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“Global Body, Global Brain/ Global Factory, Global War: Revolt of the Value-Subjects”

Global Insurgency

**“Capital is Enclosure
~~First it fenced off the land
 Then it metered the water
 It measured our time
 It plundered our bodies and now it polices our dreams~~
 We cannot be contained
 We are not for sale
 Leave capital to enclose itself”**

Leaflet attached by demonstrators to the wire fence surrounding the Summit of the Americas, Quebec City, April 2001.

The keening of a coven of witches has just faded, the blue-robed singers winding away around the perimeter fence enclosing the trade negotiators at the Summit of the America, when fiercer chanting rises from an column of red flags approaching the heavily guarded main gate. One banner blazes a yellow hammer and sickle; many more are sliced with anarchist black. As the contingent of the Convergence des Luttes Anti-Capitalist reaches the fence, there is a momentary pause: people mill to sporadic drumming, slogans peter out anti-climactically. Suddenly, a handful of figures, masked, gloved, combat clothed--“black block” activists--launch themselves onto the fence, scaling it. They sway violently on its crest; topple a section, from which others, wire-cut, peel away. As police gaze on, a million dollar barrier, topic of civil rights lawsuits and parliamentary questions, falls in five minutes. Both sides pause in of mutual amazement. The demonstrators hesitate, surprised by their own success, reluctant to storm the fortress, suspecting, perhaps, the deadly force that would indeed greet too deep an incursion towards the presence of visiting US President George W. Bush The security forces recover first. On a flank the futuristic ranks of the riot squad, extra-terrestrially gas-masked, visored and shielded, emerge. The white parabolas of tear gas canisters rise into the sky, first shots in a continuous barrage whose clouds throughout the afternoon blow back into the air-conditioning systems of Summit delegates’ hotels, delaying the opening of proceedings and inaugurating forty-eight hours of confusion on all side. The next day, thousands of demonstrators from labour and social movements will march away from the fence to a vacant industrial parking lot to listen to hours of speeches from trades unions leaders and other official spokespeople denouncing corporate globalization, while at the barrier a swirl of thousands more young activists clash continuously with security forces. Police fire scores of rubber bullets, deploy water cannons and arrest hundreds, yet at one moment appear to refuse orders from senior officers to charge a group of gas sodden retching teenagers resolutely “locked down” in the street in front of them . . .

Such scenes are increasingly frequent on a landscape of globalized capital that has over the last decade been crossed by an ascending arc of struggles. A too-rapid scan can trace this trajectory from the 1994 Zapatista revolt in Chiapas, an uprising which burst out on

the anniversary an earlier wave of activism against the 1992 North American Free Trade Agreement, to the 1996 general strikes in France, through wave of strikes against neoliberal policies in India, in Indonesia, Korea and Latin America throughout the 1990s, back into the 1999 European mobilizations against the G7 meetings in Cologne and the world wide campaign that halted the Multilateral Agreement on Investment. In North America, it was only with the “Battle of Seattle” the scale of this process broke into the awareness of the mainstream media, making the subsequent demonstrations against Washington against the IMF and World Bank, in Prague, in Quebec City and in the May Day 2001 events around the world a focus of alarmed commentary. At the time of writing, the line is crossing Europe again with the impending protests at the G8 meeting in Genoa; the World Bank’s removal of its scheduled meeting from Barcelona to cyberspace (a decision greeted gleefully by swarms of hackers); and the police shooting of demonstrators at Gothenburg in Sweden. But any chronology of landmark events distorts the process it charts. For one of the features of demonstrations such as those in Seattle or Quebec is that they mark the convergence of a range of campaigns and activism—labor organizing, anti-sweatshop initiatives, green mobilizations, poor people’s movements, debt repudiation coalitions—now percolating on a wide and ongoing basis.

A single—or even several—tear-gassed swallows do not make a left-romantic spring. But comparison with the political, intellectual and cultural climate of even a decade ago—the heyday of neoliberalism, the era of the Fall of the Wall, of the “end of history” thesis, the time when Margaret Thatcher’s “there is no alternative” vindication of free-market policies rang with conviction—shows how much has changed. Horizons of contestation have opened up, so that, in ways few expected, there is appearing a watershed of social struggles that bear comparison with the explosion of 1968, were it not that such resemblance-finding too easily annuls the specificity and innovation of these emergent, twenty first century movements.

That the scale and intensity of these insurgencies—usually pejoratively and misleadingly termed “anti-globalization” movements-- has caught their opponents order by surprise is clear. Even to participants and sympathizers, however, understanding the new mobilizations is a challenge. Perhaps the most current self-description within the movement uses the terminology of “civil society ” to speak of an uprising “in the space between the state and the corporation.”¹ But although valuable accounts have been offered within this framework, it is difficult to avoid the suspicion that what recommends the category of “civil society” to platform speakers is its very vagueness, which papers over critical divisions within the movement. As the best work in this genre admits, civil society is what Gramsci called “a maze of conflicting attitudes, values and interests.”² Theorists of “new social movements” and “identity politics” will have no trouble in identifying familiar subjects—green, feminist, anti-racist—in the throng. But such analysts, who have often been energetic to deny the importance of “old” class struggles—

¹ Maude Barlow and Tony Clarke, *Global Showdown: How the New Activists Are Fighting Global Corporate Rule* (Toronto: Stoddart, 2001) 207. See also Jeremy Brecher, John Brown Childs, and Jill Cutler, eds. *Global Visions: Beyond the New World Order* (Boston: South End Press, 1993).

² Antonio Gramsci cited in Barlow and Clarke 207.

might be given pause by the fact that these agents now appear in coalitions that often exceed single issues and specific identities precisely by the assertion of common “anti-corporate,” and sometimes overtly “anti-capitalist,” perspectives. Similarly, while “post-Marxists” such as Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe might be keen to discuss the “discursive articulation” of such coalitions, they should be abashed that these processes of connection occur around the very issues of globalized commodification, internationalized production and financial capital from which they have so assiduously distanced themselves.³

On the other hand, while long faces on the Marxian left have been cheered by the appearance of what are now recognized—even in the mainstream press—as “anti-capitalist demonstrators,” it is equally clear that the renewed militancy is not easily ramroded into their familiar categories. The demonstrators’ diffusion of composition, diversity of perspective, decentralization of organization and, usually, determined disassociation from the disastrous historical experience of state socialism, defies the grasp of most class analysis. Even sophisticated versions often end up focusing on familiar problems, such as the conflicting radical and reactionary potentials of “organized labour”, at the expense of other equally, perhaps even more, important elements. “Anarchists? Hacktivists? Witches?” scientific socialists intone, with mounting exasperation.⁴ And while there are certainly available within a broadly Marxian optic innovative concepts such as that of “antisystemic movements” proposed by the world systems theorists—which by virtue of its internationalist and inclusive perspective might seem well suited to understanding events such as those in Seattle—their elaboration largely remains tied to early generations of struggle.⁵

With no pretence to a final word, this paper develops a perspective on globalization struggles based in the tradition of autonomist Marxism. After looking briefly at this tradition’s historical background and main theses, it reviews two recent contributions: Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s theory of “empire” and “multitude,” and Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker’s historical account of an earlier episode of “hydra headed” resistance to capitalism.⁶ It then goes on, within a broadly autonomist perspective, to propose the category of “global value subjects” as an instrument to analyze the movements I term “the new combinations.” To explain the composition of these movements I discuss the dimensions of what autonomists call the “global factory,” then sketch the significance of Marx’s concepts of “general intellect” and “species being”—“global brain” and “global body”—for theorizing the role computer network and biotechnologies in their struggles. Turning to consider the possible responses of

³ Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics (London: Verso, 1985).

⁴ For a collection of essays that displays the strength and limitations of such analysis, see Monthly Review, 52:3 (2000) “Toward a New Internationalism.”

⁵ Giovanni Arrighi, Terence K. Hopkins & Immanuel Wallerstein, Antisystemic Movements (London: Verso, 1989). For an application to globalization protests, see Peter Wilkin, “Solidarity in a Global Age—Seattle and Beyond,” Journal of World-Systems Research. 1: VI (2000) 20-65.

⁶ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, Empire (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000); Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, The Many Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic (Boston: Beacon, 2000).

capital to the new combinations, I suggest this includes the danger of resort to “global war.” I conclude with discussion of an exchange between Negri and Jacques Derrida about spectral powers and struggles—“global ghosts.” The analysis focuses on globalization struggles as they manifest in Canada and the US, although, for obvious reasons, also assumes larger amplitudes.

Global Autonomists: Empire and Hydra

Autonomist Marxism is a twisted yarn of theories about counter-powers against capitalism that begins with a red thread of Marxism, but becomes heretically entwined with the feminist wages for housework debate, maroon anti-colonialist theory and rhizomatic postmodernism. Out of these mixed and recombinant ingredients it has bootstrapped what I regard as a *sui generis* twenty first century radicalism. Long semi-clandestine, driven underground by dramatic repressions of the movements with which it was connected, autonomist theory is today undergoing a resurgence in North American, partly because of the collapse of the scientific-socialisms to which it was always antagonistic, partly in association of the emergence of new anti-capitalist movements to whose analysis it seems particularly well adapted. Much of this revival attaches to the work of Antonio Negri, whose intellectual élan and extraordinary political career have made the most celebrated representative of what is, however, a very variegated body of thought. The genealogy of autonomist Marxism, its historical matrices, geographical migrations, and intellectual infusions have been recounted at length elsewhere.⁷ But its main theoretical elements can be summarized as follows.

- 1) Autonomist analysis derives from Marx’s analysis of the capital-labor relation, but departs from its customary construction by emphasizing the priority and initiative of labor—conceived in the broadest sense--whose chained creative power is seen as the source of capitalist development and crisis.
- 2) With this perspective comes an emphasis on the changing nature of both capital and labor as each responds to each other in a spiraling cut-and-thrust struggle. In periodic restructurings capitalism constantly increases in technological intensity and the scale and scope of its social organization, but these shifts answer to and are answered by changes in the composition of labour that create new points and agents of antagonism. This mutability is schematically represented in the autonomist theory of a “cycle of struggles” in which the cutting edge of challenge to capital is constituted first by artisanal or craft worker, then by the “mass worker” of the industrial assembly line, and now (in some versions) by a “socialized worker” dispersed across a wide variety of postindustrial sites.
- 3) Alongside account of cyclical contests comes an analysis of their increasing scale and complexity of such insurgencies: as capital’s subsumption of society intensifies, so the both radius of exploitation, and points of conflict, extend beyond the immediate point of production, in the workplace along an entire circuit of capital, and to involve agents other

⁷ Harry Cleaver, Reading Capital Politically (Brighton: Harvester, 1979); Nick Dyer-Witheford, Cyber-Marx: Cycles and Circuits of Struggle in High-Technology Capitalism (Urbana: University of Illinois, 1999).

than the waged worker—housewives, students, ecological activists, new social movements. An expanded circulation of struggles matches the intensified circulation of capital, bringing to the fore issues of autonomy, affinity and alliances amongst multiplex and variegated forces. For Negri, the experimentation with coalitions, coordinations, rainbows, rhizomes, networks, hammocks, and webs that has been so salient a feature of anti-capitalist movements in the last decade denotes the attempt to encompass this new situation of exploitation and resistance and find a politics adequate to "the specific form of existence of the socialized worker," which "is not something unitary, but something manifold, not solitary, but polyvalent" and where "the productive nucleus of the antagonism consists in multiplicity."⁸

4) Underlying all this is an affirmation of the creative or constitutive force socialized labor as a power capable of realizing alternatives to the world market, and making an exodus from capital, a potential not exhausted (or even tested by) the catastrophe of state socialism but rather now aligned with the possibilities for decentralized, distributed forms of collective self-organization.

Although these ideas have developed through a rich network of international connections, autonomist theory has historically focused very strongly on European—more specifically Italian—and North American contexts and experiences. Recently, however, two works, both clearly responses to the conditions of globalization, have broadened these perspectives: Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's Empire, and Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker's The Many Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic.⁹

The topic of Hardt and Negri's much discussed Empire is nothing less than the transnational order created by the apparent planetary victory of capitalism. It portrays the emergence of a universalizing yet decentered global regime built on the foundations of the world market. This "empire" is unlike earlier "imperialisms" or even "neo-imperialisms," for it is not organized by a single nation state. Even the colossal strength of the US is in Hardt and Negri's analysis but a component in a broader power that now operates through a multilayered ensemble of political, corporate, and non-governmental organizations that constructs itself in the very process of incessant improvised crisis control, and operates to extract profit from both the spatial and social entirety of life through a play of financial, cultural and judicial networks ultimately backed by the military force deployed in recurrent police actions.

This new world order does, however, face an antagonist: "the multitude." This term Hardt and Negri find via Spinoza, Machiavelli and English radical republicanism. In their usage, it serves to fuse a Marxist understanding of capital's dependence on a now postindustrial proletariat, Foucauldian themes of the resistance internal to power, and a Deleuzian account of rhizomatic conflict. The multitude is the pluralistic subject whose

⁸ Antonio Negri, The Politics of Subversion: A Manifesto for the Twenty First Century (Cambridge: Polity, 1989) 87.

⁹ Peter Linebaugh and Marcus Rediker, The Many Headed Hydra: Sailors, Slaves, Commoners and the Hidden History of the Revolutionary Atlantic (Boston: Beacon, 2000).

constitutive, creative power, now crucially manifested in cyborg networks of “immaterial labor,” Empire simultaneously requires, requisitions and represses. The multitude is a force that within Hardt and Negri’s “Roman” metaphor can be at various moments identified with slaves, barbarians or Christians. And its rebellions, in Hardt and Negri’s inventory, include Los Angeles 1992, Tiennaman Square 1989, Chiapas 1994, France 1996, Korea 1998 and Seattle 1999.

Linebaugh and Rediker’s study is, on the surface, less immediately concerned with current revolts, since its “hidden history of the revolutionary Atlantic” reveals the scope of rebellions against early industrial capitalism. The authors show how in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries “primitive accumulation” was met by dozens of organized rebellions in both England and its New World colonies. The subjects of these revolts were extraordinarily diverse—dispossessed laborers, sailors, slaves, pirates, market women, and indentured servants. But they repeatedly came together in combinations, from Digger communes to maroon settlements, which crossed what later became sedimented divisions of race, gender and class. This “motley” of revolutionaries was the human residues of the enclosures—“commoners” –for whom the deracinating violence of eviction from the land was the catalyst to insurgency. Aghast at the recurrent of these outbreaks, the rulers of the day spoke of the rebels as a “hydra” whose regenerative powers resisted their own “Herculean” attempts at decapitation. Eventually, bayonets, executions, torture, imprisonment and deportation did suppress the risings. Yet, the ideas and experiments of the early “commonist” rebels fueled both the American and French of Revolution, and went on to bleed into the revolutionary movements of the 20th century. Despite their apparent historical distance, the hydra-headed resistance movements Linebaugh and Rediker describe are clearly perceived in the light of, and understood as predecessors of, today’s “anti-globalization” protests. The book’s concludes the Pacific travels of one of the radical mutineers from Bligh’s Bounty: “The globalizing powers have a long reach and endless patience. Yet the planetary wanderers do not forget, and they are ever ready from Africa to the Caribbean to Seattle to resist slavery and restore the commons.”¹⁰ Linebaugh is a member of the Midnight Notes Collective, which in a series of brilliant autonomist analyses describes globalization as a vast continuation of “enclosure.” Despite its high tech sheen, the activities of twenty-first century capital are, Midnight Notes argues, an accelerated and expanded recapitulation of original accumulation: ending communal control of the means of the means of subsistence, seizing land for debt, creating new mobile and migrant reservoir of labor power, destroying non-market social systems, and imposing ecological predations, from hazardous waste storage to biotechnological reappropriation of food crops. It is the immiseration flowing from this process that now underlies the unrests fomenting against the new world order, in which once again, “as at the dawn of capitalism, the physiognomy of the world proletariat is that of the pauper, the vagabond, the criminal, the panhandler, the refugee sweatshop worker, the mercenary, the rioter.”¹¹ Linebaugh and Rediker’s “hydra” is clearly an ancestor of Hardt and Negri’s “multitude,” and the colonial empires it fought against is the predecessor of their global “Empire.”

¹⁰ Linebaugh and Rediker, 353.

¹¹ Midnight Notes, “The New Enclosures,” in *Midnight Oil: Work, Energy, War 1973-1992* (New York: Autonomedia, 1992) 321.

There are also, however, significant differences of inflection in these analyses. Hardt and Negri's account of "multitude" focuses heavily on subversive possibilities at the "high" end of the capitalist work hierarchy, in the "immaterial labor" of the cyborg subjects appearing in the most advanced forms of networked high-technology production. *Midnight Notes* is much more oriented toward the struggles of the landless, the dispossessed, the "low" end of global labor-power, more attuned to issues of gendered and Southern super-exploitation. Members of the group have sharply criticized Negri for underestimation of these struggles.¹²

Both, however, grapple with the dilemma of both retaining a Marxian understanding of exploitation and class conflict and surpassing it in ways adequate to the expanded dimensions of contemporary capitalism and resistance to it. Linebaugh and Rediker's exploration of the pre-Marxian radicalism of the eighteenth century, while clearly viewed through the lens of Marx's analysis of "original accumulation," permits the emergence of issues largely under-theorized by Marxian theorists—for example, the importance to accumulation of unwaged (and usually female) labour, a theme central to feminist political economy. As the leaflet cited at the beginning of this paper shows, "commons" and "enclosure" resonate deeply with concerns of today's protestors. Nonetheless, categories too tied to the era of primitive accumulation also risk nostalgia, and may be inadequate to the "futuristic accumulation" of contemporary capital.

Hardt and Negri's ambitious account of "Empire," whatever its flaws, persuasively names the nascent, diffuse, apparatus of transnational governance being slowly secreted by the world-market. Although we will later question aspects of their geo-political analysis, there is no doubt they have put their theoretical finger on something that was recognized and challenged in praxis on the streets of Seattle and Washington and Quebec. Their naming of the challenging force is, however, less compelling. The turn away from the language of "workerism" to that of "multitudes" is a creative move, but what it gains in fluidity and flexibility it sacrifices in specificity and precision. As a concept, "multitudes" lacks the discrimination to identify the divisions and contradiction within global social movements. It has very little cartographic power to distinguish between red-green alliances, neo-fascist militias, maquiladora strikes and ethno-fundamentalisms, a mapping that is crucial to understanding the potentialities and risks of the recent activism. "Multitudes" is more poetically resonant than politically orienting. For these reasons, while staying in the autonomist spirit of both these books, I would like to attempt another cut at the problems they address.

Global Value Subjects: New Combinations

The alternative I want to put in play is "global value subjects." This term designates the creative, nature-transforming agents on whose cooperative activity capital depends for the creation of surplus value, at points including but also now exceeding the immediate point of production. To shift from "workers" to "value subjects" is to follow the analytic

¹² George Caffentzis, "The End of Work or the Renaissance of Slavery? A Critique of Rifkin and Negri." Presented at the "Globalization from Below Conference," Duke University, Feb 6, 1998.
<http://lists.village.virginia.edu/~spoons/global/Papers/caffentzis>

method of Marx himself who, as Werner Bonefeld puts it, insisted that “the most general abstractions arise only in the midst of the richest possible concrete developments, where one thing appears as common to many, to all. Then it ceases to be thinkable in a particular form alone.”¹³ This was the issue Negri confronted in his writings on the “socialized worker,” where he described a process of capitalist “subsumption” that stretches beyond the workplace and into society as a whole, extending its temporal measure from the working day to the *life-span*, so that, as he observed, we have indeed “gone beyond Marx.” and might now choose to speak “not of a *worker* but of an *operator* or *agent*.”¹⁴

In arriving at “global value subjects,” I have also, however, been influenced by John McMurtry’s powerful description of capitalism as a “value program” constructed around “value designations and value exclusions,” a system within which “lives are valued, or not valued” in terms of the “differentials and measurements” of “the money parametric.” This parametric, within whose optic “society is seen as an aggregate of resources to serve the global market” establishes capital’s “grid of functions and roles,” acting as “the regulating order of selection and exclusion, in terms of which class divisions are formed and historically organized” and scarce resources allocated.¹⁵

The activity Marx recognized as “labour” –and located in the waged workplace—can in the contemporary conditions of hyper-subsumption be seen as one manifestation of a much wider and variegated span of value creating activity. The traditional locus of exploitation between capital and labor in the workplace has not been transcended, but expanded. The “value subjects” on whom contemporary capital depends still, and crucially, include “workers.” But they are also “consumers,” on whose capacity to absorb commodities, regardless of psych-social-physiological consequences, the realization of surplus value depends; the “prosumers” enlisted as active agents in a dynamic production-consumption loop that depends on the normalized extraction through “transactionally generated information” of a stream of data about every aspect of the daily life;¹⁶ the network “audience commodities” whose attention is recruited by commercial media and traded by advertisers desperately seeking “mind-share”¹⁷; the “human resources” whose training and maintenance demands the vast quanta of unpaid life activity invested in housework, schooling, “life-long learning” and all the activities of social reproduction¹⁸; and, increasingly, they are the bodies whose “biovalue” is reckoned both in terms of ability to sustain environmental risks generated by the production-

¹³ Werner Bonefeld. “The Specter of Globalization: On the Form and Content of the World Market.” In The Politics of Change: Globalization, Ideology and Critique (Palgrave: New York, 2000) 36.

¹⁴ Antonio Negri, The Politics of Subversion: A Manifesto for the Twenty-First Century (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989) 84.

¹⁵ John McMurtry, Unequal Freedoms: The Global Market as an Ethical System (Garamond: Toronto, 1998) 6, 8, 20, 31.

¹⁶ Kevin Wilson, Technologies of Control: The New Interactive Media for the Home. Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1988.

¹⁷ Dallas W. Smythe “Communications: Blindspot of Western Marxism,” Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory 1.3 (1977): 1-27; Sut Jhally, The Codes of Advertising: Fetishism and the Political Economy of Meaning in the Consumer Society (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987).

¹⁸ Maria Rosa Dalla Costa and Selma James, The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community (Bristol: Falling Wall Press, 1972).

consumption cycle, and to supply the genetic raw materials for biotechnological and life science innovation.¹⁹

In this view, the bar in the fraction “s/v”—the ratio of surplus to necessary labour power which in traditional Marxist theory measures the workplace rate of exploitation—now runs through the heart of life, diffused across the social spectrum, and realized in many differentiated ways. One might even, with the certainty of excommunication from certain orthodox churches, suggest that “class” can no longer be discussed in terms solely of the division between owners and workers at the point of production, but rather is constructed in terms of numerous, overlapping, Marxo-Foucauldian classificatory grids of abstraction and reduction—job descriptions; market demographics; educational hierarchies; environmental and medical risk assessments—through which capital organizes and processes its human subjects as an array of economic factors.

To speak of “value subjects” is, however, to also to open up ambiguities. One is the familiar double meaning of “subject,” denoting on the one hand, subordination and subjection, on the other agency and autonomy. Another way of posing the same ambivalence is to note that while “value” suggests the market accounting that is the ruling principle of global capital, it also invokes alternative valuations that this same system disallows, marginalizes, and attempts to render ineffectual as mere “moral” considerations. If on one side value subjects are subject to the law of value, constituted and constrained by the logics of the world-market, and so socialized as to be “subjectively” reconciled to the situation, accepting it as if it were voluntarily chosen, they are also, on occasion, subjects capable of positing new and different values. As McMurtry observes, there are crucial components of human—indeed biospheric—well being that “the market metric does not include . . . as values in its value calculus.”²⁰ That is to say, the market is “life blind,” indifferent to many “life harms.” “At bottom, what reacts against such “pathological social programs with (their) depredatory sequences of value demand even when they are socially instituted” is. McMurtry suggests, the “life ground” --“life’s connection to life’s requirements as a felt bond of being that crosses boundaries of membranes, classes, peoples and even species.”²¹

The diversion or reappropriation of resources to life-supporting value systems *other* than the market is what autonomists have termed “self valorization.”²² This is often discussed as having two moments, a negation of or resistance of capital’s discipline—“the refusal of work”—and a positive mobilization of “invention-power,” experimenting with the creation of alternative organizations of life. Self-valorization thus span a gamut from sabotage and strikes or “buy nothing days” to the provisional or permanent reclamations of time and space from the world market, be it in the form of community media, public provision of transportation, food or housing or free software. The problematic that

¹⁹ Catherine Waldby, The Visible Human Project: Informatic Bodies and Posthuman Medicine (London: Routledge, 2000), 33-4.

²⁰ McMurtry, 9.

²¹ McMurtry, 23

²² See Harry Cleaver, "The Inversion of Class Perspective in Marxian Theory: From Valorisation to Self Valorisation," in Open Marxism: Vol 2., ed. Werner Bonefeld, Richard Gunn and Kosmas Psychopedis (London: Pluto, 1992) 106-144.

“global value subjects” identifies is thus both how the variegated value-creating capacity of subjectivity is corralled by the world market, *and* how subjects search and struggle for alternatives. In this sense, it points to a social indeterminacy—to lines of struggles. The roots of the term “value” lie in the Latin *valore*--to be strong—a genealogy that points to the issues of whose or what’s goals and priorities will have sufficient social power to prevail.²³ To talk of “global value subjects” is to raise the question “what value” or “whose value”—or “whose values will win.” “Global” acknowledges both the international dimensions of this contestation, and also, insofar as “global” can be taken as suggesting an enveloping, totalizing or englobing condition, its multi-dimensional scope, fought across numerous “life ranges.”²⁴

This is also precisely the issue raised by insurgencies of what are misleadingly called “anti-globalization” movements and that I term “the new combinations.” I choose this name for several reasons: in part in the spirit of Linebaugh and Rediker, remembering the subversive workingmen’s associations of early industrial capital, the “revolutionary combinations” to which Marx refers in the *Manifesto*;²⁵ in part, more futuristically, thinking of a world of recombinant biotechnologies which will soon constitute the most advanced and disturbing means of production; but most importantly because it identifies movements whose critical feature is the connection and synthesis of defections and revolts by value subjects at many different points within capital’s “global factory.”

Global Factory: Value Chains

Adam Smith’s pin factory, which maximized profit by dividing and routinizing the activity of its laborers, is justly famous in the history of drudgery. It also deserves mention in the annals of free trade. This is in part because, as Smith observed, the division of labor is limited by the extent of the market, so that pin-factories only become economically feasible within a context of expanded networks of commerce. But beyond this, Smith’s pin-logic underlies the work of his student, David Ricardo, whose argument for unrestricted exchange between nations and regions specializing their production on the basis of “comparative advantage” made the division of labor its guiding theoretical principle. Today, this principle, applied with an extremism that might terrify its discoverers, legitimates the neoliberal trade regimes at the core of globalization. Autonomists name this transnationalization of capital “the global factory.” The global factory as described by Massimo De Angelis is made up by systems of value production and circulation whose various nodes and sequences of functions are integrated in geographically extended and socially complex “value chains.” It includes conventional factories (indeed, these old fashioned centres of proletarianization continue to exist but actually expand in importance). But both factories and other workplaces are themselves only moments within more extended processes. De Angelis lists outsourcing webs; arrangements for the reproduction of labor power; state expenditures on infrastructures; we would add demand management (marketing); and raw material acquisition. For any

²³ See Marilyn Waring, *If Women Counted: A New Feminist Economics* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1988).

²⁴ McMurtry, 9.

²⁵ Karl Marx, *The Communist Manifesto* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1967) 93.

given capitalist enterprise, the points on this node may be internal—within the company—or externalized—outsourced, contracted out, so that, as De Angelis points out, both corporate planning and market relations—trade—constitute elements in the construction of the global factory. The aim is “a rationalization of the totality of human activities and its subordination to the M-C-M’ (money-commodity-more money) circuit.” “Each functional node within a production chain,” De Angelis observes, “represents at the same time a configuration of value production” i.e. of power relations. By the same token, however, “each functional node is a site of conflict.”²⁶

We can pursue these contests along four superimposed dimensions on which capital’s constitution of its value subjects take place on: *punctually*: at the immediate point of production, on the job, at the site of wage labor, the classic locale of class conflict; *laterally*, around the entire circuit of capital, where surplus value extraction depends on the interconnection of production to processes of consumption and social and natural reproduction; *vertically*, between the bifurcating logics of capital as commodity and capital as money, a relation in which the later has increasingly holds the upper hand; *globally*, as all the three preceding positions are distributed according to an ever more expansive and fluid spatio-temporal logic.

Punctually: Nothing said earlier denies the importance of workplace conflict. Struggles over the wage, conditions and duration and speed of work have not disappeared. Rather, in the global factory, they are at once both intensified and transformed: intensified by the planetary mobility of capital, which now sets its norms on a world scale; transformed by envelopment with a wider range of struggles deriving from the same logic. The new combinations in fact stand as a caution against over-rapid “farewells” even to the traditional sections of the working class. Part of the significance of protests such as Seattle is the reappearance “on the street” of mass labor and trades unions, which often play a crucial role in financing and mobilizing such events. Equally significant however, is that these are not, in terms of tactics or theoretical work, the most aggressive or innovative sectors. Such roles are assumed by subjects whose experiences of exploitation either develop in new workplaces thrown up by the globalization process but outside the reach of the traditional labor movement—in “McJobs” or as “netslaves”—or from other points in the global factory. If the workplace continues to be the sharp-end of capitalism, it now figures as the savage pinnacle of an iceberg resting on a submerged base of unwaged and invisible collective activity.

Horizontally: We can approach this larger extensions of the global factory with one of Marx’s central concepts, that of the circuit of capital.²⁷ Put simply, this shows how the expansion of market values depends not just on exploitation in the immediate workplace, but also on the continuous integration of a whole series of social sites and activities. Marx’s original account describes only two moments: production—on which his analysis

²⁶ Massimo De Angelis. “Trade, the global factory and the struggles for a new commons.” CSE conference. “Global capital and global struggles: Strategies, Alliances and Alternatives.” London 12 July 2000.

²⁷ This concept of the circuit of capital recurs throughout Marx’s work, but perhaps finds its most systematic exposition in vol. 2 of *Capital* (London: Vintage, 1978) and, in a somewhat different form, in the Introduction to *Grundrisse* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1973) 81-114.

of surplus value extraction focused; and circulation—where this value is realized in the sale and purchase of commodities, providing the profits necessary to restart the cycle.²⁸ Subsequently, new struggles and new theorists have highlighted other spheres. One is the sphere of social reproduction, in which workers and consumers are trained, sustained and educated for their roles within capital's value system, processes once allotted primarily to household and community, but now increasingly organized through the mediation of the welfare state. The other is the sphere of ecological transformation, on which capital depends both for the extraction of raw materials and disposal of wastes, using nature as "tap and sink."²⁹ A modified version of the circuit of capital would thus include the moments of production, consumption, social reproduction and the (non) reproduction of nature.

Marxian crisis theory shows how difficulties in synchronizing activities around this circuit makes capital liable to continuous breakdown and restructuring. The autonomist perspective emphasizes how these crises are at root problems in capital's control over human subjects, both cause and effect of contested social relations. Thus, for example we can add to the work struggles at the point of production, poor people's movements that challenge the exclusion from consumption of the un- and underemployed, the multifarious mobilizations against the under-funding and degradation of the welfare state and the green challenges to the corporate environmental destruction. These contestations can link and interact with each other, producing a circulation of struggles that both mirrors and subverts the circulation of capital. These combinations can occur in sequences that start at different points and run in different directions. Indeed, in one sense it a mis-formulation to speak of the linking of these movements as if each were external to the other, for in some ways the relation is more a "Russian doll" affair in which each conflict discovers others nested within it. So for example, every crisis in the sphere of social reproduction reveals within itself a crisis of productive relations (stressed and exploited teachers, graduate students, doctors, nurses), and every workplace is discovered as a site environmental issues, and all of these in turn contain an issue of the public consumption of mis and dis-information generated by a commercial media.

Such analysis discerns lines of a common but complex logic running amongst the diversity of agents in the new combinations. It also underscores the potential contradictions or points of rupture that make these combinations liable to fragmentation: contradictions between "jobs" and "environment," or between taxpaying workers and welfare recipients. The making of the new combinations is the precarious, incomplete process of replacing these rifts with affinities—for example in the forming of a series of "red/green" alliances. This why the famous convergence of the "teamsters" and the "sea turtles" in Seattle has assumed iconic significance, for it marks the mutual opening to each other of movements traditionally blind on the one hand to human and natural dimensions of capital's exhaustive logic.

²⁸ See Mario Tronti "Social Capital," *Telos* 17 (1973): 105, and Peter F. Bell and Harry Cleaver, "Marx's Crisis Theory as a Theory of Class Struggle" *Research in Political Economy* 5 (1982): 189-261.

²⁹ James O'Connor, *Natural Causes: Essays in Ecological Marxism* (New York: Guildford, 1998) ix.

Vertically: The rendezvous of capital with the new combinations does not, however, rise just from its circuit of production, even in the expanded sense in which we have discussed it. As important is its internal division between its production circuit and its financial circuit—the split between capital as commodity and capital as money. The relation between these two circuits is esoteric. As Peter Gowan describes it, the productive sector is “determinant,” in so far as it generates the “stream of values out of which the money capitalist in the financial sector ultimately gains their royalties directly or indirectly,” but the financial sector is “dominant” because it decides where it will channel the investments of past savings and of fictitious credit moneys that can fuel commodity production.³⁰ The balance between these sectors can, however, vary enormously, depending on phases of the business cycle and historical conjunctures. There is general agreement that the post-1973 era, the period of globalization, has marked an ascendancy of finance capital.

Indeed, following Negri, we would say that it is precisely at the level of financial capital that control is exercised over the global factory.³¹ Previously, the financial levers of domestic economies rested predominantly in the hands of national governments. But when governments failed to discipline their workers, global money bypassed such arrangements. With the valuation of national currencies, interest rates and credit worthiness determined by international investors and speculators, economic control became “immanent” within the entire planetary finance system.³² Governments--national, regional and municipal--that had previously squared the demands of business and worker's movements by running up deficits now found their credit and currency stability conditional on policies that would win the support of the money markets. Finance capital thus became crucial in driving down social costs to a level where investment in tangible production would be deemed profitable again.

As it asserts its ascendancy in this role, financial capital--market value in its most universal, fungible, abstract, mobile and indefinite form--asserts itself as the general instrument of social power, one that is in a sense external to *all* relations of production. This hypertrophy of financial capital overlays the conflicts at other points on capital's circuit with a polarizing tension between those for whom the money markets figure as a unimaginably fast means to affluence and those for whom they manifest as an terrifying whirlwind moving with disconnected and destructive logic. It is as uprising against the generalized money-form of capitalist power that we can understand the fluidity and comprehensiveness of the new combinations.

This is explicitly thematized in the selection of the World Bank and IMF as targets for demonstrations; the centrality of campaigns such as the Jubilee call for Third World debt forgiveness; and proposals for Tobin taxes and other regulations of the financial system. But more generally, finance capital's common subordination of working, social and

³⁰ Peter Gowan, The Global Gamble: Washington's Faustian Bid for World Dominance (London: Verso, 1999) 13.

³¹ Antonio Negri, Marx Beyond Marx: Lessons on the Grundrisse (New York: Autonomedia, 1991) 21-41.

³² Christian Marazzi, "Money in the World Crisis: The New Basis of Capitalist Power." Zerowork 2 (1977) 107

environmental conditions to the imperatives of global money markets is the practical embodiment—or, more properly, the spectral, speculative, abstract *disembodiment*-- of the power that is jointly opposed by the apparently disparate elements of these movements. This may also be reflected in other aspects of the new combinations--for example, the importance of anarchism as their “fighting front.” A hostile Marxian interpretation would see this as a nostalgic romantic throwback to the pre-industrial conditions. But anarchist spontaneity, anonymity, leaderlessness, and ubiquity are a mischievous mirror of the fluidity and omnipresence of capital in its most advanced post-industrial form. The militant unionist was the nightmare of industrial capital, but the bad dream of the stock broker is the black bloc, a counterpower whose morphing, mobile affinities speak back against a financial command that is vaporous, nomadic, and strikes across all points on the social horizon.

Globally: Globalization is usually discussed it as an issue of planetary unification. But the construction of the global factory it is at least as much an issue of division—a new solution to capital’s perennial problem of separating, low, high and alternative value subjects. Low value subjects are sources of cheap or free labour (slavery), near subsistence level consumption capacity, whose social reproduction is minimally invested in, and onto whom the costs of the non-reproduction of nature can be maximally offloaded. High value subjects are those whose strength (by virtue of skill, organization, scarcity) and strategic situation have forced up wages and working conditions (moving from absolute to relative surplus value), whose consequent expansion of consumption capacity has constitutes them as motors of “consumerism,” whose social reproduction is the supported by infrastructures for the production of human capital and who are to a degree protected from the non-reproduction of nature. Different value subjects are of course those collectivities who organize the allocation of their resources by means other than the market. Segregating high and low value subjects, while eliminating or cordoning off alternative value subjects is a perennial problem for capital’s managers, one which it has addressed through a series of territorial solutions, or what David Harvey terms a series of “spatio-temporal fixes.”³³

In the post-war era, the famous tripartite division of First, Second and Third World described its provisional success of this international order in segregating value subjects into zones of differential control. This international order was, however, shaken by national liberation movements in the Third World, industrial unrest, student revolts and other new social movements in the First. By the early 1970s, was clear that, from capital’s point of view, the “triplanetary” division of the world wasn’t working. The process that is today known as ‘globalization’ represents capital’s response to this crisis.³⁴ To destroy the multiplying threats, it broke out from its old entrenchments, overran the previous divisions of its world system, and, empowered by its new digital technologies, opened up the whole planet as a field for maneuver. Corporate flight from the demands of the mass worker led to the partial Third-Worlding of the First World--deindustrializing manufacturing centres, canceling the Keynesian deal, lowering wages, and intensifying

³³ David Harvey, *Spaces of Hope* (Berkeley: University of California, 2000) 98.

³⁴ See Mario Montano, "Notes on the International Crisis," *Zerowork* 1 (1975) 52-53. Repr. Midnight Notes, *Midnight Oil*.115-143,

work. The other side of this coin was the selective First-Worlding of the Third World, modernizing the threat of revolutionary insurgency out of existence by harnessing the turbulent energies of immiserated labour to the creation of various growth sites—EPZs and NICs-- that seemed to confound theories of perpetual dependency. At the same time the one alternative to capitalist development and underdevelopment --the Second World of state socialism--was blown apart when the pressures of arms race competition and information age restructuring ignited the contradictions of authoritarian communism. The Three Worlds imploded.

The result is the creation of a world-space of accumulation, increasingly smooth and planar in terms of capital's liberty of movement, intensely striated and segmented in terms of the conditions enjoyed or suffered by capital's value subjects.³⁵ Globalization does not overcome the dyadic division of high/low value subjects. Rather it replicates it on an expanded geographical basis, and through a wider range of scales, reproducing it "fractally" at local, regional and transnational levels.³⁶ The line between high and low value subjects is no longer drawn between North and South, but includes the "First World in the Third and the Third World in the First." This replication of dyadic structures at successively smaller territorial scales does not dissolve the original North/South divide, which is re-instituted it at a "higher" level, not so much as a division between industrial centres and natural resource hinterlands, but in an informational/industrial hierarchy. The multiplication of self-similar structures occurs within the original colonial and neocolonial matrix, in ways that may blur its outlines but do not disintegrate them, generating asymmetries within asymmetries in increasingly dense and interlocked patterns. Polarities of 'development' and 'underdevelopment' still exist, are indeed massively intensified, and continue to fall preponderantly on either side of a North/South axis. But at the same time these poles designate possibilities of ascendant affluence or abysmal misery that can be visited on *any* point in the planet according to the movement of corporate investment.

In the rhetoric of global capital, this is represented as an expansion and universalization of the prosperity of core metropolitan capital: if as an interim phase, standards of life in the North fall, as low-value subjects in the South "catch up" through adjustments of the global market, this is only a transitory moment in a trajectory that will lead eventually to growth for all. The answer from the new combinations is that the truth of globalization is precisely the reverse, a "race to the bottom" in which all are reduced by competitive pressures to the lowest common denominator of working, social and environmental conditions.³⁷ Whatever gains in productivity may result from the international division of labor are offset by the way in which capital can set all its subjects in competition with each other and thereby seize for itself an ever-increasing proportion of this global wealth.

³⁵ See Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia (London: Athlone, 1987) 380-385.

³⁶ Massimo De Angelis, "Global Capital, Abstract Labour and the Fractal-Panopticon." The Commoner, N.1. <http://www.commoner.uk.org> Accessed 06/15/01.

³⁷ See Jeremy Brecher and Tim Costello. Global Village or Global Pillage: Economic Reconstruction From the Bottom Up. (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1994).

The social surplus grows--but so, and to an ever-greater extent, does capital's capacity to expropriate that surplus, in a net increase in the social rate of exploitation. These consequent patterns are complex. There are subjects in the South for whom globalization represents an entrepreneurial opportunity, or a chance to seize the privileges once exclusive to labour the industrial North. There are millions more, for whom, as *Midnight Notes* make clear, it represents a massive intensification of exclusion, exploitation, marginalization and immiseration. In North America and Europe, capital's unwelcome devaluation of formerly high value subjects through the exposure of the Keynesian-welfare deal to direct competition with low value zones, is the major force catalyzing the new combinations.

These movements are divided between different responses to this storm. Very broadly indeed, one can distinguish between anti-globalization and counter-globalization tendencies. Anti-globalization elements are essentially protectionist, usually seeking shelter by restoration of a nation-state social contract. Similar impulses can, however, also work through various anti-statist regionalisms and localisms. This aspect of the new combinations can veer to the populist right—witness the “Buchanan brigades” at Seattle. Counter-globalization elements see the problems at the former centre of the world system as addressable only by a new internationalist agenda that halts a race to the bottom by raising from below. It thus aims at minimum for a new global “deal” improving the conditions of the most immiserated, at maximum for more radical solutions: “fix it or nix it.” Capitalist deterritorialization opens the way to a logic in which high-value subjects, losing a position of relative privilege, acquire an interest in raising the living standards of those in previously low-value peripheral zones: “when they win, we win.” To this should be added that the affluence of Northern Fordist capital, while legitimating and normalizing consumerist greed and acquisitiveness has also, by ensuring a relative material security for many, created the conditions for a mass ethical consciousness which is seriously disquieted by the disparity between its own conditions and that of the majority of the planet's population. This same ethical subject—often young, often a student-- is also, and as it were in the same breath, frightened by what these inequalities mean in terms of the fragility of the world order of which it is a beneficiary. Such tensions run through the new combinations as a whole, through its component collectivities, down to the level of social individuals. They add up to an enormous ball of contradictions teetering this way and that, one that could roll in any of a number of directions with enormous force, or split apart like a segmented orange. When struggles at different points on capital's circuit, or in different geographical areas, fail to circulate and combine, the movement decomposes, throwing off fragmentary, reformist, and incompatible responses to problems of capitalist globalization. To the degree struggles do circulate and combine, the global factory becomes not Smith's but Marx's: the one, that is to say, whose subjects have nothing to lose but their “value chains”—and where the rattling of such chains communicates the emergence of altogether new concepts of social value.

Global Brain: General Intellect

Critical to the appearance of these new values are the capabilities, positive and negative, of technological revolutions indispensable to the global factory—specifically,

digitalization and biotechnology. These are new forces of production shaping the context of the new combinations, forces they both respond to and seek to transform. Autonomists take as a starting point for exploring these possibilities some observations by Marx in his delirious notebook, *Grundrisse* (1857) on the topic of “general intellect.”³⁸ Here he prophesies that at a certain moment in capitalism’s development the direct expenditure of labour power will cease to be the most important factor in the creation of use-values, which will instead depend primarily on the forces of social knowledge--the "development of the general powers of the human head." This mobilization of "the general productive forces of the social brain" will manifest in techno-scientific innovation and the increasing importance of machinery --"fixed capital" --and, in particular, systems of automation and networks of transport and communication. Read sympathetically, this account of “general intellect” can be seen as a prefigurative glimpse of today’s information economy, with production teams, innovation milieux and university-corporate research partnerships yielding the high-technology “fixed capital” of robotic factories, biotech and global computer networks. However, the point of Marx's analysis was that such technological advance, which seems a capitalist utopia, contains the seeds of a capitalist nightmare. Automation and socialization together create the possibility of--and necessity for--dispensing with wage labour and private ownership. In the era of general intellect "Capital thus works towards its own dissolution as the form dominating production."³⁹ What --if anything--can now be made of this revolutionary optimism?

Negri, Paolo Virno, Michael Hardt and Maurizio Lazaratto and others suggest that in the consideration of “general intellect” it is not enough to focus on the accumulation of the “fixed capital” of advanced machines.⁴⁰ The critical factor is rather the variable possibilities of the human subjectivity that continues—in indirect and mediated rather than direct, hands-on, form---to be critical in this high technology apparatus. This subjective element are variously termed “mass intellect,” “immaterial labour,” or, in Franco Berardi’s formulation, “the cognitariat.”⁴¹ These terms designate the human “know-how”—technical, cultural, linguistic, and ethical-- that supports the operation of the high-tech economy, especially evident in the informational, communicational and aesthetic aspects of contemporary high-tech commodity production. The question thus becomes how far capital can contain what Jean-Marie Vincent calls "this plural, multiform constantly mutating intelligence" within the structures of the world market.⁴² One crucial arena in which these issues focus is the Net—or, more generally, the digital information systems indispensable to globalized capital. As Vincent puts it, "general intellect" is in fact “a labour of networks and communicative discourse,"

In effect, it is not possible to have a "general intellect" without a great variety of polymorphous communications, sequences of communication in the teams and

³⁸ Karl Marx, *Grundrisse* (Penguin: Harmondsworth, 1973) 699-743.

³⁹ Marx, *Grundrisse* 700.

⁴⁰ Paolo Virno and Michael Hardt, eds., *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics* (University of Minnesota: Minneapolis, 1996).

⁴¹ Virno and Hardt, and Franco Berardi, “Bifo/Berardi, interview on “The Factory of Unhappiness,” <http://www.nettime.org>. Posted 11 June 2001. Accessed 06/12/01

⁴² Jean-Marie Vincent, "Les automatismes sociaux et le 'general intellect.' *Futur Antérieur* 16 (1993):121 (my trans.).

collectivities work, communications to use in a creative fashion the knowledges already accumulated, communications to elaborate and record new knowledges.⁴³

If we for a moment entertain—as Marx did—the conceit that the world market constitutes an enormous capitalist “metabolism,” then capital’s communication network already constitutes a sort of primitive nervous system. If we had to identify a main site for this ganglion we would name first the digital networks of the international financial system. This system only responds to money signals: it does not receive and cannot process information about life destruction, biosphere hazard or social degradation except as investment risk or opportunity. It thus operates on the basis of extremely simple set of signal inputs, which although efficient for operations of accumulation are potentially lethal to the life-fabric of the planet.

The information transmitted from this reptilian system then cascades down through a whole series of workplace and consumer information systems, to constitute the operating intelligence of the world market as a whole. A critical role is played by the commercial media, which translates the signals received from this primary level into a series of representations comprehensible at an everyday level by individual subjects. Thus corporate media, acting through mundane and well known responses to marketing demographic and advertising revenues constructing a sort of “matrix”- like simulations that converts the abstract valuations of capital back into a series of sensuously apprehensible stories, narratives, characters and news stories so that it indeed seems as if the world as ordered, identified and prioritized by global money is the “real” – so that, for example, television and journalism shows a planet almost solely inhabited by affluent value subjects with a lively interest in stock market fluctuations and constant traumatic life style and household design choices.

One of the most marked features of the new combinations has, however, been its rejection of this form of simulatory conditioning. Revulsion against the power of a commercially driven media to saturate consciousness, structure social interactivity and standardize creativity has become a major theme of the new dissidence, for which culture jamming, ad-busting, and subvertisements are familiar forms of self-valorization. This is particularly apparent in the arena of advertising and culture. The “no logo” slogan declares a repudiation of the “word” of capital, of its power to brand and name, a rejection, that is to say, of the basic processes by which markets interpellate and constitute value subjects.⁴⁴

The positive side of such self-valorization is the potential of digital networks for what Hardt and Negri call “a kind of spontaneous and elementary communism.”⁴⁵ The history of the Internet is in fact that of a hyper-accelerated “cycle of struggles,” a helical spiral of appropriations and re-appropriations, which have taken it from a military command and control system to an academic research network to an experiment in populist, communication and virtual community in a process that has outstripped the dreams, let alone the plans, of capital’s managers. From the early 1990s they have tried to re-coral

⁴³ Vincent, 127.

⁴⁴ Naomi Kline, *No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies* (Toronto: Knopf, 2000).

⁴⁵ Hardt and Negri, 257.

this process through a series of information highway and e-business initiatives. Today, cyberspace is the scene within which the vectors of e-capital tangle and entwine -with those of a molecular proliferation of activists, researchers, gamers, artists, hobbyists, hackers.

The most obvious political manifestation is the creation of an "electronic fabric of struggles."⁴⁶ From the emailed communiqués of Zapatista spokesperson Subcommandante Marcos through the networked opposition to the Multilateral Agreement on Investment, to the parody of official WTO web sites in "Battle of Seattle," the Internet has become a vehicle of the new combinations. These experiments create in cyberspace a re-compositional arena where multiplicitous trans-sectoral, transnational oppositional forces can forge a new language of alliance, and also make of it, through electronic civil disobedience, net strikes, and other forms of hacktivism a combat zone in which the flows of capital and neoliberal policy can be interrupted. Cyberspace is important as a political arena, not, as some postmodern theorists suggest, because it is a sphere where virtual conflicts replace struggles 'on the ground,' but because it is a medium within which terrestrial struggles can be made visible to and linked with one another. This process is no magic bullet. It is fraught with hazards technical fetishism, new hierarchies of expertise, health risks, and the "ultimate nightmare," the creation of "a simulated international radical network in which information circulates endlessly between computers without being put back into a human context."⁴⁷ Nonetheless, new forms of struggle have been sufficiently vigorous to catalyze a lively discussion of countermeasures and "netwars" in the think tanks of Empire.⁴⁸

Behind cyberactivism, however, lies an array of other activities that, though less overtly politicized, challenge capital's law of value equally or more severely, by de-commodifying its digital products. These include piracy; open source and free software initiatives; peer-to-peer production; gift economy practices. Information society theorists have long pointed out that "ethereal goods" have qualities—inexhaustibility, simultaneous use, zero-cost reproduction, they grow in value as used-- anomalous in a market economy. These features have become increasingly problematic to those concerned with policing digital commodity transactions. Ease of digital reproduction and the speed of network circulation are warping and blasting gaping holes in the fabric of intellectual property. As Richard Barbrook has recently pointed out, while the official ideology of post-Cold War North America is triumphal celebration of the free market, in their daily practice millions of Americans are actually involved in a on-line digital circulation of free and unpaid "gift economy" of music, films, games and information that in effect amounts to a form of "dotcommunism."⁴⁹

⁴⁶ Harry Cleaver, "The Chiapas Uprising," *Studies in Political Economy* 44 (1994) 145.

⁴⁷ European Counter Network, UK, "INFO: European Counter Network online," online, Internet, ACTIV-L 25 Dec. 1994.

⁴⁸ John Arquilla and David Ronfeldt, "Cyberwar Is Coming!" *Comparative Strategy* 12.2 (1993) 141-165.

⁴⁹ Richard Barbrook, "Cyber-Communism: How the Americans are Superseding Capitalism in Cyberspace," Hypermedia Research Centre, University of Westminster, London, . www.hrc.wmin.ac.uk. Accessed 05/03/00/

These practices are part of the daily life the youth activists of the new combinations. Today's moral panics over Napster and Gnutella simply mark the most recent and acute episodes in an unquenchable hemorrhage of commercial value intrinsic to the network capital. The turmoil in the music industry oligopoly is certainly no indicator of the imminent collapse of digital capital, which is rapidly moving to co-opt and adapt such systems for commercial purposes. But "download rage" suggest the very dynamism of a perpetual innovation economy promises only an ongoing escalation of measures and countermeasures between owners and hackers. As important as the technological capacity is ideological legitimacy—a battle that the music business seems to have significantly lost. "P2P" is the product of a generation socialized within what Negri calls capitalism's "ecology of machines," for whom the potentialities to freely reproduce and circulate digital information are a taken for granted component of their environment.⁵⁰

Indeed, although the term "peer to peer" is primarily associated with systems such as Napster and Gnutella, some analysts use it to designate a much more far reaching model of digitally enabled, non-profit content creation and circulation, based on what Yochai Benkler terms IRISDROPS—"information rich distributed production systems."⁵¹ In this sense, it embraces the enormous amounts of self-valorizing non-commercially produced internet and web content, free and open source software, game patching and scenario building that is the stuff of digital culture. Such "semiotic democracy" is already in headlong collision with tendencies to intensify copyright regimes and proprietarily enclose networks. In this perspective, "P2P" is the contemporary formulation of the "free association of producers."

In the longer run, these developments point to possibilities of assembly and self-organization that stretch far beyond street demonstrations. Over the last decade, radical economists have raised the issue of how digital networks can be used to co-ordinate and process highly decentralized forms of participatory economic planning.⁵² Proposals range from loose governmental directives backed by high levels of public disclosure about labor, environmental and production costs to more complex systems iteratively matching needs and production between assemblies at many levels of local, regional and transnational collectivity. What all share, however, is the suggestion that the information technologies deployed to create "friction free" capitalism--just-in-time systems, customer-supplier networks, easy to use accounting and simulation programs--open the way to an inverse result, namely the subjugation of market to plan without the

⁵⁰ Negri, Politics of Subversion, 89.

⁵¹ Yochai Benkler, "Freedom in the Commons—The Emergence of Peer Production as an Alternative to Markets and Hierarchies, and the Battle Over the Institutional Ecosystem In Which They Compete." Symposium on Cybercapitalism, Institute for Advanced Study, School of Social Science, Princeton, April 29, 2001

⁵² Dianne Elson, "Market Socialism or Socializing the Market?" New Left Review 172 (1987); Michael Albert and Robin Hahnel, The Political Economy of Participatory Economics Princeton: (Princeton University Press, 1991) and Looking Forward: Participatory Economics for the Twenty First Century (Boston: South End Press, 1991); Paul Cockshott and Allin Cottrell, Toward a New Socialism (Nottingham: Spokesman). See also Andy Pollack, "Information Technology and Socialist Self-Management." In Capitalism and the Information Age: The Political Economy of the Global Communication Revolution. Ed Robert McChesney, Ellen Meiksins Wood and John Bellamy Foster (New York: Monthly Review)

hypertrophy of a centralized state. Though most discussion about the cyberactivism of the new combinations focuses only on tactical features, a more interesting way to view it is as a prefigurative use of networks for distributed social coordination and organization, a digital counter-planning from below. As Tiziana Terranova points out, "general intellect" is in fact a sort of Marxian inflection on the theme of a global mind or world brain networks persistent in futurist works from Teilhard de Chardin's "noosphere" to Pierre Levy's concept of "collective intelligence."⁵³ Classical Marxisms have, rightly been contemptuous of such ideas for their technological determinism or idealism, and above all their assumption that such a collective consciousness arises as the self-reflexive awareness of global capitalism. But this rejection might be reconsidered if we position the issue within an antagonistic perspective: the global mind *versus* the limbic system of the stock market, social knowledge *versus* financial capital, the noosphere generating and generated by the revolt of global value subjects.

Global Body: Species Being

It is however wrong to overemphasize the "immaterial" aspects of the new combinations. On the streets in Seattle, Washington, Prague, Melbourne and Quebec were thousands of activists concerned not only with the muck and sweat of daily exploitation, but also with futuristic technologies of a very organic aspect: with issues of biotech, biodiversity and biopiracy, the patenting of food supplies, the production of "terminator" seeds, the release of genetically modified organisms, the labeling of genetically modified foods, and ultimately with the designed transformation of human body itself. While struggles around the Net and other communication media do often originate with capital's high-tech, high-value cyborg-hacker subjects, in the case of biotechnologies, struggles frequently move from the bottom up, insofar as it is third and fourth world populations at the base of capital's value chains who are most directly exposed to its enclosure of genetic resources.⁵⁴

The reproduction or non-reproduction of nature has been mentioned as a sphere where the new combinations encounter capital around toxic wastes, forest destruction, ozone depletion and other "green" campaigns. The issues now listed obviously overlap with these, but extend further insofar as they involve a point when capital does not just englobe and transform the "external" environment but reaches into the fundamental constitution of its subjects as natural beings. The life-sciences revolution, with its array of genetic engineering, reproductive technologies, pharmaceuticals and medical interventions places on the horizon a radically accelerated transformation of plant, animals, and humans conducted under the auspices of capital accumulation.⁵⁵

⁵³ Tiziana Terranova, "Free Labor: Producing Culture for the Digital Economy," *Social Text* 63. 18:2 (2000) 33; Pierre Levy, *Collective Intelligence: Mankind's Emerging World in Cyberspace* (Cambridge, Mass.: Perseus, 1999)

⁵⁴ See Harry Cleaver, "Technology as Political Weaponry," *Science, Politics and the Agricultural Revolution in Asia*, ed. Robert Anderson (Boulder: Westview, 1981) 261-276; Vandana Shiva, *The Violence of the Green Revolution: Third World Agriculture, Ecology and Politics* (London: Zed Books, 1991); Jeremy Seabrook, "Biotechnology and Genetic Diversity," *Race & Class* 34.3 (1993) 15-30.

⁵⁵ See Edward Yoxen, "Life as a Productive Force: Capitalizing the Science and Technology of Molecular Biology," in *Science, Technology and the Labour Process: Marxist Studies*, vol. 1, ed. Les Levidow and

Processes of breeding, hybridization, and species relocation have of course been persistent feature of human history, quickened by the technological dynamism of capital, so that, *contra* “deep ecology,” there is no longer any question of saving a “pure” nature. But this should not obscure the fact that information capitalism is altering the speed, scale and specificity of these processes in ways that amount to qualitative, not just quantitative change. As Hardt and Negri acknowledge, such a situation demands a concept of “biopolitical production,” a Marxian appropriation of Foucault’s “biopower” that proposes as the object of capitalist appropriation not so much as “labor power” but as “life itself.”⁵⁶ I would go further: if capital’s digital revolution points to the emergence of a Global Brain, then its biotechnology revolution demands the recognition of a Global Body.

What is at stake is nothing less than the trajectory of “species being.” This is the term Marx uses refers to humanity’s self-recognition as a natural species with the capacity to transform itself through intentional social activity, making make “life activity itself an object of will and consciousness.”⁵⁷ He raised the issue of species being in the context of his well-known discussion of alienation. In this he describes how private ownership of the means of production results in a four-fold sequestering and estrangement of human subjects from the products of their own activity; from their relations with fellow productive beings; from the nature that is transformed through their activity; and, as a result of the previous three steps, from their own historical possibilities of self-transformation.

The concept of “species being” has often been rejected as tainted with an essentialism held to be foreign to Marx’s thought. However, the defining feature of species being Marx identifies is the capacity of humans to effect change in their collective development. If it posits an essence, it is paradoxically that of a power of transforming or constructing nature. From this point of view, the point of raising the issues of species being is not that of proposing a normative human condition, but rather of indicating the issue of who or what controls the processes and directions and controlling definitions of ceaseless human self-development. The central problem Marx raised in relation to “species being,” namely the alienation of these collective human- capacities into the hands of privatized ownership is, in the age of Monsanto, Bristol-Meyers and Merck, more acute than ever. Alienation takes on a whole new urgency when it reaches up to the creation of “alien” life forms designed specifically and solely for their functionality to capital. Given this context, the recent revival of the concept of species being by authors such as David Harvey and Gayatri Spivak, rather than constituting a reversion to a much-reviled “Marxist humanism,” provides a theoretical articulation of some of the deepest concerns underlying the protests of the new combinations.⁵⁸

Bob Young. (New Jersey: Humanities, 1981) 66-123) 127-152; Cary Fowler and Pat Mooney Shattering: Food, Politic and the Loss of Genetic Diversity (Tucson: University of Arizona, 1990).

⁵⁶ Hardt and Negri, 25-31.

⁵⁷ Karl Marx, The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844 (New York: International Publishers, 1964) 67.

⁵⁸ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999) 73-81, and David Harvey, Spaces of Hope (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000) 206-212, 213-232. See also Keith Doubt, “Feminism and

We have already cited a number these campaigns, mainly involving the transformation of plants and animal species. Behind these however lie issues that touch directly on human identity and what Herbert Gottweiss describes as capital's interest in biotechnology for its "potential contribution to a broader social stabilization, mainly by its expanded capacity to control behavior and bodies."⁵⁹ The US state sponsored Human Genome Project to map and sequence all the DNA of a 'normal' human prototype, a project comparable in cost and scope to the space program of earlier decades, is generally promoted as a means of curing hereditary diseases.⁶⁰ But since genetic engineering's main achievements are currently neither therapeutic nor even diagnostic but predictive, allowing the probabilistic identification of conditions for which no known remedy presently or foreseeably exist, such techniques mainly offer corporate and state managers a way, not of healing, but of targeting subjects with an alleged predisposition to costly disease, and an alibi for failure to eliminate pollutants redefined not as social hazards, but as problems of individual predisposition.⁶¹

If the Human Genome Project does generate 'breakthroughs' to enhance the human body, the combination of genetic screening with reproductive technologies offers prospects for the renewal of a eugenic agenda. However, the commercial thrust behind this biorevolution, a thrust ratified by the disclosure of the Human Genome Program's publicly funded findings to its commercial rivals, means that such a program would probably have a different 'feel' from its unfortunate historical predecessors.⁶² As employment possibilities become increasingly dependent on genetic profile, or bioengineered enhancements, positive and negative selection will be left to the survival instincts and pocket book of individuals.⁶³ We begin the move from classes to clades—to a situation in which differential positions in the market grid are associated with deepening bio-psycho-somatic interventions, up to the possibility of germ line intervention. As Linebaugh has pointed out, in origin, the term "proletarian" designated subjects with no function but to reproduce themselves.⁶⁴ In Marxist usage, this has been understood as a person who has nothing to sell but their labour power. Soon, however, it may be applied to someone whose only economic value depends upon their reproductive capacity, in the sense of their genetic heritage.

Rape as a Transgression of Species Being," in his *Sociology After Bosnia and Kosovo* (Oxford; Rowan and Littlefield, 2000) 61-66. The classic critique of Marxist humanism is of course Louis Althusser, "Marxism and Humanism," in *For Marx* (London: Penguin, 1969).

⁵⁹ Herbert Gottweis, "Genetic Engineering, Democracy, and the Politics of Identity," *Social Text* 42 (1995) 137.

⁶⁰ See Daniel Kevles and Leroy Hood, eds., *The Code of Codes: Scientific and Social Issues in the Human Genome Project* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992).

⁶¹ See Ruth Hubbard and Elijah Ward, *Exploding the Gene Myth* (Boston: Beacon, 1993); Henry Greely, "Health Insurance, Employment Discrimination, and the Genetics Revolution," in Kevles and Hood, 264-280; Seth Shulmann, "Preventing Genetic Discrimination," *Technology Review*, July (1995): 16-18.

⁶² See Mae-Wan Ho, "Tech-Flesh 8: The Human Genome Sellout and Beyond," *C-Theory*, "Tech Flesh," <http://www.theory.com/flesh/08.html>. Accessed 06/12/01; Critical Art Ensemble, *Flesh Machine: Cyborgs, Designer Babies and the New Eugenic Consciousness* (New York: Autonomedia, 1998).

⁶³ See Giovanni Berlinguer, "The Body as Commodity and Value," *Capital, Nature & Socialism* 5.3 (1994): 35-49.

⁶⁴ Peter Linebaugh, *The London Hanged* (London: Penguin, 1991) 121-122.

That such concerns about market regulation of “biopower” and “species being” are both real and current within the new combinations is shown by the mounting scandal over commercial rationing for HIV treatment drugs in the underdeveloped world, particularly Africa. There is already, AIDS apart, a massive differential, in some instances near 100%, in expected life span between “high value” and “low value” inhabitants of the developed/underdeveloped world—a differential determined by market allocation of food, shelter, water, and basic medicines. However, the market withholding of medicines with the power to alleviate a plague that turns human reproductive capacities into a death sentence, including medicines that prevent HIV transmission from mother to gestating child, has sharpened this chronic monstrosity into crisis of public conscience—all the more so since, just as in 19th century industrial towns, global disease is an issue that ultimately defies attempts to completely cordon off rich from poor. The circulation of struggles against pharmaceutical capital from South African resistance to legal threats over licensing generic drugs to student movements at Yale and other universities in North America protesting academic profit from HIV drug research is a remarkable instance of recombinant activism and its recognition of Global Body.⁶⁵ This recognition, multiplied in a hundred other instances, is one of the most powerful contemporary forces pressing towards the restraint or dismantling of world market value systems.

Global War: Exterminism Redux

What of capital’s response to the new combinations? Today, even the champions of global free trade concede their agenda is in trouble. Representative is Jagdish Bhagwati, who in his [The Wind of the Hundred Days: How Washington Mismanaged Globalization](#) attributes the neoliberal meltdown to two main causes.⁶⁶ One is the financial crisis of 97/98, in which speculation annihilated the anticipated Asian growth centers of the world economy, setting off catastrophic ricochet effects up and down global value chains. The other is the success of the “anti-globalization” movements. The most obvious instance of this second factor is the debacle of the WTO in Seattle, but there are others, such as the collapse of the projected MAI, protracted internal debate about the role of the World Bank—crises that work their way out via divisions within the ruling elites but derive from pressures from below. Under these stresses, the operations of the global factory are slowing, sabotaged by two contradictions: an internal one between capital’s financial and productive circuits, whose different speeds and agendas have now tripped over each other in a planet wide stumble, and an external one between capital and human subjects who insist on asserting values other than those of the world market. In fact, however, the two crises are not separate, since the financial exodus from SE Asia was partly triggered by business anxieties about labor strife and popular movements in the area, and the consequent “crash” has in turn proliferated unrest of all kinds.⁶⁷

⁶⁵ “Campus Revolt Challenges Yale Over Aids Drug,” [Guardian Unlimited](#). 13 Mar. 2001. Available at <http://www.newsmax.com/cgi-bin>. Accessed 07/03/31.

⁶⁶ Jagdish Bhagwati, [The Wind of the Hundred Days: How Washington Mismanaged Globalization](#) (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2000).

⁶⁷ See Midnight Note’s, “Chronology of Asian and Oceanian Workers’ Struggles,” [Midnight Notes](#) 12 (1998) http://www.geocities.com/kk_abacus/asiaocean.html Accessed 07/03/01.

Facing these dilemmas, the highest strata of capital's global managers seem to oscillate between two responses. One, which Waldon Bello terms the "Davos option," is a co-optive agenda which seeks to pursue the transnational integration of capital but give it a "human face" by token concessions and the recruitment of pliable sectors of the civil society movements.⁶⁸ In the global factory, this is the equivalent of establishing quality circles and participative management practices. It is well recognized within the new combinations, and widely viewed with skepticism. The other response, which finds its most identifiable face in George W. Bush's US Republican administration is less well recognized, but perhaps more dangerous: a turning away by major capitalist powers from the globalization project, in favor of a relative retreat into regional and competitively hostile trading blocs.

One sign of this is the ongoing deterioration of US-China relations. In fact, over the very period when "anti-globalization" movements have most successfully focused attention on the transnationalization of capital and its state-transcending institutions, there has thus risen in the background a drumbeat of a very different kind, its notes made up of bombed embassies in Belgrade, war-games off Taiwan, and nuclear espionage scandals at Los Alamos. This music rose to a crescendo in the days before the Quebec trade summit with the collision of an American spy plane and Chinese fighter jet.

Such a pattern should give us pause about Hardt and Negri's thesis of "Empire," which focuses on the tendencies of capital to produce a unified, though hybrid, system of world governance for cosmopolitan accumulation process. Such a thesis does not, as some critics suggest, negate the role of the nation state, but it does resituate it as a relay or node in a vaster transnational apparatus. In such an order, state violence plays a critical part, but as the police actions of Empire—such as those in Iraq or Kosovo—against disorders that are now, necessarily in a sense "internal" to it. What the Empire thesis does disallow is the explosion of hostilities between the main parts of the transnational apparatus. Tactical nuclear war between major states, for example, would constitute a practical refutation of it.

Although the emergence of Empire is a possibility, it may be only one—and not necessarily the most disturbing—of several directions for twenty-first century capital. Against Hardt and Negri's argument, we can put the view posited by Giovanni Arrighi, in his *The Long Twentieth Century*, a magisterial investigation the "longue duree" of the capitalist world-system.⁶⁹ Arrighi, a student of Braudel, shares his mentors view that "capital only triumphs when it becomes identified with the state, when it is the state," and identification demanded not only by the need for state authority to regulate and organize the market, but also to mobilize vast sums of investment in military and public works. These same ventures in turn generate inter-state competition for mobile capital. In Arrighi's view "inter state competition has been a critical component of each and every phase of financial expansion and a major factor in the formation of those blocs of

⁶⁸ Waldon Bello, "From Melbourne to Prague: the Struggle for a Deglobalized World," *Corpwatch*. <http://www.corpwatch.org/issues/glob101/featured/2000/wbello>, 2000. Accessed 06/02/01.

⁶⁹ Giovanni Arrighi, *The Long Twentieth Century: Money, Power and the Origins of Our Times* (London: Verso, 1994).

governmental and business organizations that have led the capitalist world-economy through its successive phases of industrial expansion.”⁷⁰

Thus his history of capital is that of a successive “changing of the guard” as one state complex after another becomes the protector and beneficiary of the most advanced and expansive sectors of capital. He describes four “systemic cycles of accumulation,” each lasting between one and two centuries, led by a particular state bloc: Genoa (the “long 16th century”); Holland (the “long 17th century”); Britain (the “long 19th century”); and the US (the “long 20th century,” running from 1850 to 20??). In each of cycles the state-capital bloc that emerges is more powerful and larger and more complex than in earlier ones, with the US imperial complex of course being the greatest Behemoth all, with world destroying power. According to Arrighi’s grand cyclical schema, however, the US is due to decline. The crisis of the 1970s set in train a process which involves not only the search for a new regime of accumulation—in the sense of new institutions of production and consumption—but also a new nation state sponsor for this emergent complex. The most likely contender for successor state complex—a “new guard”—is, according to Arrighi, East Asian capital.

In the past, however, state-capital blocs have not relinquished their supremacy other than under the shattering effects of wars. The extraordinary military power of the US makes this problematic. Arrighi outlines three possibilities. One is that the “old guard” of the US state-capital complex successfully prevents any “new guard” emerging, halting the “changing of the guard” by becoming “a truly global empire.” A second is that a “new guard” of East Asian capital assumes leadership—but does so without the “state and war making” capacities that have characterized previous cycles. The third is, simply, post-Cold War chaos.

Appearing in 1994, Arrighi’s book had the misfortune of bad timing. Its thesis rested heavily on the rise of Japan as a champion of East Asian capital, so the spectacular collapse of its economy seriously compromised the credibility of its cyclical story. In the immediate aftermath, if any of Arrighi’s options seemed plausible, it was be that of the US halting the cyclical rythem by transformation into a “truly global empire.” This could be seen as roughly compatible with Hardt and Negri’s forecast of Empire, if one assumes Arrighi to be referring not to straightforward US domination, but as the transformation of US led institutions into the kernel of a multinational world capitalist regime.

However, Arrighi’s prediction of an emergent East Asian “new guard” for capital might warrant revisiting if one considers as a possible leader not Japan but China—a contender that does indeed have the “state and war making capacities” to act in this role. China’s “Thermidor” experiment in combining the residues of authoritarian socialism with market structures has produced a state-capital formation capable of seriously resisting what Peter Gowan calls “Washington’s Faustian bid for world domination.”⁷¹ From this point of view, the rise and fall of “Japan Inc”, and the U-turn in fortunes of US world power in the

⁷⁰ Arrighi, 12.

⁷¹ Gowan, (title).

1980s and 1990s might, in the “long dureé” seem no more than a hiccup, a last spasm of a failing power, in the historical progression Arrighi proposes.

In this view, the US and Chinese states respectively will become the centres of contending blocs of capital. The implications of this are, however, ominous, since it contains the possibilities of major inter-capitalist collision. Nor, of course, need we draw on Arrighi alone to make this diagnosis. A mounting US-Chinese or Western-Sinic confrontation is the main thrust of Samuel Huntington’s famous “clash of civilizations” thesis that, despite its own careful modulations and disavowals of belligerence, attracted enormous attention in hawkish US foreign policy circles for its depiction of a near future US-China war.⁷² There is now a plethora of similar academic, journalistic and think tank speculations. And while during the Clinton administration US and Chinese elites warily courted each other around the issue of China’s WTO membership, there are strong indications that Bush regime marks the predominance of factions of US capital whose enthusiasm for China as a vast market are more than balanced by their suspicions of it as industrial rival, software pirate, and military antagonist.

The unity of the “Empire” Hardt and Negri predict thus seems menaced by capital’s competitive side, proceeding not by way of the “free” market, but rather through interaction with state complexes whose ability to leverage economic opportunities through trade policy, financial practices, and public expenditures ultimately depends on massive military power. Faltering growth in the global factory increases the possibility of this outcome, giving increasing incentives for regional resource enclosure and market protectionism. In particular, the flagging of info-highway, e-commerce and dot.com models of high-tech accumulation invites a revival in US military Keynesianism. This is the prospect lightly signaled by the Bush regime’s inaugural bombing of Iraq, and emphasized with the announcement of the revived Star Wars scheme--a steroid shot for military-industrial complexes on both sides of the Pacific.

Beyond these bluntly political economic attractions, however, the intensification of nationalist-military antagonisms holds out the prospect of checking and breaking the new combinations, of imposing a domestic discipline which “globalization” now seems unable to maintain. On both sides of the Pacific, for capitalism’s “old” and the “new” guard alike, war fever is a way to repress, discipline and split internal opposition: for China, an answer to regional separatisms, Faun Gong and labor activism, for the US regime, a way of dividing the new combinations, separating out protectionist labor, pro-Tibetan, post-Tiennaman human rights activists and Malthusian environmentalists on one side against pacifists, left-internationalists and globalizers-from-below on the other. This is an agenda whose outlines are already visible, particularly in the growing rapprochement between Republicans and sections of the AFL-CIO.⁷³

⁷² Samuel P. Huntington, *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996).

⁷³ See Waldon Bello and Anuradha Mittal, “Dangerous Liaisons: Progressives, the Right, and the Anti-China Trade Campaign,” *Corpwatch*, <http://www.foodfirst.org/media/opeds/2000/5-china.html> Accessed 06/01/01

Were serious US-China polarization to develop, the ensuing confrontation might, for the sake of familiar ideological animosities, be dubbed on both sides as a “new Cold war.” But it would in fact be much closer to familiar forms of imperialist tension, injected with the most virulent forms of racism, and containing all the prospects for spiraling into hot conflagrations rivaling and exceeding the scale of twentieth century holocausts. As David Harvey chillingly reminds us, there is no better solution to an accumulation crisis of the sort now building in a world market than mass destruction of excess capacity.⁷⁴ It would mark the return of what E.P Thompson, in some of the most fraught years of the US-Soviet confrontation identified as the dynamic of “exterminism.”⁷⁵ The failing discipline of the Global Factory may be replaced by the command of Global War. This draws a dark, scorched line across the horizon of the future towards which so many radical rivulets and transformative tributaries are flowing. It would be an answer to the crisis of capital’s value system that risks the violent devaluation and decomposition of all its subjects. It is a prospect that may take all the internationalist, combinatory powers of today’s movements to avoid.

Global Ghosts: Red Magic

This paper began with blue-robed witches and black-bloc anarchists. Let us end with some red magic. In 1994, Jacques Derrida conjured up the “specters of Marx,” which, he suggested, continued to haunt contemporary capitalism despite all its triumphs.⁷⁶ This haunting, he said, occurs despite the loss of the body with which Marxism was identified, the industrial working class, and despite the ignominious death of its various vanguard party incarnations. It is a spectral return that largely occurs through the very post-industrial, informational, telecommunicational means of production and communication on which capital now depends. It is a visitation that confronts the new world order with the face of the plagues that it is visiting across planet—famine, slavery, debt. Derrida invokes a “New International” contesting these global injustices. But, in characteristic deconstructive style, he leaves the possibility of their resolution deferred or suspended, so that the “New International” assumes the features of a protracted “work of mourning” for intractable inequities and calamities, rather than a project of social transformation. In a response, Negri applauded Derrida’s recognition that the “mobile, flexible, computerized, immaterial and spectral labor” capital had summoned into being for its “ghostly productions” has “gone bad on it,” constituting “a new productive reality that exceeds all capital’s units of measure.”⁷⁷ But Negri also took Derrida to task for then retreating into a melancholic, mystic messianism. The deconstructive approach, Negri said, could see capital’s failure to rid itself of the subversive ghosts, but could not acknowledge the constructive, constituent power of the emerging social movements, arising from “a new consistency of laboring energy, an accumulation of cooperative energy.” This constituent force, Negri declared, is “the new—post-deconstructive—

⁷⁴ David Harvey, *The Limits to Capital* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1982) 444-445.

⁷⁵ Edward Thompson et al, *Exterminism and Cold War*, ed. New Left Review (London: New Left Books, 1982).

⁷⁶ Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: the State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning, and the New International* (New York: Routledge, 1994)

⁷⁷ Antonio Negri, “The Specter’s Smile,” *Ghostly Demarcations: A Symposium on Jacques Derrida’s Specters of Marx*, ed. Michael Sprinkler (London: Verso, 1999) 9.

ontology.” Missing this, Derrida’s “work of mourning” lost sight of the “smile on the face of the specter,” and could not propose “an exit towards the future, or a new construction of justice that’s mingled with new forms of spectral being.”⁷⁸ The debate expired amiably with Derrida in turn welcoming Negri’s comments, but suggesting that they should agree to disagree about the meaning of “ontology.”⁷⁹

Such subtleties seem a long way from the water cannon, pepper spray and wire fences. But the debate does identify what is at stake in the emergence of the new combinations. The forces on the streets in Quebec City are, surely, a manifestation, although in complex and often self-contradictory ways, of the “New International” Derrida named. And there is, in North America and Europe at least something, “spectral” about their great street protests-- not just because of the tear gas clouds. For all their energy and violence, they are events whose significance does not reside fully in the immediate action. Rather, these demonstrations are emanations of events happening elsewhere, relays from other worlds, aftershocks and projections of changes that are occurring more centrally in the South and in cyberspace. They are reverberations arising on the one hand from the great transnational reorganization of labour in the Global Factory, of bloody struggles in the hinterlands of Chiapas, the streets of Seoul, and the sweatshops of Jakarta, and on the other from the tumultuous reorganization of productive technologies and relations that constitutes the formation of Global Body and Global Brain. If there is a ghostly presence that informs them, it is surely one that brings together these two “elsewhere’s,” the ultra-material South and immaterial-cyberspace-- the black-visored Commandante Marcos, mysterious, ubiquitous Mayan dance-of-death revolutionary with email.

So, as Berardi observes, the classic formulation that sees action on the streets, as more real than its symbolic forms is wrong: in this case, it is the street action that is symbolic.⁸⁰ But to recognize this is not to say such moments are insignificant: on the contrary, they are the constitutive moments of new identities and agents, the big bubbling cauldrons out of whose mists emerging subjects defect from capital’s value schemes in scores of directions, transformed by their confrontation with capital’s security forces, by their combination with other alternative value subjects.

If there is any truth to the analysis of the cycle of struggles outlined earlier, the new combinations represent the failure of capital to escape its own development. The construction of the Global Factory was a flight from the unforeseen results of Fordist mass production, mass consumption, and welfare state system. This regime of accumulation (in large part imposed on capital by working class struggles of the early 20th century) gave decades of post-war growth --growth heavily concentrated in the North, but extending across the planet. Rather than stabilizing the system, however, the social development accompanying this prosperity emboldened and strengthened those movements challenging the fundamental inequality of the system—worker, student and new social movements in the North, national liberation movements in the South. The

⁷⁸ Negri, *ibid*, 12

⁷⁹ Jacques Derrida, “Marx & Sons,” in *Sprinkler*, 257-262.

⁸⁰ Franco Berardi, “Bifo/Berardi, interview on “The Factory of Unhappiness,” <http://www.nettime.org>. Posted 11 June 2001. Accessed 06/126/01.

costs of containing insurrections mounted, and in the crisis of the 1970s capital went into “fight and flight” mode. Both the transnationalization of production, the expansion of finance capital and the new technologies with which this is inseparably associated formed part of this project.

For some two decades it seemed that that capital had indeed “ended history” and exorcised Marx’s ghost with these instruments. But the emergence of the new combinations shows that restructuring, rather than destroying counter-powers has also recreated them. Marx wrote that in creating the industrial proletariat, capital organized and disciplined the ranks of its own adversary; the global factory aimed, by destroying and dispersing the bases of the “mass worker,” at truncating this very process. But this was a twisting road: the process of eliminating the threat, via high technology systems and global reorganization, reestablishes it at another, perhaps higher, level. Intensifying the integration of the world market has made channels for unprecedented connections between different value subjects; it has formed a new, and militant industrial proletariat in new planetary zones; the same postindustrial, digital technologies that were necessary for this effort have proven hot-beds of subversive connection and experimentation; and capital’s ecological and biological transformations are not only producing crises unmanageable within market logic, but also subjects urgent to steer them by other means.

Amongst these multitudes are to be found nationalists and fascists, opposing free trade with protectionist measures; global Keynesians, who seek to replace neoliberalism by cosmopolitan version of the welfare state; and many, including both de-globalizers and globalizers-from-below who see their struggles as a step on the way to the creation of a non-capitalist society. The detailed description and evaluation of these different options is topic for book-length treatment, already the subject of several analyses, and the stuff of dialogues ongoing within and constitutive of the emergent combinations.⁸¹ But it is clear enough that there is emerging a proliferation of concrete utopianisms envisaging ways more or less outside or beyond the market system. The subjects generating and acting on such different models of value are, to go back to Marx for a moment, the sprites that the sorcerer’s apprentice of globalized capital has summoned up and lost control of, sprites now running off in all directions to tasks quite different from what they were bidden, constructing the synapses of a Global Brain and the cells of a Global Body to resist the disciplines of the Global Factory and the dismemberment of Global War. Whether such movements will remain only a spectral, haunting, deconstructive discomfort to capital, or develop the substantial capacity to make “an exit towards the future” is uncertain. The more vital they become, the more reality their projects assume, the more hollow and wraith-like will the market values they oppose appear, and the more lethal the force it will bring against them. These spectral struggles are, as Marx would understand, an issue not just of ontology but of victory--of which values will become materialized, and which be consigned to the vaporous world of phantasms; of who will make a specter of whom; of what will die and what will live; of whose incantations will command the magic circle of the globe.

⁸¹ For a summary see Amory Starr, Naming the Enemy: Anti-Corporate Movements Confront Globalization (London: Zed Books, 2000).