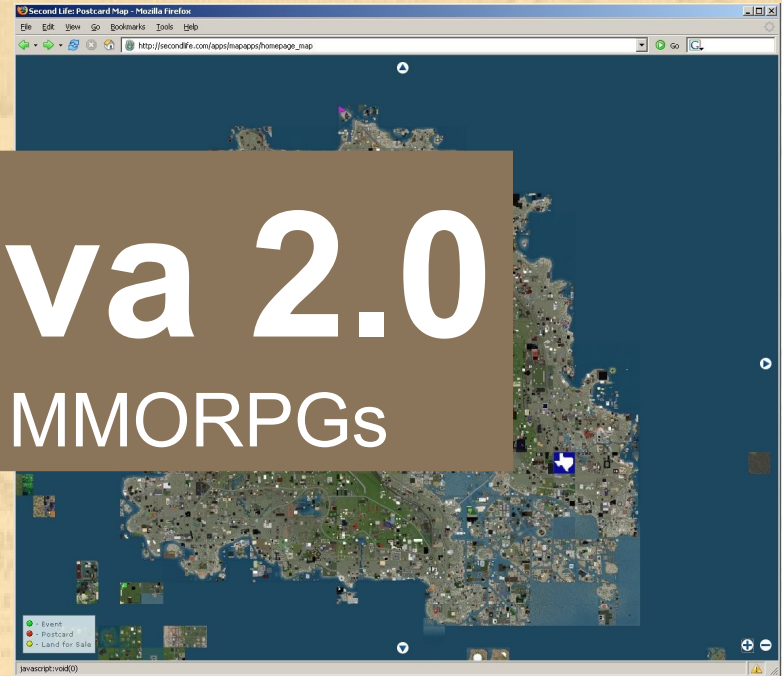


# Terra Nova 2.0

The New Worlds of MMORPGs



**David J. Gunkel**  
Northern Illinois University  
dgunkel@niu.edu

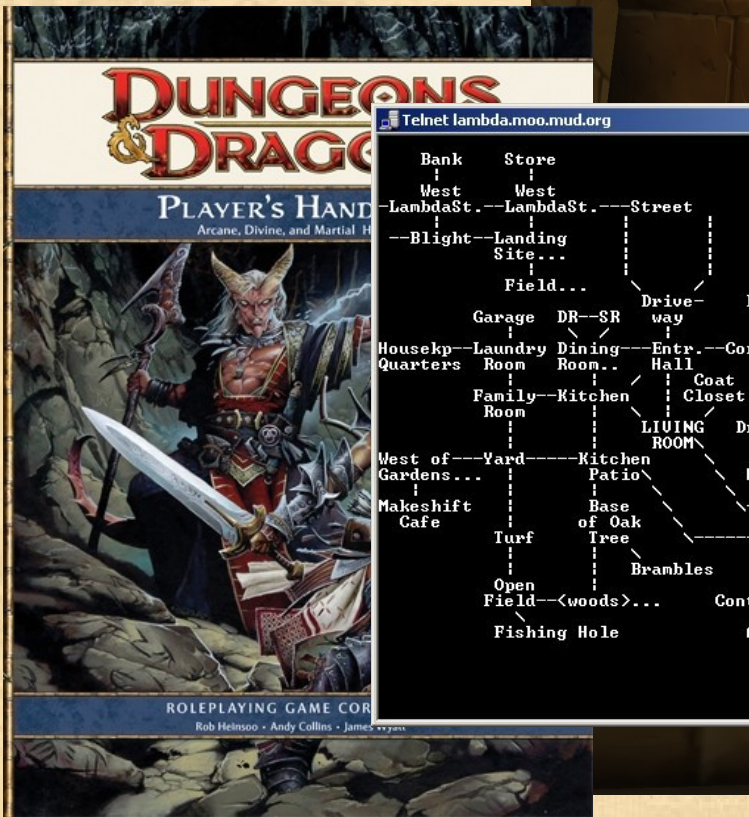
# MMORPG

Massive Multiplayer Online  
Role Playing Game



# MMORPG

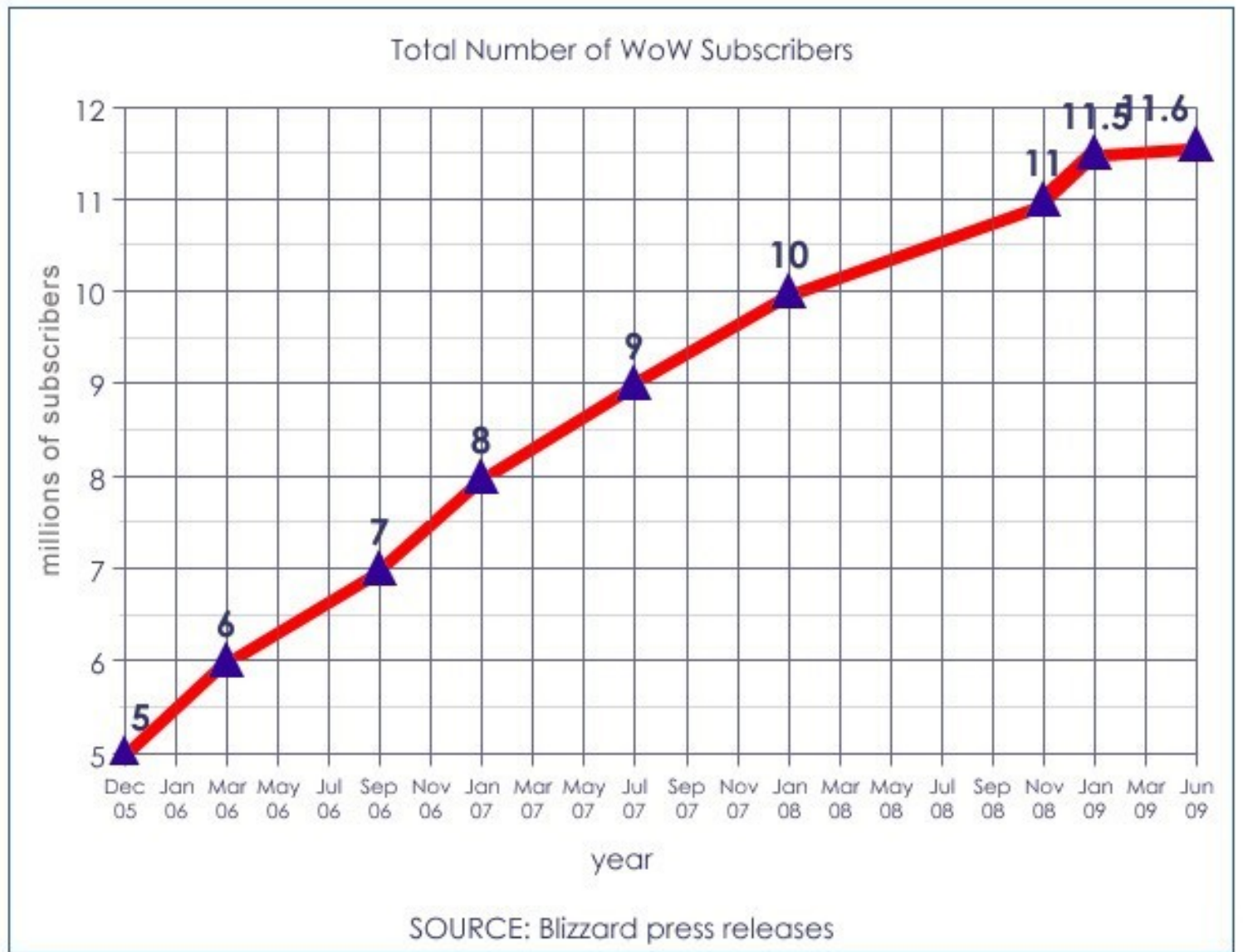
Massive Multiplayer Online  
Role Playing Game



# MMORPG

Massive Multiplayer Online  
Role Playing Game



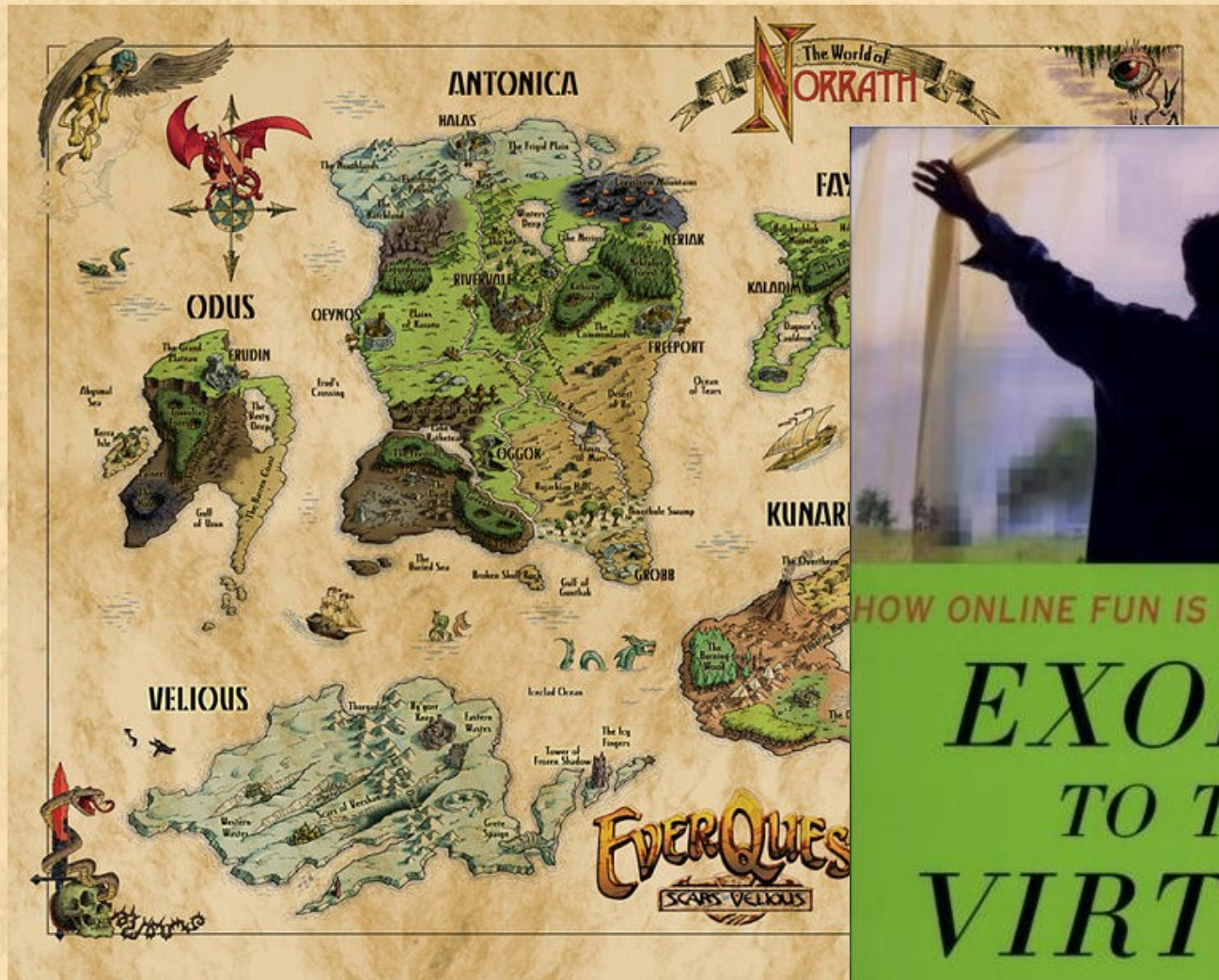


Growth in *World of Warcraft* subscribers from Dec. 2005 to June 2009



## Ailin Graef (aka Anshe Chung)

- *Second Life's* first virtual millionaire
- Buys and develops virtual real estate
- Owns 36 sq. km of land in *Second Life*



HOW ONLINE FUN IS CHANGING REALITY

# EXODUS TO THE VIRTUAL WORLD

EDWARD CASTRONOVA Author of *Synthetic Worlds:  
The Business and Culture of Online Games*

# Objective:

Critical cost/benefit analysis of this “new world” and “frontier” metaphor.





# 1) New World Redux

MMOPRG as *New World and Frontier*

# 2) The Darker Side of the West

- Forgetting of History
- Ethnocentrism
- Consequences for Others

# 3) Conclusion and Effects



# New World

# New World Redux



# New World

# New World Redux



Amerigo Vespucci  
*Mundus Novus* (1502)

# New World

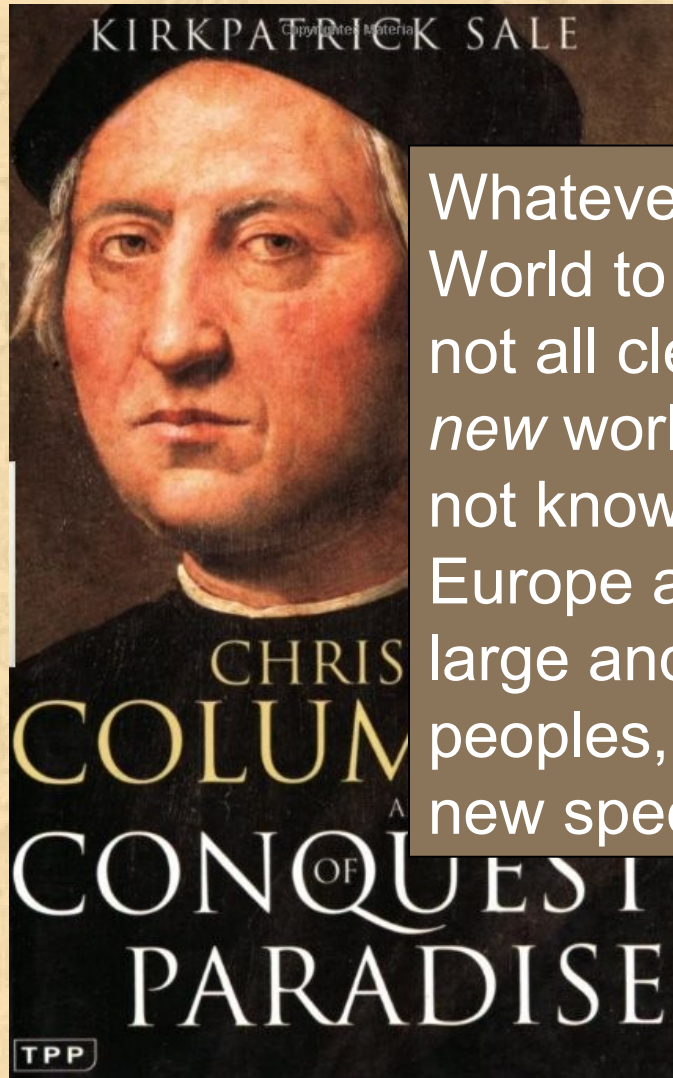
# New World Redux



Martin Waldseemüller, *Carta Marina* (1513)

# New World

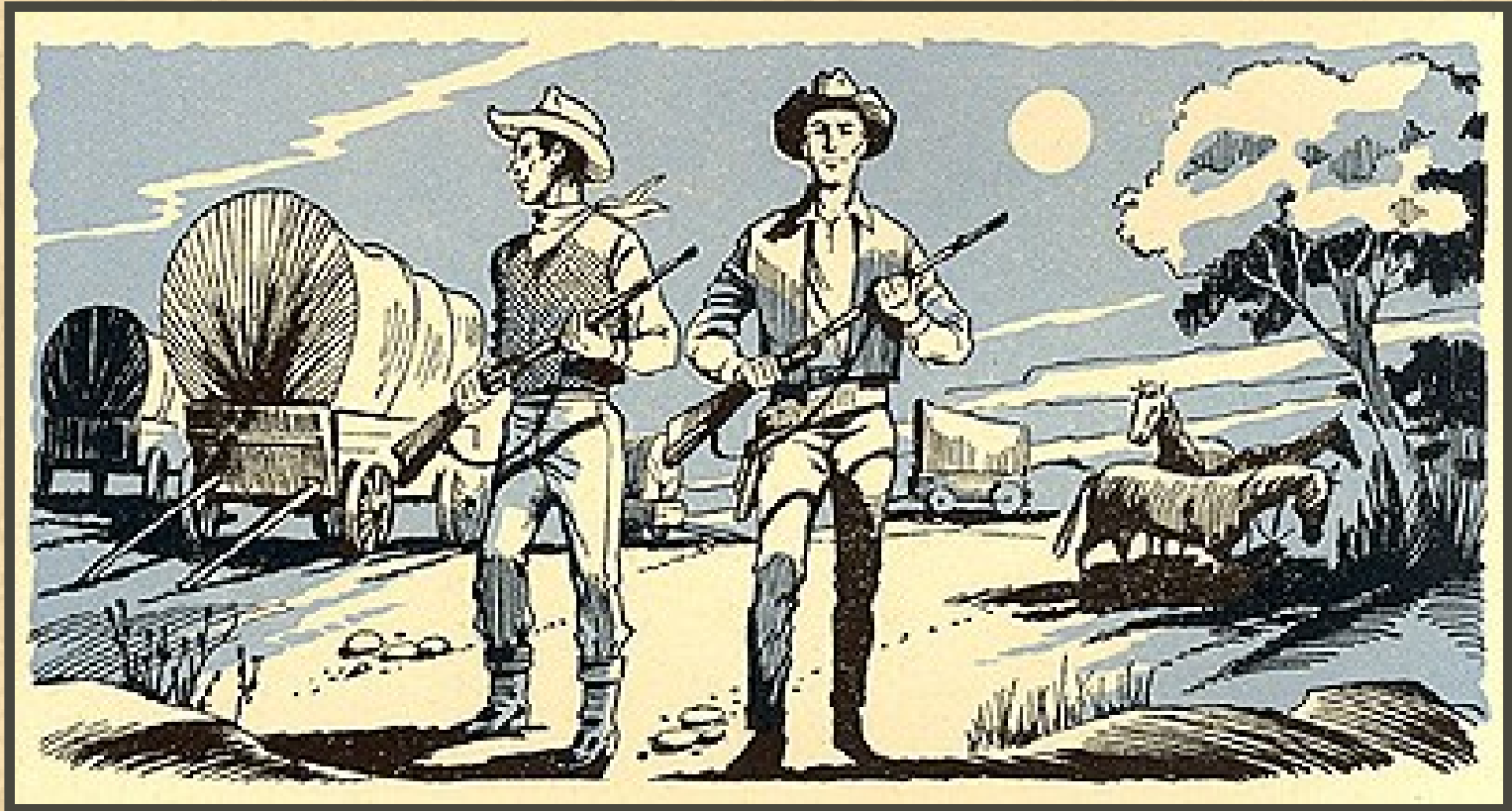
## New World Redux



Whatever Europe understood the New World to be—and it was many things, not all clearly assimilated yet—it was a *new world*, another half of the globe not known before, plainly different from Europe and even the Orient, rich and large and mysterious, a place of new peoples, new vistas, new treasures, new species (Sale, 2006, p. 234).

*Frontier*

New World Redux



# Frontier

# New World Redux

**FREDERICK JACKSON  
TURNER**

\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*

'The wilderness masters the colonist.  
It finds him a European in dress, industries,  
tools, modes of travel, and thought.  
It takes him from the railroad car  
and puts him in the birch canoe.  
It strips off the garments of civilization  
and arrays him in the hunting shirt and  
the moccasin.'

\*\*\*\*\*  
\*\*\*\*\*  
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**THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE  
FRONTIER  
IN AMERICAN HISTORY**

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PENGUIN BOOKS • GREAT IDEAS

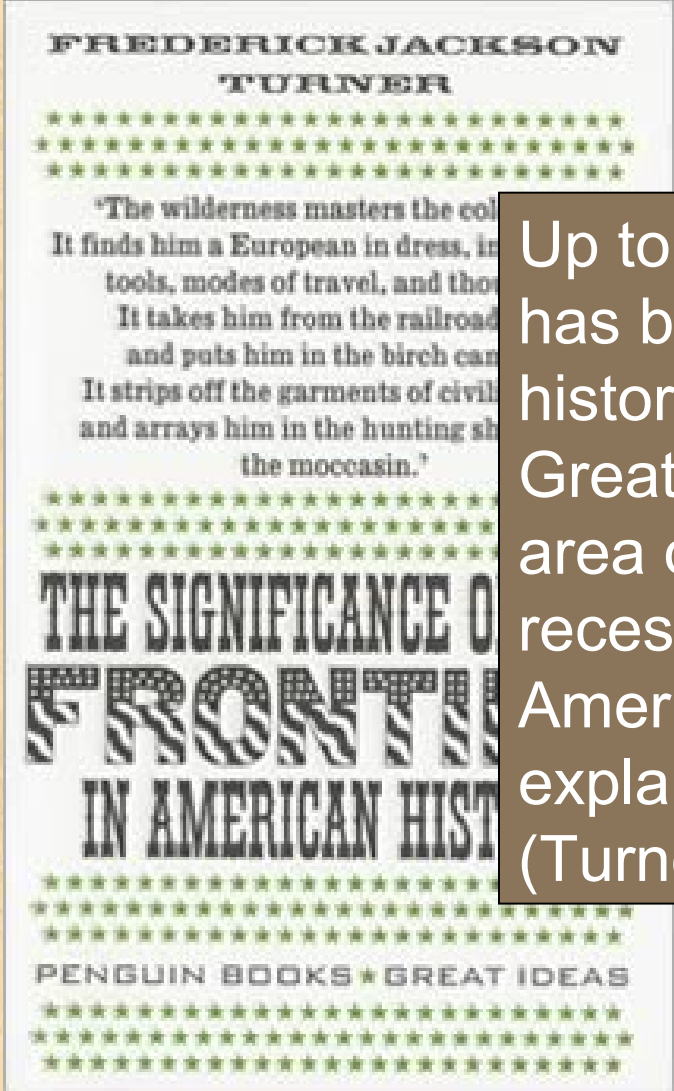
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Frederick Jackson Turner

# Frontier

# New World Redux

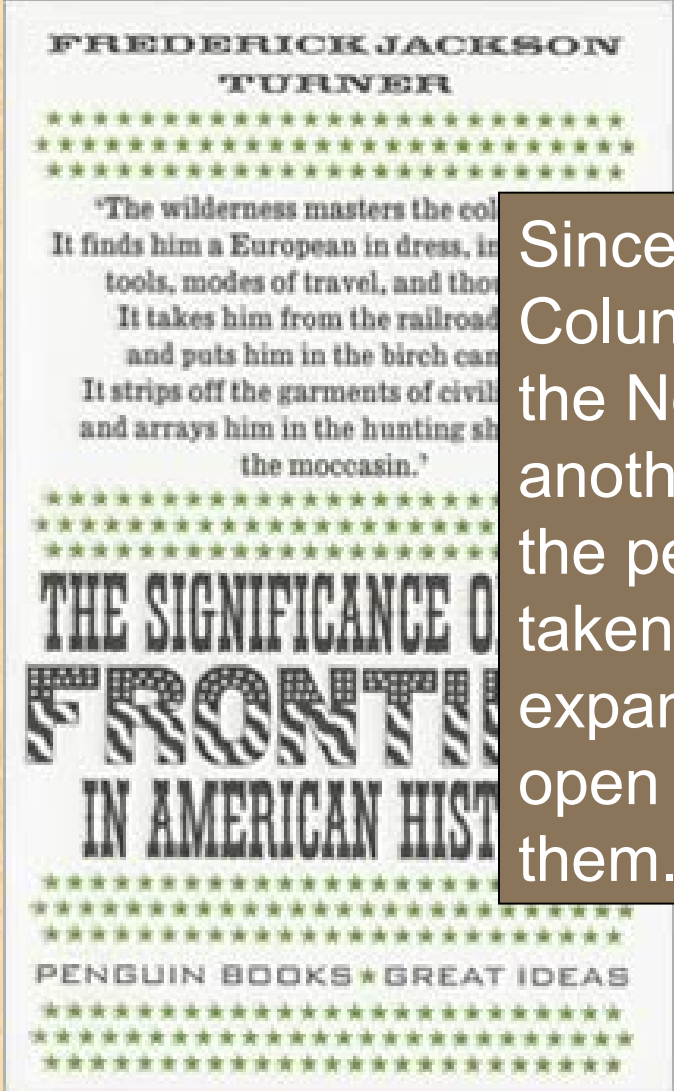


Up to our own day, American history has been in a large degree the history of the colonization of the Great West. The existence of an area of free land, its continuous recession, and the advance of American settlement westward, explain American development. (Turner, 1894, p. 199)



# Frontier

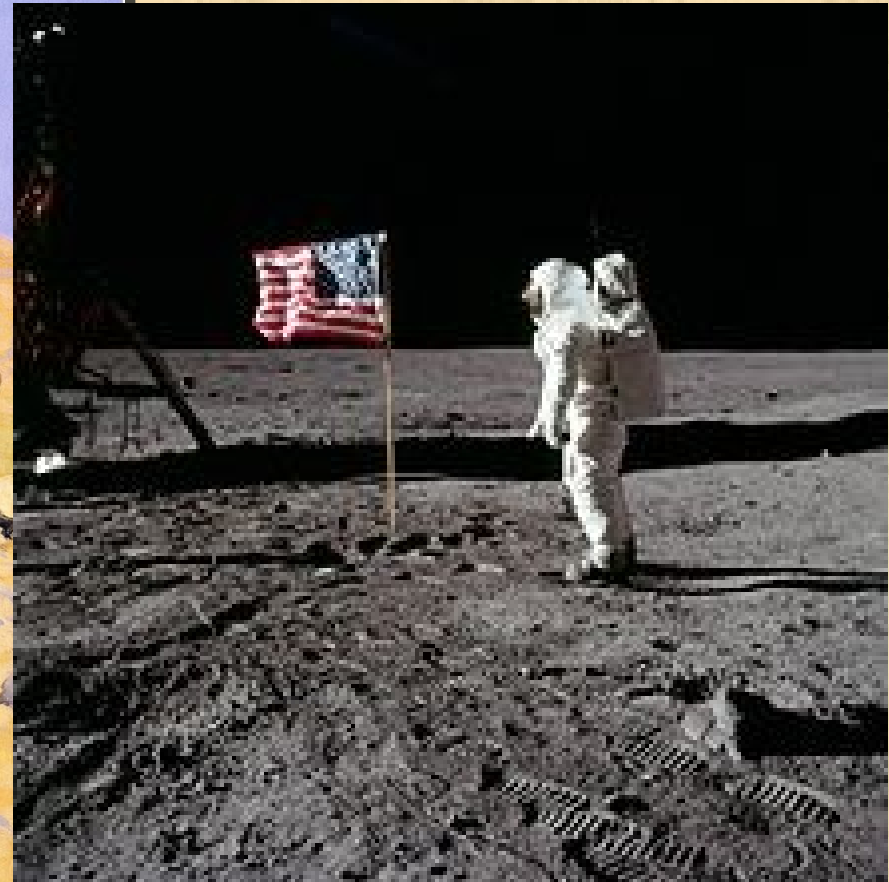
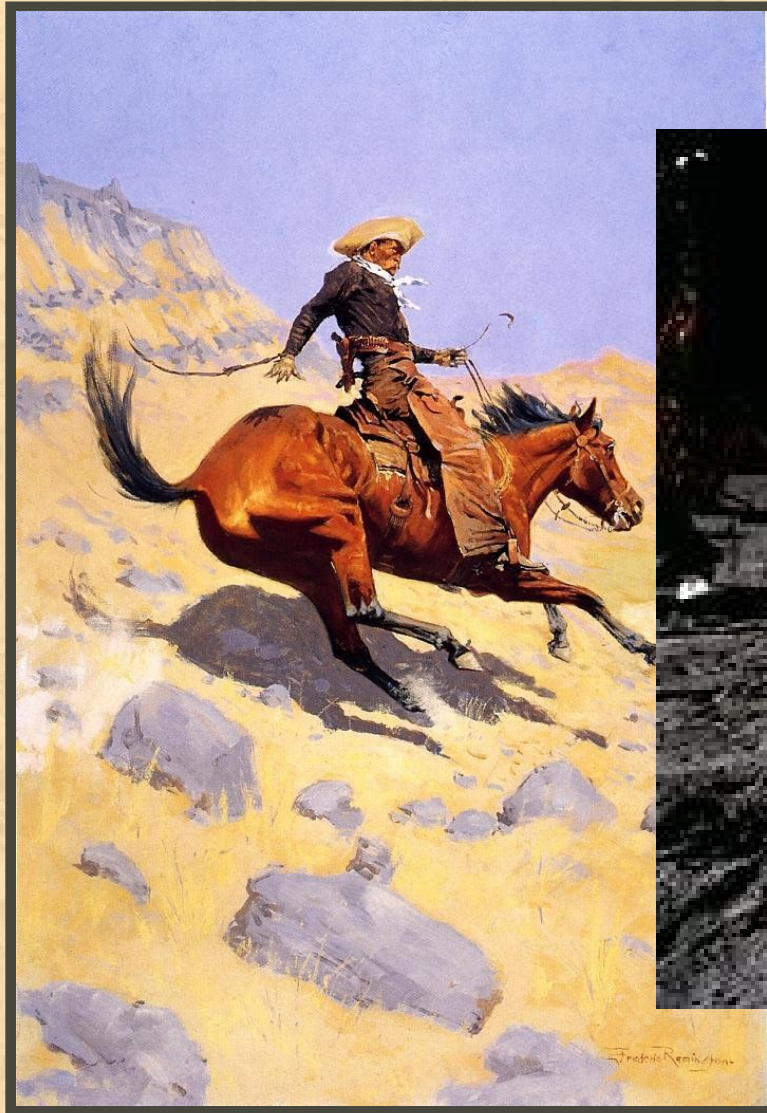
# New World Redux



Since the days when the fleet of Columbus sailed into the waters of the New World, America has been another name for opportunity, and the people of the United States have taken their tone from the incessant expansion which has not only been open but has even been forced upon them. (Turner, 1894, p. 227)

# Frontier

# New World Redux



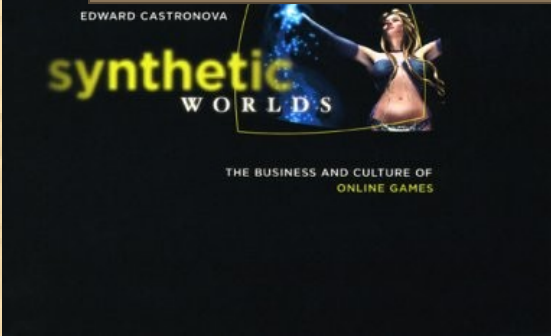
# New World Redux



# New World Redux

The synthetic world of *Second Life* sells server resources to those who want them, and nobody bats an eye when they call it 'land,' for that is what it is. Land. Space. *Lebensraum*. The New World. Terra Nova

Castronova, 2005, p. 306



It's the equivalent of getting on the boat to come to America or piling into the Conestoga wagon to head out west.

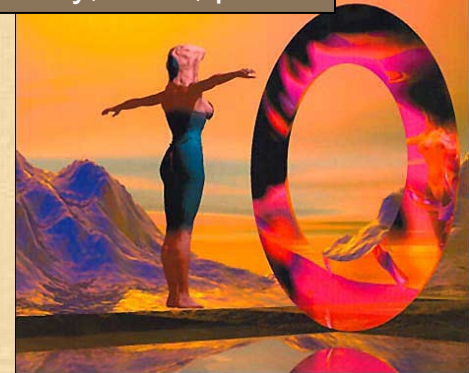
Kelly, 2004, p. 63

Massively Multiplayer  
Playing  
Games  
Kelly 2



SL is a new frontier; by definition, we are all pioneers.

Ducking Kwak, 2006



# New World Redux

The book cover features a blue background with a yellow light beam shining down from the title 'WORLD' onto a pattern of dark blue circles at the bottom. The text is white and yellow.

## PLAY BETWEEN WORLD

EXPLORING  
ONLINE  
GAME  
CULTURE

T. L. TAYLOR

1) Metaphors explain the new by way of the old.

A metaphor, like *new world* or *frontier*, helps us make sense of new technology by explaining things in terms that are already understood, well formulated and widely accepted.

# New World Redux



## PLAY BETWEEN WORLDS

EXPLORING  
ONLINE  
GAME  
CULTURE

T. L. TAYLOR

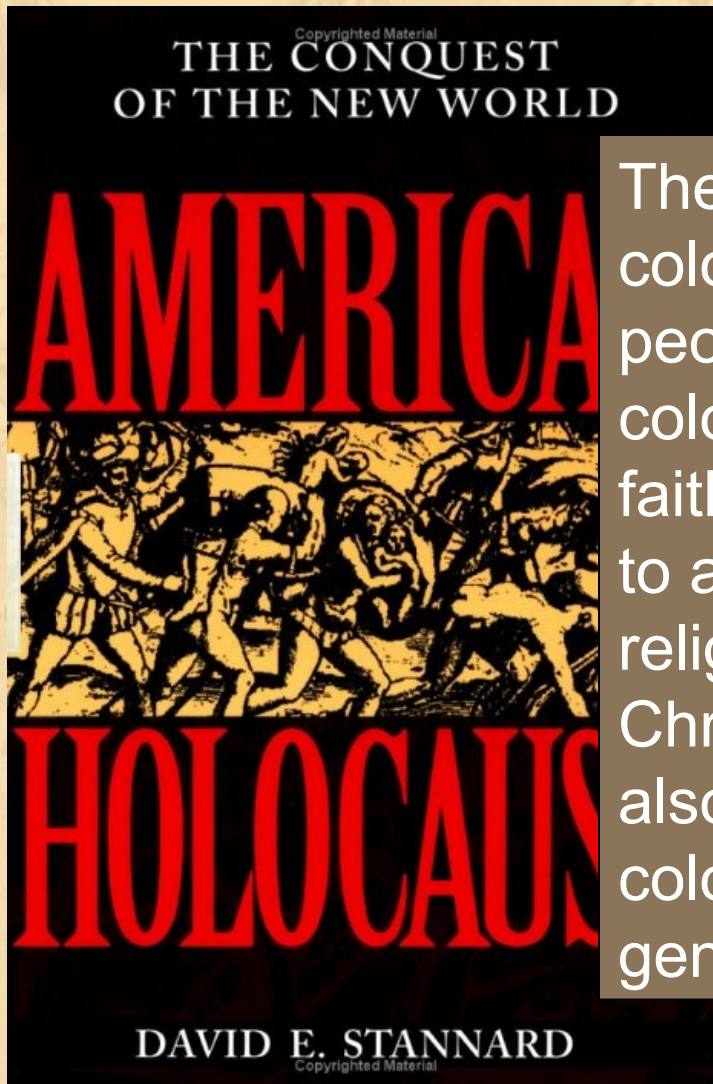
2) Metaphors are never value-neutral.

*New world and frontier* communicate powerful ideas: heroic exploration, discovery, progress, opportunity, individualism, freedom, wealth, and even utopia.

# The Darker Side of the West



# The Darker Side of the West



The New World became a nightmare as colonial power spread and its native peoples became the victim of colonialism, deprived of their ancient faith and their ancient lands and forced to accept a new civilization and a new religion. The Renaissance dream of a Christian Utopia in the New World was also destroyed by the harsh realities of colonialism: plunder, enslavement, genocide (Fuentes, 1999, p. 195).



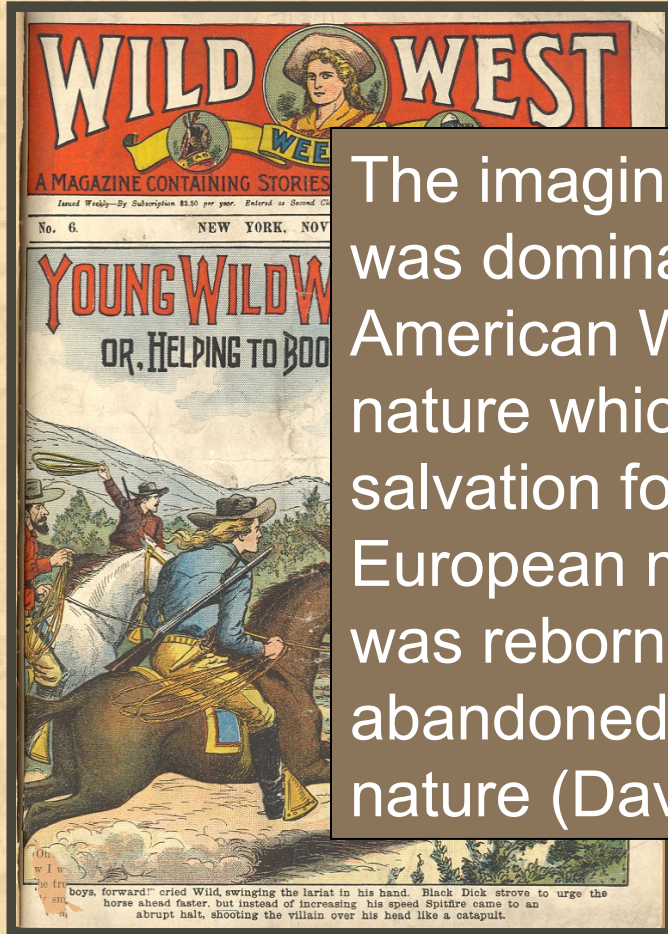
# The Darker Side of the West

New technologies are often heralded by a rhetoric that locates them as futuristic, without history, or at best arising from a scientific-technical lineage quite separate from cultural history (Penny, 1994, p. 231).



## Forgetting History

# The Darker Side of the West



The imagination of Americans after 1800 was dominated by the belief that the American West represented a redemptive nature which would provide spiritual salvation for the men who settled upon it. European man, corrupted by civilization, was reborn, made innocent, when he abandoned old world history for new world nature (David Noble, 1964, p. 419).

## Forgetting History

# The Darker Side of the West



Ethnocentrism

# The Darker Side of the West

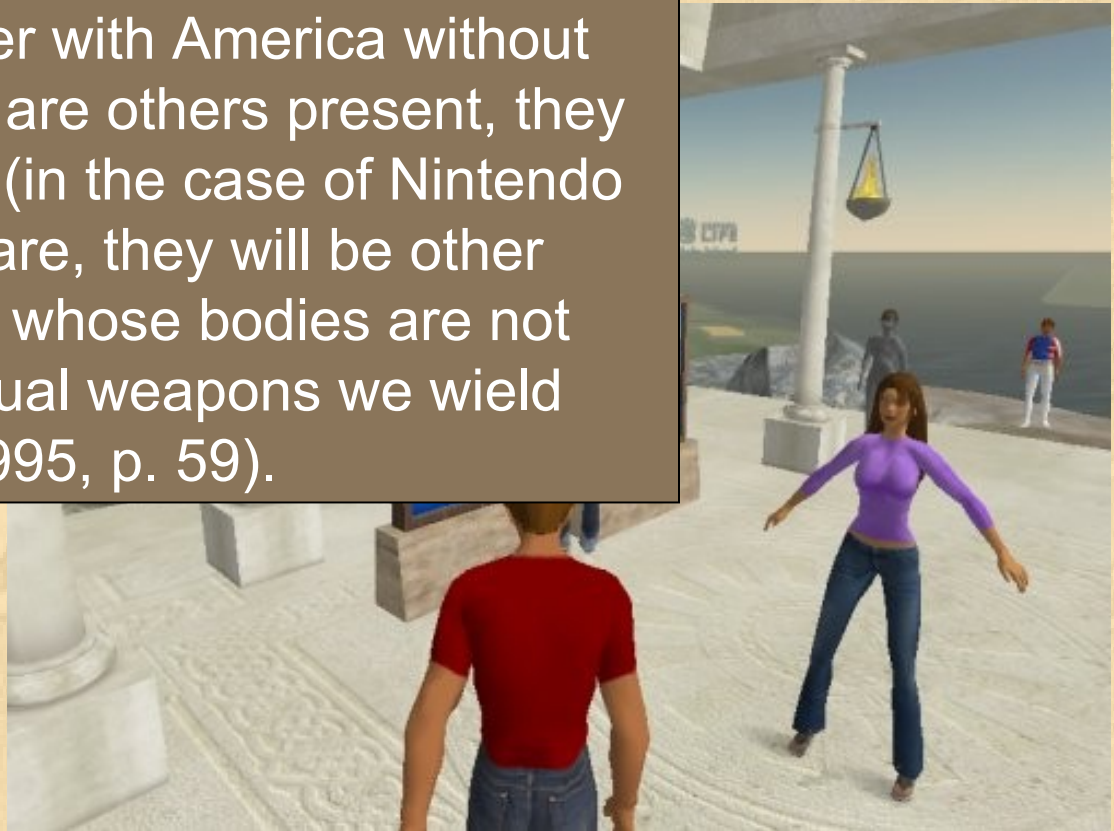


Ethnocentrism

# The Darker Side of the West

I would speculate that part of the drive behind the rhetoric of virtual reality as a New World or new frontier is the desire to recreate the Renaissance encounter with America without guilt: this time, if there are others present, they really won't be human (in the case of Nintendo characters), or if they are, they will be other players like ourselves, whose bodies are not jeopardized by the virtual weapons we wield (Fuller and Jenkins, 1995, p. 59).

## Consequences for Others



# The Darker Side of the West

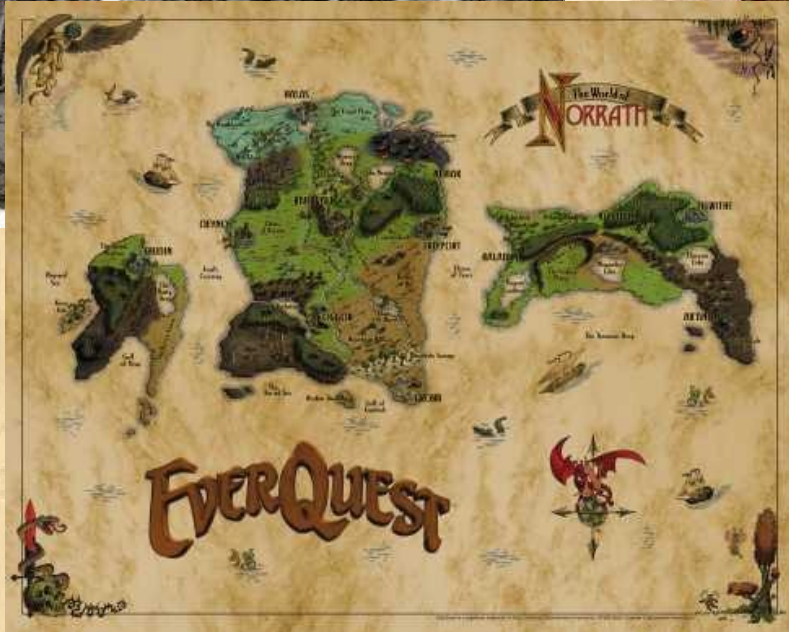
Cyberspace does have real victims. The rewriting of colonial history has a direct impact on the lives of those whose history is being denied and whose historic identity is distorted (Sardar, 1996, p. 19)



Although this virtual exclusion is admittedly bloodless and seemingly sanitized of the stigma of colonial conquest, it is no less problematic or hegemonic (Gunkel, 2001, p. 24)

## Consequences for Others

# Conclusions



# Conclusions





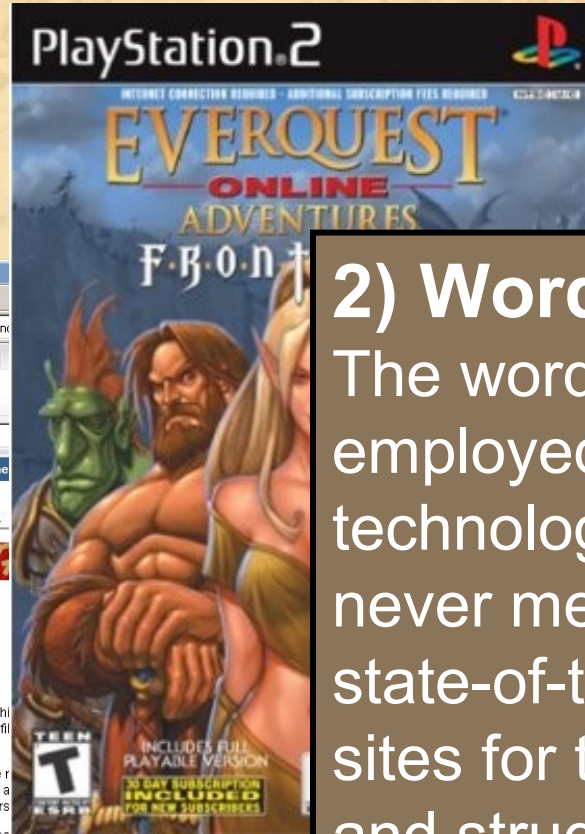
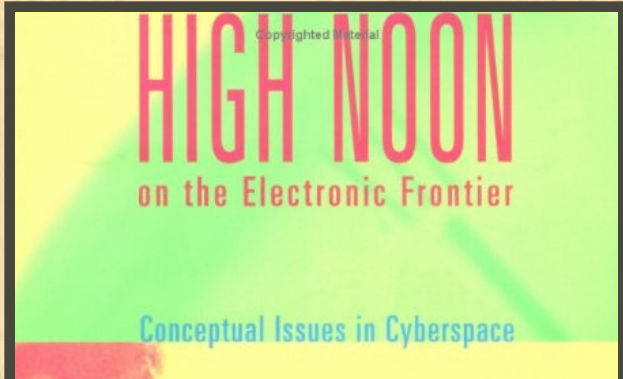
# Conclusions

## 1) *New world* and *frontier* have a darker side:

- Forgetting of history
- Imposition of colonial power and the exercise of ethnocentrism
- Exclusion of others.



# Conclusions



## 2) Words Matter

The words that are employed to describe a technological innovation are never mere reports of the state-of-the-art but constitute sites for the production of and struggle over significance.

A screenshot of a CNN news article from October 17, 2006. The article is titled "Bringing news from new frontiers" and is posted at 10:56 GMT. The author is Paul Sussman. The article discusses the virtual world of Second Life, mentioning a Reuters correspondent, Adam Pasick, who is covering the latest news and events from the virtual world. The article also mentions that Second Life has spawned a booming market in online property. The screenshot shows the CNN website interface, including the search bar, navigation links, and the article text. The URL in the address bar is http://edition.cnn.com/2006/TECH/internet/10/17/secondlife.feature/index.html#.

# Conclusions

## 2) Words Matter

Not a matter of finding some perfect and less controversial terminology.

Language, any language, is already shaped by the sediment of its own culture and history.



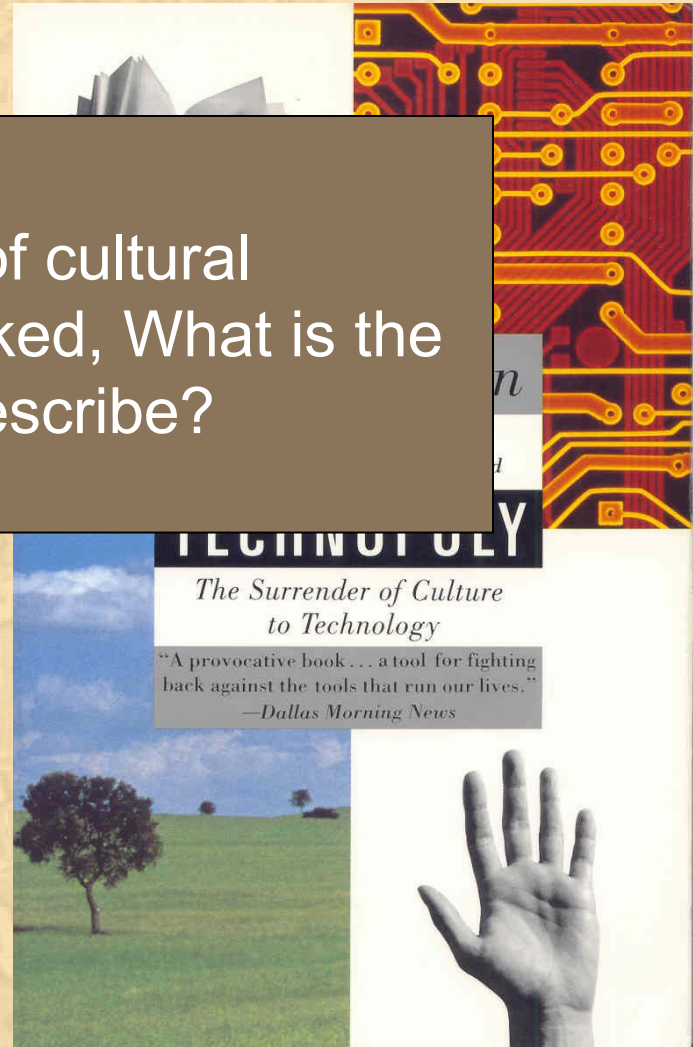
# REALITY

Worst game ever.

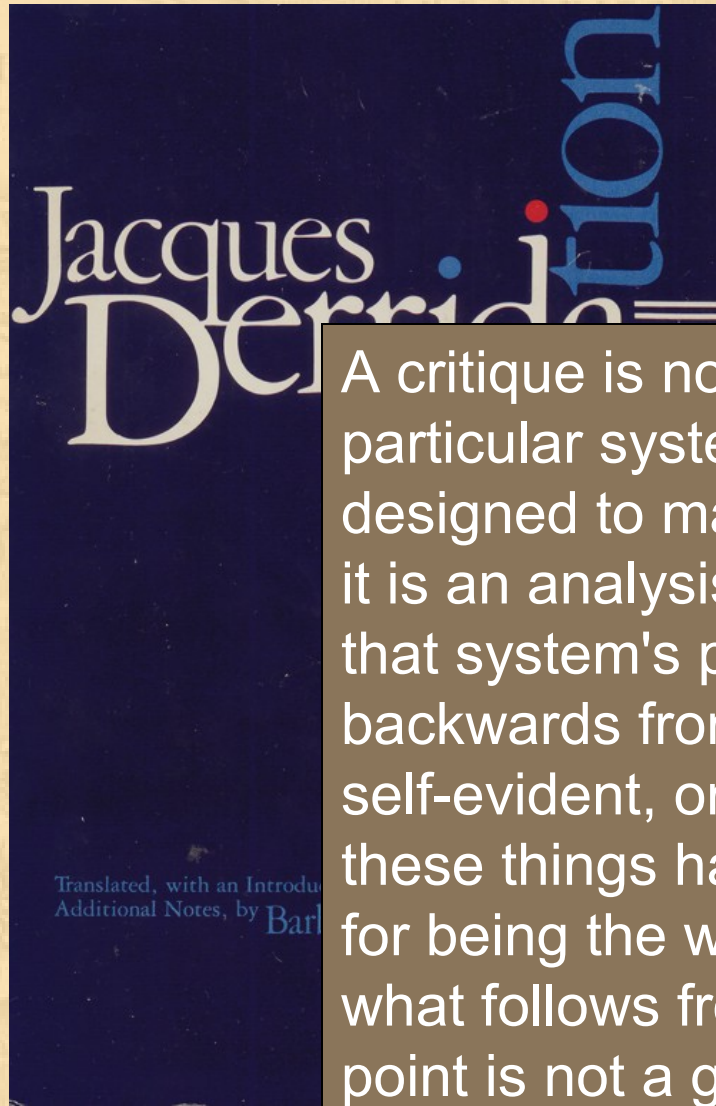
# Conclusions

## 3) The Point of Criticism

Anyone who practices the act of cultural criticism must endure being asked, What is the solution to the problems you describe?  
(Postman, 1993, p. 181)



## Conclusions



A critique is not simply an examination of a particular system's flaw and imperfections designed to make that system better. Instead it is an analysis that focuses on the grounds of that system's possibility. The critique reads backwards from what seems natural, obvious, self-evident, or universal, in order to show that these things have their history, their reasons for being the way they are, their effects on what follows from them, and that the starting point is not a given but a construct, usually blind to itself (Johnson, 1981, p. xv).

# Conclusions



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