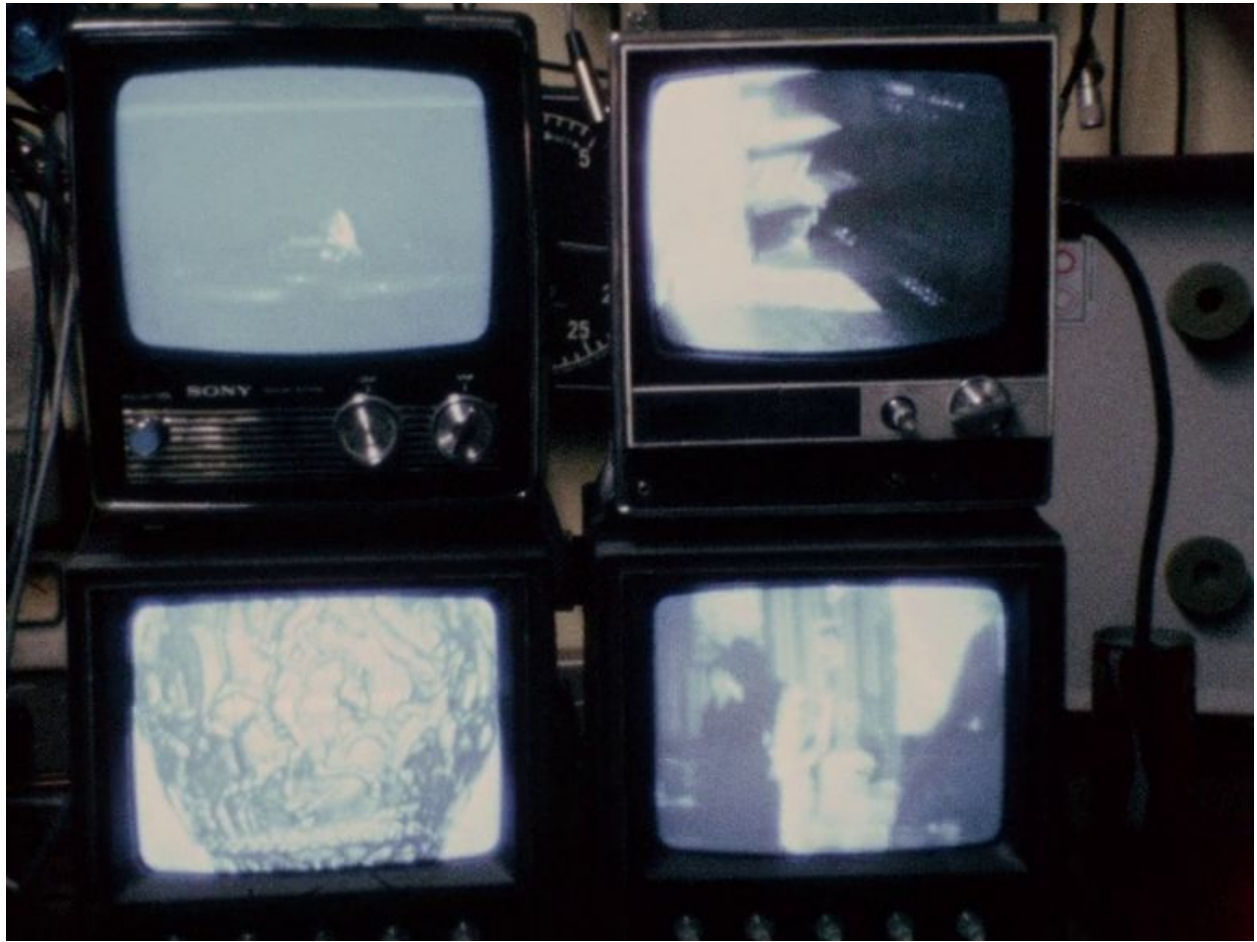


Territories of Victimhood
Ben Galyas

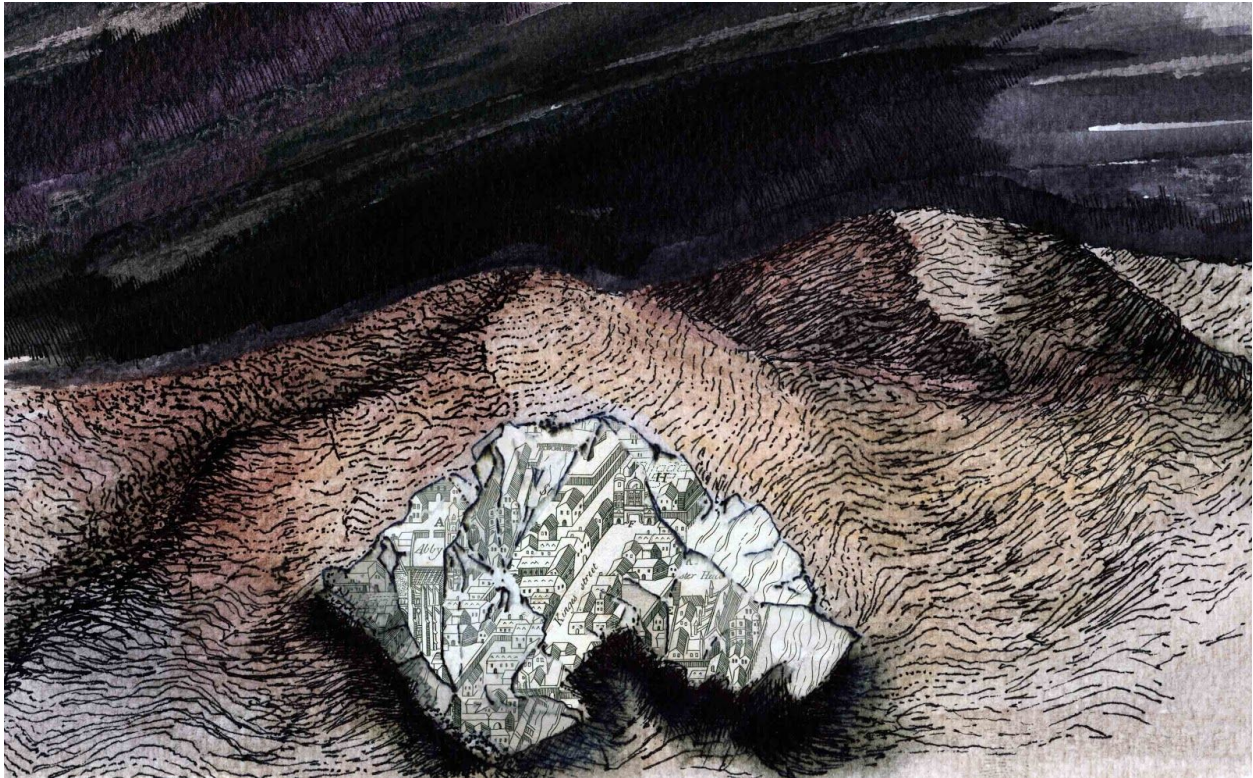


Penthesilea, Laura Mulvey & Peter Wollen, 1974.
Image accessed Online at <http://www.screenonline.org.uk/film/id/567507/> on 20.9.16

In an interview given before his death, the artist Mike Kelley proclaimed that ‘victimhood’ was perhaps the defining religion of the west (2013). To understand such a broad term and sentiment is a task that requires a mass of understanding, not only its subjects, but the conditions, and the sociological architecture that it is entrenched within. With this assertion, Kelley makes a compelling point. The past twelve months have made visible the instability that the previous forty years of neoliberalism fostered. Uncertainty over economic stability and growth, for the individual and for entire states, has created political hysteria. The time to examine our democratic, corporate, and media structures has well expired. What is it that has enabled man not only to accept his social, economic, and cultural oppression, but to find comfort in it? Why are we so enthusiastic about buying into ideology that provides no meaningful benefits either to ourselves as individuals or as a wider society?

Victimhood operates as a consequence of desire (Deleuze and Guattari, 1983). That desire is propagated by an ideological machine that has been centuries in production. The exact specifications of the machine have been explored by the likes of Michel Foucault, Jean Baudrillard, Franco Berardi, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. Its operations incorporate linguistics, economics, violence and aesthetics in order to create the social conditions which have lead to a fetishisation of suppression and an appetite for fascism. This unstable condition is one that requires constant critique and exploration, as its technological armature is constantly developing at an unprecedented speed.

The Mechanisation of Language



*Image, On Exactitude and Science, Artist Unknown,
Accessed via web (28.9.16)*

<http://scottpickard.com/scottpickard/2013/12/16/on-exactitude-in-science-by-jorge-luis-borges/>

The fable, ‘On Exactitude in Science’ by Jorge Luis Borges tells us of an empire in which the art of cartography attained such perfection that a map was created on a perfect one to one scale covering the entire land, the map becoming at once indistinguishable to the land in its ruin. Jean Baudrillard uses this fable as the “most beautiful allegory of simulation” (1983, p1). He proposes that simulacra is not only the dominant mode of representation, it is in itself all representation *and* the dominating mode of reality, henceforth the demise of all beneath it. When this is considered in conjunction with language and discourse, it poses the question that surely language accumulated from machine (a device of pure simulation) is not only indistinguishable from that of the mother, but seemingly even more meaningful. In order to critique this, we must further explore not only the nature of simulation and language itself but indeed our relationship to it.

The Italian theorist and activist, Franco ‘Bifo’ Berardi defines the postmodern era as that where the techno-linguistic machine increasingly penetrates every aspect of social existence (2007, p101). The crucial aspect here is that language, which was once passed down verbally from mother to child and then accumulated upon by reading words written on a page, has been equalled, if not surpassed by the machine. This, Berardi thinks, is a significant juncture, not just for language, but for our educational development as thinking beings. Throughout the previous

centuries, language has been acquired gradually and thoughtfully, conversations are overheard, books are chosen on our behalf, and governments establish the path for schools and universities that carefully structure our development. This is not without its problems, institutional and indeed educational conservatism and ethnocentrism have stained the public psyche. Adorno preempts in *The Concept of Enlightenment* that “*the uniqueness of the mythic process.. tends to legitimize factuality, [and] is deception*” (1944, p27).

The ritual of learning is in itself a false idol, its success determined more by marketability and employability than academic gain or standard. When government took the decision to effectively marketise educational institutions, two significant changes to the definition of education took place. Firstly, education itself became an *exchange*, not, as one might expect, of ideas and discourse, but an exchange of a capital investment for financial opportunities post graduation. Secondly, investment towards education became subject to further investments by hedge funds and financial institutions (Berardi, 2013), henceforth, our participation as fuel for the dominance of these institutions (of excess and accelerated wealth creation), is not a request but a *requirement*. These changes not only changed the fundamental definition of education, but the way by which it was practiced. Students, became the primary financial means of their institutions, and therefore universities must consider their education as an investment opportunity (with returns being the likelihood of a comfortable post graduate salary) above anything else. Simultaneously, an atmosphere of institutional cuts and streamlining meant the universities themselves were forced into compromising on what they could offer in terms of general development and support, shifting the focus from the ‘luxury’ of academia, providing sustenance for the general intellect, towards the marketability and earning capacity of its students; ensuring its place in the university market was assured.

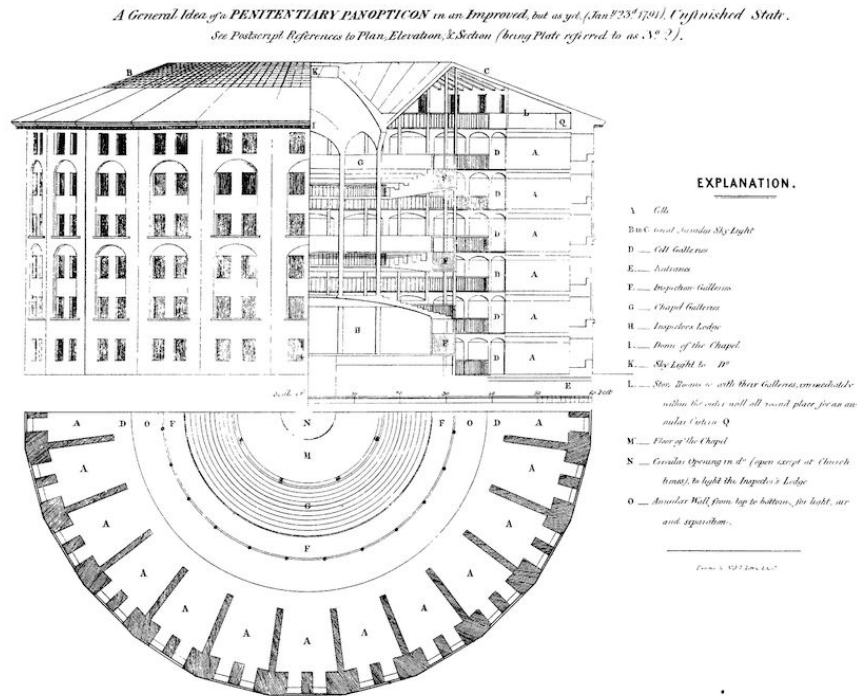
Whilst it was once believed that knowledge would liberate the human from the circumstances that enslave them, it is now evident that educational institutions serve as a narcotic to real understanding. Success in complying with and performing this ritual itself denotes success in further life, and that success lends the authority and influence to inform the next of kin and so the process, it would seem, is destined to be infinite. Nevertheless, language and therefore knowledge as a physical human activity is something we are seemingly passionate about sustaining, however lethargic the progress we make from one generation to another is. However much we source information on virtual platforms, the general intellect is forever looking for a body.

The difference between the mother (teacher) and machine in terms of the accumulation of knowledge, Berardi says, is centred around ‘trust’. “*The first generation that learned more words from a machine than from their mothers has a problem concerning the relationship between words and the body, between words and affection.*” (2012, p101). I know, for example, that what is signified by language is its subject by bodily experience. Even as an abstract, the combination of the experience of the world, and trust and love of it arrives at my knowing. Because of this experiential experience, the signifier (language) is irrevocably and consciously tied to the signified (experience). Berardi does not believe the same rules of affection apply between a child and mother (and experience of the world) as to the machine and asks what becomes of language once it is disembodied. Certainly language becomes more operational, our access to it is

hypothetically no longer bound to another body of experience. It is separated from physical existence but immersed in virtual. It is no longer the warmth of light that is light but its simulation.

Another problem that arises in the displacement of the body is that of speed, in that essentially the problem that arises with the ability to access a mass of virtual information in comparison to bodily communication is that of velocity and acceleration. Neurological disorders such as ADHD are becoming commonplace, with the hastening rise of technological interaction a contributing aspect (Hicks, 2016). We come to expect knowledge as an instantaneous information exchange. The kind of interactions involved defined more by download speeds than the flow of conversational language. The acquisition of velocity as a factor within knowledge is one that has been inhabited by neoliberal economics. Such haste in exchange is required by financial institutions and corporations alike in order to maintain the flow of capital accumulation; instantaneous information is required in the form of virtual updates and projections (including not only financial data but real time political information as these also have significant effect on markets). These compressed, virtual simulations of information overspill into a mass of material that far exceeds any information that a single body could provide and therefore becomes a source that supersedes all others. In stating that the general intellect is looking for a body, I want to express that real intellect is less an acquisition of information and is in itself bodily and experiential in socio-physical terms.

The Machine as a Correctional Facility



Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon Prison
Image Accessed online via web on 28.09.16
<http://www.rivistastudio.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/panopticon.png>

In Deleuze's Society of Control, the socio technological consequences of Foucault's disciplinary societies are explored in reference to history, logic and program. Although there are no specific reference to spectacle, parallels can be drawn and extended which help us to view technology in a wider context; *"The old societies of sovereignty made use of simple machines--levers, pulleys, clocks; but the recent disciplinary societies equipped themselves with machines involving energy, with the passive danger of entropy and the active danger of sabotage; the societies of control operate with machines of a third type, computers, whose passive danger is jamming and whose active one is piracy or the introduction of viruses... This technological evolution must be, even more profoundly, a mutation of capitalism"* (1992, p2). What then do we consider of the computer as a language machine and educational facility, given the assertion that its solitary will to being is the economic system that surrounds it?

Gestell is a term coined by Martin Heidegger in 'The Question Concerning Technology'. Whilst its literal meaning refers to a basic sense armature, Heidegger redefines it as a kind of *enframing* of technological development. It is in his interest to specify the metaphysical location from which technology emerges, principally in comparison to classical technological advancements. *"Enframing blocks the shining - forth and holding - sway of truth. The destining that sends into ordering is consequently the extreme danger. What is dangerous is not*

technology. There is no demonry of technology, but rather there is the mystery of its essence” (1977, p28). Whereas, Heidegger proclaims, Greeks saw technology (or techne) as a craft in itself; a way of revealing our surroundings, as a means to an end. Similarly, modern technology serves us to make specific tasks easier, but crucially, it focuses almost entirely on the utility of objects in the world. It manipulates our environment for the greatest possible outcome, unable to process unquantifiable qualities such as beauty. Materials in the world are only important as far as they are valuable to humanity. This will to efficiency (Heidegger, 1977, p29) is intrinsic to Deleuze’s technological society of control and is nonetheless controlled and enabled by profit and accumulation.

In the socio physical, conversation mode of language exchange, there is a dynamism as thoughts are constantly in flux between one and another. There is a direction that ebbs and flows in accordance to psychological impulses and external stimulus and language is accumulated as such. To change our meaning, it is possible to alter our tone, our body language, to trigger the other into an understanding of a language game. With the machine that performs to satisfy its user, there is a drastically different dynamic and relationship. The ebb and flow is replaced by an outpouring of information, with the user as an adopted curator. Information runs in one direction, from machine to man. Where there were once sluggish ebbs and flows, there’s now the possibility to access an infinity of information at once. In the same way that techne is compared to technology, as a learning device, a lot is sacrificed for efficiency from the body to the machine.

Firstly, physicality and distance is quashed in exchange for immediacy; distance between sexes, the stage and audience, and most crucially, between socio physical real and its virtual double (Baudrillard 2002, p192). When the affection that Berardi refers to between the human and body as an information source is lost to virtuality, it is inevitable that a degree of empathy is simultaneously discarded. Banality and violence, as populist material for general consumption, is widely saturated online. Its popularity is sourced from offering a break from convention boredom (which in itself is a consequence of alienated labour), instead offering a new kind of boredom, the numbing weariness of an attention economy. Having instant availability to infinite sensational and violent material in an everyday context actively promotes ambivalence and withdrawal, which along with victimhood are perhaps the dominating religions of the post Ford west.

One explanation to our ongoing attraction to virtuality is our will to disappearance. That there is an urge between user and machine that the immersion between them could become indistinguishable. (Baudrillard, 2002, p193). I find this to be a seducing preposition. The social removal of virtual interaction is, in some ways, comforting. There is a distinct lack of physical exposure within our private (virtual) space. This lack of body consciousness is contrary to the reality - there is always an exchange taking place. The problem that occurs with this relationship is that, unlike socio physical relationships, we do not know where our virtual body (which is a body made from a vast accumulation of data) necessarily begins and ends. The supposed invisibility and anonymity of virtual interaction only serves to reaffirm our relationship to it. *“Without physical ownership and without an explicit sense of exposure I do not normalise my*

actions. If anything, the supposed anonymity of the internet means I do the opposite” (McMullan, 2015).

This degree of exchange between machine and man is a consequence of the machines production via the market economy. It demands a financial return which is fulfilled by its non complicit accumulation and marketisation of personal data to governmental and corporate bodies. Whilst one should not discount the plausibility of the machine as an educative device, it should be considered that the price paid is one of compliancy and immersion, not just to the screen but within the ideology (or enframement) surrounding it. Similar to Jeremy Bentham’s panopticon (conceived in the late 18th Century, his design for a correctional facility consisted of a central watchtower surrounded by open ended cells, in to order allow the inmates the constant sensation of surveillance), the machine creates constant virtual surveillance, only this time under the context of a fabricated sense of privacy and contentment.

Virtuality as a Burden

The greatest technological advancement and accelerating force behind the development of simulacra is the camera. It is important to consider that not only did it serve as a revolutionary force in art and design, but permanently altered the social dynamic between the state and citizen. Along with the increased capability to capture images in a creative context, came the opportunity for the outstretched arms of the political establishment to record and catalogue its citizens in the context of law and criminality. Photographic techniques in themselves became a very real means to oppression (Tagg, 1988). Whereas now this is an automatic and virtualized process, it was a significantly more physical endeavour which in itself led to the categorization of people via hospitals, prisons, passports, licenses towards the finality of a complete virtual database.

If then, representation falls as a burden upon its subject; in this case, the ordinary citizen, what is to be made of the virtualisation (and dematerialisation) of representation as a collective psychology? To discuss this is in some way to discuss the Guattarian 'molecular unconscious'. In Deleuze and Guattari's discussion of desire, it functions on a level beyond the social body - it looks towards social, technical, mechanical and organic microbiology and psychology in order to fuel an all encompassing, aporetic ideology of desire. Instead of polarising repression and desire, or to say that our desire is consequential of our repression, Anti Oedipus begins to examine these terms as one. That our ability to function as desiring machines is a consequence of an economic framework. Desiring is in itself dependant on unattainability, and unattainability sustains itself through a variety of means, be that financial, aesthetic, or pornographic. Repression within a neoliberal economic ideology not only causes desire (by preventing its fulfillment) but creates an acceptance of our own repression through normalisation and consensus.

The normalisation of repression can be reduced to certain aesthetic features of urban space; of architecture and advertising. Each separate building and board functions not just formally but ideologically as a demonstration of the spread of wealth and the ease of maneuverability of capital between citizen and corporation. In Judith Williamson's seminal text, *Decoding Advertisements* (1978) she writes that advertising's aim is to make us feel like an individual, promising that satisfaction and fulfillment are within reach; a manipulation of desire that assures its end. Although insightful at the time, the nature and aggression of advertisements has accelerated well past Williamson's assertion.

Thanks to vast technological advancements, advertising plays its part within a system of attention economics, as a slice of a mega saturation of imagery and the monetising force of the vast majority of virtual media. There is no longer space or time for advertisements to appease to a sense of individuality as it must compete with both our growing ambivalence. The sheer diversity of advertisement's methodology is too vast to begin to critique its functionality as one entity. What can be said is that advertisements merge and inclusion within the saturation of imagery has succeeded in creating a much wider and all encompassing ideological network. To expand, when advertising (a deliberately pointed, aestheticised, consumerist ideology) functions as part of a network of images, and indeed allows them to spread through the monetisation of viewing, the ongoing virtual production of images begins to respond, influence, reject, and

regurgitate. The ideology of advertisements becomes an enframement for the expanding network of images.

If the economic ideology of accumulation, desire, and of social, economic and sexual repression enframes the simulated environment as a whole, and the availability of this interaction is greater than ever before, private and virtual space are as one, and the inevitable consequence of this must be biologically internalised interaction (a virtual biology). When we consider and compare this paradigm to the Taggian repression of the late 19th to mid 20th century, the disappearance of a genuinely physical apparatus is not only startling but immensely consequential. The virtual apparatus in comparison, allows itself to spread exponentially, and if both are considered as repression machines, or machines of pure ideological function, then one can only speculate towards the effect of this massive act of constant violence on the collective psyche.

New York and the Destabilizing of the Ideological State Apparatus

One can compare the internalisation of a technological repression to the more visceral repression of state punishment, as Michel Foucault begins to in *Discipline and Punish* (1977). Foucault recalled an account of a public execution in the mid eighteenth century to one account of prison rules from the mid nineteenth. In outlawing the guillotine (a grotesque monstrosity of a machine) for lethal injection, two significances occur. Firstly, throughout implementation, the body remains intact, the killing becomes internal, sedative, to the point of non violence. The non-massacism of the physical body no longer renders it visibly as a disposable apparatus as regards to the state. Secondly, state punishment becomes invisible to the public sphere, it ceases as a spectacle demonstrating both the forceful potential of government to sever the physical body and as a deterrent to commit in fear of the final point of punishment.

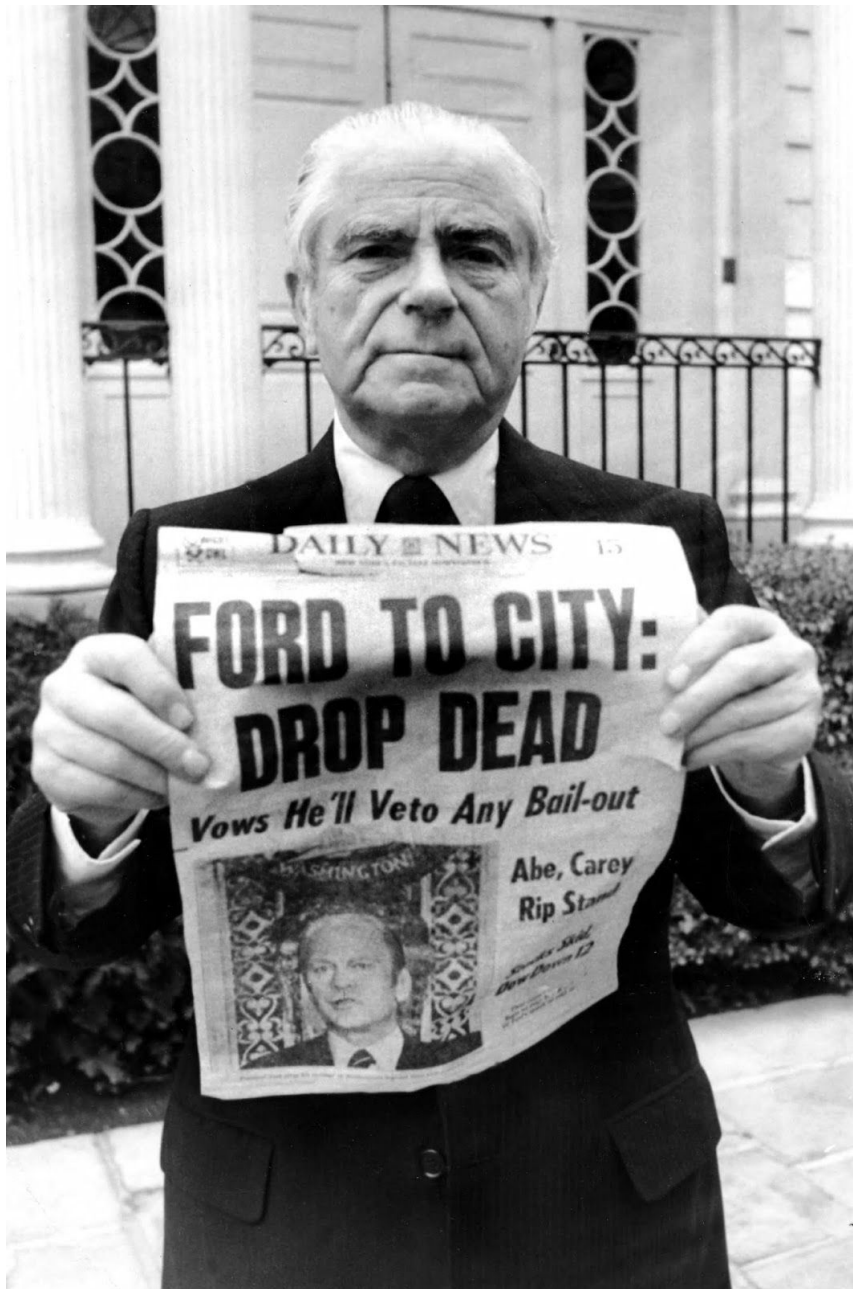
What is more, emphasis is no longer placed on the violence of punishment but its certainty. The formerly invisible process of court and spectacle of punishment has been reversed. It is now the court hearing that attracts visibility in the form of media outlets and virtual media speculation and the punishment that is performed behind locked doors. For offenders, it is the certainty of punishment rather than punishment itself that deters. We can see this across visual culture; G4S security vehicles do not display information about detainment itself, but the absolute certainty of its occurrence; ‘a 100 percent conviction rate’. Crime and courtroom dramas only further cement emphasis on process and certainty rather than punishment in itself. These factors accumulate towards a sense of the weight of the oppression of several systems and processes that run in accordance with economic and social oppression (similarly as an oppression that operates via process and certainty rather than punishment).

As a point of comparison between the abstract notion of internalised, virtual suppression and the very literal internalisation of state punishment, one could speculate that rather than being a freak occurrence, caused by the staggering pace of technological development in comparison to a social understanding of its capabilities in the hands of financial authority (whether business or governmental, for now there is little to divide the two). Rather than this is an inevitable point along a movement that has been set largely in one direction for hundreds of years.

Louis Althusser attempted to deconstruct the power structures of a ruling class by the creation of a relatively unsystematic distinction between force and ideology (1974). The distinction fell between what Althusser described as Repressive State Apparatus (or RSA) and an Ideological State Apparatus. The repressive state apparatus accounted for structures that use physical force to ensure power remains with the ruling classes; including governmental, military, police and judiciary forces. These are the systems the state enacts either when groups, individuals citizens, or even other states threatened to derail the ordered repression that they (the ruling classes) administer. The ideological state apparatus account for structures that do not necessarily use physical force, but orientation and indoctrination, they reinforce the rules of the bourgeois class through the classroom, the church and the home (Althusser, 1974). They create a normative state of repression where we primarily learn that our value is as our means to enable the production of capital for the bourgeoisie. For example, marketised education (as previously discussed) as an ideological apparatus acts as a roadblock to social mobility ensuring that those

from deprived backgrounds are continually failed whilst those from middle and high income backgrounds thrive.

What Althusser fails to realize, albeit in a different context to the politically destabilized terrain we find ourselves in today, is that ideological state apparatuses are not simply the stake of those suppressed by them, but the location. That it is ideology as a collective psyche that has characterised class struggle as a normal, if not essential part of coexistence with the financial and ruling elites. If anything, the repressive state apparatus only serves to characterize and in some ways, dislocate the invisible violence that is inflicted on its own citizens through means of economic, social and cultural oppression. This simultaneous characterisation and dislocation is only able to exist through a vast network of simulations and representations that turn the repressive apparatus into something separate to world, and our concerns, but nevertheless form an accurate portrayal of the ideology that governs it.



Ford to City: Drop Dead (1975).
Accessed via web <http://www.noiryork.net/2016/06/ford-to-city-drop-dead.html>

Althusser refrains from specifically referring to the network of images and representation as an ideological apparatus; understandably so as simulation is not so much generated by the state but enabled by the social and economic systems that it has created. In this specific time, it has become evident that the state no longer holds the kind of power over its citizens as it once did, and to understand ideological apparatuses is not specifically to understand them always as a direct consequence of the state but as a collective projection from a variety of bodies. The point of transference of power between political and economic institutions was most likely a gradual

shift throughout the twentieth century. However, it was New York, in 1975 where this shift became more immediate, visible and violent for the first time (Curtis, 2016).

For the previous thirty years, it was a commonly held belief that elected politicians ran the city; from transport, to education, to spending and taxation. But in the early 1970s, politicians began borrowing more money from financial institutions to afford the growing costs of services and welfare. Meanwhile, the development of infrastructure and transport links to and from the city meant that the affluent middle classes fled on mass; and so to the fiscal flexibility they afforded the government through taxation; this meant that the banks reluctantly lent even more money to the city than ever before. Then, one day, the banks simply ceased lending in fear that the city would not be able to repay their debt. Adam Curtis describes the fracas that proceeded in his recent documentary; *“The city held its regular meeting to issue bonds in return for the loans, overseen by the city's financial controller... The banks were supposed to turn up at 11am, but it soon became clear that none of them were going to appear. The meeting was rescheduled for 2pm and the banks promised they would turn up.”* (2016). What happened that day acted as a puncture, that the fabric of a political government was visibly pierced by financial institutions in what was a remarkable and radical shift both in power and the fundamental understanding in the role of elected government. The banks insisted that they would take control of the fiscal policies once afforded to the politician and established a committee to manage the city's finances.

The importance of this event, as a spectacle if nothing else, is not to be undermined for this would create a template as to how national governments would negotiate and outsource their fiscal responsibilities henceforth. In regards to Althusser's ideological state apparatus, this is significant in effectively dismantling the state's power to influence ideology. Financial industries and business interests began to spread through advertising, mass media, and even began to inform education. The normalisation of oppression has spread from the ruling classes to the entire bourgeois and these forces have vastly accelerated at the pace of the virtual platforms they embrace.

Alphaville and Locating Ideology



Alphaville (1965), Jean-Luc Godard

Accessed via web at:

<https://spatialregister.wordpress.com/2014/05/29/alphaville-and-thx-1138-left-and-countercultural-critiques-of-the-technocratic/>

A variation on this idea is presented by the French film-noir director, Jean-Luc Godard, by the voice of Alphaville 60 in his classic film, *Alphaville*; “*Whether it be in the so called capitalist world of the communist world, there’s no evil intent to subjugate man through the power of indoctrination or of finance. There is simply a natural ambition of any organisation to plan its activities.*” (Godard, 1965). Here Godard begins to identify that the material ideology is not solely a consequence of government but a shared projection as previously discussed. There is a suggestion that ideology may exist elsewhere; in architecture, advertising, and cinema, as part of the natural order of conformity towards a shared idea of progression and accumulation. Ideology may not be the direct source of simulation, but provides a *raison d’être* for any given organisation or corporate body. In *Alphaville*, Godard explores a territory not dissimilar to Althusser’s critique of the state’s functions as well as ideas surrounding technology and language. A technocratic autocracy is maintained by a technological apparatus; Alphaville 60.

This technology creates a location defined not by geography but a collective psychology where the rules of logic define the body and imagination, and emotional gestures and language are outlawed.

Unlike the vast majority of science fiction cinema, Godard does not employ special effects or unconventional locations. The film is shot in 1960s Paris, at a time where the utopian structures of modernist architecture was beginning to manifest itself: Paris in the 1960s underwent a dramatic transformation that affected not only the architectural apparatus of the city but its economic priorities (Vince 2016). It would see an unprecedented (accelerated) restructuring of entire districts. *“After the arrival of the cinema and the re-emergence of European economies from post-war austerity, architectural change was again on the cards... During the 1950s and 1960s, André Malraux would oversee a vast and unimaginable project designed to ‘rehabilitate’ the historic neighbourhoods of the urban centre around Le Marais, which included the scrubbing and cleaning of facades and the transformation of residential buildings into office blocks and commercial units. The price of land sky-rocketed; this served only to push workers and the lower middle classes to the peripheries while depopulating the central arrondissements, further entrenching income and housing inequality while celebrating a new global consumerism of elite, modern flats and domestic technologies.”* (Vince 2016). In the mid twentieth century, Paris saw a complete and visible re prioritisation of financial elites and institutions through urban design and architecture (but in reality spread far beyond) which, some may suggest, lead to the infamous 1968 riots, infiltrated and orchestrated in part by the Situationist International. The process that Parisians witnessed is not unlike the process that has become visible in areas of central London over the past thirty years, commonly referred to as gentrification. By choosing to shoot in the epicentre of this transformation (of new, alien buildings, distorted by darkness), Godard refuses the guise of pure simulation and the paranormal of the screen, but instead chooses to make visible an underlying narrative about the world as he saw it.

The machine, Alphaville 60, exists as a wondering narrator, who often speaks directly to and around the antihero and central figure, Lemmy Caution, without necessarily having physical appearance or a direct source of origin. It acts as both a drifting, disembodied narrator, and as a physical location (a vast series of anonymous, rotating machines) defined predominantly by its distinctive, broken, ominous tone of voice. In many ways, to understand Godard’s anti-portrayal of the location and non location of Alphaville 60 is to understand what has been previously described as the ideological apparatus (Althusser). The impossibility to singularly locate ideology as a point of reference acts as its most effective weapon to impose violent and oppressive structures on its subjects (Foucault, 1977). In using Alphaville 60 as a device to understand the simultaneous materialisation and non materialisation of ideology, the suggestion that the Ideological State Apparatus is more of a site or location of class struggle than Althusser gives credit for is more easily understood.

“The city of Alphaville is above all else dark because as Godard evokes it in the film, it’s a place built out of the stuff of anti-belief. It’s a place where nobody has a clue, except perhaps for denizens lacking imagination who only have a single clue: how to assure, in a highly

monitored world, bottom-line physical survival via an absolutely unprotesting and even unthinking, silent conformity.” (Benedikt, 2004)

Alphaville also allows for a startling and extravagant dramatisation of Berardi’s language machine; and through the abstraction of ideas to the materiality of cinema we can see a projection of the roles that language and technology play within ideology at a point in time that preceded the vast acceleration and expansion that has taken place since. In the film, words are removed and added to *Alphaville*’s dictionary based on their relevancy in a society governed by logic. Words such as ‘why’, ‘conscience’, and ‘love’ are removed to prevent their use and understanding by the general population. Whilst this is perhaps where the film begins to become extravagant in its fiction one cannot help but draw parallels from one language machine (Berardi, 2012) to another. The difference between the two is what prevents *Alphaville* becoming satire rather than science fiction.

Language in *Alphaville* as an ideological tool operates as part of an what Foucault refers to as the political technology of the body, which is best described as a ‘microphysics of power’ (Foucault 1977, p26) that operates between psychogeography (the simultaneous location and non location of ideology) and physical bodies themselves. It aims to investigate what might be most convincingly concealed in the relations of power, to uncover their grounding in economic infrastructure; and to trace them not only in their governmental forms, but also in the infra-governmental (or para-governmental), and most crucially, to discover them in what Foucault describes as “material play” (Tagg 1988, p70).

In *Alphaville*, the machine dictates the parametres of language and this wish is fulfilled by a group of citizens that edit and redefine specific terminology for mass distribution across the district. The true nature of the language machine is indeed much more complex. Nevertheless, what is consistent in both is that there is a singular driving force that affects the way that language develops; that being ideology. Like *Alphaville*, what carries and develops language is mechanical, only in our world, it is a virtual mechanism beyond anything Godard could have imagined. However, unlike *Alphaville*, it is not strictly logic that defines the development of language but the faculties of virtual, free market economics (Berardi, 2012).

It is notable that poetry is simultaneously outlawed in *Alphaville* whilst remaining the passion of the protagonist. When considering the relationship between language and finance (for one surely allows the other in a form of exchange), it would seem that language is defined by the same ideological structures that govern economics (Berardi, p139 2012) because language allows for an exchange between people in the same way that currency does; so free market ideology becomes the driving force behind its ongoing development. Poetry does not necessarily partake in exchange because its function is different. It does not demand to be returned or responded to because its location is separate to the kind economic exchange that ordinarily affects language. Poetry, it would seem, is an excess of language; a location where no exchange takes place but one that allows us to maneuver our understanding, not just of language but of the world. It seems reasonable then, that similarly to *Alphaville*, the logic of the financial market works against the non exchange of poetry, to a broader, more functional, mechanised form of language.

A Virtual System of Objects

Whereas Althusser's Ideological and Repressive State Apparatuses seeks to investigate the structure of power at its source, Foucault, throughout his writing, investigates the structure and effects of power structures as an imposed exchange with the physical body. This stance not only allows the examination of governmental forces, but of object relations as a whole. One of the significant problems in Althusser's writing is that it becomes outdated when we consider the massive variety in technologies that behave as a source of repression, whereas in considering the body as the primary site, the exchange of labour and language, technology, and the consumption of images, products and services become grounds for critique.

How then, does the system of objects (of money, architecture, images, products, even artworks), impact on both the individual and the social body? Foucault's astute assessment of the state of repressive devices indicates a movement towards the subtle structures that allow influence to be exerted from one body to another; "If the economic take-off of the West began with techniques that made possible the accumulation of capital... it might perhaps be said that the methods for administering the accumulation of men made possible a political take-off in relation to the traditional, ritual, costly, violent forms of power, which soon ... were superseded by a subtle, calculated technology of subjection." (1977, p 200, 201). Forty years later, the subtle, calculated technology that is referred to has become visible not only within technological advancements, but object relations as a whole.

Berardi places significant attention to the development of currency as a physical material and as a sign of value that have gradually separated from each other. In doing so, he refers to Marx's abstraction of labour and begins to excavate the dematerialisation of ideology that allowed something like neo liberalism to emerge as a political force in the mid 20th century.

"Between the electrum money of ancient Lydia and the electronic money of contemporary America there occurred a historically momentous change. The exchange value of the earliest coins derived wholly from the material substance of the ingots of which the coins were made... The eventual development of coins whose politically authorized inscriptions were inadequate to the weight and purity of the ingots... precipitated awareness of quandaries about the relationship between face value and substantial value." (Berardi 2012, p 136). Here marked the dominance of intellectual currency over materiality. The de-physicalization of money only accelerated after the invention of first paper, then virtual currency and indicated the astute observations of Marx's abstraction of labour; that labour's (like currency's) concrete value became irrelevant from its politicised worth (1859). Dereferentialization, not just of currency and labour, but of semiotics and language, has become a crux of capitalism in the late 20th century.

The emancipation of the sign is explored by Baudrillard, and should be regarded as a direct consequence of the abstraction of currency and labour discussed by both Berardi and Marx as dereferentialization carries classical, inherent value beyond its traditional form into something that is both radical and far less tangible. *"The structural dimension becomes autonomous by excluding the referential dimension, and is instituted upon the death of reference.. Signs are exchanged against each other rather than against the real."* (Baudrillard, 1993, p6-7). The

autonomy of the structural dimension is what has previously been discussed as non-locational ideology. When Baudrillard discusses the autonomy of signs, exchanging only with each other, this seems more tangible than it ever has previously. Technological exchange between virtual bodies is the primary mode of transferring information from one location to another, or from one body to another. Frequently, points of reference to a tangible reality are lost within layers of mediation, so information becomes of mass of fictional data; data for data's sake. The structures of virtual platforms mean that exposure is more valuable than knowledge. That information is created to be spectacular rather than informative. The political rise of post-truth is simultaneously the greatest evidence that one could seek for an autonomy of signs (with no reference to what may have been traditionally described as the real) and the greatest demonstration of the general intellect under siege.

“Digital technology cancels the singular enunciative composition of polysemy, gesture, and voice, and tends to produce a language that is subjected to linguistic machinery.” (Berardi 2012, p 152).

What all these ideas express is that ideology, the force that gives structure to power, wealth, and influence, is ultimately inescapable. It exists between a point of location and non-location and the immense power and growth of technology, and our ability to access and distribute information through virtual simulation have only further distanced and abstracted our abilities to define it as an entity. When ideology becomes embedded within language, it halts our ability to resist it (Godard, 1965); and should rightly be regarded as a direct dismantling of the general intellect. The immensity of virtual communication is so that the language will surely continue to be defined by structures far from reach. This stage of capitalism does not have the capability or will to provide for the general intellect; the social intellect. It is for us to reserve and protect the locations where it can flourish; within poetry, art, imagination, and of the discourse that follows in order to resist the overwhelming tide of an ever changing ideology that has destabilized social cohesion so violently.

“Let's hope we aren't living in a simulation. If we were, then for aesthetic reasons the culmination of 2016 would have to be Trump's victory” (Shaviro, 2016)

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