1

## The Desiring Machines of Capital and Technology

By

**Biodun Iginla** 

## © Biodun Iginla 2014

No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted by any means without the written permission of the author.

Printed in the United States of America.

This book is printed on acid-free paper.

For Tamara Kachelmeier, with love

## **Contents**

**Introduction: Setting Up the Machines: A Contemporary History**(6)

**Chapter 1: The Machine of the City (29)** 

**Chapter 2: The Contemporary Nomads (47)** 

**Chapter 3: The Machine of Online Identities (68)** 

**Chapter 4: The Machine of Traditional Media (106)** 

**Chapter 5: The Digital Divide: The Example of Montana (129)** 

Chapter 6: Political and Economic Machines: Capital's Capture of the Third World (151)

Chapter 7: America's War on Terror in the Time of Technology (241)

## Capital and Technology Chapter 8: The Machine of Social Media (275)

5

7

**History** 

Capitalism and technology, working 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

Capital and Technology 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

11

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

13

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

*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.)

16

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,

Capital and Technology 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

34

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

Now I would like to describe these visual machines in the digital Los Angeles of Ridley Scott's *Bladerunner*.

in a vast technological terrain of time-light.

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, birdseye 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.

54

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 subjectpositions 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

65

other representations. Migrant consciousness leads to one extreme form of identity politics, in which each culture is selfreferential 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

Bladerunner 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 brickand-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

<a href="http://www.google.com">http://www.google.com</a> 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

78

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 newswires: not only the Twin Cities IndyMedia news-wire (http://twincities.indymedia.org), but also the global IndyMedia newswire (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 newsmedia (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.

88

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.

89

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

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 newswire too long, and the longer they stay, the more harm will be done to our brother.

"The hottest place in Hell is reserved for those who, in times of moral crisis, remain neutral."--Dante

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:

From: "Julie Rose"<julierose@onebox.com>
To: jasonp@protest.net, imc-minneapolis-editorial@indymedia.org,
imc-minneapolis-tc@indymedia.org, imc-minneapolisfield@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-minneapolisfield@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):

114

- \*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

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

125

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 citygates 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

133

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 graduateschool 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 forestpreservation 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 collegetowns, 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

145

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 timelight (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

Capital and Technology 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 babyhunting," 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

Capital and Technology 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 reestablish 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 wellcrafted 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 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 antifascist 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 foreignexchange 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, highunemployment 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, <u>National Public Radio's Morning Edition had the</u> 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 capturedbut 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, <u>National Public Radio came out with the following report:</u>

"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 <u>United Airlines Flight 93</u>, <u>United Airlines Flight 175</u>, <u>American Airlines Flight 11</u>, <u>American Airlines Flight 11</u>

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 <a href="Independence Day">Independence Day</a>.

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 fourmonth 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-

The US engaged diasporic and fluid cell-units in war. And the nature of war itself had changed considerably

Pakistani border; Abu Nidal–Lebanon; and Abu Sayyaf–Philipines.)

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.

263

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 <u>computer-mediated</u> tools that allow people to create, share or exchange information, ideas, and pictures/videos in <u>virtual communities</u> and <u>networks</u>. *Social media* is defined as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of <u>Web 2.0</u>, and that allow the creation and exchange of <u>user-generated content</u>." 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 <u>technoself</u> 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).

Capital and Technology In 2014, the largest social network is <u>Facebook</u> 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.
- <u>Communication</u>: 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.
- <u>E-Commerce</u>: Mobile social media applications such as <u>Amazon.com</u> and <u>Pinterest</u> 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.

## Capital and Technology 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 <a href="Facebook">Facebook</a>, YouTube and <a href="Twitter">Twitter</a>, provide a constant supply of alternative news sources for users.

As <u>social networking</u> 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 <a href="Barack Obama">Barack Obama</a> 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.

## **BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Eric Alliez, Les Temps capitaux (Paris: Editions de Cerf, 1992).
Gilles Deleuze, Mille Plateaux (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1980).
, Cinéma I (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1984).
, Cinéma II (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1985).
Pico Iyer, Global Souls: Jetlag. Shopping Malls, and the Search for
Home (New York: Knopf, 2000).
Robert Kaplan, <i>The Coming Anarchy</i> (New York: Random House,
2000).
Paul Virilio, La Vitesse de la libération (Paris: Editions de Galilée,
1995)