Siehst du Denn Nicht, das Ich Verbrenne:
The Ethics of Transmission and Bearing Witness in the Era of the Networked Gaze

Preface:

The room is dark, filled with the quiet hum of an air conditioner. An unattended pot begins to boil on the stove. Nearby, a young woman rests in a fetal position on her twin bed, eyes transfixed before the blue glow of a palm-sized screen. Her thumb mechanically taps the right of the screen: **tap** a high-school acquaintance's family trip to Paris **tap** a "Know Your Rights" infographic **tap** a neighbor's anguished face pressed against concrete, surrounded by white officers **tap** her crush's mirror selfie **tap** a huddle of Palestinian men struggling to retrieve the small body of a child out from under the rubble **tap** ad: new blush formula offers a "Warm Glow from Within" **tap** a commemoration of a self-immolation protest **tap** a sea of bodies trips over itself in line for a bowl of watered down soup as drones circle above *tap* ad: "Ozempic Soon to be Developed for Pets" **tap** meme *tap* a photo of herself at a party **tap*.* The pot boils over. The woman registers the hissing sound and reluctantly drags her body to the other end of her studio apartment. With equal dispassion, she returns the stove's dial to 'off.' Blankly, she sinks down the kitchen wall to the linoleum floor. She hasn't eaten since before her shift earlier, but somehow she isn't hungry. Her thumb re-opens Instagram. Where was that last video? Her finger hovers over the "repost" button…**tap.**

Introduction:

This scene, repeated in countless variations across the globe, represents a distinctly modern form of secondary trauma. The subject who automatically scrolls an infinite supply of overwhelming stimuli, making distant, yet visceral contact with the fragmented suffering of the past other, is caught in a loop of affective deferral and repetition.[1] Trauma, defined broadly, is the response to an overwhelming stimulus that cannot be fully grasped as it occurs, but returns in bursts of retrospective (*Nachträglich*) psychic intrusions of a repetitive nature. To use Freud's early trauma terminology, the "first instance" of vicarious trauma is always available to the social media user, making it uniquely difficult to trace a trauma's "second instance" via the framework of an event.[2] Given the addictive nature of social media, psychic space from overwhelming stimuli is rarely afforded to the chronic user, narrowing the window of

[1] Freud, Sigmund, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1955), Section 6.
[2] Fanon, Frantz, *Wretched of the Earth*, "Colonial War and Mental Disorders." This chapter reveals how tracing trauma through Freud's concept of Nachträglichkeit falls short when treating patients who are actively embedded in a traumatizing environment. Freud's patients were primarily bourgeois Europeans whose daily lives did not perpetuate the second instance of trauma.

post-traumatic emotional contact with a disturbing exposure. If hysteria was the paradigmatic affect of Freud's day, and psychosis that of Lacan's, it seems our moment can be characterised by a pervasive dissociative slumber, in part, due to the continuous influx of overwhelming stimuli.[3]

This paper considers Cathy Caruth's "*ethical imperative of an awakening that has yet to occur*," in the context of deaths accessed through the digital screen.[4] In her view, the ethical imperative of a *deferred awakening* compels the subject to transmit the unbound stimulus onwards, despite the impossibility of its wakeful access. I argue that the "repost" button is a singularity of Caruth's ethics of transmission, one which disrupts the fantasy that the demand of responsibility to the other can be satisfied via deferred witnessing. First, I will recount the Dream of the Burning Child, which Freud retold in his *Traumdeutung*, and was later repeated by Lacan and Caruth. In keeping with the insight that each "repetition demands the new," I will peel back the layers of understanding afforded by each instance of the dream's repetition.[5] Second, I will mobilize Caruth's ethics of transmission to unpack the "repost" function as a way of mitigating one's limited emotional access to, and material agency against, psychically overwhelming digital stimuli that at various levels involve bearing witness to death. Third, I will consider the ethics of bearing witness and transmission in the context of widely shared, on-the-ground footage of the ongoing genocide in Gaza, as a way of understanding the material inadequacy of Caruth's ethics of transmission. Ultimately, I contend that the impulse to transmit an *awakening yet to com*e functions as a psychic shield against a *real* ethical failing of the other. The repost button, as a contemporary manifestation of an ethics of transmission, organizes a collective circuit of deferral and repetition that stands in for the infinitely delayed ethical encounter.

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[3] Malabou, Catherine, *The New Wounded* (2012), xviii. Malabou portrays PTSD sufferers as all displaying "the same affective coolness, the same desertion, the same indifference." She suggests that coldness and disaffection are the paradigmatic affects of our time. One possible outcome of this paper is to update her explanation for this with to account for the digital forms of trauma that pervade daily life in the 2020s.
[4] Caruth, Cathy, "Traumatic Awakenings" (1996), p. 112
[5] Lacan, Jacques, "Tuché and Automaton" (1998), p. 61

I: A Transmission that has Lost its Referent

In *Chapter VII* of the *Traumdeutung*, Freud introduces a dream told to him "by a woman patient who had herself heard it in a lecture on dreams: its actual source… unknown."[6] The patient *re-dreamed* said dream based on its telling and later transmitted it to Freud. Freud describes the dream as follows:

> "A father has been watching besides his child's sick-bed for days and nights on end. After the child had died, he went into the next room to lie down, but left the door open so that he could see from his bedroom into the room in which his child's body was laid out, with tall candles standing round it. An old man had been engaged to keep watch over it, and sat beside the body murmuring prayers. After a few hours' sleep, the father had a dream that *his child was standing beside his bed, caught him by the arm and whispered to him reproachfully: "Father, don't you see I'm burning."* He woke up, noticed a bright glare of light from the next room, hurried into it and found that the old watchman had dropped off into sleep and that the wrappings and one of the arms of his beloved child's dead body had been burned by a lighted candle that had fallen on them."[7]

This dream is enigmatic both in its opaque origin and in its direct relationship to the materiality of the waking world.[8] Freud first explains the dream via wish fulfilment, offering that "the dream was preferred to a waking reflection because it was able to show the child once more alive."[9] That said, the dreamed child "reproachfully" addresses the father and alerts him to a tragedy, repeating knowledge of the unthinkable and seemingly resurfacing the Father's guilt surrounding his child's death. Not fully satisfied with the simplicity of his original analysis, Freud later returns to the dream and explains, "a further motive force in the production of the dream was the father's need to sleep."[10] Thus, for Freud, the dream functions to prolong sleep by integrating the

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[6] Freud, Sigmund, The Interpretation of Dreams (2010), p. 513
[7] Freud, p. 513, 514
[8] Freud, p. 515. The Dream of the Burning Child is received in isolation from the dreamer, impeding Freud's ability to trace it in connection with other information about the dreamer's life.
[9] Freud, p. 514
[10] Freud, p. 570

presence of flames, which might otherwise wake the father. This second reading foreshadows consciousness's apparent desire to suspend itself, hinting at Freud's later advent of the death drive in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*.

When Lacan re-tells the dream in "Tuchè and Automaton," he shifts its function to that of *waking* the father into another reality. The encounter between the dreamed child and the dreaming father is framed as an essential confrontation, "an appointment to which we are always called with a real that eludes us."[11] For Lacan, the dream points to a latency in seeing that is not an exception, but rather a feature of consciousness's fraught relation to the real. The Dream of the Burning Child, which reaches Lacan after at least four degrees of mediation, might be read as "an act of homage to the missed reality – the reality that can no longer produce itself except by repeating itself endlessly, in some never attained awakening."[12] This applies not only to the dreamer, but also those to whom the dream has been transmitted. For Lacan, what is repeated involves the tuchè, a brush with the apparently unassimilable real, that which lies beyond the automaton. Somewhere, latent in the Dream of the Burning Child, then is "reality in abeyance, awaiting attention."[13] The dream implies "another space" or "scene" that lies between perception and consciousness," a gap that constitutes awakening.[14] In the form of heat or light, the dreaming father perceives the raw stimulus of burning before it is met with consciousness. Within the dream, the fact of the burning is heard, not seen. Upon 'awakening,' the sight of flames blinds the father to what is burning. Quickly, his attention turns to the old watchman's failure of consciousness, a mirror of his own failed responsibility to the other. The real, Lacan says later, following a discussion of the 'fort-da' game in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, "is a small part of

[11] Lacan, "Tuchè and Automoton," pp. 53
[12] Lacan, p. 58
[13] Lacan, p. 56, 57. The dream of someone knocking at the door follows a similar logic.
[14] Lacan, p. 56

the subject that detaches itself from him while still remaining his."[15] It is the father's projected frustration at the still-dreaming watchman; it is the repetition of the unthinkable tragedy in sleep; it is the bright lick of flames which conceals what is burned. The real's presence is known via its apparent absence. If the place of the real is stuck to the sole of the shoe, it is encountered only via the unconscious limp that manifests after miles of walking.[16]

Caruth's "Traumatic Awakenings" begins with a contradiction afforded by the field of trauma studies; "that the most direct seeing of a violent event may occur as an absolute inability to know it; that immediacy, paradoxically, may take the form of belatedness."[17] [18] Dissociative defences are a well-documented response to traumatic stimuli, codified even across various iterations of the DSM's reductive PTSD criteria. In this sense, the real is never directly accessed in a wakeful state. For Lacan, the unassimilable reality at the heart of the Dream of the Burning Child is how the very identity of the subject (the father) is constituted by the death of the other (his child) that he survives. For Caruth, the traumatic sight reveals not only an epistemological relation to the real other but also an ethical one, expanding the stakes of trauma studies.[19] The belated awakening as a site of trauma is a collision of both the "necessity and impossibility of responding to another's death." [20]

What has been repeated, first by two dreamers, and again across psychoanalytic discourse, is the brush with a real "which always lies behind the automaton," a real which,

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[15] Lacan, p. 62
[16] Lacan, Ecrits, p. 517
[17] Caruth, "Traumatic Awakenings," p. 91, 92
[18] Freud, Project for a Scientific Psychology, "The Hysterical (First Lie)." This is part of why Freud's "first" instance of Trauma in the case of Emma is an instance of repetition, which is traced to the initial event or "second" instance, originally experienced at a distance. This notion of trauma, however, is an early conception that Freud later develops beyond the model of the hysteric.
[19] Caruth, "Traumatic Awakenings," p. 92
[20] Caruth, p. 100

despite appearances, could not be mere chance.[21] Responsibility is thus "whispered reproachfully," not only to the dreaming father, but to all subjects whose life is predicated on the fact of death. The words, "*seist du denn nicht, ich verbrenne*," apply to the entirety of the living.[22] In them, the child "transmit(s) a burning that runs between the death of the child and the imperative of the father's survival, a burning that, like the candle, falls to awaken, anew, those who hear the words."[23] If consciousness seeks to suspend itself via sleep, as Freud implied, it is awakened by the repeated "ethical burden of survival."[24] Caruth argues that what is passed on is not only the meaning of the words, but their performance; "in the opening of the other's eyes, the awakening consists not in seeing but in handing over the seeing it does not and cannot contain to another (and another future)."[25] We are left with both the impossibility of wakeful recognition and the ethical imperative of an awakening that has yet to occur. Trauma repetition thus takes on a social form. Since the overwhelming stimuli cannot be wakefully integrated, it is transmitted onwards in hopes of an eventual ethical rousing.

II: Engineered Belatedness

The young woman slumped on her linoleum floor, thumb hovering over the repost button, is not an outlier, but an archetype. She inhabits a contemporary form of the father's dream; a space between consciousness and perception, where the 'bright glare' that begs awakening emanates a blue, rather than incandescent glow. The whispered reproach, "don't you see I'm burning," now echoes across thousands of videos which scream of distant ruin. In the crowd of

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[21] Lacan, "Tuchè and Automoton," p. 54. He meant this in a different way, but perhaps we can provide it a double meaning.
[22] It is also worth noting how Lacan gets personal about his experience as a father in Tuché and Automaton and how Freud lost his Daughter, Sophie, before writing Beyond the Pleasure Principle
[23] Caruth, "Traumatic Awakenings," p. 107
[24] Caruth, p. 108
[25] Caruth, p. 111. The performance also entails the gap "between the German, from which these words address the future, and the French, in which they are received…"

hungry bodies suffering an air, land, and sea blockade, the young woman catches a flare of desperation in a mother's face. She flashes back to a post she saw months ago; the frustrated eyes of a baby sucking on dried dates due to the lack of milk and formula in Gaza.[26] Paralysed before the screen, her wet, unblinking eyes blur the image as she hears the video start to replay. Her thumb hesitates between two options: move on to see the next "story" or re-post. In a haze of dread and guilt, she shares the video.

Freud, in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, transforms trauma from a psychic exception into a rule. Lacan expands trauma as an ontological condition, and extends its logic of transference beyond the biological into the very structure of subjectivity.[27] Caruth draws from this ontological condition an ethical imperative; a call to awaken the other from within the impossibility of one's own awakening. To understand how the call of the other now arrives, in the palms of millions of comatose social media users, we must turn to the structure of looking itself. Building on the grammar of the moving image, a cornerstone of both cinema and trauma studies, I will work my way towards a newer media economy of the scroll. This contemporary image circuit delivers fragmentation, transmission, and repetition with algorithmic speed, alongside the visceral urgency of sharing a world with the viewer.

Modern developments in trauma theory have coincided with technological developments across the decades.[28] From the nineteenth century diagnoses of "railway spine" to late twentieth century claims of "traumatic broadcasts," technology, trauma, and the economic modes that underlay them are inextricably connected.[29] The demand for the photographic image is, like

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[26] Middle East Eye, February 9th, 2024
[27] This refers to Freud's 'perception consciousness system' in "Beyond the Pleasure Principle" and the epigenetic thrust of the transmission of trauma across generations in *Moses and Monotheism*.
[28] The advent of the photographic image, the conceptualization of trauma, and the coalescence of industrial capitalism all coincide in the early nineteenth century. In *Anti-Oedipus*, Deleuze and Guatteri laid the groundwork for how psychoanalysis's relevance is particular to the capitalist mode of production.
[29] Charles Pugh and Michael R. Trimble, "Psychiatric Injury after Hillsborough" (1993) pp. 427-428

realism, arguably a manifestation of reified consciousness. The desire to photograph arises, at minimum historically, from a subjectivity that is economically oriented towards abstraction, fact, and calculability.[30] [31] The camera is a technology that enables one to petrify, abstract, and capture a veritable fragment of the fleeting moment in isolation of its wider context. The camera's shutter petrifies the already-folded-moment and converts whatever and whoever occupies its frame "into objects that can be symbolically possessed" and exchanged.[32] On a temporal level, the photograph is a technology that reifies the dead and saves it for later. On a rhetorical level, the violent vocabulary of photography, "shoot, "capture," and its moving image counterpart, "load the magazine," "strike the lights," "attach the shotgun microphone to the pistol grip," symbolically reinforces the morbidity of the camera. Susan Sontag adds that "like guns and cars, cameras are fantasy machines whose use is addictive."[33] At the level of the apparatus alone, it seems photography already encourages repetitive engagement; with the shutter, with the distantly-accessed past, and with the camera's aesthetic object.

Allen Meek writes, "traumatic memory and modern visual media have… been theorised as registering, repeating and re-playing events in ways that exceed conscious perception and understanding."[34] Film, or the succession of 18, 24, or 64 photographs played back within a single second, amplifies the sensory impact of the camera. Trauma and its symptoms have long been conceptualised via visual paradigms, such as the "flashback," which were reinforced by the

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[30] Lukacs, Gorg, *History and Class Consciousness* (1968), pp. 88 and 100. Here, I am referring to the principle of rationalization. "This phenomenon can be seen at its most grotesque in journalism. Here it is precisely subjectivity itself, knowledge, temperament and powers of expression that are reduced to an abstract mechanism functioning autonomously and divorced both from the personality of their 'owner' and from the material and concrete nature of the subject matter in hand."

[31] Marx, Karl, *1844 Manuscripts* (1959), p. 46. "The transcendence of private property is therefore the complete emancipation of all human senses and their qualities…"

[32] Sontag, Susan, *On Photography* (1977), p. 14

[33] Sontag, p. 14

[34] Meek, Allen, *Trauma and Media* (2011), p. 7

methodology of experimental psychology.[35] "Imagery became increasingly important in understanding post-traumatic processes in the late 1970s and early 80s," in the wake of the Vietnam War, as experimental psychologists used 'stress films' to test post-traumatic stress responses.[36] From this point forward in the US, there arose a bureaucratic need to legitimise and codify post-traumatic symptoms for legal claims and insurance compensation. Following the widely televised attacks of September 11th, 2001, the notion of secondary or vicarious trauma accessed through the screen slowly gained credibility. "For children raised from birth with television, the immediacy of the medium seems almost as real as pure, untouched reality."[37]

Edgar Jones points out that while overwhelming stimuli viewed in the cinema is contained, a new kind of shock may be produced by viewing "sudden and disturbing imagery in a familiar and apparently safe situation," via the home television.[38] Consider how this bodes for the contemporary smartphone user, whose media-viewing devices travel with them across all domains of lived experience.[39] Most young people today have adopted their portable screens as an appendage to the body; feeling uneasy, exposed, and even unsafe in brief intervals of separation from their devices. The juxtaposition of the personal and the impersonal that grounds Jones' point is also amplified by the whiplash of what types of content can be viewed in quick succession on a social media feed. Seeing an image of oneself or one's friends, followed by a meme, followed by on-the-ground footage from a war zone, followed by an advertisement, all

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[35] The term "flashback" was introduced into psychiatric discourse by Horowitz in the late 1960s. It first appeared in the DSM III-R in 1987. This term, of course, is also widely used to produce repetitive psychological effects in cinema and has become a common structuring mechanism for contemporary media such as "Lost" and "Momento," among other television shows and films.

[36] Pinchevski, Amit, "Screen Trauma" (2019)pp. 75. This scholarship was produced in occupied Palestine by an Israeli scholar. While Pinchevski's text is useful in providing a lineage of the secondary digital trauma in the field of trauma studies, this paper does not subscribe to its geopolitical affiliations. This context does, however, fall in line with the notion of the 'traumatized perpetrator' discussed in section III.

[37] Pinchevski, p. 46

[38] Jones, Edgar, "Flashbacks and Post-traumatic Stress Disorder" (2003) pp. 158-163

[39] Pinchevski, "Screen Trauma." Viewers of violent broadcasting were reported 66% more likely to experience post-traumatic stress symptoms.

within the comfort of a familiar setting, is a common experience for Gen Z and Gen Alpha users.[40] The flow of information also works both ways online, further blurring the lines between one's personal world and the virtual world. In 2013, the DSM-V revised the criteria of PTSD to include work-related media exposure, which is "most likely recurring and involuntary."[41] In 2025, this logic could be applied to nearly every social media user who engages with an addictive algorithm, economically motivated to maximize attention, encouraging recurring and involuntary exposure to whatever it piques the viewer's interest.[42]

Anna Kornbluh categorises the style of too-late capitalism as an aesthetic of immediacy, expanding and further periodizing Jameson's writing on postmodernism. For Kornbluh, it is a mode of circulation, more so than the media itself, on which the illusion of immediacy rests.[43] In a historical moment when mediation travels at hyper-speed, it is almost emotionally imperceptible. The mirage of "direct seeing" pervaded by the instantaneous sharing of already-dead images, renders secondary trauma accessed through the screen so seemingly immediate that it may take the form of belatedness Caruth speaks of, despite its lack of depth and viscosity.[44] [45] The doom scroll performs immediacy while inducing a state of trance, often accompanied by paralysis, repetition compulsion, and delayed processing. Like the dreamer, the

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[40] While it is true that not every user is drawn to on-the-ground footage from war zones or an altruism centered on witnessing, it is also true that several digital systems have been set up to enable the sharing violent media when mainstream platforms like TikTock and Instagram are not enough. Telegram and Liveleak are two platforms that speak to a general demand for repeated exposure to shocking and violent imagery.

[41] Pinchevski, "Screen Trauma," p. 69

[42] Time Magazine, "Court Filings Allege Meta Downplayed Risks to Children…" (2025). A User Experience Researcher at Meta was quoted saying, "IG is a drug…we are basically pushers," regarding the addictive nature of the company's social media products.

[43] Kornbluh, Anna, *Immediacy* (2024), p. 42. "Immediacy is not an inner disposition of media, attaining ever-greater actualization in the digital era, but an outer configuration of the circulation system that digital media effectuate, with the mode of production as its cause."

[44] Caruth, ibid.

[45] Kornbluh, *Immediacy*, "Algorithmic Cultural Categories," p. 60

scroller forgets they are looking into a mirror. But unlike the dream, the algorithm delivers just-in-time content tailored to the profile of the captive viewer, kept dormant for profit.

III: The Foreclosure of Awakening

The historical convergence of trauma theory and media technology reveals yet another crucial paradox; the very apparatus that enables us to see the suffering of the other, with increasing immediacy, intimacy, and repetition, is structurally designed to foreclose its awakening within us. The "repost" function is the ritualized symptom of this foreclosure.[46] It is a gesture of ethical transmission that structurally ensures the awakening never arrives. Already for Caruth, the Dream of the Burning Child ultimately contains an impossible demand. "For Lacan," she writes, it is "the story of an impossible responsibility of consciousness in its own originating relation to others, and specifically, the deaths of others."[47] The ethical act in the face of a delayed awakening for Caruth is to receive the sheer address of the other's suffering and to respond to it, even when the full scope of the cry rests beyond conscious comprehension. The ethics of transmission is one developed from within the recognition of a psychic limit. It is an ethics, it is an act of carrying the failure forward, towards a future where it might, impossibly, be heard.

What emerges from Caruth's analysis is a chain of testimony and detached witnessing that may well continue ad infinitum, but simultaneously offers the subject the feeling of having acted to the best of their ability to end the cycle of infinite deferral. On a subjective level, this may preserve the subject's ego, but on a material level, it is utterly inadequate. The ethical imperative to "transmit an awakening yet to come" is a self-aware fantasy screen that protects the

[46] When I say "repost," I refer to any kind of re-sharing on a social media platform, be it via a literal button, like the "retweet," or multiple clicks. It is, however, worth noting that Instagram's new (2025) grid "Repost" button has been criticized for its strategic ability to reduce online activism by demanding fewer clicks to share a post and delivering a far more modest reach than a reposted Instagram Story.
[47] Caruth, "Traumatic Awakenings," p. 105

subject from the catastrophically real failure of the other's demand. The “repost” function crystallises this insight.

Let’s return to the social media platform as a mirror, a narcissistic mirror, where, by design, the other is flattened into a reflection of one’s likes, dislikes, values, desires, etc.[48] The Imaginary is the realm of the algorithm; a binary logic which continually speculates and reflects the user’s identity. Kornbluh writes that “psychoanalysis enjoins us to theorise with a lens other than moral panic – one that elucidates the historical and cultural conditions for the overvaluation of the imaginary.”[49] Caruth, as sharp as her reading of Lacan is, ends by reverting psychoanalysis to the enclosed position of moral panic. To stop at moral panic is to remain in the circle of the imaginary, an egoistic assessment of one’s own goodness or badness. The ongoing genocide in Gaza represents a crack in the mirror.[50] It is the intrusion of a Real that cannot be algorithmized or ethically deferred out of existence. It demands a responsibility to the other that is not about psychic preservation, but real, material intervention. The “repost” feature manages this unbearable Real by converting the cry’s urgency to act into a ritual of passive transmission, a ritual that has long-proven its failure to stop the suffering it circulates.

Here, the political and material failure of an ethics of transmission is laid bare. For the alienated subject scrolling in the relative safety of the American bubble, the "awakening yet to come” is a psychic structure; for the Palestinian under siege by decades of apartheid, blockade, and military bombardment, it is a death sentence. This disparity is not accidental, but constitutive. The social media platform’s architecture thrives on the very gap between observer

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[48] Kornbluh, *Immediacy*, pp. 50-58, Here, Kornbluh discusses Lacan’s mirror stage in relation to the over-valuation of imaginary online.
[49] Kornbluh, p. 53
[50] Even the thousands of Content Moderators, mostly employed in the Global South at devastatingly low wages, who view flagged content to determine whether it should be taken down from social media sites, cannot keep the flood of imagery pouring out of Gaza at bay. It is also worth noting that Content Moderators experience extraordinary rates of occupational post-traumatic stress. Moritz Reisenwick and Hans Block’s film *The Cleaners* (2018) offers a peek into the lives of these media-exploited workers.

and observed, converting the cry of the other into an echo chamber of guilt that keeps the user scrolling in a paralysed state of impotent concern. Like in the Dream of the Burning Child, the spectre of Gaza haunts American viewers, whose failure of the other is already complete. With each tank of gas, each bite of food, each taxed paycheck, they are indirectly, yet tangibly, enacting harm on the other side of an ocean.[51] [52] This dynamic reveals the hidden figure in Caruth's ethics: the traumatised perpetrator. If Freud, in *Moses and Monotheism*, understood trauma as the repressed guilt of the murderous collective, then the screen trauma of the West is the repressed guilt of the complicit spectator, looping in a hall of mirrors. We are not bystanders or mere witnesses. We are implicated subjects in a geopolitical and economic order founded on blood, that we then distantly 'bear witness' to from the comfort of stolen luxuries that we are structurally encouraged to pretend we have earned. The "repost" function offers not an ethics of transmission, but an alibi for inaction, designed to soothe our sense of self.

Conclusion:

The circuit of deferred awakening does not point to an eventual ethics; it is the cultural mechanism that tolerates atrocity, a socialised scheme of morbid repetition compulsion. The Dream of the Burning Child ends with a father rushing to a corpse. Our screen-induced slumber ends with a thumb hovering over a button, trapped in a loop that confuses transmission for action and ego-preservation for ethical duty. The imperative to transmit an 'awakening yet to come' is a fantasy screen protecting the subject from the catastrophically Real failure of the other's demand.

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[51] It would be remiss not to mention that the very phones we scroll on are often made from component parts assembled by premature hands in 'developing' countries. Furthermore, the minerals in said phones, such as cobalt and coltan, are sourced from the DRC, where mining contracts are upheld by Real bloodshed, sexual violence, and extreme cooersion.

[52] Marx, Karl, *Capital Volume I*, p. 267. One of the problems with indulging infinity, as capitalist circulation ontologically demands, is the failure to integrate the finitude of natural resources. The circulation formula for usurer's capital, M-C-M, is a tautology. Modern capitalist circulation, represented as M-C-M' finds meaning through the sheer addition of sum.

It confesses an impotence to engage with the death that our life entails, in hopes of forgiveness. The child is burning on our screens. We have watched her and her siblings burn there for years.

Awakening, therefore, cannot arrive through transmission alone. It requires a rupture of the circuit itself, a turn from the symbolic gesture of the repost toward the material and political acts of divestment, confrontation, and solidarity. Yes, we must hear the cry. But we also must break the window. At the end of Tuché and Automaton, Lacan transmits that he, too, is a father who has seen his own failure reflected in a child's eyes. He, too, moved away despite the appeal.[53] Critique itself, from Freud to Lacan to Caruth, and now, this text, is caught in a chain of transmission. It inherits and passes on the very impossibility it seeks to articulate. To conclude here is not to resolve, but to diagnose the recursive nature of a failure that is, still, actively our own.

[53] Lacan, "Tuchè and Automoton," p. 63

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