

## Wilderness House Literary Review 14/3

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### Hate As Currency

Although it's not officially designated as one, hate has become a dominant currency over the past 25 years or so. For millions, hate is as much a currency today as the money (or lack of) in their wallets.

After all, what is currency?

Traditional "dominant" currencies like the dollar, the Euro, yen, peso, ruble, etc. rule our lives. These currencies pay for food, shelter, health care, government, transportation, electricity, phones, computers – the essential goods and services we need to exist in today's modern world.

Today's cryptocurrencies, like Bitcoin, have been on the scene for the past decade and are used as alternatives to traditional currencies. They, of course, exist in digital form -- in contrast to physical form, like bank notes and coins. Created by individuals, corporations, organizations and some governments, they allow for instantaneous transactions and borderless transfer-of-ownership -- meaning they require no conversion or exchange because they're the same worldwide.

Whenever you're talking currencies, you always need to talk about disposable currency (more commonly referred to as "disposable income") – i.e. what's left over after the essentials are paid up. Disposable income allows us to purchase entertainment and the superfluties of life.

*So where does that leave the tens of millions of Americans and hundreds of millions (or perhaps even several billions) of people around the world who have no disposable income of any type?*

Since 1995, which many tech experts mark as the first major year of the commercial internet, people who lack tangible disposable income have spent hours each day, days each week, weeks each month and months each year on social media platforms spouting hatred. Hate has become their means for recreation, their favorite pastime, and their latter-day vacation.

While the internet hasn't been the only driver of hate as currency, it tops the list. The rich and powerful, who have lots of traditional disposable income, also use hate as currency -- but in a different way. They invest their traditional currency heavily into hate to increase their wealth and influence.

Investing in hate pays them dividends much like investing in stocks bought on Wall Street. How? The rich invest in hate to grow their base of like-minded supporters. The more these hateful supporters listen to the communicators of the rich and powerful on the radio, television and other mediums that the rich and powerful own, the more advertisers pay to the rich and powerful. It's the tried and true strategy of investing money to make money.

The Koch brothers, Rush Limbaugh, Alex Jones and Fox News -- among others -- all have proven that hate mongering is a highly lucrative business. Democratic presidential hopeful Elizabeth Warren nailed it recently when she called the Fox Network a "hate-for-profit racket."

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“Among others” definitely includes President Donald Trump. He knows that hate sells to his supporters better than beer, hot dogs, tee shirts and MAGA hats at his rallies. At his Orlando, Fl. rally in June, which he used to kick off his 2020 re-election bid, Trump hammered away yet again at illegal immigrants coming into the country and sold his supporters on his newest hate scheme: to deport illegals as soon as they enter the U.S. Although it’s an impractical and patently illegal scheme that likely won’t come to bear, Trump hopes that using such “hate currency” at his rallies will pay dividends by rekindling the hatred for immigrants held by his followers who voted him into office in 2016.

Hate currency isn’t just the bailiwick of economically deprived individuals “spending” their hate on the internet, or rich and powerful ideologues using hate to expand their agendas, or power barons investing in hate to expand their wealth and influence. There are literally thousands of NGOs (non-governmental organizations), or so-called hate groups, across the world that are actively promoting hate. They are selling hate to besotted supporters who gladly support such organized hatred with hard cash contributions and dues. In the U.S. alone, the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) tracks NGOs on an annual basis and says that in 2018, it counted 1,020 groups. That number, SPLC adds, has grown steadily over the past few years.

Using hate as currency, while never more prevalent than in today’s world, has been a strategy of the rich and powerful for centuries. As the great Swiss social and political philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau lamented in his “Discourse on Inequality” in 1754, “From the extreme inequality of Conditions and fortunes . . . one would see Chiefs foment everything that can weaken assembled men by disuniting them . . . Everything that can inspire . . . mutual hatred in the different estates by setting their Rights and interests at odds, and so strengthen the Power that contains them all.”

In other words, Rousseau said that the wealthy used their money and power to turn the poor against each another, in an effort to distract the poor’s hatred for the wealthy -- who exercised true societal power and control. He suggested that the ultimate goal of the rich and powerful was to make the poor feel rich with hatred for the poorer and the poorest – a strategy used by autocrats to this day.