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Editorial

In Poland, the Law and Order Party has fired a curator for promoting Jewish themes. A Catholic Nationalist is chief adviser to American president-elect Donald Trump. Hungary's right-wing government threatens the Lukács archive with destruction. Modi's BJP arrests a college student president for insulting "Mother India." Theresa May replaces paintings in 10 Downing Street with framed pictures of her own quotes.

The curtain rises on the second century since the Russian Revolution to reveal a lifeworld beset with problems shocking in their undead familiarity. It is true that the future is unknown and invisible, but not everything invisible and unknown contains the future. The invisible unknown includes both what hides backstage, waiting to emerge, and what persists silently outside the theater of our perception without becoming either past or future. For the urban form-of-life, the political rematerialization of the fascist program is horrifying in the proper, supernatural sense. Natives of an undiscovered country, the undead are only the unknown invisible made visible but still unknown. Maybe zombies are just what angels look like to those who are still breathing. Maybe worship is the safest kind of fear.

Montesquieu thought that principles were decentralized forces like electricity or heat: to the extent that we generate virtue, we live as a republic; to the extent that we generate honor, we live in a monarchy; and to the extent that we generate fear, we live under despotism. Defeating despotism means reducing fear—a process that begins by locating the necessary concept. Every horror movie knows this to be true: each monster-villain has a logic that, once deciphered, lets them be neutralized. Synthesizing images into concepts is how we work to keep each other safe. In this vein, Liam Gillick considers the derivative architecture of Trump Tower in Manhattan to emphasize its minimal familiarity.

Amelia Groom gives new meaning to the term "permanent collection" when she visits the Otsuka Museum of Art, where images of the art-historical canon have been printed onto indestructible ceramic plates. The militant corpse of reanimated nationalism insists on a similarly compulsive vitality, albeit with far more sinister intentions. Earlier this year, Hito Steyerl made the connection between contemporary art, hoarding, and the current fascist resurgence. In a very real sense, the art world is a form of international monetary sovereignty that does not answer to the national kind. Art is a sort of counter-distribution by global social fiat: a clear and present example of the irreducibly collective moment in any process of material validation. Art's inclusion in the hoard—deep in the belly of the freeports—is evidence of an actually existing international socialism, however limited, corrupt, or unconscious. When value exceeds its grasp, capital makes war, as Maurizio Lazzarato and Eric Alliez address in their entwined history "To Our Enemies."

The relative independence of the value-process is one

reason why artists and intellectuals must resist the temptation to join the orgiastic production of fear—not because things are safe, but because they are so dangerous. Artists are empathy dealers, after all, as Kara Walker has recently reminded us. George Eliot insisted that we are only democratic to the extent that we generate empathy, because it is only by force of empathy that law can rule. Democracy is always available to us, in every circumstance; it is only as far away as the next moment of empathy. Etienne Balibar locates a similar, supplemental logic in the contradictory concept of equality lurking beneath the "Hyperbolic Proposition" that was the *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen*. With "Geontologies," Elizabeth Povinelli gives us a concept worthy of the reality, an effort to consider not the living and the dead, but the presence of both life and death on the one hand, and their total absence on the other. What does it mean to think the extinction not of a given species but of the categories of life and death *in toto*?

Decentering these figures means considering other forms of agency. In "The Coming '17," Franco "Bifo" Beradi argues that we cannot recreate the past century's revolution, but must look to a new class of dispersed digital laborers for the architecture of emancipation. In this spirit, Geert Lovink interviews Yuk Hui about the status of the digital object and what the phenomenological tradition can teach us about how we stage our understanding of data. Kirsty Robertson observes a different kind of hybrid object in the trajectory of "Plastiglomerate," the strange material made when beach bonfires fuse sand and plastic garbage. Are these personworks Mother Earth returning Smithson's favor? Has Gaia already begun making art from residual human matter?

X

Maurizio Lazzarato and Eric Alliez

To Our Enemies

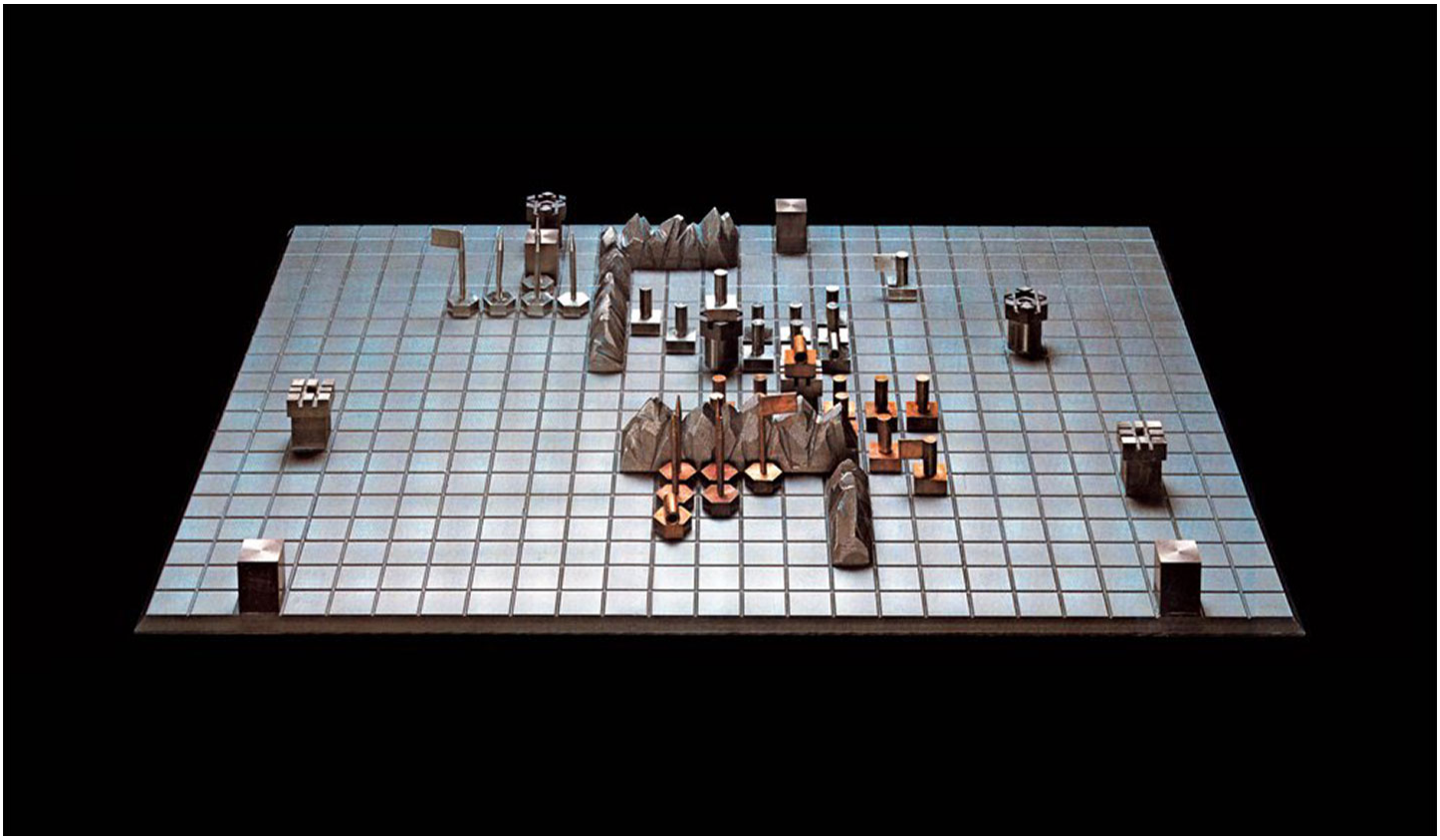
1. We are living in the time of the subjectivation of civil wars.[1] We did not leave the period of triumph of the market, automation of governmentality, and depoliticization of the economy of debt to go back to the era of "world views" and the conflicts between them. We have entered a time of building new war machines.

2. Capitalism and neoliberalism carry wars within them like clouds carry storms. While the financialization of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries led to total war and the Russian Revolution, the 1929 crash and European civil wars, contemporary financialization is at the helm of global civil war and controls all its polarizations.

3. Since 2011, the multiple forms of subjectivation of civil wars have deeply altered both the semiology of capital and the pragmatics of the struggle to keep the manifold powers of war from being the perpetual framework of life. Among the experiments with anticapitalist machines, Occupy Wall Street in the US, the Indignados in Spain, the student movements in Chile and Quebec, and Greece in 2015 all fought with unequal arms against the debt economy and austerity policies. The "Arab Spring," the major protests in Brazil, and the Gezi Park clashes in Turkey circulated the same watchwords of organization and disorder throughout the Global South. Nuit Debout in France is the latest development in a cycle of conflict and occupation that may have started with Tiananmen Square in 1989. On the side of power, neoliberalism promotes an authoritarian and policed post-democracy managed by market technicians to stoke the flames of its predatory economic policies, while the new right (or "strong right") declares war on foreigners, immigrants, Muslims, and the underclasses in the name of the "de-demonized" extreme right. This extreme right openly comes to occupy the terrain of civil wars, which it subjectivizes by rekindling *racial class warfare*. Neofascist hegemony over the processes of subjectivation is confirmed by the renewed war on the autonomy of women and the becoming-minor of sexuality (in France, "La Manif pour tous") as an *extension of the endocolonial domain of civil war*.

The era of limitless deterritorialization under Thatcher and Reagan is now followed by the racist, nationalist, sexist, and xenophobic reterritorialization of Trump, who has already become the leader of the new fascisms. The American Dream has been transformed into the nightmare of an insomniac planet.

4. There is a flagrant imbalance between the war machines of Capital and the new fascisms on the one hand, and the multiform struggles against the world-system of new capitalism on the other. It is a political imbalance but also an *intellectual* one. This text focuses on a void, a blank, a theoretical and practical repressed which is, however, always at the heart of the power and powerlessness of revolutionary movements: the concept of "war" and "civil war."



Guy Debord and by Alice Becker-Ho's boardgame The Game of War.

5. "It's like being in a war," was heard in Athens during the weekend of July 11–12, 2015. And for good reason. The population was faced with a large-scale strategy of continuing war by means of debt: it completed the destruction of Greece and, at the same time, triggered the self-destruction of the "construction of Europe." The goal of the European Commission, the ECB, and the IMF was never mediation or finding compromise but defeating the adversary on an open field.

The statement "It's like being in a war" should be immediately corrected: *it is a war*. The reversibility of war and economy is at the very basis of capitalism. And it has been a long time since Carl Schmitt revealed the "pacifist" hypocrisy of neoliberalism by reestablishing the continuity between economy and war: the economy pursues the objectives of war through other means ("blocking credit, embargo on raw materials, devaluation of foreign currency").

Two superior officers in the Chinese Air Force, Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui, define financial offensives as "bloodless wars"; a *cold* violence, just as cruel and effective as "bloody wars." With globalization, as they explain, "while constricting the battlespace in the narrow sense, at the same time we have turned the entire world into a battlefield in the broad sense."[2] The expansion of war and the multiplication of its domain names has led to the establishment of a continuum between war, economy, and politics. Yet from the beginning, liberalism has been a *philosophy of total war*.

(Pope Francis seems to be preaching in the desert when he asserts, with a clarity that is lacking in politicians, experts of all stripes, and even the most hardened critics of capitalism, "Let's recognize it. *The world is in a state of war in bits and pieces* … When I speak of war, I talk about real war. Not a war of religion. No. There is a war of interests. There is a war for money. There is a war for natural resources. There is a war for domination of peoples. This is the war."[3])

6. During that same year of 2015, a few months after the defeat of the Greek "radical left," the president of the French Republic announced on the evening of November 13 that France was "at war" and declared a state of emergency. The law authorizing him to do so and authorizing the suspension of "democratic freedoms" to grant "extraordinary" powers to the administration of public security had been passed in 1955 during the colonial war in Algeria. Implemented in New Caledonia in 1984 and during the "suburban riots" in 2005, the state of emergency brought colonial and postcolonial war back into the spotlight.

What happened in Paris on an awful night in November is

what occurs daily in cities in the Middle East. This is the horror that the millions of refugees "pouring" into Europe are fleeing. They are visible evidence of the oldest colonialist technology to regulate migratory movement by its "apocalyptic" extension in the "infinite wars" started by Christian fundamentalist George Bush and his cabinet of neocons. Neocolonial war is no longer taking place only in the "margins" of the world. In every way possible, it moves through the "center" by taking on the figure of the "internal Islamist enemy," immigrants, refugees, and migrants. The eternal outcasts are not left out: the poor and impoverished workers, those in unstable jobs and long-term unemployment, and the "endocolonized" on both sides of the Atlantic ...

7. The "stability pact" ("financial" state of emergency in Greece) and the "security pact" ("political" state of emergency in France) are two sides of the same coin. Constantly dismantling and restructuring the world-economy, the flows of credit and the flows of war are, with the States that *integrate* them, the condition of existence, production, and reproduction of contemporary capitalism.

Money and war are the global market's military police, which is still referred to as the "governance" of the world-economy. In Europe, it is incarnated in the financial state of emergency that shrinks workers' rights and social security rights (health, education, housing, and so forth.) to nothing while the antiterrorist state of emergency suspends their already emptied "democratic" rights.

8. Our first thesis is that war, money, and the State are constitutive or constituent forces, in other words the ontological forces of capitalism. The critique of political economy is insufficient to the extent that the economy does not replace war but continues it by other means, ones that go necessarily through the State: monetary regulation and the legitimate monopoly on force for internal and external wars. To produce the genealogy of capitalism and reconstruct its "development," we must always engage and articulate together the critique of political economy, critique of war, and critique of the State.

The accumulation of and monopoly on property titles by Capital, and the accumulation of and monopoly on force by the State feed off of each other. Without the external exercise of war, and without the exercise of civil war by the State inside its borders, it would never have been possible to amass capital. And inversely: without the capture and valorization of wealth carried out by capital, the State would never have been able to exercise its administrative, legal, and governmental functions or organize armies of ever growing power. The expropriation of the means of production and the appropriation of the means of exercising force are the conditions of the formation of Capital and the constitution of the State that develop in parallel. Military proletarization goes hand in hand with industrial proletarization.

9. But what "war" are we talking about? Does the concept of "global civil war," advanced at the same time (1961) by Carl Schmitt and Hannah Arendt, impose itself at the end of the Cold War as the most appropriate form? Do the categories of "infinite war," "just war," and "war on terrorism" correspond to the new conflicts of globalization?

And is it possible to use the syntagma of "the" war without immediately assuming the point of view of the State? The history of capitalism, since its origin, is crisscrossed and constituted by a multiplicity of wars: wars of class(es), race(s), sex(es),[4] wars of subjectivity(ies), wars of civilization (the singular gave its capital letter to History). "*Wars*" and not *the* war is our second thesis. "Wars" as the foundation of internal and external order, as organizing principle of society. Wars, not only wars of class, but also military, civil, sex, and race wars are integrated so constitutively in the definition of Capital that *Das Kapital* should be rewritten from start to finish to account for their dynamic in its most real functioning. At all of the major turning points in capitalism, we do not find the "creative destruction" of Schumpeter carried out by entrepreneurial innovation, but always the enterprise of civil wars.

10. Since 1492, Year One of Capital, the formation of capital has unfolded through this multiplicity of wars on both sides of the Atlantic. Internal colonization (Europe) and external colonization (Americas) are parallel, mutually reinforcing, and together define the world-economy. This dual colonization defines what Marx called primitive accumulation. Unlike, if not Marx, then at least a certain long-dominant Marxism, we do not restrict primitive accumulation to a mere phase in the development of capital destined to be surpassed in and through the "specific mode of production" of capital. We consider that it constitutes a condition of existence that constantly accompanies the development of capital, such that if primitive accumulation is pursued in all of the forms of expropriation of a continued accumulation, then *the wars* of class, race, sex, and subjectivity are *endless*. The conjunction of the these wars, and in particular the wars against the poor and women in the internal colonization of Europe, and the wars against the "first" peoples in external colonization, precede and make possible the "class struggles" of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by projecting them into a common war against *productive pacification*. Pacification obtained by any means ("bloody" and "not bloody") is the goal of the war of capital as "social relationship."

11. "By focusing exclusively on the relationship between capitalism and industrialism, in the end, Marx gives no attention to the close connection between these two phenomena and militarism."[5] War and the arms race have been conditions for both economic development and technological and scientific innovation since the start of capitalism. Each stage in the development of capital invents its own "Keynesianism of war." The only fault in

this thesis by Giovanni Arrighi is in limiting itself to "the" war between States and paying "no attention to the close connection" that Capital, technology, and science maintain with civil wars. A colonel in the French army sums up the directly economic functions of war as follows: "We are producers like any other." He reveals one of the most troubling aspects of the concept of production and work, an aspect that economists, unions, and Marxist recruits avoid thematizing.

12. Since primitive accumulation, the strategic force of destructuration/restructuration of the world-economy is Capital in its most deterritorialized form: financial Capital (which had to be expressed as such before receiving its letters of credit from Balzac). Foucault critiques the Marxist conception of Capital because there will never be "the" capitalism but always a historically qualified "political-institutional ensemble" (an argument that received much attention).

Although Marx never in fact used the concept of capitalism, we must still maintain the distinction between it and "the" capital, because "its" logic, the logic of financial Capital (M–M'), is (still historically) the most operational one. What has been called the "financial crisis" shows it at work even in its most "innovative" post-critical performances. The multiplicity of State forms and transnational organizations of power, the plurality of political-institutional ensembles defining the variety of national "capitalisms," are violently centralized, subordinated, and commanded by globalized financial Capital in its aim of "growth." The multiplicity of power formations submits, more or less docilely (albeit more rather than less), to the logic of the most abstract property, that of the creditors. "The" Capital, with "its" logic (M–M') of planetary reconfiguration of space through the constant acceleration of time, is an historical category, a "real abstraction" as Marx would say, producing the most real effects of universal privatization of "human" and "nonhuman" Earth, and removal of the "commons" of the world. (Think here of the land grabbing which is both a direct consequence of the "food crisis" of 2007–08 and one of the *exit strategies* from the "worst financial crisis in Global History.") We are using the "historical-transcendental" concept of Capital in this way by pulling it (and dropping the capitalization as often as possible) towards the systematic colonization of the world of which it is the long-distance agent.

13. Why doesn't the development of capitalism go through cities, which have long served as its vectors, but instead through the State? Because only the State, throughout the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries, was capable of achieving the expropriation/appropriation of the multiplicity of war machines of the feudal period (turned towards "private" wars), to centralize them and institutionalize them in a war machine transformed into an army with the legitimate monopoly on public force. The division of labor does not only take place in production, but also in the specialization of war and the professional soldier. While centralization and the exercise of force in a "regulated army" is the work of the State, it is also the condition for the accumulation of "wealth" by "civilized and opulent" nations at the expense of poor nations (Adam Smith)—which, in truth, are not nations at all but "wastelands" (John Locke).

14. The constitution of the State as a "megamachine" of power thus relied on the capture, centralization, and institutionalization of the means of exercising force. Starting in the 1870s, however, and especially under the effect of the brutal acceleration imposed by "total war," Capital was no longer satisfied with maintaining a relationship of alliance with the State and its war machine. It started to appropriate it *directly* by integrating its instruments of polarization. The construction of this new capitalist war machine integrated the State, its sovereignty (political and military), and all its "administrative" functions by profoundly modifying them under the direction of financial Capital. Starting with the First World War, the model of scientific organization of labor and the military model of organization and execution of war deeply penetrated the political functioning of the State by reconfiguring the liberal division of powers under the hegemony of the executive, while inversely the politics, not of the State but of Capital, were imposed on the organization, execution, and aims or war. With neoliberalism, this process of capture of the war machine and the State was fully realized in the axiomatics of Integrated Global Capitalism. In this way, we bring in Félix Guattari's IGC to serve our third thesis: Integrated Global Capitalism is the axiomatic of the war machine of Capital that was able to submit the military deterritorialization of the State to the superior deterritorialization of Capital. The machine of production is no longer distinguishable from the war machine integrating civilian and military, peace and war, in the single process of a continuum of isomorphic power in all its forms of valuation.

15. In the *longue durée* of the capital/war relationship, the outbreak of "economic war" between imperialisms at the end of the nineteenth century represented a turning point, a process of irreversible transformation of war and the economy, the State and society. *Financial capital transmits the unlimitedness (of its valuation) to war by making it into a power without limits (total war).* The conjunction of the unlimited flows of war and the unlimited flows of financial capital during the First World War pushed back the limits of both production and war by raising the terrifying specter of *unlimited production for unlimited war*. The two World Wars are responsible for realizing, for the first time, "total" subordination (or "real subsumption") of society and its "productive forces" to the war economy through the organization and planning of production, labor and technology, science and consumption, at a hitherto unheard-of scale. Implicating the entire population in "production" was accompanied by the constitution of processes of mass subjectivation

through the management of communications techniques and opinion creation. From the establishment of unprecedented research programs with the aim of "destruction" came scientific and technological discoveries that, transferred to the production of the means of production of "goods," would constitute the new generations of constant capital. This entire process was missed by workerism (and post-workerism) in the short-circuit which made it situate the Great Bifurcation of Capital in the 1960s–70s, combined in this way with the critical movement of self-affirmation of workerism *in the factory* (it would take the arrival of post-Fordism to reach the "diffuse factory").

16. The origin of *welfare* cannot be found solely within a logic of insurance against the risks of "work" and the risks of "life" (the Foucauldian school under managerial influence), but first and foremost in the logic of war. *Warfare* largely anticipated and prepared *welfare*. Starting in the 1930s, the two became indistinguishable.

The enormous militarization of total war, which transformed internationalist workers into sixty million nationalist soldiers, was "democratically" reterritorialized by and in welfare. The conversion of the war economy into the liberal economy, the conversion of the science and technology of the instruments of death into the means of production of "goods," and the subjective conversion of the militarized population into "workers" took place thanks to the enormous apparatus of state intervention along with the active participation of "companies" (corporate capitalism). Warfare pursued its logic by other means in welfare. Keynes himself recognized that the policy of effective demand had no other model of realization than a regime of war.

17. Inserted in 1951 into his "Overcoming Metaphysics" (the overcoming in question was conceived during the Second World War), this passage by Heidegger defines exactly what the concepts of "war" and "peace" became at the end of the two total wars:

> Changed into their deformation of essence, "war" and "peace" are taken up into erring, and disappear into the mere course of the escalating manufacture of what can be manufactured, because they have become unrecognizable with regard to any distinction. The question of when and where there will be peace cannot be answered not because the duration of war is unfathomable, but rather because the question already asks about something which no longer exists, since war is no longer anything which could terminate in peace. War has become a distortion of the consumption of beings which is continued in peace … This long war in its length slowly eventuated not in a peace of the traditional kind, but rather in a condition in which warlike characteristics are no longer as such at all and peaceful characteristics have become meaningless and without content.[6]

This passage was later rewritten at the end of *A Thousand Plateaus* to indicate how technical-scientific "capitalization" (referring to what we call the "military-industrial, scientific-university complex") creates "a new conception of security as materialized war, as organized insecurity or molecularized, distributed, programmed catastrophe."[7]

18. The Cold War is intensive socialization and capitalization of the real subsumption of society and populations in the war economy of the first half of the twentieth century. It constitutes a fundamental passage in the formation of the war machine of Capital, which does not appropriate the State and war without subordinating "knowledge" to its process. The Cold War stoked the hearth of technological and scientific production that had been lit by the total wars. Practically all contemporary technologies, and in particular cybernetics, computer, and information technologies, are, directly or indirectly, the fruits of total war re-totalized by the Cold War. What Marx called "General Intellect" was born of/in the "production for destruction" of total wars before being reorganized by the Operational Research (OR) of the Cold War into an instrument (R&D) of command and control of the world-economy. The war history of Capital constrains us to this other major displacement in relation to workerism and post-workerism. The order of labor (" *Arbeit macht frei*") established by the total wars is transformed into a liberal-democratic order of full employment as an instrument of social regulation of the "mass-worker" *and of his or her entire domestic environment*.

19. '68 is situated under the sign of the political reemergence of wars of class, race, sex, and subjectivity that the "working class" could no longer subordinate to its "interests" and its forms of organization (party-unions). While labor struggles "reached the highest absolute level of their development" in the United States ("Marx in Detroit"), they were also defeated there after the major postwar strikes. The destruction of the "order of labor" resulting from the total wars and continuing in and through the Cold War as "order of the wage system" was not only the objective of a new working class rediscovering its political autonomy; it is also the effect of the multiplicity of all these wars which, somewhat all at the same time, were inflamed by tracing back from the singular experiences of "group-subjects" that carried them towards their common conditions of subjective rupture. The wars of decolonization and of all the racial minorities, women, students, homosexuals, alternatives, antinuclear protesters, " *lumpen*," and so on. thus define new modalities of struggle, organization, and especially the delegitimation of all "power-knowledge" throughout the 1960s and 1970s. We not only read the history of capital through war, but we also read war through '68, which is

the only possible way to make the theoretical and political passage from "war" to "wars."

20. War and strategy occupy a central place in the revolutionary theory and practices of the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. Lenin, Mao, and General Giap conscientiously annotated Clausewitz's *On War*. '68 Thought refrained from theorizing war, with the notable exception of Foucault and Deleuze-Guattari. They not only proposed a reversal of Clausewitz's celebrated formula ("war is the continuation of politics by other means") by analyzing the modalities through which "politics" can be seen as war continued by other means: *they especially and radically transformed the concepts of war and politics*. Their problematization of war is strictly dependent on the mutations of capitalism and the struggles against it in the so-called postwar period, before crystallizing in the strange revolution of 1968: the "microphysics" of power advanced by Foucault is a critical actualization of "generalized civil war"; the "micropolitics" of Deleuze and Guattari is inseparable from the concept of "war machine" (its construction relies on the activist history of one of the pair). If we isolate the analysis of power relations from generalized civil war, like Foucauldian critique does, the theory of governmentality is nothing more than a variant of neoliberal "governance"; and if we cut micropolitics from the war machine, like Deleuzian critique does (it also undertakes an aestheticization of the war machine), only "minorities" remain that are powerless in the face of Capital, which keeps the initiative.

21. Siliconed by new technologies that they developed into a strike force, the military combined technological machines with war machines. The political consequences were formidable.

The USA planned and led the war in Afghanistan (2001) and in Iraq (2003) based on the principle "Clausewitz out, computer in" (the same operation is oddly enough used by the defenders of cognitive capitalism who dissolve the omni-reality of wars into computers and the "algorithms" that had served in the first place to wage them). Believing they could dissipate the "fog" and uncertainty of war by nothing less than the primitive accumulation of information, the strategists of hyper-technological, digital, and "network-centered" war quickly changed their tune: the victory that was so rapidly attained turned into a political-military disaster that triggered the disaster in the Middle East *in situ*, without sparing the Free World that had arrived bringing its values like a remake of *Dr. Strangelove*. The technical machine explains nothing and can do little without mobilizing all the other "machines." Its efficacy and its very existence depend on the social machine and the war machine, which most often outline the technological avatar according to a model of society based on divisions, dominations, and exploitations (*Fast Cars, Clean Bodies*, to use the title of Kristin Ross's fine work).

22. If the fall of the Wall delivered the death certificate of a mummy whose Communist prehistory '68 made us forget, and if it is to be considered a nonevent (as the thesis of the *End of History* states in its melancholic way), the bloody fiasco of the imperial war machine's first post-Communist wars made history. In part because of the debate that it started *inside the military*, where a new paradigm of war appeared. An antithesis of the industrial wars of the twentieth century, the new paradigm is defined as a "war amongst the population." This concept, which inspired an improbable "military humanism," is one we make our own by returning its meaning to the source and real terrain of wars of capital, and by rewriting this "war within the population" in the plural of *our wars*. The population is the battlefield in which counter-insurrectional operations of all kinds are underway. At the same time, and indistinguishably, they are both military and nonmilitary because they also carry the new identity of "bloody wars" and "non-bloody wars."

Under Fordism, the State not only guaranteed State territorialization of Capital but also of war. As a result, globalization cannot not free capital from State control without also freeing war, which passes to a superior power of continuity by integrating the *plane of capital*. Deterritorialized war is no longer inter-State war at all, but an uninterrupted succession of multiple wars against populations, definitively sending "governmentality" to the side of governance in a common enterprise of denial of global civil wars. What is governed and what allows governing are the *divisions* that project wars into the heart of the population at the level of the real content of biopolitics. A biopolitical governmentality of war as differential distribution of instability and norm of "daily life." The complete opposite of the Great Narrative of the liberal birth of biopolitics taking place in a famous course at the Collège de France in the break between the 1970s and 1980s.

23. Accentuating divisions, aggravating the polarization of every capitalist society, the debt economy transforms "global civil war" (Schmitt, Arendt) into interconnected civil wars: class wars, neocolonialist wars on "minorities," wars on women, wars of subjectivity. The matrix of these civil wars is the colonial war. Colonial war was never a war between States but, in essence, a war *in and against* the population, where the distinctions between war and peace, between combatants and noncombatants, between economy, politics, and military were never used. Colonial war in and against populations is the model of the war that financial Capital unleashed starting in the 1970s in the name of a neoliberalism of combat. Its war is both fractal and transversal: fractal, because it indefinitely produces its invariance by constant changes of scale (its "irregularity" and the "cracks" it introduces operate at different scales of reality); and transversal, because it is simultaneously deployed at the macropolitical level (by playing on all of the major binary oppositions: social classes, whites and nonwhites, men and women) and the

micropolitical level (by molecular "engineering" privileging the highest interactions). It can also connect the civilian and military levels in the Global South and North, in the Souths and Norths of *everyone* (or almost everyone). Its first characteristic is therefore to be less *indiscriminate* war than *irregular* war.

The war machine of capital which, in the early 1970s, definitively integrated the State, war, science, and technology, clearly declares the strategy of contemporary globalization: to bring to an end the very short history of reforming capital— *Full Employment in a Free Society*, according to the manifesto of Lord Beveridge published in 1944—by attacking everywhere and with all means available the conditions of reality of the power struggle that imposed it. An infernal creativity is deployed by the neoliberal political project in pretending to grant the "market" superhuman qualities of *information processing*: the market as the ultimate cyborg.

24. The newfound consistency of neofascisms starting with the financial "crisis" in 2008 represents a turning point in the waging of wars amongst populations. Their dimensions, both fractal and transversal, take on a new and formidable effectiveness in dividing and polarizing. The new fascisms challenge all of the resources of the "war machine," because if the "war machine" is not necessarily identified with the State, it can also escape the control of Capital. While the war machine of Capital governs through an "inclusive" differentiation of property and wealth, the new fascist war machines function through exclusion based on racial, sexual, and national identity. The two logics seem incompatible. In reality, they inevitably converge (see "national preference") as the state of economic and political emergency takes residence in the coercive time of *global flow*.

If the capitalist machine continues to be wary of the new fascisms, it is not because of its democratic principles (Capital is ontologically antidemocratic!) or the *rule of law*, but because, as it happened with Nazism, post-fascism can claim its "autonomy" from the war machine of Capital and escape its control. Isn't this exactly the same thing that has happened with Islamic fascisms? Trained, armed, and financed by the US, they turned their weapons against the superpower and its allies who had instrumentalized them. From the West to the lands of the Caliphate *and back*, the neo-Nazis of all allegiances embody the suicidal subjectivation of the capitalist "mode of destruction." It is also the final scene of the return of the colonial repressed: the jihadists of generation 2.0 haunt Western cities like their most internal enemy. Endocolonization also becomes the generalized conjugation of "topical" violence of the most intense domination of capitalism over populations. As for the process of convergence or divergence between the capitalist and neofascist war machines, it will depend on the evolution of the civil wars now underway and the risks that a future revolutionary process could run for private property, and more generally for the power of Capital.

25. Prohibiting the reduction of Capital and capitalism to a system or a structure, and of the economy to a history of self-enclosed cycles, wars of class, race, sex, and subjectivity also challenge every principle of autonomy in science and technology, every highway to "complexity" or emancipation forged by the progressive (and now accelerationist) idea of the movement of History.

Wars constantly inject the indeterminacy of conflict into open strategic relationships, making inoperable every mechanism of self-regulation (of the market) or every regulation by feedback ("man-machine systems" open their "complexity" to the future). The strategic "opening" of war is radically other than the systematic opening of cybernetics, which was not born in/of war for nothing. Capital is not structure or system; it is "machine" and *war machine*, of which the economy, politics, technology, the State, the media, and so forth are only the articulations informed by strategic relations. In the Marxist/Marxian definition of *General Intellect*, the war machine integrating science, technology, and communication into its functioning is curiously neglected for the sake of a hardly credible "communism of capital."

26. Capital is not a mode of production without being at the same time a mode of destruction. The infinite accumulation that constantly moves its limits to recreate them again is at the same time unlimited, widespread destruction. The gains in productivity and gains of destructiveness progress in parallel. They manifest themselves in the generalized war that scientists prefer to call "Anthropocene" rather than "Capitalocene," even if, in all evidence, the destruction of the environments in and through which we live does not begin with "humans" and their growing needs, but with Capital. The "ecological crisis" is not the result of a modernity and humanity blinded to the negative effects of technological development but the "fruit of the will" of some people to exercise absolute domination over other people through a global geopolitical strategy of unlimited exploitation of all human and nonhuman resources.

Capitalism is not only the deadliest civilization in the history of humanity, the one that introduced us to the "shame of being human"; it is also the civilization through which labor, science, and technology have created—another (absolute) privilege in the history of humanity—the possibility of (absolute) annihilation of all species and the planet that houses them. In the meantime, the "complexity" of (saving) "nature" still offers the prospect of healthy profits combining the *techno* utopia of *geoengineering* and the reality of the new markets of "polluting rights." At the confluence of one and the other, the Capitalocene does not send capitalism to the Moon (it has been there and back); it completes the global merchandizing of the planet by asserting its rights to the well-named troposphere.

27. The logic of Capital is the logistics of an infinite valuation. It implies the accumulation of a power that is not merely economic for the simple reason that it is complicated by strategic power and knowledge of the *strength* and *weakness* of the classes struggling, to which it is applied and with which they are in constant explanation. Foucault tells us that the Marxists turned their attention to the concept of "class" to the detriment of the concept of "struggle." Knowledge of strategy is thus evacuated in favor of an alternative enterprise of pacification (Tronti offers the most *epic* version of this). Who is strong and who is weak? In what way did the strong become weak, and why did the weak become strong? How to strengthen oneself and weaken the other to dominate and exploit it? We propose to follow and reinvent the anticapitalist path of French Nietzscheism.

28. Capital came out the victor in the total wars and in the confrontation with global revolution, for which the number for us is 1968. Since then, it has gone from victory to victory, perfecting its *self-cooled motor*, where it verifies that the first function of power is to deny the existence of civil wars by erasing even the memory of them (pacification is a *scorched earth* policy). Walter Benjamin is there to remind us that reactivating the memory of the victories and defeats from which the victors take their domination can only come from the "defeated." Problem: the "defeated" of '68 threw out the bath water of civil wars with the old Leninist baby at the end of the "Hot Autumn" sealed by the failure of the dialectic of the "party of autonomy." Entry into the "winter years" on the edge of a second Cold War that ensures the triumph of the "people of capitalism" (" *'People's Capitalism'—This IS America!*"), the End of History will take the relay without stopping at a Gulf War that "did not take place." Except there is a constellation of new wars, revolutionary machines, or mutant militants (Chiapas, Birmingham, Seattle, Washington, Genoa ...) and new defeats. The new writing generations describe "the missing people" dreaming of insomnia and destituent processes unfortunately reserved *for their friends.*

29. We will cut it short, in addressing *our enemies*. Because this text has no other object, under the economy and its "democracy," behind the technological revolutions and "mass intellectuality" of the General Intellect, than to make heard the "rumble" of real wars now underway in all of their multiplicity. A multiplicity which is not to be made but *unmade and remade* to charge the "masses or flows," which are doubly *subjects*, with new possibilities. On the side of relations of power as subject *to* war or/and on the side of strategic relationships that are capable of projecting them to the rank of subjects *of wars*, with "their mutations, their quanta of deterritorialization, their connections, their precipitations." In short, it is a question of drawing the lessons from what seems to us like the failure of the thought of '68 which we have inherited, even in our inability to think and construct a collective war machine equal to the civil war unleashed in the name of neoliberalism and the absolute primacy of the economy as exclusive policy of capital. Everything is taking place as if '68 was unable *to think all the way*, not its defeat (there are, since the New Philosophers, professionals in the matter), but the warring order of reasons that broke its insistence through a *continuous destruction*, placed in the present infinitive of the struggles of "resistance."

30. It is not a question, it is not at all a question of *stopping resistance*. It is a question of dropping a "theoricism" satisfied with a strategic discourse that is powerless in the face of what is happening. And what has happened to us. Because if the mechanisms of power are constitutive, to the detriment of strategic relationships and the wars taking place there, there can only be phenomena of "resistance" against them. With the success we all know. *Graecia docet*.

X

Translated from the French by Ames Hodges. This text is an excerpt of Maurizio Lazzarato and Eric Alliez's forthcoming book *Wars and Capital,* to be published in English by Semiotext(e). The book's release is scheduled for August 2017.

1
This text is the introduction to *Wars and Capital* by Maurizio Lazzarato and Eric Alliez, translated from the French by Ames Hodges, forthcoming from Semiotext(e) in August 2017.

2
Qiao Liang and Wang Xiangsui, *Unrestricted Warfare: China's Master Plan to Destroy America* (Los Angeles: Pan American Publishing, 2002), 190.

3
Philip Pullella and Wiktor Szary, "Pope says Europe attacks show 'world at war,' religion not to blame," *Reuters*, July 27, 2016 http://www.reuters.com/article/us-pope-poland-idUSKCN1062PL .

4
We are using "war against women," "war of the sexes," and "gender war" interchangeably. Without entering into the debates that overlap feminism, the concepts of "woman," "sex," and "gender" (like that of "race") do not refer to any essentialism but to the political construction of heterosexuality and the patriarchy as social norms of procreation, sexuality, and reproduction of the population, of which the nuclear family is the foundation. It is a continuous war waged against women to submit them to these processes of subjection, domination, and exploitation.

5
My translation from the French. — *Translator's note*

6
Martin Heidegger, *The End of Philosophy* , trans. Joan Stambaugh (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 104–05.

7
Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* , trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 467.

Amelia Groom

Permanent Collection

Time and the Politics of Preservation at the Ōtsuka Museum of Art

When the *Mona Lisa* went to Washington, DC in 1963, it was the first time The Louvre had ever allowed her to travel abroad. The circumstances were exceptional: basically, André Malraux was smitten with Jacqueline Kennedy. She, America's then-First Lady, and he, France's then-Minister of Cultural Affairs, had first met in Paris in the spring of 1961. They spent a day together, visiting museums and speaking in French about art. Dazzled and eager to please, Malraux somehow made a spur-of-the-moment promise that da Vinci's flimsy little picture would visit the US capital, IRL.

Surrounded by draped red velvet and guarded around the clock by US Marines, the *Mona Lisa* attracted ten thousand visitors to the National Gallery of Art on her first day there—and in the weeks that followed, and the museum had to extend their opening times to try to accommodate the crowds. In the midst of the media frenzy surrounding the event, Andy Warhol wondered why the French hadn't just sent a copy. "No one would know the difference," he remarked. And if no one knew the difference, what would the difference be? By sending a copy instead, The Louvre could allow everyone to experience a direct physical encounter with something that looked the same, while also keeping the original safely tucked away, preserved for posterity.

This was in fact the exact thinking that led to the closure of the Lascaux caves in the south of France, and the production of a facsimile nearby. Malraux took the *Mona Lisa* to Washington in January of 1963, and three months later his ministry was closing the Lascaux caves off from the public, in the name of preservation.

The paintings at Lascaux had survived for more than seventeen thousand years, but they threatened to disappear forever as soon as we got too close. As early as 1955, less than a decade after the site was opened to the public, contamination caused by the near-constant swarms of breathing humans was starting to show. The thought of accidently losing the pictures was evidently too much for us to bear—we had to lose them on purpose, by resealing the caves and replacing them with a likeness of our own making.

Plans for Lascaux II were drawn up, and a team of painters and sculptors began work on reproductions of several sections of the caves, with every contour and every mark replicated to the millimeter. The copy finally opened to the public in 1983, two hundred meters from the original site. Now nobody sees Lascaux I, but hundreds pass through the underground simulacra-sequel every day.

I'm deep underground, inside the Otsuka Museum of Art.

Built into a hillside at Naruto, a small coastal town in southeast Japan, the museum has more than a thousand iconic works on permanent display. There's da Vinci, Bosch, Dürer, Velázquez, Caravaggio, Delacroix, Turner, Renoir, Cézanne, van Gogh, Picasso, Dalí, Rothko—all the Western canon's greatest hits. Even Michelangelo's Sistine Chapel frescos are here, lining the walls of a custom-built hall.

To "acquire" the works in this collection, a technical team prints photographs of them, in full scale, onto ceramic plates. They then fire the plates at 1,300 degrees centigrade and follow with some hand-painted touch-ups. According to the museum's marketing material, these painted-photographed-printed-baked-painted pictures will then survive for several millennia. "While the original masterpieces cannot escape the damaging effects of today's pollution, earthquakes and fire," reads a statement from the museum director Ichiro Otsuka, "the ceramic reproductions can maintain their color and shape for over two thousand years."[1]

The hundreds of millions of dollars that have gone into this enterprise came from the pharmaceutical company Otsuka Holdings—which is also behind the popular antipsychotic drug Aripiprazole, and the popular Japanese beverage Pocari Sweat. The museum's full-time guide is a friendly faceless blue robot named *artu-kun*—"Mr. Art"—whose belly is branded with the Pocari Sweat logo. Part of his job is to remind visitors that it's okay to touch the artworks here, since they're indestructible objects.

Everything in this enormous underground museum is simultaneously *anticipating* and *defying* destruction. Has the apocalypse already happened, or are we still preparing for it? From inside the bunker, it's impossible to tell. Looking at the ceramic reproductions today, I am looking at them in two thousand years—there's no difference between now and then, because history is at a standstill.

I walk around the museum, photographing and touching the artworks. I stroke the cheeks of Vermeer's *Girl with a Pearl Earring*, and I press my face against Klimt's *Kiss*. But the closer I get, the further away they seem. Does it still count as touching if my touch is guaranteed to have no effect?

The novelty of touching the art soon wears away, because every surface is so neutralized. The artworks start to feel like one big piece of worn-out sandpaper—and the surface of time itself is flattened into a mythic, homogeneous continuity. This is what art worthy of preservation looked like to the Otsuka team at the end of the twentieth century,

and—if everything goes according to plan—nothing is ever going to change.

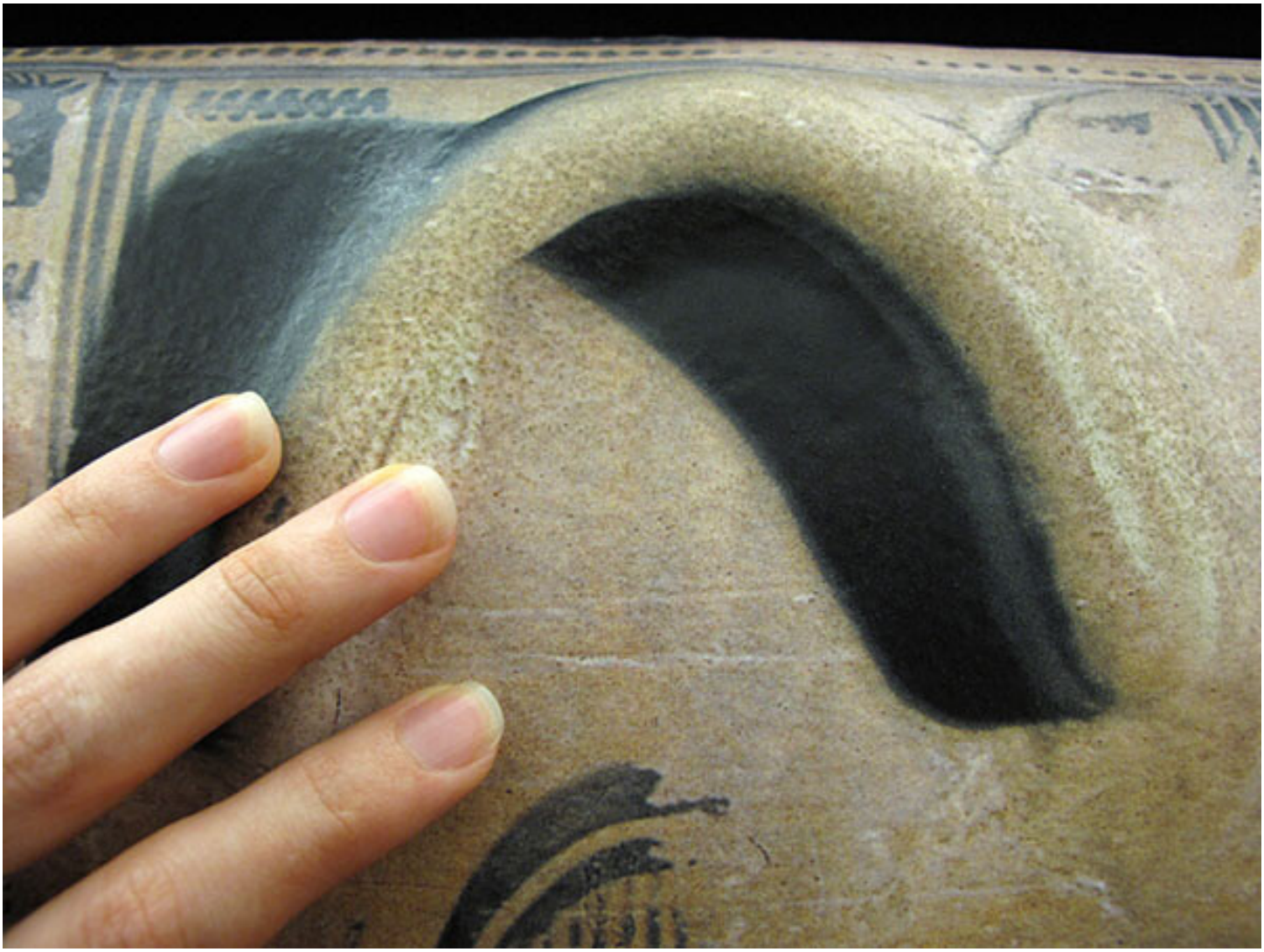
In the 1990s, while the Otsuka Museum was amassing its collection of everlasting copies, Jean Baudrillard was decrying what he called "the Xerox degree of culture," where "Nothing disappears, nothing must disappear."[2] With the Lascaux caves as his recurring example, Baudrillard questioned our increasing proclivity for preservation-by-substitution, where things that would otherwise be allowed to pass are forced into artificial longevity, via their simulacra.

Evoking current debates in France about doctors artificially keeping patients alive, even when ultimate life expectancy is unavoidably short, Baudrillard used the term *acharnement thérapeutique* or "therapeutic relentlessness."[3] This is an apt analogy for what happens at the Otsuka Museum of Art: a superimposition of relentless, compulsory vitality onto artworks and europhilic art historical narratives that might otherwise have very little life left in them.

Otsuka has even started to take this therapeutic relentlessness a step further, by embarking on forcible revivals of the already dead. The latest acquisition for the permanent collection is their first copy of a work of art that does not exist: a painting of sunflowers in a vase, by Vincent van Gogh, which was destroyed in Japan in 1945. Along with everything around it, the painting was turned to smoke and ash during a US air raid over Ashiya on August 5–6—around the same time as the first atomic bomb exploded over Hiroshima.

But according to the brightly colored ceramic plate now on show at Naruto—which was rendered from photographs that predate the picture's incineration—World War II never happened. In fact, according to the art history that Otsuka is locking into place for the next two millennia, nothing will ever happen. This is a revised and idealized version of history, with all the ruptures covered up, and all of time's contingencies tidily sealed off. In other words, it is a version of history without a real temporality.

Let's imagine that these ceramic boards really do survive



untarnished for the next two thousand years. What would a future alien visitor then find here, amongst the ruins? It's a history of Western art, beginning with Ancient Greece and progressing in a dead-straight line through the centuries, before finally landing at Abstract Expressionism and American Pop Art: the grand apotheosis of a three-thousand-year-long narrative. Nothing after 1970 has yet received the Otsuka treatment.

Of course, the more expansive any attempt at a total comprehensive overview is, the more its inherent incompleteness will show through. At Otsuka the feeling is one of overwhelming excess—it's the largest museum in Japan and seeing everything means walking for almost four kilometers—as well as alarming omission. For instance, there are hundreds and hundreds of works, but the female artists who have been invited into this grand narrative can be counted on one hand. Initially I thought this would begin to improve, at least a little, as I moved along Otsuka's chronological progression of art from antiquity up to the 1960s—but I found that the only non-male artist who appears in the postwar era is Bridget Riley.

This is a version of art history with no sculpture, no video art, no performance or installation art, no ready-mades—only flat photographically reproduced paintings and some other things that are made to look like flat photographically reproduced paintings. A selection of medieval tapestries and Byzantine mosaics are included, as photographs fired onto ceramic boards—their textures completely flattened out. Stranger still are some Ancient Greek vases which have been photographed from all sides and printed as two-dimensional rectilinear planes, with shadows from the handles included as part of the image surface, indicating their former three-dimensionality. But although everything here depends on photographic technology, this is a history of art in which photographs have never featured as artworks in themselves. The camera is simply a vehicle that transfers images from surface to surface; it does not make its own images.

In Mr. Otsuka's statement about the museum, he proudly announces that visitors can now finally "experience art

museums of the world while being in Japan." But if this is really about increased accessibility, we might wonder why the artworks that are selected for reproduction are already some of the most widely reproduced and accessible images of all time. The museum opened at the turn of the twenty-first century, by which point anybody with an internet connection anywhere in the world would be able to access any of these iconic images, sometimes with resolutions that reveal more detail than our naked eyes could ever see.

As a mode of reproduction, photography invites multiplicity, fragmentation, and circulation. Writing in the 1940s, Malraux observed that the photographic document can liberate the object from its context and hierarchical positioning, as well as from its physical volume and prescribed dimensions.[4] But unlike Malraux's "museum without walls"—and unlike Taschen books or Google Art Project—the Otsuka team returns volume, weight, and location-specificity to the mechanically reproduced work of art. They turn dematerialized images back into singular, heavy objects with fixed dimensions and spatial positions, so the images don't travel to us—we have to travel to them.

If Otsuka's ceramic board copies actually fulfill the promise of surviving untarnished until the year 4016, they will almost certainly outlive the originals they refer to. More than duplicates, they're replacements. Their aim is to *permanentize* pictures and histories that are relatively fragile and transient.

When the Umbria and Marche earthquake struck central Italy in 1997, destroying much of the thirteenth-century frescoes in the Basilica of St. Francis in Assisi, the Otsuka team offered to lend their newly acquired photographic versions of the frescos to the Italians, for consultation during the restoration process. The original could then be rendered *as a copy of its own copy*—and every time its material veers away from what it was, consultation with the allegedly indestructible simulacra can bring it back into line.

There is a broader issue here, which is about finding ways to look at artworks without taming their dynamic and durational capacities. When art historians seek to pin down works of art to a single date of authorial inception, the temporal multiplicity of the work is denied. Likewise, when conservators imagine returning a work to the condition of the "artist's original intentions," they fight against the ongoing durations of art objects—objects which always accumulate marks of their historical and material realities.

The Tate Modern's 2013 retrospective for Saloua Raouda Choucair included an abstract painting that was riddled with holes and had shards of glass sticking out of it, as a result of a bomb going off near the artist's home during the Lebanese civil wars. She had decided to leave the canvas unrepaired, so it could continue to bear witness to the violence that it had endured. The ruptured abstract composition thus took on a direct indexical relation with the external world. The picture pointed not just to a moment of artistic creation in the past, but also to what it had been through since then—so its temporality extended beyond the initial instance of creative authorship.

But the Otsuka Museum of Art is founded on an attempt to deny the passage of time. There is no past here, since nothing passes away and all the scars of history can be covered up, and there is no futurity, since there is no space for contingency or chance. In this archive there is only the relentless, permanentized present, preempting any alternate future, replacing everything else with itself, enforcing *more of the same* forever.

Adorno observed that the words "museum" and "mausoleum" are "connected by more than phonetic association." The German word " *museal*" (museum-like), he wrote, "describes objects to which the observer no longer has a vital relationship and which are in the process of dying." Such objects go to the museum when they are ready to withdraw from life. In Adorno's words, "They owe their preservation more to historical respect than to the needs of the present."[5] But is there not also potential for strategies of reactivation within the museum-mausoleum? Can't we try to think about ways of setting its contents in motion, in accordance with the needs of the present?

As I was struggling to find my way out of the Otsuka Museum of Art, I started to become more aware of the seams that run through its pictures. Because the fired ceramic boards can only be produced up to a certain size, any larger surfaces have to be pieced together from separate plates. As a result, many of the pictures feature strange disjunctive grooves, which remind us of their base materiality.

The more I focus on these caesurae, the more the museum's myth of solidity and clean continuity is disturbed. The hyper-durability of the baked ceramic plates comes with a compromise of surface interruption, and it is in the surface interruptions that we find evidence of the gaps that run through all versions of history—even and perhaps especially those that present themselves as watertight. Looking at the spaces in between the pieces—spaces we are not supposed to look at—I wonder what potentiality lies there. What leakages might pass through these openings? And how can the visible seams be taken up as an invitation to rearrange the contents of the archive?

Certainly, the Otsuka Museum of Art is a corporate vanity project, which presents its reactionary version of art history as something conclusive and unchanging. It fetishizes individual (white male) genius, perpetuates simplistic progress narratives, costs too much money,

takes up too much space, and fails to properly deal with the temporality of the art that it cares for. But which of our major art institutions are exempt from such criticisms? In its excessive permanence and false totality, Otsuka is simply reproducing the problems encountered in contemporary museological, art historical, and preservation practices more generally. In this respect, the Otsuka Museum could also be considered the most elaborate work of institutional critique ever attempted.

Still trying to find the exit, I stumble into a darkened room with reproductions of Goya's *Black Paintings*, and I stop in front of *Saturn Devouring His Son*. It's a truly appalling image: a naked, cowering old man with bulging eyes looking right back at us, and a half-eaten child clenched in his knuckly fists.

Saturn is the Romanization of Cronus, the Greek god of time whose image later morphed and amalgamated into the bearded, scythe-carrying old man known as Father Time. The myth of Cronus tells us that he had castrated and overthrown his own father, and so he was terrified that one of his children would one day do the same to him. To prevent this from happening he would consume them as soon as they left their mother's womb.

The paranoid patriarch struggles to hold on to his position of power by desperately suppressing all futurity. He devours everything that could come after him, in a precautionary measure against the inevitability of change. This is an image of time that exists only as a perpetual, cannibalistic present, preemptively replacing any alternative with itself. There's no real future in this version of time, since there is no indeterminacy, no contingency—only prediction and subsumption.

But Cronus's struggle is ultimately futile—and somehow in Goya's depiction he seems to know it. Rhea—who is Cronus's wife, and sister—eventually makes a plan with Gaia, their mother. When Rhea gives birth to the sixth child, Zeus, the women hide the baby away—and they later force Cronus to disgorge the contents of his stomach, so that one by one the other infants are vomited back to life.

Here we are reminded that the future is not just something "in the distance" that we identify and move toward in a linear fashion; it can be unrealized potentiality that is already present, but suppressed. This futurity can be swallowed and withheld—but then it can be spewed up and redistributed. By intervening in Father Time's system of control, it is the mothers in this myth who can restore the future's messy indeterminacy.

X

An earlier version of this text was published in the book La vie et la mort des œuvres d'art / The Life and Death of Works of Art , *edited by Christophe Lemaitre and published by Tombolo Presses, France, 2016.*

All photographs appear courtesy of the author.

Amelia Groom is a writer and art historian who is currently working on a book that looks at the art and anti-fascist activism of Claude Cahun and Marcel Moore through the lenses of environmental art practice and queer and trans ecologies. Groom's book about Beverly Buchanan's swampy, ruinous environmental sculpture *Marsh Ruins* was published by Afterall in 2021.

1
See →.

2
Jean Baudrillard, *Illusion of the End* , trans. Chris Turner (Stanford: Stanford University Press), 74, 72.

3
Ibid., 72.

4
André Malraux, "Museum Without Walls," in *The Voices of Silence* , trans. Stuart Gilbert (London: Paladin, 1974), 13–130.

5
Theodor Adorno, "Valéry Proust Museum," in *Prisms*, trans. Samuel and Shierry Weber (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press,), 175–185, 175.

Liam Gillick

A Building on Fifth Avenue

This aesthetic regime does not reside in the present. It is something from the past. Not even the recent past but a particular value system more than thirty years old.

The entrance to a tall building on Fifth Avenue in New York is set back from the street approximately 9ft (274cm) from the inner edge of the sidewalk and forms a square arch that reaches up 24ft (731cm) high and is 18ft (548cm) wide. The entrance forms a shallow refuge from the movement of people walking past.

For the purposes of this precise description of a building we will not get beyond the front door—we will just consider the entrance. All measurements are approximate based on photos by the author and related to the estimated height of the doorman.

There are no steps up or down from the street and instead there is a continuation of the concrete sidewalk grade onto smooth dark flagstones each 18in (45cm) square. From this point a number of materials can be identified along with the dark stone on the ground. Glass, polished brass, polished black granite, and brushed stainless steel are the primary materials joined by various bronzed plaques and gilded lettering.

Such a combination takes us to a time where a jumbled realignment and surface-driven appropriation of high-modernist aesthetics within architecture were turning through a filter of postmodernist self-consciousness. This building is, in many ways, derivative of the earlier work of John Portman, real-estate developer and neofuturist architect famous for LA's Westin Bonaventure Hotel and New York's Marriot Marquis, who turned ninety-two on December 4, 2016.

To quote Fredric Jameson on Portman:

> I am proposing the notion that we are here in the presence of something like a mutation in built space itself. My implication is that we ourselves, the human subjects who happen into this new space, have not kept pace with that evolution; there has been a mutation in the object unaccompanied as yet by any equivalent mutation in the subject. We do not yet possess the perceptual equipment to match this new hyperspace, as I will call it, in part because our perceptual habits were formed in that older kind of space I have called the space of high modernism. The newer architecture therefore—like many of the other cultural products I have evoked in the preceding remarks—stands as something like an imperative to grow new organs, to expand our sensorium and our body to some new, yet unimaginable, perhaps ultimately impossible, dimensions.[1]

The reason for this?

> You are in this hyperspace up to your eyes and your body; and if it seemed before that the suppression of depth I spoke of in postmodern painting or literature would necessarily be difficult to achieve in architecture itself, perhaps this bewildering immersion may now serve as the formal equivalent in the new medium.[2]

Looking at the left elevation of the inset entrance arch and starting at the front edge where it meets the street, the following materials are deployed. First a 3ft (91cm) wide section of granite paneling that reaches from the ground to the soffit—carrying a number of information plaques, logos, and awards that are centered at a height of 5ft (152cm) from the ground.

There is a space for logos and awards here. The use of an arch as an inset cuts into the facade of an otherwise smooth frameless glazed tower. This reintroduces the codes of earlier triumphal elements that by their nature make space for crowing and self-awarding in a way that earlier disappearances of the entrance "proper" in utopian modernisms do not. Key elements indicate the takeover of a type of modernism by a form of minimalism. This was a key artistic development in the 1960s and creates a key misunderstanding. Minimalism is not a continuation of utopian modernism, it is a critique of utopian modernism on the basis of material facts and by way of a self-conscious play of real illusion against fake illusion. Minimalism is a development beyond modernist visions of totalizing utopia, one that breaks both from the everyday and from an illusionistic representation by attempting to include the human within a set of material encounters devoid of pretentions to completeness or truth of whatever kind.

Moving towards the entrance doorway, a second 3ft (91cm) wide section of cladding is formed of, in ascending order from the base: a 12in (30cm) section of polished granite; next, a 7ft (213cm) single-pane glass window; next, a 6ft (182cm) stainless-steel panel; and finally, an 8ft (243cm) single-pane glass window with a 2in (5cm) base sill to direct water away from the stainless-steel panel

below. The upper single-pane glass window is topped by a further 6in (15cm) of polished granite before reaching the soffit. The glass windows at the base of the left and right sides of the entryway form display windows. Continuing towards the doorway, a final section of polished granite paneling is 2ft 6in (76cm) wide and runs the full height of the inset entrance archway from the ground to the soffit and forms a smooth transition to the glass and brass of a set-back doorway that runs perpendicular to each of the side sections of the inset entrance archway.

Without much time for breath. Here we have the entire minimalistic value system of this place laid out. It will be familiar to anyone who is versed in kitchen design from the late 1970s onwards. These materials are designed to be industrially finished and stay polished. They offer a toned-down consistency that echoes the earlier hard labor of "family silver" in a mirrored salon. With granite, brass, and stainless steel it is possible to effect a certain shine and sustain a diluting reflectivity over sustained periods of time. These polished materials only show back to the passerby a sense of movement and blurred figures in space—not an accurate or disturbingly clear reflection. These are mirrors in the same way that the paint job of a Maserati is a mirror.

To the right of the entryway, starting from the edge of the entrance arch as it meets the street and working towards the doorway elevation, the same order of materials and paneling is used as in the elevation on the left-hand side—including a further group of plaques and signs on the outermost section of polished granite panels that is located closest to the sidewalk.

Our arch is perfectly symmetrical but offset from the center of the building. This allows the bulk of the right side of the street-level elevations to be used as storefronts. The two glass windows within the inset entrance archway also function as small store windows. They are a reminder that we are not entering a place that is separated from commerce but one that is reliant upon retail for its existence. Even at the point when no commercial exchange would make economic sense in this place—these two side windows signify that potential. Even with curtains in place and signs of domestic life placed in them, we could not help but read these vitrines as spaces offering something for sale.

At the top of the inset entrance, a white painted soffit carries fourteen downlights set flush into a white painted

area. The soffit continues to the sidewalk edge of the entrance arch with a 3ft (91cm) continuation of the polished granite used to frame the entire entrance. The front granite section of the soffit contains a further seven downlights, giving a total of twenty-one. The lights are evenly spaced, creating the nodes of an invisible grid seven lamps wide and three lamps deep. These lights are on at all times.

Lights are on at all times. This is what has been learned from Las Vegas but finds muted reference in the soffit of this building. The lights create no illumination—they appear as spots of brightness within a structure. The lights indicate that this is a place rooted in the use of light as an attractor and a sense that time has been taken for a ride .

At the top of the arch there is a perpendicular continuation of the smooth polished granite surface that extends upwards 3ft 6in (106cm) from the outer edge of the soffit to create the appearance of an architrave for the entire entrance arch. Tightly placed on the architrave are ten letters fabricated from polished brass that form two five-letter words. Each letter is 34in (86cm) high. The first word is the family name of the owner of the building and the second word describes the type of building under consideration. The depth of the letters is such that their front faces are at the same level as the smooth facade of the building itself.

Stymie Extra Bold. This is the typeface of IBM, the BBC, New York Times Magazine *—in custom form. Stymie Bold was used all over Britain in the 1960s—particularly for television studios and light industrial factories. It remained the typeface of authority in a non-Germanic context until the takeover by Helvetica in the 1990s. The use here is not a mistake. There is a connection to college logos and established authority forms. The* New York Times *continues to use its own version of Stymie Bold.*

The fact that each word is five letters allows the text to be centered on the architrave, the gap between the two words revealing a thin joint between the polished granite slabs where they meet in the center. The lettering is a font with blocky serifs that create a boxy extension to every stem, ligature, and extender. The blocky serifs are all un-bracketed slab serifs. Viewed from the front, the entire entrance archway, including the architrave, is inset 4in (10cm) from the smooth black glass facade of the building.

The city is apparently abused. The previous building on

the site has been carted away unceremoniously. This is supposed to be an act of vandalism and bad taste. But in fact the new "tower" takes its place politely within the existing power structure, making no claims to transformation and not even changing anything via architectural parody, brutality, or an arriviste gesture. Jameson noticed the same with the Bonaventura by Portman:

> The Bonaventura, however, is content to "let the fallen city fabric continue to be in its being" (to parody Heidegger); no further effects, no larger protopolitical Utopian transformation, is either expected or desired. This diagnosis is confirmed by the great reflective glass skin of the Bonaventure, whose function I will now interpret rather differently than I did a moment ago when I saw the phenomenon of reflection generally as developing a thematics of reproductive technology (the two readings are, however, not incompatible). Now one would want rather to stress the way in which the glass skin repels the city outside, a repulsion for which we have analogies in those reflector sunglasses which make it impossible for your interlocutor to see your own eyes and thereby achieve a certain aggressivity toward and power over the Other.[3]

The entrance arch frames a symmetrically ordered, primarily glazed entryway into the building itself. The entryway is parallel to the sidewalk and divided into three distinct sections at the street level. At each outer edge of the entryway, a single-pane window 5ft (152cm) wide is framed at its lower edge by a brass baseplate 4in (10cm) deep. These two side windows have no visible frame on their outer edges. Continuing towards the center of the entryway, the two single-pane windows meet 4in (10cm) wide vertical brass sections that frame two sets of revolving doors. In between the revolving doors are a set of glass double doors that complete the entryway. Brass plates 6in (15cm) deep support the top and bottom of the double doors. The two outer windows, the two sets of revolving doors, and the central swing doors are all 9ft (274cm) high.

Framelessness is a dream fulfilled as we enter the regime of the minimal within architecture. This is where the aesthetic coding of this place starts to align with the values of car production and kitchen design more than it does with the notion of work or social exchange. The car is

the place of individual fulfillment where luxurious materials are deployed towards the crude representation of desire. The advanced kitchen is also a place where cabinetry and appliances start to lose their handles, hinges, and frames. The car and the kitchen are the two legacy aspects of advanced modernism that carry individual desire and have the potential to be replaced. The building under consideration deploys the logic of the car and the kitchen in its aesthetic clues.

perfect cross if viewed from above. The revolving door sections have rectangular brass push plates starting 3ft (91cm) from the ground. The push plates are 6in (15cm) deep and run from the central pivot of the door to the edge of each of the four revolving sections. Each push plate begins from the central pivot and continues outwards towards the outer edge of the door section, holding 1in (2.5cm) from the surface of the glass before turning in at an angle of twenty-five degrees, 4in (15cm) from the outer edge where it meets the frame. The revolving doors and

The central swing doors each have a 1in (2.5cm) diameter vertical push/pull rail positioned 4in (10cm) from the central meeting point. The rails extend vertically for the full 9ft (274cm) height of the doors. The push/pull rails are held away from the surface of the door by 1in (2.5cm) diameter brass tubes, 2in (5cm) deep. The push/pull rails are matched by the same rails on the interior of the glass doors. There is no further framing of the glass doors at their meeting point and the inner edges of the tempered glass panels meet cleanly, echoing the joint in the granite panels of the architrave. The brass of the swing doors is not ornamented in any way. On each side of the swing doors, the two sets of revolving doors are comprised of four sections, each perpendicular to the next, forming a

the push plates are unadorned.

The entrance is standard. There are an excessive number of doors for such a small place. This standard arrangement complicates easy passage into and out of the building. There is confusion. These are the doorways of commerce—common from the office building. Ironically these are not the doorways of a store. There are mixed messages here. The postmodernist double-revolving-doors-around-central-double-doors arrangement creates the illusion that this is a place of work as much as a place of consumption. Production of brands and identities takes place at this site. We are allowed to share the entrance into the appearance of a

Midtown work zone.

Running across this lower section of the entryway, two gilded stripes have been applied to the surface of the glass across its entire width. The stripes are formed from a repeated pattern that is made up of a horizontal, evenly spaced repeat of the twentieth letter of the alphabet gilded onto the surface of the glass. Each letter is 2in (5cm) high. The two stripes are parallel to each other. The first row is 3ft (91cm) from the ground and the upper row is 5ft (152cm) from the ground. The typeface is the same one used on the large sign that is mounted on the architrave of the entrance arch. The two stripes function as a repeated series of logos and draw attention to the glass to prevent anyone from walking straight into it. Centered on the right-hand window of the lower section of the entryway are three numbers in a different typeface than the one used on the architrave and the one which forms the stripes. The three numbers are gilded onto the glass in the same way as the two stripes. The numbers are 7, 2, and 5. The numbers are 6in (15cm) high and are positioned 6ft 5in (195cm) from the ground.

Logos, Logos, Logoi.

Back to Jameson for a second:

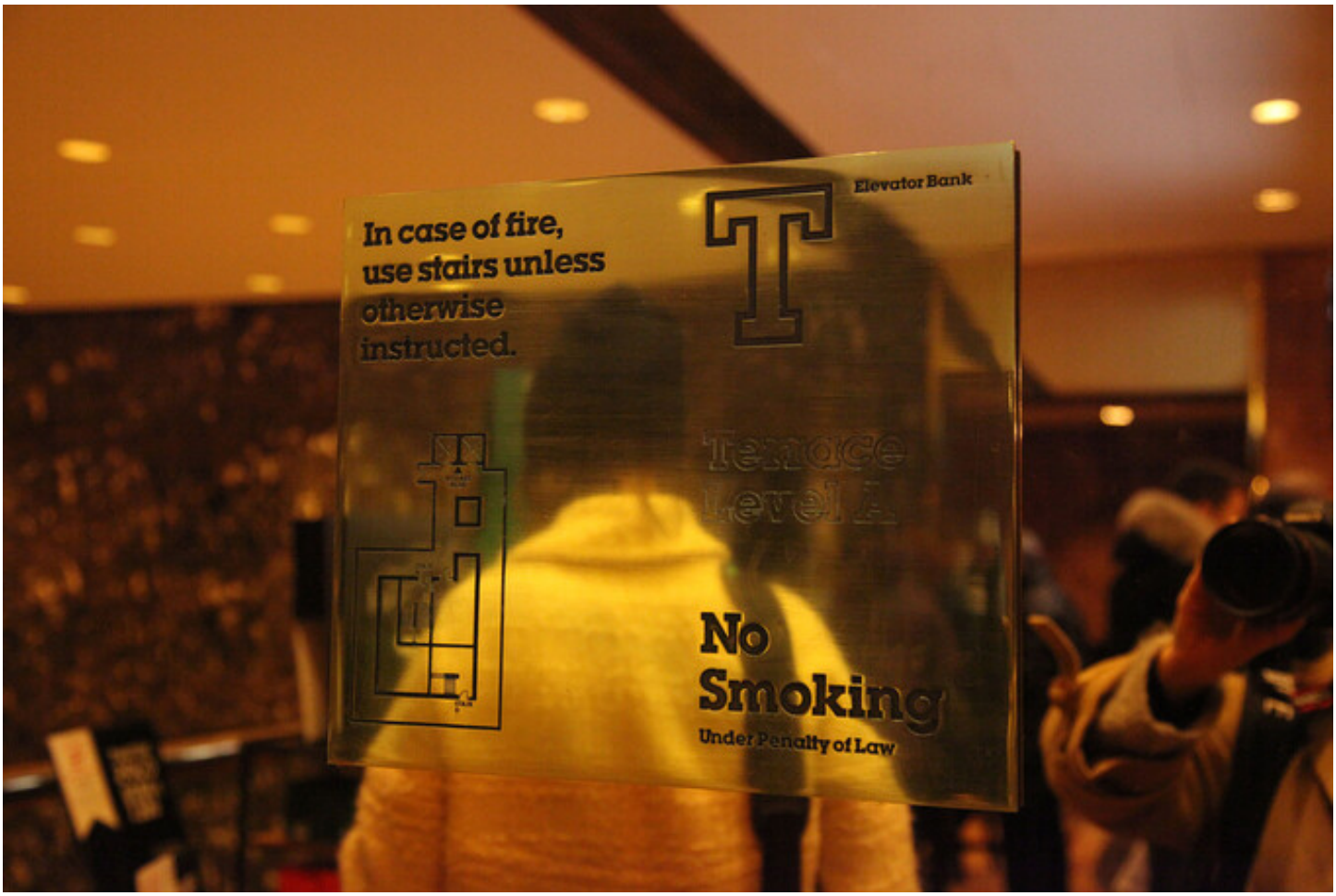
> no doubt the logic of the simulacrum, with its transformation of older realities into television images, does more than merely replicate the logic of late capitalism; it reinforces and intensifies it. Meanwhile, for political groups which seek actively to intervene in history and to modify its otherwise passive momentum (whether with a view toward channeling it into a socialist transformation of society or diverting it into the regressive reestablishment of some simpler fantasy past), there cannot but be much that is deplorable and reprehensible in a cultural form of image addiction which, by transforming the past into visual mirages, stereotypes, or texts, effectively abolishes any practical sense of the future and of the collective project.[4]

Below the numbers, slightly off-center towards the revolving door on the right side of the entryway and sitting equidistant between the two stripes of letters that are gilded onto the glass, is a green and white circle that has

been applied as a sticker directly to the glass. The sticker is 19in (50cm) in diameter. The green and white sticker carries a graphic image that shows a woman with long hair wearing a tiara or crown. She appears to be holding two fishtails, one in each hand—they may be her own. The window, revolving door, and double door section of the entrance are topped with a section of polished brass that extends the full width of the entrance arch. The polished brass section is 2ft 6in (76cm) high, and is completely smooth and unpatterned. Centered on this brass section and sitting directly above the double swing door are two sets of five letters that repeat the family name of the owner of the building and the type of building under consideration. These letters are 14in (35cm) high and the two words combined are 8ft (243cm) wide. This repeated deployment of lettering uses the same blocky serifed typeface that was used on the architrave of the entrance arch. The letters at this lower level are 12in (30cm) high and matte black, in contrast to the polished brass panel they are fixed to.

form. Yet the clear anodized aluminum and bolted glass of the contemporary commercial space only appear to provide transparency—structurally, they deploy all the same opaque moves. The merging of the corporate and the commercial, or at least a sense that a space is in transition between the two. The way in which an approach to an entrance is already known from high-end residential units. The deliberate complexity of two sets of revolving doors and one single swing door that makes a doorman necessary—not because the residents of this place actually enter this way—but in order to echo the same "service structure" for those visual consumers who come by to witness and walk through, consume a logo and a martini.

Above this polished brass panel, five evenly spaced single-pane glass windows span the rest of the entrance elevation above the doors and continue up to meet the soffit. The glass is frameless but is pinned with eight 4in (10cm) round plates at 5ft (152cm) evenly spaced vertical intervals to four 6in (15cm) wide mullions that provide

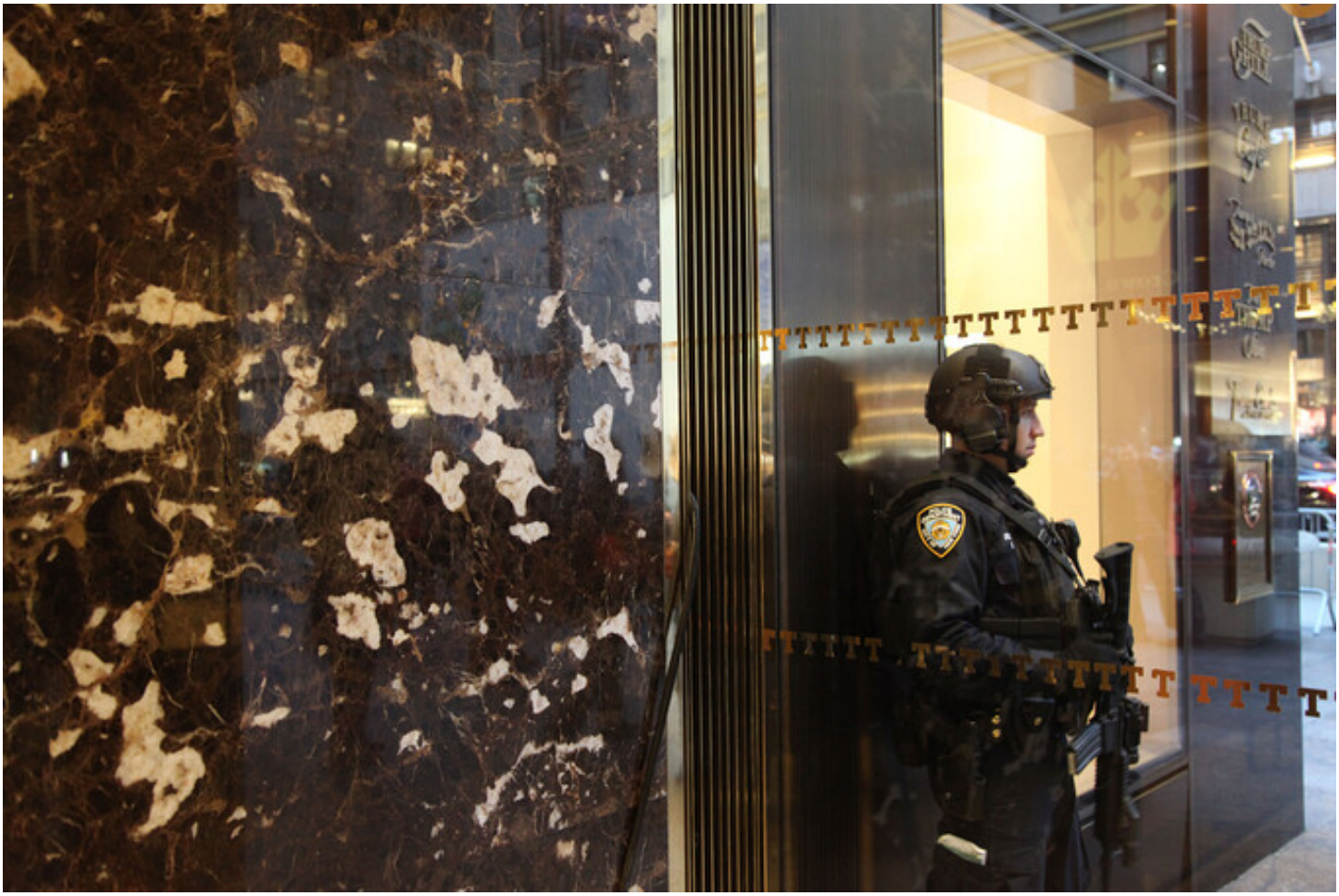


Such aspects have become a paradigm. Superficially, some things have been dropped. The taste for polished granite, brass, and dark glass exists now only in bleached

lateral support to the glass. Each pane of glass is 4ft 6in (136cm) wide and 16ft (487cm) high. On the center pane of glass, a logo and a series of letters and numbers have

been gilded to the surface of the glass. The logo, letters, and numbers occupy the bottom third of the central glass panel.

is subdivided into a five-by-five evenly spaced grid. The simple tree graphic does not bear leaves. Below this are three words stating that the building is open to the public. Below this statement are two times of day. The time the



This is a public place. This door leads into an area that has already been paid for by the citizens of this city. Now those people are paying again. This is a building that carries coding from an earlier time as the transition to the frameless and the seamless was starting to be articulated within a design aesthetic where the structure becomes the logo and the logo floats free of its function. This has all been seen and said and recognized so many times before in the complex analysis that was postmodern theory. Now is not the time to cease a granular analysis of the old/new spaces of power—not a moment to compare it to Versailles or dictator chic (these were later "backward renovations"—historical revisionism of the self). It is a moment to look carefully with eyes wide open. A concrete analysis of a concrete situation layered in aluminum and dark glass.

The logo on the central glass panel is a simplified graphic representing a tree that has been overlaid by the thin outline of a square that creates a box around the tree and

building opens and the time it closes.

Ballard still said it best:

> The more arid and affectless life became in the high-rise, the greater the possibilities it offered. By its very efficiency, the high-rise took over the task of maintaining the social structure that supported them all. For the first time, it removed the need to suppress every kind of anti-social behavior and left them free to explore any deviant or wayward impulses. It was precisely in these areas where the most important and interesting aspects of their lives would take place. Secure within the shell of the high-rise, like passengers on board an automatically-piloted airliner, they were free to behave in any way they wished, explore the darkest corners they could find. In many ways, the high-rise was a model of all that technology had done to make possible the expression of a truly

free psychopathology.[5]

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Liam Gillick is an artist based in New York. His work exposes the dysfunctional aspects of a modernist legacy in terms of abstraction and architecture when framed within a globalized, neo-liberal consensus, and extends into structural rethinking of the exhibition as a form. He has produced a number of short films since the late 2000s which address the construction of the creative persona in light of the enduring mutability of the contemporary artist as a cultural figure. Over the last twenty five years Gillick has also been a prolific writer and critic of contemporary art, contributing to *Artforum*, *October*, *Frieze*, and *e-flux Journal*. His book *Industry and Intelligence: Contemporary Art Since 1820* was published by Columbia University Press in March 2016.

1
Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1992), 47.

2
Ibid., 51.

3
Ibid., 41–42.

4
Ibid., 54.

5
J. G. Ballard, *High-Rise* (1975).

> -- The conditions that obtained when life had not yet emerged from the oceans have not subsequently changed a great deal for the cells of the human body, bathed by the primordial wave which continues to flow in the arteries. Our blood in fact has a chemical composition analogous to that of the sea of our origins, from which the first living cells and the first multicellular beings derived the oxygen and the other elements necessary to life ... The sea where living creatures were at one time immersed is now enclosed within their bodies.
>
> —Italo Calvino, *Blood, Sea*[1]

Kirsty Robertson

Plastiglomerate

What is a beach actually? It is marginalia, a footnote to the essay that is the ocean. Beaches are many things and can range from rocky outcrops to lush vegetation. But the sandy beach of popular imagination is made up of sediment, of particles coming from eroded coral reefs in the ocean, sediment from the sea floor, eroded sections of the continental shelf, or weathered and eroded rocks from nearby cliffs.[2] In Hawai'i, volcanic basalt sometimes contributes to the mix, creating black beaches of small-to-tiny particles that are eroded by the constant, lapping wave action of the ocean. Beaches are far from sedentary. They are in constant motion, as wind and water wear away at rocks, coral, shells, and other matter. They also stretch across time as certain minerals, such as quartz and feldspar, are chemically stable and strong enough to last well through erosion, often forming the base of beaches millennia old.[3] When plastics are released into the ocean, they join this process, being broken down into smaller and smaller parts and adding to the sand mixture on almost all coastal beaches. Note: an archive of pure sand is an impossibility. No wonder that sand is often seen to flow through time, through the glass timer, to ebb and flow, to move liquidly across the face of the Earth.

Kamilo Beach, Hawai'i is a node where the ocean gets rid of foreign substances. The beach has long been known as a way station: stories are told that pre-contact, native Hawai'ians used the beach to harvest logs that had drifted into Kamilo from the Pacific Northwest, and that shipwrecked bodies often turned up there.[4] Currently, Kamilo is a terminal point in the circulation of garbage. The beach and adjacent coastline are covered in plastic: as much as 90 percent of the garbage accumulated in the area is plastic. So much garbage collects here that Kamilo Beach can be found on *Atlas Obscura*'s compendium of bizarre and obscure places to visit, where it is described as "constantly covered in trash like some sort of tropical New York City gutter."[5] It is a site of immense efforts at cleanup organized by the Hawaii Wildlife Fund, a group that must constantly contend with the ocean's supply of new materials.

Plastiglomerate sample/ready-made collected by geologist Patricia Corcoran and sculptor Kelly Jazvac at Kamilo Beach, Hawai'i, 2012. Photo: Kelly Wood. Courtesy of the artist.

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In 2012, geologist Patricia Corcoran and sculptor Kelly Jazvac travelled to Kamilo Beach, following a tip from oceanographer Charles Moore that the beach was covered in a plastic-sand conglomerate. Moore suspected nearby volcanoes were to blame. In fact, the plastic and beach detritus had been combined into a single substance by bonfires. Human action on the beach had created what Corcoran and Jazvac named "plastiglomerate," a sand-and-plastic conglomerate. Molten plastic had also in-filled many of the vesicles in the volcanic rock, becoming part of the land that would eventually be eroded back into sand.

The term "plastiglomerate" refers most specifically to "an indurated, multi-composite material made hard by agglutination of rock and molten plastic. This material is subdivided into an in situ type, in which plastic is adhered to rock outcrops, and a clastic type, in which combinations of basalt, coral, shells, and local woody debris are cemented with grains of sand in a plastic matrix."[6] More poetically, plastiglomerate indexically unites the human with the currents of water; with the breaking down, over millennia, of stone into sand and fossils into oil; with the quick substration of that oil into fuel; and with the refining of that fuel into polycarbons—into plastic, into garbage. From the primordial muck, to the ocean, to the beach, and back to land, plastiglomerate is an uncanny material marker. It shows the ontological inseparability of all matter, from the micro to the macro.

Following the research excursion to Kamilo Beach, Corcoran and Jazvac argued in *GSA Today* that plastiglomerate was evidence of a plastic marker horizon that could contribute to the naming of a new era. The naming and dating of the Anthropocene, an as-yet formally unrecognized and heavily debated term for a geologic

This and all subsequent images: plastiglomerate samples/ready-mades collected by geologist Patricia Corcoran and sculptor Kelly Jazvac at Kamilo Beach, Hawai'i, 2012. Photos: Jeff Elstone. Courtesy of the artist.

epoch evidencing human impact on the globe, relies "on whether humans have changed the Earth system sufficiently to produce a stratigraphic signature in sediments and ice that is distinct from that of the Holocene epoch."[7] While it is incontrovertible that humans have impacted the planet, the strata to measure that impact in the global geological record remains controversial. Is the signature change a layer of plastic sediment from the mid-twentieth century's "Great Acceleration" of population growth? Does it begin with the Industrial Revolution's massive deposits of CO2 into the atmosphere? Or perhaps it is lithospheric, with evidence found in the rise of agriculture some twelve thousand years ago? Maybe the start date of the Anthropocene can be traced to a single day, that being the first nuclear test—the Trinity test—in 1945, which deposited an easily measured layer of artificial radioactivity into the global soil.[8] The term "Anthropocene" remains stable/unstable, "not-yet-official but increasingly indispensable," writes Donna Haraway; near "mandatory" in the humanities, arts, and sciences, if not elsewhere.[9] Whichever (if any) start date is chosen, plastiglomerate—a substance that is neither industrially manufactured nor geologically created—seems a fraught but nonetheless incontrovertible marker of the anthropogenic impact on the world; it is evidence of human presence written directly into the rock.

After collection, the samples gathered at Kamilo Beach were analyzed so as to categorize the plastics and the natural sediments that together created the plastiglomerate whole. Following this, Jazvac showed the plastiglomerate in art exhibitions as sculptural ready-mades, to demonstrate human impact on nature. Finally, museums, among them the Yale Peabody Museum, the Het Nieuwe Instituut (Rotterdam), and the Natura Artis Magistra (Amsterdam), reached out to collect and display the samples as specimens that captured

changing natural history. These three paths bring up a number of questions. What does it mean to understand part of the geologic record as a sculptural object? Can art make visible a problem too large to otherwise understand? What can we learn from approaching the fraught term "Anthropocene" as a creative undertaking on a massive scale, even if the end result of that creativity is the demise of a hospitable environment for most species? What can art tell us that stratigraphy cannot?

Cynical Smog and Mermaid's Tears

The invention of plastic is so recent. Its rapid accumulation is as young as it is overwhelming. Considered against Earth's five-billion-year life span, it appears to arrive and cover the world in one simultaneous instant, unfolding through time and space into a future we cannot yet see. Noted for its convenience and durability, plastic emerged in part as a promise to displace other products that relied on animal remains and natural resources: bone, tortoiseshell, ivory, baleen and whale oil, feathers, fur, leather, cork, and rubber. "As petroleum came to the relief of the whale," stated one pamphlet advertising celluloid in the 1870s, so "has celluloid given the elephant, the tortoise, and the coral insect a respite in their native haunts; and it will no longer be necessary to ransack the earth in pursuit of substances which are constantly growing scarcer."[10]

Invented just after the turn of the twentieth century, the mass production of the synthetic organic polymers of plastic only began in the 1950s. Bakelite®, Styrofoam®, and Nylon® gave way to thermoplastic polymers, which could be molded and melted and remolded.[11] Roland Barthes starts his meditation on plastic in *Mythologies* by noting, "Despite having names of Greek Shepherds (Polystyrene, Polyvinyl, Polyethylene), plastic … is in essence the stuff of alchemy." Plastic is the "transmutation of matter," the transformation of primordial sludge into the modern, malleable, and convenient. Every fragment of plastic contains the geologic memory of the planet: "at one end, raw, telluric matter, at the other, the

finished, human object."[12] Barthes wasn't actually thinking about oil when he wrote this; rather, he was focused on the idea that plastic could be seemingly made into anything. He was taken with the plasticity of plastic, and unconcerned with the backstory or future impact. Plastic allowed for social mobility, increased consumption, and a seemingly bright, hygienic, and accessible future for all.

Plastic soon shed its utopian allure, becoming hard evidence for the three c's—the triple threat of capitalism, colonialism, and consumerism—as well as a kind of shorthand for all that was inauthentic and objectionable about postwar everyday life. Plastic was just the latest evidence of bio-cultural cynicism. As earlier forms of extraction—such as the exploitation of rubber from trees and animals for their products—became unfeasible, the continued expansion of the three c's was made possible through new forms of extraction, such as resource mining and oil-field development.[13] While the site of exploitation may have moved, the underlying patterns of accumulation, colonization, and consumption remained unchanged.

Was Barthes correct in saying that plastic can be made into anything? In the past, it might have been assumed that "nature" was the one thing that could never be made from plastic. Plastiglomerate suggests that this is no longer the case. It is an ecological paradox such that the mind struggles to separate its plasticity from its telluric oily past. Take, for example, a sample collected from Kamilo Beach that is clearly a lighter and sand. And yet it is not. These are not two substances glued together, but multiple substances that are one another. The lighter was likely one of the billion plus made in China and Taiwan each year from parts sourced all over the world.[14] It had already traveled the globe prior to ending up on Kamilo Beach, where it melted, along with other microplastic flakes and confetti, into a single substance, a glomerate with a history as long as the sand and as short as the invention of plastic polymer in a war-time laboratory in the 1950s. As Pam Longobardi writes, "Plastic objects are the cultural archeology of our time, a future storehouse of oil, and the future fossils of the Anthropocene."[15]

Plastic production has quintupled globally since the 1970s

to 265 million tons per annum in 2010.[16] As Heather Davis notes, plastic is immensely destructive, ecologically devastating both in the intensity of resource extraction required to make it (a staggering 8 percent of the world's oil production goes into the manufacture and production of plastics) and in its disposal.[17] The few minutes or days in which it might be used as a takeaway container, a lighter, or a toothpaste tube belies both the multimillion-year process of its making, and the tens of thousands of years it is expected to last before breaking down, finally, into its molecular compounds.[18] In its plastic state, it is usually quickly disposed of, making its way to landfills, but also into sewers or streams, where it often ends up in waterways and on shorelines.[19]

Plastic is not the irreducible product that was once thought. Plastics do not biodegrade, but in water, solar radiation on the surface leads to photodegradation, which is amplified by embrittlement and fragmentation from wave action.[20] The plastics in the ocean are mostly particles smaller than one centimeter in diameter, commonly called microplastics, but more poetically referred to as "mermaid's tears." Although only 0.1 percent of plastics production is thought to end up in the vast islands of microplastic debris in the world's oceans, plastics are nonetheless the primary source of marine pollution. Highly durable, these microplastic fragments will last for hundreds or thousands of years.[21] Notes Davis, "After digging up the remains of ancient plants and animals, we are now stuck with the consequences of these undead molecules, the ones that refuse to interact with other carbon-dependent life forms."[22]

Most plastiglomerate is made from abstract "plastic confetti," "the embrittled remains of intact products."[23] The lighter-conglomerate is exceptional for the legibility of the lighter as a human-made object. Where ropes, nets, jars, toothbrushes, bottle caps, can lids, and cigarette lighters can be recognized, plastiglomerate becomes figurative, realistic. The plastic aspect gains a longevity and aesthetic vibrancy that it would not otherwise have. The combination of rock sediment and plastic creates a charismatic object, a near luminous granite, pockmarked with color. Plastiglomerate is trace evidence of

human-nature interaction: plastic is made by an anthropogenic action, and plastiglomerate is made by a series of anthropogenic gestures that create fascinating, disquieting objects.

and most docile earth; consider them both, the sea and the land; and do you not find a strange analogy to something in yourself?

—Herman

Five Gyres

Melville, *Moby Dick*

Consider the subtleness of the sea; how its most dreaded creatures glide under water, unapparent for the most part, and treacherously hidden beneath the loveliest tints of azure. Consider also the devilish brilliance and beauty of many of its most remorseless tribes, as the dainty embellished shape of many species of sharks. Consider, once more, the universal cannibalism of the sea; all whose creatures prey upon each other, carrying on eternal war since the world began.

Consider all this; and then turn to the green, gentle,

Whose lighter was it? A smoker in Los Angeles? Possibly in Tokyo? Maybe in Ojai? Or perhaps someone rivers and canyons away.[24] Upstream in a thousand human settlements where a lighter can be bought and thrown away. Perhaps on the western coast of North America. Perhaps on the eastern coast of Asia. The lighter ends up in the gutter. It waits for a storm. The water takes it. It ends up in the sewage. In the sliver of water. In the river. In the bay. In the ocean. In the Kuroshio Current. In the great churning mass of the Pacific from where somehow, in a storm, in the winds, it ends up on Kamilo Beach in Hawai'i.

Or possibly, more likely, someone drove over the rocky terrain of the Hawai'ian Island, hiked in to a deserted and plastic-strewn beach, lit a fire to keep warm, and left the lighter behind. One more piece of plastic on the sand. This is how it is with objects. They are mostly mute about their journeys, though most of them have traveled much farther than any of us.

Covering almost 70 percent of the Earth's surface, "oceans define, sustain and characterize the planet's ecology. More than half of our oxygen supply is produced by the microscopic plant life that suffuses the earth's oceans, though for how much longer is unknown. This is where all life on this planet began and if it dies it will take all of us with it."[25] After leveling off between six and seven thousand years ago, oceans and seas have provided a sense of constancy, a rhythm to the Earth's movement through space. Whereas on land, humans built up from agricultural settlements to choking cities, the seas seemed relatively changeless, bringing death and fear in the form of storms, attacks, the transport of enslaved captives, and sunken ships, but also providing seemingly endless navigable passages full of life and profit (for the few)—a largeness full of largesse. But now, through the loss of megafauna from overfishing and habitat destruction, massive pollution, and high levels of phosphorus and nitrogen flowing into the oceans due to fertilizer use, dumping, and climate change, oceans are under extreme threat. As the oceans heat up, coral reefs are dying, and "jellyfish have bloomed to such an extent they threaten to extinguish all other ocean life. They are an organic form of junk."[26] Overfishing has decimated many populations, particularly of large animals such as whales, dolphins, sharks, turtles, and blue fin tuna. Oil and gas exploration threatens fragile ecologies across the globe, ranging from the Arctic to the Gulf of Mexico to the tip of Argentina, and nearly all major bodies of water in between. And on top of all of this, garbage and effluents pour into the oceans at ever increasing rates.[27]

It is not known how much plastic waste oceans and waterways currently hold. Measurements were last taken in the 1970s, and even then they were largely guesswork and focused entirely on "visible" plastics, that is, those floating on the surface. Current estimates range in the order of tens of thousands of tons of plastic in surface waters of open oceans.[28] But plastics floating on the surface represent but a small fraction of the total, and that total is difficult to ascertain because microplastics below a certain size (half a centimeter) are largely absent on the surface of the oceans. We don't know why.[29] Additionally, as Ian Buchanan writes, microplastics form "a 'strange attractor' for all the toxic scum floating elsewhere in the ocean."[30] The microbial communities that flourish on plastic microfragments are present "at a density and diversity much greater than that of the surrounding ocean water."[31] Perhaps mistaking the small fragments for food, marine life eats these toxic microfragments, at which point they enter the food chain, "completing the vicious circle of toxins out and toxins in."[32]

The constant movement of the Earth, the tide, and winds produces ocean currents that act at surface and depth in roughly unchanging patterns over thousands of years, affecting land temperature, the movement of water, and now, the movement of pollution detritus.[33] The same currents that are used by the shipping industry to map the fastest passages across the globe, the same currents that opened the world to the age of plunder and colonization in the fifteenth century, currently churn the detritus of that system into smaller and smaller fragments of microplastic. As Cózar et al. write, "[the] large-scale vortices act as conveyor belts, collecting the floating plastic debris released from the continents and accumulating it into central convergence zones."[34] The Coriolis effect, deflecting air along curved paths against the Earth's rotation, has created five gyres, one in each ocean—five giant slow-moving vortexes determined by the circulation patterns of wind curl and torque.

The Great Pacific Garbage Patch, centered in the Northern Pacific Gyre, is a combination of ocean currents, climate change, and unchecked plastic pollution. As plastics move from source to ocean in the Pacific they get caught up in the ocean's currents until a veritable soup of mermaid's tears churns. Though huge in size (often compared to "the size of Texas"), the tiny size of plastic particles and the fact that they are below surface means that the garbage patch is invisible to the naked eye. Perhaps the five gyres overwhelm all forms of thought in their destructive totality. Trying to describe the indescribable nature of the thinness of plastic sludge in the ocean, Max Liboiron has called it "plastic smog," less like a garbage patch and more like insidious but invisible pollution.[35]

Vibrant Matter

If the gyres are largely invisible, the release of surface plastics and microplastic fragments to Kamilo Beach, where they are combined with sand into plastiglomerate, presents an interesting visual dilemma. Susan Schuppli writes, "It seems we still need visual evidence before we can act as moral agents. This regime of visibility is a huge challenge. How do we act as ethical agents when there are all kinds of events that don't produce coherent visual evidence?"[36] We might ask the same question of this newly demarcated substance. As a geological artifact, plastiglomerate is an indicator of human impact on the ecology of the Earth. As an artwork, plastiglomerate makes the familiar unfamiliar. It reifies the unfathomable, consolidating and attesting to difficult-to-substantiate material and social-political issues. Plastiglomerate is a remainder, a reminder, an indicator of the slow violence of massive pollution. It brings together deep geological time and current consumerism. It also takes on the properties of what Jane Bennett calls "vibrant matter," a lively thing made by certain actions and off-gassing in its own strange

geological matrix.[37]

When it comes to using plastiglomerate as part of a plastic marker horizon in determining the potential start date of the Anthropocene, there is more at stake than simply whether or not the International Commission on Stratigraphy and the International Union of Geological Sciences can agree that we have met all of the criteria to define a new epoch. The hubris behind self-naming an era is inescapable. As Métis scholar Zoe Todd reminds us,

> The current framing of the Anthropocene blunts the distinctions between the people, nations, and collectives who drive the fossil-fuel economy and those who do not. The complex and paradoxical experiences of diverse people as humans-in-the-world, including the ongoing damage of colonial and imperialist agendas, can be lost when the narrative is collapsed to a universalizing species paradigm.[38]

The history of plastics, tied up as it is in colonization and resource extraction, clearly illustrates the unevenness at the heart of defining the Anthropocene. Additionally, the way that the Anthropocene tends to be used as always-already underway highlights a distinction, and by proxy a hierarchy, between humans and nonhumans (or "more-than-humans") that perpetuates a nature-culture divide and suppresses ways of understanding the world that might be more relational than taxonomic. Todd writes, "I think that the danger in any universal narrative or epoch or principle is exactly that it can itself become a colonizing force."[39] She reminds us that Indigenous knowledges have space for the connection of all matter, while by contrast, settler knowledge requires the vibrant matter of a plastic stone to tell this story.[40]

If we are in a period highly impacted by human presence, it is worth remembering that the land is ahead of us in time, already aware of and influenced by the processes of extraction and depletion whose effects are often only

recognized too late. But so too, human actions are part of a complex series of incursions that affect more-than-human critters, the land, the air, and even the depths of oceans and substrates of soil. The same is of course true of plastic pollution. Plastics are bought and discarded in much larger quantity in the Global North, but the gyres ensure that the distribution of microplastics in fact affects nonhumans prior to humans, while floating plastic depots tend to accumulate in areas without the resources to clean them up or hide them, and in the bellies and digestive tracts of those who would not recognize such a foreign substance as not being edible.

Plastiglomerate clearly demonstrates the permanence of the disposable.[41] It is evidence of death that cannot decay, or that decays so slowly as to have removed itself from a natural lifecycle. It is akin to a remnant, a relic, though one imbued with very little affect. As a charismatic object, it is a useful metaphor, poetic and aesthetic—a way through which science and culture can be brought together to demonstrate human impact on the land. Thus, to understand plastiglomerate as a geological marker is to see it as unchanging. Plastiglomerate speaks to the obduracy of colonialism and capitalism. The melted veins of plastic that actually become the rock speak to how difficult it is to undo unequal relations of destruction. The scraping out of plastic from the rock, melting down to separate the plastic from the sand, would result most obviously in the destruction of the new object and likely also the destruction of its constituent parts.

Nevertheless, plastiglomerate is a seductive substance, attracting artists to both collect and display it, and to make it. What does turning plastiglomerate into an artwork do? To understand it as art is, potentially, to see it as a call to action. But that latter interpretation demands seeing it as art made by the Earth, with humans only as anonymous actors, as midwives lighting the fires on the beach. After all, it is made from the most banal of substances: rock and plastic, both easily available and easily melded into one. Most artists *making* plastiglomerate are doing so as a commentary on human-made pollution. Although there are plenty of artists using plastic to comment critically on waste, labor, and production, it appears that those specifically drawn to plastiglomerate seem rather to be oddly inspired by it, occasionally even going so far as to erroneously report that volcanic action creates plastiglomerate, and that this in turn is evidence of "nature adapting to technological surplus."[42] Such statements are categorically incorrect, and hint at how, if the Anthropocene is a narcissistic category, then the art world is the mirror. To make such an object in order to question its making seems a deeply problematic tautology, implicated in an impulse that sees the Anthropocene as a kind of celebratory mechanism for human interaction with the world. It suggests a constant search for new and novel material with which to make a mark, a gesture that is cognizant of capitalism's love of the new, even as it replicates it. Such impulses also echo Jodi Dean's perceptive analysis of a faction of the global left who experience a certain *jouissance* at being in the know—to find satisfaction in evidence of catastrophic climate change while doing nothing to stop it (or actively perpetuating it). "Anthropocenic enjoyment," she calls it.[43]

But why should finding plastiglomerate and displaying it as a ready-made be any different? Plastiglomerate is what Heather Davis calls "accidentally or incidentally" aesthetic.[44] It is precisely the facticity of plastiglomerate, its infrangibility, its constituent components and analysis as both artwork and geological specimen that make it fascinating. Plastiglomerate demonstrates an already existent artistic relationship between human and planetary action that can't really be improved by rendering that relationship as solely human. Or perhaps more disturbing still, it demonstrates the Anthropocene as a performance, an artwork with the end act of planetary destruction.

The extensive life span of thermoplastics and rock do not need any further intervention to illustrate their force. Perhaps, as Jazvac does when she shows the plastiglomerate as ready-made sculpture, we need to delve into what we already have, using plastiglomerate as object, sample, metaphor, talisman, and evidence. Following on Todd, Jazvac remarks on her uneasiness with the way that she is often described as having "discovered" plastiglomerate, a word that has strong colonial connotations, and that imagines a manufactured landscape as something like a frontier to explore and possess. Every time plastiglomerate is shown, Jazvac notes, it is evidence of removing and describing something from a land that is not hers—an action that is misunderstood and perpetuated constantly in the coverage and use of plastiglomerate as material. Perhaps, then, it is an anticolonial and a feminist action to refuse to see plastiglomerate as an ideal object or substance that can be discovered, extracted, gathered, and used to bolster careers in a capitalist system or to highlight the "newness" of an anthropogenic substance.

Refusal is a radical gesture in the contemporary art world, and drawing attention to the complexity of plastiglomerate as a ready-made that is more than a ready-made, that is more than a new material, challenges the

> extractive gaze … of the explorer, the prospector, the cartographer or the lumberjack [that] reduces nature to what Martin Heidegger (1977) called a "standing-reserve," a cache of inert matter to be dammed, dug up, cut down, flattened out, raised up, divided and sub-divided, harvested, photographed, mapped, assayed, bought, and sold and generally manipulated in order to serve all-too-human purposes.[45]

An extractive and capitalist gaze renders plastiglomerate as matter and metaphor all too closely connected to a romanticization of the Anthropocene. As Jazvac understands, the ways landscapes are idealized, used, and viewed are ideological.

Understood in this way, plastiglomerate has multiple overlapping identities. Pushing the metaphoric understanding of its ontological nature as far as possible, perhaps we can find in the chemical chains of synthetic polymers melded with the craggy scraps of sand a useful theoretical model of the molecular, in line with that of the plant-life rhizome (Deleuze and Guattari) that so dominated Anglo scholarship in the 1990s and 2000s.[46] The ready-made geologic being of plastiglomerate speaks to more than pollution: also geology, the deep time of Earth, colonization, human-animal knowledges, currents of water, and the endless unfolding and collapse of life on Earth. We might conclude that "we have come into existence with and because of so many others, from carbon to microbes to dogs. And all these creatures and rocks and air molecules and water all exist together, with each other, for each other. To be a human means to be the land and water and air of our surroundings."[47]

X

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1
Thanks to Jayne Wilkinson, "Bodies Beneath," *Drain (Junk Ocean)* , vol. 13, no. 1 (2016) http://drainmag.com/bodies-beneath/ for pointing me to Italo Calvino's text.

2
In his forthcoming book, journalist Vince Beiser traces the black market of sand, noting that the seeming ubiquitous substance is actually under threat, disappearing, and often controlled by organized crime. Sand, he notes, is the most used natural resource in the world: "Sand is the thing modern cities are made of." Vince Beiser, "The World's Disappearing Sand," *New York Times* , June 23, 2016 http://www.nytimes.com/2016/06/23/opinion/the-worlds-disappearing-sand.html .

3
Many beaches now have to be maintained, as human impact has undermined the natural life cycle of beaches. Dams on rivers, industry, building, and so on have all impacted beaches, such that many have to be resupplied with sand, often termed "nourishment sand."

4
Kenneth Weiss, "Plague of Plastic Chokes the Seas," *Los Angeles Times* , August 2, 2006 https://web.archive.org/web/20121210215429/http:/www.latimes.com/news/la-me-ocean2aug02,0,2177579,full.story .

5
Atlas Obscura , "Kamilo Beach" http://www.atlasobscura.com/places/kamilo-beach .

6
Patricia L. Corcoran, Charles J. Moore, and Kelly Jazvac, "An Anthropogenic Marker Horizon in the Future Rock Record," *GSA Today* , vol. 24, no. 6 (June 2014) http://www.geosociety.org/gsatoday/archive/24/6/article/i1052-5173-24-6-4.htm .

7
Colin N. Waters et al., "The Anthropocene is Functionally and Stratigraphically Distinct From the Holocene," *Science*, vol. 351, no. 6269 (January 8, 2016) http://science.sciencemag.org/content/351/6269/aad2622 .

8
Corcoran, Moore, and Jazvac, "An Anthropogenic Marker Horizon."

9
Donna Haraway, "Tentacular Thinking: Anthropocene, Capitalocene, Chthulucene," *e-flux journal* 75 (September 2016) http://www.e-flux.com/journal/75/67125/tentacular-thinking-anthropocene-capitalocene-chthulucene . Other terms, such as Haraway's "Chthulucene," or "the Capitolocene" and others, are also useful, though the proliferation of neologisms may simply work to cloud the issue of whether we are in an era distinct from the Holocene.

10
Susan Freinkel, "A Brief History of Plastic's Conquest of the World," *Scientific American* , May 29, 2011 http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/a-brief-history-of-plastic-world-conquest/ .

11
Ibid. Most household plastics are synthetic organic compounds. They are synthetic (human-made), organic (carbon-based) chains of monomers.

12
Roland Barthes, *Mythologies* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1972), 110–11.

13
Many of the oil fields in North America, among them the Bakken oil fields in North Dakota, the tar sands in Alberta and Saskatchewan, and deposits in the Arctic, are on land that has never been ceded. Further, the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003 has been oft characterized as an act of neocolonialism for oil.

14
Lighters are manufactured all over the world: BIC maintains factories in France, Spain, Brazil, and the United States. Zippo also manufactures in the United States. The vast majority of cheap plastic lighters, however, are manufactured in China and Taiwan, many of these in the Chinese city of Wenzhou. Michael Backman, *Inside Knowledge: Streetwise in Asia* (London: Palgrave MacMillan, 2005), 23.

15
Pam Longobardi, "The Ocean Gleaner," *Drain (Junk Ocean)*, vol. 13, no. 1 (2016) http://drainmag.com/pam-longobardi-the-ocean-gleaner/ .

16
Andrés Cózar et al., "Plastic Debris in the Open Ocean," *PNAS* vol. 111, no. 28 (July 15, 2014): 2 http://www.pnas.org/content/111/28/10239.full.pdf .

17
Heather Davis, "Life & Death in the Anthropocene: A Short History of Plastic," in *Art in the Anthropocene: Encounters Among Aesthetics, Politics, Environments and Epistemologies* , eds. Heather Davis and Etienne Turpin (London: Open Humanities Press, 2015) http://heathermdavis.com/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Life-and-Death-in-the-Anthropocene.pdf .

18
Plasticizers are correlated with infertility, recurrent miscarriages, early-onset puberty, obesity, diabetes, reduced brain development, cancer, and neurological disorders such as early-onset senility in adults. Ibid.

19
Corcoran, Moore, and Jazvac, "An Anthropogenic Marker Horizon."

20
Cózar et al., "Plastic Debris in the Open Ocean," 1.

21
Ibid.

22
Davis, "Life & Death in the Anthropocene."

23
Corcoran, Moore, and Jazvac, "An Anthropogenic Marker Horizon."

24
This passage echoes and draws from some of the theories around object-oriented ontology, among them Timothy Morton's notion of hyperobjects. In fact, Morton's work is applied to a discussion of plastiglomerate in the catalogue for "Another Land ... And in the Other, Our Own," an exhibition that took place in Norway in 2015 (Ian Cofre, "Another Land ... And in the Other, Our Own," Prosjektrom Normanns, 2015). "Nature-culture," Bruno Latour's term for the intermixture of the organic and human-made, could also be applicable.

25
Celina Jeffery and Ian Buchanan, "Introduction," *Drain (Junk Ocean)*, vol. 13, no. 1 (2016) http://drainmag.com/junk-ocean/ .

26
Ibid.

27
Callum Roberts, *The Ocean of Life: The Fate of Man and the Sea* (London: Viking, 2012), 1–20.

28
Cózar et al., "Plastic Debris in the Open Ocean," 6.

29
Hypotheses include sink processes that take place through micro-fragmentation and submersion into the sediment, or ingestion by marine organisms, specifically mesopelagic fish, who in eating and defecating the plastic add weight to it that causes the formerly buoyant substance to sink to the bottom—in sum, "microplastic fragments could also reach the bottom via defecation," a proposition, it is noted, that requires further quantitative testing. Cózar et. al, "Plastic Debris in the Open Ocean," 2–5.

30
Ian Buchanan, "What Must We Do About the Rubbish?" *Drain (Junk Ocean)* , vol. 13, no. 1 (2016) http://drainmag.com/what-must-we-do-about-rubbish .

31
Erik R. Zettler, Tracy J. Mincer, and Linda A. Amaral-Zettler, "Life in the 'Plastisphere': Microbial Communities on Plastic Marine Debris," *Environmental Science and Technology* 47 (2013): 137–46. The importance of microbes to ocean, and hence planetary, health, cannot be underestimated. It is not yet proven but hypothesized that plastics in the ocean will attract and allow the proliferation of certain kinds of microbes, thus altering the chemical makeup of the world's oceans.

32
Buchanan, "What Must We Do About the Rubbish?"

33
Ocean currents are extremely complex, and at depth, remain only partially understood and mapped.

34
Cózar et al., "Plastic Debris in the Open Ocean," 1.

35
Daniel Engber, "There is No Island of Trash in the Pacific," *Slate* , September 12, 2016: http://www.slate.com/articles/health_and_science/the_next_20/2016/09/the_great_pacific_garbage_patch_was_the_myth_we_needed_t

o_save_our_oceans.html?wpsrc=sh_all_dt_tw_top ; Max Liboiron, "Redefining Pollution and Action: The Matter of Plastics," *Journal of Material Culture* , vol. 21, no. 1 (December 2015). Liboiron's article focuses on the distinction between plastic polymers (nontoxic) and the hormone-disrupting plasticizers added to those polymers (toxic). The idea that plastic itself is not toxic, but plasticizers are, massively complicates the stories of harm that can be told about plastics, and confuses meanings of pollution, health, and harm.

36
Lucas van der Velden and Rosa Menkman, "Dark Matters: An Interview with Susan Schuppli," *Dark Ecology* , 2016 http://www.darkecology.net/dark-matters-an-interview-with-susan-schuppli .

37
Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010), 1–20.

38
Caroline Picard, "The Future is Elastic (But it Depends): An Interview with Zoe Todd," *Bad at Sports* , August 23, 2016 http://badatsports.com/2016/the-future-is-elastic-but-it-depends-an-interview-with-zoe-todd/ .

39
Zoe Todd, "Fish Pluralities: Human-Animal Relations and Sites of Engagement in Paulatuuq, Arctic Circle," *Inuit Studies* , vol. 38, no. 1–2 (2014): 217–38.

40
Distinct from but paralleling Todd's argument is that of Rob Nixon, who addresses what he calls environmental "slow violence," the violence enacted by extraction, emissions, and pollution, which unveils itself slowly across time, as an "unevenly universal" burden, one that will tend to be experienced inequitably. Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013).

41
Heather Davis, "Toxic Progeny: The Plastisphere and Other Queer Futures," *PhiloSOPHIA*, vol. 5, no. 2 (Summer 2015): 233.

42
Elise Lammer, "Review," *Mousse Magazine* , July 19, 2014 http://moussemagazine.it/salts-artbasel-2014/ .

43
Jodi Dean, "The Anamorphic Politics of Climate Change," *e-flux journal* 69 (January 2016) http://www.e-flux.com/journal/the-anamorphic-politics-of-climate-change/ . Dean is not totally on board with art-science collaboration, which she sees as a repetition of past failed experiments writ anew. She argues for an anamorphic approach to climate change activism—an approach from the side. Perhaps our approach to plastiglomerate fits this criteria, moving beyond a traditional art-science collaboration.

44
Davis, "Life & Death in the Anthropocene."

45
Peter Hodgins and Peter Thompson, "Taking the Romance out of Extraction: Contemporary Canadian Artists and the Subversion of the Romantic/Extractive Gaze," *Environmental Communication* , vol. 5, no. 4 (2011).

46
See Heather Davis on the molecular: H. Davis, "Molecular Intimacy," in *Climates: Architecture and the Planetary Imaginary* , ed. James Graham (New York: Columbia Books on Architecture and the City, 2016), 205–11.

47
Heather Davis, "The Land and Water and Air That We Are: Some Thoughts on COP 21," *NYAQ*, March 15, 2016 http://sfaq.us/2016/03/the-land-and-water-and-air-that-we-are-some-thoughts-on-cop-21 .

Elizabeth A. Povinelli

Geontologies: The Figures and the Tactics

For a long time many have believed that Western Europe spawned and then spread globally a regime of power best described as biopolitics. Biopolitics was thought to consist of a "set of mechanisms through which the basic biological features of the human species became the object of a political strategy, of a general strategy of power."[1] Many believe that this regime was inaugurated in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and then consolidated during the 1970s. Prior to this, in the age of European kings, a very different formation of power, namely, sovereign power, reigned. Sovereign power was defined by the spectacular, public performance of the right to kill, to subtract life, and, in moments of regal generosity, to let live. It was a regime of sovereign thumbs, up or down, and enacted over the tortured, disemboweled, charred, and hacked bodies of humans—and sometimes of cats.[2] Royal power was not merely the claim of an absolute power over life. It was a carnival of death. The crowds gathered in a boisterous jamboree of killing—hawking wares, playing dice—not in reverent silence around the sanctity of life. Its figure, lavishly described at the opening of Michel Foucault's *Discipline and Punish*, was the drawn-and-quartered regicide.

How different does that formation of power seem to how we conceive of legitimate power now, what we ask of it, and, in asking, what it creates? And how different do the figures seem through which the contemporary formation of power entails its power? We do not see kings and their subjects, or bodies hacked into pieces, but states and their populations, individuals and their management of health, the Malthusian couple, the hysterical woman, the perverse adult, and the masturbating child. Sure, some social formations seem to indicate a return to sovereign power, such as the US and European security states and their secret rendition centers created in the wake of 9/11, 7/7, 11-M (the Madrid train bombings), Charlie Hebdo … But these manifestations of a new hard sovereign power are deeply insinuated in operations of biopower—through the stochastic rhythms of specific algorithms and experiments in social media—something Foucault anticipated in his lectures on security, territory, and population.[3] Is it such a wonder, then, that some believe a great divide separates the current regime of biopolitics from the ancient order of sovereignty? Or that some think that disciplinary power (with its figures of camps, barracks, and schools, and its regularization of life) and biopolitics (with its four figures of sexuality, its technological tracking of desire at the level of the individual and population, and its normation of life) arch their backs against this ancient savage sovereign *dispositif*?

Foucault was hardly the first to notice the transformation of the form and rationale of power in the long history of Western Europe—and, insofar as it shaped the destinies of its imperial and colonial reach, power writ globally. Perhaps most famously, Hannah Arendt, writing nearly twenty years before Foucault would begin his lectures on biopower, bewailed the emergence of the "Social" as the

referent and purpose of political activity.[4] Arendt did not contrast the era of European kings and courts to the modern focus on the social body, but rather she contrasted the latter to the classical Greek division between public and private realms. For Arendt the public was the space of political deliberation and action carved out of and defined by its freedom from and antagonism to the realm of necessity. The public was the active exclusion of the realm of necessity—everything having to do with the physical life of the body—and this exclusion constituted the public realm as such. For Arendt, the space of necessity began leaking into the public during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, creating a new topology of the public and private. She termed this new spacing "the Social." Rather than excluding bodily needs, wants, and desires from political thought, the liberal "Social" state embraced them, letting loose *homo economicus* to sack the public forum and establish itself as the raison d'être of the political. Ever since, the liberal state gains its legitimacy by demonstrating that it anticipates, protects, and enhances the biological and psychological needs, wants, and desires of its citizens.

If Foucault was not the first word on the subject of biopolitics he was also not the last. As lighthearted as his famous quip might have been that this century would bear the name "Deleuze," he would no doubt have been pleased to see the good race that his concept of the biopolitical has run, spawning numerous neologisms (biopower, biopolitics, thanatopolitical, necropolitics, positive and negative forms of biopower, neuropolitics) and spreading into anthropology, cultural and literary studies, political theory, critical philosophy, and history. Jacques Derrida and Donna Haraway would explore the concept of auto-immunity from the point of view of the biopolitical.[5] Giorgio Agamben would put Arendt and Foucault in conversation in order to stretch the origins of the emergence of the biopolitical back to Greek and Roman law.[6] Roberto Esposito would counter the negative readings of Agamben by arguing that a positive form of biopolitics could be found in innovative readings of Martin Heidegger, Georges Canguilhem, and Baruch Spinzoza.[7] Foucault's concept of biopolitics has also been battered by accusations of a narcissistic provinciality.[8] This provinciality becomes apparent when biopolitics is read from a different global history—when biopolitics is given a different social geography. Thus many authors across the global south have insisted that it is impossible to write a history of the biopolitical that starts and ends in European history, *even when* Western Europe is the frame of reference. Achille Mbembe, for instance, argued that the sadistic expressions of German Nazism were genealogically related to the sadisms of European colonialism. In the colonial space "the generalized instrumentalization of human existence and the material destruction of human bodies and populations" were the experimental precursor for the extermination camps in Europe.[9] And before Mbembe, W. E. B. Du Bois argued that the material and discursive origins of European monumentalism, such as the gleaming boulevards of Brussels, were found in the brutal colonial regimes of the Congo.[10] This global genealogy of both the extraction and production of materiality and life has led Rosi Braidotti to conclude, "Bio-power and necro-politics are two sides of the same coin."[11]

But are the concepts of biopolitics, positive or negative, or necropolitics, colonial or postcolonial, the formation of power in which late liberalism now operates—or has been operating? If, paraphrasing Gilles Deleuze, concepts open understanding to what is all around us but not in our field of vision, does biopolitics any longer gather together under its conceptual wings what needs to be thought if we are to understand contemporary late liberalism?[12] Have we been so entranced by the image of power working through life that we haven't noticed the new problems, figures, strategies, and concepts emerging all around us, suggesting another formation of late liberal power—or the revelation of a formation that is fundamental to but hidden by the concept of biopower? Have we been so focused on exploring each and every wrinkle in the biopolitical fold—biosecurity, biospectrality, thanatopoliticality—that we forgot to notice that the figures of biopower (the hysterical woman, the Malthusian couple, the perverse adult, and the masturbating child; the camps and barracks, the panopticon and solitary confinement), once so central to our understanding of contemporary power, now seem not as decisive, to be inflected by or giving way to new figures: the Desert, the Animist, the Virus? And is a return to sovereignty our only option for understanding contemporary late liberal power? This text attempts to elaborate how our allegiance to the concept of biopower is hiding and revealing another problematic—a formation for want of a better term I am calling *geontological* power, or *geontopower*.

So let me say a few words about what I mean by geontological power, or geontopower, although its scope and import can only be known in the immanent worlds in which it continues to be made and unmade—one of which this text engages. The simplest way of sketching the difference between geontopower and biopower is that the former does not operate through the governance of life and the tactics of death but is rather a set of discourse, affects, and tactics used in late liberalism to maintain or shape the coming relationship of the distinction between Life and Nonlife.[13] This text argues that as the previously stable ordering divisions of Life and Nonlife shake, new figures, tactics, and discourses of power are displacing the biopolitical quartet. But why use these terms rather than others? Why not use meteorontological power, which might more tightly reference the concept of climate change? Why not coin the ill-sounding term "gexistent," given that throughout my work I use the term "existent" to reference what might elsewhere be described as life, thing, organism, and being? Wouldn't gexistence better semanticize my claim, elaborated below, that Western ontologies are covert biontologies—Western metaphysics

as a measure of all forms of existence by the qualities of one form of existence (*bios*, *zoe*)—and that biopolitics depends on this metaphysics being kept firmly in place? In the end I decided to retain the term *geontology* and its cognates, such as *geontopower*, because I want to intensify the contrasting components of nonlife (*geos*) and being (ontology) currently in play in the late liberal governance of difference and markets. Thus, geontology is intended to highlight, on the one hand, the biontological enclosure of existence (to characterize all existents as endowed with the qualities associated with Life). And, on the other hand, it is intended to highlight the difficulty of finding a critical language to account for the moment in which a form of power long self-evident in certain regimes of settler late liberalism is becoming visible globally.

Let me emphasize this last point. Geontopower is not a power that is only now emerging to replace biopolitics—biopower (the governance through life and death) has long depended on a subtending geontopower (the difference between the lively and the inert). And, similarly to how necropolitics operated openly in colonial Africa only later to reveal its shape in Europe, so geontopower has long operated openly in settler late liberalism and been insinuated in the ordinary operations of its governance of difference and markets. The attribution of an *inability* of various colonized people to differentiate the kinds of things that have agency, subjectivity, and intentionality of the sort that emerges with life has been the grounds of casting them into a premodern mentality and a postrecognition difference. Thus the point of the concepts of geontology and geontopower is not to found a new ontology of objects, nor to establish a new metaphysics of power, nor to adjudicate the possibility or impossibility of the human ability to know the truth of the world of things. Rather they are concepts meant to help make visible the figural tactics of late liberalism as a long-standing *biontological orientation and distribution* of power crumbles, losing its efficacy as a self-evident backdrop to reason. And, more specifically, they are meant to illuminate the cramped space in which my Indigenous colleagues are forced to maneuver as they attempt to keep relevant their critical analytics and practices of existence.[14] In short, geontopower is not a concept first and an application to my friends' worlds second, but a concept that emerges from what late liberal governance looks like from this cramped space.

To begin to understand the work of the concept of geontopower relative to biopower, let me return to Foucault's three formations of power and ask two simple questions, the answers to which might have seemed long settled. First: Are the relations among sovereign power, disciplinary power, and biopower ones of implication, distinction, determination, or set membership? And, second: Did Foucault intend these modes of power to be historical periodizations, quasi-transcendent metaphysics of power, or variations within a more encompassing historical and social framework? Let's remember that for all our contemporary certainty that a gulf separates sovereignty from discipline power and biopower, Foucault seemed unsure of whether he was seeing a shared concept traversing all three formations of power or seeing three specific formations of power, each with their own specific conceptual unity. On the one hand, he writes that the eighteenth century witnessed "the appearance (*l'apparition*)—one might say the invention—of a new mechanism of power which had very specific procedures, completely new instruments, and very different equipment."[15] And yet Foucault also states that the formations of power do not follow each other like beads on a rosary. Nor do they conform to a model of Hegelian *aufhebung*; sovereignty does not dialectically unfold into disciplinary power and disciplinary power into biopolitics. Rather, all three formations of power are always co-present, although how they are arranged and expressed relative to each other vary across social time and space.[16] For example, German fascism deployed all three formations of power in its Holocaust—the figure of Hitler exemplified the right of the sovereign to decide who was enemy or friend and thus could be killed or allowed to live; the gas chambers exemplified the regularity of disciplinary power; and the Aryan exemplified governance through the imaginary of population and hygiene.

We can find more recent examples. President George W. Bush and his vice president, Dick Cheney, steadfastly and publicly claimed the right to extrajudicial killing (a right the subsequent president also claims). But they did not enact their authority in public festivals where victims were drawn and quartered, but rather through secret human and drone-based special operations or in hidden rendition centers. And less explicit, and thus potentially more productive, new media technologies like Google and Facebook mobilize algorithms to track population trends across individual decisions, creating new opportunities for capital and new means of securitizing the intersection of individual pleasure and the well-being of certain populations, what Franco Berardi has called "semiocapitalism."[17] These modern tactics and aesthetics of sovereign power exist alongside what Henry Giroux, building on Angela Davis's crucial work on the prison industrial complex, has argued are the central features of contemporary US power: biosecurity with its panoply of ordinary incarceration blocks, and severe forms of isolation.[18] But even here, where US sovereignty seems to manifest its sharpest edge—state-sanctioned, prison-based killing—the killings are heavily orchestrated with an altogether different aesthetic and affective ordering from the days of kings. This form of state killing has witnesses, but rather than hawking wares these witnesses sit behind a glass wall where a curtain is discreetly drawn while the victim is prepared for death—or if "complications" arise, it is quickly pulled shut. The boisterous crowds are kept outside: those celebrating kept on one side of a police barrier, those holding prayer vigils on the other side. Other examples of the

co-presence of all three formations of power float up in less obvious places—such as in the changing public announcements to passengers as Qantas flights approach Australian soil. Whereas staff once announced that passengers should be aware of the country's strict animal and plant quarantine regulations, they now announce the country's strict "biosecurity laws."

And yet across these very different entanglements of power we continue to use the language of sovereignty, disciplinary power, and biopolitics as if these formations were independent of each other and of history. It is as if, when we step into their streams, the currents of these various formations pull us in different directions. On the one hand, each formation of power seems to express a distinct relation, aesthetic, and tactic even as, on the other hand, we are left with a lingering feeling that some unnamed shared conceptual matrix underpins all three—or at least sovereign power on the one side and disciplinary and biopower on the other. I am hardly the first to notice this. Alain Badiou notes that, as Foucault moved from an archaeological approach to a genealogical one, "a doctrine of 'fields'" began to substitute for a sequence of "epistemical singularities" in such a way that Foucault was brought back "to the concept and to philosophy."[19] In other words, while Badiou insists that Foucault was "neither a philosopher nor a historian nor a bastardized combination of the two," he also posits that something like a metaphysical concept begins to emerge in his late work, especially in his thinking about biopolitics and the hermeneutics of the self and other. For Badiou this concept was power. And it is exactly here that the difference between biopolitics and geontopower is staked.

Rather than power, I would propose that what draws the three formations together is a common but once unmarked ontological assertion, namely, that there is a distinction between Life and Nonlife that makes a difference. Now, and ever more globally, this assertion is marked. For example, the once unremarkable observation that all three formations of power (sovereign power, disciplinary power, and biopower) work only "insofar as man is a living being" (*une prise de pouvoir sur l'homme en tant qu'etre vivant*) today trips over the space between *en tant que* and *tant que*, between the "insofar as" and the "as long as." This once perhaps not terribly belabored phrasing is now hard to avoid hearing as an epistemological and ontological conditional: all three formations work *as long as* we continue to conceptualize humans as *living things* and *as long as* humans *continue to exist*. Yes, sovereignty, discipline, and biopolitics stage, aestheticize, and publicize the dramas of life and death differently. And, yes, starting from the eighteenth century, the anthropological and physical sciences came to conceptualize humans as a single species subject to a natural law governing the life and death of individuals and species. And, yes, these new discourses opened a new relationship between the way that sovereign law organized its powers around life and death and the way that biopolitics did. And, yes, Foucault's quick summary of this transformation as a kind of inversion from the right to kill and let live to the power of making live and letting die should be modified in the light of the fact that contemporary states make live, let die, *and* kill. And, yes, all sorts of liberalisms seem to evidence a biopolitical stain, from settler colonialism to developmental liberalism to full-on neoliberalism.[20] But something is causing these statements to be irrevocably read and experienced through a new drama, not the drama of life and death, but a form of death that begins and ends in Nonlife—namely the extinction of humans, biological life, and, as it is often put, the planet itself—which takes us to a time before the life and death of individuals and species, a time of the *geos*, of soulessness. The modifying phrase "insofar as" now foregrounds the *anthropos* as just one element in the larger set of not merely animal life but all Life as opposed to the state of original and radical Nonlife, the vital in relation to the inert, the extinct in relation to the barren. In other words, it is increasingly clear that the *anthropos* remains an element in the set of life only insofar as Life can maintain its distinction from Death/Extinction *and* Nonlife. It is also clear that late liberal strategies for governing difference and markets also only work insofar as these distinctions are maintained. And it is exactly because we can hear "insofar" that we know that these brackets are now visible, debatable, fraught, and anxious. It is certainly the case that the statement "clearly, *x* humans are more important than *y* rocks" continues to be made, persuade, stop political discourse. But what interests me is the slight hesitation, the pause, the intake of breath that now can interrupt an immediate assent.

This is the formula that is now unraveling: Life (Life{birth, growth, reproduction}v. Death) v. Nonlife.

X

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1
Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the Collège de France 1977–78* , trans. Graham Burchell (London: Picador, 2009, 1.

2
Robert Darnton, *The Great Cat Massacre: And Other Episodes in French Cultural History* (New York: Basic Books, 2009).

3
See, for example, Joseph Masco, *The Theater of Operations: National Security Affect from the Cold War to the War on Terror* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014).

4
Hannah Arendt, *On the Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958).

5
See Jacques Derrida, *The Beast and the Sovereign, Volume 1* , trans. Geoffrey Benjamin (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009); and Donna Haraway, "The Biopolitics of Postmodern Bodies: Determinations of Self in Immune System Discourse," *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* , vol. 1, no. 1 (1989): 3–43.

6
Giorgia Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998).

7
See Roberto Esposito, *Bios: Biopolitics and Philosophy* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 2008); and Timothy Campbell, *Improper Life: Technology and Biopolitics from Heidegger to Agamben* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).

8
See, for comparative purposes, Dipesh Chakrabarty, *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007).

9
Achille Mbembe, "Necropolitics," *Public Culture* , vol. 15, no. 1 (2003): 14. See also Rosi Braidotti, "Bio-Power and Necro-Politics: Reflections on an Ethics of Sustainability," *Springerin* , vol. 2, no. 7 (2007).

10
David Levering Lewis, *W. E. B. Du Bois: The Fight for Equality and the American Century 1919–1963* (New York: Henry Holt, 2000), especially 394–96.

11
Braidotti, "Bio-Power and Necro-Politics."

12
I understand "concept" in the broad sense in which Deleuze and William James approached the work of conceptualization, namely to actualize a series of quasi-events into a threshold. See James, *Pragmatism* (New York: Dover, 1995); Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); and Isabelle Stengers, "Gilles Deleuze's Last Message" http://www.recalcitrance.com/deleuzelast.htm .

13
Thus the concepts of geontology (Nonlife being) and geontopower (the power of and over Nonlife beings) are meant to indicate the current phase of thought and practice that define late liberalism—a phase that is simultaneously reconsolidating this distinction and witnessing its unraveling.

14
I will argue that a crucial part of what is forming this cramped space is a homology between natural life and critical life as techniques, vocabularies, and affective means for creating forms of existence—a scarred homology between the drama of natural life of birth, growth, and reproduction, and the death and drama of the critical life events *conatus* and *affectus* and finitude. is cramping is not happening in the abstract but through late liberal ways of governance of difference and markets.

15
Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975–1976* , trans. David Macey (London: Picador, 2003), 35.

16
See Esposito, *Bios*, 57.

17
See Franco Berardi, *Precarious Rhapsody: Semiocapitalism and the Pathologies of the Post-Alpha Generation* (New York: Automedia, 2009). See also Andre de Macedo Duarte, "Hannah Arendt, Biopolitics and the Problem of Violence: From Animal Laborans to Homo Sacer," in *Hannah Arendt and the Uses of History: Imperialism, Nation, Race and Genocide* , eds. Dan Stone and Richard King (London: Berghahn, 2007), 191–204; and Claire Blencowe, "Foucault's and Arendt's 'Insider View' of Biopolitics: A Critique of Agamben," *History of the Human Sciences* , vol. 23, no. 5 (2010): 113–30.

18
Henry Giroux, *Youth in a Suspect Society: Democracy or Disposability* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 83; Angela Davis, *Abolition Democracy: Beyond Prisons, Torture, and Empire* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2005). See also Ruth Wilson Gilmore, *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); and Masco, *Theater of Operations*.

19
Alain Badiou, *The Adventure of French Philosophy* (London: Verso, 2012), 87, 93, 97.

20
See, e.g., Scott Lauria Morgenson, "The Biopolitics of Settler Colonialism: Right Here, Right Now," *Settler Colonial Studies* , vol. 1, no. 1 (2011): 52–76; and Sandro Mezzadra, Julian Reid, and Ranabir Samaddar, *The Biopolitics of Development: Reading Michel Foucault in the Postcolonial Present* (New York: Springer, 2013).

Franco “Bifo” Berardi

The Coming ’17

The Interminable Collapse

The hundredth anniversary of the Soviet Revolution will likely coincide with a global collapse. The oft-announced recovery is not coming, and a rightist wave with racist undertones is mounting.

The collapse of capitalism will be interminable and enormously destructive, as long as a new subjectivity does not emerge and a different social model does not develop. The subjectivity that in the nineteenth century was expressed by the workers’ movement appears today so disintegrated that we cannot imagine any possible recomposition in the near future.

The anti-financial uprisings of 2011 have not succeeded in reversing the route of financial plunder, and the European leftist parties have accepted austerity politics, even if this betrayal is likely to provoke their final defeat.

The dynamics that led to the ascent of the Nazis and then to the Second World War are back. Contemporary nationalist parties are echoing what Hitler said to the impoverished workers of Germany: you are not defeated and exploited workers, but national warriors, and you will win. They did not win, but they destroyed Europe. They will not win this time either, but they are poised to destroy the world.

The ongoing impoverishment of society is not a natural necessity, but a consequence of the politics of financial accumulation. The neoliberal model implements itself by force of automatism, while consensus melts away. The July 2016 issue of *The Economist* had the theme “Anarchy in the UK” and admitted the bankruptcy of neoliberal globalism. The symptoms are visible: stagnation; overproduction and then deflation; looming recession.

The sources of stagnation and unemployment—market saturation and the reduction of necessary labor time—are not inherently negative trends in themselves. On the contrary, from the perspective of social usefulness they prove that the era of scarcity is over and the emancipation of human time from repetitive work is imminent. The material basis now exists for people to devote their time to the care of others, self-care, education, and other non-market activities.

Capitalism, however, is semiotically unable to implement the potentialities inherent to knowledge and technology: its dynamic tends in fact to contain those potentialities within old frameworks of growth and accumulation. Consequently, it transforms the potentialities of knowledge and technology into factors of scarcity and destruction.

This distortion has impoverished European society and is

A film still from Sergei Eisenstein's movie October: Ten Days that Shook the World (1928). The scene depicts the storming of the Winter Palace during the October Revolution, 1917.

unleashing an antiglobal reaction that is feeding resentment, fascism, and war. What will happen next?

1917 Will Not Happen Again

In the age of bio-info-political power, the Winter Palace is empty. But we must revisit 1917, because the Soviet Revolution established the paradigm that presided over the political landscape of the last century: the working class organized via political parties into a social vanguard, seeking to seize central power and use it against the capitalist class. The vision that Lenin expressed in his writings (particularly in *What Is To Be Done?*) provided a military framework for class struggle. This tactical move allowed the Bolshevik party to seize power, but this was also Lenin's strategic mistake, and maybe his crime. The Leninist party gave birth to a state and an army, but Lenin's determination turned class struggle into war, thereby suffocating the processes of revolutionary autonomy in Germany, Italy, and also in the United States, where the Industrial Workers of the World were expanding their social organization.

In order to win the war unleashed by the Leninist revolution, Western capitalism fomented fascism against the working class.

We know the story of what followed: Soviet communism and Anglo-American capitalism were forced into an alliance. Then democracy defeated the Soviet Union. In the second half of the century, democracy emerged as the winning mythology, but its triumph did not last. Beginning in Chile on September 11, 1973, the neoliberal reformation started cancelling democracy, and went on to cancel democracy everywhere else (including in Greece in July 2015). The dictatorship of the abstract over concrete life emerged under the label of neoliberal governance, which thrived more or less peacefully until the end of the '90s. Since the dot-com crash of spring 2000 and the new September 11 of the first year of the new century, the global landscape has fragmented into countless conflicting identities that are now exploding into a global

Bolivian President Evo Morales presents Pope Francis with a crucifix carved into a wooden hammer and sickle, in La Paz, Bolivia, July, 2015. Photo: L'Osservatore Romano/Associated Press

civil war.

Colonialism and Internationalism

Zbigniew Brzezinski, former adviser to US president Jimmy Carter, has written important books about the global political landscape. In 1993 he published *Out of Control: Global Turmoil on the Eve of the 21st Century*, a book in which he subverted the prevailing optimism of that period and predicted the uncontrollable proliferation of identitarian conflict.

In a recent issue of *The American Interest*, Brzezinski published an essay entitled "Toward a Global Realignment." Notwithstanding the flavorless title, the article contains a dramatic consideration that may be summarized as follows: after centuries of colonial domination and violence, the former colonies are asking for a moral and economic restitution that the West is unwilling and unable to pay. The concrete historical debt we own to those we have exploited cannot be paid because we are forced to pay our abstract financial debts.

Brzezinski's style in the essay is elegant, but his words are appalling and unequivocal. He deserves to be quoted at length:

> Special attention should be focused on the non-Western world's newly politically aroused masses. Long-repressed political memories are fuelling in large part the sudden and very explosive awakening energised by Islamic extremists in the Middle East, but what is happening in the Middle East today may be just the beginning of a wider phenomenon to come out of Africa, Asia, and even among the pre-colonial peoples of the Western Hemisphere in the years ahead.

Periodic massacres of their not-so-distant ancestors by colonists and associated wealth-seekers largely from Western Europe (countries that today are, still tentatively at least, most open to multiethnic cohabitation) resulted within the past two or so centuries in the slaughter of colonised peoples on a scale comparable to Nazi World War II crimes: literally involving hundreds of thousands and even millions of victims. Political self-assertion enhanced by delayed outrage and grief is a powerful force that is now surfacing, thirsting for revenge, not just in the Muslim Middle East but also very likely beyond.

In the sixteenth century, due largely to disease brought by Spanish explorers, the population of the native Aztec Empire in present-day Mexico declined from 25 million to approximately one million. Similarly, in North America, an estimated 90 percent of the native population died within the first five years of contact with European settlers, due primarily to

diseases. In the 19th century, various wars and forced resettlements killed an additional 100,000. In India from 1857–1867, the British are suspected of killing up to one million civilians in reprisals stemming from the Indian Rebellion of 1857. The British East India Company's use of Indian agriculture to grow opium then essentially forced on China resulted in the premature deaths of millions, not including the directly inflicted Chinese casualties of the First and Second Opium Wars. In the Congo, which was the personal holding of Belgian King Leopold II, 10–15 million people were killed between 1890 and 1910. In Vietnam, recent estimates suggest that between one and three million civilians were killed from 1955 to 1975.

As to the Muslim world in Russia's Caucasus, from 1864 and 1867, 90 percent of the local Circassian population was forcibly relocated and between 300,000 and 1.5 million either starved to death or were killed. Between 1916 and 1918, tens of thousands of Muslims were killed when 300,000 Turkic Muslims were forced by Russian authorities through the mountains of Central Asia and into China. In Indonesia, between 1835 and 1840, the Dutch occupiers killed an estimated 300,000 civilians. In Algeria, following a 15-year civil war from 1830–1845, French brutality, famine, and disease killed 1.5 million Algerians, nearly half the population. In neighboring Libya, the Italians forced Cyrenaicans into concentration camps, where an estimated 80,000 to 500,000 died between 1927 and 1934.

More recently, in Afghanistan between 1979 and 1989 the Soviet Union is estimated to have killed around one million civilians; two decades later, the United States has killed 26,000 civilians during its 15-year war in Afghanistan. In Iraq, 165,000 civilians have been killed by the United States and its allies in the past 13 years. (The disparity between the reported number of deaths inflicted by European colonisers compared with the United States and its allies in Iraq and Afghanistan may be due in part to the technological advances that have resulted in the more productive use of force and in part as well to a shift in the world's normative climate.) Just as shocking as the scale of these atrocities is how quickly the West forgot about them.[1]

I agree with Brzezinski's diagnosis, but he forgets to say that in the twentieth century, internationalism emerged as a way to avert the kind of global conflict he describes. Only the workers' internationalist sentiment could avoid a planetary bloodbath. But communism has been defeated, and the internationalist way has dissolved. We now face a war of all against all for the sake of nothing.

Depressed Subjectivity

After the dissolution of communism, the mythology of boundless competition and profit gained the upper hand. But after thirty years, this mythology has gone totally bankrupt. Western subjectivity is angrily depressed, and Jonathan Franzen explains why:

> People came to this country for either money or freedom. If you don't have money, you cling to your freedoms all the more angrily. Even if smoking kills you, even if you can't afford to feed your kids, even if your kids are getting shot down by maniacs with assault rifles. You may be poor, but the one thing nobody can take away from you is the freedom to fuck up your life whatever way you want to. That's what Bill Clinton figured out—that we can't win elections by running against personal liberties. Especially not against guns, actually.[2]

The promise of economic success has been achieved by only a small part of society. For the losers, it has resulted in precariousness, neuro-exploitation, a diminishing salary, and more work. But the losers are reclaiming their personal freedoms, and in the US this means first and foremost the freedom to keep and bear arms.

With the dissolving of the internationalist vision, everybody now belongs to a clan—ethnic or virtual—and everybody is preparing to protect themselves against the coming invasion. After the abandonment of the universalist horizon of enlightened modernity, conflicting subjectivities are now kept together by a faith in belonging.

Program

Since mental activity is captured by the economy, and the bulk of contemporary work is semiotic, reflection is absorbed and assimilated and reduced to work. In the past, industrial workers were not directly mentally engaged in their tasks. Contemporary semio-workers, however, are obliged to engage their mental faculties in the automated process of production.

Only a break in the submission of cognitarian consciousness to the paradigm of competition can now open a process leading to the autonomous self-organization of cognitive labor. The emancipation of knowledge-force represents the only chance to defeat the neuro-totalitarian system in the making.

The task of the future is to reinvent the process of subjectivation. This reinvention must start from the spreading conditions of mental suffering, and from the

Participants in the second-largest furry convention in the U.S. wait outside the Hyatt Regency hotel in Rosemont, Illinois, after a criminal release of a toxic gas disrupts the convention and forces participants to evacuate the building, December, 2014.

discovery of a new level of political action. The concept of a program has long been at the core of political action. In the last century the word "program" referred to an organic ensemble of projects that politics enforced on the social body. Now we should think of "program" in terms of social software: an algorithm based on social needs and aimed at social welfare, which should oppose the financial algorithm prevailing today. Only an algorithm for emancipation can replace the present algorithm for financial exploitation.

Programming (in the sense of software for the production process) is the activity particular to cognitive workers. The autonomy of programming practices is the political project that we have to pursue. But we know that the autonomy of practices presupposes the autonomy of the subject.

In the global Silicon Valley, millions of cognitive workers are disseminated worldwide: this is the subjectivity that can subvert financial dictatorship.

We must view the global Silicon Valley in the same way that Lenin viewed the Putilov factory in 1917, and in the same way that the rebels of Italian autonomia viewed the Mirafiori Fiat plant in '70s: as the core of the process of production, the place where the maximal level of exploitation is exerted and where the highest transformative potential can be unleashed.

While politics is impotent and nation-states cannot govern the flows of semio-finance, the global Silicon Valley has replaced the governments of the past. However, the global Silicon Valley is not a place without conflict: in this deterritorialized factory, millions of cognitive workers can develop a new form of consciousness and a new social dynamic based on the reduction of labor time, the uncoupling of income from work, and the full implementation of technology and automation.

The challenge is to cultivate this consciousness among cognitive workers: from their mental suffering, an ethical awakening can arise. And in the ethical awakening of millions of engineers, artists, and scientists lies the only possibility of averting a frightening regression, whose contours we glimpse already.

X

Franco Berardi, aka “Bifo,” founder of the famous Radio Alice in Bologna and an important figure in the Italian Autonomia movement, is a writer, media theorist, and social activist.

1
Zbigniew Brzezinski, “Toward a Global Realignment,” *The American Interest* , vol. 11, no. 6 (July–August 2016) http://www.the-american-interest.com/back-issue-toc/?i=6025 .

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Geert Lovink

Digital Objects and Metadata Schemes

Yuk Hui has dared to pull philosophy into the twenty-first century by asking what a digital object is. Originally from Hong Kong, he has been roaming Europe since 2006. He first did his PhD in London at Goldsmiths College, then relocated to Paris and worked at Bernard Stiegler's Institute of Research and Innovation before moving, inevitably, to Berlin, where he is a postdoc at Leuphana University (Lüneburg). His first book, On the Existence of Digital Objects *, arranges a dialogue between the technophobic metaphysics of Martin Heidegger and the French technology thinker Gilbert Simondon (author of the neglected 1958 classic* On the Mode of Existence of Technical Objects *). In his debut, Yuk Hui elegantly plays with the double meaning of the word "ontologies": on the one hand, the eternal level of the question of Being* [1] *; on the other, the technical meaning of the word used by computer science to describe the hierarchies inside representations of knowledge such as metadata.* [2] *Ontology in the context of the internet is often associated with the inventor of the World Wide Web, Tim Berners-Lee, and his term "semantic web," a set of standards for data formats and exchange protocols. One way to describe* On the Existence of Digital Objects *is to say that it gives the touching yet superior engineering mindset of Berners-Lee a solid continental European foundation. Programmers do not just hang out on Slashdot, 4Chan, and Reddit; they also read Husserl. Indeed, some hyper humans might … My question is why the geek establishment didn't foresee the rise of platform capitalism, with monopolies such as Google and Facebook. Information science's approach to ontology has proven naive, if not shortsighted. The internet as a public realm that the engineering class takes for granted has all but disappeared, leaving no space to implement experimentation on the fundamental (indeed ontological) level. This raises the question of whether ontological adventures such as this one can be successful without a political angle.*

According to Yuk Hui, "The idea of the philosopher as a figure who stands outside as mere critic and defends the purity of thought has been washed away in the flux of technological progress." The nature of technics needs to be taken into account when talking about being. That's an ambitious starting point. However, the real existing social media dominance puts on the table the question of what role philosophical investigations (such as Hui's) can play. Should research become more technical (and necessarily more traditional in order to be accepted)? Or should it go against the grain and refuse to build foundations in the service of an insular engineering class that is in dire need of a Žižek-style political provocation? Another approach could be to compare Hui's surprisingly Deleuze-free style with American programmer-theorists such as Alex Galloway and Wendy Chun, who have never dug as deep into classic philosophy in search of the foundations of our digital existence. Who's ready to read XML syntax alongside Schelling and turn knowledge of Python and C into action, thereby changing the language of philosophy

A tongue-in-cheek prototype of a Chinese computer keyboard, the first to feature one key per character instead of the multiple hidden commands required to type Chinese on QWERTY and Wubi keyboards.

itself?

At times, On the Existence of Digital Objects *falls into the obligatory comparative exercise of explaining how author A is unlike author B—but then it recovers quickly, giving us a sense of things to come. What's really upsetting about the future of this digital philosophy-in-the-making is the "black box society" (Frank Pasquale), the secretive algorithms that cannot be read, let alone changed. How can philosophy become technical when it, once again, can only speculate about its object?*

Let's praise Yuk Hui for his priceless effort to practice what Friedrich Kittler always proposed, yet towards the end of his life drifted away from, escaping to Ancient Greece. Bernard Stiegler's preface to Hui's book is equally appreciative. Next stop for Yuk Hui is a similarly ambitious study on the nature of technology in China, which he has just finished. Let's now get to the subject: the digital objects that surround us, and steer us, in such virtual, invisible, and intimate ways.

Geert Lovink: Can you sketch the long-term implications of your approach for philosophy at large and how it is taught? Where are we in terms of the debates and experiments to integrate technics into the philosophy curriculum? Networks and philosophy have yet to encounter one another. How do you want to stage this? Some say that the "encounter" is a Christian notion to start with.

Yuk Hui: Like Bernard Stiegler, I am trying to reread philosophy according to the question of technics, not only within European philosophy but also Chinese philosophy—for the latter I am collaborating with some Chinese scholars, for example Professor Gao Shiming from the China Academy of Art. Stiegler is a very good example of this since he bases his reading of the history of philosophy on what he calls the "tertiary retention," which is artificial memory. Tertiary retention is a supplement to what Edmund Husserl calls "primary retention" (impression) and "secondary retention" (recollection). Stiegler develops his reading in a systematic and rigorous way. However, we still need to do an enormous amount of work to take this further, and necessarily with a "collective" if not a school (and indeed Bernard has a

philosophy school in Epineuil-le-Fleuriel), which will firstly have to deeply engage with philosophical texts and the philosophical tradition instead of mere intuition, which is always necessary but not sufficient; secondly, it will have to closely engage with technological development, and in this regard it is necessary to work with engineers; and thirdly, it will have to take the concept of technics beyond Western discourse, which seems to me a very urgent task in the Anthropocene.

You said that networks and philosophy have yet to encounter one another. I would say that such encounters are immanent. We can always see the question of networks in different thinkers, implicitly or explicitly. For example, it's clearly evident in Saint Simon, Marx, Heidegger, Simondon, Deleuze, etc., not to mention in more contemporary philosophers; however, we need to *retrieve* and *thematize* these thinkers—"in the Christian sense," as you said, like the encounters of Christ in the Gospels—in order to respond to the problems of our epoch. This is exactly the point I have made before.

GL: What went wrong with the corporate discourse around Big Data? What's so boring and suspicious about it? And why haven't the "digital humanities" risen up against this monstrosity? Would you be in favor of data being discredited altogether? Or would you rather say: another data is possible? Recently, a "data prevention manifesto" was posted on the nettime list. It argued against protection and the "privacy" paradigm. We would be much better off, it said, preventing the production of data in the first place. Would you say that data has already crushed the reputation of Theory as we know it in the arts and humanities? What do you say to people who accuse you of promoting the Big Enemy of critical thinking?

YH: For me the main stake of Big Data, together with algorithms, is prediction. It is another form of the determination of time, which is probably not the same form of temporizing the past, the present, and the future that we can find in Bergson, Heidegger, Lyotard, Deleuze, etc. This means that we must discover in Big Data a new and powerful synthesis of time, and figure out how to deal with it. This new synthesis of time is what I call "tertiary protention," which is intended to supplement Stiegler's concept of tertiary retention. As we have discussed before, for Husserl there is primary and secondary retention, as well as primary and secondary protention (anticipation). In Stiegler's theory, tertiary retention is the support for other forms of retention and protention; however, we must add that protention cannot be reduced to retention. This is very explicit in Husserl's later writings on time-consciousness, e.g., the so-called Bernau manuscript (1917–18). Of course, there is ambiguity—for example, debt is an example of tertiary protention as well as tertiary retention, since it anticipates that which we will have to return, and it is recorded as traces. Tertiary protention is amplified due to the increasing ability of machines to predict and to anticipate. We might say that as long as we become part of Big Data, we are actually constantly in debt to certain unknowns.

We know the story of Edward Bernays and we know about the psychology of marketing, which since the twentieth century has been based on a mechanism geared toward the manipulation of psychopower. Now, however, the mechanism is not just concerned with psychopower; rather, personalization and prediction have become even more effective and direct. The predictions of Big Data give us an "average" experience, since Big Data is based on the mean. However, it is not average in the sense that everyone is the same; rather, Big Data shows variations around the mean, which give the impression that everyone is different. These variations are what Deleuze would call "the particular," meaning that they can be reduced to a mean, to an average. They might also be described as the "differences" that sociologists Scott Lash and Celia Lury pointed out in their book *Global Culture Industry*. However, these differences are *reducible*.

Therefore, I would not say that Big Data is boring, but rather that it is truly suspicious, and we will have to transform this practice of Big Data. This is also related to your question of why the digital humanities haven't risen up against this monstrosity. Many digital humanities projects are part of this paradigm. When you visualize the co-relations between hundreds of thousands of images, you are employing the same logic as the Big Data industry (albeit harmlessly) and you are exhibiting its aesthetics. This kind of digital humanities still has a place for now, but I don't believe it can continue much longer, since we are reaching the end of a transitional stage. Data is by no means our "Big Enemy." We should be aware of the history of data, which has been a subject in the humanities for a long time without being thematized. It is now time to enter a new stage by taking the question of data and the organization of data further. It seems to me that this has to be the task of the future "digital humanities."

GL: You have said that "the digital is the capacity to process data." Can we dig into that? This "dynamic" approach presumes that there is also a static view, of zeros and ones, in which the digital merely *is*. Is it an intolerable thought that data can just exist, without any context—data as such?

YH: There are not only two views, static and dynamic. There are different orders of magnitude, and each of these orders of magnitude can be seen as a reality in itself. The methodology of *On the Existence of Digital Objects* incorporates such an understanding of orders of magnitude, which it is often used in epistemology. Therefore 0 and 1 is one order of magnitude, and data another. If we regard 0 and 1 as the only order of magnitude, we will be easily trapped in a metaphysical impasse. The philosopher Edward Fredkin has proposed what he calls a "digital ontology," or "digital physics," since he takes 0 and 1 as the foundation of being, like Thales's

water, Heraclitus's fire, or Anaximander's *apeiron*.

However, when we look at things from a phenomenological point of view, this digital metaphysics doesn't do much except confirm Heidegger's critique of technology: its essence is no longer technological but enframing (*Gestell*), and being is treated as a calculable standing reserve (*Bestand*). This is why I have proposed that we focus on the question of data as the main question of the digital. I take this insight also partly from Jacques Ellul. In fact, already in the 1970s, in his book *Le système technicien*[3]—a work that extended Simondon's analysis of technical objects—Ellul observed that the totalization of systems was possible only because of the computer's ability to process data.

You have asked, "Can data just exist, without any context"? I think the answer is yes, even without having to follow Quentin Meillassoux's critique of correlationism. Firstly, we need to understand the history of the concept of data. Data is what is given, as the etymology of the Latin word *datum* suggests. At the same time, it is sense data, which is also given—Husserl calls it *das Gegebene*. The French word for data, *donnée*, which is also the past participle of the verb "to give" (*donner*), retains this sense. We can say that in empiricist and transcendental philosophy, there are different ways of organizing data. For Hume, it is based on the rules of association (contiguity, resemblance, causality), and for Kant it is based on certain *a priori* structures, including intuition and the understanding.

The use of the word "data" to designate computational information is only employed towards the end of the first half of the twentieth century. Essentially, this not only gives a new meaning to the term "data," it also implies a necessity to rethink its organization. Hence the reason for this book. However, whether what is given is conceivable or not is another debate. When Heidegger talks about Being as *es gibt*, the word *geben* is emphasized as sending (*schicken*), as *Geschenk*, and what is given presents itself and hides at the same time, as Heraclitus says in his fragments. We might say that there is *Datum an sich*, like Kant's *Ding an sich*, but it doesn't necessarily mean that data is a black box or that it withdraws, as some speculative realists have said. For Heidegger, only through hiding is revealing possible. And even if we say that data belongs to the noumenal world, most Chinese philosophers would disagree with Kant that humans don't have intellectual intuition and cannot access the noumenal. This is why I wanted to turn this dead-end question of "withdrawal" and *Ding an sich* into a question of relations.

GL: In the past, I learned to make a distinction between passive and active digital objects. There were executive files and static files such as documents or database entries. Does it make sense to make a distinction between programs and data? There is also a sociological dimension here: programs are written by geeks, whereas data is produced by clueless, ordinary users. These days, people talk about algorithms and bots. Both of them manipulate data in their own way.

YH: A long time ago, when we played games that came on floppy disks, it was necessary to use an .exe file to execute a .dat file. I guess this is what you mean by active and passive. This is still the case in some computational environments. The web, however, is a different environment, since it is supposed to be running all the time and is programmed in most cases with scripting languages. In general, in the past fifty years the mark-up languages have further developed and evolved—for example, from GML to SGML, from HTML1 to HTML5, from XHTML 1.0 to XHTML 2.0, and now web ontologies as well as formal ontologies. The use of mark-up languages like GML to format data started with IBM in the 1960s, and then in the 1980s there was a lot of work on knowledge representation (KR).[4] When we examine these histories, we see that the line between a data object and a program started to blur: not only do these objects carry constraints and functions, they also effectively allow communication between different platforms and applications. Programs and platforms can only communicate when the "ontologies" or "categorizations" are shared. They are becoming more and more "active" in the sense that you just spoke of.

GL: You write that the phenomenological tradition failed to comprehend technical and digital objects. At the same time, it is undisputed that Martin Heidegger is one of the most influential technology philosophers of the twentieth century. How do these two things go together?

YH: Let me be precise about this critique of phenomenology. I hold that the new definition of data seems to have problematized phenomenological investigations, which give an ambiguous role to technical objects in the construction of experiences. It is true that phenomenology has its own history dealing with technical objects in the larger sense of the term. For example, the early Husserl prioritizes expression (*Ausdruck*) over indication or sign (*Anzeichen*), since the latter doesn't express anything—it is passive, like Hume's association of ideas, while the former always demands an active sense explication. The late Husserl developed a different insight, where he addresses cultural objects, and the lifeworld (*Lebenswelt*) was primary in his investigation. Heidegger's analysis of the ready-to-hand—which for me is actually a reversal of Husserl's distinction between expression and indication—is very important to the understanding of technical objects, and that is why I offer it as a supplement to what Simondon calls the "concretization" of technical objects. I think that Simondon was aware of that, since he made Heidegger his ally in Part III of *Du mode d'existence des objets techniques*.

When I say that the phenomenological tradition is not

The first Chinese computer capable of running one million calculations per second is inaugurated in 1973.

sufficient to deal with digital objects, I mean first that the role of the technical object is ambiguous in these investigations, and therefore we must retrieve it through a rereading of Husserl and Heidegger—and here we must thank Jacques Derrida and Bernard Stiegler for their pioneering work (and we must also pay attention to the differences in their readings). Second, there is a reluctance to investigate the constitution of these objects. Husserl left what constitutes so called "pre-predicative experience" largely unexamined, surprisingly enough, considering that Husserl's slogan was "back to things themselves."

Phenomenology concerns the question of experience, which is how the subject constitutes itself through intentionality (whether via genesis or embodiment) and how objects are constituted as phenomena in the immanence of consciousness through intentional acts. To be more precise, there is a polar relation between the subject and the object, but what constitutes the object pole is rather limited, or maybe even only phenomenal. For example, phenomenology does not look into the schemes inside a technical object, and for this reason Simondon says that a phenomenological investigation of technical objects is dangerous. The investigation of digital objects is an attempt to rework the object pole and redefine its relation to the subject—that is to say, to experience. We must say that compared to Husserl, Heidegger paid much more attention to objects as well as to the constitution of objects. However, he did so in a different direction. Heidegger wanted to show that the constitution of the object is ontotheological, a tradition that started with Plato and Aristotle—though it is more complicated with the latter, since the early Heidegger's lectures on Aristotle praised him for being closer to the Pre-Socratics than to Plato on the question of Being. A fiercer critique from Heidegger arrived later, for example in his four volumes on Nietzsche, in which Aristotle is described almost as a reactionary against Plato.

GL: From the very beginning data has had its own metadata. Files have names or a unique string of numbers. They go together. This is also what you say about digital objects: the "ontologies" are not separate from the actual data.

YH: Indeed, ontologies can be simply described as metadata schemes, which define and hence give meaning

to data. Beware: the term "ontology" here is different from how it is randomly used in the humanities today. I describe this evolution of metadata schemes as a genesis of digital objects, and we can see that with the ontologies of the semantic web, descriptions of data are more refined, and the objectness of these entities becomes very clear. I remember already in 2010, during a conference on the semantic web, an engineer said that we were no longer dealing with mere data, but things, in the sense that data had become things. And if we pay attention to what this means, we see that it is not simply about how to do categorization—though categorization remains a crucial question and practice. It is also that categorization becomes productive. It produces objects in their own right, like Kant's concepts, and these objects are both real and material. In this sense we can talk about the *onto* -genesis of digital objects.

GL: With Simondon, we could say that our efforts in media theory, electronic arts, tactical media, digital design, and net criticism can be described as a movement to reinscribe technics in culture. In most cases, however, they drift apart—not the least in philosophy itself. In today's philosophy as (media) spectacle, we witness the authentic writer in the live act of deep thinking. Technology might spoil the party. Your genesis of digital objects might not be in high demand. Are you aware of that tension?

YH: I am not sure that what you have described can be called a movement to reinscribe technics in culture in Simondon's sense, though I must admit that there is much excellent work that I appreciate a lot. According to Simondon, we need to overcome the opposition between culture and technics. This is because on the one hand, technology has been seen as a source of alienation, as what is responsible for the decline of culture; on the other hand, culture denigrates technics as something inferior in the social hierarchy. For example, robots are often seen as slaves—technical objects are only objects of consumption. For this reason Simondon, at the beginning of *Du mode d'existence des objets techniques*, says that his task is to show that "there is no such thing as a robot … a robot is no more a machine than a statue is a living being"; a robot "is merely a product of the imagination, of man's fictive powers, a product of the art of illusion." That is to say, we need a turn: it is not simply about studying technology, but rather turning technology into a support for culture. I've seen many researchers working on topics such as the sociality of Facebook or Twitter, but I've rarely seen any critical stance on this. As a result, the research becomes an added value to the industry—which also claims that it reinscribes technics in culture, but this is really just the culture industry. In philosophy, decades ago, we saw the tension between ontology and epistemology expressed in the legendary Davos philosophical debate between Heidegger and Ernst Cassirer in 1929. The former read Kant according to his fundamental ontology, while the latter rejected this reading and instead proposed an epistemological one. It is clear today that there is a fundamental tension between ontology and technics. In fact, this was already very clear in Heidegger's fundamental ontology and in his analysis of modern technology, which for him was a consequence of Western ontotheology. Stiegler's three-volume *Technics and Time* is important because it demonstrates this tension and suggests another framework for thinking this tension as not an opposition. However, there is still much work to be done to make this question more visible and to reflect on it in different domains.

GL: Relational technology plays an important role in your book. We could consider it the basis of all social media. Would it make sense to further develop a philosophy of the relational model?

YH: Yes, indeed, that is the principle question of my book. And for myself, the question of being is the question of relation. Over the years I have tried to work this out in a rereading of Heidegger, which I left out of the book so as not to obscure its object or message. We have seen that in recent years, some theorists have proposed certain relational models, but many of them do not specify what a relation is. I am not sure if one has to stroll through Whitehead's *Process and Reality* in order to show that an app is relational. In my book, I try to answer the question: What is a relation? And what does it mean when we think of being in terms of relations, especially in the digital condition? The term "relation" has been used in semiosis and perception, but semiosis and perception don't exhaust the question of relation.

In medieval philosophy, we have *relationes secundum esse* and *relationes secundum dici*, one according to being and the other according to speech. In my book I didn't follow this vocabulary of medieval philosophy, since I wanted to move away from substance and theology, so I redescribed these relations as "existential relations" and "discursive relations." I wanted to describe a dynamic model in which, firstly, both relations are in reciprocal relation, and secondly, technology can be seen as the process of the discovery (which is mostly the task of science) and materialization of discursive relations (this is the question of *logos*). As you can see in chapter three of the book, entitled "The Space of Networks," I wanted to retrieve the concept of relation from Ancient philosophy, and then elaborate on the materialization of discursive relations; and in chapter four, "The Time of Technical Systems," I reinscribe it in what I call a technical system, in which the discursive relations become inter-objective relations, and existential relations manifest themselves as temporalities. This is the general model that I propose for the analysis of technical systems, and I have used it in multiple practical projects. However, I must admit that it is impossible to exhaust the question of relation, and I will continue elaborating on it in future works.

GL: As an outsider to the main international standards

organization for the World Wide Web, the W3C (World Wide Web Consortium), I have witnessed a move away from the semantic web towards a much more political aim of "re-decentralizing" the web, particularly in the post-Snowden period. Tim Berners-Lee was the original inventor of the web, back in 1991. His proposal for a new way to organize knowledge on the web, outlined in his 2001 article "The Semantic Web," failed because of its inability to understand language (as Bernard Stiegler and others claimed). My interpretation would be that the naive multi-stakeholder approach got stuck in the monopolistic power politics of the stacks—Google, Facebook, Apple, and Microsoft—which demonstrated that they were uninterested in the formalistic, scientific rearrangement of protocols. In the end, the scientists were pushed aside.

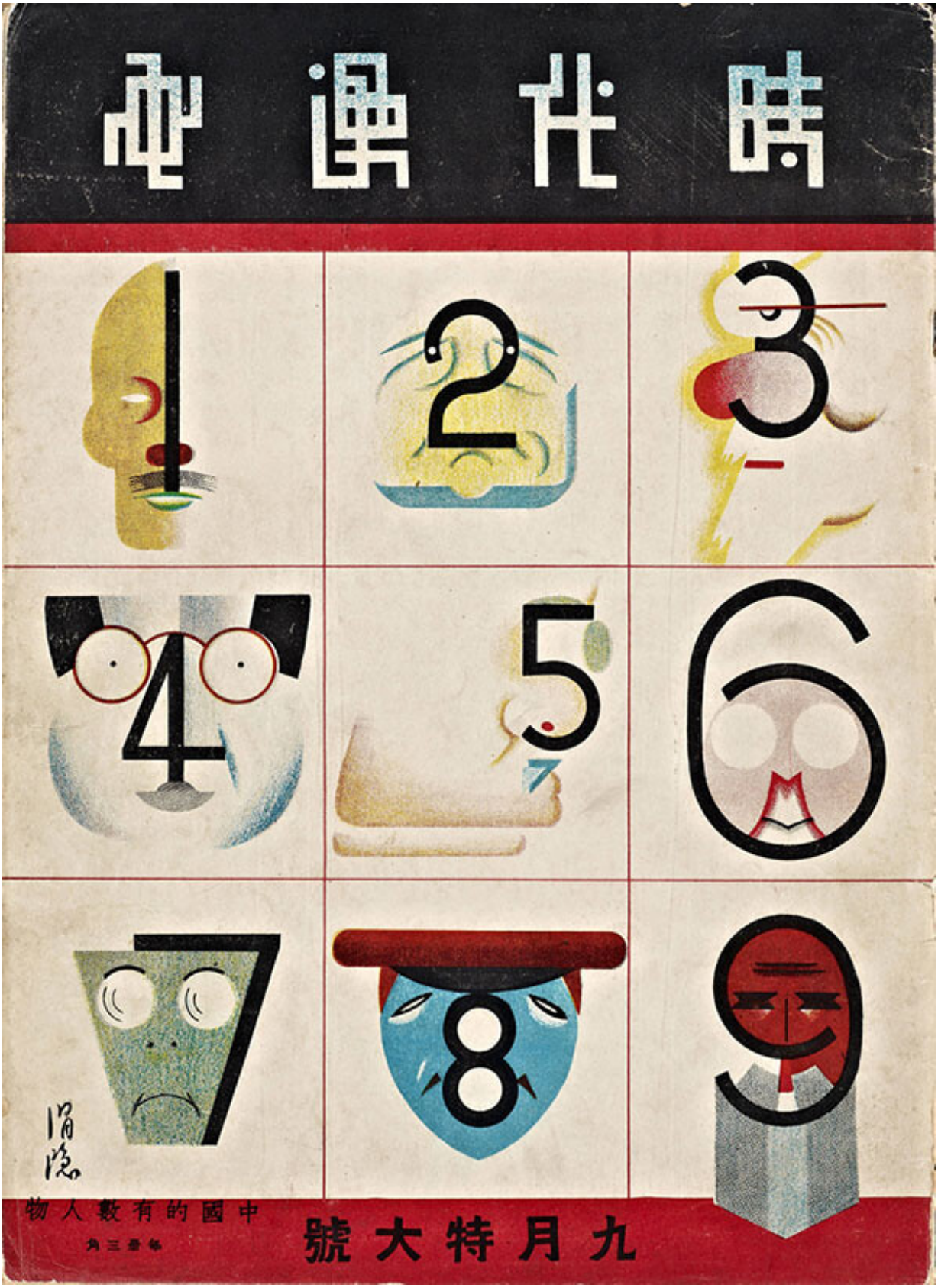
YH: I was very interested in the semantic web, both its logical questions and philosophical implications. In 2010, along with Harry Halpin and Alexandre Monnin, we launched the program "Philosophy of the Web" in Paris, which consisted of various events. I still think the semantic web is a very important project in the history of the web. The semantic web was intended to be a "world-building" project, and this is the reason Tim Berners-Lee called for "philosophical engineers," who would not only reflect on the world but build the world—an echo of Marx's thesis on Feuerbach. The semantic web aims for a world of automation. However, a world is more than automation; it also has politics, which the semantic web doesn't take into account. I don't think this is because the semantic web doesn't understand language—and we have to admit that machines don't deal with language in the way we do. This is why I suggest that we surrender the opposition between syntax and semantics and instead take up the concept of relation.

Brian Cantwell Smith, in his early and very important work *On the Origin of Objects*, has a very nice argument against the claim that machines only have syntax and no semantics, since such a distinction is far too anthropocentric. Contrary to what you have said, I am rather sure that Google, Facebook, Apple, and Microsoft are all interested in "the formalistic, scientific rearrangement of protocols"; however, they all want their own protocols, and so they are reluctant to all use the same standards. We have to recognize that there is an institutional politics between the W3C and its business members. I think someone who looked more deeply into the history of the W3C would have better insight on this. It is true that since the Snowdon affair, the W3C has launched the Magna Carta project and the campaign "Web We Want." However, since its launch it doesn't appear to me that there has been much progress.

The other reason for the "failure" that we have described—and Stiegler has been claiming this for years—is that the semantic web did not allow for a "social web," since its ultimate aim was the automation and standardization of data schemes. This is a different issue than the "cyber-libertarian" project of Julian Assange. Rather, it is a question of social organization and the organization of the social. To address this question of automation, in my book I attempted to compare Husserl's intentional logic with extensional logic in order to show that we should reintroduce the question of experience into formal logic. This stands out as a rather strange chapter in the book, since it proposes a reading of Husserl that is closer to Deleuze and Simondon. This requires a long detour through Frege, Hilbert, Kripke, and Putnam. In 2012, I worked with Stiegler and Harry Halpin to reconceptualize the concept of the social by departing from Simondon's notion of collective individuation in order to develop an alternative to Facebook. Just as Uber is the biggest taxi company without taxis, social networks are the biggest communities without the social. The semantic web only wants to provide an industrial standard so that these industrial players will use it to facilitate the development of the web, to avoid "walled gardens," as some have said. But advocates of the semantic web have nothing to say about the industry itself. *This* is the stake of the semantic web, and not its failure to understand language.

GL: Let's end with your upcoming book on the status of technology in China. Can we see this as a follow-up or logical extension of *On the Existence of Digital Objects*? Has your decade in Europe made it easier to reflect on China? What do you make of people who travel to Shenzhen to do ethnography there? Can philosophy be the king or queen of the sciences and in this way beat the social sciences?

YH: Indeed, the new book is intended to be a second work on the concept of relation that we discussed earlier. In *On the Existence of Digital Objects*, I deal with formal relations and objects. In *The Question Concerning Technology in China: An Essay in Cosmotechnics* (Urbanomic 2016), I deal with the relation between the cosmos and the moral. This book on China is an attempt to elucidate the differences between the way the concept of technics is understood in Chinese philosophy and the way it is understood in Ancient European philosophy. And as the title suggests, the book is an attempt to recontextualize and problematize Heidegger's famous essay "Die Frage nach der Technik," in order to revive the concept of a technics of world history, which I call "cosmotechnics." Picking up what François Jullien says, we can know ourselves by knowing others. His work on Chinese thought allows him to better understand European thought. I profited from years of living and studying in Britain, France, and Germany, reflecting on different systems of thought. A few years ago you joked that I was actually doing ethnography in Europe. With this book, I want to show that there has been a different concept of technics in China. It is neither the Greek *technē*, nor "technology" in the sense that emerged in European modernity. This difference is not obvious



The cover of issue no. 9 of the Shanghai humor magazine Modern Sketch, from the 1930s. The cover reads, “China’s Characters Who Count,” and the illustrations depict China's top personalities, including Chiang Kai-shek as number 1.

among researchers in China, and it has never been clearly articulated; indeed, this was very embarrassing! I once read an article from a well-known Chinese philosopher of technology who, when addressing the Chinese public, claimed that Prometheus was the origin of all technics (including Chinese technics). That is a complete disorientation, in the double sense of the word. Maybe the Greeks and the Chinese all come from Prometheus, but this is not easy to prove …

I am probably not the best person to comment on the debate between philosophy and the social sciences. I wouldn't say that there is a king or queen of disciplines. However, we have to acknowledge that in philosophy there is a particular form of questioning and a strong attention to histories of thought and to the precision of concepts. This way of questioning allows us to problematize a lot of dubious definitions that are often taken for granted. I am also interested in the social sciences, and my first degree was in computer engineering with a focus on AI, and I continue to work on practical projects. Any insistence on the superiority of a discipline is in most cases only self-indulgence. Early this year in Berlin I spent thirty minutes listening to Alain Badiou and Jean-Luc Nancy debate the question of whether Marx was a philosopher. I wish I could get those thirty minutes back. I don't see what more we could get out of Marx if we renounced him as a philosopher. The rigor of a work is not solely determined by institutions or tradition. It depends on historical insights, consistent interrogations, and creativity. There is bad social science just as there is bad philosophy, not to mention bad scientific research.

Apropos of Badiou, recently he criticized *Pokémon GO* as "the corruption of corruption" and claimed that "the battle against images is a Platonic battle." It is astonishing that this came out of the mouth of a Maoist, since every French Maoist knows by heart the saying "No investigation, no right to speak." However, we must also turn the question around: How deeply must one engage with *Pokémon GO* in order to speak about *Pokémon GO*? Or more generally, how deeply must one understand technology in order to talk about technology? We easily fall into two extreme orders or two problematic philosophical attitudes: one simply renounces modern technology, since it is intrinsically bad; and the other dogmatically endorses it in order to endow it with a certain "ontological dignity." We should get out of this *Unmündigkeit*, as Kant would call it, and overcome these obstinate oppositions. What is denounced may always appear in other forms in those who denounce it.

I hope that my book on China and technics can at least remind researchers who are, in your words, "doing ethnography in Shenzhen," that in China there is a history of technics and a history of modernization. Some researchers take globalization as a given fact so they can simply study the differences between "technical facts"—in André Leroi-Gourhan's sense, meaning the specificities of the tools and the different gestures of their users—without looking into the history of technics and modernization in China, into their "form of life," as if China is no different from an African country, or as if the differences that do exist are only superficial. Ethnographers know very well that one must problematize globalization and modernization. We may want to remind ourselves that after having witnessed the disintegration of nonmodern cultures, Claude Lévi-Strauss addressed his fellow anthropologists in *Tristes Tropiques* by saying that anthropology should be renamed "entropology." However, some quasi-critical ethnographic works only nurture such modernization. While we don't expect everyone to be Joseph Needham and we don't want to operate on a simple opposition between the global and the local, but do have to recognize "ontological diversities," as has been proposed by Philippe Descola, Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, Bruno Latour, and others who are part of the so-called "ontological turn" in anthropology. This is why I believe that, besides the proposal by these anthropologists to recognize multiple *natures*, we must first of all recognize the diversity of *cosmotechnics*, without which there is no discourse of nature—diversity not only in the sense of different "technical facts" or "technical systems" (as Leroi-Gourhan and Bertrand Gille have put it) but also in the sense of different ontologies and cosmologies. And once this multiplicity is affirmed, how are we going to imagine the development of technologies and theories in the Anthropocene? This will be the next battle for all of us.

A billboard alerts drivers to the risks of playing Pokémon GO while driving.

X

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1
See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ontology .

2
See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ontology_(information_science) .

3
English translation: *The Technological System* (London: Continuum, 1980)

4
See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Knowledge_representation_and_reasoning .

Etienne Balibar

A Hyperbolic Proposition

The *Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen* of 1789 produces a truth effect that marks a rupture. It is nevertheless an intrinsically equivocal text, as is indicated by the dualities of its title and of its first line: rights of man *and* of the citizen, are born *and* remain, free *and* equal. Each of these dualities, and particularly the first, which divides the origin, harbor the possibility of antithetical readings: Is the founding notion that of *man*, or of the *citizen*? Are the rights declared those of the citizen *as man*, or those of man *as citizen*? In the interpretation sketched out here, it is the second reading that must take precedence: The stated rights are those of the citizen, the objective is the constitution of citizenship—in a radically new sense. In fact neither the idea of humanity nor its equivalence with freedom are new. Nor, as we have seen, are they incompatible with a theory of originary subjection: the Christian is essentially free *and* subject, the subject of the Prince is "franc." What is new is the sovereignty of the citizen, which entails a completely different conception (and a completely different practical determination) of freedom. But this sovereignty must be founded retroactively on a certain concept of man, or, better, in a *new* concept of man that contradicts what the term previously connoted.

Why is this foundation necessary? I do not believe it is, as is often said, because of a *symmetry* with the way the sovereignty of the Prince was founded in the idea of God, because the sovereignty of the people (or of the "nation") would need a *human foundation* in the same way that imperial or monarchical sovereignty needed a *divine foundation*, or, to put it another way, by virtue of a necessity inherent in the idea of sovereignty, which leads to putting Man in the place of God.[1] On the contrary, it is because of the dissymmetry that is introduced into the idea of sovereignty from the moment that it has devolved to the "citizens": until then, the idea of sovereignty had always been inseparable from a hierarchy, from an eminence; from this point forward the paradox of *sovereign equality*, something radically new, must be thought. What must be explained (at the same time as it is declared) is how the concept of sovereignty and equality can be noncontradictory. The reference to man, or the inscription of equality in human nature as equality "of birth," which is not at all evident and even improbable, is the means of explaining this paradox.[2] This is what I will call a hyperbolic proposition.

It is also the sudden appearance of a new problem. One paradox (the equality of birth) explains another (sovereignty as equality). The political tradition of antiquity, to which the revolutionaries never cease to refer (Rome and Sparta rather than Athens), thought civic equality to be founded on freedom and exercised in the determinate conditions of this freedom (which is a hereditary or quasi-hereditary status). It is now a matter of thinking the inverse: a freedom founded on equality, engendered by the movement of equality. Thus an unlimited or, more precisely, self-limited freedom: having no limits other than

An illustrated header adorns Jean-Jacques-Fancois le Barbier's publication of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and the Citizen (1789).

those it assigns to itself in order to respect the rule of equality, that is, to remain in conformity with its principle. In other terms, it is a matter of answering the question: *Who is the citizen?* and not the question: Who is a citizen? (or: Who are citizens?). The answer is: the citizen is a man in enjoyment of all his "natural" rights, completely realizing his individual humanity, a free man simply because he is equal to every other man. This answer (or this new question in the form of an answer) will also be stated, after the fact: *the citizen is the subject*, the citizen is always a supposed subject (legal subject, psychological subject, transcendental subject).

I will call this new development the citizen's becoming a subject (*devenir sujet*): a development that is doubtless prepared by a whole labor of definition of the juridical, moral, and intellectual individual; that goes back to the "nominalism" of the late Middle Ages, is invested in institutional and cultural practices, and reflected by philosophy, but that can find its name and its cultural position only *after* the emergence of the revolutionary citizen, for it rests upon the reversal of what was previously the *subjectus*. In the Declaration of Rights, and in all the discourses and practices that reiterate its effect, we must read both the presentation of the citizen and the marks of his becoming-a-subject. This is all the more difficult in that it is practically impossible for the citizen(s) to be presented without being determined as subject(s). But it was only by way of the citizen that universality could come to the subject. An eighteenth-century dictionary had stated: "In France, other than the king, all are citizens."[3] The revolution will say: if anyone is not a citizen, then no one is a citizen. "All distinction ceases. All are citizens, or must be, and whoever is not must be excluded."[4]

The idea of the rights of the citizen, at the very moment of his emergence, thus institutes an historical figure that is no longer the *subjectus*, and not yet the *subjectum*. But from the beginning, in the way it is formulated and put into practice, this figure exceeds its own institution. This is what I called, a moment ago, the statement of a hyperbolic proposition. Its developments can only consist of conflicts, whose stakes can be sketched out.

First of all, there exist conflicts with respect to the founding idea of equality. The absolutism of this idea emerges from the struggle against "privilege," when it appeared that the privileged person was not he who had *more* rights but he who had *less*: each privilege, for him, is substituted for a possible right, even though at the same time his privilege denies rights to the nonprivileged. In other words, it appeared that the "play" (*jeu*) of right—to speak a currently fashionable language—is not a "zero-sum" game: that is what distinguishes it from the play of power, the "balance of power." Rousseau admirably developed this difference on which the entire argumentation of the *Social Contract* is based: a supplement of rights for one is the annihilation of the rights of all; the effectivity of right has as its condition that each has exactly "as much," *neither more nor fewer* right(s), than the rest.

Two paths are open from this point. Either equality is "symbolic," which means that each individual, whatever his strengths, his power, and his property, is *reputed* to be equivalent to every individual in his capacity as citizen (and in the public acts in which citizenship is exercised). Or equality is "real," which means that citizenship will not exist unless the conditions of all individuals are equal, or at least equivalent: then, in fact, power's games will no

An illustrated header adorns a plate of the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (1793). Photo: Wikimedia commons.

longer be able to pose an obstacle to the play of right; the power proper to equality will not be destroyed by the effects of power. Whereas symbolic equality is all the better affirmed, its ideality all the better preserved and recognized as unconditional when conditions are unequal, real equality supposes a classless society, and thus works to produce it. If a proof is wanted of the fact that the antinomy "formal" and "real" democracy is thus inscribed from the very beginning in the text of 1789 it will suffice to reread Robespierre's discourse on the " *marc d'argent*" (April 1791).[5]

But this antinomy is untenable, for it has the form of an all-or-nothing (it reproduces *within* the field of citizenship the all-or-nothing of the subject and the citizen). Symbolic equality must be nothing real, but a universally applicable form. Real equality must be all or, if one prefers, every practice, every condition must be measured by it, for an exception destroys it. It can be asked—we will return to this point—whether the two mutually exclusive sides of this alternative are not equally incompatible with the constitution of a "society." In other terms, civic equality is indissociable from universality but separates it from *community*. The restitution of the latter requires either a supplement of symbolic form (to think universality as ideal Humanity, the reign of practical ends) or a supplement of substantial egalitarianism (communism, Babeuf's "order of equality"). But this supplement, whatever it may be, already belongs to the citizen's becoming a subject.

Second, there exist conflicts with respect to the citizen's activity. What radically distinguishes him from the subject of the Prince is his participation in the formation and application of the decision: the fact that he is legislator and magistrate. Here, too, Rousseau, with his concept of the "general will," irreversibly states what constitutes the rupture. The comparison with the way in which medieval politics had defined the "citizenship" of the subject, as the right of all to be well governed, is instructive.[6] From this point forward the idea of a "passive citizen" is a contradiction in terms. Nevertheless, as is well known, this idea was immediately formulated. But let us look at the details.

Does the activity of the citizen exclude the idea of *representation*? This position has been argued: whence the long series of discourses identifying active citizenship and "direct democracy," with or without reference to antiquity.[7] In reality this identification rests on a confusion.

Initially, representation is a representation *before* the Prince, before Power, and, in general, before the instance of decision-making, whatever it may be (incarnated in a living or anonymous person, itself represented by officers of the State). This is the function of the Old Regime's "deputies of the Estates," who present grievances, supplications, and remonstrances (in many respects this function of representing those who are administered to the administration has in fact again become the function of the numerous elected assemblies of the contemporary State).

The *representation of the sovereign* in its deputies, inasmuch as the sovereign is the people, is something entirely different. Not only is it active, it is the act of sovereignty *par excellence*: the choice of those who govern, the corollary of which is monitoring them. To elect representatives is to act and to make possible all political action, which draws its legitimacy from this election. Election has an "alchemy," whose other aspects we will see further on: as the primordial civic action, it *singularizes* each citizen, responsible for his vote (his choice), at the same time as it *unifies* the "moral" body of the citizens.[8] We will have to ask again, and in greater depth, to what extent this determination engages the dialectic of the citizen's becoming-a-subject: Which citizens are "representable," and under which conditions? Above all: *Who* should the citizens be in order to be able to represent themselves and to be represented? (For example: Does it matter that they be able to read and write? Is this condition sufficient? etc.). In any case we have here, again, a very different concept from the one antiquity held of citizenship, which, while it too implied an idea of *activity*, did not imply one of sovereign will. Thus the Greeks privileged the drawing of lots in the designation of magistrates as the only truly democratic method, whereas election appeared to them to be "aristocratic" by definition (Aristotle).

It is nonetheless true that the notion of a *representative activity* is problematic. This can be clearly seen in the debate over the question of the binding mandate: Is it necessary, in order for the activity of the citizens to manifest itself, that their deputies be permanently bound by their will (supposing it to be known), or is it sufficient that they be liable to recall, leaving them the responsibility to interpret the general will by their *own* activity? The dilemma could also be expressed by saying that citizenship implies a power to delegate its powers, but excludes the existence of "politicians," of "professionals," *a fortiori* of "technicians" of politics. In truth this dilemma was already present in the astonishing Hobbesian construction of representation, as the doubling of an *author* and an *actor*, which remains the basis of the modern State.

But the most profound antinomy of the citizen's activity concerns the *law*. Here again Rousseau circumscribes the problem by posing his famous definition: "As for the associates, collectively they take the name *people*, and individually they are called *Citizens* as participating in the sovereign authority and *Subjects* as submitted to the laws of the State."[9]

> It can be seen by this formulation ... that each individual, contracting, so to speak, with himself, finds himself engaged in a double relationship ... Consequently it is against the nature of the political

> body for the Sovereign to impose upon itself a law that it cannot break ... by which it can be seen that there is not nor can there be any sort of fundamental law which obliges the body of the people, not even the social contract ... Now the Sovereign, being formed only of the individuals who compose it, does not and cannot have an interest opposed to theirs; consequently the Sovereign power has no need of a guarantee toward the subjects, for it is impossible that the body wish to harm all its members ... But this is not he case for the subjects toward the sovereign, where despite the common interest, nothing would answer for their engagements if means to insure their fidelity were not found. In fact each individual can, as man, have a particular will contrary or dissimilar to the general will that he has as citizen ... He would enjoy the rights of a citizen without being willing to fulfill the duties of a subject; an injustice whose progress would cause the ruin of the political body. In order for the social pact not to become a vain formula, it tacitly includes the engagement ... that whoever refuses to obey the general will will be compelled to do so by any means available: which signifies nothing else than that he will be forced to be free.[10]

It was necessary to cite this whole passage in order that no one be mistaken: in these implacable formulas, we see the final appearance of the "subject" in the old sense, that of obedience, but metamorphosed into the *subject of the law*, the strict correlative of the citizen who *makes the law*.[11] We also see the appearance, under the name of "man," split between his general interest and his particular interest, of he who will be the new "subject," the Citizen Subject.

It is indeed a question of an antinomy. Precisely in his capacity as "citizen," the citizen is (indivisibly) *above* any law, otherwise he could not legislate, much less constitute: "There is not, nor can there be, any sort of fundamental law that obliges the body of the people, not even the social contract." In his capacity as "subject" (that is, inasmuch as the laws he formulates are imperative, to be executed universally and unconditionally, inasmuch as the pact is not a "vain formula") he is necessarily *under* the law. Rousseau (and the Jacobin tradition) resolve this antinomy by identifying, in terms of their close "relationship" (that is, in terms of a particular point of view), the two propositions: just as one citizen has neither more nor less right(s) than another, so he is neither only above, nor only under the law, but *at exactly the same level as it*. Nevertheless *he is not the law* (the *nomos empsychos*). This is not the consequence of a transcendence on the part of the law (of the fact that it would come from Elsewhere, from an Other mouth speaking atop some Mount Sinai), but a consequence of its immanence. Or yet another way: there must be an exact correspondence between the absolute activity of the citizen (legislation) and his absolute passivity (obedience to the law, with which one does not "bargain," which one does not "trick"). But it is essential that this activity and this passivity be *exactly* correlative, that they have exactly the same limits. The possibility of a metaphysics of the subject already resides in the enigma of this unity of opposites (in Kant, for example, this metaphysics of the subject will proceed from the double determination of the concept of right as freedom and as compulsion). But the necessity of an anthropology of the subject (psychological, sociological, juridical, economic ...) will be manifest from the moment that, in however small a degree, the exact correlation becomes upset in practice: when a distinction between *active citizens* and *passive citizens* emerges (a distinction with which we are still living), and with it a problem of the criteria of their distinction and of the justification of this paradox. Now this distinction is practically contemporary with the Declaration of Rights itself; it is in any case inscribed in the first of the Constitutions "based" on the Declaration of Rights. Or, quite simply, when it becomes apparent that to *govern* is not the same as to *legislate* or even to execute the laws, that is, that political sovereignty is not the mastery of the art of politics.

Finally, there exist conflicts with respect to the individual and the collective. We noted above that the institution of a society or a community on the basis of principles of equality is problematic. This is not—or at least not uniquely—due to the fact that this principle would be identical to that of the *competition* between individuals ("egotism," or a freedom limited only by the antagonism of interests). It is even less due to the fact that equality would be another name for similarity, that it would imply that individuals are indiscernible from one another and thus incompatible with one another, preyed on by mimetic rivalry. On the contrary, equality, precisely inasmuch as it is not the identification of individuals, is one of the great cultural means of legitimating differences and controlling the imaginary ambivalence of the "double." The difficulty is rather due to equality itself: In this principle (in the proposition that men, as citizens, are equal), even though there is necessarily a reference to the *fact* of society (under the name of "polity"), there is conceptually too much (or not enough) to "bind" a society. It can be see clearly here how the difficulty arises from the fact that, in the modern concept of citizenship, freedom is founded in equality and not vise versa (the "solution" of the difficulty will in part consist precisely of reversing this primacy, to make freedom into a foundation, even, metaphysically, to identify the originary with freedom).

Equality in fact cannot be limited. Once some x's ("men") are not equal, the predicate of equality can no longer be applied to anyone, for all those to whom it is supposed to be applicable are in fact "superior," "dominant," "privileged," etc. Enjoyment of the equality of rights cannot spread step by step, beginning with two individuals and gradually extending to all: it must immediately concern the

universality of individuals, let us say, tautologically, the universality of x's that it concerns. This explains the insistence of the cosmopolitan theme in egalitarian political thought, or the reciprocal implication of these two themes. It also explains the antinomy of equality and society for, even when it is not defined in "cultural," "national," or "historical" terms, a *society* is necessarily *a* society, defined by some particularity, by some exclusion, if only by a *name*. In order to speak of "all citizens," it is necessary that somebody not be a citizen of said polity.

Likewise, equality, even though it preserves differences (it does not imply that Catholics are Protestants, that blacks are whites, that women are men, or vice versa: it could even be held that without differences equality would be literally unthinkable), cannot itself be *differentiated*: differences are close by it but do not come from its application. We have already glimpsed this problem with respect to activity and passivity. It takes on its full extension once it is a question of *organizing* a society, that is of instituting functions and roles in it. Something like a "bad infinity" is implied here by the negation of the inequalities which are always still present in the principle of equality, and which form, precisely, its practical effectiveness. This is, moreover, exactly what Hegel will say.

The affirmation of this principle can be seen in 1789 in the statement that the king himself is only a citizen ("Citizen Capet"), a deputy of the sovereign people. Its development can be seen in the affirmation that the exercise of a magistrature excludes one from citizenship: "The soldier is a citizen; the officer is not and cannot be one."[12] "Ordinarily, people say: the citizen is someone who participates in honors and dignities; they are mistaken. Here he is, the citizen: he is someone who possesses no more goods than the law allows, who exercises no magistrature and is independent of the responsibility of those who govern. Whoever is a magistrate is no longer part of the people. No individual power can enter the people ... When speaking to a functionary, one should not say *citizen*; this title is above him."[13] On the contrary, it may be thought that the existence if a society always presupposes an organization, and that the latter in turn always presupposes an element of qualification or differentiation from equality and thus of "nonequality" developed *on the basis of equality itself* (which is not on that account a *principle* of inequality).[14] If we call this element "archy," we will understand that one of the logics of citizenship leads to the idea of anarchy. It was Sade who wrote, "Insurrection should be the permanent state of the republic," and the comparison with Saint Just has been made by Maurice Blanchot.[15]

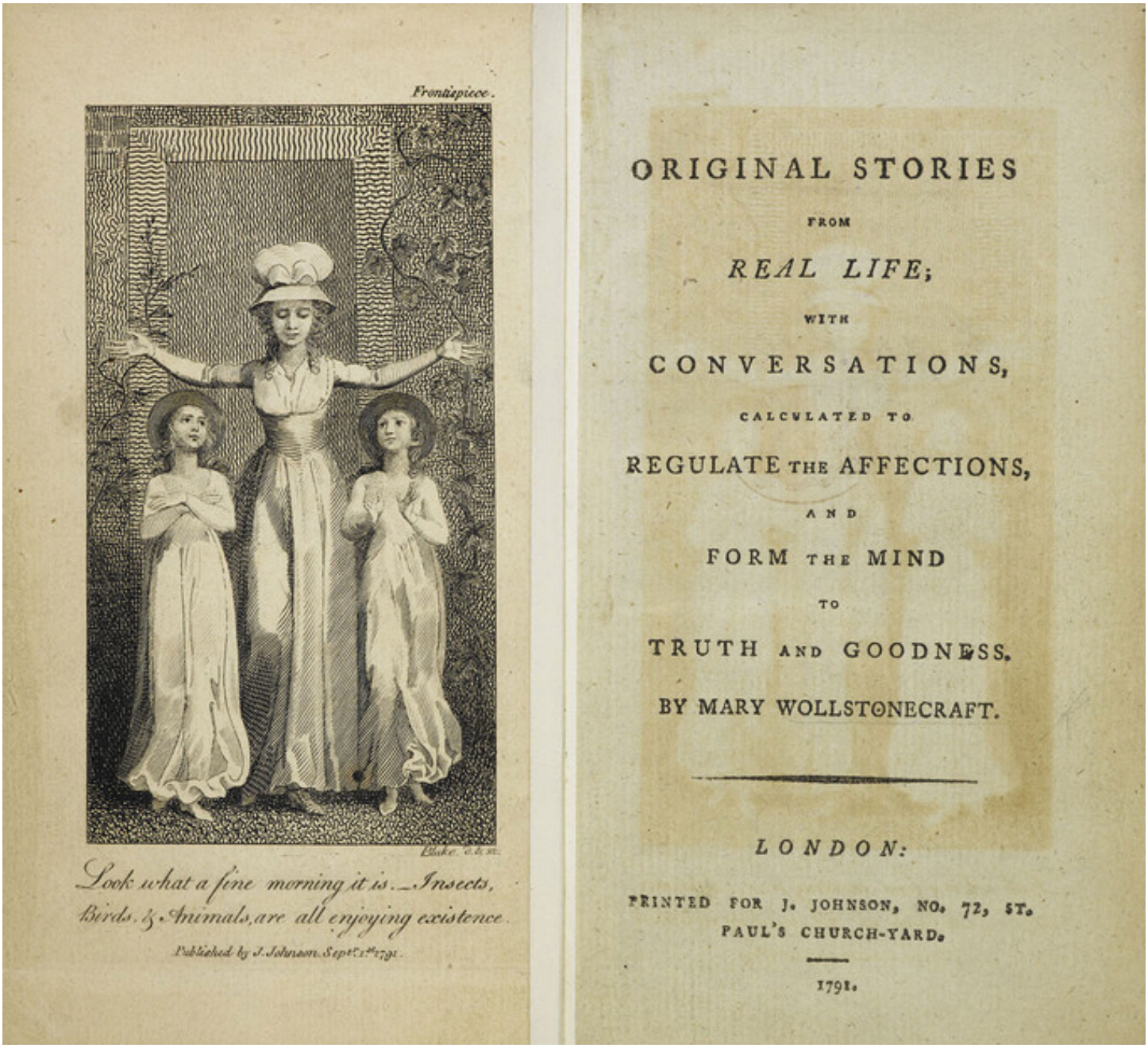
It will be said that the solution to this aporia is the idea of a contract. The contractual bond is in fact the only one that thinks itself as absolutely homogeneous with the reciprocal action of equal individuals,[16] presupposing only this equality. No other presuppositions? All the theoreticians are in agreement that some desire for sociability, some interest in bringing together the forces and in limiting freedoms by one another, or some moral ideal, indispensable "motor forces," would *also* be required. It will in fact be agreed that the *proper* form of the contract is that of a contract of *association*, and that the contract of subjection is an ideological artifact destined to divert the benefits of the contractual form to the profit of an established power. But it remains a question whether the social contract can be thought as a mechanism that "socializes" equals purely by virtue of their equality. I think that the opposite is the case: that the social contract *adds* to equality a determination that compensates for its "excess" of universality. To this end equality itself must be thought as something other than a naked principle; it must be justified, or one must confer on it that which Derrida not long ago called an *originary supplement*.

This is why all the theories of the contract include a "deduction" of equality as an indispensable preliminary, showing how it is produced or how it is destroyed and restored in a dialectic either of natural sociability and unsociability or of the animality and humanity in man (the extreme form being that of Hobbes: equality is produced by the threat of death, in which freedom is promptly annihilated). The Declaration of 1789 gives this supplement its most economical form, that of a *de jure* fact: "Men *are born and remain* ..."

From One Subjection to the Other

I think that, under these conditions, the indetermination of the figure of the citizen—referred to equality—can be understood with respect to the major alternatives of modern political and sociological thought: individual and collectivity, public sphere and private sphere. The citizen properly speaking is *neither* the individual *nor* the collective, just as he is *neither* an exclusively public being *nor* a private being. Nevertheless, these distinctions are present in the concept of the citizen. It would not be correct to say that they are ignored or denied: it should rather be said that they are suspended, that is, irreducible to fixed institutional boundaries which would pose the citizen on one side and a *noncitizen* on the other.

The citizen is unthinkable as an "isolated" individual, for it is his active participation in politics that makes him exist. But he cannot on that account be merged into a "total" collectivity. Whatever may be said about it, Rousseau's reference to a "moral and collective body composed of as many members as there are votes in the assembly,"[17] produced by the act of association that "makes a people a people,"[18] is not the *revival* but the *antithesis* of the organicist idea of the *corpus mysticum* (the theologians have never been fooled on this point).[19] The "double relationship" under which the individuals contract also



William Blakes illustration for the frontispiece of Mary Wollstonecraft's book Original Stories from Real Life (1791).

has the effect of forbidding the fusion of individuals in a whole, whether immediately or by the mediation of some "corporation." Likewise, the citizen can only be thought if there exists, at least tendentially, a distinction between public and private: he is defined as a public actor (and even as the *only* possible public actor). Nevertheless he cannot be confined to the public sphere, with a private sphere—whether the latter is like the *oikos* of antiquity, the modern family (the one that will emerge from the civil code and that which we now habitually call "the invention of private life"), or a sphere of industrial and commercial relations that are nonpolitical[20] belongs to [the capitalist] just as much as the wine that is the product of the process of fermentation taking place in his cellar."]—being held in *reserve*. If only for the reason that, in such a sphere, to become other than himself the citizen would have to enter into relationships with *noncitizens* (or with individuals considered as noncitizens: women, children, servants, employees). The citizen's "madness," as is known, is not the abolition of private life but its transparency, just as it is not the abolition of politics but its moralization.

To express this suspension of the citizen we are obliged to search in history and literature for categories that are unstable and express instability. The concept of *mass*, at a

certain moment of its elaboration, would be an example, as when Spinoza speaks of both the dissolution of the (monarchical) State and its (democratic) constitution as a "return to the mass."[21] This concept is not unrelated, it would seem, to that which in the Terror will durably inspire the thinkers of liberalism with terror.

I have presented the Declaration of Rights as a hyperbolic proposition. It is now possible to reformulate this idea: in effect, in this proposition, *the wording of the statement always exceeds the act of its enunciation* [*l'enoncé exceed toujours l'énonciation*], the import of the statement already goes beyond it (without our knowing where), as was immediately seen in the effect of inciting the liberation that it produced. In the statement of the Declaration, even though this is not at all the content of the enunciation of the subsequent rights, we can already hear the motto that, in another place and time, will become a call to action: "It is right to revolt." Let us note once more that it is equality that is at the origin of the movement of liberation.

All sorts of historical modalities are engaged here. Thus the Declaration of 1789 posits that property—immediately after freedom—is a "natural and imprescriptable right of man" (without, however, going so far as to take up the idea that property is a condition of freedom). And as early as 1791 the battle is engaged between those who conclude that property *qualifies* the constitutive equality of citizenship (in other words that "active citizens" are proprietors), and those who posit that the universality of citizenship must take precedence over the right of property, even should this result in a negation of the unconditional character of the latter. As Engels noted, the demand for the abolition of class differences is expressed in terms of civic equality, which does not signify that the latter is only a period costume, but on the contrary that it is an effective condition of the struggle against exploitation.

Likewise, the Constitutions that are "based" on the principles of 1789 immediately qualify—explicitly and implicity—the citizen as a *man* (= a male), if not as a head of household (this will come with the Napoleonic Code). Nevertheless, as early as 1791 an Olympe de Gouges can be found drawing from these same principles the *Declaration of the Rights of Woman and Citizenness* (and, the following year, with Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*), and the battle—one with a great future, though not much pleasure—over the question of whether the citizen has a sex (thus, what the sex of man as citizen is) is engaged.

Finally, the Declaration of 1789 does not speak of the color of citizens, and—even if one refuses to consider[22] this silence to be a necessary condition for the representation of the political relations of the Old Regime (subjection to the Prince and to the *seigneurs*) as "slavery," even as true slavery (that of the blacks) is preserved—it must be admitted that it corresponds to powerful interests among those who collectively declare themselves "sovereign." It is nonetheless the case that the insurrection for the *immediate* abolition of slavery (Toussaint L'Ouverture) takes place in the name of an equality of rights that, as stated, is indiscernible from that of the " *sans culottes*" and other "patriots," though the slaves, it is true, did not wait for the fall of the Bastille to revolt.[23]

Thus that which appeared to us as the indetermination of the citizen (in certain respects compatible to the fugitive moment that was glimpsed by Aristotle under the name of *archè aoristos*, but that now would be developed as a complete historical figure) also manifests itself as the opening of a *possibility*: the possibility for any *given* realization of the citizen to be placed in question and destroyed by a struggle for equality and thus for civil rights. But this possibility is not in the least a promise, much less an inevitability. Its concretization and explicitation depend entirely on an encounter between a statement and situations or movements that, from the point of view of the concept, are contingent.[24] If the citizen's becoming-a-subject takes the form of a dialectic, it is precisely because *both* the necessity of "founding" institutional definitions of the citizen and the impossibility of ignoring their contestation—the infinite contradiction within which they are caught—are crystallized in it.

There exists another way to account for the passage from the citizen to the subject (*subjectum*), coming after the passage from citizen to the subject (*subjectus*) to the citizen, or rather immediately overdetermining it. The citizen as defined by equality, absolutely active and absolutely passive (or, if one prefers, capable of autoaffection: that which Fichte will call *das Ich*), suspended between individuality and collectivity, between public and private: Is he the constitutive element of a *State*? Without a doubt, the answer is yes, but precisely insofar as the State is not, or not yet, a society. He is, as Pierre-François Moreau has convincingly argued, a *utopic* figure, which is not to say an unreal or millenarist figure projected into the future, but the elementary term of an "abstract State."[25] Historically, this abstract State possesses an entirely tangible reality: that of the progressive deployment of a political and administrative right in which individuals are treated by the state *equally*, according to the logic of situations and actions and not according to their condition or personality. It is this juridico-administrative " *epochè*" of "cultural" or "historical" differences, seeking to create its own conditions of possibility, that paradoxically becomes explicit to itself in the minutely detailed egalitarianism of the ideal cities of the classical Utopia, with their themes of closure, foreignness, and rational administration, with their negation of property. When it becomes clear that the condition of conditions for individuals to be treated equally *by* the State (which is the logic of its proper functioning: the suppression of the exception) is that they also be equally entitled to sovereignty (that is, it cannot be *done for less*, while conserving subjection), then the "legal

Pierre-Narcisse Guérin, Girl with Coiffure à la Titus, 1794. Oil on canvas. The short cut that was meant to imitate the haircut given to those about to be executed during the Terror in France.

subject" implicit in the machinery of the "individualist" State will be made concrete in the excessive person of the citizen.

But this also means—taking into account all that precedes—that the citizen can be simultaneously considered as the constitutive element of the State and as the actor of a revolution. Not only the actor of a founding revolution, a *tabula rasa* whence a State emerges, but the actor of a *permanent* revolution: precisely the revolution in which the principle of equality, once it has been made the basis or pretext of the institution of an inequality or a political "excess of power," contradicts every difference. Excess against excess, then. The actor of such a revolution is no less "utopic" than the member of the abstract State, the State of the rule of law. It would be quite instructive to conduct the same structural analysis of revolutionary utopias that Moreau made of administrative utopias. It would doubtless show not only that the themes are the same, but also that the fundamental prerequisites of the individual defined by his juridical activity is *identical* with that of the individual defined by his revolutionary activity: he is the man "without property" (*der Eigentumslos*), "without particularities" (*ohne Eigenschaften*). Rather than speak of administrative utopias and revolutionary utopias, we should really speak of antithetical readings of the same utopia narratives and of the reversibility of these narratives.

In the conclusion of his book, Moreau describes Kant's *Metaphysics of Morals* and his *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View* as the two sides of a single construction of the legal subject: on the one side, the formal deduction of his egalitarian essence; on the other, the historical description of all the "natural" characteristics (all the individual or collective "properties") that form either the condition or the obstacle to individuals identifying themselves in practice as being subjects of this type (for example, sensibility, imagination, taste, good mental health, ethnic "character," moral virtue, or that natural superiority that predisposes men to civil independence and active citizenship and women to dependence and political passivity). Such a duality corresponds fairly well to what Foucault, in *The Order of Things*, called the "empirico-transcendental doublet." Nevertheless, to understand that this subject (which the citizen will be *supposed* to be) contains the paradoxical unity of a universal sovereignty and a radical finitude, we must envisage this constitution—in all the historical complexity of the practices and symbolic forms which it brings together—from *both* the point of view of the State apparatus and that of the permanent revolution. This ambivalence is his strength, his historical ascendancy. All of Foucault's work, or at least that part of it which, by successive approximations, obstinately tries to describe the heterogeneous aspects of the great "transition" between the world of subjection and the world of right and discipline, "civil society," and State apparatus, is a materialist phenomenology of the transmutation of subjection, of the birth of the Citizen Subject. As to whether this figure, like a face of sand at the edge of the sea, is about to be effaced with the next great sea change—that is another question. Perhaps it is nothing more than Foucault's own utopia, a necessary support for the enterprise of stating that utopia's facticity.

X

Translated from the French by James Swenson. This text is the second half of the introductory essay for Étienne Balibar's Citizen Subject*, which was published last month in English by Fordham University Press. The first half appeared in* **e-flux journal** *(November 2016).*

1
See the frequently developed theme, notably following Proudhon: Rousseau and the French revolutionaries substituted the people for the king of "divine right" without touching the idea of sovereignty, or "archy."

2
In the *Cahiers de doléance* of 1789, one sees the peasants legitimize, by the fact that they are *men*, the claim to equality that they raise: to become citizens (notably by the suppression of the fiscal privileges and seigneurial rights). See Regine Robin, *La société française en 1789: Semur-en-Auxois* (Paris: Plon, 1970).

3
Pierre Richelet, *Dictionnaire de la langue française, ancienne et moderne* (Lyon, 1728), s.v. "citoyen." Cited by Pierre Rétat, "Citoyen-Sujet, Civisme," in *Handbuch politisch-sozialer Grundbegriffe in Frankreich, 1680–1820* , eds. Rolf Reichardt and Eberhard Schmitt (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1988), 9:79.

4
(Anon.), *La liberté du peuple* (Paris, 1789). Cited by Rétat, "Citoyen-Sujet, Civisme," 91.

5
Maximilien Robespierre, *Virtue and Terror* , trans. John Howe, ed. and intro. Slavoj Zižek (New York: Verso, 2007), 5–19.

6
See Rene Fedou, *L'État au Moyen Âge* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1971), 162–63.

7
See the discussion of apathy evoked by Moses I. Finley, *Democracy, Ancient and Modern* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1985).

8
See Saint-Just, "Discours sur la Constitution de la France" (April 24, 1793): "The general will is indivisible ... Representation and the law thus have a common principle." *Discours et rapports*, ed. Albert Soboul (Paris: Editions sociales, 1977), 107.

9
Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Du contrat social* , 1, 6, in *Oeuvres complètes* , eds. Bernard Gagnebin and Marcel Raymond (Paris: Gallimard, Bibliothèque de la Pléiade, 1964), 3:362.

10
Ibid., I, 7, *Oeuvres complètes*, 3:362–64.

11
During the revolution, a militant grammarian will write: "France is no longer a kingdom, because it is no longer a country in which the king is everything and the people nothing ... What is France? A new word is needed to express a new thing ... We call a country sovereignly ruled by a king a kingdom (*royaume*); I will call a country in which the law alone commands a lawdom (*loyaume*)." Urbain Domergeue, *Journal de la langue française* , August 1, 1791. Cited by Sonia Branca-Rosoff, "Le loyaume des mots," in *Lexique* 3 (1985): 47.

12
Louis-Sébastien Mercier and Jean-Louis Carra, *Annales patriotiques* , January 18, 1791. Cited by Rétat, "Citoyen-Sujet, Civisme," 97.

13
Louis-Antoine Saint-Just, *Fragments d'institutions républicaines* , in *Oeuvres complètes,* ed. Michele Duval (Paris: Editions Gérard Lebovici, 1984), 978. Cited by Rétat, "Citoyen-Sujet, Civisme," 97.

14
The Declaration of Rights of 1789, First Article, immediately following "Men are born and remain free and equal in rights," continues: "Social distinctions can only be founded on common utility." Distinctions are *social*, and whoever says "society," "social bond," says "distinctions" (and not "inequalities," which would contradict the principle). This is why freedom and equality must be predicated of man, and not of the citizen.

15
Maurice Blanchot, "Insurrection, the madness of writing," in *The Infinite Conversation* , trans. Susan Hanson (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 217–29.

16
Instead of reciprocal action, today one would say "communication" or "communicative action."

17
Du contrat social , I, 6, *Oeuvres complètes* , 3:361.

18
Ibid., I, 5, 3:359.

19
I am entirely in agreement on this point with Robert Derathé's commentary (against Vaughn) on the adjective "moral" in his notes to the Pléiade edition of Rousseau (*Oeuvres complètes*, 3:1446).

20
See Karl Marx, *Capital*, trans. Ben Fowkes (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), 1:292. "The product [of the worker's labor in his workshop

21
See Etienne Balibar, "Spinoza, l'anti-Orwell: La crainte des masses," *Les temps modernes* 470 (September 1985): 353–94.

22
As Louis Sala-Molins does in *Le C ode Noir ou le calvaire de Canaan* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1987).

23
See Yves Benot, *La révolution française et la fin des colonies* (Paris: La Découverte, 1988).

24
Let us note that this thesis is *not* Kantian: the accent is placed on the citizen and not on the ends of man; the object of the struggle is not anticipated but discovered in the wake of political action; and each given figure is not an approximation of the regulatory ideal of the citizen but an obstacle to effective equality. Nor is this thesis Hegelian: Nothing obliges a new realization of the citizen to be superior to the preceding one.

25
Pierre-François Moreau, *Le récit utopique: Droit naturel et roman de l'État* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1982).

Stephen Squibb

This Machine Builds Fascists: Nationalism as Mode of Distribution

The reappearance of fascism on the world scene requires a retheorization of nationalism. If the purpose of theory is that it allows us to see something safely, as Andrea Wilson Nightingale has argued—accompanying and guarding us like an old army general whose view of combat from distant elevated ground reveals patterns no fighting soldier could see—then the return of the past century's most dangerous phenomenon indicates a theoretical failure at the heart of our strategic planning. Our inherited concept of nationalism has made navigating the lifeworld much more dangerous and difficult than it needs to be. It is either unfinished or poorly made.

We don't know how to feel about the nation, despite much writing on the topic. Attempts to unravel "the question of the nation" without specifying the materiality that organizes it are futile exercises—as futile as attempts to unravel "the question of the factory" without recognizing production as a material problem in need of perpetual renegotiation.[1] It was the actions of the nineteenth-century workers' movement within and against the factory-institution that recorded the concept of production as a larger, transhistorical theater of class struggle. From signifying the fabrication of goods, production became a principle of explanation, a way of describing the social-historical world without recourse to ideas of "God," or "Nature." Similarly, the nation-state operates within the wider theater of distribution, in which class struggle divides the social surplus into the prices of land, labor, and money. Recognizing contemporary movements within and against the nation therefore requires according this concept of distribution the same weight previously given to production. Like production, distribution is a distinct theater of class struggle, rather than a preamble or a gloss for another more fundamental conflict. In order to understand our current crisis, we need to acknowledge that the class struggle within the theater of distribution is as persistent and as material as it is elsewhere.

What is Distribution?

Distribution refers to the distribution of the social surplus.[2] To prevent distribution from becoming another night in which all cows are black, it is important to emphasize what distribution is not. In the same way that red is not blue but both red and blue are colors, distribution's peers clarify what it is. To borrow and refurbish some categories from orthodox political economy, distribution exists alongside production, reproduction, and representation. As a concept defined in relation to other concepts, distribution is what is not-production, not-reproduction, and not-representation.[3] That is: if we consider the sum total of social-historical processes and subtract everything better described by production, reproduction, or representation, what remains is distribution. All four can be understood as theaters, fixed by the class struggle, and

A detail of a vitrine announces merchandise in the Trump Tower. Photo: Kaye Cain-Nielsen

charged with staging the differences between the material and the immaterial, the visible and the invisible, politics and economics. In the same way that transhistorical genres appear in different modes at different times (performance exists always but not always *proscenium* performance and so *proscenium* is the mode, while performance is generic), we receive the four theaters of class struggle as always already fixed into this or that contingent mode. Class struggle is what reveals this contingency and records the difference between theaters and modes. If we can say that Taylorism is a mode of production, it is only because we have recognized production as a transhistorical theater of class struggle that has *resulted* in Taylorism at whatever specific place and time. Insisting on this distinction prevents us from naturalizing such results, even as we argue over how best to characterize whatever mode. Is the shift in the mode of representation best characterized as moving from analog to digital or from paper to pixel? Is patriarchy a mode of reproduction, representation, distribution, or a combination of all three? In each case, what matters is the difference between *modes* that come and go—patriarchy, Taylorism, the spectacle—and the theaters of their appearance—reproduction, representation, distribution, and production—which, once the class struggle has constituted them conceptually, do not.

Contradiction and Overdetermination

For Benedict Anderson, nationalism is a mode of representation: "the nation" refers to the imagined community made possible by the forces of representation unleashed by the technology of the printing press. For Sylvia Walby, nationalism is the public, segregationist subgenre of the patriarchal mode of reproduction wherein women's exploitation is based on the employer and the state rather than the family (as it was with the private, exclusionary kind). Nationalism is a mode of reproduction in a different sense for Ernest Gellner, who argues that it is necessary for industrial production.[4] Few writers have argued that nationalism is *itself* a mode of production, but many, like Gellner, have seen it as in some sense derivative, parasitical, or otherwise determined by it.

I think nationalism is better understood as a mode of

This billboard was installed in 1989 by real estate developer Seymour Durst, who paid $100.000 for its construction. The clock displays, both, the U.S. gross national debt, as well as each family's share of it.

distribution. Distribution is responsible for the existence of prices for land, labor, and money.[5] These are brokered by market-staging institutions such as central banks, institutions for arbitrating labor disputes, and court systems—para-market formations both indigenous and exogenous to markets themselves. Land, labor, and money are not commodities like any others, as any reference to supply and demand is particularly inadequate in accounting for their prices. Unlike the exchange of other goods, the exchange of land, labor, and money requires more in the way of social validation from supplementary institutions in order to maintain itself as a market. For this reason, some have called land, labor, and money "peculiar" commodities, because their patterns of exchange are exceptional. Some don't think they should be referred to as commodities at all, owing to this same institutional excessiveness. In this and much else, I will follow Suzanne de Brunhoff and refer to them as "non-commodities," to signify the fact that the commodity character of their exchange is a contested outcome of class struggle.[6]

Class struggle is the reason the exchange of non-commodities tends to generate brokering institutions. When a central bank adjusts interest rates, it is adjusting the price of money, and shifting the distribution of the social surplus between profit and interest. When the US National Labor Relations Board hears a case, it is adjusting the price of labor-power and shifting the distribution of the social surplus between workers and owners. Something similar happens when an institution like Fannie Mae or Freddie Mac in the US guarantees a mortgage and adjusts the price of land.[7] Social surplus is allocated by way of such adjustments, and the character of their staging corresponds to a given mode of distribution. When these market-staging or brokering institutions are predominantly national institutions, nationalism describes the mode of distribution.

Certainly describing nationalism as mode of distribution opposes the efforts of previous thinkers on this subject. However, my aim is not simply to insert the concept of distribution into the place held by reproduction, representation, or production in these earlier, pathbreaking conceptions of nationalism. Rather, the goal is to replace a monocameral model of social-historical

After Seattle University announced its refusal to bargain with the adjunct and contingent faculty union, despite is status being certified by the National Labor Relations Board, the union began a campaign calling out the Seattle University Administration by filing a "missing [social justice] values report."

explanation—in which it is understood that one or another of these theaters always predominates—with a quadracameral one. This model understands any predominance of one theater over the others to be the result of class struggle, rather than a metaphysical inevitability. It is class struggle which determines, in any given social-historical moment, which class identity is constituted in which position by reference to which combination of elements.[8] It is because of the workers' movement that we have the concept of production; it is because of the women's movement that we have the concept of reproduction. Theory follows practice, and so the class struggle records itself in genres of concrete materiality. Instead of the politics or economics of reproduction being reduced to the politics or economics of production—or vice versa—both production and reproduction (and representation and distribution) are always already *politically economic.*

It is truly the case, as has been said, that recorded history is the history of class struggles. But it is not true that there are two, or only two, primary classes. This binary is an error in the record, and an effort *to limit class struggle in advance.*[9] In point of historical fact, it is up to the class struggle how many class relationships persist throughout the political economy, which is never less than the sum of the four theaters. Such relationships form not only along the line dividing politics from economics *in production*, but also along comparable lines in representation, reproduction, and distribution. The record of class struggle insists on these divisions, and history will not sit for a simpler portrait.

The aim of reading nationalism as a mode of distribution is thus not to claim that it has priority over the other modes, or that it determines them, but only that it *can* do so, at certain times and under certain conditions. The largest obstacle inherited by revolutionary theory from the past century is the neuroses that insists on one or the other element of political economy being always already generic or universal enough to dominate or determine the other three. We have been perpetually told that the important thing is *really* writing, or the materiality of the value-form (mode of representation); or *really* computers or immaterial labor-power (mode of production); or *really* plasticity and ontogenesis (mode of reproduction), and so on. This is the analytical equivalent of saying that what *really* matters in an electrical circuit is the load, rather than the power source, the connectors, or the switch, when it is the presence of all four kinds of thing that makes it what it is. In the same way that an electrical circuit can stop functioning due to problems within one or more of it elements, so too do crises in the political economy often begin with one or another of its elements before spreading to the others. This predominance is contingent rather than axiomatic.

All modes have both a diachronic and synchronic existence. When considering the social history of any given theater, it is important to examine both the coexistence of multiple modes within a single time frame, and also the shift, from time frame to time frame, of which mode predominates within a given theater. Diachronically, we might say that by the twentieth century, Taylorism had replaced the cottage industry as the predominant mode of production. Synchronically, we nevertheless note that many contemporary industries maintain cottage modes of production. This is why, in *The Development of Capitalism in Russia*, Lenin could identify no less than five modes of production existing side by side at the end of the nineteenth century, even as he recognized the shifting hierarchy among them. Similarly, to say that nationalism is the predominant mode of distribution today is not to say that it is the only one. A corresponding work of twenty-first century revolutionary theory would be *The Development of Nationalism on Gaia*, which would similarly identify the persistence of other distributive modes, even as it recognized the global ascent of nationalism and its attendant crises, of which fascism is certainly the most famous.

What Does the National Mode Replace?

If nationalism is the predominant mode of distribution today, what mode came before it? Some argue that such a question is nonsensical, because there is no such thing as a mode of distribution, only mechanisms of *redistribution*, which should be abolished as quickly as possible. What I am referring to as distribution would then be split into a natural or divine outcome, on the one hand, and a contingent element of the political economy, called "redistribution," on the other (mere "periodic interventions" into an otherwise self-regulating machine). In this scheme, distribution as a social historical reality is replaced by a combination of myth and morality. To desire a return to the gold standard, the abolition of the minimum wage, or a lifeworld populated only by associated producers is to desire economics without politics, or politics without economics. Unfortunately for our conservative comrades—and there are more of these than will recognize themselves as such—the dream of a distribution-free world, understood as the free and happy functioning of land, labor, and money markets independent of distributing institutions, cannot survive even the shallowest acquaintance with history. It is utopian in the strict sense of describing a place that has not been found to exist.

A reactionary position, as opposed to the conservative one, is more consistent with historical reality. The reactionary wants to restore absolute monarchy, which does in fact describe accurately the mode of distribution displaced by the nation. Like feudalism before it and nationalism today, absolutism refers to a set of institutions engaged in staging markets for land, labor, and money. The feudal bond priced land in terms of military labor, requiring landowners to furnish the king with a fully equipped knight for forty days a year—a price regime that dissolved when the money market allowed monarchs to raise military funds independently of the distribution of land.[10] Under absolutism, instead of depending on the nobles for knights, a monarch became a military capitalist, raising money on the strength of future expectations as an entrepreneur would. When these bills came due, the monarchs either paid in loot or levied taxes, which led more or less directly (if not at all quickly) to consolidating the lords' alliance with the expanding professional class and eventually to the replacement of the absolutist mode of distribution with the national one.

Here we see why it is important to distinguish between the four theaters as places where multiple and overlapping conflicts between forces and relations take place: because it is often the forces of one that upset the relations of the other. The rise of print, to return to Benedict Anderson's thesis, was a force of representation that helped undo the feudal relations of distribution. The rise of radio was a force that consolidated national relations of a similar kind. Many national institutions are the products of class compromises intended to stabilize exactly these kinds of interactions. At the end of a long and costly sequence of strikes and lockouts, a national institution is formed for arbitrating labor disputes. After numerous and costly credit crises, a central bank emerges for arbitrating the cost of money. The nation is what replaces the king as the repository of local responsibility for non-commodity management. And in the same way that the "good king" was one who successfully exported violence abroad, so too does the nation seek to exile class conflict to the borders of its territory.[11] It is in response to the need for institutionalized mechanisms of non-commodity management that the nation arises to disaggregate labor-power into a kind sold by a class of citizens at one price and a kind sold by a class of non-citizens at another. These must either seek national permission to exchange their labor-power, or work illegally.[12]

Such efforts at managing the price of labor-power often coincide with efforts to manage the price of money, which is likewise reinstituted as a national concern in the form of central banks. In national distribution, the class struggle between owners and workers, on the one hand, and creditors and borrowers, on the other, is partially mitigated by the creation of a class struggle between citizens and foreigners.[13] But none of these class divisions are any more fundamental than any of the others, or have more metaphysical weight. Class struggle predominates over everything, including the question of which class division becomes an active antagonism in which conjuncture.

Fascism, historical and otherwise, follows from a crisis in the national mode of distribution. It arises when the contradictions inherent in that mode become

A man holds up a tea kettle during an Atlanta Tea Party tax protest in April 2009. Photo: John Bazemore/AP

exacerbated—in particular when the nation-state loses the ability to socially pre-validate its non-commodities, and thus no longer functions to bridge the gap between social recognition and material realization, imperiling accumulation. Fascism is reactionary because it aims to restore the political economic significance of an enfeebled mode—in this case, the nation—by supplementing it with violence. Racism is the ideological expression, post facto, of violence performed in the nation's name. All nationalisms are potential fascisms to the extent that they are relied on to stabilize non-commodities for exchange. In order to see why this is so, it is necessary to briefly examine the relationship between the non-commodities and capital.

A man confronts a Ku Klux Klan rally in Columbia, South Carolina on July 18, 2015.

The Non-Commodities and Capital

Often, when we set out to analyze capital, we end up only speaking about power and commodities.[14] Many an ultraleftist has inflated these concepts into a new metaphysics. Intending to communicate the severity of our collective situation, some comrades frequently end by obliterating the concept of capital itself, and thus denying the overwhelming reality they had set out to demonstrate. Said simply: if everything consisted in some combination of commodities and power, there would be no capital, whose conceptual existence rests on the difference between commodities and non-commodities as objects of exchange.

A capital is a circuit of accumulation. It is traditionally notated in its simple form as M – C – M', that is, money (M) transformed into commodities (C) transformed into more money (M'). Here we can already see that our capacity to perceive this transformation, and thus, our capacity to conceptualize capital itself, rests on defining money as a non-commodity. Otherwise our circuit would become a tautology, indistinguishable from a series of barter exchanges, reading C – C – C.

The same is true for labor-power, another non-commodity managed by the mode of distribution. The traditional notation of industrial capital is M – (C + L) – C – M', that is, money (M) is transformed into commodities and

labor-power (C + L), which are combined to produce new commodities, which are then transformed back into more money (M'). If, as in the previous example, labor-power and money are not understood as non-commodities, we are once again back in the tautological night where all cows are black: C – (C + C) – C – C. If there is no exchange of non-commodities, there is no transformation, no accumulation, and no capital. It is only the persistence of the distinction between non-commodities like money and labor-power, on the one hand, and standard commodities for production and consumption, on the other, that makes capital *capital*.

What is important for our analysis of distribution broadly—and for nationalism and the resurgence of fascism in particular—is only to note that capital is not capable of providing M or L. It can combine these to accumulate more of M—that is what makes it capital—but it must encounter these non-commodities ready-to-hand, so to speak, if any accumulating transformation is to take place.[15] However, it would be a mistake to then conclude that because capital cannot provide money and labor-power, the nation immediately can. If distribution names the sum total of processes implicated in staging these non-commodity markets, this does not mean that any particular mode of distribution has a primordial monopoly on doing so.[16] In fact, it is the *difficulty* of maintaining these non-commodities as objects of exchange that accounts for the antagonism at work in any given mode of distribution, national or otherwise.

In other words, the fascist effort to *revalorize* the nation is an effort to reestablish the role of the nation in facilitating the exchange of non-commodities. For example, tightening the border, "protecting" jobs, and deporting "illegals" all seek to increase national influence over the price of labor-power. Race is the mythological residue of this national distributive mechanism. Here it helps to remember Robert Paxton's insight that the Ku Klux Klan is the first fascist formation, a paramilitary nationalism organized to drive down the rising cost of labor-power after emancipation (and whose tragic success was famously celebrated by D. W. Griffith as the *Birth of a Nation*).

Likewise, the first Italian *squadristi* were organized by landowners in the countryside in response to professional efforts to raise the price of labor-power sold by those working the land. Once in power, fascism further depresses the price of labor-power by outlawing strikes and birth control and placing a renewed emphasis on national potency. Potency—the capacity to reproduce—refers both to the ability to issue money and the ability to issue people, and the nation compensates for its decreasing ability to manipulate the one by more and more aggressively manipulating the other. By forcing the identities of "woman" and "foreigner" into increased circulation and reinstituting to a greater or lesser degree the slavery—in the sense of the un- or undercompensated exchange of labor-power—of those so labeled, fascism promises to extend the privilege of collecting hereditary rent outwards from aristocrats with the appropriate bloodlines to the mass of male citizens possessing the appropriate racial purity. Included in the bargain is the partilineal anxiety about losing one's inheritance either to an illegitimate heir born of an adulterous wife or to interest payments owed to a professional moneylender living in the city. And so the anti-Semitism and misogyny proper to a previous era's ruling class returns in today's alt-right/neo-Nazi memeology of "cucks" and "globalists." Racist patriarchy is the toxic fumes emitted by a nation desperate to recover its distributive significance by exacerbating the contradictory conditions of its own possibility. Instead of recognizing how territorial borders work to cheapen labor-power worldwide, fascism rebuilds the violence of the border within the territory itself. Racism is simply the common name for this reappearance of border-class struggle within an already instituted distributive unit.

The United States provides a recent concrete example of such a distributive crisis. Beginning in 2008, a decades-long policy of nationally pre-validating the price of land led to a lending crisis.[17] Due to the exceptional position of the US dollar as both a national and an international currency, this threatened the global price of money. It was only the extraordinary efforts by the American institutions in charge of the price of money and the price of land—most notably the Federal Reserve and the Treasury via Fannie and Freddie—to re-validate both non-commodities by buying mortgages and debt that kept these markets from collapsing entirely. However, the decades-long destruction of American labor unions by representatives of the former slave states meant that the price of American labor-power enjoyed no corresponding beneficence. It did not return to its precrisis levels, but continued to exchange at a depressed rate. In sum: following the crisis the Federal Reserve played its role as lender of last resort, stabilizing the non-commodity money and reestablishing its exchange.[18] The Treasury followed suit, buying enough mortgages via Fannie and Freddie to stabilize the price of land and reestablish *its* exchange.[19] In the matter of the non-commodity labor-power, however, the response was opposite. Not only did the US nation fail to play its role as "labor union of last resort," but captured state and federal governments actually shed more than half a million jobs following the crisis.[20] This is the equivalent of Treasury trying to stem the housing crisis by selling more mortgages, or the Fed responding to the lending crisis by increasing rates.[21]

With the national mode of distribution comes ways of ameliorating these crises by means of national institutions, but without a guarantee that these will be deployed.[22] The nation becomes the territory responsible for absorbing the crisis material of this or that political-economic cycle, but whether it succeeds or fails in doing so depends on other factors. The material trauma of unemployment and

the material trauma of bankruptcy are both resolved, to a greater or lesser degree, into the material trauma of the national territory. What the mode of distribution determines first of all is the characteristic distribution of *political economic fallout.* Like the kingdom before it, *the nation is what suffers*.

If the functional purpose of the mode of distribution is to effect the class compromises necessary to limit the danger to accumulation posed by the strange capacity of non-commodities to refuse exchange, this function has recently been undermined by the explicit unbundling of fiscal and monetary policy, whose putative combination was the instrumental condition of possibility for the late nation-state's responsibility. We have seen how this has happened in postcrisis America, which acted decisively to restore the global monetary system but not its citizens' standard of living. This splitting is also written into the treaties governing the European Union, which mandate the control of inflation but not the control of unemployment, stripping their member states of monetary control without making a comparable adjustment in fiscal policy, which in theory remains with the member states. What both the American and European cases indicate is that the contemporary mode of global distribution is putatively split between a national mode of fiscal policy and a regional mode of monetary policy. The myriad European crises since the global financial crisis of 2008 indicate that the distance between these two kinds of policy inhibits the existence of either, as Greece and other states have learned. Meanwhile, the Union itself is in serious danger of learning the opposite lesson: a regional currency cannot persist without some allowance for regional fiscal policy.[23]

The resurgent right-wing regimes openly menacing global peace do so in the name of permanently collapsing this distance between sovereignties in favor of the nation—an impossible, utopian task. Faced with the destitution of their kingdoms, absolute monarchs launched pogroms to recover the hoards accumulated by the same class who they depended on, in better times, to raise them money and keep their rivals poor. Fascism is just the national-popular application of this same logic. It is the attempt by the nation to reconquer money by murdering its decadent, cosmopolitan agents, and to shrink the stock of labor-power by re-enslaving women and foreigners. Like workers and professionals, these can be immiserated or destroyed. The restless instability of the non-commodities cannot. These will remain, constitutively, in need of distribution.

X

Stephen Squibb is intimately familiar with the highways linking Brooklyn, New York with Cambridge, Massachusetts.

1
Karen Barad's definition of materiality, in *Meeting the Universe Halfway* , is useful here: "In an agential realist account, matter does not refer to a fixed substance; rather, matter is a substance of intra-active becoming—not a thing, but a doing, a congealing of agency. Matter is a stabilizing and destabilizing process of iterative interactivity." K. Barad, *Meeting the Universe Halfway* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 151.

2
Strictly speaking, social surplus is only that which is distributed, represented, reproduced, and produced. The surplus is never not all of these.

3
Readers familiar with the tradition will notice that I have substituted "representation" for circulation and "reproduction" for consumption. This is a substantive realignment, as aspects of what was circulation now belong to production and representation, and elements of consumption are similarly reassigned. This allows for more accurate and specific descriptions of the political economy, in the sense that, for example, when writers have criticized "consumer society" they have frequently done so in terms not of *consumption* per se, but actually in terms of representation (often advertising) or of reproduction (around issues of health and safety). Likewise, circulation in the sense of exchange is so fundamental that it can't really be productively isolated, while circulation in the sense of fixed capital investment is really a form of production.

4
S. Walby, "Woman and Nation," *International Journal of Comparative Sociology* , vol. 33, no. 1–2 (1992). E. Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2009): "To understand the role played by (nationalism as a system of) education, we must, to borrow a phrase from Marx, consider not merely the mode of production of modern society, but above all its mode of reproduction" (29). This is because "the monopoly of legitimate education is now more important than the monopoly of legitimate violence" (34). However, production still predominates: "These conditions do not define the human situation as such, but merely its industrial variant" (55).

5
Typically I refer to the non-commodity stock exchanged by workers as "labor-power." If I neglect to do so in the early going, it is because, strictly speaking, money perhaps ought to be predicated in a similar way. Whether this would be best done in terms of "value-power," "presence-power," or, after André Orléan, "debt-power" or "credit-power," however, is beyond the current text to determine.

6
De Brunhoff shifts between the terms "non-commodity" in *Marx on Money* , trans. Maurice J. Goldbloom (London: Verso, 1973), 71, and "peculiar" or "particular" commodity in *State, Capital and Economic Policy* (London: Pluto Press, 1978), 4. Both are crucial works that make possible much of what follows. Karl Polyani, in *The Great Transformation,* uses the term "fictitious commodity." For the role of class struggle in determining the degree to which labor power is commodified, see Harry Cleaver, *Reading Capital Politically* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979).

7
This price of land becomes particularly important when it is recruited to offset decreases in consumption resulting from stagnant wages, further disaggregating labor into those who own and those who rent, a strategy pursued in Britain and the US especially. See Christian Marazzi, *The Violence of Financial Capitalism* , trans. Kristina Lebedeva (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2011).

8
A concrete example: the invention of birth control created the conditions of possibility for the predominance of the mode of reproduction over the mode of production. Thus the dominant class identity shifted, in certain contexts, from being constituted by reference to the relations of production to being constituted by references to the relations of reproduction. Shulamith Firestone was one of the first to think reproduction along these lines. Also Engels, whose passage to this effect in *The Origins of the Private Property and the State* Judith Butler identifies as a socialist-feminist favorite. See J. Butler, "Merely Cultural?" in *Adding Insult to Injury: Nancy Fraser Addresses her Critics* (London: Verso, 2008). As Barad readily asserts, few have done more than Butler to develop the concept of materiality.

9
If all hitherto recorded history *really is* the history of class struggles, then these struggles must precede and occasion any division of the classes into whatever number. The privilege that would grant the twoness of the class struggle in advance, so to speak, is archaic and unfounded. The greatest critic of this error is Etienne Balibar, particularly in his essays on the mode of production, from *Reading Capital* (London: Verso, 2012); "On the Vacillation of Ideology...," in *Masses, Classes, and Ideas* (London: Routledge, 1994); and on nationalism and racism, in *Race, Nation, Class* (London: Verso, 1991), where he describes the effect of this productivist metaphysics: "It can be said in the strong sense of the word there is in *Capital* not two, three, or four classes, but *only one* , the proletarian working class, whose existence is at one and the same time the condition of the valorization of capital, the result of its accumulation, and the obstacle which the automatic nature of its movement constantly encounters" (160)

10
See, for example, Chester Dunning and Norman S. Smith, "Moving Beyond Absolutism: Was Early Modern Russia a 'Fiscal-Military' State?" *Russian History* , vol. 33, no. 1 (2006); and Jan Glete, *War and the State in Early Modern Europe: Spain, the Dutch Republic and Sweden as Fiscal-Military States* (London: Routledge, 2001). Perry Anderson's *Lineages of the Absolute State* (London: Verso, 1974) remains one of the best historical treatments of this or any other topic, albeit one still committed to ultimately explaining absolutism and feudalism in terms of production. In the interests of brevity I have left off specifying what sort of technology, in particular, makes distribution as generic as production was for writers like Anderson. In short, it is military technology. The concrete stakes of my intervention here are, ultimately, to make technologies like the machine gun, the atom bomb, the long bow, and (in another theater) birth control as significant, for historical materialism, as the technologies of the cotton gin, the robot, or (in another theater) double-entry bookkeeping.

11
It's important to remember, with respect to labor-power, that the growth of trade unions was as frequently organized by employers or the state for the purposes of labor discipline. De Brunhoff, *The State, Capital and Economic Policy* , Chapter 2. Also Jonas Pontusson and Peter Swenson, "Labor Markets, Production Strategies and Wage Bargaining Institutions: The Swedish Employer Offensive in Comparative Perspective," *Comparative Political Studies* , vol. 29, no. 2, (1996): 223–50. Correspondingly, it is also important to remember that it was not the regime of Ronald Reagan that brought down the USSR, but the struggle for independent unions originating in Poland.

12
"In the United States, after the defeat of militant trade unionism during the 1920s, and after the massive unemployment of the 1930s, the government favored the growth of the trade unions (in the face of violent opposition from a section of the employers), because trade unions were entrusted with a new role: that of managing workers' demands, notably by negotiating wage contracts with employers representatives. The disaggregation of the working class (into the unionized and the non-unionized, into white and black workers, etc.), the regulation of the right to strike, the witch hunt of communists and progressive liberals ... all made it possible to make inflation acceptable." De Brunhoff, *The State, Capital and Economic Policy* , 132.

13
This is the political economic reality beneath Carl Schmitt's perception that the content of the concept of the political is the friend/enemy distinction. Certainly it is, but this distinction rests on an economy of labor-power, which, in times of crisis, manifests a friend/enemy distinction. Fascism is the extreme form of this manifestation. We see here how the understanding of production as a theater of class struggle accounts for the division between a politics (a friend/enemy

distinction) and an economics (the relative commodification of labor-power).

14
Echoing Poulantzas's critique of Foucault, de Brunhoff makes the essential point: "The Italian *operaismo* (class autonomy) current has defined the fundamental antagonism of the present epoch as that between socialized labor and the state as collective capitalist ... Its weakness, in my opinion, is its subjectivist view of class, implying that society functions in terms of relations of power which are not embodied in given objective social relationships. Consequently the Italian critique 'from the left' has a tendency to mirror the economism it seeks to overthrow ... By bringing together politics and economics a suffocating general rationality ensues, which leaves no place for the history of struggle. The result has been a displacement of the problem from capital to commodity and from capital to power ... economism is more frequently to be found nowadays in the way in which analyses of different social practices have become contaminated by references to economic norms. The 'political economy' of signs, of the body, the family, the state; the primordial importance attached to the logic of equivalence and the category of exchange, together with the notion of micro-economic techniques of power—all these theoretical developments pay homage, in one way or another, to the economic theory of the commodity, if not the rules of optimum management. The social devices which produce knowledge—or signs or traces—are seen in a uniform, and hence comparable way, in terms of their common and presupposed capacity for probabilistic calculation ... The commodity form and the mechanisms of power hold the center of the stage, while capital is left in the wings ... labor-power and money as particular types of commodities seem to me to constitute a rational point of departure for an analysis of the relationship between state and capital over a long period." De Brunhoff, *The State, Capital and Economic Policy* , 3. My own effort is simply to describe this relationship as a primary example of the social-historical materiality of distribution.

15
Or at least not the kinds of capital we have considered so far. It will be the argument in a future piece that military and police capitals accumulate precisely by providing these non-commodities.

16
The use of the term "market" in this analysis is a bit confusing, insofar as it refers to the conditions of possibility for a given form of exchange rather than a specific location or theological deus-ex-machina of the "invisible hand/spontaneous order" variety, which have always just described the view of non-commodities from the perspective of capital. So for example, the payment of rent in kind by serfs under feudalism represents an exchange of labor-power, and thus a "market" even though this often happened without there being a separate "theater of commerce" in the sense we usually mean by "labor market."

17
Reactionaries often tell the truth about one small part of the political economy and then lie about or ignore the rest: they are not wrong, in this respect, to argue that the crisis began with Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, the two American public-private hybrids responsible for guaranteeing mortgages. They just fail to see these institutions themselves as part of a larger bargain underpinning American empire. Cheap mortgages are what the American taxpayer gets in exchange for funding American military capitals, which guarantee the status of the American dollar as the reserve currency, allowing the federal government to borrow at world-historically low rates. Fannie and Freddie just extend a small part of this privilege to the rank and file of American citizens. Hence the reactionaries are careful not to blame Freddie and Fannie *themselves*, but only the laws which prohibit them from discriminating against borrowers on the basis of race. If the racist reality of the nation were simply allowed to assert itself, the reactionaries suggest, then all would be well. They are right about the first part—the core structures of the nation certainly excrete racism—but wrong about the second, because no effort to purge illegitimate nationals has ever succeeded in stabilizing the exchange of non-commodities.

18
Legibility concerns have delayed me from discussing the functions of the non-commodity money in sufficient detail here. It is important to say, in the interim, that it is *only* the strange position of the US dollar as the international reserve currency that allowed the Fed to do what it did. Typically, liquidity, as the social institution of the materiality of value, prevents any one institution from behaving in this way, as the constitution of liquidity at the moment of hoarding is constitutively international and diffuse. For the articulation of a similar position, see André Orléan, *The Empire of Value* , trans. M. B. DeBevoise (Cambridge: MA: MIT Press, 2014).

19
The fact that America was able to avoid austerity on these two fronts is owing in part, in must be said, to the partially private character of its distributive institutions in charge of land and money. Half the governing board of the Fed is appointed by private banks and half by elected presidents. Likewise, Fannie and Freddie are public-private hybrids; they have shareholders, but these are not so strong as to keep the Treasury from evaporating the nearly three hundred billion in profits returned on the mortgages bought at the height of the crisis.

20
Broken by corporate-backed gerrymandering, the US House of Representatives even went so far as to threaten the position of the dollar as the reserve currency by refusing to raise the debt ceiling unless more government workers were fired. This effort by the American ruling class to instrumentalize its control over the international currency to enrich themselves at the expense of their citizens already contained Trump's campaign in embryo: insofar as it, too, sought to sharpen the contradictions inherent in America's position as a national territory charged with managing international money.

21
Nor was this absurdity lost on the leaders of the institutions, who repeatedly pled that they had done all they could with the levels of monetary policy and that it was necessary for Congress to turn to fiscal solutions.

22
Inflation is the signal example, which makes a national currency the gauze absorbing the political economic wound.

23
Hence the need for an emergency "fiscal compact" rammed through by Merkel in 2011.