The Desiring Machines of Capital and Technology

By

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For Tamara Kachelmeier, with love

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History

Capitalism and technology, <u>working</u> for each other, like the two-

headed monster Janus and also like a transnational condominium, have

both created various machines that enslave us all by transforming

human life on earth. What follows is a brief historical sketch of how

capital and technology brought this about.

Beginning in the mid-1970s through the early 1980s in the West, the

capitalistic process assigned value to information (and knowledge):

that is, capital valued information as a form of labor and merchandise.

Briefly, within the capitalistic process, what is valued is what can be

exchanged: that is, a form of merchandise is what has exchange-

value. Once this process began to value words and ideas, as distinct

from material goods, the new time of capital, armed with the new

labor-power of (information), began to free itself from the time of

concrete labor. As a result, capitalism became less concerned with

organizing space into functional sectors than with subsuming the

totality of time under its own laws of unequal exchange.

This new process ruptured the pact between capital and labor, which

was actually an agreement among labor, management, and the state;

that is, with the cooperation of labor and management, the state

arbitrated and regulated productivity, wages, and profits. Before this

new system was set in place, the production of consumer goods

developed mass consumption (in other words, supply worked to

create demand). In this model, US domestic workers became

consumers of the merchandise they produced (to quote Henry Ford:

"Our workers should also be our customers").

However, by the mid-1970s, the saturation of domestic markets for

consumer goods led to the expansion of capital into third-world

countries. This expansion was necessary so that these goods could be

produced and consumed by a third-world urban work force that was

both abundant and ready for work, but that was not organized and thus

not expensive. These new modes of production, consumption, and

distribution led to the establishment of Free Production Zones (so-

called FPZs) and Export Processing Zones (so-called (EPZs) within the

context of the new international division of labor and the

imperial transnational capital.

Capital became extremely fluid, eroding to a certain extent the

boundaries and functions of the traditional nation-state: no restrictions

on first-world investment and transfers of capital, as third-world

governments were eager for first-world revenues, and first-world

transnational companies were eager for cheap third-world labor. A

truly symbiotic relationship, which in turn has led to this contradictory

phenomenon: The condominium that comprised (first-world) imperial

agents and (third-world) local elite needed at the same time a weak

nation-state in relation to capital (to not impose restrictions on the

fluidity of capital) and a strong nation-state in relation to labor (to

guarantee a needy domestic labor, by, among other tasks,

imposing taxes and other measures, like overpricing, punitive to the

poor). In the early 1990s, GATT (General Agreement on Trade and

Tariffs, transformed into WTO, World Trade Organization) and

NAFTA (North American Free Trade Agreement) simply formalized a

situation that had existed since the mid- to late 1970s, and even then,

the provisions and regulations came nowhere near acknowledging the

extraordinary optimum transfer of capital, goods, and people that had

prevailed before. This would explain the confused impassioned debates

about NAFTA, WTO, and especially the one in 2000 in the US about

the admission of China into WTO, which were quite confused across

ideological divides with strange bedfellows-- like labor unions and

conservative Republicans.

To repeat: This new system of capital started working for the free

circulation of humans, merchandise, and information. People whose

profession involves producing, analyzing, and circulating money,

words, codes, data, audio, video, and images (the dot.com crowd,

editors, writers, movie producers, media-content providers, designers,

investment bankers, currency traders, and even sales-people, thanks to

e-commerce, e-Bay, and others (Let's not forget that sales used to

depend on "face-time") can live and work anywhere in the world, so

long as they are wired, for institutions not necessarily located where

they live and work.

As an example: I'm a freelance writer who generates content for new

media around domestic US and the world. I also do basic

research for cultural institutions, like museums and book publishers.

The bulk of my everyday work consists of writing essays and reviews

and reading books, manuscripts about to be published, so-called

journals of opinion in politics and the arts, (sometimes quite jargony)

academic journals, daily and weekly newspapers, and dogged research-

-through hyperlinks--that I do mostly online: This essentially means

that I can do most of my work anywhere in the US and the world--as

long as I have a computer with access to the Net. I send and receive

projects as attachments on respective web-based e-mail, which can be

accessed anywhere in the world as long as I can get to a computer with

an Internet connection. I download or upload materials from and into

my online workstation (http://www.fusionone.com) and then work on

them, so I really don't have to worry too much about misplaced

floppies or crashed hard drives.

In fact, I consider myself more or less dead if I'm offline for more than

twenty-four hours. My clients electronically deposit my checks into my

online debit bank account. And when I travel around the US and the

world I simply carry my ATM cash card that also doubles as my VISA

card. I communicate with friends and relatives mostly by e-mail, which

is the only reliable way to contact me, as I might be anywhere in the

world at anytime. My e-life, as it were, lived on speed, is an admixture

of user IDs, passwords, e-airline tickets, e-boarding passes, airline

name tags, airport outlets for my laptop, and multiple time-zones.

In fact, the one period when I flew across time-zones so

frequently, I ceased to believe in jetlag: I flew so often that I inhabited

my own time-zone. (A few months ago, a friend who works for

National Public Radio, spent a week in the North Pole. She e-mailed

me from up there. In response, I asked her what her time-zone was. She

e-mailed back: My time-zone is whatever I want it to be. Of course! I

thought.) During that period, I woke up one morning in Tokyo, had

lunch in the afternoon in Hong Kong, and slept that night in New York.

And my New York brick-and-mortar apartment is on the fortieth floor,

with a sweeping view of most of the West Side of Manhattan and New

Jersey, so that sometimes at night when I'm dozing off in front of the

TV by the living-room window, I have the illusion of being on an

airplane over the city, descending and watching an in-flight movie. In

his *Global Souls: Jetlag. Shopping Malls, and the Search for*

Home, Pico Iyer describes similar experiences of a life lived on speed,

but I'm getting ahead of myself. There's more on speed to come.)

Whereas in the previous model of capital, time and bodies were bound

to the space of labor production, these days, time and bodies have been

liberated from the space of production. In a sense, as Paul Virilio has

pointed out: It doesn't matter where our bodies are, because when

we're plugged in, we're in teletopia, and the body's sphere of

influence, on one register, is reduced to the production or the zapping

of signs. So information (knowledge) became a production factor that

can be quantified: in other words, it became a commodity.

Capital and technology have worked together to produce a

teletopia where the duration of time and the extension of space have

been superseded by the absolute speed of the time of capital, the speed

of time-light (that is, the time it takes to transmit data: the speed of

light—which is 678 million miles per hour). At the beginning of the

Third Millennium, the condominium of capital-technology has

liberated human life completely from the boundaries of space and

abolished the need for travel all together.

From this point on, the task of capital is to assure an optimal

mobilization of information and, from daybreak to sunset, and also

overnight, to work against the viscosity of a complex social body that

might hamper this mobilization (for instance, social movements,

radical intellectuals, the homeless, and so on).

In 2000, the New York Stock Exchange [NYSE] and NASDAQ

announced that they will stay open during evening hours--they close

now at 4:00 EST. Given Capital's new regime, I was surprised that it

took this long for these primary US stock exchanges to decide and

think about staying open in the evening. It's only a matter of time

before the exchanges stay open 24/7. Human bodies will sleep of

course, but at their own peril, since the machines of Capital will stay

awake forever. A friend who is a web developer as well as a stock

trader told me recently, "History is gone!" And I agreed, because since

Capital operates with speed and overexposure, history--including what

subvents it, memory-- is more or less elided. In fact, history

becomes a luxury that only the underexposed can afford.

At this point, and for some time now, we have the exceptional fluidity

of people, wealth, and words. We must understand the phrase "cultural

capital" in this double sense of capital and knowledge. The market law

of commodities, then, controls the diffusion (and even the realm itself)

of ideas. (As an aside, the Internet has deposed academia--particularly

in the US--as the privileged "space" for the production, circulation, and

consumption, and discussion and debate of knowledge and ideas.

These days, the kind of knowledge that academics produce is but a

blimp within the flow of information and knowledge that course

through the Internet everyday. In a sense, this academic knowledge has

lost some of its stock value, has gone through a "correction," to

deploy stock market parlance. And with various virtual universities

being set up these days by book publishers and private-sector

entrepeneurs--Harcourt General, the textbook publisher, 2000 set up its

own "university," where, of course, most of the required reading will

come from books featured on its online catalogue. So that very soon,

behind each virtual university will be the ghosts of, say, 200

professors, or FTEs, in university administrative parlance.)

To digress somewhat in a long parenthesis: Let me just restate all this

within the framework of one of the industries I used to work in, book

publishing, in which editors and publishers are more or less cultural

brokers and producers of stocks of knowledge in the intellectual stock

exchange: The cost of producing information (knowledge, in

this case bound in book-form), measured in the time necessary to its

formulation and comprehension (writing, acquisitions, rewriting,

editing--the editorial department's function), must be minimized

(composition--the production department's function), while its

exchange value is increased by the multiplication of references,

allowing it to reach a broad public (publicity, advertising--the

marketing department's function). End of parenthesis.

To pick up my thread: Before this new system of capital emerged, the

traditional laborer moved everyday from the "space" of home to that of

work, and vice-versa. of labor. Now we no longer make distinctions

between "home" and "work." We're all enslaved completely by time

and capital, free to invest in ourselves, with the various

machines at our disposal to produce valued time, that is, money as time

saved and stored through labor. Recall Ben Franklin: "Time is Money

and Money is Time") We've all become new "human capital," now

producing valued time in order to consume the time valued. Time

valued is simply what is commonly known as leisure time, (free

evenings, vacations days-off, leaves of absences), but which is now

enslaved by capital as well, since we spend money during our so-called

leisure time.

This human capital is the "civil servant" par excellence of time and

capital: The old factory is now dispersed throughout the city, and work

in the factory and life in the city now become indistinguishable. Time

has completely colonized space, has invaded even domestic

space: Pace, the freelancer or consultant working at home, in the so-

called "home office," plugged into the computer, the Wi-Fi, into the

Internet, and so on; and the staff member attached to an institution who

"takes work home" or is "working at home" and so on.

Capital has thus created the worst prison of all: It has locked time up.

First, Capital liberated time from the space of production, and only

then was Capital able to capture time and allocate it to Capital's own

laws of production and consumption. Time subsequently became the

only factor in the production and consumption of commodities. In the

dot-com world, for instance, information (data, codes, video, audio,

texts) is the ultimate commodity. Structurally, Time also became the

only factor in the production and consumption of Time: For

instance, I had to buy some time out on furlough (with the time that I

had saved) in order to be able to think, type, cut and paste, rewrite,

edit, and print this essay on my machine.

Capital has provided the Time used to produce and save Time, the

saved Time subject to the law of commodities. One is rich because one

has more saved time (that is, money), and one is poor because one has

less saved time (that is, money). According to this paradigm, the poor

or the homeless or the unskilled or the unemployed have no valued

time, no stored time, but only naked "real or actual" time that no

employer wants to buy, sometimes even at a discount: in other words,

the homeless or the unemployed or the unskilled have only their own

naked time to waste.) However, both the employer and the

employed are enslaved by time and capital; both are incorporated into

the machine of transnational capital: The former simply has more

money at her disposal to buy more machines to enable her to produce

and to save more time in order to enjoy (to consume) more time, and so

on and so on.

Where once we derived our dignity from labor, we now wish to partake

in the luster of capital. We desire our own imprisonment by capital, as

it were.

We've become desiring machines of capital and time and technology.

This human capital engages in the optimal maximization of time and is

highly skilled at what is commonly called "multi-tasking." This

human capital, jetting around the globe to network, wears a cell-phone

attached with an earpiece and speaks into an attached mike while

speaking to her contacts, speaking into the air, as it were. She carries a

laptop while looking for an open outlet during a layover at the airport--

that maximum space of transition that also collapses temporal intervals.

Sometimes you see her at cafes working on her laptop while also

talking on her cell-phone while also drinking a cafe latte. In all these

"spaces," she works in an "environment" that has no relationship

whatever to real time as such: In other words, there is now a distinction

between "present time" (the time present to the viewer on the screen of

the computer monitor) and "real" time.

As an example: I have a friend who lives in New York. He's a broker

who trades in foreign currency for a small brokerage firm on Wall

Street. He has a Quotron in his home study in Park Slope in Brooklyn.

He tells me that sometimes he's up around 3 AM checking the trades in

London, Paris, and Frankfurt. At around 7 PM in New York, the

market in Tokyo is open, since the time-zone there is about fourteen

hours ahead of New York's. Sometimes he intervenes right there and

then to trade and transfer currency. Time in Tokyo and London and

Frankfurt is present to him on the screen of his monitor, where he lives,

in his real time in Brooklyn. Our point here will soon be moot: As I

mentioned before, both the New York-Dow Jones and Tokyo-Nikkei

will soon overlap for a few hours on weekday evenings to undergird

the speed of Capital--pity the stockbrokers whose bodies will be

asleep during those hours!

I ran into a human capital one Saturday August 2000 night at LAX--as

I arrived in Los Angeles for the Democratic National Convention--in

front of the Tom Bradley International Terminal (TBIT in popular

parlance, where time-zones collide and fuse into one another: TBIT is

the gateway for flights into the US from southeast Asia and the

gateway out there from the US; so the few times I've been there, some

people are having breakfast; some are having lunch; and some are

having dinner). A thirtysomething, she had just jetted into LA, back

"home" as it were, from Taipei, where she'd been for ten days. She had

only three mid-sized pieces of luggage, and I can recognize a laptop

case when I see one. We chatted as we waited for the G-Bus

shuttle to connect us to the subway. She told me that she could afford

to travel that light--even overseas--for extensive periods of time

because she packs "travelers clothing," the kind that you wash in your

hotel room and that dries in under five minutes. "I fly so often that I

don't believe in jetlag anymore," she told me-- as the shuttle pulled up-

-somewhat jauntily, heartily, and, it seemed to us, triumphantly.

Capital's capture of Time is exemplified by life in the contemporary

metropolis, which I discuss in Chapter 1.

Chapter 1: The Machine of the City

The contemporary city has become a fluid terrain of multiple

lines of flight, as well as a shifting zone of intensities and forces,

marked by signs and indicators pointing to all possible directions and

transits, very much like an airport. Now even more and more, our

airports themselves look like cities, with banks, office "complexes,"

churches, shopping malls, restaurants, bars, special TV broadcast

channels, "parks," and walkways.

The cosmopolis is "overexposed" in the sense that Paul Virilio has

talked about: If at this point we can even say that this city still occupies

a piece of space, a geographical position, it certainly no longer

corresponds to the old distinction of city and rural or to the distinction

between downtown and suburb. The digital convergence of

telecommunications and computer technology (the so-called

new technologies) in the "city without limits" has dissolved the very

distinction of city-suburb-rural, eroding the boundaries of the city.

Constructed space now exists in an electronic topology, and old

distinctions between public and private and habitation and circulation

have been displaced by an overexposure that erases the extension of

space and the duration of time.

The representation of the contemporary cosmopolis is no longer

determined by the spatial grid of streets and avenues: At this point the

city is determined by technological "space-time," with its networks, its

electronic highway systems where the interface of human-machine

replaces the facades of buildings and the surfaces of the ground

on which they stand. Before the advent of new technologies, life in the

city was determined by the circadian alternations of day and night.

Now however, since we not only open the blinds but also turn on our

television and computer monitors, daylight itself has been changed. An

artificial electronic day, whose only calendar is based on the

telecommuting of information (pace knowledge) that bears no

relationship whatever to real time, is now added to the solar day of

astronomy and the night of electric power. In other words, there is now

a distinction between "present time" (on the screen of the monitor) and

"real time," which I discussed in the Introduction with the example of

my Brooklyn broker friend.

The city without limits as the contemporary desert, haunted and

invaded by transnational (or postnational) nomads, has also become a

teletopia where the duration of time and the extension of space have

been superseded by the absolute speed of the time of capital; that is, on

one register, the city has now become virtual space subsumed by the

time of capital: the city transformed into the desert overexposed to

time-light of speed.

I mentioned that technology and capital produced the digital city. I also

already indicated, if somewhat obliquely, that visual machines preside

over this digital city. Now if cinema, in its strictest sense, erases the

conventional duration of time and the extension of space, then at this

beginning of the twenty-first century, we definitely live everyday

nomadic cinematic lives tied to the screens of our various

monitors. In fact, we might as well be the replicants (complete with

memory implants: pace screen memories) in Ridley Scott's 1982 film

Bladerunner: that is, we are pieces enslaved by the machine of Capital

in a vast technological terrain of time-light.

Now I would like to describe these visual machines in the digital Los

Angeles of Ridley Scott's *Bladerunner*.

Ridley Scott's 1982 film failed at the box-office but a few years after

its release became a cult-film not only in the film world but also among

a certain generation of city slickers who grew up in cyberspace. The

film became cultic among high-tech cognoscenti for reasons that I hope

will be clear in the next few pages. But for now: the most effective

science-fiction films are those that mix elements of the familiar

with the unfamiliar, and in the case of *Bladerunner*, its Los Angeles

was all too familiar and yet we saw in that film disturbing ingredients

of our human future. I have chosen to analyze this film because its

half-ruin half-high-tech cosmopolitan, multicultural, techno-saturated,

and diasporic Los Angeles discloses one direction that the machines of

capital and technology might take us.

Blade runner opens with a panoramic scene, with a wide-angled, birds-

eye shot of a vast high-tech megalopolis, suffused with hazes and

beams of artificial light and huge monitors broadcasting giant

commercials.

The film articulates a world in which monitors are an

omnipresent and hegemonic part of life. (Throughout the rest of this

chapter, the term "monitor"--I'm assuming its interactive function and

agency--underscores the complete fusion of computer, television, and

telecommunications technology currently in process with, for instance,

web-TV, media broadcast workstations, and new-media online news-

wires. Indeed, this fusion is currently being used by the new-media

industry, and will be available for consumers when corporate heads get

together and merge their resources—as Time-Warner, AOL, and CNN

did two years ago)

Monitors frame the protagonist, Deckard-Harrison Ford, when we first

see him, and they line the streets like lamps. Their glowing screens

illuminate every interior of the movie. The film's semiotic maze

engages a complex imagery of eyes and screens. *Bladerunner* poses

Los Angeles as the quintessential postcontemporary city and presents a

pastiche (and a fracturing) of temporality in its architectural elements.

The opening shot of the film is a panorama of a chiaroscuroed city. The

city is a silhouette of skyscrapers and points of light against gray

clouds. Smoke stacks shoot out flame, and lightning and explosions

and spinners punctuate the horizon. A huge eye appears next, filling

the entire screen and reflecting the cityscape. Another shot of the city

shows a pyramid at the base of a column of light, and then the same

nameless eye.

The eye returns our gaze and also mirrors our gaze. It shows us

the reflections of the city that were, a moment ago, reflections of the

movie screen in our own eyes. Shortly after, the opening scene, Leon's

interrogation, is replayed for us three times as Deckard-Ford uses it in

his investigation. Screens are reflected within the larger screen, the

film itself, and Deckard-Ford watches with us what we have already

seen. This scene explains the presence of a camera during the opening

scene, integrating it into the narrative.

All the film's main characters are nomads: Deckard-Ford, the Blade

Runner (whom the film suggests might be a replicant); Zora-Joanna

Cassidy; Pris-Daryll Hannah; Leon; Roy-Rutger Hauer--four replicants

who escaped from the Off-World and are now nomads on Earth; and

Rachel-Sean Young--Tyrell's replicant almost-human showcase.

Vision in the film is part of the system of Capital. Cinema and its

precursors extended the field of the visible and turned visual

experience into commodity. In *Bladerunner* Capital constructs a visual

regime that enslaves everyone. Neon lights and commercials dominate

the Los Angeles of the film, a dystopic teletopia where Capital and

technology constitute a Janus-Like conglomerate.

Corporations have figured out how eyes work and mass-produce them.

Chew, the eye-maker, wears a crazy goggle contraption to do his work.

People on the streets wear glasses with flashing lights, and Roy teases

J.F. Sebastian with a pair of glass eyes. The replicants seem to hold

vision sacred. In a grisly act of revenge, Roy seeks out Tyrell in his

apartment and bursts his eyeballs with his thumbs. And in one

of the powerful moments of the film, Roy, near death, describes the

myriad wonders he has seen: *"I have seen things that you humans*

wouldn't believe. Attack ships on fire off the shoulder of Orion. I have

seen C-beams glitter in the dark near Tennhauser gate. All those

moments will be lost in time... like tears in the rain."

Two main visual machines frame the film: The Voight-Kampff

machine that appears in the opening scene with Leon and Holden and

is later used to discover that Rachel-Sean Young is a replicant. This

machine is a very advanced form of lie detector that measures

contractions of the iris muscle, and is used primarily by Blade Runners

to determine if a suspect is truly human by measuring the degree of his

empathetic response through carefully worded questions and

statements. The investigator poses questions about various hypothetical

situations, and as the subject responds the investigator watches a screen

that shows the subject's eye, as well as two smaller screens and

numerous readouts.

The Voight-Kampff machine is a menacing allegory of the way we see.

It reduces the eye to a purely physical object, to be comprehended

completely by science and examined for what it can reveal about one's

thoughts. The Esper is the other main visual machine, which Deckard-

Ford uses in his room to mobilize Leon's photograph the same way the

cinema mobilizes images into what Deleuze called time-movement.

The Esper dissects the photograph for Deckard's investigation. He

inserts it into a slot, and it appears on a screen within a grid.

With voice commands, he proceeds to dissect it, zooming in on one

section, moving over, revealing details ever more minuscule. In fact

the navigational screen of the machine also resembles a video game

come to life, consisting of a diagram of the landscape with

superimposed grids.

Grids are a function of visual technology, a mapping of the space

inside the frame onto itself. In *Bladerunner*, reality is

compartmentalized and looked at through a screen of horizontal and

vertical lines (which are likewise implied by the borders of monitors).

The grid concretizes visual machines. Ridley Scott created a

particularly memorable image in the blimp monitor that hovers over

Los Angeles. At one point the blimp is seen through the grid

that is the lattice of the expansive skylight of J.F. Sebastian's gloomy

loft-apartment in the Bradbury Building. (Interestingly, the Bradbury

Building was built in Los Angeles in 1893, prefigured the modern

mall, and was inspired by a time-travel novel, H.G. Wells's *Time-

Machine*.)

The blimp itself is huge and covered with arrays of flashing lights. At

least two big monitors broadcast commercials for "Off-World"

colonies, displaying the Coca-Cola logo and a geisha girl who smiles,

or eats a cherry, or smokes a cigarette. *Bladerunner's* world of

commercials and noise and neon lights extrapolates on our dependency

on monitors. The film articulates a paradox of subjectivity, from the

opening eye to the monstrous blimp to the monitor in Deckard's

bathroom. The screens as well as the eye watch us back, return our

gaze. *Bladerunner* interrogates visual pleasure and representation,

which comes closest to the surface of the text in the photographs that

replicants collect. These photographs are maps of a true screen,

replicas of a reality that once presented itself to someone's eyes. The

monitors invite the same kind of vertigo, presenting a thrill of the real,

or an aesthetics of the hyperreal, a thrill of vertiginous and phony

exactitude.

Vertiginous hyperreal thrills recall another film set in Los Angeles, this

time on the last day of the millennium, Kathryn Bigelow's 1995

Strange Days, in which the main character, Lenny-Ralph Fiennes,

peddles playbacks, video splicings of the thrilling experiences

of other people's lives seen from the viewpoint of the recorder. The

narrative and political spirit of *Strange Days* itself were inspired by

real events in Los Angeles, the Rodney King incident captured on

amateur video, and the subsequent riots later, both incidents widely

disseminated in digital news media in the US and the world.

We get the picture--Los Angeles is the exemplum of the digital city:

the city that Mike Davis in his *City of Quarz* describes as completely

constructed from the desert under a political and economic visual

regime; the city without limits as the contemporary desert, haunted and

invaded by transnational nomads and contemporary replicants, has

become a teletopia where the duration of time and the extension of

space have been superseded by the absolute speed of the time of

capital; that is, on one register, Los Angeles has more or less become

virtual space subsumed by the time of capital: the city transformed

from and into the desert overexposed to time-light of speed—where

transnational nomads roam. The transnational nomad is most certainly

a byproduct of the machines of capital and technology. I devote by

next chapter to this human capital.

Chapter 2: The Contemporary Nomads

This chapter will first trace the development and emergence of the

contemporary diasporic person (identified here as the transnational

nomad), as distinct from the traditional historical diasporic person

(identified here as the "migrant" or "exile"): a development made

possible by the structural offensive of transnational capital whose

contemporary history I have already described.

I argue that contemporary cosmopolitan persons everywhere are

diasporic, that is, in dispersion. For my purposes here, the cosmopolis

signifies New York, Toronto, Rome, London, Paris, Berlin, Sydney,

Miami, San Francisco, Los Angeles, or any megalopolis (or digital

world city) with a sizable demographic mix of first-world

citizens and immigrant-citizens of third-world heritage. To clarify:

economic migrants and political exiles still cross the borders of nation-

states, to be sure, but I want to argue ultimately, that nomadic

subjectivity has epistemological and political ramifications for post-

millennial theoretical enterprises.

Let's begin with the historical context. The Greek word diaspora,

which means dispersion, was first used by Thucydides in The

Peloponnesian War to describe the exile of the population of Aegina.

(Pace, the Greek word *oikos*, which means home, and *barbarus*,

foreign, the etymon of "barbarian".) The Hebrew word *galut* was

employed in The Old Testament to refer to the forced exile of Jews

from Jerusalem to Babylon in 586 BC. The term was later used

in the sense of dispersion to describe the Christian communities

scattered across the Roman Empire before it adopted Christianity as the

state religion. Traditional use of "diaspora" is often associated with

Jewish people.

But once the term is applied to other religious or ethnic groups, it

becomes immediately apparent how difficult it is in many cases to find

a definition that makes a clear distinction between a migration and a

diaspora, or between a minority and a diaspora. For instance, diaspora

isn't used when discussing the presence of British immigrants in

Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Canada, and

the US. Nor is the word applied to the many German colonies in (the

then) Central and Eastern Europe and in several Latin American

countries. Pierre George, the geographer, has used instead the

expression "minorities of superiority" to refer to these migrants and

exiles who continue to retain their identities as Germans, whom they

see as culturally superior.

Western (traditional) notions of diaspora can be loosely defined in

three ways: first, as the collective forced dispersion of a religious and

or ethnic group, precipitated by a disaster, often political; second,

considering the role played by collective memory, which transmits

both the historical facts that precipitated the dispersion and a broadly

understood cultural heritage; and third, the group's will to transmit its

heritage in order to preserve its identity, no matter the degree of

integration or attempt at assimilation, that is, the will to survive

as a minority by transmittal of heritage.

Within the framework of the traditional Western organization of

knowledge and history, there are many diasporas in many first-world

cosmopolitan areas--each represented usually in enclaves and each

classified as a domestic cultural minority. Thus, there are myriad

diasporas scattered all over the Western cosmopolis: Jewish;

Armenian; Gypsy; African; Chinese; subcontinental Indian; Irish;

Greek; Lebanese; Palestinian; Vietnamese; Cambodian; and Korean.

And so on.

Two (traditional) Western conceptions subvent these notions of

diaspora: The first traditional conception is the conception of the

identity of self, which was refined in the mid-twentieth century by

phenomenology and existentialism, and which emphasized the primacy

of the categories of perception and experience: the unitary "I" (that is,

the conscious subject, always identical and present to itself and always

opposed to the other) is viewed as the only legitimate organizer and

controller of perception and experience. These notions of the "I"

assumed the integrity (the indivisibility) of the normative and universal

(Western) self outside the differences and vicissitudes of culture and

history.

The second traditional conception is the Jacobin imaginary (one

legacy of the French Revolution underpinning the liberal wing of the

Enlightenment) that for the past two hundred and some years in the

West has supervised the idea of society as a rational and transparent

order grounded on a single principle that accounts for a whole field of

differences. In the operation of this imaginary, the category of

representation was supposed to discover a common essence beneath

differences, to search for the structures that constitute the inherent law

of all possible variations, and to establish the normative requirements

for a single democratic logic that will rule society. Historical events,

however, have transformed these traditional notions of diaspora.

In the mid to late twentieth century, the disintegration of

European imperialist networks and the emergence of various

decolonization movements, the ever-changing social formations and

modes of production under the aegis of capitalism, and the politics of

the defunct cold war have had several ramifications, among which,

because of the many military, social, economic, and political practices

corollary to these developments, first-world countries now have a

sizable and expanding number of first- and second-generation citizens

with third-world heritage.

These (post)colonial citizens within the first world have contributed

enormously to: a certain globalization that traverses races, languages,

and social formations; the questioning of the meaning of the nation-

state itself; the fact of heterogeneity, plurality, and community;

the production of a variety of cultural economies and texts; and the

politics of cultural memory in the (de)configuration of national

identities, discourses, and ideologies. My point is that there is currently

a robust (and even exponential) diasporic drift across countries,

continents, races, languages, and religions because of the

reconfiguration of international capital and labor, and because of the

economic and social fallout from the ethnic antagonisms that thawed

out after the freeze of the cold war.

More specifically in domestic US, before the end of the cold war, the

politics of difference articulated by the liberation movements of the

1960s and 1970s--by groups aligned with the categories of race,

gender, class, national origin, and sexual orientation--insisted

on cultural differences (pace "multiculturalism") as the basis of

identity. And in the third world, the decolonization movements of the

late 1950s and 1960s fomented the active rediscovery of difference

among racial and ethnic groups within large and complex societies.

Thus, "identity politics" became precisely the practice that militated

against normative and fixed (Western) notions of identity that had

usually hierarchized those categories of difference for discrimination

and subordination. And "multiculturalism" got its critical purchase

because it linked various identity struggles with a common rhetoric of

difference and resistance. But I want to focus on only one of these

"historical events": the various transformations of capital—aided by

technology--that have disrupted traditional conceptions of

identity, and that in turn have prepared the terrain for the emergence of

the contemporary nomad, as distinct from the migrant or the exile, an

emergence whose conditions of possibility were produced by

transnational (or postnational) capital.

Both the new nomad in the city and the city itself have been put into

the orbit of the time-light of speed. Let's discuss and analyze and the

attributes of this new nomad--in the new city that has also become the

deterritorialized desert: The nomadic person that has emerged, at this

post-millennial stage of transnational capital, in the overexposed city-

become-desert.

Contemporary discourses have shown us that the notion of the

"individual" offers a fiction of cohesion that bears as its symptom the

belief in a fully enabled and self-conscious power. And of course the

notion of the subject in turn offers the contradictory senses of (1) the

enabling and controlling and (arguably) sovereign subject of power and

discourses, and at the same time (2) the subject dispersed, subjected to-

-and at conflict with--linguistic, social, and cultural formations, and

legal, political, and economic institutions. Then we have the notion of

subject-positions that an "individual" or person occupies, positions that

have their own discourses and histories, some of which that "person" is

born into, and others that the "person" has chosen. These subject-

positions are sometimes contradictory and never cohere to form a

complete "individual." For example: one "person" or "individual" can

be fractured by the subject-positions of Ethiopian, Jewish,

mother, lesbian, physically handicapped, conservative

environmentalist, radical amateur economist, and "leftist" political

columnist. This person, who in fact is none other than our nomadic

subject, will occupy all these various positions from day to day in

discourse and society (with respect to institutions and other people) and

will have to negotiate all the tensions attendant to these positions from

day to day, depending on the context.

The nomad, thoroughly traversed, perhaps animated, perhaps

conflicted, by historical, ethnic, and cultural differences, is a product of

the transnational (or postnational) capitalist rewriting of social relations

and labor production (or put another way: the reconfiguration of the

international division of capital and labor), is more often than

not multilingual, and is, as we have said, an American citizen with

third-world heritage living in a megalopolis in the US. This

postcolonial American understands well that these subject-positions are

affiliations, again, some that s/he was born into, and some that s/he has

chosen. The question for this different kind of American is how to

thematize these affiliations, recognizing them as sites of conflict and

struggle rather than as sites of identity.

This postcolonial American is one version of Edward Said's "cultural

amphibian" or Homi Bhabha's "cultural hybrid," but contrary to both

Said's and Bhabha's figure of the migrant intellectual "floating upward

from history, from memory, from time," I argue that this polyglot

nomad is neither exile nor migrant as such. The migrant has a

close tie to class structure: In most countries, migrants are the most

economically disadvantaged who have minimal or zero stored time,

more or less marginal to the neo-Fordist network. And the exile is

often motivated by political reasons and does not often coincide with

the poor.

In contrast, our nomad does not stand for homelessness (not no

passport but several passports) or compulsive displacement but is

rather a figuration of the kind of subject who has no desire or recidivist

nostalgia. This figuration articulates the desire for a site of conflicts

made of transitions, successive shifts, coordinated changes, repetitions,

cyclical moves, and rhythmic displacements. To repeat somewhat and

to clarify: both the (basically economic) migrant and (basically

political) exile belong to the Fordist phase of Capital, while the

(basically cultural and epistemological) nomad belongs to Capital's

neo-Fordist phase.

The nomad is the prototype of the man or woman of ideas: As Gilles

Deleuze puts it, the point of being an intellectual nomad is about

crossing boundaries, about the act of going, regardless of the

destination. To paraphrase Deleuze: The life of the nomad is the

intermezzo; she is a vector of deterritorialization. The nomad enacts

transitions without a teleological purpose. Nomadic consciousness is

also an epistemological position because it allows the transdisciplinary

propagation of concepts and multiple interconnections and

transmigrations of notions from one domain of knowledge to
another. On a more general level, the history of ideas is always a
nomadic story: ideas are as mortal as humans and as subjected as
humans to the unpredictable twists and turns of history.

The figure of the nomad, as distinct from that of the exile or the
migrant, allows us to think of international dispersion and
dissemination of ideas not only on the banal and hegemonic model of
tourist or traveler but also as forms of resistance to collective amnesia.
The distinctions among the exile, the migrant, and the nomad also
correspond to different styles and different relationships to time. The
mode and tense of exile style are based on an acute sense of

foreignness, coupled with the often hostile perception of the

host country.

Exile literature, for instance, is marked by a sense of loss or separation

from the home country, which for political reasons, is a lost horizon:

Memory, reminiscence, and recollection--crucial to the traditional

diasporic style--are central to this mode of writing. On the other hand,

the migrant is caught in an in-between state in which the narrative of

origin destabilizes the present. Migrant literature is about a suspended,

often impossible present, nostalgia, and blocked horizons: The past

functions as a burden, lingering into the present, and characters live in

the frozen sense of their own cultural identity; self-representation, as a

moment of absolute authenticity and authority, is privileged over all

other representations. Migrant consciousness leads to one

extreme form of identity politics, in which each culture is self-

referential and so autonomous in its own authority that it can never be

understood in a space outside itself. The nomadic tense is active,

affirmative, and continuous because the trajectory is controlled speed.

The nomadic style is about transitions and passages without

predetermined destinations or lost homelands. Nomadic artistic

practice is fluid, transgressive, and transitory, and is about temporal

displacements, zigzags of flashbacks and future tenses, and speed

montages of bodies and events moving through time and space. This

practice therefore exceeds the ideology and institution of literature, and

belongs more appropriately to the art-form of cinema: precisely my

point in Chapter 2, where my close analysis of Ridley Scott's

*Blade*runner disclosed nomads and machines functioning in

visual machines.

The nomad's relationship to the earth is one of transitory attachment

and cyclical frequency. To quote Deleuze now: "The nomads are there,

on the land, wherever they are they form a smooth space that gnaws,

and tends to grow, in all directions. The nomads inhabit these places;

they remain in them, and they themselves make them grow, for it has

been established that nomads make the desert no less than they are

made by it."

Technology—more specifically cyberspace—has further compounded

and complicated considerably the fluidity of nomadic identities. It is

now possible to fabricate online identities, complete with brick-

and-mortar and e-addresses and enough writing samples to develop a

credible identity portfolio in cyberspace. I will elaborate on all this in

my next chapter.

Chapter 3: **The Machine of Online Identities**

Identities can now be completely constructed in cyberspace, and these online identities can participate effectively in events in real life (in RL, as the parlance has it) that have real ramifications for brick-and-mortar identities.

(Online identities are the lynchpin of what now known as social media, which I will discuss in the last chapter of this book.)

To repeat: these online identities can produce enough writing samples to develop a credible identity portfolio in cyberspace. So for instance,

an online identity (that obviously someone has created), say,

"Mayda Kaplan," with an e-address and a voice-connect phone number

can write several news articles and news analysis and sign her name to

them. Now if one goes to the meta-search engine

http://www.google.com and types in "Mayda Kaplan" in the search

box and clicks, ten or fifteen or even a hundred (provided "Mayda

Kaplan" has written close to a hundred articles, which then will

provoke several "critical" responses) items will come up on the

monitor, all associated with "Mayda Kaplan." To phrase differently,

Google's search throughout the web for "Mayda Kaplan" will produce

10 or 15 or even 100 results.

For the online user after this visit to google, "Mayda Kaplan's"

portfolio on the web will have lent some credibility to claims of a real-

life identity of a certain "Mayda Kaplan." Google will have

legitimized, to a certain extent, "Mayda Kaplan's" identity in real life.

But I'm getting way ahead of myself. I want to use my own experience

as an example of everything I've just said about this.

I already disclosed in the Introduction that I'm a writer who works

mostly online. My partner, Julie Rose, is also a writer and editor who

also works online. This means we often work daily with virtual groups

and teams scattered all over the world. This means we often work with

colleagues we've never met in person. But we also work locally, in

Minneapolis and in New York, with new news media. This

means we've spent face-time with some of our colleagues. In the

former case, we've simply worked on our various projects with people

we've had to trust (and vice-versa) over the years.

After Julie and I got married on January 1, 2000, we went to Chile for

our honeymoon. I had been to Chile once before, to visit a close friend,

a New York writer who was down there on a Fulbright. When I was

there I made new friendships that I had sustained and developed since

the first visit. Julie and I were in Chile for six weeks. Now the

November before that, a friend of mine who lived in Missoula,

Montana (let's call him Rob), and who owned his news-media dot-com

that he'd web-developed himself (let's call it Click News-Net), had

commissioned me to write an article for his company. I had

signed a contract for this project to be paid a flat fee of one thousand

dollars: Not bad for a four thousand-word article. Because, in the

November of 1999, I was somewhat broke, Rob had advanced me four

hundred dollars from his own pocket, and of course I had promised to

pay him back once I got my Click News-Net check.

A little more background on Rob: That November 1999, his wife had

just left him for a Montana writer famous for writing novels about

Montana, and they were both going through a divorce. His life was

falling to pieces (as mine had) because of this, and, since I'd "been

there" (in vulgar parlance), I was helping him through his divorce. Like

me, he also has two kids, a boy and a girl, eight and six respectively.

He had almost committed suicide by eating a bunch of

poisonous plants, then—thinking about his two kids—he "came to his

senses" (as he put it) and had forced himself to throw up before taking

some antidotes. (As an amateur naturalist, he knew quite a bit about

plants.) Early December 1999, his company even had flown me from

New York to Missoula, and I had stayed with him at his house for four

days, ostensibly (to justify his company's airfare expenses) "to

discuss" the parameters of my writing project.

While Julie and I were in Chile, my Click News-Net check arrived at

our New York apartment. And of course Rob knew that his company

had sent the check. Then he e-mailed me repeatedly, asking for his

money back. (I always check my web-based Yahoo mail, even while

overseas, since all I need is access to the Internet.) I told him

Julie and I were in Chile, and that I'd pay him back when I got back to

New York. At that time, we both divided our time between New York

and Minneapolis. (My ex-wife and I share custody of our thirteen-year-

old daughter and eleven-year-old son.)

Now a related disclosure: Inspired by an article in *The New Yorker*

sometime in 1999 that engaged the politics of displaying the e-

addresses of famous people who were either friends or colleagues or

relatives when people send out a group-posting, I frequently posted

group messages to over five hundred people at a time using the bcc

(blind carbon copy) feature of my e-mail. Knowing that my friends,

relatives, or colleagues would check out the other e-addresses on my

list, I wanted to show off to them that I knew these famous

people—which in fact I did because of my work in the news-media. A

few web-savvy friends had warned me repeatedly a few years before

this to bcc their e-addresses because they didn't care to be spammed. I

continued to ignore them—until Rob taught me an object lesson when I

was in Chile. Now My Yahoo did not allow group-postings to more

than one hundred people at a time (also an anti-spamming policy), so

each time I posted to my group, I had to split my address list into five

sublists to post in five batches. I used to be annoyed at Yahoo about

this, but once again, what Rob did taught me otherwise.

This is what he did: Rob said he didn't believe that I was overseas. He

claimed that in fact I was not overseas but in the US, and that I was

spoofing Chilean originating Internet Protocols (IPs) of my

postings to him. Well, as any techie knows too well, IPs in fact can be

spoofed, just as virtual persons with e-addresses can also be fabricated.

But here once again, I'm getting ahead of myself. This chapter also

deals to a certain extent with the point at which e-mail as "personal"

communication becomes transformed into broadcasting or netcasting.

On February 2, 2000, after Rob had repeatedly asked me for his money

back, sometimes posting me as many as fifty identical messages in one

day, I blocked his e-address, and told him that I was "tuning him out"

until I got back to New York. Then, given his psychic state, he simply

went nuclear: He posted a nasty message calling me a thief and a liar to

the e-addresses (those with surnames beginning with P's, Q's, R's, and

S's—his began with an S) in my subgroup that he had captured

from my earlier postings. In effect, he transformed this captured list

into a "listserv," as postings went back and forth: from me refuting his

allegations; from some relatives by marriage (a few Roses) and friends

defending my honor and integrity; and from Rob himself, under

various assumed names, further maligning my character. Some people

on this "listserv" asked to be removed. Julie, who of course as a Rose

was in the loop, defended me just as vigorously. After a week or so of

flame-postings and counter-postings, the exchanges evaporated. I

thought the nightmare was over.

Julie and some friends and relatives advised me to file a lawsuit against

Rob, and I seriously thought about this for a couple of days. Then I

declined. I was repulsed at the thought of lawsuit against a

former friend (as I now regarded him: the damage was done) who was

going through a nasty divorce—even if he had done all he could online

(at least at that point) to damage my professional and personal

reputation and also my integrity. But I decided not to pay him back his

money as punishment for the damage I felt he had done.

But Rob was not done with me yet: In early November 2000, he

resumed his slanderous postings to the same "listserv" he had captured

and used in February. He repeated the same insults and name-calling

from the previous February. Rob, disguised as a certain "Joe Andrupa,"

responded to his own posting, and added some more fabrications. "Joe"

claimed to have known me since 1980 and that he was involved in a

sexual harassment lawsuit that I had filed against him. For two

days, exchanges went back and forth on the "listserv," mostly between

Rob and me, but two or three people joined in, some responding to the

fictive "Joe Andrupa." One of these, a woman I had had a short-term

romantic relationship with, and who was on my address group, said

that in her opinion, I was becoming a character in my novel. Another

friend on the "listserv" got a call from a *Minneapolis StarTribune*

reporter (who was also on the "listserv") wanting to know whether my

friend was "real" or "virtual."

I was wandering what had triggered this latest round of flaming, until a

mutual friend of Rob and me who also lived in Missoula told me that

Rob had indeed been fired from the Click News-Net, which he in fact

co-founded, and which in October had been acquired by another

dot-com news-media company. This mutual friend disclosed that Rob

was under tremendous psychic distress: He was going through a nasty

divorce; he had just been fired from the company he co-founded; his

soon-to-be-ex-wife was still living with the famous writer in Missoula,

a fact known to just about anyone in that dusty little Western town,

where everyone not only knew everyone else in academic, literary, and

dot-com circles but also what everyone was up to. And so he had

become paranoid and delusional, and was then blaming me—

inexplicably--for his troubles. I had met Rob to begin with through this

mutual friend, an old grad-school buddy who now taught at the

University of Montana, and with whom I had stayed in Missoula for a

few months after my own divorce.

On this latest round, he included the e-addresses of three listservs of

the Twin Cities IndyMedia collective that I was a member of. As I was

to find out later, unbeknownst to me, Rob had been quietly stalking me

online in the intervening months of his slanderous postings. For one, he

had surreptitiously joined these listservs to monitor my postings and

activities. For another, he had also been monitoring IndyMedia news-

wires: not only the Twin Cities IndyMedia news-wire

(http://twincities.indymedia.org), but also the global IndyMedia news-

wire (http://www.indymedia.org), and a few domestic ones: New York

City; Boston; Los Angeles; and Seattle, all of which had one thing in

common: I frequently posted news articles and analyses to all of them.

Once again, on this round, Julie vigorously defended me, as did as well

a few IndyMedia reporters who either knew me personally or

had worked with me online. Once again, Rob responded to his own

postings, again under various assumed names. But on this round he

went even further: He went to the amazon.com and borders.com

websites and wrote bogus customer "reviews" of my novel, *Love in*

This Time of Silicon. These reviews were nothing more than ad

hominem attacks on me and not book reviews at all for the simple fact

that he hadn't read my novel. These "reviews" were subsequently

deleted after I convinced amazon.com and borders.com techies of their

origin.

On this latest round of Rob's online stalking, slander, and assault, Julie

and other friends and relatives finally succeeded in convincing me to

file a lawsuit against Rob. And so in early December 2000, I

filed a lawsuit against him in US District Court in Minneapolis, under

United States Code 28.

In March 2001: Rob drew the Twin Cities IndyMedia editorial

collective into the fray when--incredibly--he posted a message to the

three Twin Cities IndyMedia listservs that, as a congenital liar, just as I

had invented certain components of my life, I had also "invented" Julie

Rose, that I was "mentally ill" because the woman I claimed to be

married to, and with whom I also claimed to live in New York, was in

fact nothing more than a "virtual" person whom I had fabricated, but

not completely, he claimed. His posting mentioned the existence of a

"Julie Rose" who was a translator of French theory books, and

whom in fact I had used as "the real-life model" for my invention.

Two days before this posting, Rob had also posted a slanderous

comment against me on the Twin Cities IndyMedia news-wire. I had

commented on a posting on the Twin Cities IndyMedia news-wire

about an impending visit to the University of Minnesota campus by

Robert McNamara (the former Secretary of Defense in the Johnson

Administration during the height of the Vietnam War and later the

president of the World Bank). My very short comment mentioned

something about organizing a protest during McNamara's visit. Rob's

slanderous comment subsequently to mine had absolutely nothing

whatever to do with Robert McNamara's visit to the university

campus. He simply called me a liar and a cheat trying to get

people into trouble. He then resolved to his usual practice of

responding to his own comments under assumed names, which then

drew a few IndyMedia collective members into the McNamara

Thread—as it later came to be known. Rob's postings to the three Twin

Cities IndyMedia listservs about Julie, and his ad hominem comments

on the news-wire combusted into a full-blown flame war organized

around me--and also on Julie--on these listservs and on the news-wire.

In order to fully understand this combustion, and in order to make my

narrative more comprehensible in the manner in which Julie was also

drawn into the fray, affecting my professional life in Minneapolis, I

would have to segue into my experiences with the Twin Cities

IndyMedia editorial collective.

I was one of the founding members of the Twin Cities Independent

Media Center (IndyMedia), which, like many other IndyMedias, was

formed in the wake of a protest: the protest against the International

Society for Animal Genetics when it had its meeting in Minneapolis in

July 2000. In fact, I wrote the primary first-person action report of that

protest for the Direct Action Media Network, where I was working at

the time. The report was also picked up by other alternative news-

media (like protest.net and a-infos) and later posted (by someone else)

to the New York City IndyMedia news-wire, and much later, posted by

me to the Twin Cities IndyMedia news-wire when it was finally set up.

The fact that I was a founding member was also borne out by the e-mail exchanges (that I'd archived) that I had in late August and early September 2000 with the person who was more less setting up not only the Twin Cities IndyMedia website but also the Twin Cities IndyMedia editorial collective. (Typically, when I began to post action reports and news analyses to the Twin Cities IndyMedia news-wire, I asked more than once for the story administration password so that I can go in and edit my stories—but was simply rebuffed.)

At the second monthly meeting of the editorial collective (I had missed the first), I brought up the topic of developing an editorial policy about racist, hate, and slanderous ad hominem postings, which several other

IndyMedias (like New York City, Seattle, and even the

IndyMedia global-editorial) were debating at the time. No one at the

meeting listened to me.

In any case, when Rob began to post his ad hominem comments and

slanderous attacks on me on the McNamara Thread under assumed

names, and Julie and a few friends defended me with their own

comments (comments that had absolutely *nothing* to do with news

events), there was no editorial policy in place, and so all these

comments not only stood on the news-wire but also expanded during

the course of ten days to two weeks.

Julie joined the three Twin Cities IndyMedia listservs after I

forwarded Rob's posting that I had invented her to her. In the

meantime, a close friend, an Irish-American, who was also a member

of the editorial collective (let's call him Jason), posted a message to the

listservs defending me, and engaged only the ongoing flaming war on

the news-wire, and not Rob's posting about my invention of Julie:

Date: Wed, April 25 2001 10:30:45 -0600 (MST)
From: "Jason" <jasonr@protest.net> **Add   Block**
To: imc-minneapolis-editorial@indymedia.org, imc-minneapolis-tc@indymedia.org, imc-minneapolis-field@indymedia.org
Subject: The flame war on the news-wire
   Message:

"I was not very long there until, like water, I
found my own level. 'My People'--the people who
knew about oppression, discrimination,
prejudice, poverty and the frustration and

despair that they produce—were not Irish
Americans. They were black, Puerto Rican,
Chicano. And those who were supposed to be 'My
People,' the Irish Americans who knew about
English misrule…said exactly the same thing
about blacks that the loyalists said about us
at home. New York: I was given the key to the
city by the mayor, an honor not to be sneezed
at. I gave it to the Black Panthers."
--Bernadette McAliskey

First of all, there's a conflict going on that
I've been left out of because until the last
few days I have had almost no access to the
Internet and email. Although I'm happy to be
left out of such a degenerative argument, I
feel the need to say something now because I am
getting the distinct impression that an
important member of our collective, our brother
Biodun, has been treated unfairly. I looked on
the site tonight and saw all the attacks and
flaming that I'd heard about and witnessed
arguments over in the emails I reviewed over
these last few days.

First of all, the people we've been
working with deserve trust. We cannot build
healthy relationships and continue to succeed
in our endeavor without giving comrades the
benefit of the doubt. Whatever happened to
cause the conflict that occurred, checking
through these unopened emails over the last
couple of days has given me the distinct
feeling that I was witnessing a lack of trust
and a failure to support a member of our
collective who has been in need of it.

Also, this situation bears a shameful
phenomenon to which I've borne witness far too
often in my life, which is that of a bunch of
well-meaning white people viciously ganging up
on a black man. Not just a black person, but
specifically a black man. I believe Biodun is
right to wonder if people listen to him. Yes,
he did raise the issue of hate speech early on,
which I spoke about as well at the second full
collective meeting, which was the first meeting
held at the university.

Now that all this is going on, I suggest we
have a collective meeting right away so that we

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can arrive at a consensus to delete all
the ad hominem attacks on our news-wire. These
attacks on our brother have stood on the news-
wire too long, and the longer they stay, the
more harm will be done to our brother.
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"The hottest place in Hell is reserved for
those who, in times of moral crisis, remain
neutral."--Dante
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The following day, on Thursday April 26, Julie weighed in. Because she was on the listservs, she got Jason's post, and so she clicked **Reply All** and posted a response to Jason—and to the lists:

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    From: "Julie Rose"<julierose@onebox.com>
To: jasonp@protest.net, imc-minneapolis-editorial@indymedia.org,
imc-minneapolis-tc@indymedia.org, imc-minneapolis-
field@indymedia.org
    Subject: Re: The flame war on the news-wire
```

Date: Thu, April 26, 2001 15:45:27 -500 (EST)

   Message:

Hey Jason: Thanks for your posting. I'm not very happy with what has been going on the Twin Cities IndyMedia news-wire and on these listservs the past two weeks. First off, the editorial collective has done nothing with the vicious slander that Rob Soloff continues to perpetrate on Biodun, using the Twin Cities IndyMedia website and listservs. (Disclosure: I'm Biodun's wife. I do exist in flesh. But more about this below.)

There's the editorial policy issue, on which you commented here, Jason. Just what the hell is the problem with deleting hate-racist and personal slander postings? I understand other IndyMedias have been doing this for months, while the Twin Cities collective is at pains to develop a policy.

So far, since the collective has left these comments on the site, then that collective must have decided that Biodun himself has become the news. Then there is the question of Rob's

alleging that Biodun invented me. This is too absurd in its face. Anyone who doubts my existence can call me at my coordinates below.

Rob lives in Missoula, Montana. I live in New York City. In his posting, Rob proposed that our friend Julie Rose, the translator who lives in Hong Kong, is the "real" Julie Rose.

From time to time, I go to Minneapolis with my husband on weekends. I understand your editorial collective meetings are usually on Saturday afternoon the last day of the month. I might show up in person.

Jason: I wish you my best.

    ____
    Julie Rose
    Writer and Editor
    Voice: 1-212-699-8173
    E-Mail: julierose@onebox.com

Hours after Julie's post, a member of the collective (let's call

him Michael) with whom I'd feuded during one of our collective

meetings while we were discussing the policy of consensus (to which I

was opposed), responded to Julie's post, saying in effect, that since she

was not an active member of the collective, "even if she does exist"

(those were his exact words), she had no business posting to the Twin

Cities IndyMedia listservs.

In any case, Jason finally called an emergency meeting of the editorial

collective for one April Saturday, and at that meeting, the collective

decided to erase all the ad hominem comments on the McNamara

Thread. Meanwhile, Rob, under various assumed names, continued to

disrupt the listservs with more slanderous posts. This flame war raged

on. In mid-May, a frustrated Julie posted another message to the

listservs, specifically addressing "Michael and others." (Michael had

been an active participant in the flame war, inexplicably taking Rob's

side.) This message turned out to be quite crucial to my relationship

with the Twin Cities IndyMedia collective.

From: "Julie Rose"<julierose@onebox.com>
To: imc-minneapolis-editorial@indymedia.org,
imc-minneapolis-tc@indymedia.org, imc-minneapolis-
field@indymedia.org
Subject: The Twin Cities IndyMedia versus
Biodun
Date: Tue, May 15, 2001 23:08:19 -500 (EST)
Message:
Michael and others: OK, let's let it rip. Some
things are better articulated out there.

My experience with this listserv is as follows:

When Biodun, my husband, says something he
believes in, no one listens to him, as Jason,
another member of your collective, has also
pointed out. Biodun then cites examples of his
point from other IndyMedias. He's then ganged
up on by mostly white males on these listservs,
some with Germanic names.

My grandparents are Holocaust survivors. My
husband's two heritages share two Holocausts:
the Jewish one and that of the Middle Passage.
So then my radar activates.

Whom are we kidding here? I use the racial code
when nothing else makes sense.

I've been analyzing all the postings pertaining
to me and to Biodun on these listservs. These
are the patterns I see.

You folks (especially so-called "activists" and
"anarchists") simply repeat the worst of racial
scenarios.

I don't even know why Biodun is still active in
your collective. We've discussed this. He

should be spending the time he's wasting
with you people marketing his novel instead.
This would at least produce more tangible
results.

I'm not afraid to take anyone on behalf of my
husband. My sincere apologies for all this, but
working for social justice also means that you
people need to clean your act in-house.

     _____
     Julie Rose
     Writer and Editor

A few days after Julie's posting, she received this posting from the

Twin Cities IndyMedia that she forwarded to me:

     ---Original Message Follows---
     From: "Twin Cities IMC"<mspimc@protest.net>
     To: julierose@onebox.com
     Subject: Julie Rose removal
     Date: Thu, May 17, 2001 10:15:31 -600 (MDT)

Message:

As of 5-16-01, the Twin Cities collective agreed to remove Julie Rose from all MSP-IMC listservs for the following reasons:
You're disruptive on the email lists;

You've sent intimidating email to members of the collective;

Further, you've never attended a meeting or have contributed positively to the collective. Attendance is not necessary for participation: this is not in and of itself a reason to be removed. However, when considered with the two reasons outlined above, we found there was no other option but to remove you;

You may come to the next regularly scheduled MSP-IMC meeting to appeal this action.

Twin Cities IMC collective
5-17-01

I found out later that Michael had called an emergency meeting

of the collective on Wednesday in light of Julie's posting the day

before (in which she cited people "with Germanic last names"

attacking me—Michael's own last name is Germanic) to discuss and

take action to purge Julie from the listservs. And in fact, Michael had

drafted the post from the Twin Cities IndyMedia collective announcing

this purge to Julie. Jason knew about the meeting but decided to skip it,

knowing what was going to happen.

The day after this posting to Julie, I resigned from the Twin Cities

IndyMedia editorial collective. I sent the collective the following post:

Date: Mon, May 21 2001 14:28:35 -0700 (PDT)
From: <writingmachine@yahoo.com> **Add Block**
To: "Twin Cities IMC"<mspimc@protest.net**>**

Subject: Resignation
   Message:

"I was at the jail where a lot of protesters were being held and a big crowd of people was chanting 'This is what democracy looks like!' At first it sounded kinda nice. But then I thought: Is this what democracy looks like? Nobody here looks like me."
--Jinee Kim, Bay Area youth organizer, from Elizabeth "Betita"Martinez's "Where Was the Color in Seattle?"

Here's the deal. I'm quitting the TC-Collective for the following reasons:

   1.   I've been the target of (in famous words from US political and media history) "high-tech lynching" by a number of individuals. I'm not naming names, but you know who you are.
   2.   My work in and contribution to this collective is most certainly under-appreciated: And even worse, ignored all together.

```
3.    You purged my wife from the
listservs, at an emergency meeting that
Michael called when I was in New York and
therefore could not attend the meeting.
```

Addendum: Rob's lawyer settled my lawsuit against him for several thousand dollars. The settlement had a gag clause stating that I should not disclose the terms of the settlement but should simply tell people that there's been a settlement "to the mutual satisfaction of all parties."

Conclusions: The Julie Rose Rob said I had based my invention of my Julie Rose on is also a friend of mine. She is indeed a translator from French into English and has translated several books by Paul Virilio. In fact, when I was senior editor at the University of Minnesota Press, I

contracted her to translate two books, one by Paul Virilio. My

own Julie is also a translator who has translated news articles and

analyses for online news-wires. My Julie has also read several French

theory books, and has used Virilio for her own work. A google search

for "Julie Rose" will produce thousands of results, and indeed users not

personally familiar with either Julie Rose will confuse the results.

I introduced my Julie Rose to the other Julie Rose. The latter lives in

Hong Kong, and so they've never had face-time, but the other Julie got

a kick out of the whole episode, and both Julies have had several e-

exchanges about the whole thing.

Object lesson and question: Obviously bcc'ing when sending

out group postings is absolutely advisable, as my own case nears out.

But the question remains: as capital and technology continue to

construct various machines that compel more and more online work

with virtual teams all over the world, and that somehow render travel

itself and face-time unnecessary, how do online workers create a

mutual environment of trust?

Here's how I concluded Chapter 2: Vertiginous hyperreal thrills recall

another film set in Los Angeles, this time on the last day of the

millennium, Kathryn Bigelow's 1995 *Strange Days*, in which the main

character, Lenny-Ralph Fiennes, peddles playbacks, video splicings of

the thrilling experiences of other people's lives seen from the viewpoint

of the recorder. The narrative and political spirit of *Strange*

Days itself were inspired by real events in Los Angeles, the Rodney

King incident captured on amateur video, and the subsequent riots

later, both incidents widely disseminated in digital news media in the

US and the world.

In my next chapter, I will discuss how capital uses technology to try to

control time and information, and the ways that US corporate media

collaborates with our two-headed monster, Janus, in bring this about.

Chapter 4: The Regime of the Media

Now capital uses technology to try to control time and information.

And the US corporate media completely collaborate with capital in the

attempt to control both information *and* time.

(For an example of this matter of corporate media's attempt to control

"time, " consider the pathetic NBC coverage of the Sydney Olympics,

which, because of the time-zone difference--Sydney time is 15 hours

ahead of New York's--NBC broadcast only tape delays, so that we saw

the heats onscreen when we already knew the results of the finals from,

say BBC or even National Public Radio---NPR. The Olympics then

became, at least for Americans at home, a virtual TV Olympics

floating in a time-zone of its own, and that had no relation whatever to

the "real" time of Americans.)

The exception to US corporate media's collaboration is in fact NPR,

which taps into the extensive coverage of BBC World Service and

sometimes even uses its correspondents for its own reports. In fact, in

the Twin Cities, Minnesota Public Radio--the flag station for NPR--

switches over to BBC World Service from 11 PM Central to 4 AM.

Broadcast network news--as Jon Katz, former CBS producer said in

2000--"is basically a corpse that hasn't been pronounced yet." The

moribund--in my opinion also--broadcast network news media

(specifically ABC, CBS, NBC, and also the 24/7 cable "news"

networks CNN, MSNBC, and Fox) are currently and ferociously

driven by market economy and by the relentless pressure of daily

ratings.

This is the corporate setup of the major news networks: CBS is owned

by Viacom, the vast entertainment conglomerate. General Electric

owns NBC. ABC is part of Disney. CNN is one component of Time-

Warner AOL. And so therefore, the network news divisions are

expected to not only make a profit (which was most certainly not the

case in the days of Eric Severaid and Edward Murrow) but also

compete successfully with entertainment divisions. And

correspondents and reporters are encouraged to make themselves the

news rather than investigate and report them. These networks

are desperate: CBS has the so-called "reality" shows "Survivor" and

"Big Brother." ABC has "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire." And Robert

Wright, the head of NBC, who has to make a hefty profit for General

Electric, asked his team late spring in 2000: "Where is our 'Survivor'?"

And then Julie Chen, the anchor of "CBS Morning News," also

doubles as the commentator for "Big Brother"--with her copy

sometimes supplied by the show's producers--further blurring the

divide between news and entertainment.

As an example, *Brill's Content* (the monthly that monitors the media

for, in its own words, "accuracy, labeling, and sourcing, conflicts of

interest, and accountability") did a feature on Alex Kuczynski, the

media reporter for *The New York Times* (titled "Smart Alex)

saying that she is the new breed of journalist who is her own brand,

who gets into gossip columns, and who prefers personality-driven

pieces over hardcore business stories (the article highlighted her as "the

reigning 'It' girl of media coverage, with her high-profile social life and

hip writing, the face of a changing *Times*) And the current head of

ABC News was recently reported to have told his correspondents and

panelists to ratchet up their social lives--"to entertain more, to get into

social columns, and to create buzz."

Consequently, the corporate media networks have contributed

enormously to lowering the level of public discourse in the US about

itself and about the world in general. (The local network affiliates, with

their "happy-talk" so-called Eyewitness News, are laughable,

pathetic, and abysmal.) Local Twin Cities corporate media, both print

and television, are represented by WCCO (which is owned by CBS);

KARE 11 (an NBC affiliate); KSTP (an ABC affiliate); KSMP (part of

UPN); and last but not the least, the FOX channel--and the *St-Paul*

Pioneer Press and *Minneapolis StarTribune*. These media often report

stories on behalf of corporations. In other words, if there is dispute

between management and labor (say between Northwest Airlines

management and mechanics), WCCO and the *Minneapolis StarTribune*

will definitely report the news slanted toward Northwest management

and definitely under-report the perspective of the mechanics. This

strategy is sometimes blatant and sometimes very subtle.

ABC and CBS, for instance, both closed many of their

overseas bureaus that correspondents must now cover events in vast

areas that stretch from Moscow to Sydney by relying on satellite

uplinks instead of first-person reports. By cutting their overseas staff,

CBS and ABC created a lucrative void that Reuters and Associated

Press rushed to fill. So that AP and Reuters supplemented their wire

and print and photo services with full-fledged audio and video

operations. Ironically, the networks then started paying in excess of $1

million a year for footage from Reuters and Associated Press

Television Network (APTN), and *The New York Times* online also

started relying more and more on AP's overseas news dispatches to the

point of creating a subset of links on its site for AP.

Especially after the end of the cold war, interest in foreign

coverage among US networks simply evaporated. As a friend who

works for ABC recently told me, the running joke in the ABC

newsroom about "World News Tonight with Peter Jennings" is: "It's

not the world. It's not the world. It's just tonight, with Peter." And most

daily print US media these days merely report the obvious. The local

dailies are mostly useless, also relying on dated pickups from the wires

or *The New York Times* and *The Los Angeles Times*.

Consider the following inane headlines from various US dailies (some

of them major):

*Low wages said to be key to poverty

*Affluent top list of political donors

*Dean wants students to take required courses

*Research finds lawyers are overpaid

*Dysfunctional families said to affect children

*Revival of death penalty paves way for more executions

*Plot to kill officer had vicious side (*The Chicago Tribune*)

*Commission cuts will hurt stockbrokers, analysts say

*Religions have varied views on redemption

*Teenage girls often have babies fathered by men

*Officials say only rain will cure drought

*House cleaners find careers in the homes of others

*Life bleak for men in chains

*Malls try to attract shoppers

*Survey finds dirtier subways after cleaning jobs were cut (*The New York Times*)

*Larger kangaroos leap further (*Los Angeles Times*)

*Police finds more tolerance lowers crime

*Study finds sex, pregnancy link

*Homicide: Makes you feel violated

*Harmfulness of violence can no longer be denied

*Infertility unlikely to be passed on (*The Montgomery Advertiser*)

And so on. Trust me: I didn't make *any* of these up. In any case, I want to focus on how corporate media helped create, through the use of a network of hyperbolic metaphors, the atmosphere of a booming dot-

com industry and the new economy of the Internet. In what

follows, I disclose how a few key metaphors deployed by corporate

media became dominant in popular discourse about the dot-com

industry and the Internet.

This is from "The Internet: How It Will Change the Way You Do

Business," the cover story of the October 1994 issue of *Business Week*:

"The Internet, it seems, has the potential to help reengineer all sorts of

businesses…Internet startups are laying the groundwork for entirely

new ways of doing business…The Internet represents a wide-open

market in which all kinds of new products and services may bloom and

where a startup may have just as much chance as an IBM."

The piece also included the following hyperbolic sentence: "The

Internet is the Wild West of technology. Nobody has written the rules

yet." This sentence set up a premise that soon became the primary

assumption in most Internet-business coverage in the media: The web

was a new frontier, a land of unbounded opportunity where the

strictures of traditional business no longer operated. (I'll be focusing

on this notion of the "new frontier" myself in my chapter on the digital

divide below.)

Barely six months after this cover story, *Business Week* surfaced with

another cover story on Internet-business, in which we find the

following: "The Internet business is a fresh field of dreams in which

even small companies can pioneer new technologies, set new

standards, and grow rich." In no time at all, the notion of the Internet as

the great leveler morphed into accepted fact. In November 1995, *US*

and World Report further underscored the metaphoric level-playing

field of dreams: "The Web levels the playing field, so that small

businesses and entrepreneurs can battle bigger foes on a more

evenhanded basis." This field of dreams then functioned as the

foundation for the investment mania that followed. If the Internet was

indeed a field of dreams, then it made sense for venture capitalists—

and soon the public—to put their money behind any online upstart, no

matter how bad the business plan or how formidable its offline

competitors. In the Internet "gold rush," a company had to move at

"Internet speed" to secure "first-mover advantage" in its corner

of the "new economy." But we're getting ahead of ourselves.

In the summer of 1995, the metaphor machine went into overdrive,

when Netscape Communications floated an oversubscribed initial

public offering (IPO). As the shares took off, Jim Clark, the CEO and

founder of one the most hyped startups of the 1980s, Silicon Graphics,

saw his initial $3 million mushroom into $500 million. Jim Clark and

Marc Andeersen (whose Mosaic—the pioneer web browser—morphed

into Netscape at Clark's bidding) became poster boys of the Internet

"gold rush." In 1994 Amy Harmon of *The Los Angeles Times* had

already used the term "gold rush" to describe the race by media

companies to stake their claims in "cyberspace," itself a powerful

metaphor coined by sci-fi writer William Gibson in his 1984

novel *Necromancer*. Here's a typical analysis of the new mood from

Newsweek's year-end issue in 1995: "On Wall Street, Netscape has

produced an unprecedented stock frenzy—a gold rush not seen in

northern California since Sutter's Mill."

Thinking through the "gold rush" metaphor itself should have been a

warning for the dot-com bust that was to come later. Gold mining was

indeed the apt metaphor for the Internet boom, but the real story of the

California gold rush was that most 49ners went home empty handed,

and the people who got rich weren't the ones digging for gold, but

people like Levi-Strauss, who made his fortune off the back of the

miners.

In any case, by 1999, the idea of the Internet as the "new world order"

had captured the American imaginary, thanks to several articles in

corporate print media. Predictably, *The Wall Street Journal* jumped

into the act. Consider the following from a July 12, 1999 profile of

eToys: "Above all, perhaps, eToys has succeeded because it is a

company that is utterly and unapologetically Web-based." Well, so

much for utter success: eToys filed for bankruptcy in February 2001.

The "new economy" is the mother of all Internet metaphors helped

along by US corporate media. The term "new economy" had been

tossed around for decades to describe a number of developments,

including the emergent postindustrial economy. By 1994, however, the

term was everywhere, but it took on a significantly wider

meaning in a 1994 special issue of *Fortune* titled "The New

Economy." In that issue, John Huey wrote: "We are, right now, in the

very early stages of a new economy, one whose very core is as

fundamentally different from its predecessors, as, say, the automobile

age was from the agricultural era."

The "new economy" soon gained its current purchase when it became a

metaphor for anything related to the Internet. Said Technologic's

Richard Shaffer: "It was a term that everybody used and knew it was

vague. It stood simply for a future that everybody could take part in."

And everyone in US corporate media participated. References to the

"new economy" became exponential. Between 1985 and 1995, there

were 775 references to the term in the business media. In 1998,

the figure jumped to a rate of 1000 references a year. Last year, the

term skyrocketed to 20,000. And so overnight, the term began to crowd

out other concepts in public discourse.

Finally, the metaphor "Internet time" took over, a vulgar translation of

the concept of speed that I engaged in the Introduction. The translation

went something like this: If you were living on Internet time, it only

made sense to "get big fast." Internet time would not stand still while a

startup farted around with some ideas, crafted a business plan, and built

a strong management team. If you had a concept plausible enough to

get by venture capitalists, then you better jump on it like, yesterday.

And so public investors were asked to back the IPOs of Internet

startups with business plans that would make no sense in

conventional business. In the new parallel Internet universe, investors

then jumped at the chance to funnel their savings into such ridiculous

concepts like Value America an online superstore that was planning to

make itself into an online Wal-Mart.

And so US corporate media had a big role in buffing up the dot-com

industry and the Internet through metaphor spinning, somewhat like a

last gasp. Because the death knell for the US network corporate media:

A whole generation of young journalists with considerable talent and

technical knowledge and experience are moving into web-based new

media, especially the alternative news networks and collectives, like

the Direct Action Media Network (DAMN!) and the Independent

Media Center (IMC: IndyMedia, split up into radio, print,

video, and PDF teams. These new media are working to decouple

capital from technology, to disrupt and expose how capital has been

trying to use technology to control information. And thanks to the

Internet, capital can never succeed in this enterprise. All of these new

media are dedicated to working with activist groups (like Global

Action, Greenpeace, Rainforest Action Network, Direct Action

Network, various labor unions) to effect social change and redress

numerous injustices to cultural and ethnic minorities around the world.

These new media report only events that deal with a variety of issues:

police brutality; state repression; anti-racism; human rights; women's

rights; the environment; labor; anti-globalization; animal rights; and so

on.

All these media and groups are behind the protests (beginning from November 2000 to current) at Seattle WTO and World Bank, the Washington DC World Bank, the Republican and Democratic National Conventions in Philadelphia and LA, in Prague WTO and World Bank, at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, at the Summit of the Americas in Quebec City, and the WTO and World Bank in Genoa.

These direct actions intervene and disrupt the various enslaving machines that capital and technology have set up, and also explode the internal contradictions that make these machines function. In the future, the body of global capital will have more to fear from these nomadic direct actions that will forcefully continue to haunt the pores

of its skin--than from its own internal contradictions. These

direct actions are like the nomadic Mongolian hordes outside the city-

gates of Beijing that haunted the Chinese civil servants inside the city.

Most of the media-activists at IndyMedia protesting all these issues do

their media work online, in news-wires. These media-activists are

working "on behalf of" subalterns—mostly in the third world—who

have limited access to the Internet. But the digital divide is also quite

alive in the US. I discuss the problem of the digital divide in my next

chapter.

(But meanwhile, the emergence of social media is promising to

demolish tradition media as we know it by fusing media and

technology all together. Again, I will discuss this in my last chapter.)

Chapter 5: The Digital Divide: The Example of Montana

Contemporary Montana can be said to be a production of European literati, specifically, a Gallic invention in the best of the Romantic tradition. In the eighteenth century Montana was already an invention when white Frenchmen (the La Verendrye) penetrated the "virgin" (in the word of one historian) territory for the first time. At that time the trapper followed the explorer, and was in turn followed by the priest and the prospector. Also at that time George Catlin in painting and James Fenimore Cooper in fiction had fixed for the American imaginary the fictive Indian and the legend of the ennobling wilderness, allowing the possibility of Montana as a mythic Utopia.

We know from American history that America had been relentlessly dreamt (the "Dream") from East to West as a testament to the original goodness of "man": from England and the Continent to the East Coast of the New World; from the East Coast to the Midwest and the Northern Territories; and from there all the way to the Pacific. Montana has always functioned as a Frontier. In a sense the Old Frontier was transformed into the Old New Frontier. And currently it is in transition once again: the frontier between a minimum-wage slave economy into what can be called the "ether" economy of cyber technoculture.

Let's talk a little bit about the history of the Frontier. By Frontier we

mean the margin where the Dream encounters resistance. In the

Old Frontier this encounter was between Rousseau's fantasy of the

Noble Savage (the Indian) and the Cowboy, with his ritual

drunkenness, the shooting up the town, the "rape" of nature, and the

slaughtering of the buffalo. Now the inhabitants of the Old Frontier,

struggling for their lives, had neither the time nor the energy to reflect

on the contradiction between their reality and their dream. The

contradiction remained unrealized and was split geographically: People

still living safely on the East Coast continued to dream the Dream, and

those living in Montana (the Northern Territories) became total

Westerners deliberately cut off from history and myth, immune to the

beauty of their landscape.

Next came the second stage of the Old Frontier (what we have

called the Old New Frontier). The school mistress followed the whore

(the signifier of the denial of romance), moved from the East to marry

the rancher or mining engineer, and the Dream and reality finally

confronted each other. The school mistress brought with her the

sentimental and romantic Frontier novel, consequently producing a

demand for an art that nurtured the myth, an art that transformed a

lifestyle into a cultural practice. The legend quickly became readymade

and then found form in hokey pulps, B-movies, and fake cowboy

songs. This second stage of the Old Frontier moved from a certain

naiveté to a virtual history produced from a discrepancy: On the one

hand, this stage idealized a recent past into the image of the myth. On

the other hand, it exposed the failures of the original settlers to live up

to Rousseau's ideal. The West was reinvented.

Montana's own recent past (say up to around 1990-1992) in some

respects could be said to share aspects of this second stage of the Old

Frontier: It was torn between its valorization of its virtual past (a

pristine culture held up defiantly against the sophistication and

"corruption" of the East Coast--Montana has been the Other of New

York for some time now, and vice-versa), and a malaise resulting from

the collision of this virtual history with the "real" history that kept

breaking through.

I first went to Missoula in the summer of 1992 to visit an old graduate-

school friend from the East Coast who was now teaching at the

University of Montana. First off, I was quite impressed (in the

original sense of this term) by the monocultural Montana demographic:

white, parsimonious, healthy, nature-loving, and friendly, set at the

vortex of reality and myth, and surrounded by all those splendid

mountains and stunning vistas where several weather systems were

visible from a distance. And Missoulians were friendly.

The friend I visited was born in France, and he had come to the US to

study and then decided to stay and work. He got married to an

American, and they had a son together before they eventually split up.

After graduate school he was an itinerant professor in several

midwestern colleges before he finally landed at the University of

Montana in 1988, where he eventually attained tenure in 1994. Never

really the outdoor type in France when he was growing up

(born in Paris and raised in Toulouse), he quickly came to appreciate

the mountains, hiking trails, and camping sites in Montana. Missoula

was changing and expanding quite rapidly in those years. Signs of this

expansion were everywhere, especially in those outer neighborhoods,

like Pattee Canyon and South Hills that were littered with new

bungalows with tacky architecture. Shortly before I went to Missoula,

his friend (let's call him Pierre from now on) had just bought one of

these bungalows in South Hills (a house currently worth three times

what he paid for it in 1992), and he was dying to introduce me to the

thrills and pleasures of whitewater-rafting and wild camping. And I

most certainly was dying to get out of claustrophobic New York City.

The many hikes they did up Blue Mountain and Lolo Peak that

summer, the camping at Glacier National Park, the exquisite

dining on buffalo burgers washed down with red wine, and the skinny-

dipping in the hot springs and mud-baths of Hot Springs were

definitely tonics for a psyche exposed to and blasted by the subways

and the gritty sidewalks of New York City. In any case, that was my

first concrete encounter with the Other that Montana is to New York. (I

had had a previous virtual encounter with Missoula via Kim Williams's

colorful and folksy dispatches in the mid-1980s for Susan Stamberg for

her "All Things Considered" on National Public Radio.)

From the Old New Frontier, Montana then shifted onto the next stage,

the Virtual Frontier, with history simply constructed for

commodification and folded into the time and space of Capital. This

stage is crucial because it more or less prepared the terrain for

the stage that is currently emerging: the "ether" economy (in all senses

of financial, social, political, and psychic) of cyber technoculture. This

Virtual Frontier is characterized by dude ranches, chamber-of-

commerce rodeos, Indian pow-wows (to a certain extent), and

sometimes state government and corporate-sponsored "Pioneer Days."

The East Coast came to see its Dream in action and demanded it on

order for the two-week vacation. In the Virtual Frontier average

Montanans (including some transplants) became the pimps or

prostitutes of the local "culture" and myths of the state.

Obviously the most "cosmopolitan" and culturally diverse town in

Montana, Missoula is curiously positioned with respect to this Virtual

Frontier. This dusty town (pop. 70,000) has no tourist

attraction in itself--aside from the dime-a-dozen boutique stores and

faux "trading posts" on North Higgins Avenue and environs. Missoula

functions in this economy of the Virtual Frontier as more or less a

trajectory for transients--either professional ones or tourists passing

through from Glacier National Park to Yellowstone (or vice versa) or

heading for (or from) the lakeshore cabins of Flathead. Let's talk a bit

about Missoula before getting back to my discussion of frontiers.

Before I went back to Missoula to live there intermittently for a year,

from July 1998 till June 1999, I had been back in the intervening years

every summer, each time to visit Pierre. They had spent most of the

time with Pierre's friends and colleagues at the university at private

(sometimes dinner) parties, at drinking sessions at downtown

bars, or at outdoor picnics at Caras Park and elsewhere. In July 1998, I

was again living in New York, and again he was becoming

claustrophobic and dying to get out into open spaces and skies. Pierre

invited me to join him and his group of seven on an extensive camping

trip to the Olympic Peninsula and Glacier. The six-week camping trip

was soon transformed for me into an extended one-year sojourn in

Missoula because I needed a break from New York to work on revising

my novel according to the specifications of his publisher. And Pierre

was extremely generous letting me stay at his bungalow in South Hills.

Now that I was living in Missoula, I had to depend on mass transit to

get around (I grew up in New York City and never learned how to

drive). Because there are very few blacks in Missoula (there

are always few blacks in American frontiers), I quickly became

popular with most of the Mountain Line bus drivers. In fact, I very

soon became known to more or less everybody in Missoula.

Somewhat replicating the spectrum of my life in the US since high

school, at first, I hung out mostly with Pierre's university colleagues

and friends. But then I began to meet people not affiliated with the

university: wannabe and best-selling writers; cyber-entrepeneurs who

owned their Internet companies (see more below); failed graduate

students; divorced women trying to recover from failed marriages or

careers or abusive husbands (or two or all three combined); and nature-

loving (and sometimes tree-hugging) college dropouts involved in local

politics, some of whom were also aspirant writers or artists. I

was close friends with an aspirant artist who was also a forest-

preservation activist, a local, born on the Northside of Missoula, whose

"day job" was doing deli retail work at Worden's on the corner of

North Higgins Avenue and Pine Street (let's call her Bryn). High on the

sauce herself, she (sometimes including her friends, who were in fact

quite interesting in many respects) introduced me to seedy karaoke bars

on and off Brooks Avenue, and to legendary (for the locals) bars on

North Higgins and environs (Mulligan's; CharlieB's; Oxford, AmVets,

Missoula ("Mo") Club, and others). Bryn told me that as a writer I had

to experience first-hand local scenes and flavors before writing about

them (which we must be reminded is an exemplary American

"Western" requirement in the enterprise of writing.)

I was recognized in restaurants, in already mentioned karaoke bars at

night, downtown during the day on North Higgins (drivers would honk

and wave to me), in the South Gate Shopping Mall, and at drunken

dinner parties (fueled by nicotine, alcohol, gossip, and casual sex)

around town, from the dilapidated houses on the Northside, to the

"bougie" cottages in Rattlesnake, to the nondescript bungalows on the

slopes of South Hills.

Currently, Missoula residents can be classified into three economic

categories: university faculty and staff (like Pierre); telecommuters;

and minimum-wage slaves (like Bryn). Some people traverse two

categories: writers (who by definition are telecommuters) teaching at

the university part-time; faculty moonlighting as freelancers;

and a number of minimum-wage slaves trying to earn either

undergraduate or graduate degrees or who have already earned

graduate degrees (like a few of the divorced women I knew: one of

these had studied in France with the famous French psychoanalyst

Jacques Lacan and was now working in a used-clothing store on South

Higgins Avenue and Fifth Street). Indeed, a lot of minimum-wage

slaves in Missoula are highly educated. As in many American college-

towns, there is a robust labor force of perennial and professional

students and nature-loving graduates eager and desperate to be slaves

in order to earn the privilege of living in a town surrounded by

mountains and hiking trails. To belabor our point: in Minneapolis

(where I now reside full-time), where the landscape is flat--albeit with

lakes--but where the labor market is tight and unemployment is

around 2 percent, workers get paid $10 an hour to flip hamburgers.

Whereas in Missoula, writers get paid $7-8 an hour at a local editorial

sweatshop to summarize the content of websites.

(The cyber-community of Hollywood-film and New York-media

transplants in huge ranches around Bozeman, Flathead Lakes, and

elsewhere west of the Continental Divide in Montana is definitely

beyond the scope of this essay and deserves an extensive discussion.)

To repeat: Missoula, and by extension the state of Montana, is once

again at another Frontier, which we can call Cyber: the transition from

a minimum-wage slave economy into the ether economy of cyber

technoculture. The slave economy is already shrinking in

Missoula: Families who cannot afford rising housing and living

expenses have been moving out to the trailer parks in the outskirts of

town. Consequently, enrollment in public schools has dropped

precipitously, resulting in the closing of two schools. Because the

yuppies and Internet people moving into town (and constituting the

cyber-community) were either not married with kids or were married

with no kids yet. The last group I fell in with during my tenure in

Missoula are pioneers (if we may use this term) of this Cyber-

community.

Because my work is definitely facilitated by high-speed Internet

access, which I got in Missoula at an Internet company (located

downtown on South Main and Ryman Streets) that a friend (to whom

Pierre--his friend--had introduced me, one example of the

commingling of the university and commuter groups: let's call him

Rob--a transplant from northern California) owns with his seven

employees, each of whom he pays a six-figure salary plus stock

options. All his employees have spouses (some with kids) who don't

work because their income is more than enough to support their

moderate lifestyles in Missoula. (Definitely more than enough: In fact,

during my last two months in Missoula Rob and his employees all

bought huge houses in Missoula and environs.) I spent at least four-five

hours each weekday at Rob's company (Click News-Net) doing his

online work. The atmosphere at Click News-Net was most certainly

something out of central casting for Net-Heads working for a

cyber company: of the eight employees (two women, six men, Rob

included), two worked at home (a female programmer and a male web

developer). The ones who came in everyday had flex-time. The

refrigerator in the office kitchen was stuffed with frozen pizzas, Diet

Coke, Mountain Dew, and Pepsi. When Pierre and his business partner

are in town, they often walked around the office speaking into their

headsets while holding their Palm Pilots. When they're in town: They

often fly around the US and sometimes to Europe on business. To

repeat: These people, these pioneers of the Cyber Frontier are

displacing local Montanans by the day.

When I went to restaurants, he saw signs of incredible wealth,

wondering where the money came from. Montana was

certainly depressed economically. A friend of mine--a native

Missoulian--who worked at the post office on Brooks Avenue, told me

that when people came in to fill out a change of address form (which

happened quite frequently because of the cyber-people moving into

town from out-of-state), they often put the same phone number for

their daytime and evening phone number: a clear sign that they were

telecommuters. They lived in Montana but all the money they earn

come from out-of-state and even out of the country. And these same

cyber-people (again constituting the Cyber-Frontier) were driving up

the real-estate market and forcing the locals and their families out of

town.

And this Cyber Frontier might be the last Frontier in Montana,

fully armed, as it is (like Athena sprung from Zeus's head) with the

new Global Capital. In another nanosecond, the nature-loving slave

(like Bryn) will no longer be able to afford herself in new time and

space of Global Capital. (I personally observed the wreckage of

Rousseau's fantasy on the faces of the teeming beer-guzzling locals

fastened to one another or to the pool tables amid the funky interior

decor of Charlie B's.) Capital is in the process of transforming and

folding the geographical space of Missoula into the time of Capital.

And the contemporary Missoulian still yoked to a nostalgia for myth

and history is at this point being transformed into a relic in a museum.

The cyber telecommuter (like Rob), yoked in his own way to the time-

light (that is, the time it takes to transmit data: the speed of light) on the

screen of the monitor in front of him, and who produces and

circulates codes, words, graphics, data, or money through the Internet,

is becoming the new resident of Missoula--and to a certain extent

Montana. In fact, this new Montana resident is himself simply an

interface in the Internet of Capital. And the new technology that makes

this telecommuter possible is dissolving the boundaries of town,

constructing a new digital topology without limits, and most

significantly, exploding the figure of the Pioneer and the Cowboy in

dude ranches that were never real--that is to say that were virtual--to

begin with.

Now I turn my attention to the third world, where the digital

divide is more palpable than that of Montana because it is subtended by

political and economic machines set up more by capital than by

technology.

Chapter 6: Political and Economic Machines: Capital's Capture of the Third World

So far, I've described how both capitalism and technology, working for each other, set up various machines that enslave us all by controlling time and information. I've also looked at the ramification of these machines for the digital divide by providing the example of Montana. In this chapter, I focus on a concrete historical analyses of US political and economic policies that entangle the first world's corporate machines (and its consumption) and the third world's production--by importing the first world's concept of democracy and the free market into the third world. More to the point, I will show how one US

administration's concrete political and economic policies laid

the groundwork for Capital's capture of the third world.

First off, some cold statistics: Currently at the time of this writing, the

richest fifth of humankind earns 86 percent of the world's income,

while the poorest fifth earns only 1 percent. Then, before I begin, let's

perhaps consider Robert Kaplan's comments, in his controversial *The*

Coming Anarchy:

History has demonstrated that there is no final triumph of reason,

whether it goes by the name of Christianity, the Enlightenment, or

now, Democracy...the democracy we are now encouraging in many

parts of the world is an integral part of a transformation toward new

forms of authoritarianism...many future machines, ours

especially, could resemble the oligarchies of ancient Greece or

Sparta...[and perhaps it is] at such prosperous times as these that we

need to maintain a sense of the tragic...[especially when] we consider

the Golden Age of Athens as the beginning of its decline.

And not a few high-tech gurus have hastened to point out the

similarities of the terrain and push West with the new technologies.

These gurus argue that in the 1970s and 1980s, when Japan was ahead

of the US economically, the latter's investments in these technologies

are finally paying off (in spite of the current downturn in the dot-com

industry and decline of tech stocks)--and that the US is now having its

last laugh, since, in 1987, Japan released a study of US economy that

cited mismanagement and poor labor relations as causes of a

slide that threatened to reduce the US into a "hamburger-stand

economy," to which Reagan responded by imposing a 100 percent

tariff on some Japanese imports, in retaliation for what he called

"unfair Japanese trade practices." And now, Japan has been dithering at

the edge of an economic deflation for the past two years, shortly before

and after the Asian economic flu.

Finally, onward with our analysis. In September 1994, the Clinton

Administration finally addressed "the vision thing" in the domain of

foreign policy, with major addresses by the President and Secretary of

State, and of particular significance, by the National Security Adviser

Anthony Lake, who articulated the intellectual foundations of the new

Clinton doctrine at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced

International Studies. A new National Export Strategy was announced

that set guidelines for international economic policy, and a White

House panel on intervention applied the doctrine in this particular

sphere, all within a few days.

The seriousness of the enterprise was duly recorded with such

headlines as "U.S. Vision of Foreign Policy Reversed" by Thomas

Friedman in *The New York Times*, implying a dramatic policy change.

The new vision was based on a picture of the contemporary world that

had expanded well beyond opinion, to the point of an axiom. Thomas

Friedman eloquently sketched this picture: "America's victory in the

cold war was a victory for a set of political and economic principles:

democracy and the free market." At last, the world was coming

to understand that "the free market is the wave of the future -- a future

for which America is both the gatekeeper and the model." The term

"gatekeeper" has an ominous ring. The whole affair makes us wonder

about how we keep the gates, who we let in, and what kind of model

we are to offer to the world.

I begin with Anthony Lake's address, recognized to be the centerpiece

of the new vision. A long-time liberal dove, Lake explained that

"Throughout the cold war, we contained a global threat to market

democracies: now we should seek to enlarge their reach." Containment

having succeeded, we can now go on to "enlargement -- enlargement

of the world's free community of market democracies." The

title of his address was: "From Containment to Enlargement."

This new vision replaced the defensive position of the previous fifty

years. People everywhere could embrace this new departure, realizing

that of course the US was unlike any other nation past or present, Lake

observed, in that "we do not seek to expand the reach of our

institutions by force, subversion or repression." Commentators were

duly impressed by this perceived enlightened stance. A rational person

who wanted to know what the Soviet Union (pre-Gorbachev) was

trying to do in world affairs would, naturally, look at what Soviet

Union did do where its influence reached, specifically, in its then East

European satellites.

Undertaking that exercise, sane people -- assuming that they did not simply collapse in ridicule -- would have known how to evaluate an announcement by Leonid Brezhnev that the then USSR would no longer be content with containing the Evil Empire, but would now move on to "enlargement" of the community of free and democratic societies. Similarly, sane people who wanted to know what the US was trying to do in world affairs would look at what it has done where its influence reached, and would evaluate the announcement of the new vision in these terms -- again, assuming that they did not simply collapse in ridicule. It is interesting that the questions that would occur to my eleven-year-old did not seem to have been raised. This position

might be justified by the argument often voiced in

sophisticated circles that facts are irrelevant in the special case of the

United States.

So therefore in the prestigious journal *International Security*, Samuel

Huntington, the Eaton Professor of the Science of Government at

Harvard University instructed us that the United States must maintain

its "international primacy" for the benefit of the world, because its

"national identity is defined by a set of universal political and

economic values," namely "liberty, democracy, equality, private

property, and markets." Since this was a matter of definition, so the

Science of Government taught, it would be an error of logic to bring up

the factual record, and we would simply be illustrating our silliness by

doing so, as if Orwell's Winston Smith had experimented with

objects scattered on a table top to test Big Brother's denial that 2+2 =

43. Let's proceed nonetheless with our silliness.

I might also briefly engage Orwell's core concerns, not given quite the

prominence of his critique of the official enemy. In an unpublished

introduction to *Animal Farm*, Orwell wrote: "The sinister fact about

literary censorship in England is that it is largely voluntary. Unpopular

ideas can be silenced, and inconvenient facts kept dark, without any

need for any official ban." The desired outcome is attained in part by

the "general tacit agreement that `it wouldn't do' to mention that

particular fact," in part as a consequence of media concentration in the

hands of "wealthy men who have every motive to be dishonest on

certain important topics." As a result, "Anyone who challenges

the prevailing orthodoxy finds himself silenced with surprising

effectiveness."

Orwell believed that the United States was different, more free and

open. John Dewey, more familiar with US intellectual culture, did not

commit that error. Speaking of "our un-free press," Dewey observed

that critique of "specific abuses" is of limited value:

The only really fundamental approach to the problem is to inquire

concerning the necessary effect of the present economic system upon

the whole system of publicity; upon the judgment of what news is,

upon the selection and elimination of matter that is published,

upon the treatment of news in both editorial and news columns.

So he said we should ask "how far has genuine intellectual freedom

and social responsibility been possible on any large scale under the

existing economic regime." Not very far, he judged. The reaction to

Clinton's new vision fell well within these strictures, though to

document how this was an obsession would be a waste of time, as

Orwell and Dewey recognized. The more firm conclusions established

challenging system-supportive doctrine, the more they must be

suppressed; if the conclusions were established by the standards of

physics, they would have to be buried so deeply in memory as to be

completely beyond recovery. Returning to the questions that would at

once occur to a pre-ideological eleven-year-old, to evaluate the

announcement of the new vision, I turn to US behavior in regions

where its influence reached.

There are many choices, as the US was now a global power. But the

most illuminating will surely be the Western Hemisphere, where the

US has long run the show virtually without interference, so its deepest

values and convictions are revealed with great clarity. According to the

doctrine that we are to accept as an axiom, "throughout the Cold War

we contained a global threat to market democracies" in the Western

Hemisphere, never having sought to expand our power "by force,

subversion, or repression," from the days when we were

"exterminating...that hapless race of native Americans...with such

merciless and perfidious cruelty" (John Quincy Adams), until

the present. To put the best possible face on these axioms that are

beyond questioning, let us select the peak moments of American

liberalism, the days of JFK and LBJ (who far surpassed his predecessor

in his commitment to liberal ideals).

Taking just the most important case of the many that come to mind, the

higher truth entails, then, that at the peak of modern liberalism, JFK

and LBJ dedicated themselves to the violent overthrow of the

parliamentary government in Brazil in favor of a National Security

State in order to contain a global threat to market democracy. That,

indeed, was how the matter was perceived. Kennedy's Ambassador

Lincoln Gordon, who moved on to Washington after helping lay the

groundwork for the coup, lauded the "democratic rebellion" of

the neo-Nazi generals as "a great victory for the free world," "one of

the major turning points in world history." "The principal purpose for

the Brazilian revolution was to preserve and not destroy Brazil's

democracy," the respected liberal democratic statesman informed

Congress two years later, while the torturers and murderers were --

very visibly -- at work. It was "the single most decisive victory of

freedom in the mid-twentieth century," he testified, and should "create

a greatly improved climate for private investments" -- a comment we

may file away for later reference.

After leaving the State Department, Gordon went on to become the

President of Johns Hopkins University, where, we should remember,

Lake announced the new revolution in foreign policy. As the

generals instituted a regime of fascist terror, Brazil became "the Latin

American darling of the international business community," the

business press reported. The new regime was also hailed by the leading

academic apostles of the free market, much impressed by the purity of

doctrine of the technocrats and the "miracle" they had wrought --

though in fairness, it should be added that there were occasional

reservations about the sadistic violence by which the miracle was

instituted. The euphoria persisted through the 1980s, until the fortunes

of the rich began to be affected by the economic disaster, at which

point the methods that had been hailed as a "real American success

story," yielding "impressive economic growth based solidly on

capitalism," were suddenly transmuted to a proof of the failure of

statist interference with our market ideals; the self-adulation,

not untypical, is quoted from a highly regarded 1989 scholarly

monograph by Gerald Haines, senior historian of the CIA.

Brazil is a highly illuminating case, perhaps the reason that "it wouldn't

do" to reflect on the obvious lessons. Brazil is far and away the most

important country in Latin America, firmly under US control since

1945, when it became a "testing area for modern scientific methods of

industrial development" applied by US experts, Haines observed with

pride. This country with enormous resources should be the "Colossus

of the South," ranking alongside the "Colossus of the North," as

predicted early in the century. Brazil has had no foreign enemies, and

benefited not only from careful US tutelage but also from substantial

investment. Capital's capture of Brazil therefore shows with

great clarity just what the US can achieve in "enlarging the free

community of market democracies" under conditions that are near

ideal.

The successes are real enough. Brazil has enjoyed a very high growth

rate, which conferred enormous wealth on everyone except its

population -- apart from the top few percent, who live at the standards

of the wealthiest Westerners. Brazil is a sharply two-tiered society.

Much of the population lives at a level reminiscent of Central and West

Africa. As Haines was hailing the success story of American style

capitalism, the UN Report on Human Development ranked this rich

and privileged country in 80th place, alongside of Albania and

Paraguay. In the Brazilian northeast, medical researchers

described a new subspecies: "pygmies," with 40 percent the brain

capacity of humans, thanks to severe malnutrition in a region with

fertile lands, owned by large plantations that produce export crops in

accord with the doctrines preached by their expert advisers. Hundreds

of thousands of children die of starvation every year in this success

story, which also wins world prizes for child slavery and murder of

street children -- in some cases for export of organs for transplant,

according to respected Brazilian sources.

Perhaps Brazil was unusual. We might therefore look elsewhere,

perhaps Guatemala, turned into a "showcase for capitalism" in 1954

when Washington overthrew the democratic capitalist government and

soon to celebrate the fortieth year of our achievements in

exterminating another "hapless race of native Americans with such

merciless and perfidious cruelty," along with others who were in the

way. Or El Salvador, the recipient of some $6 billion in "aid" from the

US in the 1980s. The results, always well known outside Orwell's

"prevailing orthodoxy," were recently reviewed by the UN Truth

Commission, which attributed 85 percent of the horrendous record of

atrocities to the security forces trained, armed, and advised by the US,

and another 10 percent to the death squads linked to them and to the

wealthy business sector that the US expects to keep firmly in power.

The US corporate media meanwhile professed shock at the revelation

of what they had chosen to suppress when it mattered. The Clinton

Administration responded by establishing a Commission to

inquire into this grim history; its mandate was to improve procedures,

nothing more, because "We don't want to refight the battles of the

1980s. We're not a house-cleaning Administration." The Salvadoran

government agreed, issuing an amnesty for the killers and torturers in

gross violation of the peace accords that established the Truth

Commission, which stated that the guilty must be punished, and

rejecting the Truth Commission demand that the Supreme Court be

dismantled in view of its record of complicity in atrocities.

Immediately after the Truth Commission report appeared, Arena, the

political party of the killers, which the US continued to support, held

its convention to nominate its candidate for the coming election,

Armando Calderon Sol. The party dedicated itself anew to

defending the memory of its founder, Roberto d'Aubuisson, one of

Central America's great murderers, trained at the School of the

Americas, now at Ft. Benning, Georgia. Calderon Sol declared that the

party is united "more than ever to defend [d'Aubuisson's] memory,"

while the convention hall echoed with the Arena theme song, which

pledged to make "El Salvador the tomb where the Reds will end up" --

the term "Reds" being understood quite broadly, as events have shown.

In El Salvador also, our defense of market democracy spared its

beneficiaries no horror.

The Salvadoran government procurator for the defense of children,

Victoria de Aviles, acknowledged that the "big trade in children in El

Salvador" involved not only kidnapping and a gratifying improvement in exports, but also their use "for pornographic videos, for organ transplants, for adoption and for prostitution." Hardly a secret, veteran British Latin America correspondent Hugh O'Shaughnessy observed, recalling his direct observation of an operation of the Salvadoran army in June 1982 near the River Lempa, where the US-trained troops "had a very successful day's baby-hunting," loading their helicopters with 50 babies whose "parents have never seen them since." O'Shaughnessy's report on "Takeaway babies farmed to order" appeared in the *London Observer* the same day that the *Times* featured Anthony Lake's uplifting and admired remarks on "enlargement" of our traditional mission of mercy and benevolence.

There is no need to review further how we "contained a global

threat to market democracy" in "our little region over here," as FDR's

Secretary of War, Henry Stimson, described the Western Hemisphere.

It is enough to recall a warning issued by Simon Bolivar in 1822, as he

sought to liberate Latin America from Spanish rule: "There is at the

head of this great continent a very powerful country, very rich, very

warlike, and capable of anything" -- including the evasion of

"inconvenient fact." US power has of course extended far beyond the

Western Hemisphere. The obvious example that my eleven-year-old

would look at to evaluate the presupposed axiom is the Philippines,

which has benefited from almost a century of US rule, tutelage, and

assistance since its liberation-through-slaughter. The country is situated

in the world's leading growth area, where it remains the sole basket

case, very much on the Latin American model. Could that tell

us something about our role in advancing market democracy?

One could write a revealing and very brief article reviewing how the

question has been addressed in respectable literature. We learn more

about our role as "gatekeeper and model" from a World Bank study

reported in the London *Financial Times* just as the new vision of

foreign policy was released in the US. The World Bank found that

Latin America has "the most unequal income distribution in the

world," and predicted "chaos" unless governments "act aggressively

against poverty," which is truly appalling in its depth and scale. Why

should Latin America win this glorious record too? Another obvious

question, lying well beyond the horizons of respectability. Those

interested in an answer might look back to 1945, when the US

was setting out on its crusade to "contain the global threat to market

democracies" -- or as the senior historian of the CIA puts it, when "the

United States assumed, out of self-interest, responsibility for the

welfare of the world capitalist system."

In "our little region over here," our foreign enemies -- France and

Britain -- were to be displaced, so we could have a free hand. That was

simple enough, but another problem emerged: Latin Americans had not

taken the right graduate courses and didn't understand the fundamental

principles of economic rationality, which required that their

development be "complementary" to the US economy, in accord with

the sacred principle of comparative advantage. Latin American

countries advocated what a State Department officer described

as "The philosophy of the New Nationalism," which "embraces

policies designed to bring about a broader distribution of wealth and to

raise the standard of living of the masses."

Another State Department expert reported that "Economic nationalism

is the common denominator of the new aspirations for industrialization.

Latin Americans are convinced that the first beneficiaries of the

development of a country's resources should be the people of that

country." These mistaken priorities ran directly counter to

Washington's plans. The issue came to a head in a February 1945

hemispheric conference, where the US put forth its "Economic Charter

of the Americas," which called for an end to economic nationalism "in

all its forms." The first beneficiaries of a country's resources

must be US investors and their local associates, not "the people of that

country." There could be no "broader distribution of wealth" or

improvement in "the standard of living of the masses," unless, by

unlikely accident, that happened to result from policies designed to

serve the interests of those with first priority.

Given US power, economic rationality prevailed, with the

consequences that the World Bank now fears. All these consequences

were happily invisible to the triumphalists. Perhaps something changed

in, say the 1980s, when the yearning for democracy became a leading

principle of our foreign policy, according to right-thinking people.

Instead of rendering judgment, we should cite that of Reagan insider

Thomas Carothers, a State Department official in the Latin

American Bureau who "worked on a variety of assistance projects

designed to promote democracy in Latin America and the Caribbean,"

he reported, and has written extensively on the consequences; he had

no doubts about the "sincerity" of the efforts, though even his own

account was enough to show that they were utterly cynical in

conception.

Carothers found a negative correlation between US influence and the

rise of democracy in the hemisphere. Where US influence was least, in

the southern cone, steps toward democracy happened, opposed by the

Reagan Administration, which later hastened to take credit for them.

Where US influence was greatest, the effects were worst, in fact far

worse than Carothers recognized given his crabbed

conventional conception of "democracy," though he clearly articulated

the main point. Washington adopted "pro-democracy policies as a

means of relieving pressure for more radical change," he wrote, "but

inevitably sought only limited, top-down forms of democratic change

that did not risk upsetting the traditional structures of power with

which the United States has long been allied." Its "impulse is to

promote democratic change, but the underlying objective is to maintain

the basic order of what, historically at least, are quite undemocratic

societies."

The US kept to "very limited, controlled forms of democratic change"

because of its "deep fear...of populist-based change in Latin America --

with all its implications for upsetting established economic and

political orders and heading off in a leftist direction." Washington's

allies, therefore, were "the existing power structures," not those who

work "from the bottom up to spread the ideas and principles of a

democratic society among the citizenry." These miscreants, in fact,

were the ones left in ditches, tortured and mutilated, dismissed to their

proper place by the security forces we trained, armed, and advised --

though awareness of that decisive truth was too much to expect. What

of the "global threat" to the "market democracies" we were defending

in Latin America? Take Brazil, where US intelligence could find no

hint of Soviet intrusion, even if that were imaginable. In fact, in "our

little region" there had been no Russians in sight, unless we virtually

invited them in.

It is perfectly true that targets of US attack sought help from

somewhere, and since they were not going to get it from the

subordinates of the Enforcer, they ultimately turned to the Soviets, who

were sometimes willing to help, for their own cynical reasons, in which

case the US victims became tentacles of the Evil Empire, whom we

must destroy in self-defense. By similar logic, a Soviet Anthony Lake

could have argued that the USSR was defending freedom and

democracy in Afghanistan from the "global threat" of American

imperialism and its terrorist forces -- who, since liberation from Soviet

rule, destroyed and massacred with great zeal and success, another

"inconvenient fact" that merits little notice. There would, for example,

be little use in focusing on the exploits of the CIA favorite Gulbuddin

Hekmatyar, one of the world's most extreme Islamic

fundamentalist fanatics, who bore primary responsibility for 30,000

deaths in the capital city of Kabul alone according to *The Economist*,

surpassing Pol Pot in Phnom Penh, it appears. Perhaps the "global

threat" referred to indigenous Communists. Here there is much to say,

including some reflections on the familiar doctrine that democracy

requires exclusion of "Communists" from the political system, by

violence if necessary.

(In the final chapter, I'll write more about all the ironies fraught in the

narrative currently unfolding that involves the mujahedin, Taliban,

Afghanistan, Osama bin Laden, and the US.)

Thus when the US-backed terror regime was doing its work in

Iran after the 1953 CIA-MI6 coup that overthrew the conservative

parliamentary government, *The New York Times* praised the US clients

for their "long record of success in defeating subversion without

suppressing democracy," noting with pleasure the suppression of the

"pro-Soviet Tudeh party," formerly "a real menace" but "considered

now to have been completely liquidated," and the "extreme

nationalists" who had been almost as subversive as the Communists --

all liquidated without suppressing "democracy." The practice was,

again, standard, and passed with little comment, given the prevailing

concept of "democracy." Still more interesting, perhaps, was the way

the concept "Communist" was understood.

Here the record is voluminous and consistent: to gain the title

"Communist," it is enough to work "from the bottom up," appealing to

the "poor people" who "have always wanted to plunder the rich," as

John Foster Dulles described the plague. That is precisely why the US

terror war in Central America, motivated by the "sincere impulse" to

bring democracy, was in large measure a war against the Church --

"Communists," in the technical sense, once the Bishops had adopted

"the preferential option for the poor." Nothing changed in this respect

as new visions replace the old.

Let's drop the drivel about our love of democracy and look at the

market, thus at least approaching the real world. Recall the one quoted

statement of Lincoln Gordon's that does not simply send shivers up the

spine: the neo-Nazi triumph should "create a greatly improved

climate for private investments," as indeed it did. It is quite true that we

seek to impose market discipline on the third world, now including the

large regions of Central Europe that might return to their third world

origins. But the odes to the market are carefully crafted to conceal two

important facts.

First, market discipline in the third world is attractive because it will

leave the societies open to Western plunder. Second, the wonders of

the market are for them, not us, and have always been: every successful

developed society, from Britain to the East Asian Tigers and

dramatically including the US, gained this status by radical violation of

the doctrines we impose on the poor and keeps that status in the same

way. The second prong of the new vision, Clinton's new

international economic program, reflected the understanding of these

truisms.

While Administration rhetoric on the marvels of free trade boomed on

the front pages as part of the PR campaign to ram through an

unpopular (and in fact, highly protectionist) version of a North

American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the business sections

reported the new National Export Strategy that is to go far beyond the

"less coordinated efforts" of Reagan and Bush, with a planned

expansion of Export-Import Bank lending, which as the Reaganites had

conceded in their day, already violated then GATT (now WTO) rules.

The Clinton Administration opposed the measures it was

implementing, the press reported, because "they amount to government

subsidies that distort international markets." But there is no

contradiction. As Ex-IMF President Kenneth Brody explained, "by

creating such a program in the United States, the Clinton

Administration would have more influence in seeking international

limits on such lending." The President also approved an independent

program that would release $3 billion in loan guarantees to domestic

and foreign buyers of US-built ships -- again, for the purpose of

inducing others to end such gross interferences in the market, *The Wall*

Street Journal explained. The logic will be recognized instantly: war

brings peace, crime brings law, arms production and sales bring arms

reduction and nonproliferation, overthrowing democratic governments

brings "showcases for democracy," and so on. In simple words,

anything goes, as long as there is a good answer to the question: "What

is in it for us?" The simple truths were underscored by Clinton's

Treasury Secretary Lloyd Bentsen: "I'm tired of a level playing field,"

he said: "We should tilt the playing field for U.S. businesses. We

should have done it 20 years ago." In fact, "we" (meaning state-

corporate power) have been doing it for two centuries, dramatically so

in the past fifty years, even more under the Reaganites. But that is the

wrong image to convey.

It is preferable to speak warmly of Carter-Reagan achievements in

moving "toward a defense buildup and less government intervention in

the economy" -- Harvard economist and *Wall Street Journal*

contributing editor Robert Barro, pretending (it has to be a

pretense) that he did not know that the Pentagon is, and has been

explicitly designed to be, a massive form of government interference in

the economy to ensure that high-tech industry feeds at the public

trough. The Reaganites had forged new paths in violating market

orthodoxy for the benefit of US-based corporations, but they did not go

far enough to satisfy the business community, one reason for the

substantial corporate-financial support for Clinton's program as a New

Democrat. And the new programs, like the old, were described in the

business press, renowned for its devotion to the needs of working

people, as aimed at increasing "jobs," a term that has taken on the

meaning of the unpronounceable word "profits" in conventional

Newspeak.

The phrase "What is in it for us?" is from the third component of the new Clinton vision, the decisions of the White House panel on intervention. The Clinton panel determined to put an end to the era of altruism. No more "nice guy," as in the days when we turned much of the world into graveyards and deserts. Henceforth the guiding consideration will be "What is in it for us?" the words that *The New York Times* highlighted in its report. Thomas Friedman's full report on the new "enlargement" doctrine filled in the picture. The National Security Adviser, he observed, had focused on the fact "that in a world in which the United States no longer has to worry daily about a Soviet nuclear threat, where and how it intervenes abroad is increasingly a matter of choice." That is the "essence" of the new doctrine, Friedman

emphasized, a doctrine that clearly and explicitly reflects the

understanding that the "nuclear threat" was the Soviet deterrent to US

intervention. Now that the deterrent is gone, intervention can be freely

undertaken, as had been observed years earlier by others, with the Cold

War winding down.

Summarizing, the new vision was that in the international economy, we

will no longer be satisfied by a "level playing field" for US

corporations, but will construct a proper tilt by violating free trade

rules even more thoroughly than before. And with the deterrent gone,

we would intervene where and how we choose, though only when there

is something in it for us. The technical term for this stance is "the

Politics of Meaning," to which the Clintons were sincerely devoted.

Actually, there was nothing new in the new vision, apart from

tactical adjustments that reflected the new realities of global power.

The mood of despair in the third world is easy to understand, quite

apart from the catastrophe of global capitalism that has ravaged the

traditional colonies. It was captured by a leading Brazilian theologian,

Cardinal Paulo Evaristo Arns of Sao Paulo, Brazil, who observed that

throughout the third world "there is hatred and fear: When will they

decide to invade us," and on what pretext? And by Egypt's leading

newspaper, the quasi-governmental *Al-Ahram*, which described the

new world order as "codified international piracy."

Another component of the new vision was leaked to the press as its

basic features were being presented in public: a draft report on

government secrecy sent to the National Security Council by

Clinton's Information Security Oversight Office. The report

recommended that classified documents be held for longer than was the

practice during the Cold War, apart from the rule of the Reaganite

reactionaries, whose commitment to state power and secrecy went far

beyond the norm. Their 1982 decision to keep "virtually all [secret

government] documents classified indefinitely" was to be relaxed, AP

reported, with restrictions of only up to forty years, as compared to

Nixon's "hold period" of thirty years and Carter's of twenty years.

The Clinton task force also recommended slow and extremely costly

document-by-document review instead of declassification en masse,

and called for "balancing public interest and national security

concerns," as determined by "agency officials." The procedure

for automatic declassification of certain top secret documents, set at ten

years by Nixon and six by Carter, should be extended to fifteen years,

the task force proposed. Returning to our attitude toward markets, the

doctrinal system faced unexpected problems among the population,

who were expected to sit by in silence and ignorance while the state

executives rammed through their secret version of NAFTA, grossly

misinterpreted as a "free trade agreement." In the light of unanticipated

popular opposition, it was necessary to revive traditional modes of

population control. In earlier years, huge propaganda campaigns had

been undertaken to overcome deviant ideas among the general public,

notably after World War II, when the world was swept by a current of

social reform, bitterly fought by the US government at home

and abroad.

Success in reversing these trends was great in most of the world,

including the United States itself, though in Europe and Japan the

attack on labor and democracy did not achieve all of its goals and

countries adopted a kind of "social contract" that included such

depraved ideas as health care, workers' rights, and other departures

from the principles for which we serve as a gatekeeper and a model. In

the US, the wave was beaten back in part through massive propaganda

efforts orchestrated by the Chamber of Commerce and the Advertising

Council, which conducted a $100 million campaign to use all media to

"sell" the American economic system -- as they conceived it -- to the

American people. The program was officially described as a

"major project of educating the American people about the economic

facts of life." Corporations "started extensive programs to indoctrinate

employees," the leading business journal Fortune reported, subjecting

their captive audiences to "Courses in Economic Education" and

testing them for commitment to the "free enterprise" system -- that is,

"Americanism." The scale was "staggering," sociologist Daniel Bell

(then a *Fortune* editor) observed, as the business world sought to

reverse the democratizing thrust of the Depression years and re-

establish the ideological hegemony of the "free enterprise system."

A survey conducted by the American Management Association (AMA)

found that many corporate leaders regarded "propaganda" and

"economic education" as synonymous, holding that "We want

our people to think right." The AMA reported that Communism,

socialism, and particular political parties and unions "are often

common targets of such campaigns," which "some employers view...as

a sort of `battle of loyalties' with the unions" -- a rather unequal battle,

given the resources available, including the corporate media, which

offered the services free of charge, then as now. The results were

remarkable, leaving the US off the spectrum of industrial societies on

social issues and basic human rights. Health care is one case that

finally gained attention, as the highly bureaucratized and inefficient

private system began to become too much of a burden to corporations,

though the US will remain alone, it seems, in ramming through --

again, over popular opposition -- a system that is highly regressive (not

tax-based) and that attends carefully to the needs of the few

huge insurance companies that are to take the central management role,

at substantial public cost. We might note that this is characteristic of

the "welfare state." A minimally realistic picture of the phenomenon

will take into account the fiscal measures designed to benefit the rich,

which amount to hefty government welfare payments.

Reviewing the scale of these devices, political scientist Christopher

Howard pointed out that "one crucial fact remains: the middle- and

upper-income classes are the main beneficiaries of the hidden welfare

state." Thus "over 80% of the tax benefits for home mortgage interest,

charitable contributions, and real estate taxes go to those earning more

than $50,000," not to speak of "the large fraction of tax expenditures

that subsidize corporate fringe benefits." Moving on to a fully

realistic conception of the "welfare state," we will also take account of

the Pentagon system, export promotion devices, and other measures

designed to provide taxpayer subsidies to the wealthy -- to protect

"jobs," in standard parlance. The new health reform program is well-

crafted to satisfy the conditions of one-sided class warfare that guide

policy generally. On health reform, it has so far been possible to keep

the options within a narrow spectrum that excludes the general public,

which continues to favor a standard tax-based (single-payer) system by

considerable margins, as has been the case from the mid-1940s. But on

"free trade," discipline eroded significantly (not necessarily for good

reasons, a different matter).

Accordingly, as noted, it was necessary to undertake

"population control measures," to adopt some terminology of

counterinsurgency literature. Returning to the traditional methods

pioneered by the PR industry, *The New York Times*, in a front-page

story, graciously provided the foolish masses with "A Primer: Why

Economists Favor Free-Trade Agreement." Critics of the executive

version of NAFTA are declared "malicious" liars, with what they say

entirely ignored apart from the easy and irrelevant targets.

The *Times* patiently explains the "fundamental insights" about

international trade that have not changed for 250 years, citing the

"legendary textbook" in which Paul Samuelson quotes John Stuart Mill

as saying that international trade provides "a more efficient

employment of the productive forces of the world." Who but a

lunatic could oppose that? To be concrete, who but a lunatic could

have opposed the development of a textile industry in New England in

the early nineteenth century, when British production was so much

more efficient that half the New England industrial sector would have

gone bankrupt without very high protective tariffs, thus cutting short

industrial development in the United States? Or the high tariffs that

radically undermined economic efficiency to allow the United States to

develop steel and other manufacturing capacities? Or the gross

distortions of the market that created modern electronics?

Who could be so silly as to fail to understand that we would be far

better off if the US were still pursuing its comparative advantage in

exporting furs and crops from stony New England soils, while

India produced textiles and ships and, for all we can guess, might have

led the way to industrial revolution? Perhaps joined by Egypt, which

might not have had to rely on such radical violation of market

principles as extermination of the natives and slavery to enable King

Cotton to fuel the industrial revolution, as the British and Americans

did. And who could be so ridiculous as to contemplate a NAFTA

designed to reflect the interests and concerns that are actually

articulated by critical voices in all three of the countries to be linked by

treaty arrangements? No reflections on these matters appear in the

primer offered to the backward peons. Thanks to extreme departure

from market orthodoxy, things did not pursue the course that economic

rationality might have entailed.

Thus India, under British rule, deindustrialized, becoming an impoverished agricultural society, while Britain prospered. Egypt's attempt to enter the industrial world was beaten back by British power. The pattern has extended through much of the world, the US taking the lead in the campaign against independent development abroad, and against market discipline at home, as Britain faltered in the task.

Today, India, like most of the South, is undergoing neoliberal "structural adjustment" reforms, while the US, as always, violates market principles as it pleases along with the rest of the industrial world, most of it more protectionist than in 1980, the Reaganites often leading the pack in the attack on economic rationality. There are

notable effects, and beneficiaries are not lacking. Take

diamonds. Seven out of ten diamonds sold in the West are cut in India,

with super-cheap labor, now being driven down to still greater depths

of misery thanks to structural adjustment. But there is a bright side:

"We pass some of the benefits to our overseas customers," an Indian

diamond exporter observes. Workers and their families may starve to

death in the New World Order of economic rationality, but diamond

necklaces are cheaper in elegant New York shops, thanks to the

miracle of the market.

There are also a few highly touted success stories, notably Ghana,

"regularly cited by [International Monetary] Fund and [World] Bank

economists as the prime example of how structural adjustment cures

failing economies and places them on a path to sustainable

growth," Ross Hammond and Lisa McGowan pointed out in a review

of this "showcase." Thanks to its obedience to market discipline,

Ghana was "showered with foreign aid," including more soft loans

from the World Bank than any country except China and India (in

absolute, not per capita value). Manufacturing has declined, as have

domestic food and livestock, and food self-sufficiency generally.

Malnutrition has increased, environmental degradation is proceeding

apace, the external debt has tripled, and since 1987, Ghana has paid

more to the IMF than it has received -- a standard third world

phenomenon, as the capital hemorrhage from the poor to the rich

countries has been joined by capital export to the IMF and Work Bank,

now "net recipients of resources from the developing countries," the

South Centre (formerly the South Commission) reports in a

1993 study.

But there are reasons for IMF and Bank enthusiasm about Ghana.

Agroexport has grown, "rich Ghanaians have fared quite well under

adjustment" as land ownership and income have concentrated, and

Western creditors and investors are doing nicely.

The leading success story deserves its reputation. The picture only

darkens as we move closer to home, where our benevolence can be

exercised more efficiently. Consider Nicaragua, destroyed by US terror

and economic warfare, now "challenging Haiti for the unwanted

distinction of being the most destitute country in the Western

Hemisphere," Hugh O'Shaughnessy reports from Managua.

Infant mortality has reached the highest level in the continent after a

dramatic decline before the effects of the US war set in by the mid-

1980s. The UN reports that one-quarter of all children are

malnourished. Diseases that had once been almost eliminated are

rampant. Women set up street corner soup kitchens "to save tens of

thousands of youngsters from starvation." Sandinista health, nutrition,

literacy and agrarian programs "have been scrapped by a government

pressed by the International Monetary Fund and Washington to

privatize and cut public spending." The social fabric is coming apart

under severe duress, with rapidly rising crime and violence, as usual

directed mainly against the most vulnerable people: rape, for

example, is escalating. "The country's leaders seem to care little,"

O'Shaughnessy reports, though there is little they can do in the face of

the orders from on high. "Finance Minister Emilio Pereira boasted that

Nicaragua has the lowest inflation in the Western Hemisphere -- never

mind that its four million people are starving." The far right refuses any

compromise, knowing "that it has the support of the US government."

"The Central American Foreign Ministers and secretary general of the

Organization of American States, who came on a mission of mediation,

left in despair [on Sept. 9] after [right wing elements of the US-backed

UN] refused to join peace talks."

In the countryside, the situation was even worse than in

Managua. Contra forces were fighting again in the North, boasting of

their Miami suppliers. Others too were mobilized, as desperation drove

peasants to armed combat. In the main cotton producing areas, not an

acre was sowed because of lack of credits -- though the most powerful

producers, including the minister of agriculture and cattle-ranching and

the president of the High Council of Private Enterprise, Ramiro

Gurdian, received over $40 million in loans last year, Barricada

Internacional reported. Central America specialist Douglas Porpora

wrote that 70 percent of what limited credits there are go to "a small

number of large export producers," in accord with standard US policies

of enriching the wealthy sectors involved in agro export. Farmers had

been driven out of these regions by Somoza, who had taken over the

land for cotton export, part of the "economic miracle" hailed in

the US, as the economy grew while the population starved. After years

of intense pesticide use, much of the soil has lost its fertility.

Banana exports and other agricultural production also collapsed, and

sugar mills, including those that had become profitable under

government control, were shut down, apparently in a campaign by the

former owners, now restored, to destroy the unions and reverse the

gains in workers' rights of the past years. Despite its victory, the US

was not satisfied. Nicaragua's people must suffer much more to atone

for the crimes they have committed against us. In October 1993, the

IMF and World Bank, virtually US-run, presented new demands of

unusual severity. Nicaragua must reduce its debt to zero; eliminate

credits from BANIC, one of the remaining state banks;

privatize enterprises and government services such as energy and

water, to ensure that poor people really feel the pain -- unable to give

their children water to drink, for example, if they cannot pay, thanks to

zooming unemployment.

Nicaragua must cut public expenditures by $60 million, virtually

eliminating much of what remains of health and welfare services, while

the mounting disaster offers new opportunities to condemn the

"economic mismanagement" of the despised enemy. The $60 million

figure was perhaps selected for its symbolic value. A few years

previous, the already privatized banks shipped $60 million abroad,

following sound economic principles: playing the New York stock

market is a far more efficient use of resources than giving

credits to poor bean farmers, as any competent student of economics

can explain. The bean harvest was lost, a catastrophe for the

population. Banks were now to be fully privatized, to ensure the "more

efficient employment of the productive forces of the world," with

consequences for the population that were evident but that did not enter

into calculations of economic rationality, as sophisticates understand. It

is only fair to add that the wonders of the free market have opened up

alternatives, not only for rich landowners, speculators, and

corporations, but even for the starving children who press their faces

against car windows at street corners at night, pleading for a few cents

to survive.

Describing the miserable plight of Managua's street children,

David Werner, the author of *Where There is No Doctor* and other

books on health and society, wrote that "marketing shoe cement to

children has become a lucrative business," and imports from

multinational suppliers are rising nicely as "shopkeepers in depressed

communities do a thriving business with weekly refills of the children's

little bottles" for glue-sniffing, said to "take away hunger." The miracle

of the market was again at work, maximizing efficient use of resources.

On Nicaragua's Atlantic Coast, 100,000 people were now starving to

death, with aid only from Europe and Canada, Church sources

reported. Most were Miskito Indians. Nothing was more inspiring than

the laments about the Miskitos after a few dozen were killed and many

forcibly moved by the Sandinistas in the course of the US terrorist war,

a "campaign of virtual genocide" (Reagan), the most "massive"

human rights violation in Central America (Jeane Kirkpatrick), far

outweighing the slaughter, torture, and mutilation of tens of thousands

of people by the neo-Nazi gangsters they were directing and arming,

and lauding as stellar democrats, at the very same time -- or the

"successful baby-hunting" that foreign reporters observed at exactly

that moment. What has happened to the laments, now that 100,000 are

starving to death? The answer is simplicity itself. Human rights have

purely instrumental value in the political culture; they provide a useful

tool for propaganda, nothing more.

Ten years ago the Miskitos were "worthy victims," in Edward

Herman's useful terminology, their suffering attributable to official

enemies; now they have joined the vast category of "unworthy

victims" whose far worse suffering can be added to our splendid

account. What more need be said? "The United States has a visceral

need to annihilate the Sandinistas once and for all," said a foreign

affairs expert whom O'Shaughnessy quoted. That was evident years

ago, when the refusal of the Sandinistas to genuflect in the expected

fashion aroused sheer frenzy. In 1985, one congressman described "the

lust that members [of Congress] feel to strike out against Communism"

in Nicaragua.

Opinion divided between those who called for brutal terror to punish

the crime of disobedience, and those on the far left of the respectable

spectrum who recommended that we should support terror only if it is

"cost-effective" (said Michael Kinsley), and if that test fails,

we should seek other means to "isolate" the "reprehensible"

government in Managua and "leave it to fester in its own juices" (said

Senate dove Alan Cranston). Nicaragua must be restored to the

"regional standards" of our terror states, Tom Wicker and other media

doves declared with passion. Nor will the US rest until the military is

under Washington's control, with consequences that are familiar

throughout the continent, a crucial element of US policy toward Latin

America for fifty years, emphasized with particular force by the

Kennedy intellectuals. Nicaragua's efforts to pursue the peaceful means

required by international law aroused particular fury.

In 1984, senior US government officials demanded that an invitation to Daniel Ortega to visit Los Angeles be withdrawn "to punish Mr. Ortega and the Sandinistas for accepting the Contadora peace proposal," *The New York Times* reported without comment, referring to peace efforts that the US government was able to undermine. The World Court condemnation of the US evoked further tantrums. Washington's threats finally compelled Nicaragua to withdraw the claims for reparations awarded by the Court, after a US-Nicaragua agreement "aimed at enhancing economic, commercial and technical development to the maximum extent possible," Nicaragua's agent informed the Court. The withdrawal of just claims for billions of dollars of reparations having been achieved by force, Washington abrogated the agreement, suspending its trickle of aid with demands of

increasing depravity and gall. The imperial arrogance is most

impressive.

Having been condemned by the World Court for the "unlawful use of

force" against Nicaragua in a campaign of wholesale international

terrorism that no other actor in the world scene could hope to approach,

we now demand righteously that Nicaragua prove to us that it is not

engaged in terrorism. Any further aid is conditioned on this proof, the

Senate voted. And having helped to destroy the country and its people

prior to the terrorist war, we now demand that the beneficiaries of

those wonderful years receive properties and reparations.

In September 1993, while the new foreign policy vision was

taking its final form, the Senate voted 94-4 to ban any aid if Nicaragua

fails to return or give adequate compensation (as determined by

Washington) for properties of US citizens seized when Somoza fell --

assets of US participants in the crushing of the beasts of burden by the

tyrant who had long been a US favorite. Voting against were Paul

Wellstone (D-MN), Jeff Bingaman (D-NM), Paul Simon (D-IL),

Russell Feingold (D-WI).

In October 1993, Senator Christopher Dodd, a leading Senate dove,

visited Managua to ensure that these orders are fully understood.

Nothing will satisfy the lust to punish the transgressors, even their

reduction to Haitian standards. Any mafia don would understand. If

someone on your turf fails to pay protection money, you don't

just give him a black eye. Others have to learn the lesson. The world

must come to understand what virtually limitless power will achieve if

offended in any way -- the lesson that Bolivar sought to impart.

Accordingly, the treatment is uniform, extending to Vietnamese,

Cubans, Iraqi children, indeed anyone who doesn't understand the rules

of the world for which we are the gatekeeper and the model.

A major qualification has to be added to everything said so far. We

have been adopting the standard mystification that nations are actors in

world affairs, nonsense of course. In any "really existing state," power

is sharply skewed; those who hold it use the state to defend their

interests, whatever the impact on others at home or abroad, a truism

emphasized by that noted revolutionary Marxist Adam Smith,

among many others. Demystifying, all looks different. Who lost War

II? Certainly not German and Japanese industrialists who dedicated

themselves to the fascist cause, and were quickly restored to power and

wealth by the conquering armies. Who won? Certainly not the anti-

fascist resistance, which was dispersed or decimated by the military

victors.

Who lost the Cold War? Surely not the reigning Communist

nomenklatura, now the leaders of nomenklatura capitalism -- "a

parasitical new robber-baron class of speculators and mafiosi," as

Soviet scholar Robert Daniels called them, with wealth beyond their

wildest dreams. Surely not the tough Communist Party boss of

Sverdlovsk, Boris Yeltsin, now elevated to the rank of leading

democrat as he reverses Russia's democratic gains from 1989, highly

praised by Western governments and press -- and by financial markets

-- because of his commitment to the "market shock" that is expected to

"create a greatly improved climate for private investments." Or his old

subordinates from the CP apparatus, now staffing his bureaucracy.

Who won the Cold War? Not the huge mass of the populations

controlled by Western power sectors, neither in the former colonial

domains nor at home; nor the common people of the East, now

learning anew the lessons of their history as third-world subjects. A

true history will depart radically from standard formulas. In Adam

Smith's day, the "principal architects" of policy, who saw to it that their

interests were "most peculiarly attended to," were "merchants

and manufacturers."

The world has changed since, quite considerably in just the last twenty

years, in part as a result of Richard Nixon's dismantling of the post-

World War II (said Bretton Woods) international economic system.

One consequence of these major changes in world order has been a

huge increase in unregulated capital. The World Bank currently

estimates the total resources of international financial institutions at

about $14 trillion. Not only can European central banks not defend

national currencies in the face of this unprecedented private power, but

the euro might "effectively collapse" as EC governments "is

experiencing the power of today's free-wheeling global capital

markets," the *Financial Times* reported in a review of the

world economy and finance. The huge and unregulated international

capital market controls access to capital, but global investors impose a

price.

If a country's economic policies are not attractive to them they will use

their power to induce changes. Such pressures may not be "fatal" to the

very rich, but for the South, the international capital market is "no

more than an unacceptable arm of economic imperialism," which

governments cannot resist in an era when even in the rich countries,

governments "are on the defensive and global investors have gained

the upper hand." A related development was the dramatic shift in use

of capital resources. Cambridge University economist John Eatwell

noted the striking fact that "In 1971, just before the collapse of

the Bretton Woods fixed exchange rate system, about 90 percent of all

foreign exchange transactions were for the finance of trade and long-

term investment, and only about 10 percent were speculative." Today

those percentages are reversed, with well over 90 percent of all

transactions speculative. Daily speculative flows now regularly exceed

the combined foreign exchange reserves of all the G-7 governments,"

the richest seven. [Now ceremoniously known as G-8: in a concession

to Russia, which currently is broke but wants to be respected as a

"world power with nuclear weapons."]

One consequence is that "economic performance in the 191970s and

191980s has been poor throughout the industrial nations of the OECD,"

with growth in each G-8 country about half that of the

191960s, unemployment at least doubled, and productivity growth in

manufacturing industry sharply down. Furthermore, "the sheer scale of

speculative flows can easily overwhelm any government's foreign-

exchange reserves," as just noted. National economic planning is

increasingly difficult even for the rich, market instability is increasing,

and governments are driven to deflationary policies to preserve market

"credibility," driving economies "toward a low-growth, high-

unemployment equilibrium," with declining real wages and increasing

poverty and inequality. A third related development has been the

sharpening of the double-edged conception of the market: fetters for

the weak, to be thrown aside at their pleasure by the strong. During the

past twenty years, free market rhetoric has soared to glorious heights,

while the rich countries have enhanced their protections against

market discipline.

WTO economist Patrick Low drew attention to "the sustained assault

on [free trade] principle from which the WTO suffered, starting around

the early 191970s," a "difficult period economically" until today, in

which "the WTO did not fully succeed in holding the line against

growing protectionism and systematic decline" -- to put it mildly.

Again, the Reaganites combined the two tendencies quite brilliantly,

orating in free market voices to the poor while assuring the rich, loud

and clear, that the state will intervene massively to protect their

interests. Then Secretary of the Treasury James Baker "proudly

proclaimed that Mr. Ronald Reagan had `granted more import relief to

US industry than any of his predecessors in more than half a

century'," international economist Fred Bergsten points out, adding that

the Reaganites specialized in the kind of "managed trade" that most

"restricts trade and closes markets," voluntary export restraint

agreements -- "the most insidious form of protectionism," which

"raises prices, reduces competition and reinforces cartel behavior." The

increase in the Pentagon budget alone is a major form of state

intervention in the economy for the benefit of the rich, and has been

understood just that way for half a century -- one reason why there will

be a long wait for a "peace dividend." A fourth related development

has been the rapid acceleration of the internationalization of the

economy.

Foreign sales of transnational corporations now far exceed all

of world trade -- and of what is called "world trade," well over a third

is now estimated to be intrafirm transactions, centrally managed

interchanges within corporations that happen to cross an international

border -- one of many reasons why talk about "free trade" and

"markets" is of limited relevance to the real world. An obvious

corollary is the sharp decline in meaningful democracy discussed

before (see, for example Edward Herman, "The End of Democracy?" *Z*

September), as extreme totalitarian institutions (corporations, banks,

investment firms, and so on.), with strict top-down control, internal

secrecy, and only the most limited public accountability gain even

further power on a global scale. Naturally they are constructing organs

of governance to reflect their interests (WTO, the IMF and World

Bank, the EC executive, G-7 closed sessions, and so on.), all

properly insulated from popular interference, even awareness, a new

and higher stage in the long struggle to remove any threat to "top-

down" forms of democracy that enhance "the traditional structures of

power with which the United States has long been allied" -- eliminating

mystification, "the traditional structures of power" with which the

"principal architects" of US government policy and the interests they

serve have "long been allied."

The consequences are not hard to see or understand: slowdown in

economic growth, decline in economic or other planning in the

interests of the general population, and extension of the third world

model to the rich countries themselves as the domestic population

becomes superfluous for profit-making, the supreme human

value in the world for which we are "the gatekeeper and the model."

The US and Britain have been leading the way in these developments,

and their accomplishments are welcomed by those who matter. While

the new Clinton vision was receiving its final touches, a front-page

story in *The Wall Street Journal* reported "a welcome development of

transcendent importance," no less: "the increasingly competitive cost

of U.S. labor." Thanks to the harsh attack on labor through a

combination of state power and improved opportunities to shift

production abroad, US labor costs per unit output fell 1.5 percent in

1992, while costs increased in Japan and Europe, as well as Taiwan

and South Korea. In 1985, hourly pay in the US was higher than the

other G-7 countries.

By 1992, it had fallen to below its wealthy competitors, apart from

England, where Thatcher had done even better in punishing working

people. Hourly wages were 60 percent higher in Germany than in the

US, 20 percent higher in Italy. The US has not yet reached South

Korea and Taiwan, but progress is being made, in the richest country in

the world, with unparalleled advantages -- and a highly class conscious

business community, fighting a bitter class war against an enemy

lacking resources, organization, and meaningful modes of interaction

or participation. The lessons are spelled out by *Business Week*. Europe

must "hammer away at high wages and corporate taxes, short working

hours, labor immobility, and luxurious social programs." It must learn

the lesson of Britain, which finally "is doing something well," *The*

Economist announces approvingly, with "trade unions shackled

by law and subdued," "unemployment high," and the Maastricht social

chapter rejected so that employers are protected "from over-regulation

and under-flexibility of labor" (job security). American workers are

barely a step behind.

The end of the Cold War offered new weapons for use against working

people in rich societies. There are "green shoots in Communism's

ruins," exults the world's leading business daily, the London *Financial*

Times; not everything is grim in the former Communist world. The

"green shoots" are the new opportunities for corporations to reduce

costs thanks to "rising unemployment and pauperization of large

sections of the industrial working class" as capitalist reforms are

instituted. GM opened a $690 million assembly plant in

Germany, where workers are willing to "work longer hours than their

pampered colleagues in western Germany" at 40 percent of the wage

and with few benefits, the journal relates happily. Poland is still better,

with workers available at 10 percent the wage of the pampered

Western workers, kept that way "thanks largely to the Polish

government's tougher policy on labor disputes," that is, repression of

labor. Of course, the term "markets" has its usual meaning. GM

purchased an auto plant near Warsaw, economist Alice Amsden

commented, "on the under-the-table condition that the Polish

government provide it with 30 percent tariff protection" -- the usual

form that "free market" enthusiasms take. Tax holidays for investors

are also offered, among other gifts.

The same is true when our own domestic third world seeks to entice foreign investors. Alabama beat out competitors for a new Daimler-Benz plant for which its population "will pay dearly," *The Wall Street Journal* noted a few days after the Clinton economic strategy was announced. Germany's leading conglomerate paid a royal $100 for the plant site, and has been offered a package of tax breaks valued at over $300 million, along with other publicly funded services. Alabama "has a third world economy," the head of an economic development group observed: "They're losing money to invest in their people, their roads, their state in general," as the market performs its miracles.

The traditional third world can explain to us how it works. The

prospects are inspiring. Canadian social benefits and workers' rights

can be attacked through "free trade," which forces harmonization

downward to US standards. The same device can be used to "lock the

United States into a low-wage, low-productivity future," the

congressional Office of Technology Assessment concludes in its

review of the executive version of NAFTA, scrupulously designed to

protect rights of investors, not workers or future generations (the

environment). And an increase in standard of living for Mexican

workers is not a serious threat, given harsh dictatorial rule and the

flooding of the labor market as peasants are driven from the land by

US agribusiness exports. German workers had become "used to some

of the best working conditions on earth," *Business Week*

commented under the heading "Time to Leave the Cocoon?"

But no more, as some "60% of German industrial jobs are threatened

by competition from Eastern Europe, Asia, and the U.S.," the last now

offering its contribution to the ranks of the Third World thanks to "the

welcome development of transcendent importance." With these "green

shoots" rising in old and new Third Worlds, Germany's biggest

employers' federation, Gesamtmetall, was able to issue a "declaration

of war," canceling "union wage and vacation contracts -- for the first

time ever."

Meanwhile profits should do just fine, as the world moves

toward the desired two-tiered model under its new visions. In brief, the

developments of the past years offer new ways to put the screws on the

overwhelming majority of the population both abroad and at home,

options enhanced by the end of the Cold War -- which is why the Cold

War victors are celebrating so triumphantly: investors, executives, and

wealthy professionals at home; the former Communist Party rulers now

joining in the global rip-off; their counterparts in the global South; and,

of course, respectable sectors of the educated communities, who are

called on to trumpet the "victory for a set of political and economic

principles: democracy and the free market." The Clinton vision merely

announced another small step toward the same ends.

How far can this go? Will it really be possible to construct an

international society on something like the third world model, with

islands of great privilege in a sea of misery -- fairly large islands, in the

richer countries -- and with controls of a totalitarian nature within

democratic forms that increasingly become a facade? Or will popular

resistance, which must itself become internationalized to succeed, be

able to dismantle these evolving structures of violence and domination,

and carry forth the centuries-old process of expansion of freedom,

justice, and democracy that is now being aborted, even reversed? These

are the large questions for the future.

Chapter 7: America's War on Terror in the Time of Technology

On March 16, 2008, The New York Times reported that American

officials say that Pakistan's pledge to fight Al Qaeda and Taliban

militants in Waziristan is being weakened by disagreements in the

Pakistani military and security forces over what their priority should

be. The divisions have emerged as a source of growing frustration to

the Bush administration, with officials saying the main disagreement in

Pakistan is over whether to gear up a counterterrorism campaign

against Islamic extremists or to try to shore up a conventional force

focused on potential threats from India. (Almost two months after

elections in Pakistan, in which the assassinated Benezir Bhutto's extant

Pakistani People's Party (PPP) won the elections against

Pervez Musharraf's party, there is still no viable government in

Pakistan.)

On March 10, 2008, National Public Radio's Morning Edition had the

following report:

" It's been more than six years since the al-Qaida network was routed

from its bases in Afghanistan.

In the meantime, many al-Qaida leaders have been killed or captured

— but not Osama bin Laden or his deputy, Ayman al-Zawahiri.

Within intelligence circles, there is debate over whether the terrorist

network has recovered from the setbacks it suffered after the Sept. 11,

2001, attacks. Some analysts say al-Qaida is a shell of what it

once was. But U.S. intelligence officials are not so sure.

There are many different judgments of al-Qaida's strength being put

forth these days. Just last month, President Bush, before the

Conservative Political Action Conference, said the group is reeling.

"The Taliban, al-Qaida and their allies are on the run," Bush said.

But the president's own intelligence agencies offer a different opinion.

National Intelligence Director Michael McConnell, in his most recent

threat assessment, said the core al-Qaida leadership has "regenerated."

Having survived the global war on terror, al-Qaida in this view

is again a centrally directed network with military capabilities.

Speaking on CNN two weeks ago, McConnell reflected that view.

"They have the leadership that they had before, they've rebuilt the

middle management, the trainers," McConnell said. 'They're recruiting

very vigorously.' "

And on July 12, 2007, National Public Radio came out with the

following report:

"Al-Qaida strongest since September 11. NPR.org: July 12, 2007 · Al-

Qaida has rebuilt its operating capability and poses the greatest threat

to the U.S. since the Sept. 11, 2001 attacks, according to a new

assessment from U.S. counterterrorism analysts.

At a White House news conference, however, President Bush

disputed the perception that the terror network had not been weakened.

"That's just not the case," he said. "Because of the actions we've

taken, al-Qaida is weaker today than before."

The intelligence findings follow Homeland Security Secretary Michael

Chertoff statement on Wednesday that he has a "gut feeling" that the

United States faces a heightened risk of attack this summer.

A counterterrorism official speaking to The Associated Press on

condition of anonymity said the stark appraisal, entitled "Al-Qaida

better positioned to strike the West", and indicates the terror network

that launched the most devastating terror attack on U.S. soil has been

able to regroup despite nearly six years of bombings, war and

other tactics aimed at dismantling it.

Al-Qaida is 'considerably operationally stronger than a year ago" and

has "regrouped to an extent not seen since 2001," the counterterrorism

official said, paraphrasing the report's conclusions. "They are showing

greater and greater ability to plan attacks in Europe and the United

States.'

The report says al-Qaida has used its safe haven along the Afghan-

Pakistan border to restore its capabilities."

My aim in this post is limited to three points that somewhat coalesce

into a loose architecture of theses: The Bush administration has issued

conflicting information about the strength of al-Qaida; the nature of

modern war has changed since Pearl Harbor and both sides are

using modern technology; and 911 changed life forever.

By all means let's take a brief primer on exactly what happened on

September 11, 2001 (9/11/01: 911: the national emergency number, as

the property manager of my apartment building pointed out to me that

morning), events happened in New York City, Washington, DC, and

near Shanksville in western Pennsylvania that brought together several

components: capitalism, technology, nomadism, multiple identities,

postcolonial citizenry in the first world, and political and economic

machines in the third world.

The attacks involved the hijacking of United Airlines Flight 93, United

Airlines Flight 175, American Airlines Flight 11, American Airlines

[Flight 77](#), and the subsequent destruction of the [World Trade](#)

[Center](#) in New York City, New York, and severe damage to The

Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia, along with the deaths of 2,974

victims.

Details are too well-known to be rehashed or even linked to here.

Some commentators have mentioned the cinematic mode of this

destruction: For instance, it is compelling to juxtapose video clips of

the burning WTC towers and the Pentagon recycled again and again on

TV with images of an exploding White House (blown up by aliens

from space) in Bill Emerrich's 1996 film [Independence Day](#).

The hijackers who targeted US capital used its technology against it.

Capital and technology framed the master text of this disaster.

Corporate America had been dealt a blow, possibly

leading to an economic recession in the US that might extend to the

whole world because of the international gird

and network of capital. The hijackers transformed the hijacked jetliners

into ferocious missiles (with human freight) aimed at corporate

America aimed against capital.

These hijackers were polyglots and had multiple identities. Although

they were said to have origins in the Middle East. A few were

identified as US citizens born in the Middle East, but who moved

around the world with fake passports and identities–and inordinate

amounts of funds seeded by Osama bin Laden. Indeed, several of these

hijackers who trained in flight schools in Florida supposedly passed

themselves off as Germans and according to reports, spoke

fluent German to one another, and for several months were even guests

at the home of a Florida family. One of these, Mohammed Atta, had

lived in Hamburg, Germany for some time before he did his four-

month pilot training at the Huffman Aviation International Flight

School in Venice, Florida, to get ready for his mission. Another was

identified as a Lebanese who had lived briefly in Germany and then

spent some time in Afghanistan before enrolling in Embry-Riddle

Aeronautical University in Daytona Beach, Florida, to train as a jet

pilot in preparation for his mission on September 11, 2001.

These polyglot hijackers also used technology to plan and achieve their

nefarious mission: When they were flight students, they reportedly

frequently used flight manuals, cell-phones, and laptops with

complicated software programs to plan their missions. They

also honed their training by frequently playing Microsoft flight

simulator games on their laptops. And they also drank quite a bit of

alcohol in bars (not a usual practice by Muslims) where they played

other kinds of video games

(presumably Velocity's "Jetfighter II" was one of these). Most lived

near or in Delray Beach, Florida, because of its

proximity to Interstate 95, halfway between the municipal airports in

Boca Raton and Lantana–obviously to facilitate

their global travel while designing plans for their September 11

mission. And all the hijackers bought the airline

tickets (which they used for their doomed September 11 flights) on the

Internet from Travelocity using credit cards

or frequent-flyer miles.

Shortly after the national air lockdown, President Bush declared a

national state of emergency, and as

Commander-in-Chief mobilized some 1 million military reserves to get

ready for what he proclaimed "the first war of

the twenty-first century." He said that "a group of barbarians have

declared war on our country," and that "Americans must prepare

themselves for battle." From Day One, corporate media had been

describing the rubble of the WTC towers as Ground Zero: military

moniker for the front line of a war battle.

Which brings us back to September 11, 2001: Planes flying

into tall buildings, blowing them up; burning bodies leaping out of

windows on top floors; broken limbs, severed heads, body parts strewn

all over Lower Manhattan, being collected in buckets; ferries carrying

dead bodies across the Hudson River to New Jersey: all these add up to

incredible and spectacular cinematic scenes fueled (please pardon the

pun) by capital and technology. A college professor friend described

this scenario still unfolding at the time of this writing as "post-

Apocalyptic."

On September 15, 2001, in a brief appearance with his senior advisers

at Camp David, George W. Bush said

point-blank: "We're at war. There's been an act of war declared upon

America by terrorists, and we will respond

accordingly. My message is for everybody who wears a

uniform to get ready." Shortly afterward, in his weekly radio

address, he warned that "those who make war on the United States

have chosen their own destruction." He told

Americans to steel themselves for a campaign "without battlefields or

beachheads." Victory, he said, "will not take

place in a single battle, but in a series of decisive actions against

terrorist organizations and those who harbor and

support them." Bush again called those responsible for the attacks

"barbaric people."

And so the US braced for war against Osama bin Laden's Al Qaeda,

his international network of

terrorists, and against nation-states, which is what Bush meant when he

said "and those who harbor and support

them." And therein lay the rub: this network is transnational, nomadic,

and diasporic, and operates with fake

multiple identities, passports, and nationalities, with cell-phones,

rented apartments and apartments near freeways

in world cities, with Internet encryption communications, and with

face-time in modular cells.

(Following is a list of nation-states the US considers terrorist: Iran;

Iraq; Syria; Libya now in the process of being removed from the list);

Cuba; North Korea.

And here's a list of organizations the US considers terrorist: Armed

Islamic Group (GIA)–in Algeria; Popular Front for the Liberation of

Palestine (PFLP); Palestine Islamic Jihad; Islamic Jihad–

Egypt; Palestine Liberation Front; Hamas–Palestine; Euzkadi Ta

Askatasuna (ETA)–Basque Country, Spain; Al-Gama al-Islamiya–

Egypt; Hezbollah–Lebanon; Red Army–Japan; Kurdistan Workers

Party–Turkey; Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement–Peru;

Liberation Workers of Tamil Eelem (LTTE)–Sri Lanka; Revolutionary

People's Liberation Party/Front (DHKP/C)–Turkey; Revolutionary

Armed Forces of Colombia; Al-Qaeda–Waziristan, on the Afghanistan-

Pakistani border; Abu Nidal–Lebanon; and Abu Sayyaf–Philipines.)

The US engaged diasporic and fluid cell-units in war. And the nature

of war itself had changed considerably

since Pearl Harbor. To paraphrase [the title of Manual de Landa's

excellent book](): What we now have is "war in the

age of intelligent machines." The US and the West, mostly

Judeo-Christian, armed with global capital, confronted an

international network of nomadic terrorists, mostly Muslim, (in its

current formation—Islamic State) armed with ferocious passion for

redressing (perceived)

injustice, guns, knives, robust funds, and jetliners transformed into

lethal missiles. The world seems to be already faced with what Samuel

Huntington famously called the "clash of civilizations."

And both sides are armed with technology. The former's terrain are

digital cities, and the latter, deserts and mountains, and also digital

cities. It seemed at this point that in the US, that we weren't too far

from the Los Angeles of Ridley Scott's *Bladerunner*, if we believe

what security experts said in the wake of September 11 events.

Security experts described a new kind of country, where

electronic identification eventually became the norm, immigrants

tracked more closely, and airspace over cities like New York and

Washington off-limits to civilian aircraft. Security experts said–and

still say–technology presented almost limitless possibilities, including

national electronic identification cards. "Each American could be given

a 'smart card,' so as they go into an airport or anywhere, we know

exactly who they are," said Michael G. Cherkasky, president of Kroll

Inc., a security consultant. "The technology is there," Mr. Cherkasky

said. "These cards in industry are going to spread, and then it's going

to be rapidly spread elsewhere."

By December 2007, new US passports became smart cards, with

computer chips have detailed information about those they were issued

to and would identify them when read by a computer.

(Disclosure: I have one of those.) It's just a matter of time before the

passports will be coordinated with fingerprints, or in a few years, with

facial characteristics, and be programmed to permit or limit access

through turnstiles into buildings or areas. They could track someone's

location, financial transactions, criminal history, and even driving

speed on a particular highway on a given night. Video surveillance,

already becoming widespread, could be sharply increased in stores,

offices, and public spaces and at public events. In the interim, the

profiling and surveillance of Arab- and Muslim-Americans has

increased and will most certainly continue to increase within the US,

echoing the internment of Japanese-Americans after Pearl Harbor.

From the get-go the war on terror was imbued with religious

overtones. George W. Bush has used the term "crusade" from time to

time to describe the war. And Osama bin Laden's words in his 1998

interview with ABC's John Miller–which I cite here at length–offered

an ominous window into the events of September 11, 2001:

"The hostility that America continues to express against the Muslim

people has given rise to feelings of animosity on the part of Muslims

against America and against the West in general. Those feelings of

animosity have produced a change in the behavior of some crushed and

subdued groups who, instead of

fighting the Americans inside the Muslim countries, went on to fight

them inside the United States of

America itself. The Western machines and the government of the

United States of America bear the blame for what might

happen. If their people do not wish to be harmed inside their very own

countries, they should seek to elect governments that are truly

representative of them and that protect their interests. The truth is

that the whole Muslim world is the victim of international terrorism,

engineered by America."

Are Muslims in the West–in the US for instance–imperiled by this

development of tendencies? It would seem this is not the case in the

US, given that in 2006, Minnesota–specifically my own district, MN-

05 (Minneapolis–easily the bluest and the most ethnically diverse in

the state)–elected the first Muslim US congressman.

Questions about Ellison's involvement with the Nation of

Islam arose during his 2006 campaign. After winning the Democratic

party nomination in May, he wrote a letter to the local Jewish

Community Relations Council where he reportedly "asserted that his

involvement with the Nation of Islam had been limited to an 18-month

period around the time of the Million Man March in 1995, that he had

been unfamiliar with the Nation of Islam's anti-Semitic views during

his involvement with the group, and that he himself had never

expressed such views." He also stated that he was never a member of

the Nation of Islam, but only worked with it to organize the Minnesota

contingent to the Million Man March.

In Ellison's letter, he denounced the Nation of Islam and Farrakhan,

writing "I wrongly dismissed concerns that they [Farrakhan's remarks]

were anti-Semitic. They were and are anti-Semitic and I should

have come to that conclusion earlier than I did." He explained his

previous views, saying that he, "did not adequately scrutinize the

positions and statements of the Nation of Islam, Louis Farrakhan, and

Khalid Muhammed." He also stated that "any kind of discrimination

and hate are wrong. This has always been my position"

Despite his work with the Nation of Islam, Ellison was backed by the

publisher of [The American Jewish World](), a local Twin Cites

newspaper.

In the end, Keith Ellison was elected from MN's 5th congressional

district by a coalition of yuppies, community activists, feminists, the

huge Somali community that is supposedly the largest outside

Mogadishu, and by Lutheran religious activists that had

sponsored the Somali refugee program in the first place.

What the future on earth will look like is anybody's guess. But one

thing is certain: Life in America changed forever after September 11,

2001. Already people talk about "pre-September 11″ America and

"post-September 11″

America.

Again, as a professor-friend of mine said: "America discovers

foreigners after 9/11." It took me some bit of time to unpack that one…

On September 15, 2001, in a brief appearance with his senior

advisers at Camp David, George W. Bush said point-blank: "We're at

war. There's been an act of war declared upon America by terrorists,

and we will respond accordingly. My message is for everybody who

wears a uniform to get ready." Shortly afterward, in his weekly radio

address, he warned that "those who make war on the United States

have chosen their own destruction." He told Americans to steel

themselves for a campaign "without battlefields or beachheads."

Victory, he said, "will not take place in a single battle, but in a series of

decisive actions against terrorist organizations and those who harbor

and support them." Bush again called those responsible for the attacks

"barbaric people."

And so at this point the US is engaged in the first and second

phases of war: against Osama bin first, against Laden's Al Qaeda, his

international network of terrorists, and against nation-states, which is

what Bush meant when he said "and those who harbor and support

them," and second, with Islamic State, the jihadists' latest

manifestation. And therein lies the rub: this network is transnational,

nomadic, and diasporic, and operates with fake multiple identities,

passports, and nationalities, with cell-phones, rented apartments and

apartments near freeways in world cities, with Internet encryption

communications, and with face-time in modular cells. Here's a

selection of nation-states and organizations the US considers

"terrorist": nation-states: Iran; Iraq; Syria; Libya; Cuba; North Korea;

and Sudan. Organizations: Armed Islamic Group (GIA)—Algeria;

Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP); Palestine

Islamic Jihad; Islamic Gihad—Egypt; Palestine Liberation Front;

Hamas—Palestine; Euzkadi Ta Askatasuna (ETA)—Basque Country,

Spain; Al-Gama'a al-Islamiyya—Egypt; Hezbollah—Lebanon; Red

Army—Japan; Kurdistan Workers Party—Turkey; Liberation Workers

of Tamil Eelem (LTTE)—Sri Lanka; Revolutionary People's

Liberation Party/Front (DHKP/C)—Turkey; Tupac Amaru

Revolutionary Movement (MRTA)—Peru; Revolutionary Armed

Forces of Colombia; Al Qaiada—Afghanistan; Abu Nidal—Lebanon;

Abu Sayyaf—Philippines.

The US engaged diasporic and fluid cell-units in war. And the nature

of war itself has changed considerably since Pearl Harbor. To

paraphrase the title of Manual de Landa's excellent book: What

we now have is "war in the age of technology." The US and the West,

mostly Judeo-Christian, armed with global capital, confront an

international network of nomadic terrorists, mostly Muslim, armed

with ferocious passion for redressing (perceived) injustice, guns,

knives, robust funds, and jetliners transformed into lethal missiles. The

world might be faced with what Samuel Huntington has famously

called the "clash of civilizations. And both sides are armed with

technology. The former's terrain are digital cities, and the latter,

deserts and mountains, and also digital cities. To cite Attorney-General

John Ashcroft, the attacks on September 11 were "orchestrated,

coordinated assaults conducted in technically proficient way." And in

fact this new war might be a new *cold* war, if we remember that the US

viewed communism as a state-sponsored international conspiracy. And the battle-lines in this new cold war will be fluid as well, dispersed globally. To quote a reporter in *The New York Times* of October 7, 2001: "The theater of war may be a cave near the Khyber Pass, a safe house in Hamburg, an airport in Kualar Lumpur, anywhere in the world." And once again in the new machines of capital and technology, information reigns supreme. Listen to US Defense Secretary Ronald Rumsfeld, the old cold war warrior now retooled for the new cold war: "It's not going to be a cruise missile or a bomber that is going to be the determining factor. It's going to be a scrap of information."

(In what many in the Bush Administration and corporate media

have widely identified as the second major front of this war, the

bioterrorism of anthrax, which either domestic or international

terrorists—it's not clear at the point of this writing which—have

deployed against American officials and citizens, falls beyond the

topics this book engages: capital and technology; although

transforming anthrax from its natural state as a bacteria into spores that

can then be either inhaled, ingested, or contracted on the skin by

humans—in other words, transforming anthrax from a bacteria into a

weapon—involves highly technical and scientific skills.)

And it also seems at that point in the US, that we were not too far from

the Los Angeles of Ridley Scott's *Bladerunner*, if we believe what

security experts are saying in the wake of September 11 events.

Security experts are describing a new kind of country, where electronic identification might become the norm, immigrants might be tracked more closely, and airspace over cities like New York and Washington might be off-limits to civilian aircraft. Security experts say technology has presented almost limitless possibilities, including national electronic identification cards. "Each American could be given a 'smart card,' so as they go into an airport or anywhere, we know exactly who they are," said Michael G. Cherkasky, president of Kroll Inc., a security consultant. "The technology is there," Mr. Cherkasky said. "These cards in industry are going to spread, and then it's going to be rapidly spread elsewhere."

Smart cards, with computer chips would have detailed

information about those they were issued to and would identify them

when read by a computer. The cards would be coordinated with

fingerprints, or in a few years, facial characteristics, and be

programmed to permit or limit access through turnstiles into buildings

or areas. They could track someone's location, financial transactions,

criminal history, and even driving speed on a particular highway on a

given night. Video surveillance, already becoming widespread, could

be sharply increased in stores, offices, and public spaces and at public

events. In the interim, the profiling and surveillance of Arab- and

Muslim-Americans will most certainly increase within the US, echoing

the internment of Japanese-Americans after Pearl Harbor.

The war on terror is imbued with religious overtones. George

W. Bush used the term "crusade" from time to time to describe the war

his administration was planning. And Osama bin Laden's words in his

1998 interview with ABC's John Miller—that I cite here at length--

offered an ominous window into the events of September 11, 2001:

The hostility that America continues to express against the Muslim

people has given rise to feelings of animosity on the part of Muslims

against America and against the West in general. Those feelings of

animosity have produced a change in the behavior of some crushed and

subdued groups who, instead of fighting the Americans inside the

Muslim countries, went on to fight them inside the United States of

America itself. The Western machines and the government of the

United States of America bear the blame for what might

happen. If their people do not wish to be harmed inside their very own

countries, they should seek to elect governments that are truly

representative of them and that protect their interests…The truth is that

the whole Muslim world is the victim of international terrorism,

engineered by America…

What the future on earth will look like is anybody's guess. But one

thing is certain: Life in America changed forever after September 11,

2001. Already people are talking about "pre-September 11" America

and "post-September 11" America. What the future on earth will look

like is anyone's guess. But one thing is certain: Life in America

changed forever after September 11, 2001. Already people talk about

"pre-September 11" America and "post-September 11"

America. Again, as a professor-friend of mine said:

"America discovered foreigners after 9/11." It took me some bit of time

to unpack that one...

Chapter 8: The Machine of Social Media

Social media are [computer-mediated](#) tools that allow people to create, share or

exchange information, ideas, and pictures/videos in [virtual communities](#) and

[networks](#). *Social media* is defined as "a group of Internet-based applications that

build on the ideological and technological foundations of [Web 2.0](#), and that allow

the creation and exchange of [user-generated content](#)." Furthermore, social media

depend on mobile and web-based technologies to create highly interactive

platforms through which individuals and communities share, co-create,

discuss, and modify user-generated content. They introduce substantial and

pervasive changes to communication between organizations, communities, and

individuals. These changes are the focus of the emerging field of technoself

studies.

Social media are different from traditional or industrial media in many ways,

including quality, reach, frequency, usability, immediacy, and permanence. There

are many effects that stem from internet usage. According to Nielsen, internet

users continue to spend more time with social media sites than any other type of

site. At the same time, the total time spent on social media in the U.S. across PC

and mobile devices increased by 99 percent to 121 billion minutes in July 2012

compared to 66 billion minutes in July 2011. For content contributors, the

benefits of participating in social media have gone beyond simply social sharing

to building reputation and bringing in career opportunities and monetary income,

as discussed in Tang, Gu, and Whinston (2012).

In 2014, the largest social network is Facebook and other popular

networks include Twitter, Instagram, LinkedIn, and Pinterest.

Although traditional social media offer a variety of opportunities for companies

in a wide range of business sectors, Economic Sector mobile social media makes

use of the location- and time-sensitivity aspects of it in order to engage into

marketing research, communication, sales promotions/discounts, and relationship

development/loyalty programs.

- Marketing research: Mobile social media applications offer data about offline

  consumer movements at a level of detail heretofore limited to online companies.

  Any firm can now know the exact time at which a customer entered one of its

  outlets, as well as comments made during the visit.

- Communication: Mobile social media communication takes two forms, the first

  of which is company-to-consumer in which a company may establish a

connection to a consumer based on its location and provide reviews

about locations nearby. The second type of communication is user-generated

content. For example, McDonald's offered $5 and $10 gift cards to 100 users

randomly selected among those checking in at one of the restaurants. This

promotion increased check-ins by 33% (from 2,146 to 2,865), resulted in over 50

articles and blog posts, and prompted several hundred thousand news feeds and

Twitter messages.

- Sales promotions and discounts: Although in the past customers had to use

  printed coupons, mobile social media allows companies to tailor promotions to

  specific users at specific times. For example, when launching its California-

  Cancun service, Virgin America offered users who checked in through Loop at

  one of three designated Border Grill taco trucks in San Francisco and Los

  Angeles between 11 am and 3 pm on August 31, 2010, two tacos for $1 and two

  flights to Mexico for the price of one.

- Relationship development and loyalty programs: In order to increase

  long-term relationships with customers, companies are able to create loyalty

  programs that allow customers who check-in regularly at a location to earn

  discounts or perks. For example, American Eagle Outfitters remunerates such

  customers with a tiered 10%, 15%, or 20% discount on their total purchase.

- E-Commerce: Mobile social media applications such as Amazon.com and

  Pinterest are influencing an upward trend in the popularity and accessibility of e-

  commerce, or online purchases.

  According to the Nielsen Company's "The U.S. Digital Consumer Report",

  almost half (47%) of smartphone owners visit social networks every day via

  mobile applications. With the rapid adoption of mobile devices, social media has

  a symbiotic relationship with the mobile consumer.

Distinction from other media

E-commerce businesses may refer to social media as consumer-generated media (CGM). A common thread running through all definitions of social media is a blending of technology and social interaction for the co-creation of value.

People obtain information, education, news, and other data from electronic and print media. Social media are distinct from industrial or traditional media such as newspapers, television, and film as they are comparatively inexpensive and accessible. They enable anyone (even private individuals) to publish or access information. Industrial media generally require significant resources to publish information as in most cases the articles goes through many revisions before being published.

One characteristic shared by both social and industrial media is the capability to reach small or large audiences; for example, either a blog post or a television

show may reach no people or millions of people. Some of the properties

that help describe the differences between social and industrial media are:

1. Quality: In industrial (traditional) publishing—mediated by a publisher—the

   typical range of quality is substantially narrower than in niche, unmediated

   markets. The main challenge posed by content in social media sites is the fact

   that the distribution of quality has high variance: from very high-quality items to

   low-quality, sometimes abusive content.

2. Reach: Both industrial and social media technologies provide scale and are

   capable of reaching a global audience. Industrial media, however, typically use a

   centralized framework for organization, production, and dissemination, whereas

   social media are by their very nature more decentralized, less hierarchical, and

   distinguished by multiple points of production and utility.

3. Frequency: The number of times an advertisement is displayed on social media

   platforms.

4. Accessibility: The means of production for industrial media are typically government and/or corporate (privately owned); social media tools are generally available to the public at little or no cost.

5. Usability: Industrial media production typically requires specialized skills and training. Conversely, most social media production requires only modest reinterpretation of existing skills; in theory, anyone with access can operate the means of social media production.

6. Immediacy: The time lag between communications produced by industrial media can be long (days, weeks, or even months) compared to social media (which can be capable of virtually instantaneous responses).

7. Permanence: Industrial media, once created, cannot be altered (once a magazine article is printed and distributed, changes cannot be made to that same article) whereas social media can be altered almost instantaneously by comments or editing.

Community media constitute a hybrid of industrial and social media. Though community-owned, some community radio, TV, and newspapers are run by professionals and some by amateurs. They use both social and industrial media frameworks.

Social media have also been recognized for the way they have changed how public relations professionals conduct their jobs. They have provided an open arena where people are free to exchange ideas on companies, brands, and products. As stated by Doc Searls and David Wagner, two authorities on the effects of Internet on marketing, advertising, and PR, "The best of the people in PR are not PR types at all. They understand that there aren't censors, they're the company's best conversationalists." Social media provides an environment where users and PR professionals can converse, and where PR professionals can promote their brand and improve their company's image by listening and responding to what the public is saying about their product.

Effects of using social media for news purposes

Just as television turned a nation of people who *listened* to media content into *watchers* of media content, the emergence of social media has created a nation of media content creators. According to 2011 Pew Research data, nearly 80% of American adults are online and nearly 60% of them use social networking sites. More Americans get their news via the Internet than from newspapers or radio, as well as three-fourths who say they get news from e-mail or social media sites updates, according to a report published by CNN. The survey suggests that Facebook and Twitter make news a more participatory experience than before as people share news articles and comment on other people's posts. According to CNN, in 2010 75% of people got their news forwarded through e-mail or social media posts, whereas 37% of people shared a news item via Facebook or Twitter.

In the United States, 81% of people say they look online for news of the weather, first and foremost. National news at 73%, 52% for sports news, and 41% for entertainment or celebrity news. Based on this study, done for the Pew Center, two-thirds of the sample's online news users were younger than 50, and 30% were younger than 30. The survey involved tracking daily the habits of 2,259 adults 18 or older.

33% of young adults get news from social networks. 34% watched TV news and 13% read print or digital content. 19% of Americans got news from Facebook, Google+, or LinkedIn. 36% of those who get news from social network got it yesterday from survey. More than 36% of Twitter users use accounts to follow news organizations or journalists. 19% of users say they got information from news organizations of journalists. TV remains most popular source of news, but audience is aging (only 34% of young people).

29% of those younger than 25 say they got no news yesterday either

digitally or traditional news platforms. Only 5% under 30 say they follow news

about political figures and events in DC. Only 14% of responders could answer

all four questions about which party controls the House, current unemployment

rate, what nation Angela Merkel leads, and which presidential candidate favors

taxing higher-income Americans. Facebook and Twitter now pathways to news,

but are not replacements for traditional ones. 70% get social media news from

friends and family on Facebook.

For children, using social media sites can help promote creativity, interaction,

and learning. It can also help them with homework and class work. Moreover,

social media enable them to stay connected with their peers, and help them to

interact with each other. Some can get involved with developing fundraising

campaigns and political events. However it can impact on social skills due to the

absence of face-to-face contact. Social media can affect mental health of teens.

Teens who use Facebook frequently and who especially susceptible may become

more narcissistic, antisocial, and aggressive. Teens become strongly

influenced by advertising, and it influences buying habits for the future. Since the

creation of Facebook in 2004, it has become a distraction and a way to waste

time for many users. Americans spend more time on Facebook than any other

website in the United States. Based on a Nielsen study, the average American has

spent more than 27 minutes per day on the social media site, via computer and

mobile.

In a recent study conducted, high school students ages 18 and younger were

examined in an effort to find their preference for receiving news. Based on

interviews with 61 teenagers, conducted from December 2007 to February 2011,

most of the teen participants reported reading print newspapers only

"sometimes," with fewer than 10% reading them daily. The teenagers instead

reported learning about current events from social media sites such as Facebook,

MySpace, YouTube, and blogs. Another study showed that social media users

read a set of news that is different from what newspaper editors feature

in the print press.

Using nanotechnology as an example, Runge et al. (2013) studied tweets from

[Twitter](#) and found that some 41% of the discourse about nanotechnology focused

on its negative impacts, suggesting that a portion of the public may be concerned

with how various forms of nanotechnology are used in the future. Although

optimistic-sounding and neutral-sounding tweets were equally likely to express

certainty or uncertainty, the pessimistic tweets were nearly twice as likely to

appear certain of an outcome than uncertain. These results imply the possibility

of a preconceived negative perception of many news articles associated with

nanotechnology. Alternatively, these results could also imply that posts of a more

pessimistic nature that are also written with an air of certainty are more likely to

be shared or otherwise permeate groups on Twitter. Similar biases need to be

considered when the utility of new media is addressed, as the potential for human

opinion to over-emphasize any particular news story is greater despite the general

improvement in addressed potential uncertainty and bias in news articles

than in traditional media.

On October 2, 2013, the most common hashtag throughout the country was

"#government shutdown," as well as ones focusing on political parties, Obama,

and healthcare. Most news sources have Twitter, and Facebook, pages, like CNN

and the New York Times, providing links to their online articles, getting an

increased readership. Additionally, several college news organizations and

administrators have Twitter pages as a way to share news and connect to

students. According to "Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2013", in the US,

among those who use social media to find news, 47% of these people are under

45 years old, and 23% are above 45 years old. However social media as a main

news gateway does not follow the same pattern across countries. For example, in

this report, in Brazil, 60% of the respondents said social media was one of the

five most important ways to find news online, 45% in Spain, 17% in the UK,

38% in Italy, 14% in France, 22% in Denmark, 30% in the U.S., and 12% in

Japan. Moreover, there are differences among countries about

commenting on news in social networks, 38% of the respondents in Brazil said

they commented on news in social network in a week. These percentages are

21% in the U.S. and 10% in the UK. The authors argued that differences among

countries may be due to culture difference rather than different levels of access to

technical tools.

History and memory effects

News media and television journalism have been instrumental in the shaping of

American collective memory for much of the twentieth century. Indeed, since the

United States' colonial era, news media has influenced collective memory and

discourse about national development and trauma. In many ways, mainstream

journalists have maintained an authoritative voice as the storytellers of the

American past. Their documentary style narratives, detailed exposes, and their

positions in the present make them prime sources for public memory.

Specifically, news media journalists have shaped collective memory on

nearly every major national event – from the deaths of social and political figures

to the progression of political hopefuls. Journalists provide elaborate descriptions

of commemorative events in U.S. history and contemporary popular cultural

sensations. Many Americans learn the significance of historical events and

political issues through news media, as they are presented on popular news

stations. However, journalistic influence is growing less important, whereas

social networking sites such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter, provide a

constant supply of alternative news sources for users.

As social networking becomes more popular among older and younger

generations, sites such as Facebook and YouTube, gradually undermine the

traditionally authoritative voices of news media. For example, American citizens

contest media coverage of various social and political events as they see fit,

inserting their voices into the narratives about America's past and present and

shaping their own collective memories. An example of this is the public

explosion of the Trayvon Martin shooting in Sanford, Florida. News

media coverage of the incident was minimal until social media users made the

story recognizable through their constant discussion of the case. Approximately

one month after the fatal shooting of Trayvon Martin, its online coverage by

everyday Americans garnered national attention from mainstream media

journalists, in turn exemplifying media activism. In some ways, the spread of this

tragic event through alternative news sources parallels that of the Emmitt Till –

whose murder became a national story after it circulated African American and

Communists newspapers. Social media was also influential in the widespread

attention given to the revolutionary outbreaks in the Middle East and North

Africa during 2011. However, there is some debate about the extent to which

social media facilitated this kind of change. Another example of this shift is in

the ongoing Kony 2012 campaign, which surfaced first on YouTube and later

garnered a great amount of attention from mainstream news media journalists.

These journalists now monitor social media sites to inform their reports on the

movement. Lastly, in the past couple of presidential elections, the use of

social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter were used to predict election

results. U.S. President Barack Obama was more liked on Facebook than his

opponent Mitt Romney and it was found by a study done by Oxford Institute

Internet Experiment that more people liked to tweet about comments of President

Obama rather than Romney.

Briefly, it's an open question whether social media is liberating or whether it's

simply another piece of the machines of capital and technology to enslave us all

on Earth.

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