On Levi R. Bryant’s “Dim Media”: The Age of Disruption, Homeless Media, and Problematzing Latour’s Apolitical “Flat Ontology”

By Ekin Erkan

“The homeless, by contrast, radiate almost no gravity on the assemblages within which they dwell. They are there, we see them on street corners daily, but they are generally forgotten and with little voice”

* Levi R. Bryant, *Onto-Cartography: An Ontology of Machines and Media* (2014): p.216

On the question of those "lines of flight" that Deleuze and Guattari pose in *A Thousand Pleateaus* (1980) — that is, trajectories of transformation and mobility, rather than fixed structures — the power of state and corporate institutions is understood in terms of their capacity to direct or retard processes. While Deleuze and Guattari’s framework offers a particularly useful way to understand the complex relationships between processes of capital accumulation and other political and cultural factors (with which such processes must necessarily interact) it circumscribes and, consequently, autonomizes what Joseph Schumpeter termed Capital’s tendency for “creative destruction”. Thus “lines of flight” has been understood as it facilitates a “dissolving” of all existing social ties, within those relentless circulation of commodities, labor, and currency that (has been observed long since before) Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels made it their opening theme (in 1848).

Where Deleuze and Guattari introduce us to “lines of flight,” they transcode the mechanics of “flight” through “capture,” fomenting what is understood by many as Deleuze’s philosophical thesis: forging an analog relationship between univocity and difference via multiplicitious immanence. This is, of course, posed against Freud’s molar unities in their second chapter “One or Several Wolves.” Thus, if Heidegger is the philosopher par excellance of queries between hermeneutics and immanence, it is Deleuze who asks “what is the relationship between immanence and multiplicity?” While, for many of us post-Laruelleans, there is the Deleuze of immanence as well as the Deleuze of multiplicity (caught in an eternal Prometheun ἰσονομία (isonomia) where there is no victor), for Deleuze these two components fit together adeptly. Guided by the principle of univocity, Deleuze describes a world of pure multiplicity - all multiplicities are equally immanent within nature. As Whitehead spoke of “occasions,” Deleuze speaks of specific gatherings (of heterogeneous multiplicities), dubbed “assemblages,” that occasion themselves as *blips* – blips of singularity on an otherwise smooth plane.

Clearly, radiance, illumination, and iridescence – that is, Iris – is present. Levi R. Bryant, makes us aware of this; in contrast to “bright objects and satellites,” there also subsist “possibilities of local manifestations, movements, and becomings” that “constrain some objects in assemblages… classified as dim objects” (205). These “dim objects” refer to those cultural mnemonics that are produced in assemblages and gravitational fields, but those that, also, exercise very little gravity of their own. Bryant mentions what Badiou refers o as “objects that only very faintly appear in a world” (2006, 153–68). This is, also, what Rancière calls “the part of no part,” or “no part in anything” (Rancière 1999, 9): those members of a collective that are within the collective, but that simultaneously are neither afforded vocal ability nor even have a voice. As Bryant notes:

“[e]xamples of dim objects would be slaves, the homeless, the disabled, women prior to suffrage, the mentally ill, people of religions other than the dominant religion of a social assemblage, atheists, the proletariat, non-heterosexuals, illegal immigrants, and so on.” (205)

This dimness is, of course, scalar and, while some of these “dim” assemblages have been able to form coalitions it is the homeless (for Bryant) who, “by contrast, radiate almost no gravity on the assemblages within which they dwell” (205). In contrast to Rancière’s notion of “the police,” or the liquidation of politics from policy (for Rancière, the police is pure policy), “roughly equivalent to onto-cartography’s gravitational fields structured around relations between bright objects and satellites” (Bryant 205), politics speaks to the moment when “dim objects” are able to “rise up from their faintness, speak, and challenge the police order in the name of ‘anyone whatsoever’” (205). Alas, Bryant’s scalar approach proves particularly seductive for an inquiry on homeless media, which lack social assemblage; alas, if it is “dim objects” that we can relate to homeless media, it is transhumanism whereby residentiary media finds its central crux.

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In Ken Loach's *Cathy Come Home* (1966), the newlywed couple (Cathy and Reg) traverse the wary generic desolate English cityscape as they lapse into homelessness. In Eric Rohmer's *Le Signe du Lion* (1962) bourgeoise-flaneur-turned-tramp, the forlorn Peter Wesselrin, grouses and trudges through Paris, lumbering from market to brook as his rent shoes plot his variable path. Despite their bleak day-to-day existence, in Leos Carax’s *The Lovers of the Bridge* (1990) panhandler Alex and his newfound love, the lonesome street-painter Michelle, dance through their follies and sweep the Paris skies, waltzing atop the Pont Neuf. In Doris Wishman’s “roughies” sexploitation film, *Bad Girls go to Hell*, Meg threads throughout New York’s midtown, abandoned, bruised, and outcast from Chicago. In Agnes Varda's *Vagabond* (1985), Mono Bergeron's body is unapologetically transient and liminal, moving through the Languedoc-Roussillon winterscape - a frosted beach, a frigid garden; of her passage, she is almost impertinent: "I don't care; I move" - that is, until her body becomes the hoarfrost that once surrounded her, her carcass enclosed in a ditch. Dead. The street children in Luis Buñuel’s *Los Olvidados* (1950) and *Nazarin*’s (1959) reticent Roman Catholic priest, Padre Nazario, are victims of their environmental milieu’s misfortune; given their threadbare clothes and sparse possessions, they are unenclosed and motile - the Mexican landscape unfolds behind the camera’s cartography, charting their paths. Feuerbach’s analysis of how religious beliefs regarding God are, in truth, alienated projections of our own aspirations indicates that that what we take to be properties of homeless, abject objects - cultural mnemonics, media artifacts or, via Husserl, tertiary retentions – are in fact our own projections.

These stories of homeless subjects draw from what Bernard Siegert notes as the pauper-mythos of Christ’s *earthly* existence, the vagabond-traveler era of passage where “To be poor meant to be on the road” (2015, 92). Peter Wasselrin’s tattered wingtips unfurl as his descent grows more bleak; Alex the tumbler’s cracked ampules and vodka bottles, Michelle’s moth-eaten paintings and Nazario’s frayed bible become artifacts of their fluid condition – these are the synecdochal indices of permanent passage. As “machines,” dim homeless objects are overdetermined – such “machines are nothing but their interactions with other machines” (Bryant 181). Yet, if they have no autonomy whatsoever (we see this in these subjects’ deaths, in their imprisonment, and so on) we can, as Bryant says, reduce these machines to their interactions or relations to other machines. Yet, we ought to avoid the apolitical recapitulation of Latourian interface determinism/actor-network theory (after all – as Alex Galloway reminds us: Latour has never been post-modern). In *Cartographic Cinema*, Tom Conley notes that homelessness’ transient filmic representation bore a unique relationship with abstraction and its circumscriptial terrain, rendering the city as “a geometrical configuration of combined parts that superimpose or transform movements in homogenous space” (Deleuze 1983, 63 qtd. Conley 2007, 220).

Yet there is something else occurring in these films - no, not the “mourning work” that undergirds Cathy Caruth's "trauma theory," popularized in the 1990s (and epitomized with 9/11), nor Dominick Lacapra's "acting out" response; rather, something far more pernicious and *maddening*. A taste for life becomes dilapidated; consider auditory pleasures - Peter's love for his saxophone (and music, more generally), which not only becomes buried but altogether lost behind the projector. For if we recall the *Ordinary Man of Cinema* and Jean-Louis Schefer, who invokes the great spiritual automaton, or the dummy at the back of our heads as the principle site of cinema (a central precursor for what Patricia Pisters has consequently termed the “neuro-image”) that which is off-screen is not only off-site but excised from the margins of the brain (it is not lost but inhabiting the unconscious). Alex (Denis Lavant) grows increasingly destitute and seemingly abandons his acrobatics, as his heart grows injurious (he withholds his lover’s chance for surgical reoperation – the fact that she is a visual artist and depends on her eyesight only exacerbates this iniquitous affair).

As documented by American psychologist William James, patient Mr. X. (a wealthy and erudite Viennese merchant) thought he was going mad when his loss for life’s pleasures accompanied a concurrent loss of sleep and appetite:

“he noticed suddenly one day an extraordinary change in himself. After complete confusion, there came a violent contrast between his old and his new state. Everything about him seemed so new and foreign that, at first he thought he must be going mad. He was nervous and irritable” (2007, 499).

In all these cases of homelessness, it is an outside madness that finds enclosure by subtly, but assuredly, enfolding – these are not people who have gone mad, but the case studies of subjects who have been afflicted by their outside conditions. Of course, this is not clinical madness itself but a kind of neurotic abjection - as John Rajchman reminds us in *Analysis in Power: A few Foucaldian Theses* “Freud held that in every neurosis there was a fear of madness, of going mad and of mad people” (46). Of course, where Rajchman’s essay lauds Deleuze and Guattari’s *Anti-Oedipus* project for its problematizing anti-psychiatric moralism, he faults the “form of this argument, which derives an analysis of society from madness, and to simply modify it by a particular construal of the difference between schizophrenia and paranoia” (47). Alas – Rajchman is more than correct, and the pair repeat this problem in *A Thousand Plateaus* by doing exactly what they accuse Freud of doing to the psyche: reducing multiplicity to mere molar unities (Malabou articulates this argument most eruditely qua Hegel in here essay “Who’s Afraid of Hegelian Wolves”). Yet, Rajchman turns to Foucault to solve this problem (so as to examine “mechanisms of power to which it is indissolubly linked”(47)), and this is no solution at all (the case of molar madness).

Given German sociologist Davor Löffler’s notion of “active informationalism,” a new moment of realism breaks from postmodernism’s process-integrative capacity of “active informationalism,” beginning in roughly 2001 appeal to power simply *won’t do*. In *Distributing Potentiality: Post-capitalist Economies and the Generative Time Regime* (2018), Löffler speaks of how:

“every system is unfolding a self-referential world by its specific selection and synthesis of environmental data, to influence the becoming of a system means to generate worlds. This is currently occurring in nearly every field: from self-optimization by datafication of the self, to biogenetics, preemptive politics and nudging, preditive policing, automated speculative markets and derivative trading as bets on potential developments, to generative design as the automation of creativity by algorithms. Active informationalism marks the beginning of the domestication of ‘genetic spaces.’ Processes of becoming themselves are integrated into operational chains” (2018, 31).

Problematizing modernist thinking (perhaps best epitomized by Quentin Meillassoux’s arche-fossil realism), Löffler shows that “rendering reality” is not simply through Foucauldian negentropic operational feedback mechanisms, which regulate and normalize human bodies but then become wilted, for they stay at the level of social structuration rather than being developed into general concepts pertaining to “low entropic and negentropic systems including machines ranging from the inorganic to the technological” (Bryant 107). We must, therefore speak of feedback with what is woven into the secondary retentions that form memory and become protentional *pharmaka*.

If there is anything to be gleaned from Foucault’s work with madness that is relevant for us today (given extropianist ethics and transhumanist libido), it is Foucault’s lack – quite literally. Stiegler’s impending book, *The Age of Disruption* (a text I laud as, quite possibly, the epitome of his life’s work) draws its thesis from this lack – I am speaking of the 1961 preface in *The History of Madness* that was removed from the 1972 edition following Derrida's critique in "Cogito and the History of Madness" (1963). Foucault’s original preface presented reason in the Classical Age as it relation to madness – here, Foucault poised reason as a kind of “trick” that madness plays (on, and against, itself). This opposes much of the standard Foucauldian archeological historiography (and that which Rajchman presents), whereby history is understood as a kind of social enclosure that progressively circumscribing madness, thus treating it as unreason. Thanks, in great measure, to Stiegler’s revival, we can now allocate history’s partition of classical reason as a kind of madness, or as a “new form of madness,” exacerbated in the homeless condition(ing). This "trick of madness" foreshadows (though not forecloses) our current moment of fetishist, transhumanist "neo-barbarism," or our epoch that suffers from the absence of epoch.

Of course, the possibility of losing reason - of “going mad” – has been the very *fatum* of the tragic condition since the ancient Greeks found the horizon of their piety. Thus the possibility (and the amorphous nature) of ὕβρις (hubris), which stems from the conflict between Zeus and Prometheus, as the mortal condition. Hermes is, of course, the interpreter of ὕβρις, of the limits it imposes, as Αἰδώς (Aidṓs) and Δίκη (Dikê); when the latter – justice and moral order - is not respected, Νέμεσις (Nemesis) orders punishment. Thus, it is not madness that is the problem, but the direction, or the sway, of madness that becomes pre-conscious and pharmacological. In our age, which Stiegler terms as characterized by “disruption,” wondering how to avoid going mad is the very “quasi-cause of madness” (302). Our monotheistic care tries to overcome the possibility of going mad by turning it from a default into a fault, and, thus, by making the blame fall on the pharmakos that is the scapegoat. Thus, Stiegler offers that this scapegoat denies that the necessary possibility of becoming mad, which is always contained in technical life (in Canguilhem's sense), lies precisely in the “organological and pharmacological conditions of noetic souls,” (226) which go demoralized. The curative pharmakon always ends up becoming toxic.

It is the transhumanist project that is ὕβρις par excellence (what Roberto Esposito called *delinquere* – the “lack” that keeps us together), as it takes statistical and probabilistic calculations of averages as standardization, measuring and eliminating idiomatic differences (diachronic and idiosyncratic variability); yet ὕβρις is, therefore, two-faced, reflexively fulfilled with the possibility of sublimation and negentropic noesis of every kind.

The project of modernity did not account for dimness – what was bright was stratified: capital, print, and central perspective unified by machine-integrative capacity; everything consolidated under a coordinate system and blanketed by homogenous natural law(s) - one continuum and the continuum of the one, seeping through each strata. In contrast to modernity’s madness of encroachment, held at ruler’s length by industrial (re)production’s own libidinal economy, the contemporary world of deep digitality transposes the cybernetic conditions in Deleuze's control society, which is stilted on the conditions of subjective cellularity and monolithic view. The digital swarm has rendered analog indices of passage obsolete, not only discarding them but denying them of any use-value/utility (outside of networked ontology). Consequently, we can see that what Shannon Mattern terms “technologies of settlement” (2017, 87) have displaced the old cultural techniques (*Kulturtechnik*) genealogical ties to all things palpable, malleable, or agrarian, though they have also been luxated only to be reified vis-à-vis reticulated intermedial electro-magnetic surfaces (screens). Drills, routines, skills, habituations, and techniques reappear in tools, gadgets, artifacts, and technologies. Where those “first writing surfaces, clay and stone, were the same materials used to construct ancient city walls and buildings, whose facades also frequently served as substrates” (Mattern, xxxix), such media of besmirchment (mud, clay, chalk, and silt) finds their qualitative praxis in the self-produced automatic protentions derived from internet users, who are increasingly “fully digital.” What often goes unnoticed is the subterranean legislative strata: that the American hegemony of GAFA was perhaps most substantially bolstered by the public domain decision on April 30, 1993 (in Europe) that gave the internet a completely new a revolutionary dimension. This, of course, followed the Clinton government granting tax exemptions for this very set of businesses.

Through the analyses of Jonathan Crary, Thomas Berns, and Antoinette Rouvroy, Stiegler has describes the loss of a kind of primordial narcissism - not just that of the “*wes*” that television aims to “tele-vise” and, thus, facilitate as a standardization ("psychic secondary retentions") but, also, those primordial narcissisms that must be maintained and protected (that of the *Is*), against pathology. However, these primordial narcissisms are replaced by "automatic protentions derived from the automatic analysis of the retentions self-produced" by internet users who are decomposed "through a process of the automated 'dividuation' of the digital traces produced by everyone" (25). This is how the data economy not only replaces the industry of cultural goods - a disruption of what was already disruptive by something more rapid and violent (radicalization) - but, also, how media is made residentiary and domestic (often accompanied by making it more tactile). How Latour can extol the networked interface, denying the link conceived by design and marketing where technical systems and psychic individuals are short-circuited by social systems, is worthy of suspicion.

Foucauldian accounts of power and madness, wherever they may appear, fundamentally foreclose that the advent of control society (that which renders individuals into “dividuals,” or data-points for entry) is linked to societies of marketing, or to the exploitation of affects via calculability. These are, of course, those invisible and unrecognizable (and, thus, the most collective) affective sites that Jean-Louis Schefer and Deleuze were concerned with as well as the emotive and internal (stimuli and “the body”). The truth is that Foucault paid very little attention to the historical fact of marketing and, thus, Foucault’s analyses remain limited as they fail to account for how biopower presupposes psychopower (passive informationalist power, which is invested in the psychological or immaterial realm) in the digital age of disruption.

Peter Sloterdijk reminds us in *In the World Interior of Capital* (2005) of the genesis of psychotechnologies of psychopower - that is, of games, computers, SMS, etc.; those technologies that constitute part of the culture industry – and their relationship to *neuropower* (the construction of synaptic and habitual relations in the body and brain in order to influence consumer decision-making). Warren Nedich gives us a viable understanding of neuropower, as construed by Sloterdijk, as that:

“which delineates the new conditions of power in cognitive capitalism….concerns the ways and means that capitalism intervenes upon the neuroplasticity of the brain in order to produce the perfect consumer through bottom-up processing, activating the primary cortices of the brain like the occipital or visual cortex and the auditory cortex” (2017, 337)

Furthermore, on the synaptic architecture of neural processes, in "Banding the brain: A critical review and outlook," Hilke Plassman offers that:

“[t]he influence of bottom-up factors may be especially strong online, as consumers engage in fast web surfing and often spend very little time on any given page. Systematically manipulating low level visual features to ‘guide; viewers’ eyes to a webpage’s regions of interest is possible by utilizing insights from visual neuroscience” (2012, 21).

To this form of cognitive psychopower, a formal functor of direct action is enfolded upon the frontal cortex, which, through a kind of top-down processing, affects choice and prognostication, radically reshaping biopower in terms of transhumanism. Thus, as Stiegler describes, the unbinding of the drives formulates a kind of disaffection and a sort of “withdrawal,” or *disaffection*, that generates disbelief, miscreance, discredit, and madness. This is the uncontrollable kind of becoming that we see in these earlier filmic narratives that reaches its fully-formed development in Deleuze’s control societies and Stiegler’s societies of hyper-control, where we witness “[a] becoming panicked that is inevitably a becoming mad, and that aggravates all attempts to deny that gravity of the situation via new extensions of control” (190).



Let us turn to the “unorthodox cult” of the subway, a beacon signifying the social commons of urbanity. The subway is a site for what John McPhee called "deep time" in *Basin and Range* (1981), where "[n]umbers do not seem to work well with regard to deep time. Any number above a couple of thousand years—fifty thousand, fifty million—will with nearly equal effect awe the imagination” (20). Rosalind Williams, in her study of subterranean technologies (mines, subways, sewers, etc.), links the notion of “deep time” to Marx’s historical materialist account (which Shannon Mattern eloquently calls “subsurface history”). Of course, given that these are historically sites for labor and homelessness, this is most interesting for our case study.

Open Source Intelligence, in their publication *Collective Intelligence: Creating a Prosperous World at Peace* (2008) propose a number of integrative proposals; these are, mostly predictable - they speak mostly of installing interfaces at subway stations that deliver foreknowledge (instead of warnings related to past circumstances) and SMS Subway arrival alerts. However, here is one proposition that particularly stands out:

“There is an acoustical technology contraption at the 34 street NYC subway station sponsored by MIT, Apple, Bose, and about six other groups. Based on my personal experience it has provoked communication between strangers, even at distances of 60 feet. One major contributor was Christopher Janney” (152).

I underscore this quote, not to commend these companies’ (and architect’s) efforts but to underscore a means of showing that it is not the network that is hierarchical but that which resonates within it as a market force. Bruno Latour’s interest in the autonomous agency of object-networks (“the parliament of things”) finds it closest ally in Bruno Latour and its philosophical lynchpin in Meillassoux’s flat ontology of the real. For it is Meillassoux who endorses the Copernican revolution, “wherein the anthropocentrism of correlationism is displaced in favor of a system in which reality is at the center, and the human is but one element in the network of the real” (Galloway 2013, 354).

Bruno Latour has upheld that the subway spoke to an older understanding of network vis-à-vis surfacing; “networks have become the rule and surfaces the exception. It has lost its sharp edge” (2005, 143). Yet, Latour’s interface-determinism presents a hard design of apolitical recapitulation, where smooth surfaces are sovereign, unquestionable rulers. Systems are not, of course, disruptive hierarchies, as Latour would have us believe - it would appear that there is an effort to sharpen such networks, too, which reveals the very contingency of systematicity and the very existence of a historical phase after decentralization.

To be clear, I am in agreement with Alex Galloway that Ian Bogost, Nina Power, and Levi R. Bryant show how object-oriented philosophy can be used so as to invert the valence of the unfeeling logic within this exclusionary "parliament of things," which Harman’s camp of “speculative realism” champions. As Power has said:

"a historical materialism (that of late Sartre, for example, or even Firestone when she speaks of it being 'too late' to save nature) that is able to conceive of politics from the standpoint of catastrophe but carries on anyway strikes me as rather more relevant: proliferating ontologies is simply not the point - further, what use is it if it simply becomes a race to the bottom to prove that every entity is as meaningless as every other (besides, the Atomists did it better)." (2009).

Consider the case study of OMNY, New York's MTA transit system's MetroCard replacement effort, which has launched as of May 31, 2019 at 15 subway stations with plans to become ubiquitous over the next five-year period. OMNY poses a contactless bank card or smart phone application as the sole means of fare payment. Prominent chain restaurants such as Sweetgreen and Dig Inn, which emphasize ecological urban-chic design and organic vegan fare, also have business models founded on cashless operation. In many ways this appropriation of “smooth-ness” is presented as Western co-option of “wisdom” (though, ineluctably, this results in “disruption” and madness). Consider Tristan Garcia’s account of examples of some classical ways of picturing wisdom:

“the withdrawal of the senses (*pratyahara*), the yogic identification of *ātman* with *brahman* (the self and the whole), the ideal of a smooth surface that reflects the world without disturbing it, and the notion of pure flatness found in some of the schools of Zen Buddhism. The same thing is also at work in the kinds of concentration, introspection, and visualisation designed to neutralise internal and external disturbances. These can be found in Vedic religion, Sufi meditation, Jainism, and Stoicism” (2018, 122).

In short, ludic capitalism has poised passage under the spiritual terrain of a subject position vis-à-vis the same smooth fluidity of the reverse panopticon, or what McKenzie Wark terms the *transopticon*, whereby space engulfs the “game space” of privatization. Consequently, we do not just see the destruction of the affective spheres – of intergenerational and transgenerational relations – but, also, the unravelling of the discourse of emancipation, by which bourgeois morality cultivates Eastern religious collective protentions under smoothness-as-marketing strategy. By spiritualizing passage with reason, we see the great antithesis of Zeus’ hermetic proclamation, where Zeus boomed to Hermes that all mortals must, in fact, become hermeneuts, so as to be capable of interpreting what is just and what is shameful - the opprobrious sacrificial call for a god to “divide himself,” and, thus, be a god not longer. As dividuation becomes the norm, the possibilly to *transindividuate* is replaced with *transdividuation*: a serpentine line of patrons, acai bowls in one hand and square-cash ready iPhones in the other. Genealogically- speaking, we are still occupy the privileged position of being able to easily deduce such media-archaeologies: the digital metro-card app’s ancestry - that of a physical tool and, more specifically, of currency and coinage. There is, of course a Janus face to all such tools – between what Deleuze and Guattari termed a “nomad science” and a “state science.”

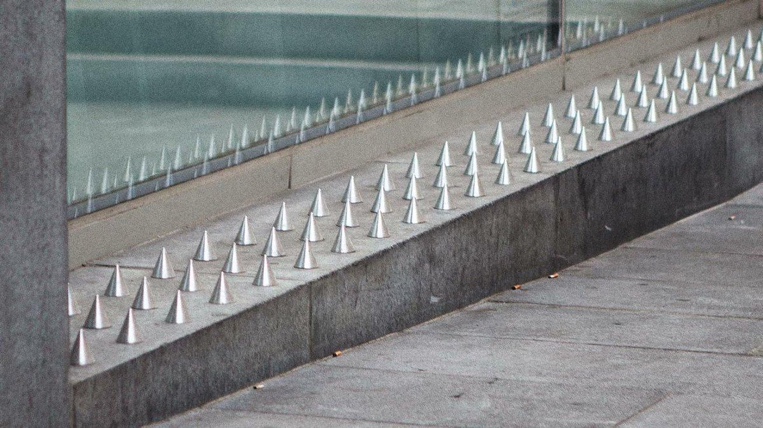
There is, also, a grain of Aristotle here - consider Aristotle's gross misreading of Plato, when Aristotle poses mathematics as a pure form of thought (so as to separate what is pure from what is impure). For Aristotle, the ultimate thought is mathematics and abstraction is comparable to that which separates something from its material/materiality; in the history of science this is, of course, not the case - the difference between abstract and the concrete is not ontological, in an Aristotelean sense, but, rather, methodological in the context of the machine, itself (or machinology). The machine – whether immaterially engaged in the post-Fordist, post-monetary reticulated system (e.g. subway transportation and it’s metro card/coinage genealogy) or tactile - plays a rudimentary abstract action and a rudimentary concrete function. This brings us back to the infantile distinction between “laminar flow” of streams and a kind of “hard science.” As with Deleuze and Guattari, in Nick Land and CCRU there is always this emphasis in turbulence, the "stream of flow," and laminar streams. All such distinctions evaporate however, as we can create a machine that turns any sort of laminar flow into a turbulent flow (*flux*) and a turbulent flow into a laminar flow.

Demonstrative knowledge is curtained through technological experiments and machines are more than analogues – instead, they open the realm of nature in relation to mind and body. Insofar as this is a machine-question, this is one of the greatest properties of Archimedes' machines, their "Janus-face," which dissolves distinction - the Archimedean method has a principle: a geometric problem can not be thought of in completely abstract principles. To flash forward, those of us familiar with Galileo's discourse on "two new sciences" know that he profusely ascribes his debts to Archimedes. We see this Janus face with Evangelista Torricelli, too, who invented barometers, which allotted for Robert Boyle's theory of the partial vacuum and consequent theories of vacuum technologies, which eventually engendered the development of atomic bombs.



We can even see the fallacy of this distinction during the dawn of civilization, when the Persians invented Cartesian wells, which were distributed according to their height. There subsists a stream of flow, however, when one tapped into the water it creates a turbulence because of the mechanisms of the machine itself. All machines are so - they confound this so-called hard distinction between nomad science and state science, steam vs. turbulence, abstract vs. actual. Archimedes' machines, the inception of all such machines there-after, are completely Janus-faced (for a more complete account, read Reza Negarestani's "What Is Philosophy?" series).

In the case of “homeless media” one would be remiss to not account for the Janus-faced that produce and reproduce the anti-homeless "hostile architecture" (also known as “exclusionary” or "defensive” urban design). Just as the 1851 "Crystal Palace" (the name that Dostoyevsky gave to the unnamed great building built in London for the "great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations") was the building through which Britain above all celebrated its great power of global capitalism, the urban park-scape now advances the exterioirization of globalized world-becoming. What is a site of leisure for the bourgeois urban occupant is weaponized against the homeless.





This has burgeoned in Paris, New York, Los Angeles, London, and Berlin (often parallel to gentrification). As Alex Galloway notes, the generic object is now necessarily understood as a Euclidean point, whereby subjective points of view have metastasized it into multiplicity - space bends, recedes, and circumscribes its deep curvature around the subject (2014, 69). Under “sharp networking,” the homeless subject can never be washed of their motile urban indices – their *excesses* – although they are increasingly made abject in the urban environment. The interface, or the network, already inscribes human consequences upon itself – thus, Harman's "equal footing" claim (as articulated in his book on Latour, *Prince of Networks: Bruno Latour and Metaphysics* (2009) is nonsensical - for if "[w]hat exists is only actants: cars, subways, canoe-varnish, quarreling spouses, celestial bodies, and scientists, all on the same metaphysical footing" then, why, pray tell, are there embedded studs lining park benches but not willow trees (this has, properly speaking, nothing to do with interface amenity).Barred from dreaming, such exclusionary urban design dictates to the homeless: “you are proscribed from dreaming and banished from ‘dream time’ altogether”; “you may only occupy that ‘deep time’ of liminal vats, where you are not only proletarianized but reminded of your proletarianization”; “you are not a noetic soul, reduced to gesticulation (so that we may gawk, feel remorse, and recycle).” Thus, for those dim bodies, one can no longer seep into “madness” as they liminally saunter over the cityscape (as was the case for Peter Wesselrin), for this requires pause and contemplation (rest). Madness is now the very subject condition of origination .

Bolstered by the rhetoric of “protection,” “hostile architecture” finds its gestural extension in the wandering eye(s) of CCTV cameras, as they attempt to usher the transient homeless subject into invisible, closed cocoons far from public view. Yuk Hui notes that censors, CCTV, and pattern recognition are part of a “technical tendency” that has accompanied ludic capitalism’s digitization process:

“Modern technologies bring us much convenience, but this convenience as an expression of convergence (in terms of functionalities as well as of time and space) also threatens to replace care structures (both individual and collective) with the machine form of “care.” In fact, we are already experiencing many of these situations, from reminders to automatic updates and recommendations. This highlights the urgency not only of discussing the status of human beings but also of searching for a new structure of care” (2016, 268).

To return to neuropower and its implications for cognitive mapping, one must entertain that the surveillance state’s homogenization of time, space, and information is also becoming increasingly vectorialist, as information exceeds embodiment, reducing ambulation to the multiplicity of the continuous feed. Thus, control is no longer a matter of the management of bodies and their wants (“good old biopolitics”) but, instead, a “more subtle business of extracting the required salience from components of the human, wired in increasingly segmented ways into components of the digital” (Wark 2012, 81). Siva Vaidhyanathan is naive to say that each incident of “peer surveillance becomes part of a massive corporate surveillance system once uploaded to Facebook or Instagram” (53) for, just as collective surveillance has become embedded in marketing media’s algorithmic governmentality, these images have been downloaded by both state and corporate servers far before they enter social media and become vehicles for predictive scoring.



Filmic homeless (in the pre-psychopolitics era of Buñuels, Loach, and company) facilitated the representation of Agamben’s *homo sacer* (bare life) and its *maddening* conditions. Yet, this delirium, fit with social unfoldings and multiple rationalizations was that of a delirium that “literally prevents one from going mad, for it postpones the senseless abyss that threatens this passing through the identical, which is what scription amounts to” (Kristeva 1980, 75). Scription is replaced by typeface; we are now confronting the motile subjectivity of terrains and artefacts that are foregrounded against their limits (the cityscape) and their barriers (the edges of the cartographic camera), which no longer simply produce *excess* but rely on it as prerequisite. Digital cartography now points off-screen, rather than abandoning the fixed frame of reference so as to beget “world-making.” Thus, in Carax’ filmography, which, of our examples, is closest to post-cinema, the camera can never “keep up” with Denis Lavant, who always risks seeping beyond the margins.

What is interventionist media to do today? At diametric ends with the glib smart-phone interface of convenience capitalism (expedient travel-fare and purchase) is the ethical power that the abject can exert through *thereness*, or a logic of refusal; in his book on structural abjection and spectatorship vis-a-vis European contemporary cinema and continental philosophy, Thomas Elsaesser recounts an anecdote of a homeless man he observed one winter morning near Washington Square in New York:

“…whom a film crew was asking to move. The man refused; he also could not be bribed with a hot drink or with money. The director eventually gave up, saying, ‘It’s impossible to negotiate with someone who has all the time in the world, and no place to go,’ and so the homeless man was eventually incorporated into the shot. Homeless people are rare in New York these days, and this one would have been an example of the ethical power that the abject can exert….it aligns the man with the figure of Herman Melville’s *Bartleby the Scrivene* , whose ‘I prefer not to’…has become the philosophers’ motto of an ethics of withdrawal rather than of militant resistance or open refusal. Manifesting presence and nothing more was also what was said to have lent power to the Occupy Wall Street movement, whose participants – like Daniel Blake in front of his graffiti signature – protested merely with their thereness” (2019, 158).

If cinema initially presented didactic prowess for marginalized and subaltern subjects (e.g. *Los Olividados*), it was by function of representation via “empathetic projection,” presenting the philosophic situation that Elsaesser refers to via “films as thought experiments,” whereby empathy teaches us ‘what it might ‘be like’ to be in this situation, without ever giving us the sort of privileged access to a character’s inner states that we would expect from an identification with the character, or outright sympathy” (152). In rebuttal to Deleuze’s “the people are missing,” or an imagistic minor-subject that counters hegemonic oppression vis-à-vis cinema’s ethico-politics, postcolonial studies has responded with what can be reduced to two basic charges. As Spivak dismisses the staging of the world via paternal proxies, pointing to the abstraction of "the other” in Deleuze's thinking, she, in turn, reproaches the mystification of the virtual, prompting the real, or local, voice of experience and knowledge. Patricia Pisters culls Gayatri Spivak’s oft-quoted essay, “Can the Subaltern Speak” (1983), noting that:

“First, Deleuze’s critique of representation as developed in *Difference and Repetition* and his emphasis on desire, lines of flight, and the virtual are seen to prohibit real material contact with, and any commitment to, or navigable route through, concrete postcolonial and political reality. Second, Deleuze’s philosophy is said to leave no room for the specific voices of (Third World) others; the political concepts he (often with Guattari) developed, such as the nomad, becoming-minoritarian, and the impersonal (or asubjective), are deemed problematic from a postcolonial point of view” (Pisters 2012, 245).

Yet, as we have seen, we do not need to consolidate post-colonialism to see the problems with lines of flight. for, as diagonal methodology (lines of flight connecting to elements outside the totality) allows for an activation of the inexhaustible and innovative, it also has deterministic ends. Where lines of flight direct us towards preindividual funds, so, too, do they help produce this collective Dasein - digital tertiary retention, which constitutes the digital technical system, is disruptive because it takes control of this sharing (of the background, or the preindividual funds, of an epoch).

Elsaesser notes that empathy - and, therefore, sympathy and identification – are simply no longer ethically feasible gestures of solidarity; instead, Elseasser evokes films that are able to produce spaces that underscore what Jean-Luc Nancy terms the "inoperative community" for the abject spectator (153). Yet, these admonitions have fallen on silent ears - from Alexandra Pelosi's *Homeless: The Motel Kids of Orange County* (2010) to the myriad of documentaries on international homelessness (e.g. *Shelter*, *PUSH*, *The Street: A film with the Homeless*), outsider representation and “paternal proxies” have occluded the narrative conditions of passage produced by these aforementioned auteurs. Often thwarting passage and mobility through fixed shots, these documentary artifacts not only hypostasize a “theory of the victim” but revert to the anti-homeless "hostile architecture" of contemporary urban design by capitalizing on the gratuitous glamorization of poverty (what is sometimes termed “poverty porn”).

Of course, there have been initiatives that appeal to the “humane possibility” to conceive of a positive relationship between homelessness, transience and new media (“new lines of flight”). Consider the New Haven Emergency Department "mHealth" project (a wireless “health and e-care” effort that prompted the Federal Communication Commission to create a homeless task force) and legal scholar Suzanne Bouclin’s research with “Homeless Nation: Producing Legal Subjectivities through New Media” (2015). While recognizing the successes f such efforts - mHealth and the Montreal-based/activist driven website Homeless Nation project are upending the prominent digital division between new-media users and disenfranchised homeless subjects, allowing for assemblage - I aspire to canvas a solution for future projects by emphasizing the need for plasticity-based algorithmic programming that extends beyond the terrain of mobile phones and computer access while also being wary of it. Stiegler emphasizes the commons and Davor Löffler “nudging”

In particular, if we turn to examples such as City24x7, New York’s “Smart Screens” initiative, we notice that psychogeography is reticulated along lines of capital (which, as mentioned earlier, are enfolded along neurological lines). These free, multi-lingual, internet-connected, large-scale touch-pads have replaced 250 phone booths in Manhattan. However, it is no coincidence that these are concentrated along busy streets (in west Harlem, the sole “Smart Screen” is on W. Broadway, near Columbia University’s 116th street entrance, rather than where Harlem residents would have access to it). How, then, can a truly “homeless new media,” meaning a new media for the public, be reterritorialized as a ubiquitous parallel of the urban psychogeographic landscape of transience if it is, at the very core, Janus-faced and not a gestural site of enclosure? Lines of flight have asymptotic ends (therefore, in projective geometry and vanishing point geometry, parallel lines do, in fact, collide). Given that these projects sell themselves along their ultimately utopic means (though not ends), and encourage a wary dubious skepticism towards the possibility of both meta-data collection and psychogeographic control, they best embody what Latour turns a blind eye to: “control after decentralization.” Jason Lariviere and Alexander Galloway have been producing most exciting research on the philosophy of compression, which may prove valuable yet for psychogeography as well. When further navigating the landscape of “homeless new media” we ought to ask: what sorts of worlds are made by possible by digitality? What is lost through this compression and what is gained? What are the legislators of this loss? What does digitality prohibit? And, lastly, how is it possible to think non-digitally?

Srnicek and Williams were once highly lauded for wanting to (rightly) reprogram the material platforms behind what has become the "data economy," which is increasingly leading to generalized automation. However, this may very well just involve a new type of ludic capitalism, which, if not denaturalized, will co-opt playful (in the way that Schiller and Huizinga thought key to the social whole) and direct it towards smooth tyranny (look at the trajectory of "cancel culture" and the right’s absorption of accelerationism). Bernard Stiegler notes that: "[a] redeployment of digital pharmacology in the service of post-capitalist goals...requires new forms of knowledge capable of providing new prescriptions" (295) that will make it possible to overcome the tyranny of lifestyles. Of course, these must "collectively individuate" a new, true digital culture of a new moral being, de-proletarianized and capable of noetic dreaming, expecting nothing of technological solutionism. In Britain, people have covered anti-homeless spikes with cushions and mattresses (“a nursery for slumber”), while in Mumbai similar installations were replaced with flowers following social media outrage. The noetic soul remains embedded in the public consciousness, which sparks hope after all.

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