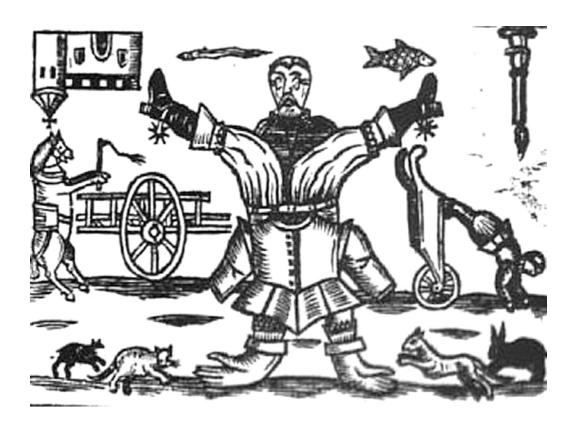# Re(in)fusing the Commons

Edited by Nate Holdren + Stevphen Shukaitis

In the beginning there is the doing, the social flow of human interaction and creativity, and the doing is imprisoned by the deed, and the deed wants to dominate the doing and life, and the doing is turned into work, and people into things. Thus the world is crazy, and revolts are also practices of hope.

This journal is about living in a world in which the doing is separated from the deed, in which this separation is extended in an increasing numbers of spheres of life, in which the revolt about this separation is ubiquitous. It is not easy to keep deed and doing separated. Struggles are everywhere, because everywhere is the realm of the commoner, and the commoners have just a simple idea in mind: end the enclosures, end the separation between the deeds and the doers, the means of existence must be free for all!

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Introduction

After ten issues, *The Commoner* makes the first timid steps toward changing format and organisation, towards making more explicit and visible the practices of cyber commoning it is grounded on. Watch this space, we are slow, but things will happen. Meanwhile, enjoy the edition that our two guest editors, Nate Holdren and Stevphen Shukaitis, have put together, an edition in which the different contributions are traversed by the problematic of commoning.

Commoning, a term encountered by Peter Linebaugh in one of his frequent travels in the living history of commoners' struggles, is about the (re)production of commons. To turn a noun into a verb is not a little step and requires some daring. Especially if in doing so we do not want to obscure the importance of the noun, but simply ground it on what is, after all, life flow: there are no commons without incessant activities of commoning, of (re)producing in common. But it is through (re)production in common that communities of producers decide for themselves the norms, values and measures of things. Let us put the "tragedy of the commons" to rest then, the basis of neoliberal argument for the privatisation: there is no commons without commoning, there are no commons without communities of producers and particular flows and modes of relations, an insight we have focused on in issue 6 of this journal, entitled "What Alternatives? Commons and Communities, Dignity and Freedom." Hence, what lies behind the "tragedy of the commons" is really the tragedy of the destruction of commoning through all sorts of structural adjustments, whether militarised or not.

As the guest editors of this issue rightly point out, the question of commoning is linked to the question of "refusal of work," that magic expression used in the 1970s to highlight the frontline clash of value practices. The term, however, is not meant as a refusal of doing, of commoning, of (re)producing in common, but on the contrary is an affirmation of all this in the only way possible when in the presence of a social force, capital, that aspires to couple its preservation to that of the commoners through the imposition of its measures of things. In these conditions, "refusal of work" as refusal of capital's measures, and commoning as affirmation of *other* measures are the two sides of the same struggle. How can we refuse capital's measure without participating in the constitution of other common

measures? And how can we participate in this commonality without at the same time setting a limit, refusing capital's measure? The setting of a limit to the beast and the constitution of an "outside" are two inescapable coordinates of struggle. It is through the problematic of this polarity that we could read the very diverse contributions of this issue of The Commoner.

Massimo De Angelis

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In June 2005, at the centenary celebration of the Industrial Workers of the World, historian and Midnight Notes Collective member Peter Linebaugh made a provocative remark in a talk about the commons. He said the World Bank also talks about commons.[1] An important difference in how we think about the commons, he suggested, should be that we pay attention to practices of commoning, as human activities. In light of this remark, we would like to suggest a gloss on the title of this journal. Commoner, not only as someone who dwells within and relies upon the commons, but also as someone who commons. To common: to produce and hold in common. Just as capitalist production has as its fundamental product social relations in the form of the capital relation, commoning produces social relations in the form of commons, freely associated humanity. It is in this sense that we want to link the commons with the work of Mario Tronti, linking commoning with the refusal of work.

What is the relationship between refusal of work and commons? Well, first, what do we mean by refusal of work? It has been noted before that 'refusal of work' is not simply 'refusal to work,' but it is refusal of the work relationship. Work has at least two moments: the purchase by the capitalist of our bodies and time in the form of the commodity labor power, and the capitalist attempt to make use of our bodies and time after the purchase is made. Refusal of work spans both moments: the attempt to break out of the need to sell oneself as a commodity, and the attempt to resist or completely refuse being made use of if one has sold oneself.

How does this relate to commons? We see it this way: another name for the compulsion to sell labor power is 'enclosure.' And it is only within the enclosed spaces of workplaces (which, to be clear, for us include homes, classrooms – potentially any moment of life) and by resort to the violent mechanisms of enclosure that the capitalist can make use of us for surplus value production. The commons, then, in these terms is two things. It is a name for spaces, times, histories, memories, moments of life that are not – or at least not fully – enclosed, ruled by and functional for capital. It is the uses of our bodies and times that are different from and antithetical to the capitalist use. We do not only mean this in an abstract and utopian sense. The commons were constructed; the new commons are being constructed.

Commoning is a process of organization. In a sense the commons are always already organized. They do not exist without organization(s), sometimes formal but more often informal.

The simple fact of producing the commons is a moment of refusal of the values of capitalism. Refusal of work is simultaneously an attempt to produce new commons, new forms of commoning (we can all point to relationships, memories, styles, images, and knowledges produced through our involvements in strikes, demonstrations, and other forms of refusal), an attempt to defend existing commons, and a use of existing commons to attack – or defend ourselves against – capitalism. If we do not have a type of commons in the social relationships with our comrades then our efforts are less likely to succeed. Stan Weir recognized this when he stressed the importance of informal work groups, and emphasized their empirical existence within important struggles.

This issue of the Commoner was originally intended to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the publication of Mario Tronti's *Operai e Capitale*, a text which had an enormous impact on the Italian far left and whose influence is most present today in the work of Antonio Negri. Part of the project for we commoners is to analyze the facts and questions that Tronti posed: "How is the working class made, from the inside, how does it function inside capital, how does it work, how does it struggle, in what sense does it accept the system, in what way does it strategically refuse it?"

Our goal for this issue is a modest one: to show the continuing relevance of Tronti's work and to draw more attention to this neglected body of Marxist thought.[2] We expect that we are largely preaching to the choir when it comes to the readership of *the Commoner*. Some of the contributors to this issue have decided to directly engage with and develop Tronti's work at a theoretical level; others carry out inquiry into trends and practices within the global movements of commoners and of capitalism. While Angela Mitropoulos opens the issue by applying ideas from Tronti's writings to explore issues around immigration and autonomy, Ida Dominijanni closes it by exploring the relation between Tronti's thought and the feminist politics of difference. As Nick Dyer-Witheford explores connections between species-being and the specter of commonism, George Ciccariello-Maher begins to draw together a line of thought based on the logic of separation that connects thinkers such as Sorel, Tronti, Negri, and Fanon.

In exploring the connection between refusing work and creating new commons it is important to not give the impression that this is not a difficult or in some cases even impossible task, especially for those who are engaged in forms of caring and affective labor. For as argued by Alisa Del Re, to build a conception of utopia upon refusing work that does not take into account the labors of social

reproduction most often carried about by females is to base one's notions of freedom on the continued exploitation of female labor. This issue is taken up by Precarias a la Deriva in their consideration of what form a strike from such constrained positions might take as well as a previously published article by Silvia Federici from the early 80s which elaborates on the revolt against housework that took place during the 70s coming out of campaigns such as Wages for Housework.

What runs through all the contributions is the attempt to understand refusal and commoning in order to practice both better. To us, commoning and refusal are one and the same. Freely associated production of social relations is precisely the real movement that abolishes the present state of things. Refusal defends and produces the commons. Let us then, following the whimsical suggestion of p.m., hang golden globes all over marking points for the congealing of new planetary commons and revolt. The commons nourish and produce refusal. In the words of the IWW constitution, by the subversive practices of the global movement "we are forming the structure of the new society within the shell of the old."

Nate Holdren + Stevphen Shukaitis

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[1] Peter Linebaugh, "Magna Charta and Practical Communism," talk delivered at the centenary of the Industrial Workers of the World, 2005. Those interested can find the text and audio of a similar presentation that he delivered to the "Contested Commons / Trespassing Publics" conference at Sarai in New Delhi here: http://www.sarai.net/events/ip_conf/ip_conf.htm.

[2] At the time of this writing, less than 1/3 of Tronti's first book and no other work by Tronti have been translated. Interested readers can consult the available passages online (http://affinityproject.org/theories/tronti.html), and a recent electronic discussion of Tronti (http://www.long-sunday.net/long_sunday/tronti).

Angela Mitropoulos

Autonomy, Recognition, Movement

In 1964 Mario Tronti began putting forward an analysis of working class autonomy that would come to be identified—and not always accurately—with an entire period and milieux of radical politics in Italy. The argument went something like this: while capitalists must necessarily equip themselves with the state so as to enter the field of class struggle, working class struggles can occur independently of any given form and level of representation. In "Lenin in England," he dismissed claims of any "inexorable necessity of working class mediation," insisting that, to the contrary, the state amounted to capitalist subjectivity *as such*.[1] Put otherwise: the subjectivation of capital consists of law as well as necessity accounted for through law and the state, whereas working class struggles imply an indeterminacy but not, for all that, a haphazardness.

Moreover, for Tronti, "the beginning is the class struggle of the working class. At the level of socially developed capital, capitalist development becomes subordinated to working class struggles; it follows behind them, and they set the pace to which the political mechanisms of capital's own reproduction must be tuned." As an instance of this, Tronti argued that the unification of the world market was imposed on capital by the unity of movement of the working class at the world level. He would later characterise this unity of the movement of the working class as the "strategy of refusal."[2] In the rejection of work, widespread non-cooperation and the desertion of traditional forms of working class representation (such as unions and parties) that characterised the 1960s in Europe and elsewhere, Tronti (and others) discerned not the end of class struggle—as the optic of socialist orthodoxy would have it—but *a different strategy*. In retrospect, and with a nod to historically parallel theoretical discussions in a French idiom, Franco Berardi described these insights as "the emancipation from the Hegelian concept of subject." For him, the distinct innovation of class composition analysis developed through *Potere Operaio* and *Autonomia* consisted of a reappraisal of the understanding of class, seen not as an "ontological concept, but rather as a vectoral" one.[3] Therefore, there was no essential form of organisation or struggle that was valid for all time but, instead, movements and compositions.

More recently and well beyond Europe, the theme of autonomy has become pivotal to discussions of migration, border policing and global capital. There it has come to imply—in view of the intervening conjuncture of debates over 'globalisation'—an emphasis on the strategic-analytical priority of the movements of people over those of capital.[4] As the so-called 'anti-globalisation' protests began to circulate in the late 1990s, so too debates over the analysis of 'globalisation' become more acute. By 1999, what had become apparent was the dominance—both presupposed and disseminated by the designation of the anti-summit protests *as* 'anti-globalisation' campaigns—of a perspective in which the 'unification' of the world market was accomplished at the expense of nation-states, in turn regarded as the necessary condition for the defense (and/or representation) of the working class against capital. Though, to be more precise, the concept of class had long receded behind or been redefined as that of 'the people' and, in so doing, counterposed nation-states to global capital in a move that was as historically forgetful as it was analytically untenable.

In other words, the reverse of Tronti's argument as noted above, which is also to say: the standard democratic socialist account prevailed as both a condition and the result of the mediation of those protests as a substantively homogenous campaign. The stakes and implications, therefore, were by no means hypothetical. *De Fabel van de Illegaal*, a Dutch antiracist organisation, was among the first to raise the alarm at the presence of nationalist and, in some cases, explicitly xenophobic groups and perspectives around the anti-summit protests.[5] In the USA, an unflinching alliance between Pat Buchanan and Ralph Nader ferried stacks of paper, photocopiers and fax machines to Seattle for the protests against the World Trade Organisation in 1999, while ATTAC similarly concentrated on capital's movements, and lobbied for a Tobin Tax throughout Europe. But if in the US and Europe at this point, this displayed a typical distance between lobbyists and protesters that was also a difference of orientation toward the state and, by 2000 the demarcations were starkly posed as riots broke out in, and mass escapes occurred from, Australian internment camps, some just days before the protests against the World Economic Forum in Melbourne.[6]

And so, if one aspect of the radical response to the nationalist figuration of anticapitalist protests was to argue for the organisational decentralisation of the anti-summit protests—against the recurrent demands for unity and mediation and for the political creativity of irreconcilable differences—the other, and not unrelated, response was to insist that the globalisation of finance and trade was historically preceded by the globalisation of labour. Only this could account for the apparently

paradoxical circumstances of the post-1989 period that consisted of *both* the deregulation of capital and trade flows *and* the re-regulation of the movements of people. The first as a catching-up measure, the second as a means to reinstate control and manage the flows. The analyses that located deterritorialisation on the side of capital and, more or less implicitly, territorialisation on the side of labour, were obliged to erase an entire history of struggles against the enclosures just as they were inclined to proffer an argument for their fortification.

The calibrations of capital flight are *always* premised on the organisation of differential and segmented markets. To put this another way, and to echo Tronti's initial formulations: capital's global unification—'globalisation'—was imposed on it by a widespread refusal and flight of people. This flight took shape not only as an exodus from the factory and the unions that the writings of *Potere Operaio* sought to analyse, but as a simultaneous exodus from what has usually been referred to as the 'Third World', the poorhouses and workhouses of 18th and 19th century Europe which had been exported across the world as the very meaning of its partitioning as 'first', 'second' and 'third'. The attempted global reorganisations of finance and trade of the late 20th century, as well as the post-1989 border regimes introduced in the US, Australia, Europe and Canada, postdate the movements of people from 'periphery' to 'core.' This is in no way to suggest that there has not been a world market prior to this, which is as absurd as the suggestion that the world market has not always been an *inter*-national system. Rather, it is to note that what has been called 'globalisation' of late can only be explained with regard to the recent history of movements that were an attempt to escape the specific conditions of exploitation of the post-WWII period. Those conditions being, in short: a Fordist production system divested of its early resort to a relatively higher wage and 'Third World' nationalisms increasingly, and in the least violent moments, operating as Bantustans. It might be worth noting here that it is precisely the failure of that attempt to secure the movements of people—to accomplish a repartitioning of the world into spaces of exception and spaces of norms that was once constitutive of the distinction between 'First' and 'Third Worlds'—that has precipitated the more recent resort to a seemingly permanent global war.

In a more specific sense, then, in discussions of migration the notion of autonomy comes to imply both an analytical proposition and a political disposition. First, it not only suggests the political-strategic precedence of the movements of people over those of capital and, not least, the state's policies which give strategic and subjective form to capital, as outlined

above. It also involves an insistence that migration is a *strategy*—a strategy, that is, undertaken in and against the cramped spaces of the global political economies of work, gender and desire, among other things, but a strategy for all that.[7] Of the terms of such an approach, and echoing Sergio Bologna's earlier work on class composition, Yann Moulier Boutang noted that it is not only important to "look only to the tip of the iceberg: the institutionalized forms, or the word of the people, the way in which they speak, supposing that, as soon as they aren't saying anything, they aren't acting." It is important to heed "the silences, the refusals, and the flight as something active."[8]

Secondly, what is at stake in this attentiveness to a subterranean analytic becomes apparent if one considers the ways in which migration policy is crucial to the organisation of differential and segmented labour markets, on national, regional and global scales, and not least through the creation of illegalised strata of workers. Therefore, migration, particularly that which is undocumented and criminalised, means movements in the face of global divisions that are as biopolitical and affective as they are legal, economic and military. In one sense, then, the flight from devastation can be akin to a strike for higher pay, the withdrawal of one's labour from impoverished layers of the market, in which destitution is routinely deemed to be a ecological and/or biological condition, inherent to those regions and/or the bodies of those who inhabit them. What often comes into play here—not only in the organisation of state policy but also in ostensibly 'progressive' responses to it—is racism, sovereignty, the entire terrain upon which it becomes possible, habitual even, to depict migrants as bereft of political action, indeed of activism.

In the Australian context the concept of the autonomy of migration came to imply a more explicit opposition to racism, perhaps because here it requires a good deal more effort than usual to distinguish the nation-state from colonial, missionary and carceral undertakings. As Brett Neilson argued, "to oppose racism [...] one first needs to question the constituted power of the Australian state and its correlate forms of identity and subjectivity." And, as Sandro Mezzadra added, in this discussion with Neilson on Australian and European borders, there has been a tendency to "depict those who suffer the effects of globalisation in the global south as mere victims, denying them a position as protagonists or active social subjects in contemporary processes of global transformation. From this perspective, migration becomes just one in a long line of catastrophes occasioned by neoliberalism."[9] This is also why the path of an assumed political expediency at work in 'mainstream' defenses of migration so often

involves the re-victimisation of those whose movements have been criminalised by the state. Consider here the preference among many NGOs for depictions of otherly-complexioned migrants as mute victims who, in the very spectacle of this inability to speak or act, invite the observer to assume the task of representation.

At issue here is not simply the objectification of migrants, but also a very particular form of subjectivation of the non-migrant that is assembled by implication. Namely, the construction of a more or less furtive bond between 'activist' and 'state', in which political subjectivity is invoked on condition of assuming the perspective of the state—or being, literally, a subject of it. Moreover, in the absence of manifestoes, programmes and spokespeople, much of the Left is all too ready to assume that migration implies the absence of political decision and action; thus reserving for itself the semblance and definition of political struggle, movement and representation. In this way, the form of the political decision—what it means to be and enact the political—is made synomymous with the structure of the sovereign decision. In the wake of the Australian military's seizure of the Norwegian freighter that had rescued over 300 undocumented migrants from drowning, the Prime Minister pithily summarised the conceit of the sovereign decision in the form of an election slogan: "We will decide who comes here and the circumstances under which they come." The prevalent and ostensible counter-slogan of 'Refugees are welcome here' not only repeated the classificatory machinery of migration policy that obliges the other to beg, but positions the 'we' as the one who must be persuaded by such pleading, who has the authority to welcome, or not. The affective economy of migration policy involves a resignation to the state as the model behind which political action and thinking always lurks and—perhaps more captivating than this—the wish to hold fast to the right to decide the exception that is bestowed by rights-based politics. In other words, as Hannah Arendt put it, the right to decide who does and does not have rights and, it should be added, the processes through which the sovereign state and its exceptions are constitued. [10]

At stake in every politics of border controls is control over the border of the political. In presenting the act of migration as outside the field of politics, the very definition of what a movement and politics is remains tied to the organisation of democratic representation in a very precise sense, and so, *in turn*, the terrain in which migration appears as that which must of necessity be controlled, regulated and mediated. For if democracy means the rule of the *demos* ('the people'), then the formal emptiness of the proposition of who 'the people' are is nevertheless constantly played out

along both anthropological and racialised axes of differentiation that are as eager to make of 'humanity' the beginning and end of the sense of the world as they are to adjudicate upon the non-human.[11]

In this regard the concept of the autonomy of migration is not a claim about the absence of economic or other pressures around migration and migratory flows, as Nicholas Bell from the *European Civic Forum* supposed.[12] Nor is it, similarly but in a philosophical register, the proposition of an autonomous or unconditioned subject as it appears in the works of Kant or Locke, where autonomy is defined as self-possession. Even less does it mark the contours of an identity that calls out for recognition. As Maurizio Ricciardi and Fabio Raimondi have argued, viewing "migrants as subjects deprived of rights and citizenship" means that they are presented as indicators of a political lack and a sign of the inexorable necessity of the nation-state.[13] In any case, the concept of autonomy, as a way to orient oneself around the issue of migration, means above all that one does *not* concern oneself with the reasons why an other wishes to move across borders, simply put: it insists that the other is autonomous from oneself, particularly where one's *self* is most liable to assume the pose of deciding on such matters for an other, either because one's own belonging is not in question *or* as a means to prove that it should not be. More generally, the concept of the autonomy of migration is an insistence that politics does not need to be the property of the state and those who—however implicitly and by dint of a claim to belong to it, as the subject that is *proper to it* (its property)—can claim to reserve for themselves the thought and action that is deemed to be properly political. Therefore, it amounts to a challenge to the sovereign and representational dispositions within what passes for the Left, to the very construction of what it means to be an activist, to do politics and to recognise movements and struggles as such.

One of the questions that arises, then, is of the relation between cognitive labour and movements, particularly as this gives form to the question of the relationship between recognition and autonomy. Throughout its recent history in radical politics, the concept of autonomy has not simply indicated a distance from the state, forms of mediation and representational politics. More specifically, it has called into question the role of recognition and, thereby, the particular role that has been assigned to cognitive labour since Fordism of managing as well as representing the figure of the working class.[14] For while it would be more than plausible to read Tronti's early account of the autonomy of working class struggles as pointing toward its more recent appearance in discussions of migration in almost every respect, for Tronti the explicit sense of autonomy remains that of an autonomy

which admits no heteronomy—save for that of the work to be done by research. This research, Tronti argued, was necessary to "work out the form that will be taken by a future dictatorship of the workers organised as a ruling class." Therefore, while he insisted that the existence of working class struggles was independent of its formal organisations, that working class struggles menaced every category of political-economy, every policy of the state and economic reorganisation, the means by which this could be *recognised* and translated into organisational forms remained the province of "theory."

However problematised the role of cognitive labour was by Tronti, it nevertheless came to assume the task of recognition and, thereby, the terrain upon which the autonomy of the working class is not simply identified but, in a very specific sense, constituted. Yet if what survives from Tronti's early analysis is less the explicit "project to research a new Marxist practice of the working class party" than the concept of autonomy, this is in part because the presumed externality of 'theory' to the 'working class' was undergoing a significant shift that has, likewise, become a significant theme in post-*Autonomia* writings. Indeed, such a shift was already more than apparent, even if ambivalent. In "The Strategy of the Refusal," Tronti also argued that culture is "always a relation between intellectuals and society, between intellectuals and the people, between intellectuals and class; in this way it is always a mediation of conflicts and their resolution in something else." The reformulation of the question of the role of the 'intellectual' was part of the importance which Tronti and others assigned to the shift from formal to real subsumption: "now that capital itself is calling them back' into the world of production, they arrive as objective mediators between science and industry: and this is the new form that is being taken by the traditional relationship between intellectuals and the party." He argued, therefore, that it was necessary to refuse to be intellectuals. In posing the question of the shift from formal to real subsumption, the very understanding of cognitive workers as a distinct and managerial strata was, subsequently and in its most interesting aspects, transformed into a question of the forms of exploitation of cognitive work (and immaterial labour).[15]

But if the writings of Paolo Virno, Maurizio Lazzarato, Antonio Negri and others have focused more recently on the theme of immaterial labour, there is a sense in which the reception of such writings, if not always the analyses themselves, have retained an impression of cognitive work as a privileged site for the recognition—or, perhaps, the very constitution—of a revolutionary subject. Some of this is due to the uninterrupted transfer of political models from Leninism to so-called 'autonomist Marxism', in which

Leninist organisational forms are deemed to have been adequate for an earlier epoch but not for the present or, at the very least, where the task of analysis is one of discerning the presence of a revolutionary subject. Yet, this is also due to a continuing reluctance to treat cognitive labour *as labour*—that is to say: as labour with its particular forms of exploitation, subjectivation and command that must, as a question of habit, shape an approach toward other kinds of labour let alone the world. And here it becomes crucial to restate a critical understanding of the philosophical concept of autonomy given that, in the specific context of cognitive work, autonomy is intimately bound up with exploitation. In other words, it is precisely through a degree of self-management that cognitive labour is mobilised as labour and made available for exploitation.

As Augusto Illuminati warned some time ago, the "movement of the exodus is ambiguously marked by the opposition to dominant ideas and their molecular renewal." The terrain of autonomy might well be "the practical beginnings of communism," but for others it amounts to the "liberalism of the market."[16] In retracing the history of the concept of autonomy from the early writings of Tronti to its more recent appearance in discussions of migration, the very ambivalence of this notion might be emphasised by mentioning another theme prevalent in the early writings of *Potere Operaio* and *Autonomia*, that of self-valorisation. Insofar as autonomy means something like "to give oneself one's own law," self-valorisation means "to determine one's own value." There is a deep ambivalence in both the question of law and value. Radical notions of value may well manifest a refusal of the determinations of value *as established* or presently recognised by capital, but it can also exhibit a striving for self-possession. The latter articulation retains distinctly capitalist aspects of valorisation which function as a prelude to—or aspiration of a future—exchange.[17] But they can also indicate a bid for autonomy from the world that is also, in another sense, a kind of enclosure: the attempt to seek a cognitive shelter from the impact, whether troubling or invigorating, of the touch of the world.

The questions of the internalisation of law as habit remains to be more fully examined than I can on this occasion, as this might be illustrated through the relation between the ostensible contractual freedom of the wage and the persistence of slavery, or as this inflects associations between, say, 'chainworkers' and 'brainworkers', given that the latter are compelled (as Lazzarato would say) to present themselves as subjects and, to a degree at least, self-manage their exploitation.[18] More broadly, it is perhaps not necessary to reiterate here the banality of a cognitive labour, given over to calculation and exchange, which sees in movements not the potential for the

world to be otherwise but the capacity for accruing value, to recall that capitalism remains characterised by expropriation.

The question at this juncture is more precise than this. It is important to consider the extent to which a subaltern analytic adopts the demeanour of 'making the invisible visible', of conceding, in other words, to the role of representation that has been regarded as the province of intellectual labour and the gesture of its managerial rank.[19] Here, it becomes apparent that while the concept of autonomy assumed something of the character of a self-sufficient subject in its earlier *Operaisti* manifestations—autonomous *viz* the state and capital— as it has passed through to a discussion of migration it has undergone a significant modification. In other words, the question that has been thereby posed is of the relation to the other, whose difference is irreducible to, even while it is conditioned by, understandings and compositions of the working class, or more broadly of who 'we' are and the world is.

Autonomy is not the proposition of a self-sufficient working class but of the discrepancy between a labouring on the sense of the world and the sensory impacts of movements on the world. The autonomy, if you will, of an aleatory materialism from any given representations of it, which is by no means confined to a discussion of struggles against migration controls.[20] Nevertheless, the concept of the autonomy of migration has emphatically posed the question of the association—and breach—between a state-bound definition of movements and their kinetic existence. From that point it marks the space not of an accomplishment, nor a substantive political identity in which the presence of a revolutionary subject might be recognised, but an ongoing tension in which mediation always risks positioning itself as an instance of capture. This is the question that arises for cognitive labour—for research, reading or simply thinking on the sense of the world—each and every time.

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[1] "Lenin in England". First Published: in *Classe Operaia*, January 1964, and republished in *Operai e Capitale*, Einaudi, Turin, 1966, p.89-95, under the heading "A New Style of Political Experiment." (1964)
[2] "The Strategy of the Refusal" This essay was written in 1965 as part of the "Initial Theses" in Tronti's *Operai e Capitale*, Einaudi, Turin, 1966, pp.234-252. The whole of *Operai e Capitale* has yet to be translated into English. (1965)
[3] "What is the Meaning of Autonomy Today? Subjectivation, Social Composition, Refusal of Work." Available at: http://info.interactivist.net

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[4] Mitropoulos, A. "Virtual is Preamble: The Movements Against the Enclosures." Available at: http://www.makeworlds.org/node/133 (Orig. 1999) See also more recently the conversation between Manuela Bojadÿzijev, Serhat Karakayalõ and Vassilis Tsianos (Kanak Attak) and Thomas Atzert and Jost Muller (Subtropen) on migration and autonomy, and "Speaking of Autonomy of Migration." Available at: http://www.kanak-attak.de

[5] Merijn Schoenmaker and Eric Krebbers, "Seattle '99, marriage party of the Left and the Right?" Available at: http://www.gebladerte.nl

[6] See http://antimedia.net/xborder

[7] See Sabine Hesse, "I am not willing to return home at this time." Available at: http://www.makeworlds.org

[8] "The Art of Flight" Interviewer, Stanly Grelet. Available at: http://slash.autonomedia.org.

[9] Mezzadra, S. and Neilson, B. (2003) "Né qui, né altrove - Migration, Detention, Desertion: A Dialogue" *Borderlands* 2:1 Avalaible at: http://www.borderlandsejournal.adelaide.edu.au

[10] See Mitropoulos, "The Barbed End of Human Rights," http://www.borderlandsejournal.adelaide.edu.au (Orig. 2000).

[11] See Agamben, *The Open*.

[12] "Migration, Autonomy, Exploitation: Questions and Contradictions," Available at: http://thistuesday.org

[13] Ricciardi and Raimondo, "Migrant Labour." Available at: http://thistuesday.org

[14] It is not necessary here to reiterate the managerialist parallels between Fordist production methods and, say, Leninist understandings of the relation between the party (conceived as a gathering of radicalised bourgeois intellectuals) and the masses. Suffice to note that the more interesting question is of the post-fordist arrangement of this relationship, as discussed, for instance Maurizio Lazzarato's discussion of the reorganisation of the relationship between command and autonomy, in "Immaterial Labor." Available at: http://www.generation-online.org.

[15] See Jason Read's *The Micro-Politics of Capital* (New York: SUNY Press, 2003) for a discussion of formal and real subsumption and some of its implications.

[16] Illuminati, A. (1996). "Unrepresentable Citizenship" in P. Virno and M. Hardt (eds) *Radical Thought in Italy.* Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press pp.166-85.

[17] For a brief discussion of this in relation to the university and the militarisation of the intellect, see B. Neilson and A. Mitropoulos, "Universitas, Polemos." *Borderlands.*

[18] For the first, see Caffentzis; for the second, Mitropoulos, "Precari-us?" Also, see Barchiesi for an English-language review of Moulier-Boutang's work. Available at: http://www.generation-online.org.

[19] For a longer discussion of the ways in which the task of 'making the invisible visible' played itself out in the noborder networks, see A. Mitropoulos, "The micro-physics of theoretical production and border crossings," Borderlands 3:2 (2004). Available at: http://www.borderlandsejournal.adelaide.edu.au.

[20] See edition of Multitudes on aleatory materialism, as well as Borderlands, forthcoming.

Nick Dyer-Witheford

Species-Being and the New Commonism: Notes on an Interrupted Cycle of Struggles

Sketching in the Ashes

The last decade of the 20th century saw the eruption, in Chiapas, Paris, Seattle, Genoa, Porto Allegre, and countless other sites, of a new cycle of struggles against global capital. But "9-11" has reconfigured the context within which this cycle moves. The "war on terror" draws a dark, scorched line across the horizon towards which so many radical rivulets and transformative tributaries were flowing, marking a likelihood that all types of dissent will be delegitimized and attacked in a context of normalized mass death and social destruction.

In this new situation, it is no longer feasible (if it ever was) to think within the binary framework: Empire vs. Multitudes.[1] The conjuncture requires an analysis that comprehends not just at the World Trade Organization and the Zapatistas, but also Al Quaeda (not to mention all the Christian, Hindu, Judaic theocratic fundamentalisms).

Sketching in the ashes of a global war scenario, I propose a triangulation between three points:

a) The logic of neoliberal capitalism. I call this the logic of the World Market. It interpellates a planet of market subjects: *consumers.*

b) The logic of exclusionary ethno-nationalist-religious movements. I call this the logic of Fundamentalist Reaction. It addresses a planet lethally divided amongst *chosen peoples.*

c) The logic of collective creativity and welfare proposed by the counter-globalization movements. I call this the logic of Species Beings. It speaks to a planet of *commoners.*

A whole series of molecular energies are currently being attracted, apportioned and annihilated between these three molar aggregates.

World Market and Fundamentalist Reaction are apparently opposed, antagonists in the "war on terror." But they are mutually dependent on and produce each other: Fundamentalist Reaction responds defensively against the universalizing commodification of the World Market. The World Market, having armed and cultivated various "chosen peoples" as agents of destruction of state socialism (. e.g. the mujahadeen) and now legitimizes and vindicates its military expenditures and security apparatus waging war on Fundamentalist Reaction. Indeed, World Market and Fundamentalist Reaction each *contain* one another (e.g. fundamentalist Christianity in Bush's USA, market dependence of radical Islamic regimes). Each relies on the other to supply the dimensions of social existence (ethico-communal cohesion, economic structure) it cannot realize in its own, inherent logic.[2]

Neither the World Market nor Fundamentalist Reaction is a unitary force. Both are characterized by competitive, fissiparous tendencies: the hostility of, on the one hand, contending "chosen peoples" (fundamentalist Christians vs. Jews vs. Islam vs. Hindus, etc., etc), and, on the other hand, trade blocs of competing capitals (North America vs. Europe vs. Asia).[3]

Played out over a planetary field now saturated with the weapons of mass destruction originally spawned by capital in its fight with state socialism, the conflicts of World Market and Fundamentalist Reaction, combined and cross-cut with the conflicts internal to each of these categories, drive towards social and ecological catastrophe, either through the direct effects of war, or the indirect effects of sustained inattention to problems such as HIV/AIDS, global warming, and mass impoverishment.

On the other hand, both Market Subjects and Fundamentalist Identities can be seen as a attacking the logic of global commons enunciated by movements of Species Beings.

"The Present Living Species": 1844-2004

To speak of "Species Beings" is to adapt the young Marx's term "species-being" –central to his famous discussion of alienation in the *Economic and*

Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844. Here he describes how private ownership of the means of production results in a four-fold deprivation of human subjects: estrangement from the products of their own labour; from cooperative relations with fellow beings; from the nature that is transformed through their activity; and, from their own historical possibilities of self-development, or "species being."

"Species being" refers to humanity's capacity to transform itself through intentional social activity, making make "life activity itself an object of will and consciousness."[4] It is more than just existence as a natural, biologically reproductive collectivity with corporeal needs for food, water, shelter, and sex. Marx terms this species-life.[5] Based in this biological embodied, ecologically embedded existence, species-being is the elaboration and expansion of these life-needs in a process of collective and individual self-development. This entails material capacity, self-consciousness and collective organization, all feeding into each other. Species-being is a constitutive power, a bootstrapped, self-reinforcing loop of social cooperation, technoscientific competencies and conscious awareness. It is an emergent attribute--"life engendering life."[6]

Elements Marx identified as central to the unfolding of "the present, living species" include not only the cooperative organization of labour, but also the harmonious relation of humans to their natural environment ("nature linked to itself, for man is part of nature"), the emancipation of women from masculine domination (from which one can judge "how much man as a species-being . . .has come to comprehend himself"), the interconnection of people in increasingly "cosmopolitan" collectivities, and the application of science as technology to industry.[7]

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 affect change in their collective development.[8] If it posits an essence, it is paradoxically that of a power of transforming or constructing nature. Thus "alienation" of species-being, the central problematic of the *1844 Manuscripts*, is not an issue of estrangement from a normative, natural human condition, but rather of who or what controls and limits the processes of ceaseless human self-development.

Species-being is realized to the degree that individuals not only contribute to the growth in social powers, but also access these powers as an increase in their own capacities and autonomy—indeed, as the very grounds for their intensifying individuation. Species-being is, we can say, "transindividual," both the ground and compound of a multiplicity of individual species-beings.[9]

Social forms that block the circular access of social and individual powers by sequestering resources undermine species-being. So too, since, species-being is a

capacity for conscious social change, do forms that hand its direction to blind or out of control mechanisms. Hence the critique of capitalist alienation: the privatization of species-being as property, and its direction by atomized market exchange, forecloses on its wider, universal, development.

The 1844 Manuscripts posit nothing less than a political economy (or perhaps an anti-political economy) of the human. It proposes that to be human is not a matter only of biology. Even less is it a matter of abstract and ideal human rights. To be human is an issue—in the widest sense—of wealth. To be truly human is to have an equitable share in the material surplus generated by species activity, the surplus that makes possible collective and individual development and self-transformation.

"Species being" can be seen as the closest Marx came to positively identifying, transformative agency of communism. The creation of a "working class" as a decomposition of species being inflicted by the "class-ifying," gridding and divisive operations of capital as it alienates species being: class identity is that which has to be destroyed in struggle so that species being can emerge.

But the implications are more radical than Marx himself may have grasped. For the reverberations of "species being" outrun the classic moment of class oppression—the proletarian reduced to the status of a "beast" or "machine." It points towards to those other categories -- "woman," "native," "black"—whose impoverishment and exploitation has been legitimated by their designation as sub-human. It opens onto analysis of the way world market galvanizes categories not only of work, but also of gender and race in ways that at once excite and constrain the possibility of a far more universal, global, concept of the human than any that had existed before.

Marx's capacity to theorize the full possibilities of species being theory were, however, stalled by bind spots in regard conditions of domestic and colonial labour. It was also hampered by the tensions in his thought in regard to the biosphere, and its oscillations between a rationalist triumphalism ("mastery" over nature) and what we would term an ecological perspective ("metabolic interaction with nature). Far more than in any of his later work (except perhaps *Grundrisse*) which revives some of these themes-- the *1844 Manuscripts* revolves these issues, so the first enunciation of "species being" is ringed with his best thought about sex and nature. Nonetheless the historical and personal limits of the theorization are apparent.

Louis Althusser's famous claim that 1844 writings lie on the wrong side of an epistemological break in Marx's work seems substantiated by the virtual disappearance of "species being" and "alienation" from his mature writings. [10] But we propose Marx abandoned "species-being" not because the concept was flawed, as

because he could not, in his era, go through with it. Early industrial capitalism allowed him a prescient glimpse of the mobilization of planetary life as productive force. The process was, however, insufficiently advanced to engage its full scope, so Marx's analysis subsequently retracted into the famous investigation of waged labor in the mechanized factory. The disclosure of species-being had to await the full commodification of human social and ecological existence via web cast and xenotransplants.[11] Given this context, the recent revival of the concept of species being by authors such as David Harvey and Gayatri Spivak articulates some of the deepest concerns underlying the protests of the new movements.[12]

Streets Full of Species Beings

These eruptions have been termed "anti-free trade," "counter-globalization," "new internationalist," "civil society" movements. Suggestive as these terms are, they are inadequate to recognize the scope of the issues at stake in the emergence of these movements. Such mobilizations are not just, or primarily, about work, trade, and social justice—although they are certainly about all these.

They are rebellions generated within and against a capitalism that is 'global' both in its planetary expansion and its ubiquitous social penetration, and whose processes generate subjects able to envisage, and willing to fulfill, the universalisms the world-market promises but cannot complete. This suggestion is broadly consonant with Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's account of a multitudinous insurgence of "biopower" against "empire," and with John McMurtry's analysis of an antagonism between "life sequences" and "money sequences." [13] These new activisms are species-being movements, or, perhaps, movements of species-beings. Features that support such characterizations include:

i)   Multiplicity. The diversity of agencies involved reflects a situation of hyper-subsumption, where, while classic forms of exploitation persist—and are often intensified—capital taps the psychophysical energies of species-life at every point on its circuit: not just as variable capital (labor), but also, as a circulatory relay (consumerist consciousness, "mind share"), a precondition of production (the general pool of biovalues and communicative competencies necessary for "general intellect"), and even as constant capital (genetic raw materials). Species-being movements contest the "general exploitation of communal human nature."[14]

ii)   Gender. These movements would be inconceivable without the emancipation of women at once initiated and contained by the world

market. This is evident in the role of women as theorists and leaders, and the enunciation of a feminist critique of political economy around issues such as globalized female work, unremunerated domestic labor, the double shift, procreative rights, and degeneration of the welfare state.

iii) Ecology. The centrality of concerns such as biodiversity loss, global warming, ozone depletion, water privatization, and felling of rain forest marks the emergence a green critique of capital's "universal poisoning" of the environment.[15] The meeting of "sea turtles" with steelworkers on the streets of Seattle is emblematic of this.

iv) Cosmopolitanism. "Anti-globalization" is a wild misnomer for movements formed on a terrain of transnational exchanges and communications. The intensified mobility of finance, production and markets has set in motion a series of regional and international interactions amongst activists opposing various facets of global capital. Terms such as "anti-corporate globalization," "counter-globalization," "new internationalism," "globalization from below," "global justice" attempt to capture this: Spivaks's "globe girdling movements" is perhaps most evocative.[16]

To say these are movements of species-beings is not to deny that the movements of Seattle, Genoa, and Porto Allegre are rife with contradictions. They include nationalist protectionists, liberal market reformists, welfare state nostalgists and isolationist fascists. One reasons for the popularity of "civil society" terminology amongst the movements' platform speakers may be that its vagueness covers up these tensions. But to speak of "species-being" movements is to suggest that amongst these heterogeneous elements the genuinely new, and most dynamic, are biopolitical activisms, characterized by cosmopolitan affinities, transnational equalitarianism, implicit or explicit feminism, a strong ecospheric awareness, a practical critique of high technology, opposed to both the world market and reactive fundamentalisms

Materiality, Immateriality, Immizeration

Pluralizing the phrase—"species beings"—recognizes, to a degree that Marx never fully did, that the constitution of such a "species being" is the task of organizing collectivity across global difference. Attempts to define the new movements in terms of the centrality of a specific stratum of labour may be counter-productive.

Exemplary of such problems is Hardt and Negri's privileging of "immaterial" labor. This gives a pivotal role in the constitution of multitudinous insurgency to forms of biopower involved with information and communication. The paradigmatic figure is the high-tech "cyborg" worker. It thus elevates to a universal status a type of work that, although certainly globally dispersed, nonetheless remains predominantly concentrated in the "advanced" zones of the world market, and are-still-predominantly masculine. Although later iterations of the concept attempt to expand the scope of immateriality to embrace the "affective" labor of the largely female service sector, this expansion hides more difficulties than it resolves.

The problematic of species-being is that of recomposing a wide variety of different types of biopower waged and unwaged. This interaction is complex, intractable, and cannot be ironed out by incrementally expanding the concept of immateriality until it includes everyone from programmers to prostitutes.

Although there are any number of ways of categorizing the diversity of planetary laborers, we could, very schematically, suggest that the attention paid to "immaterial" laborers be balanced by equal attention to at least two other groups—"material" and "immizerated" workers.

If immaterial biopower is characterized according by its communicational and affective activity, then material biopower is that type of work still primarily focused on shaping the physicality of products-- from SUVs to running shoes to semiconductor chips--which obstinately refuse to dematerialize themselves; and immizerated labor is that part of the labor force which, through various gradations of precarious and contingent employment up to the short and long term reserve army of the unemployed, is treated by capital as simply surplus to requirements.

All concrete work is constituted at an intersection of these three abstract categories, which are not mutually exclusive but actualized to differing degrees along a continuum. But it is also possible to identify extremes on these continuums amongst different strata of planetary labor. The spatial concentrations of these extreme forms of labor in particular continents, regions and urban areas now constitute the "North" and "South" of the global order. If the paradigmatic figures of today's immaterial labor are amongst the net-workers of the World Wide Web, then those of material labour are surely in the manufacturing plants of the *maquiladoras*, export processing zones and new industrial areas; and those of immizerated labor in the vast tides of the homeless and itinerant who settle in the doorways and alleys of every rural slum and world-city.

Once we differentiate these sectors of global labor, it is by no means evident that the struggles of "immaterial labor" are the central ones on which those of other groups, as Hardt and Negri claim, "converge." [17] On the contrary it may well be the

insurgencies of "immizerated/material" labor—the revolts of the Haitian maker of Disney T-shirts, or of dispossessed peasants in Chiapas, or South East Asian assembly line workers—that provide the critical points of focus, with which radicalized sectors of immaterial labor "identify" and on which they "converge" in solidarity, propelled both by a basic sense of justice and a self protective resistance against a the global "race to the bottom."

Thus while immaterial labor *is* privileged in terms of the high-technology capitalist hierarchy of work, the dynamics of struggle against that hierarchy often flow in the reverse direction, from the bottom up. It is tempting to reverse the priority Negri gives to immateriality by saying: in the circuits of capitalism, immizerated labor is discarded, material labor produces commodities, while immaterial labor contributes primarily to their circulation (advertising, media, e-commerce). But in the circuit of struggles, it is immizerated labor that generates spontaneous insurgencies (riots, insurrections, land wars), material labor that gives these struggles organizational form (strikes, unions) and immaterial labor that circulates these struggles (media, netwars etc). In fact, such a formulation would be absurdly over-schematic and hence almost as mystifying as the "immaterial labor" thesis, but it does at least have the advantage of turning our attention to the central problem of mobilization against a world-market, which is that of organizing across the "international division of laborers."[18]

For this reason, too, we should be cautious about too quickly adopting an "end of the third world" discourse. It is quite true that the capitalist deterritorialization enabled by improved communications and transportation has made possible the creation of what Maria Rosa Dalla Costa terms a new "hinterland of communication and liaison" between activists around the world.[19] Movements of the immizerated—still predominantly of the global South—have found ways of by passing the local forces of capitalist and state terror to appeal for support in the North. And the global relocation of work has opened the way for this appeals to meet a response: high-value Northern biopower, losing a position of relative privilege, acquires an interest in raising the living standards of those in previously low-value peripheral zones: "when they win, we win."

In addition, the affluence of Northern capital, while legitimating and normalizing consumerist greed and acquisitiveness has also, by ensuring a relative material security for many, created the conditions for the emergence of an ethical subject 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, a fragility dramatically demonstrated by "9/11."

However, these vectors can be pointed in many different directions. Sections of species being movements can fall towards either Fundamentalist Reaction (the nationalist protectionist option exemplified by the neo-fascist Buchanan brigades at Seattle) or toward the World Market (exemplified by the enlistment of NGO's in reformist projects). And fears of global fragility are precisely what are marshaled under a militarist banner by the "war against terror."

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, ort 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, and incompatible responses to problems of capitalist globalization.

Cognitive Capital, Cyberactivism & Contestational Biologists

What are at stake in the emergence of species being movements are new forces of production, communication and destruction generated by a high-technology "cognitive capitalism."[20] These include digitization and biotechnology and the new weapons potential arising from them. These are effecting what can only be described as "species changing" shifts in techno-social conditions that promise to alter collective conditions at levels that are genetic (corporeal), environmental (habitat), communicative (speech, culture) and survival (war), on a scale that is often glibly referred to a "post-human."

Underlying the movements of "species beings" is an demand that these impending and ongoing transformations be managed—in the sense of being able to say both a "yes" and a "no" to options, or to solutions to problems—from below, in a way to equalization of improvements and burdens.

The World Market attacks Species Being by appropriating and privatizing the collective, cooperative forces that change species-life (i.e. corporate control of new technologies); Fundamentalist Reaction attacks Species Being by forbidding and repressing the changes in species-life that collective cooperation enables (i.e. theocratic censorship and prohibition of new technologies).

In terms of issues of communication: the logic of the World Market is that of the global image empires of Murdoch and Berlusconi; that of Fundamentalist Reaction is that of filtering, censorship and death sentence for dissenting journalists

and artists; that of Species Being movements is peer to peer and open source networks

In terms of the life science and biorevolution: the logic of the World Market is that of patented life forms; that of Fundamentalist Reaction is prohibition of "unnatural" experimentation; and that of Species Being movements is public ownership, the meeting of basic life needs and responsible risk assessment.

Species-being movements contest the corporate trajectory of both digital and bio-technologies. In the case of new media this contestation often, but not always, takes the form of reappropriation. In the case of biotechnologies it often, but not always, takes the form of a refusal of high-technology life engineering. What is common is the attempt to intervene from below in technoscientific life-alteration, and to open channels for it other than those determined by commodification.

In the field of communications networks, an explosion of 'alternative' or 'indy' media has accompanied a critique of the corporate media's filtering of social information. This includes the radical press, community radio, tactical television experiments and video activism. Probably the most dramatic innovation, however, has been the widespread use of the Internet for self-organization, circulating news, speeding internal communication, connecting with potential allies, making an "electronic fabric of struggle."[21]

The picture is different in the area of biotechnologies, where refusal is more apparent. In the global South resistance to biopiracy and bio-prospecting by multinational pharmaceutical companies has been intense. So too is opposition to agribusiness' coercive marketing of proprietarily controlled seed strains: In Europe and Canada, opposition to genetically modified (GM) foods and products such as bovine growth hormone have been widespread and successful.

The wide rejection of biotechnology may cast doubt on nomination of these new activisms as species-being movements, for it seems to repudiate the nature-transforming capacities about which Marx waxed enthusiastic. And there are certainly many in such resistances who reject the biotechnological in the name of natural or divine essences. Such positions risk falling towards green-tinged forms of Fundamentalist Reaction.

For other activists, however, the issue is not biotechnology per se but the corporate determination of its directions and deployment, and related issues of trustworthy research, testing, and labeling. Thus recent proponents of "contestational biology" declare "the real question" is "how to create models of risk assessment that are accessible to those not trained in biology" so that people can differentiate between innovations that amount to little more than "pollutants for

profit" and those that have a "practical and desirable function."[22] Many theorists and organizations fighting corporations such as Monsanto can envisage a benign role for biotechnologies in a different social context, where their development might take a different direction. Some say their stance is not a rejection of the life-sciences revolution, but the adoption of an alternative path within it, leading not towards the engineering of discrete genes, but to the more ecological analysis of holistic life systems.[23].

The stance of today's species-being movements towards high technology thus mixes appropriation and rejection, invention and sabotage, hacking and neo-Luddism, Web-casters and seed gatherers. It is quite possible today to encounter activists fight genetic patenting via computer networks.

Such practices may seem incoherent, but they may just be discriminating. If species-being entails conscious social choice about human self-transformation, it must involve the capacity to say "yes" or "no" to technological options. In Jurgen Habermas' terms, species-being movements seem to be saying an emphatic "yes" to the possibilities of enhancing "communicative reason" through high-technology media, a nearly equally emphatic "no" to the "instrumental reason" of genetic engineering, and are using the former to combat the latter.

Global Public Goods and the New Commons

'Commons' is a recurrent term in species-being activism. Its signals a focus on access to and regulation of collective resources, around issues ranging from digital culture to plant breeding to atmospheric pollution and the global water supplies. This commons discourse resumes older discussions about 'public goods,' but breaks new ground, both in the range of ecological, biogenetic and cultural domains it addresses, and in its interest in the possibilities of organization of resources from below, rather than according to the models of command economies or bureaucratic welfare state.

High technologies, in both their communicational and biological aspects, intensify the socialization of productive activity, both in terms of the social cooperation required for the research and development, and by generating collective consequences that cannot be reckoned in terms of individualized market exchange.

In the case of digital networks, these consequences include new modes of product creation and circulation, such as peer to peer networks and open source networks, which fly out of the orbit of the commodity form. These potentials are expressed in the "creative commons" and "open cultures" movements contesting the intellectual property regime of the world market.[24]

In the case of biotechnologies, commons aspects are most apparent in the multiplication of possible public harms from irresponsible experimentation and premature application. But public good aspects involving defense against planet –sweeping epidemics are also visible: the transnational campaign against pharmaceutical capital to compel affordable access to anti-HIV retrovirals is a case in point.[25]

The more capital deploys digital and biological technologies to enclose informational, ecological and biotechnological domains within the market, the more it intensifies market 'externalities.' Commons discourse restores these processes-- creative possibilities fettered, destructive dimensions unaccounted for--to view.

The conflict between capital and species-being movements maps very approximately onto rival models of technological development: in media, open source and peer to peer networks versus proprietorial code and closed systems; in life sciences, systemic biology and ecosystemic perspectives against reductive genetic engineering. The tendency of species-being movements is towards the practical realization of what Marx termed "communal activity, and communal mind."[26]

Alien Powers

The importance of 'commons' movements can only be measured against the counter tendency towards social polarizations that give a new vitality to that most exhausted of terms, "alienation."

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. Such forms—onco-mice, spider-goats, and terminator seeds—already exist, very concrete expression of the power of money to "a world upside-down-the confounding and compounding of all natural and human qualities."[27]

Biotechnologies generate not only designed animal and plants, but also alterations in the most basic givens of the human condition: appearance, health, emotional and intellectual faculties, longevity, and sexuality. Germline interventions might make such changes inheritable. Futurists speak of a moment at which a technologically-transformed humanity would become as 'alien' to its former self as humanity is today from, say, great apes: a post-human singularity.

Marx's account of species-being qualifies apocalyptic accounts of the post-human, for it reminds us that humans have long been forming themselves in a technologically mediated relation with a "second nature," in a series of grafts, symbioses and prosthesis with machines, buildings, altered nutrients and landscapes: in this sense, the species has *always* been post-human.[28]

But Marx's critique also condemns the direction of this process by an "inhuman power" of accumulation.[29] His account of species-being reduced, as labour, to the status of "beasts" or "machines" opens to a consideration of the post-human as catastrophe, not by reason of departure from a supposedly essential nature but from an unequal scheduling of departure times, or because some step onto the train across the backs of others.

Every extrapolation from the present suggests that access to voluntary biotechnological transformations will be deeply income dependent. The combination of powerful biotechnologies with vast differentials in wealth and global health care systems shaped by neoliberal privatization is a recipe for market eugenics very different from its ill-fortuned state-driven predecessors. Positive and negative selection will be left to the survival instincts and pocket book of individuals in system where employment possibilities are dependent on a clean genetic profiles, or even bio-modifications, bringing into site the jaw-dropping possibility of the transformation of "classes" into "clades."

Techno-apartheids and digital divides already contribute to vast differentials in human life chances around the planet. The sovereign power of the market decrees that most of the inhabitants of sub-Saharan Africa, for example, are excluded from anything that the liberal citizenry would consider as a properly human existence, becoming the "homo sacer" of global capital.[30]

Market driven globalization exacerbates ethnic envy and hatred between "frustrated, impoverished majorities" and "market dominant minorities."[31] To this situation we may soon add the bio-rifts produced by a neoliberal-eugenics that makes the masters of the planetary economy more and more literally 'alien' from those they rule.

It is the prospect of the post-human made on the basis of the in-human that renders species-being movements' insistence on "the common" vitality. This commonality is not the maintenance of natural state, but an equalitarian order to be achieved. The program that would follow from this is one of equalization of conditions, one that gave a primacy to the meeting of elementary needs of species-life for everyone. Absent this, the technological modifications of species-life will follow an inhuman path towards the war of the post-human against the not-yet-human.

Neo-Exterminism

This situation may already be upon us. '9/11' brings to crescendo what many heard approaching: confrontation between the techno-cultural whirlwind of cognitive capitalism and an array of religious-ethno-nationalist fundamentalisms arising as a defensive response to the immizeration and disruptions the world market creates: "McWorld versus Jihad."[32]

Marx identified two forms in which species-being is alienated: capital and religion.[33] Each abstracts from, substitutes and imposes over the species' collective, cooperative capacity for self-organization a fetishized authority—money or divinity. Capital privatizes a material wealth; religious institutions sequester spiritual experience. The world market embraces the dynamic mutation of human technocultural possibilities, at the expense of all collectivity; religious fundamentalisms maintain social collectivity, but on the basis of fixed, divinely sanctioned identities and hierarchies.

In the 'war on terror' these two alienated forces turn on each other. Having colluded to annihilate the previously existing socialisms, neoliberal capital and reactionary fundamentalisms face off, fangs bared. The grimace is deceptive, since each partial, alienated antagonist actually requires and internalizes the other. Bush is evangelical, relying on fundamentalist Christianity to discipline the social maelstrom of American turbo-capitalism; bin Laden is a scion of oil capital and lacks any economic program alternative to the world market. But this only intensifies the animosity.

Both are hostile to the forces of Seattle and Porto Allegre, though each sees them as a manifestation of its opponent's logic, as 'terrorism' or 'decadence.' Thus the widely felt intuition that the war on terror is somehow aimed against counter-globalization, recently articulated by Slavoj Zizek, requires no conspiracy theory: whoever moved first, CIA or mujahadeen, 9/11 resulted from the interaction of two forces antithetical to species-being.[34]

What makes this a true "dialectic of disaster," is an aspect of technology that Marx undoubtedly scanted—its power not as means of production, but of destruction.[35] The new technologies of "cognitive capitalism" are rooted in military purposes. They arose from the nuclear confrontation with state socialism. The entire trajectory of computerization, as well as substantial portions of the new life sciences, would by unthinkable without this deadly matrix. The specter of mutually assured destruction can be seen as a *via negativa* to humanity's practical self –recognition of its planetary unity. The mass anti-nuclear movements of 1960s and 1980s were

perhaps the first species-being mobilizations, predecessors of today's globalization from below.

During the Reaganite Second Cold War, E.P. Thompson coined the term "exterminism" to name the mutual momentum of rival military-industrial -scientific systems apparently spiraling to disaster.[36] The collapse of the Soviet Union seemed to vitiate this idea. But the war on terror brings back this dynamic, in revised form.

Neo-exterminism presents itself not as the massified confrontation of Pentagon and Kremlin, but rather in flexibilized, diffuse, post-Fordist form, in the frantic attempt of advanced capital to prevent the real or imagined spread of increasingly generalized, miniaturized and handy weapons of mass destruction that might threaten it hegemony. Underlying this metastasizing dynamic, and the surgical strikes with which established power attempt to manage it, lies, once again, capital's inability to control the high-technology it has unleashed, overlaid on the vast global inequalities we have already discussed, and on the confrontation between world market and fundamentalist reaction.

In neo-exterminism, the most amazing techno-scientific expressions of species-being powers appropriated by capitalists and fundamentalists alike will not appear as retrovirals and open source software, but instead as swarms of robotized battle-drones chattering to each other in the skies over smoky landscapes searching for mobile weaponized smallpox laboratories.

Neo-exterminism does not, yet, offer the 'big bang' conclusion to species-being of nuclear winter; but it does promise slow degradation into persistent war, economic wastage and universal fear, a dynamic that in current conditions of global interdependence may be as mortal. It is an understanding of this possibility that made the forces that in 2000 appeared on streets of Seattle reappear in 2003, as the largest peace movement the planet has ever seen opposing the invasion of Iraq.

The Return of the Plan

Other current manifestations of species being logic include: campaigns for global water access, the struggle against the HIV/AIDS epidemic; the redirection of medical research towards diseases that afflict the poor, young South, rather than towards the post-human North ; movement to reduce and regulate the unevenly inflicted consequences of global warning; mobilizations against the patenting of life forms and for the proper social control of biotechnologies; and, centrally, against the obscenity of global wealth inequalities.

Such movements against the privatizing power of the World Market need, however, to be more clearly linked with another, parallel, range of struggles against the obscurantist logics of Fundamentalist Reaction. These struggles include women's resistance to re-impositions of patriarchal discipline and the defense of ethnic and religious minorities. Absent a stronger linkage between these two wings of a species being movement, the war on terror will successfully wrap itself in the flag of enlightened liberation even while relentlessly deepening the grip of the World Market.

The task of the Species Beings is to disentangle themselves from and neutralize World Market and Fundamentalist Reaction before these two antagonists bring irreparable planetary collapse, through war and negligence. This is the contemporary inflection of the civilizational choice Marx posed when he said that in the absence of socialism, the options were capitalism or barbarism

Many think the very best to hope for is a system of "cosmopolitan social democracy" that hedges the world market around with a series of globalized welfare state institutions.[37] This is a decent, responsible objective for which to struggle, but not enough.

The world market has summoned powers whose consequences it cannot control or even measure. The management of a range global eco-metabolic problems, including not only biotechnological risks but climate and atmospheric change, pandemics and water and energy supply, require institutions of oversight, testing, risk assessment, public resource management and regulation, and collective education—in short, social planning, and on a scale to make previous efforts look retiring.

The new information technologies created by cognitive capital makes such governmentality feasible. The neural networked surveillance and simulation systems deployed to wage the war on terror could be turned to monitoring and avoiding the social and biospheric ruination of the planet

Yet the possibilities of panoptic despotism are obvious. What tempers these risks are the equal potentialities for transparency, creativity and assemblage created by the new mesh of global networked communication, potentialities being so vigorously explored by a host of social movements and individuals.

Realizing the logic of species-being movements thus requires more the romanticism of spontaneous rhizomatic connections. It calls for revival of a very unfashionable idea—global collective planning, but on a basis that avoids the disastrous legacy of the Leninist command state in favor of truly participative processes. The technological possibilities that the world market has itself excited

contain the possibility of a counter-subsumption that will give commodification a declining role in a human future.

Invocations of common humanity have always, rightly, been suspect to Marxists as the weakest of idealizations. Today, however, such invocations by movements of species-beings may just be the starkest of realisms, the only category practically adequate to the concrete productive and destructive dimensions of global capitalism, and the struggles against it.

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[1] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000)

[2] A good basic outline of this dynamic is in *Jihad vs. McWorld: How the Planet is Both Falling Apart and Coming Together--And What This Means For Democracy (*New York: Times, 1995), which, however, falls down seriously when it comes to alternatives to and counter-powers against this catastrophic reciprocity.

[3] Failure to recognize this last point is the weakness of Hardt and Negri's *Empire*, whose emphasis on the cohesive logic of capital as a whole comes at the expense of neglecting the rivalrous action of individual capitals that constitute the system. This results in a Kautskian theory of "super-imperialism," which cannot comprehend the possibilities such as an antagonistic split of "Empire" into "Rome (USA) and Constantinople (China).

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

[5] On this distinction see Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *A Critique of Postcolonial Reason: Toward a History of the Vanishing Present* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999) 73-81

[6] Marx, 113.

[7] Marx, 112, 129, 134.

[8] Joseph Margolis, "Praxis and Meaning: Marx's Species-being and Aristotle's Political Animal." In *Marx and Aristotle: Nineteenth Century German Theory and Classical Antiquity*. Ed. George E. McCarthy (Savage, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 1992) 229-352. Stephen Mulhall, "Species-being, Teleology and Individuality: Part 1: Marx on Species-being," *Angelaki* 3:1 (1993) 9-21.

[9] Etienne Balibar, *The Philosophy of Marx* (London: Verso, 1995), 19.

[10] Louis Althusser, "Marxism and Humanism," in *For Marx* (London: Penguin, 1969). On the issue of breaks see Etienne Balibar, *The Philosophy of Marx* (London: Verso, 1995).

[11] This suggestion follows Marx's own intellectual method, which, as Werner Bonefeld puts it, insisted "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."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.

[12] Spivak, *Critique.*73-81, and David Harvey, *Spaces of Hope* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000) 206-212, 213-232. See also Keith Doubt, "Feminism and Rape as a Transgression of Species Being," in his *Sociology After Bosnia and Kosovo* (Oxford; Rowan and Littlefield, 2000) 61-66.

[13] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000), 25-31, John McMurtry, *Value Wars: The Global Market Versus the Life Economy* (London; Pluto, 2002), 163.

[14] Marx, 148.

[15] Marx, 85.

[16] Spivak, 311.

[17] Hardt and Negri 1994, 281

[18] Selma James, "Marx and Feminism." *Third World Book Review*. 1.6 (1986)

[19] Mariarosa Dalla Costa, "Development & Reproduction," *Common Sense* 17 (1995): 29.

[20] On "cognitive capitalism," see the on-line papers from "Class Composition in Cognitive Capitalism," University of Paris, Feb. 15-16, 2002, available at http://www.geocities.com/CognitiveCapitalism/

[21] Harry Cleaver, "The Chiapas Uprising," *Studies in Political Economy* 44 (1994): 15.

[22] Critical Art Ensemble, *The Molecular Invasion* (New York: Autonomedia, 2002,) 4-5.

[23] See Jeremy Rifkin, *The Biotech Century: Harnessing the Gene and Remaking the World* (New York: Putnam, 1998).

[24] See Lawrence Lessig, *The Future of Ideas: The Fate of the Commons in a Connected World.* New York: Random House 2001)

[25] See Ruth Mayne, "The Global NGO Campaign on Patents and Access to Medicines: An Oxfam Perspective," in Peter Drahos and Ruth Mayne, Eds. *Global International Policy Rights: Knowledge, Access and Development*, (London: Macmillan, 2002).

[26] Marx, 137.

[27] Marx, 169.

[28] Katherine Hayles, *How We Became Posthuman: Virtual Bodies in Cybernetics, Literature and Informatics* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1999).

[29] Marx, 156.

[30] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford; Stanford University Press, 1998)

[31] Amy Chua, *World on Fire: How Exporting Democracy Breeds Ethnic Hatred and Global Instability.* (New York: Doubleday, 2003) 16.

[32] Benjamin Barber. *Jihad vs. McWorld: How the Planet is Both Falling Apart and Coming Together--And What This Means For Democracy* (New York: Times, 1995).

[33] Marx, 111

[34] Slavoj Zizek, *Welcome to the Desert of the Real* (London: Verso, 2002).

[35] Ronald Aronson, *The Dialectics of Disaster* (London: Verso, 1983).

[36] EP Thompson et al, *Exterminism and Cold War*, (London: Verso 1982). See also Etienne Balibar's revival of the term in "Outlines of a Topography of Cruelty: Citizenship and Civility in the Era of Global Violence," *Constellations* 9:1 (2002) 15-19.

[37] David Held and Anthony McGrew, *Globalization/Anti-Globalization.* Cambridge: Polity, 2002

Precarias a la Deriva

A Very Careful Strike - Four hypotheses.

Translators' introduction

We are happy to present here a translation of an article by the Precarias a la Deriva, a militant research collective based in Madrid, Spain. We have translated the title of the piece as "A Very Careful Strike." The title of the piece, "*Una huelga de mucho cuidado*" is a pun in Spanish, and as such is difficult to render into English. It means, at the same time, something very carefully done, something dangerous (something around which one should take care), as well as referring to the proposal of a strike by those who carry out both paid and unpaid caring labor.

The word "*precarias*" means "precarious women workers," referring to women who work in conditions of relative instability. While in many ways this is the condition of women under patriarchy and of workers under capitalism as such, the Precarias seek to analyze the present relationships of waged and unwaged work and the conditions of the women do much of this work. The phrase "*a la deriva*" in the name Precarias a la deriva means "adrift." The verb "derivar" has many meanings in Spanish that do not translate clearly into English. For example, the phrase "*derivar a otro lugar*," literally translated "drift to another place," refers to when a teleoperator connects a client with someone else (a technician, etc). In instances such as this, we have translated these phrases with other less literal terms and indicated in brackets that the Spanish term was *derivar*. We do so to try and give some sense of the wordplay in the piece, which resonates with the groups' name and the conditions of being adrift that they diagnose as characteristic of many people today.

The term "*las derivas*," literally "drifts," refers to the practice of militant research undertaken by Precarias a la Deriva. We have translated the term here as "derives" in order to preserve a common heritage with and reference to the theory

and practice of the derive used by the Situationist International. Precarias a la Deriva take up the practice of the derive in a transformed fashion, as noted in "First Stutterings of Precarias a la Deriva," where the Precarias write:

> "[i]n the Situationist version of the drift, the investigators wander without any particular destination through the city, permitting that conversations, interactions and urban micro-events guide them. This permits them to establish a psycho-cartography based on the coincidences and correspondences of physical and subjective flows: exposing themselves to the gravitation and repulsion of certain spaces, to the conversations that come up along the way, and, in general, to the way in which the urban and social environments influence exchanges and attitudes. This means wandering attentive to the billboard that assaults you, the bench that attracts, the building that suffocates, the people who come and go. In our particular version, we opt to exchange the arbitrary wandering of the flaneur, so particular to the bourgeois male subject with nothing pressing to do, for a situated drift which would move through the daily spaces of each one of us, while maintaining the tactic's multisensorial and open character. Thus the drift is converted into a moving interview, crossed through by the collective perception of the environment."

For more information on the Situationist International and their version of the derive see Debord's "Theory of the Derive," available online at http://library.nothingness.org/articles/SI/en/display/314.

For more in English by the Precarias a la Deriva see the following site: http://www.sindominio.net/karakola/precarias

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1. Sex, care, and attention are not pre-existent objects, but rather historically determined social stratifications of affect, traditionally assigned to women.

The history of sex and care as strata is ancient. Almost from the beginning of Christianity, both were associated with a bipolar feminine model, which located on one (positive) side the Virgin Mary, virtuous woman, mother of god, and on the other, (negative) side Eve, the great sinner of the Apocalypse, the transgressor, the whore. Soon, the first of the these poles would unfold into two options, maternity and virginity, both associated with the Virgin Mary and with care, while the image of Eve and her followers (Mary Magdalene, Pelagia, Tais...) became the stereotype of the sexual active woman, devalued and stigmatized as such.[1] Evidently, this bipolarity, to endure in time and expand in space would present important variations

and would appear declined in different ways in function to social classes, geographic areas, concrete cultural contexts, etc, but what is certain is that it would enter into perfect symbiosis with the bourgeois nuclear family that capitalism converted into the dominant reproductive ideal and would contribute to producing what Betty Friedan called the "feminine mystique": the whore would be the negative reflection in which the good woman (mother and wife or single virgin in submission to others) would see herself, in order to know in every moment whether or not she was following the good path.

The Enlightenment, as well as the processes of industrialization and urbanization (linked to a growing preoccupation with the "hygiene" of populations) produced a gradual transition in the control of feminine sexuality, from religious sanctions to legal sanctions, which in many areas (US, Great Britain, Australia...) included the regulation of the exchange of sexual services for money. It was in this manner that prostitution appeared in the way we know it today, that is to say, as a specialized occupation or profession within the division of labor of patriarchal capitalism, and how it was restricted to determinate spaces and subjects (ceasing to be an occasional resources for working and peasant women).[2] The border between the whore and the good woman would thus remain constructed in a more rigid manner than ever. As such, if a woman was lost[3] (or of a strange sexuality, or a single mother or someone who liked fucking) she was called a whore and thus there was established a clear barrier that excluded her from other options (clearly, from the functions of the dignified spouse and mother). Even though if at first she did not have this profession, she could very easily end up having it. She was kept out of the matrimonial market (with its "normal" relations - monogamous, reproductive, and subordinated) and ended up either in some institution (prison, set up for lost young women...) or in the street, or more precisely, "doing the street."[4]

For its part, attention[5] as a differentiated activity constitutes a new element. This capacity of listening and empathy, just as associated with models of femininity but also with the concrete activities historically reserved for women (in the areas of care as much as in sex), is isolated as a specific function and put to work for the nascent attention industry, in its different variants: telemarketing, telesales, teleassistance, customer service... In this manner, attention, exchanged for money in function of a temporal pattern of measure, is separated from incarnated communication, that which produces lasting relations, trust, and cooperation, and turns to a functionalized and uninvested exchange of codes (words and gestures). In this sense, the stories that teleoperators themselves tell are sufficiently expressive: it is a matter above all of listening, of smiling (smiling through the telephone, even though they can not see you, so that the voice sounds agreeable) and later, to pass them on (*derivar*) to someone else... or, simply, to give excuses. As a compañera told us in one of our derives: "You try to do things the best you can, but you can't do it

right if it's not your job. Then it's just putting up with things. That's very hard, because someone is telling you something that really gives you grief. Their telephone line will be down for two days and you can't tell them: "look, the best thing you can do is to cancel your service because this company won't solve your problem." Then all you can do is give excuses, say that you will do everything you can to solve the problem."[6] Empathy becomes reduced to a pure telephonic smile.

2. Our journeys across the city, questioning for ourselves our precaritized everyday lives, and asking others, have led us to abandon the modes of enunciation that speak of each of these functions as separate and to think more from the point of view of a communicative continuum sex-attention-care.

We say communicative because these three elements (sex, attention, and care) create relationships, they are modes of corporeal communication. But why call it a continuum? On one hand, in order to emphasize precisely the elements of continuity that exist under the stratification, outside of frozen images, in concrete and everyday practices, which are always more complex and fluid than any icon. In the way, we seek to challenge the supposed naturalness of those strata and to open transversal possibilities of alliance and conflict. As we said in another place: "capital fragments the social in order to extract value, we join together in order to elevate it and displace it toward other places."[7]

On the other hand, we speak of a continuum because we notice that the traditional fixed positions of women (and of genders in general) are becoming more mobile, and at the same time new positions are created. The whore is no longer just and only a whore and the sainted mother is no longer such a saint nor only a mother. At the same time, telemarketing firms and unions in that sector press for attention to be a differentiated profession, with its specific educational process: thus was born the *atenta*[8], that professional of listening and moving on [*derivar*] (to another telephone, another service, to an earlier caller or visitor), even, in a moment in which the job is increasingly less an element that organizes (individual and collective) identity, it remains to be seen if this position can come to coagulate as such.

But let's be a little strict and take piece by the piece the reconfiguration of the nexus between sex, sexuality, and care (or, more generally, reproduction), the reorganization of care, the explosion of sex as a mercantile exchange beyond the borders which were marked out and their relations with the attention industry. Is there a higher bidder?[9]

Effectively, we note a diversification in the variants of that peculiar type of contract which is the "sexual contract."[10] To the traditional contracts of matrimony

and prostitution (cut from the patriarchal heterosexual pattern), in an increasingly generalized manner there are being added other modalities, like the renting of mothers (on the part of couples that can not have children) or new types of matrimonial contract (that of the spouse for hire - frequently from the countries of the South, homosexual matrimony, weddings as a form of solidarity among citizens and those without papers...), that break with the classic regulation between sex, sexuality, and reproduction. As was to be expected, this transformation of the types of contracts has a material correlate: the crisis of the model of the Fordist nuclear family and the proliferation of other modalities of unity and cohabitation: monoparental or plurinuclear homes, transnational families, groups constituted by non-blood bonds...

In the same way, the organization of care experiences strong changes that, together with other compañeras, we understand in terms of crisis[11] but also of occasion (for a social transformation that would ally care with desire in a more just manner for each and all). On the other hand, we have spoken extensively about the characteristics of this crisis of care[12]; here we will limit ourselves, for reasons of space, to the enumeration of four crucial elements of its physiognomy. In first place, the passage from the Welfare State (which for good and for bad guaranteed the access of all who were considered citizens to a series of rights) to "risk management" (or, to say it better, to the containment of the subjects of risk) in the hands of an expanding "third sector" where the concrete labor done by women (and sometimes men) "volunteers" and/or with limited and precarious contracts, is subjected to high levels of tension and responsibility.

In second place, the externalization of the home: many of the tasks that were previously conducted in the home now are resolved in the market and many of the qualities of labor in the home today impregnate, in functionalized fashion, the city-firm. The establishment of fast food and pre-cooked meals replaces the hands of the mother that, with the help of the children, managed to have the food ready for when the men of the house returned after their workday; the contracting of other women (frequently women from the countries of the East or the South of the world and, in general, with interminable work days and very low salaries[13]) become a generalized resource that contributes to alleviating the burden of domestic work and to making women compatible with other employees outside the home, at the same time that they maintain an affective South-North passage spurred on by the crisis of the sustainability of life in many countries of the South; the extreme cheapening of clothing thanks to the delocalization of the textile industries to countries where the costs of production as much lower (and levels of exploitation much higher) eliminates the need for weaving, sewing, and darning at home; the golden telephone gives conversation and consultation against loneliness to grandmothers whose children are not able to cope with the many tasks and the multiple places they have

to be; the traditional capacities of the housewife (harmonizing counterposed interests, intuiting desires, attending to distinct necessities, resolving others' problems...) are transferred to the firm and unfold their virtuosity in order to make an environment seem natural and fluid, an increasingly networked environment, that in another fashion would breakdown or explode... the examples can be extended ad nauseum, the case is all of that configurates what Donna Haraway has called the household economy outside of the home.[14] But make no mistake, this externalization of the home does not presuppose that the labor of care has been completely absorbed by the market. Its coordination to assure the sustainability of life and a good part of the concrete tasks continual falling primarily in a gratuitous fashion on the minds and hearts of women and on the networks that they are capable of creating, even if not in the seclusion of the private, but within an intricate network that traverses homes, spheres and countries, and, on occasion, has the telephone line and modem as its principle supports.

We continue with our physiognomy of the crisis of care: the third element is the lack of time, resources, recognition, and desire for taking charge of nonremunerated care - the laboral deregulation becomes impossible to conciliate with attention to those who most require intensive care (children, the sick, the disabled, the old...) and women increasingly are less willing to take on this invisible "charge" along, without recognition or resources for it. The result is a strong uncertainty for periods of illness and old age, above all for those who do not have the money to buy care at the market prices.

In last place, we have urban questions: the crisis (and destruction) of worker neighborhood and their strong sense of community has given place to a process of privatization of public spaces, which finds its maximum expression in closed urbanizations, large commercial centers and the hegemony of the car. How to construct bonds, and beginning from there, relationships of solidarity and care, if we are not able to spatially prefigure a "we," if our everyday contact is reduced to seeing each other at the counter, through the glass of the windows or at the verge of the interior garden, under the blinding lights of the billboards or immersed in the vertiginous rhythm of shop windows. Maybe the neighborhood gangs are to as like Cheshire's smile was to Alice: a sign for possible affective (and caring) territorializations in the privatized city.

Displacements are also perceivable from the point of view of the consumer of goods and services of a sexual character. The sex industry grows, internationalizes, diversifies, sophisticates, mixes with others (for example, with that of attention, in phone sex and the party-line)... Women do not cease to be the principle work force, but they begin to appear also as consumers... of course, if they have the cash to pay for it! Sex as mercantile exchange impregnates other spaces (sex-fashion, sex-spectacle, sex-domestic work, sex-care services, sex-businesswomen) and, inserted

into the chain pleasure-consumption, it used ever more as a commercial attraction, which can already be seen in the most hardcore or the most sweetened versions. Thus, its place becomes more uncertain, more generalized, and the woman who behaves badly is not immediately heading for the other side of the barrier, to the other profession, to a specific mode of life... This paradoxical hypersexualization (better dead than simple![15]) what makes sexuality more present and visible than ever without mitigating the stigma of direct sexual service (prostitution) and creating, in fact, new internal border to the sexual industry itself (sex-porno, sex-street, sex-telephone), comes to the saturation of a fixed and exclusively heteronormative plain. One thing is certain: capitalism has also learned to tolerate and to take advantage of other sexualities, but always and when it can limit them and assure their intelligibility in some fashion. In the end, in addition to a determinate mode of production, capitalism is an axiomatic, that is to say, a specific mode of regulation of flows (of persons, objects, ideas, imaginaries, affects...) and it has been able to swallow differences every time that it can subject them to its system of convertibility.[16]

The displacement of borders and the fluidification of feminine positions, like the growth of new positions and stratifications, are real. In every case, beneath any stratum, affect flows precariously: able to porno/eroticize care, to make sexuality (and its imaginaries) into care and to reconnect attention to incarnated communication, caring and erotic between fragile thinking bodies.

3. Care, with its ecological logic, opposes the securitary logic reigning in the precaritzed world

The present context is marked by the conjunction of macropolitics of security and their everyday correlate, the micropolitics of fear. At the grand scale we observe how the western governments justify the application of these securitary policies as a response to the present geopolitical configuration, strongly marked by the "terrorist threat." These macropolitics articulate themselves day to day with the micropolitics of fear, directly related to the deregularization of the labor market and the instability that this generates. Simultaneously, consumption tries to impose itself as the sole remnant of public activity and public spaces organized around other axes disappear. The securitary triumphs as a way of taking charge of bodies and filtering them into the distinct strata of our societies. In this context of uncertainty and deterritorialization, precarity is not only a characteristic of the poorest workers. Today we can speak of a precarization of existence in order to refer to a tendency that traverses all of society, which feeds and feeds upon the climate of instability and fear. Precarity functions as a blackmail, because we are susceptible to losing our jobs tomorrow even though we have indefinite contracts, because hiring, mortgages, and prices in general go up but our wages don't, because social networks are very

deteriorated and the construction of community today is a complicated task, because we don't know who will care for us tomorrow... The logic of security founds itself in fear, concretizes itself in practices of containment, and generates isolation that persists in present social problems as individual ones. Practices of containment cast the subjects that need care and rights either into poor victims or into subjects dangerous for the rest of "normalized" society, which has been subjected and controlled in well-established niches. In the present situation of cutting back rights, social measures diminish, the focus is fundamentally assistance-ist and controlling, and its object is trying to maintain an order that perpetuates the confusion between being in a situation of risk or vulnerability and being dangerous. To carry out this task of containment, new social agents proliferate, like private security companies and NGOs, which live alongside the old dispositifs - the State security bodies and the disciplinary institutions continue playing their role.

In the face of this prevailing logic, our wager consists in recuperating and reformulating the feminist proposal for a logic of care.[17] A care that appears here as a mode of taking charge of bodies opposed to the securitary logic, because, in place of containment, it seeks the sustainability of life and, in place of fear, it bases itself on cooperation, interdependence, the gift, and social ecology. Seeking a definition of care, we identify four key elements:

* affective virtuosity: this is a matter of a criterion of social ecology, which breaks with the idea that care happen because someone loves you and presents it more as an ethical element that mediates every relation. This affective virtuosity has to do with empathy, with intersubjectivity, and contains an essential creative character, constitutive of life and the part of labor (nonremunerated as much as remunerated) that cannot be codified. What escapes the code situates us in that which is not yet said, opens the terrain of the thinkable and livable, it is that which creates relationships. We have to necessarily take into account this affective component in order to unravel the politically radical character of care, because we know - this time without a doubt - that the affective is the effective.

* Interdependence: we take as our point of departure the recognition of the multiple dependence that is given among the inhabitants of this planet and we count social cooperation as an indispensable tool for enjoying it. The task of politicizing care leads to opening the concept and analyze the concepts that compose it: economically remunerated care, nonremunerated care, self-care and those activities that assure the sustainability of life. People depend on each other, these positions are not static and it is not only "the others" that need care. The proposal consists in destabilizing these positions, which when they are mediated by a labor relation remain even more fixed, because we want to think relations beyond those of the commodity mediations, following the logic of the gift, where one gives without knowing what, how, and when one will receive something in exchange.

* Transversality: when we speak of care we refer to a notion with multiple dimensions. As we have already seen, there are remunerated and nonremunerated labor of care, blurring the false line that is persistently drawn between those who think themselves independent and crosses in an indissoluble form the material and the immaterial (relational, emotive, subjective, and sexual aspects) of our life, needs, and desires. Care takes place in commodity spheres and in those at the margins of the market, in the home and outside the home, combing a multitude of tasks and requirements for different specific knowledges. Care makes newly manifest that we cannot clearly delimit lifetime from work time, because the labor of care is precisely to manufacture life.[18]

*Everydayness: care is that continuous line that is always present, because if it were not we could not continue living, it only varies its intensity, its qualities, and its form of organization (more or less unfair, more or less ecological). We are speaking of the sustainability of life, that is to say, of everyday tasks of affective engineering that we propose to make visible and to revalorize as raw material for the political, because we do not want to think social justice without taking into account how to construct it in day-to-day situations.

Affective virtuosity, interdependence, transversality and everydayness constitute the key ingredients of a careful know-how, fruit of collective and corporeal knowledge[19], that breaks with the securitary logic and thus opens cracks in the walls of fear and precarization. But this is not a prescription for sacrificed women, but rather a line upon which to insist in order for radical transformation.

4. In the present, one of the fundamental biopolitical challenges consists in inventing a critique of the current organization of sex, attention, and care and a practice that, starting from those as elements inside a continuum, recombines them in order to produce new more liberatory and cooperative forms of affect, that places care in the center but without separating it from sex nor from communication.

And what does it mean to "place" care in the center, and in what sense is this proposal able to become a biopolitical challenge?

When we speak of "placing" we refer, more exactly, to re-placing. Because care, as we understand it, already is, in fact, in the center. Even more: it always has been and will continue to be, today more than ever, the center. The center in the sense of principle and principal, as an arche of human existence and of social relations. Because care is what makes life possible (care generates life, nourishes it, makes it grow, heals it), care can make life happier (creating relations of interdependence among bodies) and more interesting (generating exchanges of all types of flows, knowledges, contagions), care can give like, definitively, some meaning.[20] But this reality, which has been silenced in the maligned area of

reproduction and time and again recovered from patriarchal mystifications by feminist critiques of political economy, today comes to be blurred even in those indispensable Italian postoperaismo analyses of immaterial labor, the forms of exploitation and subversive possibilities of the new forms of labor. One of the gravest errors of this analysis resides, following Negri, in "the tendency (…) to treat the new laboring practices in biopolitical society *only* in their intellectual and incorporeal aspects. The productivity of bodies and the value of affect, however, are absolutely central in this context."[21] As such, our proposal for placing care in the center would consist, among other things, in recovering the affective component of immaterial labor from the periphery or the silence to which it is customarily relegated in analyses of reality, and in recognizing the impossibility of separating the materiality of bodies - despite the determination of late capitalism to do just that. In returning to situate this in the place to which it corresponds and which, in fact - we insist - it occupies.

Returning to the continuum: only if the maids, the whores, the phone sex operators, grant-holding students or researchers, telephone operators, social workers, nurses, friends, mothers, daughters, compañeras, lovers... only if the caregivers, which all women are and everyone should be (*que somos todas y que habríamos de ser todos*) rediscover the fundamental role of the labor (remunerated or not) of care and of the social wealth it produces and we withdraw from the invisibilization, hyperexploitation, infravalorization or social stigma of which care is the object, only then will we be prepared to extract from care its transformative force.

Once brought into the light, the revolutionary potential of care could become the logic that governs our lives, replacing not only the securitary logic but also that other logic which underlies it: that of the imperatives of profit. Now the interests of capital determine production (what, how, and when one produces), spaces (the houses we inhabit, the design of our cities and towns, the very global geography and its borders) and times (labor and leisure, haste, the intensification of time). But, why not begin to imagine and construct an organization of the social that prioritizes persons, that attends to our sustainability - from access to health care to the right to affect - which orients toward our enrichment as human beings - from the access to knowledge, education, and information to the freedom to move around the world - that listens to our desires? This is the biopolitical challenge.

And we need tools to bring it about. One of these is the caring strike. It seems a paradox, if, because the strike is always interruption and visibilization and care is the continuous and invisible line whose interruption would be devastating. But all that is lacking is a change of perspective to see that that there is no paradox: the caring strike would be nothing other than the interruption of the order that is ineluctably produced in the moment in which we place the truth of care in the center and politicize it.

Thus the strike appears to us in the first place as interpellation: "what is your caring strike?" Interpellation launched to all: to those of us that act as maids, as housewives, as whores, as nurses, as telephone operators... launched also to those of us that think the cities, in order to facilitate encounters, to those of us that invent bridges, so affects can come through, to those of us that imagine worlds, in order that the profit economy could be replaced by the ecology of care... and, of course, to the men - is are we going to end with the mystique that obliges women to care for others even at the cost of themselves and obliges men to be incapable of caring even for themselves? , Or are we never going to cease to be sad men and women and begin to degenerate the imposed attributions of gender?

In second place, the strike appears to us as an everyday and multiple practice: there will be those who propose transforming public space, converting spaces of consumption into places of encounter and play preparing a "reclaim the streets," those who suggest organizing a work stoppage in the hospital when the work conditions don't allow the nurses to take care of themselves as they deserve, those who decide to turn off their alarm clocks, call in sick and give herself a day off as a present, and those who prefer to join others in order to say "that's enough" to the clients that refuse to wear condoms... there will be those who oppose the deportation of miners from the "refuge" centers where they work, those who dare - like the March 11th Victims' Association (*la asociación de afectados 11M*) - to bring care to political debate proposing measures and refusing utilizations of the situation by political parties, those who throw the apron out the window and ask why so much cleaning? And those who join forces in order to demand that they be cared for as quadriplegics and not as "poor things" to be pitied, as people without economic resources and not as stupid people, as immigrants without papers and not as potential delinquents, as autonomous persons and not as institutionalized dependents. There will be those who...

Because care is not a domestic question but rather a public matter and generator of conflict.

Madrid, February 2005

Translated by Franco Ingrassia and Nate Holdren.[22]

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[1] See Dolores Juliano, La prostitución: el espejo oscuro, Icaria, Barcelona, 2002, pp. 37-43.
[2] Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988.

3 The phrase "una perdidilla," a "lost woman," is a colloquial expression used to imply that a woman enjoys having sex. [Tr.]

4 The expression "haciendo la calle" is a colloquial metaphor for working as a prostitute. [Tr.]

5 The term "attention" here, "atención," also connotes assistance. [Tr.]

6 Complete transcription of the derive with rebel telephone operators at Qualytel, Sunday December 1st, 2002. See "Sin el mute. Relato de una deriva con teleoperadoras rebeldes," in Precarias a la deriva, *A la deriva (por los circuitos de la precariedad femenina)*, Traficantes de sueños, Madrid, 2004, p. 111-117.

7 "Encuentros en la segunda fase. El continuo comunicativo: sexo, cuidado y atención," en Precarias a la deriva, A la deriva, cit., p. 64. [This essay is available online in English as "Close encounters in the second phase - the communication continuum: care-sex-attention," at http://www.sindominio.net/karakola/precarias/close_encounters.htm - Tr.]

8 "Atenta"/"atento" means someone who pays attention, but also someone who has good manners ("fue muy atento commigo" = "he was very gentle with me"). [Tr.]

9 Those are only some of the aspects of the social machine and technology of genders that are opening and reorganizing, concretely, those which have seemed more pertinent to us in relation with the sex-attention-care continuum and with its relation to processes of precarization. Elsewhere we would like to develop other aspects of the reconfiguration of this machine inside a terrain of crisis of the traditional meanings of feminity and masculinity and also, since it could not be otherwise, of battle.

10 On the sexual contract, see Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract*.

11 See Amaia Pérez Orozco and Sira del Río, "La economía desde el feminismo: trabajos y cuidados," in *Rescoldos: Revista de diálogo social*, num. 7, winter 2002.

12 See "Cuidados globalizados," in Precarias a la deriva, *A la deriva*, cit., pp. 217-248.

13 It seems important to us to make this ethnic component of contracted domestic labor standout, a component which introduces the international division of labor and its tension into homes and which creates authentic global chains of affect (see Arlie Russel Hochschild), but without forgetting that there is still a high percentage of this work (above all domestic employees who are not live-in employees) that is frequently carried out by women citizens or interior migrants who frequently work without being legally recognized within the weak social security system that is supposed to regulate this activity. In these cases, the division between the contracting and contracted woman is not so much ethnic as class.

14 See Donna Haraway, "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century," in *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York; Routledge, 1991), pp.149-181.

15 "Better dead than simple," "Antes muerta que sencilla" is the name of a song by a spanish "eurojunior" singer: María Isabel. "sencilla," in this context, means "unsophisticated." [Tr.]

16 An axiom is an operator that equalizes quantities and functions, of a nonspecified nature: thus the levels of public spending, the regulation of migratory flows, the self-regulation of financial markets and a long etc. (...)The flexibility of capital consists precisely in its capacity to add and subtract axioms and at the same time to subject every material, social, cultural flow or current to an axiomatic by means of its conversion into numerable and at times discrete quantities (commodities, symbolic-capital, relational-capital)," in Emmanuel Rodríguez, "Ecología de la metrópolis," *Archipiélago* nº 62.

17 Our concept of the logic of care differs radically form the ethic of care that some feminists (among them Carol Gilligan) proposed in the 1980s. While that notion of the ethic of care places emphasis on the individual attitudes of those who care and think care as a transcendent value (that is to say, more as a moral than a true ethic), for us the logic of care is transindividual and immanent, it does not depend on one but rather on many and is thus inseparable from the social, material, and concrete forms of organization of the tasks related to care.

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[18] On the transversality of care, see Precarias a la deriva, *A la deriva*, cit., p. 224.

[19] The phrase here refers to the Marxian "general intellect" as presented in the work of Paolo Virno, Antonio Negri, and others. [Tr.]

[20] Why do we speak of possibilities? Because the fact that care could be the motor for happier and more interesting lives depends precisely on its continuous questioning and redefinition, that is, on its politicization: care yet, but organized and distributed in a more just manner and with qualities that tend to empower (potenciar) the parts that are placed in relation. We do not value, for example, paternalist, possessive, or dominant care.

[21] Hardt, Michael and Antonio Negri. *Empire*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000. Pages 29-30.

[22] The translators are involved in an informal collective project to encourage, support, and conduct translations of social movement and radical theory related material. Anyone interested in being involved is encouraged to contact them at notasrojas@lists.riseup.net.

P.M.

The golden globes of the planetary commons

The situation is already excellent and will get better.

Of course there are minor problems, but they can all be easily solved.

The future is bright. We'll run out of oil just about at the moment, when we ought to reduce CO2 emission any way– within the next ten years. We'll have to give up our cars, just as we're getting tired of suburbia sprawl misery and want to return to that thrilling pedestrian urban life. The global economy will collapse just in time to return to a simpler life style that will be accessible to all the 6 billion inhabitants of the planet. The Internet will be ready for non-monetary exchange at a moment when the money circuits will have imploded. The clash of civilizations will just about be over when we have established a truly global civilization. The evil twins of neoliberalism and neoconservativism will have neutralized each other in a deadly embrace. The nations will decay in about the same rate as we organize in handier territories (the size of Belgium, or Pennsylvania), that can be democratically managed. Everything will fall in place – there's no need for revolutions, pushy militancy, demos, meetings. We can lie back and watch it happen. The only thing we must do is not to hinder this development and to let it happen freely.

Of course everything will be different – but some fresh excitement is overdue. We're adaptable, we love to cope. We never needed all the stuff that surrounds us now – we just bought it out of boredom. We can do without; we are a proud race of do-it-yourselfers, of instant-organizers and no-nonsense managers. Of course we will still be those lazy, sly, unreliable bums we've always been – but there won't be much work to do anymore. The era of doing will be over. All the rats will have won, the race is over. Champagne for everybody!

In the mean time, there are still some tight-assed maniacs who want to run the planet according to some debilitating scheme devised 250 years ago by a puritan Scot (named Adam Smith). The big betrayal of "economic" exchange was forced upon the unbelieving planet by the west with only too visible (plus armed) hands. Between the Rome of the 1st century, China of the 11th, India in the 17th and Europe in the 18th there were practically no differences of income. In 1750 (when Adam set out) the European pro-capita income was barely 30% higher than the ones in India, China or Africa. In 1870 it was eleven times higher, in 1995 fifty times. The world would probably have been able to defend itself against this disruptive intrusion – but the betrayal of basic human decency was so massive that nobody could grasp it. How could the maximization of profit per se be a motive of human activity? The idea goes against reason itself. And in fact, the replacement of the setting of goals by rational humans in open discussion by an "invisible hand" means the willful abdication of reason itself, the absolute and obtuse evil. It seems like a collective human sacrifice to an unknown and unknowable god. (Saint Calculus - the god of accounting?) Nobody could believe that anybody could seriously undertake such an operation. The surprise was complete, as well as the victory, the result disastrous.

Credo quia absurdum. The unbelievable absurdity is what made capitalism's victory possible. (The arrival of the ridiculous white men, the clowns, in Africa and how they triumphed, is aptly described in Achebe's *Things fall apart*.) Capitalism's triumph is not the triumph of western civilization, though. There could have been something like western civilization, if the capitalist diversion hadn't happened. If the transition in the 15th century had been one towards a renewed commons and not towards the reaction of the combined nobilities/clergies/bourgeoisies of Europe.

The ideas were there and also considerable political forces: peasants, artisans, artists, some clerics, and the early ploletarianizes of the mining and textile industries. Inventions were made: windmills, canals, sailing ships, printing, the telescope etc. Everything was ready for a big gift from Western Europe to the world. Instead of a big gift, there was the big rape.

But there's always a second chance: now.

I'm a fan of Maggie Thatcher's saying "that there is no such thing as *society*" – she was right; there are only social institutions. Without well-defined institutions society is like a body without bones (which, of course, it has become under the corrosive action of capitalism). I'm also an admirer of her successor, Tony Blair, who declared "that class war is over" – implying, of course, that *we* finally won it. Was about time. There is also no such thing as *the commons* – there are only its regulations. A commons without rules is the road to that "tragedy of the commons" that all the champions of the "ownership society are warning us against. Without new social institutions that can guarantee such rules of use, a gaudy "declaration of

the commons" would in fact just generate one big feeding frenzy and then it would collapse. The commons is not something natural and self-regulating, not comparable to ecotopes like the jungle, the prairie or the oceans. When you are a species of 6.5 billion wily bastards you have to be very careful about how you regulate access and rights of usage of it. A lot of communication, information, and bargaining and democratic decision-making are needed to keep the commons going. Actually generosity and trust are the poisons that kill democratic accountability (Beria was right). Even after hundreds or thousands of years of systems of domination and privatization there are still a few examples of successful management of the commons (e.g. the Swiss alp corporations; cf. Diamond[1]). Now, if the commons means such a lot of trouble, why not stay with capitalism, whose market system regulates itself so effortlessly? Because it *doesn't* regulate itself, it's ruining the planet faster than any other economic regime we know. For example it cannot take in account future consumers who can't "vote with their dollars" now. It externalizes most of its costs or dumps them on "society" (welfare should not be necessary in a pure capitalist system). So there is no way around our using reason, knowledge, democratic communication, even science, to determine, what we want to produce, how much, under which conditions.[5] Markets have turned out to be the most wasteful, manipulative and socially exclusive (How do you "vote" if you make only $1 or $3 a day? Okay: you still have the glorious "choice" of boycotting consumer society.) system of finding out "what people want." Of course, the alternative, rational democratic planning, has never (or only patchily) been tested. (Socialist planned – better: *command* - economies always were oligarchic, therefore corrupt, and duly collapsed.) Some aspects of it can be seen in the management of public sectors, that can be - like in Switzerland - very efficient, because it is more or less democratic (but you have to go voting every two months on a street extension here and the garbage tariffs there – it's a bloody nuisance). Propositions to privatize public power or water companies have regularly been voted down.

To make things even more complicated, the global commons has become quite comprehensive – it's not just about land. It includes all the fossil fuels, water, minerals, the oceans, "nature," the accumulated infrastructures, but also such immaterial things as scientific and technological knowledge, professional training, civic education and epistemology. Now, one might argue: why should the achievements of *our* civilization be part of the commons? After all it was *our* intelligence and the work of generations of *our* workers, which created science, built railroads, schools, power plants etc. *We* invented the light bulb, the computer, found penicillin, and discovered DNA etc. We didn't prevent the Chinese from building the steam machine. We never told the Arabs to sit in their tents and *not* to invent the combustion engine. And why weren't all those African tribes curious to know about evolution, the atom or the calculus? All human beings are equally intelligent, curious, and skilled with their hands...

As Jared Diamond points out,[6] certain circumstances put the development of science and modern technology into the western part of Asia. It could not begin everywhere and at the same time and the conditions happened to be the best in Western Europe. Of course there had been scientific thinking in many parts of the world, China, the Islamic world, India – and a lot of inventions had been made before, but the scientific revolution really took off in the fifteenth century in Europe. There are geographical reasons like topological diversity (which made Europe difficult to control for centralized empires), its pole-position to "discover" America, challenges by the climate (affording different lifestyles and great adaptability in a small area), biological facts (horses, anti-bodies). But the final push was actually negative and partly accidental: the despair of the ruling classes at the end of the middle ages, when the peasants, craftsmen, artists and some clerics tried to rearticulate the commons (that had been lost at the latest after the Roman invasion). After the plague, the European aristocracy and clergy was about to lose control over the productivity of rural and urban classes as well. The answer was the industrialization of class war: guns, ships, and territorial militarized states. Seizing the potential of technological advances developed by the rebellious peasants and burghers the reactionary alliance was capable of slaughtering the new movement. And from there it went on: witch-hunts, "religious wars," peasant wars etc.[7] The ruling alliance could not sustain this new technological class war with the resources of its own territories, even exploiting peasants and workers to the maximum: hence the recourse to colonies. This first wave of out-sourcing work made it possible to pay for the time necessary to create the whole intellectual-scientific complex that would deliver the new weapons to ride the wave of proletarian resistance and productivity: universities, royal and other academies, scientific societies, coffee houses, "bourgeois culture." To give one paradigmatic example: to have the leisure to write his seething satires Voltaire relied on his income from speculation in the Caribbean sugar business – which, of course, was mainly based on slave labor. You can say: our enlightenment was based on time lent to us by slaves. Up to now the time we have to create shareware and have chats on the Internet is borrowed from those workers in the "emerging market economies" that earn 50 cents an hour. What I want to say is this: our scientific and technological advances have been a joint venture of most of the past or present inhabitants of the planet. The start-up capital was robbed from the communities in the colonized world. The ingredients for the emerging modern civilization came from all over the world. The advances belong to everybody – also to us, of course (it cannot be denied that generations of workers were exploited in the west as well). There is no "western civilization," but just *the* civilization that happened to emerge in the west (seen from where?). Any attempt to invent a new global apartheid based on "cultural differences," devising "other civilizations" (that then – of course – would clash) is just a strategy of exclusion, of impoverishment, of trying to withhold the resources that belong to all the participants of this adventure. Computer science is typically Samoan. Democracy

couldn't be more Chinese. And what about those Inuit–theories about nine-dimensional superstrings?

So, unfortunately, science took off in the west as a weapon in class struggle. And it still shows. But advances are still advances and most of them could be put to good use for the common welfare. Some will have to be discarded (like most cars, nuclear power).

As everything else the organigram of the impending global commons will not be an invention of especially clever social engineers, but merely an emerging structure, something that is already here, has been around for ages, and just has to be found and picked up. Following Occam's advice, the social forms would be of a minimal number. What we find are, as far as I can see, just five organizational social modules, which can articulate a functioning commons.

1 – synergetic neighborhoods (villages, city-blocks etc.) of about 500 individuals, providing lodging, food (via a partnership in the country - 90 ha under European conditions), media, social spaces, free guest rooms etc. These synergems (or bolos,[9] as I called them in an older text) can be as culturally diverse as we wish, but must be open, democratic and respecting ecological limits (1000 W per capita). They're echoes of those premodern village communities that were dismantled by capitalism.

2- democratic communal areas (small towns, city boroughs: politems) of ten to twenty synergems (or tega, in bolo'bolo). This is the area of public services, smaller regional industries (organized as common enterprises of synergems), local politics (an echo of the Greek polis), "good governance."

3 – agrourban regions (metropolitem) of hundreds of thousands or millions of inhabitants, depending on historical conditions: New York City or Zurich. These regions provide such vital metropolitan services as operas, universities, museums, luxury shops, world-class restaurants, stadiums etc. The region (up to 200 km circumference) contains most of the agricultural partners mentioned under 1.

4 – autonomous territories of roughly 40'000 km2, and 10 million inhabitants (in the case of NY, this would coincide with the metropolitem). This is the area of public services for transportation, emergency aid, regional industries (breweries, building materials, energy, water etc.). The AT can combine on subcontinents for train systems, high tech industries, pharmaceutical industry etc. The ATs make those big nations, that cause so much trouble, redundant.

5 – one planetary organization to manage what's left: mainly the distribution of resources, problems between territories, emergency aid, global transportation networks, scientific research etc.

The road to the commons (and there can only be one, for all the different resources are interrelated) seems difficult, even unthinkable, at the moment. Why should those that had been exploited for hundreds of years not sit tight on their resources (e.g. oil) and a least try to get some of the ones that they helped create in exchange? Mutual distrust seems in fact more than justified. We cannot expect that those who still have the worst deal will make the first step. The **Big Offer** must come from those 500m visa-card-holders, which use 80% of the planet's resources and never compensated the others for 400 years of colonial and subsequent exploitation. Even those regions that still have something to sell to global capital would be much better off, if they got their fair share of everything. A "new caliphate" based on oil would at best be a poor sub-commons.

However pouring money into the "poor countries," as proposed by Jeffrey Sachs[8] cannot be the road to the commons. Such a sudden monetarization would ruin the remaining subsistence economies and mostly benefit the ruling oligarchies. Without a regeneration of democratic institutions everywhere, this transfer would never reach the people. Real "good governance" – if we want to use this magic word - must certainly be achieved as well in the rich countries as in the poor ones. So what we need is a comprehensive program of political, technical and social measures, best managed from people to people, from virtual synergem to virtual synergem (Community Supported Community). There can be no "help" for the others, if we are not able to help ourselves. The restructuring of suburbia must proceed step in step with the rebuilding of infrastructures in ex-colonial areas and the transfer of the needed resources. It will take some time and must be done carefully. Private or public emergency aid will be necessary in the meantime and must be supported by all means. We might be OK. In the long run, but only if we're not dead in the short one.

If you think through this concept of the global commons into all its ramifications and that it ought to be worldwide to work, you realize that it implies a revolution, or at least a new war of independence, this time not from England but from petroleum (remember the Phoenix SUV-party, that started it?). Now, I'm not the revolutionary type and I think, we might get around big upheavals with little steps, some reforms, maybe even elections. Why shouldn't Hillary Clinton (one of the most underestimated politicians of these times) run on a "It takes a synergem"-platform and become the first synergetic president, implementing a one trillion program to restructure the US?

On the other hand, experience teaches us that waiting for the politics is not such a good idea, better start something yourself in the meantime. What I propose is the **golden ball bar**. A synergem – or its modest forerunner, a cooperative housing project – needs meeting places, such like a bar or a café, where you can have a chat between the laundry room and the food depot (where the farmers unload your

vegetables). Founding a project of 500 people out of nothing is quite hard, but why not start with its bar? – that could be easier. What I mean with a golden ball bar is a small place (30 m2 is enough) which you rent as a group and where people of the neighborhood and visitors can have a drink and a chat and where you start organizing synergems or approximations of them. As a sign you hang a golden ball (size of basketball or bigger, it doesn't have to be solid gold) in front of it or put it on a pole, so that everybody can see it. In some neighborhoods there might already exist such meeting places, even commercial ones, or stores, so then you strike a deal with them, rent out a corner and put up your ball. In many cities little neighborhood bars or cafés already have the function to get the locals together: pubs in England, *il bar* in Italy etc. Probably the nicest and smallest neighborhood bars can be found in the old town of Barcelona. Now a golden ball bar has also this function, but not only. The existing places are under a certain commercial pressure – if you don't buy a drink, you get the owner in difficulties. Furthermore they tend to be places for regulars and locals and not so friendly to outsiders. With the golden ball you advertise that visitors are welcome, that it is an open place, that you'll find people interested in social initiatives (but not exclusively). In a way the golden ball bars are a free franchise comparable to the Starbucks cafés, that – in the absence of a non-commercial alternative – fulfill some of these social functions (hence their success). Your golden ball bar will be one of those 11 million potential worldwide synergem-bars (one on every block, in every town), where you can sit down, talk to the locals and have a drink (doesn't have to be a gin and tonic) and a little something (a snack, like the meze of the Greeks or Lebanese). They could also be the seeds of that universal hospitality (sila), without which a new commons won't be possible. And of course, once we're there, all those balls will be of solid gold... (could there be a better investment?)

The main message that is needed at the moment is the one of the **Big Offer** – a declaration of the willingness to go down to a nominal standard of living (GNP-wise) of a country like Morocco, worldwide (i.e. somewhere around $4000 per capita per year). This doesn't mean that we all should live like the Moroccans currently have to – resources can be used more efficiently, there are scientific advances in the field of ecological technology, social cooperation can guarantee an enjoyable life without the clutter that's surrounding us today. If you go down to 20% of the current global energy-use and share the remaining amount with everybody – that'll be about the level. (A lot of people are already below this level today, and without the technological advances.) The process of conversion and transfer cannot be conceived as one of linear shrinking. It might even be necessary to expand industrial production and increase the use of resources temporarily to produce the new technological basis for a sustainable lifestyle. This is the price we'll have to pay for today's shortsighted economic investment policy: they should have stopped producing SUVs decades ago.

Zurich, 6th March 2006

Notes

1. Diamond, Jared, *Collapse,* Penguin, 2005
2. Goodstein, David, *Out of Gas; The End of The Age of Oil*, W.W.Norton, 2004; Heinberg, Richard, *The Party's Over,* Riemann, 2004
3. Owen, David, Green Manhattan, in: *The New Yorker*, October 18, 2004
4. Sennett Richard, *Respect in a World of Inequality,* Norton, 2003
5. Kay, John, *The Truth About Markets*, Penguin, 2004; Stiglitz, Joseph, *Globalization and its discontents*, Penguin, 2002; Friedman, Thomas L., *The World Is Flat,* Farrar, Straus & Giroud, 2005
6. Diamond, Jared, *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, Norton, 1999
7. Federici, Silvia, *Caliban and The Witch: Women, The Body and Primitive Accumulation*, Autonomedia, 2004
8. Sachs, Jeffrey, *The End of Poverty*, Penguin, 2005
9. P.M., *bolo'bolo*, Autonomedia, NY, 1995.

George Ciccariello-Maher

"Detached Irony Toward the Rest": Working-Class One-Sidedness from Sorel to Tronti

"the only way to understand the system is through conceiving of its destruction"[1]

This paper seeks to situate the thought of Italian Marxist Mario Tronti—however tentatively and imperfectly—within a lineage of anti-synthetic thought, or rather thought which reserves a significant space for the anti-synthetic moment, the moment of subjective dissolution of the enemy totality. What I mean by these somewhat cryptic phrases will become increasingly clear as the argument proceeds. For the moment, and to put it perhaps a bit polemically, I will characterize this tendency—which I also seek to positively valorize—as a fundamentally *separatist* tendency, one which subjectively establishes a division internal to society and which functions toward its dissolution. The "logic of separation" associated with this fundamentally radical and antagonistic tendency, however, can and must be immediately and sharply distinguished from those conservative, essentialist, or reactionary elements that one might associate with the phenomenon of separatism.

While some might choose to begin such an anti-synthetic lineage with Karl Marx himself—after all, it was he who first (arguably preceded only by Saint-Simon[2]) emphasized class struggle as the constitutive element of history—both Marx's own *oeuvre* and the theoretical legacy of Marxism is far too ambiguous and synthetic for our purposes. We begin, then, with a nominally Marxist thinker—often disavowed, disdained, and discredited—who placed an unprecedented emphasis on this anti-synthetic logic, and from whom we will derive its parameters: Georges Sorel.

…"to restore the separation of the classes"…

I don't claim to find in Sorel the *origin* of such thought; indeed, as Foucault's genealogy of "race war" demonstrates, such logics have a long history and can be found in a multiplicity of possible historical moments.[3] But it was Sorel's peculiarity to delineate separation more clearly than most, a peculiarity that derived, no doubt, from the historical conjuncture within which he wrote, book-ended as this was by the Dreyfus Affair and the Revisionist controversy in the mid-1890s and the maturation of Leninism more than two decades later. Sorel would side with the revisionists in theory, but toward an entirely distinct political outcome: unwilling to replace a crumbling determinism with the evolutionary development of Bernstein, Sorel broke more severely with economistic accounts than had any of his contemporaries. Disenchanted with and disgusted by the parliamentary left after Dreyfus, and openly rejecting the determinism of all existing Marxisms, but moreover operating in a context still untouched by what would become a tidal wave of Leninism, Sorel elaborated some of the most radical, innovative, and overlooked revolutionary strategies of the century.

In his seminal *Reflections on Violence* (1908), Sorel establishes the idea of a multifaceted separation—formulated in specifically economic, political, and epistemological terms—as a frontier *internal to* society, which is established through a sort of friend-enemy distinction (but one which, by virtue of precisely this internal character, is necessarily distinct from Schmitt's formulation).[4] This theoretical construct is instantiated in practice through recourse to the idea of a revolutionary myth, an idea which is not—contrary to Antonio Gramsci's reading—a veiled determinism.[5] Rather, the myth serves as a sort of *projection*: it is the projection of the enemy through a firm separation that allows for the consolidation of radical subjectivity. It is the projection of the enemy that allows the consolidation of the self, as—in a gesture toward Tronti—the *class-for-itself* appears as the necessary precursor to the *class-in-itself*.[6]

The radical and innovative character of Sorel's approach is most starkly illustrated through the entry-point of practice, in which Sorel advocates that the working class

> repay with *black ingratitude* the *benevolence* of those who would protect the workers, to meet with insults the homilies of the defenders of human fraternity, and to reply by blows to the advances of the propagators of social peace…[this] is a very practical way of indicating to the middle class that they must mind their business and only that.[7]

"For the discussions of law, they [the working class] substitute acts of war," he adds.[8] Not only is such a response conducive to the crafting of working class identity, but it

also plays a central role in shoring up the class relation itself, and thereby driving history: it is only through such a subjective orientation by the working class that the capitalists might "get back a part of their energy," since such a violent response "confines employers to their role as producers, and tends to restore the separation of the classes, just when they seemed to be on the point of intermingling in the democratic marsh."[9] Working-class subjectivity is granted the autonomy to force the consolidation of capitalist subjectivity, thereby restoring objectivity to Marxist science.

"Social peace" and the "democratic marsh": these are the enemies in Sorel's account, due to their mediating and moderating function, their effort to formally inscribe the working class into parliamentary socialism. And it is through his opposition to such moderating influences that we derive an understanding of Sorel's opposition to philosophies and political strategies which rely too heavily on notions of unity and totality, and which are thereby rendered both factually wrong (there's no such thing as "society") and politically pernicious (in the co-optation of the working class and the stagnation of capitalist development). The precise character of this concern is formulated in a 1910 appendix to the *Reflections*, entitled "Unity and Multiplicity," in which Sorel—through an appreciative history of religious separatism—seeks to correct what he sees as a flawed dismissal of class struggle on the basis of common-sense notions of unity.[10] Such claims are most often buttressed by the prevalence of "socio-biological analogies" which presume that the unity of society mirrors that of biological organisms.[11] In place of such approaches, Sorel offers his own "diremptive" method, one which seeks "to examine certain parts without taking into account the ties which connect them to the whole," and which moreover refuses the imperative to "reconstitute the broken unity."[12] This method, however, is far from universal or objective, as "according to the points of view one takes, one has the right to consider society as a unity or as a multiplicity of antagonistic forces."[13]

It is here, however, that Sorel's argument takes a slightly counterintuitive turn, but one which is consistent with the general contours of his thought. After attacking the idea of the unity of society, he immediately applies the same argument to workers' organizations, which "ought to vary to infinity as the proletariat feels itself more capable of cutting a figure in the world."[14] Parliamentary socialists, on the other hand, have taken it upon themselves to group the working class according to a foreign concept—unity—which they borrow from democracy, and which crucially implies a unity *with* the bourgeoisie. "It is necessary to take a point of view diametrically opposed to the one taken by politicians," but one which doesn't reject unity *a priori*, but rather cultivates the "ideological unity" of the proletariat as a fighting group, a unity which functions in opposition to a broader social unity.[15] The separation of the working class from capitalists, for Sorel, does not merely imply the

substitution of two unities for one. Rather, to oppose the politicians does not imply a facile rejection of their concepts, but rather a recognition of the autonomous capacity of the working class to turn those concepts to its own ends.

We see, then, that Gramsci's charge of determinism applies even less in the realm of identity and subjectivity, as the identities in question (working class, capitalist, bourgeois) are not rigidly fixed, but rather quite the opposite: Sorel's formulation represents a recognition that such identities *exist only insofar as they are projected*, which translates practically into the idea that "individuals can sensibly adhere to a group only on the assumption that there is one."[16] Struggle, moreover, helps to consolidate these oppositional identities by "weeding out the pacifists who would spoil the elite troops."[17] Furthermore, the manner in which such groups are represented and imagined plays a contributing role in their actualization, and this is the performative element of Sorel's thought: "Oppositions, instead of being glozed [*sic*.] over, must be thrown into sharp relief…the groups which are struggling one against the another must be *shown* as separate and compact as possible."[18] To *show* an image of a class and its character is to *create*, contribute to, or encourage that character, and a closer look at the sort of class that Sorel deems necessary—separate and compact—will allow us to glimpse his understanding of class constitution.

What Sorel desires, to put it differently, is a sort of determinism—he wants to restore the objectivity to Marxism—but such objectivity can only be established, paradoxically, through subjectivity:[19]

> Proletarian violence not only makes the future revolution certain, but it seems also to be the only means by which the European nations—at present stupefied by humanitarianism—can recover their former energy…A growing and solidly organized working class can *compel the capitalist class to remain firm in the industrial war*; if a united and revolutionary proletariat confronts a rich middle class, eager for conquest, capitalist society will have reached its historical perfection. Thus proletarian violence has become an essential factor of Marxism.[20]

Viewed in this way, we can see that—contrary to most prevalent readings—it is separation and not the myth which constitutes the central category for Sorel.[21] Separation is projected—through "mythical" means—for the sake of cultivating the "ideological unity" necessary for the material instantiation of class separation. Put the other way around, separation simultaneously provides the *raison d'être* and the teleological content of the myth. The myth is a mechanism, albeit a crucial one, whereby the goal of separation and thereby of a paradoxical subjective determinism is established, and recognizing this fact is the key to reorienting and salvaging what is useful in Sorel's thought.

Sorel's logic of separation, moreover, constitutes a *double paradox*. It is paradoxical, firstly, in its antagonism: it is a separation defined not by the establishment of distance between oneself and one's enemy, but rather by the establishment (and projection) of a *frontier of antagonistic separation*. This is a contact zone, not a buffer zone. This paradox is the basis for a crucial distinction between a logic of separation and what I deem a conservative or reactionary separatism, the goal of which is the establishment of distance to allow for isolated, autarkic development. Radical separatism thereby presupposes the maintenance and cultivation of antagonism. The second paradox arises in the temporal aspect of this separation, as it is through a sort of historical disruption that objectivity can be subjectively crafted:

> There is no process by which the future can be predicted scientifically…And yet without leaving the present, without reasoning about this future…we should be unable to act at all. Experience shows that the *framing of a future, in some indeterminate time*, may…be very effective.[22]

There exists no zero-sum relation between transcendence and immanence, as the gesture of a "mythical" projection of transcendence is what allows transformation from a position of relative immanence. In what follows, I hope to demonstrate the operation of this paradoxical logic in Tronti.

…separation against hegemony…

The European reception of Sorel is an infinitely complicated one, as his thought would be mobilized by anarcho-syndicalists, communists, and fascists in the later years of his life and following his death in 1922. This reception was equally complicated within the left itself, where the manner in which Sorel was received and his thought utilized can be usefully understood along broadly Gramscian (i.e. "hegemony"-based theories) and anti-Gramscian lines. While Gramsci was inspired by Sorel, he disagreed sharply with the latter on the role of the party, seeing Sorel's theories as having been too critical, too negative, and never sufficiently constructive (a critique which stems, I argue, from Gramsci's misunderstanding of the myth).[23] This critique of Sorel from the perspective of the imperative to construct a hegemonic alternative is continued by what could be broadly deemed the "Gramscian" left, which ironically lays greater claim to Sorel than do many more radical, far-left, or anti-hegemonic elements. This tendency culminates at present in the work of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, who lay claim to Sorel only after filtering the latter through what they perceive as the radical democratic imperative of Gramsci, and who further add a Derridean twist which results in a further distancing from central elements of Sorel's thought (and indeed from that of Gramsci as well).[24]

Standing in broad opposition to this tendency is what one might loosely term "radical anti-Gramscian" thought. This strand of thought, which appears most clearly in the Italian context (in which Sorel's direct influence was considerable), constitutes a lineage from Sorel himself to his Italian collaborators, most famously Antonio and later Arturo Labriola and Bendetto Croce. The anti-Gramscian mantle would later be taken up by Galvano Della Volpe, who would then inspire several of the theoretical progenitors of the "Autonomist" school of Italian Marxism, including Mario Tronti. Indeed, Tronti would be more willing than his predecessor to break with the Gramscian legacy, for a number of reasons.[25] Combining the identification of *de facto* working-class antagonism (in the work of Raniero Panzieri and Romano Alquati) with Della Volpe's "materialist sociology" rooted in a reinterpretation of Marx, Tronti's break with Gramscianism would be near-inevitable.[26]

Indeed, Tronti and his collaborators would push decisively beyond the "theoreticism" of even Della Volpe himself, forcefully rejecting ideology as a ground for struggle, arguing that "*an ideology is always bourgeois.*"[27] This claim would accompany an attack on the very organic intellectual charged with taking up that ideological struggle, in which the latter would be labeled as a practitioner of "the most diabolical bourgeois science that has ever existed, industrial sociology," and arguing that thinkers must "refuse to become intellectuals."[28] That Tronti was severely critical of the Gramscian heritage is clear. Indeed, much of the *Autonomia* movement, which matured in opposition to the stifling presence of an Italian Communist Party (PCI) which openly claimed the Gramscian legacy, would inevitably tend toward a deepening of its hostility toward this monumental figure of early Italian Marxism.[29] However, in what follows I will emphasize another element of Tronti's anti-Gramscianism, one which resides below the surface of party politics, in the realm of concepts: Tronti's anti-hegemonic tendency, one which bears striking resemblance to Sorelian separation, and which arises in a context of opposition to the PCI's assimilation of hegemonic struggle to active participation in capitalist planning. This extension of Sorel's logic appears most clearly in Tronti's 1966 *Operai e Capitale* (*Workers and Capital*), under the guise of a political, economic, and epistemological affirmation of "one-sidedness." While the autonomist critique of the logic of hegemonic struggle would appear most unmistakably in Antonio Negri's work of the late 1970s, this critique is effectively prefigured by Tronti, and an assessment of the Sorelian elements of Negri's thought thereby requires a close evaluation of his predecessor.[30]

…"a rigorously one-sided class logic"…

In what follows, I set out from Tronti's understanding of the need for a new working-class science, a science which he formulates as a sort of non-objective objectivity. This seeming paradox becomes clear in Tronti's practical assertion of the

one-sidedness of the working class, a position which sets out from the imperative of avoiding subsumption to the enemy totality, in this case capitalist society. I then discuss the instantiation of that one-sidedness in reference to the consolidation of working-class identity—which Tronti elaborates through a reversal of the traditional relation between the in-itself and the for-itself—before considering more closely the degree to which this inversion brings Tronti into line with what we have seen above from Sorel.

Much early autonomist thought set out from the initial inversion—delineated most forcefully in Tronti's 1964 "Lenin in England"—which asserted the fundamental dependence of capital upon labor, and the capacity of the latter to impose upon the former "through the objective violence of their organized strength in the factories."[31] This "new epoch"—one facilitated by the socialization of capital—gives rise immediately (in the second paragraph of "Lenin in England) to the need for a new theoretical orientation, a new "science": "Capitalist society has its laws of development: economists have invented them, governments have imposed them, and workers have suffered them. But who will discover the laws of development of the working class?"[32] This is the project taken up by Tronti's 1966 *Operai e Capitale* (which included the earlier essay, among others), in which he sets out to make of this initial inversion a working-class science by wading into epistemology, and it is in this effort that Tronti's proximity to a Sorelian framework comes clearly into view.[33]

The first point to be made regarding this science, however, is its explicit refusal of objectivity. This is already visible in the statement above, in which Tronti argues that economic "laws" are political creatures, to be invented and imposed by one class and suffered by another. As Steve Wright argues, Tronti's "science" set out from a symptomatic reading of Marx which, unlike Althusser's seminal study published the same year, explicitly rejected a model of working class epistemology which relied on an internally-coherent and entirely self-referential system.[34] Rather, what Tronti proposes is "a non-objective social science with no pretense to objectivity…a unilateral synthesis," in which

> we must recover a specific type of internal development of the working class, a political growth of its struggles, and on top of this we must build a lever to *leap forwards*—without objectivism, without a return to origins, without beginning from year zero.[35]

Tronti, however, insists on the "objective materiality of the working class," and this paradoxically non-objective objectivity serves as a useful entry point into Tronti's understanding of the politics of class constitution, consolidation, and development.[36]

It is here that we get a first glimpse of Tronti's one-sidedness. As a means of opposition to the "objectivity" of bourgeois social science, he offers the point-of-view of the working class, a perspective which has direct relevance to theoretical production:

> On the theoretical plane, the workers viewpoint must today be unlimited, it must not erect barriers, it must leap forward by transcending and negating all the factual proofs that the intellectual cowardice of the petty-bourgeois is continually demanding. For working class thought, the moment of discovery has returned. The days of systems building, of repetition, and vulgarity converted into systematic discourse are definitely over: what is needed now is to start again, with rigorously one-sided class logic, engaged courage for ourselves, and detached irony toward the rest.[37]

This is a science of working-class *praxis* as opposed to the bland empiricism of some approaches to *practice*. Instead of thinking *about* the working class—this, after all, is the "diabolical" work of the industrial sociologist—the working class is granted, at least nominally, a theoretical weight of its own.[38] There exist, accordingly, "*history* and *politics*: two legitimate horizons, but each for a different class": the one buried in the collection of banal facts, the other dedicated to the radical unification of those moments.[39] To the assertion that "he who knows truly, hates truly," we could accordingly add the opposite:

> The first step continues to be the recuperation of an irreducible working-class partiality against the entire social system of capital. Nothing will be done without *class hatred*: neither the elaboration of theory, nor practical organization. Only from a rigorously working-class viewpoint will the total movement of capitalist production be comprehended and utilized as a *particular* moment of the workers' revolution. Only one-sidedness, in science and in struggle, opens the way simultaneously to the understanding of everything and to its destruction. Any attempt to assume the *general interest*, every temptation to remain at the level of *social science*, will only serve to inscribe the working class—in the most powerful way possible—within the development of capital.[40]

True knowledge—in contradistinction to those inevitably flawed efforts at general knowledge—presupposes class enmity, as embodied in a paradoxically non-objective working-class science.

Like Sorel, this emphasis on "ferocious *unilaterality*" draws its sustenance largely from a critique of totality, and it is no coincidence, then, that the phrase "general interest" appears threateningly prominent in both texts.[41] It is here that anti-synthetic continuity makes itself felt, as Tronti even goes so far as elaborating class relations in terms of the opposition between the working class and capitalist *society*,

arguing that with the historical process of the socialization of capital, it comes to pass that "society's general representative is now truly social capital."[42] This is not to say that the two classes have ceased to exist: nothing could be further from the truth. Rather, what has occurred has been that capitalist interest has come to be bound up, firstly, with the need for "real domination over society in general," and secondly, with the strategic erasure and obfuscation of that very class relation. In such a situation,

> workers no longer have to counterpose the ideal of a *true society* to the *false* society of capital, they no longer have to dissolve and dilute themselves within the general social relation. They can now re-discover their own class as an anti-social revolutionary force. At present, the *whole* society of capital stands before the working-class without the possibility of mediation. The relation has finally been reversed: the only thing that the general interest cannot mediate within itself is the irreducible partiality of the workers' interest.[43]

Tronti's worry is precisely the emerging talk of the disappearance of class, and he sees the tendency to speak of such a trend as an erroneous and misleading response to the socialization of capital, as "the real generalization of the working-class condition can suggest the appearance of its formal extinction."[44]

The *specificity* of labor is thereby assimilated to the *genericity* of popular sovereignty, the nation, the people, civil society. This sort of subsumption was, in effect, the unifying thread of PCI strategy: from Togliatti to both Giorgio Amendola's open support for capitalist planning and even Pietro Ingrao's nominally left-wing "privileging of civil society as the crucial site of struggle."[45] Tronti's rejection of struggles on the level of both ideology and hegemony allowed for the insight that such "political mediation here serves to allow the explosive content of labor's productive force to function *peacefully* within the beautiful forms of the modern relation of capitalist production."[46] Diametrically opposed to such a position, and following on from the assertion of working-class partiality, Tronti would conclude that

> the working class is not the people…We ourselves, in fact, *come from the people.* And just as the working class is politically emancipated from the people at the moment when it is no longer presented as a subaltern class, so too does working class science break with the heritage of bourgeois culture at the moment in which it no longer assumes the perspective of society as a whole, but rather the perspective of that part which wishes to overthrow it.[47]

Thus, "when the *working class* politically refuses to become *the people*, it does not close, but rather opens the most direct path toward the socialist revolution."[48] Immediate, uncritical synthesis and the resulting incorporation into the enemy

totality thereby becomes, for Tronti, the mortal enemy of the working class, and he would expend significant energy dispelling those notions which serve as vehicles toward such an end, central among which is culture: "If culture is the reconstruction of the totality of man, the study of his humanity in the world, a vocation to keep united that which is divided, then it is something which is reactionary by nature and should be treated as such."[49] Moreover, the idea of a specifically working-class culture is, for Tronti, as oxymoronic as the idea of a specifically bourgeois revolution. Rather than cultural synthesis, the task of the working-class perspective is oriented toward "*a dissolution of everything existing*, a refusal to continue to build in the rut of the past. Man, Reason, History, these monstrous divinities should be fought and destroyed as if they were the power of the bosses."[50] "As if," because they are central to the maintenance and reproduction of that power.

Dissolution of the social as totality is clearly as central to Tronti as it was to Sorel,[51] but we still have yet to see the precise character, the conditions, the parameters under which this dissolution might occur. That is to say, while we have already mentioned the paradoxical non-objective objectivity of the working-class point-of-view, and while we have glimpsed the social totality within and against which such a perspective operated, we still have yet to probe the precise character and identity of that part which wishes to overthrow society. In order to better grasp these elements of Tronti's thought, then, we must first analyze a bit more closely the nature of the material vehicle of that dissolution: the autonomous working class.

Central to Tronti's theoretical apparatus—as was also the case for that of Sorel—is the theme of the compactness of the working class, and it is indeed this specter of compactness which stands in stark contrast to the equation of the working class with "the people," a derivation which inscribes the former into the expansiveness of society and the general interest. One might argue that this compactness is merely the material result of historical developments, and that it is thereby an objective condition of sorts. This is indeed the impression given by Tronti's discussion toward the end of "Lenin in England," when he speaks of "the whole, compact social mass which the working class *has become, in the period of its historical maturity*."[52] But we can already sense here a tension: certainly, the working class "has become" compact, but it has done so precisely through its *political* development. Hence "the only way to prove this unity [of the working class] is to start organizing it."[53]

This development toward compactness is situated temporally in Tronti's discussion of the refusal, his equivalent of Sorel's practice of working-class separation. From the beginning, Tronti argues, the class struggle has "two faces, that of the working class and that of the capitalists, which are not yet separated by a radical division."[54] This is indeed a strange statement, but one which becomes clear once we recognize that the "*simplification* of the class struggle" entails a recognition

of "not only the quantitative growth and massification of the antagonism, not only its ever-increasingly homogeneous internal unification," but *also* and *most crucially* a re-establishment of "its primitive, direct elementary nature," that is to say, a *cultivation of class partiality*.[55] Hence, the reduction of the class struggle to a pure and one-dimensional antagonism between two compact class identities gains the status not of an objective historical development, but rather a subjective political project in which "struggle…was seen as the greatest educator of the working class, binding the various layers of the workforce together, turning the ensemble of individual labour-powers into a social mass, a mass worker."[56] Class—specifically in its highest (and thereby most discrete) form—is as much a subjective construction as it is an objective development, and this orientation is central for grasping Tronti's position in the Sorelian legacy.

The radical character of Tronti's position on class—and its fundamental proximity to that of Sorel—emerges most clearly in his markedly non-orthodox discussion of the class-in-itself (*Klasse an Sich*) versus the class-for-itself (*Klasse für Sich*). It is perhaps worthwhile to begin by noting that, even for Marx, the so-called "class-in-itself" cannot be reduced to pure objectivity, and we see this even in its alternative formulation as a "class against capital," a class determined *differentially* vis-à-vis its enemy:

> This mass is thus already a class as against capital, but not yet for itself. *In the struggle*, of which we have noted only a few phases, this mass becomes united, and *constitutes itself* as a class for itself. The interests it defends becomes class interests. But the struggle of class against class *is a political struggle*.[57]

Here, we see that the organic link between an oppositionally-defined class and its homogenization through struggle is already clearly present in Marx's formulation. However, in a passage that is so crucial as to be worth quoting at length, Tronti seizes upon this differential character of Marx's definition to catapult himself beyond it:

> Could we then say that we are still in the long historical period in which Marx saw the workers as a "class against capital," but not yet as a class "for itself"? Or shouldn't we perhaps say the opposite, even if it means confounding a bit the terms of Hegel's dialectic? That is, that the workers become, *immediately*, when confronted by the boss, "a class for itself"; and that they are recognized as such by the first capitalists; and it is only afterwards, after a long and difficult historical process, which is perhaps not yet completed, and which involves terrible practical experiences that are still repeated today, that the workers arrive at the point of being actively, subjectively, "a class against capital." And there exists in this transition the need for political organization … The working class *does* what it *is*.[58]

Put another way, "we cannot understand what the working class *is* if we do not see *how it struggles*."[59] Contrary to many interpretations—which, no doubt, owe much to the misleading phrase "class-in-itself"—Marx's understanding was not essentialist. A class can be said to *exist* in opposition, but only to *constitute itself* through political struggle. This existence is teleological in that it points toward the struggle, but Marx resists the temptation to define the present in terms of that teleology (by granting the "class-in-itself" political content), and he thereby neglects the strategic utility of that teleological content.

Tronti's intervention is to tug on the ambiguity of this preliminary existence, one which—as formulated in *The German Ideology*—delineates class as the material effect of a "common battle" that has yet to begin.[60] For Tronti, "from the very beginning the proletariat is nothing more than an immediate *political interest* in the abolition of everything existing," and it is this political character which, from a Marxist perspective, constitutes the class-for-itself.[61] In accordance with the basic autonomist reversal which grants the working class the offensive, it is then this preliminary struggle against the individual capitalist which "produces capital…it is the organization of industrial workers into a class that provokes the capitalists in general to constitute themselves as a class."[62]

What does this have to do with Sorel's formulation of class? The two coincide in Tronti's recognition of the need to *cultivate* the image of a compact and homogeneous working class (and its equally compact enemy), in the recognition that these characteristics are only partly historical, and thereby partly subjective, existing only insofar as they are projected in struggle and organization. When one focuses correctly on projection, we realize that Tronti's account of the class-for-itself—like that of Sorel—can be neither empiricist nor Utopian.[63] For both, "homogeneity stood as a goal *for which to fight*," and this is the key to grasping the continuities of their thought.[64] Nor should we take Tronti's dismissals of separation too literally: while he rejects the latter in favor of antagonism, the two are essentially equivalent in a Sorelian framework.[65] Better put, Tronti's wariness toward separation effectively supports Sorel's recognition of the need to ensure its antagonistic character. Separation is the projection of antagonism, which far more than being a "myth," is recognized by both Sorel and Tronti as the *precondition for working-class identity*. It is this point that Wright seems to simultaneously recognize and neglect in noting that Tronti—while seeing class homogeneity as a *political objective*—at the same time held a "simplistic and one-dimensional view of proletarian behaviour."[66] The point here is not to deny that Tronti's account of such behavior was not occasionally "simplistic," but rather to situate such observations within his broader system and the projection of separation that it entails.

Such a projection, moreover, concerns more than mere identity: the projection of antagonism in the form of the refusal—the political unification of the

class—is a profoundly *generative* moment, one which can dictate the pace of material homogenization. The working class creates the capitalist class, and Tronti's notion of *simplification* (i.e. the unification of demands in "the refusal to collaborate actively in capitalist development") forces the capitalist class to behave increasingly "for itself" (this is Tronti's nexus of positive demands and negative blockage).[67] The projection of separation creates antagonism, thereby reinforcing separation as a material effect, and we are reminded once again of Sorel's paradoxical desire to forge objectivity on a subjective foundation by spurning liberal humanitarianism and provoking the capitalists. Hence Tronti's strategy can be seen as a seizure of that workers' autonomy whose positive existence he has already posited: "Our starting point, therefore, lies in the discovery of certain forms of working-class struggles which provoke a certain type of capitalist development that leads toward revolution."[68] It is only through the subjective assumption of an autonomous perspective that the objective tendencies of the capitalist system can be allowed to run their course.

This Sorelian optic provides us with an entirely different understanding of Tronti's proposed working-class science. He formulates this as a

> new concept of the *crisis of capitalism* that must be put into circulation: no longer economic crisis, catastrophic collapse, the Zusammenbruch…rather, a political crisis imposed by the subjective movements of the organized workers, through the provocation of a chain of critical conjunctures, within the sole strategy of the working class refusal to resolve the contradictions of capitalism.[69]

Practically, such a refusal means for Tronti the blocking of any attempts to reinscribe the working class in capitalist development through a broad social democratic party. The lack of such a reinscription was precisely the advantage that Italy had over the rest of Western Europe, but the strategies pursued by the Italian Communist Party threatened to undermine that advantage.[70] While is was precisely this concern that would lead Tronti to favor a defensive entrism into the PCI, an emphasis on the operative theory requires that we—somewhat counterintuitively—emphasize the separateness implied in Tronti's position on social democracy, a separateness which bears a striking resemblance to that formulated by Sorel.[71]

…without "reconstituting the broken unity"…

I would like to briefly draw out some necessarily diremptive conclusions from the above discussion. These will consist, firstly, of outstanding questions, and secondly, of an attempt—which necessarily does violence to Tronti himself—to pry open his "hermetically sealed categories" and make his theory available to a wider range of radical thinking.[72]

Firstly, what are we to make of Tronti's explicit disavowal of Sorel? Beyond noting the fact that disavowal constitutes the red thread that holds together the reception of Sorel's thought—from Negri to Jean-Paul Sartre—we can see that Tronti himself performs the same interpretive errors identified earlier.[73] Tronti criticizes the general strike—in both its Sorelian and Luxemburgist variants—for being "an event for the [labor] movement not directly connected with the class."[74] By this he means that the general strike tends to be the product of an ideological intellect rather than a product of the struggle of an increasingly massified and compact class. In Sorel's context, such a claim would only apply to those parliamentary socialists whom he opposed so fervently, and whose strikes he dismissed in terms similar to Tronti.

Secondly, therefore, given Tronti's emphasis on the unification of the working-class refusal as explicitly *political*, what are we to make of Sorel's extended critique of "the political general strike"?[75] Tronti argues that

> The anarcho-syndicalist "general strike," which was supposed to provoke the collapse of capitalist society, is without a doubt a romantic naïveté from the beginning. It contains within it and as its basis a demand which only appears to oppose the Lassallian demand for a "fair share of the fruits of labour," that is, a demand for fair "participation" in capitalist profit.[76]

Hence, the error of such strikes is that they remain on the "economic" level, which in Tronti's vocabulary implies a failure to recognize the "political" implications of such claims. But this is precisely the error of the "political general strike," in Sorel's formulation, in which "middle-class force" predominates over "proletarian violence," and functions to further incorporate the working class into the machinery of parliamentary politics: "The political general strike…shows us how the State would lose nothing of its strength, how the transmission of power from one privileged class to another would take place, and how the mass of the producers would merely change masters."[77] The proletarian strike, on the other hand, operates through the mechanism of the myth to provide precisely the degree of separation and class consolidation that Tronti seeks.

Thirdly, and perhaps most seriously, what are we to make of Sorel's equally extensive celebration of "the ethics of the producers" in the face of Tronti's rejection of the dignity of labor?[78] Sorel is clearly concerned with more than the *pars destruens* of the revolutionary equation, and Tronti might have some reason for concern in hearing the ethic of the producers described in terms of "the betterment of the industry" and "continued progress in methods of production."[79] However, the revolutionary myth spurs the worker toward "an entirely epic state of mind, and at the same time bends all the energies of the mind to that condition necessary to the realization of a workshop *carried on by free men*."[80] There is no contradiction

between such an ethic and "Tronti's advocacy of antagonism between labour and labour-power," since the proletarian general strike could not conceivably occur without the working class abandoning the "pride of the producer" and "deny[ing] itself as a productive force."[81]

These potential problems having been clarified, we can assert more forcefully the compatibility of the Sorelian logic of separation and Tronti's one-sidedness. If all we have done is to provide a new and potentially fruitful optic through which to view early autonomist thought, then we have done enough. This conclusion, however, remains glaringly insufficient. After all, what use is this theoretical continuity to us if its concepts are irretrievably corrupt? Many have noted the central tension running through the *corpus* of Tronti's theoretical production: namely, the fact that despite his insights into the socialization of capital and the development of the "social factory," Tronti nevertheless failed to follow through on the radical nature of these insights. He failed to question the privileged *locus* of the factory, and he failed to question the working-class centrality which linked that privileged location to a privileged class formation.

Rather than rehashing such concerns, as valid as they are, I would like to touch briefly on another concern not entirely unrelated to this Gordian Knot of class location, and which opens the logic of separation up more dramatically for radical appropriation. This concern appears in the fact that, while posing significant insights for radical and revolutionary identity *in general*, the account traced thus far is restricted to a strictly working-class identity. This limited purview can be rooted in Tronti's insistent privileging of the factory, but what is crucial is the fact that this privilege is *doubled* when one considers Tronti's reflections on so-called "Third-Worldism." That is to say, much like the tension that arises from the privileging of the factory, we can also locate a tension in the ambiguous privileging of Italy in an otherwise very non-determinist and subjectivist account.[82]

Tronti's opposition to the "Chinese dances" of Third-Worldism (as well as that of many of his early contemporaries) is well documented.[83] The potential for radical transformation from the periphery is first disposed of through the presumption that the "internal colonization" of socialized capital follows only on the heels of a complete subsumption of the external.[84] However, it is worth noting that Tronti himself would emphasize the incompleteness of this process less than a year after the publication of *Operai e Capitale*.[85] Within that work, however, this very same tension can be felt with equal force. While Tronti would assent to Panzieri's association of radical possibility with the "developing points" of capital characterized by a high organic composition,[86] he nevertheless concludes that

it would be an error to generalize…a revolutionary rupture of the capitalist system can occur at different levels of capitalist development. We cannot expect

that the history of capitalism be *concluded*, in order to begin to organize the process of its dissolution.[87]

This, of course, makes perfect sense within a theoretical apparatus based—however inconsistently—upon the autonomy of working-class initiative, and we cannot help but wonder what might be the implications of such a statement for Tronti's broader framework. Something similar might be said about Tronti's political interpretation of Marx's labor theory of value.[88] Moreover, what might be the effect of thinking more rigorously about the connection between autonomist manifestations of the "theory of the offensive" and similar notions emerging in the periphery around the idea of guerrilla warfare?[89] What breakthroughs would result from taking seriously the differential character of class that appears in Marx, which is extended and radicalized by Sorel and Tronti and which renders "class" a supremely expansive concept which cannot be limited to economic location? What might be the effect of re-asserting the continuity that exists between this differential notion of class and the idea of the subaltern, which despite being coined by Gramsci and used (dismissively) by Tronti, has come to mean something quite different through the work of postcolonial intellectuals?[90] Can the theoretical linkage of hegemony to subalternity—albeit through a "relation of non-relation"—aid us in recognizing both the danger of the former and the radical potential of the latter?[91] Circling back around, what might be the outcome of stripping the term subaltern of its Eurocentric connotations, by refusing—as does Edward Said—the Marxian argument that those who fail to constitute a class "cannot represent themselves, they must be represented"?[92] In all such gestures, Tronti's formulations are useful but incomplete.

Such thoughts are necessarily fragmentary, and certainly run the risk of an overly "Alexandrian solution" to the dilemmas posed by Tronti, but my aim here is merely to sketch the parameters of a future research project.[93] The opening to such a project depends first and foremost on recognizing the possibility that Tronti's hostility to Maoism and radical thought emanating from the periphery was—in accordance with his Dellavolpism—historically determinate and conjunctural. Only then can we free the Sorelian-Trontian logic of separation from its specific context and test its insights for the nexus of separation and identity more generally.

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[1] Alberto Asor Rosa, quoted in Steve Wright, *Storming Heaven: Class Composition and Struggle in Italian Autonomist Marxism* (London: Pluto Press, 2002), 29.

[2] See Saint-Amand Bazard, *et al*, *The Doctrine of Saint Simon: An Exposition; First Year, 1828-1829*, tr. G. Iggers (Boston: Beacon Press, 1958).

[3] Michel Foucault, *"Society Must be Defended": Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-1976*, tr. D. Macey (New York: Picador, 2003 [1997]).

[4] Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, tr. G. Schwab (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996 [1932]); *The Theory of the Partisan: A Commentary/Remark on the Concept of the Political*, tr. A.C. Goodson (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2004 [1962]), http://www.msupress.msu.edu/journals/cr/schmitt.pdf. While Schmitt comes closest to formulating a division *within* society in *Theory of the Partisan*, it is clear by that point in his career (1962), some thirty years after *The Concept of the Political*, Schmitt's strategic priorities had shifted from an affirmation of the friend-enemy distinction to an open hostility toward any form of that distinction in which the decision is not made on the state level. This hostility, moreover, is prefigured in Schmitt's commentary on Sorel in his 1923 *The Crisis of Parliamentary Democracy*, tr. E. Kennedy (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988).

[5] "In Sorel's case it is clear that behind the spontaneity there lies a purely mechanistic assumption, behind the liberty (will — life-force) a maximum of determinism, behind the idealism an absolute materialism." Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, ed. Q. Hoare and G.N. Smith (New York: International Publishers, 1971), 129.

[6] Indeed, Gramsci's translators note that "'Cleavage', for Sorel, is the equivalent of class consciousness, of the class-for-itself." Gramsci, *Selections*, 126, fn4. Despite the fact that such a statement misses the point a bit—since to equate the two is to render the formulation more bland and banal than it is—it nevertheless serves to illustrate the argument.

[7] George Sorel, *Reflections on Violence*, tr. T.E. Hulme (New York: Collier Books, 1961 [1908]), 91.

[8] Sorel, *Reflections*, 269.

[9] Sorel, *Reflections*, 91-92.

[10] Sorel, *Reflections*, 250.

[11] Sorel, *Reflections*, 251.

[12] Sorel, *Reflections*, 259.

[13] Sorel, *Reflections*, 272.

[14] Sorel, *Reflections*, 272.

[15] Sorel, *Reflections*, 272-273.

[16] Richard Vernon, *Commitment and Change: Georges Sorel and the Idea of Revolution* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1978), 17.

[17] Sorel, *Reflections*, 271.

[18] Sorel, *Reflections*, 122, emphasis added.

[19] Sorel's "ultimate goal" was "the subjection of nature to human control, [which] is—according to Sorel—a universally accepted value," and this represents an attempt "to retain the substantive ambitions of nineteenth-century philosophy of history while skeptically narrowing the scope of reason." Vernon, *Commitment and Change*, 20; Richard Vernon, "Rationalism and Commitment in Sorel," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 34, n. 3 (July-September 1973), 420.

[20] Sorel, *Reflections*, 92, emphasis added.

[21] This error spans the ideological spectrum, and is repeated by both opponents and supporters of Sorel's thought. Even the Wu Ming Foundation (heir to Luther Blissett), which can be credited with engaging in an all-too-rare pragmatic reassessment of Sorel, still makes the error of exaggerating the function of the myth in Sorel's thought. See Wu Ming, "Tute Bianche: The Practical Side of Myth-Making (in Catastrophic Times)," *Giap Digest* 11 (19 October 2001). For a recent example of this mistake by a well-known anarchist intellectual, who goes even further in presenting the Sorelian myth as a sort of hoax perpetrated against the masses, see David Graeber, *Fragments of an Anarchist Anthropology* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2004), 18-19.

[22] Sorel, *Reflections*, 124-125.

[23] Gramsci, *Selections*, 127; 395.

[24] Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (London: Verso, 1985).

[25] Wright, *Storming Heaven*, 27-28.

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[26] Wright, *Storming Heaven*, 26-27.

[27] Tronti's *magnum opus* has yet to be fully translated into English, a situation which will hopefully be remedied in the near future. In what follows, I will cite and translate from the Italian and Spanish editions: Mario Tronti, *Operai e Capitale*, 2nd ed. (Turin: Einaudi, 1971); Mario Tronti, *Obreros y Capital*, tr. Ó. Chaves Hernández (Madrid: Akal, 2001). Citations will be in this format: Tronti, *Operai/Obreros*, 33/38.

[28] Tronti, *Operai/Obreros*, 246/256.

[29] Palmiro Togliatti, the post-war leader of the PCI who would inspire the later turn to planning in the 1960s was, unsurprisingly, a close collaborator of Gramsci's. Perhaps more surprising is that Togliatti was also a Sorel devotee earlier in his career. See Jack J. Roth, *The Cult of Violence: Sorel and the Sorelians* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980), 176.

[30] This discussion of Tronti is, obviously, a small part of a wider project already underway, and which will involve a closer analysis of Negri's thought.

[31] Tronti, *Operai/Obreros*, 89/93

[32] Tronti, *Operai/Obreros*, 89/93.

[33] If I start from theory in discussions of Tronti while having started from practice in discussing Sorel, this is no mistake. Sorel was much more consistent in taking working-class practice as the only defensible starting-point, whereas "all of Tronti's discoveries…[were] derived through a process of logical deduction." See also Wright's assertion that Tronti was inconsistent in his deference to practice, and that he remained caught up in the metaphysics of his own apparatus. Wright, *Storming Heaven*, 39; 84.

[34] Wright, *Storming Heaven*, 82.

[35] Tronti, *Operai/Obreros*, 232/242; 244/254

[36] Tronti, *Operai/Obreros*, 310/321.

[37] Tronti, *Operai/Obreros*, 92/96.

[38] Tronti, *Operai/Obreros*, 246/256.

[39] Tronti, *Operai/Obreros*, 268/276.

[40] Tronti, *Operai/Obreros*, 14/19; 84-85/88.

[41] Tronti, *Operai/Obreros*, 53/58.

[42] Tronti, *Operai/Obreros*, 76-78/81-83.

[43] Tronti, *Operai/Obreros*, 82/86.

[44] Tronti, *Operai/Obreros*, 79/83.

[45] Wright, *Storming Heaven*, 74.

[46] Tronti, *Operai/Obreros*, 79/83.

[47] Tronti, *Operai/Obreros*, 245/254.

[48] Tronti, *Operai/Obreros*, 79/83.

[49] Tronti, *Operai/Obreros*, 245/255.

[50] Tronti, *Operai/Obreros*, 245-246/255, emphasis added.

[51] This is a concern that will gain even more clarity in the work of Antonio Negri, especially his *Il Dominio e il Sabotaggio*, available in Antonio Negri, *Books for Burning: Between Civil War and Democracy in 1970s Italy*, ed. T. Murphy (London: Verso, 2005), 231-285.

[52] Tronti, *Operai/Obreros*, 94/98, emphasis added.

[53] Tronti, *Operai/Obreros*, 90/94. We also see this on 93/97 and 247-249/256-258, where the unification and homogenization of the class is again tightly bound to its organization.

[54] Tronti, *Operai/Obreros*, 248/257.

[55] Tronti, *Operai/Obreros*, 248/258.

[56] Wright, *Storming Heaven*, 77.

[57] Karl Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press, 1977), 168, emphasis added. See also Karl Marx, *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (Peking: Foreign Languages Press,

1978), 126: "Insofar as millions of families live under conditions of existence that separate their mode of life, their interests, and their culture from those of the other classes, and put them in hostile opposition to the latter, they form a class. Insofar as there is merely a local interconnection among these small-holding peasants, and the identity of their interests forms no community, no national bond, and no political organization among them, they do not constitute a class. They are therefore incapable of asserting their class interest in their own name, whether through a parliament or a convention. They cannot represent themselves, they must be represented."

[58] Tronti, *Operai/Obreros*, 235/245.

[59] Tronti, *Operai/Obreros*, 200/209.

[60] Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The German Ideology*, in Robert C. Tucker, ed., *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd ed. (New York: Norton, 1978), 179: "The separate individuals form a class only insofar as they have to carry on a common battle against another class."

[61] Tronti, *Operai/Obreros*, 241/250.

[62] Tronti, *Operai/Obreros*, 236/245-246.

[63] Accordingly, it might be worth comparing the weight that both grant to "anticipation" in more depth. See Tronti, *Operai/Obreros*, 11-26/16-32; Sorel, *Reflections*, 125.

[64] Wright, *Storming Heaven*, 79. I agree with Wright that Tronti did not recognize the incomplete character of this homogenization as clearly as did someone like Alquati, but this should not undermine the theoretical role it plays in Tronti's apparatus.

[65] Tronti, *Operai/Obreros*, 246-247/256.

[66] Wright, *Storming Heaven*, 182.

[67] Tronti, *Operai/Obreros*, 247/257.

[68] Tronti, *Operai/Obreros*, 93-94/98.

[69] Tronti, *Operai/Obreros*, 250/259-260.

[70] Wright, *Storming Heaven*, 68.

[71] A focus on a separation which is inherently antagonistic draws us away from facile *a priori* reactions to something like entrism, given the imperative for antagonism that the latter seeks to fulfill.

[72] Wright, *Storming Heaven*, 86.

[73] The only passages in Negri's *Domination and Sabotage* which directly reference Sorel were left out of the original Red Notes English translation. The translator cited the "incomprehensibility" of the passages, but given that the passages are completely clear, one can only assume that their omission was political (these very passages were used as evidence to imprison Negri later). The recent *Books for Burning* translation includes these passages (258-259), and while the reference to Sorel (and Ernst Bloch) are meant to reject any association with these thinkers, they serve rather as a tacit admission of the profound continuitites that exist between the thinkers (though it should be noted that Negri's description of Sorel's thought is a caricature at best, which like Gramsci and Laclau and Mouffe, mistake the myth for the central category in Sorel's work). Jean-Paul Sartre, "Preface," in Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, tr. C. Farrington (New York: Grove Press, 1963 [1961]), 14.

[74] Tronti, *Operai/Obreros*, 308/320.

[75] Sorel, *Reflection*, 151-179.

[76] Tronti, *Operai/Obreros*, 237/246-247.

[77] Sorel, *Reflections*, 177.

[78] Sorel, *Reflections*, 216-249; Tronti, *Operai/Obreros*, 261/270.

[79] Sorel, *Reflections*, 258.

[80] Sorel, *Reflections*, 248.

[81] Wright, *Storming Heaven*, 39; Tronti, 261/270.

[82] This is apart from the prevalence of Eurocentric metaphors—of discovery and conquest, of unknown continents, of a new route to the Indies—that run throughout *Operai e Capitale*, especially the "Introduction."

[83] Cited in Wright, *Storming Heaven*, 70.

[84] Tronti, *Operai/Obreros*, 56/60.

[85] Cited in Wright, *Storming Heaven*, 86-87.

[86] Wright, *Storming Heaven*, 40.

[87] Tronti, *Operai/Obreros*, 68/71.

[88] See Wright, *Storming Heaven*, 84.

[89] See Wright, *Storming Heaven*, 144.

[90] See, e.g., Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, eds., *Selected Subaltern Studies* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988). For the differential definition of the subaltern, see Ranajit Guha, ed., *Subaltern Studies I: Writing on South Asian History and Society* (Delhi: OUP, 1982), 8. Doing so might very well lead us toward a formulation of Marxism on the basis of the category of exteriority rather than totality, of the sort pioneered by Enrique Dussel in *Toward an Unknown Marx: A Commentary on the Manuscripts of 1861-1863*, tr. Y. Angulo (London: Routledge, 2001 [1988]).

[91] Jon Beasley-Murray and Alberto Moreiras, "Editorial Introduction: Subalternity and Affect," *Angelaki* 6, n. 1 (April 2001), 1.

[92] Edward Said, Orientalism (New York: Vintage, 1979), 293; 335. For an excellent discussion of the link between Marx's differential understanding of class (276), the subaltern as "an identity-in-differential" (284), and its purportedly concomitant need for representation (276-277), see Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak," in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. C. Nelson and L. Grossberg (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 271-313.

[93] This project envisions the extension of a Sorelian logic through both Tronti and Negri, before engaging in a "decolonial turn" toward the work of Martinican philosopher-revolutionary Frantz Fanon, whose formulation of identity and radical separation bears a striking similarity to that identified here.

Silvia Federici

The Restructuring of Social Reproduction in the United States in the 1970s

The following is the text of a paper that Silvia Federici wrote in 1980 for a Conference convened by the Centro Studi Americani in Roma on "The Economic Policies of Female Labor in Italy and the United States." The Conference was held in Rome on December 9-11, 1980 and was co-sponsored by the German Marshall Fund of the United States.

New York, (1980)

> "If women wish the position of the wife to have the honor which they attach to it, they will not talk about the value of their services and about stated incomes, but they will live with their husbands in the spirit of the vow of the English marriage service, taking them 'for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love, honor, obey.' This is to be a wife." – *New York Times*, August 10th, 1876: "Wives' Wages"

> "The most valuable of all social capital is that invested in human beings and of that capital the most precious part is the result of the care and influence of the mother, so long as she retains her tender and unselfish instincts." – Alfred Marshall, *Principles of Economics* (1890).

While it is generally recognized that the dramatic expansion of the female labor force is possibly the most important social phenomenon of the 1970s, uncertainty still prevails among economists as to its origins. Technological advancement in the home, the reduction of family size and the growth of the service sector are offered as likely causes of this trend. Yet, it is also argued that these factors may be an effect of women's entering the labor force and that looking for a cause would lead us in a vicious circle, a "what comes first, the chicken or the egg"

problem. As this paper claims, the uncertainty among economists stems from their failure to recognize that the dramatic increase of the female labor force in the 1970s reflects *women's refusal to function as unwaged workers in the home*, catering to the reproduction of the national work force. In fact, what goes under the name of "homemaking" is (to use Gary Becker's expression) a "productive consumption" process,[1] producing and reproducing "human capital," or in the words of Alfred Marshall, the laborer's "general ability" to work.[2] Social planners have often recognized the importance of this work for the economy. Yet, as Becker points out, the productive consumption that takes place in the home has had a "bandit like existence in economic thought."[3] For the fact that this work is not waged, in a society where work and wages are synonyms, makes it invisible as work, to the point that the services it provides are not included in the Gross National Product (GNP) and the providers are absent from the calculations of the national labor force.

Given the social invisibility of housework, it is not surprising that economists have failed to see through the 1960s and 1970s that this work has been the main battleground for women, so much so that even their opting for market jobs must be seen as a *strategy* that women have used to free themselves from this work. In this process, women have triggered a major reorganization of social reproduction, that is putting into crisis the sexual division of labor that has so far prevailed and the social policies that have shaped the reorganisation of reproduction in the post-war period. However, despite indications that women are breaking away from the wagelessness of the home, today more than 30% still work primarily as homemakers, and even those who hold a market job devote a considerable amount of time doing work that entitles them to no pay, no social security or pension and none of the benefits that come from a wage. This means that housework is still the major source of employment for American women, i.e. that *most* American women spend most of their time doing work that entitles them to no pay, no social security or pension and none of the benefits that come with a wage.

It is also becoming clear that, in the absence of monetary compensation, women face serious obstacles in the attempt to gain "economic independence," not to mention the heavy price they often pay for it: the inability to choose whether to have children or not, low wages and the burden of a double shift when they enter the labor market. The problems that women are facing appear particularly serious given the economic prospectives we are presently offered, as they emerge from the current debate on the "energy crisis" and the feasibility of a growth versus a non-growth economy. It appears that no matter what path will prevail, women will be the main losers in the "battle to control inflation" or energy consumption. The recent experience of Three Mile Island, for instance, has shown what are the likely effects on women's lives of the type of economic growth that is presently sponsored by the "business community" and the government, which is based on the expansion of

nuclear power, the de-regulation of many economic activities, and increased military spending, Equally unappealing, however, is the no-growth alternative, which promises to women an unlimited intensification of their work in the home, although it would not be devoted to "cleaning up the nuclear mess" but to substitute (by gardening, sowing, etc) for too-much-energy-consuming technology. The question, however, is whether these are the only alternatives we have and, equally important, whether American women will accept them.

The Revolt Against Housework

Although it is rarely recognized, the first signals of women's refusal to function as unpaid workers in the home did not come from Betty Friedan's bestseller *The Feminine Mystique*, but from the claims of thousands of mothers during the welfare struggles of the mid 1960s. While developing in the wake of the Civil Rights Movement and usually perceived as a minority issue, the struggle of welfare mothers gave voice to the dissatisfaction of American women with a social policy that ignores their work in the home, stigmatizes them as parasites when they demand public assistance, while reaping enormous benefits from the wide variety of services that they provide to the maintenance of the national work force. Welfare mothers, for example, denounced the absurdity of the government policy that recognizes child-care as work only when it involves the children of others, thus paying the foster parent more than the welfare mother, while devising programs to "put the welfare mother to work." What was the "spirit" of the welfare struggles is well expressed in the words of one of its organizers:

> If the government was smart it would start calling AFDC [Aid For Dependent Children] 'Day and Night Care,' create a new agency, pay us a decent wage for the service work we are doing now and say that the welfare crisis has been solved, because welfare mothers have been put to work.[4]

A few years later, discussing the Family Assistance Plan (FAP) proposal presented in 1971 by the Nixon Administration, Senator Moynihan recognized that this demand was far from extravagant:

> If American society recognized homemaking and child rearing as productive work to be included in the national economic accounts…the receipt of welfare might not imply dependency. But we don't. It may be hoped - Senator Moynihan added – that the Women's Movement of the present time will change this. But as of the time I write it had not.[5]

Moynihan was soon to be proved wrong. At the very time when he was recalling the legislative adventures of FAP, a Wages for Housework Movement was emerging in the U.S. and, despite the prevailing climate of austerity, the claims of welfare mothers were reaching so deeply into the consciousness of women that the National Women's Conference held in Houston in 1977 included in its Plan of Action that welfare should be called a wage.[6] Not only did the welfare struggle pose the question of housework, though disguised as a "poverty issue," on the national agenda, it also made it clear that the government could not any longer hope to regulate women's work through the organisation of the male wage. A new era was beginning when the government would have to deal with women directly, without the mediation of men.

That the refusal of housework was a widespread social phenomenon was further dramatized by the development of the Women's Movement. Women protesting bridals' fairs and Miss America contests were as many indications that fewer and fewer women accepted the home as their "natural place." By the early '70s, however, women's refusal of housework was taking the form of a massive migration into the waged labor force. It is a commonplace among economists to explain this trend as the result of technological advancement in the home and the spreading of birth control which presumably have "liberated women's time for work." Yet, with the exception of the microwave oven and the food processor, little technological innovation has entered the home in the seventies, by far not enough to justify the record growth in the female waged labor force.[7] As for the decline of fertility rates, past trends indicate that the family size is not *per se* a determinant factor in the decision of women to search for a market job, as proven by the example of the 1950s when, in the presence of a baby boom, women, particularly married ones and with young children, began returning in record numbers to the waged labor force.[8] How little women's time has been liberated for work is also shown by the results of several studies, like the one conducted by the Chase Manhattan Bank in 1971, showing that, at the end of the sixties, American women were spending an average of 45 hours per week doing housework, a number that easily escalated in the presence of young children.

If we also consider that the highest rates for women entering the labor force have been among women with preschool children, we can hardly conclude that it is work *per se* that women have been missing, particularly since on a mass level the market jobs women can find are usually extensions of housework. The truth, as Juanita Kreps (1971) points out, is that women "are eager to trade (housework) for a market job that is equally routine and repetitive (because) the difference is the job pays a salary."[9] Another crucial reason for the record expansion of the female labor force, particularly after 1973, has been the extensive cuts of welfare benefits in the course of the '70s. Starting with the Nixon administration, a campaign has been carried out daily in the media blaming all social problems on the "welfare mess."

Meanwhile, across the nation, eligibility rules have been tightened, cutting the number of women who can qualify and increasing the amount of work involved, while the benefits themselves have been reduced despite the steady increase in the cost of living.[10]

As a result, while until 1969 AFDC benefits were higher than the median female wage, by the mid seventies the opposite was true, despite the fact that the median real wage had fallen compared with that of the sixties. Faced with the virtual onslaught on welfare, women seem to have followed the advice of that welfare mother who once commented that if the government is willing to pay women only when they take care of the children of others then women should "swap their children." Considering that in the labor market they are concentrated in service-sector jobs involving reproductive labor, it could be argued that they have traded off unpaid housework for their families for paid housework in the marketplace,

That the growth of the female labor force reflects women's refusal of housework also explains the seeming paradox whereby at the very moment when women were entering the labor market in record numbers, housework began surfacing as a worthwhile ground of economic investigation. The 1970s saw a true boom of studies on housework; then in 1975 even the government decided to measure the contribution that housewives' chores make to the GNP. Again, in 1976, researchers at the Social Security Administration, studying the impact of illness on national productivity, included in their figures the dollar value of housework.[11] Being based on a market-cost approach, the estimates reached were extremely conservative. Yet, the very fact that an attempt was made to make these calculations demonstrates the government's rising concern with the "family-housework crisis." Indeed, behind the sudden interest for housework lies the old truth that this work remains invisible only as long as it is done. However, other factors make the housework crisis worrisome for policy makers. First and foremost is the threat to "family stability," as a correlation is made between the increasing earning capacity of American women, the escalating divorce rate and the concomitant increase of female headed families. By the mid seventies, the government was also becoming concerned that the expansion of the female waged labor force was growing beyond all projected accounts,[12] thus revealing an autonomous character that promised to thwart its plans for it. For example, far from providing a "solution" to growing welfare rates, the increase in the number of women seeking a waged job has created a buffer for welfare benefits, for the disparity between the number of women looking for a job and the jobs available has continually pre-empted the government's attempts to "put welfare women to work." Equally worrisome, in the context of the severest recession since the Depression and in the face of prolonged unemployment, has been the seeming "rigidity" of female participation in the waged labor market.

Would women so easily accept to go back to the home, as they did in the post- war period, and would they accept to go back empty handed after experiencing the financial benefits of a wage?[13] It is in this climate that a revaluation of housework has taken place. Yet, despite much lip service little has been done. The value of housework has been recognized in some minor legislative proposals. For example, a government authorized retirement plan passed in 1976 (as part of the Tax Reform Act) has allowed husbands to make contributions to an Individual Retirement Plan (IRA) also on behalf of their non-employed wives. The contribution of the wife to the welfare of the family is also recognized, at least on a formal level, in the no-fault divorce laws that several states have passed in recent years, which allow for a division of the family property on account of the services provided by the wife. (Some recent court cases, however, have turned down the claims of some women demanding a division of the male wage). Finally, the Tax Reform Act of 1976 has allowed parents to deduce childcare expenses from their taxes up to a maximum of $400 per child (parents, however, must spend $2,000 to qualify for that sum). As for the possibility of a monetary compensation for housework, the only suggested proposal, so far, has been a symbolic price tag functional to its calculation into the GNP. The assumption is that this would give women a heightened sense of its value and increase their satisfaction with this work. Typical of this approach is the recommendation made by a task force studying work in America:

> The clear fact is that keeping a house and raising children is work, work that is, on average, as difficult to do well and as useful to the larger society as almost any paid job involving the production of goods and services. The difficulty is … that we have not, as a society, acknowledged this fact in our public system of values and rewards. Such an acknowledgement *may begin by simply counting housewives in the labor force*, assigning a money value to their work.[14]

In reality, the only response to women's revolt against housework has been the continuing growth of inflation which has increased women's work in the home and their dependence on the male wage. Yet, despite the virtual absence of supportive legislation and the growth of inflation, women's refusal of unpaid labor in the home has continued through the 1970s, producing significant changes in the organization of housework and the general process of social reproduction.

The Reorganization of Social Reproduction

Women's relation to housework in the 1970s is a good example of what economists call the "income effect," that is, the tendency of workers to reduce their work in the face of increased earnings, although in the case of women what has been reduced has been exclusively their unpaid work in the home. Three trends have

emerged in this respect: reduction, redistribution (otherwise known as "sharing"), and the socialization of housework.

The *reduction of housework* has come primarily through both the reorganisation of many housework services on a market basis and the reduction of family size, beginning with a dramatic reduction in the number of children. By contrast, labor-saving devices have played a minor role in this process. As indicated, few technological innovations have entered the home in the 1970s. Moreover, the persistent stagnation in the sales of household appliances[15] shows a tendency towards the *disaccumulation of capital in the home, i*n line with the reduction of family size and the *disaccumulation of the services* the household provides. Even the apartment and furniture designs – the virtually nonexistent kitchen, the trend towards *modular units* and *knock out* furniture – are indicative of the tendency to expel from the home large slices of its previous reproductive functions. Indeed, the only true labor-saving devices women have used in the 1970s are contraceptives, as indicated by the collapse of the birth rate, which in 1979 reached a peak of 1.75 children per 1,000 women aged 15-44. As we are often told, the baby boom of the 1950s has turned into a baby bust, that is deeply affecting every area of social life, from the school system, that has been forced to close several schools, to the labor force, which, if the present trend continues, will see a progressively aging population, to the production industries that are shifting their priorities to the needs of a more adult population.[16]

Despite predictions that a new baby boom is coming, this trend is likely to continue since, unlike in the 1950s, American women today are willing to forego motherhood, even to the point of accepting sterilisation, in order to keep a job, rather than submit to the work and sacrifices that having children entails.[17] (From this point of view, current estimates pointing to the astronomical cost of having children actually grossly underestimate it, even when they calculate the "foregone earnings of the mother.") A reduction of the work done in the home is also evidenced by the increasing number of women who delay marriage or do not marry (often living alone or in communal settings) as well as the escalating rate of divorces (still primarily filed by women) that, in the 1970s, has marked a new record every year. What this indicates is that marriage no longer seems to be a "good bargain" for women or a necessary one and that, while the refusal of marriage is still not "on the agenda," women have gained a *new mobility* with respect to men and the possibility of establishing part -time relations with them, where the work element is substantially reduced. To what extent women are refusing to service men for free is also reflected in the continuous growth of female-headed families.

Here, however, some clarification is needed since too often this trend has been interpreted as a "broken home syndrome" produced by the current welfare policies that prevent the payment of Aid To Dependent Children (AFDC) in the presence of a husband in the home. In other words, too often the growth of female-

headed families is seen in a perspective of victimization that ignores women's attempt to reduce the work and the discipline that come with a male presence in the home. That the impact of welfare policies has been overrated is shown by a recent experiment conducted in Seattle where welfare benefits were given to intact couples. After one year, these couples had the same rate of marital dissolution as other welfare families. This indicates that it is not that families break up to qualify for welfare but that *welfare buys women more autonomy from men* and the possibility of terminating a relationship only built on monetary constraints.[18]

Not only have women reduced housework, they have also changed the conditions of this work. For example, women have challenged the right of the husband to claim sexual services from his wife, independently of her consent. The 1979 trial of a man charged with raping his wife was a landmark in this respect, since never before had forcing one's wife to have sex been considered a crime. Equally significant has been women's revolt against battering, that is corporal punishment in the home, traditionally condoned by the courts and the police, that implicitly legitimized it as a "condition of housework." Also in this case *the right to self-defense* that the courts have increasingly recognized to the battered wife has been won on the basis of the power women have gained and their determination to refuse the traditional "hazards" of work in the home.

Another growing tendency in the 1970s has been "sharing the housework" which has long been supported by some feminists as the ideal solution to the housework problem. Yet, precisely when we consider what has been accomplished in this area, we realize the obstacles that women face when they try to enforce a more egalitarian division of labor in the home.

Undoubtedly, men are more likely today to do some housework, particularly among couples where both partners have a job. Moreover, many new couples stipulate a *marriage contract* that establishes the division of labor in the family. In the '70s a new phenomenon has also begun to appear: the *househusband*, possibly more widespread than it is acknowledged, as many men are reluctant to admit that they are supported by their wives. Yet, despite a trend towards a desexualization of housework, as a recent survey indicates, most of the work done in the home is still done by women, even when they have a second job. Even couples that establish more egalitarian relations face a true turn of the tables when a child is born. The reason for this change is the wage benefits that a man forfeits when he takes time off from work to take care of his children. This suggests that even such innovations as *flexitime* are not sufficient to guarantee that housework will be equally shared, given the decline in the standard of living that the absence of the men from work involves. It also suggests that women's attempt to redistribute housework in the family is more likely to be frustrated by the low wages they command in the labor market than by entrenched male attitudes towards this work.

Finally, the clearest evidence that women have used the power of the wage to reduce their unpaid labor in the home has been the explosion of the service (reproduction) sector in the 1970s. (US Department of Commerce 1975: 3-13). Cooking, cleaning, taking care of children, even problem solving and companionship have been increasingly "taken out of the home" and organized on a massified, industrial basis. It is calculated that, at present, Americans eat half of their meals away from home, and the fast food industry has grown in the '70s at a yearly 15% rate, despite the fact that inflation has encouraged the revival of the "do it yourself" habits. Equally significant has been explosion of the recreation and entertainment industry which are picking up the traditionally female task of making one's family happy and relaxed. In fact, as wives and mothers have "gone on strike," many of their previously invisible services have become saleable commodities around which entire industries are built. A typical example is the novel growth of the body industry – ranging from the health club to the massage parlor, with its multiple-- sexual, therapeutic, emotional-- services, and the industries that have been created around jogging (the popularity of jogging is itself an indication of the new general awareness that you have to "take care of yourself" because nobody else may be doing it). Further evidence of the trend towards the disaccumulation of services in the home has been the growth of daycare centers and the dramatic increase in the number of children enrolled in preschool. (194% for age 3 between 1966 and 1976).[19]

Taken as whole, these trends indicate a major transformation in the organization of social reproduction, in the sense that this work is increasingly desexualized, taken out of the home and, most important, waged. Thus, while the home is still the center for the reproduction of labor power (or "human capital" from a business viewpoint), its importance as the backbone of reproductive services is waning. What has entered into crisis is the organisation of reproduction that prevailed in the Keynesian economic model of the post-war period. Within it, housework was commanded and regulated through the organisation of the male wage, that was to function both as a direct investment in human capital and as an incentive to production through its demand-consumption role. In this model, not only did women's work in the home become hidden in the male wage, while the only activity recognised as work was the (waged) production of commodities, women became appendages, dependent variables of the changes and transformations in the workplace. Where your husband lived, what job he had and what wages he made directly dictated the intensity of women's work and their required levels of productivity. However, in refusing to work for free, women have broken with the home/factory, male wage/housework cycle, posing themselves as "independent variables" that the government and employers must confront directly, even at the point of reproduction. This development is also causing the reproduction of labor-power to assume an autonomous status in the economy with respect to the production of commodities, so much so that the productivity of reproductive work

is no longer measured (as it used to) by the productivity of the male worker on the job, but directly at the point where the services are delivered.

Undoubtedly, throughout the 1970s the government and business have attempted to use the reorganization of reproduction to (i) dismantle the social welfare programs which sustained the policy of "human capital development" that characterized the post-war period up to the Great Society, (ii) to contain the male wage that has been climbing through the 1960s. Claiming that social welfare spending has failed to produce the expected results, the government has encouraged the reorganisation of reproduction on a market basis, for it seems to guarantee (despite its low productivity level, at least measured in conventional terms) immediate returns, independent of the productivity of the labor-power produced. Yet, while succeeding in reducing welfare spending and creating a climate where welfare is blamed as one of the main problems of American society, the government has failed to eliminate what can be considered the first "wages for housework." Most important, while the "female welfare wage" has fallen and women and poverty are *still* synonyms, the *total wage* in the hands of women has decisively increased. As for the attempt to use women's increasing demands for market jobs to contain male wages (via a reorganisation of production that "underdeveloped the manufacturing sectors while encouraging the development of the service sector") this too has failed to provide the expected results.

It has been noticed that despite the high rates of unemployment, we have not witnessed in the 1970s the backlash against women's employment (particularly married women's employment) that was so pronounced in the '30s and '40s.[20] Men, it seems, have recognised the benefits of a double income, as indicated by the continued reduction of male participation in the labor force. It is even claimed that men are behaving increasingly like women as far as their work patterns are concerned. Not only is the husband-breadwinner-wife-homemaker model breaking down (according to the statistics by the Department of Labor this applies today to only 34% of men of working age), but husbands with wives holding a market job are less likely to accept job transfers (often turning down job promotions rather than face a move that would disrupt their wives' employment), they also change jobs more frequently, prefer jobs that entail shorter hours to higher salaries, and retire earlier than in the past. Moreover, the double pay-check in the family has provided a crucial buffer against unemployment and inflation, as shown by the experience of the last few years when a predicted recession would not "take off" because consumer demand (and consumer debt) kept expanding. Cushioned by the prospect of a double income, families were less afraid of borrowing and spending, to the point that inflation has had the opposite effect that it has had traditionally: it has increased spending rather than diminishing it.

Conclusions

This paper has argued that women's refusal to be unpaid workers in the home has caused important changes in the organization of reproduction and the conditions of women's work. What we are witnessing is the crisis of the traditional sexual division of labor that confined women to (unwaged) reproductive labor and men to the (waged) production of commodities. All the power relations between men and women have been built on this "difference," as most women have had no alternative but to depend on men for their economic survival and submit to the discipline that comes with this dependence. As already indicated, the main change in this respect has been accomplished by women literally migrating into the waged labor force which, in the 1970s, has been the main factor of women's increased social and economic power. This strategy, however, presents many limits. While men's work has decreased over the last decade, *women today work even harder than in the past.* This is particularly true for women heads of families and women with low wages, who are often forced to moonlight to make ends meet.[21] The burden women are still carrying is well reflected in their medical history. Much is made of the fact that women live longer than men. Yet, medical records tell a different story. Women, particularly in their early thirties, have the highest rate of suicide among the young population, as well as the highest rates for drug use (tranquilizers), mental breakdown and mental treatment (in-patient and out-patient), and they are more likely to report stress and discomfort than men.[22] These statistics are a clear symptom of the price that women are paying for either their life as full-time homemakers or the burden of a double shift, that is, the burden of a life built exclusively on work. Clearly, no positive change can occur in women's lives unless a profound transformation occurs in social and economic policies and social priorities.

However, if what the newly elected Reagan Presidency has promised comes true, women will have to fight a hard battle just not to lose what they have gained in the '60s and '70s. We are told in fact that welfare spending will be cut, the military budget will be increased, and new tax cuts are planned that will certainly benefit business while giving very minor relief to low income people and none to people with no income. Furthermore, the kind of economic growth that the supply-side economists of the Reagan entourage are promoting threatens women with the nightmare of a continuously growing pollution, brought about by increasing nuclear waste and far-reaching industrial deregulation. This means more Three Mile Islands, more Love Canals, more diseases in the family, more day to day worrying about one's health and the health of one's children and relatives, more work to cope with it.

At the same time, it is doubtful that a slower rate of economic growth, based on reduced energy consumption, "could have a beneficial effect on women's role in

society."[23] The slow-growth economic model usually presented is the model of a society based on intensive labor, and intensifying in particular that "component" of it that is not waged: housework. What "creative personal activities" the soft technology path opens to women is well indicated in the words of one of its supporters, the English economist Amory Lovins: gardening, canning, weaving, do-it-yourself carpentry, making preserves from your own fruits and vegetables, sewing clothes, insulating windows and attics, recycling materials, etc.[24] In exalting the return to "do-it-yourself habits" as a victory of quality over mediocrity, individualism over the System (the emotions such activities release –are "powerful, lasting, and contagious") Lovins complains that:

> We have substituted earning for an older ethics of serving and caring, as the only legitimate motivation for work. Thus, alienation in the place of fulfilment, inner poverty.[25]

Along the same lines Nancy Barrett envisions that in a slow-growing economy:

> the line between work and leisure may become blurred…(and) the person who stays at home would not feel useless, if he or she were contributing to fuel conservation and increasing the food supply. To the extent that non-market activity is felt to be socially useful, it is much more likely that non-working people (predominantly women given the prevailing patterns of behaviour) will feel more content with staying out of the labor force than in the recent past.[26]

But – it is legitimate to ask – is not this seemingly idyllic picture of a life all built around reproducing oneself and others the life that women have always had? In other words, are we not hearing again the same glorification of housework which has traditionally served to justify its unpaid status, by contrasting this "meaningful, useful, and more importantly *unselfish* activity," with the presumably greedy aspirations of those who demand to be paid for their work? Finally, are we not facing, once again, a variety of the old rationale that has been traditionally used to send women back to the home?

However, if the changes women have made over the past decade are any indication of the direction in which American women are moving, it is unlikely that they will be satisfied with an increased in their workload in the home, though accompanied, as it may be, by a universal, but purely moral, recognition of the value of their work. In this context, we definitely agree with Nancy Barrett that women:

> may find it necessary to center their interest on financial support for non-market activities (and) Wages for Housework, Social Security…and other fringe benefits for housework will be matters of increased concern.[27]

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Notes

1. Gary Becker, "A Theory of the Allocation of Time," *The Economic Approach to Human Behavior.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976.

2. Alfred Marshall, *Principles of Economics.* London: Macmillan and Co., (First edition 1890), 1938: 207.

3) Gary Becker, "A Theory of the Allocation of Time," *The Economic Approach to Human Behavior.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976: 89.

4) Milwaukee County Welfare Rights Organization. *Welfare Mothers Speak Out.* New York, W.W. Norton & Co., 1972: 79.

5) Daniel P. Moynihan. *The Politics of a Guaranteed Income.* New York, 1973: 17.

6) The text of the proposal reads: "Congress should approve a Federal floor under payments to provide an adequate standard of living based on each State's cost of living…And, just as with other workers, homemakers receiving income transfer payments should be afforded the dignity of having that payment called a wage, not welfare." National Plan of Action adopted at the National Women's Conference held in Houston in November 1977.

7) Also from the point of view of consumer expenditure on household appliances, the 1970s have experienced no growth (compared with the 1960s) and a decline compared with the 1950s. It is also questionable whether more technology can liberate women from work. It has often been the case that labor saving devices have increased women's work.

8) This point is convincingly argued by Valerie K. Oppenheimer in her study *The Female Labor Force in the United States*, Population Monograph Series, Number 5, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1970.

9) Juanita Kreps. *Sex in the Marketplace: American Women at Work.* Policy Study in Employment and Welfare N II, Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1971: 68.

10) In New York, welfare benefits are frozen to 1972 levels (adjusted in 1974), despite the fact that the cost of living has practically doubled over the last eight years.

11) It was calculated that a fulltime housewife is worth $6,000 a year, a very low figure compared with the $13,000 of the Chase Manhattan Bank study and the $20,000 of a contemporary study by economist Peter Snell.

12) By 1976 women's entrance into the labor force had reached figures that the Department of Labor did not expect until 1985.

13) It is important in this context, to mention the proposal for a revised unemployment insurance that was debated during the Ford Administration. Although not openly admitted, it aimed at cutting unemployment benefits for those persons – read housewives – who had just 'left the home.' It also proposed that unemployed persons with working spouses should not be counted as recipients of unemployed benefits. Persons "whose lack of education or previous job experiences renders them unqualified" would also be excluded from unemployment insurance. See Eileen Shanahan, "Study on Definitions of Jobless Urged." In *New York Times*, January 11, 1976.

14) *Work in America.* A Report of a special task force to the Secretary of HEW. Cambridge, MIT, 1975.

15) Compare the sales of the service industry with the sales of household appliances. The increase of services sales (compared with appliance sales) has doubled in less than ten years.

1965	1970	1975	1976
6.3%	8.7%	11.8%	11%

16) The present collapse of the birth rate plays an important role in the current discussions on immigration policies (see *Industrial and Labor Relations*, April 1980).

17) This was the case of a female worker at a chemical plant in West Virginia in 1978, who had themselves sterilized for fear of being dismissed or being transferred to a lower paying job. As it turned out, in the wake of a suit brought by United Auto Workers (UAW) against General Motors (against restrictions for women of childbearing age) this was not an isolated case.

18) The highest rate of increase for female headed families has been among divorced women. The situation of female headed families shows the hardships women must face when they try to "make it on their own," as they score the lowest income levels for all population groups. This is due both to the low levels of AFDC payments and the low wages the "displaced homemaker" commands when she takes a market job. As long as housework is not recognized as work, the housewife is considered to have no skills and is forced to accept the lowest paying jobs.

19) Yet, as of 1977, it was calculated that only 3% of children up to age 2 and 5% of children of age between 3 and 5 were going to a daycare centre. In 1975, in a study by the Census Bureau on childcare arrangements, most of the parents surveyed listed themselves or the public system as the main caretakers of their children. The responsibility for the gap between the number of daycare centers available and the needs of working women – including those who work in the home – lies with the policy of the Federal government that considers daycare services legitimate only in the case of "handicapped" families, thus restricting daycare benefits to the recipients of AFDC. With the exception of the Federal Tax exemption, Federal involvement in daycare services has decreased in the 1970s (particularly after 1975). Under these circumstances, mothers do not have any alternative but to seek personal arrangements or face the substantial costs of a for-profit-run day-care centre, averaging $50 a week, a sum that cuts into their earnings while failing to provide an adequate service.

20) As Valerie Oppenheimer points out, throughout the 1930s and 1940s, negative attitudes prevailed towards married working women, as it was feared that they would take jobs away from men. Bills against the employment of married women were passed in the legislature of 26 states. Oppenheimer also points out that even before the 1929 crash "the majority of the school system would not hire married women as teachers, and about half required single teachers to retire upon marriage." Oppenheimer (1970), 127-128, 130.

21) Women's share of moonlighting nearly doubled during the 1969-1979 period, although figures may be higher if we include employment in the underground economy. By 1969, women were 16% of all moonlighters, while by 1979 they were 30%. It is calculated that women who moonlight work an average of 52 hours per seek (*Monthly Labor Report*, Vol. 103, No. 5, May 1980).

22) *Women and Health, United States 1980.* Public Health Reports, Washington D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1980, 9-11, 36-37.

23) Nancy Smith Barrett, "The Economy Ahead of Us," In Juanita Kreps, ed., *Women and the American Economy.* Englewood Cliffs, Prentice Hall, 1976: 165.

24) Amory Lovins. *Soft Energy Paths.* New York: Harper and Row, 1977: 151.

25) Ibid. 169

26) Smith Barrett (1976), 166.

27) Ibid.

Ida Dominijanni*

Heiresses at Twilight. The End of Politics and the Politics of Difference

1. I sense at the moment a certain tendency to monumentalise the early Tronti and to enshrine him as the iconic master of Italian workerism. This is a befitting gesture, especially given the rediscovery and positive revaluation of workerism outside of Italy and the impact of a text like *Operai e capitale* on Italian Marxism and on the *Bildungsroman* of all those who encountered the book at the time of its publication. There is, I believe, ample testimony of this in the current volume and, I have to admit, it arouses in me that slight jealousy that younger brothers and sisters have for the experiences of their older siblings. I will not, however, come to the party. This is for biographical reasons, out of faith to my own relation with Mario (which dates from a later time), and because I am convinced that his more recent work is just important as his earlier writings and doesn't always get the attention it deserves.

I start with biographical concerns just to annoy the *maestro*, who notoriously considers biography an irrelevant and slightly irritating genre. When *Operai e capitale* was first published, in 1966, I wasn't even an adolescent. The book drifted around our house (in fact the copy I still have is the one from my father's library), along with many other texts that Einaudi offered to the progressive and educated element of Italian society. But many important years would pass before I would meet its author in Florence, on the occasion of the launching of the *Laboratorio politico* project.[1] It was the end of the 1970s. The feminist break from the 1968 'community of equals' had played itself out. Workerist journals like *Quaderni rossi*, *Classe operaia* and *Contropiano* had already become legends. Their protagonists had taken separate paths but there was still something common that linked them together. I had come to know them through their writings and, although it would be years until some would become my beloved friends, I already

considered them comrades both near and far. These feelings were confirmed on more than one occasion, and they still come to mind, even in the case of Tronti, when, as in a recent interview, I am compelled to say 'I don't agree.' Or *vice versa* when I am forced to explain to my feminist friends why, notwithstanding the differences between his idea of politics and mine, I still feel so close to him. But I'll come back to this later, for now let me continue the story. While Tronti's laboratory was being established—barely aware of the intersections between the complications of feminine difference and the complexities of late capitalist society or the intersections between feminist criticism and the crisis of politics—the feminist laboratory was also restructuring itself, in a way that many people failed to understand. The *gonne a fiori* movement, recognized by everyone for its impact on customs but by no one for its impact on politics, was over. A fruitful season of theoretical discovery was beginning. While many, after having attached us to the 1968 movement, were attaching us to the ebbing back of that movement, we were learning in our own groups—the Virginia Woolf Cultural Center in Rome, the Women's Bookshop in Milan, the Diotima community in Verona —to confront, as Tronti puts it now, the crisis of politics 'with substituted categories.'[2]

It is difficult to reconstruct the happy boldness of those days. We lived the period in the easiness of relations between women (while the left was losing itself in the uneasiness of Craxi's modernization) and in continual discovery of the new doors opened by the category of sexual difference. These were not, as in the 1970s, only the doors of the present: the conflict of the sexes, the implications of the personal in the public, the role of the unconscious in political rationality. The doors of a longer history were also opening: the story of modern politics and its constitutive aporias. Once the neutrality of the individual was dismantled, the whole conceptual constellation in which the individual was positioned was also dismantled or redesigned: the state and law; liberty, equality, fraternity; order and conflict; power and authority; rules and desire. The modern political project appeared not simply incomplete but rather destined never to be completed, since it is irreparably marked by the founding disavowal of a difference that is constitutive of the human being. I'm unsure exactly what, but something of all this (the critique of equal rights, I think, or perhaps just the open-minded nature of our research) came to the attention of Tronti, who in 1988 gathered some of us for a seminar at the Certosa di Pontignano, where he outlined the critique of democracy that still occupies him now. The 'Bolognina turning point' of 1989 was not then on the horizon.[3] The XVIII Congress of 1988 had pushed the PCI toward an uncertain cultural revisionism that was still open to diverse outcomes. But it was already clear

that the urgencies of freedom were fading into market liberalism and the emphasis on rights was overshadowing the critique of power. The 'horizon of communism,' of which Cesare Luporini would speak two years later at the Bologna Congress, was giving way to the horizon of liberal democracy, which would be taken up in its most acritical form.

But the PCI's turn did not change the object of Tronti's research, which to the contrary was confirmed. Instead, it changed the political, cultural and relational context. A longer account would have to return, sooner or later, to the effect of displacement this had not only on the PCI but on the entire Italian left, forcing complex positions and biographies into the narrow rigidity of a binary, yes or no, presented not as the acceptance or refusal of *that* change but of change *tout court*. It is true that many were always convinced of the need for change, but not for that particular change: they found themselves driven into a conservative faction to which they never belonged. And *vice versa* many who were always quite conservative found themselves suddenly pushing for an ill-defined change. This is not the place to try and make sense of the confusion that reigned at the time and which still affects the political and cultural scene. I want only to recall the background against which those who wished to hold onto their own personal heterodoxy—without resigning themselves to either longing for the past or the mirage of what is to come (or what seems to be coming)—had to define themselves. It is from this standpoint, it seems to me, that Tronti examined the post-1989 transition both in Italy and globally, constantly contesting the narrative promoted as common sense by the mass media and political mainstream. This much is clear from the interviews I conducted with him for *il manifesto* at key moments over the past fifteen years.[4] Rereading them, I find a thread that reperiodizes the whole post-1989 transition, connecting the 'Italian anomaly' to the wider context of the end of 20th-century politics and the workers' movement. He denounces the post-communist left above all for its subaltern cultural position, coldly dissects Berlusconi and the populist mediatized political forms characterized by him (and largely internalized by the left within the wider degenerative drift of the Western democracies), and opposes the optimism predicated on a linear and progressive model of modernization to an analysis that stresses the discontinuities and the contradictions of globalization.

It was during one of the more recent interviews with Tronti, done at the time when the statue of Saddam Hussein was falling in Baghdad, that I uttered that 'I don't agree' already mentioned above. I couldn't agree with the way in which

Tronti understands what he judges as the absolute and ineluctable defeat of the antiwar movement. According to him, there was a war and Bush won it, therefore the pacifists were defeated. It could not be otherwise, he implies, since in war as in politics (that is, politics understood as 'hot' or 'cold' war between friend and enemy), it is force that decides. My objection springs from an argument that derives from my feminist experience: that you can't measure the efficacy of a movement using the values against which it was born. You can't measure the efficacy of the pacifists using the values of the very force they sought to contest, just as you can't measure the efficacy of feminism using the values of the power that feminism contests. In my turn, I too imply that politics is not only force and power, not always does it take the form of war, or function according to the binary of friend and enemy: there is something else under the sky of politics and this otherness must be recognized and accounted for. It is always on this same point that my closeness to Tronti reverses into the maximum distance: that is, on the idea of politics, in the final analysis. Naturally, I don't pretend to be able to change his mind. But I will take advantage of this occasion to try and explain why the obstinate adherence to this idea of politics functions, in his latest work, as a kind of final resistance that blocks the analysis at precisely the point where it might be freed. *La politica al tramonto* is the text that at once allows and demands this approach.[5]

2. Timely in its publication at the end of 1998, *La politica del tramonto* is more a farewell toast to the 20th-century than a welcoming of the 21st. It is a text about ends and losses: the end of the century of grand politics, the loss of points of belonging, the vanishing of that which the word communism held (or was believed to have held) in common. Before being a work of political philosophy, then, the book is a practice of mourning, as evidenced by the writing that 'comes from within,' the circular procedure of argument, the alternate tonality of musical 'movements' that accompany the index, and the final suspension and ellipsis: a parenthetical question mark attached to the final sentence that speaks of 'wandering, wondering, mistaking' in the 'strange light that the twilight of politics throws upon the history of the recent past.' This is what happens to thought when we are mourning, in the suspended time that opens up when one thing has finished and another has not yet begun: it wanders and wonders, turning back on itself, trying to follow an *andante* tempo but falling back to the *adagio*, displaced and disoriented from loss. But when one is able to take stock of oneself in this altered but fruitful condition, the displacement and disorientation can become an opening. It is this crucial theme, the working through of grief for the end of communism, that Jacques Derrida, as early as 1993 in *Specters of Marx*, identified as the most

urgent task for political and geopolitical thought after 1989. Derrida linked the end of communism and the end of modern political forms with the spectral weight of the spirit of revolution upon the global geopolitical unconscious and melancholic tone of our epoch. And it should be noted that he also associated the mournful shadow cast over politics (and its removal from political discourse) with the 'masculine installation of sexual difference' within the mechanisms of power and their transmission from father to son, with all the cruel and sacrificial conflicts that follow from this.[6]

There is a strange consonance between the non-communist author of *Specters of Marx* and the communist author of *La politica al tramonto*, even though they take a quite different approach to their theme. I will not revisit here the main thrust of Tronti's analysis, which identifies communism as the heir of modern politics and consequently correlates the end of communism (backdated from 1989 to 1968, from the Berlin Wall to Prague's Wenceslas Square) with the end of modern politics. Instead, in a Derridean manner, I will approach Tronti's argument from its borders: if modern politics is finished, what is its inheritance? Are we its heirs and, if so, who is this 'we'? If, as Derrida writes, inheritance is always a matter of decision, of close scrutiny, or a choice between what we take and what we leave, how do we then 'decide' about the inheritance of modern politics? And, in this matter so full of the specters of the inheritance of modern politics, what is the role of the *feminine installation* of sexual difference in the critique of power and its transmission?

It is at this level, I believe, that the question of the connection between Tronti's late work and the feminist thought of sexual difference must be posed. This connection is not a matter of fashion, chumminess, or politically correct homage. Tronti knows that the thought of sexual difference is not about 'women's issues,' gender rights, or quotas of representation, but about politics: about the who, what and how of politics, about its roots and its destiny. It thus raises radical issues which demand general lines of inquiry. Tronti's recent trajectory suggests three of these to me: a genealogical one, an ontological one, and an epistemological one.

3. With the first evidence comes the first problem. The question of sexual difference emerges as a political question, along with feminism, at the time of the crisis of politics: around about the time—let us say provisionally—of 1968. In the periodization proposed by Tronti, this date functions as the watershed between the 'grand' and the 'small' 20th-century, or between the grandness and the decline of 20th-century politics. Is it the case that in this relation, which is conceptual as well

as temporal, the feminist revolution and the crisis of politics sit together? Is the former a symptom or a cause of the latter, or both? And does it announce an exit from the crisis as much as a post-crisis politics? Tronti (does not) respond(s) to these questions by hypothesizing a sort of missing heritage that women could in theory, but never in practice, take from 20th-century politics: as if women were the last heiresses of a fallen empire that leaves nothing behind—the missing heiresses of a lack or trustees of a bankruptcy. We know how this works. When the masculine installation of difference in the mechanism that transmits power from father to son breaks, the response of power is not to divert this mechanism to the daughter but to declare bankruptcy. But let's leave aside the metaphor, and proceed using Tronti's terms. When the 'feminist revolution' erupts around about the time of 1968, Tronti writes, it exhibits the two characteristics necessary for a political subject in the classical sense: ancient roots and a spirit of discord.

> There is the need for liberation from millenarian repression. These are the two characteristics that qualify and reveal a political phenomenon as being able to measure up to the noumenon of history. The first is that it breaks out in direct contrast, in a relation that is agonistic or 'polemical' in the literal sense of the term, meaning that the one divides into two with no possibility of synthesis, opening up an either/or that unleashes a *Freund-Feind* struggle. The second is the long duration of the problem, its epochal nature and relative eternity.[7]

The stuff of a political subject was thus there. But—Tronti goes on—'the problem was missing its epoch.' Sexual difference could be 'a category of modern politics.' But, in practice, 'it could not do without conflict, it could not do without force, it could only stand on the legs of realism and utopia, it could not but construct a desired false consciousness, it could not but convert the strategic complex of liberation into a tactic of emancipation.' It emerges only when modern politics ends. The contradiction man/woman would have had 'its natural place autonomously alongside the great epochal contradictions of the early 20th-century: workers and capital, fascism and democracy, capitalism and socialism.' Instead, it exploded 'in the small 20th-century, when all the other great contradictions were, either theoretically or practically, extinct.' The conclusion is that feminism is an instance of culture but not politics. 'It gave us thought, displaced relationships, changed laws, upset common sense, destroyed good sense.' But because it occurred not in the era of politics but of the end of politics, 'it remains a culture, a theoretical point of view on the world and man.' It is not the heir of 20th-century politics, but only 'of the civilizing, modernizing and secularizing processes of the 1960s.'[8]

Clearly we have a paradox before us. But while Tronti attributes it to the thing itself, I attribute it to its interpretation. I will try to suggest another hypothesis, a different way of analyzing the relation between feminism and the crisis of 20th-century politics, beginning with a reconsideration of the 'watershed' of 1968.

4. Notwithstanding the familiar refrain of the left, which considers feminism a kind of derivative of 1968, born from it like Eve from Adam's rib, a glance at the facts reveals that feminism began before 1968, both in the US and Italy. It grew, as Carla Lonzi writes, not *with* but *despite* 1968 (and, in Italy, 1977). And it does not follow the reflux of the 1968 movement at the end of the 1970s.[9] Rather, it cuts the 1968 movement internally, with the separation of women from men, an act which is not just a declaration of identity or a gesture of liberation but an exodus from the lexicon and form of a certain politics toward another lexicon and other forms. It is an unveiling and declaration of alterity, which departs from the deluded certainty of repetition that emerges so strongly in politics at times of revolution. The repetition of the 'masculine as the dominant value' under premise of egalitarianism, the repetition of phallocentrism under the premise of universalism, the repetition of power under the premise of antiauthoritarianism, the repetition of alienation under the premise of liberty. [10] If, as Tronti claims, 1968 can be considered the point of exhaustion of modern politics, it does not mean that everything that disappeared of modern politics at that point was good. Feminine difference reveals what has been left out, bringing to the fore a crucial element of the picture: the complicity that modern politics entertains with the symbolic order of patriarchy. Just as in Holbein's *The Ambassadors*, the anamorphosis changes the entirety of the picture, so the feminine glance discovers the skull—yet another story of specters, to gloss Derrida—and opens another perspective on modern politics, for the future and the past.

I will speak later of the future. For now, I want to propose two brief revisitations of the past. Going back through the 20th-century and the entire period of modern politics, the exceptionality of the contingency that links feminism to 1968 allows us to partially—but only partially, as we shall—locate a certain returning regularity in the picture. There are two exemplary moments here: the 1930s and the French revolution. Before it exploded around the time of 1968, Virginia Woolf had already announced the 20th-century feminism of difference in *Three Guineas*. In the wartime London of 1938, there had already been a huge wave of feminine emancipation, an exodus from an exhausted political lexicon, a conflict

with the feminism that aims only at parity with men, a struggle with socialist and pacifist brothers and their way of attaching women to themselves 'equally,' and a response to the connection between the crisis of patriarchal authority with the hardening of virile masks of power, first among them that of the *Führer*. It was the era of the great contradictions that Tronti would like to have seen aligned with the man-woman contradiction. But this alignment did not occur. Rather sexual difference acted as an uncomfortable third term that complicated the picture, an unpredictable element that could not be reduced to the grand dichotomies of classical political conflict. The second moment is Paris 1791, at the time of the revolution: Olympe de Gouges rewrites the seventeen articles of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen in her Declaration of the Rights of Woman and of the Citizen. This is neither an act of feminine translation nor inclusive enlargement but a reformulation of the universal on the basis of sexual difference. Two years of the revolution had been enough to understand that the third keyword of 1789, fraternity, compromised the supposedly universal character of the other two, since the relation between brothers remains exclusive and excluding. Also in times of revolution, masculine difference returns to install itself in the heart of power and its transmission.

Let's put it this way—the politics of difference, which, according to Tronti, is like politics *tout court*, takes advantage of the state of exception: in normal times women used to stay at home, now they are diligent workers and good citizens. In times of war and revolution, women explode onto the public scene and attempt to reinvent the rules of the game, but something always returns unchanged to exclude them or, to put it better, women resist capture by this process. But what is the state of exception for the politics of difference? It is the point where the suture between the socio-political order and the symbolic order breaks, where the edifice of modern politics and its patriarchal foundations can no longer sustain themselves and, for a moment, everything opens up to different possibilities and unpredictable outcomes, before the suture of normality returns to restrict them. In times of change, writes Luisa Muraro, 'the games are, so to speak, officially open': in political disorder the game between women and men becomes freer and women participate as protagonists of change.[11] But the institution of the new order is systematically accompanied by that which is currently understood as exclusion. A more attentive feminism, however understands this as the subtraction of women from the mechanism of power that reorganizes the relations between men and the entire public sphere. Maria de Medeira has miraculously captured this process on the screen

in her movie *Capitani d'aprile*, narrating the events of the 1975 Carnation Revolution in Portugal through the eyes of a young girl. As Muraro writes:

> Feminist historiography has documented the repetition of this phenomenon in many different contexts. In every instance, the moments of recognizable feminine presence are revolutionary phases of human history, while the tendency to exclusion-reclusion sneaks back in the successive, and generally longer, phase of 'normal history.' In the early Christian societies, in the late medieval cities, in the modern French state, in revolutionary Russia, in independent Algeria, in anti-imperialist Iran, in enormously different contexts, feminine protagonism was accepted at the early stages and then at a certain point, when the revolutionary phase ceded to the search for stable forms, it became, so to speak, unsustainable, particularly for men.[12]

Muraro connects the mechanism of the exclusion of women to another symbolic mechanism, which in masculine history works to substitute pleasure with power, or rather with the taking of pleasure from power. Here again we see the masculine installation of sexual difference in the transmission of power from father to sons: a Freudian theme before it was ever Derridean or feminist one. In *Totem and Taboo*, Freud explained how the constitution of the social and political order is linked to the Oedipal constellation; that is, to the sacrificial sequence that allows the fraternal clan to substitute itself in the paternal order by killing the father and paying for the power it thus acquires with the interdiction against pleasure and the regulation of access to women. Just how much the history of modern sovereignty—of the 'totemic mask' of the sovereign—has to do with the sacrificial quintessence of this primordial myth is something that should —but is not—understood by political thought.[13] But what happens to this original suture between modern politics and the Oedipal constellation in the era that Tronti calls the twilight of politics and which many others call the twilight of Oedipus? What role did the feminist revolution of the 20th-century play in opening up this double fracture in the political order and the symbolic order? And what consequences does this double fracture have for politics-to-come?

5. I would like to revisit in this framework the controversy opened by *La politica al tramonto* in its identification of 1968 as the watershed between the grand and the small 20th-century, or between the greatness and decline of modern politics. The relevance of this controversy becomes evident if we read Tronti's text alongside another that was also published at the turn of the century and written by authors by no means unfamiliar to him: Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's *Empire*.[14] Whereas, for Tronti, 1968 closes the era of politics, for Hardt and Negri, it is a

beginning that opens a new era of subversion. And, while Tronti fails to see the novelty that is born from the ruins of the old, Hardt and Negri fail to see the repetition that returns under the sign of the new. I think it is impossible to avoid this shortsightedness without introducing to the picture the complications of the feminist revolution, its asymmetrical connection to 1968, and its effects upon the suture between the political and symbolic orders.

Tronti himself deals with the problem in the right way when he writes about 1968 that 'the crisis of politics paradoxically has its origins in the will to throw authoritarian power into crisis.' But the analysis here needs to be more subtle and, doubling back along the trajectory of sexual difference, to avail itself of the distinction—which Tronti later gladly notes—between power and authority elaborated by the Diotima philosophical community drawing on Hannah Arendt.[15] Tronti argues, to my mind with some reason, that 1968 was an anti-authoritarian political movement that had the paradoxical effect of removing authority from politics. Even so, there was a double movement: sons against fathers, but also sisters against brothers. On the first front, that between sons and fathers, the revolution of 1968 brings to its highest point the tendency of modern politics that began with the 'grand narrative' of the social contract. As Carole Pateman has magisterially shown, this is nothing other than the narrative of the transition from traditional (paternal) patriarchy to fraternal patriarchy, from the natural power of fathers to the conventional and contractual power of sons, which installs itself in the double and interconnected form of male freedom and domination over women.[16] The novelty emerges on the second front: that of sisters against brothers. In 1968, this explodes with unprecedented extension and intensity. It reveals the entanglements of the 'sexual contract' between free men and subjugated women which sustains the social contract, divides the public sphere with the inaugural gesture of separatism, and gives political form to a sisterhood that is asymmetrical to fraternal society, because it is not based on matricide in the way the latter is based on parricide and relies not on paternal sacrifice but on maternal relation. The feminine attack on the patriarchal-fraternal order liberates politics from its sacrificial and mournful roots: the relational form supplants the ritual of death that regulates the transmission of heredity and the separation of powers.

It could be said that the first movement, insofar as it is revolutionary, re-enters the order of repetition, while it is only the second that is truly unforeseeable and makes a difference. In the state of exception, the fraternal anti-authoritarian revolution renews the Oedipal sacrifice and, in so doing, preserves and reproduces

the patriarchal symbolic order. The sisters, however, break it. The first movement, under its subversive crust, reorders; whereas the second disorders. Antoinette Foque, one of the protagonists of the French scene, identified this dynamic immediately. Foque writes that May 1968 was 'the first assemblage of sons as such: after the era of liberty and equality came that of fraternity.' 'The father has exited the scene,' and what counts now is 'the double, the twin, the reflection, the brother; or what they call the comrade,' which in the era of fraternity acquires the coloring of omnipotent narcissism.[17] The narcissistic personality of the 1968 and post-1968 man, accurately described by Christopher Lasch in 1980, should not be under-evaluated as a widespread sociological phenomenon.[18] It is not by chance that the theme returns in one of Slavoj Zizek's most important interventions: another end-of-the-century book, *The Ticklish Subject.* Discussing the historicity of Oedipus in the wake of Freud and Lacan, Zizek also locates in the contemporary anthropological panorama a break in the symbolic order of bourgeois society and identifies this with the eclipse of paternal authority. The symbolic authority of the father, 'the Name of the Father,' the figure that unites the two functions of totem and taboo, of the ego-ideal and the super-ego, fades away. In its place there emerges 'the primordial father,' deprived of symbolic authority, no longer the ego-ideal but the ideal ego. This 'primordial father' is the imagined rival of his Peter Pan sons, who are eternal adolescents in competition with him, like Narcissuses obsessively dedicated to the care of themselves. They remain unaffected by interiorized prohibitions and are continually driven by injunction to enjoyment, which is functional to the capitalism of immaterial consumption and the postmodern religion of chance.[19]

In this way, Zizek explores the everyday effects of that process of the decline of paternal authority and the consequent crisis of masculine identity that Max Horkheimer analyzed in his *Studies on Authority and the Family.* But neither Horkheimer in the 1930s nor Zizek today manage to understand what was happening on the feminine side while Oedipus was vacillating within the masculine *Bildungsroman.* Let's return to Antoinette Fouque: in the era of narcissistic fraternity or the 'universe of sons and images' which takes the phallus as 'the general equivalent of the integrity of Narcissus,' what place is reserved for women? Fouque responds: either the part of Echo or the exhibition of the body in the market of images (a phallic gesture in its own way). These two poles have certainly not remained vacant: there is an abundance of women available to fill them. The point is that many, around the time of 1968, took a different path: difference, separation, exodus from the community of equals, sisterhood and feminine genealogy rather

than parricidal fraternity, the emptying of power and construction of authority while the masculine anti-authoritarian struggle was confounding power and authority. No more Echo, no more mirrors for Narcissus. It was the feminine separation, just as much if not more than the decline of paternal authority, that prevented the movement of 1968 and after from resolving and recomposing itself into a new political order based on the reproduction of the old symbolic order. The movement of brothers against the father was the insurrectional element reducible to the new order, but the movement of sisters against brothers was unforeseeable and irreducible. In this way, it was women who made 1968 radical, more than it was 1968 that made women radical.

It is thus true that 1968 closed an epoch: it closed the epoch of the modern social contract, of the separation of powers among brothers after the killing of the father and beheading of the sovereign. After 1968 there is no longer the stability of the democratic contract (it is no accident that the neo-contractualists have had to reinvent it, without success: to reaffirm its neutrality a contractual subject must cover itself in the veil of ignorance with regard to its concrete determinations, beginning with its sexual one). There are unstable and narcissistic fraternities that seek to divide up among themselves a power without authority, and there are women who refuse to echo and construct authority without power. From Olympe de Gourges's contestations of the fiction of universal fraternity to the feminist separation from the 1968 community of equals, the historical arc of harmony between the modern political order and the patriarchal-fraternal order both extends and expires. The symbolic order is scrambled, out of joint like the time of Hamlet; there is great disorder under heaven. The Oedipal-masculine genealogy of politics has come to the end of the line; the hereditary mechanism of power guaranteed by the masculine installation of sexual difference is interrupted by the installation of feminine difference in the critique of power. It is necessary to take stock of patrimony again and reconceive inheritance. Modern politics declines but it does not finish, even if it is no longer possible to think it in the lexicon or act it out in the forms of the Oedipal fairytale.

6. So much for the path of genealogy, which can also be traced in ontological terms, along the line of the irruption of sexual difference within the formation of the modern subject. This is by no means a task that is concluded or conceptually resolved, as demonstrated by the debate that has rocked the international feminist community for three decades and intersects the contemporary philosophical debate on subjectivity, on the relation between identity and difference and between

difference and differences, and on the passage from modernity to postmodernity. It is neither possible nor interesting for me to recapitulate that debate completely here.[20] But I do want to interrogate it, starting from the reading Tronti proposes of the 'event' of sexual difference: as we have seen, 'the one divides into two with no possibility of synthesis, opening up an either/or that unleashes a *Freund-Feind* struggle.' With this, crucially in my opinion, Tronti grasps the rupture of the original gesture, political and theoretical, of the birth of feminine difference: the separation from men and the affirmation of a self that knows itself to be partial and claims its own partiality and point of view. From this point on, the individual is no longer one and neutral (and thus, it really ceases to exist and cedes its place to singularity). Discourse is no longer univocal and universal, the public sphere splits: difference is irreducible, there is no synthesis, the dialectic does not function. Tronti's sensibility with regard to this rupture of the sexual difference-event is not accidental: it is not by chance that Toni Negri, in his recent and provocative text *La differenza italiana*, collocates Tronti and Luisa Muraro, *operaismo* and the thought of difference, in the isomorphism of the affirmation of workers' difference and that of feminine difference, and of the political gesture of the workers' separation from the masters in the factory and the feminine separation from men everywhere.[21]

But the rupture of the event does not stop here: difference does not limit itself to division in two, but it immediately becomes a differential matrix and multiplies differences. This is immediately clear from the history (more so than the philosophy) of the women's movement: as soon as one affirms the difference from men, there emerge differences between women. As soon as the collective noun and subject 'women' is deployed, it is contested by the plurality of female groups that differentiate themselves from that noun, by female voices that begin to say 'I' in different ways. Such is the practice of movement, which, in fact, will never have an organized form or unitary representation. In philosophy, where there is a complex series of references and alliances (Nietzsche, Foucault, Deleuze, Derrida), there seems to be a revolt (largely derived from Anglosaxon women's studies and poorly adapted to the Italian context) of 'gender theories' against the supposed essentialism of the theory of sexual difference. This involves the substitution of the conflict man-woman with the (often much less conflictual) proliferation of transgender, nomadic and rhizomatic subjectivities. Such a path is not without its traps, since the logic of multiplicity often recapitulates the logic of the one (with some confusion between sociology and ontology). The problem posed by the event of sexual difference remains to be thought in both its conceptual implications and general

politics: the break of essentialist ontology of identity and the rewriting of an anti-essentialist ontology of difference.

It is not a matter of dissolving the one in the many, but of taking theory seriously by learning how to convert into practice the differential form the subject acquires when the voice of sexual difference shows there is no longer, and never was (except at the price on an insupportable fiction), a neutral and universal oneness. This differential form is internally fractured, excessive, non-coincident with any essence or identity, and dislocated from itself. It precipitates the fall of the figure of the individual and the entire scaffolding of modern politics—not only with respect to order (and with consequences for the forms of representation) and the state but also with respect to disorder and subversion. The conflict man-woman *does not* assume the form of a struggle between friend and enemy but that of a relation of difference. It does not organize itself in a field of forces directed against an other but acts locally and transversally. It does not aim to seize power but rather to empty it. As such, it obliges us to rethink the form of antagonism outside the binary friend-enemy and to measure transformation with values different to those of force and power. The one that divides in two does not remain content with the forms of modern politics or follow the unfolding of the great dichotomous contradictions of 20th-century politics. Rather, it leaves these behind or, more accurately, announces that politics itself must leave these behind.

Also if considered from the point of view of subject formation, sexual difference is central to our times. It removes the problem of the subject from the schematizations and simplifications that constellate about the debate on the passage from the modern to the postmodern. More precisely, we can say that sexual difference incarnates and motivates (but also complicates) this passage, since it comes from 'the mute and tacit inside of modernity' but does not identify itself with the dissolutive drift of postmodernity.[22] The subject of difference that emerges—not by accident—with the decline of the identitarian subject, accelerates the deconstruction and crisis of the latter without nihilistic or auto-annihilating results. As Tronti himself acutely observes, there is today 'a masculine movement of deconstruction and, however uncertain, a feminine movement of construction.'[23] But if this is so, there are more things under the sky of the passage of modernity to postmodernity than contemporary philosophy can know. And there is an excess that Tronti himself, in his defense of the power of the modern against postmodern fragmentation, doesn't manage to grasp: the subject that emerges from the disavowed part of the modern paradigm does indeed point to an overcoming, but

'opens from its inside not toward any 'afterwards' but rather toward more of itself.'[24] It thus points—and here we are again at the question of inheritance—to the relaunching of the patrimony of modern politics and not to its dissolution. But with this image of the tacit and mute inside of modernity, we arrive at the third and final path that I wanted to follow: the epistemological.

7. Another factor, the most frequently overlooked one, of the irruption of sexual difference into modern politics should not be forgotten: i.e., the unforeseen and disturbing way in which it suddenly reveals the repressed side of politics and, in so doing, throws doubt on the luminousness of politics as we know it. Difference under neutralization, the mute feminine word under phallogocentrism, patriarchal oppression under democratic liberty and communist equality, the private under the public and the personal under the political, the unconscious under rationality, sexuality under the neuter, repetition and impediments under the utopian project: at the beginning feminism was an effort to unbury this immense repressed material. The scandal was to proclaim that this repressed material was also political material, or that it should and must become so. And this scandal goes on since, three and a half decades after the beginning of feminism, everyone is ready to add a 'gender' chapter to politics as it currently exists; but no-one (or almost no-one) recognizes that this politics is only the surface of a stratigraphy that can no longer be occluded and throws into question the sphere, statute and form of rationality. Remarkably too, the scandal persists at a historical time when the surface of politics does nothing but vomit, like an erupting volcano, all that was repressed by the construction of modern politics. Women excluded from the public sphere, ethnicities canceled by the nation-state, religions expunged by lay citizenship, the 'geopolitical melancholy' (Derrida once again) hidden under liberal triumphalism obsessed with the spectre of communism: these are signals that show how the rationality and lexicon of modern politics are no longer able to mark the change or make sense of it, like a crust that breaks under the pressure of unnamed drives. All of this suggests that the current disaffection for politics should perhaps be interpreted as disaffection with its worn narrative, with the linguistic and conceptual cage in which it is imprisoned.

But the unconscious has two sides: repetition and opening, neurosis and desire, nightmare and dream. And while repression imprisons, the unpredictable liberates. 'The fascination of politics is that it can never rationalize everything' so Tronti writes in the essay '*Politica e destino.*' In the spoken version, I am sure, he added something else, which was perhaps too scandalous to be included in the

written version—rationality is broken by the weight of an unconscious that does not allow itself to be removed.' There remains, however, the mark of an excess that is irreducible to 'the given and the objective,' which 'is not only outside, in history, but also inside, in the motivation, articulation and decision to act politically.' It is an action that is not entirely in our hands but that also decides about us and acts on us. Where this excess or 'irruption of the unpredictable' occurs, there is an event or contingency. In a manner similar to Arendt, Tronti claims, there is politics where there is 'the birth of the unexpected and thus of the unrecognized.' In this sense, politics is a feminine substantive, 'because politics is a mother, it creates in the sense that it generates.'[25] Unconscious, birth, contingency, excess: the lexicon of feminine liberty turns in a circle around the terms of the groundlessness of politics, and opens the central question of the late Tronti: that of freedom's existence in tension, and not continuity, with democracy.[26]

8. The late Tronti, which begins with the 'Tesi su Benjamin' in *La politica al tramonto* and continues to this day, is the most striking but least received. It is like an indigestible fruit for the common sense of the left at the beginning of the millennium, which has made itself an heir of democracy without any 'decision' about what to take on board and what to discard. By contrast, Tronti both decides and discards: 'The century of democracy, which in war wins against dictators, does not give freedom in peace. At the end of the 20th-century, that historical conflict between dictatorship and freedom, that defeated both totalitarianism and authoritarianism, opens the way to a political conflict between democracy and freedom.'[27] Far from realizing the autonomy and independence of the bourgeois individual, *homo democraticus* inhabits the present like 'one of the herd,' an isolated and massified atom, apathetic and dependent, a proud defender of his own 'particular' freedom but susceptible to pervasive forms of control, from the mass mediatized manipulation of common sense to the colonization of desire in the supermarket and the emptying of political participation in the forms of plebiscite democracy. And all of this occurs in the shadow of guaranteed constitutional rights, which, in expanding the spectre of juridical freedom, do not obstruct but rather assist, in certain ways, the hemorrhaging of freedom that turns democracies into regimes of voluntary servitude.

Is this degeneration or the destiny of democracy? 'In the past fifty years, according to those who see the problem from the point of view of radical democracy or the critique of democracy, democracy has either been corrupted or completed. I believe that it has been completed.' As with socialism, there is no

break between the model and the thing, between the idea and the historical experiment. Democracy is real (or actually existing) democracy. It is not something other than the historical realization of the idea. The outcome is not a degeneration of the model but is inscribed in its original constitution, which it shows to have a disturbing root: 'The unification of the world under the single sign of indirect domination, the crash of alternative subjectivities, the death of the people and substitution of the masses in the titles of the sovereign's function, the spurious forms (commanded from above) of direct democracy, the primacy of communication and subalternity of politics, and the fact that all of this produces a thought that is seen as the one and only, ultimate and indisputable, form of political system, without anything other or beyond it being publicly desirable, suggests the (reversed) title of 'democratic totalitarianism.'[28] What is this if not the logical and historical unfolding of democracy's identitarian root, of the identity of *demos* and *kratos* that substantiates the formula of popular sovereignty, realized in the course of time as the '*kratos* of the *demos*, the power of the mass over anyone,' the 'process of homogenization or massification of thoughts, sentiments, tastes, and behaviours,' a sort of 'auto-dictatorship' close to voluntary servitude'? But if this is knot that strangles the democratic project, there is perhaps no way to untie it: 'it seems to me that the moment has come to cut it.'[29]

In his latest exercise of the critique of democracy, which I am following here, Tronti's debt to the thought of sexual difference becomes more explicit and precise: this critique, he writes, 'has a father, *operaismo*, and a mother, the autonomy of the political. And it is a female child, since the thought and practice of difference anticipated this critique with the questioning of the universalism of the *demos*, which is the other face of the neutral character of the individual, and with that *non credere di avere diritti* (don't believe you have rights) that is no longer directed to the individual but to the people.'[30] In this way, the general valence, both theoretical and practical, of the event of sexual difference is acknowledged and carried to its consequences. It is not only a matter of the denunciation and criticism of the false neutrality of the individual and the *demos*, but also of the exposure of and attack on the heart of the identitarian root of democracy. (Sexual) difference is not an element that can be expansively included in democracy. It is rather the explosive and unhinging element. If the democratic order constructs itself on an identitarian base and consolidates and globalizes itself through the assimilationist and homogenizing valence of equality, difference is the element that disorders this double base by unhinging it. If, in the democratic order, the identitarian root and assimilationist and homogenizing valence of equality suffocate human and political

freedom, decomposing them in the liberty of the (neutral) citizen assured by rights (that are 'precious to live together with others but poor for existing in a way that begins with oneself'), difference is the refounding element of freedom or, to put it another way, the category with which to rethink the subject.[31] The semantics of freedom and the grammar of difference touch each other in the central and crucial political project of the present, which is called 'for the critique of democracy.'

I have discussed elsewhere the cut that Tronti's criticism of democracy makes with respect both to the right that has been hegemonic in the West from the 1980s on (and which has hooked the democratic triumph to a liberal, privatized and antipolitical conception of freedom) and the post-89 left (which has hooked it to an immunitarian and depoliticizing concept that absolutises the democratic religion without daring to question).[32] This is a tainted convergence that today is under the eyes of all: in the democracy exported to Iraq by the United States, the Paris *banlieues*, and the extenuated Italian transition. There is no need to underline, in the face of this democratic monotheism, the subversive aspect of Tronti's program. Upon which (and here I want to conclude), sexual difference acts like litmus paper but also brings up some question marks.

9. It remains to say something about the 'completion' of democracy that Tronti, from his point of view, justly assumes as a bar against the ideologies of a still-to-come completion of the democratic project, or of its reformability, or of the possibility of purifying the 'corruptions' of the 'correct' model that are rather (as we have seen) its logic of becoming true. It is, however, a strange completion that contains an element of chronic incompleteness—that of the still incomplete inclusion of women in democratic citizenship and in the seats of representation and power. This theme notoriously divides the international panorama of feminism: between those who read this incompleteness as a deficit and a 'not-yet' and those (the feminists of difference) who read it as an excess and a 'no more.' In the first case, democracy will be complete only when it has included women (and parity is the measure of this progression). In the second case, democracy is complete insofar as the semi-inclusion (or semi-exclusion) of women fractures it always and forever (and difference is the sign of this original and destined *crisis*, which the feminist revolution has turned into *criticism*). This conflict that agitates the feminine democratic scene throughout the 20th-century and today is not simply a secondary matter; what is at stake is the faith in the democratic religion, which is sustained by the priestesses of parity as much as it is contested by the disbelievers of difference. The democratic states of the late 20th-century responded to the explosion of

difference in the 1970s with the strategy of 'obsessive parity.'[33] And the democratic Empire of today uses the same strategy in the war of conquest of the infidel women, who are hiding everywhere—in the Western metropolises as much as in Afghan villages and Iraqi cities. The clash of civilizations, or the war for the planetary hegemony of the democratic religion, will not be won until the resistance of feminine difference and the feminine incredulity toward democratic homogenization (whether this incredulity is naked or clothed, postmodern or premodern, nomadic and queer or domesticated and segregated) is crushed.

But it will not be crushed, as demonstrated by the irreducibility to the democratic lexicon of some emblematic conflicts that revolve around sexual difference, such as the struggle over the French law on the veil. Or by the ordinary irreducibility of the feminine to the parameters of power, of representation and value, which unsettles democratic games of partition and parliaments as well as capitalist devices for control of the workforce. Or again by the irreducibility to the contractual form of the birthing power of the mother, which shows the limits of the masculine political generativity celebrated by the narrative of the contract. The democratic century that, as Tronti says, defeated the workers' movement, also placed a feminine thorn in its side. But this means, differently from what Tronti claims, that it is not completely true that the double face of democracy, both a practice of domination and project of liberation, can be boiled down to one face only, namely the first. The completion of democracy still produces fractures and conflict: maybe not in the form of the antagonism friend-enemy, but certainly in the form of exodus, resistance, emptying, heresy, and parody. The democracy of the de-politicization of the masses still produces the political if, as Carla Lonzi used to claim, the feminine separation from the lexicon and dying forms of modern politics *is already political*, and if this separation has already given birth to new words and new forms.

At the end of modern politics, the heiresses of its fall or executers of its failure, are paradoxically the best suited, from the platform of the difference, to relaunch it. You can passively inherit a patrimony and then dissipate it, or you can inherit and decide what to discard and what to keep and valorize. After discarding the masked neutrality of the subject, the homogenizing power of equality and the totalizing drive of identity, the Oedipal brotherhood that excludes, the masculine sacrificial ritual that celebrates power and the mournful and guilty shadow that it throws on the public sphere, maybe, like Peer Gynt's onion, nothing of modern politics will be saved. But maybe we will rediscover its kernel of freedom. What is

at stake is not a struggle friend-enemy but a radical leap in civility. The criterion of measurement is not the conquest of power, but rather the reshaping of the subject. Difference interrupts the eternal return of the-always-the-same. This light that the *politica al tramonto* throws on recent history is not only strange; if you look at it from the right angle, it also displays the promising clarity of dawn.

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[1] *Laboratorio politico* was a journal of political theory and practice directed by Mario Tronti. It was published for three years, from January 1981 to December 1983.

[2] Mario Tronti, 'Politica e destino,' op. cit. (forthcoming, no page numbers).

[3] On November 12, 1989 the Secretary of PCI Achille Occhetto announced at the Bolognina branch of the party in Bologna the change of the name of PCI and the constitution of a new, post-communist party. This decision was ratified few months later at the Congress of Bologna, February 1990.

[4] See *il manifesto* 12/21 1989, 5/30 1991, 7/29 1993, 3/27 1994, 7/11 1995, 3/2 1997, 7/8 1999, 8/24 2000, 5/17 2001, 3/28 2002, 4/11 2003, 4/1 2004, 4/29 2005.

[5] Mario Tronti, *La politica al tramonto,* Einaudi 1998.

[6] Jacques Derrida and Elisabeth Roudinesco, *Quale domani?,* Bollati Boringhieri, Torino 2004. Here Derrida reconsiders his *Spettri di Marx,* Cortina, Milano 1993. On the communists' mourning for the end of communism see also the interview with Wendy Brown by C. Colegate, J. Dalton, T. Rayner, C. Thill 'Learning to Love Again' in the special issue entitled Democratic Futures, *Contretemps* 6, 2006 (www.usyd.edu.au/contretemps).

[7] Mario Tronti, *La politica al tramonto*, p.41. [The terms *Freund* and *Feind* are drawn from Carl Schmitt, on whom Tronti has written a great deal. For more on these concepts, see Schmitt's short book *The Concept Of The Political*, published in 1996 by the University of Chicago Press.]

[8] Mario Tronti, *La politica al tramonto*, pp. 41 ff.

[9] See. Maria Luisa Boccia, 'Il patriarca, la donna, il giovane. La stagione dei movimenti nella crisi italiana,' in Fiamma Lussana e Giacomo Marramao (a cura di), *Italia repubblicana nella crisi degli anni Settanta,* Rubettino 2003, vol II; Ida Dominijanni, 'Le donne oltre la crisi della politica,' in A aVv, *Millenovecentosettantasette,* manifestolibri 1997.

[10] Lia Cigarini, 'Masculine as the dominant value,' in *il manifesto* (monthly review), 1970, n.4.

[11] Luisa Muraro, *Oltre l'uguaglianza,* Liguori 1995, p. 119.

[12] *Ibid*, p. 113.

[13] Giacomo Marramao, *Dopo il Leviatano,* Giappichelli 1995, pp. 317 ff.

[14] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire,* Harvard University Press, 2000.

[15] See. Diotima, *Oltre l'uguaglianza* op cit.

[16] Carole Pateman, *The Sexual Contract,* Polity Press, 1988.

[17] Antoinette Fouque, *I sessi sono due,* Il Saggiatore 1997, p. 49.

[18] Christopher Lash, *The culture of Narcissism,* Norton 1980.

[19] Slavoj Zizek, *The Ticklish Subject,* Verso Books 1999, it. transl. Cortina, 2000, pp. 391 ff.

[20] See among others Adriana Cavarero and Franco Restaino, *Le filosofie femministe,* Paravia 1999; Rosi Braidotti, *Feminist Philosophies,* in Mary Eagleton, (ed.), *A Concise Companion to Feminist Theory,* Blackwell 2003.

[21] Antonio Negri, *La differenza italiana,* nottetempo 2005.

[22] Luisa Muraro, *Oltre l'uguaglianza* op cit., p. 141.

[23] Mario Tronti, 'Politica e destino' op cit.

[24] Luisa Muraro, *Oltre l'uguaglianza* op cit., p. 141.

[25] Mario Tronti, 'Politica e destino' op cit.

[26] See my 'Lâ'eccedenza della libertà femminile,' in Ida Dominijanni (ed), *Motivi della libertÀ* , Franco Angeli 2001.

[27] Mario Tronti, *La politica al tramonto* cit., p. 197-198

[28] Mario Tronti, 'Per la critica della democrazia,' in Ida Dominijanni (ed), *Motivi della libertà* op cit., p.25.

[29] Mario Tronti, 'Per la critica della democrazia politica,' in Marcello Tarà (ed.), *Guerra e democrazia,* manifestolibri 2005, p. 16.

[30] Ibid. *Non credere di avere dei diritti* is the title of a famous book of the Libreria delle donne di Milano (Rosenberg e Sellier, 1987).

[31] Mario Tronti, *La politica al tramonto* op cit., p. 199

[32] In my Introduction to *Motivi della libertà* op cit.

[33] Luisa Muraro, *Oltre l'uguaglianza* op cit., p. 130.