### 1AC – Imperialism

#### Security co-operation operates on an axis of reversing the South Project, sustained through false flag operations, fascist militarization, and colonial violence that makes conflict structurally inevitable

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The celebration of NATO’s 70 years of existence provides another opportunity to unearth the real history of the ideas, practices and destruction wrought by this military alliance. Even with the clear exposure of the cooperation between NATO, the CIA and the British MI6 to spread terror and psychological warfare in Europe immediately after the formation of this military alliance, the mainstream media, academics and policy makers remain silent on activities of the ‘stay behind armies’ and ‘false flag’ operations that distorted the real causes of insecurity in the world after 1945. The evidence of the manipulations of the peoples of the world to ensure the continued survival of NATO has been well documented in the fraudulent interventions and bombings in the Balkans right up the present multiple wars against the peoples of Iran.

Vijay Prashad had identified NATO as the prime defender of the Atlantic project. This Atlantic project, he noted was, “a fairly straightforward campaign by the propertied classes to maintain or restore their position of dominance.” This Atlantic Project was anchored in the military alliance called NATO with its principal work, that of reversing the South Project; the struggles for peace bread and justice by the poorer citizens of the planet, especially those who had emerged on the world stage after the decolonization of Africa, Asia, and the Caribbean.

The ostensive reason for the founding of NATO was to ‘thwart’ Soviet aggression, but in practice the organization was a prop for western capital and after the fall of the Berlin Wall, became the core prop for Wall Street. In this year, there will be many commentaries on the fact that the existence of NATO reflects a Cold War relic, that NATO is obsolete and lost its mandate, but very few will link the expansion of NATO to the military management of the international system. Prior to 1991, the planners of NATO could justify the existence of NATO on ideological and political grounds, but with the threat of a multi polar world and the diminution of the dollar, NATO expanded to the point where this author joined with others in labelling this organization Global NATO to reflect its current imperial mandate. The Global thrust of NATO now comprises 29 members from Europe and North America along with 41 ‘partners’ that had started off under the banner of the North Atlantic Cooperation Council (NACC) in 1991. Since that time, NATO has launched a lengthy war without end in Afghanistan, colluded in the destruction of Iraq and conspired with militarists to forge ‘Partnership for Peace’ (with most members of the former Warsaw Pact states). The core 29 members are now enmeshed with treaties and undertakings from states involved in the Mediterranean Dialog and Istanbul Cooperation Initiative: Bahrain, Kuwait, Qatar, and United Arab Emirates. There are also the ‘partners’ from across the globe: Afghanistan, Australia, Colombia, Iraq, Japan, Republic of Korea, Mongolia, New Zealand and Pakistan. This enlargement served the military purposes of encircling China and Russia who military planners in the West targeted.

There is no shortage of literature on NATO and its milestones, but very few have documented the real crimes of this global network of anticommunist operatives who precipitated real terror and psychological warfare against the citizens of Europe and North America while supporting mass atrocities from Algeria to Indonesia, and South Africa. Books such as that of NATO’s Secret Armies: Operation GLADIO and Terrorism in Western Europe by Danielle Ganser and The Brothers: John Foster Dulles, Allen Dulles, and Their Secret World War, by Stephen Kinzer used rigorous research techniques to uncover the dark history of NATO. These two books can be distinguished from the bland international relations texts that discusses NATO inside the old calculations of ‘strategy,’ ‘concert of democracies’, ‘security cooperation’ and the balance of power,’ and spheres of influence. Most recently, this IR rendering of the history of NATO has been served up in a document entitled, NATO at Seventy: An Alliance in Crisis. Published by Harvard University with one of the coauthors being a former US ambassador to NATO. This document spelt out ten challenges.[1] However, in a testimony before Congress, Nicolas Burns boiled down the challenge of NATO to one objective; that the current role of NATO must be to contain Russia and China.[2] On the day before the actual 70thanniversary, on April 3, the Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg delivered an address to a joint session of the US Congress advocating an expansion of the alliance while promoting a military buildup against Russia. [3] European progressives will have to reflect deeply on whether the current sanctions regime and the special propose vehicle called the Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges (INSTEX), is ushering in another round of inter imperialist rivalry reminiscent of the currency wars of 1929-1939. Then, the shifting alliances yielded confusion among working peoples who ultimately went to fight against each other in Europe, spreading barbarism throughout the world, from Auschwitz to Hiroshima.

The continued struggles for bread, peace and justice ensure that it is only the authoritarian leaders from the Global South who are compromised on the real meaning of the existence of NATO. In the present era, there is a new capitalist competition while North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) serves as an integral part of the Pentagon’s world command structure. Recent experiences have demonstrated in Afghanistan, Iraq and Libya that the moguls of Wall Street are willing to wage as many wars, to destroy as many countries and to kill as many people as necessary to achieve the dominance of US capitalism. The destruction of Libya was a classic example of the convergence of finance as warfare, the weaponization of information and incessant bombing to destroy a society. Where at the start of NATO the war scare was the propaganda method, In the current digital age, brain hacking and the engineering of smart phones have placed the giant technology firms of Apple , Google, Amazon, Microsoft, Facebook at the forefront of the new weapons platform of NATO and Wall Street. This analysis is in three parts spelling out the rationale for the call for all progressive forces to join together to concentrate their energies in the dismantling of NATO.

#### The 1AC extends the expansion of warfighting’s newest terrain: Human brains — their obsession with hacking and weaponizing cognition as a new frontier of great power warfare is a mode of neuro-geopolitical entanglement that annihilates value to life through a regime of cognitive discipline.

#### Cognition has become the newest battlefield – subtle disciplinary strategies create a neuro-geopolitical entanglement

Grove 19 [Jairus Victor Grove is Associate Professor of Political Science and Director of the Hawai'i Research Center for Future Studies at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa; “Savage Ecology: war and geopolitics at the end of the world”; August 16, 2019]//Eleanor //-elkh-

This is the terror that keeps Jürgen Habermas up at night. What will we do if we discover our freedom is contingent, that our very nature can change?31 The plan of the rest of this chapter is to follow Malabou’s provocation through to the heart of that terror. However, unlike Habermas and others, I hope to do so without the sentimental attachment to a humanity that never existed. Rather, I want to push Malabou’s concepts further. I want to consider what happens to plasticity and destructive plasticity when they are let loose in the wilds of politics. As knowledge of our formable and forming nature becomes not just known but made practical, the nightmare of humanists becomes real. Populations of human bodies without essential identities can be altered or, in the language of cybernetics, steered. Unlike understandings of power, even subtle forms of disciplinary power, plasticity on the scale of the individual and the polis represents the possibility of change without subjection, that is, without resistance. Rather than the relations of power that make subjects in the Foucauldian image, we have the possibility of designing or steering subjects that have no index of what they were before, such that something could resist. Instead, plasticity represents the possibility of a frictionless change—in the sense that one can imagine (and has imagined) the alteration of the brain or the assemblage of bodies-brains-semiotics-technics that is often called the social—that would leave no trace of what could be called an alternative. This is not the failure of resistance to produce an outcome, as in the case of the noncompliant prisoner who nonetheless remains imprisoned. Instead, plasticity raises the question of techniques that produce bodies that do not know that the “they” that they once were wanted to resist or even are imprisoned. The incorporation of plasticity into politics raises the specter of Gilles Deleuze’s “societies of control,” in which individuals become “dividuals”— humans as counters in a flexible and constantly “modulating” economy.32 Control in this context is often read systemically, as if only the “society” views humans as counters but the “dividuals” themselves, like Robert Duvall’s character in thx 1138, yearn to be free, to be unique. Confronting plasticity and its explosive potential to obliterate precursors poses a dif­ferent dividual, a real dividual: bodies stripped not just of their identity but of the desire to have an identity or to have an identity nonidentical to the identity that preceded it. Control represents the real possibility of order without the leverage or friction of ordering. Normatively I do not disagree with Habermas and others that this reduction of freedom to an engineering problem is horrifying. The point of disagreement is that arguing against the existence of such a possibility will have an effect on the probability of this nightmare.33 The attempt to safeguard humanity through the scapegoating of materialist thinking is self-defeating, as it insists that human freedom and dignity are independent of the brain while also decrying the possibility of each “becoming material.” In its cruelest form, this line of argument amounts to trying to cure someone with Alzheimer’s by scolding her about the intrinsic dignity and rationality of humans. Lesions beat argument every time. So rather than taking recourse to moralize the horror of control, it is necessary to take seriously the possibility of control as a material configuration enabled by the inessential nature of humans: their plasticity. Furthermore, I ask the reader to affirm the horror of destructive plasticity rather than look away or flee into the arms of humanist sentimentality.

#### Here, the exploited participates in the same neoliberal logics of pragmatism, implicitly consenting to become sites of knowledge extraction

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A well-known slogan that emerged from the disability movement during the 1990s goes: “Nothing about us without us.” It stresses that no policy should be adopted without fully involving those who are affected by that policy. Nowadays, it is a catchphrase used across different fields and institutional settings, signaling that “participation” has become a placeholder for inclusion, democracy, and horizontal decision-making processes. Yet, what does “participation” in a given system mean when the epistemic-political codes, the ability to maneuver, and the stakes of the participation are set in advance by the party in control? So-called “participatory programs,” like surveys and other forms of data acquisition, have been used extensively by humanitarian agencies since the 1990s, and more recently have shifted into systems for practicing what I instead call “participatory confinement.” In such systems, individuals are nudged and encouraged to actively participate in their own confinement and governmentality, “for their own good.” Christopher Kelty, a scholar of science studies and anthropology, rightly claims that this sort of “participation is more often a formatted procedure by which autonomous individuals attempt to reach calculated consensus.” Not only are the goals and forms of participation often preestablished and surreptitiously imposed, but individuals are also de facto pushed to corroborate, contribute to, and improve mechanisms of confinement and coercion. Here, I focus on refugee humanitarianism as a case study for coming to grips with modes of participatory confinement as a systematic political technology of governmentality.

Modes of participatory confinement in refugee humanitarianism are inflected by clear-cut asymmetric relations between asylum seekers on one side, and humanitarian actors on the other. This initial condition and its trend towards reform by way of inviting participation is reminiscent of the diagnosis of prison reform by Michel Foucault in a lecture he gave in 1976. Furnishing an anticipatory example of participatory confinement, he writes: “There is an attempt to make prisoners themselves participate in devising the very programmes for their punishment, through the prisoners’ councils and so on. This is the idea that the individual, singly or collectively, is meant to accept the punitive procedure.” Nowadays, participatory approaches are center stage on the agendas of international agencies and NGOs in the context of the so-called “refugee crisis” in Europe. They continue to operate with the same neoliberal logics of prior reforms to systems of punishment and control that performatively invite the exploited to frame the forms of that exploitation, while actually ceding no power to the “participant.”

Furthermore, invoking a term from Tiziana Terranova, participatory confinement in refugee humanitarianism can also be considered a form of “soft control.” Asylum seekers are increasingly asked to answer questionnaires and provide detailed information to humanitarian actors about their coping strategies, migratory journeys, the logistics of border crossing, and their protection needs. These activities are presented to refugees as an opportunity to improve their individual situation and, at the same time, the asylum system at large; in actuality, they just increase the control that the system has over refugees. In The Undercommons, Fred Moten and Stephano Harney refer to a similar process as the “invitation to governmentality” which subjects are repeatedly exposed to. Elaborating on this notion, it can be argued that this “invitation” in the context of humanitarian participatory programs also involves pushing subjects to perform unpaid labor by providing feedback. They thus implicitly consent to being sites for the extraction of knowledge, which is used by NGOs to further enforce modes of control and governance. Speaking of an invitation to governmentality in these terms also sheds light on the multiple forms of interpellation that individuals are subject to, and how they are nudged to participate “for their own good.” That is, the invitation to governmentality that individuals are exposed to in different contexts often turns into a form of subtle coercion.

#### The “Western apex of truth” draws the dichotomy of the irrational other, manifested in representations of the global south

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[Modified] for ~~gendered language~~.

Control of Knowledge and Subjectivity

Ramose (2003) argues that the rationale that European colonialism operated on was an unsubstantiated belief that Africans, among other non-European races, were not rational beings hence, they were not entitled to what rational beings claimed as their entitlement and rights. He argues that: One of the bases of colonisation was that the belief ‘man is a rational animal’ was not spoken of the African, the Amerindian, and the Australasian. Aristotle’s definition of man was deeply inscribed in the social ethos of those communities and societies that undertook the so-called voyages of discovery—apparently driven by innocent curiosity. But it is well known that these voyages changed into violent colonial incursions. It seems then that the entire process of decolonisation has, among others, upheld and not jettisoned the questionable belief that ‘man is a rational animal’ excludes the African, the Amerindian, and the Australasian. (Ramose 2003: 1) What Ramose manages to reveal is that the imaginary right and exclusive claim to rationality by Europe(ans) is only realised because of material power fashioned to guard and preserve the myth that Africa is unable to rationally construct knowledge. The power of the gun is what Europe used to scatter its patterns, templates, designs and standards across the globe. Power in European terms is tantamount to instruments of control emitted by violence. This imaginary exclusive right to rationality by Europe(ans) has wide-ranging and extensive implications for knowledge production about Africa by Africans. This is meant to cast doubt and reinforce the modern bias on Africa and other non-European races; it is also meant to make the non-European doubt themselves as to their capacity to rationalise, think and philosophise. European imagination, and hence modernity, “is doubtful [that] Africans are wholly and truly human beings” and it questions the Africans’ capacity to philosophise (Ramose 2003: 5). The pattern that European imagination implanted in the mind of the African is to doubt herself and himself. This pattern is relatable to what Mudimbe (1987: 2) called the “organising structure” and what wa Thiongó (1981: 94) called the “organising principle”. This chapter adds the ‘ordering structure’ to the long-standing patterns of control that European civilisation subjected Africa to. The self-doubting African cannot and is not meant to know or produce knowledge about [theirself] ~~herself and himself~~, let alone [their] ~~her/his~~ surroundings and localities. Europeans, as are self-acclaimed exclusive recipients of rationality, have thus put themselves on a pedestal of knowledge production, and at the apex of correct and therefore truthful knowledge. There is an underlying attitude that exudes itself as though Europeans were the only race and civilisation that holds and embodies the truth. As a result, an African’s right to knowledge is contingent upon a “passive as well as uncritical assimilation” of the knowledge produced in Europe for Europeans and the whole world (Ramose 2003: 2). Africans are then supposed to faithfully implement the knowledge that is constructed, defined and designed “outside Africa” (ibid.). Coloniality of knowledge therefore refers to the Euro-North American intellectual thought as the referral point upon which all other epistemologies and knowledges are judged against. As an epistemological movement, “it has always been overshadowed by hegemonic Euro-north American-centric intellectual thought and social theories” (Ramose 2003: 2). Knowledge production, and the capacity to think and generate is a preserve of Euro-North American-centric modernity resulting in the creation of “border thinking” (Arturo Escobar in Mignolo 2001: 179). The thinking is located in the Euro-North American civilisation, beyond that geography, there exist no rationality. Such is the thinking of Euro-North American-centric civilisation.

#### Here, epistemology and technology converge to create the war assemblage, an economy of mundane war, a slow, unending violence

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War as defined by classical war studies suggests a distinct class of actors, interests, aims, and expertise. As a result, the study of war as well as much of the social mobilization of war presumes an exteriority of war and warfare from other sectors and institutions like the economy or the state. For those who study military history, war—in this limited understanding—can certainly be decisive in the rise and fall of nation-states and even transformations of the global system when that system is only indexed by the states that populate it, but the pursuit of these histories still presumes a kind of exceptional character of war. War following this line of thought is a cataclysmic event that interrupts the otherwise normal character of daily life. For others, particularly in the field of strategic studies, warfare is a tool, an instrument whereby states and sometimes organizations pursue ends beyond the limits of politics and persuasion. War compels and determines a course of action as an orchestral direction of overwhelming force. For those who hope to abolish war, a parallel exteriority animates their theorizing about war. War, according to these thinkers, is reducible to the self-interest of hegemonic states, the militarism of soldiers, and the self-amplifying loop of profit and power. Presidents, generals, ceos, arms dealers, and patriots come together to pursue war as an end in itself. Again, those actors and those pursuits are treated as outside the normal realm of human social relations. But what if war is history? What if the very form of life that created, was reinforced by, mutated with, and emerged from the Eurocene is warlike? State-making, territorialization, expansion, annihilation, settlement, and globalization are all warlike relations. I want to consider the possibility of war and warlike relations as processes of making a form of life in which warfare is normal. And what I mean by normal is much more than what we mean when we use concepts like ideology or legitimacy or discipline. By normal, I mean the very fabric of relations that makes a form of life and a world: a war body, a war assemblage, a war ecology. I am not suggesting that war is the only form of life. There are surviving forms of life interior and exterior to the Eurocene. No process of annihilation succeeds without leaving at least a trace.3 However, the normal workings of daily global life are a state of war. Rather than think of state of war in the juridical or theoretical sense, which distinguish war from peace on the grounds of declarations or measures of order, I want to consider war as an ecology endemic to the Eurocene. So by state of war I mean state in the sense that physicists or chemists think about states of matter. Every state of matter is an order, and despite that order, every state of matter has some elements of other states. A state of matter exhibits properties like solidity, liquidity, gaseousness, or the full-on freak-out of plasma but is not entirely made up of that state. And yet the state still has an effect despite that heterogeneity. So to say that we live in a global state of war, and that the making of the Eurocene was that making of a global state of war, is to say that war intensifies the field of relations that make the world what it is right now, not that it exhausts the possibility of what the world can become. Instead, the practices and organizations—from resource extraction, enclosure, carbon liberation, racialization, mass incarceration, border enforcement, policing and security practices, primitive accumulation by dispossession, targeted strikes, to allout combat—are relations of war rather than merely correlates or opportunities for a war metaphor. To put it a bit more bluntly, politics, colonialism, settlement, capitalism, ecological destruction, racism, and misogynies are not wars by other means—they are war. War is not a metaphor; it is an intensive fabric of relations making the Eurocene. To make this claim requires rethinking—somewhat bombastically—the meaning of war. If war has such a wide application, it would seem to mean nothing. In talks, roundtables, and casual conversations, colleagues have often suggested that such an expansive definition of war is polemical or even absurd. Others have said that spreading war so thin cheapens the sacrifices and tragedies of those who have experienced “real war.” It is curious to me that many of the same people have no difficulty assigning similar base or structuring characteristics to capitalism, settlement, or patriarchy. I do not see war as a replacement or a displacement of those structuring structures. Instead, war is like those other complicated, heterogeneous, abstract machines but interrelated and importantly semiautonomous in the making of the world. The importance of shifting the point of emphasis or break between war and other “big processes” is to emphasize the way collectively making death comes to be its own organizing ecology rather than just an instrumental means for other ecologies, such as racism or sexism or capitalism, that are often more obviously invested in ordering—subordinating orders—than destruction. Furthermore, I do not think, given the extreme level of violence and deprivation necessary to create the global ecology we now inhabit, that it is “a stretch” to call war the constitutive fabric of planetary relations. Instead, war as an intensive difference takes possession of other categories, at which point phase shifts take place in categories like racism or economics. What was the slow, lethal burn of postslavery policing escalates into the fury of outright combat in the streets, a race war in the streets of 1921 Tulsa or the 2015 streets of Baltimore. Even in our sacred texts of democratic theory, the pulsing tributaries of war run throughout descriptions of political formation. John Locke argued with little dispute that slavery was the institutionalization of war.4 And W. E. B. Du Bois said of the process of reconstruction after slavery that war had begun again, and in fact had never ended.5 Do we think that the same could not be said for the vast carceral project directed at black people described so well by Michelle Alexander or Loïc Wacquant?6 The common retort is to ask whether this line of thinking means all forms of killing should be considered war. I think that is a reasonable question. However, I believe that retort actually demonstrates the problem of war in the Eurocene. Take, for instance, the lynching of African Americans after the American Civil War or the routine murder of Native Americans by settlers before the arrival of the American cavalry during the period of westward expansion. Were these killings disparate acts of murder or strategically valuable microevents of war? How would patriarchy’s sadistic continuity and heterogeneous creativity across geography and time survive without the nearly viral practices of domestic violence that suture norms to bruises, scars, and corpses? To exclude the way each micropractice of war—murder—aggregates over time and space into continental scale, slow-motion warfare would significantly impoverish our understanding of the role war plays in the making of global systems. Any one act of brutality could be dismissed on idiosyncratic grounds and attributed to lazy claims about human nature. Or these acts of brutality can be brought into a conceptual jurisdiction of war such that we can get a glimpse of how these seemingly disparate practices of violence resonate, congeal, and order the global system. The historical granularity necessary to prove this seemingly absurd proposition is well beyond the scope of this book. Instead, this chapter and the larger aim of the book try to identify operators or machines in the emergence of war that confound the tried and true questions of sovereignty, security dilemmas, and the increasingly apparent absurdity of circumscribing global political change to the behavior of “great powers” in a rationalist and statecentric sense. The commitment to a world run by the causal agents of states, regimes, and norms (whether thick or thin) appears to me like the Velveteen Rabbit: toys whose straw stuffing is beginning to poke through worn skin and whose button eyes have been long since lost. Unlike the mythic rabbit, there is nothing real for these fetishes to become.7 The first step to understand war as a form of life that is world forming requires building a community of concepts capable of capturing the diversity of relations at work in the making of war. It is a messy inquiry. In recoil from this indiscernible mess, there are those who would rather “un–black box” phenomena by exhaustively identifying all actants or detailing complex processes of social and material change, but these approaches are ill-suited to describing the broader ecology of war. The problem with the desire to explain or un–black box phenomena is that it seduces us to focus on those phenomena on which we think we have the best chance of imposing an artificial autonomy or separation of things and events. Those phenomena that seem to give themselves up to analyzable bits and pieces are prized for publication and research funding. This cult of discreteness has not gotten us very far. Reality does not, as some realist philosophers say in a creepy analogy to butchering, “cut at the joints.”8 Positivism, even the complexity and systems variety, wants an object of inquiry at an instant. In a particularly Whiteheadian moment, Merleau-Ponty responds to the desire for discreteness with disdain: In human existence, then, there is a principle of indetermination, and this indetermination does not merely exist for us . . . from some imperfection in our knowledge. . . . Existence is indeterminate in itself because of its fundamental structure: insofar as existence is the very operation by which something that had no sense takes on sense. . . . Existence has no fortuitous attributes and no content that does not contribute to giving it its form, it does not admit any pure facts in themselves, because it is the movement by which facts are taken up.9 In the attempt to vivisect existence—to reduce to an instant what is process and movement, rhythm and relation—those more subtle connections or resonances whose effects are felt but not discrete are overshadowed by those relationships we can chart and measure. Such an approach circumscribes our thinking rather than allowing it to remain open to the emergence of thought as provoked by a wild world. Domesticated notions of complexity are stand-ins for the merely complicated. Real complexity suggests that there is novelty in the world rather than thinking that novelty is an effect of a complicated process. This is what Merleau-Ponty means when he says that the indeterminate is the “fundamental structure of the world.” Those who see in complexity the mere character of complicatedness invest in that image of complexity the hope for more sophisticated predictive models and desire a mechanistic universe defined by initial conditions.10 For those striving to create positivism 2.0, chance exists as an endangered species to be extinguished once all the data are in. I think this diminishes the creative and chaotic elements of becoming characteristic of ecologies like war, and reinvests the desire for order and control with a false and dangerous telos. The aleatory is reduced to a question of epistemology rather than being seen as a generative principle of the cosmos, giving new confidence to those who would see to make useful predictions or pronouncements upon their models of the world. I admit it is tempting when new scientific discoveries verify our own theoretical belief in thinking that somehow science has finally gotten it right. However, one need only look at what happens when the image of thought founded on this new faux-empiricism combines with the shabby categories of interest and security to see how quickly scientific facts about complexity or quantum physics or networks or sociobiology can be put to use for preventive war and social control.11 In international relations, even insights about uncertainty can become a predictive social scientific method.12 The postcolonies and pockets of peoples surviving settlement are still finding that the “study” of their cultures’ complexities serves the interests of those who would obliterate difference rather than those who would insist on a new pluralism. Anthropologists, sociologists, and economists—all armed with the latest in social-actor-network theory, complexity equations, and advanced social media scraping algorithms—are deployed as part of the subsequent revisions of the Human Terrain System in Iraq, Afghanistan, Chicago, Los Angeles, the Dakota Access Pipeline, Yemen, Mexico, Mali, and back again. Knowledge separated from its ethical considerations is readily weaponized.13 Rapidly scoping from the micro of culture to the macro of the planetary scale, the Eurocene is already transitioning from territorial warfare to geopolitically motivated geoengineering and regional terraforming to institutionalize hegemony geologically while still refining the microscopic collection of data on threats as small as a single person.14 Inspired by the work in early chaos and catastrophe theory, Deleuze and Guattari suggest another path for the pursuit of complexity. Rather than ignore the overwhelming complexity of the world, scientific inquiry can be a way to cope with chaos “defined not so much by its disorder as by the infinite speed with which every form taking shape in it vanishes.”15 Creative sciences attack the problem of chaos by attributing functions to chaos so that its shifting patterns, orders, and relations can be thought. Functions are a kind of “fantastic slowing down, and it is by slowing down that matter, as well as the scientific thought able to penetrate it with propositions, is actualized.”16 I want to develop war as something between a function and a concept. I am trying to draw together consistencies by extending out, “building bridges,” and occupying larger zones of components and functions that attempt to slow down, distinguish, and make actual indexible territories of interest, which only appear whole because investigation as a science has imposed a kind of temporary and hesitant “freeze frame.”17 One could become worried that such provisional moments could get mistaken for reality itself, however, with close attention, care for the world, such mistakes are hard to maintain. The relational (in movement-process) and substantive character of the world defies reductionism. Novelist and philosophical tinkerer Tristan Garcia explains the neither/nor of concept object-relations as follows: A thing is nothing other than the difference between that which is in this thing and that in which this thing is. Unless one guarantees this double sense, there are no thinkable things. Every reductionist who claims to deduce that which this or that thing is from that which composes this or that thing only succeeds in dis-solving the very thing that they claim to account for. We attempt to accomplish the exact opposite of this: to guarantee things as invaluable differences embedded in the distribution channels of being of the world. To complete our task, we set out to discover the meaning which circulates among things, between that which composes them and that which they compose, inside or outside us, with or without us.18 War in particular demands this double aspect of things to capture war’s territorializing and deterritorializing tendencies to make and unmake things and be a thing all at the same time. Although throughout the book I take inspiration from new scientific research—examples from neuroscience, physics, evolutionary biology, artificial intelligence, and experimental psychiatry—that inspiration will not be used to build some new, more stable, method of inquiry, but instead I will try to trouble a still pervasive image of the world as law-governed. Therefore, war serves a double movement: it presents itself as an ordering principle or form of ecology despite the frequent conflation between war and chaos, while also undermining the image of the world as one ruled by the laws of a singular transcendental order. Even many postpositivists, particularly interpretivists, of various kinds are unsettled by this kind of open-ended or experimental thought, absurdly big claims, oriented around assemblages, resonances, or systems of thought particularly in the context of war and violence because it means letting go, at least for a moment, of the desire to ascribe blame or culpability—from my perspective, consonant with causality—to particular individuals in time and space. This is a deficit, but it comes with the benefit of elucidating, even if only vaguely, the operators in the generation of technics, affects, peoples, and weak or novel connections in the savage ecologies that often determine, or at least circumscribe, the incipient possibilities of action by the individuals we so desperately want to hold accountable for their failures or vices. Remember Walt Whitman’s words that began this book, “The war—that war so bloody and grim—the war I will henceforth forget—was you and me.” The question in the context of this research is: Why is there so consistently an arrangement of racial supremacy, power, ethics, and violence to prosecute or distribute war and technical-martial logic to support and distribute it? While it is valuable to investigate how leaders can function to amplify conflict, what is striking is how quickly any one leader can be replaced and how little the trajectory of war changes. Following Sloterdijk’s pronouncement on the becoming atmospheric of contemporary warfare, collective violence is saturating every corner of the Earth system, but like carbon, neither the distributors nor distribution of violence is equitable. Saturation is no excuse for universality. There will never be a we that is human as such. And yet there is also no tribe, history of proper names, or nation-state that can bear the responsibility in any meaningful way. Twenty or thirty generations of malicious and sadistic decisions cannot amount to the collective effect of the heterogeneous relations that produced the Eurocene but neither should we let go of the particular forms of life that congealed around an instrumental approach to collective violence that swallowed and then organized peoples, nonhuman peoples, and things throughout Europe and then the regions those people, nonhuman peoples, and things settled. Mapping something like the totality of those actors and relations is impossible and maybe even counterproductive, but tracing the lineages of warfare that came to enable the expansion of the Europeans until they became a “cene,” a geologically and geopolitically significant order, may gather up a swarm of conceptual machines still buzzing through our contemporary moment. Consequently, I am less interested in why once such an institution or assemblage is in place, a leader at a given moment succeeds in making actual the already present virtual tendencies of war. Consider how difficult it is to reconcile our lost hope for Barack Obama with the expected failure of George W. Bush or how quickly the terror over Donald Trump was normalized once the adults from the military stepped in, precisely because foreign policies of each arrangement of leadership are in many ways indistinguishable, particularly from the perspectives of their victims.19 It is not surprising to me, then, that sovereigns make war, or that they take advantage of democratic paradoxes to do so. The problematic that drives this section is how such a complex, mobile, and global ecology of war so closely aligns and adheres to such a seemingly local decision as a sovereign act of violence or declaration of war. One might take a lesson from the electrification of sound. In order to amplify or magnify a sound and preserve the fidelity of a particular harmonic arrangement, one cannot simply “turn up” the volume. It requires a certain interface between the means of amplification, the ambient qualities of the room, the number of people present, and the resonant capabilities of those people, the furniture, the walls, the floor, and the ceiling. Similarly, political decrees or decisions to produce effects must reverberate and interface with complex assemblages of institutions, economies, ethical dispositions, affective discourses, and other machinic operators. From this perspective, sovereign “decisions,” whether by presidents or suicide bombers, appear to be on both sides of the razor’s edge between cause and effect. Such an approach requires, as Deleuze writes, “not so much . . . convincing, as being open about things. Being open is setting out the ‘facts’ not only of a situation, but of a problem. Making visible things that would otherwise remain hidden.”20 So we have a world full of sovereign violence, but the place of a given sovereign in the distribution of that violence remains obscure. What follows is an attempt to flush out the contemporary milieu or ecology of war in its mutational, material, and global tendencies to open up the landscape for something that requires a history. In the following chapter, I return to the specific historical mutations of war that contributed war’s contemporary becoming as a Euro-cum-American facialization of the Eurocene. The sections that follow look for these “loose associations” or dif­ferent assemblages that may not yet have converged or connected but have tendencies and internal resonances that I think organize war’s various becomings. In particular, I consider the ecology of annihilation that characterizes American practices of warfare now dominant among “great powers.” These parts do not follow one from the other. They are often disjointed in their locations and themes. The hope is that the consistency that does connect them is one of possibility or chance rather than necessity so that the sense of inevitability that often characterizes the analysis of global security is not so easily territorialized for the capture of war. Some connections will appear more obvious than others, but, like other kinds of ecologies, sometimes the connections are merely the happenstance of coinciding; contingency can produce novelty and novelty can be catastrophic and horrifying. From this perspective, I ask what it would mean to consider the driving force of the Eurocene, war, ecologically.

#### This expansion of war beyond physicality enables dark pure war, inseparable from capitalism, colonialism, and militarization

Towns, 19—associate professor in Communication and Media Studies, Carleton University (Armond, “(Dark) Pure War: Virilio, the Cinematic, and the Racial,” Media Theory, Vol. 3, No. 2, 145-160, dml//-ekh-)

In Pure War, Paul Virilio argued that war continued beyond the physicality of the battlefield. Outside of the violence of the fight lay a violence of industrial production toward the conditions for war. Put differently, pure war signified the new ways that war was now acted out ‘in infinite preparation’ (Virilio, 2008: 29). Pure war indicated the always already active preparation for war by the state, even when war was not being physically waged.

One could say that a cornerstone of Virilio’s research has been media’s relation to unending war. A central component of pure war, for example, is information, or the gathering of data to surveil and police populations that are always under the watchful eye of the war machine. Interestingly, Virilio concerns himself less with the racial implications of those who are open to surveilling and policing and more with the expansion of policing and surveilling as practices that are applicable to ‘everyone’. Yet, his examples of war have racial undertones that he often does not fully investigate: the Vietnam War, the Iraq War, and the Italo-Ethiopian War, to name a few, all creep toward the pure war. Even as Virilio (2002) acknowledged the racial implications of the Second World War, he had less to say about the recognition that the Nazis pulled their racialized strategies of death for the European Jewish population from the US state’s approach to black and indigenous people (Whitman, 2017). Each of these wars, between white and nonwhite people or between white and white people in relation to those who could never fully be white, suggest that the wars that Virilio found most interesting were not race neutral.

What can Virilio provide for a media studies of race? I argue that Virilio’s work on pure war can be reinterpreted as a ‘dark pure war’, concerned with a militaristic, unending war against nonwhite populations. It is a dark pure war, one that structures the colony and the metropole, that lays the foundation for pure war. Dark pure war is not necessarily ‘black’ in the racialized sense, even as it often functions that way. Instead, it is black in the ‘blackening’ sense, in what Kumi Silva (2010) calls the ‘identification’ of nonwhite bodies as open to state violence. Thus, pulling from Virilio and Simone Browne’s (2015) Dark Matters, a dark pure war outlines the centrality of race to the continuance of war, even as race is the purposefully forgotten genesis of such war. This is not Michel Foucault’s (2003) ‘race war’, as Europe is not the central locale from which such war occurs. Rather, dark pure war is inseparable from Euro-American imperial, capitalistic expansionism (colonialism and racial slavery) as militarized projects toward the maintenance of white life and the conditions of black death, ad infinitum.

Virilio’s work has been called, rightly in my opinion, ‘wild and aphoristic’ (Sharma, 2013). Yet, I want to say that what Virilio may point toward is an investigation of the centrality of technologies to racialization processes. Surveillance studies (which has long investigated race) and media philosophy (which has been slower to discuss race) are put into conversation with one another here. I advance the concept of dark pure war in three sections. I start by delineating the connections between war, cinema, and information that Virilio argued were important. I then move into outlining the darkness of pure war, particularly by outlining the racialized components of contemporary policing and surveillance. I conclude by calling for a rethinking of ‘dromology’, one that moves toward including the multi-symbolic capacity of ‘race’ in discussions of war.

The Perceptions of War: Vision and the Cinematic

In War and Cinema, Virilio argued that the history of war was both theatrical and a history of transforming perceptual fields, whereby vision was increasingly the site of power. As such, the rifle’s gunsights and the camera came together to situate the world as a field of vision that could be measured, calculated, and shot. For Virilio, film functioned as a pedagogical tool, one that involved an increasing sensorial detachment from film itself. Virilio’s example is the famous myth of an audience in Paris watching a film of a moving locomotive filling the screen causing the people in the cinema to believe the train was going to drive over them:

[In] fact it was the precision of the camera-shot which first created audience panic at the Lumières’ ‘motion demonstrations’ of the train’s arrival at la Ciotat, when everyone felt that they risked being crushed or injured by the train. This kind of fear, akin to the sense of speed that people seek on roller coasters, did not disappear but simply became more pernicious as the audience learnt to control its nervous reactions and began to find death amusing (Virilio, 1989: 39-40).

What Virilio pointed to was a transformation in perception: film produced images of objects, thus, perceptually distancing audiences from said objects, to a point where there would no longer be a need to panic at the sight of an oncoming train in a cinema. There have been a few attempts to debunk the myth of whether or not the audience was actually sent running at the sight of the train (Cooper, 2016; Grundhauser, 2016), but the fact still stands: ‘film is now second nature to us, but it was utterly shocking not much more than a century ago’ (Cooper, 2016).

Cinemas were ‘training camps’, bonding ‘people together in the face of death agony, teaching them to master the fear of what they did not know – or rather, as Hitchcock put it, of what did not exist’ (Virilio, 1989: 40). In short, cinema readied people for ‘the artificial horizon of a screen or a monitor capable of permanently displaying the preponderance of the media perspective, the relief of the “tele-present” event taking precedence over the three dimensions of the volume of the objects or places here present’ (Virilio, 2006: 66). This training did not occur overnight, but involved multiple media forms that all worked toward perceptual transformation. As such, more than cinema, Virilio is interested in the ‘cinematic’, which included and exceeded cinema, proper; he tried to track the link between cinema, war, and later ‘vision machines’, such as television, CCTV, smart devices, and drone strikes, assuring us that ‘Components of a cinematic machine have been in use over many centuries: forms of projection, moving images, immobile voyages, and visionary illuminations’ (Crary, 2009: 13). The cinema, television, and war all worked together toward distancing audiences from objects, for Virilio.

Virilio’s work on cinema also adds much to those interested in studying the Web and information. In the wake of the atom bomb, Virilio warned of a second bomb, the ‘information bomb’, which is important for pure war. Whereas the atom bomb was a war of movement, the information bomb was a war of knowledge and speed, signifying a war ‘won’ by the increasing speed of interactivity in real time. Such a bomb included and exceeded cinema, and essentially structured computer screens and the Web – both media developed during and after the Second World War, and very much because of it. This is a trajectory of transformations that cannot be said to have origins in cinema, but were representative of the impact of the cinematic:

We’re still here in the domain of cinematic illusion, of the mirage of information precipitated on the computer screen what is given is exactly the information but not the sensation; it is the apatheia, this scientific impassibility which makes it so that the more informed man is the more the desert of the world expands around him, the more the repetition of information (already known) upsets the stimuli of observation, overtaking them automatically, not only in memory (interior light) but first of all in the look, to the point that from now on it’s the speed of light itself which limits the reading of information and the important thing in electronic information is no longer the storage but the display (Virilio, 2009: 56).

For Virilio, then, the shift from ‘tele-vision’ to ‘tele-surveillance’ reflected the demands of capitalism and war. Whereas tele-vision held ‘the task of informing or entertaining the mass of viewers’ (Virilio, 2006: 59), the new tele-vision, or the ‘tele-surveillance’, was concerned with ‘exposing and invading of individuals’ domestic space, like a new form of lighting, which is capable of revolutionizing the notion of neighborhood unit, or of a building or district’ (Virilio, 2006: 59). The drone strike, then, could pinpoint a ‘target’s’ location, whether indoors or outdoors.

Thus, tele-surveillance spoke to a ‘dromology,’ a ‘speed politics’, or a politics of instantaneousness, sparked by the increasing need to entertain, monitor, and prepare others for their own monitoring. Further, it replicated the waging of war on people at a distance: ‘Making information resonate globally, which is necessary in the age of the great planetary market, is in many ways going to resemble the practices and uses of military intelligence, and also political propaganda and its excesses’ (Virilio, 2006: 62). Likewise, this spoke to what many have called a ‘slow violence’, one that disproportionately impacts the Global South (Nixon, 2011; Parikka, 2017), as a space largely viewed solely as a waste station of the Global North. War is a continual process that does not end when the last round is fired, but is also carried out via the circulation of information and propaganda in ways that penetrate architecture without necessarily physically destroying a building’s structural integrity.

Dark Pure War: Surveillance and the Racial

Pure war is the continuance of war after the physicality of war is over and done; now, information functions toward the continuance of war, as a preemptive strike against enemies: ‘But war doesn’t really end, as Virilio noted, it just accelerates, approximating ever more closely to its pure form’ (Wark, 2018). Information is now a central component of war, whereby ‘Not only is architecture vulnerable to bombs, it proves defenseless against information, passing through the doors and walls of our homes, rearranging the space and time we imagine we live within’ (Wark, 2018). Indeed, ‘the capability of war without war manifests a parallel information market of propaganda, illusion, dissimulation’ (Der Derian, 2002: viii).

To rethink Virilio’s pure war as dark pure war requires thinking about not only how information is weaponized toward war’s continuance, but also the presumed racial neutrality associated with both war and information. Thus, race is the underexamined, overlooked element of Virilio’s theory. Like discussions of dark matter in physics, Browne’s employment of ‘dark matter’ is meant to point toward the ‘unseen and unperceived’ elements of antiblackness in the surveillant practices of contemporary society. She argues that ‘rather than seeing surveillance as something inaugurated by new technologies, such as automated facial recognition or unmanned autonomous vehicles (or drones)’ (Browne, 2015: 8), we can instead think about ‘surveillance in and of black life as a fact of blackness’ (Browne, 2015: 6). Thus, Browne connects surveillance theory to a dark history concerned with the measurement of bodies to see their ‘intentions’, a dark history often underexamined in surveillance studies. That history is scientific racism:

Anthropometry, or Bertillonage, was introduced in 1883 by Alphonse Bertillon as a system of measuring and then cataloguing the human body by distinguishing one individual from another for the purposes of identification, classification, and criminal forensics. This early biometric information technology was put to work as a “scientific method,” alongside the pseudo-sciences of craniometry (the measurement of the skull to assign criminality and intelligence to race and gender) and phrenology (attributing mental abilities to the shape of the skull, as the skull was believed to hold a brain made up of individual organs) (Browne, 2015: 112).

What Browne points toward is a question unasked by Virilio: what if the ‘fact of blackness’ is the structuring necessity for the new technologies of surveillance themselves? This would require that we rethink pure war as a dark pure war, which is to say that pure war holds race as central, while never acknowledging its importance to the maintenance of war.

What if we thought about Virilio’s pure war as a racial condition in the US? In short, what if we were to rearticulate WEB Du Bois’ (1994) question of, ‘How does it feel to be a problem’, as a racialized question of war? The end of the US Civil War and the end of racial slavery marked the structure of pure war as a condition, rather than a contingency, of black life. Another way to say this is that white people went to war with each other over the right to own our black bodies in the US Civil War, and it presumably ended in 1865. Yet, the replication of racial violence, what Saidiya Hartman (2008) calls the ‘afterlife of slavery’, has yet to end for black people; instead, racial violence is fundamental to what it means to be black (and white) in the US. Jim Crowism, ghettoization, deindustrialization, white flight, mass incarceration, and gentrification are remnants of dark pure war. They are post-war answers to how to deal with a ‘problem’; to call for their end is to call for the end to what many cannot let go of: whiteness. Further, with race at its center, this entails that black people are not the only ones affected by dark pure war, but are part of dark pure war’s larger assemblage.

What Virilio pointed toward, then, was that cinema and war were necessarily interconnected and assistants in the perceptual transformations that readied populations for their own continual surveillance; and just as important, such forms of surveillance have been tested on people of color prior to their implementation on the larger society. This is what Browne refers to as the ‘unseen and unperceived’ component of dark matter and what I call dark pure war: it is the necessity of the black body as an always already surveillable, commodified object, one that can normalize even the contemporary surveillance of people’s information online.

#### This is structured through the affects of neoliberalism, by which the critical pedagogies of militarism operate through the mundane interactions with academia, resolvable only through critical, counter-conduct performances

Zembylas 19 [Michalinos Zembylas (2019): The affective dimension of everyday resistance: implications for critical pedagogy in engaging with neoliberalism’s educational impact, Critical Studies in Education, DOI: 10.1080/17508487.2019.1617180] // jz// -ekh-]

My analysis has shown that whatever form neoliberalism is taken to be in schools and universities, the neoliberal present has important affective implications. The affective economies of neoliberalism that are produced in schools and universities create particular ‘capacities to affect and be affected’ for teachers and students alike. It is thus extremely important to develop methodological and theoretical tools that critically trace the capacities of teachers and students for affecting and being affected in their engagements and negotiations with neoliberal education, and specifically how these capacities are normalized, embodied or enable alternative counter-practices (Zembylas, 2018b). Hence, what is required is a continued critical engagement with neoliberalism’s educational impact in ways that take into consideration the affective potentialities of resistance. Considering the affective potentialities of resistance in critical pedagogy can be the starting point for alternatives visions of educational policies and practices that challenge forms of neoliberal education. I would argue, then, that what is needed in the study of resistance in critical pedagogy is what Thrift (2008) calls a micro-biopolitical approach (Thrift, 2008) which understands the complexities and ambivalences of neoliberal affects and norms that operate at the mundane, ordinary, and everyday level in schools and universities and the consequences that are produced (Zembylas, 2018b). This micro-biopolitical approach on conceptualizing resistance in critical pedagogy is valuable not only because it pays attention to the affective consequences of mechanisms and techniques of neoliberal education in schools and universities, but also because it invokes what Braidotti (2013) terms ‘affirmative critique’ (see also Staunæs, 2016). An affirmative critique in critical pedagogy, for example, is the sort of critical engagement with ideas 10 M. ZEMBYLAS and things that creates affective spaces for alternative counter-conduct practices against neoliberal education. In other words, recognizing the affective dimension of resistance in critical pedagogy creates openings for an affirmative critique that has the potential to transform teachers’ and students’ capacities to affect and be affected. In considering the approach I am suggesting here to affect and resistance in critical pedagogy, one can indeed raise several questions and concerns such as: How may critical pedagogy itself function as an ‘apparatus of power’ (Anderson, 2014) which uses affect to mobilize resistance towards certain ideologies or structures such as neoliberalism? How are these mobilizations of resistance connected to broader collective conditions and processes of resisting certain ideologies or structures at the macro-political level? How do teachers’ and students’ practices and bodily capacities reproduce or enrich certain mobilizations of resistance through their encounters? How can those practices and bodily capacities be reproductive, adaptive or resistant, whether intentionally or not? (e.g. see McKenzie, 2017). There are no definitive answers to these questions, but they must be posed to show the complexities and ambivalences emerging from attempts to link affect and resistance in critical pedagogy. Hence, I would argue that any viable theorization of resistance in critical pedagogy must not be limited to ‘conventional’ understandings of resistance but must emphasize how affects condition the ways neoliberalism emerges, circulate and are transformed by forms of resistance waged by teachers and students. Greater acknowledgment of the ways in which schools and universities play a fundamental role in the affective conduct of individuals, encouraging and directing the self-perceptions, economic behavior and socio-political actions of students, citizens, and workers (Odysseos & Pal, 2018) will renew theorization of resistance in critical pedagogy in two ways. First, by gesturing toward the particular ways in which affects come to have force and socio-political significance, critical pedagogy disconnects resistance from a psychologized perspective or a perspective that defines resistance in dualistic terms as a matter of either human agency or social structure. This would mean, for instance, recognizing that resistance is not a set of individualized actions but rather it is very much embedded in the affective infrastructures of neoliberal education. To create renewed affective relations and assemblages as counter-conduct in schools and universities, then, would essentially mean to invent new affective practices that instigate empowerment and resistance against the various manifestations of neoliberal education. As Alldred and Fox (2017) conclude: It is therefore more accurate to see power and resistance as dual fluxes that permeate all assemblages, a shifting balance that is never finally settled. Defining a certain affect as an assertion of power or an effort at resistance is less important than assessing the capacities that these affects produce. (p. 1171) For example, it is argued that ‘affective solidarity’ is necessary for a sustainable politics of transformation (Hemmings, 2012). Hemmings proposes an approach that moves away from rooting transformation in politics of identity and towards modes of engagement that start from the affective dissonance experience can produce. Although affective dissonance with the experience of neoliberalism’s educational impact, for instance, cannot guarantee a resistant mode, ‘that sense of dissonance might become a sense of injustice and then a desire to rectify that’ (Hemmings, 2012, CRITICAL STUDIES IN EDUCATION 11 p. 157). The recognition of affective dissonance as the point of departure for a possible affective solidarity among teachers and student highlights that affective dissonance with neoliberalism’s educational impact may be a productive basis from which to seek solidarity with others – not based on a shared identity or ideology, but on feeling the desire for transforming the injustices inflicted by neoliberal policies and practices. Second, the recognition of the affective dimension of resistance in critical pedagogy helps us understand the affective present in and beyond schools and universities as a series of processes and practices in ‘the everyday’ in which the focus is on the actions that are mobilized to produce something rather than on their representations or what they supposedly mean. By examining the consequences of affects at the micropolitical level, resistance can be understood in terms of the ways actions produce capacities to affect and be affected, that is, ‘in terms of the forces circulating in assemblage and the consequent capacities that are produced in assembled relations, including human bodies and subjectivities’ (Alldred & Fox, 2017, p. 1171). Calling upon theoretical insights in critical pedagogy that recognize and examine the affective dimension of everyday resistance is likely to challenge the ‘invisible’ infrastructures of neoliberal education in schools and universities. All in all, the call for a critical pedagogy to acknowledge the affective dimension of resistance marks an important and necessary moment that allows critical pedagogy to be further enriched in attempts to address the challenges faced by teachers and students in neoliberal education. Schools and universities are at a critical juncture whether and how they will be able to develop pedagogies and ideas that neither return to an idealized, pre-neoliberal past, nor expect a sudden revolution but instead resist against the self-formations involved by neoliberalism (Odysseos & Pal, 2018). What I have offered here is an attempt to illuminate the affective dimension of resistance and its implications for critical pedagogy through theoretical insights that enhance individual and collective capacity for counter-conduct in neoliberal contexts. Being attentive to the complexities and potential ambivalences in teachers’ and students’ forms of resistance enhances our analysis of how critical pedagogy more broadly, and schools and universities more specifically, are themselves implicated in transformations of neoliberal education (Odysseos & Pal, 2018).

#### Thus, we affirm a pessimistic reading of the empire, the night side of IR theory – an optimistic analysis of worlds-to-be that views modern IR as a failed practice that refuses the violence of the pure dark war

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Why would I bother with the “night side” of ir theory?47 In part, I wish to move away from the rationalist fallacy among both defenders and critics of empire. There is a shared belief in the strategic competence of nations like the United States. Even those most vocally critical often see in the covert operations and vast military occupations a kind of purpose or conspiracy. The debate about empire then becomes about its moral virtue rather than the factual question of the strategic competence of imperial states. However, the lives of millions annihilated in Iraq, Yemen, Afghanistan, and now increasingly throughout the continent of Africa do not reflect an amoral strategic competence. The mass murder in pursuit of the war on terrorism and its vision of nation-building is the result of lethal [ignorance] ~~stupidity~~.48 In some sense, the investigative journalism of Jeremy Scahill and Glen Greenwald attributes too much reason and order to the catastrophic floundering of the American empire.49 To see even a dark vision of order in the last thirty years of U.S. policy is itself a form of optimism. No one is in control, there is no conspiracy, and yet the killing continues. A pessimistic reading of U.S. empire and the geopolitical history that precedes it is neither tragedy nor farce. It is a catastrophic banality lacking in any and all history, a pile of nonevents so suffocating that we often hope for a conspiracy, punctuating event, or villain worthy of the scale of violence.50 For those of us who continually rewatch the reruns of The Walking Dead and Jericho on our laptops in bed, we are waiting for relief in our privileged but increasingly fragile bubble. I know I am not the only one who finds respite from the weight of politics’ “cruel optimism” by watching fantasies of cruel pessimism. A pessimistic understanding of global politics helps explain how we could come to a place where there is a sense of relief in watching everything come to an end.51 Failed ir affirms the power of this kind of negative thinking as an alternative to the endless rehearsing of moralizing insights and strategic foresight. The negative is not “against” or reacting to something. Rather, it is the affirmation of a freedom beyond the limits of life and death. That is, it is making a life by continuing to think about the world, even if that thinking is not recuperative, and even if nothing we think can save us. In the face of it all, one celebrates useless thinking, useless scholarship, and useless forms of life at the very moment we are told to throw them all under the bus in the name of survival at all costs. This is a logic referred to lately as hope and it is as cruel as it is anxiety inducing. Hope is a form of extortion. We are told that it is our obligation to bear the weight of making things better while being chided that the failure of our efforts is the result of not believing in the possibility of real change. In such an environment, pessimism is often treated as a form of treason, as if only neoliberals and moral degenerates give up—or so goes the op-ed’s insisting upon the renewed possibility of redemption. In response to these exhortations, pessimism offers a historical atheism, both methodologically and morally. The universe does not bend toward justice. Sometimes the universe bends toward the indifference of gravity wells and black holes. Affirming negativity, inspired by Achille Mbembe, is grounds for freedom, even if that freedom or relief is only fleeting and always insecure. I am not arrogant enough to think a book can attain freedom of this sort, but this book is inspired by refusals of critique as redemption in favor of useless critique and critique for its own sake. That the pursuit of knowledge without immediate application is so thoroughly useless, even profane, is a diagnosis of our current moment. The neoliberal assault on the university is evidence of this condition, as is the current pitch of American politics. Our indifference as intellectuals to maximizing value has not gone unnoticed. We are still dangerous, worthy of vilification, of attack, sabotage, and derision because we fail so decadently. We are parasites according to Scott Walker, Donald Trump, and the rest. So be it. We are and shall remain irascible irritants to a worldwide assault on thinking that is well underway and facing few obstacles in other jurisdictions. What would failed scholarship do? Learn to die, learn to live, learn to listen, learn to be together, and learn to be generous. These virtues are useless in that they do not prevent or manage things. They do not translate into learning objectives or metrics. Virtues of this order are selfsame, nontransferable experiences. They are meaningful but not useful. These are luxurious virtues. Like grieving or joy, they are ends unto themselves. But how will these ideas seek extramural grants, contribute to an outcomes-based education system, or become a policy recommendation? They will not, and that is part of their virtue. Even if there is no straight line to where we are and where we ought to be, I think we should get over the idea that somehow the U.S. project of liberal empire is conflicted, or “more right than it is wrong,” or pragmatically preferable to the alternatives. I hope this book can contribute to the urgent necessity to get out of the way by reveling in the catastrophic failure that should inspire humility but instead seems to embolden too many to seek global control yet again. Demolition may be an affirmative act if it means insurgents and others can be better heard. And yet this may fail too. If we can accomplish nothing at all, we can at least, as Ta-Nehisi Coates and other pessimists have said, refuse to suborn the lie of America any longer. Telling the truth, even if it cannot change the outcome of history, is a certain kind of solace. In Coates’s words, there is a kind of rapture “when you can no longer be lied to, when you have rejected the dream.”52 Saying the truth out loud brings with it the relief that we are not ~~crazy~~. Things really are as bad as we think. If there are those of us who want to break from this one-hundred-year-old race to be the next Henry Kissinger, then why do we continue to seek respect in the form of recognizable standards of excellence? I am not sure where the answer finally lies, but I do know that professionalization will not save us. To appear as normal and recognizably rigorous will not be enough to stave off the neoliberal drive to monetize scholarship, or to demand of us strategically useful insights. The least we can do in the face of such a battle is to find comfort in meaningful ideas and the friendships they build rather than try to perform for those we know are the problem. Some will ask, who is this “we” or is that “they”—where is your evidence? More will know exactly what I am talking about. The virtues I seek are oriented toward an academy of refuge, a place we can still live, no matter how dire the conditions of the university and the classroom. It is not the think tank, boardroom, or command center. We are, those of us who wish to be included, the last of the philosophers, the last of the lovers of knowledge, the deviants who should revel in what Harney and Moten have called the undercommons. 53 In one of his final lectures, Bataille speaks of the remnants of a dif­ferent human species, something not quite so doomed, something that wasted its newly discovered consciousness and tool-being on the art that still marks the walls of prehistoric caves.54 This lingering minor or vestigial heritage is philosophy’s beginning. Philosophy survives war, atrocity, famine, and crusades. Thinking matters in a very unusual way. Thinking is not power or emancipation. Thinking matters for a sense of belonging to the world, and for believing in the fecundity of the world despite evidence to the contrary. How do you get all this from pessimism, from failure? Because willing failure is a temptation, a lure to think otherwise, to think dangerous thoughts. Pessimism is a threat to indifferentism and nihilism in the sense of the phenomenon of Donald Trump. Pessimism is a provocation and an enemy of skepticism, particularly of the metaphysical variety. It is not redemption from these afflictions, but in pessimism there is solace in the real. To put it another way, to study the world as it is means to care for it. The exhortation that our care or interest should be contingent on how useful the world is and how much of it conforms to our designs is as much opposed to care as it is to empiricism. We can study airports, poetry, endurance races, borders, bombs, plastic, and warfare, and find them all in the world. To consider the depth of their existence can be an invitation to the world rather than a prelude to another policy report. One cannot make a successful political career out of such pursuits, but you might be able to make a life out of it, a life worth repeating even if nothing else happens. At the end of Jack Halberstam’s The Queer Art of Failure, we are presented with the Fantastic Mr. Fox’s toast as an exemple of something meaningful in these dark times of ours. They say all foxes are slightly allergic to linoleum, but it’s cool to the paw—try it. They say my tail needs to be dry cleaned twice a month, but now it’s fully detachable—see? They say our tree may never grow back, but one day, something will. Yes, these crackles are made of synthetic goose and these giblets come from artificial squab and even these apples look fake—but at least they’ve got stars on them. I guess my point is, we’ll eat tonight, and we’ll eat together. And even in this not particularly flattering light, you are without a doubt the five and a half most wonderful wild animals I’ve ever met in my life. So let’s raise our boxes—to our survival. Halberstam says of this queer moment: Not quite a credo, something short of a toast, a little less than a speech, but Mr. Fox gives here one of the best and most moving—both emotionally and in stop-motion terms—addresses in the history of cinema. Unlike Coraline, where survival is predicated upon a rejection of the theatrical, the queer, and the improvised, and like Where the Wild Things Are, where the disappointment of deliverance must be leavened with the pragmatism of possibility, Fantastic Mr. Fox is a queerly animated classic in that it teaches us, as Finding Nemo, Chicken Run, and so many other revolting animations before it, to believe in detachable tails, fake apples, eating together, adapting to the lighting, risk, sissy sons, and the sheer importance of survival for all those wild souls that the farmers, the teachers, the preachers, and the politicians would like to bury alive.55 Although not as much fun as Halberstam’s monument to low theory, Savage Ecology is for all the other wild animals out there studying global politics. May we be buried alive together