FAST CAPITALISM

FAST CAPITALISM FAST CAPITALISM

FAST
CAPITALISM

Contents

Regular Articles

Slow Thoughts for Fast Times

FAST CAPITALISM

About the Authors

Marcus Breen

teaches in the Communication Department at Boston College. Born and educated in Australia, he has worked as a journalist, researcher, consultant and academic. His research engages cultural and media studies with radical political economy. He is writing a book about Chinese society and media.

Tara Brabazon

is the Dean of Graduate Studies and Professor of Cultural Studies at Charles Darwin University, and Professor of Cultural Studies at Flinders University in Australia. She is the author of 20 books including 12 Rules for (academic) life, The University of Google, City Imaging, Digital Dieting, Trump Studies, and The Creative PhD, and over 250 refereed articles and book chapters. She has won six teaching awards and is a columnist for the Times Higher Education. Tara was awarded an Order of Australia (AM) in 2019 for her contribution to higher education.

François Debrix

is a Professor of Political Science at Virginia Tech. From 2011 to 2022, he served as the Director of the interdisciplinary and theory-oriented ASPECT (Alliance for Social, Political, Ethical, and Cultural Thought) program at Virginia Tech. Some of his recent publications include the following books: Global Powers of Horror: Security, Politics, and the Body in Pieces (Routledge, 2017); Beyond Biopolitics: Theory, Violence, and Horror in World Politics (Routledge, 2012; co-authored with Alexander Barder); and Necropolitics: On Death and Death-Making in International Relations (Routledge, 2020; edited with Caroline Alphin).

Henry A. Giroux

currently holds the McMaster University Chair for Scholarship in the Public Interest and is the Paulo Freire Distinguished Scholar in Critical Pedagogy. His latest books include Pedagogy of Resistance: Against Manufactured Ignorance (Bloomsbury 2022) and Insurrections: Education in the Age of Counter-revolutionary politics (Bloomsbury in 2023).

Edith González-Santiago

has a Master's Degree in Teaching Psychology at the upper secondary level and has a Bachelor's Degree in Psychology from UNAM. Professor at the Facultad de Estudios Superiores Iztacala, UNAM in the Open University and Distance Education System.

Stefan Lawrence

is currently senior lecturer in Sport Business Management at Leeds Beckett University, United Kingdom. Stefan is editor of the books Digital Wellness, Health and Fitness Influencers and Digital Football Cultures (both with Routledge) and has published widely on sport and leisure their relationship to social justice and digital cultures respectively. He is a member of the editorial boards for Leisure Sciences, Leisure Studies and Managing Sport and Leisure and is a Principal Fellow of Advance

Higher Education.

Charles Lemert

is an Emeritus Professor of Sociology at Wesleyan University. He has published extensively in sociological theory. His Americans Thinking America will be published early in 2024. He is beginning work with Kristin Plys on The Certain Future of Marxism, a sequel to their recently published The Uncertain Future of Capitalism.

Timothy W. Luke

is University Distinguished Professor, and, Chair, Department of Political Science at Virginia Polytechnic Institute and State University. The co-founder, and co-editor, of Fast Capitalism, his research focuses on environmental political theory, international politics as well as social and political theory as they relate to the workings of cultural politics, global governance, and political economy.

José Manuel Meza Cano

has a PhD in psychology from UNAM, Mexico. He is currently a full time professor at the same university. His research lines deal with disciplinary social networks, especially the study and analysis of the fediverse's social networks and their application to distance education as spaces for knowledge construction.

James Sandy

is an assistant professor of history in the Department of History at the University of Texas at Arlington. His research explores the intersection of American military and cultural history, specifically in the prosecution and validation of violence and the ways in which American conflicts are memorialized in popular culture. His upcoming book, A War All Our Own, offers a comprehensive history of the American Ranger Tradition.

TikTok Containment meets "The threat of a good example" Inversion gets more than 15 seconds of fame

Marcus Breen

When President Donald Trump proposed to ban the Chinese social media platform TikTok on national security grounds on August 6, 2020, it marked a pivotal moment in the interaction between many contending layers of political life. Cojoined in a register of nationalist rhetoric, US national policies cross-referenced geopolitics, and the history of international competition and cooperation in global trade flows with and against China. As such, the proposed ban gave credit to the ancient popular Chinese saying: "Things that oppose each other also complement each other" (Ban Gu nd: 84). More precisely, when seen through the lens of digital networking, Trump's announcement marked an inversion of the un-assailed US domination of all things digital. In so doing, it marked a challenge to the overdetermination of technology by the United States against the emergence of a new, more complex set of forces operating through the digital or virtual sphere *as well as* every other level of human activity, given that so much of life has become defined by communication technologies. The Chinese model had arrived via the internet. This model, drawing on state planning for a managed economy that addresses the entirety of the Chinese population in a program of socialist development – provoked the ban on TikTok and, as such, operates as an example of the narrow US commitment to dominate the world with its communication technology. The resulting landscape is one in which communication is revealed as central to the continuing dialectic of human history through the collision between China as TikTok and the US as a national security state. Donald Trump's announced bans on TikTok exposed this contradiction, illustrating how the inversion of the global power structure was constituted by the complementary energy of digital interaction.

If human history can be defined as the rupture of otherwise settled power relations by the emergence of contending forces, Trump's efforts at putting a stop to TikTok marked the re-articulation of the US Government policy of "containment" initiated by George F. Kennan in 1947 (Office: undated). While previously, the containment of the Soviet Union was through Cold War confrontations about ideology and the superiority of the democratic West, TikTok marks the escalation of the containment of the material world to include advanced communication technologies. The complication is that the global hegemonic power of US digital technology transmogrified into an *obvious* US nationalist agenda to reveal the essence of white supremacist liberal democratic claims built into digital technology. Trump magnified this ideology through the digital field, setting it against a more

complex Asian opposite. The contradiction is that the networked technology of TikTok applied the energy of Western platform innovation, multiplying, transferring, and inverting it to the global virtual other, China, thereby drawing attention to the US opposite.

Historically, the success of the original US containment of the Soviet Union was achieved through the Monroe Doctrine, the Marshall Plan, and the Cold War, resulting in the US victory in establishing and then confirming the US as hegemon. The materiality of that approach was in the threat of raw power warfare. Containment Version 2, digital containment - or perhaps more correctly, the continuation of a permanent state of warfare initiated by the US - is appealing to US policymakers working with an uncritical national and Western media system after intentionally mischaracterizing China as "the enemy" (Larson 2021). But this was a new field of struggle between powers. The ban against TikTok evolved within the increasingly complex political economy of digital technologies that Jodi Dean described as "ever-morphing, interlinking," indicating the articulation between diverse digital applications joined through the internet's algorithmic logic (2010: 1). It evolved within the US approach to making globalization through the neoliberal economic system the priority since the 1980s, as US elites argued for "linking" economic and financial activity with China: just not as an equal. With the rise of TikTok, proposals emerged for delinking from China, arguing that it was necessary for the "self-sufficiency movement" to physically return industrial manufacturing to US factories on US soil, thereby expressing a nativist inflection of nationalist obsessions that found their digital moment in the TikTok and related bans (the related bans are not considered in detailed in this essay) (Chen & Li 2022). Such "onshoring," or bringing industry home to the US, was an extension of a nationalist policy that continued to morph and harden in intensity, leading up to Trump's TikTok ban announcement (Lind 2008).

The TikTok case illustrates that a nationalistic change imperative was happening in the digital domain, even as containment as it was originally conceived had been used by the US Government to suppress Marxist, socialist, communist, and left movements generally, most specifically and successfully through the Cold War with the USSR and its Eastern European Allies. In a semantic sleight of hand, the change imperative in the digital domain repurposed these containment priorities against the non-American, not liberal democratic "other." Historically, international containment emerged in tandem with the success of the US Government and its elites in effectively suppressing and extinguishing the communist left as a political movement at home, mostly through the House of UnAmerican Activities (HUAC) and Senator McCarthy's red-baiting hysteria. National security concerns were always the foundation of the containment arguments, and as I will illustrate, that tradition, grounded in the manipulation of popular public opinion that keeps hysteria at elevated levels of salience, continued unabated after Trump left government in 2021, as President Biden persisted with the bans. *The Wall Street Journal*, a public conduit to Republican and conservative US interests, illustrated the continuity when it reported early in the second year of Biden's term, the view, summarized in its headline: "US Moving—Some Say Too Slowly—to Address TikTok Security Risk" (McKinnon and Leary 2022).

The original concept of containment had to be adjusted because digital communication technologies had become central to national, state, and individual survival. China became the cause for a new kind of containment, one where networked technology was central. Given that context, TikTok offers a gateway for analyzing the digital turn within the messy intersection of interconnected global capitalism, neoliberalism, socialism, and petty American domestic politics, fueled by irrational appeals to nativist and nationalistic emotions. These intersecting concerns appear through a variety of lenses. Indeed, as the game played on, the telescopic lens of evolving global political economy did not fall into place as the US would have preferred when looking from its high perch of hegemonic self-

interest. Nevertheless, digital containment was and remains a key US Government focus.

At one level, containment by the US, as originally conceived in relation to the Soviet Union, is not equipped to respond to the complexity of China's national interests, especially its technological innovations. Nevertheless, as Kennan argued in the containment document *The Charge in the Soviet Union (Kennan) to the Secretary of State*, also known as *The Long Telegram*, "Part 5: [Practical Deductions from Standpoint of US Policy]" the foundation for contemporary US approaches resonate with his recommendation. Of relevance to the US-China trade dispute initiated by Trump, of which TikTok was an extension, Kennan offered a diplomatic insight:

> (2) We must see that our public is educated about the realities of the Russian situation. I cannot over-emphasize importance of this. The press cannot do this alone. It must be done mainly by Government, which is necessarily more experienced and better informed on the practical problems involved. In this, we need not be deterred by the ugliness of the picture. There would be far less *hysterical* anti-Sovietism in our country today if realities of this situation were better understood by our people. Nothing is as dangerous or terrifying as the unknown (1947, emphasis added).

Hysteria is not new, as this comment from Keenan illustrates. Indeed, the absence of knowledge about Russia that Keenen identified is reproduced today in China and Asian culture generally, forming a foundation for a new hysteria. In fact, the absence of knowledge is the precursor to the psychological conditions of psychosis, which is constituted by fear, anxiety, panic, uncertainty, and so on to hysteria, as psychoanalysis has argued since Sigmund Freud introduced the concept of hysteria to human behavioral analysis. Structured ignorance about China's development continues the trajectory of imperial logic, where a population is directed into hysteria through a blocked relationship, where the intention is to manipulate public opinion through propaganda and magnified untruths rather than free-flowing information, according to liberal political theory. Ironically, or perhaps tragically, the "free flow of information" is privileged in US claims of liberal democracy, along with free speech, as a system in which more information generates a more informed citizenry. That is, until that information is grounded in a Chinese digital platform.

Kennan's recommendations still resonate today, albeit across the new complexities that are involved in addressing the containment of China. Part of this complexity is explained by recognizing that the US and China are coupled in the logic of neoliberal ideology and practice, with both nations having a 30-year history of integration in production and innovation. However, because the relationship between China and the US is not informed by public knowledge about China, it has been subjected to elite and corporate media propaganda that further blocks knowledge. Consequently, ignorance is the dominant currency of US public discourse. The epistemological landscape is one in which a contemporary form of anti-Chinese and anti-communist hysteria flourished, presaged by Kennan in his 1947 description.

In fact, public ignorance explains Trump's political success. In reference to China, his proposed ban of TikTok was part of a heightened defense by the US Government against China, although the ban was imbricated in what Greg Albo referred to as "the logic of the new technologies (in) fundamentally transforming capitalism" (2020: 321). This transformation of capitalism through its articulation with networked technology is central to the US Government's action against TikTok because capitalism worked through digital technology to transform China, just as it had the US and globally. For an ignorant US public, the idea that a nation would compete with and surpass the US

with its domination in technology was improbable, then unacceptable. However, this orientation to ignorance extended the lengthy history of colonial resource extraction that served the Western public, whose standard of living was kept high by such programs. That China might threaten the US at its own game - use technological innovation to generate capital, capitalist corporate formations, personal wealth creation, and improved standards of living - was translated into unfiltered support for the US nationalist impulses that informed Trump's anti-China efforts.

Meanwhile in China, national transformation was an ongoing narrative happening through the mobilization of a central planning model that runs counter to yet alongside the capitalist chaos of US liberal democracy. The rationalist Chinese planning model attracted containment energy from the US Government because the evidence is clear that economic and geopolitical power was (and is) shifting from the US and the West generally to the East, prompting McKinsey Consultants to ponder "how Asia will lead" globally (Tonby et al: 3). In the US, Trump refused to adopt the theoretical liberal foundations of traditional public policy settings: structure, rationality and institutional theory, adopting instead "irrational information processing" (Barnett 2018: 16-17). Trump's TikTok ban added to the capitalist chaos with one important proviso: it was coherent in the way the US foreign policy of containment was structured - always well funded - reflecting the US elite's interest in maintaining unrestricted hegemony through a process of targeted policy actions.

The original aspects of the Munroe Doctrine of containment to contain and manage the East and the West were undone when Trump launched the action against TikTok. As the international relations critic John Mearsheimer argued (already) in 2015, during the Obama era, the US jettisoned the doctrine of twentieth-century standards of spheres of the East and West in a "balance of power politics," to become a 21st-century power that no longer recognized spheres of influence (2015). The world belonged to the US as the sole hegemon. Balancing between spheres was no longer relevant. What were once the many tentacles of US Government policy-making within its quest for world supremacy became focused on China. In the morphing system of global flows of knowledge and power due to the internet, containment embodied a zealous, confrontational interest in suppressing the digital empowerment of China. The interest was fueled by hysteria that served the purpose of rattling the "liberal international order," softening up the public for actions like banning valuable communication technologies while leaving the public without resources for comprehending the changed conditions of global political power and any explanatory theory (Nye 2022). The aggressive US action in banning TikTok did not seek adaptation to the new state of great power relations, or the maintenance of balance of power. It was the equivalent of the thrashing around of a massive, uncontrollable creature that could not comprehend why it was no longer the master. In a more banal sense, the Trump action against TikTok was a response to "the threat of a good example," and as such, followed a lengthy history of US opposition to any alternative to the political-economic interests of the USA (Melrose 1989).

Sinicizing Marxism

Trump's action mobilized my keen interest in China's digital technologies. This research began as an attempt to further comprehend how the TikTok ban played out the way it did, to become little more than a whimper, soon after Trump left office, then escalated again later. In exploring the subject's history, the door was opened to the Sinicizing of Marxism, a process in which Mao Zedong sought to bring into alignment "the universal theory of Marxism with the 'concrete practice' of Chinese society and the Chinese revolution," to evolve in "highly problematic ways in which the 'foreign' theory of Marxism-Leninism could be adapted to the concrete historical realities of modern China" (Rošker

2019: 6, 8). The question is, how is TikTok connected with Sinicizing Marxism?

The answer to that question involves an appreciation for the dialectical method, in which two contradictory material elements create transformations in political economy. At the most elemental, this contradiction occurs as the Western superiority mentality collides with the Asian way of life, history, philosophy, and politics. After the height of neoliberalism's global integrationist phase, where the US and China became each other's economic and financial co-dependents, Trump's antagonism to TikTok marked the reframing of China as it exceeded, or outgrew, its role as the global collaborationist of US-dominated capitalism. Suddenly, as it were, Sinicizing Marxism demanded attention. Firstly, it relocates analysis that is not immersed in or unconsciously reproduces an imperial mindset. This has been more characterized as "Sinological-orientalism," an extension of Edward Said's concept of Orientalism that incorporates as its basic operating logic the racist trope that the Chinese cannot match the West or US advances (Vukovich 2012: 2-4). Secondly, Imperialism and Orientalism are a well-established couplet, in which the superiority of the imperialist is prefigured by dehumanizing "the other," usually non-white people or by mischaracterizing a population with racist ideation in order to undertake colonization in the interests of exploitation of the othered: the less than human indigenes. In the US, the linguistic aspects of generating an imperialist culture are significant, imbricating the values into the culture. For example, consider the ease with which "Yellow Peril propaganda" is mainstreamed in the media. At the same time, "its relatives xenophobia, Sinophobia, anti-Asian racism, and McCarthyism" have, at various historical moments, reached "consensus in the American public" (Luo 2021). Thirdly, seeking the truth means reframing China through an appreciation of and sympathy for its national project incorporated within Sinicizing Marxism. This involves admitting the rational, worthy qualities of the Chinese method. In this reframing, Orientalism is relocated outside the context established by the US history of supremacy.

Such a shift in orientation is a critical strategy that relies on the ability to admit, change, and welcome new knowledge contexts, in this case, a context that is not defined by the aggressive, militarized imperialistic US policy method embodied in containment (Fassin 2019: 21). This reorientation further recognizes that the Chinese method contains internal contradictions that express the foundations of Marxist philosophy in theory and practice at the specific site of national application. This occurs even while China has come into existence in the contemporary Western mind, through its articulation with and expression of global capitalism, through the publicity about and the popular use of TikTok. The context is both curious and contradictory. It is one where TikTok globally elaborates on US consumer culture and individualist identitarianism on a social media platform, even as Sinicizing Marxism matures and advances in China.

Anti-China racism

As the Trump presidency ended, white nationalist emotions appeared to be consensual for the 75 million people who voted for him. Their emotions occurred against "the other" of China and were magnified in anti-Chinese propaganda. Those emotions were translated into violence and abuse against Asians on US streets, with estimations of 3,800 events recorded over the year by mid-2021, in the second year of the pandemic (Ho 2019). Indeed, the COVID-19 pandemic added to the pressure on China, layering yet another negative affective sensibility toward non-whites in the US. This negative emotion - hatred by any other name - about claims that the virus emerged in China, sharpened Orientalism, promoted by Trump's characterization of COVID-19 as "Kung Flu" and "China virus." While further references to COVID may be instructive, I will not extend the discussion of the pandemic and its association with China, except to note that the prejudicial, racist statements made

by Trump and conservative politicians further hardened the US public against any comprehension of Sinicizing Marxism, or knowledge of China, its history or continued rise. Furthermore, there were no signs that the kind of humanistic education that would comprehend China and its culture emerged in the US during the Trump Presidency or post-Trump. Rather, "China hawks" questioned the way China funds research to "indoctrinate" US college students (Reuters Staff 2020), while the US Senate voted to close Chinese government-funded Confucius Institutes on US college campuses (Horsley 2021). The focus on China as "the other" whose knowledge could be harmful to the US, overwhelmed the policy environment to the detriment of practical learning about culture, economics, or international relations.

To illustrate the point, the major response taken by the US Congress as racist acts against Asians escalated, was to introduce the *COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act* (2021). Typically, in a nation built on libertarian philosophy, where freedom of entrepreneurial action is followed by public policy regulations, the Hate Crimes legislation attempted *post-factum* to undo the racist nature of the attacks on Asian people, without reference to TikTok, Chinese technology, or containment. By evading these matters, the Federal campaign to stop anti-Asian and anti-Chinese hate continued the US public policy tradition of addressing one matter in great detail *after* it had happened, leaving comprehensive attention to the causes of the hate unattended. Consequently, the argument here is that if there had been no anti-Chinese containment model campaigns against Chinese technology firms, to begin with, hate crimes would not have escalated to the level they did. Not quite a digression, the *COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act* enacted law enforcement procedures at Federal, State, and Local levels, giving succor to Asian minorities without addressing the root causes of racism, its Orientalist meaning, or its role in the US imperial project.

TikTok redefines the complicated relationship between the historical consideration of the Chinese as "othered" and the stunning recent success of China's networked technology. This approach was reinforced, as Alain Badiou argued in *The Rebirth of History: Times of Riots and Uprisings* (2012), because "the dominant media" had suggested "a simple interpretation of the riots in the Arab world: … a desire for the West" (2012: 48, cited in Breen 2020). Such an imperial imaginary begins by defining The West as the universal standard for progress. Badiou added that "the space of realization of emancipatory ideas is global" and that "genuine change would be *an exit from the West*, a 'de-Westernization'" (2012: 52, emphasis in original). Extending Badiou, the prevailing US view is in keeping with anti-Chinese, anti-communist, pro-western colonialism. The cosmopolitanist's acknowledgment of difference, which is Badiou's preference, was and remains outside the purview of US priorities, and with low levels of education in the US and the West about China's Sinicizing approach, government and media campaigns persist with unquestioned propositions about western supremacy. Of course, informed discussion of Sinicizing Marxism in US public discourse is unlikely, given the antipathy to the open investigation of Marxism, reproducing a knowledge gap within the dominant liberal democracy. If the US were to take the time to learn about Chinese accomplishments in networked technologies as a constituent of Marx's theory of capitalism, it would be better placed to enter into cooperative arrangements with China as a continuously evolving organism. This failure to acknowledge the uniqueness of China's conditions means that any connection with US priorities, even imperial ones, quickly reach a stalemate. China's determination not to be "western" according to the hegemon's dictates - taking Badiou on, as it were - means that it moves in directions of its own choosing. More precisely, the application of Sinicizing principles directs it to a vein of structured knowledge within emerging Marxism. At the same time, the US, compared to its ill-directed liberal democracy, almost operates as a knowledge desert and certainly as a reactionary bulwark against developmental progress.

This contradictory minefield consists of contrasting epistemological systems. Nevertheless, the US and China must be considered together because they are coupled in the world system. Until recently, the global ambitions of the US were constructed as a confident commitment to international capitalist leadership and dominance. The success of this hegemony was defined by Kennan's 1947 anti-communist screed in which the word "Communist" is mentioned 16 times, with little or no reference to the integration of the US with Russia, because at that time, there was no neoliberal global project and therefore almost no collaboration. Until neoliberalism, when market fundamentalism or unregulated free trade became codified, trade between nations was maintained within the structure of the balance of powers. In contrast, China now operates as a part of the global system with a different remit, informed by a 5000-year history while building toward a long socialist horizon that informs its Sinicizing Marxism model. It is a model that continues to evolve within and against capitalism, with and against the US. Trump's effort to ban TikTok from domestic American use was an effort to stop a Chinese social media application from taking a foothold in the US to present a challenge to the world hegemon. In the spirit of the dialectic, TikTok challenged the hegemon because it was an extension of global capitalism within the neoliberal order.

The TikTok ban provokes two questions: Will Sinicizing Marxism evolve to transform capitalism through digital innovations, creating a Sino-inflected political economy? If such a new form takes shape, will US containment in its anti-Chinese, anti-communist iteration be turned on its head? The answer is somewhat already evident. Arguably, a type of Sinicizing public policy emerged in the US, with President Biden's proposals for massive public investments to "overhaul the economy" valued at several trillion dollars in the American Jobs Plan (2021) and the American Families Plan: "an ambitious, once in a generation investment to rebuild the middle class and invest in America's future." (2021: np). They somewhat mirror Chinese efforts at national infrastructure development aimed at economic growth. Indeed, the Biden policies inverted the Trump-era free market, anti-regulationist approach and were informed by a moral economy that aligns citizens with the orbit of state social provisioning, where such provisioning is in addition to the bloated military budget. TikTok inverted the hegemon.

What Happened? Creating hysteria: Tweet, then sign

US and global media provided detailed coverage of the proposed US bans of TikTok. The background to the TikTok ban can be unraveled by exploring the programmatic system of formal antagonism against China that appears in the US Government's public documents, reaching back to Kennan's "Long Telegram." In fact, the TikTok ban was a continuation of US bans on communication technologies that were detailed in Executive Order 13873 (EO) *Securing the Information and Communications Technology and Services Supply Chain* on May 17, 2019. At that time, Trump wanted to put a stop to Chinese communication technologies operating unimpeded within the US because they posed a national security threat. The order required The Director of National Intelligence:

> to assess threats to the United States and its people from information and communications technology or services designed, developed, manufactured, or supplied by persons owned by, controlled by, or subject to the jurisdiction or direction of a foreign adversary (EO 1387 2019, 22691).

More centrally, the order established an emotional foundation grounded in threats to national security, pointing the finger at foreign technologies and anyone who was not American. Trump signed on with the assertion that:

> The unrestricted acquisition or use in the United States of information and communications technology or services designed, developed, manufactured, or supplied by persons owned by, controlled by, or subject to the jurisdiction or direction of foreign adversaries augments the ability of foreign adversaries to create and exploit vulnerabilities in information and communications technology or services, with potentially catastrophic effects. It thereby constitutes *an unusual and extraordinary threat to the national security*, foreign policy, and economy of the United States (italics added, EO 1389 2019, 22689).

Only the United States of America was named in this document. No other nation's name appeared in the 2019 Executive Order (EO), although the language made the case for the US positioning against any contingency, for example (above) naming "potentially catastrophic effects," "extraordinary threat," as if the nation was facing a dire eventuality.[1] Such appeals to catastrophe and threat due to "foreign adversaries" constructed a resonance of psychotic fear in the US, a fear associated with othering-through-ignorance and harking back to the claims that non-American foreigners generated what Kennan referred to as "hysteria." It was a short step from the sense that, "Lurking in the background is a growing fear that the rise of China will spell the end of the American era" (Nye 2019: para 1).

The irrationality that produces public hysteria is part of the political and cultural landscape that has been sharpened in its relationship with digital media, a theory I explored in *Uprising: The Internet's Unintended Consequences* (2011). Evidence of the chaotic character of irrationality when set against the formality of rationality along with its conceptual and Kantian philosophical twin maturity, was evident in claims by Trump made on the social media platform Twitter. Short blasts of text by Trump reinforced the irrational because they – like his entire presidential enterprise – were directed at an emotional register for white nationalists and their evangelical ilk, cohorts whose principal motivation in support of Trump were "grievances" translated into a rhetorical and activist passion that leapt over the established processes of the deliberative style of parliamentary politics and the myths of objective media reporting. Specifically, the "white grievance" of the Trump supporters provoked protest that "is gendered and sexualized in particular ways, as Trump supporters express(ed) misogynistic and homophobic fears about gains by women and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) citizens" (Hooker 2017: 493). Such grievances came just a decade after Sarah Palin's play-on-words about the "mainstream media" being the "lamestream media," on Sean Hannity's radio show in 2009. Made when Palin was the Vice-Presidential running mate for John McCain, her catchy wordplay consolidated the trajectory of grievance by creating a linguistic framework for the public rejection of the mainstream media as the trustworthy fourth estate (Barr 2009: np.). Grievances feed every social movement, even reactionary ones, drawing on the sensations of exclusion experienced by many "out-groups" and operating as the foundation for social mobilization and political action (LeFevre and Armstrong 2018). Trump's use of Twitter was no exception. As a feature of the success of Trump in rising to the Presidency, grievances informed the conservative project generally, constructing the primary form of meaning as a negative visceral reaction by the white out-group to rational forms of compassion and empathy: values that are degraded in a society that rewards hyper-competitive individualism, celebrated with emotional media displays. When set against rational liberal ideals of tolerance, diversity, and equality, irrational claims

about the fourth estate's media coverage were used during the Trump Administration to negatively present immigrants, Muslims, and Mexicans, in fact, any non-white person as "othered" within an affective landscape of resentment. Devoid of rationality, the "other" as non-white and non-Protestant were incorporated into the emotionality of public discourse. Professionally packaged Executive Orders gave heft to the negative political rhetoric that characterizes "the other" as enemies. Acting together against the grain of rationality, it was straightforward logic to add the Chinese Government and China to the list of threats to the US, thereby creating hysteria.

Trump's Executive Order, *Securing the Information and Communications Technology and Services Supply Chain*, established the foundations for targeting TikTok, although two high-profile Chinese companies were subjected to formal pressure followed by bans by Trump before TikTok came into focus. Huawei and ZTE were active in the US through business alliances and research collaborations with firms like Qualcomm and Vodaphone when a list of complicated accusations stemming from the US Government, as described by *Ars Technica*, led to bans on these firms:

> The accusations against a concern fueled by the US government that Huawei wishes to compromise or undermine networks and systems belonging to the US and Europe, as well as a concern that the company tries to unlawfully use intellectual property taken from Western countries. Among Chinese firms, Huawei is viewed with particular suspicion due to its ties to the Chinese military.
>
> Huawei's CFO was arrested in Canada on behalf of the United States, which says that Huawei has violated the *US sanctions against Iran*, and the company has also been indicted for stealing robotic phone-testing technology from T-Mobile. (ARS Staff 2019).

Another reason identified by *Ars Technica* journalist-researchers for opposing Huawei was their leadership in 5G technology, which is a case study (not considered here) of how the US became visibly deficient in the development and rollout of new mobile technologies. Putting the pieces together – including the reference to Iran – points to the breadth of US claims against Chinese firms. Those firms, engaged in global partnerships for business ran afoul of comprehensive technological, military, strategic US interests, and perhaps most powerfully yet subtly, the knowledge that Chinese telecommunication firms were outperforming the US. Only a new strategic containment program could suppress what increasingly appeared to be "the threat of a good example," of Chinese development.

The accusations against China were not new. They had been rehearsed in detail in 2012 when The House Intelligence Committee investigated and then released the 52-page "Investigative Report on the US National Security Issues Posed by Chinese Telecommunications Companies Huawei and ZTE" (2012) that said: "Based on available classified and unclassified information, Huawei and ZTE cannot be trusted to be free of foreign state influence and thus pose a security threat to the United States and to our systems" (2012: 45). Most dramatically, the committee recommended that US companies should buy their telecommunication equipment from other providers, thereby beginning the break in communications integration that would emerge seven years later with Trump. Moreover, this 2012 inquiry set the groundwork for the precision of the Trump attacks. As the report indicated:

> Chinese telecommunications companies provide an opportunity for the Chinese government to tamper with the United States telecommunications supply chain. That said, understanding the level and means of state influence and control of economic entities in China remains difficult. As Chinese analysts explain, state control or influence of purportedly private-sector entities in China

is neither clear nor disclosed (2012, 11).

The die was cast during the Obama Administration for Trump to turn the screws and for alarmist "hawks" seeking to characterize Chinese firms in the US as threats to national security. In fact, the report details claims about connections between Huawei and ZTE and the CCP, while raising questions about oversight, ownership structures, ethics, and Chinese state entities. The questions and complaints from the committee showed how Chinese firms formally connect with the Chinese Government in a system that is unlike the civil society approach of Western culture, where economic activity operates as somewhat autonomous and private (despite Government contracts), rather than dependent and public. The Chinese method extends Sinicizing Marxism and is the basis of the critique from the US Government has been characterized by US neo-liberal protagonists as Chinese mercantilism, where instead of free markets:

> … it is about maximizing long-term producer welfare and achieving autarky. And it's a particular kind of producer welfare where the owner of the factors of production is the Chinese Communist Party. As such, the focus on producer welfare is tied not just to a particular theory of economic growth but to direct self-interest of the Chinese government and officials in it (Atkinson 2012: 7).

The contrast in styles translates into reporting about the Chinese Government that essentially presents negative connotations about the CCP through linguistic framing in which communism (and socialism) is reiterated in the socially constructed meaning of unacceptable, evil, and unworthy of rational consideration in the US or by liberal democracies.

Deep criticism of China was circulating well before Trump came to power, although it was Trump's application of America First settler colonial originalism through applied personal belligerence that translated into policy action. Birtherism - white native-born - was "the foundation of Donald Trump's presidency," in which "the negation" of the Presidency of Barack Obama extended to establish Trump's "entire political existence… on the fact of a black president" (Coates 2017). While applicable, this racist dialectic fails to adequately expand on the systemic whiteness of US elites and their history of "cruel exploitation" through slavery, expropriation of land from indigenous peoples and persistent warfare (Horne 2020, 211). The affect of racist domination by whiteness was the foundation for his action before his term in office began, then refined with demands for Made in America, by his administration.

Trump personified the break to decoupling from China, informed and legitimized by the federal bureaucracy. This bureaucracy was dedicated to "disrupting and deterring the wide range of national security threats posed by the policies and practices of the People's Republic of China (PRC) government," according to *The China Initiative*, a program that refined and broadened the opposition to Huawei and ZTA in 2012 (2019: np). The 2018 *China Initiative* became the foundation for opposition to China. It was regularly updated as a Trump era anti-China effort that engaged in litigation by a variety of Trump-appointed District Attorney's on US academics engaged in research with collaborators in China. By 2022, it was publicly discredited as a "xenophobic threat" to the US economy and US ideals, although the tenets of its arguments remained, albeit updated (Tang and Walsh). In February 2022, it was abandoned after complaints that included the following observation from *The New York Times*:

The move comes a year after civil rights proponents, business groups, and universities first raised concerns to the Biden administration that the program had chilled scientific research and contributed to a rising tide of anti-Asian sentiment (Benner 2022).

Any thought that this move away from anti-China securitization indicated a change in US orientation was deconstructed by the disturbing claim made by the journalist reporting the closure of the China Initiative: "But the end of the initiative does not mean that Beijing is no longer a significant national security threat." Accordingly, "national security cases related to China (were folded) back into the overall mission of the national security division" of the Justice Department (Benner 2022). The move meant that Chinese media and technologies would be less open to public scrutiny as they disappeared into the bureaucratic miasma of Washington D.C. There, they could be massaged to maximize emotional anxiety, according to the priorities of the race-based national security ideology that Trump had gestated against China.

TikTok as National Security with Executive Orders

TikTok became China. Or, TikTok-as-China became the target of opposition to China through the mish-mash of actions beginning with policy-through-press-release, an approach initiated by the uber-anti-Communist, Senator Marco Rubio of Florida, a conservative with impeccable conservative Republican Party anti-communist credentials due to his family's Cuban refugee status. The TikTok opposition was consolidated when Rubio noted in October 2019: "There continues to be ample and growing evidence that TikTok's platform for Western markets, including those in the United States, is censoring content that is not in line with the Chinese Government and Communist Party directives" (Pham 2019). The headline to this claim expressed the kind of national security hysteria-inducing emotions that are foundational to the conservative anti-Communist, anti-Castro community in Florida: "TikTok could threaten national security, US lawmakers say" (Pham 2019). To add fuel to the fire, on October 24, 2019, Democratic Senator Chuck Schumer and Republican Senator Tom Cotton released a letter to Joseph Maguire, the Acting Director of National Intelligence in the Office of the Director of National Intelligence: "We write to express our concerns about TikTok, a short-form video application, and the national security risks posed by its growing use in the United States" (Cotton 2019). The political bipartisanship much lauded by the US political elites was getting an airing after years of Trump and the Republican Party refusing to collaborate with the Democratic Party, proving that matters of national security are easily transferred across the political parties. When it came to the difference between liberals and conservatives, security was the unifying topic. Even when freighted with the Orientalism that Trump embodied, the US had to be defended against TikTok.[2]

Four months later and with the cast set, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, speaking at a conference in Munich on February 16, 2020, segued from criticism of Chinese adjustments of its international borders to technology: "And let's talk for a second about the other realm, cybersecurity. Huawei and other Chinese state-backed tech companies are *Trojan horses for Chinese intelligence*" (Macias 2020: np). Pompeo was using a linguistic method in which deference to the military and national security constructs the language through fear of the other. This rhetorical tactic begins with an image in which liberalism or openness to the other admits a threat at the top of the slippery slope of impending American misery. The negation of the Trojan horse riding "other" is made through the semiotic appeal to popular images of warfare in the conservative imagination, having been consistently reinforced by generations of media propaganda, then consolidated through leisure

activities such as online games that feature militarism as a Western "good." Unsurprisingly, TikTok offered another vehicle for the US to press its case against China.

By July 6, 2020, Pompeo was on the record saying that the US Government was "certainly looking at" banning Chinese social media apps, including TikTok, adding the accusation that TikTok shared information with the Chinese government (Singh and Kalia, 2020: np). As noted above, public ignorance of China allows for a type of Orientalism that characterizes "others" as enemies, allowing any statement encoded with Orientalist meaning to be constructed negatively. This technique is refined in military training and was of concern for Kennan, who recommended education to avoid a hot war. As a broadly applied method of dehumanization, it is in use against Russia, called into operation as it has been against enemies since time immemorial.[3] Add to this the long-standing anti-communist or anti-left rhetoric within policy making in the US mirrored by the media, and the pieces fell into place, such as the following report from Reuters.

> US lawmakers have raised national security concerns over TikTok's handling of user data, saying they were worried about Chinese laws requiring domestic companies "to support and cooperate with intelligence work controlled by the Chinese Communist Party" (Singh and Kalia 2020).

This comment reinforced the negative view of the CCP, establishing in the media the nexus between Chinese technology and Communism. The point was further reinforced by Pompeo, who repeated it:

> "Only if you want your private information in the hands of the Chinese Communist Party," Pompeo remarked when asked if he would recommend people to download TikTok. (Singh and Kahlia 2020).

The next iteration of this approach was Fox News, a trusted outlet for the Trump Administration and the most persistent trigger for Trump supporters in the Republican Party's effort to construct the US as an illiberal, white supremacist country. Indeed, television provided the central imaginary for Trump, who was knowledgeable about the influence of TV from his years as the host of *The Apprentice* reality TV show on NBC from 2004-2017. His use of Twitter extended the emotional range of connectivity to his supporters, generating a cult of irrationality, one based on emotion. As a cable news provider, Fox News also constructed the visual code for Trumpism that resonated with his emotional manipulation of Republicans.

In fact, Fox News played a significant role during Trump's administration and was the unofficial media outlet for the Trump Presidency. As a relative latecomer to broadcast and cable news and information services, and after its launch on October 17, 1996, the Fox News currency was emotion: "fear… the anger, the bombast, the virulent paranoid streak, the unending appeals to white resentment" (Dickinson 2011). The station reported that it "finished 2020 as the most-watched basic cable network for the fifth straight year" (Flood 2020). With three million viewers each night watching Sean Hannity, the numbers suggest the station and its supporters in the conservative movement deployed itself like a complex publicity apparatus to influence public opinion through secondary reporting in the media ecosystem - primarily Twitter - more than reporting the news itself. Described as the prime mover for "peak cable news" because of the number of viewers watching all cable news channels in the US during the Trump years, Fox News offered Pompeo space to question the Chinese and TikTok on the Laura Ingraham Show, concentrating the public imagination on the politics of anti-communism (Pompeo 2021). His point was summarized in the headline on Fox

News: "Pompeo warns of potential restriction of Chinese TikTok app; US users may be ceding info to 'Chinese Communists'" (Creitz 2020).

Keeping the emotional energy within the spectrum of irrationality, was straightforward politics for Trump, the television reality star. His knowledge of and capacity to generate emotional cues were formed through a career in branding and marketing, making him a valuable vehicle for irrationality, given that it is irrationality that advertising and marketing relies on to sustain consumerism. In a contradictory sense, professionally written policy statements like those delivered in Executive Orders, are examples of texts that are "performed" within the irrationality of the televisual, as the documents are signed with televisual urgency, creating breathless coverage on Fox News and mainstream television. The urgency of the coverage molds public affect. By filling the Executive Orders about TikTok with the specter of communism and national security, the energy of irrationality magnified the threats they posed. For example, the apparent urgency of the matter was codified on August 6, 2020, when Trump invoked the International Emergency Economic Powers Act, along with the National Emergencies Act, signing the Executive Order: *Addressing the Threat Posed by TikTok, and Taking Additional Steps To Address the National Emergency With Respect to the Information and Communications Technology and Services Supply Chain*. The "threat" and its affective baggage, whether true or not, was clearly defined:

> TikTok automatically captures vast swaths of information from its users, including internet and other network activity information such as location data and browsing and search histories. This data collection threatens to allow the Chinese Communist Party access to Americans' personal and proprietary information—potentially allowing China to track the locations of Federal employees and contractors, build dossiers of personal information for blackmail, and conduct corporate espionage (EO2020, 48637).

Assertions were also made about Chinese "censorship" and "disinformation campaigns" about Hong Kong protests, China's treatment of Uyghurs and other Muslim minorities. Having established in the Executive Order the overpowering need to ban TikTok, the appeal returned to the old saw of security, the core of US domestic thinking that rests on the sentimental public imaginary of protecting nativist heroics: "The United States must take aggressive action against the owners of TikTok to protect our national security" (EO 13942 2020, 48637). Ofcourse, the negative characterization of TikTok did not stop there.

Executive Order 13942 added financial transactions, prohibiting in 45 days after August 6: "any transaction by any person, or with respect to any property, subject to the jurisdiction of the United States, with Bytedance Ltd" the majority shareholder of TikTok (EO 13942 2020, 48638).

Having worked through the emotional logic of the "emergency" threat posed by TikTok as a social media platform, the remaining effort in achieving the subjugation of TikTok to US interests was relatively simple: attack its business and finance arrangements. While the US public could be relied on to go into hysteria through negative othering of China and Communists, business and finance opposition had to be constructed along economic nationalist lines. In so doing, Bytedance was introduced as a morally bad entity in the US business environment. Simplistically, Bytedance's Chinese ownership of TikTok made the business possible and needed to be opposed because it was not a US-based business operation. Somewhat later, Trump acknowledged that TikTok could continue to operate in the US if it were owned by US investors, making capital accumulation and platform control acceptable if it were not Chinese.

Criticizing Chinese ownership was superficially racist, while from the Trump perspective, it was presented within the nationalistic framework of global technological domination. These positions derived from and confirmed the hegemony that the US had enjoyed as the overlord of the global internet until the Chinese appeared to offer effective networking technologies of their own, evidenced through TikTok. More important in constructing these arguments, was an agenda that connected US ownership with national security. Chinese ownership meant that computer server hardware was physically located in China or in territories not allowing US access. Conversely, US ownership of Bytedance would give the US Government the power, drawing on Homeland Security laws, to observe exactly what it accused China of doing – surveillance of TikTok users. The inversion of the power of US surveillance of its citizens by the Chinese-owned TikTok had to be corrected.

The corrective capacity was available through the application of Homeland Security law. This law operates as an ideology, whereby after the terrorist attacks in the US on September 11, 2001, it mobilized a totalizing rearrangement in US Government surveillance power and came into operation through George W. Bush, followed by President Barack Obama. This is clear from Wikileaks document releases as well as Edward Snowden's whistleblowing action revealed in his memoir *Permanent Record* (2019). Snowden identified how the US Intelligence Community (IC) globally surveilled internet users through a series of interconnected efforts utilizing tools such as STELLARWIND and PRISM, put to comprehensive effect by the National Security Agency and its UK equivalent GCHQ (Gelman and Poitras, 2013). Taking legal liberties with techniques that identified "foreign targets whose communications cross US infrastructure," Trump magnified the Homeland Security method with the proposed ban on TikTok (Gelman 2013). The "method" was a comprehensive US surveillance system, as long as access to the data and software could be guaranteed. This meant that the data needed to be located in the US or its "partner" territories, such as that of the "Five Eyes" partners, the US, Canada, UK, Australia, New Zealand, whose national sovereignty is questionable when considered through the lens of US surveillance and securitization. In fact, "the myth of sovereignty" for US partners has been identified as a significant aspect of the relationship between the US and its foreign partners, such as the Five Eyes ones, and became obvious as pressure built on TikTok and as more was learned about legal protocols, or the absence of them in Homeland Security law and practice (Patience 2023).

Meanwhile, US data firms were an open book: "Collection directly from the servers of these US Service Providers: Microsoft, Yahoo, Google, Facebook, PalTalk, AOL, Skype, YouTube, Apple" (Gellman and Poitras 2013). Before TikTok, the US Government's assumption had been that its global domination of networked technology would be secure, notwithstanding the Great Firewall of China. In fact, such was the Homeland Security ideology, that the US Government established a suspicion system, "The Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act (IRTPA) of 2004 and the 2007 National Strategy for Information Sharing Suspicious Activity Reporting or SAR … to establish locally controlled distributed information systems wherein potential terrorism-related information could be contributed by the 18,000 state, local, tribal, and territorial (SLTT) law enforcement agencies for analysis to determine whether there are emerging patterns or trends" (Nationwide SAR Initiative). An extension of the Suspicious Activity Reporting effort was the US Government's directive: "Ten Way to Integrate suspicious Activity Reporting into your Agencies operations," which inverted open society values of liberal democracy with values that closed down human relations as a site of trust, support and solidarity (NSI Initiative). Simultaneously, SAR reinforced antagonism to China or anything foreign or othered, as a threat. This was not an isolated case. Rather, it was an expression of the culture of national security. The National Threat Evaluation and Reporting (NTER) Office extended the national security focus with emotional ties, reinforced by questions about foreign social media

platforms, thereby establishing TikTok within a frame that focused on the contradictions, inverting its role from a social media platform to a national security challenge (NSI Initiative).

Furthermore, citizens from nine Islamic states were banned by Trump on January 27, 2017, by Executive Order 13769, *Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States from traveling to the USA*, commonly referred to as "The Moslem Ban." Outrage and appeals followed, but The US Supreme Court upheld the selective ban on Muslims, with Chief Justice Roberts writing in support of the ban, noting that President Trump had, "ample statutory authority to make national security judgments in the realm of immigration" thereby reinforcing in the public mind the nationalist security project that was underway in the virtual world and in the proposed ban of TikTok (Liptak and Shear 2017).

The repetition in the language around the bans moved in the echo chamber of Fox News, Twitter, and the national media ecosystem, to become codified US political rhetoric. Negative emotional associations parlayed an Orientalist view of China and the Chinese with Communist access to US platforms and was reiterated in the threatening language of national security due to unknown associations of TikTok's parent company Bytedance with the Chinese Government. Being Chinese was enough to invoke communism, which was red meat to conservative hawks like Pompeo, who readily prompted Trump with urgent Executive Orders.

Furthermore, the rhetoric became an explicit layer of national public policy-making with a financial angle. It was used in defense of the US digital industry, especially the social media platform Facebook. As an expression of national industry policy, the mention of Facebook appeared to catch Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg off guard. Silicon Valley reporters, putting their American supremacist ducks in a row noted that, "Zuckerberg misunderstands the huge threat of TikTok" while "failing to win one of the social feeds (short form video) his business depends on" (Constine 2019).

Financially, concerns expressed by US market commentators highlighted the impact on Facebook valuations if TikTok captured a larger user base in the US. If TikTok continued to grow beyond 100 million US users by August 2020, the profit calculations of Wall Street looked poor (Douyin 2021; businessofapps 2021). As an expression of emotion and affect, anxious financial reporting contributed to the public construction of irrational emotions that further inflamed anti-Chinese hysteria.

By January 2021, metrics used in evaluating social media platforms and their stock value illustrated how market valuations of Chinese companies in the US became an additional motivation for Senator Rubio, Secretary of State Pompeo, and President Trump in 2020 to launch the anti-TikTok campaign. *In Time Spent per User*, an evaluation and measurement tool for Wall Street analysis, time on TikTok was up 325% year-over-year, outperforming Facebook for hours spent per user per month:

> TikTok is in a league of its own when it comes to revenue, ranking as the #2 non-gaming app in terms of consumer spending. While many social media apps monetize through ads, TikTok monetizes through ads and allows users to purchase digital goods (Southern 2021: np).

Given this, the Government's action against TikTok also expressed national economic anxieties. More importantly, TikTok's identity as an emergent economic powerhouse provoked expressions of nationalistic finance fetishism that challenged Silicon Valley innovators and Wall Street investors. This reading reinforces an appreciation of US digital technology as fundamental to the US economy, incorporating social, economic finance, and cultural power: a triple play, as it were. Until the

emergence of TikTok, US firms like Facebook and Google had unrestricted dominance in the US and globally – with the exception of China. In effect, the US technology that always wins is central to the US colonial mind, as David Noble showed in *America by Design*, colonizing US citizens and foreigners alike, "to inescapably reflect the contours of that particular social order which has produced and sustained it" (1977: xxii). Moreover, this ideology was refined by neoliberalism, whose original rationale included opening global markets for US products, ideation, and culture. In such a context, any innovative foreign entity outperforming US social media platforms and technologies became a target for crushing, in the spirit of US capitalism.

In order to achieve a competitive advantage in neoliberalism, the US needed allies, as the Five Eyes Alliance mentioned earlier illustrates. At the geo-political level, as the US mobilized its power as hegemon, the Trump Administration opened wide the door to long-term containment of China by drawing in traditional allies, such as historical Euro-centric white allies like Australia, New Zealand and the UK, to states with elements of ethno-nationalism like Hungary, Israel, and India. Consequently, the proposed US ban on TikTok did not stand alone. The most obsequious enactments of US power came from one member of the latter group as part of the US project to push back against China and TikTok when the Indian Government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi banned TikTok on June 29, 2020, along with 223 other Chinese apps. India's Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology argued that the app was "prejudicial to sovereignty and integrity of India, defense of India, security of state and public order" (Smith 2021: np). The geopolitics of the bans had the appearance of an organized move against Chinese communication technologies in general, not only TikTok. It was a move that mirrored activities Kennan had proposed in 1947's containment strategy:

> (4) We must formulate and put forward for other nations a much more positive and constructive picture of the sort of world we would like to see that we have put forward in the past. It is not enough to urge people to develop political processes similar to our own. Many foreign peoples, in Europe at least, are tired and frightened by experiences of past, and are less interested in abstract freedom than in security. They are seeking guidance rather than responsibilities. We should be better able than Russians to give them this. And unless we do, Russians certainly will. (Kennan 1947: np).

The digital containment strategy against TikTok and other Chinese technology firms mobilized during the Trump years is clear in this statement if the references to Russia are replaced with China.

Not a TikTok Conclusion

The moves during the Trump Presidency against TikTok can be summarized as taking place at several interconnected sites through the use of US Government policies that drew on variations of anti-communist containment strategies hatched in 1947. There were inevitable differences because China is not the USSR. The primary difference being that China and the US were integrated in trade, but not in the flow of digital data. If TikTok had been owned by US firms, it would have been open to backdoor scrutiny by US Government surveillance techniques, and the opposition to TikTok as a successful social media app would have been moot. Such an approach was not possible. Running in tandem with the absence of unlimited scrutiny of the Chinese social media platform, the foundational ideas presented by Trump and his administration in the US media were grounded

in anti-Chinese Orientalism that was reconfigured within the long-standing ideological agenda of anti-communism. To Rubio, Pompeo, Trump, and American supremacists, the fact that TikTok was succeeding and appealing to more Americans than US social media apps, collided with US economic conceits about the superiority of its technology and financial domination within the global model of open market liberalism. And while the Trump Administration's campaign against TikTok consolidated the suppression of Chinese communication technologies generally, public ignorance about China enabled the US Government's opposition to fit into the established playbook of containment, inverting and negating TikTok as a social media platform with rhetoric and public policies. Meanwhile, as the proposed anti-TikTok bans went forward, the continued use of digital technologies for surveillance illuminated by Wikileaks, Snowden, and others, added to the further inversion of the open society theory of liberal democracy.

The political agenda was clear at an ideological register: Trump's TikTok bans dehumanized China and the Chinese in an Orientalist move that insisted on maintaining the US as a global imperial hegemon. Media was used to set the emotional register of public antagonism against TikTok. For its part, the contrast with TikTok inverted public ignorance, generating knowledge about Sinicizing Marxism to suggest the effectiveness of China at utilizing digital technologies within the contradictory CCP model of social and economic development: integrating developmental aspects of their national project within global capitalism. In the US political calculation, knowledge about China and its achievements could not be known or shown as positive, lest it offer a path to socialism as an alternative to the dominant US and Western method of capitalism within increasingly circumscribed liberal democracy. TikTok had to be stopped by the US Government because it expressed in digital form the rise of China. As such, it was a "threat of a good example." To not oppose TikTok would give credit to a player on the world stage whose national development offered a contradictory and complex model of progress within global capitalism.

Endnotes

[1] The 2019 EO was released a few days before Edward Snowden's book *Permanent Record* appeared, a book that detailed the US security agency's universal surveillance of global internet communication. Snowden was not mentioned in the 2019 EO.

[2] Claims that US Government security is managed in a democratic way, meaning *open to public scrutiny*, is not sustainable, even though the US persists in pointing the finger at China and many other nations about communication security. For example, the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Court (FISA) has not made fully public its assessments of national security matters for many years. The ACLU argued persistently into 2021 that secrecy about surveillance of US digital communication was unconstitutional, with transparency advocates noting that "many of the surveillance court's opinions remain secret, and the *USA. Freedom Act* does not ensure that the court's future opinions will see the light of day." David D. Cole, Jameel Jaffer, and Theodore B. Olson offered a *Guest Essay* in the Op-Ed pages in the *New York Times*.

[3] Russian critic Andrei Liakov offered these examples of dehumanization against Russians: "Other Western commentators have also dehumanized the people of eastern Ukraine. Further, this dehumanization has seeped into a general dehumanization of all things Russian. From the start of the crisis in Ukraine, the Ukraine-EU Association Agreement was presented to Western readers as a "civilization choice" for Ukrainians between a "civilized Europe" and a "barbaric, Asiatic Russia." During the Euromaidan protests in December 2013, Sweden's former Foreign Minister Carl Bildt, the co-architect of the EU's Eastern Partnership (EaP) program, tweeted that the growing conflict between the protesters and police symbolized "Eurasia versus Europe in [the] streets of Kiev." Even more extreme, former Georgian President Mikheil Saakashvili declared Moscow to be the "new Tatar-Mongol yoke." Curtesy of an email from ---------, May 30, 2021, to the No Cold War members of Massachusetts Peace Action Nuclear Disarmament.

References

Albo, Greg. 2020. "Postcapitalism: Altrernatives or detours?" Edited by Leo Panitch and Greg Albo, Beyond Digital Capitalism. Socialist Register 2021. New York: Monthly Review Press and The Merlin Press: 310-330.

American Jobs Plan. 2021, March 31. The White House. https://www.whitehouse.gov/ briefing-room/statements-releases/2021/03/31/ fact-sheet-the-american-jobs-plan/ Accessed June 5, 2022.

American Families Plan. 2021, April. The White House. https://www.whitehouse.gov/american-families-plan/ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/ Build_Back_Better_Plan#American_Families_ Plan Accessed November 25, 2022.

Ars Staff. 2019, May 30. "Bloomberg alleges Huawei routers and network gear are backdoored: Details are scarce, but the "backdoor" appears to be benign." ArsTechnica. https://arstechnica.com/gadgets/2019/04/ bloomberg-claims-vodafone-found-backdoors-in-huawei-equipment-vodafone-disagrees/ Accessed November 21, 2021.

Atkinson, Robert. 2012. Enough is Enough: Confronting Chinese Innovation Mercantilism. Information Technology and Innovation Foundation, Washington DC http://www2. itif.org/2012-enough-enough-chinese-mercantilism.pdf Accessed June 6, 2022.

Badiou, Alain. 2012. The Rebirth of History: Times of Riots and Uprisings. New York: Verso.

Ban Gu, History of the Earlier Han Dynasty. Cited in Mao Zedong, On Practice and On Contradiction. Red Prints Publishing.

Barnett, Michael, N. 2018. "What is Information Theory Good For?" Editors, Robert Jervis, Francis J. Gavin, Joshua Rovner, Diane N. Lambrose, Chaos in the Liberal Order: The Trump Presidency and International Politics in the Twenty-First Century. New York: Columbia University Press: 8-21.

Barr, Andy. 2009. "Palin trashes 'lamestream media'," Politico, November 18. https://www. politico.com/story/2009/11/palin-trashes-lamestream-media-029693 Accessed November 21, 2021.

Benner, Katie. 2022. "Justice Dept. to End Trump-Era Initiative to Deter Chinese Threats," The New York Times, February 23. https://www.nytimes.com/2022/02/23/ us/politics/china-trump-justice-department. html?searchResultPosition=3

Breen, Marcus. 2020. Book Review. Rongbin Han, Contesting Cyberspace in China: Online Expression and Authoritarian Resilience, New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2018. International Journal of Communication 14. https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/16190 Accessed December 15, 2020

Business of Apps. 2021. "TikTok Revenue and Usage Statistics." https://www.businessofapps. com/data/tik-tok-statistics/ Accessed June 5, 2022.

Chen Ting-Fang and Lauly Li. 2022, July 27. "The resilience myth: Fatal flaws in the push to secure chip supply chains." Nikkei Asia. https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/The-Big-Story/The-resilience-myth-Fatal-flaws-in-the-push-to-secure-chip-supply-chains?utm_ campaign=GL_one_time&utm_

medium=email&utm_source=NA_
newsletter&utm_content=article_link
Accessed June 6, 2022.   Accessed November
5, 2022.

Coates, Ta-Nehisi. 2017. "The First White
President." The Atlantic, np. https://www.
theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/2017/10/the-
first-white-president-ta-nehisi-coates/537909/
Accessed April 15, 2023.

Constine, Josh. 2019, October 1. "Zuckerberg
misunderstands the huge threat of
TikTok." TechCrunch. https://techcrunch.
com/2019/10/01/instagram-vs-tiktok/ Accessed
June 6, 2022.

Cotton, Tom and Schumer, Charles. 2019,
October 23. Letter to The Honorable
Joseph Maguire, Acting Director of National
Intelligence. https://www.democrats.senate.
gov/imo/media/doc/10232019%20TikTok%20
Letter%20-%20FINAL%20PDF.pdf Accessed
April 28, 2022.

Creitz, Charles. 2020, July 7. "Pompeo warns
of potential restriction of Chinese TikTok app;
US users may be ceding info to 'Chinese
Communists'." FOX News. https://www.
foxnews.com/media/mike-pompeo-tik-tok-
china-communist-social-media-spying-fox-
ingraham Accessed June 8, 2022.

COVID-19 Hate Crimes Act. 2021. https://
apps.npr.org/documents/document.
html?id=20784480-bills-117s9 Accessed
November 21, 2022.

Dean, Jodi. 2010. Blog Theory: Feedback and
Capture in the Circuits of Drive. Cambridge:
Polity.

Dickinson, Tim. 2011, May 25. "How Roger
Ailes Built the Fox News Fear Factory." Rolling
Stone. https://www.rollingstone.com/politics/
politics-news/how-roger-ailes-built-the-fox-
news-fear-factory-244652/. Accessed April 28,
2023.

Douyin. 2021. https://www.douyin.com/
Accessed November 22, 2021.

Executive Order 13769. 2017, January 27.
Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist
Entry into the United States from traveling
to the USA. Federal Register, Washington
DC https://www.federalregister.gov/
documents/2017/02/01/2017-02281/protecting-
the-nation-from-foreign-terrorist-entry-into-the-
united-states Accessed June 5, 2022.

Executive Order 13873. 2019, May
17. Securing the Information and
Communications Technology and Services
Supply Chain. Federal Register, Washington
DC https://www.federalregister.gov/
documents/2019/05/17/2019-10538/securing-
the-information-and-communications-
technology-and-services-supply-chain
Accessed June 5, 2022.

Executive Order 13942. 2020, August 6.
Addressing the threat Posed by TikTok,
and Taking Additional Steps To Address the
National Emergency With Respect to the
Information and Communications Technology
and Services Supply Chain. Federal Register,
Washington DC https://www.federalregister.
gov/documents/2020/08/11/2020-17699/
addressing-the-threat-posed-by-tiktok-and-
taking-additional-steps-to-address-the-national-
emergency Accessed June 5, 2022.

Fassin, Didier. 2019. "How is Critique." Editors,
D. Fassin and B. Harcourt, A time for Critique:
New directions in critical theory. New York,
Columbia University Press: 13-36.

Flood, Brian. 2020, December 16. "Fox News

finishes 2020 as most-watched cable news channel in history." FOX News Channel. https://www.foxnews.com/media/fox-news-finishes-2020-as-most-watched-cable-news-channel-in-history Accessed June 6, 2022.

Gelman Barton and Poitras Laura. 2013, June 7. "U.S., British intelligence mining data from nine US Internet companies in broad secret program." The Washington Post. https://www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/us-intelligence-mining-data-from-nine-us-internet-companies-in-broad-secret-program/2013/06/06/3a0c0da8-cebf-11e2-8845-d970ccb04497_story.html?tid=a_inl_manual Accessed June 14, 2022.

Gelman, Barton, 2013, June 15. "US surveillance architecture includes collection of revealing Internet, phone metadata." The Washington Post. https://www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/us- surveillance-architecture-includes-collection-of-revealing-internet-phone-metadata/2013/06/15/e9bf004a-d511-11e2-b05f-3ea3f0e7bb5a_story.html. Accessed June 14, 2022.

Hooker, Juliet. 2017. "Black protest/white grievance: On the problem of white political imaginations not shaped by loss." South Atlantic Quarterly. 116.3: 483-504.

Horne, Gerald, 2020. The Dawning of the Apocalypse. New York: Monthly Review Press.

Horsley, Janet. 2021, April 1. "It's time for a new policy on Confucius institutes." Brookings Institute. https://www.brookings.edu/articles/its-time-for-a-new-policy-on-confucius-institutes/ Accessed April 18, 2023.

Investigative Report on the US National Security Issues Posed by Chinese Telecommunications Companies Huawei and ZTE. 2012, October 18. US House of Representatives: Washington DC. https://republicans-intelligence.house.gov/sites/intelligence.house.gov/files/documents/huawei-zte%20investigative%20report%20(final).pdf Accessed June 6, 2022.

Kennan, George. 1946. The Charge in the Soviet Union (Kennan) to the Secretary of State. US Archives, Washington, DC https://nsarchive2.gwu.edu//coldwar/documents/episode-1/kennan.htm Accessed November 21, 2022.

Larson, Deborah Welch. 2021, January 15. "The Return of Containment." Foreign Policy. https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/01/15/containment-russia-china-kennan-today/ Accessed November 21, 2022.

Liptak, Adam and Shear, Michael. 2017, June 26. "Trump's Travel Ban Is Upheld by Supreme Court." The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/2018/06/26/us/politics/supreme-court-trump-travel-ban.html Accessed April 28 2023.

Lind, Michael. 2008. "The Next American System." Washington: Democracy, A Journal of Ideas, Inc Democracy, 10: 29-40.

Luo, Nina. 2021, May 20. "The American Victims of Washington's Anti-China Hysteria." The New Republic. https://newrepublic.com/article/162429/yellow-peril-rhetoric-selling-war-with-china Accessed June 15, 2022.

Macias, Amanda. 2020, February 16. "US officials' warnings about China are 'lies, not based on facts,' foreign minister says." CNBC. https://www.cnbc.com/2020/02/16/us-warnings-about-china-are-lies-foreign-minister-wang-says.html Accessed November 22, 2021.

McKinnon, John and Leary, Alex. 2022.

February 2. "US Moving—Some Say Too Slowly—to Address TikTok Security Risk." Wall Street Journal. https://www.wsj.com/articles/tiktok-security-risk-china-biden-11643807751?campaign_id=4&emc=edit_dk_20220203&instance_id=52049&nl=dealbook&regi_id=91378785&segment_id=81528&te=1&user_id=3d71727136bcb462c5c5e633c4757e55 Accessed June 15, 2022.

Mearsheimer, John. 2015, September 25. "Why is Ukraine the West's Fault?" You Tube https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JrMiSQAGOS4&ab_channel=TheUniversityofChicago Accessed February 10, 2022.

Melrose, Dianna. 1989. Nicaragua: The threat of a good example? Oxford: Oxfam, UK.

Nationwide SAR Initiative, undated. https://www.dhs.gov/nationwide-sar-initiative-nsi and About the NSI, undated. https://www.dhs.gov/nationwide-sar-initiative-nsi/about-nsi Accessed April 25 2023.

NSI Initiative, undated. https://www.dhs.gov/sites/default/files/2022-09/17_0315_NSI_10-Ways-Integrate-SSAR-Into-Agencys-Operations-v2.pdf Accessed April 25 2023.

Noble, David. 1977. American by Design: Science, Technology and the Rise of Corporate Capitalism. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Nye, Joseph. 2019, January 18. "Between Complacency and Hysteria." Foreign Policy. https://www.chinausfocus.com/foreign-policy/between-complacency-and-hysteria Accessed June 16 2022. Accessed November 22, 2022.

----------------. 2022. "The Evolution of America's China Strategy." Project Syndicate. https://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/us-china-biden-national-security-strategy-by-joseph-s-nye-2022-11 Accessed November 23, 2022

Office of the Historian. 2021. Kennan and Containment, 1947. https://history.state.gov/milestones/1945-1952/kennan Accessed June 17 2022.

Patience, Alan. 2023, March 23. "The Myth of Sovereignty." Pearls and Irritations. https://johnmenadue.com/the-myth-of-australian-sovereignty/ Accessed April 28, 2023.

Pham, Sherisse. 2019, October 25. "TikTok could threaten national security, US lawmakers say." CNN Business. https://www.cnn.com/2019/10/25/tech/tiktok-national-security/index.html Accessed May 15, 2022.

Pompeo, Joe. 2021, May 10. "You May Never See Those Numbers Again": Can Cable News Pass The Post-Trump Test?" Hive, Vanity Fair. https://www.vanityfair.com/news/2021/05/can-cable-news-pass-the-post-trump-test Accessed June 8, 2022.

Reuters Staff. May 4, 2020. "Congress Republicans accuse China of seeking to indoctrinate US students." Reuters. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-china-usa/congress-republicans-accuse-china-of-seeking-to-indoctrinate-u-s-students-idUSKBN22G2KG Accessed June 18, 2022.

Rošker, Jana, S. 2019. "Editor's Foreword. Asian Studies from Hegel To Mao And Beyond: The Long March Of Sinicizing Marxism." Asian Studies, VII (XXIII), Issue 1: 5-12. https://revije.ff.uni-lj.si/as/issue/view/658/AS Accessed December 15, 2021.

Singh, Kanishka and Kalia, Shubham. 2020, July 6. "Pompeo says US looking at

banning Chinese social media apps, including TikTok." Yahoo!finance. https://finance.yahoo.com/news/pompeo-says-u-looking-banning-034104736.html Accessed June 19, 2022.

Smith, Georgina. 2021, May 8. "The history of TikTok: From Musical.ly to the number 1 app in the world." Dexerto.com. https://www.dexerto.com/entertainment/the-history-of-tiktok-1569106/ Accessed June 22, 2022.

Southern, Matt. 2021, January 15. "TikTok Beats Facebook in Time Spent Per User." Search Engine Journal. https://www.searchenginejournal.com/tiktok-beats-facebook-in-time-spent-per-user/392643/#close Accessed June 28, 2022.

Snowden, Edward. 2019. Permanent Record. New York: Metropolitan Books.

Tang, Julie and Walsh, John, V. 2022, January 22. "The DOJ's China Initiative is a xenophobic threat to America's economy and our core ideals." San Francisco Chronicle. https://www.sfchronicle.com/opinion/openforum/article/The-DOJ-s-China-Initiative-is-a-xenophobic-16794924.php Accessed June 20, 2022.

The China Initiative: Year-in-Review (2019-20). 2020, November 16. Office of Public Affairs, Department of Justice, Washington DC https://www.justice.gov/opa/pr/china-initiative-year-review-2019-20 Accessed November 22, 2021.

Tonby, Oliver and Jonathan Woetzel, Wonsik Choi, Jeongmin Seong, Patti Wang. 2019. Asia's Future is Now. McKinsey Global Institute.

Vukovich, Daniel. 2012. China and Orientalism Western knowledge production and the PRC New York: Routledge.

Fediverse's evolution from the Cultural-Historical Activity Theory

José Manuel Meza-Cano and Edith González-Santiago

Abstract

This paper begins by mentioning some problems we found in social networks belonging to corporations such as Facebook and Twitter, emphasizing the inclusion of algorithmic timelines, the verticality of decisions that respond to market logic, and the privacy of users' data. This research gives rise to presenting open-source social networks as a democratic and safer alternative for their users. These social networks shape the Fediverse, the result of the union of the words Federation-Universe, and whose history and evolution we describe. We expose the main postulates of the Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) for using this theory to conduct the Fediverse analysis, characterizing it as an Activity System, and thus, investigating the foremost tensions, reasons for change, and results. Among the findings of this analysis are: the preference of users for specific interfaces, the shift in the choice of social networks by users, the suggestions and opinions of the user community, and their influence on the programming development of social networks, promotion, or abandonment of projects by developers and change in the protocols used to connect the networks. We conclude this work by emphasizing that the CHAT allows this type of systemic analysis to be carried out from the critical moments and historical milestones of a system in constant change, such as the Fediverse. Furthermore, the proposal is made that universities are those institutions with prestige and infrastructure that can promote research, criticism, and reflection on the use of social networks for the benefit of users of the social Internet.

Keywords: activity system; psychology; social networks; technological mediation.

1. Introduction

From the historical-cultural psychology perspective, social networks have become an important niche for investigating human interactions, in addition to the individual vision close to the use and appropriation by people, since it is possible to analyze its historical evolution. In this paper, we propose to account for the evolution of the Fediverse understood as a result of interactions between programmers, protocols, and software from which changes and historical milestones are generated, resulting in concrete projects produced from collaborative communities to develop democratic, safe, and reliable alternatives for users.

We describe the problems of social networks belonging to big corporations, especially

the algorithmic use of timelines, the verticality of their decisions, and the security of user data, to then give way to the description of the Fediverse, its history, and its evolution. Our objective is to characterize the Fediverse as an Activity System from the CHAT, to analyze the tensions and changes within the system. At last, we present the conclusions and future perspectives that can be generated from this analysis.

2. Corporate social network issues

Common social networks such as *Facebook*, *Twitter*, and *Instagram*, among others, are widely used and are part of people's daily lives. However, some problems have caused a significant number of users to seek other spaces for interaction. The problems come even from the very structure of the social networks, which are logically, structurally, and architecturally centralized (Schneider 2019), i.e., it is a single corporation and, therefore, a closed group of people who have the power to decide on the structure and access to the architecture, data, and terms of use, generating a monopoly (Cabrera 2017). The above has led to the fact that the groups of power are the ones who make decisions that directly impact the user's motivations. An example of this is the changes made by *Twitter* in 2022 following the purchase of Elon Musk, including charging for user verification (Lerman and Siddiqui 2023).

Centralization gives whoever controls the social network the ability to choose what to show to users and counteract what the user himself wants to see on the network, taking away control over the conversation and interaction. That has led to different users seeing different versions of a single event or seeing it at different times, which reduces the possibility for users to coordinate actions if they wish to act. The previous Kirschner (2015) described it as something that happens on algorithmic timelines on networks such as Facebook and Twitter, something he called an "echo chamber," where users only communicate with a small circle of friends and do not know anyone outside the group, thus generating a contact bubble. The author mentioned existing repercussions that can be triggered from a network of friends based on similarities, as it excludes variety, closing the way to differences and, therefore, to the points of view necessary to create enriching discussions and argumentations.

One of the most relevant issues is the use of user data by corporate social networks and the fact that these networks include mechanisms to ensure the authenticity of the identity, thus avoiding anonymity. Previously, the thought that anonymous participation in social networks could generate antisocial behaviors was common since there was no perception of a repercussion in the physical world; however, currently, there are many unsocial behaviors in networks such as Facebook. Therefore, having users' actual data seems to create a mercantile relationship and thus target segmented advertising to their profiles, as happened with the *Cambridge Analytica* scandal, which caused many users to delete their accounts permanently or temporarily (Brown 2020).

In addition to the above, nation-states have been pressuring *Twitter* and *Facebook* to comply with their laws and allow data auditing by the authorities. In an extreme case, this may impact the Internet in such a way as to generate what Arreola (2020) refers to as a "national Internet" and the development of a kind of "digital sovereignty" where governments decide what kind of information is available on the Internet and what applications one can access through it. That is already happening in China and its great *Firewall* or with *Runet* in Russia, where the state intervenes trying to reduce the social impact of different phenomena, what Asmolov (2020) calls "crisis situations" ranging from natural disasters to political movements and protests.

In light of the anterior problems, users began questioning the relevance of maintaining

profiles on the most commonly used social networks. Although there is an important group of people collaborating with free software projects such as *Linux*, *Firefox*, *Open Office*, or *Libre Office*, it is the regular user who began to look at open-source social networks as an alternative with the aim of generating democratic, safe, and free spaces (Mansoux and Roscam 2020). In this context, we highlight the role of the Fediverse.

3. What is the Fediverse?

From the problems of corporate social networks and the hand of free software users and developers arose the desire to build alternative social networks, which emphasized ethical aspects, infrastructure, and organization, highlighting the release of the source code. Through this, they created decentralized and interoperable communities that supported its use. These social networks are part of the "Fediverse" an acronym for "Federation" and "Universe", which takes up the concept of the federation from political theory, understood as the actors that constitute a network and collectively cooperate in distributing power and responsibility. When this concept is grounded in federated social networks, we speak of servers connected, called instances or nodes, which use different software but with the same communication protocol (Mansoux and Roscam 2020).

By May 2023, the Fediverse had more than 7.9 million accounts distributed in almost 19500 servers or instances using social networking projects such as *Friendica*, *Funkwhale*, *Hubzilla*, *Mastodon*, *Misskey*, *PeerTube*, *PixelFed*, and *Pleroma*, among others. Many of these instances respond to specific topics such as music, art, professional or political activity. The preceding has shown that shifting from universal and corporate social networks to small instances that connect to each other is possible and even fills a niche that was necessary to address (Mansoux and Roscam 2020). It is possible to obtain Up-to-date information on the number of active federated social network accounts, instances, and projects from the Fediverse Party website (2023).

In short, the Fediverse possesses three indispensable qualities: it is logically, politically, and architecturally decentralized (Schneider 2019).

The popularity of the Fediverse has increased due to the user's interest in being part of the technical decisions of the networks, recovering their agency as users. This allows for counteracting the sense of estrangement that arose with corporate social networks, which separated the user from technical decisions and knowledge of the infrastructure and, therefore, from the organization (Mansoux and Roscam 2020).

At the user level, to exemplify how the Fediverse works, we cite an example shown by Holloway (2018): It is as if you could log into Facebook and see posts from friends on *Instagram* and *Twitter* without having an account on each social network. A simile would be having an account on *Mastodon*, watching and commenting on a video on *Peertube*, and replying from a *Pixelfed* account. The anterior is achievable by using conventional protocols that we address below in the evolution of the Fediverse, and so its development, due to analyzing the phenomenon that has been the Fediverse's creation.

4. Evolution of the Fediverse

According to MacManus (2022), the Fediverse started almost at the same time as networks such as *Twitter*, approximately in 2008, and for four years, it was centered on the *identi.ca* site,

developed by Evan Prodromou, who used the protocol called *Laconica*, which meant the possibility of communicating with other sites that used this protocol in a decentralized way. In 2012 *identi.ca* split into *pump.io* and *GNU Social* and started to use a protocol called *Ostatus* to communicate between servers. So the registration to the *Identi.ca* site was closed in December 2012. *GNU Social* was the leading software used in the Fediverse from 2012 to 2016. This period was led mainly by *Qvitter*, an interface similar to Twitter's appearance in its early days, but at the core, it ran *GNU Social* (Gehl 2015). Despite this favorable scenario, most users were still software developers or free software advocates.

Karpiniec (2018) mentions that the broadest instance of *GNU Social* with the *Qvitter* interface was *quitter.se*, which came to register 10,000 users who were proud to claim that they were part of a federation of microbloggers concerned with ethics and solidarity, far from the social networking systems controlled by large corporations, so that even right-wing agitators were denounced and expelled by the same moderators of the instance.

Again, in 2016, *GNU Social* underwent another bifurcation since it was limited only to updating international translations, stagnating the main project. This led to the *PostActiv* project, which had technical advantages such as fluidity and storage. In the same year, several projects emerged almost simultaneously and began to use a protocol that unified several projects called *ActivityPub*. Eugen Rochko developed *Mastodon* with an interface similar to *Twitter*, taking into account the *Ostatus* protocol and including, for the first time, the *ActivityPub* protocol to connect between instances (MacManus 2022).

In 2017, a new social network called *Pleroma*, also similar to *Twitter*, appeared and, then, in 2018, the projects *microblog.pub* as a simplified *Twitter*, *PeerTube*, similar to *Youtube*, and *PixelFed*, similar to Instagram, all using *ActivityPub* (Fediverse Party 2023) emerge.

However, the Fediverse began to gain momentum with *Mastodon* as it became the most popular network. As of March 2023, the *Mastodon* network has approximately 6 466 240 accounts, about 4 213 694 active people in more than 12 573 instances, according to the Fediverse Party portal (2023).

Mastodon's popularity seems to be due to several factors that made people with a non-technological profile see the Fediverse as an alternative option to corporate social networks. Among the main advantages and possible causes of its popularity is that it was disseminated as an alternative to *Twitter*, but without tolerance for people "trolls" or "agitators" (Gehl and Zulli 2022). In addition, the possibility arose to modify the terms of use of each instance according to the user's interests. Another possible advantage was the appearance of *Mastodon*'s advanced interface, which is very similar to that of *Tweetdeck*, employing columns for specific purposes such as timelines and direct messages, among others (Leswing 2022), and, in addition, being free software, users can participate in making decisions on how the interface, or any element of *Mastodon*, can be improved (Zulli, Liu, and Gehl 2020).

The adoption of the *ActivityPub* protocol by *Mastodon* in early 2018 caused it to become the *de facto* standard in the Fediverse even though the previous *Ostatus* protocol continued to be used and, technically, a *Mastodon user* could communicate with a *GNU Social user*. The prior ended in May 2019 when it was announced that compatibility would no longer continue with *Mastodon*, opting only for *ActivityPub* (Gargron 2019), a decision based on increasing the security of messages. Although this could fragment the Fediverse into *Ostatus* and *ActivityPub* instances, the W3C (World Wide Web Consortium 2018) considered the latter the official standard for all the social web.

To better understand the development of the Fediverse, Figure 1 shows a timeline indicating

the years in which the different projects and protocols appeared.

Figure 1. The Fediverse social networking projects and the use of the *Status.net*, *Ostatus*, and *ActivityPub* protocols. Source: Own elaboration.
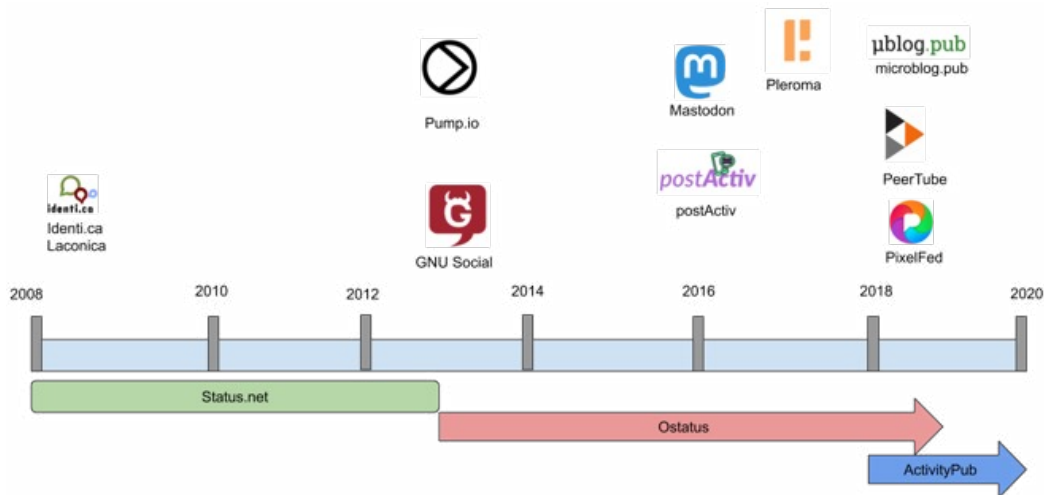
There is another line of development based on the *Diaspora** protocol that brings together other social networks such as *Friendica*, *Hubzilla*, and *Diaspora**, some of which currently use ActivityPub as their protocol. Although they are worth mentioning, their origin and development have followed another path we don't report in this paper. Once we have described the development of the Fediverse, it is pertinent to detail the theory on which we based our analysis.

5. Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT)

Generally, psychology has been seen as a discipline in charge of studying individuals, focused on problems such as depression, anxiety, or special educational needs, or even studying groups in interaction, as is the case of a school classroom; however, some approaches go beyond the duality of individual-group, taking into account the interaction of people in their social and cultural context. This approach allows us to speak of artifacts, such as social networks, relevant for studying the evolution and development of the Fediverse from a systemic approach. In this regard, the Cultural-Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) allows us to approach this perspective. From Vigotsky's initial postulates, Engeström (2009) proposes that it is possible to analyze groups and communities through it to account for elements that are found in the subject since we characterized it by being both a historical theory and a theory of development, due to how it allows for an analysis of changes in human practices, taking into account the contextual elements of both local and global history, including individual and social practices.

In general terms, CHAT evolved with the initial proposals of Vigotsky, who included the notion of mediated activity, focusing on the individual and his relationship with the environment through tools and artifacts (1st generation); then, Leontiev included human activity as the unit of analysis distributed in objects and individuals in a given environment and context (2nd generation). Subsequently, based on his model, Engeström (2009) extended the perspective to Activity Systems which identifies a

series of new components, including rules, community, and division of labor, in addition to those proposed by Vigotsky and Leontiev: subjects, artifacts, and mediating objects, where is possible to link more than one Activity System through the search for the same result or product (3rd generation).

This theory serves as a framework for action-oriented research, practice in context, mediated learning, human development, and pedagogical practice. In addition, it is also a methodological tool for specific interventions to manage change and the development of new practices through formative interventions and social designs in human Activity Systems (Yamazumi 2006). According to Roth and Lee (2007), CHAT reduces the theory-praxis gap; therefore, it is not limited to the explanation of phenomena but can also have an impact on human praxis by seeing subjects as agents of their actions in the scenarios and contexts to which they belong through change and criticism.

In the analytical aspect, the CHAT elements interact systemically; for this purpose, we use the triangle below to illustrate how the elements interrelate through the activity. This figure shows the theoretical components and the processes that arise from their interaction, such as the product, the exchange, and its distribution. In this sense, the notion of activity goes beyond relatively brief events defined in time, so Roth and Lee (2007) take them as an evolving structure of collective mediation. Figure 2 shows how these elements are interrelated in an Activity System.

Figure 2. Model of the Cultural-Historical Activity Theory. Source: Engeström (2009).
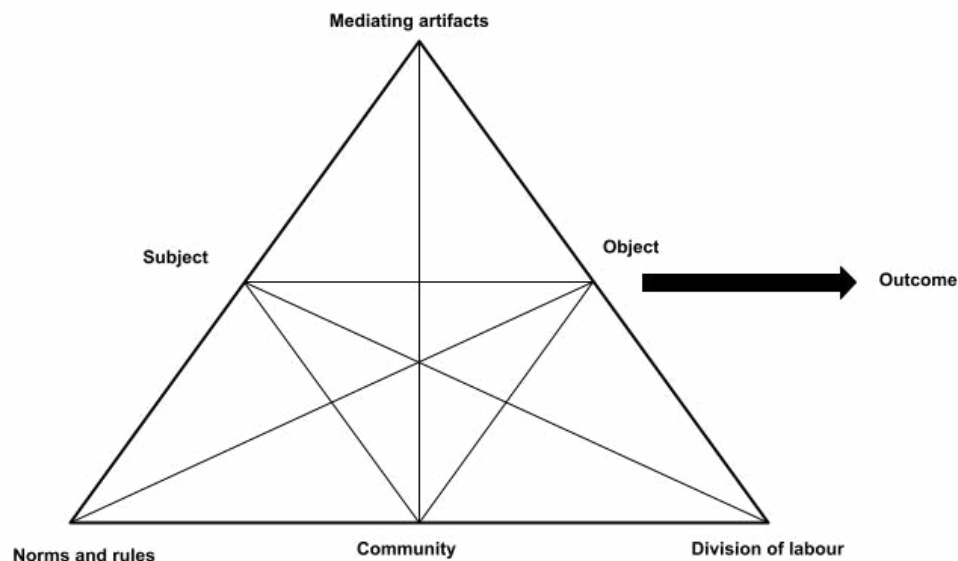
The system is as follows: the community delimits the division of labor within itself while collaborating to achieve an object in common to accomplish a product or result. They direct these efforts by a set of rules and norms agreed upon and shared among its members, which limits or favors a determined type of activity that, in turn, is mediated by tools and artifacts. This activity historically generates tensions, contradictions, and points of conflict that, if resolved, can modify the system or even generate a new one called an Expansive Learning cycle (Engeström and Sannino 2016).

Concerning Expansive Learning, Aramo-Immonen, Jussila, and Huhtamäki (2015) emphasize

that there must be a triggering action, such as a conflicting questioning of existing standard practice in the organization or group to provoke them, which, in turn, produces culturally new patterns of activity. Asmolov (2014) states that how a contradiction, or tension, is resolved can suggest who dominates in an Activity System, and this can range from emphasizing institutions, organizations, or individuals for its resolution.

CHAT headlines five fundamental principles that favor the process of inquiry into Activity System relationships. First, it establishes as the unit of analysis the relationship that an object-oriented Activity System has with other Activity Systems in a network of systems. Second, it emphasizes the multiplicity of voices within the systems, thus bringing into play diverse points of view that favor the emergence of differences among participants and the generation of tensions. Third, historically, it emphasizes that Activity Systems are the product of an object's changes over time, which can derive from the tensions of the second principle. Fourth, there are contradictions in the system that must be resolved, or a new system must be formed. Fifth, there is the possibility of expansion of the system generated by the participation of its members by successively resolving tensions and contradictions (Engeström, 2009).

The theoretical-methodological characteristics of CHAT allow for deep analysis; in this regard, Asmolov (2014) suggests the following questions to inquire into how the Activity System is constituted and related: What are the boundaries, purpose, and degree of the system's flexibility? What is the structure of the community, and how does the division of labor occur? Who is influential in defining or mediating the boundaries of the system? What are the central tensions within the system? Are there any competing Activity Systems around the same objects? How can the same technologies lead to the creation of different Activity Systems in diverse cultural or historical settings?

Therefore, to investigate these questions, we linked this theory to the evolution of the Fediverse.

6. The Fediverse is characterized as an Activity System

The Fediverse social networks, as well as the technologies and the decisions that programmers make when using them, can be seen as an Activity System from the CHAT. In that sense, as with any Activity System, it has its internal tensions and contradictions that originate changes, which are historically modified and generate the system's expansive learning cycle. The following is a description of each element of the CHAT applied to the elements of the Fediverse.

Subject. It is constituted by software developers who have contributed to the creation and evolution of the Fediverse, making decisions about the main programming tools and protocols used to perform the federation between instances (connection). These programmers have long remained the main subject, although they have now been joined by users who do not have software programming skills. For non-programmers, the main activity is based on using social networks, publishing, exchanging information, or promoting their usage to other users.

Mediating artifacts. These are all the tools that allow the system to remain active, mediating between subject and object. We are not only talking about technological devices such as web servers but also about software tools such as programming languages (*PHP*, *Ruby*, *Elixir*), the protocols used to communicate instances (*Ostatus*, *ActivityPub*), and also the Fediverse social networks (*Identi.ca*, *GNU Social*, *Mastodon*, among others).

Norms and rules. This element can be understood from the generalized agreement within

the Fediverse to use open-source licenses that allow adopting any development of these networks, studied, improved, and published again under the same licensing terms. The most widely used license is the *GNU Affero General Public License* v3.0, used by *Mastodon* (Github 2016), *Pleroma* (Git 2019), and *PixelFeed* (Github 2018) and which allows for commercial use, modifications, distribution, and private use. In addition, there are rules within the system agreed internally upon for each development, such as the time to update the source code or the agreements to use or not a specific development technology (*PHP*, *Elixir*, and so on) or protocol (*Ostatus*, *ActivityPub*).

Division of labor. Different roles are involved in creating the networks, their maintenance, modification, distribution, and improvement. Among the main actors are the programmers who develop the code of the networks and federation protocols, as well as the mobile versions. Also, there are graphic designers in charge of creating a graphic identity for the projects: logos, imago-types, mascots, and others. On the other hand, some users do not have the programming skills to collaborate in the development of the source code but instead can collaborate with the dissemination of the projects, opinions, and their use.

Community. This aspect refers to all members who are actively part of the Fediverse through the accounts created in the instances. It includes users, collaborators, and developers since they are, at the same time, a community and actors with roles in the division of labor. The above allows everyone to interact with each other, suggesting improvements and changes that can favor the development of the networks in horizontal participation.

Purpose. The object in common of the members of the Fediverse community is to interact in democratic and safe social networks, using, for this purpose, different instances according to their interests.

Product. As a product, from the interaction within the system, the Fediverse is obtained, understood as a space made up of instances of federated social networks of open source code, secure and in constant change.

Figure 3. The Fediverse is characterized as an Activity System from the CHAT and its elements. Source: Adapted from Engeström (2009).
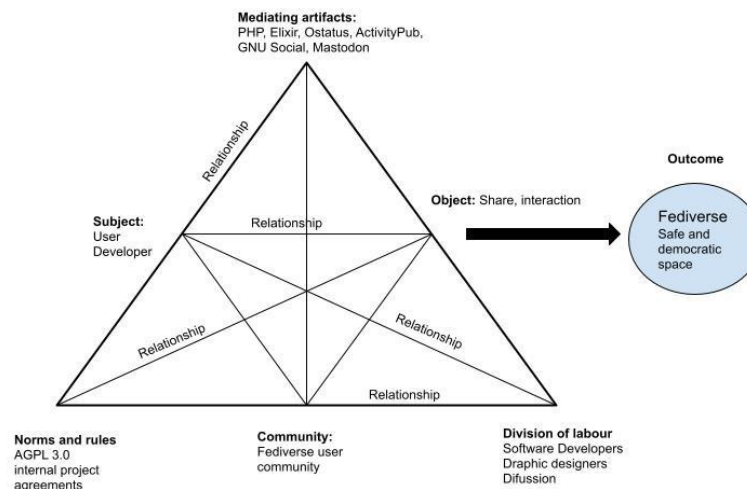
Figure 3 shows the CHAT's elements and how the Fediverse conforms to them. As can be seen, all the elements maintain a close interaction relationship, thus achieving the object in common. This allows the analysis of the history of the Fediverse, finding tensions to which it has been subjected as a system, resulting in a modification of the product (Fediverse) and the re-conformation of the interactions of its elements from the change in some of them (expansive learning). Figure 4 emphasizes these tensions marked with dotted lines.

Figure 4. Tensions in the Fediverse's history are framed in the CHAT elements and their interaction. Source: Adapted from Engeström (2009).
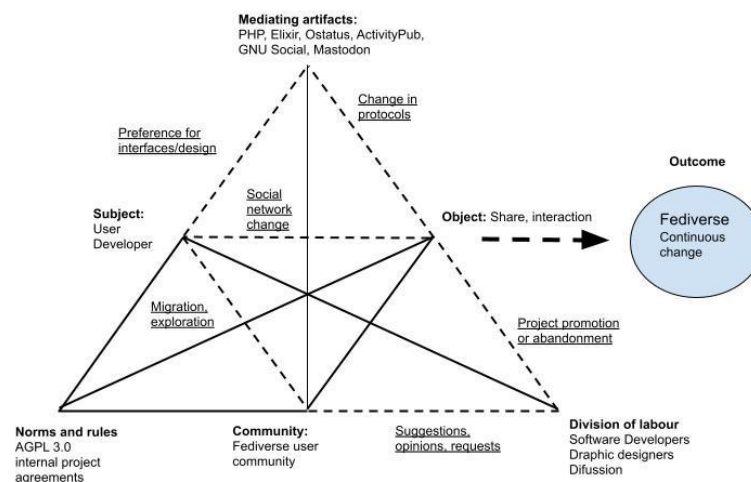
From the analysis carried out, we found five tensions that have contributed, to a large extent, to what the Fediverse is today.

1. Preference for interfaces/design. Users show preferences for specific interfaces or graphic design of the networks. The previous is possibly the case of the migration that favored *GNU Social through the Qvitter* interface around 2012-2016, and so the *Mastodon* project with a *Twitter* and *Tweetdeck* similar interface.

2. Change of preferred social network. We found reasons for users to switch from one federated social network to another. The main one is the obsolescence of the network, derived from the lack of updates or the change in the principal protocol for federation with other networks. That is the case, for example, of *GNU Social*, which did not receive updates and continued to use the *Ostatus* protocol; meanwhile, other projects emerged that joined under the use of *ActivityPub* (*Mastodon*, *Pixelfed*, *Peertube*, among others).

3. Suggestions, opinions, and requests from the community. Being part of a community where users, developers, and graphic designers interact horizontally promotes a particular type of technology or the rejection and abandonment of another. That happened with the adoption of *Mastodon* and the gradual abandonment of *GNU Social* due to improvements in the interface and mobile applications (Karpiniec 2018).

4. Personal promotion or abandonment of projects. Although it can be a multifactorial decision, whether projects are promoted or abandoned depends principally on the developers who, at the

same time, are influenced by the rest of the community, where they take sides for some particular technology based on its future advantages. One example is Evan Prodromou, a member of the community but also the leading developer of *Status.net*, *Laconica-Identi.ca*, who decided to support the *ActivityPub* project and help in the homogenization of protocols. Thus, the community and the key members agree to make decisions based on their roles in the division of labor.

5. Change in protocols. This tension is one of the main reasons why the Fediverse is constantly changing. Protocols are how instances connect, even if they are different social networks (for example, connecting *Mastodon* users with *Pixelfeed*). As stated before, the developer makes the decisions about protocol changes influenced by the community having a direct impact on the system's object and an indirect impact on the product, which is the Fediverse itself. An example is the concern for splitting the Fediverse in two by choosing the *ActivityPub* protocol as the main one; meanwhile, *Ostatus* continued to be a protocol widely used by *GNU Social* instances. This constant tension, when resolved, generates an adjustment in the system, but, as can be seen, it could engender two systems from a previous one over time.

Based on this analysis, we described the most significant tensions and their influence on the history of the Fediverse, characterized as a space in constant change in which the community is part of the decisions. According to Zulli et al. (2020), developments based on free software, such as the Fediverse social networks, allow aligning the interests of programmers and users, so there is no distant power gap between them sharing similar concerns. In these types of networks, it is possible to collectivize decisions about what is or is not acceptable, including preferences, thus improving the experience for all users.

7. Conclusions

Throughout this paper, we have presented the problems of corporate social networks and the alternative that the Fediverse offers, characterizing it as an Activity System from the CHAT. This has allowed an analysis of this system that, at the same time, has led to findings about its internal tensions and their resolution. We present the main conclusions below.

In the first instance, it is important to mention that the Fediverse, being an entity that develops and evolves on the Internet, leaves its milestones and historical moments in different websites of the community itself; therefore, in this work, we consulted various sources of information ranging from personal pages of blogs, generated by the own community, news portals that talk about the Fediverse, and also recent works in academic journals.

On the other hand, using CHAT made it possible to characterize the Fediverse as an Activity System and to find its internal tensions. The analysis we proposed in this study has made it possible to demonstrate that this theory favors broadening the perspective toward tools, social interactions, internal roles, division of labor, and others.

Engeström (Wong 2018) mentions that, from expansive learning, human beings end up in contradictory situations in their systems, where demands would seem wrong, but which allow them to distance themselves from the context and build a bigger, broader picture. Therefore, expansive learning implies learning something and building a new activity. Under this perspective, the Fediverse could be an unfamiliar system for most people, especially those using the most common corporate social networks. In fact, in the beginning, they were mainly used by free software developers and anarchists, then gradually were positioned, as a result of *Mastodon*, as a viable alternative for use in everyday life, filling a niche from a new way of approaching the use of social networks that

corporations did not take into account: horizontal, democratic, federated and with emphasis on the user. However, Cabrera (2017) argues that the invisibilization of Fediverse social networks is a symbolic violence case, given that corporate social networks consolidate the idea that there are few Internet services and they must be privative.

Another important conclusion relies on the Fediverse's possibilities for the future of networks, especially to create instances that allow people with the same interests to interact. The above is feasible and, it seems, desirable. In the words of Engeström (Wong 2018), this would move people away from the niche markets that corporate social networks have become, where they emphasize individual activity, and there is no actual concern for community, nor for the effort of collaboration or production of something in common. He suggests that the way to counteract this phenomenon is the creation of communities among the networks so that the significant nodes are not the individuals, but the community itself, which coincides with the Fediverse approach and its instances as nodes. That also coincides with the statements of Karpiniec (2018), who mentions that people will join in their instances, grouping themselves in those servers where they will discuss with people with similar interests, forming micro-communities, but where moderation is at the discretion of the community itself, favoring the emergence of diverse discourses (Kirschner 2015).

The Fediverse has grown in recent years and has been nurtured by former users who, due to historical milestones, have sought alternatives in what Karpiniec (2018) calls "waves" linked to actions they consider unethical or invasive, especially from Twitter. Then, people organize themselves and try to promote migration to other networks, finding in the Fediverse a democratic-horizontal space, as happened in 2016 with the implementation of algorithmic timelines, generating the *#RIPTwitter* movement or the recent wave of people who came to *Mastodon* due to purchase by Elon Musk (Huang 2022).

Despite this organic growth, it has been fundamental to promote the use of these networks. However, as opposed to corporate social networks, how to promote using Fediverse?

The proposal would be from the implementations, uses, and reports of experiences generating knowledge that favors reflections on the use. In this regard, Cabrera (2017) points out that universities can play an important role because they are referents of social prestige and parameters of cultural valuation; however, they are immersed in using corporate social networks, reproducing their symbolic hegemony. This is even contradictory, especially when the universities themselves have infrastructure capable of managing their communication service, which would limit dependence on large corporations. With this infrastructure, they could promote the development and dissemination of the Fediverse, having servers and instances at the university, school, or faculty level; they can also generate a change in social thinking since universities are ideal contexts where they should question using software and the services used by their community (teachers, researchers, and students); also generating reflection and criticism on what are the most appropriate technologies for educational activity (Cabrera 2017) that can also benefit society in general. Fortunately, some universities have realized this and have begun to create profiles or instances for their students and teachers; among them, Berkeley, MIT, and FES Iztacala, UNAM stands out (Leppert 2021).

How is it possible that users allow themselves to be part of social networks that profit from their data? In this regard, Cabello, Franco, and Haché (2012) state that users assume a cost from a profit perspective, allowing data to be profitable as long as the big corporations don't hinder the processing of sharing with others. However, the authors above propose extending the open and free social web to the entire Internet, where people should control their privacy, which is indeed what Fediverse promotes.

Acknowledgment

References

Aramo-Immonen, Heli, Jussila, Jari, and Huhtamäki, Jukka 2015. "Exploring co-learning behavior of conference participants with visual network analysis of Twitter data". Computers in Human Behavior, Vo. 51. 1154-1162. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2015.02.033. Accessed April 18, 2023.

Arreola, Javier. 2020. "Avanza el Nacionalismo Digital". Forbes Mexico. https://www.forbes.com.mx/avanza-el-nacionalismo-digital/ Accessed April 20, 2023.

Asmolov, Gregory. 2014. "Crowdsourcing as an activity system: Online platforms as mediating artifacts". Pp. 24-42. In Sintelnet WG5 Workshop on Crowd Intelligence: Foundations, Methods and Practices. Barcelona, Catalonia. http://ceur-ws.org/Vol-1148/paper3.pdf Accessed January 13, 2022.

Asmolov, Gregory. 2020. "Runet in Crisis Situations". Pp. 231-250. In Internet in Russia. Societies and Political Orders in Transition. Edited by Davydov, Sergey. Moscú: Springer. . https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-33016-3_12 Accessed February 14, 2021.

Brown, Allison. 2020. "Should I stay or should I leave?: Exploring (dis) continued Facebook use after the Cambridge Analytica scandal". Social media+ society. Vol. 6. https://doi.org/10.1177/2056305120913884 Accessed March 15, 2023.

Cabello, Florencio., Franco, Marta, and Haché,

Alex. 2012. "Towards a free and federated social web: the case of Lorea". Teknokultura, Vol. 9, No. 1. 19-43. https://revistas.ucm.es/index.php/TEKN/article/view/48218 Accessed March 3, 2021.

Cabrera, Ehécatl. 2017. "Redes sociales libres en la universidad pública". Revista Digital Universitaria, Vol. 18, No. 1. http://www.revista.unam.mx/ojs/index.php/rdu/article/view/933 Accessed December 12, 2020.

Engeström, Yrjö. 2009. "Expansive Learning. Toward an activity-theoretical reconceptualization". Pp. 53-73. In Contemporary Theories of Learning. Edited by Illeris, Knud. New York: Routledge.

Engeström, Yrjö and Sannino, Annalisa. 2011. "Discursive manifestations of contradictions in organizational change efforts: A methodological framework". Journal of Organizational Change Management, Vol. 24, Issue 3. 368-387 https://doi.org/10.1108/09534811111132758 Accessed June 10, 2020.

Fediverse party. 2023. "About fediverse". https://fediverse.party/en/fediverse Accessed June 2, 2023.

Gargron .2019. "Remove OStatus-related code #10740". Mastodon. Github. https://github.com/mastodon/mastodon/issues/10740 Accessed June 10, 2023.

Gehl, Robert. 2015. "Building a better Twitter: A study of the Twitter alternatives

GNU social, Quitter, rstat.us, and Twister". Fibreculture, Forthcoming. https://ssrn.com/abstract=2595247 Accessed August 5, 2020.

Gehl, Robert and Zulli, Diana. 2022. "The digital covenant: non-centralized platform governance on the mastodon social network". Information, Communication & Society. 1-17. https://doi.org/10.1080/136911 8X.2022.2147400 Accessed June 7, 2023.

Git. 2019. "Pleroma - AGPL-3". https://git.pleroma.social/pleroma/pleroma/-/commits/develop/AGPL-3 Accessed June 8, 2023.

Github. 2016. "Mastodon - Licence". https://github.com/tootsuite/mastodon/blob/master/LICENSE Accessed June 8, 2023.

Github. 2018. "Pixelfed - Licence". https://github.com/pixelfed/pixelfed/blob/dev/LICENSE Accessed June 8, 2023.

Holloway, James. 2018. "What on Earth is the fediverse and why does it matter?" New Atlas. https://newatlas.com/what-is-the-fediverse/56385/ Accessed January 12, 2022.

Huang, Kalley. 2022. "Chau, Twitter. Hola, Mastodon. Todo sobre la plataforma a la que migran muchos usuarios". The New York Times. https://www.nytimes.com/es/2022/11/14/espanol/mastodon-que-es-twitter.html Accessed January 8, 2023.

Karpiniec, Thomas. 2018. "From GNU social to Mastodon". Tinkering Down Under. https://thomask.sdf.org/blog/2018/08/19/from-gnu-social-to-mastodon.html Accessed August 11, 2021.

Kirschner, Paul. 2015. "Facebook as learning platform: Argumentation superhighway or dead-end street?" Computers in Human Behavior, Vol. 53. 621-625. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2015.03.011 Accessed December 11, 2022.

Leppert, Gerald. [@gerald_leppert@bonn.social] .2021. "Universities in #Mastodon / #Fediverse Which #universities are in the Fediverse?" Mastodon. https://bonn.social/@gerald_leppert/106251684772378929 Accessed May 2, 2023.

Lerman, Rachel and Siddiqui, Faiz. 2023. "Twitter's blue check mark was loved and loathed. Now it's pay for play". The Washington post. https://www.washingtonpost.com/technology/2023/03/31/twitter-verification-checkmark-ending/ Accessed April 23, 2023.

Leswing, Kif. 2022. "If you're thinking about quitting Elon Musk's Twitter, here's how to use alternative Mastodon". Tech. CNBC. https://www.cnbc.com/2022/11/15/how-to-use-mastodon-twitter-alternative.html Accessed January 4, 2023.

MacManus, Richard. 2022. "A Creator of ActivityPub on What's Next for the Fediverse". The News Stack. https://thenewstack.io/the-creator-of-activitypub-on-whats-next-for-the-fediverse/ Accessed January 6, 2023.

Mansoux, Aymeric and Roscam, Roel. 2020. "Seven theses on the fediverse and the becoming of FLOSS". Pp. 125-140 In The Eternal Network: The Ends and Becomings of Network Culture. Edited by Gansing, Kristoffer and Luchs, Inga. Berlin: Institute of Network Cultures. https://monoskop.org/images/c/cc/Mansoux_Aymeric_Abbing_Roel_Roscam_2020_Seven_Theses_on_the_Fediverse_and_the_Becoming_of_FLOSS.pdf Accessed October 6, 2022.

Roth, Wolff and Lee, Yew. 2007. "Vygotsky's neglected legacy: Cultural-historical Activity Theory." Review of educational research, Vol. 77, Issue 2. 186-232. https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654306298273 Accessed January 10, 2020.

Schneider, Nathan. 2019. "Decentralization: an incomplete ambition". Journal of Cultural Economy, Vol. 12, Issue 4. 265-285. https://doi.org/10.1080/17530350.2019.1589553 Accessed May 6, 2023.

Wong, Gustavo. 2018. "Engestrom expansive learning" [Video file]. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4uuwDcZpv04 Accessed March 6, 2022.

World Wide Web Consortium. 2018. "ActivityPub. W3C Recommendation 23 January 2018". https://www.w3.org/TR/activitypub/#acknowledgements Accessed November 6, 2022.

Yamazumi, Katsuhiro. 2006. "Activity Theory and the Transformation of Pedagogic Practice". Educational Studies in Japan: International Yearbook, No. 1. 77-90. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ842894.pdf Accessed December 6, 2020.

Zulli, Diana., Liu, Miao, and Gehl, Robert. 2020. "Rethinking the 'social' in 'social media': Insights into topology, abstraction, and scale on the Mastodon social network". New Media & Society, Vol. 22, Issue 7. 1188-1205. http://dx.doi.org/10.17613/1mwy-vp43 Accessed November 9, 2022.

Beyond Verticality and Horizontality: Arcological Thinking and the Neoliberal Subject

François Debrix

Over the past two decades, several critiques of neoliberalism have relied on a binary understanding of space to depict neoliberalism's operations and objectives as well as to offer modes of mobilization and contestation against neoliberal politics and economics. For quite a few scholars, the challenge of neoliberal capitalism and the need to resist it can be summed up as an opposition between verticality and horizontality. In particular, this challenge, we are told, is what the contemporary subject of neoliberal politics (or what commonly has been referred to as the "neoliberal subject") is faced with. While neoliberalism's vertical structures, institutions, aspirations, and metaphors (building higher, accumulating wealth, raising one's socio-economic profile, reaching for the top, elevating one's competitive capacities, increasing one's portfolio, etc.) confront the neoliberal subject with what often looks like an insurmountable neoliberal capitalist monolith, horizontality is presented as a somewhat new and often welcome, even if dispersed, spread out, and sometimes unrooted, "on the ground" mode of political organization, mobilization, and emancipation from contemporary forms of neoliberal capitalist growth.

This essay takes issue with this simplistic understanding of neoliberal capitalism and of some of its actual or imagined political responses. It suggests that the verticality versus horizontality binary framing fails to capture the political textures of neoliberalism today, or what German-Korean philosopher Byung-Chul Han has referred to as "neoliberal psychopolitics" (Han 2017a). In particular, an emphasis on the verticality of neoliberalism and/or on its horizontal challenges is unable to make sense of the forms of subjectivity constructed by contemporary modes of neoliberal capitalism. Put differently, vertical and horizontal perspectives (and, often, their antagonism) cannot persuasively account for what the contemporary neoliberal subject is and does. This does not necessarily mean that vertical analyses of neoliberal capitalism cannot provide meaningful insights about the ways neoliberalism has developed and has been put to use. Nor does it suggest that horizontalist challenges to neoliberalism are no longer of any critical political or social value. Still, too often, critiques of neoliberal capitalism remain confined within two-dimensional understandings of space that rely on an either/or binary framing that pits verticality against horizontality whereas, in more recent modalities of neoliberal capitalism, verticality and horizontality are simultaneously involved and sometimes fused together.

Today's subjects, in particular, are neither mainly defined by their capture in vertical neoliberal capitalist institutions nor easily identified as radical agents with a potential to be liberated by horizontal anti-hegemonic formations intent on confronting dominant capitalist forces.   Indeed, turning to Han's writings, I argue that the neoliberal subject is an "achievement subject" (Han 2017a; Han 2018). As an achievement subject, today's neoliberal subject is driven by performance, generally measured as a series of digital outputs, and it is expected to generate data about itself. For Han, the neoliberal subject as achievement subject appears to be a "free" subject that can operate and often expand its reach without limits or constraints (horizontally) within neoliberal political and economic vertical social structures and institutions. As Han argues, this subject does not face "repression on the part of sovereign entities external to itself" (Han 2018: viii). Yet, the achievement subject of neoliberal psychopolitics does not enjoy unfettered freedom. It thinks of itself as free and operates as if it is free, but only to the extent that it has internalized the conditions necessary for it to succeed, compete, and maximize its productive capacities in the context of neoliberal capitalist accumulation. Thus, the achievement subject lives and acts on a daily basis both *with* verticality and horizontality, but also *beyond* verticality and horizontality, or, to put it slightly differently, with structures or under conditions that blur any clear distinction between vertical and horizontal spaces as well as ways of occupying/ making use of space. I suggest that the contemporary neoliberal subject is placed in organizational designs and relies on operational principles that, similar to data, data systems, and digital platforms that are the "lifeblood" of contemporary neoliberal capitalism, often make the matter of a horizontal opposition to vertical neoliberal institutions obsolete since such a concern remains stuck within a binary spatial analysis that no longer seems to define today's subject.

Following Han's theoretical lead, and supplementing his insights with spatial and architectural analytical tools that transcend a verticality versus horizontality framework, I look for a different configuration of neoliberal space, one that can better articulate the various challenges faced today by the neoliberal subject. I settle on a spatial/architectural configuration that has been referred to as arcological. Arcological architectural designs (or visions) defy both vertical and horizontal postulates. Arcological conceptualizations are partly derived from the work of Italian architect Paolo Saleri (later in his life, a professor of architecture at Arizona State University) who, in the 1960s and 1970s, envisioned arcologies as atypical lived-in democratic utopias. More recently, arcologies (and other related constructs, like horizontal skyscrapers) have been revisited by a few architectural firms, including Arcosanti, a firm named for Soleri's initial project and influenced by Soleri's visions about spatial and architectural forms. Arcologies are often conceived as spatial domains that are fluid in their design since their goal, through the use of both horizontal and vertical configurations and of forms that are neither clearly vertical nor horizontal, is to realize conditions of life and work that can suit the neoliberal subject and, importantly, can enhance the subject's capacity to achieve by emphasizing reliance on data and data systems.

In the first section of this essay, I review the verticality versus horizontality debate. I (re) introduce analyses that insist on tackling neoliberal capitalism as a set of market and/or post-market based vertical structures and institutions that leave little to no room for individual subjective creativity or emancipation and, often, are seen to stifle the neoliberal subject, depriving it of agency. I also examine counter-hegemonic and counter-vertical critiques of neoliberalism that, sometimes as complements to analyses of neoliberalism's alleged vertical structures, pin their hopes for a radical challenge to neoliberalism and for a rediscovery of the neoliberal subject's political agency on horizontal(ist), decentered, and "on the ground" forms of political organizations.

In the second part of the essay, I seek to steer clear of the binary framework relied upon by proponents of both vertical and horizontal perspectives by showing, via Han's work, that these approaches are often ill-equipped to address the question of what the neoliberal subject today is

and does, largely because critiques of neoliberalism premised on either verticality or horizontality (and their antagonism) do not capture what contemporary neoliberal politics is about. Particularly, they fail to account for the ways data and data systems have reworked what freedom and constraint are and mean for the neoliberal subject. I briefly explain how Han's theoretical insights are better able to provide intelligibilities about contemporary neoliberal politics, or what, once again, he calls psychopolitics, and can offer a more useful grasp of today's neoliberal achievement subject. I also argue that we need to look for different analytical approaches, with possibly new concepts and new terminologies, to make sense of the spatial settings in which today's neoliberal achievement subjects operate. To do so, I turn to arcological perspectives, describing what they are, where conceptually they come from, and how they can be thought to be in line with the understanding of neoliberalism (and of neoliberal subjects) that Han gestures toward. To be clear, I do not intend to support or advocate for arcological postulates and visions. By and large, as I suggest in this essay, arcological ventures, or at least their assumptions and principles, can be seen as models or platforms for future (in some cases, current) modalities of neoliberal life and work, in other words, for psychopolitics. Yet, arcological perspectives, actual or fictive, already realized or imagined, provide architecturally derived spatial images, terms, and concepts that need to be taken seriously as they give credence to the theoretical analyses (and warnings) offered by Han about present and future forms of neoliberal subjectivity.

The verticality versus horizontality debate

Starting with the assumption that contemporary societies "are increasingly dense and stacked societies in which uses of space are built upwards and downwards with ever greater intensity within geographical volumes" (Graham 2016: 4), urban geographer and theorist Stephen Graham has sought to shed light on neoliberalism's "hierarchies of power and worth" (Graham 2016: 17). These neoliberal hierarchies take place in cities above all and are shaped by vertical spaces and structures. For Graham, any critique of neoliberalism must tackle the matter of verticality. For too long, Graham deplores, the emphasis placed by political scientists, geographers, and economists on horizontality and horizontal spaces, or what Graham calls "the global extent of the earth's surface" (Graham 2016: 2), has privileged modalities of territorially grounded power, sovereignty, violence, and wealth acquisition. They have neglected to study how vertical planes have been involved in the making and perpetuating of class antagonisms, modes of domination premised upon economic or even financial value, and capitalism's global hegemony.

According to Graham, neoliberalism (or neoliberalization, as he often calls it), which for him amounts to "the reorganization of societies through the widespread imposition of market relationships," imposes "today's dominant, if crisis ridden, economic order" (Graham 2011: 4). This dominant (geo) economic order is less about horizontal expansion as it is about concentration or densification of wealth. This argument resonates with David Harvey's claim that neoliberal capitalism moves along vertical axes as much as it does along and across global horizontal planes (although Harvey, unlike Graham, is not willing to give up just yet on the relevance of horizontal analyses). Even in an era of global capitalism, neoliberal flows are steered upwards as much as laterally since late-capitalist assembly and growth require vertical structures. Thus, "the circulation of capital… entails spatial movement" that is vertical as much as (if not more than) horizontal since money is always "assembled somewhere" (Harvey 2011: 42). In the context of neoliberalism, it is not only capital that is affected by these vertical movements, but also the everyday life of neoliberal subjects since, as Mark Fisher has noted, neoliberalism, or what Fisher labels "capitalist realism," subsumes all social relations under an economic logic of capitalist organization and control (Fisher 2009). Thus, to quote Harvey again, "the space and time configurations of social life are… revolutionized" (Harvey 2011: 42), and one such

revolution according to many scholarly critiques of neoliberalism is a shift towards vertical spaces and structures of concentration, accumulation, and growth. Political and economic theorist Yann Moulier-Boutang agrees with this interpretation of contemporary forms of neoliberal capitalism, or what he has renamed "cognitive capitalism," and he takes issue with the idea that capitalist globalization has only been horizontal. As Moulier-Boutang notes, "globalization does not expand space… Rather, it 'de-territorializes' and 're-territorializes' spaces" (Moulier-Boutang 2011: 49). Even though for Moulier-Boutang contemporary capitalism as cognitive capitalism is based upon "the accumulation of immaterial capital" and the expansion of a "knowledge economy" (Moulier-Boutang 2011: 50), accumulation and expansion demand a vertical imaginary, one where vertical growth and upward movement are key to the neoliberal subject and to social life governed by a generalized cognitive economy.

Neoliberalism has forced power away from the horizontal plane and moved it towards vertical augmentation. In their work *Inventing the Future: Postcapitalism and a World without Work*, theorists Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams tell us as much when they contrast the construction of capitalist markets under contemporary conditions of neoliberalism (or what they term post-capitalism) to the way classical liberalism and its laissez faire approach viewed the market logic. They write that "whereas classical liberalism advocated respect for a naturalized sphere supposedly beyond state control (the natural laws of man and the market), neoliberals understand that markets are not 'natural'… [They] must instead be consciously constructed… *from the ground up*" (Srnicek and Williams 2016: 53; my emphasis). Srnicek and Williams understand that today's markets must be built up, often with the help of state interventionism. By extension, neoliberal life must be constructed upward, too. Here, the "building up" or "constructing upward" phrases are not just metaphors, but rather clear expositions of an operative arborescent model of economic accumulation and growth, as well as of vertical social life whereby intensified production and competition are meant to be the daily regimens for the neoliberal subject in structures and institutions designed to facilitate such a demand for intensification and competition (Alphin 2021: 5). For quite a few scholars, contemporary neoliberal conditions of intensified competition and exacerbated accumulation make the need to detail vertical power increasingly urgent.

For Graham, it is not so much that vertical geographies have not existed prior to neoliberalism. Rather, as he argues, "vertical schemes for assigning value and worth" were primarily "translated into horizontal cartography" (Graham 2016: 19). This scheme was designed to neutralize the effects of a different kind of power, one centered around capitalism and operating by way of wealth accumulation, concentration, and surplus. According to Graham, the translation of "vertical schemes" into horizontal arrangements explains how political and economic spaces have remained largely horizontal matters that have continued to privilege "flattened" state-centric modes of organization of power and social order (Graham and Hewitt, 2012), both domestically and internationally. In order to remedy this failure of (geo)political and (geo)economic thinking, and to be more attuned to neoliberal regimes of power and wealth, "vertical politics and economics," operating within, through, and as "vertical geographies," must be emphasized (Graham 2016: viii; see also Davis 1998: 360-362).

Urban spaces seem to be particularly suitable to be studied as neoliberal spaces (Alphin 2021) and, crucially, as sites where a critique of neoliberalism's verticality can be deployed. As Graham and Hewitt suggest, "vertical qualities of contemporary processes of urbanization" (Graham and Hewitt 2012: 73) can make sense of power and wealth relations in a neoliberal era (see also Brenner and Kiel 2006). By extolling the values and virtues of neoliberalism's concentration of wealth and intensification of competition, vertical spaces in urban contexts are supposed to facilitate the mobility of neoliberal subjects along vertical planes (Graham 2016: 11) while isolating them from other less successful (that is, less productive and less competitive) subjects so that the more successful

neoliberal subjects may be able to concentrate on being efficient and on contributing to capitalist accumulation. Thus, verticality, once again, is not just a spatial metaphor for neoliberal growth or ascendancy. Conceptually, it also serves to encourage the neoliberal subject to look up and move up, to build higher and taller, to circulate upwards or downwards (although any downward movement must have a bottom threshold below which the neoliberal subject's life is no longer sustainable or desirable) rather than laterally, to buffer itself from the non-productive or not competitive masses by living and working in high places (high finance, high tech industry, cloud-based economy, etc.), and away from those elements that the neoliberal capitalist economic logic has left behind or, better yet, below (and scattered across the globe, sometimes in other parts of the city). As Graham and Hewitt argue, vertical structures and spaces, in the name of providing the neoliberal subject with work and life environments where it can thrive, "contribute in many cities to the emergence of a myriad of vertically stratified, gated 'communities,'" which, in turn, exacerbate the ongoing desolation of the rest of the city and its occupants and, by extension, of global society, perceived as a "flattened" or "residualized [urban] surface" (Graham and Hewitt 2012: 79).

Thus, verticality seems to describe the life conditions of neoliberal subjects well. The allegedly vertical politics and economics of neoliberalism provide the neoliberal subject with an environment that has designed, through its geometry and geography, structural solutions for how to demarcate oneself from others with which contact is to be avoided (Davis 1998). Vertical spaces also offer the neoliberal subject the lure of self-reliance, power over oneself and others, control, or heightened competitiveness (Graham 2016: 162-163) as the neoliberal subject is invited to look upon the leftover and largely horizontal world of the masses from above, from the sky, at heights from which it can no longer clearly distinguish forms down below (which is acceptable or even desirable since the neoliberal subject needs to concentrate on being productive and competitive for the sake of capital accumulation). This association between verticality and power or control is not necessarily new or unique to neoliberalism. As Sharon Zukin once argued, the "landscapes of the powerful" have traditionally been "understood in terms of verticality" (Zukin 1991: 186). Still, for the neoliberal subject, the enticement to intensify by striving to go higher parallels the physiognomy of the city's landscape, a landscape once again dominated by the neoliberal capitalist push towards ascendancy, growth, and surplus making (Graham 2016: xi; Davis and Monk 2007).

For scholars who emphasize the vertical extent of neoliberalism's power and wealth (Davis 2007; Day 2007; Adey 2010), verticality is a form of "re-territorialization" (Graham 2016: 11), seemingly well-adapted to the needs of the neoliberal subject. Often, this vertical re-territorialization is also a layering or stacking up of socio-economic strata that is designed to guarantee some movements (up and down, across some of the layers or levels) to the detriment of others. Lateral movements are limited or relegated to the "flat" spaces where the neoliberal subject generally does not belong, even though, as Harvey notes, an expansion or even proliferation of capital, or better yet, of neoliberal capitalist verticalities (creating more and more vertical urban spaces across the globe), is always at stake too (Harvey 2011: 143). The upward trajectories enabled by vertical structures, and the simultaneous threat of having to go back down, to fall below, perhaps all the way to the ground, substantiate neoliberalism as an ideology that requires the subject—a subject in constant need of achievement—to think of itself in terms of upward mobility, always wanting to realize more, always seeking to self-maximize along a vertical axis. Thus, the neoliberal subject's main imaginaries, its dreams for and about itself, conditioned as they are by neoliberalism's productivist requirements, can remain tethered to a logic of achievement for the sake of achievement or of competition for the sake of competition (Alphin 2021: 114).

Important as the arguments about neoliberalism's verticality may be, they have faced a series of challenges. Often, these challenges have emerged from scholars who, similar to proponents of

vertical analyses, have sought to deploy effective critiques of neoliberal capitalism and of the forms of social life and relations that are said to define the neoliberal subject. Among these critiques, a few urban geographers have attempted to offer insights designed to make Graham and his colleagues' perspectives more nuanced. For example, Andrew Harris has stated that "the emerging focus on verticality across urban and political geography has tended to lack an engagement with… multiple everyday worlds." (Harris 2015: 609). Such a lack of engagement, Harris suggests, has driven the focus of urban geographers eager to critique neoliberal spaces away from social worlds and realities where verticality is more varied, diffuse, and complex as well as where, crucially, the horizontal stretch of capitalism still matters. Relatedly, neoliberal verticalities may not be as fixed, uniform, or monolithic as some have claimed. Again, Harris writes: "The vertical—set perpendicularly against the horizontal—has largely been understood within a three-dimensional (volumetric) space of Euclidean geometry. This means there can be a tendency, particularly in work on 'vertical gated communities'…, to assume that high-rise buildings and structures, including self-declared 'vertical cities', are necessarily undifferentiated and homogeneous communities above the horizontal plane" (Harris 2015: 612).

Harris's comments invoke a different critical perspective with regards to the spatial dimension of neoliberal capitalism, one that, for purposes of radical mobilization against neoliberalism, refuses to give up on horizontality and, in fact, suggests that horizontal planes still hold the key to providing emancipation for the neoliberal subject. Reacting to pro-neoliberal globalization views that have posited that the world at the beginning of the twenty-first century is flat and that, as Thomas Friedman famously put it, this "flattening of the world" is clear evidence that, through neoliberal capitalist markets, high tech travel, flows of information, and means of instantaneous communication, "we are now connecting all the knowledge centers on the planet together into a single global network… which could usher in an amazing era of prosperity, innovation, and collaboration" (Friedman 2007: 8), several anti-neoliberal globalization perspectives have sought to deploy alter-horizontalist modes of thought and, at times, of political action too. These new horizontalist perspectives, on display since about the turn of the millennium, have attempted to reclaim horizontality as a form of critique as well as a way to mobilize subjects against recent modes of capitalist exploitation and control. In so doing, while rejecting pro-globalization world flattening arguments, they have often relied on understandings of neoliberalism as a vertical hegemon that must be uprooted at the base, on the ground, and by way of horizontal(ist) strategies of organization of individuals and groups that supposedly do not fit the model of neoliberal order and subjectivity as it has been presented by vertical theories. Thus, while relying on understandings of neoliberal verticality deployed by some of the scholars mentioned above, these anti-neoliberal capitalism analyses have cast their arguments against the background of verticality and vertical perspectives while looking to reclaim horizontality. While the turn to horizontality as a critical modality of thought and action may have been rekindled of late, this is perhaps not a new phenomenon. As social organization theorist Rodrigo Nunes notes, "for decades, debates on the left have tended to pitch conceptual pairs like horizontality and verticality." (Nunes 2021: 13).

New horizontalist perspectives largely subscribe to the view that neoliberal capitalism, despite its many vertical nodes and modes of accumulation and growth, is about "de-territorialization." And de-territorialization unfolds according to a spatial logic of lateral connections and networks, whether they are the dominant networks that sustain contemporary modalities of neoliberal capitalist power or radical, critical, and counter-hegemonic loose connectivities of individuals and collectives that seek to resist neoliberal capitalism. For example, this is how Moulier-Boutang understands the requirement to innovate in the current dominant mode of capitalism (which, again, he terms cognitive capitalism). As Moulier-Boutang claims, "innovation is no longer, or is not only, solely, within the individual company; it is wherever the territory provides a productive… network" (Moulier-Boutang 2011: 54). Since in

cognitive capitalism, innovation, knowledge, and what Moulier-Boutang calls the "management of immaterial resources" are key, the networking, connectivity, or "cooperation of brains" from across the globe and throughout the socio-economic order is the main organizational modality of neoliberalism (Moulier-Boutang 2011: 79). Such a "networking of brains" does not do away with command, but rather spatially de-centers forms of control across the social, political, and economic spectrum.

To some critics, this horizontal scattering of immaterial resources and knowledge networks that is the lifeblood of the economic system can also give rise to types of popular political and social organizations or movements that devise similarly horizontal strategies in order to resist the modalities of command and control of neoliberal capitalism. In so doing, these spatial strategies of political organization and protest also reject the image of the stereotypical (vertical) neoliberal subject constantly driven and defined by upward maximization, intensified competition, and a need to find ways to go or be higher. According to Srnicek and Williams, the development of a "counter-hegemonic project that requires the toppling of neoliberal common sense" (Srnicek and Williams 2016: 169) can only take shape through a horizontal infrastructure of networks of contestation made up of individuals and groups that have been cast away (or left below, as I put it above) by neoliberalism. These individuals and groups organizing horizontally as networks are the meaningful subjects that have been shaped by neoliberal capitalism. They are the ones that require horizontality as a radical mode of political organization and emancipation. As Srnicek and Williams would have it, to adequately represent the political demands of these true neoliberal subjects, "the overarching architecture of such an ecology [of resistance] is a relatively decentralized and networked form" (Srnicek and Williams 2016: 163) (although it bears mentioning that Srnicek and Williams see such a horizontal architecture of popular networks as different from what they call "a standard horizontalist vision," which for them would be akin to pure popular sovereignty with little hope for political groupings or collectives).

Possibly one of the most frequently cited forms of horizontal reclaiming of neoliberal capitalist space for counter-hegemonic purposes is Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's "multitude." For Hardt and Negri, in the face of what they call Empire (Hardt and Negri 2001) (which, for them, encompasses both the horizontal dimensions of late-capitalism's global flattening, as noted by Friedman, and the vertical extent of neoliberal accumulation, concentration, and piling up of wealth embodied by some urban spaces, as described above), the multitude is both an organizational principle of political resistance and emancipation that unfolds spatially (and primarily in a horizontal fashion) and an organic social reality that encompasses de-centered (or spatially scattered) subjects in need of networking and connectivity. Thus, in their words, the multitude is "a concept of applied parallelism, able to grasp the specificity of altermodern struggles, which are characterized by relations of autonomy, equality, and interdependence among vast multiplicities of singularities" (Hardt and Negri 2009: 111). But the multitude is also "a multiplicity of social singularities defined more or less by their culture or ethnicity or labor position" that can manage to "coordinate their struggles together" (Hardt and Negri 2009: 111). At stake in the unfolding of the multitude is a fight over space, and in particular the need to recapture social space away from neoliberal capitalism and its model of vertical subjectivity. For Hardt and Negri, horizontality is a rediscovered political instrument that can revive what they call "global public space." As they argue, "constructing global public space requires that the multitude, in its exodus, create the institutions that can consolidate and fortify the anthropological conditions of the resistance of the poor" (Hardt and Negri 2009: 247).

Among other things, this retaking of global social space requires a new horizontal vision of the city. The city, or what they call the "metropolis" or "biopolitical city," must be revisited as a horizontal plane of and for life. The excessive building up of the neoliberal city must be undone and verticality must be brought down to earth so that the city can become "a site of biopolitical production" (a space of and for life beyond neoliberal vertical structures) as well as "the space of the common, of people

living together, sharing resources, communicating, exchanging goods and ideas" (Hardt and Negri 2009: 249). Thus, in the name of the multitude of subjects cast away by contemporary forms of neoliberal capitalism, a horizontal "metropolization of the world" is Hardt and Negri's answer to the verticality of the neoliberal city and of neoliberalism more generally.

Whether it is defined as the product of neoliberalism's "vertical spatial stretching" (McNeill 2005) and, accordingly, it is given attributes conditioned by vertical and hierarchical ways of thinking social life, or whether it is seen as part of a collective or even a living multitude that can offer it a new capacity of resistance and a new hope for emancipation, the neoliberal subject is conceptualized by most critiques of neoliberal capitalism as an outgrowth of either verticality or horizontality. The neoliberal subject's social characteristics, its needs and desires, are thus typically those that are conditioned either by vertical modalities of accumulation, growth, and intensified competition or by horizontal potentials for radical organization, political mobilization, and resistance through and across networked connections, lateral "metropolization," and decentered collectives. In a way, the picture that each perspective gives of the neoliberal subject is one defined by "exclusive disjunctions: either one thing or the other" (Nunes 2021: 13). According to these configurations, the neoliberal subject is thus either a verticality-driven subject that shuns horizontal planes of life/living or a politically re-energized counter-hegemonic subject that seeks to spread radical potentials by joining or forming networks across the globe.

In the next section, I turn to the work of political philosopher Byung-Chul Han and his notion of "neoliberal psychopolitics" to provide an understanding of the contemporary neoliberal subject that is not constrained by either verticality or horizontality, nor by their opposition. As I will show, Han's theory of the neoliberal subject as an achievement subject problematizes any description of neoliberalism and of the neoliberal subject as either vertical or horizontal. Put differently, the spaces of neoliberal psychopolitics and for the neoliberal achievement subject are neither just vertical or just horizontal. While retaining some properties of verticality and horizontality (and, sometimes, of both at the same time), the spaces and structures of social life of and for the neoliberal achievement subject may best be apprehended as arcological spaces and structures.

The neoliberal achievement subject and arcological spaces

According to philosopher Byung-Chul Han, "[w]e are living in a particular phase of history [when] freedom itself is bringing forth compulsion and constraint" (Han 2017a: 1). Han adds: "As the entrepreneur of its own self, the neoliberal subject has no capacity for relationships with others that might be free of purpose" (Han 2017a: 2). To be an "entrepreneur of its own self," the neoliberal subject must turn onto itself and must constantly seek to improve itself, invest in itself and its own productive capacities, and ultimately exploit itself. Here, in part, Han borrows some of Michel Foucault's insights about the late-liberal subject, or what Foucault termed *Homo Oeconomicus*, as a self-entrepreneur that had internalized the demands of the system, particularly by adopting a set of conducts that would remain in line with the dominant socio-economic expectations and norms of the times and would regularly check itself to ensure that it continuously fit the norms, particularly in terms of productivity and efficiency (Foucault 2008: 270-271; see also Foucault 2016). But Han goes one step further by stating that the late-liberal, or now neoliberal, subject internalizes the need for exploitation too. As Han puts it, "neoliberal psychopolitics is always coming up with more refined forms of exploitation. Countless self-management workshops, motivational retreats and seminars on personality… promise boundless self-optimization and heightened efficiency… Neoliberalism has discovered integral *human being* as the object of exploitation" (Han 2017a: 29).

For Han, the subject at the heart of contemporary neoliberal schemes is what he calls the

"achievement subject" (Han 2018: viii). Contrasted to Foucault's "obedience subject" of disciplinary power and biopolitics (Han 2018: ix), the achievement subject of neoliberal capitalism is a self-optimizer that depends on what Han calls psychopower to strive to be and to want more. Psychopower for Han is a power that relies on data and digital technologies, or perhaps on what Moulier-Boutang has referred to as cognitive capitalism, in order to maximize psychic or mental processes with a view to realizing more effective self-control and self-productivity. According to Han, self-exploitation managed by way of data and digital platforms is primarily a psychic or mental endeavor (not a physical one) that breaks down subjectivity into a series of data bits, algorithms and formulas, and digitalized numerical factors and aggregates that enable computation-based management and measurement. Through data and digitalized numerical values that can be accessed and used at all times, techniques of self-enhancement, self-surveillance, and self-enforcement geared towards constant performance evaluation translate the self/subject into a series of data points always available for assessment. Such a psychopolitical (no longer biopolitical) tracking and such a striving for digital improvement of one's self/subjectivity take place all the time, in all sorts of ways, and through all kinds of social environments and structures or domains of life and work that need not be assumed to be either horizontal or vertical prior to their operationalization.

By and large, this is what the neoliberal subject is and does for Han. This is how and why it always seeks to achieve. To achieve means for the neoliberal subject that it has to turn itself into a series of digital measurements or computations that can be readily accessed and assessed. In this manner, the achievement subject of neoliberalism is also what Han calls a "project" (Han 2017b: 48). A project is not actualized or finalized. It always requires further enhancement or improvement. A project always demands more. Thus, the achievement subject as project can always do or be better. In this way, the neoliberal achievement subject is also perpetually a work in progress, often coming short (as the digital computations and the data points tell the subject it can do more or better), and thus always striving, always seeking to improve on its previous outputs.

The neoliberal subject or project as Han conceives it to be is also never its own master. It is always someone or something else's object or objective, although the achievement subject does not see it this way since, by and large, the achievement subject understands its constant push for better performances as a matter of freedom, as Han notes (Han 2015: 35). Even as it works on itself, the achievement subject as project pushes or throws forward (pro-ject is from the Latin *projectere*, which means to throw or aim forward, or to push ahead) what the system has already set up and given. Key to neoliberal exploitation under psychopolitics is, through an endless enhancement of achievement driven subjects, the making of subjects into projects, or, put differently, the construction of a projected subjectivity (and this projection can go in many directions, can take various shapes and forms, and can unfold in diverse spatial contexts) that compels subjects to measure themselves against themselves in a bid to maximize their capacities, often represented as always shifting sets of data.

In many ways, neoliberal psychopolitics, as Han has theorized it (Han 2017a), challenges the verticality versus horizontality binary relied upon by critiques of neoliberalism. The neoliberal achievement subject is not simply stuck in vertical structures that impose upward mobility and conditioned to produce more by way of vertical stratification. And this neoliberal subject is also not easily defined by its emancipation potential, or as a subject that can spread its capacity of resistance and its newly found political agency laterally, across horizontally reconstructed multitudinal networks. Rather, empirically and theoretically, the achievement subject is given the "freedom" to expand its potential for self-maximization and/as self-exploitation in ways that can be at once vertical and horizontal, and to the point where the distinction between horizontality and verticality may no longer be determinant. Han started to perceive the futility of verticality versus horizontality debates when he suggested that neoliberal psychopolitics unfolds in contexts that simultaneously combine "boundless

self-optimization" (that is to say, a horizontal plane of limitless expansion) and "heightened efficiency" (a vertical modality of intensified capitalist productivity and growth) (Han 2017a: 29). For Han, it does not matter if the achievement subject as project throws itself forward or backward, upward or downward, horizontally or vertically, as long as it is able to work on itself and its data outputs to be more competitive and to more efficiently internalize the demands of the system (which, again, the subject does not see as a demand but rather as a set of opportunities).

For Han, under conditions of psychopolitics, the neoliberal subject once again experiences freedom as and through compulsion and constraint. It is data that "frees" the subject from what Han calls "subjective arbitrariness" (Han 2017a: 58). Thanks to a "freedom" to access data and to assess data outputs about one's self, everything the neoliberal subject is, does, or wants can be transparent, readily available, known, and thus quantifiable, trackable, and actionable too. Some have referred to this neoliberal subject as a quantified self (Wolf 2011; Lupton 2016; Han 2017a: 60). Data seemingly provides unlimited access and movement for the subject, but such a freedom of movement and access is also a matter of control. As it moves "freely" out and about with data in search of self-maximization, the neoliberal subject is monitored (by itself, to start with) and data is instantaneously gathered and potentially publicized as the subject performs (but never fully achieves). For the neoliberal achievement subject, as Han explains, freedom via data is always a matter of digital surveillance (Han 2017a: 55-56; see also Zuboff 2019). Crucially, Han adds, data "freedom" as digital surveillance works for neoliberalism and the neoliberal subject "because it is *aperspectival*. It does not suffer from the perspectival limitations [of] analog… systems" and spaces (Han 2017a: 56). Thus, what the neoliberal subject needs to remain with this logic of constant openness onto data systems is an environment or spatial configuration that can accommodate or, better yet, encourage the subject's moves (often as a series of data points, once again). This is why the spaces of the neoliberal achievement subject are indeed, as Han states, without or beyond perspectives, or "aperspectival."

The "aperspectivalism" of neoliberal psychopolitics cannot be adequately represented by the notions of verticality and horizontality (or their opposition), notions or dimensions of (geo)political and (geo)economic thinking that remain tethered to analog settings and systems. Vertical axes and horizontal planes, visually or metaphorically useful as they may be thought to be when it comes to allegorizing neoliberalism and the role/place of the neoliberal subject, fall short of making sense of the neoliberal achievement subject as a subject/project whose freedom and control, fused together, are constantly made and remade by the performative work of data (Deleuze 1992: 5; Davis 2015, Birchall 2018). Put differently, spaces of digital subjectivity cut across the rigidity of horizontal versus vertical dichotomies and their analog, material, and representational anchors.

Instead of vertical or horizontal, I want to suggest that the spaces of and for the neoliberal subject under conditions of psychopolitics can be thought of as "arcological." Arcological spaces or domains, or arcologies, are built environments and spatial configurations that neoliberal subjects both crave and rely on for life and work. As zones that simultaneously enable expansion and concentration of neoliberal capital and competition, arcologies accommodate the neoliberal subject as the product of data systems and digital outputs, and they condition it to want to achieve. Arcologies are often thought of as all encompassing, autonomous, and ecologically self-contained and self-sustaining spaces of and for competitive life and efficient work that possess what could be described as biospheric characteristics (Baudrillard 1994; Luke 1995; Kershaw 2000). Like biospheres, arcologies are meant to be hermetic zones of life and work, somewhat sealed from the world and social reality found on the outside. In them, a saturated neoliberal universe of labor, consumption, but also home life, leisure time, and communal relations (as needed) is provided to the achievement subject through a thorough reliance on data and digital interfaces (including social media). Arcologies are organized according to a logic of quotidian achievement. Thus, arcologies can provide daily material confirmation, through the

objects and subjects that inhabit them, of freedom and constraint as key principles of psychopolitical living.

To this day, arcologies often remain the product of science fiction imaginaries or visionary post-urban architectural utopias. Science fiction author Paolo Bacigalupi has introduced arcological spaces in several of his novels and short stories (Bacigalupi 2010; Bacigalupi 2016). In Bacigalupi's often dystopian near future, arcologies are lived-in spaces that rely on both horizontal and vertical principles. While Bacigalupi's arcologies are often imagined as sitting a few hundred yards above the earth's surface (above a city, a desert, swamp lands, etc.) (Bacigalupi 2016: 9; 201-202), they are also above-ground horizontal expanses, possibly looking like post-urban floating islands that, in a cloud-like manner, are suspended between earth and sky (as we will see below, it may not be coincidental that arcologies seem to mirror for the neoliberal subject the digital cloud where much of the subject's personal data now reside). They are still anchored to the earth thanks to massive vertical pillars, but they stretch out horizontally across or just below the clouds. Often described as being enclosed by glass structures that offer them exposure to the sun, they are meant to operate ecologically through a fully self-reliant recycling system (with seemingly limited runoffs evaporating in the air or dumped down below, back into the outside world). Arcological spaces, through these biospheric traits, can potentially be deployed under all climatic conditions and in any of the earth's eco-systems (in deserts, over ice caps, in swamps, over and across oceans, on top of or adjacent to decaying urban landscapes, etc.). Arcologies are their own built-in eco-systems, and since they supposedly can adapt to various land, water, and air conditions, there is not one unique spatial principle or shape that they must privilege.

Considerations of horizontality and verticality are thus secondary concerns with arcologies. What primarily matters are the life/work conditions and, in particular, the exposure of the neoliberal subject, as the main dweller of these spaces, to data-based achievement, competition, and intensification that arcologies are designed to optimize throughout their interior. Put differently, arcologies are envisioned as fluid spatial constructs that maximize horizontality and verticality principles, as needed, but without privileging one over the other, in order to guarantee an uninterrupted circulation of data since data is the driving force of arcological life and work. Arcologies thus ensure total saturation of the subject by way of data and data systems, but they also seek to buffer the neoliberal subject and its data outputs from any influence or contagion coming from outside the arcological domain. In some of Bacigalupi's fictional renditions of arcological living spaces, the possibility of horizontal travel for the subjects exists. But this possible horizontal movement mainly takes place within a given arcology or across different arcological entities, with the understanding that hermeticity somehow can remain unscathed during inter-arcological transport.

In a way, arcological spaces created for neoliberal subjects' psychopolitical living anticipate a built-in life and work whereby subjects exist as data and data points. Cloud computing and social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Google Earth, Amazon Prime, etc.) have already sought to optimize what can be thought to be some arcological principles imagined by SciFi authors like Bacigalupi, thus turning arcologies into tangible, albeit virtual, domains that can do away with a strict adherence to verticality and horizontality. Digital platforms and networks where data are produced and stored (like the cloud) but also where a great deal of social life and work in a neoliberal age take place both mimic and enhance arcological imaginaries. Similar to arcologies, social networking today provides what French theorist Bernard Stiegler has called "a kind of vertical flatness" to life and work (Stiegler 2016, 133). Thanks to such a "vertical flatness," neoliberal subjects can start to see themselves as the tenants of arcological spaces where, as Han recently suggested, they "no longer dwell on the earth or under the sky, but on Google Earth and in the Cloud" (Han 2022, 1). Yet, as social critic Shoshana Zuboff has shown (2019), neoliberal capitalism remains firmly in control of

these "cloud-like," "Google-earthy," or "vertically flat" spaces.

According to Zuboff, and reminiscent of Han's argument about the neoliberal subject, the goal of these spaces or domains is to maximize coercion and harmony for the sake of enhancing productivity and achievement, while giving the dwellers of these spaces a sense of unlimited movement, unobstructed potential, and free access to objects and (fellow) subjects. As Zuboff puts it, a new "human hive" of and for neoliberal subjects is thus imagined (in a way, virtually constructed) through these platforms that can be readily fitted with what she calls the "machine hive" (Zuboff 2019, 414), that is to say, the neoliberal capitalist system of production, achievement, and expansion in the age of data and data systems. According to Zuboff, the motto of these social domains and spaces, a motto that, as we shall see below, is in line with arcological thinking, is provided by Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella who, in 2017, declared that "people and their relationship with other people is now a first-class thing in the cloud" (Nadella 2017; Zuboff 2019, 410). Likewise, in their study of cloud computing and cloud thinking, media theorists Rob Coley and Dean Lockwood note that the seemingly evanescent, amorphous, and yet ever-present space of the cloud (or what they call "cloud culture") is designed not only to offer virtual platforms (neither here nor there, neither vertical nor horizontal) for data gathering, storage, and dissemination, but also to move digital domains towards the construction of new "unifying structures" for neoliberal life and work (Coley and Lockwood 2012, 27). Similar to arcological designs, what Coley and Lockwood call "cloud capitalism" (their name for neoliberal capitalism in a data-driven era) is meant not only to operate as an imaginary or visionary potential, but also to move towards actual, concrete, and built-in physical applications for the alleged benefit of neoliberal subjects. They refer to these concrete applications in the making as a matter of "constructed plausibility" (Coley and Lockwood 2012, 27).

Just like science fiction imaginaries and cloud computing prospects, arcologies have been "constructed plausibilities" for a few decades now. Indeed, a few arcological structures have already been attempted, sometimes with limited success, particularly in some urban areas in China where they have sometimes been labelled "horizontal skyscrapers" (Roxburgh 2018). Recently, Saudi Arabia ordered American architectural design studio Morphosis to initiate the planning of an over 100-mile long, a third of a mile high, and only about 300-yard wide entirely self-enclosed "linear city" that would stretch above and across the Arabian desert (Ravenscroft 2022). To this day, this project remains at a planning stage. Over a decade ago, an article in Wired magazine mentioned that five "real world" arcologies were about to start construction, although, ten years later, it is still not clear what their present status is (Geere 2011).

Perhaps one of the most successful and well-known arcologies/horizontal skyscrapers to date is the Vanke Center in Shenzhen, China, which was completed in 2009. The product of the imagination of the Steven Holl Architects group, and designed to house the headquarters of the Vanke real estate corporation, the Vanke Center is meant to be a fully contained space/domain where work takes place, but also where Vanke corporation employees and guests can reside and enjoy family and community life inside living quarters (apartments) and in open and "public" spaces (this arcology contains a large natural park, movie theaters, restaurants, at least one hotel, an auditorium for concerts, and several public gardens). The Steven Holl Architects group describes the Vanke arcology/horizontal skyscraper as follows: "Hovering over a tropical garden, this 'horizontal skyscraper'—as long as the Empire State Building is tall—unites into one vision the headquarters for Vanke Co. ltd, office spaces, apartments, and a hotel. A conference center, spa and parking are located under the large green, public landscape" (Steven Holl Architects 2023; no page given). The Steven Holl Architects group's narrative captures the arcological spirit of the Vanke Center by stating that "the building appears as if it were once floating on a higher sea that has now subsided, leaving the structure propped up high on eight legs" (Steven Holl Architects 2023; no page given).

Reminiscent of Bacigalupi's fictional arcologies, the Vanke Center seeks to maximize "vertical flatness" so as to "create views over the lower developments of surrounding sites to the South China Sea, and to generate the largest possible green space open to the public" (Steven Holl Architects 2023; no page given). Yet, it is clear that the so-called public targeted by this arcological space are the neoliberal subjects who live and work, and are meant to enjoy the amenities on offer, inside this contained yet fluid domain. Indeed, what the designers of this neither vertical nor horizontal space call a realized "tropical vision" of a future where "building and landscape" are now "integrated" in a "new sustainable way" is first and foremost provided to the Vanke corporation and many of its corporate leaders, most of whom (one would presume) have already internalized the needs and requirements of psychopolitical living and neoliberal capitalist work (Vanke corporation is often considered to be the second largest real estate company and property developer in China, with ventures throughout Asia and across the globe, including the United States, and it claims to be ranked #178 on the Fortune Global 500 list).

Even though there is no obvious mention of it, it seems that the Vanke Center in Shenzhen has been able to put to use arcological principles that have been envisioned since at least the 1970s. The arcological imaginary of the Steven Holl Architects group on display in southern China is not unlike that of one of the forerunners of arcological thinking, the transnational architecture firm Arcosanti. Inspired and founded by visionary Italian architect Paolo Soleri, Arcosanti started to imagine concrete applications of key arcological principles a few decades ago. Arcosanti has touted the virtues of arcological spaces by stating that arcologies combine "architecture and ecology" (hence, the neologism "arcology") in fostering a "comprehensive urban perspective" and in being in tune with the ways "organisms evolve" (Arcosanti 2017: no page given).

Soleri started to imagine futurist architectural designs, including one that he dubbed Arcosanti, in the 1970s and 1980s (Soleri 1987). Timothy W. Luke has noted that, in Soleri's initial vision, Arcosanti was thought of as "a working prototype for a new kind of city, one that… [would be] designed, built, and inhabited as a three-dimensional, highly concentrated megastructure" (Luke 1997: 153). In Arcosanti, Soleri's prototypical arcological model, ecology and technology would come together to transcend the unsustainable "two-dimensional explosion of urban areas" with the hope of "reconceptualizing the morphology of individual houses, towns, and cities as social aggregates with immanent rational potentialities" (Luke 1997: 162). According to Luke, the fears, dangers, threats, pollutions, and other nefarious living conditions caused by the out-of-control horizontal sprawl and vertical reach of megalopolitan entities like Los Angeles, Mexico City, or Phoenix led Soleri to imagine Arcosanti as a somewhat amorphous space or, better yet, as what anthropologist Marc Augé has called a "nonplace" (Augé 2009). As a nonplace, Arconsanti would be (quite literally) a perfect utopia, one whose arcological properties would nonetheless enable it to concentrate "the production/consumption/circulation/administration of commodities in the bowels of an immense megastructure, while arraying the spaces for residences, schools, entertainments, and the arts on its top and along its exteriors, like some superluxury [ocean] steamer permanently run aground" (Luke 1997: 170).

While the ideological impulse behind Soleri's project was dubious at best (as Luke rightly noted, Soleri's Arcosanti was the dream of "a totalitarian civilization that mystifies its totalitarianism in the ideologies of choice, liberation, and convenience" [Luke 2019: 101]), in recent years, Arcosanti, the arcological utopia, has been revitalized and repurposed by what is now an architectural firm bearing the name of Soleri's vision. Today, it is argued that the arcological qualities extolled by Soleri can be an opportunity for Arcosanti, the transnational architecture firm, to take advantage of resources and ways of living championed by neoliberal politics and economics. As we saw above, other architectural firms and ventures have taken advantage of neoliberal capitalism and of the needs/requirements of the neoliberal subject, and they appear to have developed similar visions and projects (even

if sometimes they prefer to call them horizontal skyscrapers). In his study of arcological utopian thinking, Luke writes that Arcosanti (Soleri's original project) was "languishing because it [needed] a political economy to operate" (Luke 2019: 103). However, for today's Arcosanti (the architectural firm), and for other similar ventures, neoliberalism now provides a fitting ideological setting and political economic platform for arcological designs and for updated arcological values to be put to use. Thus, what Arcosanti (the architectural firm) wishes to exploit these days are the values that the neoliberal achievement subject allegedly embodies and relishes, such as living in/as "a compact system," readiness to "complexity," or the necessity to adapt and see oneself as part of a fully "functioning living system" (Arcosanti 2017: no page given), values that also promote a neoliberal mode of subjectivity through self-improvement and achievement.

Described as an "integral process" that brings together architecture/space and ecology/life, contemporary arcologies are also an answer to the non-competitive or non-achievement driven world that neoliberalism has seemingly left behind. For Arcosanti, arcological spaces are "a response to the many problems of urban civilization: population growth, pollution, energy/natural resource depletion, food scarcity, and quality of life" (Arcosanti 2017: no page given). Thus, arcologies—realized or imagined, cloud-like or sitting above ground yet still anchored to the earth—propose to "radically re-organize" life into what, for example, Arcosanti calls "dense, integrated, three-dimensional cities [that can] support the diversified activities that sustain human culture and environmental balance" (Arcosanti 2017: no page given). This, Arcosanti claims, amounts to nothing less than a "complete reformulation of how we exist" (Arcosanti 2017: no page given). And again, how we "exist" today is a psychopolitical demand as much as (if not more than) a biopolitical requirement since the subject's existence is constantly data-driven and data-dependent.

Thus, whether they are imagined in SciFi narratives, thought of as precursors to fully integrated cloud-computing forms of life and work, or architecturally and spatially designed as lived-in domains floating above ground, contemporary arcologies are "constructed plausibilities" for neoliberal maximization and self-optimization. Protected by and appearing as what Arcosanti calls an "ecological envelope" or a "bounded density" (Arcosanti 2017: no page given), an arcology's main mission indeed appears to be to "envelope" and "densify" neoliberal life and work as they are constantly made and remade by data. And since arcological domains seem to offer everything the neoliberal subject needs, all the subject has to do is, once again, concentrate on itself, on improving its own efficiency, and on being ever more competitive through data and digital computations. Arcosanti has coined an interesting phrase for what is now expected of the neoliberal subject in arcological settings: "frugal resiliency" (Arcosanti 2017: no page given). Overall, frugal resiliency does not negate the quest for affluence. But it also emphasizes the point that the subject's freedom and well-being under optimized conditions of neoliberal life/work can only be realized if and when this subject endlessly seeks to be self-efficient and self-sufficient, and, furthermore (and back to Soleri's utopia), if it understands that its life/work environment will help it to fulfill these exigencies.

Conclusion

According to Han, neoliberal psychopolitics is an answer to the contemporary limitations of biopolitics and biopower as critical modes of analysis of late-capitalist life and work (Alphin and Debrix 2021). Biopower's emphasis on the subject's body, on its capacity for obedience and discipline, and on the physical spaces where the subject's disciplinary normalization is best realized does not capture the psychic/mental operations by way of data and data systems that define the contemporary neoliberal subject as an achievement subject, a subject that, furthermore, has lost its capacity to distinguish freedom from self-exploitation. Under neoliberal conditions, psychopolitics "is taking the

place of biopower [since]… [w]ith the help of digital surveillance, psychopolitics is in the position to read and control thoughts" (Han 2017b: 78). Whereas disciplinary/biopolitical power was "tied to perspective" across a horizontal plane or along a vertical axis, the psychopower of data is now "more efficient because it is aperspectival… [and thus it] can intervene in psychological processes themselves" (Han 2017b: 78; author's emphasis).

In this essay, I have suggested that space is allied to neoliberal psychopolitics and to the making or re-making of the neoliberal subject. But not all spatial configurations are able to capture what the neoliberal subject has become. The vertical model of power, worth, and growth may seem to give us an apt representation of what neoliberalism is and does. But verticality remains tied to a way of understanding power that, by and large, is unable to explain how data has reshaped the spaces of life and work of and for the neoliberal subject. Similarly, a rekindled form of horizontality in recent critical analyses operates primarily in relation (and opposition) to the idea of verticality, or to the view that the neoliberal subject is trapped in and controlled by vertical structures, since the main goal of the proponents of new horizontal(ist) challenges is to develop a spatially decentered form of counter-hegemony vis-à-vis neoliberal capitalist systems and institutions, often by way of laterally connected networks of individuals, collectives, or multitudes. Vertical perspectives and horizontal modes of organization provide critical analyses of neoliberalism that remain tied to disciplinary or biopolitical configurations of power. As such, their critical potential has become limited in an era of psychopolitical neoliberalism. Moreover, vertical analyses and horizontal counter-hegemonic perspectives seem to be driven by a desire to challenge each other rather than by a careful attention to the ways neoliberal psychopolitics works today. Following Han's thinking, vertical and horizontal spaces, planes, or dimensions of analysis remain perspectival at a time when neoliberal capitalism has become aperspectival.

Arcological thinking or designing is ambitious, visionary, sometimes virtual, and the ideologies or imaginaries (about space, but also about future life, and about the role and place of human subjectivity in data and digital domains) that it promotes are often problematic (Luke 2019: 106) and possibly dangerous. As I suggested above, arcologies are spaces, environments, and domains of and for neoliberal achievement subjects and neoliberal psychopolitics. As they continue to materialize, in physical and virtual settings, arcologies are likely to reinforce the domination of neoliberal capitalism as a form of life/living, and possibly as the only viable form of life/living on earth. Arcologies are suited for the ways data has been molding the neoliberal subject (and not just in the cloud) so that it can remain a subject in endless search of achievement, and with a sense of freedom always already adjusted to the constraints of data systems and digital technologies. The "aperspectivalism" of arcological spaces has the potential to provide the neoliberal subject with all the life and work compulsions it craves. With such a spatial rethinking of subjectivity, it is also not clear where challenges to contemporary and future forms of neoliberalism, if any, can reside since previously deployed critiques of verticality and horizontal(ist) counter-hegemonic strategies look like they have missed much of what defines today's neoliberal subject and its surroundings.

References

Adey, Peter. 2010. "Vertical Security in the Megacity: Legibility, Mobility, and Aerial Politics," Theory, Culture, and Society. 27, 6: 51-67.

Alphin, Caroline. 2021. Neoliberalism and Cyberpunk Science Fiction: Living on the Edge of Burnout. London: Routledge.

Alphin, Caroline and Debrix, François. 2021. "Biopolitics in the 'Psychic Realm': Han, Foucault and neoliberal psychopolitics," Philosophy and Social Criticism. online first. https://doi.org/10.1177/01914537211033011. Last accessed December 2, 2022.

Arcosanti. 2017. "The Arcology Concept: Architecture + Ecology." arcosanti.org/project/arcology/. Last accessed November 26, 2022.

Augé, Marc. 2009. Non-Places: An Introduction to Supermodernity. London: Verso.

Bacigalupi, Paolo. 2010. "Pop Squad." Pp. 137-161 in P. Bacigalupi, Pump Six, and Other Stories. San Francisco: Night Shade Books.

Bacigalupi, Paolo. 2016. The Water Knife. New York: Vintage Books.

Baudrillard, Jean. 1994. The Illusion of the End. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Birchall, Clare. 2018. Shareveillance: The Dangers of Openly Sharing and Covertly Collecting Data. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Brenner, Neil and Kiel, Roger. 2006. "Editors'

Introduction: Global City Theory in Retrospect and Prospect." Pp. 1-15 in The Global Cities Reader, edited by N. Brenner and R. Kiel, London: Routledge.

Coley, Rob and Lockwood, Dean. 2012. Cloud Time: The Inception of the Future. Winchester, UK: Zero Books.

Davis, Erik. 2015. TechGnosis: Myth, Magic, and Mysticism in the Age of Information. Berkeley: North Atlantic Books.

Davis, Mike. 1998. Ecology of Fear: Los Angeles and the Imagination of Disaster. New York: Vintage Books.

Davis, Mike. 2007. "Sand, Fear, and Money in Dubai." Pp. 48-68 in Evil Paradises: Dreamworlds of Neoliberalism, edited by M. Davis and D. B. Monk, New York: New Press.

Davis, Mike and Monk, Daniel Bertrand, eds. 2007. Evil Paradises: Dreamworlds of Neoliberalism. New York: The New Press.

Day, Joe. 2007. "Hubrispace: Personal Museums and the Architectures of Self-Deification." Pp. 219-240 in Evil Paradises: Dreamworlds of Neoliberalism, edited by M. Davis and D. B. Monk, New York: New Press.

Deleuze, Gilles. 1992. "Postscript on the Societies of Control," October. 59: 3-7.

Fisher, Mark. 2009. Capitalist Realism: Is There No Alternative? Winchester, UK: Zero Books.

Foucault, Michel. 2008. The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the College de France, 1978-1979. New York: Palgrave.

Foucault, Michel. 2016. On the Government of the Living: Lectures at the College de France, 1979-1980. New York: Picador.

Friedman, Thomas. 2007. The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century. New York: Picador.

Geere, Duncan. 2011. "Five Real-World Arcologies under Construction," Wired. June 21. www.wired.co.uk/article/paolo-soleri-arcologies. Last accessed November 28, 2022.

Graham, Stephen. 2011. Cities under Siege: The New Military Urbanism. London: Verso.

Graham, Stephen. 2016. Vertical: The City from Satellites to Bunkers. London: Verso.

Graham, Stephen and Hewitt, Lucy. 2012. "Getting off the Ground: On the Politics of Urban Verticality," Progress in Human Geography. 37, 1: 72-92.

Han, Byung-Chul. 2015. The Burnout Society. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Han, Byung-Chul. 2017a. Psychopolitics: Neoliberalism and New Technologies of Power. London: Verso.

Han, Byung-Chul. 2017b. In the Swarm: Digital Prospects. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Han, Byung-Chul. 2018. Topology of Violence. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Han, Byung-Chul. 2022. Non-things.

Cambridge: Polity.

Hardt, Michael and Negri, Antonio. 2001. Empire. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Hardt, Michael and Negri, Antonio. 2009. Commonwealth. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Harris, Andrew. 2015. "Vertical Urbanisms: Opening up Geographies of the Three-Dimensional City," Progress in Human Geography. 39, 5: 601-620.

Harvey, David. 2011. The Enigma of Capital and the Crisis of Capitalism. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Kershaw, Baz. 2000. "The Theatrical Biosphere and Ecologies of Performance," New Theatre Quarterly. 16, 2: 122-130.

Luke, Timothy W. 1995. "Reproducing Planet Earth: The Hubris of Biosphere 2," The Ecologist. 25, 4: 157-164.

Luke, Timothy W. 1997. Ecocritique: Contesting the Politics of Nature, Economy, and Culture. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Luke, Timothy W. 2019. Anthropocene Alerts: Critical theory of the Contemporary as Ecocritique. Candor, NY: Telos Press.

Lupton, Deborah. 2016. The Quantified Self. Cambridge, UK: Polity.

McNeill, Donald. 2005. "Skyscraper Geography," Progress in Human Geography. 29, 1: 41-55.

Moulier-Boutang, Yann. 2011. <u>Cognitive Capitalism</u>. Cambridge, UK: Polity.

Nunes, Rodrigo. 2021. <u>Neither Vertical nor Horizontal: A Theory of Political Organization</u>. London: Verso.

Ravenscroft, Tom. 2022. "Saudi Arabia Reveals 170-Kilometer Long Mirrored Skyscraper to House Nine Million People." www.dezeen.com/2022/07/26/neon-170-kilometre-long-skyscraper-city-saudi-arabia/. Last accessed November 28, 2022.

Roxburgh, Helen. 2018. "Is Chongqing's 'Horizontal Skyscraper" the Answer to Overcrowded Cities?" <u>The Guardian</u>. June 4. www.theguardian.com/cities/2018/jun/04/is-chongqing-china-horizontal-skyscraper-the-answer-to-overcrowded-cities-raffles. Last accessed November 20, 2022.

Soleri, Paolo. 1987. <u>Arcosanti: An Urban Laboratory?</u> Santa Monica: VTI Press.

Srnicek, Nick and Williams, Alex. 2016. <u>Inventing the Future: Postcapitalism and a World Without Work</u>. London: Verso.

Steven Holl Architects. 2023. "Horizontal Skyscraper – Vanke Center 2009: Description." https://www.stevenholl.com/project/vanke-center/. Last accessed January 24, 2023.

Stiegler, Bernard. 2016. <u>Automatic Society, Volume 1: The Future of Work</u>. Cambridge: Polity.

Wolf, Gary. 2011. "What Is the Quantified Self?" quantifiedself.com/blog/what-is-the-quantified-self/. Last accessed November 26, 2022.

Zuboff, Shoshana. 2019. <u>The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power</u>. New York: Public Affairs.

Zukin, Sharon. 1991. <u>Landscapes of Power: From Detroit to Disney World</u>. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Cyberculture's Abstract Utopia: Silicon Valley and Cleaner, Greener, Leaner Rules for a "New Economy"*

Timothy W. Luke

Introduction

This preliminary analysis connects the dilemmas of eco-pessimism and eco-optimism and links them to a number of core and peripheral thinkers in the US during the twentieth and twenty-first centuries who have sought an escape, or "an out," from the deepening deterioration of both Nature and Society making many feel pessimistic about the environment. As New York City choked through eerie days cloaked by nearly impenetrable clouds of wood smoke in June 2023, the sky turned a Martian orange in the sunlight from dawn to dusk. At the same time, coastal homeowners along Atlantic, Gulf, and Pacific beaches received notices that their property insurance costs would be greatly increased, or their policies canceled permanently, due to the increasing frequency and destruction of severe coastal erosion and weather events. Meanwhile, the American Southwest was being smothered in prolonged intense heat waves punctuated by massive hailstorms, intense rainfall, and tornados. Due to so many coincident catastrophes like these, the experience of eco-pessimism today is growing in its breadth and depth as climate change simply becomes more problematic, personal, and pervasive.

To an extent, environmental destruction has cast troubling shadows over the gains of industrial society for 250 years. Yet, the ill-effects of coal, gas, oil, plastics, mechanization, and urbanization piling up in daunting new trade-offs between power and pollution are making many question the material powers they gain against the miserable pollution such degrading empowerment entails. Others, however, are more than willing to accept the bargain, believing they must embrace an eco-optimism ready to evade the entrapments of modernity in the myth, or reality, of technological innovation's "the endless frontier." US Representative Ro Khanna from District 17 of California, which is the core of the still "promised lands" of Silicon Valley, California, the New West or America itself, is exemplary in his enthusiasm for these prospects. [https://www.congress.gov/bill/117th-congress/house-bill/2731]

In so doing, he gives voice to the ecomodernist hopes winding down many different paths through disturbing studies of the systemic entropy rising from industrial society, while searching for cleaner, greener, leaner rules for a "new economy" with an anti-entropic, if not utopian, potential to attain entropy's uncanny antithesis in "extropian" forms of existence. While he is not a professed

extropian, his ecological and economic good cheer appear rooted in notions close to "EXTROPY — the extent of a system's intelligence, information, order, vitality, and capacity for improvement" (More, 1998).

As one considers today's starkly eco-pessimist social movements, from Extinction Rebellion to Fridays For Future, they tend to have younger, more radical members who will live through much of the twenty-first century suffering under the failure to limit global warming by 2030 and preventing further releases of dangerous greenhouse gases. By and large, they are suspicious of technofixes and tend to attack almost all high technology for today's proliferating forms of pollution. On the other hand, eco-optimist groups, like the Earth System Governance Project or Future Earth, believe global climate change will be slowed and then stabilized on time, thanks to their global sustainability research. Any technofix that works is well worth the effort to deploy.

It is intriguing, in turn, to see how seriously today's eco-pessimist resistance groups are taken by their ecomodernist opponents, who churn over eco-pessimist rhetoric to decisively affirm their own eco-optimism. For such thinkers, like Michael Shellenberger and his former associates in the San Francisco-based Breakthrough Institute, they call for "the death of environmentalism and the politics of possibility" (Nordhaus and Shellenberger, 2007) in their quest to accelerate technological progress to shape a new economy and ecology around their cheerful strategies for solving ecological crises by mobilizing better environmental engineering.

This defensive stance against eco-pessimism now animates various concrete dystopian "outs," emerging from Silicon Valley's abstract schemes for realizing new modes of digital being rooted in cleaner, greener, and leaner modes of everyday life both online, like the augmented reality of "the Metaverse," and off-line, like elite enclaves for "the one percent" off-north in Idaho, off-shore in New Zealand or off-world on Mars for this digital vanguard. Such self-assured presumption to take responsible guardianship over Nature and Society into their own hands is not new to the San Francisco Bay area. Instead, such ecomodernist moments of "'California dreamin'," rooted in Silicon Valley or metro Los Angeles, are only the most recent iterations of several prior waves of solutionist visions for the US from the West Coast, which should be recalled from this region's past.

Over 150 years ago, another small cadre of California-centered naturalists, who had trusted President Lincoln's 1864 grant of protection to Yosemite Valley would ensure its security for "public use, recreation and enjoyment, inalienable for all time," became distraught in the 1880s over the rampant over-use of adjoining sections of unprotected lands around Yosemite for cattle grazing, timber cutting, mineral prospecting, and small-scale farming. These key thinkers, like nature writer John Muir and magazine publisher Robert Underwood Johnson, fretted over where and how the protective boundaries between "Nature" and "Society" were drawn across the region's natural wonders as developers encroached on the Yosemite Valley and lumberjacks eyed the Mariposa stand of giant sequoia trees. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, these progressive naturalists campaigned for years as an elite vanguard of nationalistic activists and intellectuals eager to mobilize government authority and expertise to protect and preserve these sites and their extraordinary natural features.

To a degree, they succeeded, but their efforts to preserve every wonder for its own sake quickly cratered in bureaucratic tussles between Sacramento, San Francisco, and Washington, where local politicos, regional investors, and urban interests made it very clear neither the state nor the nation could maintain all-natural wonders and power up unrestrained urban growth at the same time. This contradiction required hard choices. In California, keeping Yosemite nearly pristine led to the sacrifice of the Hetch Hetchy Valley to supply the booming Bay Area with a reliable water source. Just as unique as Yosemite, on the one hand, the Hetch Hetchy's geology, on the other hand, was ideally

suited to construct a large and reliable reservoir. Its sacrifice marked the limits of cherishing a natural treasure over the growth of new municipal infrastructure to build The City by the Bay.

At this juncture, then, these original "guardians of Nature" (King, 2023) cut their biggest and best political trade-offs between eco-optimism and eco-pessimism by selling the loss of irreplaceable natural wonders at one site as an energizing lobbying tactic to gain the preservation of many different additional wonders at other sites. Such decisions also promoted cleaner, greener, and leaner environmental protections in many places with less remarkable natural qualities by building bureaucratic, corporate, popular, and technical support for their environmental protection actions. It was, and still is, accepted as the defense of both "the economy and the environment." This logic twists the folds of policy trade-offs and suggests how the negativities at one eco-pessimist conjuncture often sparks counter-reactions with broad bands of positivity for eco-optimism in closely related political dealings.

Two puzzles appear here. First, after becoming so well-supplied with waters from the Tuolumne River dammed up in the Hetch Hetchy Valley, San Francisco and the larger Bay region strangely morphed into the seed-bed of abstract utopias in which California's electronic cyberculture has come together in high-tech visions for over a century. From 1909, when Charles Herrold set up the first radio communication station in San Jose for wireless communication, to the unveiling of ChatGPT by OpenAI in San Francisco in late 2022, when Adobe, Alphabet, AMD, Apple, Microsoft, Oracle, and Nvidia all pounced on such generative AI chatbots to reimagine digital computing, the protection of small bits of "Nature" has fueled the proliferation of huge concentrations of "Society." In particular, much of the emergent direction and substance of "becoming electronic," and then "being digital," arose from the currents of inventive curiosity, commercial greed, war-time necessity, and pioneering zeal anchored around the San Francisco Bay since the 1900s. Second, this utopianizing assemblage of cognitive capitalism now includes more dystopian developments in "neobiological" (Kelly, 1994) visions beyond ordinary eco-pessimism, which underlay the eco-optimist slumber of new ecomodernist dreamers fixated on developing the newest artificial intelligence, metaversalism, social media and posthumanism on the "endless frontiers" still to be discovered in Silicon Valley (or at its outposts in Austin, Boston, Phoenix, Seattle and elsewhere).

The Ends of Utopia

To pull together the pieces from some of these puzzles, Marcuse's sense of "utopia" provides a useful point of departure. As a project of social transformation that is considered to lie in the realms of no-place, impossibility, or fiction, the utopian must be rethought. He asserts, "utopia is a historical concept. It refers to projects for social change that are considered impossible. Impossible for what reasons? In the usual discussion of utopia, the impossibility of realizing the project of a new society exists when the subjective and objective factors of a given social situation stand in the way of the transformation -- the so-called immaturity of the social situation" (Marcuse, 1967). For abstract utopias, immature social conditions may persist. Yet, for concrete dystopias of Silicon Valley, the projects for a new society continuously have been and are still being generated due to fewer subjective and objective factors blocking the transitions to transformation. These more mature social conditions in and around Silicon Valley crystallized into a collective imagination of how almost nothing is allowed by its advocates to be considered impossible, including the endless reproduction of more intrusive high-tech artifacts, codes, and platforms through everyday life. To deeply embed immature technical systems in culture and society to wildly steer everyday life, to reduce the barriers against deploying cybernetic devices amid immature psychosocial conditions or to make degrading disruptive

digital practices possible by brushing off resistance against them is the tech mogul's ideal job. Most significantly, this region's Kultur is centered upon an endless quest to eliminate, ignore or overcome any subjective and objective factors limiting access to new "products and services" by their "users" to valorize the investments by their "developers" behind such tech-driven social change. Even the worst vendor practices then are often rarely regarded, at least initially, as impossible, implausible or improbable.

Destiny Made Manifest

In the pursuit of what has been revered as this nation's "Manifest Destiny" for centuries, generations of Americans have regarded the North American continent as a tabula rasa for realizing their dreams and schemes. Not entirely unlike Ernst Bloch in *The Principle of Hope*, they began by asking – especially once they first found themselves living around San Francisco Bay -- the central questions of human existence: "Who are we? Where do we come from? Where are we going? What are we waiting for? What awaits us?" (Bloch, 1938-47). Bloch's intent in these challenging queries was to affirm the centrality of "learning hope," which he saw as the essential emotion of change, development, and struggle to make the transition to socialism. Yet, comparable "learned hopes" were sustaining the dreams of profit by Silicon Valley Bank and the array of high-tech managers and their commercial firms that mismanaged their assets, while they "hoped to learn" how to become influential, powerful, and wealthy. Such hopeful hubris also anchors Silicon Valley capitalism.

Hope, in fact, "requires people who throw themselves actively into what is becoming, to which they themselves belong," as they push across the broad plains of What-Has-Been by recognizing "the dawning of the In-Front-of-Us" that demands "its specific concept, the Novum, the concept of the Front"(Bloch, 1938-47). As Bloch's phenomenological probes of time and possibility suggest, one must embrace the challenges and contests of change in concrete contexts. In this ontography of the utopian, what lies amid "the What-Has-Become" can appear almost anywhere. Incredible possibility usually lies before imaginaries of "The Future" rising ahead of waves made at "The Front" in all of the promising contingencies of inventive agency. The cli-fi, enviro-fi, sci-fi clatter of eco-pessimism rests in dour readings of the "What-Has-Become" in CO_2 ppm in the atmosphere, the rising temperature of the ocean, the global decline of biodiversity. Affirming its presence, however, negates the normality it belies in Silicon Valley's abstract utopias for beta testing cyberculture's cleaner, greener, and leaner rules for a new economy and the ecologies required to extinguish eco-pessimism.

As people struggle at the "conscious production of history," they ultimately discover "the concept of the utopian (in the positive sense of the word) principle, that of hope and its concepts worthy of human beings," such as "expectation, hope, intention towards possibility that has still not become" realized through its "utopia of One Thing Necessary," or "the practice of concrete utopia" (Bloch, 1938-47) through a Marxian metamorphosis, as the realization of socialism. In these encounters, smart people sense the polymorphous possibilities of "The-Not-Yet." In Silicon Valley, a few anticipated that it has been by the lights of an emergent "Ontology of Not-Yet-Being" that they continually come to assemble around the Bay area. Arguably, it is a misbegotten, elitist, and disruptive "concrete utopia." Still, it remains a strange attractor drawing thousands to its domains to fulfill their strongest hopes, even though Bloch would agree they are still short of the transition to the socialism envisioned by Marx. Nonetheless, the hopes are powerful, and "the Future" looms along "the Front" where some imagine there must be a Tesla in every garage, a Google coder on every Blue Origin rocket flight, Siri speaking from any device, an Alexa waiting in every kitchen or an iPhone 14 in everyone's coat pocket (Brooks, 2001; and, Deresiewicz, 2014).

When Bloch deploys his readings of "the concrete" to ground "the utopian," he is aware of how they ring in clear Hegelian tones, as instantiations of con crescere, or the drawing together of a particular actuality, latency, possibility at the nexus of natural reality and human praxis. Authentic agency may well bring people to their fullest potential. Yet, more often, it never will be wholly attained because the historical, material, or social conditions essential for its complete realization are not yet themselves evident. Here, Marcuse's sense of the utopian brings it from the abstract realm of "the alternatives" to concreteness that colonizes everyday life all the time for almost everyone: "we live and die rationally and productively. We know that destruction is the price of progress as death is the price of life, that renunciation and toil are the prerequisites for gratification and joy, that business must go on, and that the alternatives are Utopian. This ideology belongs to the established societal apparatus; it is a requisite for its continuous functioning and part of its rationality" (Marcuse, 1964: 86). Bloch would not wholly disagree. The What-Has-Become of capitalist markets continues to thwart The-Not-Yet-Being of an authentic socialist mode of everyday life.

One only needs to look into the materialist manifestations of banal nationalism, racial expansionism, and settler colonialism (Noble, 2018) that has typified a darker side of California since its original statehood as the short-lived "Bear Flag Republic." That said, Bloch would ask all to not forsake the imperatives animating hope with its always emergent "Ontology of Not-Yet-Being." Here are the layers of pulling real possibility from the ether of impossibility. Eco-pessimism and eco-optimism mingle in the different imaginaries of utopia tied to high technology, California's wildernesses, 1960s counterculture, and over-heated 2000s cybercultures. On one level, their abstract utopian visions do energize social changes, economic innovations, or political movements that have pressed to realize The-Not-Yet-Being as a choice to construct and occupy concrete utopias. And, on another adjacent plane, these visions drew from venture capital, inventive risk, government funding, higher education, and human imagination from around the world into the central vortices of contemporary capitalism as they developed in and around Silicon Valley and its regional supply chains over the last century.

The Hopes of California Dreaming?

Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the USA, making the journey "To California or Bust" has served as one of the more enduring concrete utopias of generations of Americans. As the Far West of a political culture that imagined "Going West" as one of its greatest equal opportunities for adventure, enrichment, and self-cultivation, hundreds of thousands first trekked across the Trans-Mississippian territories of the Republic on foot, in wagon trains, on the transcontinental railroad or later in automobiles motoring across the country down "The Mother Road," or Route 66, to reach the promised land of California. In particular, the places around San Francisco from Marin County to Berkeley to San Jose to Stanford have been the destination for millions to attain their self-realization of what Not-Yet-Being for them, like visions of living on a houseboat in Sausalito, taking a degree at the University of California, growing produce in Santa Clara Valley or starting up an electronics company in a garage in Palo Alto.

While many dreams are still dreamt in California, it is the crackling imaginary of some garage-born, high technology tinkering with electronics that dominated the hues in the Bay Area's rainbow of enterprises leading to both rapid enrichment and permanent precarity. Indeed, this entire area has been reconfigured repeatedly around the endless frontiers of technology to be discovered in "Silicon Valley" thanks to immense federal spending and the energy and entrepreneurialism of mythic bands of engineers. Training usually at Stanford or Berkeley, successive waves of innovation have carved

Silicon Valley into California's, America's, and then the planet's history.

Whether it was Bill Hewlett and David Packard (Hewlett-Packard) in the 1930s, Russell H. Varian, Sigurd F. Varian, William Webster Hansen, and Edward Ginzton (Varian Associates) in the 1940s, Sherman Fairchild and Arthur Rock (Fairchild Semiconductor) in the 1950s, Gordon Moore and Robert Noyce (Intel) in the 1960s, Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak in the 1970s (Apple), John Warnock and Charles Geschke (Adobe Systems) in the 1980s or Larry Page and Sergey Brin in the 1990s (Google), they created the boxes and wires, aesthetics and codes, microchips and memory circuits, search functions and cyber-ethics behind today's digital life. As the core of today's most dominant concrete utopian turn, their aesthetic yet abstract utopias for the nation's informational mode of production scattered across "the Sunbelt" since the 1960s and 1970s did pull off Silicon Valley's aesthetic appropriation of the Real, once embedded in the coal-burning, metal-bending, and soul-crushing industrial cities around the Great Lakes of "the Frostbelt" from Chicago, Milwaukee and Detroit to Akron, Cleveland and Buffalo.

Of course, these putative high-jackings all too soon revealed the *recuperations* of the much rawer realities behind the Reagan-era hyperreality intrinsic to the CIA intrigues, venture capitalism, DARPA contracts, post-Fordist neoliberalism, and paper entrepreneurialism rising from the 1980s and 1990s. The adventures of "the PayPal Mafia" after 2001's dot-com bust, in turn, have further solidified these concrete utopian moves in the twenty-first century, as exemplified by new enterprises launched by Peter Thiel (PayPal), Jeremy Stoppelman (Yelp), Elon Musk (Space X, Tesla), Reid Hoffman (LinkedIn) or Steven Chen (YouTube) that energize today's American cognitive capitalism.

Where Would We Be Without Nature as "an Out"?

California is also imagined as America's last Great Eden after 1849, pulling Americans West to meet their destinies. Since the Sierra Club's founding in San Francisco in 1892 by the famed writer, naturalist, and conservationist John Muir, along with a group of Bay Area academics, attorneys, and artists, San Francisco has also been a green citadel. Activists harbored hopes to protect this Eden by realizing more progressive conservationist thought in pragmatic policies for California lest it slip away into the "What-Had-Become" more dehumanizing and disastrous in unchecked resource exploitation elsewhere across the country. Hoping to slow, if not halt such ecological degradation, Muir and the Sierra Club members successfully lobbied in Sacramento and Washington to make Yosemite Valley America's second national park in 1890, and the organization continued this success by backing the creation of the Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks (1890-1940), Mount Rainer (1899), Glacier (1910), Grand Canyon (1919), and Zion (1919) National Parks across the American West. Saved from extractive development plans of miners, oil drillers, lumberjacks, dam builders, or farmers, the national monument and park systems favored by the Sierra Club did not reverse development. Rather, they favored attractive development schemes to draw outdoorsmen, car campers, hikers, and nature lovers out into Nature.

Containing this unchecked resourcification and unrelenting exploitation of California's and the West's mineral, soil, timber, and water endowments by accepting other already lost regions as national sacrifice zones, the Sierra Club stepped up its resistance tactics. Under David Brower's leadership in the 1950s and 1960s, the Sierra Club morphed into a specialized culture industry, representing "the Great Outdoors" with arresting new images of pristine perfection in coffee table books, nature calendars, and magazine covers, which enabled American taxpayers and voters to see "an out" for themselves from the pollution, despoliation and crowding of post-war urban sprawl. At the

same time, the idea of "wilderness areas" free from scarring by automobile roads afforded a means of interpreting vast areas in wild country as a pause, a utopian alternative, if not "an out," from the prospects of sacrifice to the accelerating expansion of the nation's Gross National Product.

Many in the counterculture movements of the 1960s embraced new hopes for living simply in such natural surroundings. They were drawn to California as what they believed could be "an out" from dystopian times of nuclear stalemate, racial conflict, urban unrest, economic stress, and foreign war. San Francisco itself seemed to many like a concrete utopia. During pop culture's "Age of Aquarius," people there wore flowers in their hair, prepared to move to the country, erect domes, form a commune, become artists, build windmills, and ignore the world. While it now seems delusional, incredible, or naïve, it was a brush with the hope of "The Future" beyond what wishful dreams might provide. And, some of the seekers ultimately ended up in Silicon Valley.

Local dreamers in the Bay Area, like Stewart Brand, pulled together the *Whole Earth Catalog* in 1968. Its craft-like, large newsprint format displayed potent images of "The-Not-Yet-Being" promising "The-Near-To-Become" as it afforded *Access to Tools* for scores of intentional communities out in the woods and abandoned urban zones. It was eagerly embraced as a concrete materialization of "the principle of hope," because Brand claimed, "a realm of intimate, personal power is developing -- power of the individual to conduct his own education, find his own inspiration, shape his own environment, and share his adventure with whoever is interested" (Brand, 1968). To underscore these high hopes, Brand famously asserted, "We are as gods and might as well get used to it" (Brand, 1968).

By 1974, however, This-Not-Yet-Being was becoming entangled within what already was What-Has-Become. Brand's career, in turn, led him to found *CoEvolution Quarterly* magazine, with its focus on inventive Nature/Culture fusion. It ran for 11 years until he merged it with *The Whole Earth Software Review*, which evolved into a companion periodical to *The Whole Earth Software Catalog*. AS the near-lost 1960s San Francisco counterculture faded, its precepts morphed into green foundations for the emerging complexes of digital 1980s cyberculture (Turner, 2006). Playing to this new hopeful host of dreamers (Stock, 1993) in his career of serial utopianizing, Brand repackaged these digitally recoded publications as the *Whole Earth Review* that circulated from 1985 to 2003.

An advocate of what he deemed "Whole Earth Discipline," Stewart Brand reinvented himself as the exemplar of another "new out" through "ecopragmatic" approaches for administering the "resourcification" of fossil capitalism that wagers on rapid economic growth, tied to fossil fuel use, against the downside of its externalities against today's global energy regime. This market structure tried to bet on decades of gradually accelerating growth in hydrocarbon energy use against its known, but yet fully grapsed costs (Luke, 2020). In the 1960s and 1970s, Brand's *Whole Earth Catalogue* spread his eclectic readings of pragmatic technology in use for human survival throughout the 1960s counterculture. That aura of great credibility was drawn into the abstract utopias of the cyberculture, especially as many others opened their eyes to fresh possibilities in Silicon Valley's emerging cognitive capitalist and informational economy that Brand had not fully appreciated in 1968.

Inconvenient Truths as Detournements of the Real?

Despite the recurrent energy crises in the 1970s, and years of stagflation during the 1980s, worldwide levels of growing industrial pollution and production after 1989 prompted many experts to push for decarbonizing human energy use. This change is now more commonly accepted as imperative to avoid, or at least adapt to, major ecological changes around the planet, which Bill

McKibben (1989) tagged, as the Cold War closed, "the end of Nature." For the most part, green thinkers from the 1970s through the 1990s often proved to be apocalyptic brand builders for eco-pessimism, fully intent on arguing that the ultimate catastrophe was nearby. Naomi Klein's polemics are a good case in point. As she opines about how globalization twists into corporate logo consciousness, as states advance their policy agendas for disaster capitalism, and anxious teenagers wallow in the doom and gloom of climate catastrophes. Here Klein perfectly exemplifies the chiliastic clash of "capitalism versus the climate" pushed by "the old environmentalism." Brand's digitally-remastered ecological pragmatism, in turn, is now a default ethical-political alternative to such warmed-over eco-pessimism to reorient contemporary ecomodernist designs for "saving the planet."

Indeed, McKibben's and Klein's environmentalism of catastrophes has triggered spirited rejections from the "New Environmentalism," pioneered by the green skepticism of Bjørn Lomborg, and then picked up by contemporary Bay Area thinkers like Ted Nordhaus and Michael Shellenberger. With strong ties to Silicon Valley venture capitalists, digital futurists, and fossil fuel interests, they essentially argue that "the old environmentalism" mobilized in the 1960s must be retired due to its fixation on decrying apocalyptic cataclysms tied to rapid climate change, biodiversity losses, plastic pollution, environmental toxins, and sea rise. New Environmentalists dismiss these tactics as far too dire. Admitting that today's negative climate trends are probably anthropogenic, "the environment" for them is still seen as resilient enough to offer other trails to "an out." They treat climate risks, first, as nowhere near as pernicious as they have been portrayed by the old environmentalists, and, second, they propose more hopeful, positive technocratic programs for implementing high-tech ecological modernization programs to create new jobs, slow climate change, preserve (or produce more) biodiversity, neutralize toxic pollutants, adapt to sea rise, and thereby remake society.

William McDonough and Michael Braungart from beyond California also maintain parallel principles of hope essentially by touting new aesthetic and design principles, which enable ordinary people to tackle the same big wicked green problems by approaching them in small, manageable, and ordinary steps. They tout "cradle to cradle" engineering ethics for agriculture, construction, industry, and management to emulate Nature's closed loops for circulating energy, matter, and information with little or no waste. Building "a new economy" with such environmental goals should also require jobs that are fresh opportunities for existing workers, as highlighted by President Biden's signing of the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA} on August 16, 2022. Even though most of today's UAW members have careers entangled with internal combustion engines and fossil fuels and are holding out against a fully electrified automotive sector that will require fewer workers to build less complex electric vehicles, ecomodernists believe they can provide the designs required to quell any resistance to their eco-optimistic solutions.

Such eco-optimism also refines "green" values further to define "leaner" lifestyles and "cleaner" energy sources to improve Bloch's "The-What-Has-Become" of twenty-first-century culture. While his prospects for victory have not been high, Michael Shellenberger campaigned in 2018 and 2022 for governor in California to realize his dreams for the state remade into a new ecomodernizing Eden. As a "no party preference" candidate, his platform proposed scores of "inherently safe" modular nuclear reactors, funded by one of Bill Gates' many post-Microsoft start-up companies, to realize New Environmentalist hopes. Indeed, his new Environmental Progress organization (https://environmentalprogress.org/) prides itself on helping to save not only endangered whales but also nuclear reactors around the world that face decommissioning. With such out-of-the-box ecomodernist programs, he sees his eco-optimistic conservationism as the Golden State's most promising new

green business plan.

Seeing Extropy as "an Out"?

Amid such confident technophilia in Silicon Valley, many others are finding their utopian visions for "The-What-Is-Not-Yet-But-Still-Near" principles for resisting the ordinary entropy of earthly existence in the eclectic designs for "transhuman life," first expounded in abstract utopian prophecies of "extropy" as propounded by Max More and the "Extropy movement" based in Los Angeles. As President of the Extropy Institute (ExI), Max More asked would-be members of his movement a number of questions that resonate well with those accustomed to living off multiple monetary streams of compound interest, savvy puts in the options markets or lucky calls by their private equity advisors. Nothing quite equals anti-entropic effects, as the eternal life of dead labor swirling through the simple circuitries of M-C-M' at accelerating profit rates. For utopian capitalists feeling better, bigger, and bolder with each new deal paying out big gains, they already feel the blessings of human beings becoming extropian. Such underpinnings have made it easy for More to ask all those harboring the transhuman aspirations some savor the exciting prospects for anyone seeking to surpass humanity's finest exemplars:

-Do you want to make the future immeasurably better than the past?

-Do you want to live beyond the normal human limit?

-Are you attracted to innovative, market-oriented solutions to social problems?

-Do you want to upgrade your intellectual power?

-Do you want to dispel the clouded thinking of the eco-doomsayers and pessimists?

-Do you want to throw off ingrained barriers to effective thinking and action?

-Do you want to continuously improve yourself - physically, intellectually, morally?

-Do you think that technology can and should help us overcome biological, genetic, and neurological limits to our abilities and goals? [http://www.mit.edu/people/jpbonsen/extropianism.html]

For Extropians, the trap from which humanity needs "an out" is simply being human and believing that the human species/being must remain forever fixed and unalterable. Instead of treating the body and soul as already limited by their organic boundaries, extropian thought looks beyond human beings as "wetware" to reboot it continuously with neo-biological "hardware" and/or "software" (Kelly, 1994).

As More's queries to these hopeful concrete utopians promise, human individuals and

societies must migrate into transhuman states of being to attain posthuman becoming, which the embrace of the Anthropocene in many intellectual circles today seems to make even more imperative. If the Nature of the Holocene is no longer fixed, predictable, or unalterable, extropian improvements to individual humans and their species-being is crucial for thriving in the throes of De-Holocenation. If the Anthropocene is a trans-natural condition created by human disruption, extropian practices, in a sense, anticipate the Anthropocene's trans-natural instability with transhuman adaptations to these new coevolutionary conditions. Since these changes are technologically imaginable for Extropians, this accelerated evolution must be launched. The imperatives are obvious to More and the Extropy Institute:

> Technological and social change continues to accelerate, thrusting us into a future of unprecedented possibility and choice. Increasingly, gerontologists agree that aging will be partly or wholly controlled in the next few decades. Drastic extension of the human lifespan will be accompanied by the ability to radically increase human intelligence using advanced nootropics (smart drugs) and neurological augmentation with implanted miniaturized computers. Advances in genetic engineering, biochemistry, and nanotechnology (molecular machines) will enable us to heighten our senses, boost our strength, bolster our immune systems, and increase our resistance to injury and death.

> Computing power and communication bandwidth continue to grow explosively, enabling the development of virtual reality, making accessible oceans of information, and allowing the creation of electronic markets and distributed virtual communities. We can expect to see the evolution of truly intelligent artificial persons and to overcome biological and neurological limits through human-machine symbiosis. These and other technology-driven revolutions, such as space habitation and nanofabrication, offer the potential both for progress and peril. Extropy Institute endeavors to prepare our human culture for the dawning of the posthuman era, in which today's beliefs, technological achievements, and culture will seem as primitive as those of the Middle Ages seem today. [http://www.mit.edu/people/jpbonsen/extropianism.html]

While the Extropian message is pitched in universalistic language as it scans humanity's coming expectations and possibilities, these prophecies from 30 years ago are not actually cascading out into the body and mind of the digital elites at light speed. In many ways, the movement has run almost like a human colonial cargo cult rather than a transhuman cohort of cyborgs. Even then, such radical transhuman "possibility and choice" will not be available to just anyone (Moravec, 1988; and Mazlish, 1993).

In a society where even century-old drugs, like insulin or antibiotics, cost many times more than they did in the 1990s, it is clear only the top five, two or one percent of society would ever be able to afford access to these rarified extropian elite circles to enjoy such exciting opportunities. While DARPA and Big Pharma are always probing these frontiers of bionic transhumanism, there have not been many breakthroughs on the open market to afford would-be extropians new artifices for partly or wholly controlled aging, radically increased human intelligence via nootropic "smart drugs," neurological augmentation thanks to implanted miniaturized computers or advanced genetic engineering to heighten their senses, boost their strength, bolster their immune systems, and increase their resistance to injury and/or death. For the Silicon Valley digiterati, however, this is a plus. When science and technology are steered to provide these extropian supplementations, they

plainly see themselves as the chosen elect, or "The-Already-Able-We," at whom such measures "To Enable Us" will be aimed to test the range of transhuman species-being in the concrete dystopia of turning into the Anthropocene.

In this shift, one hears Steward Brand, after his cybercultural turn, make extropian hopes appear like his next vision of human development: "junior deities, we want to be. Reality is mostly given. Virtual reality is creatable" (Brand, 1987: 116). With an ever-accelerating potential for generating trillions of dollars, or perhaps even better, crypto-coins, such god talk is almost to be expected in Silicon Valley. Its elites are prone to naturalizing their net connections as divine endowments because money, at least for them, largely must pose no barriers as well as should mark them as worthy of some extropian "out" from mere humanism to boldly go "transhuman." In some sense, the immortal growth of compound interest with the spontaneous ordering of uncertain consumers with resolute producers in open markets enables the twists of profit to tie together those commodified exchanges, transforming "M" into "M'" that subconsciously appear to be the coded kernel of Extropian imagination.

To resist or vanquish entropy, then, Extropians embrace transhuman principles meshing "personal growth" with "breaking barriers" in which life well-lived is not unkind "investment well-positioned" to attain the new margins of self-satisfaction gained from,

BOUNDLESS EXPANSION: Seeking more intelligence, wisdom, and effectiveness, an unlimited lifespan, and the removal of political, cultural, biological, and psychological limits to self-actualization and self-realization. Perpetually overcoming constraints on our progress and possibilities, expanding into the universe, and advancing without end.

SELF-TRANSFORMATION: Affirming continual psychological, intellectual, and physical self-improvement through reason and critical thinking, personal responsibility, and experimentation. All while seeking biological and neurological augmentation.

DYNAMIC OPTIMISM: Positive expectations fuel dynamic action and adopting a rational, action-based optimism, shunning blind faith and stagnant pessimism.

INTELLIGENT TECHNOLOGY: Applying science and technology creatively to transcend "natural" limits imposed by our biological heritage, culture, and environment.

SPONTANEOUS ORDER: Supporting decentralized, voluntaristic social coordination processes and fostering tolerance, diversity, foresight, personal responsibility, and individual liberty.

Extropianism is a transhumanist philosophy: Like humanism, it values reason and humanity and sees no grounds for belief in unknowable, supernatural forces externally controlling our destiny, but transhumanism goes further in urging us to push beyond the merely human stage of evolution. As physicist Freeman Dyson has said: "Humanity looks to me like a magnificent beginning but not the final word. (See Extropy #11, 2nd Half 1993).

Some already imagine they will, in fact, enjoy a new kind of immortality as fully digital beings on the

Net once the famous "singularity" of silicon consciousness matches, and then exceeds, that of its carbon-based hominid forebearers.

As John Barlow asserts, "when the yearning for human flesh has come to an end, what will remain? Mind may continue, uploaded into the Net, suspended in an ecology of voltage as ambitiously capable of self-sustenance as was its carbon-based forebears" (quoted in Slouka, 1996: 11-12). Clutching this faith on the US 101 commute down the Valley to a Big Tech office park might serve as a psychosocial bond and an ethico-political mark of extreme distinction. For those workers with the technical imagination and monetary net worth who want to dream they will one day equal all of their firms' hardware, netware, or software, it is possible to see how they might want to be known as members of a chosen extropian cyborg elite. It plainly would cleave a colorful path through the grit of "The-What-Has-Become" of the present to "The Future", lying latent in the twenty-first century as "an out" few more ordinary mortals will have.

Conclusions?

Silicon Valley and the greater San Francisco Bay area have been where knowledge has been put to work, "inventing the future" for over 160 years, but this ethos largely suffuses the entire Golden State. The fusion of humans and technology/Nature plus Culture/biology is the new social capital at the "neo-biological" core of Kevin Kelly's *New Rules for New Economy* (1994). The digiterati's radical strategies for commanding and controlling this "connected world" largely plays off the concrete utopia of "techno-progressivism," which continues to grow in the wake of the post-1981 personal computing, post-1990 World Wide Web/WYSIWYG browsers, post-2007 smartphone revolutions, and post-2022 generative large language models. These material and immaterial innovations are more than suitable examples to see how Silicon Valley's high-tech billionaires and venture capitalists regard the concrete utopian life they have sold to their "users" as transporting humanity from "governance by men to the administration of things" now morphing into an ultimate realization of human liberation.

Much older craft-based values, as touted by John Ruskin, William Morris, or Frank Lloyd Wright from the nineteenth century, have been twisted into the dreams of Silicon Valley, like many ideals of the twentieth century's "last intellectuals" (R. Jacoby, 1987). Yet, they became something else, once intertwined in twenty-first-century cybernetic circuits. From extropianism, immortalism, or posthumanism to transgenderism, singularitarianism or technogaianism, the digiterati's will-to-power schemes still are evolving along the edge of the corporate cloud, ubiquitous computing, applied bioengineering, quantum nanotechnology, and consumer robotics (Luke, 2020). As the antithesis of entropy, extropy continues to be sold as eternal life, but signs of gaining this perfection largely come from its believers' buzz and swag scooped up in the halls of computer trade shows, the World Economic Forum, bioengineering conferences and software innovation retreats (S. Jacoby, 2008).

Meanwhile, as cyberculture devotees await their full-blown mind and body upgrades for extropian life, fresh previews of teleported body and mind traces are promised to soon be available in the Metaverse to all who don the latest AR goggles and telepresence rigs. Are the abstract utopian hopes of chastened C-suite Silicon Valley innovators delivering another concrete utopia now? More virtual than wholly material, *Time* magazine declares the Metaverse is closing fast; in fact, as it looks ahead "Into the Metaverse: The Next Digital Era Will Change Everything" (Ball, 2022: 46-50). Such declarations presume still evolving technical apparatuses are Bloch's "The-Not-Yet" nearing some plausible approximations in "the Singularity's" promise of eternal online life in cybernetic networks with its portals to countless 24x7x52 addressable utopias in Internet of (All) Things, Systems, Beings

and Applications both on and off an almost wholly "infrastructuralized" Earth. Having re-terraformed this planet to indeed be a "Google Earth," the Silicon Valley vanguard now contemplates -- in the billionaire ranks of figures likw=e Bezos, Branson, Gates, Musk or Zuckerberg -- the exo-colonization of the nearby solar system to make such once merely human, now nearly transhuman forms of being, an also multi-planetary space-faring forms of life (Vaidhyanathan, 2018).

While sounding like the dream world of those anxious to escape California and its many problems, such abstract aspirations are taken seriously in Silicon Valley and beyond. Indeed, the so-called "fourth" and "fifth" industrial revolutions return, in a sense, to the political ideals of the "capitalist-as-commander" selling the world's cyber-proletariat and many microserfs new modes of liberation. Somewhere in smart cities served by ubiquitous systems, "the Novum" behind Bloch's principle of hope will be attained. The price might well be the surrender of all freedom, information, and choice to the behavioral surpluses that keep these highly charged digital circuits of exchange rolling as "Metaman" (Stock, 1996; and, Mitchell, 1995), but now they must ask whether they are really alive or just generative AI. This concrete dystopia turns Marx from his *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* on his head. In recharging the generative pre-trained transformer treads, "the tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living. And just as they seem to be occupied with revolutionizing themselves and things" (Marx, 1852). There are no guarantees that sweet dreams will occupy the brains of both the undead and unliving extropians trapped in large language model (LLM) neural networks to, as Apple would assert, "Think Different."

While this "The-Not-Yet-Here" Future is presented as "the Front" of freedom for all, it largely now evolves as a fluid realm of soft authoritarianism, regulatory regimentation, near-total surrender, and life-long powerlessness for cutting-edge consumers, who can pay to be "the user." The state of emergency "total lockdowns" during the COVID-19 pandemic plainly accelerated these trends by normalizing telematic anomie as one's best hope for thriving in today's continuously evolving administration of fear. These non-places, no-wheres, and no-entries have all been streamlined into a tolerable mode of soft suppression in everyday life made possible by "Better Living Through Zoom."

The shift from these somewhat amorphous abstract utopias is slow. Yet, the prefiguration of these principles of hope for extropians arguably are in play, if not completely in sway, through the swarms of start-ups that San Francisco, San Jose, Sao Paulo, Seattle, Singapore, Shanghai, Stuttgart, and Sydney still sustain their development along with thousands of smaller cities and towns now colonized by the virtual utopias of remote telework by e-lancing "knowledge workers." Meanwhile, the growing ranks of the superfluous or obsolete precariat continue to sleep restlessly in their campers, on sidewalk tent cities, or in the beach squats of depopulated metroplexes dreaming about what will be in the community food banks, "pay what you can" local eateries, and flexi-work ads tomorrow where the entropic sinks of now lost, once state-of-the-art skilled human work appear to grow larger by the day (Eubanks, 2018). Why do too many people wonder why Zuckerberg and Company pulled out their dog-eared copies of Neal Stephenson's sci-fi novel *Snow Crash* to prototype the Metaverse 1.0 to sell the latest concrete utopia of "augmented reality" for "their users" to push social media beyond the primitive "ideal speech situations" of Facebook, Instagram, or TikTok? (see Posner, 2001).

Against these horizons, this preliminary study has explored where would humans be, without always having an "out"? The principle of hope, however, behind The-Still-Not-Yet-Here-Today, whether they rise from Americanized cybercultures, ethnocultures, countercultures, ecocultures, or technocultures, as possible "outs" increasingly feel like abstract utopias "imagineered" for our special "critical supply chain needs" by Watson-like AI packages, which as IBM boasts, advance "trust from principle to practice" (Bridle, 2018). Transparent processes provide insight into AI-led decisions,

replete with fully enabled "data privacy, compliance and security" plus the support by "an open, diverse ecosystem driving responsible use of AI" (IBM, 2022). Such rhetoric, however, rings more like a hope for fresh principles to reenergize cognitive capital accumulation instead of the fullness of hope for truly human autonomy itself in the smart cities of the endless frontier.

Without a utopian vision for putting an end to oppression, exploitation, ecological degradation, climate injustice, and the myriad intersecting socio-historical problems reinforced by global capitalism, whatever lies ahead in "The-Not-Yet" might be nearly impossible to face (O'Neil, 2017). Nonetheless, the concrete utopia provided by these, and so many other Silicon Valley-inspired visionaries continue to only hover around such questions, pretending liberation requires such abstract utopian visions. Yet, one wonders if it is indeed too late for those of us in search of some new "out" from the tedium of everyday life in the twenty-first century because these concrete utopian visions perhaps are always already in service of more repressive forces?

References

Ball, Matthew. 2022. "The Coming Worlds: The Metaverse is still under construction, but it's sure to change our lives," *Time*, Vol. 200, nos. 5-6 (August 8-16), 46-50.

Bloch, Ernst. 1938-47. "Introduction," *The Principle of Hope*. [https://www.marxists.org/archive/bloch/hope/introduction.htm]

Brand, Stewart. 1987. *The Media Lab: Inventing the Future at MIT*. New York: Viking.

Brand, Stewart. 1968*. Whole Earth Catalog: Access to Tools*. Menlo Park, CA: Portola Institute.

Bridle, James. 2018. *New Dark Age: Technology and the End of the Future*. New York: Verso.

Brooks, David. 2001. *Bobos in Paradise*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Deresiewicz, William. 2014. *Excellent Sheep: The Miseducation of the American Elite and the Way to a Meaningful Life*. New York: Simon and Schuster.

Eubanks, Virginia. 2018. *Automating Inequality: How High-Tech Tool Profile, Police, and Punish the Poor*. New York: St Martin's Press.

Extropy Institute. 1995. "The Extropian Principles," Max More, President, Extropy Institute [https://www.alamut.com/subj/ideologies/manifestos/extropian_principles.html]

IBM. 2022. "IBM Watson is AI for Smarter Business" [https://www.ibm.com/Watson]

Jacoby, Russell. 1987. *The Last Intellectuals: American Culture in the Age of Academe*. New York: Basic Books.

Jacoby, Susan. 2008. *The Age of American Unreason*. New York: Vintage Books.

Kelly, Kevin. 1994. *Out of Control: The Rise of Neo-Biological Civilization*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

King, Dean. 2023*. The Guardians of the Valley*. New York: Scribner.

Klein, Naomi. 2015. *This Changes Everything: Capitalism versus the Climate*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Lucky, Robert W. 1989. *Silicon Dreams: Information, Man and Machine*. New York: St. Martin's.

Luke, Timothy W. 2020. *Screens of Power: Ideology, Domination, and Resistance in Informational Society*, revised edition. Candor, NY: Telos Press Publishing.

Luke, Timothy W. 2020b. "Climate Change and Decarbonization: the politics of delusion, decay and destruction in eco-pragmatic energy extractivism,"ed. Robert E. Kirsch, *Limits to Terrestrial Extraction*. London: Routledge. 25-53.

Lyotard, J. F. 1984. *The Postmodern Condition*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Marcuse, Herbert. 1963. *One-Dimensional Man: Studies in Ideology of Advanced*

Industrial Society. Boston: Beacon Press.

Marcuse, Herbert. 1967. "The End of Utopia," *Psychoanalysis and Politics* [https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/marcuse/works/1967/end-utopia.htm]

Marx, Karl. 1852. *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*.[[https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1852/18th-brumaire/ch01.htm]

Mazlish, Bruce. 1993. *The Fourth Discontinuity: The Co-Evolution of Humans and Machines*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

McKibben, Bill. 1989. *The End of Nature*. New York: Knopf.

Medvetz, Tom. 2012. *Think Tanks in America*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Mitchell, William J. 1995. *City of Bits: Space, Place and the Infobahn*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Moravec, Hans. 1988. *Mind Children*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

More, Max. 1998. "*THE EXTROPIAN PRINCIPLES*: Version 3.0, A Transhumanist Declaration," Extropy Institute.

Noble, Safiya Umosa. 2018. *Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism*. New York: NYU Press.

Nordhaus, Ted and Shellenberger, Michael. 2007. *Break Through: From the Death of Environmentalism to the Politics of Possibility*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

O'Neil, Cathy. 2017. *Weapons of Math*

Destruction: How Big Data Increases Inequality and Threaten Democracy. New York: Broadway Books.

Posner, Richard. 2001. *Public Intellectuals: A Study in Decline*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Slouka, Mark. 1996. *War of the Worlds: Cyberspace and the High-tech Assault on Reality*. New York: Basic Books. 11-12

Stephenson, Neal. 1992. *Snow Crash*. New York: Bantam Books.

Stock, Gregory. 1993. *Metaman: The Merging of Humans and Machines into a Global Superorganism*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Turner, Fred. 2006. *From Counterculture to Cyberculture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Vaidhyanathan, Siva. 2018. *Antisocial Media: How Facebook Disconnects Us and Undermines Democracy*. New York: Oxford University Press.

The Right-Wing's Dirty War Against History and Education: Beyond the Politics of Disappearance

Henry A. Giroux

Introduction

The past haunts the present moment because it increasingly offers terrifying narratives and images of what Walter Benjamin once called "a catastrophe that keeps piling ruin upon ruin."[1] The catastrophe to which Benjamin refers is the ghost of fascism and its irrepressible ability to reappear in different forms at certain moments in history. At the present time, memory and catastrophe have merged as past images that flash before us, signaling danger and suggesting that the current era is a "state of emergency" that is no longer "the exception but the rule."[2]

Like the flesh-eating zombies in George Romero's horror film, *Night of the Living Dead*, fascist politics have emerged in updated forms with a brutalizing power that carries with it the threat of apocalyptic violence, the terror of white supremacy, the horror of civic death, and the nightmarish unleashing of the politically unspeakable and ethically unimaginable. As fascist politics increasingly imposes itself on public and higher education, America's history, memories of resistance, and struggle for racial, gender, and economic justice are assaulted and subjected to a politics of disappearance and erasure.

At the core of all authoritarian regimes is a politics of disappearance--a practice of elimination that targets dangerous memories, the oppositional press, troubling knowledge, revolutionary ideas, perceived enemies, migrants, people of color, women, trans people, and bodies--all of which are marked as a threat to the existing order. In the U.S., violence has become the preferred instrument of disappearance. The violence of everyday life, with its landscape of uncertainty, racial and political divisions, staggering degrees of inequality, increasing levels of state repression, and ecology of bigotry and social atomization, has created a culture of existential despair, loneliness, and individual malaise. People now disappear in an orgy of violence that leaves no space protected. Mass shootings have become routine as bodies of innocent children are killed in schools, shoppers are gunned down in supermarkets, and worshippers are brutally murdered in churches and synagogues. In 2022, there were 640 mass shootings --a disturbing figure which suggests that the roots of violence and the history of the merchants of death who benefit from an armed society too often disappear in overtly personalized, irrelevant, or trivial conversations about violence. Under such circumstances, the root

causes, underlying structures, and driving forces that benefit from a culture of violence in the United States vanish into an abyss of social and political amnesia.

As violence and hatred become organizing principles of American society, a political culture of "hyper-punitiveness" and brutality emerges. This is a culture in which disappearance and erasure produce a culture soaked in blood--reflected in endless images of dead bodies, shattered families, and human suffering.[3] In an era of what Alex Honneth calls "failed sociality," symptoms of ethical, political, and economic impoverishment are all around us.[4] Punishment rather than governance has become the dominant feature of politics and, with it, the collapse of ethical consciousness. A culture of creeping punishment now extends from the prison-industrial complex, criminal justice system, and public schools to attacks by the state on trans youth, women's reproductive rights, and democracy itself.[5] The U.S. mirrors a society that appears to have gone mad, lost in a spectacle of nihilism, consumerism, fear, hatred, manufactured ignorance, and organized irresponsibility.

Historically, the politics of disappearance has a long reach. Moreover, in the existing moment, its boundaries of repression have expanded under a savage neoliberal capitalism that has morphed into an unapologetic mode of white supremacy and fascist politics. In an age of organized forgetting, the politics of disappearance has been removed from history. When events signaling danger do appear, they are normalized as part of the spectacle, and too often examined i in fragments within an image-based culture. After the initial shock of their appearance in the 24/7 news cycle, they are soon forgotten. We are currently inundated by images of violence, but they are too often isolated from each other and disconnected from the past--just as the past is disconnected from the present.[6]

Dirty War and the Politics of Disappearance as a Tool of Repression

History is filled with incidences of disappearances that make memory a potent vehicle of political reckoning and moral witnessing.[7] The deeply historical character of terror and state violence is clear in the genocidal violence directed at Native Americans, the massive crimes of slavery and Jim Crow, the internment of Japanese Americans during the Second World War, the cultural genocide directed at Indigenous children in residential schools, and the killing of millions by the Nazis. State violence from 1974-1986 was also part of a sordid history in Argentina, Chile, and other Latin American countries. This was a period in which Operation Condor, supported by the U.S., was responsible for organizing right-wing death squads and military security forces for the purpose of hunting down political dissidents and anyone considered a Marxist or socialist.[8]

As Erin Blakemore points out, referring specifically to Argentina, this was a period of state-sponsored "torture and terrorism. During this time, the military junta waged what was later labeled as the "Dirty War."[9] This was an era in which the state turned against its citizens, "whisking away political dissidents and people it suspected of being aligned with leftist, socialist or social justice causes and incarcerating, torturing and murdering them."[10] Fought on a number of fronts, the "Dirty War" resulted in over 30,000 people "disappearing" as the "country's military dictatorship turned against its own people."[11] Argentina was not alone in exercising a politics of disappearance. Brazil also engaged in forced disappearances, as did Chile. One of the more notorious cases took place in Chile after Pinochet's coup in 1973. With the backing of the Central Intelligence Agency, Chile also relied on enforced disappearance as a ruthless political tool and further inaugurated a terrifying means of repression that spread to many other Latin American countries.[12] Under Pinochet, thousands of dissidents were killed, tortured, and eliminated.[13]

With the emergence of white supremacists in control of the Republican Party, the House of

Representatives, and a number of state governments, state violence is increasingly legitimated as a tool of repression and a vehicle for seizing political power. While incidents of overt violence by right-wing extremists against perceived enemies such as school teachers, librarians, and election officials who oppose the fascist politics of the current GOP are well established, white supremacist politicians have not fully embraced historical tools of institutional repression such as Gulags, mass deportations or executions in order to consolidate their power.[14] Instead, they have resorted to an updated ideological and pedagogical version of the "Dirty War," in which a government wages a struggle against its own citizens within the framework of fascist politics. This "Dirty War" is not conducted exclusively through the naked forces of repression but by engaging in a politics of disappearance and silencing that erases history, bans books, destroys vital civic institutions such as public and higher education, and wages a massive attack on critical education and thinking. This is a politics that aims at producing a form of moral blindness, a crisis of social responsibility, the erasure of moral witnessing, and a crisis of political agency.

The War on Memory and Machineries of Disappearance

This is a war on memory and historical consciousness. The legitimation of state violence in all of its registers is now connected to the destruction of historical memory, the covering up of dark truths, and the residues of collective resistance. This ongoing management of terror directed at the American public is now organized through a systemic attack on civic culture, critical education, and historical consciousness. At work here are forms of domination that employ repressive pedagogical models, rely on cultural apparatuses and avenues of power such as Fox News that engage in full-time propaganda, and systemically construct policies that reduce educational institutions to indoctrination factories engaged in what right-wing extremists euphemistically label as "patriotic education."

The frontiers of political and moral imagination, memory, and knowledge itself, are under siege by a right-wing politics of enforced disappearances whose aim is the manufacturing of historical amnesia and a politics of disconnections.[15] Historical consciousness has fallen prey to disappearance machines that produce and legitimate a culture of absences, displacement, the whitewashing of memory, and white supremacist notions of agency, inclusion, and identity. For regimes of terror, the politics of disappearance and the attack on historical memory include pedagogical and political tools as strategies that feed illusions and impose upon the public a psychic numbing, a diminished capacity and sensitivity to human suffering, and a paralysis of ethical consciousness.[16]

The fascist disappearance of bodies in a systemic and lethal manner has a long history, and its connection to current practices of disappearance is crucial to understand.[17] The current politics of disappearance is a strategy that has unique and important connections to historical contexts, and current mechanisms of disappearance used by the GOP are connected to older totalitarian regimes. What is distinct about the politics of disappearance at work currently in the U.S. is that it takes place under the cover of state legislative policies that erase the histories of minorities and other displaced populations. Such laws constitute a form of erasure that hides its repressive fascist politics in the dark recesses of legal illegalities. Professor James Ron gets it right in stating that "Repressive states cloak their activities in a mantel of pseudo-legality that channels their techniques of repression into ways that appear, at least to the outside observer, to follow legitimate patterns of violence."[18] The disappearance of bodies in the advent of the repressive policies of past totalitarian societies has since been criminalized. However, in the current historical moment, the ongoing attack on and disappearance of ideas, books, critical education, reason, and the institutions that support them have yet to be acknowledged as criminal activities in the service of a fascist politics.

GOP Cultural Wars and the New McCarthyism

Evidence of the current politics of disappearance is on full display in the ultra-right-wing educational policies promoted by former president Trump, Florida's Governor Ron DeSantis, and a number of other GOP politicians. Education has long been the subject of attack by right-wing Republicans. One reason is that public schools and higher education have a history of defining themselves (however inadequately) as democratic institutions that serve the public good. They have been in the crosshairs of the GOP since 1954 when the *Brown v. Board of Education* ruling officially mandated racial integration while condemning racist segregation in public schools as illegal.

Right-wing culture wars intensified with "the domestic struggles over civil rights, the women's and gay liberation struggles and in the worldwide protest movement against America's brutal war in Vietnam."[19] In addition, the rebellions on university campuses in the sixties calling for the democratization of higher education and more access for minority students further frightened and angered right-wing Republicans and their followers. With the election of Ronald Reagan as president in 1980, the war on public and higher education accelerated--not because public schools and higher education were failing but because they were public. This attack on schools as a public good correlated strongly with the right-wing attack on any idea or institution that supported the common good and its notions of equity, social justice, and social responsibility. With the takeover of the GOP in the 90s by Newt Gingrich and Karl Rove, the battle lines hardened --the cultural and political conditions that made possible the move from Reagan's conservativism to Trump's fascist and white supremacist politics were now weaponized and secured.[20] Increasingly, the common good was viewed by the GOP as the enemy of free choice, privatization, and unchecked individualism. According to the GOP, education should not be defined as a right but as a privilege whose rewards should benefit young people educated in private schools in the dictates of "patriotic education." It gets worse. As Thom Hartmann has noted, the current attack on public schools has escalated to calls to end them altogether by white supremacists and a neoliberal financial elite. He writes:

> America's right-wing billionaires and their racist Republican politician toadies are dedicated to ending public schools and replacing them with non-union, private, for-profit education that best serves well-off children while ghettoizing poor children. The idea of America as a true "land of opportunity" is anathema to their ideal of a nation of "classes and orders" where every person knows their place and morbidly rich white men are in charge of everything.[21]

The current politics of disappearance relating to educational practices and policies goes much further than calling for the privatization of public education through voucher systems and attempts to defund public and higher education. What is being put in place today is an attempt to smear certain books, ideas, histories, and critical thought itself by connecting the latter to socialist ideas and social relations. In the first instance, attempts to control the curriculum and classroom teaching are initiated by labeling certain content as "subversive anti-American leftist indoctrination."[22] This is evident in many of the speeches of former president Trump, who has stated, "Our public schools have been taken over by radical left maniacs."[23] In a video he made as part of his 2024 presidential run, he stated that, if re-elected, he would fire "radical zealots and Marxists" who have allegedly "infiltrated" the Department of Education. He also made clear that he would get rid of "pink-haired communists teaching our kids," abolish tenure for teachers, and create a certification program for teachers who "embrace patriotic values."[24] For Trump and his followers, public and higher education are portrayed

as laboratories of left-wing ideologies whose ultimate purpose is "to destroy family, community, and national unity."[25] All of these policies represent the return of what Ellen Schrecker has called "the new McCarthyism," which uses the smear of communism to attack critical education, teacher autonomy, and "real-world issues of race, gender, and social inequality."[26] She writes:

> The current [McCarthyite] campaign to limit what can be taught in high school and college classrooms is clearly designed to divert angry voters from the deeper structural problems that cloud their own personal futures. Nevertheless, it is also a new chapter in the decades-long campaign to roll back the changes that have brought the real world into those classrooms. In one state after another, reactionary and opportunistic politicians are joining that broader campaign to overturn the 1960s' democratization of American life. By attacking the CRT bogeyman and demonizing contemporary academic culture and the critical perspectives that it can produce, the current limitations on what can be taught endanger teachers at every level. In contrast, the know-nothingism these measures encourage endangers us all.[27]

The right's attack on universities as citadels of leftist ideology dates further back than the purge of academics by the rabid anti-communists under Sen. Joe McCarthy in the 1950s. Authoritarian governments in the 1930s performed a similar task in order to control universities. Professor Ruth Ben-Ghiat makes this point clearly. She writes:

> From the fascist years in Europe…right-wing leaders have accused universities of being incubators of left-wing ideologies and sought to mold them in the image of their own propaganda, policy, and policing aims. … Given the virulence the Nazis showed in silencing their critics in and out of the academy after Hitler took power in 1933, it is remarkable that this talking-point has retained traction for the right. It has done so thanks, largely, to the military juntas of the cold war era, which gave new life to fascism's battles against the left.[28]

Apartheid Pedagogy and the Plague of Historical Amnesia

In addition to right-wing policies that disparage anti-racist pedagogy, silence cultures of questioning, and smother independent thinking by associating the latter with socialist ideals, there is also an attempt to remove the intellectual and institutional conditions in which historical memory, critical education, and civic literacy inform each other as part of the broader goal of creating informed and engaged citizens. Central to this repressive pedagogical project is an attempt to squelch memory and freeze history in order to domesticate thought and turn historical amnesia into a weapon of miseducation. In this attack by the assassins of history, memory, and truth, there is an erasure of the legacies of slavery, Jim Crow, systemic racism, the Black Power movement, Black Panthers, and the political and racist conditions in the aftermath of the George Floyd murder that gave rise to the Black Lives Matter movement.[29] There is more at work here than a right-wing attempt to rethink the legacies of slavery and anti-racist struggles; it is also a concerted attempt to ban any attempts to teach Black children the truth about their history. As Marian Wright Edelman notes in her comments on Dr. Carter G. Woodson, the son of a former slave, he was clear about white people refusing to teach Black students about their rightful place in history and about how the stakes in these debates involved "more than an academic discussion." She writes:

He saw the connection between erasing Black history and assaulting Black bodies. He said that the crusade to teach the truth about Black history was "much more important than the anti-lynching movement, because there would be no lynching if it did not start in the schoolroom. Why not exploit, enslave, or exterminate a class that everybody is taught to regard as inferior?"[30]

What also disappears in this right-wing indoctrination project are elements of the long war on Black people waged by both Republicans and Democrats. These would include the rise of the Southern Strategy, Nixon's racially-motivated war on drugs, Ronald Reagan's disparaging of welfare queens, Clinton's racist and punishing welfare and incarceration policies, and Trump's relentless demonization of migrants and Black people.[31] Moreover, the myriad of achievements, struggles, resistance, and culture produced by Black people over 400 years is either erased or trivialized.[32] How else to explain the current right-wing attempt to censor, disparage, and ban the 1619 Project from being used in public schools? How else to explain right-wing attempts to ban books by Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King Jr., Ruby Bridges, Angela Y. Davis, Audre Lorde, June Jordan, Robin D.G. Kelley, and other prominent African Americans?

How else to explain the campaign by Gov. Ron DeSantis and Florida's Department of Education decision to ban a pilot Advanced Placement African American Studies course because it was "political" included "woke education masquerading as education," and "lack[ed] educational value"? DeSantis makes his case for disparaging the A.P. course by citing the work of a range of notable African-American writers, including bell hooks, Kimberlé Crenshaw, and others as propaganda. Moreover, it is hard to take seriously DeSantis' charge that the A. P. course lacks educational value when it includes work by the famed literary scholar Henry Louis Gates, Jr., historian Nell Irvin Painter, and Black icons such as Frederick Douglass and Bayard Rustin. As Janai Nelson notes in the *New York Times*, "This disturbing pattern of silencing Black voices and aggressive attempts to erase Black history is one of the most visible examples of performative white supremacy since the presidency of Donald Trump."[33] Jelani Cobb adds insightfully to this critique by insisting that DeSantis and the Florida education department want the American public to believe "that the evils of the past are not nearly as dangerous now as the willingness to talk about them in the present."[34]

Unfortunately, if not shamelessly, the College Board released a revised version of the A.P. African American Studies course in which it scrapped a number of issues that were essential to any viable study of Black history. Removed from the final revision of the A.P. course were topics such as Black Lives Matter, structural racism, reparations, Black queer studies, mass incarceration, and slavery. In addition, it removed from the A.P. curriculum prominent authors and academics such as "James Baldwin, Frantz Fanon, Audre Lorde, bell hooks, June Jordan, Angela Davis, Alice Walker, Manning Marable, Ta-Nehisi Coates, Michelle Alexander, Kimberlé Crenshaw, Barbara Ransby, Roderick Ferguson…E. Patrick Johnson, and Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor."[35] In their decision to revert to a politics of historical erasure, the College Board has become complicit in both sanctioning the white supremacist culture wars being waged against public and higher education. There is more at work here than an act of bad faith on the part of the College Board; there is also complicity with Florida and its educational policies in using the state as a laboratory of fascism. As Ngakiya Camara writes in Truthout, there is nothing surprising here since "cowering to white supremacy and political power may be easy for the College Board because it is an institution forged from racism and eugenics, and designed to preserve higher education for the white, wealthy and privileged. And today, it continues to work exactly the way it was initially intended."[36]

The Ghosts of the Past and the Fascist Embrace of "Patriotic Education"

The historically based attacks on Black people and the war waged against public and higher education are not unrelated. Both assaults echo elements of an authoritarian past reminiscent of the McCarthy period in the U.S., the cultural genocidal practices in Nazi Germany, and a torture-saturated Chile under the rule of Augusto Pinochet, in which a politics of disappearance led to the expulsion of thousands of students and professors who were punished not only for holding oppositional political views, but also for being considered dangerous, disposable, and outside the parameters of contained citizenship. The historian Ruth Ben-Ghiat provides an insightful commentary and warning on how right-wing authoritarian actions against education in the past created a template for a politics of disappearance aimed at faculty, staff, and students who are deemed political enemies.[37] She is worth quoting at length:

> Strongmen disappear people, and they also disappear areas of knowledge that encourage critical thinking or that conflict with their ideologies and social engineering goals. In Hitler's Germany, art criticism was forbidden. In Pinochet's Chile, philosophy and sociology departments closed down [with the] goal of forcing 'a profound change in the mentality of the country,' as one official put it, that placed higher education in the crosshairs of the government…. Authoritarians thus depend in part on turning campuses into sites of mistrust and fear. As authoritarianism takes hold in a society, what happens on campus—from the recruitment of informers to the expulsion of dissidents—often reflects, or even anticipates, broader transformations.[38]

In the present political and ideological climate, public and higher education are viewed not only as centers of unpatriotic education but also embraced as crucial institutions for policing dissent, eliminating unions, indoctrinating faculty and students, and for normalizing white Christian nationalism, white supremacy, and pedagogies of repression. In the minds of the far-right GOP, education is the most powerful tool for creating a public that is neither informed nor willing to struggle to keep a democracy alive. Authoritarian societies firmly embrace the notion that history is written by the victors. In doing so, they wage a war on historical memory as part of an effort to not only control historical knowledge, particularly in relation to Black and Indigenous people but also to disguise dominant power relations in acts and policies that produce a "diligent and continual silencing … required to maintain its claims on the present and future."[39] As Whiteness is increasingly secured through voter suppression, border enforcement, gerrymandering, and state violence, far-right politicians and their allies have expanded their repressive pedagogical mechanisms of discipline and economic measures of control to include cultural apparatuses such as social media and public and higher education.

It is the attempt on the part of the GOP to control historical knowledge and extinguish democratic freedoms in the service of rampant white nationalism and white supremacy that fuels the attack on public and higher education and its dirty war against racialized populations. There is more at stake here than putting up barriers to the development of critical thinking and the fostering of a radical imagination among students. The fascist politics at work in the GOP's view of America is more expansive and more destructive and has become the bedrock strategy to transforming public and higher education into citadels of repression and white supremacist dis-imagination machines. It is an ongoing project designed to prevent Black and Brown students from learning from the trajectory of history. As Angela Davis observes, it is an attempt to prevent all students from understanding the

"nature of U.S. history and the role that racism and capitalism and heteropatriarchy have played in forging that history."[40]

DeSantis, the Scourge of Remembrance, and the Racial Politics of the Dirty War

America's dirty war is a battle against those histories, memories, and social institutions that make democracy possible. It is a war against the development of an educated public for the present and future, especially from the ranks of people of color. At the heart of this war is a project of indoctrination that views dangerous memories and critical thought as anti-American. It encompasses an attack on historical consciousness as the foundation of critical thinking, the civic imagination, and empowered forms of political agency. Its core organizing idea is the suppression of Black history and the teaching of anti-racist practices. What is called anti-WOKE by right-wing politicians and pundits is nothing less than an attempt by white supremacists and nationalists, in the words of James Baldwin, to barricade themselves "inside their history."[41] This historical racism and attack on memory is a part of a larger political strategy the right-wing self-proclaimed "culture warriors" enthusiastically promote as their "culture wars." The historian Jason Stanley, writing in *The Guardian*, argues that right-wing "cultural warriors" who conduct a "culture war" that whitewashes history, bans ideas, and censors books is nothing less than naked fascism.[42]

This initial anti-woke ideology was unapologetically articulated by former President Trump, who made his ongoing support for white supremacy clear when he claimed at a rally in Florence, South Carolina in March of 2022 that keeping critical race "out of our schools…was a matter of national survival," going so far as to ask his supporters to "lay down their lives" in the fight against anti-racist policies and practices, along with ideas regarding equity and social justice. Trump is worth quoting given his merging of racism and McCarthyite, anti-communist rhetoric:

> We have no choice. The fate of any nation ultimately depends on the willingness of its citizens to lay down, and they must do this—lay down their very lives to defend their country…If we allow the Marxists and commies and socialists to teach our children to hate America, there will be no one left to defend our flag or to protect our great country or its freedom.[43]

Since 2020, the white supremacist assault on Black history, anti-racist pedagogy, and social justice issues have moved from the White House to a state-based strategy-- most visible in the educational policies put into play in a number of GOP-controlled States. One striking, if not scandalous, example is evident in the educational policies and pedagogy of cloning implemented by Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis, whose aim is to mold human agency by turning schools into dead zones of the imagination. DeSantis' regressive policies extend far beyond preventing the A.P. course on African-American history from being used in his state. As is well known, DeSantis's war on critical education, anti-racist pedagogy, African American history, and curricula that includes knowledge about trans people has been as aggressive as it is extensive--and always with a whiff of high-drama political theater, which makes clear that the discourses of racial hatred and white nationalism contain valuable political currency. DeSantis has brought Jim Crow back without apology and, in doing so, has focused on policies that erase history through the imposition of censorship and a form of apartheid pedagogy that constitutes a form of anti-memory that refuses to hold racial injustice to account. Under DeSantis, the politics of disappearance emerges as a set of take-no-prisoners policies that combine censorship, the demonization of educators, and full-fledged attacks on public and higher

education; it also entails the criminalization of teachers who engage in matters of racial injustice, forcing professors to take loyalty oaths, and the enactment of politics of silencing aimed at erasing trans people from the historical record, books, and curricular materials.

According to David A. Love, DeSantis has turned Florida into what he calls "a circus of white supremacist madness [while] staking a claim for fascism. He has waged a full-scale war on both the teaching of Black history and classroom discussions of sexuality and gender identity issues. His "Don't Say Gay Bill" forces elementary school teachers to be silent about sexual orientation and gender identity issues while using his office to target and label people who oppose this bill as pedophiles. In a number of states, there are "bills that not only restrict teachers from having conversations in educational settings about sexuality but also "bar public school libraries from displaying books about "the study of sex, sexual preferences, sexual activity, sexual perversion, sex-based classifications, sexual identity, or gender identity or books that are of a sexual nature."[44] In Texas, there are GOP calls to criminalize anyone who provided care for trans people. There is more at work here than enforced ignorance; there is also a culture of deformation and cruelty that makes societal pariahs out of LGBTQ youth while doing irreparable harm to their parents, teachers, and caregivers. This is unadulterated hatred hiding behind the fake respectability of the law.[45] Will Bunch, a talented writer for *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, is right in stating that the "violent, expanding war on LBGTQ kids" by DeSantis and other Republican lawmakers "should make you think about 1930s Germany."[46] DeSantis' war on academic freedom, critical pedagogy, troubling knowledge, and dangerous memories is also evident in his ludicrous "Stop Woke Act," which restricts teachers from talking about racial inequality, systemic racism, civil rights struggles, slavery, and any other issue regarding racial justice that might make students uncomfortable, as if how they feel is the ultimate measure of teaching them to be informed and critical citizens. Paul Krugman, writing in the *New York Times*, is right in stating that in reality, it appears that DeSantis and his Republican allies want to ban anything "that makes right wingers uncomfortable."[47] DeSantis has banned math books he claims are politically offensive, passed a bill requiring that teachers remove or cover up books from classrooms that have not been approved by a state compliance censor, used public school funds to expand charter schools, attacked public schools that are crucial civic institutions, and waged a full-scale war on democratic values and social relations. What DeSantis and others seem to need to remember is that the ideal of a critically informed civic education is teaching students how to be creative, innovative, and courageous--not comfortable.

Barbara Ransby is laser sharp in arguing that DeSantis' attack on critical education and his support for white nationalism and authoritarianism "stands in the tradition of practices we have seen in the fascist past that have remerged in the present." She writes:

> In this way, DeSantis and his allies uphold the kind of indoctrination he claims to oppose. He stands in the tradition of the Nazis who burned books for fear that their antisemitic lies would be challenged in print. He stands in the tradition of the 1976-1983 Argentinian dictatorship that jailed and exiled dissident professors and killed their students. He stands in the tradition of Turkey's dictator Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, who has purged, jailed, or exiled over 100,000 educators and intellectuals because they wrote and taught ideas he saw as a political threat. DeSantis's dangerous actions are textbook proto-fascist measures. His militant opposition to any teaching of the Black freedom struggle is also reminiscent of the South African apartheid regime's book banning and curricular and speaker censorship, which limited the circulation of ideas that could undermine the legitimacy of an unjust system.[48]

At the heart of the "Dirty War" being waged against marginalized groups in the U.S. is an attack on

historical consciousness that not only connects the past to the present but also provides the memory work essential for understanding the repressive nature and structural forces at work in the war against Black people, women, LGTBQ people, and others relegated to the category of deposable. The right wing's declared war on democracy is rooted in a politics of disappearance in which history is shredded, and matters of truth, evidence, and moral witnessing are erased. Subjectivity is the material of politics, and uncovering alternative histories is not simply a pedagogical task but a crucial tool in creating political agents capable of remembering the horrors of a past that cannot be repeated. When the racist history of the past disappears and educators who teach critical ideas are criminalized, structural racism becomes invisible, and racist acts become individualized as a matter of attitude and faulty character. When racism is reduced to alleged self-inflicted behaviors, people blame themselves for their feelings of inadequacy, impoverishment, and alleged deficits, making it all the more difficult to translate and understand individually experienced acts of racism as part of a larger system of racial capitalism.[49] The fascist plague that is now shaping public and higher education needs to be addressed with a new language that makes education central to politics and historical consciousness. Such a language needs to make the politics of remembering a crucial pedagogical tool in changing the way people connect events, rethink the present political conjuncture, and understand the history of the present.[50]

Conclusion:

A politics of disappearance is a thread that connects the plethora of fascist assaults on public and higher education in the U.S. This is a politics that erases history, memory, critical ideas, dissent, and racial justice. Its tools are fear, manufactured ignorance, engineered panics, and paranoid racist politics draped in the language of white nationalism and bigotry. Its goal is racial cleansing, a white nationalist notion of citizenship, and the undermining of the public and civic imagination. Its endpoint is a rebranded fascism. The fight against fascism must recognize that history is power, and that when it is weaponized for political purposes, as is currently being done by the GOP, memory, historical consciousness, and critical thought become one of the first causalities of authoritarianism. Memory as mis-education traps history in the present and eradicates claims of the past as a site of injustice. Equally important is the recognition that the politics of disappearance takes historical memory as its first target in order to produce a form of moral blindness and a crisis of thinking and agency. Censoring history as part of the politics of disappearance undermines the necessity of critical interpretation, erases the contemplative nature of inquiry, and limits the possibilities of disrupting conventional and hegemonic notions of historical understanding and learned helplessness. In doing so, right-wing GOP legislators enact laws that refuse to offer classroom pedagogical practices that both place people of color self-consciously in their histories and provide the conditions for empowering forms of individual and collective political agency.

Under such circumstances, reviving the political and moral imagination is more crucial than ever in order to resist the assassins of memory and social justice who have turned critical education and thinking into a crime. This suggests a mass movement in defense of education as a public good and the right of educators to teach as a practice of freedom in order to make education a formidable site of literacy, liberation, and individual and collective empowerment. The right-wing fear of cultural memory, history, and racial struggles is part of a longstanding practice informed by a modern fear of living with difference, embracing the common good, and expanding the capacities for critical and political agency. Rewriting the past in line with the imperatives of economic, racial, and social justice is a fundamental political and pedagogical task because it both shapes social memory and makes

new demands on how to fight against a fascist politics that defines itself by reducing history and its absence to a fundamental form of mystification and depoliticization. Overcoming the divorce between historical memory and political agency is the first and crucial step to learning how to remember differently-- and deeply-- so as to act urgently, and collectively in the face of the looming fascist threat.

Endnotes

[1] Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," *Illuminations*. Trans by Harry Zohn (New York: Shocken Books, 1968), p. 257.

[2] Ibid., Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," p. 257.

[3] Steve Herbert and Elizabeth Brown, "Conceptions of Space and Crime in the Punitive Neoliberal City," *Antipode* (2006), p. 757.

[4] Alex Honneth, Pathologies of Reason (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), p. 188.

[5] On the rise of the punishing state, see Elizabeth Hinton, *From the War on Poverty to the War on Crime: The Making of Mass Incarceration in America* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2017) and Henry A. Giroux, *Insurrections: Education in an Age of Counter-Revolutionary Politics* (London: Bloomsbury, 2023).

[6] I take up this issue in detail in Henry A. Giroux, "Bad Faith Liberalism and the Politics of False Equivalency," *Counterpunch* (January 27, 2023). Online: https://www.counterpunch.org/2023/01/27/bad-faith-liberalism-and-the-politics-of-false-equivalency/

[7] Amnesty International, *Disappearances: A Workbook* (New York: Amnesty International, 1981).

[8] J. Patrice McSherry, *Predatory States: Operation Condor and Covert War in Latin America* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield, 2005).

[9] James P. Brennan, *Argentina's Missing Bones: Revisiting the History of the Dirty War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2018); (Federico Finchelstein, *The Ideological Origins of the Dirty War: Fascism, Populism, and Dictatorship in Twentieth Century Argentina* (London: Oxford University Press, 2014).

[10] Erin Blakemore, "30,000 People Were 'Disappeared' in Argentina's Dirty War. These Women Never Stopped Looking," *History* (March 7, 2019). Online: https://www.history.com/news/mothers-plaza-de-mayo-disappeared-children-dirty-war-argentina

[11] Ibid., Blakemore.

[12] On Pinochet's brutal regime, see Ariel Dorfman, *Exorcising Terror: The Incredible Unending Trial of General Augusto Pinochet* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 20020.

[13] James P. Brennan, *Argentina's Missing Bones: Revisiting the History of the Dirty War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2018); (Federico Finchelstein, *The Ideological Origins of the Dirty War: Fascism, Populism, and Dictatorship in Twentieth-Century Argentina* (London: Oxford University Press, 2014).

[14] Paloma Aguilar and Losif Kovras, "Explaining disappearances as a tool of political terror," *International Political Science Review* 40:3 (May 31, 2018), pp. 1-16. Online: https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0192512118764410?journalCode=ipsa

[15] I have taken up the politics of disconnection in Henry A. Giroux, "Fascist politics, the return of antisemitism and the 'disconnected present'," *Salon* (December 18, 2019). Online: https://www.salon.com/2022/12/18/fascist-politics-the-return-of-antisemitism-and-the-disconnected-present/

[16] I have paraphrased these insights from Robert Jay Lifton and Greg Mitchell, *Hiroshima In America* (New York, N.Y.: Avon Books, 1995). pp. 337.

[17] See, for instance, Alberto Toscano, "The Long Shadow of Racial Fascism," *Boston Review*. (October 27, 2020). Online http://bostonreview.net/race-politics/alberto-toscano-long-shadow-racial-fascism

[18] James Ron, "Varying Methods of State Violence," *International Organization* 5:12 (1997), p. 298.

[19] Adam Tooze, "Is This the End of the American Century?," *London Review of Books*, [Vol. 41 No. 7 · 4 April 2019]. Online: https://www.lrb.co.uk/v41/n07/adam-tooze/is-this-the-end-

[20] See, for instance, Dana Milbank, *The Destructionists: The Twenty-Five Year Crack-Up of the Republican Party* (New York: Doubleday, 2022).

[21] Thom Hartmann, "Americans Used To Understand Public Schools and the Commons." *Hartmann Report* [September 22, 2022]. Online: https://hartmannreport.com/p/americans-used-to-understand-public

[22] Steven Con, "Ron DeSantis and the Specter of Lynne Cheney," *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (February 8, 2023). Online: https://www.chronicle.com/article/ron-desantis-and-the-specter-of-lynne-cheney?cid2=gen_login_refresh&cid=gen_sign_in

[23] Cited in Chris Lehmann, "Trump's New Platform Goes Attack Mode on Schools." *The Nation* [February 1, 2023]. Online: https://www.thenation.com/article/politics/trump-education-plan/

[24] Meridith McGraw, "Trump unveils new education policy loaded with culture war proposals." *Politico* (January 26, 2023). Online: https://www.politico.com/news/2023/01/26/trump-unveils-education-policy-culture-war-00079784--

25 Ruth Ben-Ghiat, "The Right's War on Universities," *The New York Review of Books* (October 15, 2020). Online: https://www.nybooks.com/online/2020/10/15/the-rights-war-on-universities; see also her larger work on authoritarianism, Ruth Ben-Ghiat, *Strongmen: Mussolini to the Present* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2020).

26 Ellen Schrecker, "Yes, These Bills Are the New McCarthyism," *Academe Blog* (September 12, 2021). Online: https://academeblog.org/2021/09/12/yes-these-bills-are-the-new-mccarthyism/

27 Ibid., Ellen Schrecker, "Yes, These Bills Are the New McCarthyism."

28 Ibid., Ruth Ben-Ghiat, "The Right's War on Universities," *The New York Review of Books*.

29 For a brilliant set of discussions on race and racism in America, see George Yancy, ed. *On Race: 34 Conversations in a Time of Crisis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017).

30 Marian Wright Edelman, "New Dangerous Assaults on Teaching the Truth," *Children's Defense Fund* (February 10, 2023). Online: https://mail.googlecom mail/u/0/#search/children's+defense+fundWhctKKXpVfrfQSLXmgqrmQlNnHBgDfsbBttqtfWcVnjrxmxNWHLSZdbZVlgSpXrQZWQMrmQ

31 I take up these issues in detail in Henry A. Giroux, *Race, Politics, and Pandemic Pedagogy* (London: Bloomsbury, 2021), *Pedagogy of Resistance* (London: Bloomsbury, 2022); and Henry A. Giroux, *Insurrections: Education in an Age of Counter-Revolutionary Politics* (London: Bloomsbury, 2023); see also, Charles M. Blow, "White Racial Anxiety Strikes Again," *New York Times*, [November 4, 2021]. Online: https://www.nytimes.com/2021/11/03/opinion/youngkin-virginia-race.html; Alberto Toscano, "The Long Shadow of Racial Fascism," *Boston Review*. (October 27, 2020). Online http://bostonreview.net/race-politics/alberto-toscano-long-shadow-racial-fascism

32 One source for seeing what is erased in the right-wing politics of disappearance can be found in Ibram X. Kendi and Keisha N. Blain, eds. *Four Hundred Souls: A Community of History of African America*. 1619-2019 (New York: One world, 2021).

33 Janai Nelson, "Ron DeSantis Wants to Erase Black History. Why?" *New York Times* [January 31, 2023]. Online: https://www.nytimes.com/2023/01/31/opinion/ron-desantis-black-history.html

34 Jelani Cobb, "Ron DeSantis Battles the African American A.P. Course—and History." *The New Yorker* [January 29, 2023]. Online: https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2023/02/06/ron-desantis-battles-the-african-american-ap-course-and-history

35 Amy Goodman, "Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, Khalil Gibran Muhammad & E. Patrick Johnson on the Fight over Black History." *Democracy Now* [February 3, 2023]. Online: https://www.democracynow.org/2023/2/3/crt_black_studies_roundtable

36 Ngakiya Camara, "Decades of Racial Bias Preceded College Board's AP Black History Course Changes," *Truthout* (February 16, 2023). Online: https://truthout.org/articles/decades-of-racial-bias-preceded-college-boards-ap-black-history-course-changes/

37 Ibid., Ruth Ben-Ghiat, "The Right's War on Universities."

38 Ibid., Ruth Ben-Ghiat, "The Right's War on Universities."

39 Hazel Carby, "We must burn them," *London Review of Books* (May 26, 2022). Online: https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v44/n10/hazel-v.-carby/we-must-burn-them

40 Amy Goodman, "Angela Davis: Toppling of Confederate Statues Reflects Reckoning with Slavery & Historical Racism," *Democracy Now* (June 12, 2020). Online: https://www.democracynow.org/2020/6/12/angela_davis_toppling_monuments_to_racism

41 James Baldwin, *The Price of the Ticket* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2021), p. 417.

42 Jason Stanley, "Banning ideas and authors is not a 'culture war' – it's fascism," *The Guardian* (February 14, 2023). Online: https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2023/feb/13/african-american-studies-republican-ban-florida

43 Andrew Stanton, "Trump Says Supporters Should 'Lay Down Their Very Lives' to Fight CRT," *Newsweek* (March 13, 2022). Online: https://www.newsweek.com/trump-says-supporters-should-lay-down-their-very-lives-fight-crt-1687545

44 Editorial, "Florida's harmful 'Don't Say Gay' bill is just one example of a dark national trend," *The Washington Post* (March 8, 2022). Online: https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/2022/03/08/florida-dont-say-gay-bill-hurts-kids/

45 Chase Strangio, "On the gop's push in Florida, Texas, Idaho to eradicate trans youth and trans lives." *Democracy Now* [March 3, 2022]. Online: https://www.democracynow.org/2022/3/9/chase_strangio_on_anti_trans_legislation

46 Will Bunch, "GOP's violent, expanding war on LBGTQ kids should make you think about 1930s Germany." *The Philadelphia Inquirer* (June 16, 2022). Online: https://www.inquirer.com/opinion/anti-lgbtq-violence-republican-rhetoric-20220616.html

47 Paul Krugman, "Attack of the Right-Wing Thought Police." *New York Times* [January 25, 2022] Online: https://www.nytimes.com/2022/01/24/opinion/florida-critical-race-theory-de-santis.html

48 Barbara Ransby, "Ron DeSantis's Attack on Black Studies Is Textbook Proto-Fascism." *Truthout* [January 28, 2023] Online: https://truthout.org/articles/ron-desantiss-attack-on-black-studies-is-textbook-proto-fascism/

[49] See, for instance, Cedric J. Robinson, *On Racial Capitalism, Black Internationalism, and Cultures of Resistance* (London: Pluto Press, 2019).

[50] See, for instance, *Stuart Hall, Writings on Media: History of the Present*, Charlotte Brundson, ed. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2021).

The claustropolitan society:
A critical perspective on the impact of digital technologies and the lockdown imaginary

Tara Brabazon and Stefan Lawrence

Abstract

The imperative of this article is to develop the trope of the 'lockdown imaginary.' To enact this project, a diverse array of theories and theorist are summoned, including the tropes and trajectories from Jean Baudrillard, Benedict Anderson, and Steve Redhead. This – seemingly – odd intellectual combination is both timely and appropriate. It is necessary – as with the Matryoshka Dolls – to commence with a theorization of hyperreality, then we crack open the concept to reveal theories of the imagined and imagining, concluding with the smallest and most brutalizing theoretical Dolls: claustropolitanism and foreclosure. From here, a (post) pandemic lockdown is configured, an imagining that transcends the restrictive public health imperatives of COVID-19 and global lockdowns. This article captures the perpetuity of the pandemic. It will never be post. Instead, we argue that the lockdown imaginary will continue to foreclose thought, behavior, political choices, and life decisions. Through the claustropolitan sociological approach, we chart not only the lockdown imaginary but a way through 'the end of the world' by naming its destructive tendencies.

Keywords

Introduction

It is thirty years since Jean Baudrillard (in)famously proclaimed the hyperreality of the contemporary world and presented Disneyland as a metonym, explaining how the real has been replaced with a collection of false images and simulations. For Baudrillard (2017, p. 370), '[t]he Disneyland imaginary is neither true nor false: it is a deterrence machine set up in order to rejuvenate in reverse the fiction of the real.' It exists to veil the uncomfortable and frightening reality that all the America that surrounds it is as real (and unreal) as the carefully scripted and stylized characters that trot around medieval castles. Disneyland, of course, can only serve such a function if we play active roles in its theatres of

hyperreality. We willfully adapt our language, intentions, and behavior so to reframe the possibilities of consciousness offered by Disneyland. We play along as if Micky Mouse was not a costume inhabited by a person. By living this lie – even temporarily - we allow ourselves to experience the magic of the imaginary. Disneyland invites a wilful suspension of disbelief in fairy tales. This suspension is not only for our own enjoyment. It summons and occupies an active forgetting that Disneyland surrounds us in more than a momentary, fleeting fiction from which we must inevitably depart. Disneyland is a deliberate and self-induced schism in our consciousness, one so severe that it appears as the antithesis of reality when it conceals the fact that the real is "no longer real" (Baudrillard, 2017, p. 369).

At first, and with the full – if ambivalent – force of postmodern tendencies and trajectories, it may seem an odd segue from a discussion of Disneyland to one that will focalize the COVID-19 pandemic. However, a closer consideration of the hyperreal instrumentality of both is useful for the development of a claustropolitan sociological approach. This alternative intellectual trajectory is considered through the remainder of this paper. The contention probed is that global lockdowns, brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, have served similar functions for hyper-digital societies as Disneyland has for consumer societies. That is, just as Disneyland is no more or less real than the rest of America that surrounds it, the social, cultural, political, and economic conditions experienced during global lockdowns are no more or less false, temporal, artificial, or momentary than those experienced pre- or post-pandemic. When citizens began emerging from those lockdowns, masked, cautious, and still socially distanced, it was tempting to give way to the sense that 'normality' had begun to return. However, just as Baudrillard warns us about the false dichotomy that is the real and hyperreal, we must emerge out of global lockdowns with caution and resist the temptation to dismiss the conditions of the lockdowns as momentary afflictions on our 'normal' lives.

There is no 'new normal.' There is no normal. The intense claustrophobia we witnessed in lockdown merely disguised the fact that, what we might call, the 'lockdown imaginary' has been with us for some time. Far from our hyperconnected and increasingly digitalized worlds bestowing never-ending transnational possibilities upon us, the effects of foreclosure, an acceleration of culture, rapid societal change, spatial confinement, the invasiveness of surveillance technologies, an overload of domesticity and neoliberal economic pressures, tensions, and expectations have been a feature of our societies at least since the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) of 2007-2008. The lockdown imaginary then is a conceptual move, one that reframes the global lockdowns. Individuals were confined spatially, but also socially, culturally, economically, and coerced to upskill digitally. These moments in time filtered from our lives the everyday punctuations that perpetuate the illusion of freedom and progress. We take an obverse view of global lockdowns, one that asks us to understand them as exposés and crude distillations of the lives we live in the claustropolitan society. This paper not only offers a critical lens on the 'new normal,' but it also exposes the clawing, dangerous, toxic, and frightening claustrophobia of our society and the inherent claustrophobia through which lockdowns have served and serve to subvert our consciousness. Imagined communities, information capitalism, and medicalized societies duel, strut, converge, and struggle. This investigation of the pervasiveness of 'the lockdown imaginary' commences with attention to one part of that compound noun.

Imagined and Imaginary

The influence of a scholar can be demonstrated when one word summons their legacy. Benedict Anderson's (1983) book for Verso, *Imagined Communities*, demonstrated the historic arc of a nation. It was an 'imagined community.' For Anderson, the nation was 'both inherently limited and

sovereign' (1983, p. 15). The specificity of Marxism outside of Europe – in China, Cambodia, and Vietnam – was framed through nationalism. He argued that,

> The reality is quite plain: the 'end of the era of nationalism' so long prophesised is not remotely in sight. Indeed, nationness is the most universally legitimate value in the political life of our time (ibid., p. 12)

These national ideologies enact closure, bracketing questions of who is excluded, marginalized, invisible, or ignored. When 'race' and 'nation' rub, for instance, the results are catastrophic. Refugee and immigration policies and citizenship rituals attempt to manage nationalism through an often-tenuous consensus that is performed through a benevolent socialization which is guarded and framed by the agents of law and order. Particular languages and religious behaviors are valued over others. Yet, such patterns are tenuous. Anderson's argument aligns the rise of print capitalism with the imagining of nationalism. Print was commodified and secularized, creating the spaces for new languages of power alongside new injustices. Anderson confirmed that "the convergence of capitalism and print technology on the fatal diversity of human language created the possibility of a new form of imagined community, which in its basic morphology set the stage for the modern nation" (1983: p. 49). The key argument to transpose from Anderson's stark and landmark text is that an imagining is configured through semiotic systems, which shape the narratives composed within it.

Benedict Anderson's 'imagined communities' is more than a footnote or a slogan to title a lecture slide. As we build the lockdown imaginary in this article, the fingerprints of Anderson remain on our intellectual palette. That is because he provides critical insight into the necessity for people to imagine themselves into something larger than what materially exists around them and that they rely on technology to do this. Thus, when communities and nations are rapidly and suddenly compressed, transformed, and performed through an almost exclusively digital world - delivered to them by Wi-Fi – it invokes a psychological schism so profound that the nation must be repetitively (re)imagined in the mind of the citizen. Some of these rebooted (re)imaginings fail and result in riots, occupations, and fights in supermarkets over toilet paper. During global lockdowns, deterritorialization, disintermediation, and digitalization were pivotal in this reimagination, which was framed – cramped – by domesticity. Cut adrift from our communities, isolated and alone, we (re)imagined the world beyond the home in such a manner that it is difficult to simply undo and return ourselves to what came before. Therefore, the next section probes the morphology of this lockdown imagining.

Claustropolitanism

Claustropolitanism is a theoretical, political, and social sensibility or tendency. It captures, perpetuates, and frames the foreclosing of the world and the implosive effects of globalization. Workplaces at the end of the world are staffed by the precariat, zero-hour contract staff, with unemployment and under-employment remaining the toxic alternatives. Smartphones ensure that citizens look down at digitized distractions rather than up at the hot, disappointing, and deadly present. Liking, loving, reposting, and scrolling create a micro-present, bouncing between intense but ephemeral commitments. We view a world that is never ours to own and experience. It is seen through miniaturized digital technologies. Such an environment creates paranoia and irrationality and perpetuates a sense of powerlessness. The only light at the end of the tunnel is that of a freight train hurtling towards us, gaining speed and getting ever closer.

Appropriately, claustropolitanism was developed by a dying man at the 'end' of the world. Steve Redhead, developed the notion of 'claustropolitanism' to grapple with the consequences of 'accelerated culture' and saw it as a useful conceptual tool for sociologists and cultural studies theorists:

> The French urban theorist Paul Virilio has controversially argued that we are moving from cosmopolis to claustropolis. My notion of claustropolitanism, developing the ideas from a spark lit by Virilio, denotes a contemporary cultural condition where we are starting to feel 'foreclosed,' almost claustrophobic, wanting to stop the planet so we can get off, well away from our 'mobile accelerated nonpostmodern culture' or MANC or 'nonpostmodernity' (2015: p. 1).

Redhead (2015) contended that we now inhabit a post-catastrophic world and suggests that global mega-events like the GFC should be understood as reality-altering ruptures that demand new ontologies and theories to make sense of emerging social, political, economic, and cultural changes. These elisions are not merely rhetorical. Their severity and material impact are personified by the political system in Britain – a country once seen as a bastion of pragmatism and highly mature democracy – burning through five Prime Ministers in six years. This is government at the end of the world.

Redhead also argued that claustropolitanism was a global condition. Significantly, claustropolitanism was not developed in a safe intellectual space, housed in an elite university, while occupying a tenured position. He moved from Manchester (UK) to Perth (Australia), to Brighton (UK), to Oshawa (Canada), and Bolton (UK) in less than a decade, managing volatile and ruthless university systems (Brabazon, 2020; Brabazon and Redhead, 2016). From this cascading toxicity, claustropolitanism started to appear in early references. Redhead then began to build claustropolitanism – as a theory of the world – in regional New South Wales and Adelaide in South Australia. It was enfolded in his Theoretical Times project (Redhead, 2017). The trope developed through marginal media, including blogs and podcasts (Brabazon and Redhead, 2014), and was applied through Trump Studies (Brabazon et al., 2018). Through these publications, "a shard of theory, an intellectual stub" (Brabazon, 2021a: p. 5) survived Steve Redhead's death from pancreatic cancer. Since his death in March 2018, the COVID-19 pandemic, the January 6 uprising in Washington, the 'Freedom Convoy' in Canada, and the occupation of central Wellington in Aotearoa / New Zealand in 2022 have confirmed the foreclosure of the world (Brabazon, 2022). Excessive consumerism – intensified through inflation and the unsustainable rise in food and fuel prices – offers transitory relief and micro-pleasure. Traditional authority structures continue to zombify. Experts are ignored. Scrolling replaces reading. Jordan Peterson becomes the celebrity intellectual of this time (Brabazon, 2021b), summoning nostalgic family structures, masculinity, femininity, and Christianity while also 'managing' a clonazepam addiction. That a self-help writer, a proponent of self-reliance and the importance of personal decisions, became addicted to a prescription drug and required lengthy stays in rehabilitation centers in Russia and Serbia captures confusion and inconsistencies in simulacrum scholarship.

This period can be described as an interregnum (Babic, 2020), following on from Antonio Gramsci as reconfigured by Wolfgang Streeck (Streeck, 2016a; Streeck, 2017). As claustropolitanism consumes and crushes intellectual culture, it activates Baudrillard's double refusal (1985) and Beck's (2002) zombie concepts. Leaders refuse to lead, and citizens refuse to follow. This double reflex then zombifies the very concept of 'leadership.' The word is used. It continues to walk through strategic plans, vision statements, and performance reviews. But, it is empty of meaning. This voiding of

content in a toxic, brutalizing, and brittle context is most strongly revealed in the university sector. Claustropolitanism reveals the consequences of a higher education system destroyed by pre-GFC zombified ideologies of neoliberalism. This ideology – of economic efficiency, arbitrary metrics, and rolling restructures – is completely inappropriate for teaching, learning, and research. The invention of inelegant proxies for competence, achievement, and excellence has separated the sciences from the humanities, the serious and trivial, and the academic from popular culture. The (post)expertise university was unable to intervene in 'public policy' that, during the pandemic and lockdown, had parked the public (good), creating the arbitrary and – indeed – deathly separation of health and economic priorities. This was Covid capitalism. Gus O'Donnell (quoted in Tett, 2021: p. 74), a former head of the British civil service, stated in September 2020,

> The government's incorporation of expertise from behavioral and other human sciences has been woeful … When the government says it 'follows the science,' this really means that it follows the medical sciences which has given it a one-sided perspective and led to some questionable policy decisions.

Covid-19 was the Disneyland of disease. The toxic binary opposition of health versus economics – death versus money – concertinaed the capacities for robust, evidence-driven decision-making. This is claustropolitanism, squeezing the notions of the real, the possible, and the true.

Claustropolitanism is a theory for the end of the world. Redhead's theory was not derived from a health emergency but from the Global Financial Crisis (GFC) of 2007-2008. It is a theory of provocation to 'make the end of the world great again.' While the concept offers theories of toxicity, fear, rage, and anger, including towards social, economic, and health systems, claustropolitanism found its moment in the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in the way it frames, shapes and textures its major theoretical contribution - foreclosure. The deaths from COVID-19 were horrific. Extremely sick humans were isolated. Short of breath. Sense of smell lost. Multi-organ failure. Body bags and freezer trucks parked adjacent to hospitals for the overflow of bodies. Funeral attendance restricted. Globalization – and the free movement of people, money, and goods – stopped with a shunt and a shock. Without a vaccine, social distancing was the only way to control the contagion. With a peak death rate between January and April 2020, cycles of social distancing and lockdowns summoned a claustropolitan choreography. This dance – between neoliberal economic 'growth' (actually, economic survival) and public health priorities – demonstrated the lack of value, priority, and importance granted to the life and health of most of the population. Clinging onto the edge of life, leisure, work, and solvency, claustropolitanism provides the frame, the rationale, and an understanding of how the pandemic transformed the interpretation of reality, truth, evidence, and fact.

As with all endings, myriad beginnings are enfolded within it. Theories of the end of the world were present before COVID-19 and have been foundational to science fiction as a genre and Zombie Studies as an intellectual (post)discipline. Trump Studies, Brexit Studies, Extreme Anthropology, Post-Digital Studies, and Unpopular Cultural Studies all emerged before the pandemic. Yet, as event after event – war after war – crisis after crisis – erupted after September 11, arbitrary exclusions that were perpetuating centuries of xenophobia and racism, activated a cascading irrationality of (hyper)reality. National imaginings were infected by historic claims for social justice to reconcile the genocidal consequences of colonization. The Global Financial Crisis destroyed millions of lives. Yet, after the public bailout of private banks where bankers were treating other people's money like the stake in casino capitalism, political amnesia emerged. Crouch (2011) described this as *The Strange Non-Death of Neoliberalism*. With funding voided from public health, publication, and public libraries,

private banks parked, marginalized, and masked the scale of their errors and continued making irrational decisions fuelled by greed rather than the public good. A few individuals – bad apples – did not create the GFC. Instead, Tett (2009: 26) researched the derivative trading at the time and discovered a 'dancing around the regulators.' People were harmed through the behaviors of traders, yet because these harms were not named, punished, ridiculed, and remembered; this harm became normalized. Donald Trump became President of the United States. Britain left the European Union. Anti-regulatory rhetoric and anti-statism from Trump and Brexit were built on the active forgetting of the GFC. Whalen (2017) recognized the cost of this active forgetting.

> Perhaps the biggest change for all financial services companies and professionals in 2017 is that the political narrative regarding financial regulation has shifted from a punitive, anti-business focus to a more traditionally conservative agenda focused on growth and jobs.

The normalization of this harm – perpetuated in the name of finance and real estate capitalism – meant that blame was displaced to refugees, migrants, 'Marxists,' North Korea, China, feminists, and the trans community. Actually, corruption and the displacement of regulation and governance needed to be addressed. Because these behaviors were not critiqued, there was a normalization of risk. However, there would be an appropriately zombie ending to this corporate tale. With public institutions suffering a reduction in funding because of the bailouts, they were underprepared for a crisis. This lack of resourcing and planning became clear and deadly through COVID-19.

Universities and the academics housed within them were neither prepared nor funded to research the lockdown imaginary. Instead, through the 2000s and 2010s, too many gatekeepers justified the ranking of journals and empty words like 'impact' and 'engagement.' Claustropolitanism, as a descriptor, emerged through a critique of sociological 'business as usual.' Since September 11, cosmopolitan sociologists such as Ulrich Beck, John Urry, Anthony Giddens, and Scott Lash did not possess an explanatory or interpretative palette. Indeed, benevolent, multicultural cosmopolitanism continued to be the answer to questions that were no longer asked. Therefore, claustropolitanism drew a paradigmatic line under cosmopolitanism. Instead of hopeful multiculturalism, paranoid anger and fear became the punctuating tropes for most people across the globe. Citizens were closed in – foreclosed – trapped in cycles of consumerism to provide purpose and momentum. At the same time, the remaining social structures of family, work, and leisure became not only zombie concepts and infected but shambling through the landscape, perpetuating the contagion.

The intellectual, social, and political problem that was addressed by claustropolitanism was nostalgia. As Rutherford (2000: p. 37) presciently confirmed:

> There is a paradox. Changes are occurring faster in people's consciousness than in their behavior and social conditions. This mixture of new consciousness and old conditions has created what he [Beck] describes as zombie categories – social forms such as class, family, or neighborhood, which are dead yet alive.

The pandemic intensified the zombie concepts, which included public health, higher education, work, hope, happiness, and life. These terms were still used but were ideological husks filled with toxic, shambling content. Yet, even in the shadow of September 11, Beck noted that 'human dignity, cultural identity and otherness must be taken more seriously in the future' (2002, 48). Beck's hopes have yet to be realized. Indeed, human dignity has been denied for a large minority of the global

population from whom capital cannot be extracted. There was – and is – no hope to be found in globalizing multiculturalism. Instead, 'the state,' which was so overtly critiqued by the cosmopolitan sociologists as a problem because of its domination and rigidness, became the only salve through COVID-19. The state was the only prophylactic through the pandemic. Regulations, restrictions, and mandates were the only strategy for survival at the end of the world. The anti-statism of the cosmopolitan sociologists enabled the celebration of multiculturalism, identity, and community. Therefore, punchy, overt, and clear intellectual critique of anti-statism created the gap – the spaces – for un(der)regulated neoliberalism. This problem intensified as the zombie concepts of 'family,' 'work,' and 'productivity' continued circulating. Zombies are not only infected. They move. They spread the contagion to words like 'choice,' 'freedom,' 'agency,' and 'expertise,' emptying them of meaning, hope, and purpose. Krossa (2012: p. 17) confirmed that, "a central question of sociological research for many decades has been how to integrate societies, and in a stricter sense, how to bring the aspect of heterogeneity under some control". Her prediction was accurate. Without attention to integration and building consensus – or even a structure and vocabulary for civilized debates - all sorts of new 'fighting rights' emerged during the pandemic, such as fights over toilet paper (Nguyen, 2020), the 'choice' to not wear a mask, and the right to not be vaccinated. Therefore, what is in the 'public good'? This phrase – after the Global Financial Crisis – was also zombified. The public good had been eaten from within, but the shell continued its zombie walk, infecting institutions that were assumed to be stable, consistent, and dependable.

With cosmopolitanism discharged through chaotic and catastrophic events, claustropolitanism has squeezed into the temporal and spatial deficit at the end of the world. This end of the world – and modernity - is composed of iterative endings. Endings begin and are then discharged by the beginning of the next ending. There was also no clear beginning to claustropolitanism. It was not born in the burning buildings of September 11. Tragically, 2996 people died, and suicide and illness killed many 'survivors' and first responders. But, September 11 merely demonstrated the lack of effective analytical tools deployed by the cosmopolitan sociologists. One origin of this claustropolitan ending is the Global Financial Crisis. Not only was the banking system destroyed in 2007-2008, but belief in the rationality, logic, professionalism, and predictability of finance capitalism was also crushed. Banks were 'too big to fail,' and through their zombified survival, public health and education were left to whither. Transformational infrastructural projects to enable the blue economy, the green economy, and interventions in the landscape to manage and mitigate climate change were delayed and marginalized.

This intensification of irrationality jutted from the damaged capitalism of the GFC. Wolfgang Streeck (2014; 2016b) logged this trajectory before Trump, Brexit, and the pandemic in his books *Buying Time: The Delayed Crisis of Democratic Capitalism and How Will Capitalism End? Essays on a Failing System*. The notion of a 'delayed crisis' is crucial. The recurrent parking of preventative health and infrastructural development did not save public finances. Instead, short-termism hocked the future for the political survival of the few in the present.

As we noted earlier, the claustropolitan approach commenced as a reaction to cosmopolitan sociological approaches and their difficulties in explaining the rise of national populism across the globe as well as other self-destructive events such as Brexit. At risk of oversimplification, cosmopolitan sociology is concerned with the social, cultural, and financial possibilities, modalities, conflicts, and power games that have 'opened up' beyond the nation-state and thus argues for more of a concentrated, theoretical, and empirical focus on global sociological effects and transnationalisms (Beck and Grande, 2010). Many of its aims - such as its desire to highlight the effects of global inequality, challenge narrow methodological nationalisms and confront views of

sociology as objective and value-free - are laudable, and helpfully distinguishes it from earlier sociological approaches of modernity. In its ambitions to 'open up', however, it risks overlooking the greater significance of what is 'closing in' and the implications of this foreclosure. The COVID-19 pandemic is a further watershed moment for digital societies (Lawrence and Crawford, 2021), one that has brought about a dramatic and far-reaching transformation of reality. Therefore, the next part of our article cracks open the next Matryoshka Doll: informational capitalism.

Digitalization and informational capitalism

The rapid acceleration towards the digital during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the ease with which the state reached across civil-domestic boundaries, impinging on liberties, have merely intensified and sped a collective sense of claustrophobia. As we came to terms with these new hyperdigital conditions, we were plunged - and plunged ourselves yet further - into the digital realm to play, cope, distract, escape and/or educate. The Internet replaced the gym, the pub, and trips to extended family members, with Les Mills Online and Zoom Parties becoming inelegant replacements. Creative and odd popular culture moments emerged through walking the bin to the curb for collection (Bin Isolation Outing, 2020). TikTok dances shared movements through disintermediated digital platforms. Pastimes that demanded copresence were reimagined and reconfigured in such a way that they were antithetical to what they were before COVID-19. As lockdown days, weeks, and years merged into each other, the monotony of enacting the same patterns and behaviors, in the same place, took its toll. The lockdown imaginary, a psyche we had to create to cope with the claustrophobia induced by domesticity but have found impossible to transcend as we emerged from lockdowns, has permanently changed the globe and created an environment of febrility and panic. Whether or not it fundamentally changed the claustropolitan path we were on or whether it simply accelerated the rate of change, is less clear.

What is certain is that an acceleration towards greater levels of digital literacy, technological expansion, and development has closed the gaps between the physical and digital space around us. As American English is the dominant and founding language of the Internet, there are cultural as well as linguistic consequences to heightened exposure to digitalization. Schneider (2000) stated that,

> As Americans become more wired, the wired world becomes more like America. And what do most Americans do – online and elsewhere? They shop. They gab with friends. They follow their favorite teams, decide what movie to see, and track their mutual funds. Occasionally, maybe (and most likely just before an election) they check in on the world of politics.

This imagining that commenced in the 21st century and which would become an axiom of the lockdown imaginary forecloses us with specific nodes of digitalized cultural life: sport, shopping, and finance. To foreclose is to remove predictability, to lose something that is precious, on which the patterns and structures of the local and the imagined are based. There is a violence to foreclosure, removing the punctuation and patterning of our lives and geography; at no time was this more obvious than during lockdowns. In the claustropolitan society, the truths of our experiences are revealed to be lies, and the facts of nationalism, race, sexuality, and gender are revealed to be imaginary. The certainties of family, work, leisure, and life are lost, or – even more damagingly – endlessly displaced. The reconciliation between the stories we have told ourselves about our lives and the (hyper)reality of our lives are only reconciled through the silence of death.

The artificially accelerated – panicked – foreclosure created a distortion in time during global lockdowns. We were forced into confined spaces in myriad ways that felt entirely abnormal, irregular, odd, and strange, all in double quick time. The longer we stayed home, while paradoxically maintaining an unbroken connection to the entire world, the more and more claustrophobic it felt. This aspect of the lockdown imaginary maps accurately to the post- (which was never really post) lockdown version of 'the new normal.' Long before lockdown was a word punctuating popular culture, we sought refuge in private space, whether that be domestic, work, or leisure. The smartphone made us perennially connected to others. The interface between the personal and the public was porous. Others invade our private space when it suits them and at our own behest. We consented to the invasion, contraction, and compression of the self. Think about WhatsApp's 'blue ticks,' which indicate that the recipient of a message has 'read' its content, and the emergence of cultural expectations of a timely response. Now consider the consequences of taking an arbitrary amount of time to type a reply the sender deems to be too long. This is in stark opposition to the notion that digital technologies arouse our social and cultural worlds into a state of cosmopolitan extravaganza, delighting us with the unending possibilities of consumption, sociality, and mobility. In the claustropolitan society, the expectations of others foreclose, intensify, and multiply upon us--from which we have no escape.

Digital technologies are not themselves defining the claustropolitan society. Instead, the culture around the platforms and interfaces are impelled by the logic of informational modes of capitalism. Information capitalism is a different economic system from consumer capitalism. It accrues surplus value by way of selling 'symbolic, 'immaterial,' informational commodities' and requiring of the producer and consumer 'cognitive, communicative and co-operative labour' (Fuchs, 2014, p. 54). It is thus a very particular expression of the violence of neoliberalist ideology, one that has adapted and made itself fit for the (hyper)digital world. It operates with an attention economy at its heart. It competes with itself to submerge consciousness within the digital realm, promising convenience, ubiquity, accessibility, and individualization, but just as consumer capitalist economies do, it leaves us with fear, confusion, doubt, and self-loathing. The agents that seek to persuade us to stay logged on are not embodied sales assistants. Instead, they are artificial forms of intelligence, which are perpetually deployed at the same time as we are online to monitor digital activities before algorithmically foreclosing us with narrow, targeted content, information, opinions, products, and people designed to perpetuate and reproduce our biases, with ever greater speed and efficiency. The digital echo chamber, in which we see and hear only those people who we agree with us, is claustropolitanism distilled.

A key enabler and producer of our claustropolitan digital culture is the underlying demand for metric data, which are devoured and metabolized by algorithms, themselves subject to review of their performance. These data of course are the lifeblood of informational capitalism because they are supposed to allow for better financial decisions. According to Ajana (2018: p. 1):

> Over the years, their use and function have expanded to cover every sphere of everyday life, so much so that it can be argued that we are now living in a 'metric culture,' a term indicating the growing cultural interest in numbers and a culture that is increasingly shaped by numbers … At the same time, metric culture is not only about numbers and numbers alone, but also links to issues of power and control, to questions of value and agency, and to expressions of self and identity.

Currently, many significant public institutions are governed by a metric-driven approach, facilitated by digital technologies that gather vast amounts of data, and motivated by a political desire to measure the efficacy of these institutions and individuals. Given, in the United Kingdom at least, the major successes of healthcare providers, hospitals, universities, leisure centers, schools, police, and other public institutions responsible for wellness, health, and fitness are not mainly evaluated based on their profit margins; metrics have also been used as proxies to attempt to quantify success and discern quality. However, according to Muller (2018), the 'tyranny of metrics' has failed to accomplish this and has severely eroded confidence in institutions' integrity and the knowledge produced within them. The imposition of metrics has a dramatic effect on an organization's working culture and incentivises behaviors and actions that are not indicative of quality per se but may result in a higher metric score. The 'spectacle of excellence' as per spreadsheets and surveys becomes the institutional goal, not 'excellence' in and of itself.

Metrics offer a series of inelegant proxies for quality, significance, health, and importance, but they nonetheless continue the zombie dance as if they hold meaning, gravitas, and significance. The fundamental predicament lies in the fact that the active consumption of healthcare, universities, sport, leisure centers, schools, police, and other public institutions are critiqued and undermined by an experiential reality that each user holds. While the nostalgic belief in these institutional imaginings may be comforting, the lived experience is disappointing, demeaning, and brutalizing. This has a preponderant influence in molding (mis)faith because it supersedes the quantum enshrined in spreadsheets. Metric culture is pivotal in revealing the lies told to us about our own lived experiences. It challenges embodied knowledges of the self and forces us to orientate our energies into the completely useless and futile act of maintaining the spectacle so the zombie dance can continue. As Debord (2006 [1967]) would have it, '[l]ike lost children we live our unfinished adventures,' desperately trying to maintain a sense of control in a world that is out of control and which does not want to confront the truths that are very apparent all around us. The rubbing of these porous surfaces and services weathers the skin of the self, medicalizing the rituals of citizenship.

Medicalization

The gradual and deepening medicalization of our collective existence in the West is a useful context to expand on and explore the deepening effects of metric culture and its invasive role in foreclosure and claustropolitanism more broadly. Not least because, like most features of the claustropolitan society, the pandemic whipped health-related fear into a frantic state, exposing what was always present but which now could no longer be ignored. The Boris Johnson Conservative Government in the United Kingdom, alongside the Scott Morrison Liberal Government in Australia, which was also conservative albeit with an Orwellian inversion encircling the word 'liberal,' configured a separation of health policies to 'manage' COVID-19 and economic policies to 'stimulate' the economy. Similarly, Donald Trump's Republican administration continued to validate the stock market while enacting briefings about the public health emergency. The arbitrary and destructive binary opposition of 'economics' and 'health' leveraged the life and death of citizens onto arbitrary daily press conferences, briefings, and updates. This daily feed of death, sickness, insecurity, and fear ensured the survival of neoliberalism. The bizarre and inelegant nature of this division between health and economics meant that risk and harm were normalized in the lockdown imaginary and fear paralyzed people from engaging in meaningful social interaction.

Even before the pandemic, modern medicine – the major regulator of 'normal' mental

and physical wellness, health, and fitness – had failed to address the limits of medicalization. As Lawrence (2023) notes, medicalization, or the process of bringing various aspects of life under the clinical gaze, has been criticized on a number of fronts for blurring the boundaries between pathology and social deviance, medicalizing normal but uncomfortable human emotions, serving the profit-driven motives of healthcare providers and funders, and, the overdiagnosis of benign abnormalities. The cumulative effect of these tendencies is powerful. It results in a public that is hyper-sensitive to issues of wellness, health, and fitness but is overwhelmed by the proliferation of medical knowledge and the rapid changes in guidance. This inevitably leads to an overconsumption of healthcare services, a lack of access to adequately funded providers, and a gradual shift to a reliance on (often) unqualified social media influencers as sources of medical knowledge. Coupled with the realities of a desolate landscape of economic instability, individuals are left to navigate health challenges on their own. Wellness and wellbeing discourse become social salves for physical and mental overload. Far from acting from positions of empowerment, we engage in self-help from a position of angst and desperation, hopeful that the promises made to us by neoliberal capitalism - that the market will provide the solution - are true.

Personalized health care plans and wearable tech will become even more important as the lockdown imaginary of increased individualism and domesticity persists post-pandemic. As invasive neoliberal solutions, they will be key in managing the accelerated sense of vertigo that accompanies pluralist and relativist epistemological terrains vis-à-vis self-health management. However, they are solutions that invite deep introspection, encouraging us to open ourselves to the logic of the quantified self and succumb to digital technologies that invade our bodies and then spew the self out in the form of numbers on a smartphone screen. This is the logical conclusion of a wellness, health, and fitness culture that has been progressively moving away from co-present interaction - a process that begins with the commercial production of personal music players and earphones in the 1980s - to an entire industry based on bespoke, invasive, and foreclosing technologies, such as personalized nutrition plans, MyFitnessPal accounts, the Apple Watch and noise-canceling earphones. We have never known so much and so little about ourselves at any one time. The more we know, the more we know we do not know.

This quantified self, which shapes the self-monitored fitness 'movement,' compresses the space between self-monitoring and surveillance, motivation, and shaming. The 'quantified self' was a phrase that was first summoned by Gary Wolf and Kevin Kelly in 2007 (Wolf, 2009). Unsurprisingly, it was published in *Wired* magazine. Life was not to be lived but to be tracked and mapped. This quantified self was a commodified self, with this personal data revealing commercial value. This was not the World Wide Web, but a narrow, personalized, commercialized portal. Significantly, this self-monitoring grew, and the Global Financial Crisis erupted. It accompanied austerity (Blyth, 2013), scarcity (Mullainathan and Shafir, 2014), zombie capitalism (Harman, 2010), and the precariat (Standing, 2011). With the exhaustion of the labor force, it is not surprising that through claustropolitanism, economic value is extracted from leisure and from the fear and panic created and perpetuated by the lockdown imaginary. This is re-proletarianization and the monetization of supposedly non-working time (Brabazon and Redhead, 2014). While these arbitrary metrics of steps, cardio minutes, standing, and movement appear to saturate our world with facts and information, they also intensify competition about irrelevant variables, and summon and disseminate cultures of blame, shame, and faux competition. Motivation is transposed for self-loathing. Therefore, from this self, shaped by judgment and arbitrary targets, the lockdown imaginary is shaped and perpetuated.

Lockdown as the trope for the end of the world

Lockdowns were complex formations. With only essential services open and expansive unemployment and public subsidies emerging, innovative and bizarre (post)work and leisure cultures emerged with evermore extreme political ire attached to them. The 'Lockdown Rebellion' erupted in some cities in the United States. An array of grievances was enfolded in this resistance to the lockdown, including the denial of climate change and anti-abortion activism. Still, COVID-19 deniers were a small slice of this vocal minority of post-Tea Party populists. Part of their critique was the right to shop and work. Once more, the arbitrary separation of economic and health concerns – money and death – created illogical debates and resistances. The right to die for a haircut, purchase toilet paper, or a meal at a restaurant were zombie rights for citizenship at the end of the world.

As the lockdown imaginary has seeped into the collective consciousness, the radical beliefs of libertarian free marketers and their conceptions of individuality and choice were exercised in increasingly absurd ways, prioritizing personal freedoms over the public good. This desire for agency is certainly not problematic in and of itself. Conversely, it speaks to the consequences of the claustropolitan society. The lockdown, and our inability to emerge from it seamlessly, is a cautionary tale about the dangers of continuing to live in a claustrophobic state, which denies space for conversations about alternatives to neoliberal capitalism, unequivocally dismisses all Trump and Brexit voters as bigots and racists and insists on accelerated systems and ways of being. In the simplest of terms, as Connolly (2000: p. 596) has described it, 'when speed accelerates, space is compressed', and it is the social and economic implications that emerge from the elisions between speed, acceleration, culture, (digital) technology, compression, spatiality, and change to which we suggest social and cultural scholars pay close attention. It is only in this paradigm that more complex sociological explanations can emerge. We have been here before, though, in the wake of the GFC. Foreclosure and similarly invasive capitalistic tropes returned very soon after the GFC and in similarly brutish ways to continue punctuating people's lives. Continuing in the same way will have equally dire consequences.

The defining aspect of claustropolitanism, simply put, is that as the world is opened to us, we are also opened to the world. Laid bare for all to see. The consequences of this exchange are toxic fear, confusion, misdirected rage, and displacement. As our foreclosed future collides with the present, we must resist the invasive forces that seek to naturalize risk and introduce arbitrary and granulizing metrics into every aspect of our lives. We must counter the temptation to distract ourselves with consumerism, meaningless political slogans, and economic solutions that revert to the same neoliberal dogma and instead hold open the space for alternative possibilities. The lockdown imaginary endures, but it does not have to, which is why this paper has delved into the spectral realm of the lockdown imaginary, to call for transcendence beyond the claustrophobic sociological conditions that have shaped the general malaise and disillusionment of the immediate post-lockdown moment. As we navigate the unprecedented shrinkage of global workforces, the failures of students to return to campus, and the uptick in antisocial behavior, we must confront the ghosts of our claustropolitan past and present and the ways in which the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated our journey towards domesticity, digital isolation, and introspection. The end of this journey is yet to be determined, but by embracing the warnings that are inherent and fashioned out of the lockdown imaginary, we may be able to forge a path towards new, more progressive, and optimistic horizons.

References

Ajana B (2018) Introduction: Metric Culture and the Over-examined Life. *Metric Culture*. Emerald Publishing Limited.

Anderson B (1983) *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso.

Babic, M. (2020). Let's talk about the interregnum: Gramsci and the crisis of the liberal world order. *International affairs*, 96(3), 767-786.

Baudrillard J (2017) Simulacra and simulations. In: Rivkin J and Ryan M (eds) *Literary theory: An anthology*. John Wiley & Sons, pp.366-377.

Baudrillard J and Maclean M (1985) The Masses: The Implosion of the Social in the Media. *New Literary History: A Journal of Theory and Interpretation* 16(3): 577-589.

Beck U (2002) Zombie Categories: Interview with Ulrich Beck. In: Beck U and Beck E (eds) *Individualization: Institutionalized Individualism and its Social and Political Consequences*. London: Sage, pp.202 - 214.

Beck U and Grande E (2010) Varieties of second modernity: extra-European and European experiences and perspectives. *The British journal of sociology* 61(3).

Blyth M (2013) *Austerity: The history of a dangerous idea*. Oxford University Press.

Brabazon, T (2020) Memories of the future: (Post) Steve Redhead and theories for a still-born century. Author's Republic.

Brabazon T (2021a) Claustropolitanism, capitalism and Covid: Un/popular culture at the end of the world. *International Journal of Social Sciences & Educational Studies* 8(1): 1-17.

Brabazon T (2021b) 12 Rules for (academic) life. Singapore: Springer.

Brabazon T (2022) The Medusa is not laughing: place of ignorance in a (post) pandemic interregnum. *We Miss Your Existence Juliana, Exquisite Corpse*. 37.

Brabazon T and Redhead S (2014) Theoretical times: reproletarianization. *Libsyn*: https://tarabrabazon.libsyn.com/theoretical-times-reproletarianization

Brabazon T, and Redhead S (2016) How to avoid a toxic workplace. Office of Graduate Research YouTube Channel: https://youtu.be/ZWi75lwLK24

Brabazon T, Redhead S and Chivaura R (2018) Trump Studies: The double refusal and silent majorities in theoretical times. *Cultural Studies Review* 24(2): 3-25.

Connolly WE (2000) Speed, concentric cultures, and cosmopolitanism. *Political Theory* 28(5): 596-618.

Crouch C (2011) *The strange non-death of neo-liberalism*. Polity.

Debord G (2006 [1967]) The Commodity as Spectacle. In: Durham M and Kellner D (eds) *Media and Cultural Studies: Keyworks*. Oxford: Blackwell, pp.117-121.

Harman C (2010) *Zombie capitalism: Global crisis and the relevance of Marx*. Haymarket Books.

Krossa A (2012) *Theorizing society in a global context*. Springer.

Lawrence S (2023) I Am Not Your Guru: Situating Digital Guru Media Amidst the Neoliberal Imperative of Self-Health Management and the 'Post-Truth'Society. *Digital Wellness, Health and Fitness Influencers*. Routledge, pp.1-15.

Lawrence S and Crawford G (2021) Towards a digital football studies: current trends and future directions for football cultures research in the post-Covid-19 moment. *Leisure Studies*. DOI: 10.1080/02614367.2021.1948595. 1-14.

Mullainathan S and Shafir E (2014) *Scarcity: The true cost of not having enough*. Penguin books.

Nguyen K (2020) *Coronavirus toilet paper fight at Woolworths leads to charges*. Available at: https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-03-08/coronavirus-toilet-paper-fight-at-woolworths-leads-to-charges/12037046 (accessed March 8).

Redhead S (2015) *Football and accelerated culture: This modern sporting life*. Routledge.

Redhead S (2017) *Theoretical times*. Emerald Group Publishing.
Rutherford J (2000) The Art of Life on Living, Love and Death.

Schneider TK (2000) Online in 2000: Call off the revolution. . *Tikkus*, M(5). 2: 1-22.

Standing G (2011) The Precariat. London:

Bloomsbury Academic.

Streeck W (2014) *Buying time: The delayed crisis of democratic capitalism*. Verso Books.

Streeck, W. (2016a). The post-capitalist interregnum: The old system is dying, but a new social order cannot yet be born. *Juncture*, 23(2), 68-77.

Streeck W (2016b) *How will capitalism end?: Essays on a failing system*. Verso Books.

Streeck, W. (2017). The return of the repressed. *New Left Review*, (104), 5-18.

Tett G (2009) *Fool's gold: How the bold dream of a small tribe at JP Morgan was corrupted by Wall Street greed and unleashed a catastrophe*. Simon and Schuster.

Tett G (2021) *Anthro-Vision: A New Way to See in Business and Life*. Simon and Schuster.

Whalen RC (2017) Financial regulation in the era of Donald trump. *Networks Financial Networks Policy Brief*.

Wolf G (2009) Know thyself. *Wired*.

Of the Enemy:
Scalping as Culture and Commodity on the North American Frontier

James Sandy

In a February 1711 letter home, John Barnwell recounted his campaign's recent victories in the raging Tuscarora War. Fighting in the western reaches of colonial North Carolina, Barnwell and a group of South Carolina militiamen marched from one Tuscarora village to the next in search of Native American warriors to kill and civilians to harass, enslave, or otherwise brutalize. John "Tuscarora" Barnwell was thorough in his recollection of their campaign, going to great lengths to describe their "valient" task. Barnwell, like many other frontiersmen and militia commanders of his generation, added a flair for the dramatic to his retelling of the colonists' near mechanical destruction of each Tuscarora site they came across. In one such punchy section, he claimed that he and his men were "Terror to our own heathen friend to behold" and that their war "was Revenge, which we made good by the Execution we made of the Enemy."(Barnwell 1897) The colonial destruction of the Tuscarora was devastating in both style and scale. Barnwell and his men dehumanized their adversaries, which is obvious in the way his letter quantitatively recounted the outcome of their battles. While specific and descriptive about his own losses, carefully counting and naming those lost and wounded from each company, Barnwell lists the number of people enslaved and the quantity of enemy scalps each company produced, with an aptly titled section: "Of the Enemy."

Warfare between English colonists and their Native American neighbors escalated in frequency and intensity as English North America expanded its borders in the 17th and 18th centuries. Native American warriors widened the scope and scale of their warfare to compete with the cataclysmic tone of European warfare. At the same time, colonial militias and frontiersmen adopted Native American techniques and tactics to better match their foes in the backcountries of the North American frontier. Central to both experiences was the practice of scalp-taking. As colonials turned this ritual of Native American warfare into a tool of terror and revenge, their native adversaries intensified the scale of the practice in response.

This article is primarily interested in how the practice of scalp-taking was commodified across English North America during the 17th and 18th centuries. Much has been written on the global origins of scalping and the transfer and adoption of the practice by English colonists. However, this work seeks to identify the practice as a cultural, economic, and narrative commodity. In this aim, the project broadly defines commodity as something of noticeable use or value. Scalping was

both consciously and unconsciously exploited and implemented across English North America as a tool of colonial expansion, economic incentive, and manipulator of memory. Quickly cemented as a tool of terror and revenge within the confines of frontier warfare, colonial governments started incentivizing the practice through sanctioned scalp bounties by the late 17th century. The narrative was essential to scalping's adoption and evolution, cementing an otherwise worthless trophy of war into an economic and cultural commodity weaponized in history, fiction, and art as a malleable tool of memory and judgment.

The Role of Scalping in Colonial North America

The act of scalping is simple. Whether a defeated foe is still alive or not, the victorious party normally stands over a victim lying face down on the ground. After securing a firm grip on the victim's hair, thus lifting the head directly upwards, the would-be scalper uses either a sharpened flint rock or a knife to cut a circular patch of skin from the victim's crown. A remaining and quickly knotted tuft of hair served as an easy handle. Severing the victim from their scalp was quick work for the experienced practitioner and was often completed during the heat of battle. Those unlucky enough to be scalped alive frequently bled to death, but some did survive the ordeal. Once a scalp was removed from its original owner, one had to scrape any remaining blood and tissues from the underside and light a small fire to dry out the skin. (Hulton 1977) 102-103. Many tribes on the eastern seaboard then cut small holes along the edge of the scalp and used small sticks to craft a hoop to stretch the scalp over. Others fashioned the dried scalps to their spears and tomahawks via the remaining hair or a punctured hole. Others looped several scalps together and attached them to their leggings at the waste. Either way, taking the scalp was only the first step, and its display was the crucial second. (Axtell and Sturtevant 1980)

Prior to European arrival, Native American groups practiced a highly ritualistic style of warfare. Predicated on individual glory and limited bloodshed, native groups across the eastern seaboard went to war in a carefully orchestrated manner. Central to many cultures' perceptions of war was the practice of trophy-taking. Securing weapons and, more importantly, body parts from a defeated foe was a symbol of martial prowess and manhood. Similar practices took place across the North American continent, varying dramatically from one culture to the next. To the Algonquin and Iroquoian language groups, primarily living along the northeastern coast through the Great Lakes regions, taking trophies was an essential and deeply significant piece of their culture.

Many of these eastern woodland groups, like the Huron, Mohawk, Narragansett, and Powhatan, practiced a form of "mourning war" or "Blood Revenge" prior to the arrival of European influences. (Lee 2007) ; Motivated equally by internal needs and external threats, this form of warfare sought to replace lost members. Whether someone died in a conflict or in a hunting accident, groups like the Iroquois looked to avenge that death while maintaining their population levels through warfare. The severity of a group's response depended on the relationship between themselves and the offending people. Often, these blood debts could be repaid diplomatically. When they could not be resolved peacefully, the young men of the group sought revenge through violence. (Steele 1995) 113-115. Characterized by quick and sporadic raids, combatants prioritized both the taking of prisoners and the slaughter of their opponents. Upon their victorious return, the villages' female elders passed judgment on the fate of any captives. The "mourning" process was completed through both the ritualistic torture and killing of certain prisoners, mostly men, and the familial acceptance and adoption of others. The ritualistic beating, torture, and ultimate burning of the less fortunate captives was part and parcel, to many practitioners, of the acceptance of the new members into the tribe. Often

essential to this process was the presence of a fresh scalp brought in alongside the captives awaiting adoption. (Armstrong 1998) 17-35. ; (Drake 2004)

Eastern woodland groups, like the Iroquois and Seneca, placed freshly taken scalps at the center of the "mourning" process. For the lost soul to find peace and simultaneously accept the replacement, many groups completed "requickening" ceremonies. (Williamson 2007) 216-217. The Seneca famously painted the skin and hair of fresh scalps red, along with the faces of the presumptive adoptees. Linking the two as "living relatives," the scalps symbolized the dead relative or neighbor being replaced. Practices like these highlight the importance of scalp taking as much more than simple trophy taking. Upon reaching a certain age, young men had most of the hair on their heads shaved, save for a small lock that was braided near the crown. The scalp lock represented the soul and "living spirit" of the young man. These locks were decorated with paint and beads and left to grow. The honoring and taking of scalps was a spiritual and religious necessity. (Axtell 1981) 33-34.

Returning the scalps of defeated enemies served several purposes past the acceptance of new members. Many Iroquoian peoples believed that a person mutilated in death would be denied entrance to the afterlife. The Creek people of the American Southeast believed those scalped in battle would be forced to wander the limbo-esque "Caverns of the Wilderness" until their indignity was resolved. (Friederici 1990) By offering the taken scalp of another to a deceased person's family, the slain warrior could finally move on to the next plain. Similarly, the abode of a slain warrior was often viewed as "haunted" until cleansed through the proper offering. Irish trader and anthropologist James Adair observed a Chickasaw ceremony in 1765, where two fresh enemy scalps were affixed to the eves of a house to "appease" the spirits of the slain man. (Adair 2005) ; (Williamson 2007). For many across the Iroquois and Algonquin peoples, those who lost family members were in mourning until presented with a scalp taken in retaliation. Life partners of slain men often slept with taken scalps as a symbol of their loved ones' revenge. In his now famous account of dealing with the Montagnai and their war with the Iroquois, French colonist and explorer Samuel de Champlain observed native women dancing with and adorning themselves with scalps "…as if they had been precious chains." (de Champlain 1922) 2:106.

Most of the societies discussed here were matrilineal, meaning family lineage ran through the female members and their bloodlines. Female elders were looked to for guidance and wisdom. The role of men was simple: hunt and fight. Therefore, in addition to the obvious religious and spiritual value attached to scalping, the practice was paramount in the lives of young men. (Williamson 2007) 194-196. While returning from war with a prisoner was ideal, the possession of a fresh scalp bestowed prestige and an elevated status upon these warriors. An enemy scalp was a tangible token of both revenge and power and a credit to their individual abilities. Iroquois men achieved adulthood upon completing the grisly act and could, therefore, ascend the social hierarchy. (Armstrong 1998) 30. On the western plains, Pawnee men dutifully prepared their prizes and sacrificed them in a ritualistic fire to become "anointed men." Osage religious leaders used scalps to bless the weapons of young men heading into combat. (van de Logt 2008) 73-74. Believing the soul of the defeated resided in the scalp, these ceremonies sought to empower the weapons of war. According to historians like Wayne Lee, the power of the scalping practice worked to both extend and restrict the scale and cyclical nature of native warfare. (Lee 2007) 713-720. In addition to vengeance for the initial injury, young men could not help themselves in seeking prestige for themselves in battle. Scalps held a tremendous power as motivation for conflict on both the individual and societal levels. (La Flesche 1995) 215. Despite a wide range of ritualistic violence among Native American groups, the practice of scalping stands out. Some groups, like the Cree in the Hudson Bay region, regularly imposed scalp tributes upon lesser people under their influence. The physical scalps and the practice of removing

them were culturally and spiritually essential to native warfare across the North American continent. (Hiltunen 2011) ; (Trigger 1976) 73-75. ; (de Champlain 1922) 5:231. ; (Thwaites 1896) 17:69.

European arrival and conceptions of "Ritualistic Violence"

In general, warfare in Europe underwent revolutionary change in the 16th and 17th centuries. Spurred on by the centralization of power within Western European empires and advancement in technology, the way nations and their people were impacted by warfare changed dramatically. As these powerful nations grew, so did their commitments to border security, internal tensions, and increasing needs abroad. Accordingly, European militaries were a more constant fixture as they grew in scope and extended their capabilities. These larger and more complex institutions necessitated a more efficient structure and competent officer corps to better control and utilize the growing mass of infantry. On the one hand, these armies were more disciplined than previous iterations: warfare centered on the battlefield and the siege. On the other hand, the exponential demand for bodies allowed all levels of society to enter and partake in military service, resulting in often unbridled violence, pillaging, and other "savage" acts upon the civilians of Europe.

As warfare between these competing nation-states and their smaller adversaries grew in scale and frequency, the language and meaning of conflict came into view. According to historians like Wayne Lee, warfare can be viewed as cultural communication. Warfare in Europe in the Age of Discovery was largely defined by restraint in the levels of violence deemed acceptable. (Black 2006) ; (Parker 1996) In conflicts between like-minded groups, according to Lee, each side prosecuted an equal level of violence against each other and followed the same basic restraints when it comes to violence against civilians. When the two sides were unequal, in a war with "barbarians," those restraints were less adhered to. Whether it was an internal rebellion or some foreign entity a European power was trying to subdue, they were more likely to adopt increasingly violent measures and tactics. This is on clear display in the 16th-century English putdown of the Irish rebellions. English forces were quick to destroy the livestock and crops of Irish civilians to devastate their lives logistically and materially. In extreme situations, English soldiers turned to rape, pillage, and mutilation in a clear departure from warfare against an "equal" opponent. The level of cultural equivalency mattered greatly when it came to violence and restraint in English and European warfare. These factors culminated in a more institutionalized but volatile military culture across the western half of Europe as these nations crossed the Atlantic and began interacting with Native Americans. (Lee 2011) 9, 26-27.

Scalping & Jamestown

The practice of scalping is one of the defining components of warfare between European colonists and Native Americans on the North American frontier. As an obvious piece of Native American war-making, scalping factored heavily into the relationship forged between the two sides. English colonists were terrified and horrified by the practice and used it as justification to dehumanize and escalate the levels of violence employed against Native Americans and their way of life. Through Scalp bounties, the practice was commodified by the English in their wars against the French-aligned natives, taking a once spiritual and religious rite and appropriating it as economic motivation.

As Spanish, French, Dutch, and English explorers and soldiers arrived on North American shores, they all took note of the scalping practice. Across religion, language, and other cultural differences, eyewitness accounts all point to Native warriors proudly taking the scalps of their

enemies, painstakingly preparing them, and their central place in the post-battle celebrations. Spanish soldiers and monks in Florida were ambushed and scalped in the early 16th century, leaving grisly remains to be found by their allies. (Axtell and Sturtevant 1980) 456-461. Samuel de Champlain and other early visitors to Canada, New England, and the Great Lakes all reference the practice among the Huron, Iroquois, Oneida, and others in the region. Some struggled to find the words to describe what Captain John Smith referred to as a "terrible crueltie" in 1609. Most of the earliest records from Jamestown do not give the practice a name. However, there are clear references to colonists and soldiers having their "heads cut" by the Powhatan "savages" and archaeological evidence proving it took place. The bizarre and often bewildering practice was highlighted time and time again in European accounts, usually accompanied by intricate descriptions of the processes involved. (Barbour 1969) II, 372.

There are a handful of essential eyewitness accounts of the English settlement at Jamestown. John Smith, George Percy, Robert Beverley, Edward Wingfield, and others present a harsh and difficult opening for the first permanent English settlement. What the colony lacked in adequate personpower for agriculture and defense and proper provisions for the cold winter months, it more than made up for in the form of a massive cultural superiority complex. (Fausz 1990) The presence of the gargantuan Powhatan Confederacy in the region, a loosely aligned group of Algonquin-speaking Native peoples, gave the colonists a readymade and misunderstood enemy. While there were some peaceful and collaborative moments between the two sides early on, the English carry on about their "savage" neighbors and their increasingly hostile interactions with them. Even John Smith, who popular history has remembered more as a peacekeeper, escalated the hostility between the two sides. In one spring 1609 "trade mission," Smith and a band of colonists snuck into a Pamunkey village and held their leader ransom at gunpoint. During the tense standoff, Chief Opechancanough pointed to 24 fresh scalps hanging on a line as proof of what he and his people could do. The message was not lost on Smith, who believed the Powhatan chief was "…supposing to half conquer them by this spectacle of his terrible crueltie." (Barbour 1969)

This series of tit-for-tat raids and attacks in the spring of 1609 with the nearby Paspahegh tribes and others escalated tensions and caused the English to seek revenge, expansion, and provisions more aggressively. Most of these adventures were met with disaster and death, like Captain John Ratcliffe's November trading expedition. While most of his men were killed in an ambush under the guise of peace, Ratcliffe was taken to the center of the village, tied to a stake naked, and ritualistically scalped while still alive. Other expeditions were cut down to two or three men at a time, unable to match the loose order fighting of the Native fighting style. None of these early accounts mention scalping by name, but almost all of them mention "cuts to the head," which is widely believed to describe the ceremonial practice (Percy, 1922).

Over the next few decades, the relationship between these two devolved into outright war three times. During the first conflict, from 1609 to 1614, the English aggressively assaulted their nearest native neighbors' villages and livelihoods. They burned houses and cornfields while killing any native warrior or civilian in their way. When George Percy and Captain James Davis led an attack on Paspahegh, they kidnapped the leader's wife and two small children. In brutal fashion, the children were executed and dumped overboard on the return journey while the Paspahegh "queen" was executed by the sword upon their return to Jamestown. (Cave 2013) 83-84. The English assaulted the material life of the Powhatans, in a clear representation of their own priorities. While they brutally assaulted and executed civilians and warriors alike, there is little evidence that they had adopted the practice of scalp-taking. Theirs was a war of pure devastation, and the natives running from the flames and death took note. (Percy 1922)

In March 1622, the combined forces of Chief Opechancanough entered settlements near Jamestown under the guise of trade and launched a brutal and bloody assault on the English civilians. These newer settlements, like Martin's Hundred, Henricus, and Wolstenholme, had grown in the footprint of the previous war. Fields were set ablaze, homes were ransacked, livestock was massacred, and civilians were cut down by tomahawks and clubs, regardless of their age or gender. By the end of the day, more than 350 colonists, a full third of the colony, had been killed and twenty women taken captive. While there is little survivor testimony from this attack, archaeological evidence from multiple sites suggests that many of the victims were scalped during or after the assault. (Campbell 1860) 160-165. The gates of Jamestown were only closed when a friendly native warned the guards, sparing the colonists even further bloodshed and destruction. The scale of the attack and the deep grooves found on the crowns of excavated skulls highlight a shift in Native warfare. The violence of the previous war had convinced Opechcanough to increase the scale of violence against the English, abandoning the cultural tenant of preserving life above all else. In the all-out assault on the outlying settlements, he meant to send a message to the English and hoped the unrestrained violence would convince them to abandon their claims and leave. (Vaughan 1978)

In retaliation against the "viperous brood" and their "unnaturall bruitishnesse," according to Virginian Edward Waterhouse, the colonists in Virginia launched a campaign of devastation and death each summer season for nearly a decade. Colonial raids focused on the "feed fight" and targeted villages, foodstuffs, and the people caught in the way. (Waterhouse 1622) ; (Steele 1995) 38-44. The balance in coastal Virginia shifted through the 1640s as the 3rd Anglo-Powhatan War followed the pattern of the second: A massive Native assault in 1644 mirrored the 1622 attack and killed another 400 settlers in outlying areas. This time, the deaths represented less than a tenth of the blossoming colonial society, and the Virginian response was more devastating than ever before. By 1646, the war was finished, and the Powhatan were too. Culturally, the Powhatan Confederacy had adopted the scale and butchery of the English way of war to their own tactics. Ceremonial aspects like scalping, captive taking, and ceremonial torture increased along the same scale. The terminology for the practice of scalping was not yet accepted among the English, but archaeological evidence points to its widespread use and even escalation in the period. (Axtell and Sturtevant 1980) 460-461. ; (Powell 1958)

The Pequot

The Pequot War (1636-37) laid the true foundations for the commodification of scalp-taking and its grisly product. Violent raids and reprisals between the English, their Native allies, and the Pequot clashed with these competing cultures on a new scale. Fueled primarily by freshly introduced stress on Native groups interacting in the changing economic atmosphere of colonial New England, the war was the region's first large-scale and prolonged Anglo-native conflict. For the first time, colonial militias had to defend towns and mustered expeditions at scale, bringing ingrained European conflict elements with them. As the English fought alongside Native groups like the Mohegan against the Pequot, scalping and other trophy-taking rituals solidified cultural biases and became a powerful commodity to be exploited in the rapidly evolving Anglo-Native relationship.

The war originated from tribal rivalries among the various Algonquin peoples of New England, who found themselves ravaged by in-fighting, competition for trade with the English, and the loss of nearly 80% of their population from European-introduced diseases. (Grenier 2005) 26-28. The Pequot began openly attacking Mohegan, Narragansett, and English settlements in early 1636. One Pequot ambush surprised an English patrol from Seabrooke, and as the survivors fled to the safety of a

nearby fort, they witnessed the "fleshing" of their dead and dying compatriots. Scalping was an ever-present fear to colonial civilians and militiamen, and the significance of ritually severed body parts in warfare wasn't new to either side. (Vincent 1637) 5.

Both the English and Algonquin in New England brought their own cultural understandings of violence and restraint into the Pequot War. The ceremonial and spiritual elements of Native scalping, trophy taking, and torture served multi-faceted roles within their societies, from diplomacy and vengeance to puberty and the mourning of loss. The English culture influencing the colonial societies had its own history of ritualized violence, especially with the decapitation of their enemies. (Lipman 2008) 7-10. Removing the heads of one's opponents served several purposes in the English culture: primarily punishment for high crimes like treason and rebellion. The posting of severed heads on poles, often embalmed for longevity, served as a grisly reminder to those that would dare and defy English authority. Sir Humphrey Gilbert decapitated dozens of Irish rebels in the 1560s and used them to line the pathway to his tent. Beheading was all about power to the English, or as Gilbert put it: "the stiffe necked must be made to stoupe." Colonists from New England to Virginia brought this assumption with them to the New World. (Lee 2011)

The Pequot War brought these competing cultural traditions together in a mess of conflicted meanings and escalating violence. As their Mohegan and Narragansett allies began providing the English with trophies of their victories, as their culture necessitated, a grotesque and physical avenue of cultural communication was opened. When native warriors returned from battle as victors, "…they carrie the heads of their chiefe enemies that they slay in the wars: it being the custome to cut off their heads, hands, and feete , to bear home to their wives and children, as true tokens of their renowned victorie." Colonist William Wood clearly understood the significance of this practice and what it meant to the Native American cultures. These were gifts of love, service, reciprocity, loyalty, and victory. Trophies were "…a visible sign of justice done." (Wood 1865) 95. To the English at large, these gruesome trophies represented nothing but power and loyalty, specifically to the Native Americans' fidelity and submission to English authority. As the troubles with the Pequot dragged on, the supply of heads, hands, and scalps continued to roll into English hands as gifts and tributes. Favor with the English meant favor in the fur and weapons trade for the Narragansett and Mohegan, which increasingly represented a lifeline to the devastated Native American populations. A gift of Pequot scalps to an English captain became a spiritual message of friendship, loyalty, and economic necessity. The English took these gifts as evidence of their own authority and proudly displayed them. (Lipman 2008) 15-17.

Many believe the tensions and sporadic raids erupted into full-scale war because one of these trophies was given to the English. A single Pequot was killed and scalped in September 1636, but before the trophy was presented to the English as tribute, it was passed through the hands of all the allied leaders. This symbolic gesture bound the sachems and their people together in their alliance both against the Pequot and with the English. The war escalated quickly, and in May of 1637, a combined force of English militia and Algonquin warriors assaulted the Pequot at Fort Mystic. More of a village than a fort, the ensuing massacre witnessed the burning and killing of more than 400 people. As one of the more singular and devastating moments of bloodshed and violence between the English and native Americans, the massacre at Fort Mystic once again highlighted the scale of the Englishman's war to their native enemies and allies. Famously the Mohegan and Narragansett protested the number of people killed, claiming the English way "…is too furious, and slaies too many." (Winthrop 1825) 195. This is believed to be partly in shock but also in fear of the scale of the inevitable retaliation. (Grenier 2005) 26-29.

Nearly annihilated in the Mystic Massacre, the remaining Pequots were hunted down and

either killed or absorbed into other Native American groups as adoptees. The scale of the massacre frightened the Algonquin peoples in New England and caused many to seek safety in friendship with the English. Lion Gardener, the commander of Fort Saybrook in Connecticut, told inquiring neutral groups that if they wanted to trade with the English, they must "…kill all the [Pequots] that come to you, and send me their heads." The presentation of heads to the English became so numerous and constant that Governor Winthrop admitted to losing track of just how many he received. As the year dragged on, the incoming trophies increasingly became scalps. (Lipman 2008) 23-26. ; (Mason 1736). Easier to carry and take, the scalps represented loyalty, economic opportunity, and, ultimately, safety for many Native American groups. This one-way exchange increasingly dehumanized Native Americans in the eyes of many English, viewing them akin to obedient hounds and wolves offering their masters gifts. In the years following the Pequot War New England governors turned the tribute relationship into the colonies' first bounty system: paying Native warriors for the pelts of wolves. (Armstrong 1998) 25-26. While initially attempting to rid the region of its wolf population, this practice institutionalized a system that paid individuals to submit severed body parts for monetary reward. (Odle 2023) 73-74. Scalp tributes and the first colonial bounties during and after the Pequot War laid the groundwork for the first scalp bounties.

King Philips War and the proliferation of scalping

The long-term consequences and fallout of the Pequot War and its tremendous violence would not be truly felt in New England for almost four decades. The opening of King Philip's War (1675-76) ushered in a new era of violence and warfare between the English and their Native American neighbors and the first true scalp bounties. Metacom, better known as King Philip by the English, assumed the throne of the Wampanoag people in 1662. Motivated by the plight of the Pequot and their steadily decreasing station in New England, the Wampanoag, Nipmuck, and other tribes in the area sought the outright destruction of the English. (Lepore 1999) 74-75. These raids and attacks killed anyone in their path and left as grisly a scene in their wake as possible. Houses and crops, the physical manifestation of English life, were tinder for native fires. English bodies, either dead or alive, were stripped of their clothes and desecrated, eliminating the cultural barrier between them and the "naked savage." (Hubbard 1677) 2:103 More than anything else, an abundance of English heads lost their scalps. The English responded by adopting scalping both culturally and institutionally. (Lepore 1999) 81, 92-93. ; (I. Mather 1676) 123-125.

After initially disastrous militia campaigns, where few men returned alive, some among the English decided to adopt the tactics of their enemies. Captain Benjamin Church and the first colonial "rangers" learned the "skulking way of war" from their Native American allies and scouts, taking an irregular and extirpative war to Wampanoag villages across the region. It was a Native American scout named John Alderman under Church's command who killed and scalped Metacom to end the war. At once, both a capitulation of English arrogance and a breaking of identity, a certain class of colonial frontiersmen took on the mantle of the "Indian way of war." They would be the first Englishmen to embrace scalp-taking as their own. (Steele 1995) 97-107. ; (Lincoln 1913) 127. ; (Grenier 2005) 32-38.

At this point, one of the most interesting facets of the Anglo-Native relationship was the massive blending of terminology surrounding scalps and their taking. According to James Axtell and William Sturtevant, many early European settlers struggled to account for the practice because they lacked the proper words. English accounts up to King Philip's War utilize a wide breadth of

terminology to describe the prize, including but not limited to head-scalp, flesh, head-skin, and the ever-ambiguous head. The act itself had its' own slew of descriptors: flay, excoriate, skin. In further confusion, the French and Dutch each used their own words to describe the act and its results. (Axtell and Sturtevant 1980) 462-463. It wasn't until the 1670s and the introduction of the first colonial scalp bounties and the increasing prevalence of the act did the colloquial "scalp/to scalp" become accepted and popular among English accounts.

As the war against Metacom and the Wampanoag evolved, the colonial governments of Massachusetts and Connecticut offered the first formal scalp bounty to its Narragansett allies. Building off the scalp and body part tribute traditions, warriors were promised payment in material for each enemy scalp produced. The initial bounty equated to five shillings per native scalp and twenty times that for the head of Metacom (Saltonstall 1676). The narrative was an essential and traditional part of the bounty process, and bounties were only paid out if a sufficient and believable story was told. Rewards were often withheld if a scalp was produced without credible witnesses to the act. Storytelling and narrative were always important elements of the Native American scalping ritual, and this value was confirmed as part of the new English bounties. The early English adoption and institutionalization of scalp bounties was an uneasy process. Historian Mairin Odle put this best, describing the English commodification of scalping as a hybrid development that matched colonial financial incentives to already established martial traditions of the Narragansett and other Native Americans(Odle 2023) 77.

As part of the successive Wars for Empire against the French and their Native American allies in Canada and the Great Lakes, Benjamin Church and other English rangers conducted extirpative expeditions against Native American settlements. As English war parties began torching Native American settlements deep in the backcountry, vengeful native assaults against English towns only increased. The colonies needed as many men on the frontier as possible to keep up in the arms race of extirpative and retaliatory raids. Convincing young colonials to venture into the woods to kill natives on their home turf was a tough sell. Their solution? Offering state-sponsored scalp bounties to colonial citizens. To motivate and recruit "Indian fighters," colonial governments in Massachusetts and Plymouth offered substantial cash payments for every "head skin" a colonist could hand over. (Grenier 2005) 38-39. Church and his men received five shillings per scalp during the war while chasing the one-hundred-shilling prize for Metacom's scalp. Church's son claims that they only ever received thirty shillings for Metacom's head, making clear the economic factor in their expedition. (Church 1975) 156. The demand continued for frontiersmen in successive conflicts. At the outset of King Williams War (1688-1697), Englishmen were offered £8 sterling per Native male scalp secured. The commodification of scalping shifted the practice from a barbarous peculiarity in the eyes of the English to a central yet morally questionable pillar of warfare on the frontier. (Axtell and Sturtevant 1980) 468-472.

Benjamin Church and ranging families like the Gorhams and Lovewells were well known for their backwoods adventures, and any story involving scalps spread like wildfire through the colonies. Perhaps the most famous of these early stories is that of Hannah Duston. In 1697, an Abenaki war party, allies of the French in the ongoing King William's War, attacked Duston's hometown of Haverhill in Massachusetts. Along with her one-week-old baby and nurse Mary Neff, Duston was taken captive and forced to march towards Canada. Shortly after leaving, one of the Abenaki men wrestled Duston's baby away from her and "dashed out the brains…against a tree" because the infant was slowing them down. After several hard weeks of marching through the backcountry, the party was left with an Abenaki family for safekeeping along with an English teenager who had been abducted and possibly adopted earlier that year. One evening Duston, Neff, and the young man

crept upon the sleeping family and killed them with their own tomahawks. Duston led the charge in the killing and subsequent scalping of 10 people, including six children, and then to a canoe on the Merrimack River and safe return home. Duston presented the ten scalps to the Massachusetts General Assembly and received the bounty of £50, worth more than $10,000 today. (C. Mather 1699, 137-143; Cutter 2018; Nye, n.d.).

Stories like Duston's became legendary among the colonial population for several reasons: First, the nature of Duston's capture and the horrors of her journey enforced growing fears of colonists. Her courageous and violent fight to free herself and her fellow captives gave those same fearful colonists hope that maybe they too could rise and save themselves. Secondly, she never published her own version of what happened, allowing other chroniclers and accounts to tell her story. Cotton Mather's 1699 *Decennium Luctuosom*, or *The Sorrowful Decade*, was the first to share and disseminate Duston's tale. In this account, Duston is juxtaposed to other female captive stories and held high for not bowing to the inferior "savages." (Kennedy 2017) 230-231. To Mather and his readers, according to historian Kathleen Kennedy, Duston had assumed her rightful place in standing over the beaten and bloodied Native Americans. Instead of accepting Native American violence, she took agency and distributed it. Finally, her story stands out because of those ten scalps she delivered. Not only did she, a colonial woman and mother, survive the ordeal, but she returned with physical proof that she killed and butchered her "savage" captors and was handsomely rewarded for it (Grenier 2005) 40-41. As soon as English authorities and citizens adopted scalping as a tool of war and commerce, they also began shaping the narrative around the practice and those who undertook it. Depending on the situation, perpetrators and victims of scalping varied greatly in how they were remembered.

The 18th Century & Scalp Bounties

As the 18th century opened, scalp bounties became relatively common across the English colonies. Regardless of the moral and cultural issues plaguing many Englishmen, the practice was widely popular and considered necessary to succeed against the Natives and their increasingly close French allies. These moral ambiguities presented themselves in the bounties. A 1694 law in Massachusetts offered the same bounty on any native scalp, head, or prisoner brought in, regardless of sex or gender. By 1704, that law changed and introduced a sliding scale of payouts and restrictions on acceptable targets. Only scalps from males "capable of bearing armes" received the full bounty. One adult male scalp was worth 100 days' wages for the average worker in New England (Axtell 1981) 233. The scalps of female natives were worth only a tenth and nothing was offered for children under the age of ten. There was a tremendous amount of room in these bounty laws for native civilians and friendly natives became a trade for colonial scalp hunters. Many, like Judge Samuel Sewall of Massachusetts, feared the privatization of the colonial military forces and the monetization of warfare. Sewall feared the extra incentives offered to men joining provisional ranger units over serving in conventional militias. He also had a serious issue with men building such a lucrative trade upon "butchery" at the colony's expense. He believed it a "bad omen" that men would rather show up to fight and butcher for cash instead of serving their community and defending their families. As the trade in scalps accelerated in the 18th century, their commodification became a critical part of an English colonial warfare increasingly designed to brutalize and destroy Native Americans. (M. Halsey 1973) II:691.

During the Tuscarora War of the 1710s, the colonies of North and South Carolina and

Virginia demonstrated not only the destructive power of colonial warfare in the 18th century but the centrality of incentivized scalping. Angered by Carolinian raids to enslave their people, the Tuscarora launched a series of raids on the English and their native allies, the Catawba and Yamasee. The resulting punitive campaigns from both North and South Carolina wreaked havoc and death upon the Tuscarora. South Carolina's John Barnwell led a force that, according to him, was "terror to our own heathen friend to behold." Tuscarora villages and crops were burned at an amazing rate, and the civilians fared no better. During one assault, Barnwell lamented that he and his men only scalped 52 people. In the 1713 battle at No-ho-ro-co the Carolinian army under James Moore scalped 192 Tuscarora men, women, and children. (Lee 2004) ; (La Vere 2013) ; (Barnwell 1897) 394-395. The colonial militia, scalp-hunting rangers, and friendly natives cashed in on the lucrative scalp bounties offered by each colony, which drove a greater lust for scalps, prisoners, and plunder. Even Virginia, which elected not to send any official forces to fight, offered a £20 per scalp bounty for privateering frontiersmen. By 1715, the Tuscarora were so diminished that they all either fled to safety among the Iroquois in New York or submitted to English authority. The economics and colonial bloodlust of the scalp and prisoner bounties eventually landed its' target on the Yamasee, the Carolinian allies. By 1717, they were so demoralized and broken up by scalping parties that the surviving Yamasee fled to Spanish Florida. (Ramsey 2008).

Scalp bounties motivated an entire generation of young colonists to venture out in search of adventure, fame, and fortune. Provisional ranger units proved an essential piece of fighting on the American frontier. The men leading these units, like John Gorham, John Lovewell, and Robert Rogers, became larger-than-life figures for their exploits in a cavalcade of small frontier wars in New England (Grenier 2005) 50-52. Perhaps the most famous was John Lovewell and his raids against the Abenaki during Father Rale's War in the 1720s. Lovewell petitioned the Massachusetts assembly for a commission in the Fall of 1724 to raid the north in search of native war parties. Seeking to cash in on the £100 per scalp bounty, Lovewell led two successful expeditions in rapid order and returned a celebrity. Each time, he and his men returned with native scalps and weapons, proving to the colonists that the rangers kept danger at bay. His newfound fame and fortune were short-lived, as his third expedition, in the spring of 1725, was his last. His most audacious raid to date, thoroughly bathed in arrogance, ended in a devastating ambush outside the Abenaki town of Pequawket. Thirty of the fifty-man force, including Lovewell himself, were killed in the trap and ensuing chase. Each one of them was scalped by the Abenaki. Despite such a quick and militarily insignificant career, the exploits of Lovewell, the scalp-hunting ranger, lived on in both physical and collective memory. He has a mountain, pond, and town named after him in New England, and his fight was chronicled by 19th-century literary giants like poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow and authors Henry David Thoreau and Nathaniel Hawthorne. (Symmes 1725) ; (Longfellow 1820) ; (Thoreau 1849)

By the 1730's, what John Smith had referred to as a "terrible crueltie" was part of colonial life, especially on the edge of English advancement. These frontier settlements had an intimate relationship with the practice, whether in Maine or Virginia and most probably had some personal or familial connection to a scalping. Even those in the larger cities regularly saw scalp bounties advertised in newspapers and pamphlets alongside stories depicting both horror and success. (Belknap 1813) 2:63. ; (Axtell 1981) 230-240. Scalps and their taking were increasingly seen as a necessary commodity, both as an essential facet of frontier warfare and a defining narrative of the colonial experience. Despite this acceptance and regularity, there was still a delicate moral balancing act going on within colonial society. Paying bounties to natives for hostile scalps and English scalp-hunters was one thing, but any English connection to the decidedly brutal and "savage" practice carried justifications. ("Jonathan Law to William Shirley, Aug 26, 1747," n.d.)

During the Wars for Empire, the English and French increasingly clashed over border disagreements, access to lucrative resources, and the right to continental power. These wars, fought from 1688 to the end of the 7 Years War in 1763, decided the fate of North America. Although they gradually increased in intensity and scale, they were primarily fought along the French-Canadian border, the Great Lakes region, and the Ohio region. Native allies played significant roles in these conflicts, with both the French and English relying on a revolving cast of allies. The practice of scalping played a large role in the intercultural relations between each European power. English bounties on scalps motivated colonial men to join frontier units and seek profit, ever-expanding the violence and reach of scalping. The French acceptance and encouragement of Native American warfare and tactics like scalping and trophy-taking initially made justifications that much easier for the English.

Among native peoples, the introduction of scalp bounties brought about dramatic change. According to Wayne Lee, this practice interrupted the traditions of Native warfare in several interconnected ways. The nature of Native American warfare, centering on the glory and achievement of the individual warrior, originally acted as a restraint on the scale and destructive power of native conflicts. Individual warriors had great power in deciding which conflicts to fight in and for how long. Once glory was achieved through victory and the taking of scalps, there was no need to keep fighting, thus limiting overall violence. (Lee 2011) 163. English scalp bounties, directed to increase Native American assistance against the French and other native groups, provided a new stream of motivation and mobilization for Native American warriors to take up the fight. The direct commodification of scalps spread and escalated the practice among both colonists and Native alike while putting a greater array of people in danger. Conrad Weiser, an influential diplomat and interpreter from Pennsylvania, believed this put friendly Native Americans in danger as they represented a closer and easier target. While this didn't exactly result in a widespread scalping spree, the combined effects were nearly as devastating (Wallace 1945, 434; Armstrong 1998, 30-31).

In 1756, the governor of Pennsylvania offered "huge bounties" for the scalps of any Delaware Indians. Following the deceitful "Walking Purchase" scandal perpetrated by the government of Pennsylvania, tensions built between the two sides for years. It erupted during the 7 Years' War, with Delaware and Shawnee raids backed by French supplies and frontiersmen. Governor Morris' scalp law convinced dozens of rural Pennsylvanians to try their hand at scalp-hunting. Envisioning themselves as hardy frontiersmen like John Lovewell, these groups were loud and bumbling masses. Instead of finding the people raiding their towns, they targeted friendly Native Americans like the Munsee in nearby areas. In addition to spreading violence and offensive war, these bounties motivated a greater swathe of colonists to at least consider joining the scalping ranks. In his landmark study *Our Savage Neighbors*, Peter Silver connects the effects of scalp bounties to the broader cultural landscape of colonial America. Native American raids, normally embellished in scale and scope, were used as a rallying cry in the mid-Atlantic colonies. According to Silver, this attention and focus on frontier suffering bound the diverse peoples together in opposition to the "horrors" of Native American violence. They ultimately played a role in the development and acceptance of American pluralism in the Revolutionary generation. (Silver 2008, xx-xxii & 161-165; Young 1957).

By the time the colonial crisis exploded into the American Revolution, the practice of scalping was firmly established within the English colonial culture as a barbaric "savagery" that was morally justified only because it was practiced by ones' enemies. Whether Native, English, or American, the practice of scalping was so widespread that any group didn't have to look far for vengeful justification. James Axtell argues that the practice had fully evolved, claiming that "Englishmen scalped Englishmen in the name of liberty." What had started as a retaliatory practice to quell native

aggression was now utilized to instill fear and pain upon their "cultural equals." The first scalping accusation during the war occurred immediately at the Battle at Concord. The British unit involved, the 10th Regiment of Foot, claimed that four of their men killed were also scalped and had their eyes gouged out. Ensign Jeremy Lister believed "such barbarity could scarcely be paralelld by the most uncivilised Savages." British newspapers and commanders assaulted the colonial character in print and speech, believing colonists embodied a "savageness unknown to Europeans" (Lister 1931, 27-28). Colonial refutations claimed the British fabricated the scalpings to undermine their cause, casting the patriots as "savage and barbarous" in character. While little evidence exists outside the eyewitness accounts on either side, the immediate action on both sides points to the sensitive understandings and cultural dealings with scalping. (Brown 2016)

By the end of the Revolutionary War, both the Patriots and English accused the other of stooping to "savage" and "barbarous" levels in the taking of scalps of the other. The practice was fundamentally altered from its native origins, having been physically and culturally coopted as a new weapon of war. The physical pain of scalping was intense and instilled a great fear in those within its reach. However, the wounds inflicted by scalping grew a mythology of their own in the decades and centuries after the American Revolution. The collective memorializing and re-imagining of scalping along the frontier further cemented the commodification of the practice. On the one hand, it was a "savage" and "terrible cruelltie" let loose upon the civilized and defenseless colonial settlers. On the other, it was an equally justified weapon and financial tool that the American culture seized upon in a judgmental and celebratory fashion. The dueling way scalping stories were told and weaponized highlights the final way it was commodified: as a powerful manipulator of myth and memory.

Jane McCrea was a young loyalist woman seeking to marry a like-minded man when she was killed and scalped by Native American warriors in 1777. While little details of the actual event exist, it was memorialized and re-imagined as the precious innocence and virtue of a young woman savaged by the cruel and barbarous frontier. McCrea was remembered in poems and newspaper stories focusing on the grisly details that ended with her "drench'd in her gore" (Engels and Goodale 2009). The ultimate representation of her death is John Vanderlyn's *The Murder of Jane McCrea*, finished and presented in 1804. The painting embodies the horror imagined by any young female colonist of her generation: helpless and alone in a dark wood before she is brutally killed and scalped by dark-skinned Native American men. This image and the countless that followed made McCrea a figure of mythological status, whose simplified story presented a singular image through time: Native Americans savagely scalping a helpless young woman. This imagery and narrative played right into the existing fears of American citizens and the establishing mythology of the frontier and Native American violence for decades to come. (Edgerton 1965)

On the opposite end of the same story lies Hannah Duston. Her infamous story of capture, escape, and brutality grew a life of its own after her safe return, and the ten scalps she presented to the colonial government increasingly took center stage (Carroll 2007; Caverly 1875). Duston's story was originally told in a brief account in Cotton Mather's 1699 *Decennium Luctuosum*, and she never produced her own version of what happened. She represents the opposing image of McCrea as she took matters into her own hands and killed a family of Native people, including two women and six children. Duston was far from criticized for this act and instead lauded as a hero. Her narrative appeared in several forms in the early 18th century but experienced a rebirth in the 1820s and 30s with nine new versions. Duston and her scalps were used as lessons on motherhood, Christian duty, and female agency alongside desires to memorialize the reconstruction of the violence of the 18th-century frontier struggles that Americans faced and triumphed against (Weis 1998).

Hannah Duston's story remained popular in American culture and continued to be re-

investigated and narrated. Authors like Nathaniel Hawthorne and Henry David Thoreau, fresh off their scalping tales of John Lovewell, each took their turns with the Duston narrative and, like every other narrative of her life, focused almost solely on the night of her escape and scalping. The power of her story to Americans in the 19th century was one of triumph against "savage barbarity," and was memorialized in the physical form of granite statues. In the Haverhill, Massachusetts statue, Duston is standing proudly and holding a tomahawk. (Cutter 2018) In a similar New Hampshire shrine, she is holding that infamous handful of scalps. Believed to be the first monuments built to an individual woman in American history, these statues embody the power of scalping as a tool in the American cultural memory of the frontier and how the practice came to be honored and "acceptable" in the right situation (Humphreys 2011, 151).

Scalping remains a powerful commodity of myth and memory in American history. As a dividing line between savagery and civilization, the practice reigns supreme in popular culture re-hashings of America's past. In the 2016 film *The Revenant*, scalping plays a central role in the life and actions of the film's principal 18th-century characters: fur trader Hugh Glass and rival frontiersmen John Fitzgerald, played by Leonardo DiCaprio and Tom Hardy respectively (Inarritu 2016). The Fitzgerald character's life is defined by his harrowing experience surviving a scalping, as he vividly re-lives it repeatedly. He seeks recompense by subjecting others to the same fate. Much like the long glorification of Hannah Duston, the fictional Fitzgerald's relationship to scalping is myopic and manipulative. Neither tales encompass the totality of the act, its origins, or its wider consequences. These two survived their ordeal and turned the practice against others, but the other participants are either absent or objectified into little more than props. (Odle 2016)

In the end, scalping is still a powerful historical commodity impacting our understanding and conversations about America's past. As the United States reconciles with its colonizing past, the physical, economic, and mythic commodity of scalping is fair game. While some modern narratives like *The Revenant* still fall into recognizable patterns, some narratives are being re-examined. In recent years, the statues of Hannah Duston have come under scrutiny for their glorification of violence, racism, and the impact of settler colonialism against Native American people. In 2021, after much discussion, the town of Haverhill removed the tomahawk from its Duston statue, and changed the word "savages" on its descriptive pedestal. (Mitchell 2021)

References

Adair, James. 2005. *The History of the American Indians*. Edited by Kathryn Holland Braund. The University of Alabama Press.

Armstrong, Starkey. 1998. *European and Native American Warfare, 1675-1815*. Routledge.

Axtell, James. 1981. *The European and the Indian: Essays in the Ethnohistory of Colonial North America*. Oxford University Press.

Axtell, James, and William Sturtevant. 1980. "The Unkindest Cut, or Who Invented Scalping." *The William and Mary Quarterly* 37 (3): 451–72.

Barbour, Philip, ed. 1969. "John Smith, 'A Map of Virginia.'" In *The Jamestown Voyages under the First Charter, 1606-1609*. Hakluyt Society.

Barnwell, John. 1897. "Journal of John Barnwell." *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 5: 391–402.

Belknap, Jeremy. 1813. *History of New Hampshire*. 3 vols. Boston.

Black, Jeremy. 2006. *European Warfare in a Global Context, 1660-1815*. Routledge.

Brown, Zachary. 2016. "The Rhetoric and Practice of Scalping." *Journal of the American Revolution*. https://allthingsliberty.com/2016/09/rhetoric-practice-scalping/.

Campbell, Charles. 1860. *History of the Colony and Ancient Dominion of Virginia*. J.B. Lippincott and Company.

Carroll, Lorrayne. 2007. *Rhetorical Drag: Gender Impersonation, Captivity, and the Writing of History*. Kent State University Press.

Cave, Alfred. 2013. *Lethal Encounters: Englishmen and Indians in Colonial Virginia*. University of Nebraska Press.

Caverly, Robert Boodey. 1875. *Heroism of Hannah Duston: Together with the Indian Wars of New England*. Russell.

Champlain, Samuel de. 1922. *The Works of Samuel de Champlain*. Edited by H.P. Biggar. The Champlain Society.

Church, Benjamin. 1975. *Diary of King Philip's War, 1675-1676*. Chester, CT: Pequot Press.

Cutter, Barbara. 2018. "The Gruesome Story of Hannah Duston, Whose Slaying of Indians Made Her an American Folk 'Hero.'" *Smithsonian Magazine*, April 2018.

Drake, James. 2004. "Native American Wars: Warfare in Native American Societies." In *The Oxford Companion to American Military History*. Oxford University Press.

Edgerton, Samuel. 1965. "The Murder of Jane McCrea: *The Tragedy of an American Tableau d'Histoire." The Art Bulletin* 47 (4): 481–92.

Engels, Jeremy, and Greg Goodale. 2009. "'Our Battle Cry Will Be: Remember Jenny McCrea!' A Précis on the Rhetoric of Revenge." *American Quarterly* 61 (1): 91–112.

Fausz, Frederick. 1990. "An 'Abundance of

Blood Shed on Both Sides': England's First Indian War, 1609-1614." *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 98 (1): 3–56.

Friederici, Georg. 1990. *Scalping and Torture: Warfare Practices Among North American Indians*. Edited by Gabriel Nadeau and Nathaniel Knowles. Iroqrafts.

Grenier, John. 2005. *The First Way of War: American War Making on the Frontier*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press.

Hiltunen, Juha. 2011. "Spiritual and Religious Aspects of Torture and Scalping among the Indian Cultures in Eastern North America, from Ancient to Colonial Times." *Scripta Instituti Donneriani Aboensis* 23: Religion and the Body: 115–28.

Hubbard, William. 1677. *A Narrative of the Indian Wars in New-England, From the First Planting Thereof in the Year 1607, to the Year 1677*. Boston, MA: John Foster.

Hulton, Paul. 1977. *The Work of Jacques Le Moyne de Morgues, a Huguenot Artist in France, Florida, and England*. Vol. II. The British Museum.

Humphreys, Sara. 2011. "The Mass Marketing of the Colonial Captive Hannah Duston." *Canadian Review of American Studies* 41 (2): 149–78.

Inarritu, Alejandro Gonzalez, dir. 2016. *The Revenant*. 20th Century Studios.

"Jonathan Law to William Shirley, Aug 26, 1747." n.d. Vol 15, 82-83. Collections of the Connecticut Historical Society.

Kennedy, Kathleen. 2017. "On Writing the

History of So Much Grief: Cotton Mather's Decennium Luctuosum and the Trauma of Colonial History." *The Eighteenth Century* 58 (2): 219–41.

La Flesche, Francis. 1995. *The Osage and the Invisible World: From the Works of Francis La Flesche*. Edited by Garrick Bailey. University of Oklahoma Press.

La Vere, David. 2013. *The Tuscarora War: Indians, Settlers, and the Fight for the Carolina Colonies*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press.

Lee, Wayne. 2004. "Fortify, Flight, or Flee: Tuscarora and Cherokee Defensive Warfare and Military Culture Adaptation." *The Journal of Military History* 68 (3): 713–70.

———. 2007. "Peace Chiefs and Blood Revenge: Patterns of Restraint in Native American Warfare, 1500-1800." *The Journal of Military History* 71 (3): 701–41.

———. 2011. *Barbarians and Brothers: Anglo-American Warfare, 1500-1865*. Oxford University Press.

Lepore, Jill. 1999. *The Name of War: King Philip's War and the Origins of American Identity*. Vintage Books.

Lincoln, Charles. 1913. "Narratives of the Indian Wars, 1675-1699." Digital Public Library of America. http://catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/000248638.

Lipman, Andrew. 2008. "'A Meanes to Knitt Them Togeather': The Exchange of Body Parts in the Pequot War." *The William and Mary Quarterly* 65 (1): 3–28.

Lister, Jeremy. 1931. *The Concord Fight: Being*

So Much of the Narrative of Ensign Jeremy Lister of the 10th Regiment of Foot as Pertains to His Services on the 19th of April, 1775, and to His Experiences in Boston During the Early Months of the Siege. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Logt, Mark van de. 2008. "'The Powers of the Heavens Shall Eat of My Smoke': The Significance of Scalping in Pawnee Warfare." *The Journal of Military History* 72 (1): 71–104.

Longfellow, Henry Wadsworth. 1820. "The Battle of Lovewell's Pond." *Portland Gazette*, November 21, 1820.

M. Halsey, Thomas, ed. 1973. *The Diary of Samuel Sewall, 1674-1729*. Farrar, Straus, and Giroux.

Mason, John. 1736. *A Brief History of the Pequot War*. S. Kneeland & T. Green.
Mather, Cotton. 1699. *Decennium Luctuosum*. B. Green and J. Allen.

Mather, Increase. 1676. *A Brief History of the Warr with the Indians in New-England*. Boston, John Foster.

Mitchell, Charlie. 2021. "Killer Colonost to Lose Her Tamohawk in White Supremacy Row." *The Times*, May 1, 2021.

Nye, Eric W. n.d. "Pounds Sterling to Dollars: Historical Conversion of Currency." https://www.uwyo.edu/numimage/currency.htm.

Odle, Mairin. 2016. "'We Are All Savages': Scalping and Survival in The Revenant." *The Journal of Early American Life* 17 (1).

———. 2023. *Under the Skin: Tattoos, Scalps, and the Contested Language of Bodies in Early America*. Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Parker, Geoffrey. 1996. *The Military Revolution: Military Innovation and the Rise of the West, 1500-1800*. Cambridge University Press.

Percy, George. 1922. "Trewe Relacyon: Virginia from 1609 to 1612." *Tyler's Quarterly and Genealogical Magazine*, April 1922.

Powell, William. 1958. "Aftermath of the Massacre: The FIrst Indian War, 1622-1632." *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography* 66 (1): 44–75.

Ramsey, William. 2008. *The Yamasee War: A Study of Culture, Economy, and Conflict in the Colonial South*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press.

Saltonstall, Nathaniel. 1676. *The Present State of New-England, with Respect to the Indian War: Wherein Is an Account of the True Reason Thereof*. London: Printed for Forman Newman, at the King's Arms in the Poultry, and at the Ship and Anchor at the Bridg-Foot on Southwark side.

Silver, Peter. 2008. *Our Savage Neighbors: How Indian War Transformed Early America*. New York: W.W. Norton & Company, Inc.

Steele, Ian. 1995. *Warpaths: Invasions of North America*. Oxford University Press.

Symmes, Thomas. 1725. "Lovewell Lamented. Or, A Sermon Occasion'd by the Fall of the Brave Capt. John Lovewell and Several of His Valiant Company, in the Late Heroic Action at Piggwacket. Pronounc'd at Bradford, May 16, 1725." B. Green. N02274.0001.001. Evans Early American Imprint Collection.

Thoreau, Henry D. 1849. *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*. Boston, MA: James Munroe and Company.

Thwaites, Reuben, ed. 1896. *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents*. The Burrows Brothers Company.

Trigger, Bruce. 1976. *Children of Aataentsic: A History of the Huron People to 1660*. McGill-Queen's University Press.

Vaughan, ALden. 1978. "'Expulsion of the Salvages': English Policy and the Virginia Massacre of 1622." *The William and Mary Quarterly* 35 (1): 57–84.

Vincent, Philip. 1637. *A True Relation of the Late Battell Fought in New England, between the English, and the Salvages: With the Present State of Things There*. M.P. for Nathanael Butter.

Wallace, P.A.W. 1945. *Conrad Weiser, 1696-1760, Friend of Colonist and Mohawk*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

Waterhouse, Edward. 1622. "A Declaration of the State of the Colony and Affaires in Virginia, With a Relation of the Barbarous Massacre in the Time of Peace and League, Treacherously Executed by the Natiue Infidels Vpon the English, the 22 of March." A14803.0001.001. Early English Books Online Text Creation Parternship - U of Mich. http://name.umdl.umich.edu/A14803.0001.001.

Weis, Ann-Marie. 1998. "The Murderous Mother and the Solicitous Father: Violence, Jacksonian Family Values, and Hannah Duston's Captivity." *American Studies International* 36 (1): 46–65.

Williamson, Ron. 2007. "'Otinontsiskiaj Ondaon' ('The House of Cut-Off Heads'): The History and Archaeology of Northern Iroquoian Trophy Taking." In *The Taking and Displaying of Human Body Parts as Trophies by Amerindians*, edited by Richard Chacon. Springer.

Winthrop, John. 1825. *The History of New England from 1630 to 1649*. Phelps and Farnham.

Wood, William. 1865. *Wood's New England's Prospect* (1634). Publications of the Prince Society.

Young, Henry. 1957. "A Note on Scalp Bounties in Pennsylvania." *Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies* 24 (3): 207–18.

C. Wright Mills: A New Left for a New Day / Slow Thoughts for Fast Times

Charles Lemert

Thomas Paine, during a crucial moment in the American war against its colonizers, said famously: "These are times that try men's souls." Many think, I among them, that these too are times that try men's souls. At such a time, one must look back for clues as to what to think and do. One from not that long ago who lends us wisdom of a sort is C. Wright Mills, who in the 1950s, tried to make sense of America's changing culture. However, a bad heart killed him in 1962, just after he wrote of the possibility of a New Left. He deserves another look.

C. Wright Mills (1916-1962) was born Waco, Texas. In later life, when he rode about on his motorcycle, it was tempting for some to say this was somehow a hint of his cowboy days. He didn't quite deny it:

> I grew up in Texas, curiously, enough on no ranch but in Waco, Wichita Falls, Fort Worth, Sherman, Dallas, Austin, and San Antonio—in that order. My family moved around a bit. The reason I was not stabilized on a ranch is that my grandfather had lost my ranch. He was shot in the back with a .30-30 rifle, always it's in the back, but he really was.[1]

Cowboy or not—this is the way Mills was: brash, bare bones honest, one who cut to the truth as he saw it, and more.[2] Mills was also uncommonly ambitious and brilliant. By the time he finished undergraduate studies in sociology and philosophy at the University of Texas Austin, he had published articles in sociology's two leading academic journals, the *American Sociological Review* and the *American Journal of Sociology*. Even so, he came close to letting self-doubts keep him from going on to graduate studies.[3]

In September 1939, he and his wife, Freya, moved to Madison, Wisconsin, where he began doctoral studies. The following summer, they divorced, then in the spring of 1941, they remarried just before Mills finished his coursework for the Ph.D. At Wisconsin, he met and began to work with Hans Gerth. Together, they translated, edited, and published in 1946 *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology* which for a long while was a primary sourcebook for students of Weber without reading knowledge of German. After the Ph.D. from Wisconsin in 1943, he began teaching at the University of Maryland with the support of Robert K. Merton—whom no major figure in the field was more generous to younger sociologists getting started at the time. While at Maryland, he was hired by Columbia University's Bureau of Applied Research which led in short order to an appointment at Columbia in 1947. Through these years, his marriage was on and off again. Freya and he divorced for good, this time in July 1947.

Such was the story of his life. From UT Austin in 1939 to Columbia in 1947 with major publications along the way, his days sped on and away. Everything went by fast. In 1942, his high blood pressure exempted him from military service. This was the first sure sign that his heart would fail him. He died of a heart attack twenty years later at only 45 years of age on March 20, 1962.

Before that final moment, he published 19 books and pamphlets; and 185 articles, essays, and reviews; as well as countless other lectures and interventions—and was the inspiration and subject of 171 books and shorter commentaries.[4] The major and still influential books, among the many, are *White Collar: The American Middle Class* in 1951, *The Power Elite* in 1956, and *The Sociological Imagination* in 1959. In his book on Mills, *Radical Nomad*, Tom Hayden classified Mills' writings as falling into four time periods, each with its own characterization:

- *Apprehension and Maturation*, 1939-1949
- *Pessimism Formulated*, 1950-1956
- *Radical Polemics, Analyzing the Default*, 1956-1960
- *Tentative Hopes*, 1960-1962[5]

Hayden—famous for many things in politics and his relationships with Casey Hayden, Jane Fonda, and Barbara Williams—is important here because he was among the founders of the *Students for a Democratic Society* (SDS), for which he was the principal author of its Port Huron Statement. Hayden's MA thesis at Michigan was on C. Wright Mills. He was thus ahead of the others in SDS and other radical student movements in that he saw the importance of Mills to a New Left—an importance that remained unfulfilled because of Mills' early death in March 1962 just more than a year after his famous "Letter to the New Left" in *The New Left Review*, published September 1960. For this reason, among others, Hayden's classification of Wright Mills' literary career is particularly helpful.

As for the 1939-1949, *Apprehension and Maturation*, we have seen already the strange fact about this man who otherwise was always out there doing whatever, yet nonetheless had a period of severe self-doubt before starting graduate studies. But, the apprehension faded quickly once he moved to Madison such that Hans Gerth said this of him in the day:

> He was no man with a pale cast of the intellect given to self-mortification. He was a good sportsman with bat and ball, a dashing swimmer and boatman, sailing his shaky dory on Lack Mendota. We would walk with machetes to make our way to the boat. Mills dashed with his motorboat past the more imposing houses of Midwestern corporation executives to the pier of the village store.[6]

Whether this was part of the maturation in Hayden's scheme is not clear. What was clear is that the books of this period were serious in every way—his 1946 book with Gerth, *From Max Weber* and, in 1948, *The New Men of Power: America's Labor Leaders*, which was, among other things, an implicit if not quite fully mature theory of social and political structures in the United States. Here, he wrote: "The American labor leader, like the politician and the big businessman is now a public figure, different groups hold various images of him. He is reviled and acclaimed by small and politically alert publics, he is tolerated and abused by the mass public. As always, like other men of power, he is carefully watched by men inside his own organization."[7]

This, of course, is but a hint of Mills' view on the new Post-War American social structure which was thriving economically and socially—when also, by contrast to the 1930s, labor leaders were rebels representing down-and-out workers in a collapsed economy. If Mills was ebullient like many others, it is easy to understand why he would soon become more and more a left-liberal critic of that

society. Labor leaders and the business elite could work cooperatively for the good of all. *The New Men of Power* is not one of Mills' great books, but it is an important marker on the road he would soon travel.

The second phase, *Pessimism Formulated: The Analysis of the Power Elite and the Mass Society*, 1950-1956, came to be during the events of the 1950s. Daniel Bell thought these were times when Post-War youth and the culture they imbibed had lost their grip of the traditions that mattered politically and socially. Even though Bell spoke at the memorial service at Columbia for Mills, his early reading of Mills was nothing if not the bitter personification of a younger generation unable to think and do what needed to be done to make America real again. Here's how Bell ends his essay on Mills:

> Much of Mills' work is motivated by his enormous anger at the growing bureaucratization—this is his theory of history—and its abettors and this gives [*The Power Elite*] its appeal and pathos. Many people do feel helpless and ignorant and react in anger. But the sources of helplessness ought to be made clear, lest one engage, as I think Mills does, in a form of "romantic protest" against modern life.[8]

If you want to deconstruct Bell's unqualifiedly psychological reading of *The Power Elite*, compare them to Mills' own words:

> The idea of the power elite rests upon and enables us to make sense of (1) the decisive institutional trends that characterize the structure of our epoch, in particular the military ascendancy in a privately incorporated economy, and, more broadly, the several coincidences of objective interests between economic, military, and political institutions; (2) the social similarities and the psychological affinities of the men who occupy the command posts of these structures, in particular the increased interchangeability of the top positions in each of them and the increased traffic between these orders in the careers of men of power; (3) ramifications, to the point of virtual totality, of the kind of decisions that are made at the top, and the rise of men who, by training and bent, are professional organizers of considerable force and who are unrestrained by democratic party training.[9]

Oddly, it is almost as if one of President Dwight Eisenhower's speech writers had inserted Mills' lines into the President's 1961 Farewell Address in which he warned the nation that "In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the *military-industrial complex*. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist."[10] In the last words of *The Power Elite*, Mills offers a soft form of righteous anger which may have been too much for Bell. "Commanders of power unequaled in human in human history, they have succeeded within the American system of organized irresponsibility."[11]

1950-1956 was indeed a period in which, as Hayden put it, Mills began to formulate a serious pessimism about American Society which was appropriate to those few years. America had in 1948 instituted the Marshall Plan—which is to say, the European Recovery Program—to rebuild Europe, including Germany, that it and its allies had so thoroughly destroyed in the War. Of course, Stalin wanted nothing to do with such a thing. The Cold War heated up, while at home, Senator Joseph McCarthy and his House Un-American Activities Committee injected a virulent Red Scare into what had been, months before, America's warmly optimistic blood. Then, too, the Korean War began June 25, 1950. For three years, and still today, that War divided the Korean Peninsula and world opinion. The American nation was torn every which way. Also, these were the years when televisual media took over domestic entertainment attention and, as Herbert Marcuse would argue a decade later in

One Dimensional-Man in 1964, all-but destroyed the critical component of human consciousness. Just less than a decade before Marcuse, Mills was prominent among those who began to recognize just how sterile Mass Culture could be. Tom Hayden had it right in naming this stage of Mills' thinking as *Pessimism Formulated*. Just as Dick Flacks was right in criticizing Mills for "diagnosing the 'main drift' in society rather than claiming to be making predictions."[12] It is true that, as Irving Louis Horowitz said, from the days of *From Max Weber* in 1946 with Hans Gerth "Mills began to see himself carved in a Weberian mold."[13] In a sense, Mills from *The White Collar in 1950 and The Power Elite* in 1958 describes the beginnings of a Mass Society and its Higher Circles that end up as an irresponsible Power Elite. He wrote, in effect, of Weber's spirit of capitalism run amok—a conviction that Weber himself announced at the end of *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*: "Specialists without spirit; sensualists without heart; this nullity imagines he has attained a level of civilization never before achieved."[14]

As Mills furiously worked to outrun his bad heart, the changes in his literary work fell into shorter and shorter periods—from 1939 to 1949, from 1950 to 1956, then from 1956-1960, a period of *Radical Polemics: Analyzing the Default*—in which Mills grew more and more isolated from American radicals. As Tom Hayden put it, Mills' isolation "was so complete that his writing turned into bitter inquiries into the default of the liberal and radical movements, and especially into the default of the intellectuals in their role as guardians of reason and freedom."[15] The three books of this period are each either outside the realm of what radicals then could or would think—*The Causes of World War Three* (1958) and *Listen Yankee* (1960)—or against the norms of liberal academics who were failing to protect reason and freedom—*The Sociological Imagination* (1959).

H. Stuart Hughes was a brilliant teacher but a bit of sourpuss in regard to Mills: "*The Causes of World War Three* is just as disheveled as it predecessors. If anything, it is even more disorganized and repetitious."[16] Here is proof positive of Hayden's observation that Mills' isolation from left-liberal intellectuals was all but complete. For many, he could do no right. Still, to Hughes' credit he adds: "Yet once again, as in the past, in *The Causes of World War Three* Mr. Mills has something arresting and important to say. And once again it is something that no one else seems to be saying—or at least in so forthright and explicit a fashion." This is the basic intellectual truth about Mills, especially in the books of his *Pessimism Formulated* period where he had neither time nor intention to persuade those he considered irresponsible—whether economists, politicians, preachers, or intellectuals. In *The Causes of World War Three* he renders a stern judgment on any and all, mostly in regard the then two major powers in the Cold War:

> Both the Russian and American elites, and intellectuals in both societies, are fighting the Cold War in the name of peace, but the assumptions of their policies and the effects of their interactions have been, and are, increasing the chances of war. War, it is assumed in their military meta-physic is the most likely outcome of the parallel existences of the two types of political economy. Such is the official lay of the land, the official definition of world reality, the contribution to peace of the national spokesmen among the power elite.[17]

Even more, Mills here has in mind the defaulted company of those who should have, but did not, criticize the power elites in a society that was on the way to being fully massified. *Listen, Yankee: The Revolution in Cuba* (1960) properly drew widespread attention in part because it was based on an unauthorized visit to Cuba where he met with Castro, Che, and other leaders of the new Cuba after Castro's 26th of July Movement removed Batista from office and took-over the island nation in early 1959. One might assume that the book was a kind of intellectual and political travelogue. It was that in a sense, but much more.[18] *Listen Yankee* was a prophetic book. It reads today as slightly

weird, framed too much in the Cold War rhetoric he so despised, too optimistic as to the likelihood that Castro's political revolution would lead to a social revolution, still too bound to the logic that any who opposed the American power elites were *ipso facto* on the side of progress. Yet, *Listen, Yankee* provides much more than a hint of where Mills would have gone had he survived the heart attack in 1962. First, and most disgusting to his opponents, he wrote in the first person as if he were a Cuban revolutionary:

> So, this is who we Cubans are:
> We're part of Latin America.
> We're fed up with Yankee corporations and governments.
> We've done something about it.[19]

Audacious, yes; but also telling, simple, and the truth of things to come. Just the year before, in 1959, in *The Sociological Imagination*, he advised the sociological imaginer: "Keep your eyes open to the varieties of individuality, and to the modes of epochal change."[20] The sociological imagination, he thought, is never cautious, always willing to err, and always open to social changes the cautious will miss. Mills understood that the Cuba of 1959 was part of a global movement. *Listen, Yankee*, he said from the first, "...is about more than Cuba. For Cuba's voice is the voice of a hungry-nation bloc, and the Cuba revolutionary is now speaking. ... In Africa, in Asia, as well as in Latin America the people behind his voice are becoming strong in a kind of fury they've never know before. As nations, they are young, the world is new to them."[21]

That Mills had published *The Sociological Imagination* the year before his visit to Cuba means certainly that the 1959 book was deep in his head and heart. In *Listen, Yankee* in 1960, he was already imagining a new world beyond his personal troubles with other left intellectuals. Hence the all-but-scriptural lines in *The Sociological Imagination*:

> The sociological imagination enables the possessor to understand the larger historical scene in terms of its meaning for the inner life and the external career of a variety of individuals. It enables him to take into account how individuals, in the welter of their daily experience, often become falsely conscious of their social experiences. Within that welter, the framework of modern society is sought, and within that framework, the psychologies of a variety of men and women are formulated. *By such means, the personal uneasiness of individuals is focused upon explicit <u>troubles</u>,* and the indifference of the public is transformed into involvement in *<u>public issues</u>*.[22]

This is Mills in 1959, offering a way to avoid academic sociology's naïve commitment to the classic subject/object dichotomy that became the micro/macro dichotomy, sorting out those studied small groups on the ground from those who soared into the abstract air of structures. Mills was the consummate structuralist who saw structures as visibly arising from personal troubles.

Mills—perhaps because from the early days at Wisconsin he thought of himself as a Weberian—was not drawn into an either/or way of thinking. However, he had well-informed, if extreme, views of academic sociology. The bulk of *The Sociological Imagination* is devoted to varieties of sociological methods, beginning with his famous condemnation of Talcott Parsons' Grand Theory, which mostly castigates the writing as unintelligible. "I suppose one could translate the 555 pages of *The Social System* into about 150 pages of straightforward English."[23] This is not a helpful criticism. Mills does better in the next chapter on "Abstracted Empiricism," which is always easier to criticize when it is too abstracted. "What has happened in the fetishism of the Concept is that men

have become stuck way up on a very high level of generalization, usually of a syntactical nature and they cannot get down to fact."[24] Fair enough. It would have been a better way to criticize Parsons.

Then, in a chapter on "Types of Practicality," Mills, having dismissed all-too-lofty empiricism, turns to the local. "The social scientist who spends his time on the details of small-scale milieux is not putting himself outside the political conflicts and forces of his time."[25] After his expose of the basic types of social research, *The Sociological Imagination* strays into a number of interesting essays on bureaucracy, philosophies of science, history, and the like culminating in the marvelous appendix that every beginner in most fields should read, "On Intellectual Craftsmanship."

All in all, the enduring importance of *The Sociological Imagination* is its scriptural lesson on the relation between *personal troubles* and *public issues*. His last notable piece was *Letter to the New Left* in 1960, which had more a symbolic than substantive effect on what was to come in 1962. At the very end of *Radical Nomad*, Tom Hayden does something both clever and important. He imagines what Mills might have said about the New Left had he lived. For example:

We know the importance of talking about and organizing around issues that are at one and the same time meaningful to people and radical. ... We think economic problems are the fundamental ones that connect most others, but we don't neglect cultual and personal problems that can't be postponed ... We figure it will take a long time, and much experimental work, before we come to reach all the people the movement needs to take power—which is one of the things we are seeking.[26]

Endnotes

1 C. Wright Mills, "Growing Up: Facts and Fantasies, 1957" in Kathryn Mills editor, with Pamela Mills, *C. Wright Mills: Letters and Autobiographical Writings* (University of California Press, 2000), 25.

2 As for Mills' brashness, see his 1939 letter to Read Bain, editor of the *American Sociological Review*, about his article "Logic, Language, and Culture." He would not graduate college studies in 1939, yet he declined to make many of the recommended revisions and wrote to Bain as if they were pals [in Kathryn Mills, *ibid*, 35.]

3 Irving Louis Horowitz, *C. Wright Mills, An American Utopian* (Free Press, 1983), 40.

4 See for a sample: C. Wright Mills, *Power, Politics and People: The Collected Essays of C. Wright Mills*, edited with an introduction by Irving Louis Horowitz (Oxford University Press, 1963). For a listing of his own writings and of those who commented on his thinking until his death, see in this collection "Bibliography of the Writings of C. Wright Mills," 613-641.

5 Tom Hayden, *Radical Nomad: C. Wright Mills and His Times* with commentaries by Stanley Aronowitz, Richard Flacks, and Charles Lemert (Routledge/Paradigm, 2006), 67-69.

6 Hans Gerth, "On C. Wright Mills" (lecture at the memorial meeting for Mills at Columbia University) quoted in Horowitz, *C. Wright Mills: American Utopian*, *ibid*, 46-47.

7 Mills, *The New Men of Power: America's Labor Leaders* (University of Illinois Press, 1948), 13.

8 Daniel Bell, "*The Power Elite* Reconsidered," in G. William Domhoff and Hoyt B. Ballard, editors, *C. Wright Mills and the Power Elite* (Beacon Press, 1968), 224. [The chapter was originally a 1958 *American Journal of Sociology* essay when Bell was himself in early stages of transition from a red-blooded journalist to an academic.]

9 Mills, *The Power Elite* (Oxford University Press, 1956), 296.

10 "Military-Industrial Complex Speech, Dwight D. Eisenhower, 1961," Part IV @ https://avalon.law.yale.edu/20th_century/eisenhower001.asp

11 Mills, *The Power Elite*, 361.

12 Dick Flacks, "C. Wright Mills, Tom Hayden, and the New Left," in Tom Hayden, *Radical Nomad: C. Wright Mills and His Times* with commentaries by Stanley Aronowitz, Dick Flacks, Charles Lemert (Routledge/Paradigm, 2006),7.

13 Irving Louis Horowitz, *C. Wright Mills: An American Utopian* (Free Press, 1983), 47.

14 Max Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (Charles Scribner's Sons, 1958), 182.

15 Hayden, *Radical Nomad*, *ibid*, 68.

16 H. Stuart Hughes, "The Politics of Peace: A Reflection on C. Wright Mills, *The Causes of World War Three*," *Commentary* (February 1959).

17 C. Wright Mills, *The Causes of World War Three* (Simon & Schuster, 1958), 49-50.

18 Some of the following is drawn from or based upon Charles Lemert, "After Mills: 1962 and Bad Dreams of Good Times," in Hayden, *Radical Nomad*, 48-50.

19 Mills, *Listen, Yankee* (Ballantine Books, 1960) 28-29.

20 Mills, *The Sociological Imagination* (Oxford University Press, 1959), 225.

21 Mills, *Listen, Yankee*, 7.

22 Mills, *The Sociological Imagination*, 5. Emphasis added.

23 *Ibid*, 31. [This is Mills the wise-guy. Cute but not quite right. I found Parsons a brilliantly clear teacher and his books difficult but clear enough. However, then, I'd spent years before that reading theologians like Paul Tillich and Karl Barth, who in, dealing with other-worldly matters, made sense only if one trusted them. CL]

24 *Ibid*, 74.

25 *Ibid*, 78.

26 Hayden, *Radical Nomad*, 191-192.