Revolutionary Critical Pedagogy Is Made by Walking: In a World Where Many Worlds Coexist

Peter McLaren
Petar Jandrić

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.chapman.edu/education_books
Part of the Curriculum and Social Inquiry Commons, Educational Leadership Commons, Other Education Commons, and the Religious Thought, Theology and Philosophy of Religion Commons
Revolutionary Critical Pedagogy
Is Made by Walking: In a World
Where Many Worlds Coexist

Revolutionary Critical Pedagogy in and
for the Twenty-First Century

PJ: Your early work has been strongly influenced by postmodernism. For more than a decade, however, it has slowly but surely entered "the Marxist-humanist trajectory" spanning from authors with various Marxist tendencies and the neo-Marxism of the Frankfurt School to the original works of Marx (McLaren, McMurry, and McGuirk 2008). The shift from postmodern Peter to Marxist Peter has been elaborated fairly extensively—for instance, in conversations with Marcia Moraes and Glenn Rikowski published in Rage and Hope (McLaren 2006). Please summarize it in few sentences.

PM: Good question to start our conversation. Let me try to provide a succinct response. One of the foundational social relations that interdicts a student's access to resources necessary to see the world critically is, I believe, class exploitation. An exploitation that despoils communities and dispossesses workers of their humanity. Education opposes schooling. Education is that which intrudes upon our instincts and instruments of mind and augments them; it pushes our thoughts along the arcs of the stars where our thoughts can give rise to new vistas of being and becoming and to new solidarities with our fellow humans. Our responsibilities for creating critical citizens should be proportional to our privilege. Today a good education is no longer seen as a social responsibility but as picking carefully from an array of consumer choices provided by a number of new companies and corporations. We now offer endless arrays of remedies for new kinds of learning disabilities. Just take your pick. As early as the 1980s, I was asking myself: How do we react to the cries of help from the youth of today, whose full-throated screams meet the immemorial silence of the numbingly predictable and increasingly ossified pedagogical tradition? An answer to this question mandated a move away from the ironic distastation, self-indulgent detachment and posture of Byronic heroism assumed by the vulgar divas of the academy who clearly chose identity politics over class politics and in so doing became complicitous in the very relations of inequality they officially rejected.
PJ: Departing from the Frankfurt School of Social Science, contemporary critical theories of technologies have developed into various directions (including, but not limited to, the elusive fields of postmodernism). Some of these theories ended up quite far from their Marxist roots; nowadays, they seem stuck at the place that you left more than a decade ago. Can you elaborate your return to Marxism as a theoretical base for reinvention of critical education in the context of information and communication technologies?

PM: Well, I can't promise you that much in terms of communication technologies since I have never focused on technologies of communication in the sense of computer or digital technologies, the Internet and such. But I will share what I have picked up along the way that may seem pertinent to revolutionary critical pedagogy as I have been developing that field along with other critical educators over the years. And if you feel that any of my ideas make contact with something useful to your own political project, Peter, feel free to use this correspondence as you see fit. Around the time I studied for my doctorate, I was becoming familiar with some works by Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Kautsky, György Lukács, Raymond Williams, Anthony Wilden, and other scholars who introduced me to the works of Jacques Lacan, Gregory Bateson, Terry Eagleton, Leon Trotsky, Louis Althusser, Paul Willis, John Molyneux, Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, David Harvey, Ellen Meiksins Wood, Alex Callinicos, Henri Lefebvre, and David McNally. I read them in a parallel universe to the doctoral readings assigned to us, which were mostly overpopulated by pragmatists like Dewey (whom I enjoyed) and Richard Rorty (whom I didn't), and some readings in hermeneutics such as Paul Ricoeur (whom I enjoyed the most). Most of it could be found among the dull pantheon of curriculum theorists and learning theorists that we were required to read for our classes. While I don't wish to expostulate about the classes offered in our doctoral program, because some of them proved important, I was much more interested in the Frankfurt School than the education theorists, much more interested in semiotics than in writers on organization theory or on the various ways of structuring your classroom and writing up behavior objectives for each class you taught. But then I surprised my fellow students—and myself—by moving into anthropology and comparative symbology and settled on the work of Victor Turner and performance theory for my doctoral dissertation.

When I moved to Miami University to work with Henry Giroux, I read in cultural studies, the Harlem Renaissance, Stuart Hall, Larry Grossberg, Paul Willis, Michael Lebowitz, Stanley Aronowitz, John Holloway, Hélène Cixous and French feminist thought, Julia Kristeva, literary theory, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, Jean-François Lyotard, Jacques Derrida, Ernesto Laclau, Chantal Mouffe, Michel Foucault, Gayatri Spivak, and the usual suspects. I was following the fashion at the time and picked up some important insights along the way. After that it was sociolinguistics with Mikhail Bakhtin, Basil Bernstein, Noam Chomsky. Along the way I discovered works by Teresa Ebert and Mas'ud Zavarzadeh and the Red Collective, Moishe Postone, Slavoj Žižek, Cornelius Castoriadis, Boaventura de Sousa Santos, Ramón Grosfoguel, bell hooks, Marxist educators Paula Allman, Mike Cole, Dave Hill, and Glenn Rikowski, and later, after 1995, I decided to concentrate on the works of Karl Marx, Paulo Freire, Raya Dunayevskaya, Peter Hudis and Kevin Anderson, C. L. R. James, Frantz Fanon, and Karl Kosik. That is until I became interested in decolonial studies and liberation theology around 2013, concentrating mostly on the works of Leonardo Boff and José Porfírio Miranda. Whatever I was studying involved to some extent the theme of capitalist development that was variously described at that time under the epithets "postindustrialism," "post-Fordism," or "postmodern capitalism." And then of course the term neoliberal capitalism has gained ascendancy up to the present.

While I didn't really study technology, I had read some work by Marshall McLuhan and some more contemporary work by Manuel Castells. I was interested in reading about information age capitalism and information technologies and how computers and telecommunications were used by capital to create capital mobility across national boundaries that eventually culminated in the national security state of widespread societal surveillance. And how this has helped the United States achieve full spectrum dominance as a military power. While I had some misgivings about the technological determinism of McLuhan, I understood that media is driven by profit and television programs often serve as infotainment filler for the advertising. I was pretty much convinced that television worked like a drug, and I was absolutely convinced that you couldn't write poetry on a computer—it's too left-brained. Even today, I can't even read poetry on a computer. Even though my many visits to Latin America convinced me that we have not in any way left the smokestack era of factory production, I became interested in the various ways that capital has penetrated the entire society by means of technological and political instruments in order to generate a higher level of productivity and in order to monitor and reconstitute its response to the self-organization of the working class through these new technologies. Of course, innovations in the context of knowledge production and communication in the new information society do not merely serve as instruments of capitalist domination and police state invigilation. They can be employed in creating alternative and oppositional movements in the larger project of transforming capitalist society into a socialist alternative.

I read Orwell's 1984 (1949) in my teens, discovered Debord's Society of the Spectacle (1994) [1967] in my early twenties, and of course later on I found Foucault's (1995) work on Jeremy Bentham's panopticon to be important, and a few years ago Bernard Harcourt came out with Exposed: Desire and Disobedience in the Digital Age (Harcourt 2015), which examined the role of pleasure in our surveillance culture and how digital media shape the directions of our desiring. But Marx was the theorist that most captured my interest.

PJ: There has been a lot of water under the bridge since Marx developed his theories. Please address some contemporary challenges to his dialectical thought.

PM: I am critical of autonomous Marxists such as Hardt and Negri, who, in books such as Empire (2001), argue that the multitude, who have amassed the necessary "general intellect," are now in place as a web of resistance to capitalism—and they have done so simply by refusing to reproduce capitalism, without any unifying philosophy of
praxis. Marxist-humanist theorist Kevin Anderson correctly sees this as a rejection of transcendence in favor of immanence (i.e., a rejection of Hegel). He writes:

This gaping flaw in Empire is rooted in the type of philosophical outlook they have embraced, one that radically rejects all forms of what they term transcendence in favor of staying on the plane of immanence, i.e., taking elements within the given social reality as one's point of departure . . .

But we do not have to choose between such one-sided alternatives. Consider Hegel's standpoint, as summed up by Theodor Adorno of the Frankfurt School: "To insist on the choice between immanence and transcendence is to revert to the traditional logic criticized in Hegel's polemic against Kant" (Adorno, Prisms, p. 31). In fact, Hardt and Negri regularly attack Hegel and the Enlightenment philosophers as conservative and authoritarian, while extolling pre-Enlightenment republican traditions rooted in Machiavelli and Spinoza. What they thereby cut themselves off from is the dialectical notion that a liberated future can emerge from within the present, if the various forces and tendencies that oppose the system can link up in turn with a theory of liberation that sketches out philosophically that emancipatory future for which they yearn.

Marx certainly overcame the pre-Hegelian split between immanence and transcendence. The working class did not exist before capitalism and was a product of the new capitalist order, and was therefore immanent or internal to capitalism. At the same time, however, the alienated and exploited working class fought against capital, not only for a bigger piece of the pie, but also engaged in a struggle to overcome capitalism itself, and was in this sense a force for transcendence (the future in the present). (Anderson 2010: 11–12)

Here we see, as with Habermas, a rejection of all forms of radical transcendence and a refusal to conceptualize dialectically an alternative to capitalism. As Anderson notes, doing so inspires a fear of utopianism, or worse, authoritarianism and colonial hubris. For Habermas, Hardt, Negri, and to a certain extent Holloway (although I very like his work about Zapatismo), there appears to be a fear of the Promethean side of Marx's humanism that, Anderson notes, points toward transcendence of the given. Thus in the case of Habermas, we return to a reformist liberalism, while Hardt and Negri are moving toward a poststructuralist radicalism.

The solution, as Anderson proposes, is to "stare negativity in the face" (to cite Hegel) and work within a variegated dialectic that takes into consideration race and ethnicity, gender, sexuality, and youth. We cannot simply refuse to take state power, as John Holloway and others recommend, since the state with its pernicious logic of domination will continue to exist until we have created a new social order, one that consists of freely associated labor on a world scale.

The Neighborhood Has Just Become More Interesting

PJ: Nowadays, concepts such as "postindustrialism," "post-Fordism," "postmodern capitalism," and "information society" are often merged into an overarching concept of
to transform the social relations that sustain our capitalized life-forms. That should be
the larger purpose of education, not adjusting ourselves to, or reinscribing ourselves
within, the value form of labor.

PJ: Jan Van Dijk juxtaposes “the network society” with its predecessor—“the mass
society”—and links them with characteristics of the supporting media. Predigital
media of mass society, such as radio and television, support one-way communication
between centers of power and peripheries; the network society is associated with
multidirectional digital social and media networks, and “individuals, households,
groups and organizations linked by these networks” (van Dijk 1999: 24). Another
important difference between the two generations of technologies lies in their scope.
Back in the 1980s, my home was packed with many different one-purpose devices:
radio, television, cassette player, vinyl record player, Walkman, telephone, photo
camera, video camera, ... Technologies of the network society, on the contrary, are
contextually universal, and the computer is “a medium of the most general nature”
(Carr 2011).

Mass society had been based on many technologies designed for specific and
limited purposes, while network society is based on adaptations of one technology
for many different purposes. Yet, one technology seems to successfully cut across both
generations—what can we learn about today’s Internet from our historical experiences
with television?

PM: I have always appreciated the work of Joyce Nelson, especially her book The Perfect
Machine (1991), which reveals the ideological collusion between the television industry
and the nuclearized state in their quest for the perfect technological imperative:
efficiency. Nelson undresses the relationship between the advance of television and
defense contractors and the arms industries such as General Electric, DuPont, and
Westinghouse. She reveals how the military-industrial complex and the American
entertainment industry operated as two sides of the same coin—that coin being to
gain ascendancy in the struggle for geopolitical hegemony. But to do so by capturing
through a cathode-ray tube the glorious effulgence of a nuclear detonation, with its
orgiastic uproar surging into the form of a mushroom cloud like a giant pulsating
phallus that brings about such breathtaking, awe-inspiring destruction. Livers, spleens,
heads, and torsos are not simply thrown into the air like party favors at a birthday
celebration, but immediately incinerated. Now that’s the apotheosis of efficiency! But
the effects of the radiation on the survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki were censored
by government forces in the United States. How could American viewers forget the
television appearance of President Eisenhower when, like a benign, smiling sorcerer, he
waved a neuron wand over a Geiger counter that activated a remote-control bulldozer,
beginning construction on a Colorado nuclear power plant. (It’s not easy to remember
the future and I wonder how many Americans back then could imagine that many
decades later, the Rocky Flats Plant site located near both Denver and Boulder, which
manufactured trigger mechanisms for nuclear weapons from various radioactive and
hazardous materials from 1952 until 1989, would be sued by community residents
when sixty-two pounds of plutonium was discovered stuck in the exhaust ducts of the
plant.)

Back in the 1950s, teleplays (live dramas) were considered too serious and were
replaced by sitcoms with canned laughter and shows emphasizing right behavior versus
unlawful behavior—with the familiar infantilizing good versus bad motifs offering a
televisial moral compass for youth coming of age in the postwar years. The Soviet
nuclear arsenal was also propagandized during the Cold War as a real threat to every
American home, and television provided instructions on how to protect your family
in the event of nuclear war. Nelson also examined the creation of political candidates
and presidents through the medium of television, and how the United States was able
to colonize the world culturally through popular television shows.

I grew up in the 1950s, and we were one of the first families to own a TV because
my dad started selling TVs when he returned from fighting the Nazis after World
War II. Little did my father know that he was peddling the instrument that refracted
the collective technological unconscious of our culture through gateways of fear and
guilt—a technological unconscious rooted in the nuclear unconscious that began after
the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

PJ: Your understanding of television as a technological unconscious rooted in the
nuclear unconscious fascinates me! I never thought about these links before.

PM: Television is the eye of our unconscious, like the Eye of Sauron in The Lord of
the Rings (Tolkien 2012)—through its ideological programming, it colonizes our
subjectivity, works through massaging our organs of irrationality. It replaces the messy
flesh of our bodies (which we secretly wish to discard) with the flesh of our dreams—it
remakes us by revalorizing the masculine self of conquest and control and allows us
to live what is unmanageable and uncontrollable outside our heads inside our heads
where we can stage-manage an essentially chloroformed reality. We look to technology
as we would to religion, for our salvation. It is the mirror in which we hope to find
our perfection reflected back at us through our acquisition of universal knowledge,
knowledge lost when we were supposedly thrown out of the Garden of Eden by God.
David Noble has written on this theme with considerable insight and aplomb (see, for
instance, his book Digital Diploma Mills [2001]).

I mention the nuclear unconscious here, reflecting on an article done decades ago
by Dean MacCannell (1984), who shed some light on the founding of the American
comprehensive high school, in particular, the connection between the founding of the
comprehensive American high school and the Cold War. I mentioned this in a previous
exchange with Glenn Rikowski published in my book, Rage and Hope (McLaren
2006) and in a few articles. MacCannell’s insights are innovative in uncovering the
historical roots of racist schooling in the United States and linking this with the nuclear
unconscious that marked the United States at that time. MacCannell links the politics
of the Cold War and US nuclear strategy—specifically post-Hiroshima strategic
foreign policy—to what he calls the “nuclear unconscious” that was instrumental in
structuring urban education in the 1950s and 1960s. He sees educational policy as
connected in an unconscious way to the doctrine of deterrence and the concept of
limited survivability.

Here, according to MacCannell, it is important to understand the relationship of
“hidden demographic-psychoanalytic desire” to the "postnuclear" arrangement of US
society during the Cold War (MacCannell 1984: 40). I won't go into the theoretical grounds of his argument, which are wonderfully fleshed out in his essay, but suffice it to say that he draws on Talcott Parsons, Heidegger, and Lacan in examining the idea of the creation in the United States of a unified national culture that works through a type of abstract administrative totalization that requires unity and justifies imperialism. His work is interesting in the way it examines structural oppositions in society and how they are administrated within regional and urban systems within the nation-state. And how these structural oppositions and macrosocial arrangements—and especially the way that they are managed—have become spaces where the unconscious has been displaced, having lost its ability to speak, and where subjectivity has been recontextualized. Against the double oppositions that theorists such as Greimas have taught us to appreciate, those that create new categories, MacCannell adeptly recognizes that society's "implosive reduction of all previously generative oppositions: male/female, rich/poor, black/white are collapsing into a single master pattern of dominance and submission, and there is no semiotic or institutional way of breaking the pattern" (1984: 38).

PM: As you said a few pages earlier, "the dull pantheon of curriculum theorists and learning theorists" never speaks about this shaping of education through the nuclear unconscious or the Cold War—and without an understanding of this history, it is impossible to develop an understanding of today's ideology. Please say more!

PM: Directly after World War II, the dominant thinking among US military strategists was that cities of over a million people were the only targets of sufficient economic value to warrant the use of atomic weapons. The United States believed that the Soviets would strike first and many cities would be wiped out. Yet it was also believed that a sufficient number of people outside the cities would survive an attack and rebuild US society—and as we shall see, this would be white people. Rural white folks and those living in smaller cities outside the large metropolitan areas (with a population greater than 100,000) were those that were slated for saving the reigning values of free enterprise after a Soviet first strike. According to MacCannell, the city becomes a "nuclear defense weapon" in that the "defense role of the city is not just to receive the hit, it is to absorb the hit, so that damage minimally spills over to surrounding "survival areas"" (MacCannell 1984: 40, italics original). The cities would therefore be "cured" of their officially designated social problems (crimes, disease, and high mortality rate). The idea was that the city would absorb the attack so that damage minimally spilled over into surrounding "survival areas" made up of predominantly white populations. To try to defend the cities by "hardening" them (MacCannell 1984: 34) would only intensify the attack, and it might spill over to white communities.

Along with the accelerating nuclear arms build-up in the 1960s came a massive withdrawal of upper-to-middle-class white folks, including many of the intelligentsia, into small towns beyond the suburban fringe. In the 1970s and 1980s, rural areas continued to grow at a more rapid rate than urban areas. As MacCannell (1984) points out, rather than moving toward a form of Euro-socialism, where minimal standards of living (housing, health care, income) would be created for impoverished ethnic communities, or opting for a renewed commitment to educational and legal justice, the United States began to warehouse its marginalized citizens in large cities. Interestingly, about this time, fiscal policies of public spending to increase investment and employment were replaced with monetary policies that regulated interest rates, moderated investment, and accelerated layoffs. Harvard University president James Bryant Conant, who had been a member of the secret National Defense Research Committee and had helped to target Hiroshima and Nagasaki—in particular, workers and their homes—became an influential educational reformer in the 1950s and early 1960s. In fact, he helped to create the public school system that we have today in the United States.

Conant's national-level involvement in planning the inner-city school curriculum advocated vocational education for Puerto Ricans and African Americans and recommended school counselor–student relationships on the model of the relationship of a probation officer to a parolee that extended four years after completion of high school. MacCannell cites Conant as describing in one of his writings a mixture of Puerto Ricans and blacks found in some New York neighborhoods as "a veritable witches brew" (MacCannell 1984: 43). He also recommended public work projects to provide ghetto-based employment for black male youth. The idea, of course, was to keep them contained in the cities, which were expendable under the "first strike" scenario. He questioned the relevance of having African Americans working on forest projects that would keep them out of the city. In fact, he was opposed to any program that would move black youth out of the city, even temporarily—like those modeled on earlier programs such as the Civilian Conservation Corps during the days of the Great Depression. Conant also argued that the private enterprise that was moving outside the city should not be responsible for the welfare of inner-city inhabitants whom he referred to as "inflammable material." He was against court-ordered busing to desegregate the public schools, even voluntary busing, and argued that ghetto schools must require students to "rise and recite" when spoken to and suggested boys wear ties and jackets to school.

As MacCannell (1984) argues, we see the nuclear unconscious at work in Conant's vision of public schooling and public life. He placed hope for the future of humanity in society's projected survivors (overwhelmingly white) who would live in small cities of populations of 10,000 to 60,000. When you examine the current decay and neglect of urban schools in the United States, some of this can be traced back to Conant's reform measures for the comprehensive high school. Technology in the form of atomic weaponry could be used to "purify" the cities of people of color while preserving white people in small cities close to agricultural lands.

PM: How does television fit into this picture?

PM: I figured that you were going to ask me that question sooner or later. We can see the advent of television as an ideological instrument to depress frontal lobe function. This wasn't some conspiracy, to be sure, but it was an outcome of the technology. The frontal lobe organizes plans and sequences our behavior. It is fundamental for making moral judgments, for making discriminating assessments about what we see. We know, for instance, that computer games can cause a decrease in activity in the frontal lobes by overstimulating parts of the brain associated with movement and vision. The work
of Marie Winn (2002) has been helpful in addressing the effect on the brain of viewers engaged in the new media landscape. There is the whole question of TV ownership and viewing times of children correlating with a decline in students' SAT tests.

Winn has drawn our attention to extensive television viewing and the effects on young children's verbal development (as distinct from the development of their visual or spatial abilities) and reading scores. Research into the negative effects of TV watching on academic achievement is quite compelling. There is some evidence to suggest that visual and auditory output damages the child's developing brain. According to some brain researchers, when we watch TV, our brain actually shuts off and we are neurologically less able to make judgments about what we see and hear on the screen. I am thinking of Dr. Aric Sigman's work (2007) here on how television creates more separation between thought and emotion and serves to enhance behavior conformity—TV then becomes a great medium of social control and social engineering. It's a perfect instrument for advertisers, it's capitalism's wet-dream machine. As long as you can prevent the fibers connecting the neurons in the frontal lobe from thickening through TV watching, you can create an entire generation of hive dwellers, with little self-control, ready to be manipulated by television gurus—dare we mention Rupert Murdoch? —and the propaganda machines of which they are a part.

One of my professors at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, Dr. Fred Rainsberry, who had a special interest in communication theory and curriculum development and was part of the Royal Commission on Violence in the Communications Industry, said that I should be working with Marshall McLuhan as part of my doctoral research, but the year I entered the program, in 1979, McLuhan suffered a stroke. Early on, I suspected McLuhan's work as technologically deterministic but nevertheless chomped at the bit at the idea of working with him. I developed a children's television pilot, called Kidding Around, for the fledgling multilingual television station in Toronto at that time. The idea was to visit a different ethnic enclave of the city each week, interview regular folks, and get a sense of their everyday lived experiences. We couldn't find any sponsors and the show never got past the pilot. The programming directors felt that listening to ordinary people would be very boring — yet in a sense we were undertaking a form of visual ethnography, which years later would degenerate into the staged spontaneity known as reality TV. Please don't blame me for the aerosol thoughts on display in the perfumed lives of the Kardashians, and especially don't blame me for Trump's pursed lipped, toe rag rants in The Apprentice where he sounds like he's trying to park the Schienenezepin in his oral cavity.

PJ: Please link these predigital insights to contemporary information and communication technologies.

PM: I'll give it a try, but forgive me if my answer is circuitous. As David Harvey (1990) and others have pointed out, computerization creates a compression of time/space through an acceleration of capital accumulation where accelerated turnover time in the process of capital accumulation and speedups in exchange and consumption help to produce superficial consumer needs though mass media (i.e., television advertising and the production of spectacles). We see ourselves as agents of change through these superficial commodities, which fester in our neoliberal bowels and are rapidly expelled in an uninterrupted flow to make room for more superficial commodities. Rather than producing durable goods and infrastructure for the public good, we are prone to the production of desire (a mimetic, acquisitive desire for the desire of the other in Girardian (1986) terms), which replaces those very critical systems of intelligibility that could help us to navigate the fault-lines of our subjectivity, to gain some critical purchase on what is happening to the formation of our protagonistic agency as citizens. We are then trapped into becoming activists for types of cultural change that are dependent upon the very corporations that we rail against instead of becoming agents for transforming existing social relations of production so that they will help produce both the systems of intelligibility and the durable, concrete infrastructure necessary to help populations meet their needs. As it stands, we are helping the popular majorities to create digitally and electronically produced subjectivities — bodies without organs — that are nothing but what Alan Watts used to describe in the 1960s as "bags of skin" (1966). Digitally produced skin. We retreat into a politics of immanence while thirsting for a politics of transcendence. But a politics of transcendence would mean we would have to give up the security of our embeddedness in the very corporate commodity culture we supposedly are fighting against.

If everything is compressed into the surface of a decontextualized image, then anything can be substituted for anything else. Using this warped logic, revolutionaries are really just conformists, conforming to the desires of other revolutionaries, and it's better to become a conservative who seeks and finds pleasure in life than a humorless activist who suffers but finds pleasure in life in a humorless world. You are conditioned to think in false equivalences, that a new cosmetic is as important as the crisis in Ukraine. Both are featured in the media as commensurate. We watch the millions who are addicted to the erotic costumes worn by Miley Cyrus and to her "wardrobe malfunctions" that are done accidentally on purpose, and we can marvel at the power of the media in creating celebrities to distract us from substantive political projects that affect our jobs and livelihoods. Miley is not going to wake up one day as a Marxist and usher in a revolution, as much as that may pique our leftist fantasies. But when the pink slips come their way, Miley's admirers will be searching for another job in retail or as a greeter at Walmart with limited medical benefits. But they can still view themselves as transgressive cultural consumers as they head to the bread lines and soup kitchens. With all of Miley's amazing talent, and her social justice inclinations, we hope she will attend one of the public lectures offered by the International Marxist Humanist Organization.

Technological advances are functionally integrating us to the ideological circuits and global imperatives of the transnational capitalist class, prompting us to perform our identities according to the not-so-hidden transcript of the neoliberal agenda that is hiding in plain sight: to create consumer citizens through a comprador class of cyber-citizenry who serve as sentinels that ensure the promulgation of a state of colonial morbidity. In this way, information technology serves to fire up the cauldron of domestic and political repression, to support the structural violence of capitalism, and to habitude us into the service of empire. No longer do we need to fear being pressured into the service of the empire, we have become ideological products of our own manufactured internal restraint, thanks to the technological advances that we all have
come to “enjoy.” We are all Julian Assange, lecturing from the balcony of the Ecuadorian embassy (or now in London’s Belmarsh High Security Prison and Courts, sometimes called “Britain’s Guantanamo Bay”). In this case, Elvis has recently left the building after many years in exile. The laces of his blue suede shoes have been tied together.

PJ: In the so-called network society, many occupations have undergone significant transformations—and the mass media have obviously been hit harder than the rest of us (Bird 2009). Please analyze the main developments in mass media during the past few decades. What happens to traditional press in the age of the network?

PM: That’s a tough question at a time when Trump has labeled journalists as “enemies of the people.” Journalism used to be a way of citizens holding people in power accountable for their actions—and the storied Upton Sinclair is often cited as the prototypical muckraker. But those journalists are few and far between, and their careers in the corporate media rarely last very long. As Sonali Kolhatkar (2014) has noted recently in a conversation with Glenn Greenwald, the mainstream media engage in attack pieces on people like Greenwald and Snowden in ways they would never treat members of Congress. Greenwald and Snowden have become prominent examples of Orwell’s “thought criminals” (1949), and the public has been conditioned to view them as traitors to the United States. Yet at the same time I admire the way some mainstream journalists are holding Trump’s bone spurred feet to the fire, are taking on the National Rifle Association and exposing the extensive criminal reach of the Trump regime. Witness the remonstrations from today’s Republican Party by politicians who have grown more subservient and fawning towards a more demonic and deranged Trump. Their gaslighting of the public and greenwashing of Trump’s policies reeks of the type of carnivalesque stunts you might expect at a fraternity house toga party only infinitely more dangerous because Republican politicians have rented asunder any semblance of governing by reason.

I have long been of the opinion that Orwell’s 1984 had been upon us long before 1984, this future had always been evident in the present, locked into a reverse form of prefigurative politics. It was evident in the years leading up to the US invasion of Vietnam and became dramatically more pronounced again in 2001, when the press became the echo chamber for the Bush administration in its heinous and successful call for the invasion of Iraq. After World War II, when the United States started to believe its own mythology as the world’s eternally invincible superpower, incapable of decline, then the ideological lineaments of 1984 were constructed out of the debris of the wrath and fallen corpses of American jihad. When the United States came to believe and act upon the notion that it could reshape the world however it chose through the wrath of the greatest military force in history, then we all became doomed to live permanently in 1984 as the green light was given to the NSA and to corporations to act with the same rights as “religious people,” for the government to hasten our extinction through policies that greatly enhance climate change, war, and debt peonage that turns workers into wage slaves of the transnational capitalist class, and ecocide. It is a marker of the sophistication of the US media apparatus that many Americans still believe that they live in a country that exercises the freedom of the press. The press is free, of course, when you consider that the only free cheese is already in the mousetrap. It is free to pursue the objectives and interests of the corporations that own the media outlets. But the outlets are not what determine this situation, it’s the sensuous human activity or inactivity of the people.

I agree with Chomsky that the greatest meddling in US elections is not by Russia but by corporate America. Young people today don’t read the New York Times or the Washington Post—which at least give a narrow range of opinions—they tend to go to social media networks that reinforce their own opinions with more shallow levels of analysis. The big media conglomerates such as Google and Facebook are essentially selling users to advertisers in a manner similar to old media. According to Chomsky, a U.S. media company that works for Trump, Le Pen, and Netanyahu worked with the Facebook office of Berlin to provide them with details on German voters, so that they could microtarget ads to voters in order to influence them to vote for Alternative für Deutschland, the neofascist party (MacLeod 2019).

Even when there is a chance for reporters to investigate a story, other corporations jump into the act using bribery or whatever means available to purchase the silence of potential informants. Recently, for instance, a small town in Ottawa, Canada, received $28,200 from energy company TransCanada Corp. in exchange for keeping silent about the company’s proposed Energy East tar sands pipeline project, for five years. TransCanada has agreed to give Mattawa $28,200, so that town can purchase a rescue truck. You now can rescue a body in danger, but you are required to put your moral compass in mortal danger in order to do so. The Energy East pipeline proposal has the potential to generate 30 to 32 million metric tons of greenhouse gas emissions each year that is the equivalent of adding more than seven million cars to the roads (Atkin 2014).

Digital Cultures and Eopedagogy of Sustainability

PJ: In the age of the Anthropocene, human activities are directly linked to (the present and future of) our planet. On that basis, the recently established movement of eopedagogy brings ecology in relation to critical pedagogy. In 2007 you chaired the waiver committee for Richard Kahn’s doctoral dissertation on the movement. Your book coedited with J. Sandlin, Critical Pedagogies of Consumption: Living and Learning in the Shadow of the “Shopocalypse” (2009), is extensively referenced as one of the key readings in the field. You wrote the preface for Occupy Education (2012), a book on eopedagogy by Tina Lynn Evans—and the list of your contributions could go on and on. Can you analyze potentials of eopedagogy for our explorations of the critical encounter between education and information and communication technologies?

PM: I am not sure that I can give you a satisfactory answer with regard to eopedagogy in terms of the critical encounter between education and information and communication technologies. After all, eopedagogy is a relatively new subfield of critical pedagogy—although I should be careful in referring to it as a subfield. While it may be unfair to call it a subfield, it is certainly a trajectory of revolutionary critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy is becoming more committed to speaking to issues of socioecological sustainability and to sustainability-oriented social change.
With contributions from authors and activists such as Richard Kahn, Tina Evans, David Greenwood, Samuel Fassbinder, Sandy Grande, and Donna Houston (to name just a few), the field of ecopedagogy is now on a potent trajectory. Bringing their contributions into conversation with the efforts of Vandana Shiva, Joan Martinez-Alier, Joel Kovel, Jason W. Moore, and John Bellamy Foster, ecopedagogues have cultivated a landscape of important transnational activism. We are now witnessing a profound demonstration of an efficacious integration of the social, educational, and ecological justice movements. In opposition to capitalist discipline, as it contributes to the ongoing crisis, ecopedagogic practices can be organized into a sort of "ecological discipline" (Fassbinder 2008), which would bind people to the defense of diversities both ecosystemic and social as against capital’s manipulation of them as people-commodities.

In this sense, OccupY Education (2012), a book by Tina Lynn Evans, is very much a critical pedagogy of convergence and integration bound together by ecological discipline, as the work of European sustainability scholars and activists is brought into dialogue with powerful emergent voices from las Americas, both to interrogate the rust-splotched and steampunk metropolises and tumbleweed hinterlands of neoliberal capitalism and to work toward a vision of what a world outside of the menacing disciplines of neoliberal capitalism might look like. Of course, "occupy" means something else to indigenous peoples who have long fought imperial occupation. Nonetheless, the occupy movement was courageous insofar as it put questions of inequality and new "social arcs" for utopia on the map for European/settler populations.

PJ: Indeed—"occupy" can mean different things to different people. What does it mean in the context of Evans’ (2012) work and ecopedagogy in general?

PM: What initially strikes the reader as a key theme of Evans’ project is the way she establishes the wider context of her point of departure, where place-based sustainability theory and action are applied to multiple contexts of practical lived experience—experience that has been inestimably impacted by neoliberal capitalist globalization and sustained opposition to it. Evans’ points of departure emerging from this context are the sufferings of the planetary oppressed, in the process leveraging progressive and radical theories of education, which she employs at risk of losing herself to the very discipline she has been trying so valiantly to overcome. Evans rejects a reformist strategy does the contemporary decolonial school offer?

PJ: Hijacking progressive movements for one’s own purposes is among the oldest and the most successful strategies of capitalist development. What kind of response to this strategy does the contemporary decolonial school offer?

PM: Exponents of this school have charted out the conflictual terrain known as the "coloniality of power" (patrón colonial) and "the Eurocentric pattern of colonial/capitalist power" (el eurocentrismo del patrón colonial/capitalista de poder) whose scholars and activists working in the areas of decolonizing epistemologies and praxis include Ramón Grosfoguel, Aníbal Quijano, Linda Smith, Enrique Dussel, Sandy Grande, and others. In addition to addressing the coloniality of power, a revolutionary critical pedagogy of sustainability is as much about creating what Kahn (2010) calls a "revitalized ecology of body/mind/spirit" and the struggle for "planetarity" as it is a praxiological undertaking to achieve specific, cumulative goals. Thus, for instance, Grosfoguel (2008), as well as Quijano, Dussel, and other decolonial thinkers, suggests new approaches to ecology through viewing the dependent hierarchies of capitalism, spirituality, epistemology, jurisprudence and governance, patriarchy, and imperialism as an entangled, emprezled, and coconstitutive power complex akin to a global ecology.

PJ: What do you make of ecopedagogical politics in the United States today?

PM: One ecopedagogical idea that I support can be illustrated in my admiration of yet at the same time cautious critique of the Green New Deal (GND), drawn up by the wonderful Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and Ed Markey (Whyte 2019). It’s an important document, and I support it, but it doesn’t go far enough. Why? Because, to repeat a phrase used by my comrade Peter Hudis (2012), it remains in the precinct of "environmental Keynesianism." The GND’s plan for ecological and social reconstruction is premised on substituting renewable energy for fossil fuels while leaving the current global system of expanding capitalist production and consumption intact. It is built on growth-based presuppositions. But we don’t need a more expansive capitalism, we need to drastically reduce environmentally destructive sectors of the economy. Sectors that are not environmentally destructive can certainly be encouraged to expand. New growth ultimately means more exploitation, and any environmental benefits of more efficient technological advances made in renewable energy will be canceled out in a spiraling, growth-directed economy. Exponents of ecopedagogy understand that it won’t work simply to redistribute the resources from the fossil fuel industry to renewable-energy industries. It won’t work. As my friend Peter Hudis (2012) argues, the transition away from a carbon-based productive system toward a pitch-perfect love story and can easily be co-opted by the guardians of the state, who make empty promises to manage the crisis in the interests of the public good (really in the interests of private greed). The discourses of sustainability can be hijacked by the very interests that Evans is out to unmask (see, for example, Joséé Johnstone’s “Who Cares About the Commons?,” which argues that “sustainability has come to imply sustainable profits as much as ‘saving the earth’” [2003: 1]). Understanding how such hijacking takes place and how the imperial instinct remains alive and well among progressive educators, and comes with a fixed-rate and nonnegotiable commitment to reform over revolution can be brilliantly assisted by engaging with the works of the decolonial school.
one driven by renewable energy can be best achieved through freely associated labor among worker-owned and democratically managed cooperatives within civil society that respect the commons.

PJ: Throughout this discussion, I cannot stop thinking of Ivan Illich. From Deschooling Society (1971) through Tools for Conviviality (1973) to Medical Nemesis (1982), Illich offered many innovative insights and strategies for decolonization of the complex web of relationships between technologies, cultures, education, and ecology. What are the main features of the emerging
digital cultures? What are their underlying values and ideologies? Paraphrasing Freire (1972), how do they relate to our reading of the word and our reading of the world?

PM: C. A. Bowers and I have had some spirited if not downright acrimonious debates over the decades, especially in relation to the work of Paulo Freire. At the same time, I want to acknowledge the importance of some of his lucid observations about digital cultures (Bowers 2014). First, it is absolutely essential that we understand the metaphorical nature of language and that intelligence is not limited to what can be explained by the scientific study of the neuro-networks of the human brain. Consciousness, as Gregory Bateson acknowledges, along with Bowers, includes the pathways of all unconscious mentation, which includes those pathways that are automatic and repressed, neural and hormonal. Print-based cultural storage and thinking, which is relied upon by developers of technology, is not rationally based and objective but in fact impedes awareness of what is being communicated through the multiple pathways that differ from culture to culture.

Bowers is right about this, and he worries that computer technology and the digitalized misrepresentation of man will offer us a truncated notion of ecological intelligence. Computer technicians and scientists working on artificial intelligence sanctify data and information grounded in print-based cultural storage and thinking. This reinforces surface knowledge, ignores tacit knowledge, presents a false sense of objectivity, and ultimately misrepresents the relational and emergent information-intense pathways of both cultural and natural ecologies. Bowers is very convincing here. Digital communication reproduces the misconceptions encoded in the metaphorically layered language that is often taken for granted by digital technicians.

Computer scientists are using a languaging process based on print literacy that reproduces the myths and deep cultural assumptions that influence thinking and awareness—what is being championed are the myths of individualism and progress and what is being silenced is the need to conserve the cultural commons of non-Western cultures that are able to provide largely nonmonetized systems of mutual support that rely less on exploiting the planet’s natural resources. I agree with Bowers’ prescient understanding that you can’t reduce culture, cultural knowledge systems, and cultural ways of knowing to data and information—especially given the reliance of computer scientists on print and given the fact that there exist 6,000 languages in the world. Words are metaphors whose meanings are framed, as Bowers explains, by the analogues settled upon in previous eras. Craft knowledge and indigenous wisdom traditions have been lost and replaced by Western corporate vocabularies of profits, efficiency, and competition.

There are linguistic and cultural differences that cannot be captured by artificial intelligence. We can’t capture what lies beyond the surface of the interplay of individual/cultural/linguistic ecologies. Here we should listen carefully to Bowers’ criticism of the root metaphors of Western knowledge systems and the effects they have on colonization of the life worlds of other cultural groups. The digital revolution has encoded dangerous assumptions about endless growth, individualism, and the deepening of the ecological crisis. Ecologically sustainable traditions need to be intergenerationally renewed. The traditions of civil liberties of the complex and nonmonetized traditions of the

Illich taught one to be fearless—on stage or in the audience. I would hate any kind of technophobia or dystopian imagination to destroy the fearlessness we need to move forward toward the future.

PJ: By now we succinctly introduced your critical turn from postmodernism to Marxism, explored the changing modes of production in the network society, and briefly examined critical potentials of ecopedagogy. In order to systematize our thoughts, we approached those issues in neat sequence, one by one—but their real nature is everything but neat and sequential. Scientific discourses do not separate social phenomena because of their nature, but because isolated problems represent small(er) chunks of our reality that are much easier to comprehend for human beings. However, the dialectic nature of our reality always finds its way to the surface. In the field of research methodologies, it is reflected in the need to explore the relationships between technologies and the society using various interdisciplinary, transdisciplinary, and even antimodernist approaches (Jandrić 2012 and 2016). In everyday life, it is probably most notable in overarching, elusive yet unavoidable and inevitable concepts such as “digital cultures” (I am deliberately using plural in order to stress multiplicity of backgrounds, narratives, and perspectives). What are the main features of the emerging
cultural commons that are still viable within Western cultures must be preserved and
the cultural commons of non-Western cultures that do not rely on the exploitation
of natural resources need to be intergenerationally renewed. Computer technology is
contributing to the ecological crisis as superintelligent computers still rely on print-
based cultural storage whose cultural assumptions have been shaped by root metaphors
of Western ideas of progress and individualism. We need an earth-centered ecological
intelligence. Critical pedagogy can join in such an effort. When my comrade, Sergio
Quiroz Miranda, told me he met the few remaining members of an indigenous group
who told him that they had chosen not to reproduce because life was too miserable, my
heart shattered. This was a group that had chosen to become extinct.

PJ: Digital cultures (I am deliberately using plural in order to stress multiplicity of
backgrounds, narratives, and perspectives) have recently acquired a lot of attention
from various researchers such as Sian Bayne, Jeremy Knox, Hamish A. Macleod, Jen
Ross, Christine Sinclair, and others. During the past several years, they have become
an intrinsic part of curricula at various schools and universities (Jandrić et al. 2017).
In this mash-up of postmodernist talk about grand narratives, glorifications of
technologies, various scepticisms and/or primitivisms, practical inquiry into the ways
people use the Internet for this or that purpose, analyses of the relationships between
the local and the global, changes in various human activities including but not limited
to arts, commerce, government, and education, it is easy to forget that digital cultures
are strongly linked to their nondigital background—particularly regarding power
relationships. Based on your extensive international experience, particularly in the
Americas, please link digital cultures with the distinctions between the global South
and the global North, with globalization of capitalism and the archetypes of identity.

PM: That’s a challenge I will need to address with a personal story. It’s very easy to be
distracted by the digital world and culture while you are building a personal identity
created in a digital context. It is clear how individuals want to be represented in that
world, and some prefer to live in that world than engage in the real world. Recently I
returned from teaching a course in popular education and critical pedagogy in Mexico,
where we discussed the negative impact of narcocorridos—songs that romanticize the
Mexican drug cartels such as the Sinaloa Cartel, the Gulf Cartel, the Juárez Cartel,
the Knights Templar Cartel, the Tijuana Cartel, Los Zetas, Jalisco New Generation,
and praises Manuel Torres, allegedly a top hit man for Zambada. By the end
of 2011, the song had been downloaded 5 million times and the accompanying video
had been downloaded 13 million times (USA Today 2011).

Banned on radio stations in parts of Mexico, narcocorridos are everywhere on
the Internet. Twin brothers based in Burbank, California, developed the El Alte rado
culture, which admires the Sinaloa cartel for their violent, murderous lifestyle. They
won a Grammy award in 2008 for creating a singer who goes by the name of “El Chapo
de Sinaloa.” Drug trafficking and torture are being made socially acceptable. There
have been roughly 40,000 drug war deaths since former Mexican president Felipe
Calderón started to launch a major offensive on cartels as he took office in 2006. One
of my doctoral students in Mexico presented on El Movimiento Alterado. He interviewed
a number of his twelve-year-old students in Mexico City about why they loved to listen
to the narcocorridos. Their answers were very similar:

Because we love violence.
We want to be able to torture people.
We want to grow up so we can kill people.

So there is an entire Internet culture on this. There are video games where you can rape
women, you can kill effortlessly, where you can turn yourself into a superhero. So what
is the appeal? Are you retreating into your unconscious and connecting with all the
frustrations you feel about being just an ordinary bloke in real life? Will you be more
prone to act violently to solve problems you might have in real life? To counter this
music, we played political protest music, some very contemporary, such as that from
Calle 13, a Puerto Rican band formed by two brothers, René Pérez Joglar, who goes by
the name “Residente,” and Eduardo José Cabra Martínez, who calls himself “Visitante,”
and their half-sister Ileana Cabra Joglar, aka “PG-13.”

Anyway, I returned from Mexico and was walking around the train station
and suddenly I was surrounded by superheroes—Batman, Robin, Superman, the
Flash, Wonder Woman, Wolverine, Zombies—as the city was hosting a comic book
convention and what is called a “nerd prom.” So I was thinking, where are the energies
of these teens and young adults going? Do they think that by clicking on “Like” in their
Facebook exchanges they are participating in a revolution? The contrast between the
discussions and work being done in Mexico and the invasion of the nerds in San Diego
was striking. In Mexico, Internet culture based in Los Angeles was normalizing drug
trafficking and brutal violence, while across the border in Gringolandia, everybody
was focused on the world of their superheroes. Capitalist consumer culture hijacks
the archetypes of identity—and none of them are fighting capitalism. They might be
fighting corrupt capitalists, but not capitalism as wage slavery, as a structure of feeling,
as a social sin, as a system of exploitation, as a mode of production based on private
ownership of the means of production in which commodities are created for the
exchange market, extracting as much labor from the workers as possible at the lowest
possible cost.

We take care of El Mayo
Here no one betrays him . . .
We stay tough with AK-47s and bazookas at the neck
Chopping heads off as they come
We’re bloody-thirsty crazy men
Who like to kill.

The songs glamorize torture, murder, and decapitations. This particular song glorifies
the Sinaloa cartel and its bosses, Ismael “El Mayo” Zambada and Joaquín “El Chapo”
Guzmán, and praises Manuel Torres, allegedly a top hit man for Zambada. By the end
of 2011, the song had been downloaded 5 million times and the accompanying video
had been downloaded 13 million times (USA Today 2011).

We want to be able to torture people.
We want to grow up so we can kill people.

So there is an entire Internet culture on this. There are video games where you can rape
women, you can kill effortlessly, where you can turn yourself into a superhero. So what
is the appeal? Are you retreating into your unconscious and connecting with all the
frustrations you feel about being just an ordinary bloke in real life? Will you be more
prone to act violently to solve problems you might have in real life? To counter this
music, we played political protest music, some very contemporary, such as that from
Calle 13, a Puerto Rican band formed by two brothers, René Pérez Joglar, who goes by
the name “Residente,” and Eduardo José Cabra Martínez, who calls himself “Visitante,”
and their half-sister Ileana Cabra Joglar, aka “PG-13.”

Anyway, I returned from Mexico and was walking around the train station
and suddenly I was surrounded by superheroes—Batman, Robin, Superman, the
Flash, Wonder Woman, Wolverine, Zombies—as the city was hosting a comic book
convention and what is called a “nerd prom.” So I was thinking, where are the energies
of these teens and young adults going? Do they think that by clicking on “Like” in their
Facebook exchanges they are participating in a revolution? The contrast between the
discussions and work being done in Mexico and the invasion of the nerds in San Diego
was striking. In Mexico, Internet culture based in Los Angeles was normalizing drug
trafficking and brutal violence, while across the border in Gringolandia, everybody
was focused on the world of their superheroes. Capitalist consumer culture hijacks
the archetypes of identity—and none of them are fighting capitalism. They might be
fighting corrupt capitalists, but not capitalism as wage slavery, as a structure of feeling,
as a social sin, as a system of exploitation, as a mode of production based on private
ownership of the means of production in which commodities are created for the
exchange market, extracting as much labor from the workers as possible at the lowest
possible cost.
Critical Technological Consciousness for a New Humanity

PJ: Historically, youth movements have always been important agents of social change. Certain aspects of their struggles can be attributed to a universal clash of generations, while others might have some real potential to bring radical social transformations. In order to make a clear distinction between the eternal and the contemporary, between the basic human need to struggle against authority and the really important argument regarding the future of our society, between the battle to overcome positions of power and the principled struggle against positions of power, between desperate fight against worldwide tyrants such as Saddam Hussein and struggle for a better/more just/more democratic society, between genuine political change and mere replacement of one political mannequin with another, between real social development and digital Potemkin's villages, can you pinpoint some distinct features of contemporary youth movements that emerge from the context of the network society?

PM: Youth today are learning new ways to refuse the cult of individualism as an antidote to their loss of a sense of self, to their being situated as impersonal agents in a rationalized society that is highly competitive and achievement-oriented and psychotherapeutically oriented. Contemporary youth do not feel themselves embedded in a living reality that will endure within years to come because youth are taught to concentrate on their immediate personal status and well-being. They and their loved ones are not assured of protection from misery and oblivion. The 2011 student mobilization in Chile, the activism of Nigerian youth at the Niger Delta crude oil flow station, the clenched-fist protests against the ruling establishments of Tunisia, Egypt, and Libya, the resistance to the austerity measures by the youth in Portugal, Spain, and especially Greece, the South African public students who struggle to secure basic teaching amenities, such as libraries, in their schools, the Occupy Wall Street movement in the United States—all of these are part of a growing culture of contestation with its roots buried in the past, and its arabesque of tendrils arcing toward the future, the result of grafting what is desirable from the past onto new practices of revolt. And look at the recent environmental movement focused on climate change influenced by the activism of sixteen-year-old Greta Thunberg. We should be anything but cynical. This is an important movement.

In the plant-grafting process, when the vascular cambium tissues of the root stock and scion plants have been successfully inosculated, the stem of the stock is pruned just above the newly grafted bud. But the joints formed as a result of the grafting process are not as strong as naturally formed joints. Social movements that have recognized their weak links with the past are not attempting to begin again from the beginning (as this is a constitutive impossibility), but are utilizing technological innovations never before imagined in the history of social movements to refigure the ways in which student protest can be organized to resist the cooption of the world capitalist aristocracy and to provide new networking potentialities for increasing the pressure on the sentinels of the transnational capitalist class. Some of this they learned from the Situationists, more specifically from the work of Debord. I think it is time to refashion the ways in which we incite people to rebel. At the moment the conditions of possibility for forming a new International that will lead capital to ruin are clearly not present—and that's very likely a bad idea with which to begin. Nor do I think the neo-Dadaist practice of detournement—turning capitalist practices against themselves in the form of Situationist pranks, punk music, or culture jamming—is sufficient since it is so easily recuperated by the capitalist system. Capitalists augment value from the practices of culture jammers by appropriating their forms of parody and mimicry, turning it into a spray-on, aerosol form of transgression. How about repurposing the general strike? Now that might prove interesting.

PJ: A general strike might indeed prove interesting, but I cannot see it happen. . . . Today's youth, at least in comparison to the generation of 1968, seems increasingly apathetic.

PM: The new youth movements have revealed that a decline in political activism among youth is not an inevitable fact of capitalist life nor is political apathy among youth evidence of a deep normality. However, youth are pulled in sometimes crazed and mostly inconclusive directions. The spectacle of neoliberal capitalism would have us believe that youth protest should be enlivened by constant stimulation of the senses and thus opposed to the course of daily routine of regulation and self-restraint. But protest does not always require youth to shift registers between the everyday and the culture of contestation because contestation can, in fact, be part of everyday praxis, such as in the world of hip-hop culture. Protests can erode our subsequent capacity to endure the strenuous demands of our daily life, which is, of course, a good thing, because they create a space of liminality where youth can cultivate contestation as an art form—ludic resistance against spectacular capitalism (see Barbrook 2014).

Historical necessity does not grant these movements success in advance, nor does divine fiat. This question can only be answered inside the struggles themselves and in terms of the commitment that youth have to the poor, the powerless, the disfravored, and the aggrieved. Of course, much can be learned by engaging in Richard Barbrook's Class War Games (2014), a Situationist political/digital simulation analysis of neoliberal capitalist society designed—with Lenin's pamphlet on imperialism as its default setting for understanding geopolitical competition—to create a new generation of cybernetic communist insurgents able to engage strategically in a protracted war against spectacular capitalism. Barbrook's and the Situationists' "accelerationism" certainly is an antidote to postmodern nihilism, and whether it can be an effective challenge to a qualitatively new transnational or global phase of world capitalism characterized by a globally integrated production and financial system that attempts to sustain accumulation in the face of stagnation is worth considering. Especially now when the tech sector is driving the digitalization of the entire global economy and when the global economy is employing what William Robinson (2019) terms "militarized accumulation" or "accumulation by repression" (after all, it was the US military who invented the Internet!).

PJ: What is the role of media in these processes?

PM: The presence of twenty-first-century fascism that involves the fusion of transnational capital with the reactionary and repressive political power of the state—an
expression of the dictatorship of transnational capital (Robinson 2019)—needs to be engaged by the left strategically, such as in Barbrook’s “two-way media,” which he has discussed with you Petar (Jandrić 2017: 77). Here, Barbrook chronicles the dead-end debates between commercial media and state media while the swindlers of hyperbolic entrepreneurialism hold sway. No wonder that this debate was so deeply engrained among intellectuals at the time, a time when technotechnics was considered the cell form of capital, when the “fixed media capital” of the machine was thought to have replaced living labor as the motor of history, where the electronic marketplace could regulate itself under the cover of the smoke and mirrors of dot-com culture. Today, for instance, it is not the media that have brainwashed Trump’s political base to become supporters of a white nationalist ethno-state. It’s because this thinking is so pervasively reflected in what is happening in the United States now, at this sociopolitical conjuncture, at this major historical inflection point, and of course, not just in the United States but in many countries around the world. What a contrast from the 1960s, when the United States was more communist than the Soviet Union, as Barbrook has noted.

I strenuously agree with Barbrook when he argues that “digital technologies should be used to replace markets and bureaucracies with workers' self-management” and that dot-com capitalism in the service of cybernetic communism reflects Engels’ objective—that we should work to create a system where people administrate things rather than the other way around (in Jandrić 2017: 89). But will the heirs of do-it-yourself media be able to build the shining city on the hill or be cast into the dung heap of history, having been abandoned altogether by Benjamin’s Angel of History? Could network computing for the democratization of the political economy of capitalism, complete with a socialist source code, and carried forward by the collaborative working methods of the Internet, translate into the gravediggers of capitalism and a new stewardship of our communist future if, say, these conditions were able to take over the entire global economy? As long as the working methods are controlled by people and people are not controlled by the methods they initiate—perhaps. As long as people are not tricked into believing that they are shaping the new digital technologies and not the other way around. But this stretches belief. Beware the self-replicating Internet commune! A digitalized cornucopia overflowing with information may on the surface seem to possess a dance floor of the heart, swapping face-to-face human relationality for pixel-to-pixel impersonality. Doesn’t it make you wonder why the US military is so interested in artificial intelligence?

Pf: One of the main issues with digital technologies is the staggering lack of privacy—our digital traces are almost impossible to erase and stay with us pretty much forever. This is a pretty big problem for (online) political struggle!

PM: With the help of tech companies, the state is able to convince the private sector to do some of its dirty work—in the name of fomenting inner compulsions we feel are outwardly justified if we are to be part of a dutiful congregation of consumer citizens. While the state is not monolithic in its politics, it does converge ideologically for the most part on neoliberal imperatives of anti-unionism, procapitalism, etc. Facial biometrics are being sold to us as a way to match our facial image with our passport photos in order to get us seamlessly through the long airport security lines more quickly. Sure, it’s all done in the interest of the comfort of the traveler. Did I tell you I have some expensive property in Florida I can sell you dirt cheap? Border guards are doing “suspiciousless” digital “strip searches” by requesting that border-crossers hand over their cell phones and passwords. Encryption and strong passwords can help, for the time being. If you have data stored on cloud, you can delete the app before crossing and then download it again after you cross. There are some tricks, but searches are getting worse, not better. The US Border Patrol can now equip all their patrol units with a forward-looking infrared camera, tripod, rangefinder, and battery charger and can spend weeks on end detecting the heat signatures of smugglers from as far away as two miles, use a rangefinder to determine their GPS coordinates, and take it from there. Imagine what technologies can be developed in the future for snatching up critical pedagogues before they can reach large education platforms!

I am only half-kidding. You, Petar, were held up at the US border and interrogated recently. When asked why you were visiting the United States, you mentioned you were visiting a colleague at Chapman University in California to finish this book. The border agent disappeared for a few minutes, returned, and demanded that you explain why you were visiting a known communist and then proceeded to interrogate you for five hours, and then charged you $68 for taking up their extra time! Hey all you Trumpsters, want to become a Virtual Texas Deputy? Just join BlueServo, a Virtual Community Watch and monitor livestreaming cameras of the Texas/Mexico border and catch the “illegals” crossing over. You can do it from your laptop anywhere in the country:
BlueServo™ deployed the Virtual Community Watch, an innovative real-time surveillance program designed to empower the public to proactively participate in fighting border crime. The BlueServo™ Virtual Community Watch™ is a network of cameras and sensors along the Texas–Mexico border that feeds live streaming video to www.BlueServo.net. Users will log in to the BlueServo™ website and directly monitor suspicious criminal activity along the border via this virtual fence™. (BlueServo 2019)

Ruling elites who wish to turn greed into an inalienable right are now more fearful than ever that youth-driven democratic social movements might at present spawn a revolutionary upsurge among the popular majorities. So they make undemocratic demands democratically by enforcing brutal austerity measures and ratcheting up a permanent war on terrorism. This constitutes a major challenge for today’s cyber-communists.

PJ: How should we go about this challenge?

PM: Imagine a grandmother has lost her grandson to lung disease. Her tears are rolling down the precipice of her sunken eyes like a bucketful of pearls. But when she passes the chemical factory responsible for her grandson’s death, her tears shoot out of her eyes in great red molten sparks as if spewed from an ancient volcano buried deep in the sea of her grief. She can do little more at the moment than scream in a high-pitched rage that arcs around the smokestacks that killed her grandson. But can she do more than cry tears of grief and rage?

She can mount a social media campaign against the factory. She can petition the government. She can become an environmental activist. She can enter the digital world of protest. I am not saying that social media is in itself ineffectual. But so many protests these days are by digital petition. It takes less than a minute to sign. They give us the feeling that we are doing something, that we are making a difference, that the world is not hopeless, that we can intervene. My concern is to form a coalition that organizes on the basis of class initiative, that cuts across race and ethnicity and sexuality, that directly confronts the rule of capital. Is this even possible in the digital age? Are we predestined for political fragmentation, for single-issue campaigns that bury struggles that are necessarily universal under a micropolitics of single issues antiseptically cleaved from relations of production?

PJ: Talking about social order, we must revisit contemporary transformations of the concept of the state. Sociologists such as Jan van Dijk (1999) and Manuel Castells (2001) repeatedly assert that global neoliberal capitalism rapidly diminishes the role of the state in everyday affairs. At a phenomenological level, it seems commonly accepted that most traditional functions of the state have been transferred to transnational institutions such as World Trade Organization and International Monetary Fund, corporations richer than many countries, and with increased individual responsibility for issues such as education and health. However, the left side of the political spectrum (Standing 2011 and 2014; Standing and Jandrić 2015; McLaren 2006) constantly emphasizes that the role of the state is as important as ever and seeks to improve its functioning toward increasing social justice. Which concepts of the state are emerging from new social movements? How feasible are they?

PM: Youth resisters who assume the opinion that we live in the information age where we have a knowledge economy of “immaterial labor,” where productive capital and the working classes are becoming increasingly irrelevant to social transformation, and that the nation-state is relatively powerless, are likely to adopt a “civil societarian” position (Holst 2002) and put their faith in new social movements—in the “cognitariat” rather than the “proletariat.” Many participants in the youth movements of today view the state as the “social state”—here I shall borrow some terms from Tony Smith (2009)—where symbolic and moral philosophy is the systematic expression of the normative principles of the Keynesian welfare state. In other words, it is a version of the state that offers wage labor as the normative principles of modern society.

Some of the more conservative and even liberal-centrist participants in new social movements take a neoliberal state as the norm, which we could call the entrepreneurial state—in which generalized commodity production requires a world market, and they follow Hayek’s (1948) principle that capital’s law of value in the abstract must be followed. Some of the new social movements look to create a new model of the state, which could be called an “activist state” that is based, in large part, on the work of Polanyi (2001), and includes methods of aggressive state intervention into its industrial policy. International capital still predominates in this model, and there will be an inevitable government and global trade dependence on international capital. Of course, those who govern the activist state desire to place government restrictions on its rules and regulations for attracting global investment capital. So there is a concerted attempt to lessen the worst and most exploitative aspects of the state. Then again, you have some left-liberal social movements who prefer the concept of the “cosmopolitan state.” This model is largely derived from the work of Habermas (1970), where forms of global market governance can prevail that are intranational rather than national; here there is a focus on the development of a global civil society (see Holst 2002).

Marxist and anarchist movements don’t ascribe to any of these models as it is clear to them that it is impossible to manage democratically wage labor on a global scale by placing severe restrictions on global financial and derivative markets. After all, wage labor only appears to include an equal exchange.

PJ: Being fairly close to anarchist ideas myself, Peter (e.g., Jandrić 2010), I am extremely interested in your last claim. Does that mean that Marxism and anarchism have finally overcome the Bakunin–Marx split from the First International? Can we expect reconciliation of the two political philosophies as the theoretical and practical base for creating a massive anticapitalist front?

PM: As is well known, there are wide variants of anarchism that have been described in the literature under various names, such as individualist anarchism, which rejects all forms of organization; “Black bloc”–style anarchism, which often engages in violent acts; anarcho-syndicalism and libertarian communism, which defend the interests of the working class and become involved in the class struggle; and “primitivist” and green anarchism, which challenge capitalist society or seek to create alternatives to it.
Marxists and anarchists both agree on the goal of a stateless society. Some Marxists strenuously maintain that a Leninist-style revolutionary party is necessary to rebuild society from its capitalist ashes, a strong collective, organizing force that goes beyond Bakunin's call during the First International for spontaneous organization of the masses.

I was a member of the Industrial Workers of the World, or "Wobblies," for a short time, and it's an important organization, although not as influential as it once was. I became interested in creating a philosophically driven praxis of liberation, and soon became drawn to the International Marxist-Humanist Organization (2019), which seeks to conceptualize forms of organization that escape an elitist vanguardism but which offer an organizing force toward developing a socialist alternative to capitalism. The challenge before us is to build such an alternative that can gain hegemonic ascendancy in the minds of the popular majorities worldwide so that we can fight to bring such an alternative into being.

**PJ:** Please evaluate the social relevance of the new youth movements. Where do they take us, do they have enough power to bring real change?

**PM:** As they stand, social movements prepare us for the next step, rather than take us to a new space, mainly because we do not know the spatial transformations necessary to prepare us for an alternative to the law of value. They are preparing us to be reborn with a transmuted consciousness, and while they have seen the old vanguard as a hindrance to further social change, they are still wrestling with the forms of organization needed to transform a world stage managed by a transnational capitalist class. These new social movements are the foreconscious of change, whereas what is needed is a change in the subconscious of the historical agent; that is, how do we gain an acceptance in the deep mind for the fact that we need to build a social universe outside of labor's value form? Or is this just some youthful, chilidastic dream-vision? Some aspects of our goal must remain unspecified, our path trackless, our cry soundless, and our destination uncertain, or else we will fall into the trap of imposing a blueprint, or recoding old formulas, but at the very least we must see ourselves as history's migratory urge to sublate that which we negate and to move toward a world less populated by human suffering, exploitation, and alienation. That much is known and that much must be accepted before we can build upon the vestiges of past struggles and move into an entirely new terrain of resistance and transformation.

The pent-up force of the unmet shadow that lurks in our consent to the prevailing ideology of the capitalist class has the potential to destroy the very form of our past struggles. New modes of organization are called for. The political imagination must be reconfigured to the challenges of the present. If we view the accumulation of capital and the production of nature as a dialectical unity, we need a new vision of the future that can break free from modernity's mega-strategies of revolution so that we can think of a socialist alternative to capitalism differently, not as some cataclysmic leap by which life advances, but rather as steps—some precarious and some bold—by which life is prepared to evolve. We must recover from our past what the past regarded as utopian and thus was rejected by our predecessors and offer new forms of rebellion that can better ensure that such knowledge will reimpact the present more effectively.

**PJ:** How can we begin reconfiguring our political imagination to the challenges of the present? And what are the main challenges facing us in this reconfiguration?

**PM:** We need to know how institutions operate, how people inside of them behave. This is crucial. We can learn, for instance, about war from all the valiant work of Daniel Ellsberg (we made a recording together years ago but it wasn't released because of—yes!—technical problems with the sound). And we can give some credit to Julian Assange and his WikiLeaks staff and the efforts of Edward Snowden and Chelsea Manning. And let's not forget the courageous work of Katherine Teresa Gun. We've learned about the deaths of thousands who otherwise would be relegated to the annals of ignominy, to abstractions that we can ignore because we can't picture them in ghastly and gory detail in our minds. There is a lot of information out there—all communication relies on information, but I am concerned here about the providers. Who provides the information, how is it framed or "punctuated," and what are the ideological effects? And how do human beings handle information? How do Americans cope, for instance, with the knowledge that their military has killed millions in its wars of aggression (which are disguised as preconditions for delivering "democracy" by "shock and awe" to those who won't play by our rules) and beaten them through our "humanitarian imperialism" into submission until they become pliable client states? There is no country more than the United States that appreciates quisling nation-states that willingly bend over for whoever is in power in the White House. And no country that has more obsequious politicians who constitute the shame of the nation.

Matt Gaetz, Devin Nunes and Jim Jordan appear right out of central casting for knuckleheaded schemers who would go to any extreme to be able to sniff Trump's plump rump. Given the manner in which they comport themselves to their constituencies, they appear to celebrate with seedy glee the irreducible intimacy between politics and clownishness and rarely miss an opportunity to make common cause with stomach churning buffoonery. They are a cross between Ted Baxter and Michele Bachmann, they are the vomit left at the bottom of the shot glass.

Yes, yes, technology is advancing our capacities for change. But whose labor power services these technological breakthroughs? Yes, Wernher von Braun was lionized for helping US astronauts land on the moon, but the 10,000 enslaved Jews, Roma, Soviet soldiers, and French resistance fighters who died in Mittelbau-Dora concentration camp, those slaves who helped this Nazi Party SS scientist get his V-2 rocket destruction-ready to obliterate London, don't have moon craters named after them! Nor do the epileptic children upon whom Kurt H. Debus, designer of Apollo's pressure suit and onboard life systems, conducted oxygen deprivation experiments (McDonald 2019).

How do young people react to the notion that their country is involved in a "forever war" against terrorism? How do they handle the knowledge that we could be saving millions of people by bringing them medical aid for what are known and treatable diseases—we have the technology to do that—but we don't. Capitalism creates such vast inequalities between groups within states and between states. Pollution from air, water, sanitation, and hygiene is responsible for more deaths than disease in the developing world. The rich countries can afford to export their pollution to the peripheral countries. We know that our fellow human beings, our fellow planetary citizens, are being poisoned
by lead, toxic smoke from burning refuse in industrial dumps, from smoking cigarettes, from mercury, hexavalent chromium, and pesticides, which have become obsolete. After a while, the death toll is just too much to bear, but we can fast-forward all the messy details out of our consciousness through digital distractions. Our coping mechanisms involve surfing the television channels or the Internet; we don’t have to stay in any one place for too long. Our antiwar efforts are really activated in the arena of cultural protest—through music, dress, plays, Internet sites—that are connected to rebelling against bourgeois society—as if war is just another feature of bourgeois society.

**PJ:** The system cannot be changed from within the system—this is why your shift from postmodernism to Marxism is so important.

**PM:** What I am concerned with is how war is connected to class structure, to capitalism itself, and I agree here with Garry Leech (2012) that capitalism itself is a type of war, a "structural genocide," and it will take more than transgressions in the arena of culture to combat this genocide. All of us participate in this structural genocide as much by what we choose not to do, as by what actions we deliberately choose to take in our everyday lives. It is the concentration of capital within global corporations, their hegemonic control of the structures of ideological production through media, which largely makes this genocide possible, and, of course, the policies of international regulatory agencies. Even when we choose to resist, we find ourselves regulated in the way in which we are permitted to violate the rules—we are given a certain part of the public square where we can picket, chant slogans, and the like.

Postmodern antirationalism and antiuniversalism from our avant-garde professoriate will not help us here. The struggle is up to us, to make sure we have a historical record that is truthful, and that we have safeguards in place so that corporations and government agencies cannot delete our national history. Because without memory, without collective history, education is impossible. Every educator should be involved in making history by struggling to make the world a better place by connecting their local concerns to larger global concerns—war, industrial pollution, human rights, freedom from constant surveillance. Now there is another issue here about historical records. Who owns our personal historical record? This generation’s personal history is recorded in some form—who owns it? Whoever owns it can control us. And I’m not talking here in the language of theosophy or anthroposophy about the Akashic records containing or incriminating information—that is, about their sex lives—gleaned from the correspondence of their fellows. And letters from soldiers—their acts of "epistolary self-presentation" were frequently recirculated and sometimes published (Henkin 2006). On the positive side, early postal correspondence also allowed people to participate in family life in an intimate way that did not depend upon physical presence.

**PJ:** Nowadays, various gadgets and services collect enormous amounts of our personal data in exchange for "personalized" services. For instance, my new phone is structurally unable to browse the Internet without knowing my age, occupation, gender, and marital status; in return, I get restaurant recommendations based on my favorite foods and flight discounts based on my typical destinations. However convenient, these developments bring along an elitist in-built ideological baggage, which is painfully absent from our customer contracts. Whenever we subscribe to this or that digital service, a small part of our existence gets a digital life of its own. In the process, it moves out of our control—and returns as a control mechanism for our behavior. What is the real price of our "free" restaurant recommendations, flight discounts, and heart monitors? Are we, like ancient American natives, giving away our best skins and gold in exchange for worthless glass pearls? What is the social role of metadata, and how does it relate to relations of consumption and production?

**PM:** As Evgeny Morozov wrote in The Observer (2014), our "techno-Kafkaesque" world is being subject to algorithmic regulation through technological innovation, and this will get exponentially worse in the coming years. Our daily activities will be monitored by sensors as part of the "smartification" of everyday life. Google will soon mediate, monitor, and report on everything we do. Procter & Gamble has created a Safeguard Germ Alarm that uses sensors to monitor the doors of toilet stalls in public washrooms. The alarm blares once you leave the stall and can only be stopped by the push of the soap-dispensing button. Morozov mentions that Google plans to expand the use of its Android operation system to include smart watches, smart cars, smart thermostats, and more.

Smart mattresses that track your respiration and heart rates and how much you move at night and smartphones that measure how many steps you take each day, or tools that measure how much you spend as opposed to how much you earn (to fight tax fraud) and "advances" such as remotely controlled cars that can be shut down from a distance if you are being pursued by the police—all of these will increasingly regulate your behavior. When Apple patented technology that deploys sensors in your smartphone that can block your texting feature if it is determined that you are driving and talking on your phone, and when face recognition systems are made public to prevent your car from starting should it fail to recognize the face of the driver (and send the picture to the car’s owner), we can rejoice or be greatly alarmed. I am inclined to feel wary. The age of algorithmic regulation stipulates that we will be hived within a cybernetic feedback society in which the systems regulating our behavior maintain their stability by constantly learning and adapting themselves to changing circumstances. Morozov makes the important point that technologies that will detect credit-card fraud or tax fraud will do nothing to hinder superrich families who write tax exemptions into law or who operate offshore schemes that funnel millions into their bank accounts. These technologies will always be evaded by the rich and powerful.

**PJ:** Of course! Technologies will always be controlled by their owners—I am much more concerned about their users . . .

**PM:** Morozov cites the Italian philosopher Giorgio Agamben, who writes about the transformation of the idea of government. We have traditional hierarchical relations
between causes and effects. We used to be governed by causes, Now this relationship has been inverted, and we are governed by effects. This is emblematic of modernity, according to Agamben. If the government no longer wants to govern the causes but only manages the effects, then we are in for some difficult times. Don't try to find out the causes of diseases; try to keep yourself out of the health-care system by being healthy. It's the insurance company model of algorithmic regulation, according to Morozov. If our heart rates and our blood pressure can be tracked as a means of proactive protection, will we be considered "deviant" if we choose to refuse these devices? Will we be punished, in other words, with higher insurance premiums? In a cybernetically regulated world powered by the privatization agenda of Silicon Valley, if we fail to take adequate responsibility for our health, will we be punished? Will we be seen as failures if we fail to keep healthy?

Well, Morozov makes a good point when he says that this lets the fast food companies off the hook, nor does it address class-based differences and questions of inequality. We all should be monitoring the condition of our feces and if we don't self-track sufficiently, then it is our fault if we get sick. Forget the exploitation by the food and pharmaceutical companies! This is what Morozov calls politics without politics—a politics identified with the "nudging state" that relies on metadata. As correlating aggregate data on individuals becomes more sophisticated, data on individuals goes to the highest bidder, as our personal data become state assets. The algorithmic state is reputation-obsessed and entrepreneurial. One day, everybody will be their own brand, and nearly every key social interaction will be ranked. This leads to the culture of resilience in which it is agreed that we cannot prevent threats to our existence, so we must equip ourselves with the necessary savvy to face these threats individually.

So this world that Morozov describes blithely glances over or studiously avoids serious issues facing humanity such as economic equality and emancipation—all that is important in the cybernetic world of feedback mechanisms in real time is the creation of social homeostasis in a world of polished surfaces, aerosol politics, and epidermal social relations of consumption. What is blurred and discounted are the social relations of production and how these relations are connected to the ongoing centralization of the control of the provenance of information. We are faced with an uncritical rehearsal of Brave New World (Huxley 1932), and while the soma might taste good, all life is etherized inside the Internet Box.

PJ: Following recent technological developments in collection, storage, and manipulation of digital information, we have landed into the age of big data—and Huxley's brave new world has indeed graduated from science fiction into the real life. Therefore, it is hardly a surprise that various issues pertaining to big data provoke growing attention in diverse research communities from information science to education (see Ford and Jandrić 2019). Please link big data to manipulation. What is the role of science in the struggle against the digital brave new world?

PM: I am sure you are aware, Petar, that social scientists at Cornell University, the University of California, San Francisco (UCSF), and Facebook have revealed the result of a controversial experiment (controversial because it was covert and relied on proprietary data), in an article entitled "Experimental Evidence of Massive-Scale Emotional Contagion through Social Networks" published online in Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America (Kramer, Guillory and Hancock 2014). In their attempt to alter the emotions of 600,000 people, these scientists egregiously breached accepted ethical research standards in discovering, apparently, that emotions can spread among users of online social networks, which can be taken to mean that emotions expressed throughout online social networks (in this case in mood-laden texts) can influence or alter the moods of others (they did this via a Facebook-controlled ranking algorithm that regularly filters posts, stories, and activities shared by friends).

It is still unclear if this experiment was funded by the US Army Research Office or some other branch of the US military. Even if it wasn't, learning how to manipulate how we act and feel in social networks such as Facebook obviously has powerful potential for military attempts to control large populations via the Internet, populations worldwide that are fed up with immiserization capitalism and being forced to comply with government austerity programs that hurt the poor and benefit the transnational capitalist class. Of course, an experiment determining whether 1.28 billion Facebook users could potentially be manipulated through "massive-scale emotional contagion through social networks" (Kramer, Guillory and Hancock 2014) is not simply a means of understanding what advertisements people are likely to respond to but is geared to shed scientific light on how to alter people's emotions so that they can be manipulated collectively.

PJ: Collective manipulation has always been a wet dream of the ruling class, but experiments such as this bring its threat to a completely new level.

PM: When you sign up for Facebook, you give a blanket consent to the company's research group to use you as a potential lab rat, as a condition of using the service, so the university researchers in this case obviously took advantage of the fine print to avoid requiring informed consent from the subjects involved. Apparently, however, in the case of the involvement of Cornell University, approval for the research was only given after the data collection had been completed. Because the responsibility for data collection and analysis was given over by the university researchers to Facebook, the academics involved were said to have "not directly engaged in human research and that no review by the Cornell Human Research Protection Program was required" (Cornell University Media Relations Office 2014). Does this mean academic researchers can also team up with any organization, including the US military, and escape ethical restrictions?

Everywhere you go today, you are forced to consume information that has been tested in order to prompt you to contact certain companies, or purchase certain goods, or remember certain information. At airports, in some supermarkets, at some movie theaters, and on billboards. It's very hard to escape this saturation society. But being the target of deliberate emotional manipulation puts us more squarely into the suffocating world of 1984 (Orwell 1949). We are already there. Have you ever had a dream, Petar, in which you are dreaming inside the dream? And then you awake from the dream in your dream, but when you are awake you are still in the dream. Advances in technology help us awake from the dream in the dream, but they do not help us to live outside of the dream, in the domain of wakefulness. Are the advances in technology worth it, when we no longer have the agency to create ourselves, but are merely flesh-like putty...
in the hands of the government and corporations? This is why critical pedagogy is so urgent today. Another world is possible and critical pedagogy can play a part in its creation. Yes, I believe in transcendence, and unlike Vattimo or Agamben, I don't believe that transcendence cuts off questions prematurely. We need a philosophy of praxis, a Marxist-humanist pedagogy driven by the desire to live in a world of freely associated labor where value production is no longer the motor of human existence.

PJ: What does it mean to reinvent ourselves in the age of the network? Can you please analyze the role of critical pedagogy in that process?

PM: I'm answering your questions now, Petar, from Ensenada, Mexico. Yesterday at Instituto McLaren de Pedagogía Crítica, I was speaking to my students about the importance of being attentive to the deep cultural assumptions that provide the deep moral and conceptual frameworks for our pedagogies. I was sharing with them some of the important work of C. A. Bowers (2014), who argues that digital technologies cannot represent the tacit knowledge and cultural norms that represent the daily exchanges in people's everyday lives, knowledges that sustain the natural ecologies of diverse groups of people who inhabit our planet. How, for instance, are face-to-face mentoring relationships that have helped to create the educational commons being superseded by computer programs such as Blackboard and print-based storage systems and thinking that are so prominent in digital technologies? How does corporate-controlled media/digital culture promote a particular form of Western individualism dependent upon consumerism, and, for instance, the notion that economic development and growth is automatically a good thing—all of which can lead, of course, to further poverty and the loss of natural resources?

Naturally, it can lead to much more—to structural genocide, ecocide, and epistemicide. As you elaborate in your recent paper (Jandricić 2019a), information and data do not amount to wisdom. Bowers cites the neosocial Darwinian and neoliberal perspectives of Hans Moravec and Ray Kurzweil, who argue that digital technologies are at the point of displacing human beings in the process of evolution by way of self-correcting machine intelligence. Here, in Ensenada, I am thinking of the history of the Cochimies, the Pai-Pai, the Kumiai, the Kiliwa, the Cucapa, the Guayaira, the Pericues—what were the so-called great movements of progress that destroyed their cultural commons generations ago? And how many other _pueblos originales_ will be destroyed in the future by the evolution of machine intelligence?

**Life Is Jerky**

PJ: Let's engage in a wee thought experiment, Peter. Imagine two drawers. The first drawer contains all works of arts, music, and literature—Shakespeare, Hemingway, London, Kerouac . . . /Picasso, da Vinci, Michelangelo . . . /Zappa, Mozart, the Rolling Stones . . . you name it, it's there. The second drawer contains all scientific achievements—physics, chemistry, sociology, anthropology, history . . . Which drawer, in your opinion, contains more knowledge about the world around us?

PM: I would choose the first drawer but would try to steal as much from the second drawer when nobody was looking. Actually, I have an interest in quantum theory.

PJ: What do you think about social networking and websites like Facebook?

PM: Facebook promotes people's narcissism. I prefer email. I have a certain visual aesthetic I enjoy in posting photos. It's mostly a vehicle to promote political causes, that's the best part of it—I am sitting at a coffee shop in L.A. People are ignoring their companions. They are obsessed with their phones and iPads. People are redundant.

PJ: You are an avid user of digital gadgets—more than half of this book has been written on your smartphone. How do you feel about the tremendous assimilation of information and communication technologies into our daily lives?

(During our online conversation, Peter provided three different short stories about these developments. They share the same general message, but explore different angles and evoke different feelings. I do not feel that it would be right to publish only one of these stories and restrain readers from the pleasure of engaging with others. Therefore, I will merely list the three responses in reverse chronological order.)

PM: Story 1 (June 30, 2014). Today it was raining heavily in Jinhua, China. Black streaks were running down the cheeks of the buildings like mascara on mothers weeping for their lost children. I stopped by a water-logged restaurant that served countryside-style food, with a yearning for some Jiuqu Hongmei tea. After dinner, while I was admiring posters of Chairman Mao and Chairman Hua Guofeng, I noticed about ten young waitresses in orange uniforms in the upstairs dining area. They were all sitting together in the dark, their faces eerily illuminated by their large Samsung cell phones. They were playing games and watching videos. All of them were silent. There was no dialogue. Occasionally a waitress would leave her chair to attend to a customer, and then it was back to the darkened room to the comfort of her cell phone. Outside the restaurant were unpainted concrete buildings and hydroelectric towers. They also stood silent.

PM: Story 2 (June 27, 2014). Recently I visited a 1000-year-old Buddhist Temple in Hangzhou. Sacred figures from Buddhist history were carved out of stone. Gold painted statues of Buddha loomed over the visitors who were both pious and curious. In one temple, at least a hundred monks were chanting in unison, as great clouds of incense wafted through the open doors. Winding my way down from the highest temple on the hill, I noticed one of the monks on his cell phone. Perhaps he was checking the World Cup results? Or calling his condo in Shanghai?

PM: Story 3 (May 25, 2013). I loathe technology, and yet, like many others, I am addicted to it. I hate cell phones, except for use in emergencies, yet I have an iPhone, which I check regularly. I hate the Internet, yet I spend time on the web each day checking what I have found to be reliable sources and authors. I am irritated when people around me are talking loudly on their cell phones. I greatly dislike the consumer hype around cell phone cases, and the like. There is just too much information available. It is overwhelming. Everybody creates their own Internet worlds, publishes their own journals and blogs, and sometimes you find something of interest.

PJ: Please link these insights to the world of academia.

PM: I remember instances where professors in academic institutions who publish their first few books, suddenly become celebrities among their students. They cultivate
their image as social critics, shop carefully for their in-class sunglasses, black attire, and the men sport shadow beards that never seem to grow. Their students have little knowledge about whether their professors’ work is good or not but they have published some books, so their students treat them as academic celebrities. I feel it’s a little bit like the film *American Psycho* (Harron 2000), when so much fuss is made about business cards, the texture of the paper, the print, the color—it’s all just image management. Academics get into their Internet worlds, advertise their work, and all of that.

**PJ:** 2013 issue of *The International Journal of Critical Pedagogy* entitled “Paulo and Nita: Sharing Life, Love, and Intellect” is dedicated to the concept of revolutionary love and its power to challenge oppressive social relationships. Your paper in that issue, “Reflections on love and revolution” (McLaren 2013), shows that the concept of revolutionary love extends from private sphere into important questions such as re-evaluation of the contemporary role of academics. However, Paulo and Nita Freire lived in the world of one-directional mass media such as television and newspapers. Can you relate the concept of revolutionary love to information and communication technologies?

**PM:** I believe that love is a social relationship as opposed to an entirely private matter. I believe that love can be productive for the collective emancipation of people. One might think that technological innovations—the social media, for example—have enhanced the possibility of love expanding into the collective arena of social development. But the class interests embedded in the social media—that is, the ideology of individual consumption, the commodification of subjectivities (especially the commodified individualism of neoliberal capital with its exclusive and singular morality), the exploitation of the social labor of others (the bourgeois treatment of people as commodities to be “owned” or possessed, which is increased by economic dependency and the social division of labor dominated by property relations)—have disabled the emancipatory potential of love and collective solidarity. Meeting the material needs of people—rather than treating people as “stranded assets” useful only when they can be maximized for their purchasing power by an embrace of market fundamentalism—creates the necessary conditions of possibility for radical love and the solidarity needed to create a world unburdened by value creation, a world committed to freely associated individuals.

**PJ:** Joe Kincheloe dubbed you “poet laureate of the educational left” (2000: ix). Your first book *Cries from the Corridor* (reprinted and expanded in *Life in Schools* [McLaren 2016]) is widely considered as a masterpiece of literature. In recent years, you started writing poetry (a few of your poems can be found in *MRZine* [2019]). Overall, your unique expression has made a strong influence on the success of your academic work (more about your relationship to writing can be found in the 2008 interview for the University of Waterloo [McLaren, McMurry, and McGuirk 2008]). I would like to learn about the “mechanics” of your writing. How do you write your poems? Do you use pen and paper, or type them on one of your gadgets? How do you write your articles? Do you do everything on screen, or print your articles and work on them in cafés? Why?

**PM:** Now as for writing—well, that’s an interesting process. People approach me now about my idiosyncratic style, and that’s something that they didn’t do years ago, so maybe that’s a sign that I am getting better. But I think people are starting to appreciate it more and more. My present style has to do with the writing I did in the 1960s, my affinity for the Beat Poets, encouragement I got from meeting Allen Ginsberg, Timothy Leary, and a lot of very creative people. When I write a paper, there are sections that are meant to be read. Then there are just sections that are meant to convey ideas. I am trying to bring a lot more young people into critical pedagogy, and they like the spoken-word sense of some of my paragraphs.

Sometimes I will rip pages out of magazines, shuffle them, and then just look for metaphors and strange combinations of words that have little to do with each other. I’m not sure who did the same, I think perhaps William Burroughs. Some people don’t like my work because they find it too self-conscious, as if I am trying too hard to be hip, that kind of thing. But that’s how I look at the world, I try to bring a little of a lot of different historical selves into my work—artist, poet, activist, essayist, teacher, student, interlocutor—and writing really does depend on how you feel when you put pen to paper, or finger to keyboard. Sometimes I feel more didactic than at other times. Sometimes more like somebody provoking an idea in the manner of McLuhan’s “probes” or “mosaics.”

**PJ:** So that’s the “mechanics” of your writing. How does it relate to ideas?

**PM:** I am always trying to point out that ideas don’t leap from some metaphysical springboard in our brains into a world unsullied and pristine. Our ideas are always populated by other people’s meanings, which is another way of saying that they are always subject to systems of mediation—culture, society, environment, mode of production, etc.—and to swindles of fulfillment. The circumstances in which we engage the world as reflective agents consist, partly, of conditions not of our own making. But the limited choices that we have as social agents can make both an immediate and cumulative imprint upon our present reality. Our ideas are never ideas in themselves since their meanings are always relative to the systems that mediate them. Their meanings are also relative to the ways in which we actively exercise those ideas in our existential engagement with others—in other words, they are praxiological. Critical reflexivity demands a critical language and a language of criticism. For instance, theories of ideology can help us understand the politics of commonsense knowledge, how we come to understand the world as we experience it on a day-to-day basis. The idea of retroactive causation (i.e., an effect that posits in own causes, a contingency that retroactively creates its own necessity) can help us ascertain how our actions are not the results of our intentions, but are retroactively posited after the event—we posit, in other words, the very necessity that determines us (Zizek 2012: 466). We often narrate or resignify our actions after the event in order to take into account the effects or social impact of our actions, without knowing it. Contingency is therefore embedded in every act of knowing.

This idea helps us understand how our actions are not the result of pure intentionality. We unconsciously reclaim our intentions relative to their social impact, normalizing our actions in the process of recreating “reasonable” reasons for them, reconciling our previous understanding with new knowledge of its effects. In addition, a language of critique helps us grasp the idea that because we are part of reality, we can never be neutral with respect to reality. Our unfinishedness as human beings is the result of the unfinishedness of the world, a world that is always in flux. We cannot separate our ways of knowing reality from reality itself. So I write, and rewrite, with the understanding that my thoughts are never completely satisfying or complete, and that they have been shaped by so many experiences...
that I am still struggling to understand, even years after they occurred, yes, even decades later. I realize that they are always abandoned thoughts, hung out to dry on history's sagging clothesline. For someone who rips them off the clothesline, they may feel like a hair shirt, or a spiked garter. I am sure that's how members of Opus Dei will feel reading my work on liberation theology. But I am heartened by the knowledge that some of the ideas have been worn in battle, not just at the lecture podium, but in the streets, on the picket line, and on the factory floor—and by inmates who have read my work in prisons. Ideas of Che Guevara, Óscar Romero, Hugo Chávez, Paulo Freire, Leonardo Boff, Jesus Christ, and others whom I have tried to make relevant for building a revolutionary critical pedagogy for these challenging times of resurgent fascism worldwide.

I write mostly on scraps of paper with a pen. Then I put them on the computer. Then back to the pen. And back to the computer, and so on. I just hate reading on the computer. I can't do it, even with a big screen. I have to print out drafts and read them on paper. They only make sense to me on paper. The screen is just part of the work process. And then, I need to read my work in page proofs, in the final typeface. Only then can I judge my work. And I am notorious for making last-minute changes in the page proofs. Always, always there are errors in the book or published essays. I always spot them and they always annoy me. There are few good copyeditors anymore—they have all been phased out by journals and publishers that want to pare down the publishing process.

PJ: I'm sure that our publishers will be delighted with your last-minute changes. And what about your public talks? How are they related to your writing?

PM: I always hear my own voice when I read my work. I speak the words to myself. I think a lot of work comes to life when the right person is reading it. I enjoy reading my work at conferences because I wouldn't dream of giving a talk unless I felt I had something to say and the things I have to say I feel passionate about. I am not an academic. I don't care much for academic conventions or academic life. In fact, it's a brutal world. I put a lot of energy into my talks, and few people complain that I am very much emotionally invested in the causes that I write about. On occasion I like to break off from reading my paper and be extemporaneous. Now you might be asking: who cares? You are a revolutionary and you shouldn't really care about all the aesthetic details. Just get the message across. Write like a journalist in the most accessible style possible. I respect that type of journalism like a journalist in the most accessible style possible. I respect that type of journalism

PJ: How do I personally feel about the Internet? I feel it is a tremendous source for bullying, for deception. Just going through hundreds of email messages a day, reading them on the computer. I can't do it, even with a big screen. I have to print out drafts and read them on paper. Then back to the pen. And back to the computer, and so on. I just hate reading on the computer. I can't do it, even with a big screen. I have to print out drafts and read them on paper. They only make sense to me on paper. The screen is just part of the work process. And then, I need to read my work in page proofs, in the final typeface. Only then can I judge my work. And I am notorious for making last-minute changes in the page proofs. Always, always there are errors in the book or published essays. I always spot them and they always annoy me. There are few good copyeditors anymore—they have all been phased out by journals and publishers that want to pare down the publishing process.

PM: I was impressed with Carlos' videos where the image jerks around. I thought to myself: That's what life is like a lot of the time. There has been very little smooth sailing in my life. Life is jerky. It shifts around in fits and starts. It's like driving an old car that shakes and then falls apart. All that is left is you sitting on the seat. The rest of the car is in pieces lying all around you. I feel that the journey we call life is a lot like that. I can deal with the jerks, and being jerked around by people, by circumstances, by the technological changes that speed me up or slow me down, but sometimes I wish the road has less bumps. Of course my life has been filled with much personal trauma so the jerks usually don't seem so bad. But when you are jerking around, your imagination is more difficult to focus. So you need a reprieve. I get that in my writing or my creative work.

PJ: Now that we know what Peter the critical theorist thinks of the Internet, we have arrived at the obvious last question: how do you feel about the Internet?

PM: How do I personally feel about the Internet? I feel it is a tremendous source for cranial addiction. My invitations to contribute essays in journals and books used to arrive in the snail mail; you had around nine months to a year to produce a work. Invitations now come fast and furiously and editors expect you to put something together in less than three months. So it does affect the quality of the work in a negative way, but you are able to get your ideas out there in vaster quantities, which is a good thing if you believe that what you have to say is worthwhile in making the world a better place. But you pay a price. It is more difficult to read books carefully, without being interrupted by the Internet, or rather, allowing the Internet to interrupt you. It is a ferocious distraction from things that need to be done. Cell phones take priority over conversations with family and friends. Once you unplug yourself, you enter a world where everyone else is plugged in. It's become a tool of psychological and image management. It's an alternate reality that entrap you and enables you to feel you are bonding with people in a special way when, in fact, you probably don't mean much to those with whom you are corresponding. For many young people today, it has become a source for bullying, for deception. Just going through hundreds of email messages a day, to see which ones are relevant to your life, takes hours.

Look what Donald Trump has done with tweets. He has sent US democracy reeling, systems of governance have been shattered, the regulatory power of the state has been emasculated as a hideous charade, demagoguery has been normalized and hate speech weaponized into high-grade ideological plutonium, our immortal souls have been algorithmically uploaded in computers ensepulchered in Weber's iron cage set in a global cemetery while our zombified bodies feed on corpses from freshly dug graves, and democracy may not recover. You see, democracy has already been destroyed in a technological apocalypse, and we can only see it in our rearview mirrors as we drive past the wreckage into new oblivions of our own making. I have often fantasized about just getting away from technology, and keeping a ham radio available in case I'm on a boat crossing the Atlantic and a storm is approaching and, say, my companions in the boat are a tiger, an orangutan, a zebra, and a hyena...