

THE COLLAPSE OF
THE NEW REPUBLIC

THE RISE AND FALL OF IDEOLOGIES IN A DIGITAL AGE



MPC MAJOR RESEARCH PAPER

The Collapse of *The New Republic*:
The Rise and Fall of Ideologies in a Digital Age

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The Major Research Paper is submitted
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Professional Communication

Ryerson University
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

September 1, 2015

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Abstract

The journalism industry is undergoing a profound shift from print to digital media, which has allowed for new modes of storytelling (e.g. Twitter or listicles) and ways of capturing audiences (e.g. click-baiting and data-tracking). This shift in media appears to be attended by a more fundamental ideological shift, where the economic and democratic affordances of digital media have contributed to a privileging of quantity (audience or financial growth) over quality (substance-driven, intellectual journalism). To examine this issue, this paper puts the recent collapse of The New Republic magazine under the microscope. On December 5th, 2014, two thirds of the magazine's masthead resigned en masse over an ideological dispute involving an increased focus on digital media. Using this profound ideological schism as the launching point for discussion, this paper inquires: what are the opposing ideologies within The New Republic collapse, how do they relate to digital media, and can the collapse at The New Republic be seen as a microcosm for an ideological shift occurring across the journalism industry?

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor, Dr. Matthew Tiessen, for his support and feedback throughout the writing of this paper, and my second reader, Dr. Jean Mason, for her additional insights. I would also like to thank them both for their encouragement of humanities-based research.

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Ideology and *The New Republic*: A Brief History

On November 7, 1914, political thinker Herbert Croly published the first issue of *The New Republic (TNR)*, a bi-monthly journal intended to capture the spirit of modern American liberalism. Five years earlier, Croly had published his account of American liberalism in his political work, *The Promise of American Life*, which, according to his *TNR* co-editor Walter Lippman, established Croly as “the first important political philosopher who appeared in America in the twentieth century” (Levy 13). Croly framed his account of American liberalism as the middle way between the political ideologies of two great American political thinkers: Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson. While Hamilton advocated for a national policy to advance the common good, he distrusted the common people and, consequently, democracy. Jefferson, on the other hand, lauded democracy as the essence of American promise; however, this excluded any notion of national policy. Hamilton’s political philosophy was deficient in democracy, while Jefferson’s was overly dependent on human nature. Croly, a Hegelian at heart, set out to find the synthesis between the two (18). Croly’s aim was to achieve “Jeffersonian ends by Hamiltonian means,” that is, to achieve a flourishing democratic state of individual freedom and prosperity, one produced through a national policy that acts as an arbitrator of values to promote the common good (17). This became the project of Croly’s *TNR*.

In an essay recounting *TNR*’s origins, former editor, Frank Foer, shed light on the ideological foundations of the magazine. He described its view of liberalism as an ideology bent on exploring itself (Foer). Its pursuit is “to arrive at provisional judgments and to reverse those judgments, to engage in a never-ending act of ideological seeking, to

revel in the vitality that comes with the hard task of intellectual invention” (Foer). Foer’s description points to the idea that Croly’s notion of arbitration is to be arrived at through rigorous, rational, impartial thinking, the act of which is both a means and an end in itself. Only with this kind of dialectical thinking can one arrive at truth.

This type of questioning for the sake of truth has roots in Platonic (i.e. Socratic) thought, so it is no great surprise that Herbert Croly gave his magazine the moniker *The New Republic*, implying not so subtly that he and *TNR*’s authors would be America’s Philosopher Kings. The purpose of *TNR* was never simply to “record facts,” as is done by newspapers (Foer); rather, *TNR* was intended to be a kind of modern day roadmap that would help enlighten readers and guide ordinary citizens out of Plato’s cave. In Croly’s own words, the purpose of *TNR* was to “give certain ideals and opinions a higher value in American public opinion,” and in so doing construct “a citizenry that [had] high aspirations and rigorous standards, both for its politics and its arts” (Foer). The magazine has had some missteps in carrying out this vision, from its fabulist journalist, Stephen Glass, to its controversial, right-leaning editor-in-chief, Marty Peretz, to say nothing of its perpetual battle with bankruptcy. Nevertheless, steeped in a century’s worth of liberal ideology, *TNR* has cemented its reputation as one of the top intellectual magazines in the United States. That is, until recently.

The Collapse of *The New Republic*

One hundred years after its founding, on December 5, 2014, current *TNR* owner, Chris Hughes, found himself stranded at the presses after “two thirds of the names on the

masthead” resigned en masse, taking their well-researched and thought-provoking writing with them (Lizza). The group of defectors included the majority of senior editors, arts and politics critics, and even contributing editors, many of whom held honorary positions only and resigned on principle. In total, roughly 50 people walked away from *TNR* (Chariton). For the first time in its century-long history, the magazine was forced to miss an issue.

Chris Hughes, co-founder of Facebook who is worth an estimated \$850 million, purchased *TNR* in 2012 (Spargo). Initially, Hughes’ involvement brought hope and momentum to *TNR* staff. In fact, his impressive social media work on Barack Obama’s presidential campaign positioned Hughes as a saviour to the *TNR* ship, which had been sinking under the controversial leadership of then-owner Marty Peretz. In more recent years, Hughes’ increasingly “disruptive” changes stripped him of his saviour status. He began intervening in editorial content: changing titles, capping word-counts and sometimes pulling pieces from the press altogether if they were overtly critical of the business practices of top-tier companies like Google or Amazon (Lizza). The most significant of these changes, however, occurred in October of 2014, when Hughes hired Guy Vidra, former head of the digital-native publication, *Yahoo News*, to take the helm as the magazine’s new CEO (Calderone). Soon after, Hughes replaced editor Frank Foer by installing Gabriel Snyder, previously of *Gawker*, to be the new editor-in-chief (Calderone). Together, the new leadership team announced that *TNR* would become a “vertically integrated digital media company” with a greater focus on new platforms and new audiences in order to build a sustainable and even profitable business (Lizza). But a profitable business was not the priority of many of the masthead contributors, who feared

that the digital focus of the magazine's new business model would deflate the genuine, intellectual journalism of *TNR*.

On the day of what I will be calling *TNR*'s collapse, contributing writer Cynthia Ozick wrote a poem for literary editor, Leon Wieseltier (featured in Ryan Lizza's article, "Inside the Collapse of *The New Republic*"). Although sardonic in tone, the poem highlights Ozick's belief in the decline of thought-provoking, substance-driven journalism in the face of digital media and points to the increasing preference for quick, digestible text-bites and web traffic growth:

*The Siliconian came down like the wolf on the fold,
And his cohorts were gleaming in wireless gold,
Crying Media Company Vertically Integrated!
As all before them they willfully extirpated:
The Back of the Book and the Front and the Middle,
Until all that was left was digital piddle,
And Thought and Word lay dead and cold.*

The "Siliconian" mentioned in the poem is Ozick's epithet for Chris Hughes, who, along with new hires Vidra and Snyder, became an adversarial figure for many of the more traditional *TNR* staff.

Only a few weeks before its collapse, *TNR* had held its 100th Anniversary Gala, at which Hughes, Vidra, Foer and Wieseltier addressed the audience. It was a final opportunity for each side of the *TNR* debate to publically make its case. Hughes and Vidra spoke of change, innovation and the future, while Foer and Wieseltier spoke of history, ideas and stewardship (Swanson). To make the battle lines of this debate clear, Wieseltier ended his speech with an excerpt of Walt Whitman's poem, *Passage to India*:

The Past! the Past! the Past!
The Past—the dark unfathom'd retrospect!
The teeming gulf—the sleepers and the shadows!
The past—the infinite greatness of the past!
For what is the present after all but a growth out of the past?

Reviewing my description of the *TNR* drama so far one might conclude that a clash between new media platforms, self-righteous traditionalists and Silicon-valley evangelists are at the heart of the collapse of *TNR* – and this is probably part of it. But is an increased emphasis on digital media and profitability really enough to incite a full-scale protest on the part of the magazine's now-ex masthead? And if it is, then what is it about digital media that generated such a profound ideological schism? This paper endeavours to address the collapse of *TNR* by asking: what happened at *TNR*—and why?

What Happened at *The New Republic*, and Why?

As evidenced by the themes of the speeches given at the 100th Anniversary Gala, the collapse of *TNR* was rooted in a collision of opposing ideologies. From what we have already seen, we can glean that the resigned staff feared the destruction of the magazine's legacy, while the new leadership feared for the viability of its future. While both sides appear to have the best interests of the magazine in mind, they offer disparate visions of what *TNR*'s future would look like.

What we want to examine are the beliefs and values that underpin these competing visions. Therefore, in Part 1 of this paper, we will ask the research question: What opposing ideologies were involved in the collapse of *TNR*? To answer this

question, we will first discuss the meaning of ideology and discourse, looking at the theories of Althusser, Marx, Gramsci and Fairclough. We will then use Fairclough's critical discourse analysis method, supported by textual analysis, to examine a series of texts responding to the collapse of *TNR*. Finally, in order to discern the underlying ideologies of these texts, we will interpret our analysis findings and discuss their significance within historical context.

Having discerned the ideologies involved in the collapse, we will have answered the what, but not the *why*. If we imagine the *TNR* collapse as a battle (as we will find many of the key players do), the victor is obvious. Chris Hughes remains the owner of *TNR*, and continues to publish new issues despite the December, 2014 resignations. We might conclude, then, that an ideological shift has indeed successfully taken place at *TNR*, one where the values of the new staff have triumphed over those of the resigned staff. Of course, ideological shifts, whether small scale or large, are not spontaneous nor are they simple; moreover, as many theorists have pointed out, they require the correct conditions for change. In Part 2 of this paper, we will ask our second research question: What conditions may have contributed to the collapse at *TNR*? To answer this question, we will first discuss Foucault's theory of the orders of discourse to understand the process and conditions of ideological shifts. Then we will discuss digital media and its economic and democratic affordances as conditions that contributed to the collapse at *TNR*.

TNR staff and contributing writers were not the only ones who demonstrated a strong reaction to Chris Hughes' new vision of the magazine. Champions of Frank Foer and Leon Wieseltier cancelled their subscriptions, and other legacy (meaning traditional),

and even some digital-native (meaning born online) publications featured articles in support of those who resigned from *TNR* (Lizza). On the other side of the ideological divide, some newer publications defended the digitally oriented approach of Hughes and Vidra. In the month following the collapse, it became clear that the debate at *TNR* extended beyond its hallowed halls and influential pages. In Part 3 of this paper we will examine our third research question, which asks: Can we view the collapse of *TNR* as a microcosm for a larger collapse of legacy publications? To answer this final question, we will consider the extent to which the events at *TNR* can be taken to be a microcosm of an ideological shift within the broader journalism industry, and provide some speculative analysis and areas for further consideration.

As a final note before embarking on our long and winding investigation, this paper consciously refers to the mass resignation event as *TNR*'s "collapse"—an ideologically loaded term in itself. As Norman Fairclough tells us in *Language and Power*, it is important to be "open with one's readers about where one stands" (Fairclough 5). With that in mind, I want to make clear that my own ideological persuasions generally align with those who have resigned from *TNR*. However, throughout this research, I have gained significant respect for Hughes and Vidra; an understanding that necessity is the mother of invention; and that the ideological shift at *TNR* was not frivolous and will likely contribute to the longevity of the magazine. Whether *TNR* has or will stay true to its original project is a separate question, and we will discuss this issue later on in this paper.

Part 1. What Happened at *The New Republic*?

Research Question #1: What opposing ideologies were involved in the collapse of *TNR*?

The primary assumption of this paper is that an ideological shift contributed to the collapse of *TNR*, where an old set of values and beliefs was subverted by a new set. It is the first objective of this paper to examine and gain clarity on these opposing ideologies by analyzing texts responding to *TNR*'s collapse, and considering their place within a larger historical discourse. Therefore, it will be helpful to examine briefly the terms ideology and discourse in order to move forward with a clear idea of the concepts we will be examining.

What Is Ideology?

In his essay “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,” Louis Althusser defines ideology as a “representation of the imaginary relationship of individuals to their real conditions of existence” (Althusser 256). That is to say that ideology is the imagined framework through which we view the actual world around us—how it ought to function

and how we ought to function within it. Althusser describes ideology as a psychological superstructure of subconscious religious, ethical, legal, political, and cultural values and beliefs which can be held by either a group or an individual (237). However, ideology is not self-created, it is a product of the larger apparatuses that surround us which Althusser calls ideological state apparatuses. He defines these as a “certain number of realities which present themselves to the immediate observer in the form of distinct and specialized institutions” (243). For example, a capitalist market, a democratic system, or a culture of arts and letters may all be ideological state apparatuses into which we are born, and it is the meanings and interpretative frameworks provided by these apparatuses that provide us with the lenses through which we gain our picture – our understanding – of the world.

Althusser’s predecessors, Karl Marx and Antonio Gramsci, address the process of ideological development by explaining its relationship to power. In *The German Ideology*, Marx describes how the ideologies of those in power inform the societal structures that dominate and shape the consciousness of the subordinates. Marx explains:

The phantoms formed in the human brain are also, necessarily, sublimates of their material life-process, which is empirically verifiable and bound to material premises. Morality, religion, metaphysics, all the rest of ideology and their corresponding forms of consciousness, thus no longer retain the semblance of independence. (Marx 155)

These phantoms—our ideologies—are dependent on and subservient to the power structures of our society. In his *Prison Notebooks*, Gramsci builds on Marx’s idea, referring to ideological dominance as “hegemony.” He explains that every social group is born into a social and political stratum according to the pre-existing structures designed

to serve those in power (Gramsci 5). However, he argues, since all men are capable of intellectual thought despite their designated social or economic strata, they have the power to overcome hegemony by inciting those within their strata to realize their potential for intellectual thought and regain power (10). Gramsci's concept of hegemony underscores the fact that ideological dominance is not static, but a fluid force that changes throughout history, according to shifting relations of power. We will build on this discussion of the process of ideological shifts in Part 2 of this paper.

What is Discourse?

In order to discern the ideologies involved in the collapse of *TNR*, we will be performing a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), as described by linguistics scholar Norman Fairclough. However, before we dive into Fairclough's method, it will be useful to understand his meaning of discourse, and its relationship to ideology.

In his book *Language and Power*, Fairclough explains that "ideological struggle pre-eminently takes place in language" (Fairclough 88). Fairclough understands language as both the house of ideology and the vehicle for hegemonic change. Fairclough explains that our language is laced with ideological positions, whether intentional or unconscious "common-sense assumptions" (4). Like Gramsci, Marx and Althusser's conception of ideology, Fairclough understands language to be socially determined. If language is the house of ideology, and ideology is socially determined, then this relationship makes good logical sense. He writes that "language varies according to the social identities of people

in interactions, their socially defined purposes, social settings, and so on” (21). To explain language as a “social practice determined by social structures,” Fairclough applies the term “discourse” (16).

As a social practice, discourse extends beyond the written word. Fairclough clarifies that a text—whether written, spoken, or seen—is a product of the process of discourse, which is “the whole process of social interaction” (24). Therefore, Fairclough explains that if we want to discover underlying ideologies, we cannot simply analyze a text. We must instead look to the “relationships between texts, processes, and their social conditions” (26). Now that we have come to understand the meaning of discourse, this is precisely what we will attempt to do using Fairclough’s CDA method.

Critical Discourse Analysis

Fairclough’s Critical Discourse Analysis is a qualitative method designed to identify ideologies present within the language of a given text, to determine how that text fits into a historical discourse, and to discuss the conditions and process of a change in orders of discourse (which we will discuss in greater detail in Part 2 of this paper). Fairclough’s method is divided into three phases: description, interpretation, and explanation.

Description deals with the “formal properties of a text,” and interpretation deals with the text as a “product of a process” (26). In Part 1 of this paper, we will tackle the description and interpretation phases, as they answer our first question: “What ideologies were

involved in the collapse of *TNR*?” The explanation phase is concerned with “the social determination of the process,” or its conditions (26). This analysis will help us answer our second research question, so we will leave it to Part 2 of this paper.

We will begin our application of the CDA method by applying Fairclough’s description analysis to four texts written in response to the collapse of the *TNR* and each written by one of four key *TNR* stakeholders:

1. Chris Hughes’ *Washington Post* article, “Crafting a sustainable *New Republic*”
2. Guy Vidra’s *TNR* piece, “A Letter to Our Readers”
3. Leon Wieseltier’s *New York Times* article, “Among the Disrupted”
4. Ryan Lizza’s *New Yorker* article, “Inside the Collapse of *The New Republic*”

In order to identify the ideologies that underpin the collapse of *TNR*, I have selected two authors who occupy each of the two sides of the ideological divide. Chris Hughes and Guy Vidra remain with *TNR* as owner and CEO, respectively. Together with their new editor-in-chief, Gabriel Snyder, they are driving *TNR* towards its future as a “vertically integrated digital media company.” Since the December collapse, Leon Wieseltier and Ryan Lizza have both resigned from *TNR* as literary editor and contributing writer, respectively. Leon Wieseltier joined the staff at *The Atlantic* as a contributing writer and critic upon his resignation, and Ryan Lizza continues to hold his staff position at *The New Yorker*.

All four texts selected for analysis respond directly to the mass resignation at *TNR*, and were written within a month of the collapse (between December 5th, 2014 and January 7th, 2015). While Hughes’ and Vidra’s texts defend the new digital vision of the

magazine, Wieseltier and Lizza denounce the new direction as destruction. It is worth noting (and lamenting) that the former editor of *TNR*, Franklin Foer, who was the first to resign, had not published a response to this event at the time these texts were collected for analysis.

With regard to my selection process, the four authors were chosen for their closeness to the collapse at *TNR*, and their texts were sourced using the Google Search tool, with keyword *The New Republic* or *TNR* in conjunction with the names of the selected authors.

We will use Fairclough's description analysis to examine the verbal text only, not the visual text. Although Fairclough's description analysis uses ten key questions to engage with a text, my initial sample analysis revealed that only the first four of these are useful for my research. These four questions fall under what Fairclough calls a vocabulary analysis, and they consider the experiential, relational, and expressive values, as well as the metaphors present within a text (111). Each of these questions comes with a set of sub-questions that probe further into the language. To organize my analysis of my four texts, I created a helpful coding scheme that itemizes Fairclough's questions 1 – 4, including sub-questions. I have also included brief descriptions for each question and sub-question according to the objective of this analysis. Finally, I developed specific metaphor categorizations in order to capture the dichotomies that emerged from my analysis. This coding scheme can be found in Appendix I.

A Little Textual Analysis for Good Measure

To bolster my description analysis, I have also performed a textual analysis on all four texts using the free online tool, Voyant. To perform this analysis, I uploaded my texts to Voyant, and removed the common English stop words as well as the words “new,” “republic” and “T.N.R.” I then selected the five most frequent words in each discourse in order to add a quantitative dimension to my description analysis for good measure—and I’m glad I did. The results were uncanny, as we will see.

Analysis Findings

With regards to my CDA coding scheme, classification and metaphor were the most clear and common categories of language use among my texts, and that discovery laid the groundwork of my findings. I defined classification as “a particular way of listing off and dividing up reality” and often found that my four authors would create binary oppositions to reinforce their positions. This “us vs. them” classification structure is unsurprising given the context of the discourse, where authors are responding to opposing visions for the future of *TNR*. I also found that my authors used metaphorical language to reinforce their classification structures and express their feelings about *TNR*, the ideological debate, and the future of the magazine. Frequently used metaphors included metaphors of degradation (language of collapse, forgetting, destruction); innovation (language of progression, sustainability); quality (language of intellectual depth,

substance, meaning); quantity (language of growth, whether financial or audience); religion (language of the soul, the sacred, religious orders); liberty (language of overcoming, and safeguarding or spreading freedom); and tyranny (language of protest and control). Focusing on metaphorical language and classification structures, supported by Fairclough's other analysis categorizations, I have developed descriptions of the essential ideological positions of my authors.

While discussing these findings, it is of course important to remember that “what one ‘sees’ in a text, what one regards as worth describing, and what one chooses to emphasize in a description, are all dependent on how one interprets a text” (27). However, I have found that my textual analysis not only supported the emerging ideological positions of my description findings, it largely told the same story in a mere five words. From a methods perspective, the textual analysis helped to confirm the accuracy of my interpretation in the description analysis.

Analysis Findings: Chris Hughes

“I came to protect the future of the New Republic by creating a sustainable business.”

Chris Hughes article, “Crafting a Sustainable New Republic,” was published in *The Washington Post* on December 7th, 2014, two days after the mass resignation at *TNR*. Of the four texts, Hughes’ was the first to respond to the collapse. From a crisis communications perspective, Hughes’ article acts as an apology in the Latin sense—it is a defense of his vision for the future of the magazine.

Hughes uses an economic classification scheme to contrast the two sides of the *TNR* collapse, and uses metaphorical language to marry notions of freedom and finance. Hughes explains that “at the heart of the conflict,” one side considers the magazine to be a “public trust,” while the other side (his side) sees it as a “business.” Within this classification scheme, Hughes contrasts the financial freedom achieved through innovation with the financial tyranny of a non-innovative company that is fixated on the past and must rely on the “largess of an unpredictable few.” To arrive at the “halls of power” and be the “guardian of liberty,” *TNR* must “experiment with new business models.” In his framework of financial freedom against financial tyranny, Hughes positions himself as the saviour, who is driving innovation with the aim of rescuing *TNR*, from what Hughes has called “certain death.”

Supporting these CDA findings, my textual analysis revealed the top five words of Hughes’ text to be the following: institution, journalism, business, important, and sustainable. These words demonstrate the financial lens through which Hughes sees his magazine. While journalism is important for Hughes, ultimately, he believes that developing a sustainable business is the only way to maintain the institution that is *TNR*. Given that Hughes is the owner of the magazine, and is worth close to a billion dollars, his capital- and business-friendly ideological stance is unsurprising.

Analysis Findings: Vidra

“...they have in their pockets, their homes and their workplace the means to access our publication in a matter of seconds.”

Guy Vidra's statement, "A Letter to Our Readers," was published in *The New Republic* on December 9th, 2014, four days after the mass resignation, and just under two months since he began his role as CEO of *TNR*. Of the four texts, Vidra's is the only piece published in *TNR* itself, making it the only piece directly addressed to the readers of the magazine as opposed to the industry or larger audiences. By choosing to publish in the *TNR*, Vidra demonstrates a promise of commitment to its audience and readers, first and foremost.

Vidra uses the rise of digital media to articulate a "before and after" narrative that frames his assessment of today's publishing industry. According to Vidra, publishing "was nearing its end" before digital media were widely used, and traditional media outlets were easily "upended" or "displaced by a faster moving competitor." Recently, with "technology in the service of journalism," the industry has seen new methods of distribution, allowing publications to re-engineer how, and with whom, stories are shared. Vidra explains that digital media are "a means to reach audiences outside [*TNR*'s] walls" – new audiences looking for intelligent journalism. Buried in Vidra's text, we see the underlying message of democratization and the theme of freedom through technology. Like Hughes, Vidra wants to increase audience reach in order to "save" the magazine. Unlike the financial preoccupations of Hughes, however, Vidra's vision is to use digital media platforms to share the "contrarian views" and "depth of ideas" captured in the journalism of *TNR* with new audiences who are just as intellectually curious as traditional subscription holders. The implication is that, until the rise of digital media, *TNR* has operated as an elite and exclusive magazine when it ought to be made accessible to all.

Supporting these CDA findings, my textual analysis revealed the top five words of Vidra's text to be: world, ideas, change, readers, and audience. Almost like a five-word poem, these findings spell out Vidra's message of the need for change at *TNR* to deliver ideas to new audiences and readers around the world.

Taking these findings together, Vidra's primary value with regards to *TNR* can be summarized using the term "democratization." Originally, I was surprised at the disparity between the capitalistic and democratically oriented ideologies of Hughes and Vidra. However, unlike Hughes, Vidra is a former editor and journalist for a digital-native media publication. From his digitally inflected vantage point, it is the purpose of journalism to make news, stories and ideas accessible to all citizens, and this democratization is only amplified by new digital platforms. Upon reflection, Vidra's ideological stance is not so surprising after all.

Analysis Findings: Lizza

"If we had published Nietzsche's 'Birth of Tragedy', the only question would be, 'Did it travel well?' 'Yes, Wagner tweeted it.'"

Ryan Lizza's article, "Inside the Collapse of the New Republic," was published in the *New Yorker* on December 12th, 2014, one week after he resigned as a contributing writer at *TNR*. Of the four texts, Lizza's is the most removed from the collapse. Instead of responding directly and offering his own opinion, Lizza's text reports the story of the events at *TNR* from the time of Chris Hughes' initial purchase of the magazine to the resignation fall-out. However, Lizza's indirect response is in no way more objective than

the other three responses. In fact, Lizza prefaces his article by confirming his own resignation from *TNR* in support of Foer and Wieseltier.

Perhaps it's because of the storytelling character of Lizza's piece that it presents the clearest example of classification. His schema is simple: us versus them. He explicitly speaks to the ideological element of the *TNR* staff divide, and, like Hughes, describes two camps on either side: one which considered itself to be stewards of substantial content and critical thought, and one which talked about "radical—but unspecified—change." Lizza uses metaphorical language to dramatize his classification scheme by painting Hughes as a tyrant and Vidra as his technology-obsessed henchman. Lizza tells readers the story of the *TNR* staff's initial hope of salvation at the arrival of Hughes, but follows with language of command and control to describe the change in Hughes' behaviour. Lizza even includes a *Godfather* metaphor and a Greek tragedy reference. Lizza employs creative hyponymy by attaching an image of technology to every reference of Vidra, causing readers to associate the two. He also describes how Hughes' would send Vidra to scare the staff into writing buzzier pieces or "risk being replaced." On the other hand, Lizza paints the resigned staff as protestors in a noble rebellion against Hughes, with the purpose of saving critical thought from its click-baiting tyrannical overlords. While Lizza's language is slightly subtler than what I have described here, the overarching metaphor of tyranny and rebellion cannot go unnoticed.

Supporting these CDA findings, my textual analysis revealed the top five words of Lizza's text to be: Hughes, Foer, magazine, Vidra, and said. These words demonstrate Lizza's preoccupation with a "he said, she said" debate. Moreover, Vidra's name appears well above Wieseltier's or other *TNR* staff, demonstrating Lizza's offensive position in

his writing. Standing with his now-resigned colleagues, Lizza is actively rebelling against the new leadership through his text.

Analysis Findings: Wieseltier

“Where wisdom once was, quantification will now be.”

Leon Wieseltier’s article, “Among the Disrupted,” was published in the *New York Times* on January 7th, 2015, just over a month after he left *TNR*. Of the four articles, Wieseltier’s has the latest publication date, meaning that he had the opportunity to respond to all authors. And he certainly did. Where Hughes text reads like an apology, Wieseltier’s reads like a treatise.

As in the texts of Lizza and Hughes, Wieseltier’s use of language describes the collapse at *TNR* as a battle between two opposing groups. But like a true literary editor, Wieseltier ups the ante by using bold, unabashed metaphors of religious warfare. Wieseltier’s text was the richest of the four in its use of metaphorical language, which is no surprise since he is the most celebrated writer of the group. His text is also, without a doubt, the most damning.

Wieseltier makes significant use of classification schemes, using binary oppositions to explain what he regards as broader social issues. The highlights of this long list include humanism and posthumanism (which he ties to technologism), universalism and particularism, and quality and quantity. Wieseltier applies creative synonymy to equate all of the terms on either side of his classification scheme, such that

humanism, universalism, and quality are equated on one side, and posthumanism, particularism, and quantity are equated on the other.

This classification scheme is intensified by Wieseltier's overarching religious warfare metaphor, which he uses throughout the text to provide a lens for his classification scheme. This metaphor can be identified through words including "idolatry of data," "pragmatic orthodoxy," and "high priests in the church of tech." By combining this religious warfare metaphor with his classification scheme, Wieseltier attributes normative values to the opposing ideologies involved in the collapse at *TNR*. He aligns one ideology with humanity; it values substance, ends-in-themselves, meaning, tradition, and sentimentality. The implication of these values is that they are good for the human soul, a religious concept invoked by Wieseltier himself. He aligns the other ideology with "technologism" (which he does not define, but which I understand him to mean as both a philosophy of technology and the "technologisation" of human life, which has Heideggerian flavourings, as we will soon see). This ideology values machination, efficiency, data, and quantification. The implication of these values is that not only are they bad for the human soul, in fact, they are dehumanizing. Having established such a definitive ideological divide, Wieseltier makes it clear to his readers that in this battle, he sides with humanity.

Supporting these CDA findings, my textual analysis revealed the top five words of Wieseltier's text as: culture, human, humanism, life, old. It is clear what is at stake for Wieseltier. His fear is that, under the new leadership of *TNR*—and in society generally—the humanism that is the substance of human life is being hollowed out by technologism and its data-driven values.

Intertextual Interpretation: Quality vs. Quantity

Now that we have our findings on the table, the question is, “what makes these findings significant?” Fairclough must have asked himself this same question when developing his CDA method, which is why the second phase of analysis is intended to interpret the findings. Fairclough describes two interpretation frameworks: situational context and intertextual context. The situational context of the collapse of *TNR* was described in detail in the opening pages of this paper, so we will leave that aside. Fairclough’s concept of intertextual context interpretation will help to develop and consolidate our findings on the ideologies present within our four texts.

Intertextual context understands that “participants in any discourse operate on the basis of assumptions about which previous (series of) discourses the current one is connected to” (Fairclough 145). As we learned of discourse and ideology earlier, participants of a discourse do not exist in a vacuum but are part of a historical line. To interpret our findings, we will summarize what our texts revealed and consider their historical roots to answer our overarching research question, *what happened at TNR?*

Ideologies of Quantity

Considering our findings with a broad lens, we can discern that Hughes and Vidra represent ideologies that privilege *quantity*, albeit in surprisingly different ways (that is, if

we take Mr. Vidra at his word). By quantity, I mean a concern with numbers, data, growth, and quantification. Hughes and Vidra both express the belief that if the magazine doesn't stay current with new technologies, reach new audiences, and develop a modern, sustainable business model, it will cease to exist altogether.

In Hughes view, the former vision of *TNR* faced an economic challenge. He intends to resolve this challenge by employing new digital strategies to grow audiences and thereby increase revenue. In Vidra's view, *TNR* faced a democratic challenge. He abhors the pervasive elitism at *TNR*, and believes that intellectually rich journalism should be equally accessible to all audiences. As far as Vidra sees it, digital media afford democratization. Here we have ideological positions that aim towards increasing quantities, whether of money or people.

Sociologist Daniel Bell offers clarity around the historical roots of this ideological position in his work *End of Ideology*, where he describes the origins of "post-industrial society." According to Bell, exhaustion with nineteenth-century ideologies after the calamities of Marxism, Communism, Nazism and the Welfare State led us to replace these ideologies with a "new empiricism," driven by technology and economic values (Bell, *End of Ideology* 16). Disillusioned with the old ideologies of freedom—we are now fascinated with the new ideologies of growth (Bell, 403). Bell describes the efficiency of technology as the driving force behind the concern with growth, and lists five ways that technology has changed society, each of which has efficiency at its root: by producing more goods at less cost; by opening a new job of "planning"; by emphasizing quantitative analysis in rational thought; by networking human interactions; by increasing speed and decreasing space (Bell, *Post-Industrial Society*, 188–189).

All of these new efficiencies are contained within the vision of Vidra, and especially Hughes, for the future of *TNR*. It is clear that both feel that digital media and new technologies offer more efficient ways of using and sharing content, which can simultaneously increase audiences and revenues. Vidra's invocation of democratic liberty harkens back to Jeffersonian visions of America, and his "sincere, indiscriminate, and unlimited faith in the American people" (Levy 15). The problem with this vision, as Herbert Croly pointed out back in 1909, is that democracy without quality is fruitless. In order for the democratization of information to be a noble goal, the content must be worth sharing.

Neither of these men has spoken against the value of high-quality journalism, and certainly both have praised critical thought as a key element of *TNR*. What Vidra and Hughes have not discussed, however, is whether a preoccupation with increasing quantity will be detrimental to the quality of *TNR*'s journalism, as Wieseltier and Lizza fear.

Ideologies of Quality

When we loosely categorize the ideologies of Lizza and Wieseltier, we find that both authors articulate an ideology that privileges the value of *quality*. By quality, I mean a concern with intellectual depth, substance and critical thought. They both demonstrate the belief that the new leadership at *TNR* is destroying the substance of the magazine's long-form stories, replacing them with buzzier, catchier, shorter stories that will "travel well" across digital media platforms. The cause of their resignation is not technology per se, as Wieseltier explains, but rather how technology—or rather technologism—has informed our understanding of the world:

Quantification is the most overwhelming influence upon the contemporary American understanding of, well, everything. It is enabled by the idolatry of data, which has itself been enabled by the almost unimaginable data-generating capabilities of the new technology. The distinction between knowledge and information is a thing of the past. (Wieseltier)

The knowledge/information concern expressed by Wieseltier speaks directly to the potential problem with Vidra's vision of democratization. If knowledge is being sacrificed for facts, data and information, then it is not serving the common good to share them. Croly expressed this same sentiment in his initial conceptions of *TNR*, which were not simply to record facts but rather to share higher values.

The historical roots of Wieseltier's argument can be traced back to German philosopher, Martin Heidegger, who understood the essence of technology not to be technology itself, but rather the way in which technology – or even a technological worldview – causes us to perceive the world. In his essay, "The Question Concerning Technology," Heidegger argues that the essence of technology is "enframing" (*ge-stell*), a non-permanent but nonetheless all-encompassing ethos in which we are embedded (Heidegger 325). To put this in Althusser's terms, technology is an ideological apparatus. The enframing orders man to order everything as a "standing reserve," a cache of goods available to be put to use at our command. Even the Rhine River itself, Heidegger says, becomes part of our standing reserve (321). The essence of technology, then, is the turning of all ends into means as a standing reserve, with man merely being the orderer. Of course, by merely being the orderer, man himself becomes the standing reserve (332).

In the context of *TNR*, Lizza and Wieseltier understand the quantification of content and ideas to be the hollowing out of quality. In Hughes' future vision of *TNR*,

they see themselves as mere orderers of journalistic content, reimagined as data and product.

Their preoccupation with normative concerns of the common good harkens back to Hamiltonian thinking—and to Croly’s initial project—where the intellectuals are Philosopher Kings, tasked with discerning and sharing higher values and opinions with the common people for their own betterment. But as Croly and Vidra have both pointed out, this type of ideology risks being democratically deficient. Returning back to our discussion of ideology, it is equally clear that any value discernment by intellectuals would operate under a social structure designed to serve those intellectuals, meaning that those values may not necessarily serve the common good.

What Happened at *TNR*?

On the surface, it would seem that the two groups involved in the *TNR* collapse are talking past one another. The resigned staff members are open to new technological horizons as a means of staying competitive within the new media landscape; however, not at the cost of what they define as quality. The new leadership are driving change and growth by employing new digital media tactics, strategies and metrics, but have also expressed their commitment to quality content. Why can’t these two groups just take each other at their word?

The reason, Fairclough tells us, is that language is made up of more than just words, it’s made up of ideology. For the resigned staff, the language of the new

leadership goes beyond a surface-level interest in hashtags and buzzwords. Their language reveals that an entirely new ideology has taken the reins of *TNR*, one whose values and beliefs do not align with those of the now-resigned magazine staff. Foer, Wieseltier, Lizza and their supporters felt that Hughes and his new hires were turning ends into means, quantifying the unquantifiable, and most of all, sacrificing quality for quantity. The 100-year-old magazine has undergone an ideological shift with the installation of a new, data- and profit-driven dominant ideology. That's what happened at *TNR* on December 5, 2014. Now the question we will turn to is, why?

Part 2. Why?

Research Question #2: What conditions may have contributed to the collapse at *TNR*?

We know that an ideological shift has occurred, and that a new dominant ideology is driving the vision of *TNR*. Using the metaphorical language of battle (so frequently invoked in our texts), Hughes is the undisputed victor after the collapse of *TNR*. Although 50 of his key staff members resigned, he continues to own and operate the magazine, which has successfully been re-engineered as a vertically integrated digital media company, and he has hired new, digital-savvy staff who are excited to further *TNR*'s new direction. However, as we have briefly discussed, ideological shifts are not spontaneous, and they do not occur in a vacuum. They require conditions for change. We have touched

on this idea in Part 1 of this paper, recognizing that hegemonies change according to shifting relations of power. In Part 2 of this paper, we will dig further into the discussion of the process of ideological shifts, and move forward with our second research question to examine some of the conditions that contributed to the ideological shift at *TNR*.

We will begin by familiarizing ourselves with Michel Foucault's theory of the orders of discourse, supported by interpretations by Fairclough, to understand the process of an ideological shift. Then we will apply the third and final phase of Fairclough's CDA method, which in our case, seeks to explain some of the conditions or social structures that may have contributed to the collapse of *TNR*.

Orders of Discourse

Michel Foucault's philosophy largely expresses itself through its use of historical analysis, which he deploys to describe the transformations of discourse over time. We are now familiar with the historical approach to analysis, as Fairclough—a Foucauldian scholar—adopts a similar approach in his CDA method. The advantage of examining Foucault's philosophy is that it helps us answer the question, “how does an ideological shift occur?”

Fairclough explains Foucault's term “orders of discourse” as the “overall configuration of discourse practices of a society or one of its institutions” (Fairclough “Technologisation of Discourse” 71). Orders of discourse are what determine discourse.

In his work, “Orders of Discourse,” Foucault explains that societies hold a certain set of propositions that they consider to be reasonable and true (not unlike ideologies). Anything outside of these “true” propositions appears to members of that society as unreasonable and false (Foucault 9). Truth, for Foucault, is not an absolute. It is historically relative and socially dependent, and in this way is akin to ideology. Foucault describes the moment when a society moves from the unthinkable to the thinkable—from folly to truth—and he refers to such a moment as an “event” (“Truth and Power” 55). This event expands the boundaries of truth, causing an ideological shift in how people view their world. For example, at the start of the 16th century the proposition that the earth was the centre of the universe was considered true. The introduction of the heliocentric model was an event in which society was faced with a new proposition—that the earth orbits the sun. This proposition forced the expansion of what was considered true at that time with regards to science, allowing for the Copernican revolution, a shift in Renaissance science that contributed to the larger scientific revolution. If we apply Foucault’s concept to Heidegger’s discussion on technology, we could consider the introduction of technological devices an event that changed the propositions considered true by pre-industrial society. For example, the introduction of the mill that could harness the power of the Rhine changed the nature of the Rhine as an end in itself. The Rhine became a means—a reserve of water to be ordered—for the sake of another end. Put in Heidegger’s terms, the event of technology changed the “truth” of being as an end in itself to being as a means to an end—to the standing reserve.

Foucault explains that the event is not unilateral but rather exists on a number of levels, “differing in amplitude, chronological breadth, and capacity to produce effects”

(56). Rather than imagining Foucault's event as a singular explosion of new truth, it should be imagined as a series of fireworks—some bigger and brighter than others—spread out over a number of years across a number of different locations. Just as we have learned with ideology, discourse and hegemonic change, a new proposition doesn't happen all at once, it is iterative and cumulative. For the purposes of this paper, Foucault's insights regarding orders of discourse would suggest that the ideological shift at *TNR* was not a singular event, but rather a co-contributor among a series of events that together are collectively driving a changing order of discourse.

Foucault reminds us that it's no use to try and determine the essence of the order of discourse in which we are currently participating. To borrow from Heidegger, we are unable to see past the horizon of our own being. That is to say, we do not and will never have a bird's eye view of our own historical moment since we are embedded in history. Therefore, Foucault tells his readers, "we are not to burrow to the hidden core of discourse, to the heart of the thought or meaning manifested in it" (Order of Things 22). Rather, to investigate an order of discourse "we should look for its external conditions of existence, for that which gives rise to the chance series of these events and fixes its limits" (22). Acting on Foucault's advice and following Fairclough's method, we will now consider the external conditions within the journalism industry today that contributed to the ideological shift—and collapse—at *TNR*.

Explanation: The Conditions of the Collapse

To explain why the collapse at *TNR* occurred, we are not concerned with the conditions that reinforced the subordinate ideologies of Wieseltier and Lizza, but with those conditions that reinforced the dominant ideologies of the new leaders, Hughes and Vidra. Put in other terms, our key question here is, “what external conditions led to the new leaders’ dominance?” To discuss these conditions, we will refer back to their ideological positions.

As our CDA findings revealed, Vidra’s ideological position had democratic underpinnings, in the sense that he wanted all audiences to have access to *TNR* rather than only elite audiences. A businessperson at heart, Hughes’ ideological position had economic underpinnings, in the sense that he believed that *TNR*’s survival was dependent on financial sustainability. Despite this difference, both men agreed that digital media was the solution for moving *TNR* forward because of its ability to increase the quantity of readers and revenue. In order to consider the external conditions that contributed to the collapse of *TNR*, we will consider the democratic and economic affordances of digital media.

Economic Affordances

It is no secret that print publishers have been facing real financial challenges as a result of the increasing use of digital media platforms. In the fall of 2014, the world watched as one of the “big five” book publishers, Hachette, took on the colossal online book warehouse, Amazon (which has often been called a monopoly, including by Frank Foer, formerly of *TNR*) (Forbes; Lizza). It was a long, acrimonious, and ideological battle over which of the two companies should dictate book prices, and the world was both

relieved and surprised when Amazon conceded. While it was a landmark case for the autonomy of the book publishing industry, Hachette's victory has not been reflected in the company's bottom line. Hachette saw sales drop by 18.5% in its third quarter and ended the year by handing staffers a piddling Christmas bonus (Streifeld). Meanwhile, Hachette's \$175 billion adversary has spent 2015 improving services, developing delivery drones and even building some brick-and-mortar stores (Forbes; Johnston; Lapowsky). If the causes of Amazon's economic success were distilled into only one word, it would be: the *internet*.

The internet and its digital media platforms have brought radical change to all industries by decreasing the lags and gaps created by space and time, while increasing efficiency. Political scholar Peter Ferdinand explains that the internet's original and most profound benefit for society was economic. The internet and its digital platforms have generated an overhaul of efficiencies that has allowed organizations to make massive overhead savings. The five technological efficiencies listed by Daniel Bell all apply as economic affordances of the internet. Specifically, the internet reduces the cost of internal administration, provides warp-speed communications through email, allows for the transfer and quantitative analysis of unthinkable amounts of data, it removes the physical barriers of the real world like space and time, and it creates a platform where organizations can connect directly with their consumers (Ferdinand 2). In 2000, Ferdinand wrote, "The more futuristically minded suggest a world with...fewer publishers, as writers, composers and performers distribute their creations directly through the Internet. They even suggest that the Internet will create a new paradigm of economics" (2).

We are at a point in history where organizations—and individuals, for the sake of their employability—must either get online or get out of the way. This has been particularly true in the journalism industry. Journalism scholar, Bob Franklin, sets the stage for our discussion on the economic conditions that led to the collapse of *TNR* by providing a by-the-numbers account of the journalism industry from the time of the recession in 2008 until the publication of his article, “The Future of Journalism,” in 2014:

The contraction of legacy media continues apace, characterised by falling audiences, readerships and advertising revenues. Editorial staffs are still shrinking although more slowly than during the 2008–9 peaks and at differential rates reflecting the circumstances of distinctive media platforms, media sectors and national settings. The number of daily papers in the United States has fallen from 1611 in 1990 to 1387 in 2009; editorial jobs are also down with the Paper Cuts website reporting 16,000 job losses in 2008, reducing to 1850 in 2012 (Paper Cuts 2014). Pew’s State of the News Media 2013 report, perhaps a little optimistically, characterises newspapers as “stabilizing but still threatened,” despite a fall in print advertising for the sixth consecutive year: and by a substantial \$1.8 billion in 2013, or 8 per cent. Measured by revenues, the newspaper industry in the United States has shrunk to 60 per cent of its size a decade ago. Newspaper companies struggle to meet pension and debt commitments and continue to reduce news staff, while some papers have shrunk publication frequency to three times a week.

To put it in Silicon Valley terms, Franklin’s description highlights that digital media has brought about a kind of “creative disruption” to the journalism industry, and it is increasingly clear that publications refusing to cater to and create content for online audiences will soon find themselves out of business (Massing). However, those who embrace digital media have room to grow, experiment and innovate. As digital platforms have progressed, and particularly with the introduction of Twitter, digital media has

slowly come to be regarded as a financial promise land for publications, including what Franklin referred to as “legacy” publications like *TNR* and *The New Yorker*.

A study by Lasorsa, Lewis and Holton, titled “Normalizing Twitter,” showed that major news organizations including the *New York Times* and CNN actively encouraged their journalists to use Twitter, pointing to its unique ability to quickly reach a growing number of readers. Larger media companies like these ones have an easier time using Twitter for audience growth because of the platform’s unique audience mechanism of “following,” which is based on preferential attachment. News media outlets deemed to be interesting, informative, or otherwise useful gain a larger group of followers in a quicker amount of time; moreover, legacy publications like *TNR* or *The New Yorker* can often gain followers by their brand name alone. Twitter has certainly changed the norms and practices of journalists, whether employed by legacy or digital-native publications. Despite the clear efficiencies afforded by Twitter, however, Lasorsa, Lewis and Holton found that “Those working for major national newspapers ... appear to be changing less than their counterparts at other news media, suggesting perhaps that those invested the most in current professional conventions may be the least willing or able to change” (Lasorsa et al. 31). Their conclusions were certainly true of Wieseltier, who, on the day of the collapse did not engage with the Twittersphere at all, but rather had his colleague Julia Ioffe send regards on his behalf: “Leon says he doesn’t do Twitter but he loves you all.” In Vidra’s words, this quirky tweet “traveled well” and was retweeted 51 times (Lizza).

Another economic affordance that has cultivated the success of digital journalism is aggregation, a term whose meaning today is generally tied to Arianna Huffington’s

digital-native publication, *The Huffington Post*, which now caters to thirteen countries and counting (Massing). *The Huffington Post* is today the “most-visited digital-native news site” with 100 million unique visitors per month (Massing). It has built its prolific content farm not through original story creation but instead through aggregation, with one in seven of the site’s hosted stories coming from the Associated Press, many others from Reuters, and still more from legacy publications like the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* (Massing). In his paper, “Aggregation, Content Farms and Huffinization,” journalism scholar Piet Bakker exhorts that “producing content is not enough; moderation and curation are the new buzz-words of the trade while gatewatching is at least as important as gatekeeping” (627). He defines aggregation as harvesting “content from volunteers and act[ing] as curator, correcting and editing copy” (627). The influx of aggregated journalism has increased the demand for output or product. While the journalism industry undergoes a creative disruption where revenues are marginal and competition is fierce, quality has taken a back seat and quantity has become king (Franklin 472). Aggregation affords an increase of quantity and it doesn’t require a great amount of skilled journalism. The ability to produce “more content at lower costs for these new platforms” has led to a new model of journalism, termed by Bakker as low-pay or no-pay journalism, where part-timers and amateurs rather than traditional, professional journalists add to bottom-line savings (Bakker 627; Franklin 472). By allowing publications to produce more and pay less, digital media has changed the “paradigm of economics” in journalism, as Ferdinand predicted.

There have recently been new social media innovations beyond aggregation to allow online publications to reach larger audiences. Facebook now hosts news stories

directly on its own platform, and has secured deals with nine digital-native and legacy publications, including BuzzFeed, the *New York Times*, the *National Geographic* and *The Atlantic* (Somaiya and Goel). To clarify, this means that news publications will hand over a set amount of stories to Facebook for exclusive use on its platform. Facebook's 1.4 billion users will be able to flip through stories faster by accessing them directly on the social media platform without having to link to the news publication's website, which usually takes ten extra seconds to load (Somaiya, Isaac and Gold). At the outset, this seems like it would be an economic loss for publications, as it would effectively stop Facebook users from moving over to their websites. But this new scheme is bigger than that. We have typically been thinking of websites as private property, with the goal being to get visitors to come to our "house." Facebook's new scheme demonstrates that this is changing. Flexibility, mobility, and most of all, shareability is revealing that a static "house" may no longer be the best financial option. Why make the readers come to you, when you could go to where the readers congregate? This new model will only be an economic win for publishers if the user data and ad revenue is shared between Facebook and the news outlets. However, it represents the possibility of new economic paradigms afforded to publications by digital media.

Perhaps more than anything else, the rise of big data has contributed to the coffers of media publications. Digital media allows publications to easily collect and analyze data on their users as well as on the world around them. Data impacts the editorial side of journalism through new storytelling strategies including "data journalism" and its concomitant and seemingly ubiquitous infographics, which are well suited to the sharing culture of social media platforms. More importantly, however, data impacts the business

side of journalism by giving publications the ability to target users and customize content. In their study, “Big Data and Journalism,” Lewis and Westlund explain the phenomenon of big data as an opportunity for publications to expand their products and services while at the same time tailoring them to particular audiences and advertisers which they are better able to understand through data tracking. Big data “promises economic efficiency by enabling more observation at less cost ... allowing journalists to function more like knowledge managers who better gather, organize, and analyze disparate information flows in a community” (Lewis and Westlund 457). With this explanation, Lewis and Westlund point out the similarities between aggregation and data journalism. In both cases, journalists act as curators of “found” content, which, at least on the internet, appears to be infinite.

“Like the cosmos,” Harvard scholar Thomas Patterson writes, “the Internet is expanding. There are 500 million websites worldwide and the number is constantly increasing, creating heightened competition for people’s time and attention” (Patterson 6). In order to be heard over the ever-louder voices of digital space, publications have to give the people what they want. This is the intersection at which the economic affordances and democratic affordances of digital media meet.

Democratic Affordances

The economic affordances of digital media benefit an organization’s bottom line by growing its audience. The democratic affordances of digital media give—or at least seem to give—greater freedom and choice to that audience.

With the affordances of accessibility, connectivity and mobility, digital media are inherently democratic. No matter one's age, gender, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation or level of education, when one is given a digital device that's outfitted with WiFi one has instant access to whoever or whatever, wherever and whenever.

As was the case with economic affordances, the pre-condition of digital media's democratic purview is, of course, the internet—the world's most bountiful and accessible information bank—which has had a profound impact on the ability for audiences to self-educate, often despite any barriers that may exist in the physical world (e.g. economics, location, etc.). With digital media platforms like Wikipedia, Google Search, Facebook and Skype, the internet can connect users with any online fact, opinion or person they please. Undoubtedly, this unique mixture of connectivity and accessibility has generated or accelerated innumerable achievements, since it allows users to bring the brightest minds from around the world into the same virtual room.

At the same time, the accessibility afforded by the internet, in conjunction with the mobility afforded by digital devices, means that we now have—and expect to have—the world at our fingertips at all times. For many, the smartphone is the device that supplies this level of on-the-go accessibility. According to Google's research partner, Our Mobile Planet, 56% of Canadians were using smartphones in 2013, and 52% of those users were connecting on social networking sites every day ("Smartphone Penetration"; "Frequency of Smartphone Social Networking"). As Vidra points out in his text, audiences now have access to *TNR*—or anything else they fancy reading—in their pockets at all times, no matter their location. The common phrase "what we want, when we want it" has never been more applicable.

Digital media have empowered users by opening up the world in a new way. Accessibility, connectivity and mobility have reinforced the democratic ideology by carrying the principles of freedom, choice and equal rights from the political sphere to the online space. As digital media become increasingly domesticated, users to feel entitled to participate in and gain access to virtually everything. And because digital media foster democratic ideology, this sense of entitlement takes on a normative character, where access is associated with freedom, which is understood to be normatively good in Western cultures and beyond.

Entitlement to information access has manifested in varying levels of extremes. On the more extreme end, accessibility has become synonymous with transparency, which has become a frequently used term that is closely associated with corporate and public governance, and hacker groups including WikiLeaks, Anonymous, Pirate Bay, and individuals including Edward Snowden and Julian Assange. The volume of information and accessibility brought about by digital technology has raised new ethical questions surrounding privacy, transparency, and the rights of the public.

The notion of “free access” is not exclusive to radicals and free-movie downloaders, however. In a less extreme sense, the general public’s entitlement to information access has manifested through social media. Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Periscope (the name speaks for itself here) all give users the right to access and share their own private moments, and those of strangers. Openness, transparency and sharing culture has by now become normalized and touted by Facebook’s Mark Zuckerberg as the new “gold standard” (Van Dijck, *Culture of Connectivity* 174). In her book, *The Culture of Connectivity*, Jose Van Dijck writes about the ideological shift that has

occurred online, arguing that the norms of privacy and space have been replaced by norms of free access to information, whether that's access to data for the user, or about the user (173-74).

Van Dijck refers to this ideological shift as the *connective turn*. She explains that a change occurred in the organization and architecture of social media platforms, where their centre of gravity was shifted from connectedness to connectivity (Van Dijck, "You Have One Identity" 202). Social media went from being a platform for user connection to an increasingly transparent network for data collection. Van Dijck reveals the man behind the internet's curtain when she writes, "platform owners and investors collect behavioral data that users are unaware of creating; data companies are particularly interested in signs of desires and wants, as advertisers need this information for marketing purposes" (202).

The audience provides the intersection between the democratic and the economic affordances of digital media. With the ability to track the user data, media publications (and all corporations) have come to understand that in order to increase ad revenues, they need to increase audience reach, and to increase audience reach, they need to deliver what an audience wants. The internet promotes the democratic spirit by presenting the audience with the illusion of boundless choice and freedom to self-educate, but at the back end, organizations have engineered algorithms to feed and ultimately determine those choices.

The importance of capturing audience choice in order to increase revenue has given birth to the much-loathed journalistic practice of "click baiting"—fishing for website click-throughs by promoting buzzier, catchier content proven through data tracking to hook the bait (i.e. the audience). Lee et al. published a study in 2014 that

aimed to discover the directionality of influence between editorial decisions and audience preference, which is monitored by the digital tracking of “clicks” on news websites. They found that audience preference has a key influence on the news placement choices of editors, and newsrooms are increasingly reliant on digital tracking in order to “maximize their presentation of content” (Lee et al. 519).

Harkening back to Heidegger’s standing reserve, the data from every user “click” is available to organizations, and by analyzing this data, they are able to pre-empt the desires of their audiences (McKelvey, Tiessen and Simcoe 578). The solution to increase web traffic is to feed audiences the content they have shown that they prefer. As a result, audiences find themselves in a feedback loop of their own desires, which, if calibrated according to click-bait, are less often intellectually rigorous and more often of the fluffier, buzzier variety.

The feedback loop problem occurs where democracy serves consumer demand in a competitive market. This can be seen in both the business and political spheres, which both operate on audience preference. Whether it’s a media publication or a politician, in order to “win votes”, you have to give the people what they want. Here, the question becomes, can we trust the public to choose what is good for them?

Once again, we have arrived at Herbert Croly’s conundrum between the political theories of Jefferson and Hamilton. Jefferson delighted in democracy as he had faith in the judgement and values of people and trusted them to make reasonable choices of their own accord. Hamilton’s concern with democracy, however, was that in order to serve the common good, an arbiter of value would be required to help guide the choices and opinions of the public. In other words, Hamilton believed that, if left to their own

devices, people would take the easy way out. Applied to the world of media publications, they would choose BuzzFeed click-bait rather than *TNR*.

If user data reveals that audiences prefer the fluffy stuff, and if audience preference is a key determinant of editorial decisions from an economic standpoint, then quality journalism will be significantly impacted. This underscores the fear of the resigned staff, who felt that the ideologies of Hughes and Vidra, which privilege audience preference for the sake of crafting a sustainable business, would have an impact on the quality of journalism and ultimately the legacy of the magazine, which was intended by Croly to be the arbiter of value.

Why?

In the past decade, we have seen an economic recession and the rise of digital media. The combined impact of these two things has contributed greatly to the financial peril now facing legacy publications, which not only have difficulty selling their print pieces, but must compete with new digital-native publications that cater to audience preference. Not only that, audience preference has changed as a result of new affordances like accessibility, connectivity and mobility. The online space allows audiences to choose and share whatever content they like, with whoever they like, no matter where they are in the world. And, because this clicking and sharing is done digitally, organizations now have the ability to track the preferences of their audiences and develop content to gratify and reinforce their desires. As legacy publications like *TNR* enter the online space, they

have the opportunity to improve audience reach, to better track and analyze their audiences, to precisely tailor their content to audience preference, and to increase production at a lower cost. In doing so, publications can generate audience growth and ad revenue and stay competitive within a disrupted and fast moving industry.

If we agree that *TNR* experienced an ideological shift and ideologies are tied to an order of discourse, then we can deduce that digital media have changed the order of discourse. What was once unimaginable has become normal: concerns of privacy have become a demand for transparency and accessibility, and personal choice is pre-empted and monetized on a mass scale. Using Fairclough's understanding of orders of discourse, our discussion of the economic and democratic affordances of digital media demonstrates that the overall configuration of discourse practices in our society and in the journalism industry has changed. These changes have greatly contributed to the collapse of *TNR* and have had an industry-wide impact. As we discussed in Part 1 of this paper, the ideologies entrenched in this new order of discourse are concerned with quantitative criteria like efficiency and growth. Bringing all of our findings and analyses together, we might say that the order of discourse brought about by the introduction of digital media and its affordances has contributed to an ideological shift where concerns with quality have become dominated by concerns with quantity. As a result, whether rightly or wrongly, legacy media must evolve to meet the new demands generated by digital media.

Part 3. *TNR* as a Microcosm?

Research Question #3: Can we view the collapse of *TNR* as a microcosm for a larger collapse of legacy publications?

When news broke about the collapse at *TNR*, it became a highly divisive touch point for other journalists and industry supporters to air their own ideologies and close ranks. The mass exodus sparked a flurry of subscription cancellations and an outpouring of Twitter backlash from resigned staff and their supporters (Lizza). The *Washington Post* published the accusatory article, “What Does This Vanity Publisher Want?” while Lloyd Grove of *The Daily Beast* compared the collapse to the Game of Throne’s “Red Wedding” episode, quoting Ryan Lizza’s December 5th tweet, “At least the king in the Red Wedding had the balls to stab everyone in person” (Lloyd). There was also backlash to the backlash from editors of newer, digital-native publications like *Medium* and *Gawker*, who responded to Wieseltier directly, arguing that disruption is not to be confused with nihilism, or referring to him as a “reanimated pleistocene-era fossil” and implying that he is a racist (Culpepper; Finnegan). Across the entire industry, gloves were coming off. The amount of media attention, commentary, mud-slinging and championing indicates that the ideologies involved in the collapse extend beyond the halls of *TNR* and into the battlefields of other media companies. With ideological battle lines drawn in the sand, we are left wondering, is the collapse of *TNR* a microcosm for a larger collapse of legacy journalism?

In the sense that the entire journalism industry is faced with a new, digitally-oriented order of discourse, the answer to this question is yes. As we discussed earlier in Part 2, the conditions that contributed to the collapse of *TNR*—the economic and

democratic affordances of digital media—are not unique to that magazine but exist throughout the journalism industry. However, the collapse at *TNR* is also uniquely wrapped up in its original liberal ideology, something which it does not share with other legacy publications. Former contributing *TNR* writer David Greenberg explains that while the collapse is being regarded as a casualty of the digital age alongside other legacy publications, “little magazines” like *TNR* have always relied on wealthy sponsors who believe in their vision (Greenberg). *The New Republic* cannot be entirely seen as a microcosm for a larger collapse because it faced an additional, unique external condition: “the polarization of a media environment that leaves little room for a strain of liberal thought that not only attacks the right and the far left but also prods and questions liberalism itself” (Greenberg). As discussed in the opening pages of this paper, Croly’s liberalism is rooted in the desire for evidence-based truth which is open to debate but closed to dogmatism. It is an ideology whose character is to denounce ideology by way of reason and critical thought. Part of the cause for *TNR*’s collapse is that liberal ideology has fallen out of favour with the American public, which is now so polarized and dogmatized by ideologies of the left and right that it has no interest in the “middle way” that liberalism provides (Hare, Pool 412).

Digital media, however, is not absent from the political condition of the *TNR* collapse. Online journalism is more likely to direct readers to content that confirms their own values and beliefs, not only as a result of the sheer volume of options to choose from, but also as a result of algorithmic feedback loops: “The left and the right are retreating into cocoons of information and opinion, on cable TV and social media,” Greenberg laments. Beyond this, can we speculate that this polarization signifies the

dominance of quantity over quality? If quality is concerned with critical thought and substance, and if it has been set aside in an age that privileges growth and efficiency, then perhaps we live an age where, despite the volume of information accessible through digital media, the audience lacks the interest in taking the time to engage in genuine, rational debate.

On the other hand, even if there is truth in this speculation, the journalism industry has shown signs of a return to quality content. Now that the transition from print to digital has been made, such that even the last hold-outs like *TNR* are being pushed (despite great resistance) into the online space where they can increase output and audience reach, readers seem to be looking for a better balance between quantity and quality. To draw from Hegel's *Phenomenology of Spirit*, history is a dialectic movement that swings like a pendulum through a series of theses, anti-theses, and syntheses. In other words, a historical event is negated by an opposite reaction, but then returns to a place of equilibrium. In the journalism industry, aggregated content, fluffy listicles (list + article), and micro-blog mania may be seen as a reaction to the affordances of digital media, and a negation of traditional, long-form journalism. If that's the case, how much more vapid can journalism get before audiences get bored and demand a better balance? The answer is proving to be, not much.

Digital-native media publications are already rebounding from their quantity obsession by returning to investments in quality journalism. In June 2015, former executive editor of the *Columbia Journalism Review*, Michael Massing, performed an environmental scan of the journalism industry to understand the extent to which digital

media were impacting quality—and his findings were surprisingly (though not entirely) optimistic.

Earlier in this paper we described *The Huffington Post* as the king of content farming and aggregation. However, after ten years of poaching and hosting content from other media publications, *The Huffington Post* seems to be having a change of heart. Massing points out that the Huffingtonians seem to sense their lack of credibility in the eyes of the industry, and at the end of 2014, Arianna Huffington announced plans for “doubling down on original reporting and bringing together a new investigative team” (Massing). In an unexpected narrative twist, *The Huffington Post* hired three of the recently resigned *TNR* editors to head the new team and “bring long-form journalism to a new audience” (Massing).

Perhaps more surprising are the new editorial teams at *Buzzfeed*, which is infamous for its listicles, GIFs, and ubiquitous cat photos. While *Buzzfeed* may have an established Animal Editor on staff (yes, a cat content editor), it has recently invested in experienced global investigative teams to report on news and current events, hiring editors from *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, *ProPublica* and *Politico*. Although *Buzzfeed* is diving into deeper journalism, it still operates under the “quantity” ideology we saw in our CDA analysis, where, for example, critical pieces are removed from the *Buzzfeed* site if they happen to conflict with ad revenue opportunities (Massing).

While audiences have enjoyed a heyday of lightweight content, Vidra was correct to argue that all audiences seek intellectually challenging content as well. As digital-native publications begin to realize that they cannot survive on cat-based-content alone, they are starting to develop more balanced business models to deliver substantial content.

Moreover, they are hiring traditional journalists from legacy publications to join their ranks and bolster their reputations for producing quality content. From this perspective, we can see that the collapse at *TNR* is not a microcosm for a larger collapse. Legacy publications are experiencing a creative disruption, not a complete eruption, and they are finding new solutions and avenues to survive the transition onto digital platforms. Put cynically, digital-native publications see dollar signs: the intellectual writing of experienced, traditional journalists is a good value investment to diversify their businesses.

Conclusions & Further Research

Unlike a pendulum, Hegel's notion of history does not swing from a fixed point but moves forward. A is negated by B, synthesized to C, which is negated by D, and so on. The journalism industry's apparent return to quality does not indicate a return to the past, but a synthesis that blends some parts of the past with the new conditions of this historical moment (i.e. digital technologies and their affordances and ideologies). In other words, we cannot look back in order to move forward.

In the opening pages of this paper I shared my support for Wieseltier and the staff who resigned with him. Now at the end, I still think that something has been destroyed—negated—and that the essence of technology, and especially digital, trackable, data-based technology, is a standing reserve in which humans are monetizable, quantifiable means rather than ends in themselves. While I might not think this is good in the normative

sense, it is nonetheless our historical moment. At every turn in this paper, we have been confronted with the idea that ideologies and orders of discourse move through the ebb and flow of history and its power relations. What I have learned through this research is that, as external conditions change, it is our responsibility to re-evaluate our normative notions within those conditions. That is to say that if we find ourselves at the forefront of a change in discourse, we cannot make normative judgements that are fully grounded in discourses of the past since they cannot help us sufficiently evaluate our present moment. Our judgements have to be attuned to what is now present and what might be just around the corner. In the case of the journalism industry, we cannot simply evaluate what constitutes quality based on the old discourses of print media, rather we must re-evaluate ways of ensuring quality within our present digital discourse.

The responsibility of evaluation belongs to everyone, which brings us back once and for all to the Jeffersonian/Hamiltonian divide, and one final question: Do we have to divide the ideologies of these two theorists or, like Croly, can we strive toward a synthesis? Can we at once rely on the people to promote the common good despite digital feedback loops and preoccupations with online self-performance while relying on the few to safeguard quality under the new conditions of this digital discourse? We probably can, but in order to dig deeper into this question further research will be required. Next steps will include gathering hard data of audience preference in the online space (particularly, comparing preference for lightweight journalism and long-form journalism), supported by a deeper look at theories of democracy, political theory, performance of the self and audience preference.

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Appendix I

VOCABULARY ANALYSIS CATEGORIES	CODE N°
Q1. Experiential Values: How does the vocabulary represent the world? <i>This question is largely comparative of texts, perfect for opposing ideologies!</i>	1
<i>Rewording:</i> an existing, dominant and naturalized word is being systematically replaced by another one in conscious opposition to it	1.1
<i>Overwording:</i> many words that are near synonyms (growth, increase, boost, develop, etc.)	1.2
<i>PER SE:</i> ideologically contested words (e.g. culture)	1.3
<i>PER SE & Collocation:</i> ideologically contested words combined with other words (e.g. new media culture)	1.4
<i>Classification Schemes:</i> a particular way of listing off and dividing up reality	1.5
<i>Creative Synonymy:</i> instantiating meaning systems where two words become synonymous when they are not in other discourses	1.6
<i>Creative Hyponymy:</i> including the meaning of one word in the meaning of another word (e.g. see communism, read totalitarianism)	1.7
<i>Antonymy:</i> meaning incompatibility, or creating nuanced meaning so that words become mutually exclusive (e.g. content vs. content)	1.8
Q2. Relational Values: How does the vocabulary create relationships with readers? How does it assume common values? <i>Is the author making an appeal to his audience? Is he getting buy-in?</i>	2
<i>Euphemistic expressions:</i> a substitute for the common word to avoid negative value	2.1
<i>Sarcasm:</i> a substitute for the common use of a word for the sake of added negative value	2.2
<i>Formal & Informal Words:</i> status-positioning of the author, assuming status of and relationship with the reader	2.3
Q3. Expressive Values: How does the vocabulary express the author's evaluations? <i>Where is the author showing his hand?</i>	3
<i>Evaluation/ Opinion:</i> "I believe"	3.1

Q4. Metaphors: How does the author make use of metaphorical language? <i>A metaphor represents one experience in terms of another. What are the key tropes?</i>	4
<i>Metaphors of Degradation:</i> collapse; destruction; forgotten	4.1
<i>Metaphors of Innovation:</i> progression; sustainable?	4.2
<i>Metaphors of Quality:</i> depth; substance	4.3
<i>Metaphors of Quantity:</i> increased audience, revenue growth, more content; democracy	4.4
<i>Metaphors of Religion:</i> church; priests; sacred	4.5
<i>Metaphors of Liberty:</i> overcoming; safeguarding/spreading freedom	4.6
<i>Metaphors of Tyranny:</i> protest and control	4.7