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2018

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# Fast Capitalism

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# About the Authors

## Jacopo Bernardini

Jacopo Bernardini holds a PhD in Social and Political Theory and Research. He is a Postdoctoral Researcher of Sociology and Methodology of Social Research at the Department of Political Sciences, University of Perugia (Italy). His research focuses on Age and Life Cycle, Transition to Adulthood, Generational Conflicts and Information Age. Email: jacopower@yahoo.it.

## Daniel Broudy

Dr. Daniel Broudy is Professor of Applied Linguistics and former Research Chair of the Graduate School of Intercultural Communication at Okinawa Christian University. As a former imagery analyst with the U.S. Army, he draws upon his military experience and doctoral training in psycholinguistics to develop courses in communication and in the rhetoric of the visual. His publications and research critically assess systems and methods of mass manipulation and propaganda. He is the author of Clearing a Vygotskyan Path: Phrase Play from Poetics to Prose (Waldport Press, 2008), co-author of Rhetorical Rape: the Verbal Violations of the Punditocracy (Waldport Press, 2010); Okinawa Under Occupation: McDonaldization and Resistance to Neoliberal Propaganda (Palgrave Macmillan, 2017); Writing Research Papers (Macmillan, 2011); Managing Co-editor of Synaesthesia: Communication Across Cultures; Associate Editor of Political Communication; and Co-editor of Under Occupation: Resistance and Struggle in a Militarised Asia-Pacific (Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013); News From Somewhere: A Reader in Communication and Challenges to Globalization (Wayzgoose Press, 2015); The Propaganda Model Today: Filtering Perception and Awareness (University of Westminster Press, 2018). Email: dbroudy@ocjc.ac.jp.

## Sascha Engel

Sascha Engel holds a PhD from Virginia Tech (2016) as well as an M.A. from Goethe University Frankfurt and Darmstadt University of Technology, Germany (2012). Sascha is currently an independent researcher in Cork, Ireland, where he is working on a book project focusing on the history of computing and its anthropological and post-anthropological ramifications. Email: sascha-engel@t-online.de.

## Yasmin Ibrahim

Dr. Yasmin Ibrahim is a Reader in International Business and Communications at Queen Mary, University of London. Her research on new and social media technologies explores the ethical, cultural, social and economic implications in the appropriation and diffusion of ICTs in different contexts. Beyond her interest in digital humanities,

she writes on political communication, visual cultures, Islam, migration and memory studies. Email: y.ibrahim@qmul.ac.uk.

## JL Johnson

JL Johnson is an Assistant Professor of Sociology at Bethel University. His research addresses the sociology of social movements, focusing on the connections between social psychology, communication, and personal transformation. He defended his dissertation at George Mason University in 2017, arguing that digital personalization is an increasingly dominant social structure of communication, with significant effects on the frames and processes by which social movement information reaches many internet users. He is published in Symbolic Interaction and wrote about Trumpian racism and social movement visibility in sports for the District of Columbia Sociological Society (http://thesociologistdc.com/all-issues/january-2017/tuesday-night-lights). Email: johnsonje@bethelu.edu.

## Benjamin Taylor

Benjamin Taylor recently completed his MA in political science at Virginia Tech and will begin pursuing his PhD at Johns Hopkins in the fall. His research interests are primarily in political theory and political economy, though he dabbles in a bit of U.S. constitutional law on the side. He is currently reading volume one of Capital and William Sheridan Allen's The Nazi Seizure of Power. Email: benbt16@vt.edu.

## Jakob Norberg

Jakob Norberg is Associate Professor of German at Duke University. He is the author of Sociability and Its Enemies: German Political Thought After 1945 and some 20 articles on political thought and literature in Cultural Critique, New German Critique, PMLA, Telos, Textual Practice and other journals. His next book, The Philologist King: On the Nationalist Intellectual is in preparation. Email: jakob.norberg@duke.edu.

## Timothy W. Luke

Timothy W. Luke is University Distinguished Professor of Political Science at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University where he also works extensively with the Alliance for Social, Political, Ethical, and Cultural Thought (ASPECT) and the Government and International Affairs program in the School for Public and International Affairs (SPIA). His research focuses on the intersections of environmental politics, international affairs, social and political theory as they relate to policies and practices in global governance, political economy, and cultural politics. Email: twluke@vt.edu.

# Introduction to Fast Capitalism 15.1

## Timothy W. Luke

Since 2005, <u>Fast Capitalism</u> has worked to serve as an academic journal with a political intent. For now thirteen years, fifteen numbers, and nineteen issues (with a 1.2 issue in 2005, a 2.2 issue in 2006, a 5.2 issue in 2009, and an 8.2 issue in 2011), we have been publishing reviewed scholarship and critical essays about the impact of rapidly changing information and communication technologies on self, society and culture in the 21st century.

As we announced from the outset, we do not pretend an absolute objectivity, given that the work we publish is written from many perspectives with a viewpoint. Our authors examine how heretofore distinct social institutions, such as work and family, education and entertainment, have blurred to the point of near identity in an accelerated, post-Fordist stage of capitalism.  And, we launched this project before there were the nearly 2 billion smart phones and over a billion smart tablets operating everyday around the world in 2018.

The scale, scope, and sweep of these means of communication in the existing mode of information makes it difficult for people to shield themselves from subordination and surveillance. The working day continues to expand; there is increasingly less to actually no "down time" anymore. People can "office" anywhere, using laptops, tablets, and other personal mobile devices to stay constantly in touch. But these invasive technologies that tether us to capital and control can also help us resist these tendencies, as we noted during the Great Recession, the "Color Revolutions," the Occupy movements, and Arab Spring uprisings.  People use the Internet as a public sphere in which they can express and enlighten themselves as well as organize others; women, especially, manage their families and nurture children from the job site and on the road, perhaps even "familizing" traditionally patriarchal and bureaucratic work relations; information technologies afford connection, mitigate isolation, and have made way for many new social movements from Occupy Wall Street and Black Lives Matter to #MeToo and March for Our Lives.  We are convinced that the best way to study an accelerated media culture and its various political economies and existential meanings is dialectically, with nuance, avoiding sheer condemnation and ebullient celebration. We seek to shape these new technologies and social structures in democratic ways.

We invite contributions on these and related issues. Some papers will stick close to the ground of daily life and politics; others will ascend the heights of theory in order to get the big picture. The work we publish is both disciplinary and interdisciplinary, bridging the social sciences and humanities. Culture and capital are keywords. As we always have been from the beginning, we are also are intensely interested in cities, the built environment and nature, and we encourage people who theorize space and place to submit their work.

With 15.1, we continue this project with an eclectic mix of essays, beginning with Jacobo Bernardini addressing in his "Nomophobia and Digital Natives" the dark sides of smartphone psychological dependence in contemporary Italy, especially the strong correlations between youth apathy and the massive use of new digital technologies.  The second piece by Daniel Broudy, "Flags, Anthems, and Free Speech: A Trump White House," addresses the emergent national populist regime and nationalist movement being constructed in the United States around perhaps the world's first full-blown "reality TV" inspired style of daily administration in President Donald Trump's White House. The third article by Sascha Engel poses the challenge of how to go about "Writing Circuit Histories" by delving deeply into software coding practices to contest the predominant linear narrative devices to which semi-human, semi-machinic assemblages for high technology work are subject: the narrative of "progress."

The next essay by Yasmin Ibrahim deals with the complexities of "The East as a Theatre House of Suffering: 'Suffering' Scholarship and the Orientalist Bind" in contemporary media studies.  For her, "suffering" is a sustained human predicament, but it has been largely consigned to the East/Global South as a collective human role.  In turn,

the right to look and serve as the authoritative voyeur of spectatorship is conferred to the West. She effectively disputes this "East-West" dichotomy in the oeuvre of suffering scholarship. On the one hand, it has created a two-fold humanity where one is the bearer of suffering and the other the voyeur or the moral spectator who can accord pity and compassion to the lesser other. And, on the other hand, she notes how the West/Global North is now a key locus of suffering with the war on terror, the plight of displaced populations seeking refuge, and the impact of rapid climate change. The fifth contribution to the issue "Social Movement Uses of Capitalist Infotainment" by JL Johnson is a fascinating evaluation of how different social movements have mobilized techniques from contemporary social media platforms to communicate with issue group organizations supporting the causes of LGBT advancement, food justice, and human rights. The sixth article in this issue by Benjamin Taylor carefully investigates "The Biopolitical Conditions of Sovereign Performativity," arguing that sovereignty never disappears as a force to be confronted in the everyday workings of states and societies. Instead, the contexts within which it is expressed are constantly shifting as the collective practices of spatial mastery change. In turn, the next piece, Jakob Norberg's "The Tragedy of the Commonplace: Clichés in the Age of Copyright," plays with the persistent imageries of overuse and exhaustion, cloaking the concept of the cliché. He illustrates how linguistic statements, as they circulate in everyday usage, can suffer from a "tragedy of the commons," in which any shared meanings inevitably will be degraded without constraints on use by the community that employs them. Finally, in the concluding article, Timothy W. Luke's "Have a Heart for the Holocene: The Politics of Ark Activism, Collaborative Conservation, and Sponsored Survival at Museums" explores how the Anthropocene concept is now proliferating rapidly as a powerful cultural script essentially free from the geoscience underpinnings binding it to the science of geological deep time. As a free-floating narrative that generates its own cause, effect, and context, the Anthropocene has morphed into a fascinating intellectual development as well as an event in the planet's history. This study explores how a number of museums, zoological preserves, and exotic expositions have mobilized its flexible rhetoric in displays about rapid climate change to map out how one might see the interwoven combined demise of the Holocene, or current epoch in deep time, and emergence of the Anthropocene in unique new configurations. Taken together, they could be regarded as the foundations for a global exposition about the Anthropocene epoch in human and natural history.

In addition, as we now look to publishing 16.1 in 2019, I will return, once again, to being "the Co-Editor" of Fast Capitalism at Virginia Tech in Blacksburg rather than "the Editor." And, our current co-editor, David Arditi, in Arlington at the University of Texas (as his colleagues, academic units, and I planned during 2015 in the aftermath of our Founding Editor's, Ben Agger, unexpected and untimely passing) will be taking on the role of "Editor." During the recently concluded academic year, David successfully stood for tenure and promotion in the Department of Sociology at the University of Texas at Arlington. One important result of this decision is David now has the security and seniority of an associate professor to devote more time and energy to managing Fast Capitalism at its home campus as "the Editor" of the journal. Going forward, Fast Capitalism will maintain its other current editorial positions with Coordinating Editor Beth Anne Shelton (University of Texas at Arlington); Senior Editor: Matthew Levy (Portland Community College); Production Editor: Alison Torres Ramos (Southwestern Adventist University, Keene, Texas), and Managing Editor: H. Scott Clemens.

# Nomophobia and Digital Natives

Jacopo Bernardini

In recent years, media attention has been increasingly focused on certain concepts that are closely related to the improper and excessive use of mobile phones: smartphone psychological dependence, the correlation between youth apathy and the massive use of new technologies, and the drastic change of social interaction in the Internet Age. Such phenomena may be considered as the reason behind the emergence of a new contemporary pathology that already has a name: nomophobia. This is a pathology that seems to be quite common at present, particularly in those countries with high levels of smartphone ownership, usage, and penetration, such as Italy. This preliminary field research study begins to map its significance among Italian consumers who are smartphone users.

## The Mobile Phone Addiction

The term nomophobia is an abbreviation for "no mobile phone phobia," and describes the fear of being out of cellular phone contact (D'Agata, 2008). More specifically, it is an irrational and persistent fear of not being able to be connected to the Internet via smartphone. Stewart Fox-Mills coined the term in 2008, while presenting the results of a survey on the use of cellular telephones by British citizens. His research was commissioned by the UK Post Office to the center of online research YouGov (D'Agata, 2008; Colleen, 2008; Jayakumar, 2008).

According to that research, approximately 53% of Britons suffer from this phobia, particularly young males. Similar results can be found in a survey carried out in the United States by Harris Interactive in 2012. Although the term nomophobia is never mentioned, this survey shows that 63% of respondents declared conditions of discomfort in the case of going long periods of time without access to mobile phones. Successive research studies have designated the main indicators and symptoms related to this psychopathological manifestation (Bivin, Preeti, Praveen & Jinto, 2013; King et al., 2014).

The factors identified as typical of a nomophobic subject include the habit of keeping the phone turned on all day, the tendency to feel uncomfortable without one's phone, and frequently posting online news about oneself and one's own experiences, as well as numerous indicators related to how often one checks one's phone and uses certain applications, as well as the frequency of receiving and making calls, messages or notifications. The main symptoms are anxiety, panic, depression, sweating, tremors, tachycardia, abnormal breathing, and feelings of fear. As observed in both studies mentioned above, this phobia is more frequently found in male subjects. However, what seems to be lacking in all existing studies is some sort of reference to the age variable, which this researcher considers fundamental. Articulating such a reference appears to require another notion: the digital generation, as it affixes a chronological context to digital nativity.

Marc Prensky was the first to speak of digital nativity (2001; 2012) revolving on two fundamental assumptions: the perception of the individual varies according to the social context in which he is inserted; and the human brain physically mutates depending on one's surroundings. Those generations that have grown through media digitization, Internet evolution, and the diffusion of mobile phones have therefore developed an unprecedented inclination towards technology, attributing values and meanings to it that are often inconceivable for previous generations (Cristofori, Bernardini & Massarini, 2015). The digital native label is a perfect fit for contemporary youth – born in a near-saturated technologized social scenario and therefore completely at ease within it. The value they confer to

technological instruments has no precedent; the potential predisposition to nomophobic behaviors is conceivable as being much greater than in the immediately preceding generations. In fact, the digital generation itself has recently been divided into two broad groups: the pure ones – roughly, those born in the mid-Nineties – and the spurious ones – those born in the Eighties and early Nineties (Ferri 2011; 2013; Allega 2013). Only pure digital natives have had an early and direct experience of a pervasive digital context, and are considered to be the main users and connoisseurs of new technology. Also, pure digital natives are those that are more dependent on it.

## Survey Methodology

The population of the study comprised young Italians aged between 18 and 36. Italy has been chosen since it is one of the countries with the highest levels of smartphone and mobile device usage: 128% mobile subscriptions compared to the national population (global average is 109%); 51% active accounts on the top social network accessed via mobile devices, compared to the national population (global average is 39%); 83% unique mobile users (global average is 68%); and 80% of mobile connections that are broadband (global average is 60%) (Kemp, 2018).

Stratified sampling has been adopted; the strata were gender and age group. A sample of 200 cases made up the sample for the study: 50 males aged between 18 and 24 and 50 females aged between 18 and 24 (which will be called **young adults or pure digital natives**); 50 males aged between 25 and 36 and 50 females aged between 25 and 36 (which will be called **early adults or spurious digital natives**). The questionnaire – composed of 21 multiple-choice questions and 1 open-ended question – was sent via email in January 2015.

The collected data was inserted into a matrix and processed with SPSS 14.0. All variables have been crosschecked by gender and age group. No significant gender differences have been noticed; therefore, only age group cross tabulations will be shown and discussed.

## The Results of the Survey

After the socio-demographic questions, the questionnaire asked how often during the course of an hour the participant checked his/her smartphone, on average, without receiving notifications. Possible answers were: never (selected by 9.5% of the sample); once (35%); two or three times (34%); and more than three times (21.5%). By comparing these answers with the age group, an initial significant fact emerges: as age increases, so does the frequency with which one controls one's phone. In fact, as can be seen in Table 1, just 6% of young adults aged between 18 and 24 years old – that is, the pure digital natives – claimed to never check their phones over the course of an hour compared to 13% of those aged between 25 and 36, the spurious digital natives. This trend is almost perfectly reversed with regard to controlling the smartphone more than three times in an hour.

**Table 1.** Checking one's smartphone over the course of an hour

|  | Age | | |
|---|---|---|---|
|  | **Pure Natives (18–24)** | **Spurious Natives (25–36)** | **Total** |
| Never | 6.0% | 13.0% | 9.5% |
| Once | 29.0% | 41.0% | 35.0% |
| 2–3 Times | 37.0% | 31.0% | 34.0% |
| More than 3 times | 28.0% | 15.0% | 21.5% |
| Total | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |

Note: Column percentage. Age group cross tabulation. N=200

The following question brought similar results: when asked how many times over half an hour each participant

received an audio notification on the smartphone, most of the pure digital natives answered "twice or more," while early adults mainly answered "once or never" (Table 2).

**Table 2.** Audio notifications received over the course of half an hour

| | Age | | |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| | **Pure Natives (18–24)** | **Spurious Natives (25–36)** | **Total** |
| One/no notification | 42.0% | 46.0% | 44.0% |
| 2-3 notifications | 32.0% | 34.0% | 33.0% |
| More than 3 notifications | 26.0% | 20.0% | 23.0% |
| Total | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |

Note: Column percentage. Age group cross tabulation. N=200

The respondents were afterwards asked to specify which services they utilize to keep in touch with their friends and families. There were five possible answers: calls, SMS, Facebook Messenger, Skype and Whatsapp. By analyzing the responses, two different trends can be delineated: to communicate with their friends, they tend to mainly use the Whatsapp app (95% of respondents) and, to a lesser extent, calls (73%). Conversely, to keep in touch with their families, they mostly use calls (98%) and SMS (48%). Skype use is quite marginal (only 10% of the sample uses it to keep in touch with friends and 3% to communicate with family members). Spurious digital natives tend to prefer traditional services: calls and text messages, while pure digital natives are more likely to use applications based on instant messaging: Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp.

In addition to calls and messaging, pure natives are more likely to use their smartphones for applications and video games, while early adults are more inclined to check e-mails, bank accounts, and work-related matters, as well as booking travel reservations and purchasing items online (Chart 1). Pure digital natives express a greater fear that their cell phone battery might run low. When asked, "Do you ever fear that your cell phone might run out of power?" 23% answered "often" (versus 12% of spurious digital natives) and 51% replied "sometimes" (versus 44% of spurious digital natives). 28% of young adults also claim never to contact a person without using a mobile phone, compared to 11% of early adults.

This tendency of pure digital natives towards greater and more constant use of their smartphones was confirmed in a series of dichotomous questions. Pure digital natives tend to keep their phones switched on during the night more often than spurious natives (81% versus 70%), to check their phone as soon as they get up in the morning (68% versus 49%), to post pictures or comments regarding places they have visited for the first time (43% versus 41%), and to check the time on their phone, rather than on a wristwatch (69% versus 64%).
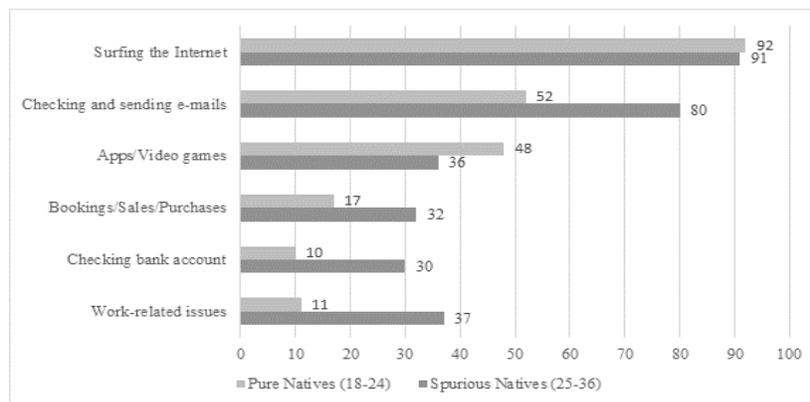


**Figure 1.** Smartphone use in addition to calls and messaging

Furthermore, more often than early adults, they state that spending a whole day without their mobile phone would be a strongly negative occurrence (43% versus 35%). Pure digital natives also believe that smartphones, the Internet, and social networks have significantly improved their social life (54% versus 40%) and they find it impossible to imagine their future life without a smartphone (63% versus 52%).

The successive part of the questionnaire displayed four common circumstances: waiting situations (on the bus, in a waiting room, etc.), in the car at a red traffic light, walking, and spending time with other people. Respondents were asked to indicate during which activities they make use of their phones. As can be seen from Chart 2, there are no particular differences between the two age groups. However, for both age classes, it is interesting to note the high percentage of affirmative responses.
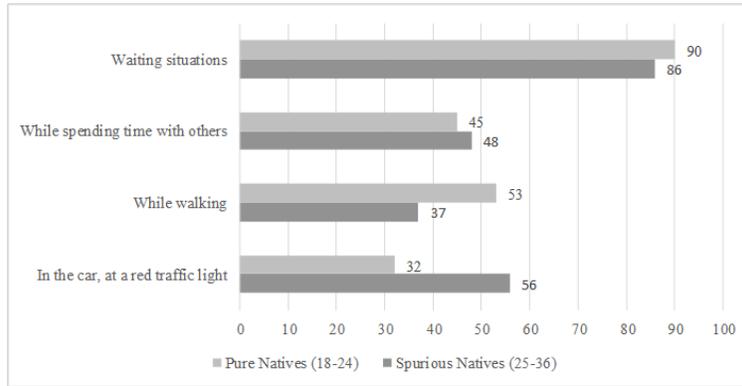


**Figure 2.** Smartphone usage in recurring situations

The last question of the questionnaire was open-ended and asked the respondents to imagine and specify their own personal feelings in the event of being prevented from using their smartphones. The analysis and processing of the responses resulted in four main categories (Table 3). By crossing such categories with age class, some significant differences can be seen; pure digital natives are more inclined towards anxiety and frustration, while spurious ones greatly associate the separation from their phones with diametrically opposing feelings: tranquility, relaxation and an overall sense of freedom.

**Table 3.** Experienced feelings in the case of forced smartphone absence

|  | Age | | |
|---|---|---|---|
|  | **Pure Natives (18–24)** | **Spurious Natives (25–36)** | **Total** |
| Anxiety/Frustration | 38.0% | 28.0% | 33.0% |
| Sense of freedom | 24.0% | 42.0% | 43.0% |
| Fear of being unreachable | 22.0% | 24.0% | 23.0% |
| Work-related fears | 6.0% | -- | 3.0% |
| Other feelings | 10.0% | 6.0% | 8.0% |
| Total | 100.0% | 100.0% | 100.0% |

Note: Column percentage. Age group cross tabulation. N=200

## Final Considerations

The survey results exposed in this essay display a clear trend; almost every question of the questionnaire has shown significantly different leanings between the two generational cohorts. The assumptions made at the beginning,

forming the study's initial hypotheses, have been substantiated by this preliminary study in Italy. Pure digital natives show a stronger bond to their smartphones, which can be seen as both an emotional attachment and a true dependence. Behavior that might indicate a greater predisposition to nomophobia is seen to a greater extent in the pure digital cohorts. In this study, such a trend has been observed in a sample of Italian respondents and therefore must be circumscribed to the Italian scenario. However, it seems safe to assume similar trends in virtually every country with a high rate of smartphone penetration.

At this point, there is another legitimate "public health" question to be asked: should nomophobia be considered a disease in the full sense of the term? The studies on this subject are currently scarce, particularly those with a purely medical focus. According to David Greenfield, a professor of psychiatry at the University of Connecticut, the attachment to smartphones is very similar to other well-known and well-researched dependencies, because – in a similar way – it interferes with the production of dopamine, a neurotransmitter that regulates the brain's reward center. As stated by Greenfield in a recent interview:

> Every time you get a notification from your phone, there's a little elevation in dopamine that says you might have something that's compelling, whether that's a text message from someone you like, an email, or anything. [...] The thing is you don't know what it's going to be or when you're going to get it, and that's what compels the brain to keep checking. [...]. That feeling you're going to miss something if you're not constantly checking is an illusion; most parts of our lives are not relevant to our smartphones (Stone, 2014).

Nicola Luigi Bragazzi and Giovanni Del Puente, two researchers at the University of Genoa – who also proposed the inclusion of nomophobia in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders – have connected the nomophobia phenomenon to the new technologies paradox, describing it as a two-faced phobia: on the one hand, the smartphone can be used in an impulsive way as a protective shield; on the other hand, it can be used as a means for avoiding social communication (Billieux, Van der Linden & Rochat, 2008; Ribak, 2009; Bragazzi & Del Puente, 2014). According to these scholars,

> It is undeniable that technology [...] enables us to perform our job more quickly and with efficiency. [...] On the other hand, mobile devices can have a dangerous impact on human health. Further research is needed, above all academic and scholarly studies, to investigate more in depth the psychological aspects of nomophobia and to provide a standardized and operational definition of it (Bragazzi & Del Puente, 2014, p. 158).

Smartphone addiction is being considered by some researchers as new clinical condition worthy of further research. The academic world is showing how, currently, being disconnected from a phone or a computer can cause anxiety, discomfort, irritability, stress and panic (King, Valença & Nardi, 2010; Bivin, Preeti, Praveen & Jinto, 2013; King et al., 2014; Kang & Jung, 2014) – negative emotions that are disproportionate to the real situation of personal danger, and therefore pathological. Certainly not all behaviors related to the use of smartphones can be defined as pathological, but it is undeniable that today's massive diffusion of smartphones – particularly among the youngest generations – has resulted in the emergence of a new hazardous phenomenon that requires further research.

In conclusion, two variables, in the judgment of this researcher, should no longer be ignored: generational belonging and, most importantly, digital nativity. Their importance is evidenced by the fact that, as shown in this brief research note, nomophobia is certainly stronger among those born and raised during the technology boom at the dawn of this new millennium.

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# Flags, Anthems, and the Politics of Free Speech in a Trump White House

## Daniel Broudy

## Introduction

Humans are curious creatures, capable of incredible compassion and yet able to concoct every intrigue and corruption imaginable. We take no responsibility for the diseases, disorders, poverty, or famine that befall our kind. We build religions to imagined communities and symbols of our own temporal power needed (we feel) to focus the attention of our fellow men and women on what is really important. We call it nationalism, dressed in signs and symbols that beckon us all to bow before their forms.

But if nationalism, as Franz Werfel once observed, is a "heretical religion based on the erroneous doctrine that nations have a soul and that this soul is more permanent, more 'eternal,' so to speak, than the soul of an individual" (1944), this claim raises a question. Can Werfel's words speak to us in the present? Representing the sentiments of a writer and advocate for nonviolence and love for all humankind, his observation might help explain the contemporary condition of public and free speech and the possible ramifications for desecrating symbols of the national soul, so to speak. While he wrote before and during Nazi aggression in the reign of the Third Reich, Werfel's insight might shed light on our present attempts to understand the dangers unfolding before us.

This essay is an effort to assess a particular strain of nationalism appearing in the Administration of Donald J. Trump. It critically examines how the President manages to appeal to the mass of his fervent followers, to disseminate and enforce his idiosyncratic concept of citizenship while working to veil from wider view an underlying plan which, by many signs, appears to be a more empowered plutocracy. Trump's present aim, it appears, seeks to bring to full bloom the seeds of a nationalism sown in the presidency of George H. W. Bush that can be seen in the fruits of a pliable and obedient American people less and less likely to exercise their free speech rights and speak out against state abuses of power for fear of economic marginalization and/or ruin at the hands of ruling and all-knowing wealth.

Standing before an imposing backdrop of American flags and referring to China and Russia as "rival powers," Trump notes in remarks on his National Security Strategy that these nations, "seek to challenge American influence, values, [and] wealth" (2017), which he said were increasing under his administration. Besides his purported personal insecurities (small hands, male pattern baldness, questionable IQ, etc. [Bookman 2018]) and obsession with trivialities (small inauguration attendance), Trump's concept of American values seems to be little more than the possession and expression of material wealth and market performance, which (for him) creates self-justified influence. "America is gaining wealth, leading to enhanced power—faster than anyone thought—with $6 trillion more in the stock market alone since the election—$6 trillion," he observed (2017).

The smooth operation of business and meeting the bottom line is necessarily the exclusive metric by which market value and, hence, citizen value is measured. Trump's nationalism is woven into his unique interpretation of and value in personal and national economic power. His interpretation of value, wealth and influence, like his predecessors', are symbolized, it seems, in the massive American flag that decorates the entrance of the New York Stock Exchange. To military men and women, however, called upon (by successive administrations) to sacrifice their bodies or minds for that symbol, the national flag engenders starkly different conceptual imagery—a patch on the

shoulder of a comrade in combat, a flag-draped coffin, the spangled banner hoisted or lowered on a flagpole during morning or evening colors.

## Keywords

Since nationalism and patriotism are sometimes conflated and/or confused, it is important to clarify their distinctions. I begin with the peculiarities parsed by journalist Sydney J. Harris:

> The difference between patriotism and nationalism is that the patriot is proud of his country for what it does, and the nationalist is proud of his country no matter what it does; the first attitude creates a feeling of responsibility, but the second a feeling of blind arrogance that leads to war. (1953)

Blind arrogance and the complete absence of responsibility toward others are key features in today's nationalist. The loudest and most vulgar cheering sections in the public discourse conditioning the public mind to receive particularly virulent strains of nationalism wrap themselves in the colors of the flag (or display the colors prominently on their jacket lapel during network broadcasts).

When Sean Hannity, for example, commentator and seasoned cheerleader for preemptive military invasions and regime changes throughout the world, reminds interviewees appearing on camera and explaining the military-industrial perspective that they are "Great Americans," his exuberance can be best understood in the nationalist light shone by Harris. In April 2017, after Trump launched a Tomahawk missile into Syria, Hannity noted that Trump's message to the world could not be any clearer: "The United States of America is back"—as if somehow to pretend that America had previously abandoned its foreign policy of actively seeking regime changes throughout the world. Here, Hannity, as a powerful talking head, shirks his immense responsibility to call critical attention to the larger national responsibility that bombing has on the people—both within the United States and, importantly, beyond its borders. Hannity further observes in his television broadcast that:

> Syria, North Korea, Iran, Russia, China and the rest of the entire world saw a very different United States of America last night. Instead of weakness, we now have strength. Instead of appeasement [and] capitulation, we now have decisiveness and leadership. Timidity has been replaced by bold action. (2017) [1]

If, in surveying the world, the nationalist insists on seeing only in black-and-white terms, the patriot sees and appreciates the diversity in the colors of its people. "A patriot is necessarily and invariably a lover of the people" (1774), notes famous lexicographer and patriot, Samuel Johnson. He further observes that, "A patriot is he whose public conduct is regulated by one single motive, the love of his country; who, as an agent in [government], has, for himself, neither hope nor fear, neither kindness nor resentment, but refers everything to the common interest" (1774). Though addressing the electors of Great Britain at the time, Johnson speaks in a meaningful way to America's pretenders today: the common good, rather than corporate personhood, must be served by those in power who claim to love the fatherland.

## Normalizing Belligerence

One important aspect of the particular brand of nationalism that Trump trades in began appearing during the George H. W. Bush presidency, continued through his son's (W's) administration, and with greater frequency through the Barack Obama presidency. With the impending 1991 Gulf War, President Bush observed in his address to the nation that the United States can [with belligerence] forge for Americans and future generations a new world order, a world where the rule of law, not the rule of the jungle, governs the conduct of nations (Bush, 1991). Speaking for the American people, Bush summoned the sacred mythologies of nationhood by citing the rule of law while, at the same time, enacting rules of the jungle to war against another country that had subsumed a neighboring nation.

This new world order of which President Bush spoke has sought to make the nation the exclusive center of man's creation. This reinterpretation of the concept of the ancient social order has remade God into a servant of the nation rather than the nation into a servant of God's purpose for man. Michael Billig notes that, "If there is an

ideological aura attached to nationhood, then the role of God in this down-to-earth … mysticism is interesting" (1995). The fascination can be found in the stark differences that appear in how the prospect of war (or the necessity of perpetual conflict) is pitched to populations across cultures. As Saddam Hussein invoked the rhetoric of an era preceding the modern nation-state fighting against "the army of atheism," Bush invited God merely to make a rhetorical appearance, calling on His name to "bless our forces" and the "coalition forces at our side" (Billig, 1995). Each belligerent action undertaken throughout the world by subsequent US administrations has called upon God to serve in this new conceptualization of the order of nations.

Infused in man's call for God to serve man's aims is the unspoken effort undertaken in mass media to make preemptive forms of belligerence normal. This process of normalization has enlisted the nation's most significant symbol, the flag, to play the crucial role of blotting out from public view the underlying system of military aggression that, "doesn't do body counts" (Franks, 2002) for foreign casualties on foreign soil. In the wake of the Gulf War, the post-9/11 world reveals, also, a form of nationalism in America arrogating to itself the power to dissolve popular sovereignty and basic citizen rights under the banner of the flag and its purported sanctity. This is the sort of belligerence that Representative Tulsi Gabbard (Army combat veteran) referenced in an interview with ABC's George Stephanopoulos (January 2018). In responding to his question about a ballistic missile attack from North Korea, which turned out to be a false alarm, Gabbard observes that,

> ... our country's history of regime-change wars [has] lead countries like North Korea to develop and hold on to nuclear weapons because they see how the United States, in Libya for example, guaranteed Gaddafi, **we're not going to go after you; you should get rid of your nuclear weapons**. He did, [but] then we went and led an attack that toppled Gaddafi, launching Libya into chaos that we are still seeing the results of today. (2018)

At the very center of the conditioning process that hides this history with one hand and normalizes belligerence with the other are the flag and anthem. The conditioning can be seen in the concrete public veneration of symbols: the field-sized flags unfurled (with taxpayer money) for the national anthem on game day (Fenno & Zarembo, 2015), the orchestrated public exhibitions of homecoming affection for veterans keen to surprise family, and the men and women arrayed in uniform (Howard, 2015) who throw (or catch) the first pitch (Kindelan, 2017), flip a coin for kickoff (NFL, 2016), or drop the puck on center ice (Sportsnet, 2016). These rituals and "gimmicks" (Lurie, 2015) of sport are in league with the state and its efforts to conflate the commonplace connotations of its symbols with mindless leisure and to elevate the nation to the heights of the sacred. Puzzled spectators, especially outside the United States, may wonder how so many American citizens have slipped into this state of nationalism even as the civil rights of so many of its citizens are shattered by the increasingly militarized state itself. A brief return to modern history should help bring some clarity to the present.

Since nationalism (cast as religion) is part of the smooth business of war (ICIJ, 2012) and maintaining the global spread of garrisons and armaments, images of the flag have increasingly been used by domestic corporate news to condition the public, reinforce the status quo, and fortify the flagging integrity of highly filtered and "distorted views of war" (Greenslade, 2010) produced by embedded journalists covering battlefield actions. War "waged from bombers [and drones] high above the fray and reported by carefully controlled journalists [has] made war fashionable," notes Chris Hedges (2010). Such synergy among corporate news mythmakers and storytellers (happy to serve as vessels of the narrative) and the agents of military action is hardly a new phenomenon as General Smedley D. Butler (recipient of two medals of honor) once noted, retired from the "racket" ([1935] 1974) he had served with high distinction.

Adam Parfrey observes in the introduction to War is a Racket (2003 Reprint edition), that Butler was arrested after he publicly spoke about Italian Prime Minister Benito Mussolini's utter callousness for the loss of one life in the affairs of the state. Only after hostile public outcry from the American people was Butler spared from courts marshal. "Pre-World War II worship of Italian Fascism in America," Parfrey writes, "can be seen in the July 1934 issue of Fortune magazine, which celebrated the Italian corporatist state" (2003). Butler, who audaciously referred to himself as a "racketeer for capitalism" (2003), infuriated the greedy capitalist class and their political lapdogs in Washington when he publicly named the names:

> I helped make Mexico ... safe for American oil interests ... Haiti and Cuba a decent place for the National City Bank boys. I helped in the raping of half a dozen Central American republics for the benefits of Wall Street. ... I helped purify Nicaragua for the international banking house of Brown Brothers. I brought light to the Dominican Republic for American sugar interests ... [and] in China I helped to see it that Stand Oil went its way unmolested. (2003:10)

Butler's confession of the movement of the nation's flag to foreign battles waged for American industry and

banking interests reveals the brutalities necessary for the rapid spread of capitalism ignored by corporate media and obscured by the emotive powers conjured up by effective advertising of the national flag. Nor can it be a coincidence, as Woodrow Wilson once declared, that the flag of the country follows the designs of financiers and manufacturers across the world where the "doors of unwilling nations are battered down" (Cited in Chomsky, 1987) in the interest of expanding markets. What is necessary, however, is a propaganda system that effectively camouflages these colonizing activities at work in our social relations and in our minds.

## Conditioning and Resistance

The widely recognized father of modern public relations, Edward Bernays observed that, "propaganda is the executive arm of the invisible government" ([1928] 2005). If such is the case, the presence and influence of propaganda is, today, much more visible in the mass media. Before America's first military foray into Iraq in 1990 and the emergence of the 24-hour news cycle, corporate media at least attempted to maintain the pretense that journalism was an independent entity from the state, a cantankerous check on the abuses carried out by state power. Today, however, scarcely any report of (inter)national import is delivered free from digital reproductions of the national flag suffused explicitly (or subliminally) with set backdrops or screen overlays as studio newsreaders follow their teleprompters (Barrón-López, 2007). The great profusion and unremitting observance of national symbols over decades engender suspicion that the state is in the business of normalizing and intensifying not just mindless mass consumption and use of products and weapons (in the name of the national interest) but a kind of idolatry as well.

In his early 20th century work Public Opinion, Walter Lippmann offers a description relevant to our 21st century problem. Of symbols and their centrality to the formation of the mass public's perceptions, thoughts, and habits, Lippmann suggested that, "no successful leader has ever been too busy to cultivate the symbols which organize his following" ([1922] 1997). George W. Bush's successful and well-known campaign to cultivate the "sacred" connotations of the American flag distilled in the lapel pin, just in the wake of 9/11 (Cruz, 2008), served in large measure to organize a mass following for the eventual preemptive invasion of Iraq and, in the midst of national hysteria and turmoil, the severe weakening of civil liberties under the USA PATRIOT Act (Sadeghi, 2003).

To be a bona fide patriot—as the Bush mythology unfolded—one had to become a nationalist and embrace, without thoughtful reflection, the new definitions of patriotism the Administration re-engineered, promoted, and controlled through compliant corporate media. Public officials who "decided [they] won't wear that pin on [their] chest" (Zeleny, 2007), obeying the new trend and signifying their obedience, became an open target for ridicule and reproach in the acquiescent media (Wright and Miller, 2007).

"The leader knows by experience," observed Lippmann, "that only when the symbol has done its work is there a handle by which he can move a crowd" ([1922] 1997). That handle, at present, is being remolded from the Trump brand name, cast in gold lettering, into the American flag and anthem. Having won the campaign for the nation's highest office, Donald J. Trump (Chief Executive of The Trump Organization) appears to be set in the business, as Commander in Chief, of cultivating his following with a campaign of rebranding. The Trump family name in plaited gold, branded on its various business edifices, signifies exclusivity and power. The brand is nothing, if not a signifier of lavish wealth. Associated conceptual images of that brand are now merging with the national flag—synthesizing commonplace concepts of patriotism and the flag and anthem to produce a brand of nationalism whose meaning and value are increasingly controlled and disseminated by elites.

In defense of President Trump's awkward comments to the father of a fallen soldier in Afghanistan, White House Chief of Staff John Kelly (ret. General) reflected on the widespread criticism of his boss and went for a contemplative "walk among the finest men and women on this earth. … in Arlington National Cemetery." He describes in a White House press conference (October 19, 2017) how a fallen soldier is cared for: We "wrap them up in whatever passes as a shroud … pack them in ice … meticulously dress them in their uniform with the medals they've earned, the emblems of their service" (Kelly, 2017). Here, the symbolic imagery of a sacred "shroud" and bravery, signified in earned medals in the name of state military actions, are fused with emotive images engendered by acts of being put on ice and preserved for as long as possible. The American fighting man and woman who have made the ultimate sacrifice represent in Kelly's mind, "the best one per cent this country produces" (2017). As citizens, we either buy into these new meanings of patriotism or risk being publicly shunned and shamed by the Administration for asking critical questions (Gessen, 2017).

Kelly, further, inserts the normalizing language of autocratic rule, "there is nothing in our country anymore that seems to suggest that selfless service is not appropriate but required," to bolster and control the Trumpian interpretation of patriotism. Reinforcing the emotions we are adjured to feel about a "military procedural on burial traditions" (Holcomb, 2009), Kelly highly recommends the public viewing of an emotive integration of Hollywood drama and actual events in the film Taking Chance. The movie is an adaptation of Lieutenant Colonel Michael Strobl's notebooks chronicling his observations and sense of guilt for working a desk job in garrison at Quantico while his comrades toiled in combat during the 2003 Iraq War. The story seeks to engender patriotic feelings of pride with conspicuous appearances of respectful salutes to service members and flags.

Though an honorable salute to a fallen Marine, the film "never rises above empty sentimentalism" to engage "with the controversial politics of the Iraq War" (Holcomb, 2009). To embrace this nationalist invention of patriotism in the worship of soulless signs and symbols and to respect the demands of elites who seek this sort of compliance means to utterly ignore the crisis on the streets of our nation—the ongoing sacrifices of veterans who with missing limbs, mangled bodies and broken hearts and minds plagued by battlefield traumas fall by their own hands in record numbers of suicides (Department of Veterans Affairs, 2016).

In Donald Trump's vision of America made great again with borders safeguarded from powerless would-be immigrants from "'shit-hole' nations" (Bump, 2018), unquestioning observance of the rites and rituals of state symbol worship also means you can play the game of life (or maintain your livelihood) without being singled out for harassment by the elite owners of wealth or by the leading players in entertainment or material production. Exercising the right to speak out can be seen, also, in the resistance of inaction, or nonparticipation. A growing number of professional athletes seeking to call widespread attention to ongoing social injustices and civil rights abuses (Chaney and Robertson, 2013) are refusing to stand during the playing of the national anthem, and some are paying the price, so to speak, for their disobedience.

Taking a knee today during the playing of the national anthem is yesterday's sit-in at places of public accommodation where institutionalized expressions of racism sought to remold Americans of African descent into second-class citizens. The symbol of a unified nation for Trump has become a symbol of "jangling discord" (King 1963) for citizens who plainly see, with each new day, the reemergence of systemic oppression and violence but refuse to remain quiet about it. In commenting on continuing NFL player protests against police brutality in communities across the United States, Trump ignores these realities and, instead, fires up his base:

> Wouldn't you love to see one of these NFL owners, when somebody disrespects our flag, to say, 'Get that son of a bitch off the field right now. Out! He's fired. He's fired! (Graham, 2017)

To Trump, blind obedience to the present norm appears to equate to continued access to and participation in civil economic life. Dealing squarely with facts about the excesses of policing power, "the violated civil rights and endangered lives" (Chaney and Robertson, (2013, 494), is far less valuable than maintaining control over the nationalist narrative and moving the masses in the direction of full compliance.

Control over society's key definitions is, in fact, integral to the process through which power is able to dictate not only what is and isn't factual, but what is and isn't valuable (Schiller, 1999). A glance at the change of new décor, carpets, curtains, and couches (Seipe, 2017) in the Oval Office will apprise the casual observer that traditional signifiers of state power (red, white, and blue) are now being saturated by images of Trumpian gold. A reciprocal effect can be found in other signifiers of convergence in the various meanings engendered by both the Trump name and by State power, which have appeared in Trump flags flown on US military vehicles (Holley, 2017).

"In the symbol," Lippmann pointed out, "emotion is discharged at a common target, and the idiosyncrasy of real ideas blotted out" ([1922] 1997). With the degradation of political discourse where real and diverse ideas are exchanged with order and decorum in civil debate, Trump's ongoing belligerence campaign (Editorial, 2017) is slowly degrading the idiosyncrasies of critical thought once brought into the public square for refinement. The discharge of emotion, "knock the crap out of them," (White 2016) at campaign rallies, featuring Trump's rhetorical brand, vividly illustrated the extent to which passions rose to blot out rational discourse only to be replaced by rage discharged at convenient scapegoats— "Mexicans" (Desmond-Harris, 2016), "Muslims" (Al Jazeera. 2017), "dreamers," (Nakamura, 2017) and women" (Vagianos, 2017).

"Nobody should be allowed to burn the American flag—if they do, there must be consequences—perhaps loss of citizenship or a year in jail!" Donald Trump observed (2016). Wherever objects of passionate rage are found enduring the slings and arrows of outrageous hatred, the wo/men in power aiming at those targets can also be

found arrogating to themselves passionate praise for their efforts in further marginalizing the weak. As a fair-haired business mogul, Trump effectively defined the fringe elements during his presidential campaign, and now works as the national leader to condition the larger public to the new reality that "dissent" (Smith et al., 2017) will not be tolerated.

Since flag burning is often seen as the supreme speech act of protest (apart from self-immolation), Trump is attempting to set the tone for future actions that might well be taken against anyone bold enough to exercise free speech and disobey. Observers may have wondered whether his words are Hollywood bluster or cool sincerity, but he appears determined (one way or another) to organize a larger and larger cult following. Compliance with the President's narrow views on free speech may be coupled, for example, with a social and monetary cost. His Department of Justice head has recently demanded, "the private account information of potentially thousands of Facebook users in three separate search warrants … to anti-administration activists who have spoken out at organized events" (Schneider, 2017). A Trump invasion of the largest online social network has the hallmarks of a campaign aimed at control not just over the public discourse, but also discourse across cyberspace. With his "repeal of online privacy protections" (Reilley, 2017) and "elimination of net neutrality" (Shamsian, 2017), Trump is well positioned, through the revolving-door of corporatists in his cabinet, to make speech and equal access to mass communication a veryexpensive prospect, indeed.

## Conclusion

President Trump's previous musings about the possible consequences for disobedience added to his expressed contempt for the First Amendment (Toobin, 2016) appears to illustrate an aim toward autocratic control that would strive to blot out from public view judicial decisions already well-grounded in previous Supreme Court rulings on flag burning as a speech act protected by the Constitution (Bomboy, 2015). Having (reportedly) dodged (Evans, 2016) his "patriotic" duty to defend the flag and freedom on a battlefield in Vietnam and having since berated those who have (and have been captured doing so) (Martin and Rappeport, 2015), it is important to contemplate why Mr. Trump might now be attending so carefully to the protection of this symbol.

As state symbols are concrete expressions of national pride and identity, they sit at the center of a nation's self-perception and serve simultaneously as representations of the elect. Desecration (or even disrespect) of symbols can be construed as an existential attack on the leader. Whereas enthroned monarchs receive adulation through their jewel encrusted crowns and scepters, state leaders taking seats of power through election receive their adulation through the public's respect for the nation's symbols. If what Lippmann suggests is true, in part or whole, the leader as head of state enjoys worship vicariously.

The elect, perceiving themselves as truly set apart, receive a kind of public veneration. In the case of Mr. Trump, this level of holiness necessitates vigilant reinforcement, in his mind evidently, in a "National Day of Patriotic Devotion" (McGill 2017) as well as in a "Day of Loyalty" with the public recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance in a nation purported to be "the world's leader in upholding the ideals of freedom, equality, and justice" (Fox News, 2017). This public worship trades not only on the power of the one elected but fortifies at the same time the authority of the leader and the national symbol by fusing the two in the public consciousness. Thus, by decree and cultural conditioning aided by compliant media, the elect set the definitions of who and what are holy, or acceptable, as well as who and what are aberrant and disposable. With open access to mass media, the elect shape the meanings of core concepts and disseminate them for mass consumption.

In the business world, no one questions the boss. If you do, you risk being fired. The boss holds power to define what is and isn't true. In this era of fake news when ontological realities are remolded with false urgencies manufactured by political and corporate power, citizens must now ask whether Trump sees the people as little more than cast members in this simulacrum of central government. For fourteen seasons, The Apprentice reality show taught Donald Trump to view its audience and contestants as a class of candidates vying for something "real." In this age of the political hyper-real, where the public struggles to discern what is and isn't true, is Trump simply playing the public for higher ratings? Or, is the populist bombast and appeal actually meant to be something genuine? Either way, the prospects for a future of free speech seem bleak, save for fearless, vigorous, and sustained public campaigns that openly question all of today's elite mythmakers.

## Acknowledgments

## Endnotes

1. Worth noting are important parallel actions ignored by chicken-hawk commentators in corporate news: the blistering speed with which hasty praise is heaped upon leaders who launch swift missile strikes and the speed with which the value of stocks in weapons manufacturing spike. In Investor's Business Daily, Nancy Gondo and Gillian Rich refer in their article "Syria Attacks Light Up Dow Stock, Defense Names," to the value of each Tomahawk missile and the weapons industry's main players whose stocks "lit up" after the strike. (April 7, 2017).

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# Writing Circuit Histories

Sascha Engel

## 1. Introduction

In addition to a substantial movie and TV industry, numerous recent books, both fiction and non-fiction, have discussed the end of man. To some extent, such cultural formations encode growing unease with the foundations of supposedly victorious Western society after the Cold War, reflecting the fragility of knowledge in the age of "fake news" on the one hand and increasing global uncertainty on the other. Nor is it an accident that such unease manifests in the form of engagements with the end of man. Beyond worrying about knowledge and its certainty, the end of man marks a contemporary formation of knowledge in its own right. Yet what is sorely missing is an appraisal of what empirical figurations may inhabit the space opened by the end of man, particularly in light of the unease it reflects. In contemporary Western society, where the "beasts and gods" between which man was situated for Aristotle have long since given way to human-machinic entanglements and human-animal hybrids, it is imperative to reassess the knowledge formations to which the end of man gives rise, and to ask what semi-human, semi-machinic assemblages inhabit them (Leslie 1996: 3-13).

It is the contention of this paper [1] that semi-human circuitries extend beyond formerly unified bodies and connect formerly distinct entities. In the section following this introduction, I argue that the end of man presents an opportunity to narrate histories of entangled circuits bridging human-animal-machinic divides. Buried beneath ontological distinctions separating man, machine, and beast, such forgotten histories must be told in ways that allow critiques of anthropocentric linear history. With this, mapping the terrain previously obfuscated by this linear historicity becomes possible.

In the third, fourth and fifth sections of this paper, some such critical mappings are presented. Their common theme questions one of the predominant linear narrative devices to which semi-human, semi-machinic assemblages are subject: the narrative of "progress." In the third section, I argue that a more richly socially embedded narrative is necessary to appraise exactly what it is that constitutes "progress." Particularly, I highlight the frequent appearance of retardation, delay, and hesitancy within the ostensibly unbroken march of progress.

In the subsequent fourth and fifth sections, I discuss the machinic side of such stories. Rather than following a trajectory of linear ascent – say, from less convenient to more convenient, from slower to faster, and so forth – machinic histories are likewise histories of dispersals, hesitations, and bifurcations. What emerges, therefore, are multi-faceted histories of semi-human, semi-machinic circuits, allowing critical engagements with linear historical narratives.

## 2. Circuit Histories

The transcendental condition of possibility for histories of circuits is the end of 'man' as an identifiable formation of knowledge. According to Michel Foucault's study on the Order of Things, "man" denotes a precisely dated formation of Western knowledge. It is preceded by knowledges based on similitude in the 16th century and succeeded in the 20th century by knowledges consisting of psychoanalysis (the other of conscious man), ethnology (the other of European man) and literature (the other of speaking man) (Foucault 1994: 42-44, 373-386). In the early

21st century, these three knowledges have in their turn given way to full eclipses of man at all sides: knowledges of stochastic distributions of catastrophe and accident; knowledges of environmental disaster and displacement; knowledges of undecidabilities and indeterminacies (see, for instance, Perrow 1999 or Lawrence and Wiebe 2017). Given the uncontrollable proliferation of the other-than-human, "[i]t is no longer possible to think in our day other than in the void left by man's disappearance" (Foucault 1994: 342).

Foucault thus reveals that "man" had at one point emerged as the condition of possibility of Western knowledge. By the same token, its role as gateway was bound to be finite. "Man" is not irreplaceable at the heart of knowledge; nor is anthropocentrism unavoidable. It is always already beset by its own dissolution: "at a very deep level, there exists a historicity of man which is itself its own history but also the radical dispersion that provides a foundation for all other histories" (ibid: 370).

The end of man uncovers this radical dispersion and provides the transcendental condition of possibility for different knowledges (Nietzsche 1989: 162-163). It opens pluralist and non-linear fields of histories, in contradistinction to the monomanic line of history prevailing as man held sway over Western knowledge formations (Chakrabarty 2007). Since man is dead – both in the temporal and in the conditional sense – life, labor and language inhabit fields of their own, with efficacies, distributions, and formations of their own (Latour 1993: 3). What is more, singular history gives way to plural histories as the dissolution of what was formerly "man" lays bare knowledges of multi-layered entanglements. Beyond Foucault's diagnosis, life now comes to be entangled in circuits of biotechnology and bioeconomy; labor comes to be stratified in circuits of cognitive and replaceable performance; and language scores and is scored in circuits of affect and social mediation (Galloway and Thacker 2007; Lovink 2011).

At this juncture, the historian is called upon to "draw a line around the short-lived facts" which, "[f]or contemporaries… hold the fascination of a fireworks display," and instead to focus on "[t]he constituent facts," which, "by accumulation and accretion… form the core of historical growth" (Giedion 1969: 389). Such are the constituent facts of our time that after "man's" death, writing history means writing history of the circuits in which life, labor and language are now mediated.

In these mediations, machines mingle with "humans" and "animals." Things have Internet, cameras are everywhere, and power is no longer based on macroscopic writing but on microscopic coding (Kittler 1993: 226). "In relation to objects like bionic components, one must think not in terms of essential properties, but in terms of design, boundary constraints, rates of flows, systems logics, costs of lowering constraints" (Haraway 2016: 30). One must write histories, not history, as objects no longer come to be constituted by one sovereign gaze in the cold light of unequivocality. Rather, objects become "constellations," and as such "readable as sign of their objectivity… Such constellations' being as writing is the transposition of that which is subjectively thought and brought together to objectivity through language" (Adorno 1975: 167-168). Rather than exhaustively described totalities, objects are now constituted in proliferating narratives amid fields of dispersing knowledges. Histories of these dispersals must be histories of semi-human, semi-machinic circuits, where it is "not clear who makes and who is made in the relation between human and machine" (Haraway 2016: 60).

A recent example for this is "Moore's Law," the assertion that the number of transistors in an integrated circuit doubles every other year, and that therefore processor capacity extends by roughly the same factor. When it was asserted in 2016 that "Moore's law has died at the age of 51 after an extended illness," the underlying narrative was one of human ingenuity and triumphant progress (Bright 2016). In all those years of hardware development, "life-changing things [had been] made possible by the reliable, exponential growth in the power of computer chips over the past five decades," such as "[m]obile apps, video games, spreadsheets, and accurate weather forecasts" (Simonite 2016).

Underneath this, however, a radical dispersal opens up as Moore's Law is reconsidered in light of the end of man. For one, technological advancement is here inextricably intertwined with economic calculus. It is thus hardly surprising to see that the beginnings of the end of Moore's law are primarily economic in character rather than technological: the end of Moore's law heralds the end of profitable processor capacity expansion – not expansion **per se** (Scientific American 2013). What is more, ontological boundaries evaporate in a circuit history reengagement with Moore's Law. For from constituting a history of ever-more extensive human advancement through technological progress, histories of processing capacity revolve around haphazard guesses, ideological commitment, Cold War politics of superseding socialism, private- and public-sector incentives, and so on (see, for example, Khan, Hounshell and Fuchs 2018).

In many ways, such ontological entanglement is not a new situation. Throughout "the traditions of 'Western' science and politics… the relation between organism and machine has been a border war" (Haraway 2016: 7). Much

of the critical edge of circuit histories arises from this conflict. Politics has always taken its place at this border where "[n]ature and culture are reworked" (ibid: 9), mixing and mingling to form "quasi-subjects" and "quasi-objects" equally as "unstable and hazardous" as "quite real" (Latour 1993: 89). As early as Marx, narrating history guided by a notion of "man's self-creation through labor" with an emphasis on the "historical process" by which "man" comes to constitute itself through natural and machinic circuits had come with a sharpened analytical eye for the political conflicts shaping the contested identities of man, nature, and machine (Rockmore 2002: 192). "For Marx, … humans and machines are continuous forces" (Wendling 2009: 118). On the one hand, "[i] n the historical and genealogical account Marx gives of machines, he shows that they are frozen labor of the past, and thus human and very political in content". Simultaneously, however, "humans, when portrayed in energetic terms, are machine-like" (ibid, 118-119). Circuit histories thus uncover the mixing and mingling of human and machinic ontologies, and the concomitant conflicts and losses buried underneath triumphant narratives of human progress and enlightenment. By traversing narratively constructed and upheld ontological boundaries, circuit histories show that the conflicts, losses, and horrors of history undermine the very boundaries they constantly re-erect to prevent being seen (Adorno 1975: 202-203).

## 3. Social Circuit Histories

The constituent facts of today, then, point to writing circuit histories rather than human history. Writing such circuit histories requires, first and foremost, assaying the canon of linear history seemingly removed from human intervention, and restoring the radical dispersal of constituent facts buried under the corpse of "man." Above all, an intervention is called for when it comes to the history of "technological progress." This is particularly necessary in the second decade of the twenty-first century, as contemporary "machines have made thoroughly ambiguous the difference between natural and artificial, mind and body, self-developing and externally designed, and many other distinctions that used to apply to organisms and machines" (Haraway 2016: 11).

Here in particular, standard historicity based on the "progress" paradigm ignores that histories are nonlinear and entangled, and that "invention," "improvement" and "innovation" never come without social context. Identifying and discussing technological artifacts as steps in an evolutionary paradigm of progress and amelioration almost inevitably naturalizes the social mediation of technological developments. At a time when "[o]ur machines are disturbingly lively, and we ourselves frighteningly inert" (Haraway 2016: 11), specters of progress present humanity either as enlightened helmsman or as victim of anonymous processes. Both of these narratives ignore the social nature of what they present as an irreversible development of means and modes of production. On the one hand, presenting fields of exemplary progress such as Artificial Intelligence as a result merely of human perfectibility and ingenuity conveniently forgets that machinic histories have rules of their own and form fields of dispersion of their own. The system of machinic objects contains complexities and spillovers, bleedthroughs and externalities. "Artificial Intelligence" in particular spans a wide field where the androids of corporate capital and state warfare dream of electric surveillance and displacement of labor with the same intensity with which they wage war against one another. Ignoring the constraints to which any algorithm is subject in a Gödelian universe, such fever dreams are predicted upon a "mystique of information that makes basic intellectual discriminations between data, knowledge, judgment, imagination, insight, and wisdom impossible" (Roszak 1994: xix). Papering over any misalignment, setback, or conflict, "Artificial Intelligence" embodies "progress" like no other paradigm in the early 21st century.

On the other hand, humans are not mere electric sheep in the face of machinic menace and mayhem. This, too, is too simplistic a narrative. It particularly – and quite conveniently – forgets that technological development is hardly foreign to "a context that includes relative prices, regulatory and other institutional factors and, obviously, the perceived market potential of the innovations concerned" (Perez 2010: 186). The effects of the improvement of processing speed encapsulated in Moore's Law, for instance, are clearly socially stratified. Consider, for example, the replacement of workers in the fast food industry with automated check-out points – while, simultaneously, outsourced customer service presents consistent employment growth predicated upon the very same human interaction which fast food chains evidently no longer require (Bureau of Labor Statistics 2018). Such differentiated effects, too, must be described in detail: gains for some, losses for others.

Consequently, writing circuit histories must here primarily be critique. Any time differentiated accounts of social gain and loss are papered over by progress narratives, social phenomena are reified into natural phenomena. Everyday

life, labor and language thus come to be subjected to a technological paradigm elevated beyond question (Lefebvre 2002/1961: 74-78). Moreover, this self-evident paradigm is inherently totalizing (Siegel 2008: 27). Empirical fields of pluralist histories thus come to be lumped into a natural history of ever better and ever more comprehensive technocratic solutions to social problems (Ellul 1964: 116-133).

Thus, writing circuit histories means first and foremost engaging in a sustained critique uncovering the social cost of so-called "progress" (Haraway 2016: 37). It should hardly require pointing out – but all too frequently does – that not all new technologies are also improvements. The notion of "progress," however, removes the means to properly evaluate new tools and gadgets (Siegel 2008: 18). Moreover, it precludes the recognition of legitimate critiques of the social effects of the introduction of new technologies. As the fate of the "Luddites" in particular shows, any social movement opposing even parts of technological implementation is susceptible to being vilified – or worse, ignored – by narratives of "progress:"

> No one alive today remembers firsthand the trauma that we call the first Industrial Revolution... The inherited accounts of this period were formulated by and large in response to the dramatic actions of those who fought for their survival against this progress. They constituted a post hoc effort to deny the legitimacy and rationality of such opposition... The Luddites... did not believe in technological progress, nor could they have; the alien idea was invented after them, to try to prevent their recurrence (Noble 1993: 4).

Even beyond social cost, and only looking at the – as it were – positive side of a "progress'" balance sheet, one will not uncover linear ascent. Taking a closer look at the actual histories of "progress" rather invites comparison to the succession of paradigms in Thomas Kuhn's study of science (Wojick 1979: 238). For Kuhn (2012/1962), scientific progress occurs by briefly punctuating long periods of unquestioned scientific normality with rapid overhauls of the paradigms upon which this scientific normality had been predicated. In the implementation of scientific progress into everyday engineering, "received evaluation policy … plays a role analogous to that played by an accepted paradigm in an area of scientific explanation" (Wojick 1979: 244). When a new technology arises which "enables us to see that our standard procedures do not evaluate all factors correctly," the new paradigm "may lie outside the group or discipline in charge," or worse, "the evidence for anomaly or misevaluation may be tentative, controversial, or merely qualitative" (ibid, 245). For example, one of the results of the development of Artificial Intelligence seems not so much to have been the success or failure of specific machinic entities, but that it put established measurements of "intelligence" in question. Particularly, failures of the so-called Turing test, where human operators are supposed to find out whether they are conversing with a machine or a human, have raised doubts regarding methodologies of measuring intelligence (Batson 2014).

Yet, as "progress" marches on, advocates will split from conservatives, and initially unclear positions on both sides will result in conflict. Once this conflict goes public, progressive "popularizers" split from conservative "technologists" (Wojick 1979: 246). Here, too, Artificial Intelligence provides ample examples for both sides of this debate. For instance, the recent feud between Tesla CEO Elon Musk demanding further government regulations for the use of Artificial Intelligence, and Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg emphasizing market-based innovation, exemplifies that conflict between the popularizers and technologists arise in any field of technologically accentuated development (Solon 2017).

The "technologists" frequently have the upper hand initially since "the lay public may not appreciate the differences between the crude new evaluation policy and the well-articulated established policy" (Wojick 1979: 246). Consequently, "progress" narratives tend to prevail with ill-informed audiences. The adjustment period, in turn, will be publicly interpreted as confusion or even "steps back;" particularly if it brings grave social consequences (Noble 1993: 5-6). In the end, however, "[t]he confusion cannot last," and the new policy prevails (Wojick 1979: 259). Its social consequences are then pushed aside by various non-violent and violent means until the mere idea of opposing the new paradigm comes to be seen as irrational or deluded (Noble 1993: 16-17). Artificial Intelligence has not reached this point yet, but already its proponents accuse its opponents of obscurantism (Walker 2017). Likewise, critical assessments of Moore's Law, particularly those showing its economic rather than technological nature, have historically been met with hostility (Ceruzzi 2005: 590).

Even in a highly idealized form, then, histories of socially mediated technological dispersal are histories of confusion, misalignment, personal conflict, and ill-informed intervention rather than linear ascending pathways. Even in a petri dish, progress is political. Beyond such idealized circumstances, moreover, histories of technological dispersal will have to take economic and political agendas into account, as well as ideological and plain old pork barrel politics (Kellner 1992: 187). Messy though they are, these are nevertheless the constituent facts of techno-social

"progress."

## 4. Machinic Circuit Histories

Just as circuit histories uncover that each individual affected by "progress" is a history unto itself, thus humanizing the machinic, so they also bring micronarratives into play by which the machinic intersects with the social. A history of the entanglement of hitherto "human" and hitherto "machinic" circuits cannot therefore be content with just the critique of linear history. It must also pay close attention to the dynamics within the circuits it describes, and particularly to those within the machinic realm itself, overdetermining the conditions of entanglement of social and technological realms (Kellner 1992: 178). Reconsidering their object, circuit histories reject sweeping macronarratives in favor of microlevel precision. Just as "progress" history dissolved into small-scale narration of knowledge politics, so formations like "Artificial Intelligence" dissolve into constituent gestures, each of which has histories of its own, to be narrated on the micro-scale of its dispersal.

Such micronarratives augment, situate, and embed macronarratives as constituent facts disperse linear monomania. Thus, once again, narrating an exemplary field of such dispersed circuit histories constitutes a critique of an all-too-linear knowledge formation where hitherto the narrative of "progress" held sway. At the same time, micronarratives of machinic histories go against the grain of limited econocentric readings of history, focusing instead on machinic momentum. In this way, they round out the above socially embedded histories of machine development by adding a machinically embedded field of histories of social development.

The particular example discussed in this section demonstrates, moreover, the radical dispersal at work in the array of machinic figurations which can be uncovered beneath "progress." Exemplifying that dispersal lies not just underneath the linear timeline of progress, but also the unified object of "Artificial Intelligence," this section focuses on the histories of "loading." Big-picture items such as the question of machinic consciousness easily obfuscate that such consciousness, even if it were an attainable reality, would still consist of myriad tiny gestures. One of these is inevitably the question of loading – consciousness, after all, requires extensive initialization in human circuits as well. Loading denotes the act of initializing all values of a program to be executed: intermediary storage positions, GOTO loops, initial values (including terminal-based input), and of course the program and its associated subroutines themselves. Thus, loading is the process by which a Turing machine's initial 0-state is set up which is necessary for algorithm execution (Denning, Dennis and Qualitz 1978: 483).

Importantly, this refers both to the initialization of hardware and that of a coded routine. In FORTRAN, for example, "[t]he code that is to be executed must first be loaded into memory using the LOAD routine. This code to be executed is assembled and linked into an assemblage the LOAD routine will handle" (Kettleborough 1985: 184). Further down coded hierarchy, opcode and the parser themselves have to be loaded; a process repeated every time computing hardware boots up und streams of electric pulses manifest to UEFI, kernel, operating system, and eventually applications.

As is immediately evident, the multifaceted taxonomy of loading suggests multiple histories based on a variety of definitions. Still, an approximation to the concept is possible. In both the coded and the hardware version, loading is distinct from compiling, which generates the structure by which loading occurs (Backus et al 1957: 26-27). Likewise, it is distinct from the manual entry of initial values, to which it rather assigns intermediary storage space as structured by the compiler (Booth and Booth 1965: 222-223). Loading is somewhat closer to gestures such as memory dumps, where values are retrieved from storage locations and loaded into the present routine (IBM 1974: 116-119). Likewise, loading bears some kinship with diagnostics, where value initialization is implemented for testing purposes (Kettleborough 1985: 62-64).

Loading is a particularly good example for a critique engendered by writing circuit histories because of the monolithic and teleological character of its prevailing narrative. In 21st-century program initialization, loading is essentially invisible. This follows partly from processing speed, closely aligned with aspects of commercialized convenience. In the graphic interface representation upon which the vast majority of contemporary operating systems are predicated, loading is at best a nuisance papered over by introductory graphics. At worst, it constitutes a fatal problem, as was the case recently with LG Nexus devices and their Oreo update.[2]

In the linear teleology of "progress," the disappearance of loading is thus an ideal end state, of which all previous loading routines are imperfect approximations. From its inception, graphics interface software was written

with the aim that it "should be easy to use but at the same time provide as many useful features as possible," including compatibility in output with "lower quality devices" - a feat direly needed as state-of-the-art interfaces remained plagued by slow speeds and thus long loading times (Sutcliffe 1980: 52). What relief, then, that Windows 10 which already "came with no shortage of performance improvements" presents as its "neatest" feature "its fast booting times" (Ravenscraft 2015)! Likewise, reducing speed constitutes progress in hardware processing capacities to such an extent that the ideology of Moore's law gave way to "Meltdown" and "Spectre" in January 2018, two processor vulnerabilities exploiting a time-saving technique used in bootloading contemporary operating systems.

Yet, the histories of semi-machinic circuits inhabiting the terrain between compiling, retrieving, dumping, and testing hardly give credence to a narrative of ever better hidden loading procedures resulting in ever-improving speed and ever more convenience. Rather, circuit histories trace a dispersion of gestures resulting in histories of displaced human-machinic interaction, particularly centered around power differentials encoded in hardware and software access levels.

In 1957's TYDAC, for instance, loading was a largely hands-on affair. It was initialized, first, by a direct and manual choice between different inputs in the following command:

**60 SELECT x**

where "x" is a selection from the set of possible input channels: 1 addresses the Card Reader, 11 does so for Tape unit 1, 12 for Tape unit 2, 13 for Tape unit 3, and 14 for Tape unit 4. After initializing this choice, a second command sets in motion the actual loading process:

**61 READ 1000,1**

where 1000 is the address into which the tape's content is to be read, and 1 is the index register to be used for the operation (McCracken 1957: 220).

The constituent facts contained in this initial loading gesture are those generally found throughout later versions of loading as well: the choice of input from which loading occurs; setting the storage addresses in which data is received; temporary storage; the material act of data transfer itself. Three aspects of this are nevertheless remarkable. The first of these is that setting the temporary storage address is not done by a compiler routine but is set manually at initializing the loading command. Here, encoded access is total inasmuch as the code addresses all input channels equally. Secondly, however, to a significant extent this is due to limitations in loading structure. In TYDAC, as in late-1950s machines more generally, loading primarily operates by feeding card stacks (or tape) into a reader. Automating this, in turn, still presupposes direct interaction, as the user "must somehow get the first card in, which must have on it a program which will load the remaining cards" (McCracken 1957: 142-143).

Thirdly, the choice of input device is not directly part of the loading gesture. This is particularly intriguing here since it directly integrates not just input, but also output into loading gestures. The command selecting inputs

**60 SELECT x**

addresses two other options as well; both of which are outputs. Entering "2" selects the Card punch, while "3" addresses the Typewriter (McCracken 1957: 220).

Contrary to expectations of "progress," one thus finds more integration and greater degrees of user interaction here than one does in later incarnations of loading routines. Particularly once loading – both booting for operating systems and loading for individual programs – came to be hidden behind graphic interfaces, such choice and interaction all but evaporated.[3]

Thus, for example, 1981's Sinclair ZX81 exclusively features a tape loading routine. Furthermore, apart from winding the tape to the program's starting point and connecting the sockets, manual user interaction with the hardware disappears behind a graphic veil. So does most of the coding. Typing LOAD, without any qualifiers as regards source or final location, starts the tape's input, whose only immediate hardware stipulation to be heeded by the user is that the tape be regulated tonally: "maximum treble, minimum bass." Once loading is initiated, "you will see various fairly even patterns on the screen, and then suddenly a rapidly moving pattern of horizontal bars… This is your program. After loading, the screen will clear with a 0/0 report code" (Norman 1980: 58).

User interaction with the loading process is reduced to setting up timings and time stamps on the tape in question and winding the tape up to the exact starting point (Norman 1980: 57-58). The tape's tonal regulation further qualifies the reference frames of intelligibility for the magnetic pulses to be derived from the tape (ibid). Everything beyond this threshold is devoid of direct interaction and encoded to prevent access: the "various fairly even patterns" are the tape's sounds while they still remain just unrecognized sounds, while the subsequent "rapidly moving bars" represent those same sounds, transformed once a threshold of intelligibility is crossed – once the program is identified as a program.

The user thus chooses a fixed program, to be relocated from one fixed location on tape to another in main device storage. Hiding the realities of loading behind this veil of seeming transparency is, not least, commercially relevant, as only the reification of input and output allows its packaging in "programs" and – eventually – "applications." Were choices left to the user, such regulation of choice and creativity to that between various types of commercially available products would be threatened. Yet what is hidden here exceeds such immediately commercial considerations.

Rather, commercial reification at play here is part of a larger displacement. Up to a certain point, the initial sound read from ZX81's tape is indistinguishable from noise. It is only when that point is reached and its threshold crossed that the "moving bars" retroactively establish the intelligibility of the previous patterns and the program's phantasmagoric objectivity arises. Code, as an emergent quality, encodes its own intelligibility threshold. In turn, this threshold delineates access. On the one hand, user interaction must be denied initially as the very intelligibility of user interaction must first be loaded. On the other hand, cutting off user access in this way prevents any program other than the present one from being initialized. Commercial reproduction and the delineation of intelligibility go hand in hand.

As regards the coded emergence of code itself, consider this description of loading hardware from the 1960s:

> ...a group of order digits is just appearing at the digit output of M[emory] and... the binary element B is set so that the gate g1 is open and the train of 32 clock pulses passes through to C[ontrol] R[egister]. These pulses cause the contents of C.R. to shift progressively to the right and, at each stage, one of the incident digits from M is absorbed. When the whole 32 have appeared these will be stored in C.R. and the memory emits an operation complete pulse which is incident upon the right-hand input of the binary element and causes a state change so that g1 closes... (Booth and Booth 1965: 35).

Here, electromechanical input operates directly on the hardware level. The opening of a gate is followed by clock pulses regulating the main transmission of actual pulses ("incident digits") from a binary input source to a register storage where storage is implemented via right shift. In turn, this is followed by a pulse indicating the end of transmission and thus closing the gate.

Here, it is particularly remarkable that the incident digits – that is, the actual values to be loaded – remain secondary to the transmission of clock pulses. To the computing device, the important part of any data transmission – including loading routines – is the synchronization of clock pulses between peripheral and mainframe sectors (Phister 1960: 175-178). This is congruent with the characteristics of a Turing machine. After all, the origin of Turing machines – quite removed from their contemporary usage – is the establishment of a mathematical boundary of computability in a thought experiment (Denning, Dennis and Qualitz 1978: 489). From the inception of computing, "content" had been secondary, to the point of irrelevance. One of the histories of loading, then, is the history of an inertia, as this particular formation remained at the center of loading gestures ever since. "Progress" is notably absent in this regard.

A particularly good example of this is the loading gesture in 1967's PDP-8/I. Once tape loading was initialized, establishing communication between DECtape and the PDP-8/I main device consisted, firstly, of setting error flags synchronizing the tape's reading sequence with the main device's status register (Digital Equipment Corporation 1967: 341).[4] A second element at the heart of PDP-8/I's tape loading process was the synchronization of tape speed with that of the main device. This is why "timing and mark channels are recorded prior to all normal data reading and writing on the information channels," and indeed is why, as the user is brusquely informed, "[s]oftware supplied with DECtape allows writing for fixed block lengths only" (ibid: 184, 189).

Here, too, technical and commercial quasi-necessity go hand in hand. Removing content from the equation of computing – both literally and figuratively – serves to consolidate the process of loading itself. Since loading is exclusively about synchronization, the device from which data is loaded and the mainframe upon which data is to be stored must be fundamentally compatible. The easiest way to establish such compatibility, of course, is to base the process of loading exclusively upon proprietary hardware. By the same token, the operational establishment of synchronization functions most easily if it is automated – and that is, if user access is removed in the process

of loading itself. Thus, DECtape only works with DEC devices and those devices for which DEC has established compatibility, and the user of a ZX81 will try in vain to read a data tape from the TYDAC era into her device. Nor, on the other hand, does this commercial encoding follow directly from machinic synchronization: it is entirely conceivable, absent commercial imperatives, that device synchronization can bridge the divides of proprietary hardware. Indeed, it frequently does – except when it is prohibited from doing so.

## 5. Two Further Threads

A third history of loading is that of a transition from physical to logical tape input and back (Digital Equipment Corporation 1967: 185-188). This physical/logical differentiation is encoded in an exemplary fashion in FORTRAN. Reminiscent of TYDAC, FORTRAN's READ is a general input command following up on another command structuring the way data is received. In FORTRAN's case, this is accomplished by a FORMAT code (Backus et al 1957: 26). As in TYDAC, this FORMAT instruction contains a choice of input type. Unlike in TYDAC, it then specifies the exact floating-point numbering format for data storage (ibid: 27). It is noteworthy that FORTRAN also contains output structuring code, such as carriage control characters: "blank" for a single space, "0" for a double space, and so on (ibid: 29). With these, input and output are on their way to becoming internal parts of the program itself. This step is ambiguous: on the one hand, it sets up the path towards the mystifying loading screen implemented in Sinclair's ZX81 by internalizing hardware access into its encoding. In doing so, however, FORTRAN also allowed more direct access to setting up the way data is received. The interface is encoded, but not entirely hidden.

With this, a bifurcation occurs in the histories of loading. PDP-8/I's and FORTRAN's differentiation of pure input from structured input, which is replicated in ZX81's difference between pure sound and intelligible sound recognized as input, delineates a distinction of loading within a graphic interface – such as a present-day operating system – from loading that operating system itself. Loading is now increasingly split between bootloading and program loading. Where TYDAC's loading procedure offered direct addressing of hardware, and even ZX81's graphic encoding left some hardware elements intact, this split now removes those last traces. Some twenty years after PDP-8/I, consequently, C64's LOAD is a high-level command setting a subroutine in motion whereby "consecutive data bytes" are moved "from input device to Commodore 64 memory" (Philipps, Nath and Silveria 1984: 73). At that stage, loading exclusively refers to program loading and is entirely distinct from booting.

With this displacement of hardware access, two secondary access levels are distinguished: loading in the booting sense now comes to be associated with external storage media, while loading in the program loading sense is situated within the main device. This makes sense because bootloading installs the first layer of hardware obfuscation, the operating system. On its basis, in turn, individual loading routines can encode and effect the reification of "applications." An exemplary manifestation can be found in IBM's System/360 family, about ten years after the PDP-8/I, where loading is transformed into an internal function within assembly routines. It no longer refers to input loading from tape or drum, but rather loads index registers (Opler 1966: 39).

Nevertheless, hardware obfuscation or displacement remains negotiated and uneasy. Once completely internalized, the programmed loading gesture uneasily re-incorporates direct input and output accessing in the 80386 processor family of the late 1980s. Here, loading oscillates between operating system and application in the "Input from Port" command. A return to TYDAC's choice of input seems to be preserved, as it is possible to "access any port from 0 to 65535 by placing the port number in the DX register and using an IN instruction with DX as the second parameter" (Intel Corporation 1987: 17/65). This access remains at the processor level, however, and does not concern the operating system itself.

What is more, a parallel to ZX81's loading screen returns, removing user access even at the processor level, albeit in a different way. While the 80386 instructions seem to restore input/output port choice to the user, direct addressing of peripheral devices as in TYDAC is nevertheless precluded by access constraints. In 80386 opcode, an input/output access command must come from a specific privilege level, as "[a]ny attempt by a less privileged procedure to use a sensitive instruction results in a general protection exception" (Intel Corporation 1987: 8/5).

A fourth history of loading emerges here. Thus far, direct loading or bootloading and indirect loading or application loading have been distinguished as two levels. With the installation of opcode privilege, a third layer of encoding emerges. Moving from direct loading to this new level, the scope of loading expands markedly: it includes in the 80386 family the loading of effective addresses (Intel Corporation 1987: 17/91) as well as status words

(ibid: 17/99) and strings (ibid: 17/102-103). With the internalization of loading effective addresses in particular, the mechanical act of winding up the memory tape to its starting point, a core element of early loading, now becomes internal to the program. Synchronization between mainframe and periphery takes on an expanded form, now established not in the bootloading process, but in the program's own opcode. In turn, this is implemented by the assembler, converting relative addresses to absolute addresses and thus ensuring the synchronization of application and operating system as well as mainframe and periphery. The now doubly encoded loading routine is thus further removed from the user still, and an equivalent of ZX81's loading screen or the 80386's privilege level architecture removes access entirely.

Even before the 80386 family emerges, IBM's System/360 family implements this further displacement in its assembler routines (IBM 1974: 20). At the beginning of each program to be executed, a USING command sets up the base register, tying the program's internal relative addresses to an absolute position in the device's memory space (ibid: 51). Subsequently, a BALR command stands "at the beginning of a program… getting the address of the next sequential operation from the current program status word, no matter where the program may have been located" (ibid: 24). Beyond allowing relative addressing within the program, this also reifies the program as such by establishing dynamic anchoring of programs within absolute memory space. Loading is no longer a universal command to synchronize any device with its input/output ports and thus, secondarily, to load any content. It has rather come to be part of a specific routine, loading specific content for specific purposes. At the same time, the USING command removes the choice of where to store a program in absolute memory space from the user and implements it in the assembler. Removed from direct access by the layers of "application," "assembler," and "operating system," the user stares at the equivalent of ZX81's loading screen until something happens. The "application" can freely be implemented as a commercial entity.

It is hardly surprising that this development culminates with a second-order encoding of loading itself. In System/360, just as in ZX81, loading becomes a predefined routine, available to the assembly coder – never mind the end user – merely as a pre-structured macro (IBM 1974: 123). Entering LOAD in the assembler's code "obtain[s] a full word (four bytes) from storage at the effective address specified, and place[s] the word in the general register indicated" (ibid: 30). Likewise, a multi-LOAD variation of the same macro "begins loading fullwords from the specified storage location. The first word goes into the first-named register. Successive fullwords go into higher-numbered registers until the second-named register has been loaded" (ibid: 40).

The displacement of the user from direct access to hardware and ultimately from loading itself is thus complete. In 1988's APL2 language, to use just one example, loading consists in defining a virtual vector, such as an array, in which items are to be stored; the definition of a relative storage address where they are to be stored; and a definition of the "stride", ie, the virtual distance between subsequent elements (Brown, Pakin and Polivka 1988: 350). The loading routine is here still initiated directly by the user, and the storage address – albeit not the absolute one – is still set manually. Yet, storage formats are predefined and the assembly of this command is as much out of the hands of the user as the definition of an array is out of those of a 21st-century "developer" in contemporary front-end "web design."

## 6. Conclusion

The space of knowledges left in the wake of man's end opens avenues of critical examination. Circuit histories exploring these avenues, first and foremost, uncover dispersed elements hitherto buried underneath linear histories of "progress." By the same token, they show that seemingly monolithic entities such as Moore's Law or Artificial Intelligence consist of myriad smaller formations with their own histories, like those of loading and initializing on the machinic end; quarrels between CEOs and differentiation between strata of workers on the human end. Underneath the social history of human innovation and ingenuity, circuit histories uncover subterranean pork barrel politics and knowledge regimes as well as hesitation and retardation in assaying and applying innovation. The partly social, partly machinic formations of "progress" thus remain embedded in a messy and complex, multidimensional reality without fully realizable teleology. Taking "man" out of historical narratives allows taking stock of displacement rather than teleology. Quasi-laws like Moore's render invisible the economic and cultural factors leading to their seeming certitude. Artificial Intelligence occludes a vast field of conflicting interests and uncertain applications, as well as differentiated gain and loss. Both paper over human experience.

By the same token, circuit histories of machinic formations show that social effects arise as much from machinic formations as vice versa. Power differentials are encoded and decoded in series of hardware and software displacements uncovered only when the narrative history of progress gives way to narratives emphasizing histories of dispersal. What is encoded in the histories of code is not a teleological move towards ever more convenience and transparency in service of users. Rather, ever increasing layers of access removal from users encode reifications of operating systems, assemblers, and applications. In turn, this feeds back to commercial forces. Particularly the development of internalized memory address initialization culminating in System/360's USING command allows the reification of programs as products. Such "applications" can then be anchored anywhere within absolute memory ranges. Variability of this kind allows copying and selling the commercial application en masse and independent of the device in question. In turn, the latter can be reified to "operating systems." On either level, this only works if loading is further reified. In this circular movement feeding back into itself, removing user access to bootloading routines allows a reification of operating systems, along with applications, as self-contained economic entities.

At the same time, it is important to remember that encoded social and economic imperatives remain subject to the machinic dynamics of both code and hardware. After all, the shift from System/360's loading routine to that of the 80386 family does re-enable some direct access of ports. On the other hand, this restored degree of choice remains within the assembly level, removed from those users whose access or knowledge does not extend that far. Even so, it is further removed still by a second-order imposition of privilege levels within the 80386 architecture. As part of such movements from the machinic to the social and back, too, the mass marketing of programs and "applications" emerges from the architecture of loading routines as one possibility of reifying the transition from relative to absolute memory indexing.

What emerges, then, is a complicated picture in which neither economic nor technological rationalities hold sway entirely, and in which messy human politics are just as effective in encoding, recoding and decoding the things to come as are machinic assemblages. There is no linear "progress" in the politics of social interactions, because the perils and platitudes of scientific popularization and engineering applications, along with market miscalculations, personality clashes, and coded access politics prevent or displace invention and innovation just as much as they further it. Nor is there "progress" in the trajectories of machinic lineage, as machinic assemblies are constituted more by lateral movements, dispersals, and displacements, than by innovative amelioration.

What emerges, in other words, are fields of dispersals instead of linear narratives, and crisscrossing ontologies instead of "man's" dominion over the sequence of time. Writing circuit histories gives voice to such dispersals, en route to critical reappraisals of man-machines, their natures, and their constellations. In the present state of anxious uncertainty, unsettling all-too-easy narratives can thus contribute to avoiding rash judgments. Once real existing non-progress is exposed, the notion might lose some of its status as panacea for the ills of the world. At the same time, the real effects papered over by its narrative triumphalism, from circuit access exclusion to joblessness, can be brought to light. Particularly, circuit histories expose the neutrality of code as a myth, arming critical analyses of power with further tools to decode the minutiae of social silicone and machine marketing.

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## Endnotes

1. It could not have been written without the generous inspiration and encouragement I received from Eoin Murphy. To him, Tim Luke, and the anonymous reviewer of this paper I owe a debt of gratitude.

2. This update was halted after it emerged that it damaged some phones' booting procedures to such an extent that they effectively became unusable. At the time of writing this, the exact cause(s) appear(s) to be a bit of a mystery still, but it seems that random forced reboots, battery problems, as well as memory issues were to blame.

3. It is intriguing that TYDAC, with its strong focus on the matter of hardware, was in fact a "mythical computer," the "TYpical Digital Automatic Computer... intended primarily as an aid to learning" (McCracken 1957: v). The history of actually existing computing begins with many such fictitious entities: neither TYDAC nor the Analytical Engine were ever materially implemented, while Alan Turing's initial concept of a Turing machine was a thought experiment designed to address one of Hilbert's problems. Here, too, social factors are important, as a significant part of the secrecy surrounding Turing's work in particular is related to the Cold War. While this matter – or rather, the absence thereof – remains beyond the scope of the

present paper, the ghostly character of early computing hardware in particular certainly merits more attention.

4. To be precise, this consisted of two actions: the DTCA command, clearing the status register of the main device, and the DTXA command, setting the status register according to the reading from the DECtape control flag. Here, one could branch off an exploration of the microhistories of synchronization, from tape and drum memory time stamps to present-day latency reduction.

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# The East as a Theatre House of Suffering: 'Suffering' Scholarship and the Orientalist Bind

Yasmin Ibrahim

## Introduction

The scholarship of suffering is in a Eurocentric bind – with the West as the possessor of the humanitarian gaze and the East/Global South as the recipient of this politics of pity (see Boltanski 1999, Hoijer 2004, Chouliaraki 2006). The panacea to eradicate the lack of compassion or pity is the enactment of cosmopolitan communities filled with diversity, so that the suffering "Other" is not a remote fantasy figure but made familiar through this idealized inclusive community. Hence, this Other is us. Suffering can also produce fetishized consumer communities which buy into the solidarity of the moment without engaging with the politics of pity (Chouliaraki 2013). Scholarship on the subject of suffering located through its vantage point of the West consuming the East or the Global South has cast itself into a binary of power relations through the construction of abjection and pity, elongating the tropes of Orientalism. Embracing the idea of suffering through media platforms, media representations and media texts, the notion of "mediated suffering" premises a process of communication (including an emotive and cognitive immersion into a constructed environment but equally a degree of removal) where technology and content reconfigure distance, proximity, morality and notions of humanity in this realm of scholarship. Premising suffering through the media event and not what preceded before or followed after, suffering scholarship retains media spectacle as its vantage point for studying audience compassion for the unknown Other and its victimhood, dictating a "proper distance" (Silverstone 2006) to enable a viable and humanitarian response to the Other in crisis.

The dichotomization of the West and the rest (i.e. read through its alterity) becomes an underpinning paradigm in these discussions without a deconstruction of the trajectory of humanitarian discourses which have originated from unequal power relations and domination. This occurred particularly through colonization, the hegemony of Western power relations and ideology after World War II, the hand of forceful capitalism and neoliberalism in opening up markets under the guise of globalization, and the formation of the Global South as a label of social and economic depravity. The scholarship of suffering hinges its analysis through the act of watching or through the broader ambit of consumption. The consumers become audiences of a screen culture and its attendant subjectivities, mediated both through technological manipulation and the modes of representation. Some of the literature on suffering encodes these audiences as "witnesses" to the events which unfold on the media(ted) stage (see Ibrahim 2010a). Suffering then appropriates a cartography where the theater of suffering is projected onto the East or Global South through the act of watching, through replay, through freeze-frames which catapult suffering into its own representational hegemonies and aesthetic modes in our technological world. The ability to feel compassion and pity, coalesce with a Western geopolitics of power such that the ability to feel pity becomes the resting site of the Western gaze and its sociological imagination of the distant Other as the lesser human, continuously impoverished through her vulnerabilities and suffering. Such an imagination is persistent in the construction of the African continent conceived through famine and genocide, and equally in fiction and popular culture, where the continent is produced

through a pornography of depravity (see Ibrahim 2018). Humanitarian and aid organizations then project these constantly though their media campaigns, conjoining Africa into monolithic whole enacted through its lack.

In the scholarship of suffering universal human emotions of pity, compassion and sympathy become enacted through the consumption of the Other in turmoil through media imagery and text. Hence, the media and mediated technological platforms provide a filter to assemble these narratives of suffering. The coalescing of the politics of pity with the geopolitics of power creates a spatial cartography which inserts a distinct divide between the consumers of mediated suffering (i.e. as experienced through media formats) and those represented, as they are constantly besieged through perennial diseases, malnutrition, natural disasters, wars, strife and anarchy. This cartography of suffering enables the distant Other to be performed through the pathos of an unfortunate entity – entrapped through this Orientalism and commodified for the West. This also means that the West as the consumer of suffering is only able to feel for the Other through certain genres of suffering, as not all types of suffering can be projected onto mainstream consciousness. Tribal wars between sects or genocides, for example, are less amenable for popular consumption. Where the West is less socialized into these genres of suffering there is less popular appeal in terms of representing it to the masses.

This paper examines the Orientalist predicament of contemporary scholarship on mediated suffering. It argues that mediated suffering needs to be cast within the context of historical power relations of conquest, oppression, colonization and the attendant missionary zeal to civilize the East. It argues that colonization and slavery has historically marked the body of the distant Other as a site of violence and suffering, of possession and dispossession and containing no moral limit to the brutality it endured. The scholarship of suffering has produced binary cartographies of the world through those who consume suffering and those whose suffering is commodified for consumption. Mediated platforms of suffering, particularly photographs and broadcasting, have privileged the eye where the visual becomes the resting site of authenticity and simulated pity and equally the means for the pornographic and perverse imagination of the body of the Other. Hence, beyond the charge of Orientalism, the bias of visuality in the scholarship of suffering prolongs a troubled but pseudo-humanitarian gaze of the Other.

Despite the trenchant Orientalism and visual bias within the realm of the scholarship of suffering, I argue that the axis of suffering has shifted since 9/11 where even the most powerful nations in the West are reframed as victims of suffering and violence unleashed by the Other. With an increasingly volatile world, it has become difficult to retain a static notion of the East and Global South in constant crisis and turmoil. With global warming and its attendant environmental repercussions, and displacement and mobility of people through war and terrorist attacks, the cartography of suffering has been ruptured. The social imaginary of the East as the theatre house of suffering has expanded to accommodate the unstable West. Despite these numerous ruptures, the East remains a spectacle of suffering due to the retardation both in the fields of the scholarship of suffering and the need to retain a beleaguered human form of the Other imagined through strife and disaster. This aesthetic rendition positions vulnerabilities away from the West in the global social imaginary to renew its potency over time.

## Critique of the Scholarship

The criticisms about contemporary scholarship of suffering (which tends to be cross-disciplinary with its emphasis on mediated forms of suffering) parallel those levied on trauma theory as a field of enquiry which "emerged in the early 1990s as an attempt to construct an ethical response to forms of human suffering and their cultural and artistic representations" (Andermahr 2015: 500). Sonya Andermahr points out that trauma theory "born out of confluence between deconstructive and psychoanalytic criticism and the study of Holocaust literature" sought from the outset to "bear witness to traumatic histories in such a way as to attend to the suffering of the other" (2015: 500). It has however been charged with privileging the trauma of White Europeans rather than being cross-cultural and neglecting the specificity of non-Western people and the trauma of ethnic minorities. Critics have argued that trauma theory's failure to forge a relationship with the non-Western Other, while premising the vantage point of the Western gaze, has led for a lobby to reroute the field (Luckhurst 2008). As such, there has been a resurgent call to release trauma scholarship from a Eurocentric bias and liberate the field from this hermeneutic bubble of Western essentialism (see Craps 2013; Bennet and Kennedy 2003; Rothberg 2008; Luckhurst 2008).

Stef Craps (2013:2) in mounting a critique of Western bias in trauma theory through his book, <u>Postcolonial Witnessing</u>, argues that trauma theory takes on a universal definition of trauma and recovery developed through the

history of Western modernity and hence marginalizes the traumatic experiences of non-Western cultures. Craps (2013: 31) contends that a major deficit of the field is to construct trauma through a singular "event-based model" which delimits wider historical processes or even the West's role in the predicament of the Other. For Rothberg, "the singular event-based model is distortive for it does not deal with the colonial and postcolonial traumas persisting into the present," and he invites the rethinking of trauma as "collective, spatial, and material (instead of individual, temporal, and linguistic)" (2008: 228). Craps (2013) cites racism as historically specific yet not defined through one event or what follows before or after this paradigmatic event. As such, historically rooted trauma emerging through a global system such as colonization and slavery presents endemic challenges to the Eurocentric models of trauma theory. Depoliticization and de-historicization are also deemed as major obstacles in trauma theory (Visser 2015). The Eurocentric bind of trauma studies is untenable as it distorts history and reproduces the very Eurocentrism that lies behind those processes (Rothberg 2008). As such, it ignited a resounding call amongst its critics to decolonize trauma studies.

The critique of trauma theory is applicable to the scholarship on suffering and equally to media studies as a field which the scholarship of suffering draws on. Media and cultural studies, being interdisciplinary, draw from other fields such as memory and trauma studies and as such can infuse these inherent biases. Despite the expansion and consolidation of media and communication studies in the last thirty years, much of the field is somewhat unaffected by postcolonial paradigms and multicultural norms or value systems. For example, the normative values ascribed to media and its functions in society are often deemed as universal, as such there is a failure to particularize it through the political systems which emerged after World War II, or approach these through postcolonial paradigms. Media studies' endeavor to integrate wider paradigms and cultures have produced a weak and fragmented call to "internationalize" or "de-westernize" rather than to decolonize the field and to integrate the postcolonial (see Ibrahim 2011).

With reference to the scholarship of suffering accruing from the field of media and communication and processes of mediation which tend to privilege second-hand witnessing through media platforms, it is often ahistorical and event-based while using Western definitions of trauma and morality as universal. The premising of media in reviewing suffering equally means there is a need to understand media and power relationships without decoupling them from the postcolonial, historical trajectories or the particularities and specificities presented through minority cultural frameworks. The mining of media text alone without situating it within wider social or historical frameworks reifies media representations as reality onto its own. In terms of research into suffering, it produces a binary cartography and creates a Eurocentrism which is difficult to defend as a vantage point when it in effect distorts history and reality. The call to decolonize research into suffering can then be equally extended to media studies which is sporadic in integrating historicity and the postcolonial in its vantage point.

## The Aesthetics of Suffering and the Orientalist Gaze

In reviewing the criticism of the scholarship of mediated suffering within media and communication studies, its Eurocentric bias elongates the project of Orientalism. While suffering represented through cultural formats is problematic and amenable to multiple iterations, Edward Said additionally illuminates cultural imperialist gaze as an added dimension of this complexity. According to Said (1978), Orientalism examines the ways in which the West imagines the East as the lesser Other. The East is fetishized through a power relationship and equally through perverse pleasures and desires which demarcate the East through a carnal savagery. The Orientalist gaze, pregnant with a relentless and perverse aesthetics of the East as yielding both the exotic and untamed, laid the grounds for the re-conditioning of suffering through this form of commodification as an Orientalist subject.

Said's (1978) concept of "Orientalism" as a critical category surveyed how the West perceived the East through a set of discursive practices. As such alterity could be induced even within the category of Europe. For example, Wolff (1994), drawing on Said, argued that during the Enlightenment Eastern Europe was conceived as the "Other," similar to the West's more recent gaze on the Middle East. As such Todorova's (1997:17) "Balkanism" thesis concurs that the West viewed the Balkans as depraved in terms of humanity and civilization. The West and its "civilization values" have become the undisputed norm, and the relationship between Europe and its "others" is "monitored and regulated through a system of disciplinary discourses and techniques invoking the oriental East as Europe's threatening external" (Haldrup, Koefoed, and Simonsen 2006, 174). This "resurgent Orientalism" is present in

Europe's relations to its external "others" and in a "growing hostility towards its internal others." As such Orientalism and the process of the creation of Other were contiguous with the modernist condition of the world where neither the fluidity of space nor topography of power have eradicated the mindset of constructing social distinctions and retaining the "Other" (Buchowski 2006: 466).

The East possessed no moral limit with its inherent atavism and propensity to slip back into savagery. This is a crucial point for reviewing the scholarship on suffering. It needs to be critiqued in terms of its East-West hermeneutics, where colonization and ownership of the native by conquering the Other retained its residue in terms of its power to own and possess the Other. The body of the Other is as such inscribed as a site of suffering. The embodied Other is owned and equally dispossessed through colonization, war, strife and slavery. The Orientalist gaze predates mass-mediated suffering where the gaze has enabled the body of the Other to be transgressed and equally recoded as the site of trauma. Suffering was further demarcated through the spatial categories of center, margin and periphery, imposing a further cartography of violence. Within it is an inference that suffering is an attribute of the lesser human, where the powerful is fortunate enough to consume this suffering but not to be identified through it or implicated with it.

In postmodernity, new spaces have emerged as sites containing the victims of modern slavery and coercive labor. The inmates in Guantanamo Bay, the deviant "migrant" in the makeshift camps of Calais, the dispossessed population struggling to deal with the border politics of occupied zones, and the suicidal factory workers relentlessly producing gadgets for insatiable consumers before a product launch. Both the "war on terror" and the neoliberal movement of capital carved out their own geopolitics of suffering, where the playground of violence is enacted in complex ways through a geopolitics of power and the demands of capital. These spaces in postmodernity have become sites of entrenched suffering which co-exist with the mediated suffering of natural (e.g. tsunamis) and man-made disasters (e.g. nuclear explosions). These non-spaces which become the receptacles for coercive forms of labor, confinement and subjugation co-exist with a wider geography and cartography of suffering, where the flow of capital and neoliberal ideologies resurrect an intrinsic logic (whether through the war on terror or to feed the hand of capital) to retain and legitimize the suffering in these non-spaces.

Beyond the aesthetics of suffering which emerged through this geopolitics of power, violence and trauma must also be reviewed in terms of the pull towards the abject in the human psyche and sub-conscience. Violence and suffering as forms of aesthetic consumption illuminate the primal within the human. The pull towards the abject (see Kristeva 1982) and the aestheticization of violence integrates a history of human subjugation and domination. As history has revealed, the sites of suffering have not always produced or yielded pity. Nor do they always perform as transformative devices in enabling pity or compassion for the Other or for the emergence of an enlightened humanity. Artefacts of suffering as envisioned through the dead or damaged body in cultural modes of representation (e.g. the photograph, the lanterna magica, the video) are not always a catalyst for pity or mass communion or for the repudiation of violence. They serve to reiterate power hegemonies and to become the exemplar for the treatment of the Other, lest they overstep the mark. The suffering of the body conjoined with power hegemonies produce a biopolitics, where the body can be constantly surveilled, gazed and castrated. As such, suffering (both its infliction and consumption) through time has operated through an entangled web of power hierarchies and ideologies, which have appropriated complex juridical discourses to legitimate suffering and trauma on the Other.

For example, the history of lynching in America paraded the dead body as a form of social justice, as a violent trophy of instilling honor, ownership and racial superiority. People drove from faraway places to watch the lynched body dangling from a rope. No dignity was offered even in death and the moment of death became prolonged through the violating gaze of the hungry public eager to consume the abject. The dead body functioned as a site of aesthetic violence, drawing large crowds not in the capacity of witnesses but as a spectacle for the legitimation of the violence and for the social order it restored [1] (see Garland 2005). These violent lynchings, though "infrequent and extraordinary, assumed tremendous symbolic power due to [their] public and sensational nature" (Wood 2011:1) It entered aesthetic modes memorialized through postcards and shared with a wider population as cultural artefacts commemorating the euphoria of violence, whilst marking the lynched body as the site for the restoration of order. Here suffering and trauma enacted through White superiority did not enact compassion or pity but encoded the body as a site of deviance and voyeuristic pleasure. The history of violence, suffering and trauma is complex through time and space but the body of the Other is a contested space which is often offered as a site to be consumed by others. Often the gaze is an invitation to read the body of the Other through power hegemonies and prevailing ideologies. Most importantly, the body of the Other is heavily entangled with the historicity and its attendant power economies. Hence, an event-based analysis alone would thwart history and reality, where bigger processes and social conditions

have produced this theatre of suffering.

## Mediated Suffering

Mediated suffering is mired in various complexities notwithstanding its premising of technological platforms to receive images and narratives of suffering. Suffering mediated through artefacts becomes once removed from the real events and twice removed due to the modes of representation within cultural artefacts. Distant suffering conveyed through imagery such as photographs, prints, moving images or art acquires its own code of aesthetics which strips it from the real, making it amenable to different forms of gaze, infusing pleasure, violence and desire onto the afflicted. While having the potential to ignite pity or mass response from its audience, embodied human suffering is amenable to multiple iterations. It can be imagined through a visuality which premises the eye where the visual bias has the potency to recode sites of suffering, commodifying them as objects for consumption to assuage primal human instincts and voyeurism. Kevin Carter's dying child preyed or by a vulture or the emaciated human forms dying from famine arranged for the aesthetic eye in colonial India inscribe a perverse gaze onto the dying body. It reiterates the dominance of the primal where the human form and its suffering are appropriated to ignite voyeuristic pursuits. Here the human and its suffering are dissolved and subsumed through an aesthetics which realizes pleasure through the wasting forms. Hence, this death figure is transformed through its depiction where its aesthetics recode for visual semantics and pleasure rather than pity.

If Kodak created a visibility into the unboundedness of human suffering of the enslaved body in the Congo of Leopold II – it also recorded the maimed bodies as mythical figures of Western domination, where limbs and torsos dismembered and truncated from the enslaved body dehumanized the Other, casting them into fictional depictions despite the reality of their predicament (see Ibrahim 2009). Beyond the visual bias in representations of suffering, mediated suffering through photojournalism and broadcasting brought suffering into the living room for consumption. The reconfiguration of time and space through the act of watching made images of suffering pervasive and common, filling column inches, scrolling reports and headlines. The consumers of suffering became audiences of these mass spectacles rather than fellow humans of a wider humanity. Broadcasting and the political economy of the media further entrenched and reproduced the spatial cartography of suffering, commodifying the suffering of the East for the West. The exotic and unknown became objects of communal gaze in the broadcasting age. The inundation of suffering and the trauma marathons (Blondheim & Liebes 2002) have led to claims that the saturation of suffering created "compassion fatigue" among audiences (see Hoijer 2004; Tester 2001).

As such, the representations of suffering can be aestheticized and banalized through pervasive capture and consumption in the age of broadcasting. Digital platforms and the ability to upload and download images enabled new forms of access to suffering, where images of suffering can be watched without the mainstream media's codes of taste, decency or standards. Equally, videos and images of suffering can be consumed without context or media narration, propelling mediated suffering into a crisis of consumption in the digital age (Ibrahim 2010b; 2012). Online platforms provide different types of access and intimacy with content and produce a fragmented audience exposed to a variety of content produced either by mainstream actors or those on the margins. For example, the reporting of beheadings by the print media and television from before the digital age to its revival in the social media age produces a body of gratuitous violence which can be accessed by a wide population. Issues of taste, decency or the ethical standards expected of mainstream media become difficult to uphold and maintain in the online space. This again reconfigures the spectacle of suffering online where it is fragmented and mediated through a whole array of interests and agendas, where images of beheading have become genres of popular culture highlighting the role of the digital platform as enabling new modes of aesthetic violence.

## The Shifting of Suffering and New Normality

Beyond new platforms to upload and consume images and narratives of suffering, there has been a seismic reconfiguration of the cartography of suffering since 9/11. The apocalyptic images and their impact as an iconic media event have repositioned suffering, where the West is the site of the uncertain and the unstable through the

threat of terrorism arising from the "war on terror," providing it with an intrinsic logic to militarize zones and engage in long drawn-out wars as evident in Afghanistan and the Middle East. The visuality of 9/11 as an iconic media memory played and replayed as a material and symbolic event on media introduced a disruption in the trope of suffering, turning the mirror of suffering onto itself. The projection of victimhood onto its persona was a game-changing moment for the cartography of suffering. The combustion of the Twin Towers as a recurrent image was also symbolic of the shattering of Western pride (Ibrahim 2007) and its recurrent thrusting of victimhood to the Other in remote locations. It seismically destabilized the West's position as the humanitarian and philanthropic champion looking over the impoverished Global South.

Silke Horstkotte (2013: 37) argues that "the 9/11 attacks derived their shock value to a large extent from the way in which this terrorist atrocity was so clearly 'made for TV.'" But it was equally the stuff of the scholarship of suffering fitting neatly within its fixation with the event-model without scrutiny into what came after or before. But unlike other events of pathos, it was a superpower freeze-framed through its destruction and annihilation by the Other. These enduring image archives gave birth to the West as the new project of suffering. The West, imagined through the notion of cities under siege without warning from terrorist attacks and explosions, has become a site of volatility despite enhanced security and intelligence. The events of 9/11 stand in contrast with the mediation of the Holocaust in terms of the public spectacle or its moral censure. The horrors of the Holocaust emerged over a long period of time with liberation images of the camps, televised trials and survivor testimonies. In contrast, 9/11 as a televisual spectacle was instantly accessible and quickly proliferated on screens across the globe. For WJT Mitchell (2011), the new transnational terrorism is largely based on spectacular symbolic acts aimed at the production of images that are meant to shock or even "traumatize" the spectator. The phenomenon of instant coverage was familiar to Western viewers from previous events, such as the fall of the Berlin Wall, but the speed and extent to which images were deployed as weapons was entirely new (Horstkotte 2013: 38). In many ways, research into suffering is interested in this moment of visual ousting, where imagery defines the inexplicable engagement with the trauma spectacle rather than the longer trajectory of working through this trauma and enabling recovery. The media spectacle as such delimits the scholarship of suffering, highlighting the field's double bind with technology and its bias with the visual.

Despite the shifting of the axis of suffering with 9/11 and the events which ensued, the victimhood of the West is constantly resisted by repositioning the enemy as the Eastern Other wreaking disruption through radicalized ideology and violence. The events of 9/11 placed suffering and victimhood into the ambit of the rich and influential Western nations and cities as their symbols of power, and the series of attacks which ensued after 9/11 again reiterated the instability of the postmodern world, where suffering and loss happened not in faraway locales of war and strife but within the ordered and governed cities in the West. As such, the West is now a site for mindless killings and brutal attacks on innocent people. Unlike natural disasters, the terrorist attacks and the notion of constantly being under terrorist threat through the atavistic Other have infused a sustained anxiety in the West where this instability of cities exploding without warning signified the "new normal."

Beyond terrorism, the displacement of people through conflict and terror has witnessed the significant movement of people fleeing from war and strife, bringing them into the border politics of the West. This movement of people into the borders of "Fortress Europe" raises a renewed crisis in terms of suffering. The refugee branded the "migrant" in neo-liberal politics is a contested figure or a suspect category where incessant doubt is invoked about affording this figure any pity or compassion once positioned in the West, having fled their homelands in the East. The encroachment of alien bodies into the West fragments the politics of suffering, where the West is constantly under terrorist attacks and increasingly its borders are infiltrated by the movement of unwanted migrants and refugees posing risks and unforeseen dangers to Fortress Europe and other Western nations. As Amitav Ghosh (1994:422) observes,

> we are witnessing a fundamental shift in the political institutions of the century with the emergence of a two-tier system of nation states. On the one hand, the boundaries of the nation-state will become increasingly blurred and on other, those boundaries will become increasingly entrenched such that it will serve as a mechanism for the maintenance of global order.

A third dimension which has fractured the cartography of suffering is global warming and the unanticipated environmental consequences of the world being vulnerable to the ferocious forces of nature which present future generations with pressing deliberations on sustainable energy, fuel usage, consumption, conservation, and the depletion of natural resources. The Anthropocene denotes the era of human impact on the environment, producing a subjectivity and a vulnerability to nature's prowess. As such, suffering can be unleashed through drastic weather

patterns and natural disasters that reveal the powerlessness of mankind.

The West as a form of superior power in terms of technological wisdom, political might and ideological advancements through capitalism and democracy becomes a renewed figure of vulnerability where its constant battle to turn away from victimhood and intrinsic volatility reveals its reticence to be plucked from its superior role as the purveyor of compassion and pity. The engagement with suffering becomes an unsafe frontier when it becomes a part of Western identity. When suffering is firmly entrenched in the East, it is able to conceive itself through a magnanimous self-image of providing relief. It is less comfortable with victimhood associated with weakness and vulnerability mostly recognizable in the portrayals of the Other. The shifting cartography of suffering presents a challenge to the West's self-image and its commodification of the East as the theatre house of suffering. Despite this "new normality" of threat and disruption in the West, its sociological imagination of the East as the lesser Other remains a status quo. Terrorist threats and the rise of radicalized religion provide renewed forms of ammunition to thrust the spectacle of instability to the East through military interventions to reinsert and retain the geopolitics of power.

## Conclusion

This paper argues that mediated suffering as a field of enquiry is in a state of crisis with its entrenched Orientalist paradigms and Eurocentrism. Its inherent weaknesses parallel those of communication and media studies which have been fragmented and sporadic in integrating postcolonial perspectives. The obsession with event analysis rather than the wider historical and social context of suffering produces an ahistoricity while infusing it with Western essentialism, dissecting humanity into a binary. The bias of the visual and modes of representation through technology, whether it be broadcast or new media platforms, produces more instabilities where the act of watching or consuming incessant images of suffering can remove us from real events while encoding us as audiences rather than fellow humans. Cultural modes of representation have the power to ignite affective communities but equally they can strip suffering from reality to offer them as commodities of consumption where they inscribe an aesthetic of violence and perverse pleasures rather than a communal politics of pity. With 9/11 and the events which have ensued, the West has emerged as the new theatre house of suffering, with cities and buildings erupting without warning. This climate of the "new normal" is further destabilized by the movement of displaced people into the West and the formation of "migrant" camps which re-invoke the border politics of Westphalian sovereignty. In addition, the age of the Anthropocene signifies an increased vulnerability of humanity where suffering is unleashed through the ferocity of nature without distinguishing it through any specific cartography. Despite these wider processes which inflict increased trauma on the Western psyche and landscape, the scholarship of suffering remains shackled through its lens of enquiry, asserting the East as the retainer of suffering and hence elongating the Orientalist trajectory.

## Endnotes

1. Garland (2005: 793) argues that "lynchers and their supporters used to describe and justify these events as criminal punishments, albeit summary, informal ones that were shaped by a white supremacist culture and a politics of racial domination. The penal character of these lynchings increased the probability that they would be tolerated by local (and even national) audiences and thus made them a strategic form of violence in struggles to maintain racial supremacy."

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# Social Movement Uses of Capitalist Infotainment

## JL Johnson

This article stems from my ethnographic research on social movement uses of infotainment styles of communication encouraged by and in a fast capitalism. A critical conversation about social movements is essentially discursive and collectivist, yet the current media landscape privileges an imagistic and personalized style of digital communication. To better understand this puzzle, I volunteered to be a communications intern for a social movement organization (SMO) working on establishing a network of straight allies of LGBT acceptance and equality. The work involved editing online correspondences, writing a blog, responding to emails, coordinating interviews with grassroots members, making fundraising phone calls, and stuffing mailers. At the urging of the staff, I attended an awards ceremony to celebrate leaders in the corporate and entertainment industries who had donated to or otherwise supported LGBT issues, where I helped set up a makeshift red carpet, staged celebrities, performed event management tasks, and recorded speeches for online dissemination.

I augmented my ethnographic work with interview data from workers in a range of SMOs that fell into three specific issue groups: LGBT advancement, food justice, and human rights. In one-hour, semi-structured, open-ended interviews, I explored how communication specialists make meaning of their work and the group constraints that act on that work. I examined the assumptions they make about how to use media and their communicative capabilities and limitations, who they imagine to be their public and not, what assumptions they hold about publics, and how communicatively effective they feel they are.

With these qualitative data, I endeavored to answer questions about the effectiveness of online social movement strategies. How and in what form do movement claims mobilize? What gives shape to online movement communications, and what are their (anti)democratic consequences? In what follows, I argue that a digital media landscape structures broad assumptions, strategies, and tactics that some movement actors make about how to mobilize online for public consideration. These assumptions, strategies, and tactics are explicitly about a **public attention** indelibly affected by the culture industries. I reveal the underlying assumptions and practices drawn from and resembling a capitalist media culture that mixes information, entertainment, and celebrity as a social process that shapes a certain aspect of the work social movement actors do to succeed at online communication.

To present my argument, I first summarize work done by anthropologists Rodrigo Ochigame and James Holston relating internet and digital technologies to a social movement's struggle for online publicity, what they call a "politics of audibility." Ochigame and Holston's idea of a politics of audibility is limited to computer algorithms, so I extend a politics of audibility to include their idea within a range of capitalism's broader effects on societal attention. To accomplish such an extension, I draw from the Frankfurt School to define two structural contradictions of the culture industry that produce specific templates and objects of attention that have migrated to online spaces. Although cultural industries produce constraints in a political economy of attention, capitalism's cultural forms are reassembled by social movements toward their particular ends. I analyze such processes as assemblages of "communicative fiber," and I conclude by presenting some of my qualitative data on how some social movement actors put together capitalism's communicative fiber for online attention.

## Capitalist Media as a Political Economy of Attention

Social scientists have been demonstrating since the mid-twentieth century that capitalist media make it difficult for social movements to communicate with publics. Media scholars, for example, have revealed that capitalistic assumptions about attention favor a social movement communication that is fast, imagistic, attractive, and terse. Catering to audience expectations of speed and terseness does not necessarily contradict Douglas Kellner's idea that "[p]olitical and social life is…shaped more and more by media spectacle" (2005). If anything, the ideas of critical theorists about the nearly absolute power with which screen-mediated spectacles dominate our lives continue to be relevant (Agger 1989; Luke 1989; Kellner 2003), even as these spectacles increasingly play out on smaller devices. Critical theories of media inform my research program into questions about whether and how there might be social movement constructions of media spectacles, especially those spectacles increasingly mediated by online mobile technologies that can be used for social movement purposes.

Literature on the relationship between movements and media shows that movement actors have been savvy to meet capitalist expectations of spectacle for a chance at attracting mainstream media attention to a diversity of movement issues and claims (Baker 1994; Bennett 2007; Entman 1989; Fishman 1980; Gans 1979; Gamson and Wolfsfeld 1993; Gitlin 1978, 1980; Lester 1980; Schudson 1978, 2000; Sobieraj 2011; Tuchman 1978). The prognosis from this literature has been that journalistic norms of objectivity and gathering information congeal into a **journalist's beat** with corporate press offices, police dispatchers, or other governmental officials. In such a state of affairs, sociologists have understood that activists conformed to capitalist media expectations of and assumptions about audience attention because of the gatekeeping function journalists have served between social movements and a society's economic and state elites, with journalists usually capitulating to the communicative terms of the former.

Social movement actors would prefer journalistic beats that treated social movements as authoritative sites of claims-making and fact-gathering, what might be called a social movement beat. In theory, **social movement beats** would mitigate capitalism's distortions of democratic communication. **With internet technologies, resources, and planning, people in social movements increasingly have realized they might construct a social movement beat themselves.** With digital tools to cover their choice issues and claims, movement actors begin to think organizationally about how to do communicative mobilization (Alexander 2006), in other words, begin assuming for themselves some of the role of news media actors. However, an open question remains about the degree to which the opening of direct access between a social movement and publics accentuates capitalism's cultural forms of communication in an infotainment society, as persistent impacts on templates, styles, and objects of communication.

This context of the availability to social movements of digital tools and internet technologies has raised questions about how media cultures continue to shape the assumptions and practices made by some movement actors about what gets online attention. Despite tech utopians heralding digital technology as enabling revolutionary democratic participations, capitalist popular culture continues to dominate and dictate mass online attention, especially seen in digital music culture (Hanrahan 2016).

I draw on anthropologists Rodrigo Ochigame and James Holston (2016), who usefully argue that computer filters are increasingly powerful determinants of attention that work against social movements. Their idea of a **politics of audibility** enables us to think about the **non-circulation** of social movement messages in online communications. Politics of audibility shape the chances of movements being heard, and they set into motion strategies to mobilize a type of communication that might rise to the top of online filters. Ochigame and Holston use the case study of how Brazilian land activists in the social movement Aty Guasu ("the great assembly") circumvented algorithmic obstacles by turning their profiles into advertisements for their movement, by changing their personal names on Facebook to "Guarani-Kaiowá," the indigenous Brazilians being displaced by private and public land grabs. By changing their names on Facebook, activists raised consciousness of the social problem, gaining online circulation and making the issue relatively well-known in their social networks. With a personalized tactic to game a politics of audibility, Aty Guasu activists made their movement very popular for a short amount of time, before Facebook banned their naming practice, ostensibly enforcing its "real name" policy.

I extend Ochigame and Holston's focus on digital (non)circulation to include a range of capitalism's broader effects on societal attention. Media objects (personal computers, algorithms, and Facebook profiles) are pieces to move around in a politics of audibility only because they are incorporated within the broader structural sources of capitalist communication. Since Ochigame and Holston rightly note that TV and print coverage often censor "the range of views available" (96), it puzzles me that they do not address how capitalism informs the cultural practices

behind both television and computer development, programming, and reception. My extension of a politics of audibility incorporate capitalist contradictions of communication that situate a social movement's chances of being heard online into a political economy of attention, which I explain below. I turn to the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory to highlight two specific problem-areas of the culture industry's political effects on societal attention.

## Narrow Attention and Celebrity as Effects of Culture Industry

The culture industries of fast capitalism do not only produce mass media for audience consumption. They also produce communicative effects on a society's attention, by encouraging objects for and styles of focus and discourse. Horkheimer and Adorno ([1944] 1972) touched on the ways that capitalism affects communication by interrogating mass media's distraction from progressive social movements as a tension between persuasion and manipulation. The culture industry provides a bevy of media to those who are excluded from a technical and capitalist elite, instilling in those alienated by capitalism a resistance to collective mobilizations that might provide redress to social inequalities. Two neglected problem-areas in relating media consumption to a society's resistance to social movements include 1) the culture industry's narrowing of attention during people's leisure time, which is related to 2) the culture industry's intense focus on celebrities. Horkheimer and Adorno articulated two structural contradictions within these problem-areas, one on attention and another on celebrity, that create specific tensions for social movements trying to reach and persuade the public.

Horkheimer and Adorno argued that the culture industry encourages mimesis to the aesthetic of capitalism, a style and mode of being that is inherently antiradical. I thought of their point often during my fieldwork, as it was best evinced by interviewees making astute observations of an overall structure to digital infotainment: exponential ("exploded to the nth degree"), hyper ("scrolling" for "three-to-four seconds"), imagistic, and immediate. In strategizing for online communication, social movements struggle to reach mass audiences that spend their free time in front of mobile screens. The central point here relates to how the culture industry narrows attention "by occupying men's senses from the time they leave the factory in the evening to the time they clock in again the next morning" ([1944] 1972:130). Audiences, then, are likely to be uncomfortable with or suspicious of a communication that does not resemble capitalist media, leading Horkheimer and Adorno to remark, "And so the culture industry, the most rigid of all styles, proves to be the goal of liberalism, which is reproached for its lack of style" (131). The culture industry thus creates a structural contradiction for social movement communicators: whether and how they could meet the expectations of public attention with fast capitalism's usual sources of information and entertainment, and transform public dialogue into an engagement with discursive practices that are critical of status quos.

The culture industry produces another structural contradiction of political communication, one that rests on the notion that the celebrities of culture industry deserve more status and attention than ordinary citizens. This is an ideology that the culture industry helps to produce by making those "in the audience not only feel that they could be on the screen, but realize the great gulf separating them from it" (145). The contradiction for social movement communication involves the struggle to empower people to involve themselves in a democratic communication when they have been conditioned to defer to people with higher status. To Horkheimer and Adorno, the central point was that capitalism is partially legitimated through the culture industry's focus on celebrity. Consumers wrapped up in the culture industry conflate democracy and capitalism, confusing democracy for a lottery in which everyone has a chance to flourish, but status and attention become perceived as deservedly vested in those atop hierarchies. In my research program, I see that the system not only becomes partially legitimated through this focus on celebrity, but also produces specific practices of deferring attention and discursive authority to those with celebrity status. Online communication, at least in terms of its reliance on and emphasis of quantitative metrics of success, only exacerbates this antidemocratic logic of celebrity and popularity.

The culture industry, then, might be understood as a political economy of attention in that it affects how social movements consider their approach to reaching the public, especially affecting online strategies for attention. Similar to Marx's dictum that men make history out of circumstance not of their choosing, movement actors are free to construct any act of political communication, but they are not free to make an act of communication out of materials of their own choosing. The culture industries narrow societal attention to particular screens at particular times, affecting how and on what people give their focus. I address these effects as conditional materials with which social movements nonetheless may be effective at online communication.

## Communicative Fiber: Assemblages of Capitalist Media

A political economy of attention produces some of the more popular cultural forms of infotainment and celebrity as media objects available to be used for social movement communicative mobilization. In my research program, I develop the idea of "**communicative fiber**" to explain the **individual processes** involved in drawing from capitalism's cultural forms, especially capitalism's obsession with celebrity spectacle, to assemble specific acts of social movement publicity (Johnson 2017). I argue that communicative fiber are common cultural pieces available to social movements, what Michael Shudson analyzed as "retrievability" (1989:160), for the purposes of attracting attention, garnering sympathy, and holding together a political audience, including media pieces available for forging a specific act of political conversation. Communicative fiber includes media technologies **and** the forms of attention, thought, and discussion that accompany and are encouraged by those media. By defining social movement communicative fiber as the process of connecting media forms and contents, as repurposing and weaving together disparate capitalist media into political messages, I attempt to evoke an imagery of a membrane-like swirl of communication resembling a digitally mediated and messy landscape of political noise.

While market actors do attempt some bounding of what media can do in-order-to sell media products to advertisers and the largest possible audience, those contours are nonetheless malleable. Emphasizing malleability, we can avoid some of the absolutism of the Frankfurt School approach to cultural analysis without losing too much of its warranted criticism of capitalist media. There is paradoxical strength to the porousness of capitalist media's communicative boundaries, in that they limit the shape and content but not necessarily the uses of objects and modes of communication that are able to survive in a nominal democracy with capitalist infotainment media. Yet my idea of communicative fiber is anchored in a tradition of symbolic interaction; I attempt to privilege human agency by emphasizing uses, processes, and interpretation (Blumer 1969). Communicative fiber is made up of processual materials vital to the defining process that goes into constructing a political communication, but I view capitalism's production of cultural forms of communication, specifically, capitalism's effects on attention and its obsession with celebrities, to be more deterministic than most symbolic interactionists might allow.

Explicating the communicative process limited by communicative fiber borrowed from culture industries helps to explain counterfactual possibilities in capitalist societies, to bring about "reversals of media spectacles" (Kellner 2005). Even as a hybrid of televisual and digital infotainment deeply affect the form and content of our political talk online, there continue to be public issues that become articulated in the forms available to us. Certainly, Douglas Kellner is correct that "Trump's orchestration of media spectacle and a compliant mainstream media was a crucial factor in thrusting Trump ever further into the front runner status in the Republican primaries" (2017). I add that social movements of both the left and the right play their part in buttressing celebrity power in the service of activist politics. For example, the disquieting phenomenon of President Trump is that right-wing movement activists actively constructed him as a "celebrity champion" of their causes (an oxymoronic process I explain below), one that is able to meld infotainment and spectacle with an articulation of populist capitalist beliefs and white working-class anxieties in an increasingly cosmopolitanism globalism.

Communicative fiber might best relate to Nina Eliasoph's (2016) most recent project to conceptualize such puzzling, and in Trump's case troubling, forms of articulation of social problems in and through capitalism's cultural forms. I draw on Eliasoph's idea that a civil society has a disciplinarian regime of values and norms that polices people's behavior and talk, reigns in the political topics available for debate, and curtails the forms and content of civil dialogue and participation. America's civil regime, for example, favors benign volunteer clubs over explicitly political groups as appropriate voluntary associations for public life, mirroring and reinforcing capitalist media's preference for "human interest stories." Predominant communicative values that guide benign volunteer groups are hyper-individualistic, mirroring and reinforcing capitalist media's celebrity worship. America's civic regime, then, is enlivened by specific and limited communicative pieces that are actively woven together, even while being bounded by and injected with capitalist cultural forms that privilege celebrity infotainment and human interest stories in ways that determine the chances of some assemblages of communicative fiber to be heard over others. This dialectical process is best seen in my data from ethnographic fieldwork and qualitative interviews.

## Infotainment for Public Attention

It had been twilight when Ramona and I stepped outside the back door of her basement level apartment in

Washington D.C. Ramona works for Fighting Disease is Fighting Poverty (FDFP), an advocacy organization with the tagline, "The power to end poverty." Through growing public opinion, developing political will, and directing financial resources to combat health disparities that disproportionately affect the poor, FDFP aims to "end extreme poverty by the year 2030," a goal it shares with the World Bank. As a communications manager, Ramona coordinates community stakeholders and generates publicity for FDFP.

When twilight transitioned to night, Ramona lit a citronella candle. Sanguine wisps of grey smoke curl around my audio recorder, placed between us for our interview about Ramona's publicity efforts for antipoverty campaigns. Ramona tells me, "So we have these giant puppets of TB and HIV, they're giant puppets. And they walk around. Do you want to see it? I think you have to see it, to know what it looks like."

Ramona palms her smartphone, swiping her thumb across its screen, tapping it to access a digital folder of photos, and excitedly tells me about the media campaign FDFP orchestrated to raise awareness of the link between tuberculosis and poverty. Bringing up the photos, Ramona gushes, "They are like the best communications thing we've ever done." When I ask her why, she says emphatically: "Because nothing has gotten us more attention than these like, mascots."

This ethnographic scene nicely exemplifies a common answer about what would break through to potential sympathizers in fast capitalism: flashy, colorful, short, and imagistic pieces of communication. The communication directors I interviewed lamented a society full of fractured sources of information, constant flows of images, and dwindling reservoirs of attention. Tim, an executive director of the LGBT Allies Network (LAN), a national LGBT rights organization, shows this best:

> What's most on the forefront for me, and for all of us in the organization, is, indeed, [people's] digital platforms, right? So I'm sitting here with my cell phone, my smart phone, and my tablet, I just left my office where my desktop was, and then... the platforms that people are accessing information, younger and younger, and more and more people are accessing a wide range of them. And I think this [holds up cell phone]? The dumbest platform is the smart phone. The dumbest, because the information has to be so concise.

Like Tim, other movement actors soberly confronted practical realities shaped by the ubiquity of mobile communications, yet remained hopeful about harnessing self-publishing tools and the unprecedented technologies and resources for controlling their messages and campaigns for people's awareness. The pressing issue is what to do about getting attention and communicating a social problem in a concise manner, working to produce what Kellner deconstructs in his idea of media spectacle: "media constructs that present events which disrupt ordinary and habitual flows of information, and which become popular stories which capture the attention of the media and the public" (2017).

Enter puppets, stage left. The irony of viruses "going viral" in Ramona's account of the publicity made with FDFP's giant puppets of HIV and tuberculosis relates to their being immediately arresting and effective in fast capitalist media. FDFP actors determined that most discussions among antipoverty activists, not to mention the public at large, ignore a core claim to which FDFP would attend ("Nobody in the HIV community ever talks about TB"). One hidden assumption about awareness is that connecting poverty to tuberculosis might grow empathy and increase the likelihood that antipoverty efforts would focus on eradicating a specific disease that affects poorer communities. These are serious and complicated issues. But Ramona's story also reveals an unspoken assumption that communicating the interrelationships between poverty, tuberculosis, and HIV is neither easy nor fun, so the unseen power of an image of tall colorful puppets of the HIV and TB viruses lies in their accessibility. Accompanied by the slogan "Deadly Duo," the puppets quickly and entertainingly advance FDFP's core claim that HIV and TB are correlated. At first blush, the idea of two roving puppets is infantile. However, something else operates beneath the surface of success stories about attention. Though seemingly contrary to the seriousness of the issue of poverty, the puppets make bare the more serious issues of movement expectations and assumptions of how people want to see and hear complicated information, particularly on mobile devices.

Individual attention, however, becomes formed through social psychological processes embedded in media as a major agent of socialization. Horkheimer and Adorno were concerned that mediated processes of socialization caused conformity and subjugation in capitalist subjects. As a sociologist reading their work, I am struck by their underappreciated structural analysis of what that process looks like in everyday life, sitting in front of screens during leisure time to relax from, forget about, and become reenergized for labor. Tim above evokes the evolution of screen-obsessed practices from the movie and television screens to "the [digital] platforms that people are accessing information, younger and younger, and more and more people are accessing a wide range of them." The evidence

here is of the culture industry's continuing effects on people's practices with capitalist media, helping us to understand the ways that these movement actors feel pressure to mimic the aesthetic of capitalism and deliver their messages through the screens that capture most people's attention.

Audiences socialized in and expectant of fast media infotainemt are likely to be suspicious of communication that does not resemble capitalist media. The implicit connection between Ramona's puppets and Tim's lament about society's narrowing of attention is how they could meet the expectations of public attention with fast capitalism's usual sources of information and entertainment in a way that advances some aspects of public dialogue toward a nuanced understanding of social problems. Short bursts of colorful spectacles in digital media might capture, if not hold, public attention just because they meet expectations of infotainment. A structural contradiction, however, exists between infotainment and democratic communication. In my field work, a "deep dive" was a metaphor for attracting an audience and deepening its involvement. As a phrase, a "deep dive" consisted of online strategies to string together pieces of infotainment in a way that, once connected, might deepen both empathy for and critical understanding of a movement's communication.

If movement workers struggle in the kinetic nature of digital materials by operationalizing capitalist media's logic of infotaintment, they do so paradoxically, in pursuit of nuanced information. For example, in the following, Ronald of LAN likens the use of infotainment as "pipelining into a deep dive." If only movements can focus enough attention (what Ronald means by "pipelining"), the issues are covered well online. These strategies and tools enable a "deeper dive" for potential sympathizers:

> I can sleep at night knowing that when you put it all together, we're telling a truth, or a set of truths, that are real. So some of them, in the same way that we're using, um, Facebook, Instagram, and some other performances to focus on certain issues [means that] certain people won't ever go to our website. We have to target our messaging, it's not to say that, that's the only thing that is real. It's to say this is, it's a pipeline. And our hope is that we have enough information and content there that they don't have to, but maybe they will want to do a deeper dive. And we have other resources for the deeper dive.

There is much to analyze in this quote. Ronald invokes the terms "a set of truths," "pipeline," and "deeper dive" to indicate two things uneasily reconcilable: a piece of a truth and the fuller context of the truth. Consider that, amidst President Trump's anxious brouhaha over comparisons of his inauguration crowd to President Obama's record crowds in 2008, Trump's communications director, Kellyanne Conway, infamously used the phrase "alternative facts" to argue against photographic evidence and insist falsely that Trump's audience was larger than Obama's. Journalists became irate by the utter falsehood of such a claim in the face of mounting evidence otherwise, but I heard in Conway's appeal echoes of Ronald saying LAN tried to inform allies of "a set of truths" about LGBT issues. The phrase seems to suggest that there is no one truth. Conway and Ronald further echo each other's point about the potential manipulation of facts and the difficulty of facing objective criticism in capitalist infotainment.

In our interview, Ronald was concerned that breaking up LAN's claims into small infotainment pieces for online dissemination would be unjust to a nuanced discussion of LGBT inequality. For example, later in our discussion, he would tell me about a 1990s biopic that heavily edited the character of a young gay man, whom he knew to be more complex, a drug user who self-medicated a depression caused by his family's rejection. The movie's message, instead, focused on and celebrated his mom, who after her son's suicide became an LGBT ally. Compared to Conway, who intentionally brokered in untruth, Ronald was musing about the effects of fragmented information on public understanding of far more complex realities around social problems. Yet he emphasized that if you put all of LAN's communications together, there is nuance and complexion—an ultimately true story of the connections among the full range of issues facing the LGBT community. A "deeper dive" evokes the ability for the internet to deliver a rich and nuanced account of news and information, an opportunity for anyone to become immersed in democratic information about a social movement. To Ronald, the 1990s biopic functioned similarly to any piece of social media communication. It might present some misinformation, but smaller pieces, inevitably specious in their narrowness, were necessary points of a delivery system. Though any decontextualized bit of information might be presented as an "alternative fact," Conway's noxious phrase for presenting unwarranted claims, Ronald is committed to a singular truth, even if broken up into pieces of movement information that are laid out as bread crumbs to a movement. Each piece could function as a "pipeline" across the vast media ecosystem, that is, each piece might be woven into others for a way to deliver potential allies to the movement's fuller communication.

In more analytic terms, infotainment styles like colorful puppets and imagistic social media posts serve as pieces to assemble for social movement communication. The strategizing and agenda-setting of laying out social movement infotainment is done as an assemblage that, when taken together with an SMO's fuller offering of communicative

resources, is considerably more critical. However, as a political economy of attention shapes these assemblages of communicative fiber, the media landscape becomes a constructed space of online spectacles, an arms race to quicker, flashier, more immediately impactful hooks. One of the more contradictory solutions to breaking through the digital noise that I observed in my work was to rely even further on capitalist modes of visibility, specifically celebrity worship. The term "**celebrity champion**" was evoked as a communicative process to recruit or otherwise utilize sports stars or Hollywood actors who might lend their name, high status, visibility, and other symbolic resources to the task of garnering attention to social causes. I turn to the second problem-area of social movement uses of capitalist infotainment for democratic communication, a structural contradiction of leveraging individual celebrity status for societal attention to public issues.

## Mobilizing Celebrities

Toward the end of my ethnographic fieldwork at LAN, I observed an awards ceremony for celebrity champions of LGBT ally causes, where I helped set up a makeshift red carpet, stage celebrities, do event management tasks, and make a last-minute video-recording of speeches. I took jottings in between work tasks, and from these jottings generated the following fieldnote on LAN's interaction with celebrity champions:

> Tim, LAN's executive director, hovers beside a cameraman. I have come to understand that Tim sees as part of his job the need to maintain a semblance of intimacy with LAN's corporate partners, thanking them for being here. Now Tim is subtly guiding a vice president of a major accounting corporation by the arm to face the cameraman for a photo with LAN's logo. After the photo, Ronald's assistant cups his ear. Ronald nods, politely excuses himself to Peter, and briskly marches toward escalators to the hotel lobby.

> Ronald returns with Jill Soloway, an Emmy-nominated Hollywood writer and director. She wrote and directed a television show about how she and her family experienced her father's coming out as transgender. It was purchased and digitally distributed by Amazon, and tonight LAN is awarding her for being a celebrity ally of LGBT issues, for transforming her personal life into the honest portrayals of LGBT struggle and acceptance featured on her show. Tim motions to the cameraman, and they have their photo taken.

> I catch Tim say to Jill Soloway, "Jill, I want to introduce you to Betty." It's only now that I realize Ellen DeGeneres' mom is at the gala. Jill and Betty chat, while Tim, with his right arm gently at Jill's elbow, subtly motions to the cameraman. Standing before the white screen at a different angle, the cursive red of "Johnson & Johnson" reads behind their left shoulders. From here you can see the purple shadow-lettering brand logo of an accounting corporation on their right, "KPMG". Above Megan and Betty's heads are LAN's gold and magenta logo, "The Let's Get Equality Gala."

Getting celebrities to be "champions for change" is part of some social movements' work for attention, and by extension a part of movement communicative mobilization. Ochigame and Holston (2016) argue that well-funded organizations are advantaged over smaller groups, especially grassroots groups, trying to make progressive change, with the resources to pay for social media sites to feature their work, or to attract (and compensate) the kind of celebrity partnerships that disproportionately garner attention online. It might be that the groups I accessed, located in D.C., were a unique subset of movement groups in the overall arena, with some amount of resources to resemble corporations (Dauvergne and LeBaron 2014). Those resources variably supported a range of tasks for communications directors trying to develop celebrity champions. The cultural imaging work seen above, however, served as a symbolic kind of celebrity resource development. At the event, we endeavored to represent a mainstream coziness to celebrities and major corporations, for easily disseminated images that would capture the symbolism of successful capitalist inclusion for and celebrity acceptance of LGBT people.

It is difficult to imagine that Horkheimer and Adorno would be anything but dismissive of LAN's photo opportunities with celebrities and corporate logos. The second problem-area of the Frankfurt School that informs my work relates to how social movements borrow from the culture industry's intense focus on celebrities. The culture industry's generation of and emphasis on celebrity status produces a structural contradiction for democratic communication. Movement communicators and celebrities alike may wish to lend a celebrity's disproportionate attentional status to social issues, knowing full well that they "are the only human beings today who can serve as sacred objects, emblems of the collective consciousness of any considerable part of society" (Collins 2004:280). However, by mimicking the ways that Hollywood makes those "in the audience not only feel that they could be on

the screen, but realize the great gulf separating them from it" (Horkheimer and Adorno [1944] 1972:145), social movements fail to question how capitalism is partially legitimated through the culture industry's focus on celebrity. More worrisome is that movements compromise, intentionally or not, the communicative authority of a public in deference to the status and attention vested in those atop entertainment hierarchies.

One does not need to go as far as Stephen Marche (2017), who compellingly assessed the Trump administration in the Los Angeles Review of Books, "The United States has become a histriocracy. We are ruled by celebrity." We do need to examine how and why online communication, through its reliance on and emphasis of quantitative metrics of success, structures the qualitative work done by social movements to conflate celebrity and political discursive authority. Brenna of Fighting Disease is Fight Poverty (FDFP) reflected an odd craftsmanship to the work of getting celebrities, noting that her organization is "not to the point of being ready to ask something like that, how to get them really involved and to be champions." Tori of Food Justice on Wheels "certainly tried to get" Michelle Obama, Oprah Winfrey and Gwyneth Paltrow, because "they amplify your voice," "that increases your reach," "you never know who's going to get a nibble from something that's out there." Ramona, also of FDFP, "assembled proposals" for Whoopi Goldberg "with a menu of options of ways she could engage with us, from like the very small to the very big."

Some scholars will deride the notion of SMO craftsmanship to build "celebrity champions for change," including myself at different moments of my own research. The point, however, relates to the ways that a social structure of the new media landscape increasingly pressures social movements into Faustian deals for online attention. Leveraging celebrity visibility in the online media landscape has been successful for both Occupy (Tom Morello of the rock group Rage Against the Machine) and Black Lives Matter (the filmmaker Quinten Tarantino, academic and popular author Cornel West). For example, the National Basketball Association became a crucial site of movement visibility for BLM in large part because Lebron James—needless to say, one of the most recognized celebrities on the planet— has used his smartphone to become one of BLM's most outspoken supporters, by amplifying his work to organize boycotts of mandatory warm-up suits, leading teammates in shows of solidarity with BLM. After Travon Martin's murder, James and the Miami Heat wore black hoodies like the one worn by Martin on the night he was killed by a white vigilante. Arguably, Colin Kaepernick, the quarterback of the San Francisco 49ers, singlehandedly infused the 2016 presidential campaign coverage with BLM topics, as well as reactionary anger at celebrity activism, ironically peddled by the Tea Party's own celebrity champion, the star from "[t]he most popular U.S. reality TV show of 2004, The Apprentice," a "super capitalist, firing young would-be corporate executives in a harsh Darwinian competition to work for the eccentric and money and power obsessed mogul, The Donald" (Kellner 2005).

We are overwhelmed daily with millions of bits of infotainment, yet celebrities still garner a disproportionate amount of attention to their online presence. They leverage offline popularity into very high numbers of online followers and overwhelmingly dominate digital media and, in a trend nearing its apotheosis, politics. For movement communicators, this reality is revealed in language like "amplify" and "reach." However, generating celebrity-based publicity takes careful, and oftentimes mysterious work, and it is highly unpredictable, as Ramona reveals when she says she has "no internal knowledge of how to do that," but well-resourced "organizations like the One campaign, they just know how to do that sort of stuff."

I am not suggesting that these movement actors are solely focused on leveraging celebrities for mere attention. The trend is much more worrisome than that. These actors see "honoring someone who is famous" as movement media advocacy forged in capitalism's cultural forms of attention and celebrity. Celebrity champions are staging opportunities for visuals and issue-specific statements to potentially reach "literally billions of potential readers and viewers." Again, these elements constitute communicative fiber, revealed in the language movement actors use about their work and goals, in that an SMO leverages a celebrity's offline status for online attention for the purposes of garnering sympathy, and holding together a movement's political audience.

## Conclusion

I am emphasizing two problem-areas for social movements mimicking the culture industry's expectations of and assumptions about audience attention. To activists, the lament has been that civil society would be better with a social movement beat. Today, SMO actors have realized they can make the beat themselves. However, they quickly confront expectations of ubiquitous mobile digital platforms, shaping specific communicative strategies movement

actors make when they go about considering the attention of their audiences and how to capture it.

A political economy of attention creates a particular struggle with capitalism's communicative fiber to generate movement publicity, revealing the process of assembling communicative fiber as the social mechanisms that help us explain why and how a social movement communication continues to be formed as capitalist infotainment. By operationalizing capitalism's communicative fiber, some social movements assume the solution is to pursue critical, nuanced information for narrow audiences (the deeper dive), by catching attention with celebrity and infotainment and training it onto SMO self-publications (the meaning of pipelining). Above, Ramona's communicative work with colorful puppets of HIV and TB is recollected not just because it is a quick piece of imagistic online media. Rather, it is astonishing to her that the nuance of TB's relationship to poverty got some traction across a stretched and distracted political economy of attention. Assumptions about the media landscape shaping what audiences would pay attention to—exponential, hyper, imagistic, and immediate—do not seem to enable a complex message to get into public dialogue, yet the puppets, while meeting expectations of capitalist infotainment, seemed to do just that.

I have argued that capitalism's political economy of attention is slightly deterministic of individual processes of weaving communicative fiber into a form that might capture, but not necessarily hold, public attention. Wondering about a social movement publicity based in popular cultural forms, I determined that mobilizing celebrities further mixes entertainment and activism, shaping a certain aspect of the work movement actors do to realize communicative mobilization. Staging mediatized online situations with celebrities was discursive and interactional work, a mix of capitalist event-planning and preparing visuals for social media. The work of mobilizing celebrities involves use of infotainment for constructing mediatized spectacles for digital circulation in ways that amplify traditional protest activity, but like the inability to control what celebrities say in public, it was not clear who was in control of the broader issue of the nominally democratic conversations struck in a capitalist infotainment society.

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# The Biopolitical Conditions of Sovereign Performativity

Benjamin Taylor

This article explores the relationship between sovereignty as an ontologically ineliminable capacity possessed by all existent beings and biopolitics understood as a regime of material distribution that constitutes some lives as worthy to be lived while disallowing others to the point of death. Sovereignty and biopolitics are thus fundamentally related, though at differing levels of analysis. Biopolitics concerns a structural regime of distribution, a regime produced by countless practices of individual spatial mastery. The link between sovereignty and biopolitics is consequently one of practice, not of abstract logics. In a market society, the self-valorization of capital of necessity dialectically produces accumulation of wealth not merely in the abstract but in concrete material manifestations of space. "Ghettoized" and "citadelized" spaces logically derive from the biopolitical **nomos** that conditions how sovereignty is enacted in late modernity. Sovereignty never disappears, but the milieu within which it is expressed is constantly shifting as the emergent outcome of collective practices of spatial mastery change.

Sovereignty thus only exists "in a fluid state, in motion" because in "every positive understanding of what [it is] exists a simultaneous recognition of its negation, its inevitable destruction" (Marx 1977 [1873]: 103). In the strictest sense of the term, then, political sovereignty can never fully secure itself because any form of rule is transient, partial, incomplete, and open to contestation and transformation. The contemporary import of the concept of "sovereignty" is derived from Christian theology, in which God's sovereignty was indicated by nothing other than his own absolute power. Early theologians interrogated the scope of this power, debating whether God was to be considered bound by the laws of nature that he himself had issued or was able to undo or interrupt those laws as he saw fit. To what extent, theologians inquired, was it necessary for God to intervene in the world that he had created with an "exception" to the normal order of things?[1]

> The division is between God's power as **potestas ordinata** and as **potestas absoluta**: the former bound by what God had already ordained, the latter totally unbound (Elshtain 2008: 21). Could God, for example, "raise up a virgin after she has fallen," or did the laws that he had previously set in motion constrain him, preventing him from acting as he would wish? (Ibid, quoting St. Jerome).[2]

The only limitation to the range of potential authority, though, was God's own authority. In the scope of human affairs, his power was effectively wholly unbounded. As the God of the Bible proclaimed to Job: "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the Earth? / Tell **Me**, if you have understanding. / Who determined its measurements? / … To what were its foundations fastened?" (Job 38: 4–6, New King James Version). Power alone functioned as the basis for God's right, to be expressed finally at the end of days, to judge the nations. Thus, in Revelation, Jesus returns to Earth in order that he may purify it: "Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He has on **His** robe and on His thigh a name written: KINGS OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS" (Rev. 19:15–16, NKJV). This final image of Jesus ought to remind us of Jesus's grant of authority to Peter, taken by the Catholic Church to be identical with the inauguration of the papal office, in which Jesus says, "I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven" (Math. 16:19, NKJV).

Understood in these initial theological terms, God's sovereign right to act was bounded by nothing other than the limits of his own capacities, and these capacities were, more or less, absolute. The transfer into politics, on the other hand, included this pretension to absolute authority without the corresponding capability to enforce it. As, for example, Hobbes's Leviathan (1968 [1651]) makes clear, individuals are a perpetual site of instability because of their lust for power, and the absolute authority of the Sovereign to act to constrain them is, ultimately, the only thing that guarantees sovereignty's perpetuity. The absence of sovereignty would result in nothing other than a relapse to the precedent state of nature: "And though of so unlimited a Power, men may fancy many evill consequences, yet the consequences of the want of it, which is perpetuall warre of every man against his neighbor, are much worse" (Hobbes 1968 [1651]: 260 [II.xx]). When I say that "sovereignty does not exist," I thus mean, as the history of Western political theories' attempts to secure it has demonstrated, that sovereignty as a state or subject's ability wholly to order the world in accordance with its authoritative intentions can never reach the Godlike level that would totally eliminate the possibility of dissent. The absolute authorship that is central to the concept of sovereignty is always partial and incomplete when introduced into politics, which are unavoidably rooted in a destabilizing multiplicity.

However — and with so broad a claim, the "however" is what really matters — the theorized absolute mastery of God over the whole of creation is reflected to a certain degree by the ways in which all manner of existent beings act to master and appropriate their own space. From the most quotidian practices to the grandest schemes for utopian organization, the appropriation of spatiality is where any and all attempts to become sovereign must originate, even as the ongoing mastery of space is the clearest hypostatization of the ideal form of sovereignty. To understand how sovereignty is performed in the world of experience rather than theorized in the world of theology, we will have to explore individual practices of sovereignty, which together make up collective regimes of distribution that temper the forms of agency that sovereign actors can express. This includes exploring how the concept of "biopolitics" fits with the concept of "sovereignty." Many attempts have been made to reconcile the two terms as they appeared in Foucault's thought. My argument is specifically a rebuttal to Giorgio Agamben's "topological" spatiology of sovereignty, which is insufficiently attentive to the historical regimes of distribution that create spaces not of exceptionality but of normal (and normalized) indigence. By dematerializing biopolitics in the "logics of sovereignty," Agamben misses the ways that specific enactments of sovereignty as practices of spatial mastery are enabled by and justify biopolitical regimes of distribution. I instead return to Foucault's account of the biopolitical as a discrete historical–political **dispositif**, the operations of which are immediately material, even as they operate according to an imaginary of optimization. "Biopolitics" produces spatial relations that accord in an ever-moving relation to and dialectical tension with representations of space. As certain forms of life are made to live and others are "disallowed to the point of death," the range of imaginable practices open to fostered forms of life expands. Disallowed forms of life come to appear as "bare" even as they yet retain sovereignty — and as the range of potentially actionable practices may become increasingly narrowed. Representations of "bare life" and "sovereignty" in practice disguise the fundamentally **potentially** bare quality of all life: its ontological precariousness.

I begin with a critique of Agamben's (1998 [1995]) analysis of the relationship between sovereignty and biopolitics, showing how it is both internally incoherent and less useful than Foucault's (1990 [1976]) original account of biopolitics. Next, I turn to Henri Lefebvre's (1991 [1974]) tripartite model of spatial practices, representations of space, and representational space in order to begin to grasp the variety of practices made possible through, and themselves making possible, biopolitical regimes of distribution. The production of space, Lefebvre helps us to see, is a never-ending activity. Individually and collectively, we are perpetually engaged in relations of spatial production and representation, which function together to bring new worlds into being. These practices must be undertaken at the level of the body, even as individual bodies alone cannot contain the effects of these practices. From Lefebvre I turn to Carl Schmitt (2006 [1950]), who argues that the production of space is a constantly contested and not merely benign practice. To produce space is simultaneously to limit the ways that others can produce space. These contestations in space and over space are the sites of struggles out of which some are able to simulate their (ontic) self-sovereignty, while others are left in a situation of socially induced "precarity."[3] I then explore recent sociological literature regarding the distribution of space in contemporary U.S. cities, paying special attention to citadelization and ghettoization as dialectically intertwined ongoing spatial **practices** that simultaneously function on the register of **representation** in evident and meaningful ways. Finally, I argue these intentionally manufactured displays of precarity and the concomitant reality of material abundance for some help to disguise the ontological precariousness that characterizes all being. This relationship between sovereignty and biopolitics is fundamentally opposed to the version offered by Agamben because it privileges relations, practices, and representations over abstract logics.

## Agamben's Account of Sovereignty and Bare Life

Giorgio Agamben opens his <u>Homo Sacer</u> with the claim that Foucault never clearly explicated the "hidden point of intersection" between "techniques of individualization and totalizing procedures," which Agamben equates with the sovereign and biopolitical "models of power" (1998 [1995]: 6). It is not entirely clear which of these techniques corresponds with which model of power as disciplinary power, which for Foucault is the mode of power concerned with individualization, goes unmentioned. Nevertheless, this allegation of lack permits Agamben to assert that the Foucauldian thesis "will then have to be corrected, or, at least completed" (Ibid: 9). Agamben's attempt at a correction comes through the distinction between **zoē** and **bios**. **Zoē** indicates life in general, whereas **bios** is the form of life made possible in community. **Zoē** is also the condition of possibility of **bios** insofar as communal life first requires that life exists at all, but according to Agamben, **zoē** is only (representationally) included within **bios** to the extent that it is excluded from it in the form of homo sacer, the figure who can be killed but cannot be sacrificed (Ibid: 82); the "fundamental activity of sovereign power is the production of bare life as originary political element and as threshold of articulation between nature and culture, **zoē** and **bios**" (Ibid: 181). The distinction between zoē and bios parallels the relationship between voice and language. Just as the human being is the "living being who has language," it is the zoē that is also capable of bios (Ibid: 7–8). The founding act of sovereignty, according to Agamben, is the exclusion of zoē from the polis, which is functionally equivalent to the creation of **zoē** within bios via the sovereign ban and internal exclusion of **homo sacer**.[4] Because sovereign power constitutes itself in relation to "bare life," he reasons, the politics of sovereignty has been biopolitical from the very beginning.

At times Agamben's account seems as if it is merely an analysis of the fundamental contradictions in the law's assertion of a durable and concrete relationship to life. In order for the law to be effective, it must presume itself to grasp in a real way the forms of life over which it ostensibly has control. It must "create the sphere of its own reference in real life and **make that reference regular**" (Ibid: 26). But since the law cannot be so precisely constructed in advance that it covers every conceivable exigency, there must remain within the law a way for the law to deal with the unexpected, or else the structure of the law falls immediately into disarray. The law must presume the state of exception. The state of exception is a state where the law is in force, yet every act (or at least every act enacted by the Sovereign) maintains the force of law, meaning that **no act falls outside of the law**: "[T]he sovereign power is this very impossibility of distinguishing between outside and inside, [state of] nature and [state of] exception, **physis** and **nomos**" (Ibid: 37). Thus, when Agamben says that the "exception everywhere becomes the rule," he does not mean "exception" in the sense of a constant negation of the norm but instead as a "realm of bare life" in which the distinctions on which law is founded become unintelligible (Ibid: 9). In such a space, the Sovereign can no longer act unlawfully because the Sovereign's actions are coterminous with the law. The camp thus comes to function as the "**nomos** of the planet" precisely because by functioning as a space in which "power confronts nothing but pure life, without any mediation," it represents in its everyday operations a site where no action can be lawful precisely because no action can be unlawful (Ibid: 176, 171).

François Debrix (2015) reminds us that for Agamben the space of the camp is not merely topographical, i.e., it is not merely a specific location that functions as an example of the furthest extent of biopolitical logics, but topological as well. It is the logical possibility that life and law might in any space become indistinct. Debrix writes,

> What matters for Agamben (and what eventually may allow one to pose topographical questions such as those listed above) are the relations and redistributions of power and violence that the space of the camp both reflects and enables. The camp, for Agamben, occupies a place in biopolitical designs, in and for political power, because it operates as a topological matrix that potentially connects bodies in space to a range of operations of force, control, exception, or utility. This is what it means for Agamben to declare that the camp is an "absolute biopolitical space" (2015: 447).

The distinction here between "topology" and "topography" is a helpful one because it seems to apply not only to the state of exception (and also nature) but likewise to the figure of **homo sacer**. While the exclusive inclusion (i.e., the ban) of **homo sacer** from the political order is the "originary" act of sovereignty, the figure of **homo sacer** plays a primarily illustrative role in the course of Agamben's argument, demonstrating a topographical instance in which the capability of the sovereign to decide on the exception appears; the historical **homo sacer** is a topographical instantiation of the Sovereign's alleged topological capacity to declare some lives as bare. Thus, the Sovereign and **homo sacer** occupy the "two extreme limits" of the juridical order, each simultaneously inside and outside of it: "the sovereign is the one with respect to whom all men are potentially **homines sacri**, and **homo sacer** is the one with respect to whom all men act as sovereigns" (Agamben 1998 [1995]: 84).

Agamben's affixation of "potentially" to the power of the Sovereign makes the concreteness of the condition of **homines sacri** all the more apparent. If the sovereign is recognizable because he potentially decides on the exception, **homo sacer** is can only be recognized if it is being actively treated in an exceptional manner. Sovereignty is the site of all potentiality (the potential to declare another **homo sacer**), while **homo sacer** is the site of all impotentiality (one has not merely been declared but is being made **homo sacer**). The Sovereign is a specific figure (thus "he" rather than "it"), recognizable not because he actually declares the exception but because the Sovereign cannot exist without the possibility of exceptionality, exceptionality in potentiality. Conversely, the concrete reality of **homo sacer** is that all are "sovereign" with respect to it because being cast outside the law's protection means it can be killed at any time without ramification. **Homo sacer** is not merely the figure who can be killed but not sacrificed but, in more general terms, one "who can be deliberately killed **without** [the killer] **committing homicide**" (Minca 2006: 387).

Agamben argues that the Hobbesian state of nature is a state of exception, one that is "is not so much a war of all against all as, more precisely, a condition in which everyone is bare life and a **homo sacer** for everyone else" (1998 [1995]:106). This, however, throws something of a a wrench in Agamben's apparent denial of virtuality to **homo sacer**. If it is possible to imagine a condition in which each is concretely **homo sacer**, then that same condition is necessarily one in which all others are simultaneously concretely sovereign in relation to **homo sacer**. But if it is possible for each to be concretely sovereign and **homo sacer** with respect to all others, then it is also topologically or virtually possible that the positions of sovereign and **homo sacer** can be swapped. A topological matrix of relations of power reflects nothing other than the abstracted form of potentially concrete relations. "Virtually" thus takes the sense of "potentially concrete," even as concrete manifestations reveal what was previously only (but which also remains presently) a virtual possibility. A virtual possibility passes into a virtual impossibility only once that which once could have been concrete can no longer possibly manifest itself. The virtual existence of either pole of the sovereign–**homo sacer** dyad requires the virtual existence of the other, even as the same holds with respect to the concrete manifestation of either pole. The relationship is always and only dialectical. The state of nature is thus the space of the permanent and indistinct virtuality of each subject as both sovereign and **homo sacer** with respect to all others, which further implies that to be constituted as **homo sacer** is to be in the presence of an actively subordinating, and not merely legally declaring, sovereign, even as the potential to be sovereign is only realized in the concrete creation of **homo sacer** or **homines sacri**. Sovereignty and **homo sacer** are thus topologically stable positions that permit immanent judgments with respect to topographical relations as they concretely obtain. However, these relations are not topographically stable. Who is acting as sovereign and who is being made **homo sacer** depends on concrete relations.

Rather than being left with a complex topology, we instead find a complex topography represented in a relatively simple topology.[5] Actual topographical "spaces of exception," the indistinction of life and law, occur at each juncture where sovereignty is constituted through not merely the **declaration** that another is homo sacer but instead the **concrete production** of another as **homo sacer**. No killing can be **de facto murder** because every killing constitutes a real space of exceptionality, and exceptionality authorizes every act as lawful. In what other sense could the state of nature have contained real **homines sacri**? Sovereignty as "ban" is not yet possible in the state of nature. The topological relationship between **homines sacri** and sovereigns cannot recognize murder, not because killing homo sacer is less than murder and killing the sovereign is more than murder, as Agamben claims, but because the category "murder" is law's **post facto** appellation onto a material encounter that exceeds the law's ability to capture it factually. As such, when Agamben emphasizes that Hobbes's solution to how the state of nature is transformed into civil society is that each lays down the right to engage in sovereign and **homo sacer**–producing actions that each may lawfully undertake in the state of nature, it is unclear what exactly this "laying down" could mean. It makes no topological sense unless it has somehow become wholly impossible for the weakest to kill the strongest. Otherwise, each is always both potentially **homo sacer** and sovereign in relation to every other. For a topological relationship to obtain, it must correspond to possible concrete realities as their abstract matrical form. In the case of laying down the possibility for sovereignty, it would necessarily require the absolute impotentiality of non-sovereign subjects (i.e., those who have laid down their right to sovereignty and become always and only bare life) ever to constitute The Sovereign as **homo sacer** — through killing him, for example — and themselves as sovereign in return. Hobbes is not unaware of this. Establishing a political order does not alter the fundamental topology that obtains whenever there are multiple subjects: each is always already virtually sovereign and virtually **homo sacer** in relation to all others. The weakest can always kill the strongest.[6]

The topographical appearance of a Sovereign and specific **homines sacri** is consequently a bit of political

obfuscation. The Sovereign persists solely as the mythology of absolute sovereign potentiality capable of declaring the absolute impotentiality of other forms of life. The collective agreement by some sovereign **homines sacri** in an historically specific context to treat one individual as their ruler and to refer to this ruler as "the Sovereign" does nothing to alter the fundamental topological relationship that Agamben's account does reveal. However, this means that Agamben's analysis of the "logics of sovereignty" tells us nothing more about politics or its structure than does the bleak Hobbesian assertion repeated above because topo-logics only enable us to understand abstractions that are of necessity actually rooted in real-world practice. Every understanding of the world is, as we will see most clearly through Lefebvre, in some sense theoretical. But this does not imply that every theoretical account of collective life usefully illuminates the complexity in which we are perpetually embedded. Topological representations are inevitable, but they are a way of making topography understandable, not of discovering the previously hidden basis of all political activity — the "hidden point of intersection" that Foucault ostensibly missed. As William Connolly puts it, "Biocultural life exceeds any textbook logic because of the nonlogical character of its materiality. It is more messy, layered, and complex than any logical analysis can capture. … [I]t corresponds entirely to no design, no simple causal pattern, no simple set of paradoxes" (2007: 31). Indeed, the relationship between the capacity for sovereignty and its actual manifestations is itself complex. It depends on "biopolitics" not merely as the bare life produced as the originary act of sovereignty, as a topological structure, but as biopolitics expressed in the distinct topographical material–spatial actualities it engenders and prevents.

## Foucault's Biopolitics and Their Relation to Sovereign Power

Why, though, return to the concept "biopolitics"? There is no incantatory power to its phonetic or graphic form and no salvation to be found by returning specifically to the Foucauldian **oeuvre**. Indeed, the term seems to play a relatively minor role in the range of Foucault's writings, and it would perhaps not be too difficult to construct the narrative that follows without turning to Foucault. Nevertheless, I believe there are compelling reasons to do so. I have two. First, the concept of biopolitics indicates much more than simply the concern of politics with life, even as Agamben and those of his ilk tend to reduce it to a fully symbolic or logical relationship between some idea of life and some practice called politics.[7] One aim of my return to biopolitics in the context of sovereignty is to correct this "correction" to Foucault's hypothesis. Second, and beyond this somewhat reactive justification, the language of biopolitics helps to emphasize that politics, especially the politics of distribution, is unavoidably about making a series of decisions regarding who will live and who will die. Some forms of life will be made to live. Some will be disallowed to the point of death. On this matter, Agamben is wholly correct. There seems to me to be an immediately tactical and polemical benefit to using the term "biopolitics," and perhaps even a term such as **homo sacer**, albeit in a modified sense that keeps in mind the concrete and dispersed ways in which lives are fostered or neglected. This benefit is located in the specifically and originally Foucauldian sense of the term, which thus requires some preliminary exegetical work.

Let us move a bit closer, then, to a direct analysis of actual regimes of making live and letting die, leaving behind the sanctified and sanctimonious ground of the purest topologies and their rarefied airs. The first question to pose is, "What does Foucault mean by 'biopower' and 'biopolitics?'" In his published works, the first use of these terms comes at the end of History of Sexuality, Volume One: The Will to Knowledge (1990 [1976]). The characterization Foucault offers, at which I have gestured multiple times already, is that the "ancient right to **take** life or **let** live was replace by a power to **foster** life or **disallow** it to the point of death" (Ibid: 138).[8] This shift is definable only in its social, which is to say material, manifestations. Foucault is concerned to note that he is interested not in a "history of mentalities" but in a 'history of bodies' and the manner in which what is most material and most vital in them has been invested" (Ibid: 152). In this account, a scientized "analytics of sexuality" permits the emergence of a whole series of technologies by which populations are increased, strengthened, and made capable of waging war on behalf of an idealized image of themselves. The objects to which this form of power — which "dovetail[s] into [disciplinary power], integrate[s] it, modif[ies] it to some extent, and above all, use[s] it by sort of infiltrating it, embedding itself in existing disciplinary techniques," albeit it "at a different level, on a different scale, and … mak[ing] use of very different instruments" (Foucault 2003 [1997]: 242) — addresses itself to "the ratio of births to deaths, the rate of reproduction, the fertility of a population, and so on" (Ibid: 243). These are the objects that eventually make it possible for various techniques of government to conceive of humanity as a "species" and as a "population."

The final chapter of <u>The Will to Knowledge</u> overlaps significantly with the last lecture provided during Foucault's series of January to March 1976. A wholly different path precedes the earlier analysis, though. Rather than preoccupying himself with the issues of sex and sexuality, he instead examines the route by which it became possible to think of society as a war, to believe that "peace itself is a coded war" (Ibid: 51). According to this image of society, certain elements of the social body pose a potential risk to its continued vitality, and thus precautions must be made against them. They must be managed, relegated to the pale, subjugated in manifold ways. Foucault is essentially tracing the emergence of non-biological accounts of race that permit the "biologizing state racisms" of Stalinism and Nazism to emerge. The link between this account and the narrative in <u>The Will to Knowledge</u> is that the techniques of managing sexuality are inextricably intertwined with the health of the population as a "race." Those conceived as belonging to "lesser" racial elements could not be permitted to put at risk the population as a whole. The "whole politics of settlement, family, marriage, education, social hierarchization, and property … received their color and their justification from the mythical concern with protecting the purity of the blood and ensuring the triumph of the race" (Foucault 1990 [1976]): 149. What in <u>The Will to Knowledge</u> begins as a concern for the aristocratic body (symbolics of blood) is thereby shown to be a concern for the aristocratic body in distinction to the body of the undesirable elements of society, which only becomes more pronounced in the sexual sciences of the bourgeois.

What we see, then, is a fundamentally different understanding of "biopolitics" in Foucault than in Agamben. For Foucault, biopolitics is a historically specific form of governmentality, a technology of power whose history he traces back to the emergence of "pastoral power" in Christian medieval society. Foucault might agree, then, with Agamben that there is something similar between the inclusive exclusion of **homo sacer** within the juridical order and later forms of power that discriminate between and amongst members of the political order. Yet to the extent that "sovereignty" is, for Foucault, the form of power that actively kills, the legally exclusionary activity that produces **homo sacer** cannot be an act of sovereignty, even if it proceeds from the figure who is legally determined to be Sovereign. Put differently, in a biopolitical regime, the law is one of many active mechanisms by which social hierarchies are materially maintained. The relationship of the sovereign ban is a complex one, in which it is never quite possible to say whether the power of the sovereign is still in force or is wholly absent. Biopolitical power, on the other hand, is marked by its active maintenance of these divisions by forms of policing that run throughout the social. Each life is made to live **in its own way**, which in turn corresponds with a certain representation of the material–spatial politics at play for any given life. It is perhaps no coincidence, then, that Foucault's lecture series <u>The Birth of Biopolitics</u>, held from January to April 1978, ended up focusing entirely on neoliberalism and liberalism as a governing rationality that constantly poses the question of whether one is governing too much, of what the proper field of government is (Foucault 2008 [2004]): 317–324).[9]

Foucault's account provides a better framework for understanding the relationship between sovereign potentiality and its actual social expression — the relationship between sovereignty and biopolitics — than does Agamben's, even as Agamben understands himself to be developing precisely this element of Foucault's thought. Sovereignty as the ontologically inalienable freedom to act in accordance with the capacities of one's mode of being, the pure form of sovereignty transmitted from theology into politics, is limited on the ontic plane by technologies of power that distribute material and representational potentiality in ways that make some modes of being more conceivable than others and other modes less so. The question then becomes exactly how these representations and practices function together in order to enable the fullest range of ideational potentiality for subjects who are always already sovereign, who are always already (potentially) freer than they feel themselves to be. "Biopolitics" in this context refers to the production of spatial–material lifeworlds that allow different imaginaries of sovereign potential to be conceivable. To stay at the level of sovereignty's logics, as Agamben does in <u>Homo Sacer</u>, is to pretend that mere abstractions are sufficient for providing an account of the social world and its politics.[10] The concreteness of Foucault's arguments, especially in contradistinction to Agamben's, reminds us how much more complex and varied the world of experience is, which in turn highlights how necessary it is to focus on the materiality of politics, which takes the form of space's mastery, appropriation, and production.

## The Embodied Production of Space

From Agamben and Foucault, we are left with two competing accounts of sovereignty. For Agamben, it is a

specific topological structure that manifests itself concretely, while for Foucault, it is a specific historical juridical–legal regime characterized by "letting live" and "making die." The theological version of sovereignty with which this chapter began offers a third alternative, in which "sovereignty" is a term that means something like "agency": the ability of God to act as limited only by the extent of that ability. This third definition is the one I now want to consider. Agamben's version, as we have seen, is somewhat useless. Foucault's is historically useful, but it does too much to bracket sovereign agency and its relationship to biopolitical regimes of distribution. No matter how totalizing a regime of power is, there always remains the possibility for its disruption through disobedient action. Attempts to achieve political sovereignty on the model of God's authority may always be thwarted, even if immense exertion would be required to do so. Consequently, drawing from these theological debates from late antiquity at the level of the subject rather than the state does more to reveal the relationship between individual subjects' appropriations of space and the general regimes of distribution that result from them.[11]

Obviously, though, sovereignty in this sense can never reach the sweeping heights contained in God's absolute creative authority. Nevertheless, it does have a creative element, concerning itself with both practices and logics, i.e., with material extensions or with novel interpretations. Both elements must be simultaneously present. Material extension requires the possibility of the interpretation that movement has occurred, while to think the external world is to think a world of extensions. One produces a sign in space by judging or interpreting that one has acted to produce a sign in space, which requires an assertion regarding what counts as a sign. "[A]ll subduing and becoming master involves a fresh interpretation, an adaptation through which any previous 'meaning' and 'purpose' are necessarily obscured or even obliterated," as Nietzsche puts it (1989 [1887]: 77 [II.12]). The relationship between materiality and interpretation pervades the totality of language as a representational system, which is language as far as it is **langue**. Everything only is itself **for us** if it is also the sign of itself.[12] We need not presume that our representational system is exhaustive with respect to some sort of "world-in-itself," but everything that we are capable of acknowledging as existing must be capable of representing itself as itself to us.

The questions that are crucial to ask here in order to discern the specific social conditions that limit this theological form of sovereignty's material expressions for specific subjects are consequently twofold: how is "space" socially produced, and what is the specific social production of space that maps onto the desire for security that attempts to actualize sovereign potentiality in the world of experience? For the first of these questions, Henri Lefebvre's The Production of Space (1991 [1974]) is a most insightful source. Lefebvre thinks about the production of space through the grid of "spatial practices," "representations of space," and "representational space," terms that correspond to a "concrete (as distinct from the 'immediate')" triad describing space as it is perceived–conceived–lived (Lefebvre 1991 [1974]: 40). The first of these terms, spatial practices, is somewhat tautological insofar as all practices occur in space and all spatial events must in some sense be practiced. Nevertheless, it would be foolish to provide an account of how space is produced without first acknowledging action in space. This is the site of the "mundane facts of the human condition, in particular the experiential unity of our bodies" (Caraccioli 2011: 98).[13] Representations of space refer to the ways in which space is abstractly conceived. This is "the space of scientists, planners, urbanists, technocratic subdividers and social engineers … all of whom identify what is lived and what is perceived with what is conceived" (Lefebvre 1991 [1974]: 38). Space here is systematically abstracted as a uniform system imposed onto space as a grid of legibility. Finally, representational space is "space as directly lived through its associated images and symbols … but also [the space] of some artists and perhaps of those, such as a few writers and philosophers, who describe and aspire to do no more than **describe**" (Ibid: 39). While these elements of spatial production are logically distinguishable, in practice, they cannot but interpenetrate one another. Space is simultaneously lived (spatial practice) and understood (representational space) in its immediate manifestation only in relation to the abstract and systematic topology (representations of space) within which it is embedded. Put a bit more obscurely, space is never empty but is instead constantly engaged in the practice of thinking and producing itself.

This model is relevant to the project being undertaken here. Lefebvre's terms permit us to distinguish analytically what are in actuality simultaneous and inextricable elements because social being in the world as an intensely embodied encounter. Sovereignty as it manifests in the world of experience must take place at the level of the body. Correspondently, how the body is practiced in order to master social space is itself a manifestation of sovereignty. Accounts that are attuned to the body's centrality to social and political practice consequently better position us to examine how sovereignty is expressed in the mastery of space.

Judith Butler and William Connolly provide us with two of the best accounts of how politics are practiced at the level of the body. In Gender Trouble (2006 [1990/1999]), Butler offers a reading of gender rooted in the Nietzschean belief that "'the doer' is merely a fiction added to the deed — the deed is everything" (Nietzsche 1989

[1887]: 45 [I.13]). That there is no doer behind the deed means that the logic of how space and identity are organized cannot be found in a yet-to-be-discovered **arcanum** that could link together how we perform our bodies with who we consider ourselves to be.[14] In other words, practices by bodies determined to be "male" or "female" do not neatly correspond to the gender identity categories of "man" and "woman." In the contemporary age, this seems hardly a radical claim. Butler, however, goes a step further in arguing that the very division between "primary sex characteristics" is rooted in the performativity of gender. Because male and female bodies have been disciplined and trained to perform themselves in masculine and feminine ways, the importance of primary sex characteristics as both a source of sexual pleasure and as a determining characteristic for how that body ought to be performed is reinforced. The division between male and female only registers as important if there is some sort of performative, which for being performative is not any less concrete, division that can be erected to constitute these biological lines. The performativity of gender, itself a "stylized repetition of the body," thus creates the mythology of its own interiority as a secondary effect of its ongoing performance. The fiction of the essence of gender follows performances of gender. "Gender," Butler writes, "is the repeated stylization of the body, a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame that congeal over time to produce the appearance of substance, of a natural sort of being" (Butler 2006 [1990/1999]: 45).

Butler's analysis intimately ties together the how the body is performed and the desires that it manifests. To prefer one series of pleasures over another depends to some significant extent on the narrative or symbolic regime within which they are made recognizable as pleasures, even as recognizability is inextricable from the bodily performances that are undertaken. William Connolly picks up on this theme in the context of his work on the affective dimensions of fascism. Connolly reads the materiality of the body in a variety of contexts, including 14th- to 16th-century European table manners, professional dancing, the film <u>Fifty Shades of Gray</u>, German military training, and his own upbringing in Michigan, which included learning and participating in modes of bodily performance patterned by figures such as football players and male adults in his neighborhood (2017: 44–58). Affect for Connolly is ever-present in these accounts. It is necessarily material. What else could it be? "Our gaits, hormonal secretions, rhythms of conduct, tacit rules of eye contact, facial habits of expression, skin dilation or tightening, memory layered modes of perception, and relational presumptions convey such disciplines into habitual modes of response," he writes (Ibid: 47). Connolly is specifically concerned with the bodily performances that open some subjects to fascist political projects. When the body is practiced and understood in certain ways, it potentially opens subjects up to abduction by such imaginaries: an ideal of masculinity may require constant willingness to prove one's toughness, to stockpile weapons for protecting one's family from all and any potential adversaries, or support for a juridical–legal formation that prioritizes force and activity over negotiation and contemplation. These practices, and the political regimes they support, appeal not merely to intellects but to bodies as practiced and representational objects. It is little surprise that the bodies Connolly focuses on are those of the "armored male." Gender, it seems, it one of the most crucial perceived–conceived–lived regimes available.

From Connolly and Butler, we can come to understand the importance of bodily practices in the world as primary to all politics and all representations of space. Importantly, though, there can be no "stylized repetition of the body" without a representational imaginary that links together distinct, disparate acts under a common term. The same Nietzsche who observed that there is no doer behind the deed also made a case against the existence of "identical actions." Because we are always-already in a world of becoming typified by ontological fluctuation, the "I" that is at each moment confronted with its own existence is a wholly different bodily practice than the "I" I perceive myself to have been only moments prior, and I am linked together as a subject only by an interpretive and representational series of regulations that permits me to conceive of myself as one and the same subject (Nietzsche 1989 [1886] 25–27 [I.19]). This is the difficulty that lay at the root of the classical origin of the dialectic; we are always-already not what we are (Kolakowski 1981 [1976]: 11–12). Even to ask the question of how this distinction between "being" and "becoming" might be somewhat resolved, though, failed (and still fails) to acknowledge that the roots of subjectivity must be found historically in the development of the regulative fiction of the "I," a regulative fiction whose origin Nietzsche locates in the violent mnemonics used to cultivate subjects capable of promising.[15] Thus, the representation of ourselves to ourselves, the formation of an Ideal-I as this regulative fiction, must precondition, embed, flow through, regulate, and discipline our spatial practices. The way that we occupy and consequently master space is dependent on the specific way we interpret what we are doing, and vice-versa.

Lefebvre includes an illustration that helps to illuminate the centrality of bodily performativity to the production of space, and thus to politics more generally. He provides us with the picture of a house. It stands before us, seemingly stable, seemingly unmoving. A closer look, though, shows that the existence of this house is not static, it

does not stand unchanging permanently within the confines of being. Rather, it is engaged in a networked series of relations that constantly alter its "actual" spatial composition. It is "permeated from every direction by streams of energy which run in and out of it by every imaginable route: water, gas, electricity, telephone lines, radio and television signals, and so on" (Lefebvre 1991 [1974]: 93). Perhaps yellowjackets or termites are burrowing into some of its wood. Perhaps a particularly heavy foot repeatedly ascending the stairs has weakened the boards. Wind and rain beat down upon it; electricity and people, gas and bugs flow in and out. We ought not to see the house as a static entity, writes Lefebvre, but instead as the intersection of a series of inflows and outflows that always threaten to disrupt the border of where the house ends and the external world begins: a series of flows in which we are intimately involved. It is an "active body," an "information-based machine with low energy requirements" (Ibid). The being of the house is a sympoietic "being with" rather than an autoefficient "being-in-itself," even as the reified "representational space which its inhabitants have in their minds … for all its inaccuracy plays an integral role in social practice" (Ibid).[16] That these flows compose a house is consequently a matter of historically situated judgment, tempered in part by the fact that certain of these processes at present exceed our active, as opposed to reflective, perceptive capabilities. It is possible to imagine a cybernetic subjectivity that would overlay onto our perception of the house all of these biomaterial flows. Perhaps what would then constitute the space of a "room" or a "wall" would shift, dependent for its definition on the degree to which the flows in and out of it are relatively limited or (im)permeable. The point, though, is that the claim that the house is a house is not absolute but is rather a representational judgment of external space projected onto a networked set of spatial practices that have been composed otherwise in the past and may yet be composed otherwise in the future.

At each moment, then, we are engaged in spatial practices, but whether these practices rise to a level of social legibility for us depends on whether and to what extent they correspond to or potentially disrupt the collective representations of space in which we are embedded. The gesture of a finger may be unimportant when it is connected to a lifted hand spinning lazily through the air. The same fingeration may be of greater importance if the digitudal gesture "flips off" the president (Dvorak 2018). It is also here that we see the sense in which embodied subjects are subjectified before they are even individuals, as Althusser (2001 [1970]) observes.[17] It becomes (for some) accidentally humorous when an infant raises its middle finger on its own precisely because the spatial practice accords to a specific symbolics of space in which the infant is embedded before it even becomes aware of its own subjectivity. The body is thus disciplined before it has even become confronted in any unified sort of way with its own existence. It is engaged in spatial practices that are already representational, even if the body engaged in the spatial practices in incapable of recognizing them. Further, it reproduces those representations through ongoing bodily practices: decorating a house, steeling oneself to fight, preparing food for dinner, working long and late hours, etc. These practices are, or have been in the past, representationally coded as either male or female acts that specific bodies repeat in stylized ways, even as some sort of representational schema is first required to acknowledge the repetitions as repetitions. Only space as representationally presented is legible as something other than either nothing or too-much-something. For space to be legible, it is necessary that everything always be only the sign of itself.

## Practices of Sovereign Space

This passage through Lefebvre, Butler, and Connolly articulates the logics of spatial practice in a way that is attuned to the social, historical, and ideational forces that anchor a perspective on space as an ongoing process of embodied mastery rather than as no more than a philosophical abstraction acknowledging the possibility of material extension. Likewise, their arguments permit us to move from an account of theological sovereignty expressed as nothing other than a subject's pure potential for authorship in the world to an understanding of how such authorship is actually carried out, limited as it is by the world's multiplicity. Lefebvre's account of representational space intertwines with the Butlerian account of gender as a fictive uniformity, of which Connolly's "armored males" are one expression, to emphasize how social symbolics emerge out of spatial practice. Carl Schmitt provides us with yet another crucial element for thinking about space with his emphasis on the Greek term **nomos** (2006 [1950]). **Nomos**, according to Schmitt, derives from the Greek **nemein**, which means "to divide" and "to pasture." From this, Schmitt contends that "**nomos** is the immediate form in which the political and social order of a people becomes spatially visible — the initial measure and division of pasture-land, i.e., the land-appropriation as well as the concrete order contained in it and following from it" (Schmitt 2006 [1950]: 69–70). No political order is thus possible without this original act of appropriating space; it forms the basis of the later processes of distribution and

production (Ibid: 327). More than mere mastery of space (spatial practices), nomos articulates the "spatially concrete unity" of "measure, order, and form," the "concrete order contained in [land-appropriation] and following from it" (Ibid: 70). As such, every nomos requires the initial appropriation of land, but "not every land-appropriation, not every alteration of borders … is a process that constitutes a new nomos" (Ibid: 82). While the appropriation of space has historically extended to the sea and to the sky, it is specifically the division of land that is foundational to the nomos. It is the case "[n]ot only logically, but also historically, [that] land-appropriation precedes the order that follows from it" (Ibid: 48). Whereas the sea cannot be partitioned through permanent spatial barriers, the land can, which means that the land can be internally and externally divided for the purposes of political communion. A variety of "fences, enclosures, boundaries, walls, houses, and other constructs" delimit the land that belongs to a particular people from both the peoples and lands that are not theirs (Ibid: 42). Appropriating land is thus simultaneously a representational and a practical act. To say "this is mine" or "this is ours" presupposes a relationship to the "this" that cannot ultimately be reinforced through legal structures alone but which requires actual or implied practices of violence.

Those appropriations of space that do not seek to create a new **nomos** (constitutive power) are consequently engaged in the process of preserving it (constituted power). What we know from Lefebvre is that there is no moment that is not in some way related to the constituted or constitutive mode of power. Whether spatial practices are seen as constitutive or as embedded in a prior constituted regime is thus a question of the representational space and spatial representation within which a subject's actions are embedded. We can take Schmitt's account of the distinction between the possibility of a political order rooted in the sea and a political order based on the land as demonstration the importance of the representation of stability. According to Schmitt, the sea could not even **logically** serve as the basis for a **nomos** because it lacks the appropriating structures that maintain the divisions between a political order and what is not a political order. But the divisional structures that appear terrestrially are not in and of themselves the basis for a continued political **nomos**. The basis for this **nomos** is the representational (in both senses) role that the walls play with respect to the way that a people orders itself. The ostensibly obdurate material blockades that clearly divide inside from outside and prevent the outside from invading the inside must be perpetually maintained in order to be effective, and whether they are perpetually maintained depends upon the desire for their continued maintenance. When the Berlin Wall was brought down, it was felled by sledgehammers, hands, and heavy machinery. Were these tools unavailable prior to 1989? Certainly not. What shifted instead was, for numerous complex historical reasons, the will to continue practicing politics in a way that maintained the wall: shooting at any who came too close or tried to cross, staffing it with guards, repairing its erosions, etc.

A recent This American Life episode on walls makes the same point in the contemporary era through the tale of David, a Cameroonian man, who attempts to break into a Spanish city of Ceuta, located in Morocco (Glass 2018). [18] If he arrives in the city, he might apply for asylum and travel to Europe. Surrounding the city is a fence towering twenty feet high and adorned with razor wire, complete with a two-meter trench in front of it and guards behind it. The fence that keeps "non-Europeans" outside of the "European" space could easily be cut by wire-cutters, but the reporter for the segment relays an unspoken agreement that those attempting to cross will not use such tools. Similarly, the Spanish guards on the other side use rubber (rather than real) bullets, so those attempting to enter refrain from using weapons in their quest. The city sits on the shore, and the fence ends when it reaches the water. Those trying to cross the fence and enter into Europe have developed a whole range of tactics by which the guards might be distracted or overwhelmed, thereby allowing some refugees to reach the local immigration center and potentially claim asylum. The whole enterprise is transformed into a giant game with real-world stakes immanent in the encounter, perhaps thereby demonstrating the "game-iness" that is always inherent to politics. David eventually defeats the wall and goes to live in Madrid, where, as of the story's broadcast, he still lives. He defeats the wall largely because the guards opt to take him to the immigration office after he has finally traversed the wall rather than to throw him back out on the other side. The wall is only effective as long as the guards are there, as long as a whole societal organization (we might say the **nomos** of Ceuta, and perhaps of Europe) is made possible by the rejection of the African/Middle Eastern/Asian outside.

Walls collapse or can be made to collapse. At sea, opposing vessels may either attack you or choose not to attack you. At no point is the "order" of the world ever permanent or fully stable. Rather, it is stable to the extent that a particular series of spatial practices can be judged to accord relatively durably with a specific image of space, an image that must be daily renewed through the ongoing practices of real-world subjects in its defense. When the tyrannical order at the end of V for Vendetta (McTeigue 2005) breaks down, it breaks down not because Parliament is destroyed. It breaks down because the men with guns who had previously been willing to shoot and

kill insurrectionist citizens have become unwilling to do so. They have come to imagine themselves and the general citizenry differently. The spatial imaginary in which they participated has altered in a way that makes their spatial practices incapable of being maintained. Conversely, when Ponchel, a French solider, is shot by Jonathan, an Irish solider, at the end of Joyeux Noël (Carion 2005), a film set during World War I, Jonathan is only able to pull the trigger because his spatial–political imaginary has not been altered by the Christmas Eve mass in which soldiers from all sides have joined. (Ponchel is dressed as a German, and Jonathan believes him to be one.) While other soldiers have difficulty continuing to fight because they no longer imagine the soldiers in the trench across from them as enemies, Jonathan, mourning, enraged, and embittered by the death of his brother, still practices himself under the auspices of an imaginary that constitutes all humans on the opposing side as enemy soldiers deserving of death. A specific place–history–identity nexus functions together to permit layers of symbolic meaning to be overlain on the bodies that populate the battlefield; a series of ideological practices intervene between man and man.

Ultimately, the maintenance of a relationship between practices in space and any given spatial representation must be actively renewed at each moment by those committed to it. Spatial practices of sovereignty are a commitment to a specific ordering of the world, an ordering that is only possible because the practices that constitute it and the spatial imaginary that interprets those practices occur simultaneously and in an ongoing fashion. The **nomos** of a given social ordering does not flow necessarily from the initial appropriation. The initial appropriation is stretched, stressed, and remade in an ongoing process that (re)shapes the spatial–material being of the participants in a certain way of life. The order is daily reconstituted. Practices in space always participate in constitutive power because the potentiality of the world is at every moment exhausted. Whether the **nomos** of a particular order can be said to have changed depends entirely on whether the spatial representations that legibilize certain practices remain tenable, which indeed does require the sort of decision-making that acknowledges an exception to what has come before — though it is never the Sovereign who alone makes such a decision.

## Biopolitical Sovereignties

We are now prepared to address the set of relationships that obtain between practices of political sovereignty and biopolitical regimes of distribution, examining them through the nexus of uneven spatial accumulation in the contemporary U.S. city. I choose the contemporary U.S. city as the site of empirical observation for a series of reasons. First, cities occupy an important position in the contemporary imaginary of social scientists. From world cities to global cities to resilient cities, understanding "the urban" grows in importance as the world moves toward ever-increasing urbanization (Rogers 2016 [2012]; Sassen 2000; Sassen 2016; Friedmann 1986). Second, in U.S. politics, cities occupy an important representational space worthy of further interrogation. Conservatives, for example, point to them as a space of extreme criminality that demonstrates the allegedly failed attempts of slightly more redistributive economic policies. For the Democratic Party, cities are typically bastions of support, which only increases the urban–rural tensions that have received much commentary since the 2016 presidential election. Most importantly for my purposes, though, they are a site in which life that could reasonably be presented as "bare" or "disallowed" according to a biopolitical logic nevertheless acts to produce its own space in a variety of important ways.[19]

Cities, of course, do not exist in and of themselves. Spatially speaking, the sense in which they exist at all is a matter of representation. Cleveland is as distinct from a farm as it is from New York City, yet the heuristic of "city" links together Cleveland and New York while excluding the farm. Likewise, the existence of city spaces is only made possible through non-city spaces that help to sustain cities as dense population centers. I acknowledge these also important relations of space in order to bracket them. In this study, my focus will be on the distribution of space in the U.S. city.[20] Consequently, the next portion of this article briefly reviews some of the relevant sociological literature that broadly characterizes the specific patterns of spatial–material distribution occurring in the contemporary city. Abundance and poverty are generated as part of the same process. Drawing from Carl Schmitt, we might say that the broad typologies to be discussed are distributional regimes integral to the reproduction of the city **nomos**. The Lefebvrian observation that constituted power is also always constitutive power also helps to illuminate that distribution is necessarily founded on appropriation in the sense that every distributive moment is an appropriative moment (the mastery of space inherent to all spatial practices), even if not every appropriative moment is also distributive (though since "distribution" as a bequeathing from one to another effectively requires

the recipient to appropriate the materialities being distributed, the relationship is perhaps not so clean in practice). After exploring this literature, I discuss the ways in which a specific spatial **nomos** of appropriation–distribution–production as enacted and legibilized by a lived–perceived–conceived veridical regime enables subjects to simulate their own sovereignty through the reification of space, as well as briefly discussing some of the affective drives that motivate this series of undertakings. How do individuals take active and constant control over their space through a variety of spatial practices? How are some potential forms of life promoted and others disallowed? What are the limited and partial ways in which the ontologically ineliminable potential for subjects\existents to author themselves and their lifeworlds is expressed in the material world?

Peter Marcuse, sociologist and son of Herbert Marcuse, examines the forms of spatial organization that have resulted in racially and financially segregated cities in a way that begins to move us toward an answer to such questions. In a 1997 article, he introduced a typology of various spatial formations that could then be found in the "post-Fordist" city: the "outcast ghetto," the "classic ghetto," "enclaves, and "citadels." The concept of the "citadel" comes from John Friedmann and Goetz Wolff, where it is a minor theme in a much longer article: "[T]he world city may be divided … into the 'citadel and the 'ghetto.' Its geography is typically one of inequality and class domination. The citadel serves the specific needs of the transnational elites and their immediate retinues who rule the city's economic life, the ghetto is adapted to the circumstances of the permanent underclass" (1982: 325). Other scholars have described the relationship between "the ghetto" and "the citadel" as dialectical; the citadel requires the ghetto in order to remain comprehensibly exclusive, even as the ghetto results from resources being directed toward and secured within citadel spaces (Smithsimon 2010: 702).[21] Citadels are spaces where the wealthy can keep themselves away from contact with "poorer and lower status people." Indeed, citadels' very design, whether in the form of a gated community or a guarded high rise, is to keep poor people from intruding on the daily patterns of behavior in which the wealthy participate. Marcuse writes, "Outer doors controlled by closed-circuit television cameras, doormen who double as security personnel, controlled egress from elevators, and combination locks on entry to underground garage space serve to protect residents" (Marcuse 1997: 247). A specific series of spatial practices clearly reproduces the division between those who belong "inside" the citadel and those who should stay "outside." The practice is consequently only made possible through an imaginary of what counts as worthy of belonging to the citadel space.

Such an imaginary, though, depends on a clear conception of what does not belong within the site of agglomerated wealth, which is in turn enabled through the clear consignment of certain otherized bodies to the spaces to which they are representationally understood to belong. Marcuse develops the importance in the United States context of the emergence of "a new ghetto that is different from the ghettos of the past and from the immigrant enclaves of the past and present" (Ibid: 229). These "new" ghettos, which were emerging in the immediately post-Fordist period Marcuse was then studying, resulted from the historically and culturally unique combination of "space and race" in U.S. cities, wherein the aftermath of slavery, Jim Crow, and redlining combined to segregate black Americans in ways that both corresponded with and reformulated a long legacy of exclusionary spatial practices.[22] Loïc Wacquant (2012) supplements Marcuse's analysis by constructing an ideal-type model from the "four constituent elements of the ghetto," namely, stigma, constraint, spatial confinement, and institutional parallelism. He contends that the ghetto "is a social-organizational device that employs space to reconcile two antinomic functions: (1) to maximize the material profits extracted out of a category deemed defiled and defiling, and (2) to minimize intimate contact with its members so as to avert the threat of symbolic corrosion and contagion they are believed to carry" (Wacquant 2012: 7). On Wacquant's account, then, the otherization of those who are eventually ghettoized both **precedes** their spatial cordoning off and is **intensified** through the processes of spatial segregation that are inaugurated. Representational space and spatial practices are intertwined at every moment, and certain **specific** spatial practices (i.e., racialized representations enacted by single bodies) have effects that quite literally extend into space generally. This is self-evidently true for the emergence of the ghettoization of the black Americans who are the primary residents of the specific spaces Marcuse and Wacquant analyze (since both Marcuse and Wacquant aim to analyze segregated spaces); black bodies were stigmatized long before black subjects were spatially separated in cities from the "normal" white population. Of course, this initial stigmatization was itself only made possible through specific material–spatial regimes: segregated schools, enslavement on plantations, the denial of political and civil liberties, and so forth.

More recently, Marcuse has moved away in some respects from his position in 1997, contending that the "hard ghetto" (ghettoization as the result of legal policy) has been replaced by a "weak ghetto," in which social forces such as "the operations of the private market in housing" (including both direct racism and income inequality) are what lead to the spatial conglomeration of marginalized groups (2012: 40). Ghettoization, he contends, is now being "de-spatialized" in order to satisfy demands for urban space on the part of affluent city residents, i.e., due to gentrification

(Ibid: 54–57). Such processes may appear to eliminate some of the forms of spatial control that have typified the ghetto classically, but as Marcuse notes, de-spatialization of once-concentrated oppression does not indicate that the oppression itself has decreased. Rather, the problems may "have just been moved around, not solved" (Ibid: 60). Indeed, as a recent report in The Atlantic notes, in cities such as Chicago, "the number of wealthy census tracts has grown fourfold since 1970" (Semuel 2018). Chicago, Alana Semuel reports, has not seen wealth "cree[p] back into some poor neighborhoods" because many Chicago residents have classist and racist "mental maps" of the city, representations of space that identify certain places "they would never live, no matter how affordable the rents or good the amenities" (Ibid). Semuel interviewed Harvard sociologist Robert J. Sampson, who attributed the difference between Chicago and other cities that have been engaged in gentrification to Chicago's racial segregation. "As middle-class residents stay out of such neighborhoods, so do the businesses that they would patronize," summarizes Semuel. "The decades-old legacies of segregation, far from being reversed, are instead being reinforced" (Ibid).

The citadel and the ghetto are consequently self-enforcing divisions of space. In Schmitt's sense, we might be justified in asserting that these sociologists are attempting to identify the specific **nomos** that holds for American urbanization. **Nomos** need not only apply globally, even as Schmitt's concern is with the specific form of the global **nomos**. **Nomos** indicates first and foremost the form of land appropriation that permits a specific regime of distribution and production to follow from it. Wealthy Americans who reside in urban citadels appropriate the space in a legible, ongoing manner, an appropriation that implies (and in fact produces) ghetto spaces that are its opposite. It would be a mistake, though, to see ghettoized spaces merely as the passive implication of a broader distributive and productive scheme that follows directly from this initial appropriation. Impoverished spaces are appropriated as well, albeit in ways that differ significantly from the mode of appropriation in the citadels.

Contemporary forms of ghettoization in the United States, which take the form of the marketization of relationships initially grounded in direct racism, function to constitute a population that can then be disallowed to the point of death. While some of the criteria for segregation may have predated the actual practices of segregation, segregation simultaneously functions to clarify or reconstitute the population of disallowable lives. Anathematized bodies are those who live in the ghetto because the ghetto is the place for anathematized bodies. The Euthyphronic divisions between a "carried thing" and a "thing that is carried" break down in the dialectical manifestation — dialectical in that segregation follows from the divisions in space it has already generated — of a presumably always already ontologically negatable form of life. The ghettoizable form of life is thus a form of life that belongs to the ghetto, which is the identification that constantly haunts black bodies as they move throughout the world. Elijah Anderson (2012a; 2012b) picks up on this theme, examining the ways that black bodies are read as alien in spaces that do not align with the dominant white imaginary:

> Although black people increasingly inhabit diverse positions in society, negative stereotypes persist and adapt to changing social situations. For instance, the ghetto stereotype follows middle-class black families into the suburbs. Some whites eye their new neighbors warily because they are not used to living near black people, perhaps thinking of them as "nice black people" who are exceptions to their race, or suspecting they have not arrived through legitimate means. Could they be drug kingpins? How else to explain a black man who drives a new Lexus and sends his children to private school? (Anderson 2012a: 17).

Though it was the original pathologization of blackness that justified its consignation to a separate location, the process of consignation continues to mark the body as "other" in ways that justify both its continual containment, conceptually and spatially, as well as the rescinding of all programs aimed at assisting the fostering of life in materially "other" spaces.

Consequently, when Wacquant writes that the "ghetto arises through the **double assignation of category to territory and territory to category**," he is indicating that the intellectual and/or material confinement of a specific race (which has been preliminarily "otherized" in ways that permit it to be disallowed to the point of death) within a specific place consequently underpins the spatially inegalitarian distribution of resources along lines that correspond to the presumed race of the subjects dwelling in specific locations (Wacquant 2012: 13). Spatial segregation is one manifestation of inegalitarian distributions according to which black lives are "disallowed," and the living spaces open to black Americans play significant roles in determining their vocational, educational, and other life options. When Anderson details the many spaces in which black bodies are not welcome, it is because black bodies are identified with particular spaces (ghettos) that they are viewed as alien in alternate spaces (non-ghettos). There is a nexus between space and identity, between spatial practices (tacit or explicit arts of discrimination, including ways of looking and speaking), representational space (the identification of a black person as black, with all the

attendant symbolic implications that result from such a judgment on the basis of America's racist past and present), and representations of space (an abstracted vision that projects where specific bodies belong on the basis of the characteristics they are determined to have). These elements are irreducibly different yet inextricable from each other. All forms of unequal treatment require otherization, and otherization is always expressed spatially.[23]

Elsewhere, Anderson has observed that those who live in the inner city (to be clear, not just those who are black) are often employed in jobs for which those with lower levels of education are competing, jobs such as janitors, office cleaners, fast-food workers, office assistants. Of these, "[m]ost of the available jobs pay little and provide few if any benefits" (Anderson 2012b: 71).[24] Further, such workers are "often the first causalities in an economic downturn" (Ibid). As such, the increased precarity of labor in the United States as well as the "recent drastic reductions in welfare payments" cause many inner-city residents (in practice belonging to all races, though perhaps not representationally so) to turn to "informal economies," which are accompanied by a host of social practices aimed at ensuring the integrity of agreements that cannot be supported through conventional legal channels and which may force residents to resort to violence, including killing, in order to make certain that future agreements are not similarly breached (Ibid: 70–72). Whether or not the perpetrators of such acts are primarily black, the acts become representationally linked with the spaces in which black bodies are presumed naturally to reside. Consequently, because ghettoized blackness, which according to Anderson functions as the representationally dominant form of blackness in white imaginations, becomes linked to such practices of violence, the state-sponsored distributional practices that permit an influx of funds into ghettoized economies can be stayed, which in turn intensifies ongoing processes of ghettoization. Residents of racially–economically segregated spaces do not comport with a vision of the optimization of the population as a whole, so they can be "disallowed to the point of death." Because "race" and "place" become coterminous, the distribution of resources away from specific populations, which is always carried out on a spatial register, can be carried out.

What these sociological observations help to demonstrate more clearly is that the collective production of space typical of a capitalist economy necessarily expresses itself in the form of spaces of relative immiseration and spaces of relative opulence. The accumulation of capital requires the dialectical opposition of the circuit M–C–M' and its implied opposite of something like M'–C–M, where M is the relative value of total assets in relation to the total output of the economy and M' is a larger value than M. As the proletariat invests its sole "asset," its living labor power, to produce commodities and is then remunerated for producing those commodities, the remuneration must be sufficient for social reproduction yet, taking the perspective of the global economy as a whole, not at a rate that permits labor to repurchase the same proportion of commodities it has already produced. If the latter condition were the case, then capital could not perpetually increase, and there would be no motivation for investors to engage in new investment schemes as their total wealth would at best stay the same (if the investment were successful), at worst decline (if an investment fails and is a loss to them). Capitalists will consequently always look for new sites of investment yielding a positive return, i.e., the ability to purchase a higher percentage of all available commodities than was previously possible before investment. The ability to purchase more commodities includes the ability to purchase a home or multiple homes in highly segregated (by class and race) spaces, while the correspondent inability to do likewise includes a decrease in one's ability to afford living spaces in neighborhoods of average or above-average price. The question of "Whose value is rising?" is consequently always also a question of "Whose space is being ghettoized?" and "Whose space is being citadelized?"

Because this dialectical process relatively immiserates some while preserving and advancing the position of others, decisions must be made regarding who will be made to flourish and whose lives will be disallowed to the point of death. In the United States, the way this determination is made follows from the country's racist history and thus manifests itself along racial lines. Importantly, though, to justify the decision to let some lives flourish while disallowing others, a division between lives worthy and unworthy of life must be made. A capitalist distribution of resources consequently always requires some sort of relatively stable representational divide between "good" lives and "bad" lives. Capitalism is always-already biopolitical, and in some (many) historical periods, the dividing line of distribution is race.[25]

To view a population as potentially disposable is both a feature of the actual material allocations made with respect to such a population as well as the representational construction of it. Life disallowed to the point of death is first marked as disposable in the very act of "disallowing" in the sense that the material abundance of society is oriented away from a specific people group. In the contemporary transnational character of the economy, these distributions are both the result of wealth polarization derived from the precarity of manufacturing labor in the United States and domestic policy decisions that actively remove support systems from beneath the feet of inner-city

residents. The right-wing myth of a close nexus between "hard work" and affluence performs the same justificatory function. Those who are poor have "chosen" to be poor, whether directly through prodigality or indirectly through imprudent financial decisions. The spatial representation that abstractly envisions the outcomes of a market-oriented economy as the most just, beneficial result intersects with representational space (the space of perception) to code individually impoverished subjects as positioned in relation to that overall matrix, thereby justifying (if not mandating) a certain set of bodily practices in relation to them (perhaps glancing off to side as a homeless veteran asks for change or clutching one's bag tighter while walking past a group of young black males).

## Sovereign Performativities and Ontological Precariousness

What is the relevance of this sociological analysis of the biopolitical distribution of material flourishing to an examination of the ways that sovereignty is performed and practiced in the world of experience? Sovereignty, as I have presented it here, is the capacity of an existent to act in accordance with the potentiality of its being, a potentiality that includes, in Agamben's (1999 [1993]) terms, the ability to-do-or-not-to-do. Because of the inescapability of social multiplicity, this form of sovereignty can only ever function as an ideal, an ontological abstraction that must be presumptively possible in order for the idea of action in the world to be legible. This is the theological model of "sovereignty as authorship." However, sovereignty as authorship is, as we have seen, always incomplete because authoring is always an intersubjective encounter. It depends on readers as much as writers. [26]

Nevertheless, the desire for something like sovereignty still remains. The empty, tautological form of the desire for sovereignty in conditions of multiplicity is the desire to act as one desires to act within one's capacity for action. But how can such a desire be achievable? One must be able to imagine oneself as free, as bound only by the attachments one gives to oneself.[27] In a complex society, this includes safety from the vicissitudes of **fortuna**. The subject working to achieve sovereignty is the subject of The Prince's penultimate chapter, working to channel the raging river of fate such that it might not overflow into the basement of the newest McMansion. While this project may reflect a fundamentally individualistic desire, the politics of it are not thereby necessarily individualistic. Indeed, spatial practices, which are necessarily collective, produce the uneven spaces of accumulation typical of a capitalist economy, especially a capitalist city. The wealthy assemble increasingly in "citadels," while the poor of all races congregate in their "ghettos." Biopolitical distributional regimes are the emergent outcomes of collective spatial practices undertaken in accordance with representational experiences linked together by the abstract representations of space that function as norms of recognizability for actual practices in space.

If sovereignty is, abstractly, the capacity of an existent to act in accordance with its form of being, then the ongoing appropriation of space in which all spatial practices engage are manifestations of sovereign potentiality as limited by the fundamental condition of multiplicity that characterizes being in the world. Space is never empty; it is always part of an existent subject. Biopolitical regimes of distribution emerge from this appropriation of space and support its continuation. Whether state distribution policy accords with a social democratic or broadly Keynesian logic that, generally speaking, reflects the will of the working population or is neoliberalized on behalf of the capitalist class, it is part of a tactics of space appropriation that reflect the possibility of sovereignty as it appears in the world. Whereas for Agamben the link between biopolitics and sovereignty is one of logics, the link here is one of practice. The ability to appropriate space, which includes the space occupied by another's body, manifests collectively in the distributional shifts that can be examined at a structural level in the historically specific regime of distribution that functions under the label of "biopolitics." Even as it has structurally distinguishable effects — which we might legitimately call its **nomos**,[28] not as an **arcanum** but as a distinguishable pattern or collection of patterns made legible through a specific representational regime — such appropriation has its existence only in practice. It begins in practice, at every moment is carried out in practice, and produces the world from which later practices must proceed. These practices are ontic manifestations of the ontological capacity for sovereignty.

"Citadel" is a well-chosen term in that it implies an attempt to protect oneself from that which is without. What is the "outside" against which the wealthy must erect barriers? It is the concretely representational space of the ghetto, which ever knocks at the door of the citadel. If the wealthy are uncareful, the ghetto's residents might revolt and expropriate the citadel dwellers. Even worse, citadel dwellers might suddenly find themselves impecunious and on their way to a ghettoized space. The fear, in short, is that the citadel dweller might be declared by the market to be **homo sacer**, to be outside the economic–political order that permits social flourishing to occur and consequently to

be permanently at risk of experiencing violence. Poverty and wealth, we have seen, must not merely be produced but maintained through the ongoing practices that master space in a specific way. The divide between rich and poor must be "policed" in the broadest sense of the term. In ghettoized spaces, this often involves encountering "the police" as an institution authorized to use lethal force against enemies of the law, and to the extent that poverty is always an enemy of the law of the bourgeois, all those who are ghettoized or who representationally correspond to the ideal of what members of ghettoized spaces ought to look like are legitimate potential targets of institutionalized police.

None of these ontically concrete practices in constant pursuit of the ideal of sovereignty fundamentally alter either the potentiality of an existent to act in the world or the ontologically precarious quality of all existence, i.e., its finality. The pursuit of sovereignty is the desire for "power after power ceasing only in death" that Hobbes identifies, which derives not merely from the effect of natural "fancies" inherent to specific beings but from buying into the discursive regimes, simulations, and ideologies that constantly produce insecurity. Property rights, the police, systems of surveillance, moral–ethical doctrines, and so forth mediate and limit the capacity of beings to act in the world in the ways necessary to reproduce and transform their own existence, construing some as **homines sacri** while permitting others to appear to themselves as Sovereign.

In this context, Melville's Bartleby (1990 [1853]) is an interesting figure because he is the "enemy of the law" **par excellence**. Bartleby's straightforward rejection of necessity, his "I prefer not to," as it is embodied in the commands and requests of his employer, the Man of the Law, cannot be contested within the very terms of necessity that he is rejecting. "Bartleby is employed, so he must work," speaks the ideology of contractual obligation. When he does not work, justifications that comport with the law of obligation must be found if he is to remain an employee. The Man of the Law is thus a "man of the law" insofar as he seeks at each moment the necessary obligation with which Bartleby is complying.[29] Given Bartleby's structurally subordinate position as an employee, there must be some sort of intelligible reason why he remains employed yet refuses to work.

But Bartleby is not bound by the logics of the Man of the Law, logics that would construe Bartleby as some sort of work-dependent **homo sacer**. Instead, Bartleby constitutes himself as sovereign by deciding on the exception. He operates according to a discursive logic totally unintelligible to the Man of the Law. Bartleby and the Man of the Law may share the same bio-material space, but it is in no way clear that the "things that represent only themselves" are identical for both of them. Bartleby the indolent, Bartleby the indigent, this Bartleby is sovereign, even as he appears from without to be bare life. The man of the law, who works that he may be secure in himself, presumes necessity where none exists. He must act as he does lest he be consigned to a worse fate. The Man of the Law would surrender mastery over his small domain were he to act as Bartleby does. Little does the Man of the Law know that Bartleby's form of mastery is freer than his own because Bartleby does not hide behind the veil of necessity. Bartleby belongs solely to himself: always vulnerable, ontologically precarious, at each moment the source of his own self-authorship in the world. But if Bartleby's life remains ontologically insecure even as Bartleby act for himself, then the pacifying figure of the declared **homo sacer** can no longer perform its palliative function. It has only ever served as a fiction.

Instead of seeking out how and where life has, from the perspective of dominant ideological and discursive regimes, been made ontologically bare, we must instead come to terms with how life is lived, how subjects act according to the laws they give themselves, and how their capacities to act in accordance with their own modes of existence actively, and sovereignly, produce the world as they experience it. This is sovereignty from the perspective of Bartleby and his kin, who appear as unnecessary excesses within the logics of bourgeois, neoliberal, biopolitical ideologies. It is precisely this space that cannot be accounted for, or which can only be accounted for as a space of the disallowed, pathological, always-already bare, that grounds all possibility of reconstruing the **nomos** of the present regime.

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## ❙ Endnotes

1. Schmitt makes this link evident when he writes, "The exception in jurisprudence is analogous to the miracle in theology" (2005 [1922]: 36). This element of Schmitt's thought is also central to Bonnie Honig's reading of him in relation to Jewish theologian Franz Rosenzweig: "I add to that [i.e., the possibility of a "secret conversation" between Schmitt and Walter Benjamin] the possibility of another such secret conversation, between Schmitt and Rosenzweig, in which neither side acknowledged the other and the stakes were also high. When we put Schmitt into dialogue with Rosenzweig on the topic of the miracle, we switch our gaze from sovereign to

popular power or to sovereignty as implicated in and dependent upon popular power" (2009: 89).

2. For both forms of power, the word *potestas* corresponds in some accounts to potential, a term that will become important for my purposes. See Elshtain 2008: 38–39, as well as Agamben 1999 [1993]: 254.

3. I draw the distinction between "precariousness" as an ontologically shared quality of all existent entities and "precarity" as the socially distributed conditions that engender life or suppress it from Judith Butler in Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable? (2010 [2009]: 2–3).

4. This is a creation of zoē in the sense that the ties of community are juridically withdrawn from homo sacer. To the extent that Agamben typically seems to equate the juridical with life, withdrawing the protections of the juridical is thus by definition what creates bare life.

5. It could be objected that my use of topological/topographical language is inappropriate when describing the sovereign–homo sacer relationship and can only be applied to spaces of exception. Any concrete relationship between these figures must take place materially, which thusly produces space, i.e., a topography. It is therefore justifiable to think of the abstract, ideal relationship as topological. Indeed, much of this article is devoted to emphasizing the spatial (and thus topological) quality of ideation.

6. Agamben's response, as I understand him, would likely be something along the lines of, "But killing the sovereign does not constitute him as homo sacer. It constitutes him as dead. Homo sacer is a form of life, one that is not bios because the law that creates social life does not hold for it. The Sovereign, on the other hand, is covered by the law, even when he has suspended its normal operation."

What makes homo sacer a distinct form of life, though, is its proximity to a power that expresses itself ultimately in killing. It is not the ban alone that makes homo sacer but homo sacer's perpetual proximity to death. Even without the law's protections, ethical forms of communal life are still possible. Indeed, they are what make the law possible. Homo sacer only exists to the extent that it might be killed. This possibility, this virtuality, obtains for the Sovereign as for any other. We see this clearly in the transition from the state of nature into society because the figure that becomes sovereign had just (concretely) been homo sacer precisely because it existed in relation to other homines sacri/sovereigns as a figure that could be killed, though not necessarily killed without recompense. The Sovereign may still be killed, meaning that the shift from state of nature to the juridical order is purely topographical.

An alternative, far cruder way of putting this point is that Agamben's study ends by discovering the presumptions with which Foucault's account of biopolitics begins: with power immanent at every moment to its own exercise.

7. Agamben's reading finds some basis in Foucault's account of biopolitics and biopower. For example, Foucault writes, "If one can apply the term bio-history to the pressures through which the movements of life and the processes of history interfere with one another, one would have to speak of bio-power to designate what brought life and its mechanisms into the realm of explicit calculations and made knowledge-power an agent of transformation of human life. It is not that life has been totally integrated into techniques that govern and administer it; it constantly escapes them. ... But what might be called a society's 'threshold of modernity' has been reached when the life of the species is wagered on its own political strategies. ... [M]odern man is an animal whose politics places his existence as a living being in question" (1990 [1976]: 143).

Foucault clarifies this point a bit in his lecture series of 1976, "Society Must Be Defended": "This excess of biopower appears when it becomes technologically and politically possible for man not only to manage life but to make it proliferate, to create living matter, to build the monster, and, ultimately, to build viruses that cannot be controlled and that are universally destructive. This formidable extension of biopower, unlike what I was just saying about atomic power, will put it beyond all human sovereignty" (2003 [1997]: 254).

There is a whole school of literature since Foucault that has taken as its object exactly these mechanisms of the multiplication of and intervention into the vital processes of life-formation. As Maurizio Lazzarato puts it in a short essay, "The patenting of the human genome and the development of artificial intelligence; biotechnology and the harnessing of life's forces for work, trace a new cartography of biopowers. These strategies put in question the forms of life itself" (2002: 100). Agamben touches on some of these specific strategies at the end of Homo Sacer when he references "the body of Karen Quinlan or the overcomatose person" for whom "biological life — which the machines are keeping functional by artificial respiration, pumping blood into the arteries, and regulating the blood temperature — has been entirely separated from the form of life that bore the name Karen Quinlan: her life becomes (or at least seems to become) pure zoē" (1998 [1995]: 186). Here "life" and "form of life" are separated through technologies that multiply life in an unrecognizable form.

My focus in this paper is less on "biopower" in the sense of the techniques of control that take life and the body as their direct object of study, control, regulation, and multiplication but instead on "biopolitics" as the structural distribution of precarity and potential vitality. This structural distribution of life and death is, of course, always carried out in relation to the forms of biopower historically present in a given society. The way that the health of a body is conceptualized is, as Foucault demonstrates through his discussion of the bourgeois body, the basis for understanding how the health of a body politic can also be maintained. Bodies

that cannot be kept healthy or that cannot be made to accord with the optimizable imago of health present a pathological threat to the society as a whole, which is the sense in which the "society must be defended" against itself.

When this "secret" or "coded war" takes the form of a medicalized attempt to multiply life for society as a whole, then the logics of distribution is "racist" in some sense. Indeed, to have a minority element of the body politic that can be cast as inherently deviant or pathological and thus either be exterminated through genocide or slowly and gradually be deprived the necessities of life while also being blamed for its inability to flourish is a convenient technique of biopower present in contemporary capitalist societies. Migrants, welfare recipients, criminals, refugees, and so forth are forms of life imaginatively incompatible with the body politic's health. Migration must consequently have ceased and deportation increased; welfare must be restricted, stopped, or put under draconian work or drug testing requirements; criminals must be stripped of their rights, denied employment, and permanently disparaged; and refugees must be denied both aid and asylum.

While Lazzarato calls for a focus on the medical and scientific technologies that modify life, and while other have taken him up in the study thereof (Braun 2007; Dillon and Lobo-Guerrero 2008; Rose 2001), it seems to me that the most important mechanisms operative today when considering the biopolitical quality of contemporary society are not those of medicalized intervention in the form of a "molecular politics" but instead of distributional regimes that operate in a similar manner to the more directly scientific racisms analyzed by Foucault but without as direct a connection to genetic bases for the distributive determinations. Instead, factors such as educational performance, preparedness for the workforce, and criminal history function to justify providing resources to some and denying them to others. This is arguably why Foucault turned to markets rather than medicine as he sought to trace the development of biopolitical logics. To the extent that such distributional regimes map onto the same hierarchies that colonial and scientific racism helped to develop is more a matter of historical contingency than logical necessity, even as the symbolic relationships that are made regular have political effects that go beyond what is logically defensible within the veridical regime that focuses on "social pathologies." We shall explore this topic in greater sociological depth below in the context of U.S. anti-black racism, which feeds off prior logics rooted in scientific racism but largely displaces those logics into alternative regimes of distributional decision-making.

8. If one reads this chapter after spending too much time reading Agamben, it is difficult not to be struck by the first paragraph, in which Foucault basically anticipates in advance every argument Agamben will raise, from a discussion of the Roman roots of the "power over life and death," to an active acknowledgment that sovereignty as a form of power had of course been

concerned with life and could even expose it to death, to delinking "the decision" (in this case, the decision to wage war) from this exposure (Foucault 1990 [1976]): 135, 137). Perhaps it was a tacit response to Schmitt, or at least the line of Schmittian thinking that Agamben eventually picks up.

9. This study is in some sense continued by Wendy Brown in Undoing the Demos: Neoliberalism's Stealth Revolution (2015), though she does not primarily use the language of biopolitics to do so.

10. Agamben's concluding few pages in Homo Sacer do move away from an exclusive focus on the logics of sovereignty to consider how biopolitics play out historically. This far more interesting account is picked up and developed in Remnants of Auschwitz: The Witness and the Archive (2002 [1998]), which captures the biopolitical moment that seems to elude Agamben throughout Homo Sacer.

11. Sergei Prozorov's Foucault, Freedom, and Sovereignty (2007) has been highly influential to my thinking in these matters and is one of the more interesting readings of both Foucault and Agamben that I have encountered.

12. This phrasing borrows from Italo Calvino's short story "A Sign in Space," included in Cosmicomics (1968 [1965]), in which Calvino explores the origin of signs, and thus also of space and thought. He touches simultaneously on the logics of simulation, genealogy, sovereignty, authorship, signification, and spatiology. For example:

"I went on looking, and signs kept growing thicker in space; from all the worlds anybody who had an opportunity invariably left his mark in space somehow; and our world, too, every time I turned, I found more crowded, so that world and space seemed the mirror of each other, both minutely adorned with hieroglyphics and ideograms, each of which might be a sign and might not be: a calcareous concretion on basalt, a crest raised by the wind on the clotted sand of the desert, the arrangement of the eyes in a peacock's tail (gradually, living among signs had led us to see signs in countless things that, before, were there, marking nothing but their own presence; they had been transformed into the sign of themselves and had been added to the series of signs made on purpose by those who meant to make a sign), the fire-streaks against a wall of schistose rock, the four-hundred-and-twenty-seventh groove — slightly crooked — of the cornice of a tomb's pediment, a sequence of streaks on a video during a thunderstorm (the series of signs was multiplied in the series of the signs of signs, of signs repeated countless times always the same and always somehow different because to the purposely made sign you had to add the sign that had happened there by chance), the badly inked tail of the letter R in an evening newspaper joined to a thready imperfection in the paper, one among the eight hundred thousand flakings of a tarred wall in the Melbourne docks, the curve of a graph, a skid-mark on

the asphalt, a chromosome ...

In the universe now there was no longer a container and a thing contained, but only a general thickness of signs superimposed and coagulated, occupying the whole volume of space; it was constantly being dotted, minutely, a network of lines and scratches and reliefs and engravings; the universe was scrawled over on all sides, along all its dimensions. There was no longer any way to establish a point of reference: the Galaxy went on turning and I could no longer count the revolutions, any point could be the point of departure, any sign heaped up with the others could be mine, but discovering it would have served no purpose, because it was clear that, independent of signs, space didn't exist and perhaps had never existed" (Ibid: 38–39).

13. Caraccioli is concerned with the ways that international relations theories of space have ignored the body as a lived site and instead replaced it with formal abstractions that serve as the template for a resulting international order. Rather than seeing the fiction of the international system as a necessity, "The phenomenology of the body teaches us that the meaning of inter-national space is determined by who is writing its narratives, constituting global practices and identities through the embodied and local circumstances we all share" (2011: 100).

14. In his search for the secret, hidden heart of sovereignty, Agamben's study in Homo Sacer opposes the apparent to the actual and participates in the dualist ontology Nietzsche deconstructs.

15. "[P]ain is the most powerful aid to mnemonics" (Nietzsche 1989 [1887]: 61 [II.3]).

16. Lefebvre argues that the representation that transforms these intersecting flows into a singular and unified object also tends to reify the social being of the humans who inhabit it. Thus, a "critique of space" is required to reveal the material relations in which humans as social beings are embedded.

Another fruitful take on the role that social life plays in constituting perception can be found in William Connolly's essay "The Vicissitudes of Experience," in which he reads "Merleau-Ponty, Michel Foucault, and Gilles Deleuze into conversation with each other and with recent work in neuroscience" (Connolly 2011: 43). Connolly emphasizes that even perception is, for the most part, not an inbuilt feature of human experience but rather the effect of how we are socialized into perceiving. This chapter precedes his analysis of fascist bodily performativities in Aspirational Fascism by roughly six years but is clearly in a related space of analysis.

17. "[I]ndividuals are always-already interpellated by ideology as subjects, which necessarily leads us to one last proposition: individuals are always-already subjects. Hence individuals are 'abstract' with respect to the subjects, which they always-already are" (Althusser 2001

[1970]: 119).

18. I am not generally a regular listener of This American Life. However, their show, as well as in-depth journalism more generally, is an excellent source for real-world experiences that inhabit the crucial political spaces with which political theory ought to concern itself. Political theory is itself "dead and undialectical," to borrow a Foucauldian phrasing, to the extent that it is not concerned with actual political struggle. This comment may seem out of place given the abstract character of the analysis that has preceded this point. But for all its abstractions, I am at least convinced that there are real political implications of diagnosing the relationship between the lived–conceived–perceived triad of space as well as the movement from appropriation to distribution to production.

19. I have explored these spatial practices through a close reading of a This American Life podcast in "Sovereignty in the City: The Tacticalization of 'Disallowed' Life" (2017).

20. Again, "city" is an incredibly broad concept encompassing a variety of spatial milieus. Thus, to speak of the "spatial distribution of U.S. cities" is to risk overgeneralization in potentially problematic ways. The concept of nomos is helpful in this regard, as we shall see.

21. At the very least, a third form of residency could be added to this list: immobile nomadism. In a series of interviews in the late 1990s and early 2000s, Daniel Kerr (2016) delved into the daily life patterns of "unhoused" persons in Cleveland, Ohio. Interview subjects described a sense of immobility that increasingly constrained them as the variety of cheap housing and well-paying short-term employment options disappeared. At the same time, the interview subjects often had to walk miles and miles each day to travel from a place to sleep to a place to work to a place to eat.

A migratory life masters space as much as any other series of spatial practices, but in the instances Kerr documents, this way of life clearly takes place within rather than contesting the dominant mode of land appropriation. It is certainly worlds, not to mention millennia, apart from the nomads described by James Scott (2017), who would also move about to find food yet who, according to the available evidence, seemed to live lives of comparative abundance when contrasted with unhoused Clevelanders. Even this ancient migratory spatial appropriation may have constituted something like a nomos.

22. Marcuse, writing in the 1990s, was seeking to account for ghettos that were "new" as of the several decades prior, so in that sense, the spatial formation may indeed have been novel. Even if not, his typology is still broadly helpful for thinking through how space and material possibilities are distributed.

23. To clarify against one potential misreading of the preceding, the argument is not that all (or even most) impoverished residents of urban spaces are black, nor is it to argue that most black people are residents of impoverished urban spaces. Rather, the argument is that race has become symbolically identified with a particular space, and this symbolical identification continues to have concrete effects in how space is appropriated and distributed.

24. This article is listed in the book in which it is included as having been adapted from the previous one by Anderson, though there is little noticeable similarity between the two.

25. This may be the reason that Foucault's "Society Must Be Defended" begins with the emergence of race and ends with biopolitics. For example, he states the following in his final lecture of that series: "It is, I think, at this point [the point where a regime of power justified by the preservation of life can take action to kill] that racism intervenes. I am certainly not saying that racism was invented at this time. It had already been inexistence for a very long time. But I think it functioned elsewhere. It is indeed the emergence of this biopower that inscribes it in the mechanisms of the State. It is at this moment that racism is inscribed as the basic mechanism of power, as it is exercised in modern States. As a result, the modern State can scarcely function without becoming involved with racism at some point, within certain limits and subject to certain conditions" (2003 [1997]: 254, emphasis mine).

26. This phrasing is from Timothy Luke (Spring 1993: 254–255), who is commenting on the implications of dialogicality in the context of realist beliefs in the international system of states, as well as in a world in which states function as the basic model of international activity: "Writing is reading. Reading is writing. The unraveling of the state today, or the loosening of its jurisdiction(s), echoes the cacophony of new coding games made articulate by modernization's encirclement of nature and globalization of exchange since 1945. New social forces beyond the state, such as the market, science, the intelligentsia, technology, the mas consuming/producing public, medicine, or even global ecology, find alternative institutional agencies that allow them to write over/against/for and speak to/against/for the state. ... New dictions are fabricating their own codes of power, spaces of operation, frames of time, and signs of authority in the many currents of the global flow."

See also Patchen Markell (2003: 119–120): "On my reading, the crucial connection between the pursuit of recognition and social subordination lies in the fact that the pursuit of recognition involves a failure of acknowledgment of one of the basic circumstances of human action — the fact that action is always, ultimately, interaction, and that this interaction introduces an ineliminable contingency into life among others. This circumstance is, in a certain respect, a limitation on our agency, at least as long as agency is understood in terms of sovereignty [or in terms of its correspondence to the formal concept of sovereignty] — but it is also the enabling condition of agency and freedom themselves."

27. Because one is choosing specific attachments, this is clearly not a Kantian sense of self-legislation.

28. Schmitt would perhaps take this to be a misuse of the term because it is focused on distribution, which is only made possible by appropriation. Further, as discussed above, Schmitt distinguishes that not every new appropriation inaugurates a new nomos. The implications of Schmitt's analysis of nomos and its derivation from nemein would seem to indicate that every spatial order, at whatever scale, has a nomos, a way of dividing the space in use, that can be discerned. So even as he states that "for us, nomos is a matter of the fundamental process of apportioning space that is essential to every historical epoch — a matter of the structure-determining convergence of order and orientation in the cohabitation of peoples on this now scientifically surveyed planet," the sense in which I use it here is closer to the "nomos by which a tribe, a retinue, or a people becomes settled, i.e., by which it becomes historically situated and turns a part of the earth's surface into the force-field of a particular order, becomes visible in the appropriation of land and in the founding of a city or a colony" (2006 [1950]: 78, 70).

29. Giorgio Agamben makes essentially this same point in his reading of Bartleby by noting that the Man of the Law turns to books about the (un)freedom of the will in order to comprehend Bartleby's rejection of his simple orders (1999 [1993]: 254). Agamben's essay is fascinating and is largely why I have turned my attention to Bartleby in the first place. However, Agamben reads Bartleby somewhat narrowly as a paragon of potentiality rather than a being that is at each moment actualized. What Bartleby offers to us is not a lesson about potentiality but about resistance — as well as its potentially nihilistic tendencies. It is no accident that Bartleby, by refusing to eat, comes closer to withering away than actively to dying.

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# The Tragedy of the Commonplace: Clichés in the Age of Copyright

Jakob Norberg

Garrett Hardin's 1968 article "The Tragedy of the Commons" seeks to explain how collectives end up spoiling the very resources on which they depend. The story begins with an open pasture, the commons. Each herdsman in the area who can keep cattle on this open pasture will do so, to feed them and thereby sustain his own existence. And each herdsman will let as many of his animals graze as he possibly can, since it comes at no cost. Yet the pasture cannot possibly nourish such a large number of animals without interruption and the quality of the shared lands will start to deteriorate. The imagined pasture will be spoiled.

A pasture open to all will be ruined by all; this is Hardin's conclusion. The question is how to prevent the destruction of a shared asset, or avert the "tragedy," defined as the "remorseless working of things" (Hardin 1968: 1244). How do we preserve the pasture from overgrazing? Or how, to introduce other examples, do we counteract overfishing in the deep seas or pollution of the air? The problem of protecting the ocean and the atmosphere are particularly challenging, because the air and waters are perpetually used by all and "cannot readily be fenced" (Hardin 1968: 1245). It is possible to close off and divide up an open pasture among property owners who will prudently manage their plots, but some commons elude the imposition of boundaries, making the tragedy seem inescapable.

Yet there are also examples of commons invulnerable to overexploitation and hence immune to tragedy. They are not to be found in the domain of natural resources. Something not quite as tangible, such as knowledge, would be one example. Once an insight has been formulated and can be transferred from one mind to another, it can be difficult to exclude people from appropriating it. But one person's acquaintance with a particular insight does not necessarily reduce other people's opportunity to benefit from it (Hess and Ohlin 2011). Unlike shared grazing lands, a piece of knowledge or an idea in most cases constitutes a "nonsubtractive resource" (Hess and Ohlin 2011: 5). My knowledge of Eurasian geography, for instance, does not subtract from yours.

Language represents yet another example of a nonsubtractive commons: it is a shared resource, it belongs to us all, and words are never consumed, no matter how often we use them. Regardless of how greedy or reckless we might be, no tragedy threatens our resources of expression and communication. But this is not always so. There are cases in which language, or rather particular formulations, become subject to a dynamic much like the tragedy of the commons. Such a dynamic unfolds under the name of the cliché, our term for expressions that have lost their value through a process of repetition and overexposure. Formulations that we use constantly, and consequently encounter constantly, at some point do lose their attractive qualities; they no longer seem witty, clever or illuminating to us (Amossy 1982).

Our shared stock of expressions does in certain cases represent a commons vulnerable to spoiling through overexploitation by a mass of individual speakers, and no area of language can be easily fenced off. As we shall see, definitions and descriptions of the cliché even rely on a persistent imagery of exhaustion, wear and tear, and gradual waste, an imagery of erosive overuse. There seems to be something we can legitimately call the **tragedy of the commonplace** through which formulations lose their value. As users of search engines, we are perhaps more attuned to how the value of words, their actual monetary value, increases with their ubiquity. The more people search for a word online, the higher the price for an advertisement connected to this word; popularity equals worth (Kaplan 2014). But while the topic of the decaying value of supposedly overused words and expressions might seem curious

one, it nevertheless merits our attention, because it exhibits how language constitutes a contested type of commons, a resource used by all and fought over by many. What strategies, I will also ask, are available to those who wish to protect shared verbal resources from overuse?

## The Problem of the Commons in the Realm of Aesthetics

A cliché, a 1972 dictionary of literary terms states, is a word, phrase or expression that "has lost its originality and impact through constant and prolonged use" (Shaw 1972: 79). The definition seems uncontroversial. Contemporary editors can without any further elaboration declare that clichés are simply "overused expressions": "Once these expressions were original but today they are stale and trite" (Jaderstrom and Miller 2005: 28). But many words and phrases appear constantly and yet no one speaks of their depletion. The critic Laurence Lerner points out that formulas such as "What is the time?, good evening, Afraid we must be going now, are commonplaces that do not wear out" and that metaphors such as the "legs of the table" can become dead metaphors without anyone expressing irritation (Lerner 1956: 250). These everyday phrases continue to do their jobs quietly and attract little attention; constant use does not necessarily entail overuse.

But some phrases, perhaps especially those that were once meant to be original and ingenious and possessed some special "freshness," appear to lose those features over time (Lerner 1956: 250). In an article entitled "Clichés," two veteran editors ask whether "people in your company use the following overused expressions? 24/7, branding, cautiously optimistic, cash cow, corporate culture, cutting edge" etc. (Jaderstrom and Miller 2005: 28). The sleek and clever phrases of corporate jargon are afflicted by the problem of overuse in a way that formulaic greetings are not, and we register the process by calling them clichés. Clichés are, one can say, high-profile expressions with relatively short and hence noticeable life cycles. The "velocity of adoption" also speed up the process of collective "abandonment" (Berger and le Mens 2009: 8146). Clichés are thus phrases that have become victims of "their own early success" (Hargraves 2014: 11). Consider the call to "think outside the box," a management consultant catchphrase that seems to have emerged in the 1970s (Kihn 2005). This is, or once was, a nifty way of calling for unorthodox thinking; it paints a simple but vivid picture of how to break out of a habitual frame. Now most of us cannot hear the exhortation without rolling our eyes; it is, according to an editor of the Oxford English Dictionary, about "as clichéd as it gets" (Kihn 2005).

The dynamic can be understood as a process quite like the tragedy of the commons. A certain phrase or expression is perceived to be smart, elegant, or evocative in some way. The expression attracts speakers who deploy it in the hope of achieving some effect. Perhaps they seek to mobilize and inspire a corporate audience, seem creative or knowing, or maybe they just want to appear commonsensical or make sure that what they say is comprehensible. But the increasing use leads to the phrase's perceived overexposure and, ultimately, its explicit classification as a cliché – over time, some people, perhaps most, begin to judge it as worn out, unoriginal, stale; "repeated exposure" leads to a "dramatic drop off" in perceived vivacity (Clune 2013: 3). The collective of speakers who relied on the phrase to profit from its qualities waste those very qualities by means of their repeated use, at least in the eyes of the more sensitive members of the linguistic community, especially alert to the "dulling" of old ideas and formulations (Davis 1997: 247).

Garrett Hardin himself speaks in his article on the "evils of the commons in matters of pleasure" (1968: 1248). It is clear enough that the tragedy of the commons applies to areas that are either unprotected against forms of subtraction, for instance grazing and fishing, or available for different kinds of waste disposal; people want to drive, factories want to produce, but the commons, the air we breathe, ends up dangerously polluted. But Hardin also provides examples of the tragedy of the commons in the realm of sensory pleasure. There is, for instance, no restriction on the "propagation of sound waves in the public medium" (Hardin 1968: 1248). Stores and other facilities play music to achieve some desired effect, say to sooth or stimulate shoppers, but the cumulative effect is that the public is at all times "assaulted with mindless music, without its consent" (Hardin 1968: 1248). In this case, the regrettable end result of the development is not spoiled lands and hungry cattle, overfished oceans or toxic smog, but frayed nerves. It is exhausting to move through cacophony, a polluted aesthetic environment; there are mini-tragedies in the realm of mental life.

The tragedy of the commonplace likewise represents a kind of creeping attack on human sensibility. A phrase first seems to capture and express something about the world or it possesses some particular quality, but through

overuse by a mass of speakers, by unfortunate ubiquity, it ceases to be engaging or illuminating and instead becomes annoying. The problem here is not overload as a result of an endless sensory assault, but perhaps a kind of low-level boredom and irritation. To paraphrase Hardin, clichés could be categorized as an evil of the commons in the realm of the aesthetic.

## The Tragedy of the Commonplace and the Failure of Regulation

A cliché, Merriam-Webster states, is a "trite phrase or expression" and in the discussion of synonyms that follows, trite is said to apply to "a once effective phrase or idea spoiled from long familiarity" (Merriam-Webster 2009: 231 and 1340). That which is trite has been worn out. The Webster section on etymology further informs the reader that trite comes from the past principle of the Latin **terere**, which means to rub or wear away. A cliché defined as a trite expression is a formulation that has been worn out, used to heavily or used for too long, gradually wasted by iteration; the cliché is understood through images of erosion, as if it were an overgrazed shared plot of land. But how does one prevent such wear and tear, the slow degradation through use?

Hardin does address measures that would halt or prevent overgrazing. To avoid the tragedy, he writes, the commons simply have to be "abandoned" (Hardin 1968:1248). When it comes to gathering food for animals and people, abandoning the commons means enclosing farmland and restricting pastures, hunting and fishing areas. Such transfers of "inefficiently managed common lands" into the hands of single owners allow – that is the idea – for more careful preservation and greater investment, which in turn enhances agricultural production in a way that is beneficial to all (Boyle 2003: 35). Privatization of common lands supported and enforced by a state with means of coercion is the adequate response to the tragedy of the commons; the "world is best managed when divided among private owners" (Carol Rose 1986: 712).

Much of the discussion about Hardin's essay has questioned the supposed choice between tragedy and coercively enforced privatization. The economist Elinor Ostrom's work on the management of the commons constitutes the most influential intervention in this debate. Against Hardin's stark parable, Ostrom marshals a wealth of empirical accounts of successfully managed commons and demonstrates that groups can effectively sustain shared resources, provided they have developed functioning mechanisms for conflict resolution and are able to define geographical boundaries and social membership. Hardin comes to his austere conclusion and suggests only a narrow set of measures, Ostrom argues, because he subscribes to a set of questionable assumptions, for instance that individuals who benefit from the commons do not communicate with each other, that they only act in their self-interest, and are insensitive to customs and other collective practices (Hess and Ostrom 2011: 11). Hardin's pastoralist, Rob Nixon writes, appears as a strangely monadic figure "exhibiting no social ties and existing, with regard to land use, outside of any evident cultural constraints, taboos, customary decrees, or collectively negotiated compromises" (Nixon 2012: 595).

But the problem of triteness, worn-out phrases and expressions, may prove intractable, for the simple reason that language cannot so easily be fenced off like fields and meadows and that other sanctions may remain ineffective. Does language by its nature resist processes of privatization and government coercion? One could think of analogous processes to privatization and coercion: government restrictions on use could correspond to censorship, privatization to authorship and copyright.

Censorship involves authorities of some kind, say a state or a church, examining and forbidding utterances that are politically or socially nonconformist (Darnton 2014). Publishing houses are closed down, newspaper offices vacated, books banned, passages edited out of individual texts, and authors persecuted. The history of such repressive control of public communication is long and far from concluded, but censorship is typically imposed to forestall rebellion, or at least the expression and dissemination of morally objectionable thoughts; it is not put in place to protect neat phrases from possible future overuse. Censorship of clichés would be overkill.

The idea that an author's rights over his or her text represents a privatization of language deserves more scrutiny. As is well known, ownership over a particular text has not always been a simple "fact emerging from the text's composition" (Fitzpatrick 2011: 58); copyright is a fairly recent legal institution. It was only over the course of the eighteenth century that texts emerged as a kind of property belonging to their authors (rather than the printer, the book seller and other parties involved in book production and distribution), a process that can be traced through a sequence of legal battles and public debates (Mark Rose 1993; Bosse 1981).

Accompanying and underpinning this gradual and contentious reform in the domain of legislation was a set of modern assumptions about authorship, namely that the individual author who writes a text expresses his or her original ideas in a specific form and that particular utterances have their source in particular, creative minds. Yet in the legal context, the image of the creative author was intimately connected to a theory of incentives: writers protected by copyright will be well-compensated for their efforts and then also be properly inspired and incentivized to continue their efforts (Spoo 2013: 8–9). A society of ownership is more productive – that is one justification for intellectual property, but also for the transfer of common, mismanaged lands into private control of dedicated individuals.

The establishment of author's rights nevertheless does not amount to a neat privatization of areas of language, which would forestall erosive overuse of clever phrases. Eighteenth-century champions of authors' rights, the literary scholar Mark Rose points out, tended to argue that literary property should be seen as analogous to real estate, all in order to stabilize rhetorically the conception of the author as indisputable owner of a work (Mark Rose 1993: 7–8). Yet nobody can completely prevent the further (erosive) use of specific combinations of words into phrases that then partly make up "owned" texts; the phrases still function as a resource accessible to all and are hence characterized by "ephemeral ownability" (Apter 2009: 113). A commercial entertainment company with copyrighted figures such as Disney can "practice good husbandry of its characters" to avoid cultural overexposure, but it is quite a bit harder to prevent the further circulation of well-composed sentences or witty expressions (Landes and Posner 2001: 13). And yet attempts to claim legal ownership over words and word combinations do take place: the artist Taylor Swift has successfully managed to trademark phrases such as "this sick beat," which means that they cannot be used by others for commercial purposes, say as mottos on T-shirts, guitar straps or greeting cards, without a license (Grow 2015).

In the realm of literature, the question of literary ownership is typically debated under the rubric of plagiarism, our term for alleged attempts to steal or pass off the words of another person as one's own words. If the actual source of even a single formulation is not appropriately mentioned, if the reference is suppressed, we have a case of plagiarism, which most writers, teachers, and scholars consider "the capital intellectual crime" (Posner 2007: 107). But proper citation practices do not prevent the overuse of particular phrases; it serves to channel the reader's attention in the right direction, namely to the author who once constructed it.

Rules against plagiarism and the conventions that allow for quotation hence provide no fullproof defense against triteness and are not designed to avert the particular tragedy of expressions becoming spoiled from constant use. Formulations can suffer degradation even though everyone knows who once assembled them and no plagiarism takes place. "What does not kill me makes me stronger" is a quotation that everyone knows stems from Friedrich Nietzsche, but the phrase itself has become nonetheless become a victim of its overexposure. Laws against plagiarism and perhaps even trademarked phrases might not perfectly prevent the tragedy of the commonplace.

## Strategies Against the Tragedy of the Commonplace

Neither government intervention in the form of censorship, nor privatization in the form of authorship, can or were meant to prevent expressions from being worn out by overuse. But there may still be ways to regulate and protect the shared resource of language. The linguistic community can at least suggest restrictions on its own use of phrases and enforce those restrictions by means of softer, reputational pressures. Which strategies are available?

Irritated by clichés, vigilant readers and listeners sometimes put together lists of clichés, partly to provide an amusing look at popular linguistic tics but not infrequently to enjoin speakers to stay away from exhausted phrases. There are lists of political clichés, lists of sports clichés, lists of business clichés, and so on. Here is the announcement of one recent list, which appeared in the Washington Post:

> Identifying clichés has become a favorite Washington parlor game. But might it not also open a rare window onto the struggles of writers and editors trying to think outside the box? Over the past few years, some colleagues at the Washington Post and I have played our own parlor game, assembling a list of verbal crutches, stock phrases, filler words, clichés and perpetually misused expressions that we should avoid in The Post's Sunday Outlook section—or at least think hard about before using. (Lozada 2014)

The list that follows, and that includes the expression "a favorite Washington parlor game," "think outside the box," and "offers a rare window," is entitled "Things We Do Not Say" (Lozada 2014). It represents an index of

prohibited expressions, without the support of an official authority but issued from the ranks of professional writers. The article of course is meant to be an entertaining look at verbal habits, but it is still governed by a serious notion of a good, non-repetitive and non-redundant style of journalistic writing.

A common response to clichés, then, is to record them, gather them and put them in the unenforceable quarantine of a list of expressions with some label like "12 Clichés All Writers Should Avoid" (Klems 2012) or even "681 Clichés to Avoid in Your Creative Writing" (Luke 2014). Some alert readers, or some especially cranky readers, dream of tougher measures against trite expressions, but unless they can issue an actual editorial rule for a newspaper, radio station or some other media outlet,[1] those who collect clichés must remain content with offering recommendations, with the hope that others will accept guidance in matters of style. The genre of the list is not an instrument of censorship, but an attempt to enable collective self-monitoring in the realm language.

It is doubtful whether expressions left alone for a while will one day seem fresh or interesting again; "think outside the box" is probably terminally exhausted and the linguistic community as a whole should move on. The purpose of the fight is instead to reduce irritation. In this struggle to limit annoyance, two kinds of threats are common, or two ways of trying to cordon off spoiled domains of language. The first threat is apparently benign, delivered as pedagogical advice from instructors to students, editors to writers, or expert writers to less confident ones: you ought to avoid clichés because trite expressions make your writing less interesting, less engaging, and you will lose your audience. Compilations of clichés serve as checklists or devices of self-editing for writers interested in effective communication. Regulation of language appears in the guise of rhetorical mentoring.

The second kind of threat is more aggressive. The main premise of this line of attack is that those who rely on clichés are failing as writers, that they are sloppy, lazy, or obtuse. Texts full of clichés are not the unfortunate products of educable novices or overly hasty writers; they are revealing records of mediocrity and mindlessness. Clichés, the literary critic Frank Kermode writes, "are infallible symptoms of used thinking" (2001: 27). By casting scorn on clichés, or by announcing the cliché's symptomatic significance, critics no longer seek to nudge people into more careful composition but impose reputational penalties on already committed crimes by means of public ridicule; they use shame to enforce cooperation (Jacquet 2011). With the institution of literary criticism in place in the public sphere, authors who publish their works face the prospect of being attacked, of being shamed, a deterrent to socially unwanted behavior, in this case their further, annoying use of already overused verbal resources.

In a collection of essays entitled "The War on Cliché," the author Martin Amis engages in the game of mocking authors for their reliance on cliché, and praising authors who parody "ready-made formulations" and "fossilized metaphors" (2001: 444). Kermode sums up how Amis goes about it:

> Over the years, Amis has done a lot of virtuous wincing over clichés. John Fowles is a prominent target: 'He managed a wan smile'; 'God, you're so naïve.' No expensive talk about Descartes, Marivaux, Lempriere and Aristophanes can procure a pardon for that sort of thing. Other reviewers may commend Thomas Harris for committing 'not a single ugly or dead sentence' but Amis finds enough of them to label Harris a 'serial murderer of the English language' and Hannibal 'a necropolis of prose.' (Kermode 2001: 27)

The language of punishment is telling: the writer who uses clichés perpetrates a crime for which his other virtues are no excuse; he is the target of an attack, and so on. We are no longer in the realm of instruction and advice, but in that of harsh public judgments.

Attempts to prevent overuse in language thus appear both as helpful suggestions for aspiring writers and as ridicule directed at hacks. The genres that correspond to the two approaches are the prescriptive writing style guide, on the one hand, and the damning review, on the other. One could say that the self-appointed regulators of language assume positions of monitoring at the beginning and the end of the writing process. They first try to caution people from using overused expressions, and then shame those who lacked the discipline or wit to eliminate them. In both cases, however, the cliché, a problem that arises because language is a common resource, cannot be by fought by outright censorship or protection of authors' rights. Instead, the critics of the cliché have to rely on everyone's willingness to avoid wasted areas of language for the sake of ensuring their own communicative success and maintaining their status. Here one can point out that the concept of the cliché itself is not neutrally descriptive but negatively charged and pragmatically applied precisely as a device to expose an otherwise unpunished overexploitation. There is not a "war on cliché" waged by highbrow critics and authors on some indisputably present target; the term "cliché" itself is the cultural war, a device by which to name perceived overuse and a weapon by which to fight it.

## Authors' Rights and the Cliché as Crime

In the fourteenth and fifteenth century, Hackney was a village outside of London surrounded by grasslands and known for the horses bred and pastured there. Riding horses became so closely associated with the place that the word, hackney, became a standard term for horses. And since these riding horses were often hired out, the word also came to refer to horses or carriages, and later cars, let out for common hire. From the seventeenth century on, a "hack" also came to designate person who works for mercenary reasons – a writer, journalist or propagandist for hire. But yet another meaning emerged; horses for hire, or horses ridden by any number of people rather than in the possession of a single person, were typically overworked. This perception then influenced the meaning of the word hackneyed, which began to refer figuratively to "something that was overused to the point of drudgery" (Quinion 2002).

Hackneyed, the dictionary tells us, belongs to the same crowd of words as trite and threadbare; hackneyed phrases or slogans are lacking in freshness and originality, having lost their appeal or interest through overuse. Once again, images that surround the concept of the cliché recall processes of gradual spoiling. Language may be a non-depletable resource, but as the metaphors of perpetual use and exhaustion imply, the interest or effectiveness of particular word combinations, as opposed to the words themselves, can in fact be wasted, and to prevent it, speakers and writers are continually cautioned and shamed by language's self-appointed guardians.

To refer to the author Martin Amis once again: "'He managed a wan smile'; 'God, you're so naïve.' No expensive talk […] can procure a pardon for that sort of thing" (Kermode 2001: 27). The use of clichés apparently constitutes a near-criminal offense, a crime in the realm of style perhaps, or some wrongdoing in the realm of pleasure. What exactly does the criminal act consist in? Of course, those who now urge us to "think outside the box" do nothing but annoy us. The phrase has become offensively **under**-stimulating and its continued circulation pollutes the shared environment; every cliché is a kind of waste product and it is this littering of our public discursive spaces that is criminal.

But the forensic investigation has not been concluded. The cliché is not only an irritation to others, but a revelation: the person who inserts overused phrases in written and spoken language exposes him- or herself as uncreative, as someone who cannot or does not want to assemble a novel formulation but relies on the already said. This is a speaker who apparently wants to benefit from the shared resource, the stock of formulations to which all speakers have access but does not seem overly concerned with making a contribution to that stock. In a sense, the speaker who deploys an already composed and available phrase reveals a desire to obtain some benefit without much effort. When a critic censures a writer for using outworn phrases and labels his or her style clichéd, we may be witnessing an attempt to point to the pollution of the aesthetic environment, but also to expose parasitical behavior.

The analysis of any type of commons, Charlotte Hess and Elinor Ostrom writes, "must involve the rules, decisions and behaviors people make in groups in relation to their shared resource" (2011: 10). The basic problem that these group then have to address is the problem of free riding, "where one reaps the benefits from the commons without contributing to its maintenance" (Hess and Ostrom 2011: 10). Language, too, is a shared resource, and the cliché designates the crime of using the shared means to achieve some goal without much independent effort, whatever that goal may be (say producing a text of 3,000 words in one evening). The cliché constitutes a problem of free riding, of using but not contributing to the commons, and the lack of creativity it reveals simultaneously bespeaks a weak commitment to the collective's resources, to the task of protecting and refreshing them. This reasoning partly sheds light, I think, on the half-serious righteousness of a "war on cliché" and the talk of punishment and pardon. The continued use of already overused expressions represents both the offense of producing an annoyance and the offense of free riding, or a failure to keep waste out of our aesthetic environment as well as a failure to regenerate that environment.

The demand that one should try to introduce something new to the language on which one relies is particularly pronounced in the age of author's rights. As mentioned, author's rights were meant to allow authors to profit from their labor. After they invest their time and effort in writing a book, authors should be able to gain recognition from its distribution and consumption by the public; the use of language is their livelihood in a market. This conception of author's rights, established at the end of the eighteenth century, is, as most students of literature know, tied to Romantic notions of originality and individuality. Authors struggling to make ends meet after the decline of patronage, early eighteenth-century authors began to claim ownership over texts by invoking their creative spirit; genius and copyright belonged together from the very beginning (Woodmansee 1984). When we speak of an author

today, we mean "an individual who is the sole creator of unique 'works' the originality of which warrants their protection under laws of intellectual property known as 'copyright' or 'author's rights'" (Woodmannsee 1992: 279). Viewed legally and economically, literary originality allows us to link a particular person to a particular text in the market for books.

This modern conception of authorship and its economy helps explain the vitriol against the cliché, especially if spotted in texts of any kind for which someone can expect some kind of reward, whether it is monetary or reputational. When an author in the sense of a sole creator relies on previously created and indeed overused phrases, he or she betrays the core premise of author's rights, namely the idea that the claims of authorship and literary ownership rest on original expression, which in turn is a manifestation of individual personality. Whether consciously or not, the writer who relies on clichés is offering us shared resources as if they were private or tries to secure compensation for an investment they have not really made. In a sense, the author's name should simply not be attached to the work, for it does not fully belong to her; the cliché attenuates the link between text and person that the signature asserts.

The cliché or the overused expression appears as an author's failure to meet the interest in stimulating variety, but also his or her failure to honor the legally and economically significant imperative of originality. The two are distinct. Quintillian, the ancient teacher of rhetoric, could complain about orators who relied too heavily on already established formulations with a proven record of success; a sophisticated public would, he claimed, reject well-known **loci communes** as they would reject, with disgust, a plate of cold leftovers (Coenen 2009: 401). Even in ancient times, it seems, publics demanded novelty, although the pace of the cultural metabolism was likely much slower then; our current media climate, governed by the imperatives of fast capitalism, has quickened the production of waste – cultural consumption is accelerating (Agger 2004).

The gradual establishment and consolidation of author's rights over their works in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century added to the aesthetic demand for variety and newness the modern demand for recognizable individuality. In a literary market, the name of the author functions like the name of a manufacturer or company – it establishes the "brand identity" of the work, all in order to assure customers of quality (Posner 2007: 69). It is in this context that the reliance on allegedly exhausted, clearly unoriginal phrases becomes a problem. The critique of the cliché, mobilized by figures such as Martin Amis, works as a cultural alarm system for the protection of authorship as an institution that links individual, expressive writing to rewards in a cultural market.

## The Cliché and the Propertization of Literature

In this context, I offer the following hypothesis: under the modern regime of literary property rights, the exasperation with the cliché stands in some proportion to the benefit that someone expects to derive from an utterance. Athletes compelled to give interviews frequently say just what everyone else is always saying ("We're taking it one game at a time"), but they are routinely forgiven, for they earn their money by winning on the field rather than composing texts.

Literary authors who slip in worn-out expressions in books are, by contrast, betraying a requirement inherent to their professional activity in the market and can expect a terrible review; now the annoyance is mixed with righteousness – they are not fulfilling the normative expectations of expressiveness and individuality that ground their ownership and justify any received rewards.

Journalists represent a middle case in this context. On the one hand, they do earn their money by writing and people complain about journalistic writing cluttered with clichés; in journalistic texts, lawns are frequently "manicured," track records "proven," battles "hard-fought" and so on – journalism is the home of the cliché (Hargraves 2014: 13). On the other hand, journalists writing reports for newspapers or news sites are not rewarded for their originality but are supposed to produce texts with an easily comprehensible, collective style. Hence readers frequently complain about clichés in journalistic writing, but few individual journalists are singled out for shaming; articles are not reviewed, and individual journalists not shamed.

The individualization of authorship and the privatization of literary styles in the era of copyright makes the reliance on commonplace look suspect. In fact, the propertization of literature, the conversion of texts into owned things, is not necessarily the remedy for the tragedy of the commons in the realm of language, but could be its origin, since the demands of original authorship are precisely what has intensified the angry critique of the reliance on

frequently used phrases. It is only in a post-Romantic world in which authors appear as the rightful owners of their original creations that the use of already established expressions and word combinations becomes a nearly criminal verbal act.

But even if author's rights on the expanding market for books create the conditions for an intensified critique of the overused phrase, the complaint about clichés does not necessarily follow an obvious commercial logic. The critique is in fact often explicitly anti-commercial, and voiced by authors and critics who wish to maintain the autonomy of the cultural sphere vis-à-vis crude economic interests (Bourdieu 1993). Given variances in the sensitivity to perceived linguistic overuse between sophisticated expert readers and large groups of more occasional consumers, it is perfectly possible for an author to produce entirely unoriginal books, filled with supposedly worn-out phrases, and nonetheless make huge profits. The expanded book market in the age of mass literacy does not necessarily punish an obvious lack of stylistic originality through tepid sales; quite the contrary. On the contrary, authors who write in a simple and easily-digested style, replete with familiar expressions, might very well gain a greater readership, to the horror of professionalized critics who respond by delineating and policing a "high literary zone" (Radway 1997: 140–41).

In a public sphere in which derivative writing meets with commercial success, the critique of the cliché can function as an instrument of harsh invalidation in the face of a book's undeniable market strength; no critic or reader has simply to accept an author's popularity but can recast it as more or less based on artistic failure and refuse endorsement. Authors and critics of the nineteenth century engineered the uncoupling of commercial success, on the one hand, and the conferral of cultural prestige through peer recommendation, on the other (Leypoldt 2014). It is precisely the critic intent on monitoring the border between genuine art and commercial pandering who needs the critique of the overused phrase, for he or she will want to point to unearned appreciation and hollow claims to originality – by exposing the hackneyed phrase in the bestseller. The critique of the supposedly overused commonplaces, which tend to cluster around commercially viable literature, functions as a critique of the perennially unfair distribution of (monetary) rewards.

## Conclusion: Owning Words, Unownable Language

It is now time to summarize the points of the argument:

1.    Language constitutes a nonsubtractive social resource and yet the appeal of particular expressions can be wasted; there is something one could call the **tragedy of the commonplace**. The gradual erosion of the qualities of shared expressions is reflected in the persistent imagery of waste that surrounds the common phrases, the clichés: word combinations are typically characterized as "worn out," "trite," "dull," "hackneyed" etc.

2.    The steady depletion of shared verbal resources cannot be contained by means analogous to coercion (censorship) or privatization (copyright). The social nature of language does not allow such measures. In this situation, critics seek to halt the ongoing erosion of phrase quality and reduce the irritating effects of linguistic detritus by means of composition advice and critical reviews that single out the rhetorical ineffectiveness or symptomatic value of the cliché. Those who rely on clichés are judged to be rhetorically inept, or lazy and talentless. The self-appointed regulators of language use and guardians of cultural prestige must rely on strategies of mentoring and shaming.

3.    The critique of the cliché, the spoiled verbal commonplace, emerges, or at least intensifies, under the copyright regime of the modern cultural market, in which authors are supposed to be rewarded for their individual creative literary products. The cliché is attacked as a near-scandalous dependence on the efforts of others, as literary free riding, in texts for which the authors are nonetheless compensated in some way. In this way, the attack on the cliché is often most vehemently directed at authors who are deemed stylistically uncreative but nonetheless achieve commercial success.

But there is something problematic about the whole process summarized above, specifically the conception of language as the field of individual creation regrettably vulnerable to collective use. Under modern copyright rules designed to institutionalize the link between identifiable individual creation and reputational or monetary rewards, actors in culture place a high value on the originality of literary products, while knowing that originality or at least novelty cannot quite be protected; the statements of authors can always be cited and copied, their expressions recycled and seemingly drained of value. The apparent overexploitation of shared verbal matter, the tragedy of the commonplace, is a dynamic that plays out constantly in the literary field; its members valorize originality and novelty

and yet have no obvious way of sheltering the manifestations of creativity from depletion and decay – because language remains stubbornly shareable and un-ownable. The cliché will not go away.

Critics attempt to penalize the continued use of phrases by attaching negative labels to speakers, by rolling their eyes at those who resort to clichés; the unceasing hunt for the new and original is accompanied by irritation at the dull and exhausted. And yet the cliché is a symptom that cannot be fully eliminated (in capitalism), despite constant attacks on their badness, because clichés are generated when a market logic demands the enforcement of ownership over forever un-ownable words. In this way, the cliché actually serves as a reminder of the radically social character of language.

The cliché will disappear not when critics have managed to train or scare all speakers into non-repetition and hyper-individualized speech, but when we have moved beyond the model of the author as "solitary genius or diligent entrepreneur" and instead begin to see writers as "social actor[s]" who seek to alter the world by means of the reverberations of their words (Agger 2001: 185). The cliché is a problem in a literary system in which individual authors are supposed to profit from their words, because those who repeat formulations must be condemned as free riders. But the cliché might not be a problem, and might perhaps not even become visible, in a transformed social context in which authors strive above all to be agents who "effect social change" in the world, for then those who speak as the author does are not epigones and parasites but allies in a mobilized public discourse (Agger 2001: 185). Within a movement with a shared discourse, common causes prevent the tragedy of the commonplace.

## Endnotes

1. Randy Michaels, a broadcasting executive, apparently did put together a list of unacceptable expressions that the radio staff was supposed to follow. "The man at the top of the troubled media empire [Tribune Co.] took time out of his real job this week to issue a list of words and phrases –119 of them, to be exact – that must never, ever be uttered by anchors or reporters on WGN-AM (720), the news/talk radio station located five floors below his office in Tribune Tower." See Robert Feder, "Memo puts WGN staffers at a loss for words," http://www.wbez.org/feder/2010/03/memo-puts-wgn-news-staffers-at-a-loss-for-words/17374.

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# Have a Heart for the Holocene: The Politics of Ark Activism, Collaborative Conservation, and Sponsored Survival at Museums

Timothy W. Luke

Science should never fully rest upon settled consensus, even though intense conflicts at key conjunctures in many scientific research programs often trigger such demands. Proponents of the Anthropocene thesis in various disciplines and different countries are lobbying hard now to force a consensus about its actuality, believing that the dire changes associated with this new epoch will alarm inventors and industrialists enough to slow rapid economic development and destructive climate change. Other geoscientists, however, doubt they should declare this moment in time as the close of Holocene epoch, which demarcates the last 11,000 to 12,000 years of the current Quaternary period in geological time. Furthermore, they are reluctant to rule that the planet now is so fatally ensnared by rapid anthropogenic climate change that this new geological epoch of humanity's making, namely, "the Anthropocene" definitely exists. Such forced settlements do not adequately conform to the methodical practices of prevailing geoscience research; and, even if they did, few believe the declaration would make much difference in the workings of human life on Earth.

At the same time, the suggestive powers of the Anthropocene concept for many other intellectuals, scientists, and writers beyond the sciences have become almost irresistible (Lidskog and Waterton, 2018: 25-46). Its rapid proliferation in many cultural and scientific networks through their everyday spoken and written communication is a rolling daily plebiscite that leans toward ignoring the old rules. Professor Jedediah Purdy at Duke University's law school, for example, opines that human beings do, in fact, now inhabit "a new nature" since "the Anthropocene adds nature to the list of things we can no longer regard as natural," which transforms, in turn, the management of this "new nature" into "a political question because the Anthropocene future is, unavoidably, a collective human project" (Purdy, 2018). Soaking in the heated froth spraying from such rhetorical whirlpools, other thinkers also find an expansive remit to speculate more concretely about the current moment "as if" the Anthropocene epoch has become a reality during "the Great Acceleration" of economic and technological change since 1945 (McNeill and Engelke, 2014: 1-5). There are groups of museum professionals, who are also have decided to sail on this rhetorical tide by steering their institutions into the largely uncharted waters of these controversies (Newell, Robin, and Wehner, 2016; and, Möllers, 2013).

The catastrophic effects of rapid climate change are significant, and they do impact more than the taxonomic conventions of stratigraphers, geologists, or botanists about deep time. This study suggests nothing better exemplifies such add-on effects from these scientific debates than a few efforts by museums and other cultural institutions, first, to map new channels being cut by the currents churning up in debates about the Great Acceleration, and, second, to explore various rocks and ripples rising out of these discursive currents. Along the banks, one already finds some highly politicized collaborative conservation efforts at seed banks, zoos, biotic conservatories, aquaria, botanical gardens, and museums, as their curators struggle to sponsor the survival of Holocene life forms and cultural inventions as well as operate institutionally as arks for the activism needed to slow the accelerants of the

Anthropocene.

This provisional analysis reviews these shifts in the workings of museums and other cultural institutions to decipher the politics and impact of Anthropocene narratives in "making culture" (Message, 2006; and, Hammond, 2018). Plainly, there are always unstable undercurrents in "the politics of display" (Macdonald, 1998) that cannot be avoided at museums. Moreover, exhibitions at zoos, museums, gardens or aquaria increasingly serve as "polemical fortifications, meant to hold . . . the hearts and minds of visitors" (Luke, 2002: xviii). Still, the Anthropocene -- as a geological concept and a cultural meme -- has become a valid excuse for various cultural, historical, and natural heritage institutions to break with their conventions of epistemic discipline, upend ontological stabilizers, and reimagine political meaning at what might be the end of the Holocene.

As the Working Group on the Anthropocene, for example, gets closer to formal criteria to label this age still waiting to be officially named, the material indicators these authorities have adopted in their deliberations are fascinating. The significance of specific "golden spike" markers, like nuclear explosive isotopes, new technofossils (plastics, underground excavations, carbonaceous fly ash, etc.), and fossilizable biological remains (commercial livestock, domesticated avian species, disappearing megafauna, etc.) are being cited repeatedly as the more definitive markers of the Anthropocene turn by many studies. And, strangely enough, there are several cultural institutions standing-at-the-ready, which have anticipated the official advent of Anthropocene epoch by documenting the larger influence of such material markers (Zalasiewicz et al., 2017: 55-60). These developments deserve closer consideration.

Following a brief discussion that follows in Section I to contextualize the divisive debates about "the Holocene or the Anthropocene," Section II surveys a handful of museums and other heritage sites to depict how they are already serving as an inventive suite of displays for "remembering the Holocene" and "imagining an Anthropocene" -- in both scientific and cultural registers -- for the new collective understandings of historical time and human agency emerging around the Anthropocene concept.

First, with regard to the loss of Holocene megafauna and their environments, the discussion turns to the ark activism of "the Buffalo Commons" project in the American Midwest, which has aimed since the 1980s to restore "the sea of grass" and the buffalo herds that were nearly obliterated on the Great Plains during the nineteenth century. Second, it looks at a smaller, but more radical effort to resurrect lost megafauna and maintain ecosystemic services at "The Pleistocene Park" in the Russian Federation. The plan for this living landscape museum is to genetically reengineer extinct megafaunal species, like mammoths, to recreate the steppe ecosystem of the late Pleistocene epoch as well as forestall the melting of its permafrost substrata to slow global warming. Third, it turns to little known undersea heritage sites in the Western and Southern Pacific where hundreds of World War II sunken capital ships rest on the sea bottom in need of greater collaborative conservation. Many of them still entomb their crews and are regarded as national war grave sites. Yet, they are increasingly subject to illegal salvage operations to recover valuable metals. Fourth, with respect to "the Sixth Great Extinction" of biota during the last two or three centuries, it looks to the International Cryptozoology Museum in Portland, ME, which memorializes those losses, while advancing the credible need to defend unspecified wildlife that may not exist and/or has not been yet discovered. Fifth, in consideration of atomic energy being harnessed for military and civilian purposes, which has left extraordinary spikes in particular nuclear isotopes deposited all around the planet in water, soil, rock, and ice formations, it surveys these technological thematics at the National Museum of Nuclear Science & History in Albuquerque, NM and the National Atomic Testing Museum in Las Vegas, Nevada. Sixth, the development of new plastics from fossil fuels is a significant marker of the Anthropocene, and they are examined briefly at the National Plastics Center and Museum now stored in Syracuse, New York. Seventh, the analysis moves to the National Agricultural Center and Hall of Fame in Bonner Springs, Kansas with its National Poultry Museum, because another highly distinctive marker of twentieth century life are the immense new middens of domestic avian bones around the planet. And, eighth, the Great Acceleration's growing alienation of human beings from Nature has coincided with a tremendous increase of "unidentified flying object" sightings and reports of alien species, which are now closely documented by The International UFO Museum and Research Center that has another unique perspective on the emergence of the Anthropocene.

Finally, Section III of this analysis concludes with thoughts about the significance of these institutions today. By serving as unusual sponsored sites of survival or unexpected clusters of collaborative conservation at the end days of the Holocene, they might provide the first foundations for the construction of a globally distributed Museum of the Anthropocene. As this new narrative colonizes more expert and popular understandings of the recent past, Anthropocenarian exhibitions undoubtedly will conserve and curate artifacts, materials, and sites from the Holocene epoch in the same dialectical fashion that "modern" museums of culture, history, nature, science, or technology

all tacitly, and yet explicitly, have stood in contrast to the "pre-modern" nature, prehistory, society, superstition, or primitivism that their curators and visitors believed they had also eclipsed.

## I. The Holocene or the Anthropocene?

At this contested conjuncture in historical and geological time, what should be the curatorial missions of cultural institutions beyond the traditional preservationist goals of museum, zoo, or botanic garden directors? For some, the Holocene is nearly lost or already gone. Consequently, some museum operations, explicitly or implicitly, approach the present-day as a lost heritage-in-the-making. That recognition, at the same time, turns them to engage as activists in the urgent tasks of rebranding their institutions as ecological arks, memory banks, biotic preserves, or marine micro-milieux. These managerial aspirations have been unfolding in bits and pieces since the 1980s and 1990s, but their importance acquires more urgency in the growing shadow of rapid climate change at this historical conjuncture (Crutzen and Stoermer, 2000: 17-18).

On the one hand, it is important to ask how should one appraise such curatorial aspirations in "the present(s)" of the Holocene and for "the future(s)" of the Anthropocene, which are being propounded in today's conflicted interpretations of this cluster of disruptive changes? In the long run, such shifts in natural history are ancient news. Extinction is normal, planetary catastrophes are nothing new, and geological epochs are, in fact, typified by new biota replacing older dominant biotic communities. On the other hand, many individuals and communities do feel endangered by these trends. Therefore, what specific cases of human/nonhuman life, organic/inorganic matter, or geological time/historical time should be spotlighted for inclusion in these Holocene heritage sites in light of the purported impact of the Anthropocene in the present, near future, and distant future (Anthropocene, 2013: 1-2)?

The world has been warned for decades about rapid climate change (Osborn, 1948; Commoner, 1971; and McKibben, 1989), but those warnings have been, and continue to be, ignored, downplayed, or belittled. To their credit, a few museum and other heritage studies professionals have anticipated this moment to examine the Anthropocene -- as the times foretold to be coming along with rapid climate change -- by putting these changes under scrutiny, in question, and on display. Beyond the usual activist pleas "to make a difference," however, many wonder if anyone really knows what difference can ever really be made.

In the minds of many, the Anthropocene thesis accurately captures how planetary-scale changes are being caused in "short-run' historical time by humanity's unintended irrational disruptions, as measured by civilization-endangering changes in the planet's air, water, soil, and biota, and they are then slowly registering materially in "long-run" geological time. As these trends advance, a planetary-scale infrastructuralization of the Earth (Luke, 2009b) deepens, and its networks of artificialized ecologies and naturalized economies (Easterling, 2014; and, 2001) essentially reveal a new dimension in dialectic of enlightenment that affirms development as disaster.

In that spirit, vested interests are busy calculating how this putative disaster is actually a great economic opportunity for advancing fresh schemes to truly rationalize Nature. Indeed, cli-fi dramas, high-tech utopias or ecological art works easily can pass as new ideologies of hope in the survivalist garb of eco-pragmatism, Whole Earth discipline or planetarian power for those who are "in the know." Even though Anthropocene-leaning narratives have floated around in arcane scientific debates since the 1970s or 1980s, Jameson slipped up when he did not add "the Anthropocene" as an exclamation point to his epilogue for modernity in <u>Postmodernism, Or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism</u>. When he asserts, for example, "postmodernism is what you have when the modernization process is complete and nature is gone for good" (Jameson, 1991: x), he should have declared what you have is "The Anthropocene."

Once that insight was granted, its popularity has spread like a prairie fire. "The Anthropocene" concept becomes an all-purpose ideological license for intensifying greater human economic intervention in the environment (Steffen et al., 2011; and, 2015), even although such efforts really "do not change everything" (Klein, 2014). Nonetheless, these haphazard qualities in anthropogenic economic changes over the last 250 years are questioned with respect to their significance as definitive signals (Brown and Timmerman, eds. 2015) of either "the Holocene ending" or "the Anthropocene beginning," because the methodological practices of good geoscience, biophysics or climatology all warn today's impatient audiences that it frankly is too soon to tell.

## II. Challenging Interventions

The "exhibitionary complex" at work in many museums today also tracks the sovereign discretion of those powerful enough to disclose what might be imagined by whom, where, when, and how about rapid climate change and biodiversity loss. Cities, states, and cultural trusts beholden to coal, gas, and oil wealth still can feel such corporate powers withholding time, energy, and funding in these missions of disclosure, as they sponsor displays, for example, about how oil and gas are still the fuels of human progress and keys to individual wealth.

Believing these social forces will not continue to bias the presentation of cultural displays is unrealistic. Likewise, overdrawn efforts at representing how, when, and where "we" are steering nature's evolution, and all existing life forms often become grandiose. No matter how dire rapid climate change becomes, museums of art, culture, history, nature, or science at this turn in geological time will organize conflicted displays about carbon-based state sovereignty and its economic capability. At the same time, therefore, these larger social forces can bizarrely celebrate and condemn themselves in "open-minded exercises" of their resilient sustainable authority.

With so many different threats to life on Earth along the horizon, however, can the curators of the Holocene heritage also exhibit and interrogate some of the forces behind what is now at hand? The following sub-sections consider some of these efforts to highlight the unusual visions in existing displays as well as to question these experiments in need of greater curation, conservation, and care to teach humanity about this shift between two geological epochs.

### A. Returning the Buffalo to the Range

The search for countervailing forces powerful enough to deploy against a corporate agrarian monocultures to defend biodiversity have been under consideration for years, if not decades (GPRC, 2014). One well-established program aims to restore the Great Plains of the United States to native grasslands with new large herds of buffalo (Matthews, 1992). This project for "rewilding" these ecologies with native species is a plausible solution (Ripple et. al, 2017) for rescuing and restoring North America's native grasslands as well as the aquifers beneath the surface (http://gprc.org/research/buffalo-commons/).

This ecosystem was destroyed rapidly in the nineteenth century as mostly white American settlers began enclosing these lands to eliminate the dominion of many Native American indigenous nations over much of the Plains. Their entire way of life was based on following the buffalo (Isenberg, 2000), but as white settler colonialism exterminated the immense herds of native North American bison it entailed the demise of Native Americans as well. Some Native American peoples had themselves only recently mastered control over this wide-open range by domesticating European horses introduced to the continent by the Spanish around 1500. Their dominance was soon undercut by settlers from Spain, England, Mexico, and the USA, who were intent upon putting the Plains to the plough, replacing bison with cattle, creating new towns and cities, and eventually crisscrossing these territories with railroads, fencing, roads, and telegraph networks. Once numbering around 60 million in North America during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, less than one thousand bison remained by 1900 in the USA (Isenberg, 2000).

The industrial agrarianization of the Plains after 1865 by small-holding farmers and ranchers rose and fell with the vagaries of commodity prices, labor supplies, water sources, and government agents (Krueger and Globe, 2007; Lind, 2013; and, Ordway, 1953). Between the 1890s and 1920s, this unsustainable mode of production peaked as larger corporate producers displaced small-holders (Berry, 1977) and degraded the soil. During the Great Depression, many towns stagnated, farms were abandoned, labor migrated to larger cities, but decades of massive alterations in soil deposition, water use, and land management had qualitatively altered the Plains' ecosystems, water courses, and land itself (Popper and Popper, 2004) for the worse.

With architects today designing vertical food gardens into urban buildings, agriculture moving into controlled suburban environments, and traditional family farms failing after the 1970s out on the Plains, it has become clear that other options exist to feed people. As Callenbach (1996) asserts, the best possible rescue for the Great Plains was, and to an extent still is, returning to a "buffalo commons" to restore the land, even as climate change alters the region's weather, vegetation, and animal life. This hope was sparked as native bison populations that grew from around 20,000 in 1950 to over 360,000 in the 2000s. Creating an "American Serengeti" devoted to caring for lost North American, displaced Mesoamerican, or even rescued sub-Saharan African biota all have been proposed, prototyped, and readied for practice. For many areas of the Midwestern states, this proposal is alluring as they face more human population losses, rezoning for massive installations of renewable energy plants with hundreds of

huge wind turbines, and a future in which human depopulation would go hand-in-hand with the decarbonization of the economy (Samuels, 2011). While today's museums about the Old West often depict the end of the trail for "the buffalo" around 1900, these new heritage planners are scheming proactively to mitigate the Anthropocene by restoring its native wild ruminant herds by 2100 to reawaken its Holocene landscapes.

In such a shift, the required species can be revived from small bison populations in North America, hybridized from existing exotic offshore bison populations or even supplemented with new species relocated from disappearing biomes in Africa, South America, or Asia. Each of these changes would justify launching new scientific expositions worthy of documenting this radical experiment in revitalizing lost ecologies. Another Holocene heritage question that demands answers is what would be the fate of the settler colonialist biota of the Old West that now are more recent hybrids facing depopulation here in the Anthropocene, because they too are now no longer as valued -- wild mustang horses, range adapted cattle strains from Europe, domestic barnyard chickens, draft horses, industrial hogs, or imported sheep?

By dedicating a handful of ranches and farms to preserve these aspects of the Holocene as nineteenth century American heritage sites with such industrial biota, the Great Plains could add yet another hall of heritage to curate for its museums of the Anthropocene, even as twenty-first century genetic engineers recall from the dead, or near extinction, once well-adapted native bison populations on the Plains. Other zones could harbor easily adaptable Old-World species needing their own refuges for survival as African megafauna are displaced by the continent's growing human populations. Amidst hundreds of wind farms, solar energy plants, and abandoned towns, roads, and farms, the Anthropocene in this region would dawn as localized geoengineering a landscape that quilts together in America fragments of New Spain returned to the 1760s, vestiges of America's frontier Old West, and bits of 1950s wild Africa relocated in America by the 2060s under the curatorial care of a new multistate Holocene heritage authority (Allenby, 2005; Hinchliff, 2006; and, Heck and Rogers with Carroll, 2014).

**B. Back to the Pleistocene and Reshaping the Anthropocene**

Another living landscape museum with even greater ambitions is a plan to build amid the ruins of the world's other failed Cold War superpower, the Russian Federation, a highly imaginative "Pleistocene Park" (www.pleistocenepark.ru/en/) as an ark to cross time and space. As Witcomb (2003) observes, the Great Plains Buffalo Commons "rewilding" expo could definitely move the museum beyond the rhetorical register of a mausoleum by resurrecting a relic species. To mitigate the Earth's rapid climate change, the Pleistocene Park's proponents, however, want to be more radical by reviving a massive sub-Arctic biome of grasslands on Siberia's thawing permafrost among its vast arboreal forests for other lost species. This goal might be hard to attain in a time when $CO_2$ levels stand at 400 ppm plus, since these greenhouse gas (GHG) levels during the last ice ages of the Pleistocene were less than 220 ppm. Nonetheless, this de-extinction project aims to introduce resurrected mammoth herds into this ecosystem. By mixing genetically reengineered mammoth DNA with contemporary Asian elephants' gene pools and/or gene-editing the current species of Asian elephants to express adaptive new traits, like longer hair, more body fat, smaller ears and some other physiological tweaks controlled by less than 50 genes (Andersen, 2017), these genetic engineers hope to accustom these mammoth-like chimeras to the sub-Arctic. Along with these neo-elephantine variants of extinct megafauna, the main advocate for this living zoological expo, Sergey Zimov, also is intent upon reviving other extinct wild horse, moose, reindeer, muskox, elk, and bison populations upon the huge natural ranges they occupied during the late Pleistocene and early Holocene (Davletyarova, 2013). If their work would slow the concentration of $CO_2$ and the release of methane trapped in the region's soils, then it is regarded as well-worth trying for these outcomes alone.

A restoration of the mammoth steppe ecosystem, like the buffalo commons in North America, is promoted as a heritage project, an ecosystem restoration, a climate change adaptation, a genetic engineering experiment, and ultimately a new destination tourism site for a "World Made by Man," only now truly by design (Zimov, 2005) by preserving early Holocene life forms. While the entire ecosystem of 2.6 million years ago is unlikely to be fully restored, especially with the Great Acceleration's massive GHG forcing since 1980, the prospect of emulating partial swaths of it with Holocene forests and taigas in Siberia, Alaska, or the Yukon as "a mammoth steppe" is a comparatively low-tech option. If this experiment succeeded, considerable curation and conservation would then be required to care for this Holocene heritage park as a modernizationist ecological and educational experiment (Hanford, 2015). This venture also crystallizes, however, the cultural and political complexities involved in reimagining the future for human inhabitants around museums, communities, and cultures dependent upon rapid climate change (Newell, Robin, and Wehner, 2015).

Even though the Arctic Sea ice retreats further each year, Zimov's faith in returning seriously cold conditions to the Earth's polar regions remains alive. Beyond possibly limiting GHG emissions, the Pleistocene Park also challenges the definitions of biodiversity in treating the ecosystems of the sub-Arctic tundras as ecosystems in need of ecosystemic servers to restart of some of the Earth's ancient biomes as generators of greater environmental services. Resurrecting mammoths, redesigning Asian elephant species, and relocating vast herds of celebrity biota from tiny heritage populations around the world sounds plainly somewhat implausible. Yet, it would serve to organize another hall for the Holocene in a nascent museum complex for the Anthropocene by assembling lost pieces of the Pleistocene with healthy hunks of the Holocene in a geotechnic experiment working to adapt to the Anthropocene.

## C. Shielding the Honored Dead from Dishonorable Salvaging

Another fascinating turn in the institutional, political, and physical boundaries of the Holocene, which clearly do require many parallel sites of curation, preservation, and remembrance to document, can be found amid many historically significant World War II artifacts across the seascapes and ocean bottoms of the Eastern Pacific. Recent archeological, historical, and military surveys there have located hundreds of sunken Allied and Axis World War II-era warships, but these studies also have discovered at least 35 to 40 major capital ships have been disturbed by illegal salvaging operations. These World War II vessels mark, or actually still contain, the remains of thousands of American, Australian, British, Dutch, Japanese and other combatant nations' servicemen, which grants them the status of national war graves. Nonetheless, the corroded wreckage of such 70 to 75-year-old ships are being partially or completely salvaged to be sold "as scrap, but the ships also contain valuable metals such as copper cables and phosphor bronze propellers" (Holmes, Ulmanu, and Roberts, 2017).

More significantly, thousands of tons of material in these sunken ships are extremely rare commodities in the era of the Great Acceleration due to a common quality, namely, it is "steel plating made before the nuclear testing era, which filled the atmosphere with radiation. These submerged ships are one of the last sources of 'low background steel,'" virtually radiation-free and vital for some scientific and medical equipment" (Holmes, Ulmanu, and Roberts, 2017). While some of the salvaged ships are more minor vessels, such salvaging has damaged even the larger iconic ships of tremendous national significance, like Great Britain's HMS Repulse and HMS Prince of Wales, Australia's HMAS Perth, and the USA's USS Houston. These ships were key elements in historic World War II battles, like the decisive attacks by the Imperial Japanese Navy Air Service on the Repulse and Prince of Wales, which sank in minutes on December 10, 1941 during what many regard as Great Britain's "Pearl Harbor."

Such scrap metal salvaging might seem utterly implausible and unprofitable. In fact, these wrecks are artifacts with considerable monetary value. "Having been and lost before any nuclear weapons explosives were detonated during and after 1945, their metal components can be certified as 'low-background'" materials, which "makes even small quantities that have survived the salt water extremely useful for finely calibrated instruments such as Geiger counters, space sensors, and medical imaging" (Holmes, Ulmanu, and Roberts, 2017). Beyond these exotic materials, the growing demands across Asia, especially China, for scrap metal makes these sites worth disturbing with deep-water equipment. As the world economy improves, even poor-quality steel can bring about £1M ($1.3M) per ship, according to some estimates, especially with the added brass from pipework, valued at £2000 a ton, and copper wiring, roughly £5000 a ton (Holmes, Ulmanu, and Roberts, 2017).

Such hulks sit at the outer limits or margins for official heritage projects, because only walls of basic morality and weak international law protect them. Lost first in action or by accident in wartime during sea attacks, massive storms or operational mishaps, these ships remain historically important. Existing maritime laws as well as international ethical traditions classify wrecks as protected sites out of the respect to their lost crews. Whether Allied or Axis vessels, the standards for preserving such sites have been absolute.

Malaysia, Indonesia, and the Philippines, however, also seem unwilling to prevent pilfering of these historical relics and war graves, which are (as the United Kingdom's Defense Ministry has declared) internationally protected: "a military wreck should remain undisturbed and those who lost their lives on board should be allowed to rest in peace" (Holmes, Ulmanu and Roberts, 2017). Despite such declarations, sunken vessels like the Perth, which displaced nearly 7,000 tons, had a beam of 57 feet, and measured over 560 feet long, is now 60 to 70 percent gone, while the Repulse and Prince of Wales are heavily damaged, and the Houston also shows signs of being repeatedly plundered (Holmes, Ulmanu, and Roberts, 2017).

These clusters of sunken ships from World War II are furthermore suggestive instances of how the museum's traditional divisions of nature/culture, human/nonhuman, living/nonliving, inside/outside or open/closed can

become muddled, and then violated to a significant extent, by material realities at the turn of the Holocene. Cultural objects, once left in common trust at the bottom of the sea, no longer are regarded as resting in a trustworthy vault for both treasured machinic objects and revered lost servicemen that deserve complete respect.

Such nonliving individuals and revered naval vessels physically are beyond the display spaces of any conventional museum, but such sea bottom sites are an important historic archive. They can be visited by divers or remotely piloted submersible vehicles, either to examine their archeological treasures or to pay respect to fallen seamen, which keeps these sites alive in the world's collective memory. While the conditions of the Anthropocene rend many conventional museumological distinctions for those concerned with the curation, conservation, and care for such historical treasures, they clearly belong in the Holocene heritage collection.

### D. Caring for Hidden Biota

With the growing losses being incurred daily in the current on-going Great Extinction, the trails blazed by the International Cryptozoology Museum also will need to be widened and extended ((http://www.cryptozoologymuseum.org) to preserve elements of the Holocene. Whether the species of cryptozoa are hidden, lost or never-to-be-discovered, zoological orders of living fossils, extinct species, mysterious cryptids (The Sasquatch, Yeti, Loch Ness monster, Tatzelwurm), and soon "de-extincted" chimeras clearly need to be documented. On the one hand, their discovery, if possible, is important in its own right. On the other hand, their disappearance is another mark of rapid climate change as well as bigger disruptions in habitats for the Earth's biota at this turn from the Holocene to the Anthropocene. All of the species already lost to extinction since the 1760s or 1940s perhaps somewhere wish that they too had been lucky enough to remain cryptids rather than be reduced to fanciful simulations, stuffed carcasses, preserved feathers or skeletal displays found in this small museum.

The launch of the International Cryptozoology Society in 2016 in association with the International Cryptozoology Museum, even if partly in jest, in Portland, Maine then should not be ignored. The discovery of new animals, like a non-extinct living coelacanth during 1939 by a trawler in South African waters may still occur in the coming decades. While its basic form evolved 400 million years ago, the divergence of the Tanzanian and Comorian coelacanths around 200,000 years ago coincided oddly enough with advent of the first **homo sapien** groups also in Africa (Brouwers, 2012). Documenting whatever new orders and genera of sociocryptozoa that might be declining or disappearing around us also needs to begin as species of life that once existed on the Earth. Likewise, growing creationist movement to resurrect extinct species as bioengineered copies or genetically modified chimeras also should be added to the halls of the International Cryptozoology Museum as the twenty-first century continues.

Still living, but once cryptid, the coelacanth fish species evaded documented human awareness for 2000 centuries, so the science of the twentieth-century could do much to alert the Anthropocene future with a Holocene biotic survey to anchor the zoological mission taken upon by this cryptozoological society and museum. Humans coexist today with many other biota basically unchanged for many millennia, ranging from the tuatara (200 million years), horseshoe crab (450 million years) giant Chinese salamander (170 million years) and nautilus (500 million years). Yet, the destructive wake of The Great Acceleration is leaving some species, including the nautilus, giant Chinese salamander or tuatara far more endangered than ever. With rapid climate change and habitat loss, their nearly cryptozoological status could become complete as these paleontological relics become the latest ghosts from the Holocene.

### E. Explosive expositions

The National Museum of Nuclear Sciences History ( http://www.nuclearmuseum.org/see/exhibits) is another benchmark for imagining any exhibition of the Holocene at the dawn of the Anthropocene. Located in Albuquerque, NM just off I-40 and not far from the Trinity Test Site and the Los Alamos National Lab, its displays depict many facets of American, and global, nuclear history, ranging from a profile of uranium and nuclear power, a kid-friendly Albert Einstein's lab, Radiation 101, Hiroshima and Nagasaki, The Cold War, Atomic Culture/Pop Culture, and most significantly, "The Decision to Drop" that examined "the testing of the world's first atomic bomb" to illustrate to visitors "just how much influence over the modern world this test created" ( http://www.nucearmuseum.org/see/exhibits).

Stratigraphers agree that the most definitive marker of the Anthropocene's advent is the intense deposition of nuclear isotopes around the world from 1945 to 1963 when the great powers tested, dropped, and then continuously tested in the ocean, atmosphere, and deserts of the world hundreds of atomic and thermonuclear devices. On this

point, one might recall the lost seamen on the HMS Prince of Wales who could not have imagined this vessel and their graves would be robbed simply to save the vessel's armored steel plates still free from these radioactive contaminants. This museum omits the Anthropocene sidebar, but it does indirectly flag it by giving "its visitors a memorable and vivid understanding of nuclear science and history" ( http://www.nuclearmuseum.org/see/exhibits).

This message is underscored more directly at the National Atomic Testing Museum (NATM) in Las Vegas, NV. Still, this very focused institution also ignores the larger terrestrial history of the Holocene. Its mission is to focus solely on "lessons of the past and present to better understand the extent and effect of nuclear testing on worldwide nuclear deterrence and geo-political history" ( http://www.nationalatomictestingmuseum.org/about/).

By highlighting the quick construction and long years of use of the Nevada Test Site, the museum's main feature focuses on a key source of the markers chosen to date the Anthropocene, namely, the highlights behind "20 years of nuclear testing" ( http://www.nationalatomictestingmuseum.org/about/ ) with its six main permanent exhibits: Ground Zero Theatre (to experience a simulated atmospheric atomic blast), Atmospheric Testing Experience (a simulation of an atmospheric nuclear bomb detonation), Radiation (to discover how natural and man-made radiation is tracked, monitored, and measured), Underground Testing (how and why testing when underground), and Atomic Culture (the still strange lessons for school children in the 1950s about how to "duck and cover" while learning to survive in the Atomic Age). Those living in 2100 will need these displays for both curation and conservation, given how this Las Vegas site exemplifies how a wholly deadened landscape from the Holocene should serve as a museum.

### F. Plastics are the Future

During the 1960s, the world was told "one word: Plastics" in a popular American film "The Graduate," because "there's a great future in plastics." Plastics indeed have proven to be "the future" for humanity. Still, the National Plastics Center & Museum (NPCM) in Leominster, MA, which opened during 1972, had to close in 2008 due to financial difficulties and low traffic counts during its operation. Set up with the support of Modern Plastics World (MPW) magazine along with the Society of Plastics Engineers, The Plastics Pioneers, and the NPCM Foundation, the Museum also housed The Plastics Hall of Fame "to honor professionals who have made significant contributions to the advancement of the industry" ( https://www.plasticstoday.com/content/national-plastics-center-museum-shutting-its-doors/46023220211582). Despite the off-shoring of many factories, the plastics business is still the third largest manufacturing industry in the USA, and its products have been adopted as another distinctive marker of the Anthropocene.

From the first non-organic mass market plastics sold widely in the 1930s through today's fossil fuel-based plastic-wrapped modernity, the deposition of plastic particles in the Earth's land and waters is leaving another eternal sign of humanity's impact on Nature. While the museum's artifacts can still be visited in the library of Syracuse University, billions of tons of plastics are viewable everyday around the Earth. From the Great Plastic Gyres in the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans to effluvia of plastic trash flowing out of the world's major rivers, plastic debris now blankets the planet's seas. At the convergence of the Arctic Ocean with the planet's super- and sub-tropical zones of sea water, there are detrital thick clots and thin layers of plastic that stretch for hundreds of miles ( https://www.nationalgeographic.org/encyclopedia/great-pacific-garbage-patch ). While these disturbing phenomena alone are impressive, this material is continuously and dangerously degrading into smaller pieces until birds, fish, crustaceans, and other sea life ingest the tiny particles. Such molecular compounds are essentially timeless and are turning up in marine bottom sediments on their way to petrification. In addition, millions of tons of plastic microfibers are entering the environment from washed clothing with plastic fabrics along with millions more tons of plastic microbeads from cosmetics and cleaning supplies (Laville, 2017). While not entirely dead, this hybrid water/air/trashscape is a growing environmental achievement from the late Holocene in need of considerable curation and care as many bizarre species of life now are colonizing these floating archipelagos of manufactured rubbish, while their showers of pollutants exterminate many crucial marine species.

### G. The Distinctive Fauna of the Anthropocene

The other distinguishing twentieth-century marker of the Great Acceleration into the Anthropocene is the exponential increase in domesticated poultry populations. Produced on an industrial scale, chickens especially are the most favored animal protein for humans worldwide, creating huge middens of chicken bones in garbage dumps and municipal waste sites. Knowing this, one must turn to the National Agricultural Center and Hall of Fame in Bonner Springs, KS with its National Poultry Museum (www.aghalloffame.com).

Located just outside of Kansas City, KS, the museum has several matter-of-fact, almost vernacular culture exhibits on geese, ducks, turkeys, and chickens to display the growing importance of select breeds in meeting the nation's and world's need for broilers, eggs, and wings by the millions daily. Looking at issues of chicken feeding, health, marketing, reproduction, processing, and production, the museum strangely interweaves the corporate lives of chickens and humans in the USA as an extraordinary achievement of high modernity in accord with it's archival and institutional ties to the American Poultry Historical Society, Inc. (http://poultryhistory.org/index.html). Meant to house significant agro-industrial artifacts, it also "tells the story of the American poultry industry over the last two centuries" (Schleicher, 2009) as it tacitly morphs into this Anthropocenic assemblage at the close of the Holocene.

With commercial hatcheries, mechanical incubators, and artificial insemination, the museum presents the blueprints for how corporate capital continues to engineer processed protein units that remake humanity and nature, while labelling all of it the "Evolution of an Industry" (Poultry World, May 8, 2009). Of course, geese, ducks, and turkey also are reduced to comparable species of monstrously homogenized chunks of flesh suitable for frozen shrink-wrapping, but the curation and care of these avian artifacts mainly concentrates on the chicken whose bones are now the most common and concentrated deposits of contemporary techno-fossils piling up in dumps all around the world. Fans of the celebrity cryptids, like the Himalayan Yeti or Northwestern Sasquatch, might believe that industrial poultry breeds are attractive snacks for their beasts, but the toxic accelerated breeding of such poultry stocks also is effacing the wild nature where such cryptids really could roam.

### H. The International UFO Museum and Research Center

Like alien space invaders, the Anthropocene has been sighted many times, speculated about endlessly, embraced by many heart and soul, but the evidence for many audiences is still scanty and suspect. There is no reason, however, that any one of these other museum-like operations on the Great Plains, in Russia, across the Western Pacific or elsewhere in the USA near Alamogordo, NM, Yucca Flat, NV, Leominster, MA or Bonner Springs, KS, should be able call out first dibs on serving as the exemplary origin point of the Anthropocene. In fact, there are maybe even more edifying municipal possibilities for this distinction, like Roswell, NM, which is home base for The International UFO Museum and Research Center.

Founded by Walter Haut (a public information officer at Roswell Army Air Field during the famous "1947 Roswell Incident") and Glenn Dennis (a Roswell Incident participant), this marvelous institution was set up, and then opened as the International UFO Museum & Research Center in 1992. The volume of visitors over the past 25 years forced the museum to move into its now third expanded location in the former Plains Theater on North Main Street in Roswell, and "the number of visitors continues to be the envy of many other tourist attractions in the state" (www.roswellufomuseum.com/).

Since 1996, an annual Roswell UFO Festival also pulls even more visitors into town, making UFOs one of Roswell's main economic engines for burning oil, using plastics, cooking chickens, and searching for exobiological cryptozoa. Indeed, as the UFO Museum curators note with pleasure, "while in Roswell, most visitors at least buy gas and a soda, or they may spend a week learning about the phenomena [of UFOs] and Roswell" ( http://www.roswellufomuseum.com/museum/museumhistory.html ). The Anthropocene, if it is to serve as "a warning to the world," as Paul Crutzen claims, must gain popular momentum as a cultural trope equal to these UFO displays about the alleged 1947 crash of an alien spacecraft outside of Roswell. If it is, then many Roswell residents would affirm to all the Earth's living landscape expositions, odd museums, and botanical preserves that they should hope they have it this good. Strangely enough, the UFO museum also was set up, in part, as a "warning to the world" about the presence of alien beings coming from outer space to destroy the Earth during the late Holocene. Rarely seen since 1947, according to the UFO culture industry that has colonized Friday nights on The History Channel by tracking down how most of ancient world history also appears to be the work of alien beings, these exobiotic beings apparently have realized that humanity already has done the key terraforming work of their alien invasions for them.

In many respects, all eight of these unusual exhibitionary enterprises should be linked to a distributed "Museum of the Anthropocene," and their respective advocates could mobilize this contested meme in these Halls of the Holocene that would bring this educational display into being. Each site reflects upon its specific meanings, refracts particular interpretations for closer consideration, and, in some instances, rechannels the questions raised by the Anthropocene -- as a scientific and cultural narrative -- to spark some strategies for significant agency in projecting human, nonhuman and posthuman imaginaries of past, present, and future Earth conditions for yet-to-be-opened museums to transport visitors into these galleries of lost, or never-to-be-found, Holocene ways of life.

All of the eight institutions discussed here, to a significant extent, are remaking culture (Message, 2006) with varying Anthropocene narratives that complicate the particular distinctions drawn during the Holocene between raw nature, human culture, and terrestrial history (Jacobs, 1985; MacKaye, 1968; Fuller, 1962; Weber, 1958; and Giedion, 1948). Inasmuch as the world, which could be defined as the "biosphere" and "noosphere" (Vernadsky, 1945) made by humans since the 1760s or 1940s, is an unstable amalgam of contradictory trends, it is almost beyond belief to pretend that humans ever have it all "under control." Instead it is being made, and increasingly occupied, in the displaced registers of processed nature, posthuman culture, and machinic history in artificial assemblages that unfold around/through/with humans, but not always in accord with their close control, direct design, or enlightened engagement (White, 1996; Cronon, 1992; and, Haraway, 1991). Any of these still fairly minor cultural installations could be an affiliated hall of disclosure for an authoritative Museum on the Anthropocene still to come, since most existing museums of history, science, technology, or nature might well need to be retitled at some point as Museums of Holocene History, Botanical Gardens of Holocene Flora, or Zoological Museums of Holocene Fauna.

## III. Concluding Thoughts

Most existing Anthropocene discourse -- both inside and outside of museums -- is hyperbolic as it struggles to close out the books on the Holocene. Divisive disciplinary debates happen in many fields of intellectual work, and a widespread ideological insurrection is indeed erupting in the academy to make the Anthropocene brand a far more popular marque (Klein, 2014; Kolbert, 2014; Cohen, 2014; and, Evans and Reid, 2014). On one level, the Holocene is still coterminous with essentially most of the rapid changes attributed to the Anthropocene during the Great Acceleration, and the gaps could easily be addressed with simply having sub-divisional ages or stages in the Holocene to account for the increasing dominance of human beings in shaping the environment during and after the Neolithic Revolution. Such variations exist in many earlier epochs in accord with the growing evidentiary materials this or that scientific community regards as most determinate. Those debates are still on-going, but they also antedate the imperatives behind adopting the Anthropocenarian brand that Crutzen and Stoermer aggressively touted in 2000.

On a second level, the ideological agenda of Anthropocenarian networks is to change "the naming game" by using the suspected cause of massive change, namely, "Humanity," as its brand marker for this epoch. Crutzen, in particular, is taken with comparing humanity to the planetary disasters incurred by the Earth over deep time, but no other era is named by geoscience, for example, the Asteriodocene, Vulcanocene, or Methanocene in the current scientific literature. This is not to say the global disaster taxa taking hold during the Great Acceleration, the Industrial Revolution, or the Neolithic Revolution are entirely ignored; but one species -- **Homo sapiens sapiens** -- is being privileged with unusual alacrity in branding this contemporary stratigraphic controversy (Bostic and Howey, 2017).

Deep temporal terms are being twisted to match up with the recent relics of human spatiality piling up in the planet's soil, ice, stone, and botanical records. As the human presence spreads, it also makes much easier to dig the looming Anthropocene future out of the still Holocene present (Orwin, 2016). Lefebvre (2003) speculates all spatiality must be understood as the articulation and materialization of social practices, political powers, and cultural programs. It is continuously produced in subjective life rather than naively discovered as objective properties in the volumes, surfaces, and expanses of ordinary encounters with waters, skies, or lands. The Anthropocenarians, however, turn Lefebvre on his head inasmuch as they assert these ordinary encounters with the atmosphere, hydrosphere, lithosphere or cryosphere, as natural space, are now historically distinctive (Higgs, 2003). Because they hope to brand humanity's social relations deeply in history, they must seek definitive signs of it becoming materially embedded in deep geological time to legitimate these scientific politics (Luke, 2017).

Ultimately, Crutzen concedes the contestedness of this nascent reality with regard to defining the Anthropocene. For him, uncertainty is what actually holds true: "The Anthropocene, what is it, really? Nobody yet knows" (Crutzen cited in Schwägerl, 2014: 219). His branding aspirations to make it the deepest ecology defined by humanity have been, in a sense, realized since 2000. Believing "the Anthropos" of recent fossil-fueled history is the cause of radical geologically documentable events is an easy conversion, transforming faith into fact for expert and layperson alike.

For reasons to be determined, ranging from nuclear war to an as yet-to-be-detected massive asteroid headed straight at the Earth, the Holocene might end tomorrow. All humans could die off, and this artificial world would disintegrate in some unknown post-Holocene conditions in another deep geological time. Meanwhile, those tending to the conservation and care for the Holocene, as heritage in these times of ecological upheaval, must grapple

with many possible outcomes in shallow historical time. Beyond these scientific politics, the planet will survive, life will adapt in some fashion, and then other dominant sapient beings could then well thrive. In the meantime, radical interventions are pushing museum-grounded practices to engage inventively with these political realities. Such efforts are important to get beyond the happy homilies of resilience and demonstrate that nothing guarantees a bright and sunny ending before museum visitors leave the building. Doing something is better than nothing, but nothing yet seems to be getting better when it comes to rapid climate change. Regardless, these protracted ethical and political struggles over the narrative constructions of the Holocene or the Anthropocene also are no excuse for permanent gloom. Instead, like many others before it, these battles are tests, as Gramsci would agree, that demand, "pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will."

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