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THE POLITICS OF EXPOSURE: TRUTH AFTER POST-FACTS

BY ZAHID R. CHAUDHARY

IN PLAIN SIGHT

In 2017 Donald Trump held a press conference with his lawyer, Sheri Dillon. Basking in the glare of media lights, they presided over a long table stacked with reams of documents in folders, across the entire table. These documents, Trump and Dillon attested, were just a small selection of the legal papers required to separate Trump from his businesses. But the close-ups of the documents fueled speculation on social media that they were blank, and Trump's own account of the ownership of his businesses being passed to his family fueled the discourse around conflict of interest. Some viewers might well have deemed this media spectacle to be evidence of Trump's truth-telling. The news conference would have its audience believe that there are no secrets, that all is visible, in plain sight. Yet the whole scene is pervaded with an uncannily stark demonstration of concealment—this, in the “plain sight” of a scene staged to allay concerns about corruption, while being an obvious instance of it. Trump's news conference exemplifies the field of truth's newfound games, in which the truth is out in the open—as the theatrics of the press conference suggest—but also precisely the opposite of what is being stated. This is a different problem from “disinformation” or “misinformation,” checkered terms that recuperate Cold War paranoia about Russia or refer to the proliferation of targeted ads—sometimes posing as news—spreading non-truths to susceptible voters. In Trump's news conference the secret of corruption is transparent yet its identification and recognition within the terms of the spectacle's own logic remains illegitimate. The cryptography of the social world is such that the secret is plain to see, and yet somehow not grasped, its truth not effectuated. Or perhaps more accurately, the open, ineffectual secret is of a piece with a social world whose expiring normative force it seeks to redirect.¹

The relationship between truth and power is historically contingent, as Michel Foucault argued long ago, and one cannot help but sense the current upheavals tearing across a range of political, economic,

and epistemological fault lines: the rise of ethno-nationalisms and populism attended by a continued globalization of the circuits of capital; scientific consensus on climate change in the face of political dissensus and inaction; the supposedly consensual participation of technology users in giving up their privacy when the nature of what they are handing over is itself opaque to these very users. Cognitive mapping, which Frederic Jameson had once held out as an aesthetic task critical for political action—because it would delineate the social field in which that action could be effectuated—has been subverted by companies like Palantir and Facebook for decisively instrumental and unaesthetic purposes. The former provides detailed mappings of the social world for both governmental repression and corporate coercion; the latter deploys its dominance in the data economy for ceaseless self-expansion in spite of the social costs of its motto to “move fast and break things,” a *modus operandi* that has entailed facilitating ethnic cleansing in Myanmar and electoral subversion in the United Kingdom and United States.²

Truth and power are indelibly imprinted on each other, yet power now appears preternaturally inured to an exposure of its excesses or violations. “The system is rigged” has become a truism for all kinds of political positions—at least within the United States—such that this *cri de coeur* declaiming the corruption of power is as likely to conceal that corruption as it is to expose it. Following Foucault I use the word “power” to refer to a dispersed net of institutions and discourses in which the presence of state power is simply one element. Foucault spoke of historical “regimes of truth” to refer to the set of constraints and possibilities that produce the procedures and practices of truth acts as well as the conditions of their effects.³ The word “regime” not only keeps in view the political and juridical connotations of the mechanism by which truth is adduced, but it also links up Foucault’s later discussion of truth to his earlier lectures on state rationalities like liberalism and neoliberalism, and the differing relationship of each to biopolitical regulation. In the forty years since Foucault delivered his Collège de France lectures, neoliberalism has remade the world such that modes of detection, knowledge-production, and evidence-gathering stabilized in the nineteenth century and reinvented in the twentieth century have now been thrown into crisis.

Given contemporary politics of veridiction, I would emphasize Foucault’s phrase “game of truth” rather than the phrase he uses more often, “regime of truth.”⁴ This is not intended to reduce the governing capacities of political and juridical forms of truth acts but to

emphasize the arena or the playing field, if you will, in which certain facts can be pressed as being effectual or find themselves effectuated while other truth-acts come to naught. The language of games also keeps in view the psychoanalytic insight that it is by means of play, through investing meaning into objects and people, that we form and transform our notions of the world, ourselves, and others. Such a process is value-neutral in psychoanalysis, and may lead to benign or malevolent ends. Games and gamification—the activation of ludic loops—have become a conscious strategy for digital platforms seeking to hold user attention captive (“user engagement”) and extract user data. As in the designs of slot machines and casinos, ludic loops are exploitable precisely because play constitutes an important form of opening oneself to one’s environment, a primal form of integrating the world and oneself. Whether through play or through some other form of self-extension or investment of meaning into people, objects, and environments, the subject moves in the orbit of truth.

Paradoxically, therefore, truth in psychoanalysis has the structure of a fiction, whether it refers to the generative misrecognition of the Lacanian school, or the freedom to misperceive and reinvent one another as a condition for relating to one another according to object relations theory (Christopher Bollas, Winnicott, Melanie Klein). These psychoanalytic stances are reminders that the truth will not run away from us because our current notions of what counts as the truth or post-truth might itself be a misperception that aids our habitation in the world. Perhaps the ominous pronouncements that truth is dead, echoing Francisco Goya’s cautionary work, *Disasters of War*, are misguided, as they cannot account for the ways that a transformation in the institutions that stabilized truth has made it seem out of joint.⁵ When Rudy Giuliani—not exactly known for veracity—tells us that “truth isn’t truth” is he speaking as a diagnostician or as a symptom?⁶ Can we tell the difference? We seem caught in a game rather than managed by a regime. If Foucault was correct that the exercise of power entails a game of truth—that is, that the exercise of power necessarily involves truth claims—then the radical mutations in the nature of authority (as an assemblage of juridical, corporate, and state power) have transformed the game of truth.

II. EXPOSURE AS REVELATION

In his Collège de France lectures from the late 1970s, collected as *On the Government of the Living*, Foucault discusses the Roman

emperor Septimus Severus and how a key secret was encoded in the very architecture of his magnificent palace. The public ceremonial hall, where the emperor “granted audience, delivered his judgments, and dispensed justice” had an ornate painted ceiling of a star-studded sky representing the position of the heavens at the exact moment of the emperor’s birth, lending his judgments and decisions a sense of a foretold and objective necessity: the earthly power exercised by the sovereign was destined by the stars above, and the exercise of that power partakes of the same *logos* that rules over the world.⁷ Foucault explains that “what manifested itself as power here, down below, I was going to say at ground level, could and had to be deciphered in truth in the night sky.”⁸ The Gods know the truth, and the painted sky in the ceremonial hall discloses the operations of power as an emanation of truth.

The corollary to this public display of truth and power’s entwinement is the night sky painted on the ceiling of Septimus Severus’s own room, which, like a horoscope, foretold the position of the stars at the hour of the emperor’s death. The truth of this destiny is shielded from public view. It, too, represents the entwinement of truth and power (divine power in this case), but this secret truth about the end of the Severus’s life has to be left out of the public display of truth/power in order for the emperor’s judgements to be efficacious and grounded. Foucault’s architectural mapping suggests that this setup is vulnerable to a possible exposure, since the hour of death is only visible to the emperor’s intimates. Placing Foucault’s reflections in *The Government of the Living* in the context of his earlier work, one can see an intellectual trajectory that moves from a consideration of power-knowledge to biopolitics and governmental rationality to the problem of truth and techniques of subjectivation.

I would argue that *exposure* as problematic might help us to see some of the sightlines Foucault sketches out across *episteme* and *bios*, truth and life, and reaching farther back to Foucault’s earlier discussions, knowledge and power. Or putting it another way, exposure can help us grasp not only the place of the secret (its valuation, necessity, and the kind of veridiction required to access it), but also another valence of exposure, what Foucault analyzed as modernity’s commitment to fostering life by exposing some forms of life to death. There is no better figure for the deep intimacy between truth, exposure, and mortal vulnerability than the image of Oedipus, who takes two pins from Jocasta’s dress and blinds himself as prophetic truth catastrophically discloses itself to him and to the community. Divine

and earthly justice finally converge, and Oedipus must cast himself away from the very community he had once saved. Such is, perhaps, the ur-image of authority brought under the yoke of accountability and justice, an image that serves well today as the ethical horizon for those who aspire to check tyrannical power—from whistleblowers to social justice activists. It is also a tragic image, one that combines grave harm to life itself as an instance of an inexorable and just fate. Truth still retains something of its piercing sting in our contemporary moment, as we will see, but the injury it deals is circumscribed by power's newfound games of truth, games that distribute the force of truth—without much concern, incidentally, for justice.

Psychoanalysis teaches us that one's relationship to truth has never been straightforward because one's relationship to what one knows is always fraught. In Lacanian psychoanalysis the subject who is *supposed* to know (the truth) is a fantasized authority, Lacan's primary emphasis being on the supposition of such a subject, and secondarily on the knowledge imputed to this subject. Lacan, too, assumes a fundamental connection between authority and the possession of the truth.⁹ This supposed subject of knowledge is a fantasy projected onto to the analyst by the analysand, for whom this fantasy serves as a critical point of transference—the point at which all of the self's incoherence is imagined by the analysand to resolve in a flash of insight. Crucially, this flash is withheld from the analysand (or so they imagine) and exists for the subject supposed to know.¹⁰ For the analysand, this relationship underscores their own radical ignorance even as it consoles them that there is in fact a subject in this world who knows what is withheld from them. In other words, the subject supposed to know is the holder of a secret imagined by the analysand, a secret so critical, so radically unavailable yet all the more effective for its unavailability, that it is no ordinary secret but The Secret itself—a secret that explains one's own truth. Hence the consolations of God's infinite knowledge but also the appeal of conspiracy theories, a conspiracy being a fantasy that someone is in charge and that this entity in charge can see how the disconnected signs that one experiences cohere. Conspiracy narratives would lose their thrill without the persistence of the secret that is written into their promised exposure; at stake in conspiracies is both a master explanation and the status of this explanation as a secret, revealed in the telling but also preserved as the condition for the disclosure. As fantasy, the subject supposed to know operates by means of such epistemological and affective magnetism. The promise of a revelation, one that reveals all, underwrites this fantasy. In this fantasy, truth can

stabilize the psyche, seeing as it is tucked away securely and might one day be vouchsafed.

Such a relationship to an imagined authority is all the more effective for being fundamentally infantile in nature. Yet the consolations of this fantasy are risky, since the supposition of a subject supposed to know can also generate its own affective turmoil. Conspiracies, for instance, return us to the scene of user-generated content, troll bots, and monetized fake news, which have saturated the public sphere. Because digitally circulated narratives routinely compete with each other, they have given rise to multiple fantasies of a subject supposed to know: from a wholesale rejection of mainstream corporate media to nostalgic longing for a media landscape in which major news sources could once be trusted (British Broadcasting Corporation, *New York Times*, etcetera) to the insistence that only these corporate news sources, however frayed with the depredations of neoliberal governance and old fashioned nationalist allegiance that had always aimed to manufacture consent, are the ones to trust.¹¹ We can say we are experiencing something like an epistemological sublime—which, when not terrifying, results in general befuddlement, despair, or a desire to turn one's back on the noise altogether—ceding participation as well as knowledge about the collective world. In this context the truth-teller emerges as a critical figure, and increasingly for liberal democracies, it is the whistleblower who occupies the place of the truth teller. Whether it is Christopher Wylie, Chelsea Manning, Edward Snowden, or an Anonymous whistleblower, it is the unruly voice from within the inner sanctums of state, corporate, or religious power that has accrued to itself the cultural and political authority of veridiction. This parrhesiastic voice—when it is not anonymous—is individual, authoritative, principled, and willing to risk its own security for the sake of the truth being out. Given the befuddled sublimity of increasingly atomized and proliferating media on the one hand, and the “plain sight” signs of scandal becoming the norm on the other, the whistleblower promises the libidinal pleasures of a previous game of truth, in which the secret could be wrested from its sanctum and communicated in the forum.

Yet often whistleblowers confirm what has been known all along: that governments lie, torture, and engage in all kinds of illegal activity. What might an exposé mean when it reveals things that one has known all along? How does one understand veridiction in a context in which the truth is already familiar and to some extent already known? Slavoj Žižek argues that in the case of Wikileaks, the true reveal is the shamelessness with which we have gotten on with our days in spite of having

known the scandalous truth in the first place.¹² A similar argument could be made about some of the best-known whistle-blowing incidents: Chelsea Manning, Edward Snowden, Panama Papers. Respectively, the exposés at issue here are the ruthlessness of American war machines (Manning); the surveillance state and its partnership with internet giants (Snowden); the legal as well as illegal management of wealth by the global one percent (Panama Papers). Individual whistleblowers expose themselves in the same action that seeks to expose their targets, whether these targets are the surveillance state, military-industrial complex, or a corrupt global oligarchy, each a form of sovereign or sovereign-adjacent power. When the whistleblower is not anonymous then whistleblowing is a clear example of *parrhesia*, a truth-act that Michel Foucault associates with the courting of a certain personal danger. Parrhesiatic speech acts oppose themselves to power and the parrhesiast risks being at the receiving end of sovereign violence. The identification of the truth being spoken with the subject who exposes the truth is a critical feature of parrhesia, and this identification subjects the parrhesiast to a dangerous exposure.

I take the contemporary phenomenon of whistleblowing as an entry point for analyzing changing rationalities and cultural priorities concerning the manifestation of truth. The veridical procedures of whistleblowing have to do with the subversion of power, of rendering it vulnerable. Yet whistleblowers tend to be isolated; they tend to act individually. Their acts of civil disobedience, being highly individuated, are for that very reason limited. This is unlike, for example, the history of civil disobedience, in which the most effectual political struggles have involved the participation of whole populations or classes of people. But whistleblowing actions are a part of a reordering of cultural and political landscapes. Their subversion of power partakes of a political impulse that is larger than the phenomenon of whistleblowing—namely exposure, which has become the currency of political praxis, and operates along the circuits and by-lanes of knowledge itself. My argument is that a logic of exposure subtends contemporary cultural politics and emerging forms of economic extraction. The politics of exposure are linked to forms of political power, of which state power is merely one (and increasingly subordinated) form.

Some distinctions about the varieties of truth told by whistleblowers are worth parsing; most whistleblowers express a moral commitment to informing the public, and seek to make available information that they feel ought to be public knowledge. This is a different register of veridiction than, for example, forms of evidence that might be viable

in a court of law, something else that is also a priority for the whistleblower's moral charge. The documents leaked by whistleblowers might indeed become critical for a future juridical process. Such procedures of veridiction could not proceed without hard evidence. In 2018 the European Court of Human Rights ruled that the British intelligence and security organization, GCHQ (Government Communications Headquarters), violated article 8 of the European convention on human rights; article 8 concerns privacy as human right. This ruling would not have been possible without the documents Edward Snowden had made available to Wikileaks and to news organizations. While it is not yet clear what effects this ruling will have within the UK, it creates a legal basis for curtailing the government's scrutiny of its own citizens. So while we might say, with Žižek, that whistleblowing is surprising for how little it reveals (because we have known all along), one must not underestimate the importance of juridical truth—a formal truth, if you will, but no less important for that. Juridical procedures can sometimes yield results that work against the management of state and corporate powers, and one does not necessarily have to read all juridical processes by means of a monolithic paranoid reading.

On the other hand, the court that concerned itself with Chelsea Manning could only consider the crime that Manning committed, not the crimes of the state that her breach revealed. The courts in which leaked documents circulate most widely is the media-theatre of news reportage and online social platforms, the very echo chambers that have blurred the lines between accusation and evidence, reportage and conspiracy, and as observed so frequently now, truth and falsehood. Evidence of US military brutality, including the video Chelsea Manning leaked (entitled "Collateral Murder" by WikiLeaks) has largely circulated as another unit in the increasingly derealized public sphere, with its "Siloes," "Echo Chambers," and "Halls of Mirrors," phrases that turn up regularly when people discuss the public sphere now.¹³ What do we make of the epistemological gap between the tedious leaked evidence—memos, bank records, emails, military video recordings—and the general conclusion that we might marshal that evidence toward; in other words, the disjuncture between information and truth? Evidence is not the same as proof, and it is in the gap between the two that the most salient political and epistemic battles of our day are being fought, from climate change to a global reckoning with sexual assault. At stake in these battles is not a mere difference of interpretation of the same basic phenomena, but the weakening of collectively agreed-upon mechanisms for producing truth. Evidence

is never merely given or stable, and proof stabilizes evidence as the manifestation of truth.

The alleged de-prioritizing of truth is not news (fake or otherwise), so I will not spend time bemoaning that truth seems no longer to matter, but I register this lament itself as a symptom of our malaise. After all, there are enough truths that are plainly in sight, such as Donald Trump's history of sexual assault and his unmitigated racism. If his openly espoused racism and history of sexual assault were not quite assets in his campaign, then it seems that quite a few people were willing to turn a blind eye to both in order to support him. Peter Sloterdijk, in his 1983 book, *Critique of Cynical Reason*, discusses in depth how the rise of Nazism was made possible through practices of turning a blind eye, a practice of fetishistic disavowal: "I see that this is so, but nevertheless I will not-see it if necessary," or put another way, "I know X is false but I believe X and will act on it nevertheless." Hal Foster has suggested that one way to understand the place of truth in contemporary politics is to raise the notion of cynical reasoning "to a higher power . . . for cynical reason today doesn't care to know, or if it knows, it doesn't care."¹⁴

So perhaps it is not simply that truth acts (such as whistleblowing) expose what we already know, but that the place of knowledge in an atmosphere of fetishistic disavowal lends such disavowal a libidinal frisson. In cynical reasoning, truth actually *matters* a great deal because acting *in spite of it* is what endows the action with its distinctive fetishistic pleasure. This is a different order of pleasure from what Wendy Brown describes as "disinhibition" of (Trumpian) libidinal politics.¹⁵ While fetishistic disavowal requires truth for its libidinal satisfaction, it is not necessarily governed by a politics of resentment. For her part, Brown returns to Herbert Marcuse's notion of "repressive desublimation," a collective social atmosphere created under capitalism when pleasure is itself integrated into the operations of capital, such that the age-old opposition between conscience, or super-egoic prohibitions, and the pleasure principle is weakened. Words and acts that seem to be in tension with existing norms are freely indulged in the thrilling experience of a freedom that reactively shores up existing forms of repression:

Free, stupid, manipulable, absorbed by if not addicted to trivial stimuli and gratifications, the subject of repressive desublimation in advanced capitalist society is not just libidinally unbound, released to enjoy more pleasure, but released from more general expectations of social conscience and social comprehension.¹⁶

From online trolling to Fox News to populist political rallies, repressive desublimation as a form of disinhibited freedom is a *carte blanche* for the expression of aggression—in Brown’s words, “this is humanity without a project other than revenge.”¹⁷ In the face of such a widespread and collective phenomenon, the truth that whistleblowers might reveal risks becoming mere fodder for the libidinal pleasure taken in acting in spite of such comprehension, since repressive desublimation is in fact a variant of fetishistic disavowal. For populations that find their autonomy and their voice through repressive desublimation, political and cultural hopes are underwritten by a politics of exposure: the fantasy that one can buck cultural and political norms and expose them as made-up, as vulnerable, and as unnecessary, all the while insisting on the most repressive forms of traditional values.

Disavowal, in the sense of turning a blind eye, moreover, is operative more generally across an array of violences, from sexual abuse and assault to pogroms against racial and religious minorities. From this perspective, whistleblowing appears quaintly attached to an order of veridiction that assumes truth sets people free, that transparency is always a collective good, and that information (“informing the public”) and knowledge are coterminous. In fetishistic disavowal, however, knowledge is overwritten by a libidinal pulsion; repressive desublimation gives free rein to the desire to tear things down as a way to arrive at age-old truths that hold things up; in the supposition of a subject of knowledge, truth is imagined to be out of reach and this supposition creates the conditions for dependency on the subject supposed to know. The logic of exposure is central to each of these phenomena, but whistleblowing differs from these entanglements of truth and power in one critical way: whistleblowers wind up communicating something in excess of their stated aims. Earlier I mentioned that whistleblowers make themselves vulnerable in the same gesture that exposes their targets. This double exposure is part and parcel of the ethics of whistleblowing: stating the truth in one’s own name, or exposing one’s own self, is also an attempt to demonstrate public accountability for oneself in the same action that demands accountability from the institution or agency that is exposed. Foucault suggests that where sovereign power is concerned, operations in the domain of truth “are always in excess of what is useful and necessary to govern in an effective way,” and that “the manifestation of truth is required by, entailed by, or linked to the exercise of government and the exercise of power in a way that always goes beyond the aim of government and the effective means for achieving it.”¹⁸ The truth escapes the control

of the authority that would wield it, and it also escapes the control of the subject who speaks of power's secret truths to power itself.

III. EXPOSURE AS EXTRACTION

Whistleblowing is an obvious act of exposure. Less obviously, the logic of exposure can limn the political mood concerning the place of truth in contexts far afield from whistleblowing itself. Let's take for a moment the phenomenon of leaks and leaking, which is often discursively framed as a crisis. We associate the terms *leaks* and *leaking* increasingly with digital circulation, and new media has made possible whole new forms of exposure. Wendy Chun and Sarah Friedland put it thus:

From Wikileaks to Facebook disasters, we are confronted everywhere with leaks. This leaking information is framed paradoxically as both securing and compromising our privacy, personal and national. Thanks to these leaks, we now understand the extent to which we are under surveillance; because of these leaks, we are exposed. This leaking information and the problems/solutions it exposes/provides are often presented as oddly personalized and humanized. Snowden is a hero or a rogue agent; Anonymous are advocates or vigilantes; slane girl is a victim or a slut. But to what extent is leaking information an issue of personal human agency? . . . *New media are not simply about leaks: they are leak.*¹⁹

Chun and Friedland note that, for example, social media users often “leak,” or expose, more than they realize to the tech companies who can monetize their preferences. Internet security purports to protect the end-user but its aim is to protect the tech company from data breaches because, after all, the end user is increasingly solicited to expose more and more of their habits, preferences, lifestyle choices and the like to the tech giant.²⁰ Based on Chun and Friedland's analysis, one might say that exposure is both a breach and *also* the very quotidian mechanism that motors online life. Shoshanna Zuboff, in *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism*, makes a convincing case that the newest form of economic extraction, the scene of primitive accumulation in the heart of the most developed and capitalist countries, is the new frontier of metadata concerning one's personal preferences, habits, moods, interests, and browsing histories. Products as wide-ranging as fridges connected to the internet, Google's search engine, Amazon's Alexa, or a Facebook profile are all channels for the extraction of personal data that can be

monetized in a thousand different ways.²¹ Such exposure of users to data collection has become, from the point of view of tech companies, an objective economic necessity.

However, users are radically unaware of the uses to which such data might be put and the other entities who may be granted access to it.²² Facebook allows users to download all of the information related to their Facebook profile, but one cannot download the results of that information as it was processed by Facebook's various algorithms, not to mention the processing by third-party trackers. Various corporate entities monetize user data via proprietary algorithms, and various algorithms are used in conjunction with internet tracking technologies whose data about the users is not available to these very users. In fact, unless one has some technical know-how, it is becoming increasingly impossible to avoid trackers collecting granular levels of data about oneself, data that is then sold like any other commodity. This data is far greater than the sum of its parts, and not reducible to the sheer facticity of the profile information one *can* download and access. The rapt users of digital products and services become more and more opaque to themselves, detached as they are from their existence as data, a digital index that paradoxically makes them increasingly usable to the powers that would monetize it.²³

Walter Benjamin had spoken of the optical unconscious underwriting the manifest phenomenon of new visual technologies. The data barons of today have made possible a cyber unconscious which, like the optical unconscious, is an effect of capital and no less real for being so. Users might know their data is being collected, but the circuits and processes in which that data morphs, or how it gets deployed, is as radically other to internet users as the processes of their own unconscious. Data becomes truth through algorithmic processing, and the multiplication of algorithms means that the same data set can be mobilized in an infinite number of ways. The users of unregulated online platforms do not have many rights over their data, which enters into cyberspace and becomes enmeshed in strange alchemies: a reserve of precious resource (data) that is simultaneously the consumption and production of that resource. The resource is itself produced from the consumption/production of online users, and only becomes legible as resource in its consumption by ad-networks, spy agencies, and online trackers. Digital extraction synchronizes the ancient processes of production, consumption, and circulation into a single temporal instant that knows no negation, and in which the past, the present, and the future are all subject to sudden valuation because nothing can be completely deleted.

Like the unconscious itself, creaturely life is the ontological condition for the cyber unconscious, yet it remains detached from it in a crucial way: the cyber unconscious contains the data indices of life extracted through mechanisms of increased engagement (gathering clicks, focalizing attention, activating ludic loops) and transformed into a pure value-form. So-called engagement, or the point of extraction, can be leveraged via any physical or social need, from the alteration of the room's temperature in a networked home to the online purchase of a gift for a loved one. In this economy, the repressed returns as an ad for the perfectly stitched commodity, following the user across multiple websites, platforms, or devices. Or it can take the form of YouTube's perverse recommendations, powered by an algorithm attuned to showing what mass numbers of users cannot look away from, so that any of its near-infinite number of videos are linked to some of the most sexual or violent content on the platform through a set of algorithmic correspondences that unfailingly land in the same libidinally charged zone. A thread laid by a perverse Ariadne, this algorithm delivers the users deeper into the labyrinth, to the place where it assumes the users secretly wanted to go, and which, in turn, it trains them to want more. Such logics, which are not specific to YouTube, are self-perpetuating, creating new data sets based on their own nudging of the users (which prove the truth of their original assumptions) and in turn training new users to focalize their attention similarly. Such an aspiration of power is reminiscent of ancient gods for whom performative speech was indissociable from mere description. In the brave new world of digital economies, extraction and exposure are the one and same. Since data is the new oil driving digital economies, the prized form of extraction—one that yields sustained streams of user data—is enhanced engagement, procured through a battery of techniques: ludic loops, algorithmic personalization, dark patterns, and persuasion; integration of trackers across devices, household objects, and public spaces; click-bait and recommendations algorithms. Most techniques for enhancing engagement depend on the power of fundamental subjective experiences, the bread and butter of Freud's theory of the unconscious: desire and fear.

As the recent scandal surrounding Cambridge Analytica demonstrated, such base impulses can be exploited to manipulate the beliefs and behaviors of populations significant enough in number to swing elections.²⁴ Facebook itself has conducted mass social experiments on its platforms.²⁵ These targeting practices aside, *all* users of networked technology are exposed—and this by means of a set of channels both

sophisticated and opaque, such that the information one knowingly offers up morphs into a wholly different data set that seeks to anticipate one's desires, purchases, political persuasions, religious views, sexual orientation, the list could go on. Moreover, government spy agencies are often permitted back-channel access to troves of user data, and there is no possibility of opting out of surveillance capitalism altogether.

The defiant retort from otherwise thoughtful users, "I have nothing to hide," displays their own commitment to fetishistic disavowal. For their part, technology companies are highly skilled at psychological and behavioral modification, relying on libidinal pleasures to feed their algorithms while publicly assuming that the end-user is a rational consumer who can choose not to consent to the fine print of the service's user agreement. The same platforms that keep working to perfect the addictiveness of their services insist that their users are rational agents whose desires and interests coincide—though such people (if they existed) would, of course, be deleterious to the extractive processes of big technology companies. In short, exposure is an economic, cultural, and political rationality unto itself; new media, insofar as they "*are leak*," crystallize one face of the politics of exposure, a politics based fundamentally on truth-producing mechanisms that are as important to the extraction of surplus value as they are to the strategies of governmental surveillance, political campaigns, and social agitation.

IV. EXPOSURE AS BIOPOLITICS

Surveillance capitalism is aided by the neoliberal reordering of the world, a reordering that is also a moment of racial capitalist restructuring.²⁶ The reason why surveillance capitalism is so difficult to counter is because the state authorities that might curtail their excesses have themselves become the organs for spreading such forms of capitalist extraction. Even as the digital revolution has reshaped media by atomizing both its content and its delivery to increasingly isolated users, the camouflaging of truth that has attended this change is accompanied both by a diminishment of any sense of a shared social world²⁷ and a dramatic increase in the scope of both state and other kinds of authority. The gig economy, powered by digital platforms, extends the employer's authority by concealing it: the Uber drivers or Deliveroo agents are not juridically designated as employees but as self-employed entrepreneurs—independent contractors whose health benefits, safety, or work environment are not the responsibility of

the employer even if gig workers expose themselves to greater risk than traditional employees.²⁸ The employer is not responsible for the workers' welfare, but his or her authority and discipline nevertheless regulates the workers' daily life. The fact that the gig workers' designation as non-employee is starting to be challenged represents another turning in the ongoing conflict between capital and labor, but this time the conflict touches on a secular theological doxa dear to neoliberal thinking: the market as the site of veridiction. With respect to the gig worker, market oracles would insist that the significantly lowered price of the gig worker's labor represents a natural price. The depredations of labor under recent neoliberal governance abound: zero-hour contracts (in which employers need not even guarantee minimal hours of work) in the UK, marginal jobs (in which contracts expire before the worker is eligible for benefits), minijobs or midijobs in Germany (a job with insufficient hours to qualify for unemployment claims once the job is terminated).²⁹ Foucault explains that under neoliberalism, "inasmuch as prices are determined in accordance with the natural mechanisms of the market they constitute a standard of truth which enables us to discern which governmental practices are correct and which are erroneous."³⁰ The market provides the truth on the basis of which governance occurs; the government does not become a market, but rather its steward, and relies on the market's forms of veridiction. The truth tellers of the market—economists—become central to the art of government, and consulting the ideally autonomous and self-regulating market that emanates truth, they offer pronouncements that determine the kind of life the polity will lead.

These techniques of governance were practiced in Africa and Latin America before they were mainstreamed in Europe and the United States. As Quinn Slobodian has argued recently, the high priests of neoliberalism—especially Friedrich Hayek, Milton Friedman, and Wilhelm Röpke—viewed decolonization as a profound threat to capitalist accumulation. Röpke was indeed an unreconstructed racist, arguing in favor of apartheid on the grounds that "the South African negro" was not only of a different race but "a completely different type and level of civilization."³¹ While Hayek and Friedman did not endorse this variant of racism, they too argued against the demands for equality between the races when such a demand required the redistribution of property in the decolonizing world. Hayek even opposed sanctions against apartheid, and would only favor black majority rule as long as postcolonial state institutions were stripped of their power to regulate the economy. Milton Friedman defended white majority

rule in Rhodesia. Neoliberalism, global in its vision at the very outset, presumed that the economy itself was not political, sought to protect it from politicization, and rendered the global and local racial inequalities that the market generates into natural laws.³²

This is why the neoliberal assumption that the economy is the site of veridiction has to be challenged on all political fronts, especially as this assumption naturalizes capitalism's race and class arrangements. I am not referring just to the fact that digital technologies misrecognize racialized subjects or that algorithmic citizenship bakes in the social divisions it had sought to overcome.³³ These are important realities, but equally important is the fact that a politics of exposure—exposure of life to risk—is now writ large, and that it affects populations *differentially*. That is to say, vulnerable populations are the most radically exposed to material danger because neoliberal policies have rolled back the protections of the mid-century liberal state, and simultaneous with this roll-back phase of neoliberal governance (exemplified by Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan) was a surge in the number of people left abandoned by the state. Attending the rise in generalized immiseration was the haunting of the middle and upper classes by the real or imagined threat of falling from their comfortable perch. In other words, alongside the material forms of exposure for poor and racially different populations emerged a *feeling* of exposure for less vulnerable populations.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* tells us that “expose” is a relatively recent entry into the English language, adapted in the 14th century from French: a combination of the Latin *exponere* (to put out) and *pausare* (to rest, lay down).³⁴ It is related to the French word, *poser*: to place or to pose. In English “to expose” means “to put out; to deprive of shelter”; “to unmask”; “to place in an unsheltered or unprotected location or to leave without shelter or defense; to lay open (to danger, ridicule, or censure); to abandon.” In religious contexts “to expose” means to exhibit—for example, the Host or relics—for adoration. Taken together, these meanings are instructive: to abandon, to unmask or disclose, to deprive of shelter, but also to display for adoration. The power to abandon, deprive something of shelter is intermixed with the capacity to disclose; this capacity remains, moreover, related to display, to putting out, to showing off—in short, to adoration. The veridical regime of exposure links together the increased financializing of life itself with the increase in risk to that life. It is not surprising that Foucault had arrived at the thorny problem of truth and its relation to power after he had elaborated forms of state rationalities and their

relationship to biopolitics, a concept that already suggests a theory of exposure. In biopolitics, the truth of a certain population is intermingled with the management of that population's life.

Foucault first establishes the notion of biopower as that regulative function by which a governing rationality seeks to encourage the flourishing of the population. It replaces the older form of sovereign power, which held sway over life and death. Biopower seeks to enrich and enable life by taking charge of the conditions that regulate it, and to do so it necessarily practices the power of normalization, producing the notion of a life that is worth living, of life that deserves to live. Biopolitics thereby regulates death by means of regulating life. How does biopower, intending to regulate and foster life, exercise the power to kill? Foucault explains that racism plays a key role in squaring this circle:

If the power of normalization wished to exercise the old sovereign right to kill, it must become racist. And if, conversely, a power of sovereignty or in other words, a power that has the right of life and death, wishes to work with the instruments, mechanisms, and technology of normalization, it too must become racist. When I say 'killing,' I obviously do not mean simply murder as such, but also every form of indirect murder: the fact of exposing someone to death, increasing the risk of death for some people, or, quite simply, political death expulsion, rejection, and so on.³⁵

Foucault refers to racism as “the precondition for exercising the right to kill”—that is, it makes killing acceptable because it situates some people or forms of life as a threat, so the elimination or exposure of these people to danger putatively encourages the flourishing of the “right” forms of life.³⁶ Hence biopower can practice the old sovereign right to kill in the name of protecting life itself. It is hard to read Foucault's words today without thinking of populations around the world who are left abandoned by the law, and exposed to all kinds of danger: the Rohingyas of Myanmar, Syrian refugees, children of Mexican immigrants in detention camps, black lives that are treated as if they do not matter, Palestinians under occupation, Yemeni lives endangered not only by bullets and bombs but by the destruction of the infrastructure that supports biological life itself, and this list could go on.

In addition to experiences of exposure for these brown, yellow, and black bodies there is a *different* order of exposure that includes almost everyone. Within western nations income inequality is at an all-time high. What good is a low unemployment rate when a single job increasingly does not provide enough to live on? These days, the metrics measuring economic health tend to index, more than anything, the economic health of the already wealthy. Recent television shows depicting the crisis of the American middle class all circle over the same ground: an upstanding non-descript white middle-class parent finds they must turn to crime in order to make ends meet (*Weeds*, *Breaking Bad*, *Ozark*). These shows depict the wounds of moral injury sustained by national subjects in order to live up to the nation's idea of the good life. They are thus evidence of the strange double fantasy generated by neoliberalism: the entrepreneurial self can overcome and can win, and at the same time that very entrepreneurship is required because survival itself is at stake.³⁷ Extreme vulnerability attends fantasies of dominating and taming one's course of life. This injured subjectivity deploys its injury as a goad toward overcoming adversity, compromising morality, and surviving at great cost. The feeling of economic exposure that leads the protagonists of these shows to make ends meet by means of criminal activity takes on the form of another kind of exposure: the danger that one might be found out as a criminal, and threat of *this* kind of exposure comes to lend the narrative its distinctive thrill. The narrative shuttles from threats to life (*bios*) to the threat of being found out (*episteme*): exposure as a biopolitical threat and exposure as a disclosive truth are intermixed. This is the case in fiction and in reality, in the United States and elsewhere. For Syrian refugees, for example, exposure to the threats to life becomes, when they cross borders, an exposure to governmental scrutiny: everything from life history, education level, possible vehemence of religious conviction, personal dress, manners and comportment are fair game for a political calculation surrounding decisions around asylum, detention, or deportation. A politics of exposure results in the abandonment of lives and their exposure to risk, in part because under neoliberal rationality more and more of life is monetized and given over to risk.

No wonder even the global bourgeoisie consider themselves to be living in a state of heightened exposure. To care for oneself means to scrutinize oneself for the slightest sensitivity—somewhere between the menace of gluten sensitivity and a terrorist attack lie the lineaments of bourgeois whiteness, and another aspect of its fragility. These might

well be adaptations to a pervasive atmosphere in which everyone feels insecure, and more and more people are rendered objectively insecure. An atmosphere is the very medium through which one orients oneself to the world, and as such is much closer to what Martin Heidegger referred to as mood [*Stimmung*] or the affective ground from which one experiences being and comports toward objects in the world.³⁸ In Heidegger's sense, a mood is an attunement to the world, and it can be collectively produced, stumbled into, made an object of scrutiny, or assumed as the basis from which one's attention, actions, and utterances flow. In an essay concerning the relationship of *Stimmung* to literary texts, Johnathan Flatley has described it as "a historical form that orients us in a specific world [and] is felt on an intimate and individual level even as it is not 'psychological,' and is a key player in the psychic life of power."³⁹ Exposure as a mood certainly describes the self-cultivation and extreme sensitivity of first-world subjects whose life feels to them as a series of vulnerabilities to manage. Meanwhile, self-exposure is embraced by poor white communities who, as a part of their practice of repressive desublimation, vote for the very climate policies that make their own living environments toxic.

Consider, as well, the phenomenon of call-out culture on the political and cultural left, in which exposing the hidden racism or sexism or other -ism of one's opponent is both the endgame of dialogue and engagement and a means of heightening one's own sensitivity to the social ills that one has just called out. I expose you and in the process feel myself exposed to the violence you represent. Wielding the truth about you against you, I establish my vulnerability while also gaining the satisfaction of an imagined moral sovereignty. Fetishistic disavowal of my own power (to shame, to belittle) never felt so good, and is part and parcel of a politics of exposure. The diverse forms of exposure I have noted here just schematically (refugees, middle-class Americans, gig workers, call-out culture) are *not* equivalent or even all to be placed on the same truth/power circuit. The point I am making is that "exposure" names a rationality, a biopolitical condition, a political strategy, a cultural-epistemic priority, and a mood.

No doubt our contemporary insistence on exposure has a history and a genealogy worth excavating, but it is also worth considering more closely how such a priority underwrites the contemporary game of truth's linkages to power. Surveillance capitalism assumes exposure for its extractive processes, and links up the most minute details of a user's life to the dispersed and nebulous, but no less coercive, power of technology companies *as well as* governmental scrutiny. It

synchronizes with already existing neoliberal techniques of subjectivation, in which subjects are not directly oppressed but the conditions of their choice are subtly managed.⁴⁰ Hence the enthusiasm recently for so-called nudge economics and subtle yet elaborate rationalizations by right-wing politicians for the manipulative work engaged in by Cambridge Analytica.⁴¹ There might yet be a way to mobilize exposure against the very regimes that deploy it as a form of extraction and biopolitical management. Within contemporary games of truth and power, truth is both the mark of vulnerability and the ultimate prize. In a climate where information and disinformation are hard to tell apart, exposure as an epistemological priority becomes all the more critical. Yet exposure differs from mere truth-telling because in its political, cultural, and economic operations, disclosure of the truth and banishment from the circle of life operate in tandem with each other.⁴² When our contemporary games of veridiction consistently offer up exposure as the means for achieving justice, for saving democracy from authoritarianism, and even sometimes for holding onto hope for a possible redemption in the future, we ought to consider as well the dangers to truth that attend exposure, the reduced notion of justice that can underwrite our hopes, and the deep intimacy between the truth disclosed and the body injured.⁴³

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NOTES

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¹ In light of Donald Trump's overt calls for foreign involvement in American elections at the same time as he is being investigated for such calls, Judith Butler offers a fascinating psychoanalytic account of the intermingling of the death drive with shamelessness. See Judith Butler, "Genius or Suicide," *London Review of Books*, October 24, 2019. <https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v41/n20/judith-butler/genius-or-suicide>.

² See Paul Mozur, "A Genocide Incited on Facebook, With Posts From Myanmar's Military," *The New York Times*, (October 15, 2018), <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/10/15/technology/myanmar-facebook-genocide.html>; and Christopher Wylie, *Mindf*ck: Cambridge Analytica and the Plot to Break America*, (New York: Random House, 2019).

³ Foucault first uses the phrase "regime of truth" in 1975, in the first chapter of *Discipline and Punish*, after which the phrase recurs throughout his work, most significantly in the *Collège de France* lectures. See *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977).

⁴ "Game of truth" as a phrase enters Foucault's lexicon in his discussions of parrhesia, and of the relation of self to truth-telling. See, in particular, *The Government of Self and Others: Lectures at the Collège de France 1982–1983*, (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2008).

⁵ Michiko Kakutani's book in particular, *The Death of Truth*, makes a simple-minded causal link across French post-structuralism and the rise of Trump (Kakutani, *The Death of Truth: Notes on Falsehood in the Age of Trump* [New York: Tim Duggan Books, 2018]).

⁶ Rebecca Morin and David Cohen, "Giuliani: 'Truth Isn't Truth,'" *POLITICO* (9 August 2018), <https://politi.co/2Bo8FIq>.

⁷ Michel Foucault, *On the Government of the Living: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1979–1980* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), 1.

⁸ Foucault, *On the Government of the Living*, 2.

⁹ Foucault is notoriously critical of psychoanalysis, though he gave Freud (along with Nietzsche) a privileged place in the modern episteme's self-understanding in *The Order of Things*. Deploying psychoanalytic insights alongside Foucault's insights on power and truth means to work in the face of Foucault's own theoretical blind spots, and also, in turn, refunction psychoanalysis in light of Foucault's insights. See Penelope Deutscher, "'Foucault for Psychoanalysis': Monique David-Ménard's Kind of Blue," *philoSOPHIA* 5.1 (2015): 111–127.

¹⁰ Jacques Lacan notes that "as soon as the subject who is supposed to know exists somewhere there is transference" (*The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis* [New York: W.W. Norton, 1998], 232).

¹¹ Philip Mirowski has astutely analyzed the phenomenon of fake news and post-facts as direct results of a confluence between technological change and the practice of neoliberal doctrines. In a chilling analysis, he demonstrates how the incapacity to distinguish fact from fiction was a long-standing goal for neoliberal theorists such as Leo Strauss, Ronald Coase, George Stigler, and James Buchanan. Such a goal has been facilitated by the amplification of fake news by online bots, the dominance of ad-networks that finance news platforms, and the de-skilling of journalism itself, such that some semblance of click-baiting governs all news. See Philip Mirowski, "Hell Is Truth Seen Too Late," *Boundary 2* 46.1 (2019): 1–53. Of course, well before Mirowski, Hannah Arendt had warned that "the ideal subject of totalitarian rule is not the convinced Nazi or the convinced Communist, but people for whom the distinction between fact and fiction (i.e., the reality of experience) and the distinction between true and false (i.e., the standards of thought) no longer exist" (*Origins of Totalitarianism* [New York: Harcourt, 1976], 474).

¹² Slavoj Žižek, "Good Manners in the Age of WikiLeaks," *LRB* (20 January 2011), <https://www.lrb.co.uk/the->

¹³ Scholars have argued that the devalued public sphere is both condition and symptom of a transformation in the nature of representative democracy under neoliberalism. Eva Cherniavsky makes a compelling argument, in a wide-ranging book, that the liberal-democratic state has increasingly abdicated its representative function and taken on a corporatist managerial role, and among the many outcomes of this transformation is "the dissolution of normative political cultures," a proliferation of "decontextualized narrative fragments, trigger points for a repertoire of intense but *dissociated* feeling," and the disappearance of "a common, given world" (*Neocitizenship: Political Culture after Democracy* [New York: New York Univ. Press, 2017], 142).

¹⁴ Hal Foster, "Père Trump," *October* 159 (2017): 4. See Peter Sloterdijk, *Critique of Cynical Reason*, (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1987).

¹⁵ Brown discusses Trumpian politics as disinhibited in several essays. See Wendy Brown, "Neoliberalism's Frankenstein: Authoritarian Freedom in the Twenty-First Century 'Democracies,'" *Critical Times* 1.1 (2018): 60–79; Wendy Brown, "Apocalyptic

Populism,” *New Humanist*, 4 December 2017; and Wendy Brown, *In the Ruins of Neoliberalism* (New York: Columbia Univ Press, 2019), chapter 5.

¹⁶ Wendy Brown, *In the Ruins*, 167.

¹⁷ Brown, *In the Ruins*, 171.

¹⁸ Foucault, *On the Government of the Living*, 17.

¹⁹ Wendy Chun and Sarah Friedland, “Habits of Leaking: Of Sluts and Network Cards,” *differences* 26.2 (2015): 16.

²⁰ For the role of leaks in another context see Tarek El-Ariss, *Leaks, Hacks, And Scandals: Arab Culture in the Digital Age* (Princeton: Princeton Univ. Press, 2019).

²¹ See Shoshana Zuboff, *The Age of Surveillance Capitalism: The Fight for a Human Future at the New Frontier of Power* (New York: Public Affairs, 2019).

²² “User” in digital media lexicon refers, of course, to the end user of digital platforms but in truth “user” is a dispersed category in this mediascape, as data collected by digital platforms is itself variously put to use by known and unknown entities. A cultural and political genealogy of the word “user”—its replacement of the word “consumer,” its association with the realm of intoxication, its false assumption of a liberal subject endowed with instrumental reason—has yet to be written.

²³ Computer scientists have begun sounding the alarm on information exposure, data mining, and covert data collection. See Arvind Narayanan and Vitaly Shmatikov, “De-Anonymizing Social Networks,” *2009 30th IEEE Symposium on Security and Privacy*, May 2009, 173–87; Arvind Narayanan and Vitaly Shmatikov, “How To Break Anonymity of the Netflix Prize Dataset,” *arXiv* (22 November 2007), <http://arxiv.org/abs/cs/0610105>; Wolfie Christl, “Corporate Surveillance in Everyday Life” https://blog.fdik.org/2017-10/CrackedLabs_Christl_CorporateSurveillance.pdf; Mohajeri Moghaddam, Hooman, Gunes Acar, Ben Burgess, Arunesh Mathur, Danny Yuxing Huang, Nick Feamster, Edward W. Felten, Prateek Mittal, and Arvind Narayanan, “Watching You Watch: The Tracking Ecosystem of Over-the-Top TV Streaming Devices,” in *Proceedings of the 2019 ACM SIGSAC Conference on Computer and Communications Security - CCS '19* (London: ACM Press, 2019), 131–47; Ren Jingjing, Daniel J. Dubois, David Choffnes, Anna Maria Mandalari, Roman Kolcun, and Hamed Haddadi, “Information Exposure From Consumer IoT Devices: A Multidimensional, Network-Informed Measurement Approach,” in *Proceedings of the Internet Measurement Conference on - IMC '19* (Amsterdam: ACM Press, 2019), 267–79; and Dan Goodin, “More Android Phones than Ever Are Covertly Listening for Inaudible Sounds in Ads,” *Ars Technica* (5 May 2017), <https://arstechnica.com/information-technology/2017/05/theres-a-spike-in-android-apps-that-covertly-listen-for-inaudible-sounds-in-ads/>.

²⁴ In Spring 2018 whistleblower Christopher Wylie provided evidence that Cambridge Analytica had harvested an immense amount of user data from Facebook’s platform, algorithmically assessed the most susceptible users and targeted them with propaganda and mobilized them to vote. Cambridge Analytica conducted this during the Brexit vote and also during the Trump campaign. They honed their skills through similar election interference via weaponized data in Trinidad, Nigeria, and Kenya. See Wylie.

²⁵ Samuel Gibbs, “Facebook Apologises for Psychological Experiments on Users,” *The Guardian* (2 July 2014), <https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2014/jul/02/facebook-apologises-psychological-experiments-on-users>.

²⁶ On racial capitalism, see Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (London: Zed Press, 1983); and Cedric J. Robinson: *On Racial Capitalism, Black Internationalism, and Cultures of Resistance* (London: Pluto Press, 2019).

²⁷ The disappearance of a notion of a shared social world seems to be a condition for political polarization as well. Eva Cherniavsky traces this phenomenon to the erosion of liberal democracies by neoliberal techniques, and Wendy Chun details the digital underpinnings of the passing of former ideas of the social world. See Cherniavsky, *Neocitizenship*; and Wendy Chun, *Updating to Remain the Same* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2016).

²⁸ These risks include having no benefits, no sick pay, no rights and protections, no break time, etcetera..

²⁹ My account of gig work is indebted to Colin Crouch's insightful analysis (Colin Crouch, *Will the Gig Economy Prevail?* (Medford, MA, USA: Polity Press, 2019). See also Ilana Gershon, *Down and Out in the New Economy: How People Find (or Don't Find) Work Today* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 2017).

³⁰ Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1978–1979* (New York: Picador, 2010), 32.

³¹ Quinn Slobodian, *The Globalists: The End of Empire and the Birth of Neoliberalism* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard Univ. Press, 2018), 169.

³² See Chapter 5, "A World of Races" in Slobodian, *The Globalists*, 146–181.

³³ These important arguments have been made by a number of scholars—see Safiya Noble, "Algorithms of Oppression," *NYU Press* (blog). Accessed December 30, 2019. <https://nyupress.org/9781479837243/algorithms-of-oppression>; Ruha Benjamin, *Race after Technology: Abolitionist Tools for the New Jim Code*, (Medford: Polity, 2019); and ; Lisa Nakamura, *Digitizing Race: Visual Cultures of the Internet* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2008) On "algorithmic citizenship" see Bridle, "Algorithmic Citizenship | Exposing the Invisible," accessed December 30, 2019, <http://exposingtheinvisible.org/films/algorithmic-citizenship/>.

³⁴ OED, s.v., "expose, v.," etymology.

³⁵ Michel Foucault, "*Society Must Be Defended*": *Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975–1976*, (New York: Picador, 2003), 256.

³⁶ Foucault, "*Society Must Be Defended*," 256.

³⁷ Foucault was the first to analyze neoliberalism as a subjectivation technique for the making of new kinds of subjects: *homo economicus* is no longer a participant of exchange, but an entrepreneur of him or herself, for whom consumption and production occur in the same act (see *The Birth of Biopolitics*, 226–30). For an interesting extension and expansion of Foucault's thinking in the context of new technologies, see Ilana Gershon, "'Neoliberal Agency,'" *Current Anthropology* 52.4 (2011): 537–55; and Ilana Gershon, "Un-Friend My Heart: Facebook, Promiscuity, and Heartbreak in a Neoliberal Age," *Anthropological Quarterly* 84.4 (2011): 865–94.

³⁸ Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1962), 172.

³⁹ Jonathan Flatley, "Reading for Mood." *Representations* 140.1 (2017): 147.

⁴⁰ For an elaboration of this point, see Mitchell "Rogue Neoliberalism, Liturgical Power, and the Search for a Left Governmentality," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 118.2 (2019): 325–42.

⁴¹ Nudge economics became a widely influential doctrine, based on Richard H. Thaler and Cass R. Sunstein, *Nudge: Improving Decisions about Health, Wealth, and Happiness* (New York: Penguin Books, 2009). For accounts of Cambridge Analytica's weaponizing of data see Wylie; and Brittany Kaiser, *Targeted: The Cambridge Analytica Whistleblower's inside Story of How Big Data, Trump, and Facebook Broke Democracy and How It Can Happen Again* (New York: Harper, 2019).

⁴² I have avoided using the language of precarity here because the problem of precarious life, as elaborated by Judith Butler, has to do with bodily vulnerability, with the finitude of life itself. Precarity does not address the problem of truth and veridiction as part and parcel of the operations of power. I am interested in precarity or vulnerability, but would like to emphasize how the subjection of others to vulnerability, and the cultivation of one's own precarious aspects are linked together by a similar game of truth. See Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (New York: Verso, 2004).

⁴³ The global disruptions caused by COVID-19 occurred as this essay was being proofed for publication: hundreds of thousands of worldwide deaths, the lockdown and quarantine of cities around the world, the shuttering of whole economies, skyrocketing unemployment claims, and measures of social distancing recommended and unevenly enforced around the world. Exposure in its starkest sense has become a concern for everyone, and the destruction wrought by COVID-19 has revealed the societal fissures often disavowed by governments and corporations. The most vulnerable are not only the ones who are most exposed and dying in great numbers, but also tend to be in professions now deemed to be essential (grocery store clerks, hospital workers, transit workers, construction industries). Mutual dependence among people has never been more clearly demonstrated as it has in the last few months, yet when exposure becomes a collective mood it takes the form of a volatile anxiety seeking discharge: there are already calls for large-scale sacrifice of the elderly and the weak for the sake of economic health alongside calls from progressives for a universal basic income, continued disuse of carbon fuel, and investments in public health infrastructure. Meanwhile COVID-19 remains an opportunity for profiteering by finance capital and pharmaceuticals, not to mention the deepening entrenchment of surveillance capitalism as virus tracking, virtual workspaces, and even more of social life becomes available for data mining.