CULTURE, MEDIA & FILM | REVIEW ARTICLE

Cultural surveillance in the algorithmic sociality: The evolution of humanistic myth and technological myth in the post-coronavirus world

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Abstract: This analysis studies the development of Walter Benjamin's aesthetization of politics, Debord's culture of spectacle, Michel Foucault's regulatory power, and outlines their key characteristics in the course of post-coronavirus art world. Taken together, it examines the totalitarian and collective cohesiveness of arts reproduction in the digital spatiality, and argues that there is the continuing cultural surveillance to shape aesthetic communication, in its evolution from celluloid resurrection to streaming media. It evaluates some consequences of cultural classification struggle, and arts mediocrity have been taken up and developed in the power circuit of media agencies.

Subjects: Contemporary Art; Philosophy of Art & Aesthetics; History of Performance; Theatrical Production; Arts Management; Cultural Studies

Keywords: Aesthetic politics; performing art; digital society; mechanical reproduction of art; culture of spectacle; power; subjectivity

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PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

The shutdown of theaters worldwide due to the pandemic in 2020 and 2021 gave rise of live-streaming technology. The convenience of this technology and its invented space of freedom take the form of positive existence. But this technological blow stressed the limit of aesthetic experience, and ironically not natural for sensuous form of human self-expression and self-reflection, when we consider freedom as volition and self-rule. Although many in the art field have been critical of the technological reproducibility of the work of live performances, few found any conflict it inhabited from the viewpoint of aesthetic emancipation. Is what being missing in the digital spatiality for live performing art? What remains non-reproducible in live theatre of the twenty-first century? We need to investigate the role of art, the new forms of power in the digital world, and the subjectivity being shaped in cultural-spatial dimension.
With the global response to the coronavirus pandemic, including social distancing measures and population lockdowns in 2020, there has been a major shift in performing arts: from instantaneous ritual to recorded visualisation. In practice, the Berliner Ensemble theatre group, stated in Germany’s denzeen in June 4, pledged to remove about 70% of the seats to reopen on September 4, resulting in only 200 seats remaining of its 700 capacity. The UK government ordered theatres to shut in March, as noted in The Atlantic on May 12, the West End of London turned dark and business of tourism withered. New York’s Lincoln Centre and Carnegie Hall have been shut since mid-March, and this contingency was extended to the end of 2020. As described by NBC on June 19, performers and technicians have been furloughed since then. Kabuki’s News reported in June, Japan’s Kabukiza theatres struggled to reopen on August 1 with a rule, “seats are left vacant to the front, back, left and right of each filled seat (in a checkered pattern) so that customers can sit at a distance from each other”. Theatres in Hong Kong, largely owned and managed by the government, were shut shortly after the Chinese New Year in mid-February, affecting the entire sector. As a result of the resumed pandemic lockdown and travel restrictions at the end of 2020, theatres worldwide continued to be deserted until February and June 2021, respectively.

Lockdowns hurt the humanistic arts in the cultural system. According to Blommaert (2018, 93), art as an aesthetic communication is doomed to enter into the digital realm of social media, “a new global infrastructure for sociality”, 1 which is exemplified by the many new broadcast streaming services, like the Lincoln Center At Home and Royal Albert Home. Suppose the idea of practising innovative expressions in the Internet helps open up critical personalities and spur the recovery of the lost sense of creative impulse, with what effect does the digital spatiality on the artistic life and artist-viewer relation? Will the aesthetic liberalism be difficult under the condition of the split of life and the policy of lockdown? Will there be a Renaissance for the twenty-first century after the coronavirus crisis? This article, based on the evolution of Benjamin’s aesthetic politics, Debord’s spectacle society, and Foucault’s subjectification in the relationship between aesthetic communication and digital representation, is an attempt to show otherwise. Central to Walter Benjamin’s concept of the media and spectacle, the effect of lockdown should be understood as the global subjectivity of aesthetic politics into the algorithmic society. The evolution from celluloid resurrection to streaming media is an re-emergence of violence in the history of auratic art, arts governance, and power of apparatuses/ agencies, leading to the birth of algorithmic personalities at the time of crisis, organizing the intellectual artists in a powerless spatiality of perception, and thus dissipulate the liberty of and experiential knowledge in the dominant culture system.

1. The humanistic myth
Social distancing, self-quarantine, and isolation is a typical case of power exercise in times of chaos. Sudden crisis, including the Black Death in the fourteenth century and coronavirus in the twenty-first century, have brought about regulatory powers that tried to manipulate aleatory and inventive activities on the verge of social crisis and cultural change. During the Black Death of 1347, G. Boccaccio (1972, 8–9) set out in Decameron with an opening scenario of fear and indifference towards the social:

people almost invariably neglecting their neighbours and rarely or never visiting their relatives, addressing them only from a distance; this scourge had implanted so great a terror in the hearts of men and women that brothers abandoned brothers, uncles their nephews, sisters their brothers, and in many cases, wives deserted their husbands. But even worse, and almost incredible, was the fact that fathers and mothers refused to nurse and assist their own children, as though they did not belong to them. 2

With an unprecedentedly high mortality rate, the social was wicked; social relations were reset to a new moral obligation: “[t]he contagious nature of plague led to the belief that the only way security could be achieved was in total isolation of the sick” (Sherman 2006, 68). 3 The crisis, for Boccaccio, seemed to equate social distancing as an opportunity for reflection, looking at the terror from a distance with an attempt to articulate insights and restore sensitivity in fear; a folk of ten
fled into the mountainside for 14 days, getting away from the hysterical attack, social disruptions and impediments. This 2-week isolation is reminiscent of self-quarantine during the coronavirus pandemic in 2020; the difference is that now the art creators, in the digital realm, are weak at self-representation and self-deepening reflection.

According to Sherman (2006, 70–73), people in the Black Death pandemic did not simply desert towns, they were able to question the Church’s sovereignty power, inquiring about the root cause of chaos with new-found personalities to regain social order, but in return, the medieval bourgeoisie punished the questioners through cruel disciplinary actions, in which “restrictions such as cordons sanitaires and quarantine frequently were expanded to limit personal freedom, and to identify the culprits”.⁴ In resistance to self-disciplined restrictions, the folk raised emancipation inquiry through storytelling game of humanistic myth, which unveiled an unprecedented form of communication—prose. As stated by Benjamin in Gesammelte Schriften in 1977, Gasché (2002, 64) explains that prose are an evoking mean of expression, with their particularity in rhetoric and inventive language with an aim, to go beyond the allowable framework of length and rhyme in poems, and thus to release critical thoughts in grammatical tensions.⁵ In this sense, Decameron offered a new logic between dos and don’ts that liberalised humanistic accents for meaning-making. More, under the broad influence of the printing technique for reproduction, this new art form liberalised the will of personalities in the slavery system to the threshold of Renaissance.

How did art set human nature free from slavery? In many senses, the constitution of distance in the artist-viewer relation is necessary for aesthetic liberalism. Some distances address spatiality, some stem from ambiguous ranges, and some are about aesthetic contrast. First, Boccaccio formulated the auratic art in a particular place and time as a ritual for contemplation; within this spatial condition, human potentialities grow through imaginations in the passive observer role. What is the aura for the art? Benjamin says: “[a] strange tissue of space and time: the unique apparition of a distance, however near it may be” (Benjamin, 2002, 104–105).⁶ In this case of separation, theatre encounter is understood as an occasion for higher potentiality by means of isolation. Second, the distance can also be a thinking spectrum between the binary divide of perceptions. By reasoning morality in mythological scene, the characters of Decameron sparked off sensory consciousness in an exploration of more options for actions between saints and vulgars, hero and fool in mythological. These invented distances, physically and mentally alike, bring forth reciprocal qualities through frictions, articulating on extremes to trigger subjective truths and perceptions between reality and unreality, with which the deities explain how the sufferers could come to be and how human potentialities could grow in restraints. Carr (1986, vol. 25) diagnoses that society operates without myths or storytelling is vulnerable to fear and fragmentation. Yet because of sensitivity the myth could produce, those with them can fuel more truths in the social and cultural domination, insomuch as that social change and revolutionary transition becomes possible.⁷ In 14 days, the chain of magical storytelling was not a utopian escape but a rebirth of imagination to shift from a single perception to multiple dimensions; they reach out for human potentialities to act beyond moral constraints and normative influences.

Third, distance is the contrast of aesthetic reflection. To Adorno, the distance affords a flash-like sensitisation to open up inhibited freedom for differentiation and contemplation, with which curiosity and impulsiveness emerge from the contrast of secular and splendid in the art. Therefore, as R. Leppert (2005, 461) cites, Adorno draws the third movement of Mahler’s Third Symphony to illustrate this aesthetic contrast as authentic art of music that orchestrates banal melody for contemplation with sophisticated tune for astonishment,⁸ aiming to allow a conscious reflection over their own ideal harmony. This intellectual liberation because of its nature of transcendence is clearly not limited to the slave, but critically pervasive for the bourgeois society and the ruling class for their governing sensitivity to social resistance. The capability of rulers or leaders starts with sensitivity toward socio-cultural risk, which is followed by the invented assumptions and truths; keeping human’s inquiry of emancipation on the brink of criticism in the disciplinary system to regain a particular order. As tension in auratic art proceeds, it enables a unique
deficiency-improvement cadence, ever more power for knowledge and awareness in the ruling raison d’etre of statecraft.

2. Auratic arts in live theatre

Given destructive power within the fresh-like sensitisation, theatre is the spectre-hunting space where physical, mental, and aesthetic distances come together as a humanitarian approach to the subjective truths (reality-to-be). Instead of thinking theatre as a cage of looping scenes, Dietz (1994, 57) agrees with Bridge Escolme that each performance “should be a disciplined improvisation in which the ‘what’ remains unchanged, but the ‘how’ can vary”, which makes every live actors unique and powerful based upon this “self-destructive act”9, which is, as its core, an extension of sensitivity and wisdom derived from the rehearsal process. Brook traces the specificity of this destructive continuity, and suggests rehearsals is what sets the auratic art apart from the lifeless one:

In a living theatre, we would each day approach the rehearsal putting yester-day’s discoveries to the test, ready to believe that the true play has once again escaped us. But the Deadly Theatre approaches the classics from the viewpoint that somewhere, someone has found out and defined how the play should be done (1995, 14)10

Theatre functions as a process of meaning-making (reflection) and meaning-sharing (communication) in reciprocal measure, and live performance is attributed an operative quality on top of a sheer representational quality. Here we follow Adorno’s (1997, 125) lead, the aesthetic communication in favor of the birth of creators through commitment to the experimental depth of contents or illusion but something does not yet exist.11 With this inflamed spirit of individual pursuit:

[...] indeed art contains a defining element of imitation (Nachahmung), but with just one reservation, namely that it is not as an imitation of something, but as an imitating impulse, that is as an impulse of mimicry, as the impulse to so to speak make yourself into the thing you stand before, or make the thing you stand before into self [einem selber] (1997, 119)12

In this sense, the disciplinary improvisation is a sublime moment not of pleasure, but the remembrance of human instinct by being free to question, challenge, and express as the way noble-like creator does, particularly in the false construction of utopia.

To think of human as a sublime noble, such ideas become manifested in Casius Longinus’s Sublime in theory. In practices, noble greatness sought for truths and visions to govern and challenge the existing socio-cultural values by leading and negotiating subjective views through criticism in the public sector. For instance, contemporary artists like Pina Bausch and William Forsythe raged creatively against the dominant role of balletic spectacle, its limits in expression particularly for those lower middle-class and post-war generations at the time of Revolts of 1968. Here, between heritage art and melodrama, Pina Bausch strode out for something unknown with her life-time critic Jochen Schmidt (1997, backcover) who helped interpreting the emerging genre of Tanztheater that “is not a style but rather a spiritual posture”.13 The criticism raised worldwide awareness around idiosyncratic personalities of German choreographers, and seeing the quality of Tanztheater as “depth” and the American postmodern dance as “lightness”. It was in the frictions of cultural domination during the Cold War (cultural war), Schmidt considered “the American art of lightness [may] all too quickly [become] an art of insignificance” (J. Schmidt, 1982, vol. 5).14 On the other side of Pina, Arno Wüstenhöfer, the theatre manager of Wuppertaler Bühnen (1964–1977), offered the ritual space to Pina in 1973 to safeguard her creative impulse and yet this came immediately with heavy criticism; “[S]ubscribers left the theatre in droves, and the start of Wuppertal Tanztheater seemed to have misfired completely” (Koegler, 2009).15 The birth of new (sub) genre took two decades to become real at the result of frictions between the established art and the rising force, a new possibility came into play in the cultural system not until 1990s. Such
collaborative relationships for auratic art take a considerable time, and this rationalisation pattern might easily be upset by spectacle forms of commercial measure in the digital social media society.

Viewed from these perspectives of aesthetic distance, there are two principles to render an aura for the arts: non-immediacy in communication and reciprocal relationship in continuous rational negotiation. The former promotes non-utilitarian judgment concerning free thought, a state of differentiation without domination. Like the double-meaning in the myths, Russell evidences (Russell, 2013, vol. 56) Mill to call on “offering interesting objects of contemplation to the sensibilities”, in return they entail an aesthetic ritual where the vague objects are just “hanging there” at the least level of comprehension for extended interpretation into the reality-to-be. The latter is then a reconciliation of differentiated thoughts, developing subjective truths out of the objective truths for socio-cultural changes. Taken together, principles of non-immediacy and transcendence of subjective truths are required to produce authenticity and intelligence for humanity.

3. The technological myth

Next, we address the beginning of spectacle culture at the departure of ritual tradition, and take a closer look at the aesthetic politics in the revolution of arts production. Walter Benjamin argues mechanical reproduction discomposes the very nature and function of art from the auratic tradition in the advent of new technologies, like the science of photography. He wrote in The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction:

An analysis of art in the age of mechanical reproduction must do justice to these relationships, for they lead us to an all-important insight; for the first time in world history, mechanical reproduction emancipates the work of art from its parasitical dependence on ritual. To an ever greater degree the work of art reproduced becomes the work of art designed for reproducibility […] Instead of being based on ritual, it begins to be based on another practice – politics. (1969, 224) 17

Between the invention of new technologies and the aleatory events of social movement, Debord (1995, 19) has noted that the aesthetic politics lies in the government of the spectacle that is understood in a narrow sense of “mass media”, and the technological representation that threatens the autonomy of aesthetic communication; we speak here of its nature of inherited “limitation” and the need of regulatory power for continuous improvement.18 This concern invites us to link the contradiction and competition between the recorded art and instantaneous art. The recorded form has consistently had an uneasy relationship with the live theatre, particularly spectacular culture, which is not always of emancipation and can only be considered technological interventions and becoming economic production, where the politics lies. As Benjamin (2002, 112) see in Pirandello’s term of disciplinary improvisation, with which stage actors achieve prestige identical to the context of tradition and beyond, while film actors are denied by artistic personalities and encouraged to act as little as possible in front of the camera, feeling like props beside the point.19 Actors learn to act the way spectacular agencies prefer; they are not the major stimulus of meaning-making but only one factor for the industry’s value-added process. Aesthetic liberalism differs from goal-oriented business for two reasons. First, perfection is not a source of art creation. Second, the longing for “improvement” involves intervention of technological thinking over artistic personalities, with which the media agencies endlessly imposed identification to effectuate such colossal indulgence in economic success and taste of the mass. The deployment of media agencies will help problematise the artist–viewer relationship in their interests of intervention, which identify with scientific logic of technology. In 2008, Carson warned of the danger of insidious commercial pressures in the development of creative industries, with which “[t]he civic, religious, educational and entertainment value of Shakespeare’s work has been forced into the harsh light of commercial scrutiny” (Carson, 2008, vol. 4).20 In this way, the threat of aesthetic politics in theatre is two-fold; personalities of performers and their “functional differentiation” (1991, vol. 29)21 to enhance, in
accordance to Luhmann’s reduction principle of social perception, our sensitivity to the complexity of modern society.

Even if Adorno, Benjamin, Debord, and Carson’s observation is true for the last century, need it to follow that the Internet—a globally celebrated society of self-rule—would be criticised for aesthetic politics? Shouldn’t it be a spatiality articulating for the new Renaissance during the pandemic lockdown we are facing? In the dire predicament of social distancing, the Big Tech—new spectacle agencies of social media, such as YouTube, Facebook, and Instagram—interweave an indispensable technological myth, exhibiting “itself as enormous positivity, out of reach and beyond dispute” Debord, 1995, 17),\(^2\) promoting of renewal and fluid engagement for global in a rebirth of a democratic spatiality for the arts community. Technological knowledge is now regarded as mythologies for the arts, and so probably is it by the artists themselves in the sector. This technological myth is also rooted in an all-embracing condition, for instance, with its low entry barrier for limit-budget users and niche cultural systems, allowing an assemblage of a socio-cultural saviour to facilitate freedom of expression in a “global form of civil society” (Held, 2003, vol. 29).\(^3\) It is not the global civil society that is the problem. It is the power effect of the global civil society problematises our cultural life. The case for inclusive artists and viewers does not guarantee emancipation because the media representation of the 21st century has tremendous progressive force that embodies the concrete aestheticisation of politics. Rose’s vision of representation adverts with a sure development of “governing at a distance” (Rose, 1999, 27),\(^4\) a third party between the government and creators with the regulatory power to artists and viewers work out how in the world they should do and perceive next during the lockdown period. The strategy appears in centralising the world’s artists in a closer dimension of representation where categorisation of ranking presumes the forthcoming regulation by cosmopolitan principles and rules (Held, 2003),\(^5\) resulting in a weakening of viewers’ critical abilities.

(1) Strategy and Effect of Authoritarian Unification

We can learn one central element that is common in the society of the spectacle: the strategic deployment of media representation is monopolisation of power and resource, which configures the consumption of American Hollywood images in the last century, and now the authoritarian alignment in the digital society. A brief account of the Fairness Doctrine stressed by Szóka (2018 April) for social media can illustrate this issue:

Fairness Doctrine for social media would benefit the largest websites by insulating them against competition from smaller sites: large, well-funded companies like Facebook, Twitter and Google already have thousands of people handling content moderation issues and the resources to face litigation over how they administer their platforms. While they would surely resent having to administer such a vague and arbitrary standard, they would also be able to manage the burden, while the startups vying to become the next Facebook, Twitter or Google would not. Investors would be reluctant to invest in startups that face the risk of heavy legal liability for failing to comply with the Fairness Doctrine.\(^6\)

The politics of Big Tech is made for the powerful to regulate the powerless. Debord (1995, 17) observes, “wherever representation takes on an independent existence, the spectacle reestablishes its rule.”\(^7\) He agrees with Van Hove, who criticises the dominance of aesthetic presentation. Its “unified practice of the integrated spectacle has transformed the world economically”\(^8\).

In practice, NBC pointed out in October 2006 that Google has bought YouTube in that year, after snapping up 15 small enterprises a year before that, and now has amongst the largest search engines in the conglomerate. In this search kingdom, YouTube Analytics tunes regulatory antennas to detect such productive problems as low view rate and low impression click-through rate in their categorisation system. By doing so, viewers are spoon-fed homogeneous and flawless “suggestions” to follow through in the creation of algorithmic condition, from this point forward, it would have to be conducted in Foucault’s term of governmental surveillance of algorithmic
memory, this regulatory power works like police, which is a deployment of scientific intellectuals to shape collective subjectivity. In Singapore, the watch time of YouTube grew by more than 30% in 2020 as shown in Channel News Asia on 2 December 2020. So does the case in Hong Kong, the Coconut Hong Kong reported on 31 December 2020 that the YouTube’s top trending video were non-art category, tapping health protection knowledge and excitement to dispel boredom. It is no wonder that Google (Shalavi, March 20, G. Shalavi, 2020) documented the top five popular home video contents of 2019, they were such survival needs as work-from-home essentials and in-home fitness.29 Mojo (Spake, 2021),30 one of the best presentation channels on YouTube, lists bread and circus as the most sought after viewing experiences during the pandemic; Tik Tok Dances, Tiger King and K-pop dances were topped.

In Gerlitz’s and Helmond’s work, cohesion in a virtual community affords the “like economy” with which modern media sponsors generate cultural uniformity. Emancipation of artistic personality is no longer the goal of making arts; the goal is about making profit out of the creative labour. In this way, the Big Tech renders algorithms to detect likeable cultural products to have ongoing dividends through super agencies like Disney, Netflix, Digital Theatre, Amazon Prime, Marquee TV, and YouTube, leading to the loss of smaller cultural systems, which produces unlikable and unproductive systems, as their names suggest. Foucault (2007, 258–260) does say in Security, Territory, Population that “police” is a form of alignment of corporations governed by the authority,31 and using “police” in a derogatory sense to stress strategic orchestration of cohesion. The “like economy” that seems the objectively determinable cultural value is fundamentally a new strategy to govern creators’ thoughts and behaviours, according to M. Dean (1999, 16), waged by the dominant to cage niche cultural systems into a “collective activity”32 to exaggerate the “pleasing mentality” and algorithmic personalities in the art reproduction system.

The relatively small enterprises in Hong Kong have been struggling at the surface of the live-streaming realm, perturbing representational relation in an increasingly global cultural system for reproducibility. To be visible, therefore, they might have to be constituted as objects of useful knowledge and mass entertainment in the competition of recognition. When the coronavirus outbreak worsened in fall 2020, The Government of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region announced on November 30 that it would tighten epidemic prevention measures, closing most of the theatre venues from December 2. As MingPao reported on December 5, the Hong Kong Theatre Arts Practitioners Union expressed that at least 104 performances and 1000 practitioners were affected, with an estimated loss of 56.7 million for the entire sector. The government claimed that active artists use live streaming and perform in deserted theatres. The most crucial concern of this argument in terms of streamable live performance, however, was insufficiency of resource and knowledge, and Ms Cheung Wai-ting, the president of the Union explained that live streaming took the responsibility of government’s subvention in its own theatres, which is, as theatre educator Mr. Simon Wong Tim-keung pointed out, problematic and behind the time for live broadcasting. The shutdown policy in Hong Kong gives feeble from of accountability for arts reproducibility to occupy visibility in the digital media spatiality. Emma Keith, the head of The National Theatre’s NT at Home Scheme in the UK admitted that the virtual spatiality is economic and cultural discrimina-

tion, marginalizing genres other than the Western cultural prestige and economic entertainment to a large extent:

The filming alone for each NT Live production is between £300,000 and £500,000. Where will this money be found at a time when live theatre is struggling to get on its feet? More fundamentally, Keith points out that this digital offering is dependent on the existence of physical theatre. We need live theatre in order to do what we do digitally. (Akbar, The Guardian, September 21, Akbar, 2020).

In this view, the specificity of digital reproduction lies in the power to deliver arts with utilitarian functions and spectacular culture. Artists in this small cultural system are aware of their
limitations in the competition of global visibility; while celebrities and excitement play the upper hand to captivate the aesthetic experience of the majority in the “like economy”.

(1) Strategy of Collective Aphasia

More circumspectly, viewers are subjected to the digital realm where legitimate language makes use of its binary conception as a tool to conduct collective aphasia, the state of commentary simplifies artists into the categories of agreeable and disagreeable, appropriate and inappropriate, innovative and anachronistic. To some extent, the use of language for comments is confined to manipulate the quality of interpretation and expression in social media. For instance, in the ballet excerpt of “Diamonds” at the site of Núcleo de Dança Carolina Cox uploaded to the Facebook page of Núcleo de Dança Carolina Cox on 17 January 2021, and featuring top stars Igor Zelensky and Ulyana Lopatkina, the viewers arrive at similar meanings and equivalent responses such as “well done”, “beautiful”, “magnifique”, and “bravo”, without confusion involved for deep discussions or controversial debates. In the Staatskapelle Berlin & Simon Rattle uploaded by the Staatsoper Unter den Linden to the YouTube on 7 March 2021, simple exclamations were sparked by commend like “YouTube is a terrible platform for classical music.” stressing the interruptions of advertisements. The technological enchantment produces limited space for commend and predicts aesthetic unviable discussion, which become brief but overvalued with “someone-like-me” bond to project the collective identity of kindness, depoliticisation, and positivity in the interest of scientific scrutiny, and further limiting the expressive form of aesthetic communication to a dysfunctional or trivial relation.

4. The politics in contemporary cultural system

In modernity, powerless does not mean less education, poverty, or physical disability; the powerless do not have critical ability to question the world. Today, to deem artists’ and the viewers’ insensitivity and inattention in the polarized ends of contents is to provoke more “improving” rules of the powerful Big Tech come to exist. Aesthetic communication and human perception were controlled by the Church sovereign then and now by the all-embracing Big Tech apparatuses, homogeneous content and non-authentic value are being promoted for commercial usefulness, rather than developing subjective truths and creative impulses. As the technological myth becomes construed not as mystery and less knowing in reciprocal communication, the algorithmic system seems amenable to minimise experimental claims by totalitarian alliances with elite art and vulgar art, the liquidation of whole knowledge of aesthetic contrast. Some will recall Benjamin’s aestheticisation of politics that consumes freedom of expression in developing algorithmic identities and the imposed self to achieve ongoing enslavement. Some will recall Debord’s culture of spectacle with which governing agencies turn the global mass to succumb to the narcissistic spectacle as dead things do. Benjamin did not live long enough to analyze power of regulatory power in society, from this perspective, some will summon Foucault’s strategy of subjectivity in the power relation of agencies/apparatuses in the struggle of anti-subjectivity and the true self. The effect of spectacle culture is also the continuous socio-cultural class domination; some may thus even recall Marx and Friedrich (2004) for their idea of ruling intelligent class:

The ideas of the ruling class are in every epoch the ruling ideas, i.e., the class which is the ruling material force of society, is at the same time its ruling intellectual force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are subject to it. Creative force dries out, converge, and proselytise in the pursuit of popularisation (66). My first observation is that the concrete evidence for regulatory discipline in aesthetic memory and communication is cultural surveillance, resulting in the absence of auratic art in which some substances cannot be mechanically reproduced that directly associate with collective subjectivity. Based on Hove’s thinking, we see the operation of algorithmic spatiality that enchants the viewers
comfortably by unrealistic optimism, which ensures the unthinking folk to dwell rather on fantastic collectives than individual realisation. Billing (2010, vol. 61) wrote:

> For van Hove, rather than facilitating communication, modern media often prevent engagement and political debate, separating ordinary people from elite politicians, described by the director as creatures ‘sheltering in their bunkers’.  

The technological myth talked about the commodification of identities that coincides with the emergence of global capitalism, with which the algorithmic system comes to embroil the creators and viewers with an attempt to manage the their receptive capability for potentialities and possibilities.

My second observation is that theatre encounter has a multi-faceted nature where one liberates with full perception of what he is not. It is only half true as Baudrillard points out (Fortier 2002, 171), the theatre has gone from a dominant art form in early modern Europe to a relatively minor one in the modern world where everything is theatricalised through technology. Like critics from Hélène Cixous, the mystery of theatre encounter “because it goes against the grain of our technological and simulated culture, promising, in a way reminiscent of phenomenological thought, an encounter with real time, lived experience and death” (quoted in Fortier 2002, 121). It has become a shrine for the ruling elites, like the men and women in the ritual Decameron maintained distance on the hill to produce critical visions, allowing sophisticated personalities and new humanistic power with an awareness of time limit of life and unlimited potentiality of being alive. It is a “degenerative” process that reaches its most advanced state as anti-strategy and dissubjectivity for liberalism. On the contrary, the mass is confined in the realm of bread and circus, being immersed in the technologically self-fantastical, and more important their aesthetic experience are programmed by the algorithmic memory, and history of their choices rule their future, which is a largely one-dimensional sameness.

5. Conclusion
Aesthetics is politics. Aura is politics. History of auratic art is the history of art governance. In this perspective of cultural regulation and spatial governmentality we always have to reflect on the form of aura and the content blending in the cultural system. The Kings and patrons of the Renaissance made the public common space opulence and private life squalor; the rich thus enjoyed going out and the rest was uplifted in beautiful aura. Now, governments and their technological assemblages render the public in a mess and private in self-fantasticalised vision, merely for instant economic interest in progressive logic. More, the global spatiality is linking itself to adverse effects of monochromatic strategy. What is worth concerning above all are cultural leadership and auratic formulation, in particular for the survival of small cultural system, which has to learn fast, theoretically and practically, to identity something their cultural roots. For Hong Kong, government has to make art human, then make art public. This is a huge task that needs courage, taste, and huge amount of money. As a result, the dialectic between purpose-ideal and existing purpose of art is configured in interactive form to frame Hong Kong identity for local and global cultural life. When that happens, the global cultural system will be able to gain necessary interdisciplinarity and functional differentiation on the macro level for the sake of modernity. This is the challenge for those who struggle in the smaller cultural system but hope to resurge the new Renaissance in the post-coronavirus world.

**Funding**
The author received no direct funding for this research.

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**Citation information**
Cite this article as: Cultural surveillance in the algorithmic sociality: The evolution of humanistic myth and technological myth in the post-coronavirus world, Isabella Siu-wai Yun, Cogent Arts & Humanities (2021), 8: 1995117.

**Notes**
1. Blommaert (2018).
2. G. Boccaccio (1972) and Horrox (1994).
3. Sherman (2006).
4. Sherman (2006).
5. Gasché (2002).
6. Benjamin (2002).
7. David Carr (1986).
8. R. Leppard (2005).
9. Dietz (1994).
10. Brook (1995).
11. Theodor Adorno (1997).
12. Theodor Adorno (1997).
13. Jochen Schmidt (1997).
14. Schmidt (1982).
15. Horst Koegler (2009).
16. Russell (2013).
17. Benjamin (1969).
18. Debor (1995).
19. Benjamin (2002).
20. Carson (2008).
21. Luhmann (1991).
22. Debor (1995).
23. Held (2003).
24. Rose (1999).
25. Held (2003).
26. Szöke (2018).
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Disclosure statement
No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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