The Technological Operation of the Swastika: [1]

A Media Ecology Approach

O Funcionamento Tecnológico da Suástica:

Uma perspectiva da Ecologia das Mídias

Carolin Aronis

Assistant Professor in the Department of Ethnic Studies at Colorado State University. She studies race, gender, antisemitism, and Jewish experiences through the intersection of critical media studies, rhetoric, and technologies.

Colorado State University, Department of Ethnic Studies, Fort Collins, Colorado, USA.

Introduction

Between 2017-2021, over 400 perpetrator-installed swastikas in universities and colleges across the United States earned media coverage after being reported (AMCHA, 2022).[2] While many swastika incidents are not reported and/or earn public acknowledgment, this current data provides a glimpse into the significant phenomenon of swastikas drawn, spray painted, printed, or installed in other ways within the areas of U.S. campuses. This phenomenon may be understood as part of a larger global, and specifically national, spike in antisemitism over the past several years. Antisemitism is a hatred towards Jews, and it may

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[1] This essay is an advanced version of a talk given by the author during the 22nd Annual Convention of the Media Ecology Association. The author would like to recognize the major contribution of Eric Aoki to the broader research work examining nooses and swastikas as violent technologies in U.S. academic spaces. This current essay focuses on the swastika alone and offers an additional understanding of its operation via a media ecology approach.

[2] See the incident data on the Amcha Initiative website during 2020-2021 with the word search "swastika." Unreported cases and/or those that did not receive public acknowledgement are not included in this search.

manifest as discrimination, harassment, intimidation, and violent and deadly attacks against Jewish individuals, communities, facilities, and institutions (Anti-Defamation League, 2021; Lipstadt, 2019; U.S. Department of state, 2010). In 2021, the Anti-Defamation League published a report of their last audit under the headline, "U.S. Antisemitic Incidents Remained at Historic High in 2020" (ANTI-DEFAMATION LEAGUE, 2021). Summarizing several surveys, *Time* published "Surge in Anti-Semitic Attacks Has Caused a 'Sense of Emergency' Among Jews Worldwide, New Report Says" (ROACHE, 2019). A simple search on the web reveals countless of incidents over the last few years, along with surveys and reports.

In the United States, and specifically in university and college campuses, swastikas usually appear on public walls and in public areas, on white supremacy flyers and posters distributed on campus, in public bathrooms, on students' dormitory doors and windows, on personal cars and other possessions. Most of these cases occur in times and places where the perpetrator can go unnoticed, and hence remain unknown and unidentified (e.g., see incident data on the Amcha Initiative website 2017-2022).

Associated with the Nazi regime, swastikas have become a symbol of the murderous legacy of the Nazis and their collaborators and is especially associated with the Holocaust, which was the systematic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of six million Jews, and many others, between 1933-1945 (ANTI-DEFAMATION LEAGUE, 2021; HELLER, 2008). Since 1945, Nazi organizations, including their symbols, the swastika among them, were outlawed and removed and their dissemination criminalized (HOLOCAUST ENCYCLOPEDIA, 2017). Today, public display of Nazi symbols, including on the internet, leads to criminal proceedings in certain countries.[3] In the United States, however, it is legal to individually display Nazi symbols and propaganda because of the country's traditions and laws protecting free speech. The appearance and frequent cases of swastikas on U.S. campuses in recent years have created a climate of fear and intimidation among students, faculty, and staff. This is most acutely felt by Jewish communities.

Cases of swastikas in the U.S. academic environment, especially in public universities—places that in many ways are expected to be inclusive, accountable for social justice, and have a high level of ethical values and procedures—raises important questions regarding safety, inclusion, and respect of minoritized populations. However, university administrations' response to such incidents depends on how

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[3] See for instance Brazil, where the manufacture, distribution or broadcasting of the swastika, with the intent to propagate Nazism, is a crime (article 20, paragraph 1, federal statute 7.716, passed in 1989). The penalty is a two- to five-year prison term and a fine.

administrators and staff interpret the swastika, its use, and the elements included in its praxis, as these count in the assessment of the case. For instance: where the swastika is installed, its size, materials used, appearance, relation to Jews and non-Jews, and if additional words or images are included. These are assumed to help assess a perpetrator's motives. However, for many members of the Jewish community there is no question of the meaning of an installed swastika—a threat of persecution and torture, a reminder of how Jews were treated in the Holocaust, and/or that the targeted Other is revealed, watched, and not welcome in the larger community or dominant group. Several university members and Jewish leaders argue that the swastika also incites violence.

See for instance responses from targeted communities following incidents of swastikas. At the University of Missouri, students said: "I felt scared for my life," and "You don't know who could be the person doing this" (13WJZ—CBS BALTIMORE, 2015). After a second incident of multiple swastikas at a Jewish professor's office at Columbia's Teachers College, the targeted faculty member said: "I was shocked. I couldn't believe it," "I'm usually not a fearful person, but they got me. I'm afraid," and "I was afraid to be in my office alone" (STANLEY-BECKER, 2018). After four swastikas were found spray painted across Wilmington, Delaware, the Jewish Federation of Delaware commented: "Any sort of symbols of this nature does make the Jewish community concerned and fearful of other acts of hate in the community […]. Enough people know what a swastika means and can feel upset and threatened by [it]" (LEVI JULIAN, 2022). After a swastika was found drawn into glass in a public area in Ithaca College, the local Hillel house wrote: "The swastika is often used to incite violence against Jews and can threaten Jewish students' sense of safety" (de Castro, 4 February 2022). Through a scholarly lens, Heller (2008) argues for the association of the swastika to violent antisemitism, and Quinn (1994) describes swastikas as striking terror in Jews and others deemed enemies of Nazi Germany.

However, for university administrations the intentions behind the installation of swastikas are a common issue for discussion, in order for them to decide how to treat incidents, those targeted, the perpetrator (if identified), and how to address the larger community. Many times, a case of a swastika earns the description of a 'symbol of hate' or 'horrific and hateful symbol,' rather than framing it within a language of violence and exclusion (see in ARONIS & AOKI, 2021). This approach—that accompanied words and other components are needed to settle the meaning of the swastika—suggests that, for administrators and probably other parties as well, the message the swastika carries and its "doing" are matters of negotiated

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interpretation for non-Jews/the university authorities. As argued elsewhere (ARONIS, 2019/2020), in a social media world, where meanings are aimed to collapse and diverge, the installed swastika has lost its clear, agreed-upon meaning. Studying perpetrator-placed swastikas on U.S. academic campuses, Aronis and Aoki (2021) call for these to be treated, defined, and understood beyond the framework of hate symbols and within the realm of *technologies of violence*. They call for swastikas, along with nooses, to be seen as objects or technologies holding agency and voice, and they offer a symbolic, agential, and instrumental understanding of the perpetrator-installation.

In this essay, I expand Aronis and Aoki's argument by using a media ecology approach to theorize the actual technological operation of the swastika in its moments of installation, appearance, and revelation. I stress aspects of the matter, medium, and doing of the swastika in order to deconstruct its violent, harassing, and threatening nature for the U.S. university Jewish community, as well as for other potentially affected minoritized and racialized communities. It is important to note that there is not yet a scholarly endeavor to examine how swastikas are used today in practice, and what their terrorizing effects on university members are.

What Swastikas are and Their Use Today

Swastikas are two-dimensional images or artifacts in the shape of a hooked cross. The original swastika had left-turning hooks, originated around 7,000 years ago in Eurasia, and was long used as a sign of well-being in ancient societies. In the 19th century, archeological findings led to speculations that this symbol belonged to the remote ancestors of a shared "Aryan" culture that spanned Europe and Asia (Holocaust Encyclopedia, 2017; Heller, 2008). In 1920 the Nazi Party formally adopted the swastika as its symbol, turning its hooks to the right, and intending to elicit pride among Germany's Aryan citizens. The red, white and black colors of the Nazi flag intentionally echoed the flag of Imperial Germany (1871–1918), which still resonated with many Germans who rejected democracy. This form of color combination of the swastika became a powerful trademark most recognizable with Nazi propaganda. It is through this process that the swastika became associated with the idea of a racially "pure" state, representing the "supremacy" of the "Aryan race" and the "inferiority" of Jews and other minorities in Germany and other countries. Since 1935, Jews were banned from waving the German flag (with the swastika) and from displaying the national colors (Holocaust Encyclopedia, 2017).

Heller (2008) explains that the swastika promoted Aryan supremacy and promised redemption for the Germans and the Aryan race. The persecution of Jews was carried out in the name of this ideology. Hence, right from the beginning of its use by the Nazis, the swastika has been associated with violent antisemitism, Heller argues. Throughout time, the swastika embodied both personal and national identities, and even more so—standing in for Hitler himself—while also striking terror in Jews and others deemed enemies of Nazi Germany (QUINN, 1994). The swastika was not only carried on the Nazi flag, but appeared on election posters, arm bands, medallions, and badges of military and other organizations. It also earned public appearance in places of gathering, on banners, and other forms.

Since 1945, the Swastika has come to stand for genocide, imperialist warfare, torture, and terror. What was once a neutral vessel, writes Heller (2004), has been transformed into an instrument of criminality, where the swastika is not a container in which an evil genie lived, but the incarnation of that creature. Fascist movements today in Germany, Russia, the Eastern Bloc, and South America, as well as U.S. white supremacists, militiamen, and neo-Nazis, use the symbol and find it appealing for the same reasons Hitler did (Heller, 2008). The murderous legacy of the Nazi regime, especially the Holocaust, permanently converted the swastika into a symbol of hate, antisemitism, infamy, and white supremacy for most of the world outside of Asia (see, for instance, the Anti-Defamation League account on the swastika, retrieved 2022). Its display is prohibited in Germany and in some other countries, leading some right-wing extremists to devise variants or alternatives to the swastika that evoke a similar effect. In the United States, the swastika is overwhelmingly viewed as a hate symbol against Jews, but it also targets Black/African-American, LGBTQA+, immigrants and/or refugees, and others of non-White and/or non-Christian background.[4]

Swastikas as (Media) Technology

*"[T]he swastika was transformed […] into an **instrument** of criminality"*
(HELLER, 2004, p. 850; emphasis added)

Slack and Wise (2015) define technology by its common perception and use in society. They describe technologies as human-made instruments or machines for addressing social or physical needs; technologies are developed, assembled, constructed, and installed by certain groups to overcome what they perceive as everyday life obstacles or for addressing social or physical needs (see also Lane, 2019). Hence, technology involves human purpose and action, and formulates relationship, flow, and connections among the living,

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[4] See for instance, Hampson (2017)

nonliving, producers, users, and processes. Technologies can also be seen as offering technological fixes for social problems and, through this lens, holding practices of control, captivation, social (in)security, discriminatory designs, hierarchy, and carceration, as Benjamin (2019) explains.

By theorizing the swastika (and the noose) through the framework of technology, Aronis and Aoki (2021) explain the instrumentalities of these objects and their "doing" by framing them as technologies by themselves.[5] In their view, the swastika was put together and used as technology addressing white supremacist/dominant culture needs/demands of superiority, subjugation of the Other, including deadly violence, and constituting white hegemony and fear among those who they identify as allegedly harming society. Swastikas installed in present day campuses by perpetrators, they explain, are tools that hold and carry forth the violence and historically embedded intent of the past while existing in the present. Beyond the intent and actions of the perpetrator, swastikas, by themselves, hold their own technological agency that is enacted by their existence.[6]

Based on Lefebvre (in SLACK & WISE, 2015) and Zagacki and Gallagher (2009), Aronis and Aoki also conceptualize the enactment of the swastika as materially and symbolically eliciting shock, fear, threat, or unease, and creating awareness to another history while experiencing it in the moment. They explain that the swastika is a violent technology that can produce external disruption within the public space and internal disruption of the social and affective world for the person who comes in contact with such technological violence.

While Aronis and Aoki (2021) provide a communicative exploration of the swastika through the lens of semiotics, speech act theory, and lastly the technology, I offer here an expanded exploration of the communicative aspect within the technology itself. Whether readers agree that swastikas can count as media in their own right, or only embody practices of mediation, the media ecology theoretical approach provides us with analytical tools to enhance our understanding regarding the ways swastikas work, communicatively. For instance, McLuhan's famous observation that "the medium is the message" (1964, p. 7) invites us to understand the installed swastika, first of all, not by the assumed "message" it carries, but by its form, mediation, existent, physical being and becoming in space and time, and by the actual work it does.

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[5] While Aronis and Aoki's work focuses on both the noose and the swastika, I focus here only on the swastika aspect in their work.
[6] See for instance "agency" in Slack & Wise (2015).

Strate (2017, also based on Culkin) provides specific meanings to McLuhan's aphorism about the medium. He explains that we should first be attuned to the medium (before its "content"), since the medium precedes the content, influences it, motivates it, and "it is the medium that has the greater impact on human affairs" (STRATE, 2017, p. 55).

Benjamin (2019), Foucault (1975), Winner (2020), Marvin (1988), Slack and Wise (2015), Sharma (2014), Rosenberger (2018), and Strate (2017) reveal, through different lenses, forms of power and authority in artifacts, technologies, and media, showing how they capture imagination, reflect and enact racist ideologies and social injustices, and how forms, arrangement, implications, compatibility, and meanings matter. I offer in the following an exploration of the technological operation of the swastikas and its enactment of antisemitism.

Examining the Swastika through Media Ecology

The following is divided into five aspects of the technological doing of the swastika, taking into consideration its assembly, its media-like practice, its enacted functions and meanings, its expectations, and its relationship between the perpetrator/assembler, the targeted, passers-by, and responders.

Assembling (the Medium of) the Swastika

Unlike the processes of assembling more "traditional" media, like newspapers or street advertisements—where there is planning ahead of time, a variety of personnel preparing content, images, and language, to put together in/on a dedicated platform to be viewed by the public—assembling the swastika relies on less procedures. The process is shorter: sometimes a matter of only a brief moment for one person to assemble or install the swastika with paint, spray, marker, feces, or knife, on a certain surface without being seen. In the following moment, there is a new swastika on the library wall, for instance, by the entrance of the Jewish fraternity, on a wall in a public bathroom in the dorms, carved on a car, or marked on a whiteboard on an assumed Jewish student's dormitory door.

While the newspaper or the street advertisement produces or pays for a surface for their content (screen, paper, and alike), the swastika is installed on an appropriated, "stolen" surface, with no permission; it is assembled using an already existing surface that does not belong to the perpetrator. The practice of using a surface in the actual space ties the put-together media (i.e., the swastika) with the actual point of its

reference (the targeted place/people), where the potential targeted individuals exist and where they are reminded through the swastika that they do not belong. Swastikas are assembled in front of their immediate addressees, on a surface that belongs to the targeted person or where they pass by. Often it is positioned within their eye level, "chasing" them in their place of living, working, or studying.

It is important to note that the perpetrator-installation of the swastika on a stolen surface does not only violate the intended function of the surface and the expected respect of private property or the public's property (e.g., the public university, the door of a student, a car), but this act also declares that there are certain people who have a higher right to vandalize or use other people's property as they wish. The use of the door, the wall, or the sidewalk as a surface for the swastika abuses these areas with an image that is perceived by some as a life threat and/or a reminder of "exposure of the Jew" and a call for their exclusion from the space. While much of current media is assembled elsewhere and reaches audiences from afar (e.g., social media, snail mail, television), this practice of setting the actual media and message within someone else's place has its uniqueness, and hence also higher intimidation. Not only can the "addressee" not choose whether to accept "the message" (e.g., as they would do when deciding to log into their social media account, open an envelope, or turn on the television), in this case the addressee is a "trapped" audience, captured by the material, visual, and spatial threatening marking of their place.

Additionally, in its unexpected, new, and short performance (before being erased or covered), the swastika will gain public acknowledgement as more and more people pass by—some of them are those who live behind the actual door, and others will see themselves as a potential next target. People will take pictures of the swastika and these will start circulating through messenger apps and social media. Sometimes the swastika will be reported to the bias incident team on campus or to the university police. It may earn media coverage as well. In other words, the materialized swastika will keep circulating digitally, gaining more and more second- and third-hand audiences.

The Swastika as a Dual Act of Marking

The practice of antisemites marking Jewish living and working places has a long history. For the current purpose of this section, I refer back to the Nazi practice of marking Jewish businesses with the Star

of David and/or with the word(s) "Juden," "Jude" and "Achtung Juden".[7] The Nazi propaganda film *Nazi Anti-Jewish Boycott* (circa 1933) (see in the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, 2022) shows a variety of marking on Jewish places and Nazi gangs passing in the streets with swastika flags while chanting in German, "Germans, defend yourselves. Watch out, Jews. […] Don't buy from Jews. Germans, free yourselves of Jewish leadership! […]."[8] In this context, this shows the practice of marking Jewish places for the sake or the service of the non-Jewish population, to identify Jews, so they would know where they are and know to ban them and avoid them. Later on, these stores and homes were broken into and destroyed, and Jewish owners and workers were removed or killed on the spot. As mentioned earlier, the swastika, as part of the flag or by itself, was a national symbol of pride for Germans. By the 1935 Nuremberg Race Laws (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, retrieved 2022), Jews were not allowed to wear, carry, and wave it, including using its colors. Due to its pride and sanctity, the swastika was not used to mark Jewish homes and businesses.[9]

Unlike that history, swastikas today appear on people's houses, stores, or Jewish institutions and facilities off campus, as well as on Jewish students' and university employees' doors, cars, possessions, or entrances or surfaces of Jewish organizations on campus. This use performs a *dual act*. Simultaneously, the swastikas (1) identify the Jew(s), reveal their location to the public, and remind Jews they are noticeable and seen, while (2) threatening violence and other heinous repercussions that the swastika "carries". In other words, if in the Nazi regime the mark was for identifying Jewish places with a "Jewish" symbol and aggressive and deadly behavior followed later, then in contemporary times, the use of the swastika brings both of these practices altogether.

It is also important to note that during the Nazi era soldiers carried swastikas on their uniform/body, on their cars as flags, and alike; these days the swastika usually stands alone without the human "carrier." Without a known perpetrator, installed swastikas can be framed through the concept of *delegation*. Slack

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[7] In the German language, "Jude" means "Jew"; "Juden" means "Jews" or "Jewish;" "Achtung Juden" means "Attention/be aware/watch out Jews." The same practices appeared in other parts of Europe, with language changing as to the location.

[8] Soon after the Nazis assumed power in Germany, they organized a boycott of Jewish-owned businesses. Gangs arrested Jews, painted "Jews forbidden" on shop windows, chanted antisemitic slogans, and blocked store entrances (Holocaust Encyclopedia, 2021)

[9] See also in Stoltzfus (2001): the Star of David was painted in yellow and black across thousands of doors and windows, with accompanying antisemitic slogans. Signs were posted saying "Don't Buy from Jews!" (*Kauf nicht bei Juden!*)*,* "The Jews Are Our Misfortune!" (*Die Juden sind unser Unglück!*) and "Go to Palestine!" (*Geh nach Palästina!*). Throughout Germany, acts of violence against individual Jews and Jewish property occurred.

and Wise (2015) explain that technology delegates or hands over tasks to humans (for instance, "prescription," as will be explained later), but also that humans delegate tasks to technology. Here we can see the technology of the swastika as doing something that humans used to do. Interestingly, nowadays, the swastika performs a task that humans cannot do, but wish they could—they delegate hatred, threat, and hostility to the swastika—having the swastika do what has become uncommon and unacceptable in a progressive society. The disappearance of the perpetrator means more power is delegated to the swastika, which stands there by itself, "doing the work" for the perpetrator. One might assume that in a politically correct culture, where hatred is not tolerated, these perpetrators rely on media, artifacts, and technologies to do the work for them.

As is known with other practices of marking and naming phenomena, acts or objects that were not identified by any label previously, and hence did not gain attention, were often dismissed[10]; however, the practice of the swastika, which marks the Jew and operates in a similar way, has a problematic negativity. Jews, in order to feel included, embraced and welcomed, prefer not to be pointed at. Within the context of antisemitism that claims that Jews are too easily assimilated into the dominant culture and hence should be "revealed", the practice of unidentifying Jewish people carries a sense of inclusivity for them. It legitimizes their living by other people around. However, the actual practice of naming the Jew, of marking their place of living and studying, and even more so when it includes a threat, differentiates them regarding their existence.[11]

Space/Time Bias and Tricky Transience

Innis' focus on the influence of the actual medium of communication on dissemination of knowledge situates the communication matter through the understanding of time and space biases (INNIS, 1951/2012; SHARMA, 2014; STRATE, 2017). If, for instance, the medium is heavy and durable, the dissemination of knowledge constitutes a time bias: it is a medium that is less likely move in space and will last for a long time (e.g., monuments or rocks with carved messages). If the medium is light, it is more suited for transportation and hence to the dissemination of knowledge over space (see for instance, papyrus or postcards), but usually it is less durable over time (paper will fall apart, get destroyed, or perish). The latter, from papyrus to the

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[10] See for instance how "sexual harassment" was neglected until it was named and therefore gained attention and legal care (Blakemore, 2018).

[11] See also marking Jewish people in the Nazi regime and earlier by a yellow Star of David badge.

radio, explains Sharma (2014), fosters the centralization of power. These technologies have a space bias, as they can easily spread in space, and knowledge and messages that are involved in reaching faraway spaces allow power to be scattered far from where they were originally created or produced, extending power outward.

Following Innis, Sharma (2014) asks us to be attuned to temporal politics of particular technological environments and to ways in which they relate to social struggle and power dynamics. The technological operation of the swastika gains a crucial understanding through these notions. As Strate (2017) notes, the contrast made by Innis between heavy and light media is specifically in reference to the *material qualities* of the media, especially their writing surfaces. The swastika, as discussed, is assembled at the moment of its creation on an appropriated, conquered surface. Unlike a produced medium that travels from its place of origin, the swastika is created already in its place of dissemination.

While in many ways it is a simple drawing that will usually be put on an unmovable surface (e.g., wall, door, sidewalk), the ability to quickly put it together on almost any surface across the globe characterizes it as a space bias matter of communication. As a very "light" medium, it can be spread across space, whether by people or digitally (as it is can easily be captured by a camera and circulated). In other words, it is not the writing surface that can move across space, but the ability to assemble the image on almost any surface across faraway spaces, even if the surfaces are unmovable. In this way, it allows power to be scattered and extended. Beyond, for instance, white nationalist groups, the swastika, its ideology, and knowledge can spread out further than these groups' physical meeting places—to the campus space and students' places of living, reminding the campus about the ideology of the swastika and the threat/promise they enact.

Following the same characteristics of the space-biased medium, the durability of the swastika is very short. Drawings are unlikely to last long (especially in cases where they are drawn on a whiteboard on a student's door with a marker) and authorities and targeted individuals, or sometimes passersby and custodians, will erase a swastika almost as soon as they notice it. However, one can argue that the memory of the swastika's existence, even if only brief, stays with the campus for many years, and plants a lasting fear in people's hearts and minds, much beyond the durability of the matter. This is reminiscent of Avidan's (2008) poem, "The Stain Remained on the Wall," which describes a stain on the wall, and no matter what people do to clean it up or cover it, the stain remains. With that analogy, even if erased, the swastika "stays on the wall," and, therefore, one might also argue for a time-biased characteristic.

Through the tricky existence of the swastika—its unexpected occurrence, both its space and time biases, and its rapid erasure and disappearance, while maintaining a long durability through media, memory, and reporting—the politics and power dynamics of the swastika are enacted. It is the agential power that is out of control for the targeted community: the spread of hatred, the inability to manage it and prevent it, and the realization that antisemitism still targets innocent Jews and other minoritized communities.

(Re)mediation of Hate and the Threatening Aura

Technologies are mediators, playing a role in translating and transforming one form into another, many times holding a language of their own when mediating messages, ideology and content of different sources (SLACK & WISE, 2015, following Callon and Latour). The original swastika created/adopted by the Nazi party stood in the name of Aryan German pride—it mediated the ideology of a racial purity and of the inferiority of the Jewish "race" (HELLER, 2008). It was embodied for instance on flags, on badges and pins attached to uniforms, on banners and signs in public areas, in offices and private places of Nazi supporters. The Nazi ideology and meaning was mediated through its transformation into a simple, popular image of a right turning cross (red or black), which is easy to draw and very recognizable. The swastika could stand in for words, propaganda, people, and acts not present, or as a reminder of their presence, as well as a predictor of their coming presence and the violent and deadly attacks to follow. As mentioned before, by being involved in persecution, torture, and eventually genocide of Jews and other minoritized and racialized populations, in the 1930s and 1940s the swastika gained its additional meaning of atrocity and hateful and deadly Nazi ideology.

The use and the doing of swastikas in current days on U.S. campuses mediates not only the original meaning of the swastika, but also the additional ideology and history it carries from the genocide conducted in World War II. In this sense, the swastika can be seen as a technological "container" (STRATE, 2017, p. 110-111) that holds accumulated content, memories, genocide, and trauma that are added through time. As a container, it constitutes environments, individually and collectively. In the 1920s-1940s, the swastika was manufactured in factories or professional places that provided legitimacy and authority to its production. It is now often spray painted, drawn with markers, chalks, feces, or carved by knife. Instead of being produced by a machine, production mostly involves the human hand, surreptitiously, and is framed as an unauthorized and illegal intimidation and threat against others in the community.

Hence, while the image of the cross is the same image, the materials used today are different; however, the current surreptitious assembling of the swastika still carries the content of the former authorized, factory produced one. The swastika in the past was distributed by the government and army—now it is mostly distributed by white supremacists and white nationalists (holding similar ideologies). Therefore, we may see the new version and assembling practice of the swastika and its "doing" through the concept of *remediation*, where the content of one medium is being embedded by a certain practice in another medium (BOLTER & GRUSIN, 1999; MCLUHAN, 1999). Following Bolter and Grusin (1999), the new form of the swastika refashions the older one, inviting this somewhat nostalgic form into a newer medium. However, this is done under the logic of "immediacy," where the traces of the mediation have been erased, and the older version blends into the newer one. Rather than referring or pointing clearly at the swastika as an item that belongs to the Nazi times, the new version does not pay tributes to the historical form and, instead, practices its power in an old-new fashion today.

The "here and now" of works of arts provide a special authenticity and uniqueness to creations (Benjamin, 2019). However, although not a work of art in any sense, the swastika's "aura" provides fear and threats. Even though carrying much history, the threatening strength of the swastika these days is actually by not being industrial, but by being made imperfectly by hand, bearing an authentic perpetrator's actual act and presence: a person assembles the swastika in its here and now, which physically threatens the well-being of the targeted individual(s). The specific time and place of the assembling, the residual remnants of the perpetrator, who was fully present and embodied at someone else's door, and then later the coverage or cleaning of it—these are all physical and material acts and evidence of the doing of the swastika, or, what I call its "threatening aura."

Prescribing Tasks Back to Us

Technologies prescribe tasks back to us, and then we get the form of habits and skills, behavior and attitudes inscribed in our bodies (SLACK & WISE, 2015, following Latour). In other words, technologies require us to maintain a certain body behavior to activate them or use them. Technologies make people interact with them in a certain way, holding a certain posture, using the hands, eyes and other body parts in certain ways, within a certain body position, and also moving around/towards/away from them. Exploring the doing of the swastika through the lens of prescription allows us to explore the way it inscribes tasks in people's bodies and leads them to a certain behavior.

The installation of the swastika requires the perpetrator to move towards the actual surface, to probably walk quickly, and to turn their head and eyes to make sure they are not seen; this behavior is more likely to occur during times when there are less people around. Then they use their stronger hand to draw/carve/spray paint/smear the image of the swastika, and probably leave the site immediately. The act is short, but still intentional and planned. The practice of the swastika requires the perpetrator to physically distance away from the assembled swastika in order not to be caught, and to let it do the work of shocking and threatening people.

The swastika prescribes tasks to the targeted body as well. It attracts the attention of the eye, it pulls people to view it, or pushes them away from it out of fear or neglect. The targeted individual(s) or community will be emotionally triggered, and trauma may resonate on their body. The targeted, passers-by, authorities, and journalists will gather around it, and will be required to report it and to follow procedures. It will occupy their bodies and their time afterwards. Their voices and hands will be dedicated to describe what they saw. Statements from the leaders of the Jewish community and/or the university will be put together and sent out to the larger community. Usually, one person will be in charge of erasing or cleaning the swastika, and, if that is not possible, they will cover it with paper or other materials. Sometimes additional labor will be needed for walls, doors, or car parts to be replaced. And later on, even long after the swastika was there, people will point at the actual place where the swastika was once installed. The swastika will remain in the memory, and will keep circulating within thoughts, emotions, and post-traumatic body reactions. The targeted community might change its behavior in these areas—appearing less in public, trying to avoid walking alone at night, leaving the university, or transitioning to another institution.

Conclusions

This essay contributes to the framework of swastikas as "technologies of violence" (Aronis & Aoki, 2021), and through a media ecology approach considers the *matter* and *medium,* and *the doing* of the swastika, as crucial in the social justice work and academic understanding of its violent, harassing, and threatening nature towards Jewish and/or other targeted minoritized and racialized communities. Deconstructing aspects of form, assembly, meaning, durability, temporality, (re)mediation, and prescription, this essay provides a phenomenological account to the constitutive practice of perpetrator-installed swastikas on U.S. campuses.

It is through media ecology and the focus on the technological operation that we are able to develop attention and understanding of systems of power and their enactment. It is through this approach that we realize the oppressive, abusive, traumatic, and threatening nature of the swastika. Unpacking its technological doing, one sees the *appropriation* of private or public surfaces, the brutal identifying of the Jew, and, at the same time, its threats to their existence in society. Thinking through media aspects, we realize how harassing the power of the light medium is, the trickiness of its space/time bias and the easiness of its installation—rapidly, by hand, by one person. We can reveal how the threatening aura is constituted, and not only mediating the former form of the Nazi swastika but also hiding the practice of remediation, which gives the feeling of the actual thing (without the "quotation" of the hypermediacy). We can recognize that swastikas prescribe tasks back to us, occupying our body, mind, and emotions long after the event occurs.

Kellner (2021) explains that "[m]edia spectacles demonstrate who has power and who is powerless, who is allowed to exercise force and violence, and who is not" (p. 7). In that way, one can point at how the installed swastika demonstrates white nationalists and white supremacy holding power against powerless individuals who are part of a minoritized group in society. The inability to anticipate when a swastika will be installed and its appearance in places where it does not belong positions Jews and others in a vulnerable situation. The installation relivens the Nazi practice and carries the memory of persecution and genocide in a new "updated" manner, which is not "filtered" by new protective laws of the U.S. and other countries, and/or by university commitments to diversity, inclusivity, equity, and social justice. This proves again and again to Jews, following Kellner's words, who is allowed to exercise force and violence, and who is not.

Beyond any actual incidents, members of Jewish communities often face a further hardship led by university administrations, police, non-Jewish members of their communities, and sometimes the media: the dismissal of Jewish reactions to the swastika, the minimization of its impact, and the normalization of its appearance. This leaves Jews feeling even more agentless, powerless, fearful, and rendered illegitimate— not only by the perpetrators, but also by the authorities along with non-Jewish potential allies—who are charged with taking care of Jews and guaranteeing their safety, inclusion, and well-being.

We are in a phase where a growing number of swastikas appear on and off campuses in the U.S., and, like with any other media, their constant appearance "contribute to educating us how to behave and what to think, feel, believe, fear, and desire—and what not to," as Kellner (2021, p. 9) explains. Swastikas have an

influence on who we are and how we should behave. As Coates, Ferber, and Brunsma (2017) remind us, subordination is always supported by individual actions and by cultural values and norms—it is embedded in the institutional structures and practices of society (p. 32). This essay offers a focus on the technological operation of swastikas to better understand their doing and problematic impact, and provides a platform to reassess individual actions and cultural values and norms.

Carolin Aronis

ORCID: http://orcid.org/0000-0002-4150-2918

Colorado State University, Department of Ethnic Studies, Fort Collins, Colorado, USA.

PhD in Communication and Media Studies / Hebrew University of Jerusalem

E-mail: carolin.aronis@colostate.edu

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Abstract

Continuing the work of Aronis and Aoki (2021), this essay focuses on contemporary installations of swastikas on U.S. campuses and uses a media ecology theoretical approach to expand on the technological operation of the swastika in the service of antisemitism. The author examines the *matter* and *medium* of the swastika, along with its *doing*, in order to deconstruct its violent, harassing, and threatening nature—for the U.S. university Jewish community, as well as for other potentially affected minoritized and racialized communities. Through five lenses of technological, material, and communicative exploration—assembling, dual act of marking, space/time bias, (re)mediation, and prescription—the author explains how installed swastikas create a traumatizing effect for Jewish university members. This may assist scholars and practitioners regarding education on the topic and treatment.

Keywords: Antisemitism. Swastika. Jews. University. United States. Media ecology. Technology. Hate.

Resumo

Dando sequência ao trabalho de Aronis e Aoki (2021) a respeito das suásticas como tecnologias de violência, este ensaio foca especificamente nas formas contemporâneas de aplicação das suásticas

em campi estadunidenses, utilizando uma perspectiva teórica da ecologia das mídias para expandir os horizontes a respeito do funcionamento tecnológico da suástica em prol do antissemitismo. A autora examina o material e a mídia da suástica, além de seu processo de produção, para decompor sua natureza violenta, assediadora e ameaçadora – para a comunidade judaica das universidades americanas, bem como para outras potenciais comunidades minoritárias e raciais. Através de cinco lentes de exploração tecnológica, material e comunicativa – produção, dupla marcação, *bias* de espaço-tempo, (re)mediação e prescrição – a autora elucida como as suásticas expostas criam um efeito traumático para universitárixs de origem judaica. Isto pode auxiliar pesquisadorxs e professorxs a respeito do tema e sua cura.

Palavras-chave: Antissemitismo. Suástica. Judeus. Universidade. Estados Unidos. Ecologia das Mídias. Tecnologia. Ódio.

Resumen

Continuando con el trabajo de Aronis y Aoki (2021) sobre las esvásticas como tecnologías de la violencia, este ensayo se centra específicamente en las formas contemporáneas de aplicación de las esvásticas en los campus de los EE. a favor del antisemitismo. El autor examina el material y el medio de la esvástica, así como su proceso de producción, para descomponer su naturaleza violenta, acosadora y amenazante para la comunidad judía de las universidades estadounidenses, así como para otras comunidades minoritarias y raciales potenciales. A través de cinco lentes de exploración tecnológica, material y comunicativa (montaje, doble marcado, sesgo espacio-temporal, (re)mediación y prescripción), el autor aclara cómo las esvásticas expuestas crean un efecto traumático para los estudiantes universitarios de origen judío. Esto puede ayudar a los investigadores y profesores con respecto al tema y su cura.

Palabras clave: Antisemitismo. Esvástica. Judíos. Universidad. Estados Unidos. Ecología de los medios. Tecnología. Odio.