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Wars Have Got Boring: The Affect of Watching Everything All the Time

RESEARCH

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ABSTRACT

Martin Heidegger deemed boredom as the mood of the twentieth century. Polysemic, yet quintessentially affective, boredom is a complex and conflicting experience of different types of emotions. A mix of hope, resolve, exhaustion and melancholia, happening all at once, all the time which can be ascribed to ceaseless mediation and the banalization of the spectacle. Ever since the detonation of the first atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the conception of absolute annihilation has been encapsulated in images, rendering it palpable and consumable for all. The unending devastation of the unfortunate 'other'- the non-European, colonized, marginalized, post/de-colonial, or occupied- has become the accepted norm, and as a result, tediously mundane. The daily ordeal of the 'other' does not arise from a visual fabrication rooted in the value or sentiment derived from photographs, news broadcasts, or tweets. Instead, it is a gradual and ordinary experience of oppression lodged into everyday life. This article will attempt to comment on how advanced technologies that underpin this 'Age of Industrial Complexes' have engendered the contemporary psychological terrains where daily tribulations scrutinize the network of our historical contexts. For the internally fractured posthuman subjects inhabiting today's technologically mediated world, the crux of the matter pertains to the myriad facets of daily life in its diverse forms, locations, and fragments. Additionally, it pertains to the framework of sensory perception upon which these experiences are both constructed and dismantled. The objective is to scrutinize the unhurried and tedious processes involved in unveiling the perpetually destabilized presents that constitute our contemporary reality.

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> "There is shame as well as shock in looking at the close-up of a real horror. Perhaps the only people with the right to look at images of suffering of (this) extreme order are those who could do something to alleviate it … or those who could learn from it. The rest of us are voyeurs, whether or not we mean to be."
>
> -Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others*.

In war is fused an ancient desire for it and fear of it as a fundamental, authentic, devastating, and recurrent experience that bears an unbridled sense of reality and finality, especially with respect to the question of death and mourning in its most enforced and bare form.[1] Wars are the site of extraordinary brutality despite the apparent subscription to legalities or moral-ethical scopes that bear hardly any real effect on the ghastly aftermaths that are left in its wake. War is also the compound, culmination, and continuance of each and every individual and societal matrix of control. War is an elevated form of reality, an "extra-real" everyday life, where life force is stretched to its extreme, constantly haunted by the looming specter of death. Wars mark a radical before and an after where "an event whose occurrence is lived, experienced, and communicated as an event" is embedded into particular imaginations and aesthetics of war.[2] Yet, calling wars boring sounds untenable, if not outrageous, but the intention of this paper is not to be provocative; instead, it is to point out the created depravity of the world which we inhabit where even wars, death, destruction, and its irreparable pains could 'be boring' and what this paper wants to suggest is that boredom can be a useful methodological tool with which to calibrate, understand, maybe even mitigate, the fact of war and everyday life by implicating the techno-fascist design and disposition of contemporary mediated life.

1. IMAGE, WAR, AND THE IMAGE OF WAR

In February 2022, a photograph of an explosion of a residential area began circulating across various news outlets and social media platforms, accompanied by a claim that Kyiv was under attack by Russia accompanied by taglines like "War has Begun," "World War III on its way." However, this purported depiction of conflict was promptly debunked by fact-checkers.[3] The images in question were from Israeli military airstrikes on the Gaza Strip in 2018 and 2021 and had not prompted such reactions in the event of its occurrence. Similarly, during the beginning of the second week of October, 2023, in the wake of Israel's heavy military campaign in Palestine, global celebrities like Justin Bieber and Jamie Lee Curtis shared messages of prayer, though for Israel, over photographs of bombings of the Gaza strip.[4] Such incidents epitomize a recurrent pattern in contemporary society, where images of warfare—missile barrages in the sky, the wanton destruction of buildings, the grim specter of death—are ubiquitous. The currency of war images is undeniable, empires have been built on it. In the mid-19th century, the Associated Press 'revolutionized' news dissemination by turning it into a commodity driven by captivating images rather than mere event-reporting marking the onset of what Daniel Boorstin termed the "Graphic Revolution," where sensationalized imagery was deployed to eclipse "pale" realities.[5] Baudrillard further deepened this understanding of the impact of media on warfare as he challenged traditional notions of conflict, asserting that the Gulf War was not a traditional war at all but rather a simulation, a hyperreality where the conflict/war/

1 See Barbara Biesecker. "No Time for Mourning: The Rhetorical Production of the Melancholic Citizen-Subject in the War on Terror," *Philosophy & Rhetoric* 40, no. 1, 147–69, 2007; Nouri Gana. "War, Poetry, Mourning: Darwish, Adonis, Iraq," *Public Culture* 22, no. 1, 33–65, 2010; Shifa Haq, *In Search of Return: Mourning the Disappearances in Kashmir*, Lexington Books, 2020; Jay Winter. *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning: The Great War in European Cultural History*, vol. 1, Cambridge University Press, 1998.

2 Lorenz Engell, *Thinking Through Television*, Amsterdam University Press, 2019.

3 The article discusses the spread of misleading images purportedly showing explosions in Ukraine, clarifying that while one of the three photos is from Kyiv, the other two actually depict explosions in Gaza from past conflicts. https://www.reuters.com/article/fact-check/photos-of-explosions-show-israeli-palestinian-conflict-not-ukraine-idUSL1N2V012H/.

4 The report speaks to Justin Bieber's controversial Instagram post supporting Israel, which featured an image of destruction in Gaza. After criticism, he deleted the post and re-shared a similar message without the background. It also includes other celebrities, like Jamie Lee Curtis and Gal Gadot, also faced backlash for their posts related to the Israel-Hamas conflict. https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/music/news/justin-bieber-israel-palestine-gaza-instagram-b2428156.html.

5 Daniel J. Boorstin. *The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in North America*, Vintage Books, 1961, p. 13.

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issue as presented by the media and political discourse, was a carefully constructed spectacle.[6] To Baudrillard, the war was a meticulously managed narrative in which the real events were overshadowed by a flood of media images and simulations which served to not only distort our understanding of the war but shaped the events themselves by forever blurring the line(s) between reality and representation. Baudrillard questioned the authenticity of our experiences in a world where simulations and hyperreality dominate our perception of events, where the meaning of reality gets usurped by the nexus of the Media and Military Industrial Complexes which the Empire weaponizes to dictate and drive contemporary existence. Paul Virilio similarly examined the transformative power of technology on perception, arguing that advancements in mediums like film, photography, and eventually computer graphics shifted the balance of power between reality and representation where the dominance of real-time images over the objects they represent ushered in a new era where virtuality overshadowed actuality.[7] What these scholars suggest in no uncertain terms is that the image and the representation supplant the real; the object represented loses its magnitude while a frontier of images takes the place of reality, which often produce a crescively splintered, disjointed and transhistorical elocution of experiences capable only of grasping fractured instances and severed details over whole fields, and hence, confusing, circulating, and manipulating one war's image with that of another. This is not to take away from the very real problem of propaganda and dis/mis-information but to point to the remarkable conditions that allow for the destruction of peoples to take on such volatile forms within the complex of the mediascapes we inhabit. One of the reasons for this is that some wars are more beneficial/important/vital to some than others. Culturally, though, such phenomena contain the accretion of new vision machines that burgeon artificial domains of information (data and images) that form an unaccustomed demesne of experience.

Media theorists and historians have long asserted that war begets all media, and the history of modern media and modern warfare is all and the same.[8] Throughout the annals of human conflict, the orchestration of warfare has consistently leaned upon the mechanisms of visual representation, sometimes to furnish meticulous portrayals of troop maneuvers and deployment of military armaments and sometimes as symbolic pleas for peace. Right from the late nineteenth century, gaining momentum through the world wars, technology was emplaced as the fundamental demand and determinant for existence in the modern world. Electricity, trains, cameras, telegraphs, phonographs, motorcars, the rotary press, etc., came about within a few years of each other, speeding life up, making communication instant, which not only manipulated but overhauled how time was experienced, and space was traversed. To Virilio, the concept of speed was latent until the 19th century which changed with the proliferation of the combustion engine and the advent of the electric telegraph. Speed engendered a multiplicity of novel forms across the social, political, economic, and cultural spectra as this epoch bore witness to a concurrent convergence of implosions and explosions, whereby the development of novel war apparatuses engendered "a double disappearance: the disappearance of matter in nuclear disintegration and the disappearance of places in vehicular extermination."[9]

Complex technologies give rise to distinct political economies centered on innovative vision regimes, vision machines, and governing systems, which facilitate the creation of virtual information domains and advancements in image warfare, remote weaponry, and military spectacles. Consequently, these developments profoundly reshape the cultural and operational frameworks essential for understanding warfare, bringing about substantial transformations in its essence, significance, and ceremonial aspects. According to Virilio, exclusively perceiving the world through screens and cameras imposes total control over individuals, subjecting them to a relentless onslaught of data and images, resulting in an absolute 'industrialization of vision' where technology serves as an extension of the body, or conversely, the body becomes an extension of technology, reducing the subject to little more than an information recording device.[10] The idea and experience of the high-tech explosion inadvertently put the image

6 Jean Baudrillard. *The Gulf War Did Not Take Place*, Indiana University Press, 1995.

7 Paul Virilio. *The Vision Machine*, Indiana University Press, 1994, p. 63.

8 Friedrich Kittler. "The History of Communication Media," *CTHEORY*, 7–30, 1996; Daniel C. Hallin, *The Uncensored War: The Media and Vietnam*, University of California Press, 1989.

9 Paul Virilio. *Speed and Politics: An Essay on Dromology*, Semiotext(e), 1986, p. 134.

10 Paul Virilio. *Open Sky*, vol. 35, Verso Books, 1997, p. 89.

as central to the conceptualizations of war, military, and military strategy, specifically the cinematic image which could capture (with apparent precision and accuracy of representation of) stasis, motion, speed, and event. The metamorphosis of warfare, wherein the rapidity of destruction began to emulate the velocity of light, courtesy of laser weaponry and computer-controlled or remotely-operated weapons systems, ushered in an era where the very world itself underwent a "geostrategic homogenization."[11] Micro-technologies, coupled with the ceaseless rhythm of updates and modifications, reshape the world where military technology and its entwinements to technocratic systems exercise an all-encompassing dominion over every facet of daily existence. Even though it could still be claimed that death is the final taboo – the last thing which arouses us it has, within the crucible of contemporary culture and across diverse media platforms including, but not limited to, the realms of cinema, television, news broadcasting, and social media, been presented in a manner that has more often than not worked to anesthetize collective sensibilities.[12] The passive or inert attenuation of emotional responsiveness towards images of (actual) death and destruction can be deemed an outgrowth of the ceaseless generation and dissemination of imagery and narratives deeply entrenched within the theater of war and algorithms.

2. MODERNITY: WAR AND PEACE AND BOREDOM

> "Boredom is a very useful instrument with which to explore the past, and to stage a meeting between it and the present"
>
> -Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*

> "Wars, pogroms, and persecutions have all been part of the flight from boredom... since half of the sins of mankind are caused by it"
>
> -Bertrand Russell, *The Conquest of Happiness*.

The idea of one war to end all wars goes back before modernity, yet the oft-asserted faith in its feasibility could be said to be fundamentally modern. To Michael Howard, the idea of perpetual peace in modernity comes from the progressivist view of history which emerged with the Enlightenment.[13] Rousseau in *The Plan for Perpetual Peace* (1761), Bentham in *A Plan for a Universal and Perpetual Peace* (1789), and Kant in his essay *Toward Perpetual Peace* (1795) attempted to provide plans for what can only be called a progressivist peace project.[14] Progressivist thinkers of the time believed in the power of scientific thought, rationalism, technology, and philosophy to discern society, which they believed, when discerned, can only be made 'better,' more efficient, and more advanced. War then inadvertently came to be figured as that which is illogical and unreasonable, and peace the ideal, desired, and rational objective. Thus, across the uncompromising march of history, perpetual peace was dreamed of as an inevitability. Yet, Howard is distinctly opposed to the imagination of permanent peace as both an idealism and an ineluctability because his assertions are rooted in his viewing of bourgeois society as essentially boring.[15] Curiously, many scholars have opined that boredom, akin to perpetual peace, is inextricably linked to modernity.[16]

In modernity, individuals began to experience boredom in distinct and discernibly different ways (whether of, with, or by things) compared to their counterparts in different eras and alternate cultural contexts. Urbanization, secularization, bureaucratization, rationalization, colonization, and the juggernaut of industrialization collectively provided the backdrop for the

11 Ibid., p. 135.

12 Lars Svendsen. *A Philosophy of Boredom*, Reaktion Books, 35–44, 2005.

13 Michael Howard. *The Invention of Peace: Reflections on War and International Order*, Yale University Press, 2001.

14 Jorg Kustermans and Erik Ringmar. "Modernity, Boredom, and War: A Suggestive Essay," *Review of International Studies* 37, no. 4, 1775–1792, 2011.

15 Michael Howard. *The Invention of Peace: Reflections on War and International Order*, Yale University Press, 2001, p. 112.

16 Patrice Petro. "After Shock/Between Boredom and History," *Discourse* vol. 16(2), 77–99, 1993; Elizabeth S. Goodstein. *Experience Without Qualities: Boredom and Modernity*, Stanford University Press, 2005; Barbara Dalle Pezze and Carlo Salzani. *Essays on Boredom and Modernity*, Brill Publishing, 2009.

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transformation of boredom into a pervasive affliction that was characterized by individualized crises of meaning and new strains of alienation, privation, and atomization of individuals. Existence, specifically urban-centered life, became regimented within the framework of clock-time. A profound estrangement from time and space, the perception of temporality and spatiality, and labor, materialized. This upheaval precipitated a shift in the locus of control from laborers to employers, engendering a life marked by constant surveillance, routinization, spontaneity-deprivation, relentless repetition, and unrelenting boredom. But what is boredom? Is it an affect, an emotion, a mood, or an experiential state? Is it all of the above? In my opinion, the struggle to conceptualize boredom arises from a degree of intentional abstruseness on the part of all involved parties- the subject of boredom, the object of boredom, and the analyzer of boredom.

Boredom has been defined as the fundamental mood of modernity, the root of all evil, an experience without qualities, among other descriptions.[17] Boredom can be characterized as a surreptitious and ostensibly unavoidable aspect of everyday life and social existence, which is an obvious yet not-necessarily known, ubiquitous yet volatile phenomenon characterized by a complex symbiosis of protean experiences with subjectively different extents of acuteness and expression. Boredom manifests as a bona fide "social phenomenon" with profound ramifications[18] implicating a marked disposition that is phenomenological and affective, experiential and emotive, communal and individual, and is remarkably though not overtly contrastive from depression or apathy and even close-cousins such as alienation, anomie, ennui, and acedia. Even though boredom is conceptually proximate to anomie and alienation it's still different in the sense that there is always the scope and space to be bored in a society pockmarked with norms bereft of transcendental meaning. Boredom comes from an abrupt advertence to the futility of norms and thus gets formulated as an affective state, an emotion, and politically, emotions matter when felt by 'enough' people for then it can be read as a 'public mood.' In industrialized societies, boredom becomes the inevitable consequence of mechanized and standardized work structures, urban living conditions, and technological influences. Boredom can be deployed as a fundamentally multifaceted concept that transcends the boundaries of metaphysical abstraction and psychological states, encompassing dimensions that are inherently sociological and philosophical.[19] Lars Svendsen even goes on to make a "guess that almost one hundred percent of the population suffers from boredom in the course of their life."[20] While Baudrillard characterizes it as often indiscernible, even inconspicuous, which he likens to a "filterable virus, of fossilized tonality" that invisibly moves across the fabric of time without leaving any gaugeable traces as fine particles inscribe itself on time, leaving behind "scarcely any living memory of boredom…(which) can superimpose itself on all kinds of activities, even exciting ones, since it lives in the interstices."[21] This innate attribute lets boredom manifest anywhere, anytime, on anything while simultaneously remaining embroiled in and untouched by historical recognition. Boredom can stem from a condition of benefit, privilege, and even laziness where a desire for entertainment, especially from events, acts, and situations of disorder, disturbance, and chaos, perversely supplies people with meaning, i.e., the shocking, the extraordinary, the grossly spectacular, could potentially jolt one out of the drudgery of everyday life. To Svendsen, the very prospect of crisis can diffuse boredom. But this diffusion is only a deferral wherein the aftershocks of chaos (war included) can get quickly imbibed into the monotony of life, a degraded and troubled monotony but a monotony nonetheless.[22]

Sensationally, boredom is embodied as a lived experience of weightiness, the unrelenting predictability of bodily inertia, and the incapacity to initiate action. Politically, it embodies a perception of impregnable power hierarchies and unyielding institutions impervious to change.

17 Martin Heidegger. *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, Indiana University Press, 1995; Søren Kierkegaard. *Either/Or, Part I*, trans. Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong, Princeton University Press, 1987; Elizabeth S. Goodstein. *Experience Without Qualities: Boredom and Modernity*, Stanford University Press, 2005, p. 5.

18 Michael E. Gardiner. "Henri Lefebvre and the 'Sociology of Boredom,'" *Theory, Culture & Society* vol. 29(2) 37–62, 2012.

19 Mark Kingwell. *Wish I Were Here: Boredom and the Interface*, vol. 1, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2019.

20 Lars Svendsen. *A Philosophy of Boredom* (London: Reaktion Books, 2005), p. 15.

21 Jean Baudrillard. *Fragments: Cool Memories III*, trans. Emily Agar, Verso Press, 2007, p. 50.

22 Lars Svendsen. *A Philosophy of Boredom*. Reaktion Books, 2005.

Elementally, boredom stands in for a particular cognitive experience/state that causes a discomfort within one (on an individual level) and speaks to an aesthetic regime of disaffection and anesthesia (on a collective level), both implying a dearth of mental and emotional involvement, that culminates in a longing to see it be alleviated, thereupon relaying a slew of substantial disclosures on behavioral, experiential, aesthetic, and societal scales.[23] Ethically, it encompasses the self-destructive consciousness of enduring a purposeless existence within a world rendered inconsequential. Indeed, boredom emerges as both a collective phenomenon intertwined with societal dynamics and an individual experience while also serving as a metric by which one may gauge an array of anxieties interwoven with the measure of societal transformations.[24]

The common perception is that boredom emerges as a negative destiny intrinsic to modern, industrialized, and metropolitan domains, where individuals construct psychological defenses against the inundation of sensory stimuli and the apathetic demands of mass societies.[25] This view overlooks how deeply boredom can be an obscured instigator of aggression and behaves as an impulse towards destruction, including self-destructive tendencies. The regularizing and ethical significations of boredom rest on the existential insufficiency of the modern individual to disclose the denotation enclosed by the contemporary zeitgeist. This prompts questions about the ethical magnitude of boredom, particularizing the scale to which it assumes the role of an ethical problem and the imputations of identifying it in that way. There also exist collateral investigative attempts to understand any probable interaction that boredom may have with what can be understood as radical hostility.[26] This demands the deliberation on standardizing assessments of boredom, beyond questions of personal or individual indisposition with insubstantial implications but conspicuously as a whole psycho-pathological, politico-cultural, aesthetic-philosophical, and an historical-social phenomenon that bears and exercises considerable societal significance.[27] Such a route not unexpectedly culminates in questions contiguous to the sociohistorical configuration of boredom in not only the age of mechanical and digital reproduction but also understandings with respect to questions of Imperialism, colonization (in all its forms), and (all brands of) capitalism necessitating inquiry of larger social, political, historical, economic, aesthetic, and cultural frameworks that cultivate boredom and brings to the fore the task of intensifying phenomenological explanations accompanied by a cognizance of such ecumenical undercurrents. Boredom often functions as an aesthetic emblem of a lack, exclusion, or scarcity that resonates with the dynamics of material dominance and, therefore, can be deployed conceptually as a product of global disempowerment, constraint, and lack. Boredom can be taken as sign, symptom, and result of affective disenfranchisement, wherein it's not only resultant from the drudgery of menial, repetitive labor but also from the disempowerment of lives under the regime of ideological and material reality of colonial dominance and neoliberal capitalism.

3. BOREDOM AND WAR: THE SPECTACLE OF DEATH AND THE DEATH OF THE SPECTACLE

Many modernist writers, poets, and artists had tried to illustrate the disintegration of selfhood afflicting twentieth-century humanity. They depicted how the cohesive individuality of that era was being torn asunder by evolving social and political conditions, leaving behind, at best, fragments precariously shored up against impending ruin. Today, this challenge assumes a distinct urgency, as our selves are disseminated into discrete data fragments—Twitter feeds, Instagram posts, shopping preferences, and text trends—captured and exploited by algorithms

23 Maggie Koerth-Baker. "Boredom Gets Interesting," *Nature*, vol. 529(7585), 2016, p. 147; Stephen J. Vodanovich, "Psychometric Measures of Boredom: A Review of the Literature," *The Journal of Psychology*, vol. 137(6), 569–595, 2003.

24 William L. Mikulas and Stephen J. Vodanovich. "The Essence of Boredom," *The Psychological Record*, vol. 43(1), 3–12, 1993.

25 Barry Sandywell. "Boredom," in *Dictionary of Visual Discourse: A Dialectical Lexicon of Terms*, Ashgate Press, 2011, p. 177.

26 Daryl Koehn. "Evil as Flight from Narcissistic Boredom," in *The Nature of Evil*, Palgrave Macmillan Publishing, 63–85, 2005.

27 Haskell E. Bernstein. "Boredom and the Ready-Made Life," *Social Research*, vol. 42(3), 512–37, 1975; Eric Fromm, *For the Love of Life*, ed. Hans Jürgen Schultz, Free Press, 1986; Cheshire Calhoun. "Living with Boredom," *Sophia*, vol. 50(2), 269–79, 2011.

that appear to possess an intimate knowledge of our innermost selves. I sit before a few screens; a Netflix show immerses me tangentially while I play a game on my phone, which is periodically interrupted by notifications from updates on different social media incessantly delivering messages with mundane details from acquaintances, which occasionally even demand immediate responses. Simultaneously, a muted news ticker flickers on a tab of a web browser while on another tab, there's work that demands undivided attention and another where I might just buy the next thing that I don't need. I am unable to commit to any single task, let alone disengage from the pervasive illumination emanating from the screens, which tether me to a distinct but equally captivating reality. I am disquieted, restless, overstimulated. I, in essence, consume myself, bestowing my attention as a form of currency. I exist as a spectral, fragmented self, ensnared within an expansive web of technology and capital ostensibly designed for my comfort and amusement. Yet, paradoxically, I remain elusive to myself. Diverging from mere powerlessness, 'this,' i.e., boredom, hinges not solely on the inability to accomplish tasks but, rather, on the realization of the futility inherent within the very actions undertaken.

Modern technology and boredom's relationship can be traced in their shared relationship to time and its many forms of reorganization.[28] The logic of technology use is rooted in the idea of efficiency, where the main objective is the maximization of production with the least disbursement of resources, knowledge or information, facts or energy, wealth or power, pleasure or distraction. Technology's win is fundamental as one of its major aftermaths is the mass production of leisure, which not only stretches but creates the idea of apparent spare time where the festering of boredom's command only alleviates, which in return implores the perpetuation and amplification of technological engagement to assuage feelings of monotony.[29] Modern technology occupies and colonizes every moment of everyday life, stipulating that not even a single moment of life is left unoccupied by the demands of filling up time, which directly results in the forsaking of the now for the future.

The other currency of modernity is attention, and modern society demands sustained attention, be it the challenges of an accelerated life, the alienation of the workforce from their labor or an unmitigated and persistent "longing for content."[30] Ringmar has suggested that by reading into the ways in which attention highlights, gets distracted, or is trounced, one's Being in its most bare form, removed from psychological and sociological particularities, can be recovered.[31] Attention then could indeed transpose in and as a regardful fostering of a splendid scope to be there when Being bares itself and where paying attention to such an occurrence could allow for an authentic life to take shape, but this attention is turned into currency in the technological age through systems of control and diktats of abstract power mechanisms which not only dictate and fabricate terrains of attention and distraction but can weaponize boredom as the tool of anaesthetization; inaction; and the realization of the futility of agency. This strain, I'd like to call "hyperreal boredom," thrives within the contours of an attention-economy which resides in what Kingwell termed the "Interface"—a complex and often concealed nexus of individuality, longing, technology, and structural interests.[32] These Interfaces may not always manifest

28 For the relationship between the rise of technology and the shifting reorganization of time see Barbara Adam, "Reflexive Modernization Temporalized," *Theory, Culture & Society* vol. 20(2), 59–78, 2003; Barbara Adam, *Timescapes of Modernity* Routledge, 2005; Anna Christina Nobre, Angel Correa, and Jennifer T. Coull, "The Hazards of Time," *Current Opinion in Neurobiology,* vol. 17(4), 465–70, 2007; Veena Das, *Life and Words: Violence and the Descent into the Ordinary*, University of California Press, 2008; Manuel Castells, *End of Millennium*, Wiley-Blackwell Publishing, 2010; John Urry, *Sociology Beyond Societies: Mobilities for the Twenty-First Century*, Routledge Publishing, 2012.

29 Arlie Russell Hochschild. "When Work Becomes Home and Home Becomes Work," *California Management Review*, vol. 39(4), 79–97, 1997; Ben Agger. "ITime: Labor and Life in a Smartphone Era," *Time & Society*, vol. 20(1), 119–36, 2011; Martin Hand. *Making Digital Cultures: Access, Interactivity, and Authenticity*, Routledge Publishing, 2016; Mark Kingwell. *Wish I Were Here: Boredom and the Interface*, vol. 1, McGill-Queen's University Press, 2019.

30 Leslie Paul Thiele. "Postmodernity and the Routinization of Novelty: Heidegger on Boredom and Technology," *Polity*, 29(4), 489–517, 1997; P. Sven Arvidson. *The Sphere of Attention: Context and Margin*, Springer Publishing, 2006; Luke Fernandez and Susan J. Matt. *Bored, Lonely, Angry, Stupid: Changing Feelings about Technology, from the Telegraph to Twitte*r, Harvard University Press, 2020; Stephen Murphy, Tara Hill, Paul McDonagh, and Aisling Flaherty. "Mundane Emotions: Losing Yourself in Boredom, Time, and Technology," *Marketing Theory, vol.* 23(2), 275–293, 2023; Karl Marx, *Early Writings*, trans. Rodney Livingstone and Gregor Benton, Penguin Books, 1992, p. 398.

31 Erik Ringmar, "Heeding the Call of Being: Heidegger on Attention and Authenticity," paper presented at *Heidegger and the Global Age: An International Workshop*, University of Sussex, Brighton, October 29–30, 2015.

32 Mark Kingwell. *Wish I Were Here: Boredom and the Interface*, vol. 1, Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2019.

through screens but are inherently interconnected with the self and its yearnings. Our self-commodification within the attention economy thrusts us into the role of unwitting laborers for capital. Moreover, it renders us recurrent victims of boredom, ensnared by deceptive promises of respite that inevitably lead to cycles of repetition. Herein, we, akin to spectral selves, discover ourselves increasingly emptied from within, all due to the alienation we inflict upon ourselves through the relentless pursuit and relinquishment of our own attention.

In contemporary society, the inevitable scope to be/get bored is, for obvious reasons, correlated in a myriad of distinctive approaches to the all-pervasiveness of digital technology which "more and more makes us passive observers and consumers, and less and less active players" creating a perpetual sense of a "meaning deficit" that accrues and accumulates.[33] In the age of industrial complexes, the infotainment society relentlessly disintegrates, surveils, and monetizes subjects with our seeming consent, where everything is a spectacle. And as the image of war is stitched into the everyday, the 'extra-real' facet of war becomes something to be consumed- as image, data, or information. Thus, the constantly emergent and persistently saturated space of online algorithms of war and war imagery is designed to be consumed into the realm of disaffection. Machinations and experiences of 'acceleration,' 'routinization', or 'speed' in technological modernity are further intensified in the digital age.[34] The constant compression and sequencing of time fundamentally reorganizes relations of time and space, event and non-event, news and the everyday, presence and absence. The abject dissolution of "boundaries between public and private, day and night, work and leisure, space and time" in the sphere of the digital renders time as the source for capital accumulation through media wherein matter and value in the infotainment society is completely absorbed into fracturing and multiplying worlds of "self-referential signs and simulations" leading to the commodification of time.[35] Herein, the everyday individual is nothing but a user, a constant consumer under perpetual surveillance, a commodity in themself. In the realm of the digital, workers are completely incorporated into the information and data circuits of capitalism only for time to be ceaselessly reconnected, reattached, and randomized.[36]

Boredom in the digital age further exacerbates the meaning deficit attainable in the processes of constant, persistent, mediated, and biased reflection. On one level, this takes place because of elevated repetition, real and abstract forms of waiting (for a bus, an interview, or the future), and the discerning of boredom as *a desire for desire* intensified by the overload and excess of signs, symbols, icons, noise, and events.[37] The dissolution of boundaries, therefore, creates an inexorability and unavoidability that demonstrates the everywhere-all-the-timeness of boredom in the post-Web 2.0 age as a pointedly particular malaise. In the last three decades, the scope of the digital, in terms of data, machinery, and infrastructures, has not simply affected institutional and individual life; rather, it has led to a complete overhaul from which even war is not exempt. New digital technologies were integrated into the very fact of war and modern media, where everyone is an information consumer and producer, which gives way to the expansion of participative war.[38] Digital media follows the rationale of an entertainment

33 Lars Svendsen. *A Philosophy of Boredom*, Reaktion Books, 2005, p. 29.

34 Gianni Vattimo. *The End of Modernity: Nihilism and Hermeneutics in Post-Modern Culture*, Polity Press, 1991; Leslie Paul Thiele. "Postmodernity and the Routinization of Novelty: Heidegger on Boredom and Technology," *Polity* 29(4), 489–517, 1997; Mark Fisher. "Specters of Accelerationism," in *K-Punk: Abstract Dynamics*, 2008; Hartmut Rosa. *Social Acceleration: A New Theory of Modernity*, Columbia University Press, 2013; Bob Hanke. "McLuhan, Virilio and Speed," in *Transforming McLuhan: Cultural, Critical, and Postmodern Perspectives*, ed. Paul Grosswiler, Peter Lang Publishing, 203–226, 2010; Steven Shaviro. *No Speed Limit: Three Essays on Accelerationism*, University of Minnesota Press, 2015.

35 Ben Agger. "ITime: Labor and Life in a Smartphone Era," *Time & Society* vol. 20(1), 2011, p. 119; Christian Fuchs. *Digital Labor and Karl Marx*, Routledge, 2014; Christian Fuchs. "Digital Prosumption Labor on Social Media in the Context of the Capitalist Regime of Time," *Time & Society*, vol. 23(1), 97–123, 2014; Martin Hand. *Making Digital Cultures: Access, Interactivity, and Authenticity*, Routledge Publishing, 2016, p. 3; Wolfgang Fellner. "The Value of Time: Its Commodification and a Reconceptualization," *Eidos: A Journal for Philosophy of Culture* vol. 2, 37–53, 2017; Katharina Niemeyer and Emily Keightley. "The Commodification of Time and Memory: Online Communities and the Dynamics of Commercially Produced Nostalgia," *New Media & Society*, vol. 22(9), 1639–1662, 2020.

36 Michael E. Gardiner. "The Multitude Strikes Back? Boredom in an Age of Semiocapitalism," *New Formations* vol. 82, 29–46, 2014.

37 See Orrin Edgar Klapp. *Overload and Boredom: Essays on the Quality of Life in the Information Society*, Greenwood Publishing Group, 1986; Marc Augé and John Howe. *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*, Verso Books, 1995.

38 William Merrin. *Digital War: A Critical Introduction*, Routledge, 2018.

society, of 'frivolous online sociability,'[39] which is definitely not a war society that we inhabit every day. The consumption of digital media as the most ideal form of pass-time and leisure activity also seemingly functions as the design of 'de-borification' though it does not dispel boredom, instead dismisses time itself.[40] Thus understood, passing time by consuming images is a way of annihilating time. The digital is perpetual mediation where one is condemned to live among the algorithm. In considering the experience of boredom in the digital age, the fundamental possibility of there being an unmediated perception of subjective time is rendered an impossibility due to the perpetual nature of distraction.[41] People think and act in ways framed, if not demanded by digital devices and system and the maintenance of connected presence and (a) permanent analytics of the self, uploaded in digital networks, also imply a lack of absence from those systems where the burdensome expectations of 24/7 availability and sharing can produce increasing indifference, shallowness of thought, and a futile loneliness.[42] Ubiquitous media, therefore, exercises control from within.

War's everyday nature as boring has been historically addressed by many, but the problems of the role played by media in the representation of war is that it effectively reifies the fatality and viciousness of war, lodging it within the carefully and deliberately designed world of the algorithm where images of death and destruction about one world in collapse is mixed with the world of cats and celebrities.[43] Media's all-the-time-everywhere nature not only collapses the event of war but ruptures the non-event of everyday life. The spectacularity of war goes through a process of "borification" where its everyday nature of pain and devastation collapses with the everyday experience of consuming images of war and images about war in circulation with images of everything else. This resolves itself as an imminently distinct deportment of war, to which every other deportment is rendered subalternate. This everywhere-all-the-time nature of news and information issues war on to its own conditions and invariably also keeps war in control, maneuvering and dictating not only the nature and dispositions of specific wars but also distributes the logic and design of wars and determines the very aesthetics and politics of war where one war is rendered more crucial or important over another war, let alone the very cognition of some wars as (media) events and others as not.

To circle back then, is perpetual peace possible? Wouldn't that be the most boring situation imaginable? From Howard, we'd receive a rather unpredictable proclamation: "bourgeois society is boring."[44] The prospect of peace appears to bear the hallmark of monotony, characterized by the absence of conflict, an aspirational endpoint diligently woven into the fabric of modernity's collective imagination. While the realm of philosophical inquiry surrounding war has predominantly revolved around the task of rationalizing and justifying engagement in, participation within, or the multifaceted dimensions comprising the domain of warfare, the lexicon employed to articulate wars often imparts the notion that they inhabit a distinct sphere detached from the everyday, implicitly positing that war exists as an entity fundamentally separate from ordinary life. When scrutinized through the prisms of politics, morality, or ethics, war frequently assumes the semblance of an event—an episode or a complex amalgamation of occurrences—demarcated by a discernible inception and a predefined culmination, underscored by the solemn declarations of institutions. In truth, wars and military activities, whether they unfold during ostensibly peaceful periods or amidst open conflict, are driven by explicit intentions executed by individuals, groups, decision-makers, and agents of sovereign states. In actuality, wars swallow everyday life while dictating gendered, racial, communal,

39 Elyse J. White. *A Unified Theory of Cats on the Internet*, Stanford University Press, 2020.

40 Markus Mattenklott. quoted in Lorenz Engell, *Thinking Through Television*, Amsterdam University Press, 2019.

41 Robert Hassan, *The Age of Distraction: Reading, Writing, and Politics in a High-Speed Networked Economy* (London: Routledge, 2017).

42 James Gleick. *The Information: A History, a Theory, a Flood*. Vintage, 2011; Aden Evens. "Web 2.0 and the Ontology of the Digital," *Digital Humanities Quarterly* vol 6(2), 2012; Scott C. Richmond. "Vulgar Boredom, or What Andy Warhol Can Teach Us About Candy Crush," *Journal of Visual Culture* vol. 14(1), 21–39, 2015; Kevin Aho. "Kierkegaard on Boredom and Self-Loss in the Age of Online Dating," in *Boredom Studies Reader: Frameworks and Perspectives*, ed. Michael E. Gardiner and Julian Jason Haladyn, Routledge Publishing, 142–54, 2016.

43 Jesse J. Harris and David R. Segal. "Observations from the Sinai: The Boredom Factor," *Armed Forces & Society* 11(2), 235–248, 1985; Anthony Swofford. *Jarhead: A Marine's Chronicle of the Gulf War and Other Battles*, Simon & Schuster Publishing, 2005.

44 Michael Howard. *The Invention of Peace: Reflections on War and International Order*, Yale University Press, 2001, p. 112.

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and nationalistic lived experiences and moral conceptions. The latent violences inherent to war, its enduring presence, the gradual encroachments of oppressive systems and structures that exert control over individuals and their lives, the routine nature of aggression, and the persistent design of subjugation and siege all coalesce. But these elements often remain conspicuously absent from the visual landscape, deliberately obscured from view.

War, undeniably, maintains profound and intricate connections to the enduring presence of militarism, declared conflicts, protracted warfare, media dissemination, cinematic portrayals, the ever-evolving digital realm, and ideological propensities favoring military solutions to societal challenges (war on drugs, war on terrorism). Warfare and military practices have been seamlessly woven into the very fabric of twenty-first-century existence. Neglecting or dismissing the perpetual specter of war fosters the erroneous assumption that a state of peace prevails in the absence of 'declared armed conflicts.' It is, therefore, particularly facile for those who lead lives shielded from the immediate realities of militarism to overlook their complicity in the machinery of war, if not their direct culpability. One can be bored from under-stimulation or over-stimulation, but sometimes the image-consumer is entrapped in the design of boredom where technology constantly promises the next new – the next event, the next war, the next weapon, the next giant leap for mankind. Understanding the omnipresence of war as everyday life draws attention to the fact that state-sponsored violence is happening all over, all the time, perpetrated through institutions, bureaucracies, agents of States, and individuals. War is repetitive, unrelenting, tedious in the most bare, violent way. The ever-present war machine is the constant and ultimate threat to humanity, producing a perpetual and, therefore, *boring* state of emergency where the world is always a press of the button away from total annihilation. And the image of total annihilation is implanted into the visual dictionary through the imagistic and the mediatic. The new global order and ensuing divisions and organization of production, information databases, communication, and representation annihilate past experiences, concepts of time and space, and also destabilizes the project of history in itself. In this chronopolitics, a peculiar dynamic unfolds: those who wield dominion over the apparatuses facilitating instantaneous communication and information dissemination also paradoxically assume the mantle of both harbinger of potential destruction and custodian of peace.[45]

Each technological system comes with its own kind of accident that is both constituent and specific to it. In the nuclear age, one is inexorably ensnared in a perpetual state of emergency, endowing states with the prerogative to superimpose their mandates onto the everyday lives of people. The specter of nuclear cataclysm, meticulously envisioned, reimagined, and disseminated by various visual regimes, steadily widens the schism separating the realm of imagination from the stark verities of warfare and desolation. Every stride in technological advancement carves a fissure into the expanses of the external world. The global landscape of communication effaces the particularities of locales and individuals, capitulating to the dominance of a cyberlife—an unpredictable, fragmented dominion dictated by the imperatives of world-time and currency. It compels denizens hailing from diverse time zones across the globe to bear witness to every unfolding event, ceaselessly. The fragmentary images culled from multifarious sources not only shape one's perception of a given geographical terrain but also sculpt one's comprehension of war itself. This heralds a transposition within the realm of imagery, imagination, and the conceptualization of the world—a continual metamorphosis from qualitative representation to the realm of absolute digitization. This dislocation within the fabric of experiential reality renders the palpable world transient, relegating quotidian existence to the precincts of technological representations. In this process, it shrouds the actualization and embodiment of tangible objects, imparting an overarching sense of non-affect, an omnipresent and seemingly incurable boredom. Therefore, boredom expressed as an *inability to act* effectively translates into the aestheticization of politics instead of the (much needed) politicization of aesthetics.

45 In 1970, George Wallis coined the term Chronopolitics, which refers to the interplay of time, politics, and social dynamics that can be deployed to examine how different perspectives on time—such as past, present, and future—can shape political decisions, social behavior, and power relations. Wallis speaks to the significance of time in understanding political change, arguing that varying attitudes toward time can influence how societies mobilize for action, respond to crises, and enact reforms. George W. Wallis. "Chronopolitics: The Impact of Time Perspectives on the Dynamics of Change," *Social Forces*, vol. 49(1), 102–108, 1970.

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4. CONCLUSION

Boredom in the information age remains blank precisely because it is overloaded with information of ambiguous complexity and choices with no real alternatives. To Heidegger, boredom was not just a problem of living inauthentically but rather an opportunity wherein the despondency can be overcome to confront one's existence, for boredom allows a kind of 'mystery' or 'inner terror' where lies the radical (political) potential to be life-affirming.[46] Affect, emotion, and feelings help in understanding "subject-formation and political oppositionality" and are vital when "neoliberal capital has reduced possibilities for collective political praxis."[47] Boredom can lead to thinking through how to secernate technology and the human experience of the constantly altering fabric and cadence of the quotidian. The spectators' and technologies' affective, perceptive, and cognitive relationships are consistently and thoroughly shuffling because of the all-encompassing take-over by the digital and the undeniable onslaught of mobile computing. As consumers of the war image, individuals ensnared by boredom become increasingly assimilated into the apathetic throng, perpetuating a collective atmosphere of inaction. Inaction, in its somber cadence, transmutes pivotal events into the mundane scape of quotidian life, divesting them of their compelling urgency and immediate import. These occurrences, rendered unremarkable, assume the mantle of everyday happenings, transpiring somewhere to someone. The harrowing images depicting destruction and oppression find themselves seized within the labyrinthine recesses of meticulously curated algorithms, becoming but muted echoes in the cavernous expanse of the digital landscape. The grand spectacle of war, once a resounding testament to human tumult, diffuses its inherent gravity, dissolving into the ceaseless maelstrom of its daily consumption, though this is not to take away from the very fact and idea of resistance, protest, and solidarity that has organized individuals who come out day after day to stand up against wars. But it is also essential to note here that the proposition of boredom as the end all and be all of our existence in the digital age is part of the larger project of keeping the individual actant colonized. This is the divisive ploy of the capitalist-realism regime to constantly reproduce the idea that we can so easily imagine the end of the world but not the end of capitalism as fact.[48] In the digital age, we are also witnesses; we witness everyday lives, clothes, food, thoughts, cats, massacres, lynchings, riots, genocides, ethnic cleansings, and war, and being a witness is deeply and critically important. It is the making of history. To make one feel trapped in the culture of guilt and boredom is to be actively manipulated. When we witness the slaughter and genocide of peoples everyday there is a need to understand that this boredom through which we view such imagery and consume such plight is the project of industrial complexes, of the Empire. It is to keep one feeling that their presence and feelings are useless, but that also implies that the killing and destruction of peoples is indeed meaningless, that we cannot even bear witness. There is a sense of boredom that may underline the act of bearing witness as well, and boredom may be able to bear the radical political potential that Walter Benjamin had imagined it to have or that the Situationists believed it to bear. This boredom cannot cure the other kind of boredom, and that is not the proposition either, but it is to realize that the project of 'de-agentifying' ourselves is the very mechanism that is deployed to constantly disempower us. And if we are entrapped within the intersection of complexes that regiment, control, design, and dictate our behaviors, existence, and our very *being-in-the-world* then it can be a critical praxis for us to practice our boredom, even, especially when it is the boredom of bearing witness. Beings cannot be denied their beinghood for not rising to occasions of pressing demands, but Beings regardless, the bored Being, the boring Being, and the boredom of Being, are all fundamentally at the seat of understanding contemporary mediated subjecthood. In realizing, recognizing, and thinking through boredom, there can also be the realization of its radical potential – of decolonizing and decentering the self. It is not a matter of choice to not be bored, but it is a question of praxis to think of what to make of it and what to do with/about it and thinking through boredom might help identify and weed out that which audaciously and ceaselessly colonizes every second of our being.

46 Martin Heidegger. *The Fundamental Concepts of Metaphysics: World, Finitude, Solitude*, Indiana University Press, 1995; Elizabeth S. Goodstein, *Experience Without Qualities: Boredom and Modernity*, Stanford University Press, 2005, p. 331.

47 Ann Pellegrini and Jasbir Puar. "Affect," *Social Text*, vol. 27(3), 2009, p. 37.

48 Fredric Jameson. *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Duke University Press, 1991.

COMPETING INTERESTS

The author has no competing interests to declare.

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