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Immaterial and Affective Labour: Explored*

Emma Dowling, Rodrigo Nunes and Ben Trott

That capitalism has undergone a series of transformations over the past few decades, and that these transformations have been reflected – at least to some extent – in a qualitative change in the nature, form and organisation of labour is increasingly undisputed. Also widely recognised is that these developments have in turn had a reconfigurative effect on the political organisation of workers and their resistance. The precise *extent*, *nature* and *implication* of these mutations, however, are far more widely contested. It is within the literature addressing precisely these issues that concepts such as 'immaterial' and 'affective' labour are gradually becoming the object of debates with consequences that are far more than simply academic.

Whilst the work of authors belonging to the Italian tradition of (post-)*Operaismo* (or 'workerism') – and in particular, of course, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's *Empire* (2001) – has been the source of increasing debate within and beyond the social sciences over the past few years, these debates have mostly focused on the propositions as to a shift in sovereignty from the nation-state to 'Empire', the supposed 'end of imperialism', and the emergence of the 'multitude' as the revolutionary subject of the post-Fordist era. The claim made by a number of authors belonging to this tradition as to the emergence of new forms of labour, their nature, and the means by which they are understood as exerting their hegemony (Hardt and Negri, 2001 and 2004; Lazzarato, 1996; Virno, 1996) have received – within English language discussions[1] – relatively

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* We would like to thank all of those who have contributed to making this project possible. It has been a great pleasure, and inspiring experience, to work together with all the contributors to this special issue, as well as those who have translated, proof-read and anonymously peer reviewed the papers included within the following pages. A huge thanks as well to Valeria Ossio [valeria_ossio@gmx.de] for the cover artwork. And finally, we would like to thank the *ephemera* editorial collective for their patience and assistance, as well as their invitation for us to embark upon this project.

1 The situation is notably different within non-English language discourses where the notions of immaterial and affective labour have received far more detailed attention. In German, for example, see: Atzert et al. (2002), Atzert and Müller (2004), Birkner and Foltin (2006), Lazzarato et al. (1998), and Pieper et al. (2007). In French, it has been in the pages of the journal *Futur Antérieur* and subsequently *Multitudes* that the original debate on immaterial labour has taken place. See also Corsani et al. (1996). In Spanish, one can refer to the assorted writings in 'arte, máquinas, trabajo inmaterial', *Brumaria* Issue 7, December 2006 [http://www.brumaria.net/publicacionbru7.htm]; and Blondeau et al. (2004), published by Traficantes de Sueños, a publishing house and bookshop that has played a key role in the Spanish-language reception of (post-)*Operaista* thought. In Portuguese,

little attention. Our aim with this journal has been to provide a space for an interdisciplinary engagement with the issues of immaterial and affective labour, to both broaden and deepen the debate and enable connections between different approaches. We believe that the contributions included within the pages of this journal succeed in both building upon existing literature, flagging up limits and potential problems as well as seeking to move beyond them.

One of the important points of departure for us as the editors of this special issue was the hypothesis that, whilst the concepts of immaterial and affective labour – as theorised primarily by Maurizio Lazzarato, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri – succeed, to a certain extent, in describing real and existing tendencies, their analyses have taken particular forms of this labour as the *de facto* 'advanced' forms of all the others. This has been the case to the extent that their particular (and singular) characteristics become imposed upon the rest. Important differences – related not only to the empirical realities of day-to-day labouring practices and their respective positions within (global) hierarchies of privilege and exploitation; but also in terms of the possibilities (or otherwise) for the self-constitution of antagonistic social subjects with a capacity to act in common – have been obscured in the process.

To these ends, alongside texts that offer a critique of various aspects of the immaterial and affective labour thesis; those which locate the current debates within particular historical realities and discourses; and those which seek to build upon and develop the theoretical and analytic framework provided by (post-)*Operaismo*, there are also a number of papers here which attempt a far more rigorous investigation into the material conditions of various forms of immaterial and/or affective labour than has been attempted until now. We hope that such investigations – and similar future projects which are surely necessary – will allow for a (re-)evaluation of the existing conceptual framework and contribute to our collective ability to identify the lines of fracture that make resistance possible today.

Some of the contributions here respond directly to this challenge. Elizabeth Wissinger (writing on modelling as affective labour), Adam Arvidsson (elaborating the functional connections between networks of the creative 'underground' and the advertising industry in Copenhagen), Kristin Carls (researching shop assistants in retail chains in the Northeast of Italy) and Emma Dowling (conducting an inquiry into affective labour in the restaurant industry) provide theoretical insights into and empirical evidence of the way in which these forms of labour are organised and deployed, and the ambivalence of their conditions. Wissinger seeks to unpack what she terms the 'technical-affective link' in the fashion modelling industry to understand the complex and not always directly conscious process by which this type of affective labour generates images intended to convey certain feelings (of attention, excitement, or interest), so that they may be bought and sold in a circulation of affective flows. Arvidsson points to how the relative autonomy of cultural producers is predicated upon both structural conditions such as a

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the pages of the journals *Glob(A.L.)* and *Lugar Comum*, can be consulted, as well as Lazzarato and Negri (2001). And in Italian, of course, there have been wide-ranging debates around the issue. See for example many of the issues of the journal *DeriveApprodi*, especially issue 18, as well as Borio et al. (2002) and Lazzarato (1997).

strong welfare system and the capacity to selectively 'drop in' or 'out' of the market relations established by corporate advertising. Both Carls and Dowling relativise the claims about some sort of natural in-built tendency to communism that immaterial labour as a whole (and affective labour as part of the genus) would have. While the kind of work done, they argue, is certainly more expressive and social than that of the assembly line, this does not necessarily mean that the autonomy this entails substantially subverts the relation with capital. Carls shows how relations in the workplace are organised around the interplay of control mechanisms and coping strategies that both create and arrest autonomy; whilst Dowling makes it obvious that, in the chain of production that leads from the kitchen to the table (and back) one can find a huge internal stratification (along pay as well as national lines).

The invitation to go back to an analysis of the material conditions and organisation of new forms of labour contained in this issue's original Call for Papers is of course neither new nor isolated. While it does address a lack in recent academic debates, particularly around the reception of (post-)*Operaista* thought, this is probably an area where discussions within the academy have lagged behind those taking place around and outside it. In these spaces, a lot of calls for a return to, or a re-problematisation of, the practice of workers' inquiries, militant investigation (*investigación militante*) and co-research (*conricerca*) have been recently made. Nevertheless, as one of the texts here reminds us, that they have been made does not mean they have necessarily been followed. The contribution of Antonio Conti et al. sets out to imagine what a project of co-research that responds to present transformations in production and in the productive territory can mean. They seek to differentiate this practice from a merely external inquiry that envisages the knowledge produced as neutral and establishes the place of political agency outside of the process of its own production – in order to conclude that co-research does not produce knowledge without producing subjectivity and political organisation at the same time. This proposal is complemented in this issue by the report of a joint work, still in progress, developed between the *Experimental Chair on Production of Subjectivity* (an experiment in the creation of a non-state, non-market university, set in Rosario, Argentina) and the trade union delegates at a local call centre.

To speak of co-research is of course to place oneself again in the political and theoretical trajectory of Italian Workerism that starts with the *Quaderni Rossi* and the pioneering work of Romano Alquati. Steven Wright's article draws upon the transcripts of the interviews with some of the protagonists of this trajectory that were carried out for the book *Futuro Anteriore* (2002) by Guido Borio, Francesca Pozzi and Gigi Roggero, a comprehensive examination of the *Operaista* legacy. In doing so, he restitutes the plurality of voices and analyses in which some themes central to this special issue – such as immaterial labour, post-Fordism, the nature of subjectivity and the role of workers' enquiries and co-research – are addressed within this tradition; a plurality that tends so often to get lost in English-language debates, overdetermined as it is by the impact of the works co-authored by Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt.

Lepoldina Fortunati and Kathi Weeks also offer reflections on the genealogy of the concepts of immaterial and affective labour. Fortunati's text charts the development of the recent discourse on immaterial labour, starting from the pre-history of the concept in authors such as Marx, Tarde and Sombart. She highlights the importance of the feminist

beginnings of the debate about immaterial labour, with specific emphasis on domestic and reproductive labour. Further to this, she seeks to unpack the role of the 'machinization' of immaterial labour in the valorisation process and the detachment from more immediate human interactions that this mechanisation process brings with it. Weeks assesses socialist feminist contributions to the Marxist analysis of productive labour. She couples this with an analysis of Arlie Hochschild's (1983) addition of the emotional labour of pink collar service workers to the critical analyses of white collar immaterial labour exemplified by the work of C.W. Mills (1951). Through this, she proposes a better understanding of the specificity of labour in the immaterial mode and the difficulties posed by its theorisation, concluding with a proposal for an alternative immanent strategy of critical/political intervention in post-Fordist regimes of work.

Another area of heated debate around immaterial and affective labour is on the contention, held by authors such as Negri and Virno, that the post-Fordist configuration of production and reproduction empties the Marxian law of value of any meaning, since labour becomes 'immeasurable' or 'beyond measure'. In this issue, Dowling's article addresses this question, critically, through an analysis of the measuring practices deployed within the context of affective labour in the restaurant industry. Max Henninger argues that Negri's position distorts aspects of Marx's theoretical framework in ways that yield counterfactual and contradictory claims, pointing to the problems of disregarding the importance of Marx's quantitative approach to value for combating an entrepreneurial strategy that consists in expanding the sector of unremunerated or underpaid work within what has been called the social factory. George Caffentzis takes a different approach and finds in a defence and expansion of Marx's theory of machines a position from which to argue against the immeasurability thesis. He holds out that the neglect of Marx's theory of machines is the source of the confusion that allows some authors to fail to see how (physical, material) labour remains the sole source of value; a confusion that is only enhanced by the employment of a category – that of 'immaterial labour' – that fails to capture what would be the defining features that it seeks to address.

Ben Trott's contribution also touches upon the argument concerning the alleged demise of the law of value. Moreover, however, it seeks to stress and defend, against many hurried and uncharitable criticisms, the tendential nature of the arguments advanced by Hardt and Negri. In doing so, it provides a comprehensive unpacking of *Empire* (2001) and *Multitude* (2004), but also draws attention to a number of important weaknesses in such works. In particular, he points to how the potential power of Hardt and Negri's revolutionary subject, 'the multitude', is dramatically over-stated.

For Rodrigo Nunes, if the tendency described by the immaterial labour thesis is essentially predicated upon an alleged hegemony of immaterial labour over other forms of labour and social life itself, the central question becomes defining what exactly this hegemony can mean. His contribution reads the immaterial labour thesis politically (both in the *Operaista* sense of class composition analysis and in relation to the political phenomena of the last ten years) and against the grain (from the claims made about the potentials for resistance to the differences between various forms of labour encompassed by the category) to raise some sceptical conclusions about the political and organisational consequences of such talks of 'tendency' and 'hegemony', which

bear more than a hint of orthodox Marxist objectivism and whose philosophical underpinnings he attempts to reveal.

To what extent is a discourse on hegemony not the reintroduction of a vanguard subject placed as the end-product of a necessary teleological development? And to what extent is the discourse on the becoming-immaterial of labour not reliant upon a productivist utopia of 'liberation through mechanisation'? Mariarosa Dalla Costa's contribution poses, from the perspective of care, a crucial problem to be considered today: that of the *limit*. The attitude of care that the peasant stands for in Dalla Costa's text re-situates the debate at once in the earth, the world, and materiality. In doing so, it opens a window onto political issues of finitude (ecological and human) that mount a challenge against the notion of progress that has been one of the central tenets of Western thought, and hence Marxism, for centuries.

Finally, two texts attempt to move beyond the present way in which affect is currently being debated. Mark Cote and Jennifer Pybus look into the phenomenon of MySpace as a place in which young adults 'learn' to immaterial labour – in what that entails in terms of developing and maintaining networks and fashioning a flexible 'self-brand' that functions as the digital interface of an individual's subjectivity – pointing to affect as the binding force that makes immaterial production cohere. The ambivalence of MySpace as a privileged site of both value extraction and the production of new, (potentially) self-valorising subjectivities is left unresolved, indicative of the more general ambivalence of immaterial labour. Patricia Clough et al draw from debates in the physical and biological sciences as well as contemporary philosophy in order to advance the thesis of an economy of 'affect-itself', where capital invests the self-forming properties of matter and moves from avoiding probabilistic trends to promoting and bringing about transformations, coupled with a form of governance they term 'radical neoliberalism'.

That so often the contributions in this issue should end in a note of scepticism and highlight the ambivalence contained in capitalist transformations is of course no coincidence. First of all, the debates which are carried out in this issue and elsewhere do not take place in a vacuum. Placing themselves on the side of struggles and resistance, they belong to a context where these themes are not merely the matter of theoretical debate, but of the practices, possibilities, victories and defeats in which political actors such as social movements and trade unions, as well as local groups and individual subjects, are enmeshed. In this sense, the most optimistic ideas put forward by books such as *Empire* (2001) were partly the product of a moment of intensification of struggle in the late 1990s. That many today should take a more sober – sometimes sombre – note reflects a less hospitable environment, where many of the advances of that period seemed to have been stalled or reached dead-ends.

But, more importantly, this ambivalence is the very nature of the game, for two reasons. The first one is that it is constitutive not only of immaterial labour, but of the relation between labour and capital in general. To say "*resistance comes first*" (Deleuze, 1999: 95) – a line of analysis which of course finds much resonance in both the fields of

French post-structuralism as well as Italian (post-)*Operaista* Marxism[2] – means that there is always an excess that labour produces in the process of reproducing capitalist socialist relations. This is an excess whose threatening potential capital must always work to recuperate, trapped as it is in its eternal dependence on the power of what is at once its condition of possibility and (potentially) mortal enemy, labour. That capital today seems to rely to such an extent on an enhanced subjective and productive autonomy of labour does not eliminate, but rather intensifies this ambivalence. To picture immaterial labour as a new vanguard subject with an inertial potential for communism would be an attempt to foreclose by decree, in theory, what can only be resolved in practice. If and how, in what situations and in what ways, something 'escapes' capture and produces resistance is the ambivalent question *par excellence*, and it is only in 'the real movement of things' that it can be answered.

The second reason is related to the very newness of the cycle of struggles of the last decade. This newness does not necessarily mean complete non-relation with previous struggles, or lack of continuity with previous trajectories; but is to a great extent a consequence of the rupture produced by its appearance in a post-Berlin Wall, post-'end of history' world. It is the phenomenon of capitalist globalisation itself, in what it entails in terms of both subsuming different realities to the same logic and creating conditions for them to communicate with each other, that generates an awareness of interdependence and connectedness among diverse realities of exploitation, oppression and resistance. This sensibility does not imply the flattening out of the differences that would cancel them into a general scheme, a 'masterplan'. On the contrary, it calls for heightened attention to the composition among differences as the pre-condition for any 'solution' to emerge. So here again, it is only in practice that questions can be answered, and no 'one-size-fits-all' theory can evade that.

It is in the space of this double ambivalence that the question of political organisation is deployed today.

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2 The notion of the ontological priority of resistance – clear throughout much of his work (cf. Deleuze and Guattari, 2004) – is raised by Deleuze in relation to Foucault's analysis of power. In a footnote, he comments, "In Foucault, there is an echo of Mario Tronti's interpretation of Marxism […] as a 'workers'' resistance existing *prior* to the strategies of capital" (Deleuze, 2004: 96).

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Creative Class or Administrative Class? On Advertising and the 'Underground'

Adam Arvidsson

abstract

This article offers an alternative to Richard Florida's theory of the creative class. Departing form a study of contemporary practices within the Copenhagen advertising industry, I argue that the salaried advertising professionals that fit Florida's definition of the creative class are not the primary producers of creativity. Rather they owe their class position to their ability to poach and appropriate creativity produced elsewhere, in networks of (mostly) unsalaried immaterial production that unfold in the urban environment. In my study, the creative content of advertising was mostly produced by this 'creative proletariat', while salaried advertising professionals mostly functioned as a sort of administrative class of the creative economy. Their task was to connect these forms of (relatively) autonomous creative production to the value-circuits of the capitalist economy. Thus, my contribution here is to propose a different model of the interaction between the creative industries and the urban environment, namely one which emphasises the contribution of the unpaid 'mass intellectuality' of the urban arts, design, music and fashion scenes.

Lately there has been a lot of emphasis on the city as a positive externality for the culture and creative industries. The most influential text in this respect is perhaps Richard Florida's *The Rise of the Creative Class* (2002). Florida's chief argument is that the urban environment can be an important factor in attracting the creative 'talent' that drives the increasingly central immaterial activities of technological, cultural and social innovation. He describes this talent as a new creative class, defined by its unique skills in immaterial production and innovation. Florida makes an ambitious general claim with somewhat sweeping policy implications: given that the creative class now makes up what he estimates to be the most productive and promising 30 per cent of the US economy, building an urban environment attractive to the creative class becomes a standard recipe for contemporary urban development. While Florida's emphasis on the role of creativity in the contemporary economy overall has run into much general criticism (cf. Glaeser 2004, Peck, 2005), it retains its validity in the case of advertising. After all 'creativity', the "creation of meaningful new forms", as Florida (2002: 8) defines it, is what these industries engage in. Here however Florida's argument runs into a different difficulty. In his version, the creative class, a particular group of uniquely talented individuals, are the sole producers of creativity. This might have been true in the 1980s, when advertising agencies relied exclusively on their own employees to produce advertisements. But as we shall see below, that model is less applicable

today. Instead, in the growing event-marketing sector that this article will focus on, it appears that creativity is mostly produced *outside* of the advertising agency or 'event bureau' itself: in relatively autonomous forms of social cooperation that unfold in the urban environment.[1]

The real productive force becomes not so much the creative class of art directors and advertising executives, but the mostly unemployed 'mass intellectuality' (Virno, 2004) of the urban arts, design, music and fashion scenes. At least in the case of event-marketing (but increasingly advertising in general) it is this *creative proletariat* that stands for an important part of the value-added of creative production.

The purpose of this article is to suggest a different model of the interaction between the creative industries and the urban environment. I build my argument on a study of the expanding event bureau sector in the Copenhagen advertising industry and centre it on Project Fox, a spectacular marketing event for Volkswagen's Fox model that took place in April 2005.[2] In the case of Project Fox, the urban environment was not simply an attractive perk, but unsalaried processes of productive cooperation – what I call the 'underground' – that unfold in the urban environment were the most important productive source of the kinds of creativity subsequently valorized by the culture industries. The creative class in Florida's definition, employed professionals in the culture industries, did not so much produce creativity in as much as they were in a position to appropriate and valorize the creativity produced by the underground. Whilst the case study explored in this paper is limited in its focus, structural developments within the culture industry described in the conclusion suggest that the model described here is growing in influence and importance. Consequently, the purpose of this text is not to try to vindicate Florida's thesis, but rather to propose an empirically grounded alternative model that I suggest can be substantiated by further research.

Project Fox

In April 2005 Volkswagen located the European launch of its new Fox model to Copenhagen. Instead of giving visiting motor journalists the standard treatment of five star hotels with commensurate wining and dining, Volkswagen (or rather the event bureau that coordinated the affair) decided to do something different. Project Fox, as the event was called, lasted for twenty days and involved three locations: a hotel, a

1 An 'event bureau' is a relatively new structure in the advertising industry. Its task is to organize events and happenings that stage the encounter between people and commodities in the live commercial environment. This can be everything form posh launch parties through exhibitions and sport competitions to supermarket demonstrations. The idea is to use events in order to trigger viral and word of mouth campaigns that use people's ordinary mediated communication networks as marketing vehicles, see for example Tripodi & Sutherland (2000).

2 This study builds on 25 interviews conducted by myself and Sandra Brovall among Copenhagen advertising professionals (with a particular focus on event marketing bureaus) and artists, DJs and other cultural producers who participated in the 2005 Project Fox event. The results are tentative and will be further developed in a collective research project titled, The Creative City, organized jointly by the department of Media Studies at the University of Copenhagen and the think tank Kesera (see www.kesera.org).

combined restaurant and club, and a studio. The common theme was the attempt to convey the experience of the creative urban 'underground' for which Copenhagen had become famous (by featuring on the cover of *Wallpaper* magazine, among other things[3]). This strategy aimed to "authentically address and directly involve a target group new to VW"[4] (namely the junior members of Florida's creative class). The hotel, Hotel Fox, originally an old and rather dull three star hotel in central Copenhagen was redecorated by 21 young artists form across Europe, recruited in art schools and invited by MTV Germany. They were to create "the world's most exciting and creative lifestyle hotel".[5] The club, Club Fox, featured the anarchistic cooking of Stephan Marquart, "one of the most cutting-edge and rebellious chefs in Germany".[6] After dinner, journalists entered the club area where different local DJ crews hosted club nights with events and performances and, importantly, brought their friends. The club was open to the public so that visiting journalists could "blend with the car's target group on its own turf".[7] Finally, Studio Fox was where journalists picked up cars for their test drives. At the same time they and the general public could "witness the artists transform Fox cars in to unique mobile works of art" and listen to lectures and debates on the cooperation between business and culture. All in all, "the primary focus of Project Fox was not on the car itself, but on young people and their preferences within art, music and culture. Therefore we built an entire universe that embraced and blended journalists and the young urban generation"[8], thus attempting to "successfully abolish the boundaries between the organizers and the target groups".[9] More than anything else, the project sought to convey the experience of a particular form of life.

Project Fox is a good example of what is generally known as 'event marketing'. The purpose of this strategy is to go beyond mere advertising to create an authentic experience of the product; to stage the encounter between consumers and products in ways that involve a much wider affective register. This is done in order to spark of a number of 'viral' communicative networks that are able to generate and sustain a media buzz. Event marketing entails *working with* the autonomous communicative productivity of the public (in Gabriel Tarde's [1904, cf. Lazzarato, 1997] sense of that term), rather than trying to override it through advertising and propaganda. Project Fox was rather singular to the Danish context in its ambition and scope. Indeed it was primarily aimed at an international audience. (Due to Danish tax legislation the Fox car is far too expensive for the domestic target group). Nevertheless it built upon the established practice of appropriating the creativity of a particular social group – the local 'underground scene' in this case, and in other examples, the 'urban gay community' in the case of Absolute Vodka, the 'Ghetto' in the case of Nike, or the

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3 Wallpaper, 'the most authotiative and influential design magazine in the world' (www.wallpaper.com) now also publishes its own city guides that cater to the more discerning members of the creative class.

4 'Project Fox, April 2-23, 2005', Press Release, Access PR (undated).

5 *Ibid.*

6 *Ibid.*

7 *Ibid.*

8 *Ibid.*

9 *Ibid.*

British club scene in the case of Red Bull – and using that as marketing vehicle able to convey authenticity and 'buzz'. In other words, the production of the (increasingly important) immaterial values that would presumably make the Volkswagen Fox attractive to its hip and savvy target audience, builds directly on the ability to appropriate the fruits of autonomous networks of communication and interaction that transpire in the urban context. The social life of the metropolis becomes a productive externality in its own right, a source of 'free labour' (Terranova, 2004 – 'free' both in the sense of being unpaid and in the sense of being impossible to command). But how is this positive externality produced, and how does its production relate to other aspects of the 'information society' or 'experience economy', such as the heightened mediatization of social practice, new forms of social cooperation and the 'real subsumption' of culture and communication that mark informational capitalism in general (Arvidsson, 2006, Dyer-Witheford, 1999, Jameson, 1991)?

Advertising in an Informational Culture

The systematic recourse to the free labour of consumers and other members of the public is no novelty. Already Tessa Morris-Suzuki (1997) identified this as an emerging core principle of 'Capitalism in the computer age'. Studying Japanese car manufacturing firms in the 1980s, she concluded that the automation of production and the impact of information technologies made "the direct exploitation of labour [..] less important as a source of profit and the private exploitation of social knowledge [..] more important" (Morris-Suzuki, 1997: 64). Today even mainstream established corporate actors like Lego and Procter & Gamble resort to this principle as they outsource large parts of their research and development activities to the creativity of consumers (Huston & Sakkab, 2006). This principle also lies behind the present massive productive developments known as 'Web 2.0' (see Cote and Pybus, this issue). The increasing recourse to the productive externality of socialized creativity is the effect of two interconnected developments (both part of the general development of the productive forces facilitated by new information and communication technologies-ICTs): the massification of production and the massification of intellect. The massification of production refers to the tendency towards standardization and increased reproducibility that marks the capitalist production of culture. In the case of the culture industries, Benjamin (1982[1955]) and Horkheimer & Adorno (1942) saw this tendency at work already in the 1930s. Advertisements, Hollywood films, pop music and soaps are produced according to the same standardized format, thus becoming increasingly similar. What Horkheimer & Adorno did not see was that this standardization and increasing similarity also diminishes the use-value of such cultural products, their ability to mobilize attention. They tend to recede from the consciousness of viewers and become a sort of background noise. (Indeed, from the 1960s and onwards the advertising industry has been complaining that "people no longer care about advertising", cf. Arvidsson, 2006). As in the 1930s, this leads to an intensified quest for 'authenticity' (Adorno, 2003 [1964]- although today this quest is expressed through the market, rather than through more or less totalitarian forms of aesthetic politics). The demand for 'authenticity' now means a demand for cultural products that are 'genuine', craft-made, or at any rate produced outside of the standardized schemes of the culture

industry. Precisely because of this, such cultural products have a higher use-value as attention generating vehicles. Such 'genuine' cultural products stand out, fascinate and create the affective intensities that are necessary in order to open up a channel of communication within what Tiziana Terranova refers to as the background noise of an informational, or network culture (Boyle, 2003, Terranova, 2004).

In an informational culture marked by almost infinite reproducibility, media culture thus tends to loose its grip over meaning (cf. Lash, 2002). It is no longer able to command anything but the partial attention of its audience, much less provide it with a meaningful and coherent worldview. Instead it recedes into the background, losing its control over the practices in which meaning and affect are constructed. Media culture thus becomes a sort of white noise, a noisy environment for the more or less autonomous production of a common social world of shared symbols, ethically relevant social relations and common affective intensities. That media culture recedes into the background of the attention horizon of the average actor means that the intellectual capacities of the mass – 'mass intellectuality', to use Paolo Virno's (2004) term – are activated. If it was once enough to follow the guidelines of advertising, women's magazines and Hollywood movies in order to consume successfully (cf. de Grazia, 2005), that is no longer true today. The use value of these products as instruction manuals for successful consumption has diminished to the extent that you now have to think for yourself (To follow fashion is *not* cool!). This mass intellectuality has been further empowered by the sociological and technological reorganization of life that has been the direct consequence of the socialization of capital in the form of media culture and new ICTs. This "capitalist dispersal of the social" (Dyer-Witheford, 1999: 85) has shifted old networks of communication and meaning-making ('community', 'tradition', 'values') and enabled new and different ones to emerge. In turn, this has enhanced the autonomy and productivity, the mass intellectuality, of what Hardt and Negri (2004) call the 'multitude'.

This situation means that on the one hand, standardization and almost infinite reproducibility diminishes the value of what can be produced with the means of production at the direct command of the culture industries. On the other hand, these industries confront a flowering productive externality in the form of the technologically empowered mass intellectuality of the multitude. Precisely because this externality has autonomy in relation to capital, it provides a tempting source of innovation, rejuvenation and creativity for the system, the very standardizing logic of which tends to eliminate such results *a priori*. In the most advanced factions of immaterial production users are indeed in charge (to use the motto of the present Web 2.0 movement), their *agency* creates the kinds of products that have the greatest use-value for the capitalist system.

Event Bureaus and the Proletarization of Advertising

For the Copenhagen advertising industry the consequences of this dual pressure of standardisation and autonomous production, have been a general proletarization of advertising, and a subsequent reorganization of the industry. The proletarization of

advertising results from three distinct but inter-related tendencies. First, there has been a massive increase and diversification of the amount of advertising space available. This has resulted in a diminishing efficiency of advertising as a marketing vehicle, in Denmark as well as internationally (cf. Ritchie, 1995). According to most advertising creatives that I interviewed, the general perception is that consumers are growing weary of advertising and television spots. Second, the rise of specialized media bureaus has removed most media buying activities from the control of advertising agencies. In 1985 media bureaus controlled 35 per cent of the turn-over of the Danish advertising market, and in 2003 the figure was 93 per cent, according to the statistics of the Danish association of advertising agencies, DRRB.[10] This shift of power has meant that advertising agencies have lost a significant source of income and thereby greatly reduced their ability to take risks and experiment with unusual solutions and practices. Also, the media bureaus follow a strict quantitative logic, directly evaluating the trade-off between advertising costs and sales results. This tends to further standardize advertising messages and reduce the space for creativity and experimentation, as the media bureaus "sell advertising as a mass commodity".[11] Finally, a third tendency has been the drive to further restrict the economic freedom of advertising agencies and hence the amount of creative space that they can provide. Before, agencies used to make money by actually producing advertisements and other media products. Today technologies like photo editing and graphic design software, digital cameras and video-editing software, together with the generalization of the competencies necessary to use such tools has produced a situation where it is no longer particularly difficult to produce an advertisement "Any kid with a Macintosh can do it"[12] – and so can most clients. Advertising agencies have lost control over the means of production. This threefold pressure to reduce creativity and experimentation has transformed the nature of advertising work. It is less free and less bohemian than before: Like many other forms of immaterial labour (such as university teaching), it is more subject to quantification, documentation and control (cf. De Angelis and Harvie, 2006).

> When I started [in the 1980s] we had wine on Tuesdays, and then on Thursdays and Fridays too, and if we got a new customer we had Champagne... it was a bit on the heavy side.. Today it's much more orderly and you have to document everything that you do. Then we used to live off other things, the actual production of things, advertisements, booklets and such. Today its pure creativity and that has to be documented.[13]

Structurally, the economic pressure on traditional agency activities, like brokering media space and producing advertisements, has led to the emergence of a new type of advertising agency, the event bureau. Event bureaus do not primarily produce advertising. They are closer to PR agencies in their operation. Their task is to produce an event, an affective intensity that can trigger a number of autonomous- or 'viral'-communicative networks among consumers and the public at large. The task of the event bureau is then to manage these autonomous processes so that the mass intellectuality of the multitude is effectively put to work in supporting the campaign at

10 Statistics available online at http://www.drrb.dk/Brancheindblik/Branchetal.aspx.

11 Interview 'Mogens' CEO event bureau, 1/11, 2005.

12 Interview, 'Klaus' Copywriter, 11/5, 2005.

13 Interview, 'Klaus' Copywriter, 11/5, 2005.

hand. The event bureau does not actually produce much itself. Rather it specializes in managing external processes of productive cooperation. Its role is biopolitical rather than directly productive: it regulates the affective and communicative flows of the multitude so that these effectively come to constitute valuable immaterial labour. This is true also for the triggering events that it stages. Given the variety of services and competences required – from waitresses in hen's costumes to cool DJs – and given the need to supply events that are perceived as 'genuine' rather then mass produced, the event bureau makes almost exclusive use of external talent. Most event bureaus consist of a few employees (three to five is the norm) whose main productive potential resides in their ability to mobilize and manage large and diverse networks of external talent. Indeed, to have such a large and diverse network is a prerequisite for employment.[14]

The Underground

One of the most important sources of this creative externality is what people in the advertising industry generally refer to as the 'underground'. The term 'underground' refers to relatively autonomous processes of cultural production that unfold in the urban environment, often in connection to some 'sub-cultural' (another difficult term nowadays) 'scene' or other. Advertising professionals as well as underground producers themselves understand these autonomous forms of creative production to be both more innovative, experimental and cutting edge, more authentic, rebellious and 'cool' than others, and thus intrinsically opposed to the corporate logic of standardization and 'commodification' (cf. Poutain & Robbbins, 2000). Cooperation between the underground and the creative industries, in particular, the 'conquest of cool' as Thomas Frank (1997) has called it, has of course a long history. Already in the 1930s advertising aesthetics began to draw on the Italian and Russian avant-garde (Salaris, 1986). In the 1950s the music industry practically incorporated the emerging youth culture as a source of product development, constantly surveying it for new marketable fads and fashions. In the 1960s, the New York Pop Art scene and large parts of the Counter Culture were a constant source of inspiration for advertising's 'creative revolution' (Frank, 1997).

However, in recent years this connection has become even tighter and more institutionalized. In the 1980s, the 'account planner' became an established figure in advertising industries (although pioneered already in the 1960s (Pollit, 1979). The account planner (or 'creative planner') constitutes the third member of the creative team and her role is to constantly survey and keep in touch with the mood of the target group, making sure that the campaign or the brand reflects what is most recent and cutting edge in the target groups own creative development. The planner can make use of external 'cool hunting' and 'trend scouting' firms.[15] These developed originally to help fashion designers keep up with an evolving street style. Now they tend to give general coverage of youth (and not so young) culture. Usually they deploy ethnographic

14 Interview 'Sven' and 'Mette' two partners to a recently started event bureau, 10/11-05.

15 See for example 'Youthintelligence' [http://www.youthintelligence.com] or 'Trendcentral' [http://www.trendcentral.com/trends/default.asp].

research and a network of 'trendsetters' (vanguard consumers at the edge of creative development in their peer group), who regularly report on what is new and 'cool'. Finally there are 'event', 'viral' or 'guerilla' marketing firms who tend to put the underground to work directly for the campaign at hand.[16] The interconnections between the advertising industry and the underground have been institutionalized to such an extent that advertising professionals, although they often identify as members of the creative class, often concede that real creative production tends to unfold elsewhere.[17] As one event bureau professional told me:

> There are, like, these two groups, on the one hand the 'correctly creative'; the people that go to the right places, Barcelona, New York, Paris, and have the right bike, and the right glasses and live on the Islands Brygge or Vesterbro [Copenhagen neighborhoods in the process of gentrification] and dress in a certain way. They choose a role where they can confirm each other. Then there are the 'true creatives', like strange people: maybe they study at the university or make music, or underground theater, and they're just born with it, and they're crude and not well adapted, and they think untraditionally and alternatively, and these strange people are the ones that advertising agencies really want to get in touch with.[18]

At the same time, the 'underground' has changed as well. It has become less political, more individualized and competitive, and more open to cooperate with the creative industries and with business in general. In this respect the Copenhagen underground scene has gone through changes similar to those described by Muggleton & Weinzeirl (2003) and McRobbie (2002) in the case of Britain, only about five years later. As in the UK, the transformation of the Copenhagen underground was linked to the establishment of the electronic music scene as the centre of underground culture. Electronic music accomplished two things: first, it expanded the size of the underground scene. With new technologies, PCs and music editing software, the capacity to engage in independent music production expanded to involve the kinds of people that did not embrace the political and existential ethos of an earlier generation of underground artists. In short, "the nerds now got involved as well".[19] Second, as the electronic music scene expanded outside the cultural and spatial boundaries of the older political underground, it came to create its own events. This involved using new venues and connecting to other emerging scenes, like video art, fashion and design, which further expanded the size and scope of underground culture. It also tended to introduce an entrepreneurial logic into independent cultural production. DJs and party organizers began to see themselves as cultural entrepreneurs, putting together music, artists and venues to create an event, marketing it to get the right kind of audience and charging money at the door to cover costs. In short, they invested time and money in order to cash in on respect (more than on money).

If underground cultural production in the 1980s had moved within ideologically coherent communities with strong internal solidarities and clear boundaries that set

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16 See for example the UK firm Razorfish [http://www.avenuea-razorfish.com/interactiveMarketing.htm].

17 The term creative class has become fashionable in Danish popular culture, not only on because of Florida, but also by the general media hype about creativity, cf. McRobbie, 2002.

18 Interview Pauline, employee, Eventbureau, 12/5-05.

19 Interview, Philippe, Artist, 20/3-06.

them off from the rest of the city (the *Autonomen*/Punk scene with its occupied buildings and frequent clashes with the police), it now began to look more like an ethical *economy* (with an emphasis on 'economy') marked instead by open-ended networks (Wittel, 1999). Cultural producers perceived themselves as enterprising individuals who invested their time and money and put their reputation at stake in producing events that might increase their credibility and standing within the peer group. This entrepreneurial turn tended to open up the underground to the creative industries and the rest of the city. First, because event producers now accepted and actively sought out sponsorships to help cover costs and to increase the attraction of their event by providing things like free beer. Second, because the frequency of these events led to the opening of a number of clubs which transformed the (former) underground into an important part of the urban nightlife scene, with the result that independent 'underground' cultural producers and creative industry employees began to frequent the same environments and 'network' with each other with greater ease than before.

An Ethical Economy

Today the boundaries between the 'underground' and 'business' are rather porous and diffuse. The two terms are often used as shorthands, but once one approaches the actual inter-change between independent cultural producers and the creative industries, the boundaries are much less clear. Indeed the creative industries seem in many respects to be placed within the hierarchies of the 'underground' itself, and intermediate figures like the 'network entrepreneurs' that I will describe below, play a sort of liminal, trickster role, between 'art' and 'commerce'. Similarly, many independent culture producers make strategic use of the monetary resources of the culture industries in order to further their own goals and agendas. Nevertheless, artists interacting with the culture industries need to negotiate the difficult transition between the ethical economy of respect that rules independent cultural production within the 'underground', and the monetary economy of the business world. The ability to do this skilfully, without appearing to be a 'sell-out', is, as we shall see, a key condition for success.

The underground is strongly hierarchical. Better, it is a hierarchical conglomeration of networks, a 'network hierarchy'. Status within the network hierarchy is premised on the amounts of contacts, social capital or, respect that one can command, and consequently on one's ability to function as a node, able to diffuse and circulate information as well as mobilize attention and participation. One's standing is directly premised on one's biopolitical capacity to regulate the communicative and affective flows that make up immaterial production. At the bottom end you have the, what my interviewees refer to as, 'deep underground', the products of which are too narrow to circulate within a wider audience (e.g. minimalist electronic music, or deathmetal), and are, for that very reason, without much interest to business. Actors higher up in the network hierarchy often see members of the 'deep underground' as most passionately anti-business, precisely because they have nothing to sell. At the same time, the 'deep underground' is perceived to be at the cutting-edge artistically. Thus it remains important for actors higher up in the hierarchy to have contacts there and to be able to draw inspiration from

what is produced there, and if necessary mobilize actors moving in the 'deep underground' to participate in the events that they organize, in order to give these events a vanguard, cutting-edge feel.

However, in order to have a career within the underground it is necessary to break out of the closed and exclusive environments of the 'deep underground' and acquire a name that is able to circulate more widely. The name is very important. It is by being widely known and having a good reputation that one is able to get jobs, gigs or other opportunities for artistic expression, and generally prosper. Most of the economy of the underground is geared towards managing the standing of one's name and maximizing its capacity to circulate. The currency of circulation is respect. Respect is accumulated by acquiring a network of people who know of and recognize one's name. Such positive recognition is in part the outcome of artistic skill. But another crucial factor is apparent or authentic altruism. It is by providing 'free goods' to people that one amasses the respect of others (be this a pleasurable artistic experience, a job, gig or other opportunity for self-expression, or a good party). In this sense it is important that one's activities produce no monetary gain, but that all resources are spent to ensure as pleasurable or extravagant an experience as possible.

> That way it's better to break even, because if there is a surplus, then we have been too cheap, and we could have used the money for something extra, something more fun. I remember last time [we organized a party] the bar started making too much money, so we went out to buy candy and handed it out to people, because in the end they had paid for it by paying money at the bar.[20]

The correct attitude seems to be to do things for others, not for monetary gain. Even very successful actors, like the network entrepreneurs who are able to live off the respect and diffusion that their name has accumulated, perceive of their career as "doing what I like and being respected for that", rather than as a conscious effort to acquire monetizable resources. [21]

Nonetheless, this economy of respect provides a strong motivation for cooperating with business, as the extra resources that become available through such cooperation can be directly mobilized in order to circulate one's name and accumulate the desired respect. This can be done either through media exposure or by being seen mingling with the right people. As two of the DJs who participated in Club Fox put it,

> If there had only been country-bumpkins there and we had got bad publicity in bad media, that would have been really bad for us. Now as it turned out there were lots of cool people and cool journalists and great bands. All those Berlin ravers who partied like crazy. It was one of the best evenings we've ever had in Denmark. And some of the coolest people we ever played for in Denmark. So it worked great for us.[22]

Or, it could be done through offering extra perks like free alcohol and a better party infrastructure:

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20 Interview 'Nis' and 'Niis', DJ:s, April, 2006.

21 Interview, Kjeld, DJ and 'network entrepreneur', April, 2006.

22 *Ibid.*

> Where would you go? An underground party that nobody sponsors in an old factory with a shitty sound system, or the same stuff with a good system, nice furniture, free vodka and free beers and a nice place with good light and good heating. You'd pick the latter, wouldn't you?[23]

Corporate money and sponsorship can be included as a resource in the ethical economy of respect, as long as they are spent without any apparent personal monetary gain.

Naturally this is wrought with danger. Firstly and most obviously, one has to be careful not to appear to be doing things for personal monetary gain, to be 'selling out' in too obvious a manner. Indeed the key to really making money is to understand how to "preserve one's goodwill"[24] while monetizing one's name; to successfully navigate the boundary between the ethical economy of respect and the monetary economy of business.[25] In order to do this, it is necessary to be careful when making alliances and in associating one's name with business actors. The sponsors might have their own ideas about how to organize the party or event, and these ideas might conflict with the criteria of success, or indeed the aesthetic habitus that prevails among one's peers. "As soon as they hire huge doormen, or guys running around with headsets, the atmosphere changes […] If the event bureau gets to decide too much it always ends up like a sort of village festival thing".[26] At one point Club Fox had a separate VIP lounge for journalists and Volkswagen people. This created a feeling among DJs and party goers that they were tricked into putting up some sort of show for corporate VIPs. In turn this reflected badly on the DJs responsible for organizing that night (and resulted in a small riot which ended with the party organizers being thrown out from their own party).

Apart from such direct corporate interference with the event itself, there is a constant danger of aligning one's name with a commercial brand. This is particularly true if one has a well-reputed name. In that case the association will stick. If it is not coherent and motivated, or if it does not fit into the personal brand that one seeks to construct for oneself, this can cause serious and lasting damage. As one famous underground artist who refused to participate in Project Fox put it:

> I live and work in this city and if I'd done that [participated in Project Fox] it would have stuck to my name and when I bike home I would have to stand there and defend the project and be a representative for it, so the only right thing was to keep away. People who say, we just take the money and have fun and make a party are too naive. They don't understand what is at stake. […] I have no problem with working with sponsored events *per se*, but here there was a hidden agenda, or rather it wasn't hidden enough. It was simply too much, like being part of a three-dimensional advertising spot, and the only reason they did it in Copenhagen was that the city is so small that they could dominate it totally, and if you went to their parties you became an actor in their advertising spot, and I think it's strange people did not understand that.[27]

The motivation for not participating was not ideological. Indeed very few of my interviewees had anything in principle against cooperating with business. It was simply a matter of brand management. Project Fox was perceived to be too overtly corporate,

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23 Interview, Thomas, DJ and 'network entrepreneur' April, 2006.

24 *Ibid.*

25 *Ibid.*

26 Interview 'Nis' and 'Niis', April, 2006.

27 Interview, 'Rasmus', Street artist, November, 2005.

too manipulative. Participating would not have produced a net gain to this person's name. Similarly, a famous DJ and network entrepreneur made a similar judgement albeit in more direct monetary terms. He did not like the design of the project, and "in any case they didn't pay enough money"[28] Less famous actors could use Volkswagen's resources as a vehicle for reaching out to new people, associate with 'cool' artists from abroad and generally gain media coverage, but for more established names the costs of being associated with the Volkswagen brand started to outweigh the benefits.

Network Entrepreneurs

One category of actors who are particularly sensitive to the difficulties of navigating the boundary between the economies of money and respect are the network entrepreneurs. These are people who live off their ability to capitalize on their place at the top of the network hierarchy or the 'underground'. They are usually (but not exclusively) a bit older and have a longer career behind them. Now they mediate between event bureaus and underground cultural producers. Because of their large networks they are able to recruit the kinds of people that the event bureau requires in order to create the right kind of ambience. Equally importantly, their name stands as a guarantee of quality. The network entrepreneurs that I talked to were very aware of the monetary value of the networks that they commanded and the respect that they had accumulated.

> I was contacted by [this company] and they needed a DJ, and I gave them a price-list with four different prices. At one price I was in the picture, in the background, but you couldn't see that it was me. At another price, you could distinctly recognize me. At the third price there were close-ups of me and at the fourth price I'd wear their clothes. This was the most expensive price of course, I think I set it at [DKK] 200.000, the lowest price was [DKK] 20.000.[29]

But what motivates a price difference of 1000 per cent? What is it that the network entrepreneur really sells? The network entrepreneur sells access to forms of life as they have developed in the ethical economy of the underground. Once mobilized by the network entrepreneur, such forms of life (cliques, friendship networks, small tribes or other more or less temporary forms of social cooperation) are made to unfold as freely as possible within the structures of the event. Most participating DJs perceived that they had more freedom to do what they wanted at Club Fox than in an ordinary club or event: "You could play whatever you wanted, and do really weird things, and they liked it anyway, so it was great".[30] According to the event bureau that managed the whole affair, it was precisely this freedom that accounted for the success of Project Fox.[31] From this point of view, the naively cynical attitude of some DJs of simply taking the money and throwing their own party is precisely what the sponsoring event bureau wants. By taking Volkswagen's money, like one group of DJs did, and using it to throw their own birthday party, "invit[ing] our friends and do[ing] something personal and just

28 Interview, Thomas, DJ and 'network entrepreneur' April, 2006

29 Interview, 'Kjeld', DJ and 'network entrepreneur', April, 2006

30 Interview, Thomas, DJ and 'network entrepreneur' April, 2006

31 Interview, 'Frans' partner Access PR, October, 2005.

be[ing] ourselves",[32] 'authentic' or 'genuine' forms of life are produced, which the event bureau values the most. Indeed, from the accounts of older network entrepreneurs who have a long experience of mediating cooperation between business and the underground, it seems that, in recent years, there has been both a growing interest on the part of business in "reaching young people though their own activities and interests"[33] (to cite Access PR's own press release) and an increase in the freedom that businesses give to event organizers and participating artists.

> There's more money now, and you are much freer in using it. Because companies know that there is no reason for them to get involved. Of course they have an idea of what they want to do, but as long as they see that they get good PR from it, it's become fairly easy to get money out of them.[34]

Indeed network entrepreneurs are optimistic about the future. On the one hand there is a continuing interest on the part of business to sponsor underground artists: "That's how I see the future of the underground, that we can be used to speak for those who make a lot of money, because there is no money in selling records any more."[35] On the other hand, new information and communication technologies (like file sharing) that permit new ways of distributing and circulating music have enabled new forms of cooperation that in turn generate new forms of life. These can be successfully marketed to business:

> So we won't be unemployed just because music has become more openly accessible. It only means that people form new groups, with new things in common. And these become even harder to find and grasp for people on the outside. This makes it even more difficult for businesses to stay in touch.[36]

To summarize: at least in case of the event bureaus, the 'underground' has become an integrated element to the economy of the culture industries. Underground artists and advertising professionals mutually utilize each other. For the underground artists, sponsorship provides resources to be mobilized in the drive to maximize one's standing and respect. To the advertising professionals, the underground produces the authentic forms of life that have become increasingly valuable in contemporary viral or event marketing strategies. The cultural industry appropriates the creativity of the underground by hooking into its networks. The network entrepreneurs play a crucial part here. By means of their position at the top of the hierarchy of the underground they are endowed with the kinds of contacts, sub-cultural capital, respect and the general biopolitical capacity that enable them to recruit and mobilize desired forms of life and to guarantee their quality. The people who are recruited by network entrepreneurs, like DJs and artists, in turn make use of their networks, either to mobilize an attractive crowd of friends and acquaintances, or to develop their own artistic capital in terms of skills and up-to-date-ness. At yet a lower level there is the 'deep underground' where innovations are made that will slowly trickle upwards. All of these levels are also connected laterally to other environments and milieus (Berlin, New York, Barcelona), chiefly, but not exclusively through ICTs. It is as if the event bureau plants a root (or

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32 Interview 'Nis' and 'Niis', April, 2006.

33 Project Fox, April 2-23, 2005', Press Release, Access PR (undated).

34 Inteeview, 'Kjeld', DJ and 'network entrepreneur', April, 2006.

35 Interview, Thomas, DJ and 'network entrepreneur' April, 2006.

36 Interview, 'Kjeld', DJ and 'network entrepreneur', April, 2006.

maybe a rhizome) in the productive multitude that dissipates almost *ad infinitum*, and allows it to establish a value stream.

Conclusion: Creative Class?

To Florida, the creative class is composed of people whose job it is to create meaningful new forms of creativity. These can be scientists, computer programmers or art directors who produce creativity by virtue of their talent (Florida, 2002: 68). For Florida, the creative class is part of the paid workforce. Hence the key to urban development and prosperity is to attract such talented and productive individuals. This is done by creating an attractive 'cool' and quirky urban environment characterized, among other things, by a strong presence of an urban bohemia, or 'underground'. It is important to note at this point that, for Florida, the underground is not productive in its own right. It merely serves as an extra perk that, along with large gay communities and lots of ethnic restaurants, will attract the demanding, talented and productive members of the creative class. In the case of Project Fox and Copenhagen event bureaus more generally however, the valuable new forms of life that were deployed as marketing tools were all produced by the free labour of the underground.

The task of the creative class (in Florida's sense of the term, i.e. professionals employed by advertising agencies) is primarily to appropriate these externally produced meaningful new forms. The culture industries have increasingly come to include the free labour of the underground as an internal element to their own valorization circuit, and the role of its professionals becomes primarily that of managing, or appropriating the value it produces. Through their networks, or through the mediation of network entrepreneurs, the urban environment comes to constitute a positive externality that can be grasped and valorized. This suggests a redefinition of Florida's terminology.

According to Access PR's own numbers, the Project Fox campaign generated 35 million hits, including via important publications like German the tabloid newspaper, *Bild am Sonntag*. While the actual value of this publicity is impossible to determine exactly, the event bureau itself estimates its value to €2 million.[37] Some of this value is produced by the organizational and coordinating labour of the event bureau, but most of it, as I have shown in this paper, derives form the immaterial labour of the 'underground'. The designers recruited from abroad to redecorate Hotel Fox were paid along the lines of €1000 a month (which is less than the Danish minimum wage). Most of these designers worked 2-5 weeks. The network entrepreneurs in turn charged around €4000 to help organize the event. Although rough and far from conclusive, these figures point towards a different composition than that of Florida's creative class. On the one hand we have the producers of creativity who are mostly not paid for what they do. Instead these creative proletarians live off other jobs; or in Scandinavia, the welfare state. In Denmark they make up a publicly funded productive externality that can be

37 This impossibility to measure is in itself an interesting illustration of the 'crisis of value' that characterizes informational capitalism in general, cf. Arvidsson, 2006, Negri, 1999. All figures cited here were given to me in an interview with the CEO of Access PR in November 2005.

appropriated and mobilized by the creative industries. On the other hand we have the creative class proper, professionals employed in advertising and event marketing firms. These people are paid and live off their jobs, but the value of their labour does not so much reside in their skills in producing creative content, as much as in their ability to appropriate and mobilize 'meaningful new forms' that are produced elsewhere. In the classical sociological terminology of class analysis these people would be more like a 'creative petty bourgeoisie' or maybe better 'the managerial class of the creative economy', in that their function is primarily to manage, appropriate and valorize, not to directly produce. (This observation is supported by the fact that, when interviewed, self-professed members of the creative class primarily envision their own class identity in terms of consumption). In so far as they are able to live off their mediating role, the network entrepreneurs would also belong to this new managerial class, albeit to its lowest layers.

We could provisionally define the boundary between these two classes as the ability to live off creativity. Advertising professionals clearly do this. So do successful network entrepreneurs. Some online gamers live off what they do, but most do not, neither do most DJs, artists and musicians, no matter their position in the underground network hierarchy. This model must to be further validated by additional research. But it already points at a different way of conceiving urban development.

If indeed the creative 'underground' is a crucial producer of the kinds of creativity that fuel the increasingly central culture industries; and if the value of these kinds of 'genuine' cultural products derives form the fact that they are produced in relative autonomy, beyond of the standardizing logic of the capitalist culture industries, then efforts to increase this autonomy could actually be a way of stimulating urban economic development. Presently most cities seem to have taken the opposite direction. Gentrification, restricted welfare systems (or the coupling of benefits to various forms of surveillance and control) and the general privatization of culture are all factors that decrease the relative autonomy of 'underground' producers vis-à-vis capital. But there are some indications that the creative revival of the Copenhagen underground in the 1990s and its transformation into an open-ended economy was, at least in part, fuelled by the more generous welfare provisions enacted by the, then, social democratic government, and made possible by the cheap housing (then) available within the city. Could a creative proletariat on welfare be conceived as a sort of publicly funded immaterial externality, that is valorized either through its appropriation by the culture industries, or more indirectly, through its contribution to the urban gentrification processes that are a key driver behind real estate prices?

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Crystals and Analytic Engines: Historical and Conceptual Preliminaries to a New Theory of Machines

George Caffentzis

abstract

In this paper I argue that immaterial labor, as defined by its advocates like Hardt and Negri, does not exist. In order to defend this claim I examine how labor has been understood in the history of capitalism through the study of machines, and argue that the most successful theory of machines in capitalist society is Marx's. I rely on this theory to defend my skepticism concerning immaterial labor. However, Marx's theory itself must be defended. One of Marx's most sophisticated critics, Philip Mirowski, has charged him with being 'envious' of two contradictory physics theories at once: the substance-theory of energy of the 1840s and the field-theory of energy of the 1860s. Mirowski argues that Marx could not decide which to take as his model for labor, machines and value, so he used both and ended up with a contradictory theory of value and machines. In Part One of the paper I defend Marx's theory by demonstrating that the very binary Mirowski deploys to criticize Marx's theory (the categories of substance versus field) is not a binary at all and that Marx's theory is consistent. In Part Two I show that Marx's theory of machines is incomplete. Though it included the theory of simple machines and of heat engines, it did not comprehend Turing machines, even though Charles Babbage had developed the first version of a Turing machine thirty years before the publication of Capital. This incompleteness encourages thinkers like Hardt and Negri to argue that services, cultural products, and especially knowledge and communication are immaterial products and hence require immaterial labor for their production. A New Theory of Machines that was complete would show how services, cultural products, knowledge and communication are material goods, and thus would support my initial claim.

> And in this there is very great utility, not because those wheels or other machines accomplish the transportation of the same weight with less force or greater speed, or through a larger interval, than could be done without such instruments by an equal but judicious and well organized force, but rather because the fall of a river costs little or nothing, while the maintenance of a horse or similar animal whose power exceeds that of eight or more men is far less expensive than it would be to sustain and maintain so many men. (Galileo, 1960: 150)

Introduction

Karl Marx often sardonically noted that the capitalist ethos evoked a magical, 'something for nothing' imaginary concerning the profit-making potentialities of science and machinery. This attitude was precisely captured in the 17th century by Ben

Jonson in his play, *The Alchemist*, and in the 19th century by the get-rich-quick cranks like Charles Redheffer and John W. Keely who had perpetual motion machines and schemes eternally buzzing in their brains (Ord-Hume, 1977). For Marx, capitalists, far from being the sober and rational agents depicted by Max Weber's ideal type, promote an irrational understanding of the uses of machinery, just as capitalism famously inculcates a fetishism with respect to commodities that is more thorough going than the reverence West Africans were supposed to express toward their wooden idols. Far from defining humanity's inevitable future, capitalism is inherently unable to understand the very machines that serve as the distinctive tools and symbols of this supposed future.

In this paper I analyze Marx's theory of machines in capitalism. I do this in order to contribute to the debate concerning immaterial labor that this issue of *ephemera* is devoted to. I take an extreme position in this debate: immaterial labor as defined, for example, by Hardt and Negri in *Empire* – "We define immaterial labor [as] labor that produces an immaterial good, such as a service, a cultural product, knowledge or communication" (Hardt and Negri, 2000: 190) – does not exist. I argue that services, cultural products, knowledge and communication are 'material goods' and the labor that produces them is material as well (though it might not always be tangible). The products of services, from stylish hair cuts to massages, are embodied material goods; cultural products like paintings, films, and books are quite material; communication requires perfectly material channels (even though the material might be 'invisible' electrons); and finally knowledge as presently understood is, like goals in soccer games, a specific material transformation of social reality.

However, in order to make my case, it is not enough to present some counter-examples as I have just done. I need to present a model of work in response to the 'immaterialists' and like all such models, they need a *machine substitute*, for *the* model of understanding human labor in capitalism is the machine that can replace it in the course of capitalist production. The identification of human labor with the action of machines is a special case of a general situation. Marx doggedly points out, again and again, from the *1844 Manuscripts* to *Capital III*, that capital in the form of machines falsely presents itself as productive of value and the creator of surplus value. Living labor repeatedly appears as dead labor, even in the case of our own living labor. This transformation is not an ideological choice, it is a *reflex* of this mode of life. (This reflex is something like the 'Moon Illusion', i.e., why the moon looks bigger on the horizon than when higher up, transposed from the realm of sight to social understanding.) Marx writes about it in the following passage, "with the development of machinery there is a sense in which the conditions of labor come to dominate labor even technologically and, at the same time, they replace it, suppress it, and render it superfluous in its independent form" (Marx, 1976: 1055). This is one of hundreds of possible citations in Marx's work that makes the same point, illustrating how obsessive he became in trying to expose this false transformation. Indeed, Marx's theory of machines microscopically analyzes this reflex that makes capital 'a highly mysterious thing' and he specifies the conditions of the demystification of machines.

In this paper I defend Marx's theory of machines from charges of inconsistency, but I also find it incomplete. I argue that it needs to be extended to include another category of machine: the Turing machine (i.e. the common mathematical structure of all

computers, formally isolated by Alan Turing in the 1930s) (Turing, 2004 [1936]). A complete theory of machines that included Turing machines as well as simple machines and heat engines would demonstrate, on the one side, the materiality of all labor and, on the other, the lineaments of a strategy to liberate labor from its bondage to capital.

Although Marx was far from being an anti-industrial 'back to the land' activist, he was a prime debunker of the economic claims capitalists make for machines which function as a form of conceptual terrorism against workers' struggle (Caffentzis, 1997). He argued that active human labor is the only source of value, that however cleverly designed or gigantic in size, machines produce no value at all and that, at best, they can only transfer their own value to the product.

Marx's attitude was similar to that early modern critic of machine magic: Galileo (Galileo, 1960; Drake, 1978). In the same paragraph from which the epigraph of this piece was culled, Galileo ridicules "designers of machines" who believe that "with their machines they could cheat nature" (Galileo, 1960: 150). He claims that machines do not in themselves create force or motion, they simply make it possible to substitute less 'intelligent' and less costly sources of force and motion for the more 'intelligent' and more costly ones. The problem for the mechanic is to design machines so that "with the mere application of [the mover's, say, a horse's] strength it can carry out the desired effect" (Galileo, 1960: 150). The mechanic introduces intelligent design into the world, but s/he cannot add even a cubit of force or motion to it. This might not appear to be so, if one looks at the books of mechanics from Hero of Alexandria's to Galileo's own, which are filled with the diagrams of the mediating machines; but its true realm is in the world of costs and wages. In other words, simple machines – the inclined plane, lever, pulley, screw, wheel and axle (capstan) – "judiciously organize force", they do not create it (Galileo, 1960: 150).

Many physicists after Galileo, especially 19th century architects of Thermodynamics like Sadi Carnot and Hermann von Helmholtz, were anxious to make this anti-magical lesson evident in the context of heat engines as well (e.g., by proclaiming the principles: no perpetual motion machine is possible, energy cannot be created or destroyed).

Marx, undoubtedly influenced by the two 'laws of thermodynamics' being developed in his time, agreed with Galileo and, if one substitutes 'value' for 'force' or 'energy', one can see his effort to establish conservation laws for value that block any attempt to 'cheat society' with machines. Machines do not create value, they merely 'judiciously organize' it and, most important, they make it possible to substitute less costly for more expensive (and/or resistant) labor power. As Andrew Ure, the 19th century 'philosopher of machines', wrote: "The effect of improvements in machinery, [lies] not merely in superseding the necessity for the employment of the same quantity of adult labour as before, in order to produce a given result, but in substituting one description of human labour for another, the less skilled for the more skilled, juvenile for adult, female for male…." (quoted in Marx, 1976: 559-560). That is why they can become such powerful weapons against the working class, so that "the instrument of labour strikes down the worker" (Marx, 1976: 559).

Though they appear often to be behemoths of power (as in the steam engines of the 19th century) or angels of intelligence (as in computers of the 21st century), machines' weakness – the fact that they cannot create value – has enormous consequences for the whole capitalist system. Industries that employ a large amount of machinery and a relatively small amount of labor cannot create within their production process the surplus value necessary to constitute an average rate of profit for the investment in constant capital (machinery, for the most part) and variable capital (wages). However, if capitalists do not receive at least an average rate of profit, they inevitably leave their branch of industry over time and new investors shun them. Soon, these branches of industry would stop functioning, due to bankruptcies and low investment. But what if these branches of industry (e.g., oil extraction) were required for the reproduction of the system? How would the profits of such branches be provided for, if the workers in these branches could not generate them? This question is especially important to answer since increasing the use of machinery to respond to workers' struggles is a crucial strategy in the eternally rolling, though often low-intensity, class war.

Marx's response to this conundrum is that there is a transformation of surplus value created in some branches of industry with relatively low ratios of investment in machinery to wages into the profits of branches that have relative high ratios. This process takes place 'behind the backs' of capitalists in the competitive process, and forms the foundation of the remarkable unity of capital, given the apparent competitive character of the system (Marx, 1981: 273ff). Investment in machines is promoted by the system in general, even though it does not lead to an increase in surplus value in particular (although, of course, surplus value can be created by workers in the production of these machines just as in the production of any other commodity).

In Part I of this essay, I defend an important tenet of Marx's theory of machines from claims that it is rooted in a fundamental inconsistency of the theory. This tenet is the notion of a transformation of surplus value generated by some branches of production into the profits of other branches of production.

Part I. Conceptual Preliminary: Is Marx's Theory of Machines Consistent?

> I could be a rich man if I could have taken along only what I merely needed to pick up and break loose. In some places I found myself in a veritable garden of magic. What I beheld was formed most artistically out of the most precious metals. In the elegant braids and branches of silver there hung sparkling, ruby-red, transparent fruits and the heavy trees were standing on a crystal base inimitably wrought. One hardly trusted one's senses in those marvelous places and never tired of roaming through those charming wildernesses and delighting in their treasures, on my present journey too I have seen many remarkable things, and certainly the earth is equally productive and lavish in other countries. (Novalis, 1964: 88)

Marx's theory of machines postulates the existence of a fundamental transformation principle of capitalist life: profits tend to be equalized across all branches of industry, even though the ratio between the investments in machinery and the payment of wages varies tremendously between them. If this transformation is not operative, then there would be no incentive to invest in machinery in order to escape working class struggle

or even to ensure the system's own material reproduction. For if surplus value is created by labor, but very little labor is employed in essential industries like oil extraction, then there would be little or no profit for such an industry that requires large investments in fixed capital.

But does such a transformation of surplus value into profit take place literally 'behind the backs' of the participants of the system? The debate on the mathematical and methodological validity of Marx's 'transformation' has been the staple of the academic polemics between Marxists and anti-Marxists since Bohm-Bawerk's *Karl Marx and the Close of His System* (2006) first published in the late 19th century. Indeed, in the last century, every time there was an intensification of the class struggle and a penetration of Marxist intellectuals into the academy, capital's schoolmasters took out that old chestnut from the closet to be roasted again. The sophistication of the technical ripostes on each side, however, has definitely been increasing. Thus in response to the campus rebellions of the 1960s, Paul Samuelson (1971) leveled his analytic arsenal on the old Moor only to find that a whole literature modeling Marx's theory in linear algebraic terms sprouting in its defense. This literature, with its Sraffaian, 'analytic' and 'recursive' solutions, has shown us that the technical problems of the 'transformation' can be resolved *if* one accepts rather stilted mathematical models of Marx's fluid, chemically active description of the capitalist system of production *and* rejects one or more of Marx's conservation principles or mathematical procedures (cf. Steedman et al., 1981; Shaikh, 1978). The status of this debate, therefore, has entered into a more interesting stage. For what is at stake is the very reason for having a labor theory of value in the first place.

A sign of this change appeared with the publication of Philip Mirowski's *More Heat Than Light* (1989) where Marx is no longer charged with making elementary mathematical errors or being ignorant of analytic techniques that were invented a generation or two after the publication of *Capital*. Rather, Mirowski tries to show that the transformation problem is a problem because it reflects a major tension not only in Marx's theory, but in all scientific endeavors during the mid-19th century. Natural philosophy was transforming itself into physics in this period, Mirowski points out, and the ontology of science was turning from 'substance' to 'field' entities (or from 'substance' to 'function' in Cassirer's [1953] formulation).

Mirowski claims that Marx found himself on the 'cusp' of this transition and his value theory reflected it, "in fact there ended being not one but *two* Marxian labor theories of value, the first rooted in the older substance tradition, the other sporting resemblances to nascent field theories in physics" (Mirowski, 1989: 177). The first type Mirowski calls "the crystallized-labor or substance approach", while the second type is called "the real-cost or virtual approach" (Mirowski, 1989: 180). They have very different, even contradictory methodological implications. For the first is like the caloric theory of heat which identified heat as a substance that 'flowed' from hotter to cooler bodies in the way that water flowed from higher to lower elevations, while the second identifies heat as one aspect of a generalized energy field that can be transformed into many different states, phases and forms. Indeed, the intellectual struggle in the development of thermodynamics from the publication of Sadi Carnot's *Memoire* in 1824 to the publication of Clausius' entropy-defining paper of 1865 could be read as marking the

transition from substance to field theories in physics (Carnot, 1986 [1824]; Clausius, 1965 [1865]). Marx's theory then would be like many theories developed in the 1840s by those who accepted both Carnot's caloric explanation of the work performed by the steam engine and early versions of the conservation of energy.

In particular the crystallized-labor theory makes it clear that exploitation can only have its origin in exploitation within the process of production. Since value is a substance, it is conserved both *locally* (when, for example, it is used in productive consumption as in the case of food for a worker or gasoline for a tractor) and *globally* (when the total sum of value is conserved in the complex transformation from one branch of production to another). These flows of value seem to have all the charm of "the hallowed tradition of natural-substance theories, which were intended to imitate the structure of explanation in the Cartesian natural sciences" (Mirowski, 1989: 184). The metaphors emanating from such a view of value, of course, have a powerful political appeal as well, for the sense of theft during the capitalist process of production can be directly referred to. After all, the worker produces a certain amount of value-stuff and s/he only gets part of this value-stuff back in the form of wages, the difference being the only source of the capitalists', the bankers', the priests' and the landlords' revenues.

The problem, Mirowski points out, with such a simple but powerful crystallized-labor theory is that it was *passé* at the moment of its most sophisticated employment in the Marxian critique of political economy. Caloric had been replaced with a much more subtle, field-theoretic entity, energy, whose continuity of motion, metamorphoses, conservation and dissipation was not to be modeled in the fluid dynamics of Cartesian vortexes. This subtlety is illustrated in what Cassirer writes of Mayer's energetic equation of potential with kinetic energy:

> If the mere elevation above a certain level (thus a mere state) is here assumed to be identical with the fall over a certain distance (with a temporal process), then it is clearly evident that no immediate substantial standard is applied to both, and that they are not compared with each other according to any similarity of factual property, but merely as abstract measuring values. The two are the 'same' not because they share any objective property, but because they can occur as members of the same causal equation, and thus be substituted for each other from the standpoint of pure magnitude... Energy is able to institute an order among the totality of phenomena, because it itself is on the same plane with no one of them; because, lacking all concrete existence, energy only expresses a pure relation of mutual dependency. (Cassirer, 1953: 199-200)

The 'cost-price' approach was Marx's incipient awareness of this new energetic-field-of-relations approach in his own work. In this approach a commodity can possess a value only relative "to the contemporary configuration of production" (Mirowski, 1989: 181). Thus its value can be changed by, for example, technological alterations anywhere in the economy (e.g., the development of new programming techniques) or even market phenomena (e.g., good harvests) that had no direct connection with the production of the commodity in question (Mirowski, 1989: 181). However, the creation of value can no longer be identified with labor, profit with the exploitation of labor in the production process, nor the flows and transformations of value with continuous (though unobserved) processes. Indeed, in the cost-price world, machines could produce (or deduct) value also. Mirowski suggests that this approach would have solved many of the major analytic problems of Marx's program, though at the impossible cost of "throwing history out the window" (Mirowski, 1989: 184), where by 'history' Mirowski

simply means that present conditions are partly determined by past events and processes.

Let us chart the consequences of contrasting approaches:

Substance theory	Field theory
crystallized labor *approach*	real-cost or virtual *approach*
labor 'buried' in the commodity is *source of value*	*source of value* in the field
the *quantity of value* is determined by labor-time	the 'socially necessary' direct replacement costs determine the *quantity of value*
the history of production is important in the determination of the value of commodities	*the history of production* is irrelevant to the determination of the value of commodities
profit can only be generated in production	*profit* can be generated in exchange and market transactions
labor *value is conserved*	'windfalls' are ubiquitous and throughout the system *values* can be created or destroyed instantaneously

But in trying to juggle between these two inconsistent ontologies Marx was bound to crash, according to Mirowski, who locates this catastrophe in 'the transformation problem' where the conservation of crystallized value and surplus value can not be reconciled with the equalization of rates of profit while the cost-price values can easily enforce equalized rates of profit but must falsify the claim that "surplus is only generated in production and is passed around among industries in the pricing process" (Mirowski, 1989: 185). The transformation of values to prices does not pose a mathematical problem *per se*, Mirowski argues, but rather it is a symptom of a deeper logical and methodological incoherence.

This is a serious critique. However, what is charming about Mirowski is that he seems to be relatively innocent of the blatant Cold War motivations that have driven similar efforts in the last couple of generations of scholarly debate on these matters. Indeed, Mirowski's effort is one of the first in the new post-Cold War turn of a rather hoary genre. A sign that Mirowski is operating in a new critical space is expressed by the fact that he applies to the work of neoclassical theorists like J. B. Clark and, yes, Paul Samuelson the same hermeneutical devise he uses to detect tensions and contradictions in Marxism (i.e., the substance versus field approaches). He also finds a shared, root failure in both the Marxist and the neoclassical research programs: *an ill-understood 'physics envy' which ironically is often ignorant of the complexity of the object of its envy or is fixated on one historical embodiment of physical theory*. In a word, the contemporary neoclassical research program has become "helplessly locked into the physics of circa 1860" while Marxism is locked in the physics of the 1840s (Mirowski, 1989: 394). Mirowski speaks for a new theoretical initiative that would, on the one hand, open economics up to models of physics that superseded the proto-energetics of

the 19th century and, on the other, look for models outside of physics altogether. But is this type of critique useful in general or accurate as a way of interpreting Marx's writings?

The main problem with Mirowski's hermeneutics in general is that the central distinction between substance and field theories he relies on is far from clear in itself and, furthermore, it is not easily inserted in a historical narrative. First consider theories like Newtonian mechanics, the kinetic theory of heat, the relativity theories and quantum mechanics: are these 'substance' or 'field' theories? Well, they are a bit of both. Thus Newton's gravity acts as a field force, but his notion of mass is substantial; the microscopic billiard balls of the kinetic theory are ideal type substances, but the macroscopic states they create (like temperature, pressure and volume) are field-like entities; Einstein's general theory of relativity seems to posit a substantial character for space-time while his special theory seems to give it a field-like aspect; as for the notorious quantum mechanics, one can easily add a 'substance'/'field' duality to top off and sum up the Tower of Babel dualities it poses to the interpreter. Thus, most theories in physics at least have substance as well as field elements in them and it is in the intersection of these elements that their complex potentialities for paradox emerge: in Newtonian mechanics, the mass point and the gravitational field; in the kinetic theory of gases, the molecule and temperature; in Einstein relativities, the mass point and the manifold of space-time; in quantum mechanics, the wave and the particle. *One might perversely argue that the uniqueness of these theories is to be found in the paradoxical heart of this intersection.*

Thus we see that Mirowski's concepts of 'substance' and 'field' are not found unmixed in any historically given theory in physics. But even as ideal types these concepts are far from mutually exclusive polarities. For one can argue that an ideal field is simply a highly complex substance defined by an infinite set of internal relations while an ideal substance is simply a pure field defined by a small to null set of internal relations. In other words, *the 'substance'/'field' distinction is not one of absolute kind but of dialectical degree*. And in the history of science one can often find nodes of transition from substance to field and then back again. Think of the complex dialectical, crisscrossing dance in the history of quantum mechanics from wave (field) to particle (substance) and back again.

Therefore it is very difficult to use these ontological notions in a historical narrative. From the Newtonian-Cartesian debates of the 17th century to the wave/particle dualities of the 20th, it is clear that 'substance' and 'field' are dialectical polarities in the theory-construction toolbox first of natural philosophy and then of physics. Mirowski credits Meyerson, an early 20th century French philosopher and historian of science, with explaining why the process of reification was so central to science of the post-Aristotelian period. Meyerson showed how 'substance' ontologies underlie conservation laws and these laws make it possible to apply mathematical methods to the "external [but non-celestial] world" (Mirowski, 1989: 6). But substance ontologies have been replaced by field ontologies for equally powerful mathematical reasons, and the reasons for this replacement can hardly be said to be determined by the internal logic of the dialectical spirit.

If Mirowski's 'substance'/'field' dichotomy is not a general tool of theoretical hermeneutics, the question remains whether his critique of Marx and the Marxist theory of value is cogent. Does Marx have two divergent theories of value? Does Marx fetishize labor and in so doing reify it into the very substance-thing that bourgeois economists so superstitiously worship? Mirowski's criticisms certainly reflect the contemporary Zeitgeist, for post-Structuralist critics like Baudrillard reject Marxist analyses because of their purported 'objectivism' and 'representationalism' (Baudrillard, 1975). But are these criticisms accurate? In order to answer this question let us go directly to the center of Mirowski's criticism: *the crystal*. After all, he dubs Marx's substance theory of value 'the crystallized-labor approach' because for Marx, "labor time extracted in the process of production is reincarnated (or perhaps 'buried' is a better term, since Marx calls it 'dead labor') in the commodity, to subsist thereafter independent of any market activity" (Mirowski, 1989: 180). But is a crystal a substance?

At the beginning of the 19th century the crystal became the focus of research programs in mineralogy and in chemistry. Mineralogists saw that most solid inorganic bodies were composed of micro-crystals while chemists, following Hauy, argued that every chemical substance had a unique crystalline structure. Hauy's hypothesis initiated an immense theoretical and empirical activity that eventually ended in its rejection. But these research programs and their fate would undoubtedly have interested Marx (and Engels) not only because they appealed to their general mathematical interests but also because of the role which that most precious of minerals, gold, played in political economy.

By the 1860s a new energetic turn in the crystalline story was taken. It was understood that a mineral's crystalline form was not a given of nature. A crystal was merely "a state of energetic equilibrium reflecting the most stable level of energy under given external conditions" (Paton, 1965: 302). Grove, in a work cited by Marx in *Capital I* (Marx, 1976: 664), clearly makes this point:

> There is scarcely any doubt that the force which is concerned in aggregation is the same which gives to matter its crystalline form; indeed, a vast number of inorganic bodies, if not all, which appear amorphous are, when closely examined, found to be crystalline in their structure: we thus get a reciprocity of action between the force which unites the molecules of matter and the magnetic force, and through the medium of the latter the correlation of the attraction of aggregation with the other modes of force may be established. (quoted in Youmans, 1872: 172)

Thus the crystalline aggregation, which had been studied throughout the early nineteenth century as a way of differentiating chemicals, was seen as part of the great round of the correlation of forces. Grove points out that via the correlation of aggregation force and magnetic force a new theory of the crystal is made possible. For the crystal simply is a store of energy that in the various mineralogical processes is released and then reabsorbed. Increasingly the internal structure of inorganic bodies were seen by physicists, chemists and mineralogists as a more or less complex pool of 'tensional' or 'potential' energy.

The whole of the theory of energetics was interested in the relation between this 'potential energy' and the 'actual energy' that is exhibited to the observer. Rankine put

the problematic of energetics in his 1853 paper 'On the General Law of the Transformation of Energy' in which he introduces the notion of 'potential energy' for the first time:

> ACTUAL, OR SENSIBLE ENERGY, is a measurable, transmissible, and transformable condition, whose presence causes a substance to tend to change its state in one or more respects. By the occurrence of such changes, actual energy disappears, and is replaced by
>
> POTENTIAL, OR LATENT ENERGY; which is measured by the product of a change of state into the resistance against which that change is made.
>
> *Vis viva* of matter in motion, thermometric heat, radiant heat, light, chemical action, and electric currents, are forms of actual energy; amongst those of potential energy are the mechanical powers of gravity, elasticity, chemical affinity, statical electricity, and magnetism.
>
> The law of the Conservation of Energy is already known, viz.: that the sum of all energies of the universe, actual and potential, is unchangeable. (quoted in Truesdall, 1980: 259)

Potential energy is, of course, a typical field variable, since it can change due to variations in the field (whether these changes are gravitational, electrical, magnetic, or chemical) while it can remain static over long periods of time. Actual energy is quite different. It is by its very nature realizing and annihilating itself at its locale of action.

Not surprisingly then, the process of potential turning into actual then back into potential energy was to serve Marx as a model for the shift from living into dead labor that is then transferred in the production process. For example, he refers to commodities "As crystals of this social substance [i.e., human labor], which is common to them all, they are values – commodity values" (Marx, 1976: 128). The crystal is the ideal model for a potential energy store whose structure is formed by the actual energies employed in the crystal-generating process but whose total potential energy is determined by the whole potential field. Value is therefore analogous not to actual, but to potential energy, for labor is valueless while being a creative, transforming, preserving, determining action, but once stored, dead, objectified, determined, congealed labor is value. This dead labor (like its analogous potential energy) is measured by the socially necessary labor-time, not by the living labor that has vanished into time, and is only *represented* in the value of the commodity.

Thus commodities have locked within them value due to the labor (both useful and value creating) that has gone into them. They form the crystalline 'storehouse' cave of capital in the same way that Helmholtz describes the objects in "the general store-house of Nature" that lock force within them:

> The brook and the wind, which drive our mills, the forest and the coal bed, which supply our steam engines and warm our rooms, are to use the bearers of a small portion of the great natural supply which we draw upon for our purposes, and the actions of which we can apply as we see fit. The possessor of a mill claims the gravity of the descending rivulet, or the living force of the wind, as his possession. These portions of the store of Nature are what give his property its chief value. (quoted in Youmans, 1872: 227)

Just as the potential energy of a rivulet can be changed by shifts in the potential field (e.g. by the reduction of the height of the water's fall by an earthquake) so too can the value of constant capital engaged in a particular process of production be changed by

events outside of that very process. But the possibility of changes in the potential energy does not turn potential into kinetic energy, for these changes occur, so to speak, 'outside' of the locus of the potential energy. Similarly, changes in the stored value of circulating and fixed capital can occur 'outside' of the process of its production. For example, cotton bought in a previous year and sitting in the storehouse of a spinning mill will increase in value if there is a bad cotton harvest this year, or the value of an already operating spinning machine can decrease if a new less expensive technique for building such machines is put into play. But in both cases these changes take place 'outside' the immediate production process. Within the actual production process of spinning cotton, however, the machine and the cotton "cannot transfer more value than [they possess] independently of the process" (Marx, 1976: 318). Keeping with the analogy, once the potential energy of a body is determined, then the kinetic energy it releases can not be greater than itself.

This excursus into the bowels of Marx's theory of value production and machines is not meant to show that Marx's theory was devised with a strict analogy to energetics in mind. On the contrary, there were many different analogies, metaphors, metonymies, tropes, etc. that Marx had in mind in the composition of *Capital*. Darwinian biology, the infinitesimal calculus, the debates in geology, the developments in organic chemistry and more were often directly and, even more often, indirectly cited in the text. Marx, Engels and indeed much of the workers' movement of the day were not suffering from 'physics envy', rather they were deeply enamored with the tremendous theoretical and practical productivity of the sciences of the day. But certainly pride of place was given to Energetics (or the discipline of Thermodynamics) during the mid-19th century, and it would be surprising if Marx did not explore the relation between labor and energy in his theory. Marx was clearly knowledgeable about Energetics and its primary theoretical distinctions (like kinetic versus potential energy). Therefore, Mirowski's critique of Marx – that he was on the 'cusp' between substance and field theories – is not convincing.

However, we might turn this reply to Mirowski's Marx-critique around into an even more pointed Marx-critique (that is similar to Mirowski's critique of neoclassical economics). Namely, if Marx was perfectly conscious of the anti-substantial developments in mid-19th century Energetics and patterned much of his value theory on them, why should 21st-century critics of capitalism take *his* theory seriously? After all, physics has moved into major new conceptual and methodological territory since the grey beards of thermodynamics finally cracked the contradiction between Carnot's caloric theory and the conservation of energy. Do relativity theory, quantum mechanics, chaos theory not offer better and more interesting insights than labor- and wretch-obsessed Marxism in order to understand the contemporary postmodern situation? Mirowski calls on his colleagues in neoclassical economics to let go of their dependence on outdated (and ill-understood) physical theory and try something new. A similar point has been made by post-Marxists and other 'anti-systemic' thinkers who were previously sympathetic to Marxism.

Well, why not? The answer is simple: *chose whatever model you wish, but* what *is to be modeled – our social reality – is still rooted in the past*. We cannot avoid or 'go beyond' the categories of labor, value, money, surplus value, exploitation, capital,

crisis, revolution and communism because capitalism is still very much in existence. True, much else is in existence now that was not in the mid-19th century, but has it made a crucial difference in understanding capital? Answers to a question like this are, of course, complex, but who could really say in 2007 that money, work, wages, profit, interest and rent do not *really* matter? Of course they do, and any application of contemporary scientific theory to contemporary social and economic life that ignores them would not *really* matter.

However, there have been genuine changes in the world of machines since the mid-19th century, especially the development and industrialization of the Turing machines. This is an area that definitely calls for an extension of Marx's theory of machines as I will argue in Part II.

Part II. Historical Preliminary: Ure versus Babbage

> The Turing Machine is an idealization of the human computer. "We may compare a man in the process of computing a real number to a machine which is only capable of a finite number of conditions… called 'm-configurations'. The machine is supplied with a 'tape'…" Wittgenstein put the point in a striking way: "Turing's 'Machines': These machines are humans who calculate." (Copeland, 2004: 41)

Marx's theory of machines was deeply implicated in the theory of heat engines that was developed in the mid-19th century under the rubric of 'Thermodynamics' in the same way that Galileo's theory of machines was implicated in the theory of simple machines initially developed especially by thinkers in Hellenistic Egypt like Hero of Alexandria and later by Arabic and medieval European mechanicians (Clagett, 1959: 3-68). Indeed, much of the motivation for Marx's restriction of value-creativity to human labor arose on analogy with the restrictions Thermodynamics places on perpetual motion machines of the first and second kind, i.e., on machines that violate the first – conservation of energy – law and the second – entropy – law of Thermodynamics. In this part of the essay I will turn my attention to the kind of machines studied by the theory of Turing machines – often called 'universal computers' or 'logic machines'.

Marx *might* be forgiven for having neglected Turing machines, for the mid-1930s are often celebrated as the origin-time of their theory while World War II is frequently seen as the 'hot-house' that forced the transformation of Turing machine theory into actual, functioning hardware. I qualify what I say because the origin of the theory and practice of universal computers or logic machines *can* be antedated by at least a century. True, the uncertain origin of a scientific or technological concept like that of the universal computer is by no means unusual and in this 'postist' period suspicion of origins is *de rigueur*. But this particular antedating is important for my argument since it will highlight an early tension in Marx's theory that can explain why the later Marxist tradition (in both its Stalinist *and* libertarian tendencies) has traditionally confused the labor process (which they glorified) with the value-creativity of labor.

This case of anteceding origins takes us to a figure quite familiar to Marx and the readers of the pages on machinery in *Capital I*: Charles Babbage. Marx quoted

Babbage's *On the Economy of Machines and Manufacturing* (1832) at least five times in Part IV of *Capital I*, 'The Production of Absolute and Relative Surplus Value' (1976: 643-674) but he seemed to have a rather ambivalent stance toward him. On the one side, Marx credits Babbage with the definition of machine he uses, but on the other, he relegated him to the role of an antiquary, someone interested not in *au courant* Modern Industry (the automatic factory) but rather in *passé* Manufacture (the workshop). In an interesting footnote he compared Babbage to a contemporary of the 1830s, Andrew Ure, whose *Philosophy of Manufactures* (1835) Marx referred to sixteen times in *Capital I*:

> Dr. Ure, in his apotheosis of Modern Mechanical Industry, brings out the peculiar character of manufacture more sharply than previous economists, who had not his polemical interests in the matter, and more sharply even than his contemporaries – Babbage, e.g., who, though much his superior as a mathematician and mechanician, treated mechanical industry from the standpoint of manufacture alone. (Marx, 1976: 470)

That is, Babbage was still mired in marveling at the remaining aspects of the detail laborer, at the workshop and handicraftsman work, while Ure was interested in the use of machinery to escape the stranglehold skilled laborers in manufacturing had on capital (Marx, 1976: 563-564).

This assessment is surprisingly off the mark. From the perspective of the 21st century Babbage was clearly involved in a project whose consequences would be more momentous than simply the polemical 'reduction' of skilled into unskilled labor discussed by Ure. For Babbage's work would eventually lead to an understanding of what skill was in the first place (Caffentzis, 1997). However, Marx could be excused his rather conventional assessment of Babbage, since Babbage's very project required an interest in a kind of labor that was not yet within the ken of 'Modern Mechanical Industry' and still required all the resources 'Manufacture' could provide in this period. Babbage wished to build at least *one* universal computing machine out of metal and wire, which required the assemblage of some of the most skilled artisans of Britain to build a machine whose requirements of precision tested the limits of mechanical knowledge. The process of putting together this machine was the basis of his research that went into *On the Economy of Machinery and Manufactures* (1832). As one of his biographers writes:

> Babbage's study of machinery and manufacturing processes originally started in a manner so extraordinary that it has passed almost without comment, as if no one could believe what he was really doing: he settled down to study all the manufacturing techniques and processes, more particularly all the mechanical devices and inventions he could find, searching for ideas and techniques which could be of use in the Difference Engine. The manner in which this research led to the elegant devices embodied in the Calculating Engines is itself a fascinating study. (Hyman, 1982: 105)

This 'one step back to go two steps forward' motion was Babbage's fate and Marx was by no means the only one who treated him as a brilliant Victorian quasi-crank. There was evidence enough for his crankiness. For example, when Marx was involved in the process of forming the International Working Men's Association and preparing its London inauguration in September 1864, Babbage was in the heat of his widely publicized campaign against barrel-organists and other street musicians which eventually lead on July 25, 1864 to propose 'An Act for the better regulation of Street

Music within the Metropolitan Police District' or, 'Babbage's Bill'. In support of his campaign, Babbage devoted a whole chapter of his 1864 autobiography *Passages from the Life of a Philosopher* to 'Street Nuisances'. What follows is Babbage's description of the chapter:

> Street Nuisances
>
> Various classes injured – Instruments of Torture – Encourages; Servants, Beer-Shops, Children, Ladies of elastic virtue – Effects on the Musical Profession – Retaliation--Police themselves disturbed – Invalids distracted – Horses run away – Children run over – A Cab-stand placed in the Author's street attracts Organs – Mobs shouting out his Name – Threats to burn his House – Disturbed in the middle of the night when very ill – An average number of Persons are always ill – Hence always disturbed – Abusive Placards – Great Difficulty of getting Convictions – Got a Case for the Queen's Bench – Found it useless – A Dead Sell – Another Illustration – Musicians give False Name and Address – Get Warrant for Apprehension – They keep out of the way – Offenders not yet found and arrested by the Police – Legitimate Use of Highways – An Old Lawyer's Letter to *The Times* – Proposed Remedies; Forbid entirely – Authorize Police to seize the Instrument and take it to the Station – An Association for Prevention of Street Music proposed. (Babbage, 1968: 389-390)

One can see this cantankerous seventy-tree year old philosopher of machines in 1864 could look a bit 'off' not only in the eyes of a communist revolutionary who was in the process of writing the text that refuted the value-creativity of machines and organizing the First International!

But, like it or not, Babbage was working on his Calculating Engines before Sadi Carnot published his *Reflexions on the Motive Power of Fire* (1824) – the beginning of classical thermodynamics – and certainly by 1834 Babbage had theorized the universal computer or, anachronistically, the Turing Machine. Consequently, one cannot say that the theory of heat engines antedates the theory of universal computers. That is, in the period when Carnot was studying, *in general,* the motive power of fire and finding it in "differences in temperature" (Carnot, 1986: 67), Babbage was studying "the whole of the conditions which enable a *finite* machine to make calculations of *unlimited* extent" (Hyman, 1982: 170). The product of that research, Babbage's Analytic Engine, had the major five components of the modern computer, as Dubbey pointed out:

> (a) the *store* containing the data, instructions and intermediate calculations;
>
> (b) the *mill* in which the basic arithmetical operations are performed ["control of operations in the Mill is by a microprogram represented by studs on the surface of a barrel (after the manner of a music box or barrel organ)" (Hyman, 1982: xiii)];
>
> (c) the *control* of the whole operation, in Babbage's case by means of a Jacquard loom system;
>
> (d) the *input* by means of punched cards;
>
> (e) the *output* which automatically prints results. (Dubbey, 1978: 217)

Moreover, the Analytic Engine could repeat instructions, make conditional decisions and store programs in a library. However, the full generality of what a universal computer that recursively operates on its own program could simulate was not fully comprehended at the time by either Babbage or his associates like General Menabra and

Lady Lovelace. Whereas Carnot presumed the intellectual background of a 'cosmology of heat' that identified the determining form of nature and life as an effect of heat (Cardwell, 1972: 89-120), the most that Babbage claimed was that "the whole of the developments and operations of analysis are now capable of being executed by machinery" (Babbage, 1968: 68). Even Lady Lovelace, when it came time for her to employ her most Byronic of hyperboles, could only refer to the mathematical world:

> The bounds of arithmetic were however out stepped the moment the idea of applying the [Jacquard] cards had occurred; and the Analytic Engine does not occupy common ground with mere 'calculating machines'. It holds a position wholly its own; and the considerations it suggests are most interesting in their nature. In enabling mechanism to combine together general symbols in successions of unlimited variety and extent, a uniting link is established between the operations of matter and the abstract processes for the most abstract branch of mathematical science. A new, a vast, and a powerful language is developed for the future use of analysis, in which to wield its truths so that these may become of more speedy and accurate practical applications for the purposes of mankind than the means hitherto in our possession have rendered possible. Thus not only the mental and material, but the theoretical and the practical in the mathematical world, are brought into more intimate and effective connexion with each other. (quoted in Babbage, 1961: 252)

That is, Babbage's engines appeared to be *mathematical* computers and computers were apparently *mathematical* things. True, these mathematical results can have 'practical applications', but they are not in themselves 'practical'. The fact that Babbage's Analytic Engine was a *universal* computer could not yet connect with a 'cosmology of computation' which was, alas for Babbage, to be the creation of the mid-20th century. Was this failure inevitable? The cyber-punk novelists William Gibson and Bruce Sterling in *The Difference Engine* (1990) did not think so, since they imagined a Victorian world where the connection between the computer and the steam engine was made and materialized in a complete mode of capitalist production. If their novel shows us that this gap was not inevitable, since the connection was imaginable, then why was it not made?

Here are parts of the answer as to why Marx, along with the British Government and 'venture capitalists' after 1834 and almost everyone else, ignored Babbage's engines in the 19th century: (a) they were conceived, even in the most florid of settings like the one above, as mathematical instruments; (b) the crisis of clerical labor had not yet materialized; (c) the computational aspect of all labor processes had not yet been understood. For in the mid-19th century the heat engine and not the computer stood at the center of Modern Industry's factories, as Ure lyricized, "In these spacious halls the benignant power of steam summons around him his myriads of willing menials [and assigns to each the regulated task, substituting for painful muscular effort on their part, the energies of his own gigantic arm, and demanding in return only attention and dexterity to correct such little aberrations as casually occur in his workmanship]" (the unbracketed part is quoted by Marx [1976: 545] from Ure [1967: 18]).

Clerical, or mathematical labor, also appeared to be a rather minor aspect of Modern Industry closeted away somewhere in a dusty office above the behemoth of steam on the factory floor. Indeed, such labor gets barely a mention in Babbage's own *On Economy of Machinery and Manufactures* (cf. Babbage 1832: 176-177). Consequently, Babbage's Engines could be relegated to the status of an item on a scientist's or

mathematician's 'wish list' as late as 1878 when a prestigious committee of the British Association for the Advancement of Science advised, "not without reluctance", the Association not to invest any funds in building one of them (Hyman, 1982: 254). Whereas the colossi of steam were on the minds of 19th century industrialists, military strategists and revolutionaries, the machines of computation were considered purely supplementary to the serious work of industry.

This estimate was to change in the transition from the paleo-capitalistic period of absolute surplus value to the contemporary period of transferred surplus value (Caffentzis, 1992: 232-238). A mark of such a change can be found in the changing position of clerical groups within the composition of the waged working class between the mid-19th and mid-20th centuries. As Braverman pointed out:

> The census of 1870 in the United States classified only 82,000 – or six-tenths of 1 percent of all 'gainful workers' – in clerical occupations. In Great Britain, the census of 1851 counted some 70,000 to 80,000 clerks, or eight-tenths of 1 percent of the gainfully occupied. By the turn of the century the proportion of clerks in the working population had risen to 4 percent in Great Britain and 3 percent in the United States; in the intervening decades, the clerical working class had begun to be born. By the census of 1961, there were in Britain about 3 million clerks, almost 13 percent of the occupied population; and in the United States in 1970, the clerical classification had risen to more than 14 million workers, almost 18 percent of the gainfully occupied, making this equal in size, among the gross classifications of the occupational scale, to that of operatives of all sorts. (Braverman, 1974: 295)

This change in the size of the clerical work force from the mid-19th to the mid-20th century, however, took place with a concomitant change in its predominant gender (from male to female) and its relative wage (from about twice the average wage for factory operatives to below the operatives' wage) (Braverman, 1974: 296-298). This transformation could not have happened without a substantial change in the machinery of the office, most especially in the use of computers. And it was imperative that this change take place for all of capital since, for example, a sudden doubling of the wage of almost twenty percent of the work force *ceteris paribus* would have meant a twenty percent increase in the total wage bill itself and potentially a substantial drop in profit. This gradual wage crisis of clerical labor, therefore, put a premium on the development of computing machines that would subvert the wage demands of a highly skilled part of the working class. But this crisis was not yet even on the horizon in the 1830s nor, indeed, even by 1867. Babbage's Analytical Engines could not attract the sustained attention of the capitalist class' 'central committee' until the dimensions of the crisis of clerical labor began to appear, which was not to happen for more than half a century after *Capital I*'s publication.

But a more important source of the neglect of Babbage's Engines was that neither Babbage, nor Marx, nor anyone else at the time saw the essential connection between computation and *all* forms of the labor process; even though the key was staring Babbage and Marx in the face all along. That key was Jacquard's loom. It proved essential, as mentioned above by Lady Lovelace, for the creation of the Analytical Engine or the universal computer. The problem was that this transposition was taken by Babbage as that of an industrial device being used for mathematical purposes while Marx (following Ure) saw it as one more chapter in the continuous saga of the struggle between workers and machinery (Marx, 1976: 553-564). This is not to say that either

was wrong *per se*, i.e., Jacquard's device was implicitly a mathematical device *and* explicitly a weapon in the industrial class struggle, but rather that Babbage's *transposition* of the two itself marked a moment in the self-reflection of the labor process that was not understood until the 1930s.

Let us consider more extensively each part of the matter:

First, Babbage described the role of the Jacquard loom in the development of his Analytic Engine in the following passage:

> It is known as a fact that the Jacquard loom is capable of weaving any design which the imagination of man may conceive. It is also the constant practice for skilled artists to be employed by manufacturers in designing patterns. These patterns are then sent to a peculiar artist, who, by means of a certain machine, punches holes in a set of pasteboard cards in such a manner that when those cards are placed in a Jacquard loom, it will then weave upon its produce the exact pattern designed by the artist. Now the manufacturer may use, for the warp and weft of his work, threads which are all of the same color; let us suppose them to be unbleached or white threads. In this case the cloth will be woven all of one colour; but there will be a damask pattern upon it such as the artist designed. But the manufacturer might use the same cards, and put in the warp threads of any other colour. Every thread might even be of a different colour, or of a different shade of colour; but in all these cases the *form* of the pattern will be the same – the colours only will differ. The analogy of the Analytic Engine with this well-known process is nearly perfect....The Analytic Engine is therefore a machine of the most general nature. Whatever formula it is required to develop, the law of its development must be communicated to it by two sets of cards. When these have been placed, the engine is special for that formula. The numerical value of its constants must then be put on the columns of wheels below them, and on setting the Engine in motion it will calculate and print the numerical results of that formula. (Babbage, 1961: 55)

Or as Lady Lovelace put it, "the Analytic Engine *weaves algebraical patterns* just as the Jacquard-loom weaves flowers and leaves" (quoted in Hofstadter, 1980: 25). Thus, Babbage and Lovelace saw in the Jacquard loom principle – that of using *seriatim* a set of partial instructions to weave a total textile – a *form* that could be transposed into a mathematical space of operations on numbers in order to mechanize them. But for Babbage and his supporters the connection between the Jacquard loom and the Analytic Engine was exactly that, a *transposition* from an industrial setting to a mathematical one, instead of an indication of a third, mathematical-industrial space that characterized the labor process in general. This insight was lacking, of course, not only in Babbage and Marx but also in most of those who studied the labor process until the 1930s. For example, Taylor's 'scientific management' efforts of the turn of the century were still engaged with the time-and-motion studies that linearly fractionalized the work process in order to reduce its temporal components in order to speed up the whole. But Taylorization left the deep computational structure of the labor process unexamined.

Second, Marx, following Ure, saw in Jacquard's loom another "invention... supplying capital with weapons against the revolts of the working class" (Marx, 1976: 563). Jacquard's loom was surely that, for it was aimed against one of the most militant parts of the European working class, the Lyons silk workers. As a commentator on 'the artisan republic' of Lyons pointed out:

> In the eighteenth century, the silk industry, or the *fabrique*, had become a capitalistic putting-out system with a few hundred merchants commissioning a few thousand master weavers to produce the silk. Masters' dependence on merchants' hiring and piece-rate (or wage) practices forged a

> bond of solidarity between masters and their 'employees' or journeymen. One consequence was a tradition of economic militance. As early as 1709, silk weavers boycotted merchants to get higher piece-rates; in 1786 and again in 1789 and 1790, they struck for a general piece-rate agreement... [After the Revolution] silk workers and local authorities returned to the *ancien regime* concept of collective contracts guaranteed by the government in 1807, 1811, 1817-19 and 1822. Moreover, silk workers formed authorized voluntary versions of their old corporations and used these mutual aid...societies as covers to organize strikes. (Stewart-McDougall, 1984: xiv-xv)

In the face of such a historically intransigent sector of workers Bonaparte and Lazare Carnot (Sadi's father), according to Ure, set Jacquard to work to develop a loom that would circumvent the skill of the silk weavers:

> [Jacquard] was afterwards called upon to examine a loom on which from 20,000 to 30,000 francs had been expended for making fabrics for Bonaparte's use. He undertook to do, by a simple mechanism, what had been attempted in vain by a complicated one; and taking as his pattern a model-machine of Vaucanson, he produced the famous Jacquard-loom. He returned to his native town [Lyons], rewarded with a pension of 1000 crowns; but experienced the utmost difficulty to introduce his machine among the silk-weavers, and was three times exposed to imminent danger of assassination. The *Conseil des Prud'hommes*, who are the *official* conservators of the trade of Lyons, broke up his loom in the public place, sold the iron and wood for old materials, and denounced him as an object of universal hatred and ignominy. (Ure, 1967: 256-257)

All this pre-Luddite rage in 1807 was not misconceived. The Jacquard punch-card device "halved the time needed to mount the looms, eliminated the weaver's helper, and quadrupled productivity," hence reducing piece-rates, and by 1846 about one-third of the silk looms in Lyons had Jacquard devices (Stewart-McDougall, 1984: 12). Ure, of course, took the resistance of the silk weavers of Lyons to the Jacquard loom as a typical short-sighted response of the workers to the inevitable and beneficial consequences of mechanization, although Ure also notes later: "it appears that there has been a constant depreciation of the wages of silk weaving in France, from the year 1810 down to the present time [1835]" (Ure, 1967: 264). But this action and reaction of the classes around the Jacquard loom was just another moment in a more general struggle that would, Ure was sure, be won by an alliance of capital with a properly chastened working class.

Ure and Marx, who inversely followed him, saw in the transition from Manufacture to Modern Industry *a general process*: "to substitute mechanical science for hand skill, and the partition of a process into its essential constituents, for the division or graduation of labour among artisans" (Ure, 1967: 20). But this description is rather vague and infinitely variable in its realization. For the questions, '*How* does one substitute mechanics for hand skill?' and '*What* are the essential constituents of a labor process?' are open ended. Neither Ure nor Marx saw that this substitution could have a specifically identifiable character that would at the same time be universalizable, aside from its being reducible to abstract labor through the labor market in the case of Marx. And therefore the realization that Babbage's induction of the Jacquard principle into the mechanization of mathematics had within it a general description of the labor process remained stillborn.

This insight was to be the result of the theory of Turing machines and the concomitant 'cosmology of computation' generated in the 1930s and 1940s. By then a number of new factors had come into play: (a) mathematics itself had been remarkably

generalized; (b) the wage crisis of the clerical working class had matured; (c) the limits of a time-and-motion form of analysis of the labor process had been reached in the formation of the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO) and other forms of 'mass worker' class organization. Thus the stage had been set for a new theory of computing machines and the labor process, or, more precisely, the self-conscious application of Babbage's forgotten, never fully cognized theory of universal computation.

Conclusion: A New Theory of Machines or an Old Theory of Capitalism – or Both?

The result of these conceptual and historical preliminaries is apparently a contradiction. On the one side, Marx's hoary theory of the role of machines in capitalism is vindicated as internally consistent against the claims of critics like Mirowski; on the other side, Marx's theory of machines is clearly found to be incomplete, since it does not explain how the introduction of Turing machines (the descendents of Babbage's Analytic Engine) affects the work process, the generation of surplus value and modalities of class struggle.

Philip Mirowski argues that both Marxist and bourgeois economics should question their allegiance to theories patterned on old theories of physics that have been left behind in the 20th century. But this argument, as I showed in Part I, is invalid. However, Mirowski does have something right. There *is* a tension between the old and new in our historical condition with respect to science and machines that needs to be isolated and resolved. It is simply that the enormous productivity (and violence) brought about by introducing a new order of machines into the work process is putting even more stress on the categories of capitalist (and anti-capitalist) self-understanding. It is important at this juncture not to appeal mindlessly to that old Marxist chestnut, 'the contradiction between the forces and relations of production', and leave it at that. For this contradiction, as Mario Tronti pointed out long ago, does not necessarily lead to another post- and anti-capitalist system of production, as Marx envisioned (Tronti, 1972). Indeed, in most cases it merely stimulates the development of capitalism itself.

Therefore, Marx's consistent but incomplete theory of machines in capitalism needs to be extended to the realm of Turing machines. One immediate consequence of this extension would be a new conception of the powers of the labor process itself and the manner by which surplus value is created. For this process and its powers are inherently neither immeasurable nor subversive, nor is it a tale of 'immaterial labor' as some have recently argued (Hardt and Negri, 2000).

How would the new theory of machines that I described help support my claim that there is no immaterial labor? It would show that contemporary technology is haunted neither by 'magical' forces nor mysterious 'ideational' novelties. What appear to be 'immaterial' products of labor are the result of pattern production that can be accomplished by machines (whether they be composed of wood, iron and paper cards and powered by heat engines or of plastic, silicon and copper and powered by electric currents). These machines are fully 'physical' or 'material', in the usual senses of these

words, as are the patterns they produce and, most importantly, reproduce. For at the core of capitalist commodity production is the reproduction of a pattern, whether it be 'composed' of pure silk or pure electrons. A new theory of machines would help explain the capitalist consequences of the ability to produce these patterns mechanically.

The Lyons artisans who smashed the Jacquard looms recognized a truth important for the class struggle that should be inscribed in such a theory. Machines can reproduce the patterns that they – intelligent and creative humans – weaved. Millions of artisans, craftspeople, engineers, clerks, and computer programmers have learned the same lesson since. No reproducible commodity production is essentially unmechanizable.

As a corollary, the new theory of machines would definitely provide a critique of 'immaterial labor' as defined by Hardt and Negri. To see this let us review the three types labor they unite under the rubric of 'immaterial labor': (1) "the production and manipulation of affects and requires (virtual or actual) human contact, labor in the bodily mode;" (2) "an industrial production that has been informationalized;" (3) "the immaterial labor of analytical and symbolic tasks, which itself breaks down into creative and intelligent manipulation on the one hand and routine symbolic tasks on the other" (Hardt and Negri, 2000: 293).

Of course, Hardt and Negri are free to coin any term they wish to express their insights. They seem to have chosen 'immaterial' – an adjective fraught with metaphysical and political baggage – as a way of differentiating their view of capitalism from the 'materialist' Marxist tradition. In making this choice, however, also they enter into a field with a history of its own that needs to be considered. For example, after the women's movement's long struggle to have 'housework', 'reproductive' work and the body be recognized as central to the analysis of capitalism, it is discouraging to have two men come along and describe the very embodied results of reproductive work done largely by women as 'immaterial'! Indeed, we see this tension in their very definition of this kind of immaterial work, "labor in the bodily mode" (2000: 293). The dissonance between immateriality and a bodily mode should alert us to a problem in using a term like 'immaterial labor'.

The new theory of machines would give further support for a critique of the term 'immaterial labor.' After all, the very distinction between 'intelligent manipulation' and 'routine task' that is so important to Hardt and Negri is put into question by Turing Machine Theory as is the notion that analytic and symbolic tasks are inherently irreducible to perfectly mechanizable operations. Turing exorcized "the ghost from the machine" more than half a century ago, Hardt and Negri's return to a Cartesian mind/body, material/immaterial rhetoric would re-"spiritualize the machine" at the cost of a great confusion (Kurzweill, 1999). Moreover, the notion that information is 'immaterial' was successfully countered in the development of Information Theory (again more than half a century ago) that saw information as the inverse of entropy (Weiner, 1961). The fact that information, like entropy, is not 'tangible' does not mean that it is not 'physical' (and hence it is not 'immaterial').

Let me return, then, to my initial claim*: immaterial labor does not exist*. I simply mean by this two things. First, the adjective 'immaterial' participates in a binary semantic field (immaterial/material) that provokes a philosophical discourse that has been problematic for centuries. Are we to return to the Aristotelian/Platonic debates on the relation between form and matter or begin to argue about whether a ditch is immaterial (and hence whether ditch-digging is 'immaterial labor')? Following Hardt and Negri and the other theorists of 'immaterial labor' into that field would not be a wise 'exodus' for the anti-capitalist movement. Second, the term 'immaterial labor' fails to bring out important common features of labor like housework and computer programming. It is not that Hardt and Negri and other 'immaterialists' do not find commonalities between housework and computer programming, rather the *kind* of commonalities that they find are not useful to understanding the class struggle at this period in history. Thus, their inability to find measurable value production as a commonality between these two forms of labor is a decisive problem in their work.

However, Hardt and Negri are right in insisting on the importance of the Turing machine for 21st century struggle. As with all machinery, the Turing machine defines a terrain of struggle with its own landmarks and history that are still in formation. A new theory of machines that brings together simple machines, heat engines and Turing machines would make it possible to survey this terrain and go beyond simply noting the continued existence of the contradictions and conflict between worker and machine in 21st century capitalist production.

I hope my preliminary efforts here will invite others to join in the work.

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Affective Labour in Milanese Large Scale Retailing: Labour Control and Employees' Coping Strategies

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abstract

Internationalisation and rising competition in large scale retailing have led to a re-discovery of service quality as a relevant field of competition. Consequently, the affective character of frontline retail labour, inherent in the direct interaction between employee and customer, has become a focus of labour control. However, management's strategies remain contradictory and fragile, not least due to opposing strategies of rationalisation and service orientation. Conflicts could thus be expected to arise, constituting possible starting points for employees' resistance against labour control and its colonisation of affects. Against this backdrop, this paper explores employees' strategies to cope with conflicting and unsatisfying working conditions, asking what role affects play in everyday work experiences. It highlights the way coping oscillates between adaptation and appropriation of competences, and how a lack of collective experiences reduces employees' capacity to act

Introduction

This paper explores the role of affective labour in Milanese large scale retailing. It starts from the assumption that due to rising competition, the interactive and emotional character of retail labour (re-)gains critical relevance even in a context otherwise dominated by neo-Taylorist rationalisation. The question put forward is twofold: First, what are the strategies used by management in order to control affective labour? Within these strategies, what is the relationship between direct and indirect control strategies, or between direct hierarchical control of work performances and more indirect participatory approaches that seek to manipulate employees' subjectivity? Second, how do employees deal with these strategies of labour control, and what kind of coping strategies do they develop in order to adapt or resist such attempts to colonise their affects? In other words, does a growing focus on affect within work processes open new perspectives for cooperation and collective appropriation of working conditions as Hardt and Negri imply with their concept of immaterial and affective labour (Hardt and Negri, 2000)? Or does this focus on affect have to be interpreted as a central mechanism of labour control and social reproduction as other critics argue (Hemmings, 2005; Hartmann, 2002)?

Since the 1990s, European retail has been marked by processes of internalisation and concentration, leading to a rise in competition and a growth of outlet sizes. As national markets are now dominated by relatively few, mostly multinational companies of similar size and influence on purchase chains, competition with regard to prices is mainly fought out at the level of labour costs. Consequent rationalisation leads to an intensification of work processes and a growing use of temporary as well as part-time employment, combined with latent understaffing and a search for maximum, unilaterally managed working time flexibility in order to cover ever longer opening hours. Due to the limits of price competition, however, service quality becomes, or even *returns* as a relevant field of competition. In clear contrast to rationalisation strategies, this development implies a re-evaluation of the customer-employee relationship, and thus of the affective character of retail work: employees are in the role of mediators between the customer's and the company's interests, and therefore their interactive and emotional competences become central for the company's market success. Such a service orientation causes an increased need for control over employees' affects and their subjectivity (Korczynski et al., 2000; Pellegrini, 2005).

In the following pages I will present some initial findings of research undertaken in Milanese large scale retailing during the summer of 2006. This study is based on semi-structured, problem-centred interviews with 30 employees in ten different outlets (in the food and non-food branches, comprising supermarkets, hypermarkets, a sports and a furniture shop) as well as 20 union representatives, including shop floor delegates and secretaries from the trade branches of all three main confederations (CIGL-Filcams, CISL-Fisascat, UILtucs).

After a brief reference to the theoretical background, analysis will proceed in the following two steps: First, I will describe management's strategies of control of employees' subjectivities in general and their affects in particular. Second, I will account for employees' reactions to these strategies and the role of affects in their working experiences and coping strategies. This second part refers to a group of five interviews undertaken with young (20-30 years old) part-time employees with open-ended contracts, working as sales clerks and cashiers in a medium size supermarket (50 employees) on Milan's periphery. This supermarket is part of a multinational company and has a long-standing tradition of labour relations as well as a high current level of unionization (60% in comparison to the sector's average of 20%).

Milan has been chosen as a field of study as it represents one of the focal points of retail modernisation in Italy – a country where the density of small scale neighbourhood stores is still quite high compared to other European countries. Transformations in the retail sector became more rapid only since the end of the 1990s, as internationalisation was fostered by extensive trade liberalisations (the Bersani reform in 1998).[1] Against

1 The Bersani reform of 1998 abolished a set of regulations and the classification of retail outlets which had, until this point, restricted the ability of new (and in particular, large) retail outlets to open, in turn protecting the existing network of smaller neighbourhood stores. Previously, not only had the maximum number of outlets per city district been limited (measured in terms of outlet surface area per inhabitant); but moreover, licences were issued which dictated the range of products a given shop was able to offer for sale. This system of prescribed specialisation, however, had already begun to be

this backdrop of strong and recent sector-wide change, retailing in Milan is characterised by a particularly high density of large scale outlets, a high degree of competition and the resulting flexibility and rationalisation pressures on labour.

Theoretical Approach

The theoretical background from which this research has been developed is that of labour process theory (Edwards, 1981; Knights and Willmott, 1990; Thompson and Akroyd, 1995; O'Doherty and Willmott, 2001) combined with Gramsci's concept of hegemony and his inherently subject-oriented approach to power and agency (Gramsci, 1992/1994; Kraus, 1997). Labour control is thus considered as a conflictive field, where effective control cannot be established simply by coercion but, like any other form of power, requires employees' consent and therefore has to involve their subjectivity. In other words, labour control is nothing static or homogeneous, but the outcome and object of constant struggles. As its aim is to transform mere labour power into real work performance, labour control has to assure the exclusion from the work process of all those employees' interests which do not meet the goal of capitalist accumulation. In addition it must adapt all those parts of employees' subjectivities required in the labour process to this imperative. Employees, in turn, constantly have to be able to mediate between conflicting interests in order to gain any capacity to act. These can include conflicts between work requirements and their own interests, between conflicting requirements or between different personal, instrumental, expressive or moral interests and expectations. Therefore, their everyday agency in work is conceptualised here as a process of coping with contradiction (Holzkamp, 1991; Kraus, 1996). Such coping takes two, interlinked forms: first, concrete agency, and second, coping through sense constructions guiding the choice between alternatives for action. It is on the latter form that the empirical part of this paper will focus. Sense constructions evidently are not free floating, but are themselves an outcome of former experiences and learning processes, constantly forged by employees' confrontation with their working and living conditions (Schütz, 1971). Thus, they are not only biographically, but also culturally and socially conditioned: as implied by Gramsci's term of 'common sense' (Gramsci 1992/94), they are themselves objects of struggles for consent and hegemony.

Transformations of Labour Control

Since the crisis of Fordism began in the 1970s, transformations of work organisation and labour control are generally seen to diverge in two different, opposing directions: on the one hand they move towards decentralisation and flexibilisation, on the other hand they move in the direction of recentralisation and re-standardisation of work processes. The former trend is linked with the development of indirect control mechanisms based on the transfer of responsibilities towards individuals or groups of

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weakened by a series of reforms in 1988, resulting from the lobbying of large scale distribution chains and shopping centres.

employees. Beyond an increase in flexibility, such indirect control aims at a 'subjectivation' of work – that is, an internalisation of control and its transformation into self-control (Moldaschl and Sauer, 2000; Dörre, 2001; Moldaschl and Voß, 2002; Peter, 2003; Pongratz and Voß, 2003). This might be achieved by a flattening of hierarchies (organisational decentralisation) and/or more direct exposure of single work processes to market competition (economic decentralisation). Participatory management strategies, such as company-culture initiatives, quality management, re-qualification within group or project work or performance-oriented salaries, are used in the same intent. Such a reorganisation of labour control is usually associated with highly qualified so-called 'knowledge' work such as IT-programming. Recentralisation and re-standardisation, in contrast, refer to a neo-Taylorist reorganisation of work processes under the imperative of rationalisation. This coincides with a strengthening of direct, hierarchical control, not least by means of new IT and communication technologies, and generally associated with industrial production or low qualified service work (Springer, 1999; Ritzer, 1996).

These changes in the organisation of work processes and labour control can be interpreted as expressions of an overall transformation of the capitalist mode of production towards a high-tech and service based global network economy, grounded in a 'regime of flexible accumulation' (Jameson, 1997; Harvey, 1997; Castells, 1998; Boltanski and Chiappello, 1999; Candeias, 2004a). From a macro perspective it could be argued that, after a period of competition between the two different models of work organisation and labour control during the late 1970s and the 1980s (especially in industry), since the mid-90s a process of 'forced alignment' is going on under the hegemony of rationalisation processes (Candeias, 2001). The effect, however, is not a homogenisation of work organisation across and within sectors. Rather it results in different combinations of both strategies according to the concrete requirements and opportunities of distinct work processes and regulatory contexts – producing a new form of special division of work in which precisely these differences are profitably exploited.

From the micro perspective of the retail sector, the interest of this research lies precisely in such combinations of both trends, in order to assess how they interact in the control of affective labour: The question is how management's increased necessity to control employees' affects (resulting from the rediscovery of service quality as an important competitive factor) leads towards the introduction of indirect forms of control even within a context dominated by neo-Taylorist reorganisation; and how, in turn, direct control itself is extended into employees' subjectivity. This stress on interrelations instead of dual oppositions between direct and indirect forms of labour control, however, is not meant to downplay contradictions resulting from such combinations of different management strategies. On the contrary, it serves to highlight them – since they are supposed to constitute central fields of conflict with which employees have to cope during their daily work.

In large scale retailing, in fact, a combination of participatory and hierarchical forms of control over employees' subjectivity can in fact be found. More or less technically sophisticated forms of direct control are used in order to discipline employees' behaviour as well as their body and appearance. These include strict codes of conduct,

'training' (how to apply make up, dress and smile in the correct way) as well as overt and/or covert supervision. Supervision is realised for example by means of video cameras (officially only serving to prevent theft by customers, but experienced by employees' as constant control), or through the use of so-called 'mystery clients', hidden agents testing service quality and employees' behaviour in front of customers (see also Dowling, this issue). In addition, computer registration of effectuated sales, customer numbers and service speed of individual employees, as well as strict control over break times is in place in order to control work performances, while at the same time reducing employees' autonomy in the interaction with clients as well as in the satisfaction of their own physiological needs. The latter is of special relevance for cashiers as they usually have to ask permission even for short toilet breaks which are often granted only after a considerable wait (Curcio, 2002).

Obviously, while codes of conduct and on the job training intend to foster internalisation of certain desired behaviours, the latter forms of strict control and supervision clearly could be expected to enter into conflict with employees' commitment to affective labour and service quality. Therefore, such direct control is complemented with participatory strategies, generating new contradictions, as employees' accounts of work experiences will show. On the one hand, the scope for organisational decentralisation and autonomy over the work process appears to be rather limited under the dominance of rationalisation and cost-cutting strategies. On the other, responsibility in most cases is nonetheless transferred to employees at least on a symbolic level. This is achieved for example by the formal or informal communication of sales objectives or by the use of company-culture initiatives (such as the ranking of the most productive departments and/or shops, introducing both an idea of group spirit and competition).

Beyond this combination of direct and indirect forms of control over affects, large scale retailing provides a good example of how strategies of labour control rely on the destabilisation, insecurity and uncertainty that is created by a generalised albeit gradual and differentiated process of precarisation of employment.[2] The result is a mechanism of 'forced availability': flexibility with regard to the availability to work is to a large extent achieved by the use of part time employment and 'voluntary' overtime work. Part-time work in particular, with its low wages, makes employees dependent on the possibility of obtaining uncertain overtime hours. As neither the amount nor the temporal location of such overtime is assured in advance, this exposes employees to an uncertainty of monthly incomes and instability of working times, as well as subjecting them to blackmailing by superiors. This is exacerbated by the tendency to assign overtime hours to individual employees' according to a logic of merit. The latter is defined as previous availability to the company's flexibility and performance requests. Yet, as generally no precise formalised measurements for such merit exist – or those

2 Caffentzis also has argued that just as thermodynamics provided a uniform approach to energy in industrial labor, with the invention of the Turing machine, computers provide a uniform approach to the computational procedures of all labor usually identified as skilled labor, but which are "implicit in all parts of the division of social labor" (Caffentzis, 1997: 52). However, Caffentzis does not imagine how digital technologies would permit us to 'see' information at all levels of matter, that is, realize the computational skills immanent to organic and non-organic matter alike, that is, matter as self-measuring.

fixed by collective rules are undermined by the individualisation of labour relations – favourable responses to employees' needs and demands turn into a 'granting of favours': they become the object of an arbitrary, disciplining decision-making power of superiors, not least based on personal preferences. Evidently, this mechanism is at work also with regard to other employees' expectations such as the stabilisation of the employment situation, increases in contractual hours, qualification and pay levels, or the granting of more regular overtime hours or of changes in working times, places and tasks when asked for by the employee. Superficially, however, the choice to work overtime and to demonstrate the requested availability to company demands is left to the employees, as overtime is officially 'voluntary'. In this way, responsibility for their working conditions is assigned to employees themselves, and needs and interests become conditioned by the internalisation of the company's flexibility requests and a good personal relationship with superiors. In other words, within this mechanism of forced availability, affect – in the form of personal preferences of superiors influencing judgements of individuals' merit – constitutes not only an object, but itself a device of labour control.

Summing up, the growing relevance of retail labour's affective character for a company's success, results in management's attempts to streamline and colonise employees' subjectivity by both direct and indirect control strategies. Moreover, it leads to an incorporation of affect as a tool for these strategies. The 'precarisation' of work and employment functions as a catalyst for a double colonisation of affect, sustaining the 'subjectivation' of labour control (even) under the dominance of rationalisation and neo-Taylorist re-organisation. Yet, the contradictions inherent in such a combination of contrasting management strategies could be expected to create conflicts and thus possible points of departure for resistance and the appropriation of the collective capacities to act. Let us therefore now turn to the role of affect within employees' work experiences and the strategies they develop in order to cope with and make sense of labour control.

Employees' Coping Strategies

Three levels can be distinguished in which affects play a role for employees' everyday work experiences. First, their contact with clients; second, the relations employees establish with the company as well as with concrete superiors; and, finally, interactions between colleagues. As a result of contradictions between management's strategies of rationalisation and service orientation, relations with customers constitute a central line of conflict within employees' work experiences. Stories about quarrels with customers and criticism of reduced service quality caused by management's orders are recurrent themes in employees' accounts of working conditions.

Overall, their experiences are marked by strong feelings of precariousness and vulnerability due to the mechanism of forced availability described above. This results in the pressure of blackmailing, dependence on uncertain overtime hours and low wages, and blocked paths to professional growth. All interviewees describe themselves as initially having been willing to show commitment and responsibility, and to fulfil the

company's flexibility requests. Yet they would quickly grow disappointed as their expectations in professional growth and employment stabilisation – to be obtained according to management's rhetoric by such availability demonstrations – reveal themselves as empty promises. As a consequence, a feeling of disrespect to their commitment prevails.[3]

> It happened to me then that I had to do tasks I wasn't supposed to do [according to my contract/pay level]. I asked several times: 'Listen, shouldn't I get the third level [of pay]?' But they always slammed the door in my face (…).
>
> *And does this strategy to demonstrate availability work?*
>
> It helps to get some overtime, because if you are always available, they will always ask you, and not the other who says no (…) But, the previous times count for nothing, you say yes, yes, yes thirteen times, and when you say no one single time, for them it's like you've always said no. (Interview 9, p.4f)
>
> But if you ask me only to come to work on a Sunday from time to time, every two or three months, only because you need to fill a hole in your timetable, for me that €50 more that you give me at the end of the month can only be used as toilet paper. It's a question of principles. It may even be that €50 is convenient for me, but what's the deal? Whenever you want; when it's not convenient for you, you don't need it; and then, because you have to replace a colleague who is ill, then you call: 'Come to work on Sunday! Kill yourself.' (Interview 8, p.8)
>
> I stayed there, until 5 or 6pm, from 7 in the morning, maybe even for one or two weeks continuously, sometimes even without taking time for a lunch break. But that was because I did work I somehow liked [in the frozen food department] (…) When they put me as a cashier, I told them immediately that this is work I don't like (…) I've also tried to talk with the manager, but (…) With the former manager I've always been responsive to their requests (…) But with what results? That in the end I had to go to the checkout counter anyway. (Interview 8, p.5, 8 and 10)

In this context, the affective character of their frontline service work seems to constitute an important source of recognition and satisfaction. Personal relations with clients, and especially clients' gratitude for good service, are described as adding sense and pleasure to daily routine, thus sustaining the value of one's work.

> Is it important for you that the customers say 'Thank you', that they recognize your work?
>
> For me, yes. There are many others that don't care. But for me, also when I worked at the fish counter, when I did those little jobs for them, for example filleting, they told me: 'Hey, you do this very well!', this gave me satisfaction. It's not just always the same thing, the same routine. If management doesn't understand it, at least the customer does, that's a good thing. (…) At least in this work you have the distraction, the pleasure of getting to know new people everyday and so the work passes by better too. (Interview 9, p.11f)

Due to the attraction of affective labour, employees could thus be said to have internalised responsibility for service quality and to behave in line with company's interests in spite of generally dissatisfactory working conditions. However, commitment to service quality should be considered more than a simple strategy of adaptation to

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3 Although all interviewees have managed to move from temporary to open-ended employment, all but one (out of five) remain involuntarily in part-time employment. None of them has received an increase in qualification and pay levels even after more then four years of specialisation.

labour control. It also constitutes an appropriation of sense and of competences, as employees clearly identify their capacities for empathy and conflict-solving in relation to customers as production, or rather, service- knowledge underestimated and disregarded by management.

> The thing [that is problematic] at the check out counters is not the control over the money, it's precisely the relation with the customers, you know. The way you talk with the customer. Because the customers go there to do their shopping, and when they arrive at the counter what do they do? They complain, because this and that is missing in the shelves, and you have to be able to keep them [make sure they are retained as customers]… not to say 'Hey, mister, what do you want from me?' (…) Ok, it can also happen [that you react like that]. But the work of the cashier is this: to keep the customers as calm as possible. (Group interview 1, p.14)

In order to make sense of quarrels with customers, however, employees rely on a strategy of personalisation. Reasons for conflicts are attributed to personal character, in this case mostly the uneducated behaviour of certain customers – despite a general awareness of contradictory management strategies and problems generated by the work organisation.

Two aspects of the interrelations between employees and management are relevant to the role of affect: one, the employees' reactions to superiors' arbitrary decision-making power based on personal preferences, and two, employee's responses to company-culture initiatives and related responsibility transfers pointing to a positive identification with the company. Employees react to the mechanisms of forced availability and arbitrary judgement officially based on merit by cultivating a sense of injustice and incorrectness: it is the disrespect to the commitment shown by the employee and the incorrect management of the shop that appear responsible for bad working conditions, and the fact that employees find themselves trapped in precarious employment situations. It is not their own incapacities to fulfil work tasks or obtain professional growth that are identified as the problem. Such criticisms could be understood as a rejection of self-responsibility inherent in the (false) logic of merit promoted by management. However, by adopting this strategy, conflicts are personalised as injustice and incorrectness linked to a specific superior's personality and incapacities.

> I had a whole discussion with my manager. I work in the beverages department. One morning some colleagues were reordering all the water bottles. All the water stuff was in the place where I would have had to work. So I couldn't do my work and started to help them, to get it done quicker. It was a big mess. At eight the market opens: 'Could you help me here? We have to clean up, have to hurry. We're opening right now, shit.' There has to be some order, you know. I still had to start doing my work, [to stock up fruit juices], hey! There comes the manager, tells us that we would have to take away the posters from the last sales that had just finished. At that point I got really angry. I said, not really in a loud voice, but he heard it anyway: 'Everybody is just good for talking here (…) All the shelves are empty here, plastic and cartons everywhere. You tell us to do this and that, but you are talking from the outside, you don't know what's really happening in here' (…) He is just not competent; the manager we have now is just not competent. Before he was a supervisor, there he didn't do anything really (…) The other day, at the counters, I finished the receipt roll, the paper for the receipts. I asked him: 'Do you know how to change the roll?' He looked and me and said: 'No.' Did you get it? That's the manager, he doesn't know how to do things (…). He doesn't know how things work and so he causes a mess. (Group interview 1, p.19f)

> Attempts to transfer responsibility for a company's success to employees and to integrate them into a company culture based on feelings of emotional belonging, is met by employees with a

> rather traditional work ethic upholding the rights and duties of a worker and promoting the idea of a fair exchange between employee and employer.
>
> What I think is: A company that gives the worker a salary at the end of the month, why shouldn't the worker have to give his [sic] work, too? Why not, why shouldn't he [sic] be interested in the company? He [sic] has to give. How should I put it? I feel that in order to receive you have to give, too. It's not that one can only take, take, take; no, you have to give. (Interview 6, p.12)
>
> When I started working at the fish counter I did it because they told me that I would have my hours increased. But not everybody does this. I see certain guys and not all are interested in having more hours. They just want a calm job. But this can't work out; because at work, if you are ready to give, I don't say that you'll always receive what you want, but you will have more possibilities. But if you always block everything, if you always close the door to any requests, forget about any favour from the company. Not favours, actually; things you deserve. (Interview 9, p.1)

While on the one hand such a moral work attitude underpins employees' adherence to a logic of merit and their sense of duty to fulfil flexibility requirements, on the other it also sustains consciousness of their own collective rights and an identification with an (abstract) workers' collective rather than with a company's interests. Consequently, the assumption of responsibility evident in employees' accounts seems to be motivated by their own interests (worker's instrumental interests in the company's well-being and/or an expressive interest in doing a good job as demonstrated with regard to customer service) and values (moral expectation in a fair exchange and integrity to fulfil one's own duties).

A further strategy to limit both the company's flexibility requests and the intrusion in employees' emotional attachment is a clear boundary-drawing between work and private life, between work experiences and one's own personality, resulting in a disaffection with work.

> The day after I had failed [to obtain the recognition of certain tasks as requiring a higher qualification and pay level], I went to the head of our department and I told her: 'Look, the company doesn't consider me a specialist. A specialist does this and that. A salesclerk at the fourth pay level does this and that. I'm only a simple sales clerk at the fourth pay level, I do exactly these things. All the other things - I won't do them anymore'.
>
> *Did it work out?*
>
> Yes, I didn't do the work of a specialist anymore. In the end they got tired, they sent me to the checkout counter. Because they wanted me to be available to their requests (…) To think that I'm always at the checkout counters now, it's true, it's getting on my nerves. But at least I do not destroy my health anymore [as with the work at the fish counter, where the hands are always in contact with ice]. If it's like that, well, then I prefer working as a cashier. (Group interview 1, p. 10f)
>
> *When you do your work at the checkout counter, do you feel responsible somehow for customers' satisfaction or for how the shop goes?*
>
> No, lately I do not give a damn, I really don't care about anything. I don't feel responsible for anything. I'm negligent, I do that work only because I have to do it. Because, because you do not feel, I don't know how to explain. They do not even try to draw you in… You, you don't have, you don't see any prospect for growth (…) It becomes something you do because you know that at the end of the month you bring home your salary. And you say to yourself: Ok, now, for the

> moment, as long as it will be, I'll do this. With the hope that maybe one day something will change or that I might find something else. (Interview 8, p. 10)

Given the vulnerability to blackmailing, such border-drawing is however mostly limited to a mental opting out, thus fostering a simultaneous distancing from and enduring of unsatisfactory working conditions.

At the third level of interaction (between colleagues), it must be stated first that the individualisation of labour relations put into practice by management strategies (mechanisms of forced availability and the false logic of individual merit), pushes employees towards a search for individual solutions only in the first instance. Employees value the (rhetorical) possibility to voice personal problems in direct individualised negotiations with superiors, and display an interest to 'care for themselves'. Yet, experiences of limited success of such individual strategies (due to the lack of any position of power and individual vulnerability) make them turn to unions and shop floor delegates for help – a behaviour that underlines the continuous subjective relevance of collective interest representation as a resource for individuals' coping strategies.

> Generally I try to get by on my own. In the sense that, if I have a problem, I don't call the unions immediately. But, I've also realised that, once you involve the unions, things are told in a different way. If you go on your own, they'll never give you a clear answer, because they know that you are not well informed enough to contradict them. (Interview 8, p.14)

> The only valid thing is to go talk to the unions. It's them who made me evolve a bit. (Interview 5, p. 3)

While the above mentioned identification with one's own position as a worker fosters such a positive approval of collective interest representation, it also goes along with a rather passive and distanced perception of collective action for which affects such as feelings of solidarity or emotional belonging seem to play only a minor role. Instead, participation in collective action is phrased as a moral duty (as part of the rights and duties of a worker) and as an instrumental interest in the effective defence of interests. Responsibility for the success of such interest defence is delegated to the unions who appear like a third, external party and are seen basically as a service provider. Such a passive service attitude is a result of and at the same time clearly at odds with employees' daily experiences of lacking solidarity on the shop floor: They complain about mistrust, deceitfulness and competition among colleagues and criticise 'exaggerated' individual availability demonstrations in front of management as well as consequently low participation in collective action.

> You know, everybody only cares for themselves. For example there is the cashier who wants to have a good image in front of superiors, because then they let her get out of the counter from time to time to do some other kind of work, filling up the shelves or stuff. That's why she wants to show that during a strike she's there, at work. Or there is the one who can't wait until the next strike, because then there are people missing and she can do 10 hours of overtime work (…) What do you think, what kind of atmosphere is there? I could eat them all, fuck! (Interview 5, p.5f)

> Demonstrating availability is one thing; pulling down your trousers in front of the company is something else. I am available, but only because I have my interests too. But doing certain things, such as spying, going around telling superiors that this and that person is stealing (like some colleagues do), that's not my character. That really doesn't have anything to do with work, that's

> not availability. (…) I don't say you shouldn't do any overtime at all, you just don't have to monopolise that 100, 200 hours for yourself; it should be an equal distribution for all. Instead, there is lots of egoism. (Interview 9, p. 4f)

Against this backdrop, affective relations among colleagues gain special importance as employees tend to rely on smaller, exclusive networks based on friendship in order to cope with the lack of overall shop floor solidarity. The non-existence of wider mutual support, as well as the limited participation in collective agency, in turn, are ascribed to personal character – this time of specific colleagues considered as mean, self-interested etc., and to resulting personal aversion. The issue of solidarity is thus 'privatized', as it is transferred in such a double way on the level of personal affective relations. Again, structural conditions (such as pressures towards individual demonstrations of availability especially during strikes) remain obscured and beyond employees' (collective) acting capacities – despite a general awareness about them, and in this context of high unionisation.

Conclusion

In sum, affects seem to play an important role for employees' cognitive coping strategies as conflicts on all three levels of interactions are transformed into questions of personal character and preferences. Such a personalisation leads to a naturalising and an individualisation of conflict which makes it difficult to conceive any common opponent against whom collective action could be directed (Ferreras, 2004). The reasons for conflict appear out of the reach of any agency as personal character is taken as a given and unchangeable private matter. Therefore, reference to affective relations seems to result in a channelling of conflicts, entailing a disguise of structural power positions and contradictions. Reliance on restricted friendship-based collective support networks in this context turns out to represent more a means of survival in the face of individualising management strategies than a sign of new perspectives of autonomous and spontaneous cooperation among affective workers.

Nevertheless, coming back to the functioning of labour control, what the analysis of employees' coping strategies reveals is the extent to which work organisation and labour control depend on employees' development of coping capacities. Work organisation and labour control depends both on their capacities to reconcile conflicting interests, and their ability to construct consent. It also depends on employees' abilities to counterbalance the shortcomings of and tensions between different management strategies. This is to say that management's strategies by themselves are fragile and kept together only by employees' compensating agency and sense constructions.

At first glance, these different sense-making strategies might seem to contradict each other, especially because they appear as linked to contrasting work attitudes: an instrumental perception of work consistent with disaffection-strategies, a moral conviction sustaining employees' sense of (in)justice, and expressive interests linked to the affective character of retail labour. However, what emerges from the interviews is how these different strategies actually work together within single individuals. Thus, disaffection from work, the attempt to draw clear boundaries between one's sense of

self and one's work, is far from being necessarily in contrast to the described work ethic and its moral requirement of 'doing a good job'. The latter also includes the capacity to distinguish between 'work' and 'life' whilst leaving personal problems at home in order to deliver an unrestrained work performance. Moreover, cultivating a sense of injustice and/or bad management does not contradict the idea of a fair exchange as embedded in the work ethic. Rather, it contributes to the construction of the company and/or one's actual superiors as 'other', as not conforming to the ideal expressed in this very work ethic. Thus it allows for a distancing from unsatisfying working conditions without giving up one's own concepts of justice. Once such a distance is established, it is possible to identify with individual aspects of the work environment, and therefore to maintain some motivation and positive feelings towards work. In a word, it seems to be precisely employees' capacity to combine, to tolerate and/or reconcile contradictory and conflicting work requirements, sense constructions and interests, which forms the basis of their capacity to act.

Additionally, the transfer of responsibility for the (company's) flexibility requirements to the employees is achieved only by a combination of employees' different sense constructions:

> a) their perception of their precariousness and their need for more stable working conditions as a private problem, meaning that they understand their response to the company's flexibility needs as a personal interest;
>
> b) their moral work attitude based on a belief in worker's rights and duties, which compliments the logic of merit, combined with an instrumental interest in being a dependent worker in relation to the economic success of the company offering employment and salary;
>
> c) their will to do a good job not only as a moral or economic obligation, but also as an expressive interest in recognition and satisfaction which is reflected in the positive accounts of affective front line retail labour.

In the light of these cognitive coping strategies, compliance with work requirements reveals itself as more than simple subjection under labour control obtained by coercion and/or internalisation of a (company's) interests. Instead it entails a process of subjectivation, that is, a constant struggle over identification and self-construction. As can be seen not only from the strategy of boundary-drawing, but also from the described work ethic and their subjective interpretations of responsibility and identification, employees constantly position themselves both within and outside the work context and management's offers of identification. In other words, their subjectivity and their self-constructions are not reduced to a presupposed company identity. In contrast, as already explained with regard to management's strategies, employees' coping strategies are also in themselves contradictory and fragile. This leaves margins for adaptation as well as dissent, demonstrated by the double function of a moral work attitude upholding both rights and duties, or by the ambiguity of mental boundary-drawing. Nevertheless, the overall effect of these strategies seems to be primarily a reduction of the overall sense of having one's interests frustrated, which leads to the endurance of dissatisfying working conditions and prolonged precariousness (be it through distancing oneself from work or through reference to alternative sources of recognition within the work context).

In other words, possible breaks or points of conflict exist both on the level of management strategies as well as employees' sense constructions – the colonisation of affect is nothing stable or homogeneous. Yet, as the 'privatisation' of solidarity shows, there is a lack of collective resources which would be the precondition for, first, an expression of such latent conflicts and contradictions, and, second, for countering the pressures resulting from the individualisation of labour relations. This is to say that the development of cooperation and collective agency is no spontaneous process, inherent in the logic of post-Fordist reorganisation of work, but requires the appropriation of collective acting capacities by employees' themselves – starting from the exchange of individual and common experiences, and the creation of practical experiences of solidarity, collective struggle and self-organisation.

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Notes Towards a Theory of Affect-Itself

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abstract

In this paper, we offer a series of notes toward a rethinking of affect in response to recent debates about the (im)measurability of value of affective labor. We propose shifting from a perspective that views affect as a property of the laborer to a conceptualization of what we call 'affect-itself.' We make this move by following recent rearticulations of matter, energy and information in the life sciences and quantum physics. Recent thinking in science points us to ways in which the value and measure of affect depend upon investments by both science and capital in dynamic matter's capacities for self-forming. Far from rendering the measure of value irrelevant, an economy of affect-itself suggests that while measures had previously provided representations of value, affectivity itself has now become a means of measuring value that is itself productive of value. Finally, looking toward theorizations of neoliberal governmentality and politics of 'pre-emption' in relation to an economy of affect-itself, we offer a consideration of what politics might be, and could be, in such a context.

Introduction

Theorists have recently debated the ability of the labor theory of value to explain forms of 'affective' labor. Considered to be 'immaterial labor' or labor of 'the general intellect', affective labor has raised questions for theorists about the very possibility of measuring value (Negri, 1999; Hardt and Negri, 2000). In his critique of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's treatment of the immeasurability of the value of immaterial or affective labor, George Caffentzis has taken the position that value is still measurable, and that its measurability is central to anti-capitalist projects. Caffentzis not only proposes that measuring exploitation depends on being able to measure the value of labor. He also argues that capitalism "imposes an extremely quantified form of life on its constituents, so that those who would resist capitalism must have quantitative capacity to deal with such an obvious feature of its antagonist" (2005:10). Caffentzis goes further and underscores the precariousness of claims of immeasurability, pointing to the ways in which mathematics has again and again met the challenge of developing measures for what is at first thought immeasurable.

Exploring the mathematics and sciences of measure has been important to Caffentzis's analysis of labor, energy and value; noteworthy is his treatment of the oil crisis of the

early 1970s as a work-energy crisis, in which he returns to late 19th century thermodynamics. Caffentzis argues that thermodynamics was *the* science informing Marx's theorization of abstract labor power as the potential energies of workers abstracted to hours of expended energy in the production of surplus value.[1] About thermodynamics Caffentzis concludes: "physics... provides definite analyses of work and new plans for its organization. Its models may appear abstract, but they are directly related to the labor process" (Caffentzis, 1992: 220).[2] In underscoring the relationship of measure, value and science, Caffentzis inspires us to rethink affective labor in terms of the sciences that have informed contemporary understandings of affect.

Following Caffentzis's turn to the science of thermodynamics for an understanding of the processes of generating and measuring value, we offer a set of notes about value, labor, measurement and affect in relationship to information theory being developed in physics and the life sciences (especially biology). In these sciences, information is understood as a capacity of matter to self-form and to engage in self-measurement; information is itself, along with matter and energy, presumed to be physical. As such, thermodynamics is now proposed to be a special case of information theory (Peat, ND; Seife, 2006). In addressing value, labor, measurement and affect in terms of the subsumption of thermodynamics into information, we aim to rethink the assumptions of the labor theory of value inherited from Marx.[3]

We are proposing that the assumptions of the labor theory of value must be problematized even more than they have been in discussions of affective labor, which move beyond the individual laborer in favor of a 'general potentiality' of humanness,

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1 Cf. Caffentzis, this issue. The laws of thermodynamics generalize energy (as being neither created nor destroyed, that is, conserved in every transfer) to such a high level of abstraction that capitalists could begin to imagine all sorts of not-yet-imagined sources of energy, allowing them even to dream of ways to transmit energy from one form to another without expenditure or cost. The second law of thermodynamics, however, deflates this dream with the concept of entropy, the heat death of a steam engine that points to the impossibility of using energy without cost. Energy dissipates or becomes unavailable for work in a closed mechanical system. Additional work is needed to reenergize the machine, which, however, further increases entropy. Thus, a response to entropic heat death is called forth in the ongoing development of technology to make production or the use of energy as efficient as possible while allowing capital to become more impervious to workers' refusal to work. Today, information is thought in terms of a new law that is: 'information can neither be created nor destroyed', which speaks to the physicality of information and to what below we will take up as the informational measuring of matter. See Seife (2006).

2 Caffentzis also has argued that just as thermodynamics provided a uniform approach to energy in industrial labor, with the invention of the Turing machine, computers provide a uniform approach to the computational procedures of all labor usually identified as skilled labor, but which are "implicit in all parts of the division of social labor" (Caffentzis, 1997: 52). However, Caffentzis does not imagine how digital technologies would permit us to 'see' information at all levels of matter, that is, realize the computational skills immanent to organic and non-organic matter alike, that is, matter as self-measuring.

3 Karl Marx introduces the labor theory of value in Chapter One of *Capital* Vol. 1. He explains that "what exclusively determines the magnitude of the value of any article is therefore the amount of labor socially necessary, or the labor-time socially necessary for its production" including the qualification that "the labor that forms the substance of value is equal human labor, the expenditure of identical human labor" (Marx, 1990: 129).

but do not question the embodiment of this potentiality, its form of mattering.[4] We attempt to do so in order to reconceptualize labor power in relation to affectivity, or pre-individual capacities to affect and to be affected. In contrast to discussions of affective labor, our discussion situates affect at all levels of matter, such that the distinction between organic and non-organic matter is dissolved.

We are moving beyond the laborer's body assumed in the labor theory of value – what we will refer to as the body-as-organism – in order to speculate about the ways in which capital is setting out a domain of investment and accumulation by generalizing or abstracting affect to affect-itself. We are questioning the assumption of the body-as-organism neither to dismiss human labor nor to propose alternatively that machines, let us say, produce surplus value, but rather to suggest that if the distinction between organic and non-organic matter is dissolving in relationship to information, as we are suggesting it is, then labor power must be treated in terms of an abstraction that would be befitting not only organic and non-organic bodies but bodies that are beyond the distinction altogether, that is, bodies that are conceived as arising out of dynamic matter or matter as informational. Affect-itself is admittedly an underspecified concept because it is meant to address the becoming abstract, and therefore becoming subject to measure that which is seemingly disparate – that is, pre-individual capacities ranging from pre-conscious human bodily capacities, to human genetic materials functioning outside the human body, to the capacities of computer programs to elaborate levels of complexity beyond the specifications of the program, to the capacities of bacteria to cross species now lending to a reconceptualization of evolution as well as becoming a model of bioterrorism.

As we shift focus from affective labor to affect-itself, then, we follow theorists whose conceptualizations of affect draw on the life sciences and physics. These theorists, who we take up below, have opened the human body to matter's informational substrate, drawing on the bioinformatics of DNA in biology, or quantum theory's positing of information as a form of measure. We explore the ways in which these sciences have enabled theorists of affect to conceptualize it as a matter of virtuality, indeterminacy, potentiality, emergence and mutation. Like these theorists of affect upon whom we draw, our engagement with the sciences is not meant to be a full explication of particular scientific fields, theories or propositions. Not only are the scientific theories to which we turn themselves debated in their respective fields, but our purpose is not an application of scientific theories to social criticism. It is rather to recognize that these

4 Because the labor theory of value also speaks to the production of surplus value extracted from the human laborer's waged work, theorists who have taken up Marx's labor theory of value have emphasized the importance of the human laborer. There is a resonance of this in those theorists of affective labor who often point to a general potentiality but only in relationship to humanness. For example, Akseli Virtanen argues that the potential of labor power has always implied that there is something which remains potential. Affective labor only makes this potentiality more visible as the "general potentiality and linguistic-relational abilities which *distinguish* human-beings". As Virtanen puts it: "For the first time the common mode of existence of human beings, the potential dimension of human existence as the power to do anything appears to us without the mediation of a meaning, product or common cause" Virtanen (2004). This "without the mediation of meaning" suggests to us that there needs be a rethinking of the mattering of potentiality, the potentiality of matter in terms of information, given that information, as we will discuss below, is a matter of form, not meaning.

scientific theories have contributed ideas about affect which have made it a nodal point for the shifting direction of social criticism. There are philosophical resonances between the ongoing elaboration of information theory in developments of the life sciences and physics, and recent social, political and economic transformations; the scientific conceptualization of affect has led social criticism to rethink matter, energy, measurability, value and information on one hand, and on the other, labor power, capitalist productivity and governance.

We are not however merely making metaphorical use of certain scientific borrowings. For one, we assume that the sciences employed by theorists of affect are sciences with which capital is also entangled. That is to say, scientific discourse and capital participate together in setting a field of investment by abstracting affect to affect-itself and engaging information as measure. Caffentzis (1992) reminds us that from the beginning, capital has been implicated in the sciences because of its engagement with the abstract potential of labor power. If in the nineteenth century science and capital were engaged in efforts to manage workers' bodies as a thermodynamic control of entropic energy, we propose that now science and capital are engaged in efforts to directly modulate the pre-individual or the potentiality of the indeterminate, emergent creativity of affect-itself. This means that we are rethinking the relationship of science, governance and productivity, speculating that a tension between control on one hand and indeterminate emergence on the other constitutes the problematic at the heart of a radical neoliberal governance of productivity. We will propose that governance is now a matter of pre-emption, but not only to anticipate and control the emergent but rather to precipitate emergence and thereby act on a future that has not yet and may not ever arrive. As our notes conclude with the discussion of affectivity and radical neoliberal governance, we want to recognize the ambivalence embedded in our conceptualization of affect-itself, as our treatment of it moves back and forth between preconscious human bodily capacities and affective capacities at all levels of matter. This ambivalence is part of the ongoing process of the abstraction of affect to affect-itself; it also is part of the effort of a radical neoliberal governance to modulate potential and emergence.

Note 1: We conceptualize affect somewhat differently than a number of theorists of affective labor do, leading us to speculate about affect-itself.

By the 1990s, theorists used the concept of affective labor as part of an effort to account forwhat they saw as important shifts taking place in capitalism and its organization of labor. Building on debates which had primarily been taking place within the Italian Marxist tradition of *Operaismo* (Hardt and Negri, 2002), some theorists went on to examine kinds of labor which have not typically been thought of as work, and which involve the production of activities rather than consumable commodities, for example, "defining and fixing cultural and artistic standards, fashions, tastes, consumer norms and, more strategically, public opinion": in short, the labor of communication and cooperation (Lanzarato, ND). Some theorists have treated the work of communication and cooperation more broadly, defining affective labor in a way that highlights certain

capacities of laborers, those linked to 'thinking and abstract knowledge', or 'the general intellect', to use Marx's (1973: 706) terms.

Akseli Virtanen for one argues that affective labor "is neither direct human labour the worker performs (shaping materials of nature, producing new objects, etc.) nor the time he or she expends, but rather 'the appropriation of his [sic.] own general productive power, his [sic.] understanding of nature and his [sic.] mastery over it by virtue of his [sic.] presence as a social body… – it is, in a word, the development of the social individual which appears as the great foundation-stone of production and of wealth" (Virtanen, 2004: 223). Similarly, Paolo Virno argues that the "primary productive resources of contemporary capitalism" lie in the "linguistic-relationship abilities of humankind…," that is, "the complex of communicative and cognitive faculties (*dynameis*, powers) which distinguish humans" (2004: 98). For Virno, the general intellect is the foundation of a social cooperation that exceeds the cooperation of laboring. This cooperation moves from a "preliminary sharing of communicative and cognitive abilities" to "the life of the mind," which is in excess of the individual in that these capacities are heterogeneous (2004: 67).

These heterogeneous capacities, Virno argues, are an 'interweaving' of pre-individual elements and individuated characteristics. Drawing here on Gilbert Simondon to elaborate what Marx referred to as 'the social individual', Virno goes on to propose that the labor power of the social individual is pure potential, something 'non-present', 'non-real' (2004: 82). Yet this potential is bought by capitalists, under the law of supply and demand; it is here that Virno locates "the genesis of surplus value...the mystery of capitalistic accumulation" (*ibid.*). For Virno then, labor power is productive because it "incarnates potential; it actualizes it" (*ibid.*).

But how is this incarnation conceived? Is potential actualized only through the work of human laborers? While Virno's and Virtanen's analyses of affective labor imply that abstract labor-power is in excess of any one laborer's body, our question is, is it in excess of the body conceived as human organism? As Virno and Virtanen move us into a realm of affect that supercedes the individual, they begin to problematize the dominant conception of the laboring body as a self-enclosed, bodily totality possessed by a human subject to whom affect belongs, what we are calling the body-as-organism. The point we want to make is that the objective existence of bodies whose energies can be measured and administered under capitalism should be understood in the context of the effects of historically specific modes of administration and measurement. This is not to say that the body is simply a construction, but rather that bodies and techniques of administration and measure all arise out of dynamic matter as part of a network of capital and scientific discourse. Given this, we are proposing that the body-as-organism is generated by a system of measurement and administration which does not adequately characterize the workings of capitalist economy and governance at this time.

Instead of looking to the body-as-organism to actualize labor-power, we are proposing that a dynamic, indeterminate matter is presently being configured in capitalism with corresponding techniques of administration and measurement aimed at a level below, above, or perhaps beyond that of the bounded body-as-organism. Therefore, while we are also concerned with the 'dynamic powers' to which Virno refers (2004: 98), we

conceive them not as a matter of general intellect, a disembodied matter, but as a generalized matter beyond the laborer's body, a matter of affect- itself. We are proposing that there is an abstracting of affect to affect-itself, which disregards the bounded-ness of the human body, thus troubling the conceptualization of the body as the body-as-organism.

Note 2: We are proposing that the conceptualization of affect-itself troubles the conceptualization of the body assumed in the labor theory of value, the body-as-organism, defined as autopoietic. We are thus led to speculate about the connections between different levels of matter.

What is the bounded human body which affect-itself bypasses or disregards? Recalling Umberto Maturana and Francisco Varela's (1980) notion of autopoiesis, we can describe the bounded human body as a closed system; it is closed to information that would compromise the body's organizational integrity while remaining open to energy needed to maintain the body's drive to homeostasis and equilibrium. As Maturana and Varela describe it, the autopoietic organism is a complex relation of parts, structures, and functions – genes, organelles, cells, tissue, bodily fluids, organs, and organ systems – all working together to reproduce the life of the body by preserving the functional relationship of the organism's parts to its environment. The organism selects its environment with the aim of maintaining its internal equilibrium, such that chance occurrence, mutation or the creative transmission of information across species boundaries can only be destructive or threatening to life.

The autopoietic body is strictly confined to the laws of classical thermodynamics, which connect human finitude to a conception of the human body as driven by equilibrium and homeostasis. It is a body organized for production and reproduction within a thermodynamic cycle of energy accumulation and expenditure. However, moving beyond the closure of the body-as-organism and its drive to maintain equilibrium and homeostasis, our conception of affect-itself points to a mode of production and reproduction for which affect need not be confined to the body-as-organism, but rather may be described as a property of matter generally, disregarding distinctions between the organic and the non-organic, the open and the closed, the biological and the physical, even the simple and the complex.[5] In conceptualizing affect-itself, we situate a body "within a wider field of forces, intensities and duration that give rise to it and which do not cease to involve a play between non-organic and organic life," as Keith Ansell Pearson (1999: 154) argues. Our conceptualizing of affect-itself follows theorists of affect who in defining it as the pre-individual capacity to affect and to be affected attribute to affect the ontological dynamism of matter generally.

Theorizing affect as the pre-individual capacity to affect and to be affected, Brian Massumi for one takes as an example of affect those bodily responses, autonomic

5 For further critique of the body-as-organism, see Clough (2007).

responses, which have been defined as in-excess of conscious states of perception and therefore point to a 'visceral perception' preceding perception (Massumi, 2002: 25) If this reference to autonomic responses seems to make affect the equivalent of the empirical measure of bodily effects registered in activity, such as dilation of pupils, intestinal peristalsis, gland secretion, and galvanic skin responses, Massumi goes on to use such measures as a philosophical flight to think affect in terms of the virtual as the realm of potential, unlivable as tendencies or incipient acts, indeterminate and emergent.

For Massumi the turn to affect is about opening the human body to its indeterminacy, for example the indeterminacy of autonomic responses. It is therefore necessary for Massumi to define affect in terms of its autonomy from conscious perception and language, as well as emotion. He proposes that if conscious perception is to be understood as the narration of affect – as it is in the case of emotion, there is, nonetheless, always "a never-to-be-conscious autonomic remainder", "a virtual remainder", or what we would describe as an excess that pertains to the virtuality of affect itself (Massumi, 2002: 25). Massumi's turn to the body's indeterminacy, then, is not a return to the 'pre-social'. Arguing that affect is not to be misunderstood as pre-social, Massumi proposes that it is "open-endedly social", that is, "social in a manner 'prior to' the separating out of individuals" (2002: 9). So, affect is pre-individual and remains so; with each actualization, there remains a virtual remainder of affective potential. It is in this sense that affect refers to the openness of bodily matter to its own unstable, pre-individual capacities, which relate to it in a non-linear, non-deterministic way. Affect is to be understood in terms of potentiality, indeterminate emergence and creative mutation – that is to say, in terms of the ontologically real virtual remainder that enfolds and unfolds space-times implicated in matter.[6]

If thermodynamics enables the articulation of the human body as an autopoietic, equilibrium-seeking organism, then what science speaks to the virtuality of affect as it escapes this body? Following Massumi, we are drawn to David Bohm's discussion of quantum physics and 'the implicate order' (2002: 37). As the essential feature of the implicate order is its 'undivided wholeness', where everything is enfolded in everything else and as well enfolded in the whole, Timothy Murphy argues that quantum phenomena are real even though they have no "continuous material existence"; quantum phenomena "themselves do not so much exist as *insist* or *subsist* in an enfolded form of space-time that is real despite its apparent ideality or abstraction" (Murphy, 1988: 222). All things unfolded in what Bohm calls 'the explicate order' emerge from the implicate order and return to it. While they exist, they are in a constant process of unfoldment and re-enfoldment. Bohm refers to 'active information' as a way to understand the potential of enfoldment – the potential of any thing to affect itself and to be affected by its quantum field – what he refers to as 'quantum potential'. In our

6 We are following Timothy Murphy who draws a comparison between the work of David Bohm, which we take up below, and Deleuze's conceptualization of the virtual. Deleuze distinguished the virtual-actual circuit from the possible-real circuit: in contrast to the possible, which is to be realized, the virtual calls forth actualizations which have no resemblance to the virtual. Actualization is not a specification of a prior generality. Actualization out of virtuality is creation out of heterogeneity. Actualization is an experiment in virtuality, an affecting or materializing of a virtual series (Murphy, 1988).

conceptualizing affect in terms of the implicate order we are proposing to attribute to affect what Murphy describes as 'quantum' or 'virtual ontology' (Murphy, 1988). We are proposing to think affect as inhering not only in the human body but in matter generally, that is, to be at every level of matter as that which is potentiating or informational.[7]

Note 3. Theories of information are crossing from thermodynamics to bioinformatics to quantum theory. Quantum theory's treatment of information leads us to propose that affect-itself is not beyond measure because it is involved in the process by which dynamic matter informs and measures itself.

Bohm's conception of information differs from the conception of information as a representation, proposed by theorists such as Niels Bohr and Werner Heisenberg. For these theorists, quantum phenomena are *known* only through experimental frameworks and are thus inseparable from the apparatuses of measure (or representation).[8] The phenomena are only endowed with real existence through the measuring apparatuses that represent them; they have no ontological status apart from these representations, which can only describe them "analogically by probability" (Murphy, 1988: 15). Murphy notes that theorists like Bohr and Heisenberg argue that at the quantum level, "a mathematical representation is all that remains of the physical world" (Murphy, 1988: 216). In this argument, any ontological attribution of physicality to what is below the threshold of probability is thought to be merely metaphysical. While Bohm argues that the measuring and the measured 'participate irreducibly in each other', it is not a matter of epistemology, of how things are known, but a matter of ontology. As such measuring for Bohm is a question of matter informing itself, where information is to be understood as physical. While quantum phenomena are indeterminate, they are real and their existence does not depend on their relationship to representations or measuring apparatuses. Rather, quantum phenomena are ontologically indeterminate in relationship to all that they are determinately implicated with.

In refusing a phenomenology that reduces quantum phenomena to consciousness or a measuring apparatus, Bohm instead points to "the existence of subquantum factors that affect events...that requires the assumption of an infinitesimal wave pattern that simultaneously links all aspects of an extended field of forces" (Murphy, 1988: 216). Therefore, all things affect each other through the quantum potential of the quantum field, even when the elements are separated by long distances, a feature of the implicate

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7 A number of Bohm's commentators point to his use of the holographic image to further elaborate the way in which unfoldment explicates the implicate at various levels of matter. While the holographic image is one in which all of its parts contain the whole, Bohm prefers the more dynamic term 'holomovement' (rather than static imagery of the hologram) to suggest that the whole of the material world is continuously including our sense experiences, nervous system and brain etc. See Talbot (1991)

8 See Murphy's (1988) discussion of Bohm, Bohr, and Heisenberg. Also see, Bohm and Hiley (1993).

order that Bohm refers to as 'non-locality'. This action at a distance points to a common pool of information belonging to the quantum field as a whole, what Bohm (1990) calls 'active information' (see also: Bohm and Hiley, 1993).

Active information is measure in matter, an in-forming, where the measuring and the measured constitute a specific case of the undivided wholeness of the implicate order. Given non-locality (or action at a distance), the effects of measure do not depend upon the strength of the quantum potential of the field but only on its form. Matter is a process of self-informing raw energy, an explication of the implicit with a remainder. As Bohm (1990) puts it, "One may think of the electron as moving under its own energy. The quantum potential then acts to put form into its motion, and this form is related to the form of the wave from which the quantum potential is derived." A form, having very little energy, "enters into and directs a much greater energy. The activity of the latter is in this way given a form similar to that of the smaller energy" (Bohm and Hiley, 1993: 35). Bohm also sees this in the action of the DNA molecule that acts in the living cell to give form to the synthesis of proteins such that only the form of the DNA molecule counts "while energy is supplied by the rest of the cell and indeed ultimately by the environment as a whole." Bohm concludes that "at any moment, only a part of the DNA molecule is being 'read' and giving rise to activity. The rest is potentially active and may become actually active according to the total situation in which the cell finds itself" (Bohm and Hiley, 1993: 36).

In relationship to in-forming, Bohm proposes that it is inappropriate "to say that we are simply measuring an intrinsic property" of the measured. What actually happens is a participation of the measuring and the measured that "reveal[s] a property that involves the whole context (of measuring or informing) in an inseparable way" (Bohm and Hiley, 1993: 6). Indeed, Bohm proposes that, "the ordinary classical and common sense idea of measurement is no longer relevant" (*ibid.*). Rather the participation of measuring and measured in one another is affective; that is, it produces a multiplier-effect, with quantum effects feeding forward and back through all levels of matter.[9] In-forming or measuring, as Murphy might put it, "registers the whole configuration of field becomings and interactions and communicates this constantly shifting configuration to all of the constituent fields and singularities" (Murphy, 1988: 225). Drawing on the thought of the implicate order, active information and quantum potential, our conceptualization of affect signals an investment in the emergent at every level of matter and as such, a dissolution of the distinction between organic and non-organic life. It is not surprising then that the conceptualization of affect has drawn to it, along with the discourse of physics, the discourses of the life sciences and genetic engineering technologies as well.

In her treatment of affect, Luciana Parisi (2004) draws on the discourses of genetic engineering and theories of evolution. She shows how genetic engineering works in ways reminiscent of what evolutionary theorists describe as the informational work of mitochondrial DNA, an informational relic originating from a virus billions of years ago but which now replicates without the body of the virus. Drawing on Lynn Margulis and

9 Massumi (2002: 36-37) offers a discussion of quantum effects and the way they feed forward and back through all levels of matter.

Dorion Sagan (Margulis, 1981; Margulis and Sagan, 1986), Parisi engages their treatment of the replication of mitochondria in a process called endosymbiosis. In this process, mitochondria take up residence in a cell body of another organism without changing their own method of informing. Like bacteria, mitochondria have no immune system, so they assemble across phyla without fidelity to relations of genus and species; they communicate horizontally, assembling through contact or contagion rather than through a linear transmission respectful of species and genus. Parisi (2004: 175) argues that endosymbiosis therefore adds "microbial memories and cellular parasitism" to reproduction through nucleic DNA.[10] Endosymbiosis models a process of precipitating an uncertain future by proliferating mutation, a process which is descriptive of genetic engineering as well.

Taking mammal cloning as an example of genetic engineering, Parisi proposes that what occurs in cloning is that the cell is "brought back to a virtual stage of growth also defined as zero degree of development" (2004: 157). However, while this suggests that the "ageing time of adult cells can be reversed and reprogrammed for new functions," Parisi goes on to argue that this does not mean that molecular time is either progressive or regressive, where "a return to zero is a return to… ground zero out of which life grows" (*ibid.*). Rather Parisi sees in cloning an example of the nonlinear relationship of causes and effects which "indicates the proliferation of unpredictable differentiation, the actual becoming of cells whose implications are yet to be realized" (*ibid.*).

Usually meant to control mutation, the genetic engineering of cloning instead "triggers an unexpected cellular becoming rather than engendering a mere copy of an original" (Parisi, 2004: 157) This kind of replication, "the contagious fabrication of life and ultimately the continual variation of matter," is descriptive of genetic engineering which is provoking or precipitating emergence, rather than only preventing it (*ibid.*: 159). In light of Bohm's formulation of active information, Parisi's treatment of genetic engineering suggests that it is a measuring in matter, an informing that actualizes what was only potentially active in the form of nucleic DNA. It is a manipulation of the time-spaces implicated in matter, a modulation of capacity or affect that might be described in terms of what Parisi, with Steven Goodman, calls 'mnemonic control' (Parisi and Goodman, 2005).

Note 4. We are proposing that affect-itself works along with power through mnemonic control, a manipulation of the

10 Parisi's comparison of genetic technologies and mitochondrial replication points to the creative mutation possible in technological processes of genetic engineering. Melinda Cooper has also drawn on the work of microbiologists, including Margulis and Sagan, to show how microbial communication offers a model for the 'biological turn' in the war on terror. She argues that the ability of bacteria to exchange sequences of DNA across species and genera has only recently been recognized to be useful for biological warfare. This ability of bacteria also has led to a general mode of governance and economy based on the precipitation of random mutation, which we will discuss below (See: Cooper, 2006). Both Parisi and Cooper complexify those treatments of genetic technologies which link them to what Kaushik Sunder Rajan (2006) calls 'biocapitalism' by arguing that genetic technologies are reductive of life rather than being seen as a complicated productivity

unfolding and re-enfolding of space-times implicated in matter. Critical engagements with this power, what we will refer to as 'pre-emptive power', necessarily engage the reconfiguration of matter, energy, affect and information that is presently being invested by science and capital.

By mnemonic control, Parisi and Goodman (2005) mean to rethink the relationship of memory and power in the context of the ubiquitous computing of a distributed system of memory storage devices across the planet. They argue that "power no longer leaves the future unoccupied and open. It doesn't merely operate on probabilities, i.e. actual forms of living that already exist in the present-past." Rather, they propose that power is now engaged with memory and its working at the informational level of matter and therefore that power "engages… the virtual entities and their active agency within actual, living processes" (2005: 2).

In pointing to the technological context of memory, Parisi and Goodman mean to emphasize the use of control technologies to both anticipate and precipitate contagion which Parisi considered in her treatment of mitochondria. She and Goodman point to "the contagious virtual residue of memory", potentials of the affective or the informational to be actualized in a deployment of what they call 'preemptive power' (2005: 3). As Parisi and Goodman see it, the aim of preemptive power is to manipulate memory by bringing the future into the present. Taking as an example genetically engineered manipulation of space-times as in cloning, Parisi and Goodman argue that preemptive power actualizes the future by foreclosing creative mutation, seeking to anticipate or control emergence; but it also therefore precipitates emergence and produces more uncertainty. Preemptive power "tackles a universe of micro temporalities enabling the future not to be predicted by means of probabilities but to actively occupy the present by means of immediacy" – that is, affectively. "Such a sense of present futurity entails how uncertainties cannot be calculated in advance" (2005: 6). Uncertainty is made an experience of futurity in the present. "The future yet to be formed is actively populating the sensations of the present anticipating what is to come, the feeling of what happens before its actualization" (2005: 3) This, in order to be able to trade on uncertainty, to trade on a future at its most unpredictable, at the limit of the calculable – to trade on emergence.

Preemptive power means to foreclose the potential of 'mnemonic mutation' by making uncertainty a means of controlling the present with an affective experience of the future. In that preemptive power drives itself to time-spaces beyond the measure of probability, mnemonic control also allows for mnemonic mutation, a production of affect, the informing of quantum potential. Thus, preemptive power aims at the not-yet actualized or affect-itself, to find a resource for energy in the virtuality of the implicate order. Since the implicate order is an 'an-entropic order', where the entropy produced in the energy expended by active information is profoundly deferred throughout the various levels of matter, the investment of capital and science in the virtual or affect-itself may be understood as a strategy for meeting the work-energy crisis of contemporary capitalism. It may well be the dream of capitalists to be able to apply small amounts of

energy in the expectation of a multiplier-effect in the reverberations of active information across all levels of matter.

Such a dream may already be giving productivity a different measure, the one we have been exploring as information immanent to matter, which when taken as a measure of value, proposes that the imperative of capitalism to extract value from human laborers is reaching a threshold beyond which preemptive power is realized as a way of governing life or affect-itself, where, as Massumi puts it, "productive powers shade into powers of existence…. Productive powers are now growth factors, power to be, becoming" (Massumi, ND). As such, affect has become an economic factor, an action on the future whose value is measured affectively, "not in labor time but in life time" (Massumi, 2004: 4).

Note 5. While affective labor has been theorized in terms of changes in capitalism in the early 1970s, our conceptualization of affect-itself is befitting to conditions of productivity and its governance in the early twenty first century when practices of speculation dominate not only for anticipating the future but precipitating it as well.

The conditions of possibility of affective labor set out in the early 1970s are usually described in terms of a shift to a service economy, as well as a globalization of financialization which follows on the formal subsumption of the reproduction of the laborer into capital in the post-World War II economy of mass production and mass consumption. As reproduction becomes a matter of market exchange, the reproduction of labor becomes a force of production. There is the resulting collapse of the distinction between production and consumption and an intensification of capital circulation. The development of digital technologies serves to replace workers and also to help augment the networking that becomes necessary for a globalized circulation. There is increased investment in the capital-intensive industries of technoscience and communication technologies which necessitate and make possible the transfer of surplus value extracted from the low-investment sector of the service industry to the high-investment sector, for example the capital-intensive industries of information and communication. Under these conditions, usually analyzed as effects of the break-up of the Fordist-Keynesian regime of capital accumulation, laboring is more readily described as affective, a matter of linguistic, communicative, or intellectual capacities.

This transfer of surplus value from labor-intensive to capital-intensive sectors, and usually from one part of the globe to another, was to be protected or secured by what would come to be called neoliberal policies of institutions like the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. This included the structural adjustment of debt, privatization or the decline of government supported security nets for populations, the manipulation of worldwide fiscal and monetary policies meant to create and manage crises, and, finally, a redistribution of populations through immigration and forced migration. While these characteristics continue to describe the global economy, we are proposing that capitalist productivity is not just in the state of a flexible 'accumulation

by dispossession', as David Harvey (2003: 137-182) would have it. Along with financialization, privatization and the management and manipulation of economic crises, capitalism meets a threshold beyond which a plane of investment and accumulation is laid out in the domain of affect-itself, along with what is referred to as the real subsumption of life itself, for which the relationship of governance and economy is reenvisioned in what can be referred to as a radical neoliberalism.

In taking up a radical neoliberalism, we are following conceptions of the relationship of governance and economy which build on Michel Foucault's treatment of biopolitics and governmentality and address affect and power of a radical neoliberalism.[11] Massumi, for one, sees the early elaboration of a radical neoliberalism in present conditions brought on by crises of governing capitalist productivity such as Katrina, the war in Iraq, and the war on terrorism. Exemplified by these events, a radical neoliberalism is characterized by a strategic oscillation in governing between regulation that exerts a downward pressure on the productivity of life, and sovereign command, which moves in when there is catastrophe or crisis. But when it does, it does so in order to provoke life, urging it to intensify its own productivity.

Command is better understood as 'negative command', a command that withdraws after life systems are restarted. Negative command, therefore, must necessarily operate in adjacency with the self-organizing processes of technical systems, where the technical is engaged with the informational substrate immanent to matter. While regulation and command work in oscillation with each other, both command and regulation are to leave the field once life is 'normal' again or when life has been jump-started again. Once government has guaranteed economic activity in the productivity of life, then it is passed back over to the business of capitalism so that capital might make more out of life. At least, that is what is expected (Massumi, 2006).

Others have described neoliberalism as the extension of an economic rationality to all aspects of society, including life-itself, where indeed the market is the organizing and

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11 In many of the treatments of affective labor we explore, there is an implicit or explicit recognition of the importance of Foucault's notion of biopower as well as his treatment of economy in relation to governmentality. This is because Foucault recognized the tie between the state, power and life. He traced the entrance of the life of the individual and of the species into politics at the moment when the managing of the household became a model for managing the state, when the sovereign's power shifted from the principality or the territory to the concern and management of the people, that is, the art of governing. In Foucault's account this occurs from the 16th through the 18th century, when the model of the good father overseeing the working of the family, its economy, becomes the managerial model for the state. In his essay, 'Governmentality', Foucault (1991) argues that the art of government requires the entrance of economy into political practice: "to set up an economy at the level of the entire state which means exercising towards its inhabitants and the wealth and behavior of each and all, a form of surveillance and control as attentive as the head of a family over his household and his goods." The economical state is engaged in the different flows and relationships of population/territory/things in terms of health, wealth and a general security of the people. Here the state intervenes in the economy, where the economy relies on statistical measures of the population's needs, regularities and irregularities, and where subsets of the population such as the family become objects and vehicles of discipline. More recently, theorists like Massumi have drawn on Foucault's work on neoliberal government to further address governmentality. Massumi makes use of *The Birth of Biopolitics* to outline the relationship of governance and economy in order to capture the workings of what we have been referring to as pre-emptive power.

regulative principle of the state and where the state legitimizes itself by behaving 'like a market actor' (Brown, 2003; Lemke, 2001). But what Massumi argues is that life-itself is involved in this political economic process in the sense that the rationality characterizing the turn from neoliberalism to radical neoliberalism is a rationality of affectivity. He refers to the political production of 'affective facts', when public fear and anxiety are stimulated by the State, and these affects begin to operate on their own, as when airports are closed because of a threat that may later be proven to be unfounded. In this case, "Threat triggers fear. The fear is of disruption. The fear is a disruption" (Massumi, ND: 8).

The affective fact displaces empirical facticity and prompts the "breakdown of logico-discursive reasoning" (*ibid.*: 8). While neoliberalism made use of indexes to prevent what was forecasted as coming from the future, reading the past as harbinger of the future, radical neoliberalism, by contrast, does not rely on prevention. It means to effect: for example, when fear of the future is stimulated in the present, the fear brings the future into the present in the form of an affective fact (*ibid.*: 8). Massumi, like Parisi and Goodman, treats this affective modulation of futurity as a deployment of preemptive power (*ibid.*: 8).

In a radical neoliberalism, affectivity functions beside command as "a component of passage between mechanisms, orders of phenomena, and modes of power" (Parisi and Goodman, 2005). Affectivity fuses the formerly separate spheres of so-called liberal democracy, causing them to function as one, "woven into the economy, making a directly economic mode of power the motor of the process as a whole: the ontogenetic power productive of becoming" (2005: 8). Affect holds together disciplinary and biopolitical regulatory mechanisms, along with command in its sudden flashes of sovereign power. It does so to modulate futurity and operate on what Foucault referred to as populations, a heterogeneous massification of singularity, which differ from historically constituted agents such as classes. Populations are subject to the management of the social, biological and economic conditions of the reproduction of life. But they are not simply populations of individual subjects, but more populations of capacities appearing as data in touch with the informational substrate of matter. These are populations referring to affect-itself and the way in which data is autoaffective, stirring up matter in the measure of exploitation, domination and mistreatment. The challenge for theories of affect, then, becomes how to articulate a politics in the present, when what constitutes the present is set in relation to a preemptive modulation of futurity. We offer some initial thoughts on this challenge in our conclusion.

Conclusion

We have situated the questions of measure and value in the context of those sciences that along with capital have brought forth affect as an economic factor central to a radical neoliberal governing of productivity. We have been mindful that science and capital have always been bound up in an effort to make the expenditure of energy more productive, more valuable. In other words, there can be no measure or value, and therefore no capitalist productivity, without science. Modes of evaluation and

measurement necessary to capitalist productivity depend on the intelligibility that science brings forth in the world, constituting the world.

In focusing on affect-itself in relationship to information, we have been engaged in rethinking value and measure in the context of a shift in governance. We consider this to be a shift away from a State project to temper, direct, and regulate the economy through consciously calculated intentionality (as in Keynesian economics) and toward a radical neoliberal governance of economy where the value of productive activity is no longer found in conscious and calculated intention, but rather in the play of uncertainty and the direct manipulation of affectivity. Whereas a post-World War II economy was subordinated to the calculations, goals, and intentions of the State, a radical neoliberal governmentality now subordinates its activities to the logic of a market economy and a rationality of affectivity. Here, the value of affect emerges adjacent to the production of use values for exchange and where the distinction between laboring and activity can no longer be maintained.

Thus the economy is no longer directed and regulated with regard to the particular social goals of the State that would necessitate the disciplining of laborers on behalf of social cohesion. It is no longer taken for granted that such activity will cause in any determinate way the achievement of a State plan of calculated intentionality. Rather, a radical neoliberalism submits social life to the imperatives of a market economy, which are uncertain. If value still refers to activity that might be described as 'socially necessary', this is only under conditions in which the socially necessary is a variable to be determined after the activity can be deemed productive; thus, what is of value is always uncertain or deferred.

We have argued that this does not mean that there is no measurement, or that questions of measure are irrelevant in contemporary capitalism. Rather, we have been engaged in a re-articulation of measure and its relationship to value. We have offered notes toward exploring this changed relationship in which we have proposed that affectivity is central to the present relationship of measure and value. Whereas measure had previously provided a representation of value, now affectivity has become a means of measuring value that is itself autoaffective, producing affect in a multiplier effect across metastable levels of matter. This is to think in terms of affective measure, to understand measure and affect not simply as related, but as occurring simultaneously in relations of metastability. Focusing on the affective circuit of fear and (in)security in the deployment of preemptive power, we have proposed that there is a measure of affectivity produced in the uncertainty or deferral of value. Rather than economic indicators establishing confidence in economic futures, the affective production of (in)security has become itself an economic indicator. That is to say, an increased sense of security or insecurity becomes a prospective evaluation of the economy's future behavior. As such, the value of an action or commodity is affective rather than its being a matter of known effects of a calculated intentionality. In an economy of affect-itself, value is that which endlessly unfolds from all action and this is the nature of its measure: it feeds forward and backward across all levels of matter – what we have described as matter measuring itself.

If for Caffentzis the politics of measure involve the estimation of the exploitation of laborers in the production of surplus value, we have been arguing that rethinking measure in relationship to value at this time also speaks to questions of the political. While the measure of value still can be said to provide estimations of exploitation, it is not in terms of hours of energy expended by laborers in activity that is distinguishable from living. Rather exploitation must be measured along with oppression, domination, mistreatment and misrecognition as matters of affective capacity, a politics of the differential distribution among populations of capacities for living. These are not simply populations of individual subjects but also populations of capacities appearing as data or information without reference to individual subjects. Thus, in an economy of affect-itself, data of disease, terror, poverty, illiteracy, and criminality all become players in a politics of affect, a matter of information, an in-forming in matter. For us, politics within a radical neoliberal governance of affect-itself must engage with the modulation of futurity at all levels of matter. How data about capacities for living feeds back across all those levels (genetic, human, populational, and otherwise), or how the measure of capacity sets off multiplier effects that precipitate future life capacities and their value, are the questions that remain for developing a political ground adequate for responses to capitalism today.

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The Anamorphosis of Living Labour

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abstract

In this essay we analyse the category of co-research, which comes from the method and style of Italian *Operaismo*, in order to evidence its difference with respect to other forms of research, first of all the sociological and academic ones, but also the workers' inquiry. Said difference is purely political. In fact, the traditional inquiries within the labour movement are mainly concerned with the production of knowledge understood as a neutral activity, to be used by an external representative subject, whether the party or the trade union. The co-research, on the contrary, tries to knock down the separation between production of knowledge and subjectivity, and the development of political organisation. Nevertheless, with respect to the 1960s and 1970s, the decades of operaista co-research, the framework is today deeply transformed. The space and time of work, and of the sociality and struggles of living labour in the Fordist era, are changed. We therefore have to re-think the co-research method, style and tool in the new space-time coordinates of 'cognitive capitalism', in the productive metropolis, and with the subjects of contemporary precarious labour. As the catoptrical anamorphosis refers to images that, when viewed normally, display indecipherable borders and look like monstrous and distorted 'optical depravities', we have to change our point of view, to recompose what seems the monster of the struggles of the multitude.

When looked at from a particular position in space or if reflected by particular devices, some distorted, monstrous and indecipherable images are recomposed, rectified, and finally display shapes that could not be perceived at first sight. For a long time knowledge of the ways these images were constructed was passed on like a secret magical doctrine; this was until to the fourth century, when anamorphic images became more popular. By the fifth century anamorphosis had spread through all treaties on perspective, architectural practices and the prolific speculations on optics of the time […]. Art history commonly regards perspective as a realistic device used to restore the third dimension; but it is principally an artefact that can be used for any purpose […]. Anamorphosis inverts the characteristics and principles of perspective: instead of gradually reducing shapes to their visible limits, it expands and projects them outside those limits to then disaggregate them so that they only reassemble in a second stage, when viewed from a determined point. It is a destruction that announces a restoration, an elusion that calls for a return. This process was established as a technical curiosity but it also involves a poetics of abstraction, a powerful mechanism of optical illusion and a philosophy of artificial reality.

Anamorphosis is a riddle, a monster, freaky. It is not an aberration that subdues reality to a mental vision, but an optical subterfuge whereby appearance surpasses reality. The system is intelligently

> articulated: accelerated and delayed perspectives upset the balance of the natural order without destroying it; instead, anamorphic perspective annihilates it by applying the same principle but taking it to its extreme consequences. As a mechanism of vision, anamorphosis is also a mechanism of reason. (Baltrusaitis, 2004)

Catoptrical anamorphosis refers to images that, when viewed normally, display indecipherable borders and look like monstrous and distorted 'optical depravities'. The problem however is not their monstrosity but the observer's standpoint: the normality from which they are looked at. When our position in space changes and we move to a different place, these images and their unsettling borders are rectified and reshaped to finally reveal forms and objects that could not be seen at first sight. Perspective is thus removed from the field of a presumed objective existence and the rationality of the real shatters into thousands of pieces as soon as it faces the insurgence of a standpoint that cannot but look monstrous to the eyes of prejudiced normality. This is the monster of partiality.

It might seem odd to begin a paper on militant inquiry with this digression, but if we were to position ourselves in a particular standpoint and engage in anamorphic practice, this introduction would substantiate one of the premises of our thesis, that is: co-research is to social and workers' inquiry what *catoptrical anamorphosis* is to perspective in art history.

Researchers have hitherto taken pictures of the world, now it is time to change it. Activists have hitherto tried to change the world, now it is also time to interpret it. This double thesis could easily sum up the ambitious aim of co-research. At the same time, it highlights the risks involved when the concept of 'inquiry' is evoked. These risks consist in either an excessively sociological approach, *research* without *joint,* or in a militant underestimation of the production of knowledge, a *joint* without *research.* We also need to point out that the social sciences often lag behind practices of social and militant cooperation: for instance, the research activity much debated in Italian sociological circles is nothing but the *market-oriented* commercial version of co-research.

Co-research is an evocative term that alludes to a move beyond the classical sociological separation between interviewer and interviewee. Contrary to the claim of populist versions of inquiry, this is not done in the name of an ideological egalitarianism; rather it aims to build a process on the coordinates of the *common* and of *singularity*: a common process of multiple singularities in different positions and with different knowledge, rooted in the Italian tradition of *Operaismo* of the 1960s and 1970s (Wright, 2002; Borio, Pozzi and Roggero, 2005). In the 1950s, when the Italian Communist Party and trade unions claimed that all was quiet in the factories, various groups of *Operaista* militants started to employ the methods of co-research to bring to the surface, connect and organise the mass workers' underground forms of insubordination and resistance that were often aimed at saving energy and avoiding work, and would eventually explode the regime of control and wage labour in the following decade.

The methodological difference between workers' inquiry and co-research is purely political. The method is all but unimportant: on the contrary, in recent years, one of the

limitations of militant research has been its somewhat hastened approach to the consolidation of preset hypotheses that failed to take into consideration the process that produced new forms of knowledge and verified premises. This is not an academic issue of correct methodology; rather, it is a question of the ability to act politically. The traditional notion of inquiry within the workers' movement, even in its most innovative and explosive forms, employed the paradigms, scientific organisation and instruments of capitalism and questioned their goals rather than their merits.

In other words, it used to direct knowledge production towards political organisation rather than the market and commodification. On the one hand, this betrayed an implicit conception of science as something neutral, to appropriate and use in revolutionary activity; on the other, the production of knowledge was developed and used by an external subject, whether the party or the trade union, through a division of political and research remits. Unlike co-research, workers' inquiry was primarily cognitive and extemporaneous; it relied on an external agency for its development. On the contrary, the ambition of co-research is to try and do without this separation: the production of knowledge is immediately production of subjectivity and development of political organisation. An alternative research, knowledge and science will not be constituted in a more or less near future; it exists within the very process that produces co-research. Science is not just criticised for its uses, whilst being regarded as an intrinsic good that is spoilt by malicious ends; the critique of science lives in the radical practice of an immediate alternative and in the questioning of the epistemological foundation of knowledge. In this sense, unlike inquiry, co-research does not only aim to expose particular problems and contribute to increase knowledge; it also questions existing organisational models with the explicit aim to reinvent organisational forms and practices. Collective research is itself organisation, and it is irreducibly one-sided and partisan.

To sum up: workers' inquiry operates within the realm of representation; co-research is opposed to and tends to move beyond it. Workers' inquiry is mainly concerned with the production of knowledge understood as a neutral activity, co-research questions its control. In the words of a cyber punk writer, Bruce Sterling, "knowledge is just knowledge, but *power over knowledge* is politics" (Sterling, 1998).

The Space and Time of Co-Research

Let us begin with our limitations: the first of them is most evident. In recent years within the movement we have been witness to a disproportion between the talk on militant research and its actual production. Now we need to invert that tendency and *change signal*: we simply need to start producing it. To begin with, we need strong political hypotheses that can be verified and implemented in the process of inquiry and on the basis of which militant cooperation can be built. The starting point concerns the *space* and *time* of research. Old models of co-research and militant inquiry were based on the productive localisation and concentration of living labour, according to a temporal scansion determined by the linearity of the relation between factory and

territory; these models are basically useless, save for the skeleton of their political method.

For the past few years urban sociology has been describing the crisis of the Fordist metropolis, the outcome of a transition from the spatial proximity of place of residence and workplace to an increase in the phenomenon of commuting, even if that is rooted in a spatial linearity of displacements within and between city and periphery (work, workers' space, living space). The sociologist Guido Martinotti theorises the birth of a 'second-generation' metropolis and identifies the decrease in the *resident* population of central areas of urban systems and its related increase in suburban areas as the key dynamic of the transformation of the metropolis (Martinotti, 1993). According to Martinotti, a new subject emerges in the second generation metropolis and goes to join the categories of inhabitants and residents: this is the *city user*, i.e. the city consumer who intermittently and briefly visits the city whilst contributing to its economic growth. However, whilst concentrating on *city users*, Martinotti and other important analysts neglect or hide the possibility of articulating this new and second generation subject as a migrant, mobile, flexible and precarious labourer. The main characteristic of the second generation metropolis is in fact its explosion of the Fordist productive cycle (regulated by the rhythms of the factory) and the subsumption of the whole of life, 24/7, under the production cycle.

Another classical dialectics that is completely subverted in the metropolis is that of centre-periphery. There are two possible ways of reading this. The first sees the metropolitan area as no longer being determined by the subsidiary functional nature of centre and periphery, but as based on the dissemination of forms of production and command and of an element that exceeds and constantly *spills over* in relation to the centre. The second way of seeing it is from a global perspective. Briefly: in a subversion of the point of view according to which the West is an example of the future of so called 'non-developed' countries, we can assume that first and foremost we must look for a paradigm of metropolis in what was once known as the 'Third World'. On this issue, we refer the reader to Partha Chatterjee's description of postcolonial Calcutta in *The Politics of the Governed* (Chatterjee, 2004), or to Manuel Castells' analysis in *The Rise of the Network Society* (Castells, 1996), or Mike Davis's in *Planet of Slums* (Davis, 2006). Chatterjee, for instance, focuses on Calcutta and describes in detail the forms of contemporary governance and policies that can be seen as participative, the recomposition of class differences into communities, and all the issues we are currently faced with. If the social capital of industrial estates and the viscous power of community traditions are the grounds on which to manage a divided society and techniques of conflict management, the main problem of governing the metropolis consists of reducing its critical and radical elements to *stakeholders* (i.e. individuals involved in the company assets). Pressured by the struggles and mobility of subjects and their forms of hybridisation and recombination, capitalism is forced to keep reinventing itself as a politics of difference.

This raises the question of how to grasp the elements that are simultaneously situated and global in the development of metropolitan inquiry (V.V.A.A., 2000). In this respect we refer not only to the centrality of particular subjects and places, but also to points of precipitation and spatial-temporal coordinates where tendencies of

contemporaneousness are condensed and become immediately visible, through recombination and/or conflict. Metropolises are precisely these points of precipitation. But trends must be articulated as paradigms, because they are not a mirror to reflect the sure fate of other places. In the contiguity of the national, metropolitan and European dimensions – as the closest, also from an institutional point of view, to the global – we find the levels and grounds on which to root political action. Once again, in a change of perspective and via the crisis of the centre-periphery dialectics, it is only natural that the political laboratory of Latin America would feature the coordinates of space, time and action of the metropolis and the continent, even if differently expressed in the experiences of Argentina, Brazil or Venezuela.

How Do We Envisage Metropolitan Inquiry? Starting From Living Labour

Even after our admission that it no longer could work, we have thus far remained fixated on a level of diagnostics. We now need to take a step forward and theorise what would work and be adequate to our times and today's subjectivities. First of all we need to identify what our militant research will focus on: in brief, living labour and the expressions of singular and collective subjectivities; the labour market and productive realms; the subjects of governance and power structures; the places and forms of conflict.

Starting from there, we must seek to develop and experiment with a *flexible modelling* that is obviously not universally applicable, but adaptable and situated, yet *reproducible* at the same time. Schematically, we can outline five levels of development for metropolitan inquiry:

1) the labour market, the realms and environments of production;

2) the places of conflict and forms of resistance, whether open or underground;

3) the places of the metropolis;

4) the places of mobility;

5) the places and forms of governance and control.

Once the metropolis is identified as the space proper to co-research, and the trends of the labour market are outlined and chartered alongside areas of production and governance, we need to go back to the beginning, that is, the mobile and flexible subjectivities of contemporary living labour.

In the past few years the issue of precarious labour in Italy met an editorial 'fortune' that is uncommon not only in terms of sociological literature, but also in the usual forms of the cultural industry, films, documentaries, novels and a growing public attention to the phenomenon of precarious labour. The experience of Euro Mayday[1] contributed to a

1 Cf. [http://www.euromayday.org].

horizontal dissemination of the lexicon of precariousness in the continent, at least in networks of activists; the French revolts against the CPE last spring bounced the term *precariousness* on the other side of the Atlantic, where within weeks the New York Times dropped the inverted commas that used to embrace the term. This transversal dissemination of the issue of precariousness does not follow the stages of the production of norms that gave rise to an increasing pressure on demands for more flexibility in the labour market; rather, it follows a feeling of loss that the precarisation of work has aroused in social perception. That is, a loss of power and of the chance of playing a strong role in the mediation between an increasingly individualised labour force and a stronger capital that is refractive to rigidity: for the trade unions it is a loss of security and of the ability to program a life plan for precarious workers. If the dominant tone of the public narration of precariousness is that of loss, it is because this process is inscribed in a transition where society looses its Keynesian ability to regulate the whole of relations, to manage the totality. The abyss of the deregulation of risk society opens up before us and, *pars pro toto*, the precariousness of labour becomes a precariousness of existence, the concrete possibility of not making it despite all the good will.

However, it is as 'whiny' as it is useless and repetitive to insist on the issue of loss in the inquiry into precarious labour, risking to render obscure the subjective side and the partisan imprinting on the processes of social change. At the same time, this distinctive gap between the guiding hypotheses of co-research and the existing mainstream and alternative literature of denunciation cannot offer its flank to the other side of the literature: the one that is apologetic of the status quo and addresses precariousness with the false name of flexibility, thus making it out to be a proto-capitalist and Robinson Crusoe-esque ideology of the individual who is entrepreneurial of himself and ready to catch the golden fruits of a land of opportunities. Although we realise that there is a real material basis to the feeling of loss in the transition from a mode of production centred on large scale industry to one de-centred on network enterprises, we do not think that because of this the *dispositifs* of security conquered by the working class are universal and desirable *a priori* and by different figures and subjectivities. Given that sociological inquiry cannot be separated from political imagination, and the organisational forms, objectives and specific issues of the 'economic' struggles of precarious labour in post-Fordism still undergo lengthy periods of incubation, the focus of co-research fades from this sense of loss of security, to concentrate on putting the autonomy of precarious workers first. In other words, the point of honour of research is the problem of shifting from this description of precarious labourers as the image of an absence and lack – of rights, security and income – to an analysis of their ability to cooperate, self-valorise and resist. After all, the genealogy of flexibility is also ambivalent, as Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello demonstrated in their heuristic study of the literature of the 1970s and 1990s (Boltanski and Chiapello, 1999). Whilst in the period of mass insubordination workers' struggle and the flight from work was (for the employers) synonymous with terror, two decades later it is presented as the redemptive recipe of labour and development policy. The motor of this radical metamorphosis is clearly the constituent power of conflicts and living labour, rather than the criteria of capitalist rationality.

Inside the Ambivalence of Practices of Self-Valorisation

When we inquire about the level of autonomy expressed in the behaviour of precarious workers, in fact we are asking what are the tactics and strategies employed by these subjects in order to secure that continuity of income that the contemporary organisation of labour can no longer provide. It is the biographical solution to systemic contradictions, or the ability of the social individual to use inventive and *ad hoc* strategies to compensate for the absence of securities that were once inscribed in the DNA of workers' subjectivity and are now absent from the new organisation of labour due to the demise of the welfare state. If verified, the assumption that innovation-power is not only employed as labour power but also as a survival strategy in systemic conditions of precariousness does not lead to a policy of greater disengagement of the mediatory and political government from the labour market. Rather, it is a case of playing it positively at the level of a discovery of the virtuous behavioural traits specifically forged in the climate of precarious subordination and its restless mobility, trying to posit, without prejudices and pre-set models, the question of possible organisations of collective self-valorisation of precarious workers.

Moreover, our emphasis on an 'anthropological' image of the new labour-force as an eradicated subject that has lost past gains, the power of contractual negotiation and the quota of power before the class that employs it, this image of a subject that is left to its own devices in a labour market that increasingly resembles a Hobbesian state of nature, does not contribute to the search for a political enfranchisement and to a transition, to use an old terminology, 'from labour-force to class'. This image of absolute weakness is the key to burden the 'new forces' of labour and to subordinate them politically: politicians and trade unionists will speak in the name of a subject whose language and forms of life remain completely alien to them.

Metropolitan inquiry mainly investigates the behaviour of precarious workers and tries to follow their living and working paths within the metropolitan space and to map the emergence of possible productive basins. The analysis chiefly concentrates on the strategies of autonomy that allow these workers to survive the jungle of the labour market. By strategies of autonomy we mean various forms of practical knowledge used both at work and in between jobs, which might point to the subject's effort to oppose resistance to command.

These strategies operate within a horizontal dynamic. As Andrew Ross pointed out in a magisterial ethnographic research on outsourcing and knowledge workers in China, the volatility of capital has created, almost in a mirroring fashion, a mobile and disloyal labour force, ready to flee wage ties and obligations before their bosses do (Ross, 2006). As we have already seen in the Silicon Valley and Milan when the hot bubble of the net economy burst, the main concern of companies today is not to increase the flexibility of the labour force, but, on the contrary, to secure its loyalty. This is one of the main theses informing our work of metropolitan inquiry: when it comes to highly skilled labourers in contexts of minimal unionisation in particular, horizontal mobility and disloyalty are the tools of contractual negotiation and self-valorisation of living labour.

This leads to the other working premise of our inquiry: the precarious subject is fundamentally disillusioned with regards to upward social mobility, which was a distinctive trait of bourgeois sensibility. She knows that the system is not capable of fulfilling this promise and thus designs her own strategies of mobility between one job and the next in the attempt to adapt her movement to the requirements of her life style. Her search is not aimed at the best job *in itself* (it is inappropriate to even mention career), but at the best job *for her*. This perception of a permanent state of risk in the subjects of precariousness is also, on the other hand, a likely cause of crisis for companies that have to deal with risky workers who are not tied to the company by a relation of loyalty, whether contractual or ethical.

Horizontal mobility refers to the nomadic and diasporic movement of the post-Fordist labourer from one job to the next, where there is no vertical fluctuation of status, but only varying degrees of application of the subject's strategies of autonomy and of her ability to adapt this mobility to her own lifestyle. This does not mean to say that forms of horizontal mobility can be grasped immediately as processes of conflict and transformation. Rather they describe the ambivalent constitution of contemporary subjectivity, where the search for autonomy inhabits a space between careerist individualism and practices of resistance, between the ethical crisis of labour and the lengthening of the working day. By highlighting the ambivalent conduct of micro-resistance and potential conflict of living labour, co-research tries to build forms of non-representative organisation that are capable of combining – to use Hirschman's expression – the *exit and voice* options in a process that is simultaneously singular and collective, of struggle and of constitution of a new public space (Hirschman, 1995).

At the same time, the aim of metropolitan inquiry is to analyse the vertical structuring of the labour market and use it as the starting point for identifying which forms of self-valorisation and resistance, whether visible or not, are practiced by different agents of production. From this perspective, we aim to theoretically articulate again what was once known as the 'refusal of work'. The very negation of one's labour power is probably only one of the expressions of that refusal; we need to ask whether and how it also ambivalently takes on the form of the re-appropriation of knowledges and their subtraction from companies, which might be defined as intellectual property theft.

Together with the theory of horizontal mobility and the various practices of resistance of different subjects of living labour, the issue of knowledge becomes one of the central nodes of metropolitan inquiry. Deepening our analysis, we might see that alongside this process there is an increase of the levels of qualifications and a transition towards something like 'differential inclusion': in other words, the value of the old degree is today 'accrued' in the process of life-long learning, often more useful to enrich 'social and relational capital' than knowledge. If, as Foucault noted in a far-sighted forecast of the 'self-made entrepreneurs' that would feature in much of the Italian literature of the 1990s, human capital transforms the subject into a kind of enterprise, the elements acquired for its constitution are simply not reducible to school and professional training; they shape an 'educational investment' that is irreducible to criteria of economic measure and programming (Foucault, 2004). It is precisely in this gap that self-training is inserted and becomes central to the constitution of the labour force, and the attempts to measure it only confirm its fundamental value. If this is the case, we need to

investigate how self-training is also used as a strategy of self-valorisation and possibly of resistance.

Conclusion

To sum up our main points, the proposed modelling of metropolitan inquiry is articulated on three axes: on the vertical axis the object of investigation is the location of subjects within the realms of the labour market and social assets, i.e. the hierarchy of the labour force. The horizontal axis consists in a map of the dynamics of mobility and resistance – micro and macro, singular and collective – in other words, the strategies of the subjects. On the third, transversal axis we place the self-perception of individuals in relation to their condition and their chances of changing it.

Let us now return to our initial suggestion. If we look at reality with the cold and critical eye of the social scientist, from an *objectively* normal perspective, we can only see the decomposition and fragmentation of living labour. The photos on the film are images that cannot be traced to collective dynamics of conflict: flexibility only translates into precariousness, deprivation and imposition. However, if we adopt a *subjectively* determined perspective, *one-sidedly*, this monstrosity suddenly displays the traits of figures that exceed the relations of exploitation and control. Subjective and singular strategies aimed at saving one's efforts and 'thieving' intellectual property, the use of training and relational opportunities, leaving as a practice of refusing to be blackmailed and to increase the value of one's labour power; these take on a character of self-valorisation that is properly ambivalent: they are cynical and opportunistic forms of individual competition, but also potential expressions of liberation and transformation. Co-research navigates this ambivalence. *Hic Rhodus, hic salta*.

From this partial standpoint the monstrous *racaille* that emerged in the event of the Parisian banlieue uprisings, for instance, takes on the form of a mobile and flexible, trasnational and relational, hybrid and precarious labour that is disloyal to the past of hard-working parents and thus to the community of belonging as much as to the fate assigned to it by a presumed universalism of Western values where commodity exchange is indispensable to the acquisition of the rights of citizenship. The moment when, as Marx forecasted in the *Grundrisse,* knowledge becomes the main productive force, the unit of measure of labour is made to explode by an excess of social cooperation and living labour (Marx, 1970: 403). In other words, the law of value is in place but no longer valid, it is a simple measure of exploitation, rather than of human activity. Under these circumstances inquiry becomes the emergency practice of an excess of subjectivity that designs new fields of possibility that find their recombination in a precise point, in the event. The anamorphic practice of co-research is thus the radical decomposition and also the constituent form of a power of transformation that already lives in the folds of the real. Here we encounter the problem of organisation and of what is to be done, precisely as collective research. At this height, to cite Isaak Babel,

we must situate our point of view and action, to see, whilst searching for the becoming subject of the monstrous, the 'mysterious curve of Lenin's straight line' (Babel, 1929).[2]

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2 Isaak Babel's sentence was used by Mario Tronti in the editorial (titled *Lenin in Inghilterra*) of the first number of *Classe Operaia*, one of the most important political reviews of Italian *Operaismo*: "With a masterly stroke, the Leninist strategy brought Marx to St Petersburg: only the working class viewpoint could have carried out such a bold revolutionary step. Now let us try to retrace the path, with the same scientific spirit of adventure and political discovery. What we call 'Lenin in England' is a project to research a new Marxist practice of the working class party: it is the theme of struggle and of organisation at the highest level of political development of the working class. At this level, it is worth the effort to convince Marx to retrace 'the mysterious curve of Lenin's straight line' [*A questo livello, vale la pena di convincere Marx a ripercorrere 'la misteriosa curva della retta di Lenin*]" (Tronti, 2006: 93).

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Learning to Immaterial Labour 2.0: MySpace and Social Networks

Mark Coté and Jennifer Pybus

abstract Why did News Corporation spend $580 million on MySpace, one of the fastest growing websites on the internet? Our contention is that it contains a dynamic new source of creative power: what we call 'immaterial labour 2.0'. MySpace is where (mostly) youth 'learn' to expand their cultural and communicative capacities by constructing online subjectivities in an open-ended process of becoming. The labour performed therein is one of modulation and variation in the networked formations that result in an exponential expansion of discrete nodes of both affect and affinity and of potential surplus value. We present immaterial labour 2.0 as an ambivalent modality of both biopower and biopolitical production, and as an exemplar of the paradigm shift underway in our interface with popular culture, media, and information and communication technology. By recalling Dallas Smythe's 'audience commodity' we contrast the 'producibility' of subjects in relation to broadcast media with the 'productivity' of immaterial labour 2.0 in social networks like MySpace

> Can one already glimpse the outlines of these future forms of resistance, capable of standing up to marketing's blandishments? Many young people have a strange craving to be 'motivated', they're always asking for special courses and continuing education; it is their job to discover whose ends these serve, just as older people discovered, with considerable difficulty, who was benefiting from disciplines. A snake's coils are even more intricate than a mole's burrow. (Deleuze, 1995: 182)

If you have not heard of MySpace yet, you will soon. With almost 100 million members and ranking as the sixth most visited website on the internet (third in the United States), it is clearly no accident that Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation purchased this emerging on-line lifeworld for $580 million in July 2005 after a bidding war with Viacom. It is not surprising, then, that there is so much buzz around a site that continues to grow by over 1.5 million users (the majority of which are youth between 16-24) each week. It is our contention that social networks like MySpace are not only exemplary of what is increasingly known as the Web 2.0,[1] they are also paradigmatic of an emergent

1 O'Reilly (2005) uses this term to describe what many see the internet is becoming; that is, as second-generation networked services. For example Google would be a leading Web 2.0 entity as the efficacy of its search engine largely depends upon the collective activity of its users. Web 2.0 is what happens when the accretion of cultural knowledge, or the 'general intellect' – in networked relations – becomes the primary dynamic of the internet. In addition to social networks, other exemplars of the

form of immaterial labour. The progenitor of the concept, Maurizio Lazzarato (1996), identifies one manifestation as an activity that produces the cultural content of the commodity – that is, "activities involved in defining and fixing cultural and artistic standards, fashions, tastes, consumer norms, and, more strategically, public opinion".[2] Our fundamental thesis is that what is transpiring on social networks like MySpace is an emerging kind of immaterial labour – what we are calling *immaterial labour 2.0* – a more accelerated, intensified, and indeed inscrutable variant of the kind of activity initially proposed by Lazzarato or within the pages of *Empire*. Thus, our interest in social networks like MySpace is in the social and cultural component of labour; where above all else, users enthusiastically respond in the affirmative to the call, 'become subjects!' In other words, our inquiry regards how we 'work' amidst our myriad interfaces with Information and Communication Technology (ICT); and how the digital construction of our subjectivity within such social networks is a constitutive practice of immaterial labour 2.0.

For some, immaterial labour is an untenable dilution of the category of labour; flying in the face of the continued presence of material production, and the immiserating global diffusion of factory production.[3] However, we harbour no totalizing delusions that this has become the singular new form of labour; rather, we present it as a tendency that helps us understand the way in which capital has taken a cultural and subjective turn on the edges of its expanding borders. Indeed, the very notion of immaterial labour will seem nonsensical unless you are willing to consider the following: that there has been a conflation of production and consumption; an elision of author and audience – especially in the new virtual ICT networks which increasingly mediate our everyday lives; and that therein, our communication and our cultural practices are not only constitutive of social relations but are also a new form of labour increasingly integral to capital relations. In short, we want to build upon and expand the working definition of immaterial labour so that it can account for the modulations and variations present within networked formations like MySpace. We do so not only to highlight an important new realm for the expansion of capital and thus surplus value, but also for emerging forms of new politics.

An important point of clarification is necessary here. While Hardt and Negri's (2000) interpretation of immaterial labour remains the most well-known, at that time ICT-mediated social networks were in their infancy and thus the practices described in this paper were not yet visible. Thus we propose immaterial labour 2.0 as a distinct new

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Web 2.0 would be wikis (open user-generated content sites like Wikipedia) and folksonomy (user-defined categories or 'taxonomy from below'; such practices are commonly known as 'tagging' and are a central feature on social networks like Flickr or de.licio.us).

2 While the original source for Lazzarato's eponymous article is Hardt and Virno's (1996) *Radical Thought in Italy*, it has since been diffused throughout the internet. Perhaps the richest such source is the veritable treasure trove, the Generation Online site [www.generation-online.org] which has a vast array of articles from a very broadly defined Autonomist tradition and incisive materials on concepts ranging from 'immaterial labour' to 'biopower' to 'general intellect'.

3 Cf. Wright (2005). Wright is not only a thoughtful critic of the immaterial labour thesis but his book *Storming Heaven* (2002) offers perhaps the best English-language overview of Italian autonomist marxism, the theoretico-practical crucible from which the very concept emerged.

subset and addendum to their tripartite frame.[4] What the '2.0' addresses is the 'free' labour[5] that subjects engage in on a cultural and biopolitical level when they participate on a site such as MySpace. In addition to the corporate mining and selling of user-generated content, this would include the tastes, preferences, and general cultural content constructed therein. While this strongly resonates with the "labour that creates immaterial products, such as knowledge, information, communication, a relationship, or an emotional response" (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 108), we want to further delineate the subjective composition of this labour. Immaterial labour 2.0 explicitly situates this subjective turn within the active and ongoing construction of virtual subjectivities across social networks. Furthermore, we wish to emphasize the role of affect as the binding, dynamic force which both animates those subjectivities and provides coherence to the networked relations. Finally, we posit such social networks as biopolitical networks, insofar as they articulate new flows through differential compositions of bodies – populations, as it were, whose capacities to live are extended through the particularities of their subjective networked relations.

The focus of our article entails the following: a political economic overview of MySpace to unpack some structural elements of this new cultural practice; considering how social networks can be understood as burgeoning sites of immaterial labour – specifically, how MySpace is a site for the expansion of the cultural, communicative and subjective capacities of its users; and how therein that networked capacity is captured in discrete quanta as a dynamic source of surplus value. In short, we present MySpace as exemplary of immaterial labour through the composition, management and regulation of the activities of its users. In addition to highlighting the actual techniques and practices of capture of MySpace, we will follow other trajectories. First, presenting immaterial labour as a modality of biopower/biopolitical production; and second, contextualizing an early attempt to understand the role of cultural labour in the reproduction of capital relations via Dallas Smythe's 'audience commodity'. The 'producibility' of the subjects in relation to broadcast media can be contrasted with the 'productivity' of immaterial labour 2.0 in social networks like MySpace. Throughout we will remain mindful of the genealogy of the concept of immaterial labour – namely, its often overlooked reliance on a productive intermixing of Foucault and Marx, primarily via Autonomists like Lazzarato, Negri, and others.

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4 Hardt and Negri's frame can be broken down as follows. The first form of immaterial labour refers to cerebral or conceptual work like problem solving, symbolic, and analytical tasks. Typically, such jobs are found in the technological sector of the culture industry – i.e. public relations, media production, web design etc. What is key is that production shifts from the material realm of the factory to the symbolic production of ideas. The second component includes the production of affects. Herein affective labour refers to those forms which manipulate "a feeling of ease, well, being, satisfaction, excitement or passion" (Hardt and Negri 2004: 108). Historically, this labour has been unpaid and has been commonly regarded as 'women's work'. Jobs in this field typically include those that produce services or care through the body. The third flags the way in which communication technology has been incorporated and transformed original industrial production (Hardt and Negri 2000: 293), thus referring to the way in which labour has become increasingly mechanized and computerized.

5 Tiziana Terranova (2004) impressively draws upon Autonomist theory, cybernetics, and information theory in her book Information Culture: Politics for the Information Age. Therein she develops a similar thesis that she called 'free labour' – namely, that free labour is a central feature of both the internet and informationalized economy.

What is MySpace?

The lifeworld of MySpace is expansive, with an abundant capacity for the proliferation of networked relations. It is more than a blog and more than an instant messenger. MySpace is not just a place to have a conversation with one friend – it is a network of friends. Thus it is not a static peer-to-peer (P2P) site where one user anonymously links to another. Instead, it is a vast cyberspatial public sphere, a place to 'hang out' with all one's friends at the same time and connect to new people through the dizzying array of user profiles which are all publicly available for browsing. These profiles are the equivalent to on-line subjectivities or "your personality", says 17 year old Edward, who likes "open-minded and cool people but not nerds and liars" (USA Today, 2006). Like an interactive version of a high school yearbook entry, users aspire to express their on-line subjectivity as a complex synergy of cultural influences, articulated through what they choose to write and upload on their profile pages. Unlike a webpage that remains static, one's MySpace site is always *becoming*, constantly in process, being updated and rearticulated – as are cultural trends – to reflect the user's evolving interests and tastes. Furthermore, MySpace is also quite different from a blog, although what distinguishes these two digital platforms is nuanced. Both types of sites are frequently updated; often daily and for some, even hourly. And, both types of sites are connected to on-line communities based on individual interests. However, a MySpace account, unlike a blog, has the capacity to be interconnected among several different communities simultaneously, while a blog generally has a very specific purpose and community with which it interacts. What's more, MySpace users typically have their site open whenever they are online, and thus concurrently post on their home page, as well as on their friends' pages, versus a blogger who would log in, post and log out. In this sense, one can imagine a user's MySpace page as their own communicative interface, that is, online subjectivity or an immaterial expression of who they are – their very own lifestyle brand continually being circulated and refined in cyberspace. Each individual site, then, becomes a unique construct of a public persona that is continuously maintained as the user strives to adequately construct his or her subjectivity through the diverse networks of relations to which he/she belongs.

Biopower: Theorizing the 'Digital Body' of MySpace

Let us take a momentary step away from the particularities of MySpace here to consider the implications for this new composition of bodies – or network of friends. We have theorized this composition by making the claim that the immaterial labour exercised therein is a modality of biopower; here we will also suggest that the organizational form of MySpace can be seen as expressive of biopower. Unpacking this claim necessitates a brief overview of Michel Foucault's famous triptych of sovereign power-disciplinary power-biopower, specifically the latter two. This is especially important because each of those dispositifs of power is dependent upon a specific deployment of bodies. What is also important here is our proposed genealogy of the very concept of immaterial

labour – namely that of a particular Foucault in relation to a particular Marxism.[6] This enables us to read the diffusion of production in the social factory as not only being exemplified in MySpace but also as resonant with the dispositif of biopower.

Organizationally, what most distinguishes disciplinary power from biopower is that the former fixes relations between individuals and various institutions; power is exercised over those individual bodies in order to attain capacities and aptitudes more adequate to the different and changing needs of the social body. Thus discipline is enacted by individualizing techniques of power. As Foucault stated in a lecture in Brazil in 1976, later published as *Les Mailles du Pouvoir*, disciplinary power entails "how we surveil someone, control his conduct, his behavior, his aptitudes, intensify his performance, multiply his capacities, put him in his place where he will be most useful" (Foucault, 2001: 1009).[7] While this provides a greater flow in comparison to the rigidity of sovereign power, it remains discontinuous. In the memorable characterization by Deleuze: "Individuals are always going from one closed site to another, each with its own laws: first of all the family, then school ('you're not at home, you know'), then the barracks ('you're not at school, you know'), then the factory, hospital from time to time, maybe prison, the model site of confinement" (Deleuze, 1995: 177). In other words, disciplinary societies were a matter of spatially and temporally ordering things in a discrete manner that composed bodies in a way that made them greater than the sum of their parts.

Such a dispositif of power, however, was inadequate to an ever-increasingly mobile and interconnected society: "[t]he mesh of the net is too large, almost an infinite number of things, elements, conducts, and processes would escape the control of such power." Hence they are supplemented by newer, more continuous networked relations of *biopower*, which is less onerous and more flexible, and "is exercised in the direction of economic processes" (Foucault, 2001: 1009). Since we are making linkages to the Autonomist Marxist concept of immaterial labour, we must stress that Foucault is not bringing back a causal economic base; indeed, he explicitly warns against falling into this habit "once again, in the spirit of a somewhat primitive Marxism" (Foucault, 2001: 1010). This wards off the mode of production as a totalizing causality lest the cohesive form of the terminal composition blind us to the heterogeneous trajectories of its constitutive elements. In this way, it is not that there is any incompatibility or total disassociation between capital, and the dispositif of biopower. Rather, it is that there are myriad 'minor' elements with their own temporal-historical trajectory whose particularities would be effaced by such a perspective. One real implication of that

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6 For an introduction to this genealogy, cf. Coté (2003). Briefly, this is the Foucault of the mid-1970s who realized power was expressed in subjectivities, and that the possibility of resistance always came before strategic relations of domination. This was the Foucault enthusiastically read by many Italian Autonomist Marxists, eventually taking form in the 'second-generation' Autonomist Lazzarato's concept of immaterial labour.

7 This article (literally translated as 'The Meshes of Power' or more elegantly as 'The Intricate Network of Power') is arguably one of Foucault's most significant never to be translated into English. It is of particular importance in this context because in it Foucault addresses his conceptual relationship to Marx in an atypically candid manner, specifically in relation to his dispositifs of power. He emphasizes his reading of Marx where he locates a 'positive' conception of power very much inline with his own. All translations are our own unless otherwise stated.

perspective is that the target of radical social change is the terminal form, as opposed to the dynamic elements which make any dispositif function in the first place.

Thus, following Foucault, we can look at the relationship to capital in the dispositif of biopower without reference to a determinant economic base. Here we can remember how Lazzarato (2000) emphasized the conflation in biopower of the *zoe* (natural life) with the *bios* (political life); similarly immaterial labour signifies the diffusion of a new labouring subjectivity into the biopolitical lifeworld. If so, then perhaps a more amenable method for doing so is to think of capital as a logic which increasingly flows through more and more otherwise discrete social relations, and finds passage in different political and social techniques and practices – precisely what we are suggesting is at play in MySpace. Foucault himself repeatedly noted that an emergent capital had the urgent need for a new dispositif of power. Of course, there *still* remains the sovereign power, a relationship between the sovereign and his/her subjects, and disciplinary power which begins as a process of increasing individual flexibility vis-à-vis specific and discrete institutions. Yet there were urgent needs, from capitalism and elsewhere: an organizational form not just for individual, atomized subjects, but for a population of living beings, arrayed in myriad flows of compositions of differing capacities.

Biopower, then, is that which "uses this population like a machine for production, for the production of wealth, goods and other individuals" (Foucault, 2001: 1012). Regulating the flow of bodies in specific compositions would supplement the containment of disciplined juridical subjects in institutional spaces. "From the 18th century, life becomes an object of power" (Foucault, 2001: 1013). This marks the end of neither sovereign nor disciplinary power; juridical and normative practices continue to flourish – dispositifs are always overlapping, never totalizing. However, there is a new materiality (and increasingly a virtuality) of power expressed through networked relations in populations. It is in this manner that Foucault situates his study of sexuality: "a point of articulation between the discipline of individuals and bodies, and the regulation of populations…of primary importance for making society a machine of production" (Foucault, 2001: 1013).

Biopower[8] then, marks a shift away from both the juridical body of sovereign body and the individual body of disciplinary power. It is the social body in its entirety, or the population, which becomes an object of regulation of power relations. It is because of the emphasis on the composition of bodies in a given population that social networks are a most adequate organizational form for biopower. In summary, sovereignty exercised the power of death over life; discipline is a corrective power over individual bodies to make them more adequate to institutionally-grounded socio-economic demands; and biopower coheres and flows through compositions of bodies to maximize particular capacities to live. This capacity to live is manifested most directly in subjectivities; to better understand the asymmetrical dimensions of power relations is to consider which subjectivities are valorized over others. Immaterial labour is thus an

8 Quite relevant to our examination of immaterial labour is the lengthy consideration by Hardt and Negri of the way that "life itself becomes an object of power" (2000: 22-41).

important modality of biopower as it radically extends the productivity of those bodies in a manner suffused with both affect and capitalist valorization.

Learning to Immaterial labour and Develop Affective Capacity

So what happens when aspects of immaterial labour become the quotidian activities of youth in a place of their own? For many who are hanging out on MySpace, the site has come to represent a refuge, particularly for the younger users seeking lines of flight from the controlled confines of home and school. This space is not under 'adult authority' and thus can be considered an autonomous public space in which users can interact and 'chill' with their friends (boyd, 2006). We posit that Lazzarato's concept of immaterial labour can act as a guidebook for the efficacious forging of such social networks. Thus we can read how the 'work' of hanging out on MySpace "constitutes itself in immediately collective forms that exist only in the form of networks and flows" (Lazzarato, 1996). There are 'entrepreneurial skills' necessary for forging effective links, especially if you want to enter the stratosphere of MySpace popularity. There is "continual innovation in the forms and conditions of communication… [which] gives form to and materializes needs, the imaginary, consumer tastes, and so forth, and these products in turn become powerful producers of needs, images, and tastes" (Lazzarato, 1996).

These series of activities are not recognized in an orthodox conception of work but they are at the heart of immaterial labour; they are also vital to the *raison d'être* of MySpace – to be valorized and to extend one's social network and hence cultural capital. For this is an overtly public space, a place where people constantly want to be seen – an extension of peer to peer communication, but, unlike the individual experience of file sharing, it is shared within a community. While the idea of 'hanging out' on-line may seem strange to some, for those who are using MySpace, this affective dimension is as real as they are. "I'm on it every day for like two hours at a minimum," says Shanda Edstrom, 18, of Clackamas, Oregon. "It's just crazy" (USA Today, 2006).

We cannot adequately understand what is different about immaterial labour unless we understand the biopolitical lifeworld in which it operates. Lazzarato leans conceptually on Foucault precisely because of the urgent need to propose a different kind of political economy, which is "neither the political economy of capital and work, nor the Marxist economic critique of 'living labour'" (Lazzarato, 2000). Instead, it is an economy of forces, in which there is a contestation between a coordination and command that seeks 'surplus power' and radically new collective possibilities, the likes of which were envisaged as far back as Marx (1973) in his visionary *Fragment on Machines*. Our understanding here is that the creative and communicative practices of immaterial labour help us enumerate the particularities of that new 'economy of forces'. And that part of the 'surplus of power' produced – certainly that which is pursued with great avarice by capital – is the affect that coheres and differentiates those myriad networks which express those myriad subjectivities. It is immaterial labour that flags the conflation of production and consumption, which bedevils the labour theory of value and initiates a crisis of value (though not for the corporate-likes of MySpace).

Lazzarato, in seeking to clarify misconceptions that arose since his initial article, more recently wrote:

> The activation, both of productive cooperation and of the social relationship with the consumer, is materialised within and by the process of communication. It is immaterial labour which continually innovates the form and the conditions of communication (and thus of work and of consumption). It gives form and materialises needs, images, the tastes of consumers and these products become in their turn powerful producers of needs, of images and of tastes. The particularity of the commodity produced through immaterial labour (seeing that its essential use-value is given by its value contained, informational and cultural) consists in the fact that this is not destroyed in the act of consumption, but enlarges, transforms, creates the 'ideological' and cultural environment of the consumer. This does not produce the physical capacity of the workforce, it transforms the person who uses it. Immaterial labour produces first of all a 'social relationship' (a relationship of innovation, of production, of consumption); and only if it succeeds in this production does its activity have an economic value. This activity shows immediately that which material production 'hid': in other words, labour produces not only commodities, but first and foremost the capital relationship. (Lazzarato, 2001)

Capital relations are, of course, always already social relations. Social networks enable an exponential explosion of such social and economic relations. And what is also produced in these social and economic relations – indeed, what causes them to coalesce in the first place – is the production of affect. It is this affective trajectory that we argue passes through the heart of what is immaterial labour – a modality of work that diffuses production (in subjectivity and consumption) throughout the extremities of the social factory. MySpace demonstrates the extent to which this social factory has already become ensconced in youth-specific social relations. Indeed, it is both a liminal and constitutive part of the social factory. Given that the majority of MySpace users are young adults, many have yet to fully enter the labour market. One of the most fundamental tasks they learn is a kind of online personal brand management in a network comprised by multiple lines of valorization (both social and capitalist). Thus it is similar but different from the *Learning to Labour* outlined in the classic study by Paul Willis some 30 years previous. At that time, English working class 'lads' were disaffected from an education system they were compelled to attend. Amidst their cultural practices in the resultant resistance – a line of flight away from school – they unwittingly reproduced their working class position in the labour market (Willis, 1977). But our passage toward biopower – what Deleuze (1995) also calls 'society of control' – not to mention our post-Fordist turn to the social factory, necessitates new ways for youth to learn to labour anew. One of the things that MySpace users must learn to more adequately construct, if they wish to be extended through a wider social network, is something both iterable and mutable, and expressive only in relation to others (both users and preferred cultural commodities). In short, they learn to produce their networked subjectivity on social networks which offer an unprecedented milieu for myriad forms of circulation and valorization. This apprenticeship is not only socially 'profitable' for youth, it helps capital construct the foundations of a future of networked subjectivity and affect.

This is why we must not reduce the experience of MySpace users to unwitting immaterial apprentices. A critical analysis would be blunted were we to dismiss the intensely gratifying component built into MySpace, which allows users to feel a part of something larger. Thus to open a MySpace account is to extend oneself into cyberspace,

thereby becoming what danah boyd (2006) calls a 'digital body'. What motivates users is the composition of bodies with which they can network. Thus an affective dimension is inscribed into a user profile, which only grows as people increasingly build their unique public personae through language, imagery and media (boyd, 2006). In turn, friends of the user are expected to write comments on the message board found on each profile's page; creating a feedback loop that serves as a means of peer valorization for one's on-line subjectivity. This enables one to maintain intimate relations among their peers through a "shared cultural context that allows youth to solidify their social groups" (boyd, 2006). Popularity is then achieved in a number of ways, the most obvious of which is through the number of friends one can successfully acquire, but also by which and how many users make comments on one's profile. Finally, for those who construct their subjectivities via promotional logic, 'fame' is achieved by maximizing posts on different people's home pages. Strategically this helps to extend one's social network (your picture and link go back to your profile and are posted when you make a comment), which leads to more friends, more popularity and ultimately more recognition. Through the user's built up network of social relations comes a sense of connectivity and belonging amidst the multiple on-line communities. And it is this sense of connection and participation in something that is larger then one's self, which provides the impetus for exploring new techniques and practices of communicative and affective productions. The 'work' of MySpace, as a corporate entity, is to 'monetize' these practices in a manner which does not compromise the good will of users.

As these networks flourish, the lifestyle brand of the immaterial self gets expressed in its capacity for becoming through the 'My' in MySpace; afforded by its potentially infinite affective relations of affinity and resistance it develops as it comes into contact with other profiles. That such affect is a constitutive element of immaterial labour has recently been noted by Negri, particularly how the emerging 'attention economy' necessitates an interactivity for the production of subjectivity, and how in turn this further complicates the measure of value of labour-power. Thus, "the more political economy silences the value of the labour force, the more the value of the labour force is extended and affects the global and biopolitical plane. On this paradoxical rhythm labour becomes affect or rather, labour finds its value in affect, in so far as the latter is defined as [the Spinozist] 'power to act'" (Negri, 1999: 79).[9]

Thus affect – expressed through particular compositions of bodies which alter our capacity to act – helps forge relationships with consumers through new subjectivities and networked relations that have the potential to interpolate users for the various lifestyles and identities that are being produced on an on-going basis. Thus built into MySpace is the sharing of information in order to create a suitable digital body. Users who participate provide valuable information about their personal tastes in music, film, television or about who they are and what they want. This, in part, is why News Corp

9 Hardt and Negri continue to emphasize the importance of affect to immaterial labour: "[affective labour produces] social networks, forms of community, biopower [where] the instrumental action of economic production has been united with the communicative action of human relations" (Hardt and Negri, 2000: 293). In this issue, Emma Dowling makes a similar connection between affect and *material* social networks in relation to service work in her paper 'Formulating New Social Subjects? An Inquiry into the Realities of an Affective Worker'.

paid $580 million to gain access to MySpace's veritable youth culture database goldmine; the exploitation of these rich affective and subjective veins is an ongoing concern of the new corporate masters.

From the Audience Commodity to Immaterial Labour

Murdoch's News Corp is no stranger to the traditional forms of mass media with a movie, newspapers and television empire that literally straddles the globe. Between Sky satellite services and the stable of Fox Network broadcasting stations, News Corp is aggressively pursuing audiences in the United States, the UK, Asia, South Asia, and Latin America, among others. Its payment of more than half a billion dollars for MySpace suggests an understanding that there is a paradigm shift underway in the relationship between audiences and popular culture.

We have made the claim that immaterial labour is rich in possibilities for helping us better understand how the economy, media, culture, language, information, knowledge, and subjectivity are becoming increasingly inseparable in the reproduction of our contemporary social order. In other words, how communication and subjectivity – including the realm long considered 'mere consumption' – have become an active articulation of capitalist production. In short, like News Corp has done instrumentally in its pursuit of surplus value, we need to conceptually trace the shift from the *audience* as discrete, measurable quanta in the chain of production, circulation, consumption, to a dynamic, productive composition of bodies as aggregates networked in ICTs. One way of contextualizing this shift is to consider what the political economist of communication Dallas Smythe called 'the audience commodity'.[10]

What seems curious today is the novelty of the concept of the audience commodity when it was first proposed amidst the famous communication blindspot debates of the late 1970s,[11] especially as here we are considering one that has largely supplanted it. In 1980, Smythe wrote in *Dependency Road*, "presently we know very little about this strange commodity, the audience" (Smythe, 1981: 263). The basic thesis of the audience commodity is straightforward: "readers and audience members of advertising-supported mass media are a commodity produced and sold to advertisers *because they perform a valuable service for the advertisers*" (Smythe, 1981: 8). In short, the audience is not a category like class, gender or race; rather, it is an aggregation of people linked to a particular market, be it for a cultural commodity (such as a TV program) or the commodities advertised therein. There is already a conceptual alert to biopower here – the audience is a population that must be managed if capital is to attain desired aptitudes and capacities. In Smythe's more Marxist terms, the audience is always already a market. It is because of this intrinsic functional position in the circuit of production and

10 Dallas Smythe was a trailblazing peripatetic communication scholar who went from a 'prairie boyhood' in Saskatchewan to graduate study at Berkeley during the Depression, to work in the US Federal Communications Commission, to suffering the anti-communist hysteria of McCarthyism, and finally to returning to Canada in the 1970s to develop various communication programmes as an elderly but engaged Maoist.

11 Cf. Jhally (1982); Livant 1979); Livant (1982); Murdock (1978); Smythe (1977); Smythe (1978).

consumption that Smythe – ever the political economist – considered the audience commodity as a key entry point in the analysis of capitalist reproduction.

It is important to remember that Smythe, in part, was responding to the Frankfurt School's critique, which considered 'ideology' as the main commodity produced by the culture industry. He writes "[f]or a variety of methodological and substantive reasons I do not find them particularly helpful…I mistrust such analysis because it seems static – ahistorical and tending to ignore the movement of the principal contradiction: people vs. capital" (Smythe, 1981: 268-271). This latter comment is especially important to the genealogy of immaterial labour as it demonstrates an affinity to both Foucault and the Autonomists. Smythe found nothing novel in the notion that force was supplemented by the use of media in the service of the dominant class. From Smythe's perspective, the Frankfurt School's focus on the domination thesis meant overlooking the productive role audiences played in the production of surplus value and the general extension and intensification of capitalist markets into everyday life. Likewise, because Smythe's concept theorises 'commodity output' as driven by the demand produced by the labor of the audience commodity, it problematizes the base-superstructure model in a way that renders it redundant. So despite some antiquated and problematic elements, one can admire Smythe's conceptual insight.

Nick Dyer-Witheford has also noted this linkage between Smythe and Autonomist Marxism, the theoretical crucible in which the concept of 'immaterial labour' was developed. In *CyberMarx*, Dyer-Witheford mentions Smythe within his analysis of the circulation of capital. In a footnote about the key role of audience 'labour' he reveals that "[i]n a personal conversation shortly before his death Smythe agreed his perspective converged with the Autonomist [...] analysis" (Dyer-Witheford, 1999: 271). We must be careful not to remake Smythe into an Autonomist – his understanding of the 'audience' is rather static and preformed, as they are passively bought and sold with no participation other than the movement of their eyeballs. Yet there remain strong parallels. Smythe writes "[f]or, in inventing the mass media and the mass audience as its principal protagonist, monopoly capitalism has created its chief potential *antagonist* in the capitalist core area" (Smythe, 1981: xvii). As he never tires of repeating, the principal contradiction of capital is 'people vs. capital'; likewise for Autonomists, the true dynamic of capitalism (and one of their key conceptual interventions) is the antagonistic relationship between labour and capital, with the former driving the latter.

Immaterial labour attempts to conceptually map major shifts that have occurred in labouring practices amidst post-Fordist globalization. One of many important differences with Smythe's audience commodity is the conflation between production and consumption – keeping in mind that Smythe's audience commodity was a corrective response to what he considered an excessive focus on 'consumption' via ideology. As Lazzarato notes, with the economy of immaterial labour, 'leisure time' and 'working time' are increasingly fused, making life inseparable from work. This is a key aspect of what Marx (1990) called 'real subsumption' – the absorption of capitalist logic and the dictates of surplus value through more and more of everyday life.

We by no means suggest there are no longer 'audiences'; rather, that immaterial labour is a better conceptual lens to understand the qualitative shift in which culture, subjectivity, and capital come together in new networks of ICT. In short, the term

'audience' is not adequate for understanding social networks like MySpace. Even if we modify audience with the term 'active,' it still fails to capture the shift in the process of capitalist valorization – or how surplus value is produced. This is one of Lazzarato's underlying reasons for conceptualizing immaterial labour in the first place. Part of the process of 'real subsumption' is capital seeking an unmediated form of command, not just over labour in the factory but in everyday life (similar to the form of command in which biopower is exercised). That is why, for post-Fordist capital, Lazzarato coins the slogan 'become subjects' (Lazzarato, 1996) – hence the subjective reading of capital. But this is not an uncritical celebration of the proliferating subjectivities of postmodernity. When looking at actual labouring practice, the subjects that you become must be compatible with the needs of contemporary capitalist reproduction. That is one reason why linguistic and communicative elements are so integral, as they facilitate an expanded capacity for social cooperation – absolutely essential for more flexible production practices.

But we cannot make a straight line to immaterial labouring practices in the social networks of popular culture here. Rather we must remember the Autonomist view of labour, which like Foucaultian resistance, always comes first. Even in the context of MySpace, we must remember its origins in the cultural practices of P2P file sharing like Napster. It is techniques of immaterial labour that allowed for the proliferation of such decentralized practices of virtual social cooperation, in the process radically altering potential kinds of interface with popular culture. Yet, this is not to make an argument for some kind of emerging consumer sovereignty. Indeed, one thing the immaterial labour thesis stresses is the higher level and intensity of antagonism that is created along the way – something borne out in practice with the forced closure of Napster and the subsequent proliferation of new and seemingly uncontainable forms of P2P practices. Lazzarato notes this fundamental contradiction in the workplace. Capital "is obliged ([in] a life-and-death necessity for the capitalist) not to 'redistribute' the power that the new quality of labor and organization imply" (Lazzarato 1996).

We can see this playing out in the dynamic decentralized architecture of the internet – the distributed network in which computers with a shared protocol can communicate directly without a hierarchical mediary. This is not only a radically different media terrain than television, it is one animated primarily by immaterial labour. In short, we have shifted from the static world of the couch potato to the dynamic one of the 'websurfer' or 'blogger'. Capital has paid attention to this and there is a shift in what is being valorized. With television, the audience commodity was an isolated and sedentary beast, an aggregation of individuals linked only through the show they watched each week. Its organizational form was also more static: a centralized network with the audience in a cluster of dead-end lines. With the internet – and specifically, social networks – it is about the dynamic immaterial labour that traverses and constructs the decentralized networks. In short, it is the links, the networks that people construct and participate in that comprise not a new audience commodity but immaterial labour 2.0. Now we can turn to the political economic structure of MySpace and the techniques and practices of immaterial labour therein.

(Profitably) Managing and Regulating the Immaterial labour of MySpace

> For economics, there remains only the possibility of managing and regulating the activity of immaterial labour and creating some devices for the control and creation of the public/consumer by means of the control of communication and information technologies and their organizational processes. (Lazzarato, 1996)

MySpace, and social networks in general, did not exist when Lazzarato wrote the above quote about immaterial labour. Yet it is our assertion that MySpace is emblematic of an emergent form of immaterial labour. As it turns out, the political economic history of MySpace reveals precisely such a strategy of 'managing and regulating', and of developing 'devices for the control and creation' of the social and cultural activities therein. While the founders of MySpace have meticulously constructed a narrative of a plucky little organic site, considerable evidence points to a site that grew as a calculated marketing endeavour with its origins in the bane of most people's internet experience: spamware, pop-up ads, spyware, and adware (Lapinski, 2006). Therein lays the structural ambivalence not only of social networks, but of immaterial labour 2.0. Specifically, MySpace is indeed an open site, a *tabula rasa* shaped by the creative imprints of its users. However, its political-economic foundation demonstrates how such user-generated content – immaterial labour 2.0 – is the very dynamic driving new revenue streams. Thus, it is the tastes, preferences, and social narratives found in user entries which comprises the quotidian motherlode of these new revenue streams. It is this user-generated content that spyware and adware monitor to microtarget those same online subjectivities. This is what has excited media conglomerates like News Corp who realize the value of mining these new networked subjectivities to extend existing and produce new markets – indeed, to construct a new paradigm of capitalist market relations.

Sovereign power coexists with biopower then, not only in society at large but also on MySpace. Part of what enables the management of the immanent networked relations is the juridical forms of the site's 'Privacy Policy' where it is clearly stated that all information recorded on the website can be shared with third parties to "allow an ad-network to deliver targeted advertisements that they believe will be of most interest to the user" (MySpace, 2005). This has allowed MySpace to adjust the cost of an advertisement on their home page more in-line with Yahoo's rate of around $600,000 a day (even though the site presently earns News Corp over $13 million in ad revenues each month) (Forbes, 2006). Furthermore, News Corp recently reached a deal with Google, where the latter paid $900 million for the rights to power all search capacities on MySpace, as well as for the majority of Fox Interactive Media properties. As a result, Google will become the "exclusive provider of text-based advertising and keyword targeted ads through its AdSense program as well as, a right of first refusal on display advertising sold through third parties on Fox Interactive Media's network" (News Corporation, 2006). What does this mean for users? Google's search bars will appear on every MySpace page, creating a new discrete interface for immaterial labour. In Smythe's model, the broadcasted content aggregated the audience for the advertiser; Google's 'AdSense', however, is also emblematic of immaterial labour 2.0 because every time the user submits a search topic, it accretes – like surplus labour – in the

Google database and in turn microtargets an advertisement tailored not only to that particular user but to that specific search. This is a key element of the 'architecture of participation' that is built into social networks which not only intensifies a personalized experience more adequate to the construction of subjectivities therein, but it also facilitates discrete capital relations.

At the time of writing there were 20 more products – all aimed at rearticulating cultural practices and social relations into surplus value – about to be launched, including a deal with either Amazon or eBay, a Voice Over Internet Protocol (VoIP) phone service, as well as talk of an actual physical magazine that will profile MySpace users and highlight the most frequently viewed pages. What's more, MySpace has recently signed a deal with Helio, a cell phone company that has invested more then $440 million into a technology that will allow users to view and update their MySpace pages through their cell phones. Not surprisingly, Chris DeWolfe, one of the site's founders, is confident that the 'sugar daddy' quotient of Rupert Murdoch's bottomless pockets will only "extend MySpace around the world so it can be a major force globally" (CNN Money, 2006; Red Herring, 2006).

Yet despite MySpace's growing success, what about the possibility of it becoming too popular, thereby compromising the loyalty of its users? Fortune Magazine once asked DeWolfe if "MySpace could be like a fashion brand. The more successful you get, the more common you become." To this DeWolfe replied "We're not deciding what's cool. Our users are […] MySpace is all about letting people be what they want to be" (CNN Money, 2006a). And so, if people are 'being what they want to be', just how are they going about doing this? The main way is the construction of their online subjectivity in a never-ending process of becoming – again, in relation to other users in the increasing circulation of cultural commodities. Each new device and resource expands the capacity of their 'digital body' and allows them to forge new compositions of relations. Yet, remembering the origins of MySpace, each device is a variation of 'spam 2.0' which is fuelled by freely given immaterial labour. In this model, corporations circulate 'free' digital commodities in exchange for valuable information that is in turn sold to (or in the parlance of MySpace, is 'shared' with) 'third parties'. As such, it is more accurate to view MySpace not as a unique site of accumulation, but rather as an aggregator, consisting of a complex network generating surplus value all of which is driven by the creative cultural content of user's immaterial labour.

Further extending its aggregating capacity, MySpace allows its users to link to other digital services known as either 'MySpace codes' or widgets (Mashables, 2006). These are digital services that are not owned by MySpace but which can be linked to and will appear on user's sites. Some of these widgets include YouTube, Imageshack, Photobucket, and Stickam.[12] Thus one could view uploaded pictures from Photobucket, a video from YouTube or even have a Stickam webcam all on their MySpace profile page. The flexibility built into this platformed application model is in part why users keep coming back to site. MySpace has reluctantly agreed not to limit user 'expression'

12 YouTube [http://www.youtube.com/], Imageshack [http://imageshack.us/], Photobucket [http://photobucket.com/], and Stickam [http://www.stickam.com/].

to its in-house applications.[13] In turn, this increases the overall number of MySpace users. While it endeavours to develop as many widgets in-house as it can, the giant cannot match the creative ferment of the myriad Web 2.0 start ups.[14]

Aside from the growing number of widgets that users are attaching to their profile pages there are also several companies that are equally capitalizing on the provision of digital content to help users appear 'cool' and more unique, particularly for those who are not as technologically savvy. Such websites include PimpMySpace, Freeweblayouts, Hotfreelayouts, and Pimpyourpro[15], to name but a few of the most successful, all seeking to capitalize on the millions of MySpace users who want to have the most unique online subjectivity expressed via profile page and graphics. In fact, this industry is so large that according to Hitwise, "MySpace layouts is now the world's ninth most popular search term…And in fact, these sites are growing at about the same rate as MySpace itself" (Mashables, 2006a).

We are seeing how, for some users, MySpace is becoming their main portal into the internet; hence it is vital to maximize your affective and immaterial capacity to best forge the links of your desired social network. The result is a richly layered interface in which each potential intensity has both widgets and commodified content to facilitate the cultural and communicative production.

There is one last widget to mention. Silent Productions[16] tailors its products to each client but the function is always the same: help users maximize the number of friends in their social network through an automated program that works on specific demographic information. In effect, this is a variation of a direct-marketing campaign but with the sophistication and microtargeting abilities that only an information-rich environment like MySpace can provide. Hence one need not labour intensively by adding friends 'one click at a time' (MySpace the corporation is unhappy with this development because it wants to monopolize this potentially rich capital stream and has issued several cease and desist letters [Forbes, April 2006]) For now, this new 'killer app' continues to grow in popularity, no doubt because it is fully compliant with the cooperative and affinity-based ethos of social networks: the necessary labour is downloaded on the users contacted, who must explicitly consent to being added as a friend to the marketer. Tila Tequilla,[17] MySpace's number one celebrity who boasts 31.5 million hits on her website, has learned the subtleties of immaterial labour 2.0 well – she too has enlisted the help of Silent Productions to help make her an overnight success (Silent Productions, 2006).

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13 Initially MySpace tried to ban YouTube from its site, however, after much protest from its users it was forced to concede its position. In turn this led to the rise of YouTube as the fourth most trafficked website on the internet (New York Times, Jan. 2006) (Alexa, March 2006).

14 Here are just two examples of recently launched widgets. Vizu.com creates polls for users to track various kinds of information and welovewidgets.com provides horoscopes that will be continuously updated for those who upload this software.

15 PimpMySpace [http://www.pimpmyspace.org/]; freeweblayouts [http://www.freeweblayouts.net/]; hotfreelayouts [http://www.hotfreelayouts.com/layouts.php?index=myspace_layouts]; pimpyourpro [http://www.pimpyourpro.com/]

16 Silent Productions [http://www.silentproductions.co.uk/]

17 Tila Tequila [http://www.myspace.com/tilatequila].

Conclusion

Immaterial labour 2.0 helps us understand the elision between producer and consumer, author and audience. However, this extension of the labour process into these new and vast coterminous fields – popular culture, ICTs, and the production of subjectivity – articulates a different kind of collective subject than with other forms of immaterial labourer in the tripartite model advanced by Hardt and Negri. For example, while MySpace users have certainly "become subjects of communication," this process does not necessitate the same instrumentality of more 'traditional' immaterial labour where the worker must be "a simple relayer of codification and decodification whose transmitted messages must be 'clear and free of ambiguity' within a communication context that has been completely normalized by management" (Lazzarato, 1996). The process on social networks is far more aleatory and subtle, as it is the variability of possible valorization processes that holds the secret abodes of surplus value for capital.

Furthermore, regardless of the management and techniques of capture invoked by MySpace, the social relations forged therein are ultimately based on affinity. So again the caveat: the concerted efforts to turn those social relations into capital relations does not negate the affect expressed nor does it limit the radical potential of the dynamic of affinity. Elsewhere we have written about the 'Soft Revolution' (Coté, 2005) – social transformation predicated on proliferating networks of relations animated by affinity, joy, and respect. The basic idea is that networked relations of affinity (and hence difference) are an emergent form of contestation of neoliberal globalization, elements expressed in everything from the Zapatistas to Tactical Media to independent music. Indeed, it is from the lyrics of an eponymous song by the Montreal band Stars that the term 'Soft Revolution' is taken.

Yet there is a profound ambivalence to many practices of this Soft Revolution, and for some, its immanence might politely be called slippage or, more aggressively, cooption. For example, virtually all the bands identified with the Soft Revolution (Broken Social Scene, The Dears, Wolf Parade) are users of MySpace. Indeed, such social networks have become important new circuits for musicians who wish to at least partially circumvent the major labels and commercial outlets. So once again, there is always something within MySpace that remains a refuge, albeit one always being surveyed by capital for enclosure. Because there is a profound power to the extension of social relations animated by affinity and facilitated by ICTs that can never be wholly contained.

As such, one possibility is to not look for a 'pure' outside, free of such contestation. Instead, we need to better understand the ways in which our lives are suffused with immaterial labour. Here we might recall how the historian Fernand Braudel emphasized the importance of the *longue durée* of geo-historical time: that nearly immobile history which was structurally stable and contained by the framework of geography. How might we apply it to the lifeworld of social networks to better understand the opposite – the instantaneous conversion ('click time'?) of our social and cultural practices, of our communication and subjectivity into discrete quanta for the expansion of surplus value?

Here let us reemphasize what we see as the always already liberatory potential of immaterial labour – that creative and affective dynamic which must be captured by capital and then rearticulated into surplus value. This recognition allows us to conclude by returning to the beginning. For Lazzarato (2000) does the very same thing in unpacking the Foucaultian concept of biopower when he distinguished it from biopolitical production. If there is political potential here, it will be expressed in the discovery of forms of immaterial labour which are a modality of biopolitical production. This would be a dispositif distinct from biopower as relations of domination – the kind of imposition from above that News Corporation seeks to exercise over MySpace. But as we have already claimed, we cannot really understand immaterial labour unless we recognize the conceptual affinity it expresses between Foucault and the Autonomists – namely that *resistance always comes first*. In other words, the collective dimension of our immaterial practices are neither determined by nor reduced to such relations of domination. As Lazzarato (2000) notes, "Biopower is always born of something other than itself", as is immaterial labour 2.0, at least in its form that is readily transferable into surplus value.

As always difficult challenges remain. Social networks offer unprecedented capacities for creating new forms of life and new relations of affinity. The question is how we can *renverser* immaterial labour 2.0 just as Lazzarato does with his "reversal of biopower into biopolitics, the 'art of governance' into the production and government of new forms of life"? (Lazzarato, 1996). In part, we can answer that question, to this preliminary inquiry into immaterial labour 2.0, with another question and an invitation to further dialogue. Recently in this journal, Akseli Virtanen, and Jussi Vähämäki wrote about the *Capturing the Moving Mind* experiment in possible organizational forms for new politics and culture. They described the combinatory relations of cooperation on that Trans-Siberian Express-based conference as follows:

> When we come across something that is right for us, we link to it, combine with it and devour it. What we were before fuses with what we have encountered and become part of a bigger, more extensive subjectivity. (Virtanen and Vähämäki, 2005)

While MySpace may be moving along different tracks of ambivalence, can we not see its users combining in networks of relations under the very same logic? What other potential might be expressed in the pursuit of such a dialogue?

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Rustic and Ethical

Mariarosa Dalla Costa

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Editors' Prefatory Note

Rather than a unified tradition, (post-)*Operaismo* is best understood as a collective effort whose theoretical and practical engagements have always shown a great degree of variation, even if remaining pertinent to a same field of consistency. If today this field is defined by certain problematics – the blurring of the boundaries between work and life, production and reproduction, the issue of 'immaterialisation' and the opening up towards dimensions of care and affect – is safe to say that it bears an enormous debt to the ground-breaking work of feminist autonomous Marxists in a broadly defined 'area of autonomy' in the 1970s, among whom Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Leopoldina Fortunati have been central references.[1]

To acknowledge this indebtedness is not to say the dialogue was easy and took the form of gentle assimilation. On the contrary, it involved a lot of divergence, confrontation even, and as Dalla Costa observes here, 'many remained deaf'. The text that follows – an intervention at the Colloquium *Earth and Freedom/Critical Wine* at Centro Sociale La Chimica in Verona, Italy, April 9-10, 2005 – is in keeping with the story of this dialogic struggle by posing enormously relevant questions to current debates, in terms that do not retread, but repeat by displacing, some of the issues at stake in the 1970s.

In particular, Dalla Costa here poses, from the perspective of care, a crucial problem to be considered today: that of *limits*. This problem appears in different ways throughout the text.

Firstly, in outlining *à rebours* what may be a Marxist orthodoxy that the hereticism of (post-)*Operaismo* has never fully managed to shake off, the perspective of care requires an attentiveness to singularity that can be easily overrun by the movement – as Hegelian as it is Leninist – that defines the cutting edge of Being and struggle in ways that tend to subsume various forms of struggle under the hegemony of one.

Secondly, the attentiveness of care, moved from the theoretical to the practico-political terrain, raises serious questions about the limits of what can and is to be done. The

1 Cf. Fortunati (2007), this issue.

attitude of care that the peasant stands for in Dalla Costa's text resituates the debate at once in the *earth* (as the ultimate source of generativity and biological life and the grounding for human relations), the *world* (as the totality of human and social relations articulated through capitalism), and *materiality* (as a precondition for the reproduction of life, and what appears in the Tardean distinction between "tangible, exchangeable and consumable" and "intangible, unexchangeable, unconsumable").[2] In doing so, it opens a window onto political issues of finitude – both of the earth's ecology and the human form-of-life – that (post-)*Operaismo* has so far addressed in less than satisfactory ways.

Both moments come together in the questioning of one of the central tenets of Western thought for centuries, which evidently also profoundly permeates Marxism: *progress*. Is it not behind the conditionality of the peasantry only being able to form part of the multitude, insofar as they are already, and inevitably, caught within the logic of teleological development? Is it not behind the idea of permanent growth, ever-increased productivity, and of liberation through modernisation and machinisation?

In this way, Dalla Costa at once sheds light and casts a shadow over a lively political issue in (post-)*Operaismo* today that is not directly mentioned in the text: the guaranteed social income. While they do not necessarily invalidate the idea, the points raised should be seriously considered in shaping the debate. On the level of the earth and finitude, how could a guaranteed social income be tied to a questioning of the limits to growth and productivity? And on the levels of materiality and the world, even if productivity is understood only as intensive and not extensive, does one not have to consider the risk of a guaranteed social income that existed in Europe alone in fact implying a reinforcement of the (global) division of labour (let alone internal stratification)?[3] These are questions which have yet to be answered. Dalla Costa here, once again, has opened the debate.

The Editors, London and Berlin, April 2007

The organisational and communicative effort which has blossomed in Italy in the first few years of the new millennium around the issue of a peasant-based agriculture brings to the fore agricultural realities – old and new alike, but all endowed with an extraordinary wealth of propositions − which afford us not only the pleasure of an intelligent discussion, but also the joy of emotional investment. We experience the thrill

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2 Cf. Tarde (1902) *Psycologie économique.* Paris: Félix Alcan; Lazzarato (2004) 'European cultural tradition and the new forms of production and circulation of knowledge' [http://multitudes.samizdat.net/European-Cultural-Tradition-and.html];

3 Of course, the guaranteed social income is conceived both as a demand and political strategy in numerous different ways, not limited to its implementation on a purely European level. Being a mostly European debate, however, it can often be depicted by certain proponents in this way. For an overview and problematisation of these discussions see Henninger (2007) and Trott (2007), both in *Turbulence: Ideas for Movement* [www.turbulence.org.uk].

of witnessing growth, the exultancy of spring, the opportunity to perceive colours and to enjoy silence. This is the humanity of a different agriculture, coming out of its hills to reveal new paths to all those who want to reclaim their lives starting from a different relationship with the earth. Here I am alluding not only to the individuals or the associations engaged in organic agriculture, but also to the initiatives in favour of preserving animal biodiversity which are engaged in the recuperation of little known rustic breeds presenting rare characteristics. These are hardy and productive local breeds of horses, cattle and fowl, extremely resistant even in harsh conditions. But since capitalist productivity, unlike nature, is hostile to diversity and requires uniformity, the rustic breeds would risk becoming extinct if it weren't for the efforts of those who love them. Humanity faces a similar problem. *We too have to salvage our rusticity, which makes us strong and diverse.* If we don't recognise it, if we don't love it, it will be crushed by increasingly homogenizing mutations.

The peasant voice, even through other subjects, has now created a rich and diverse debate, ranging from practical issues on the techniques involved in a different kind of agriculture, to efforts in delineating a different social project. It now starts to intersect other issues in our movement, new and old, such as poverty or instability, which actually started with the expulsion of people from the agricultural lands. Some critics (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 151) have said that, after having been considered backward, passive and conservative, also by the Marxist tradition, the figure of the peasant will no longer be seen as part of a separate world and will fully become part of the multitude thanks to the new forms of communication. Nonetheless, this can only be possible if the peasants are to construct forms of struggle aimed at the transformation of the totality of life. The conditional character of this assessment is surprising. If, in fact, there is a common aspect to the whole peasant movement, which in the last decades has built networks from the South to the North of the world in 65 different countries, it is precisely the opening of a discourse about the transformation of all aspects of life. This transformation is not a simple and empty demand, but a *necessity*. Because the will to rethink our relationship with the earth, whose negation (as expropriation and dramatic alteration) has always constituted the foundation of capitalist development, it implies a break with the whole process and the subversion of its conditions, while laying the ground for another development. This development will be 'other' because, first of all, it no longer considers the spread of death and hunger as the inevitable precondition for the creation of wealth as value. We are faced with an alternative: either this peasant understanding of development – which considers the earth from the perspective of 'food sovereignty' since it is the only guarantor of life at the planetary level – will prevail, or we will be confronted with infinite variations on the constant of hunger. Therefore, *the struggle of the peasant movement is the exemplary biopolitical struggle. The opening up of what some people call biopolitical struggles is not a problem for the peasants*, as it might be for others. What might be missing, on the other hand, is the will, on the part of these other political subjects, to start from the same basic concerns.

It is not by chance that I am reminded of the title of a document very popular in the feminist movement of the 1970s: 'When the mute speaks'.[4] The mute was the woman. It

4 In English in the original (Translator's note). This text was a mimeographed original that circulated amongst Feminist circles of the period.

took years for the other subjects – men – to acknowledge the meaning of womens' denunciation – that is the immense feminine labour that went into reproducing them – and then for their behaviour to change. Many remained deaf anyway. The same thing could happen to the contemporary peasant subject, who speaks through the movement. The most probable risk is not that it will not be able to offer new perspectives on fundamental issues, but that the other subjects will not acknowledge them or that they will define as 'biopolitical' struggles that are not such at all. On the other hand, women and peasants are the most unrecognized subjects both in the history of capital and of anti-capitalist movements. Capitalist development is founded on the negation of women as persons and of the earth as living organism. Both have been considered zero-cost natural resources, and treated as machines for the production of labour and food as commodities.

Now the peasant movement, starting from the perspective of food sovereignty, is vying for a food no longer considered as commodity, and that could be provided to a humanity no longer considered as labour force, claiming it as its fundamental right. In this perspective, as we all know, we can find not only the demand for access to soil, water and credit, but first and foremost the right to select, preserve and exchange natural seeds, as the peasant has always done in the past, because this right constitutes the most essential level of safety and autonomy. This right is predicated against genetic manipulations, patents, monopolies and interdictions. Initiatives aimed at maintaining the freedom of life sources − which are the seeds as well as water and soil – opposing their privatization and enclosure, are present all around the world. One example is the Seed Bank in Bangalore, India, created by peasant networks and which collects and redistributes natural seeds among the rural populations. Similar initiatives exist in many countries. As I have already stated elsewhere, the struggle for soil, water and seeds is crucial in the biopolitical field, because its outcomes will determine the possibility not only for life, but for human freedom (Dalla Costa, 2002). This is the mother of all battles, where we see on one side the interests of multinationals and their scientists, and, on the other, the movement for another agriculture composed by peasants and citizens who refuse to be simple consumers and defend the seeds as common goods. In fact, the seeds are not only a gift of nature, but also of the work, the knowledge and the cooperation of entire generations of peasant men and women. Their being natural does not make them 'primitive'.

Food policies, aid mechanisms included, have always been a strategic instrument for the managing of the capitalist system. Today, in the genetically modified organism (GMO) phase of biotechnology, this instrument is becoming sharper, aiming at modifying and capitalising on the reproductive power of nature, which is the only true source of life and abundance. The alteration of the spontaneous mechanisms of life reproduction, patents, international debt, and structural adjustments: these are all components of a game allowing the system to create a food dictatorship determining the absolute dependency of entire populations and therefore the possibility to blackmail them on any issue at all. Against this system, peasants and citizens are fighting for a food democracy and for a maximum of autonomy and freedom, which is the essential basis of every democracy. The first step in this struggle is to keep in their own hands the most fundamental common goods and the means of life production and reproduction, i.e. land, water and seeds and the ancient and social knowledge embodied in them. I agree

with José Bové when he says: "The first sovereignty concerns food: it is the power of sustaining oneself, choosing how and what to eat" (Bové, 2001: 151).

The most meaningful shift originating in the peasant movement *is a logical one*. The movement does not want to act within the capitalist trend, which tends to ignore both humanity and the earth, dismissing and ruining their vital cycles. Rather it expresses indignation at such nonsense, deciding to recuperate and reaffirm the human ability to act with reason and meaning. This is why the movement decided to address the very meaning of the peasant's social role. In this questioning, it also runs against common opinions which are characterised by the renunciation to raise these issues, generally dismissed with arguments such as, 'the peasant figure is disappearing', 'who has the right to decide what is meaningful or rational to others', or 'there are no fundamental needs, and even if they existed who can legitimately define what they are?'. This is a debate typical of urban intellectuals with very little sensibility to the pressing problems of eighty percent of humanity, ranging from access to food and water to other health-related issues. *The peasant movement, instead, questions sense on the double terrain of human relations and of the relation to the earth, thinking about the impact of the choices we make with regard to both.* From this questioning arises on the one hand the desire *to offer an agricultural product* and therefore a healthy food source answering *the basic universal need of – and right to – a food supply that can be considered safe and legitimate* in terms of accessibility, healthiness, economic, environmental and social sustainability, as well as cultural appropriateness. On the other hand we see *the determination to practice an ethics of respect and care for the earth*, since it is the only way to preserve its generating powers and therefore to guarantee this kind of food supply for the entirety of its population. *It is in the expression of this will and decision that the peasant work finds the basis for the reaffirmation of its own dignity and takes pride* in its practices and knowledge. At the same time, it also discovers and affirms once again the peasant's *multifunctionality*, because he[5] is tied not only to the earth but to the territory.

It is obviously more difficult, for other subjects, to find a way to do meaningful work or to give meaning to what they are already doing. The peasants seized an historical opportunity, and they have truly determined a logical shift. They have decided to retake ownership of their arms and minds, like the protagonists of Local Exchange Trading Systems (LETS) and of other experiences in the exchange of work and money (Dalla Costa1999).[6] This is also what others have done, deciding to open networks of

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5 The use of the masculine is intentional, as the reference here is to the discourse of peasant authors such as Bové, who write in relation to an agriculture (that of countries which are not primarily agrarian) which certainly in the large majority of cases is in the hands of men. It is significant that these countries have produced this kind of debate, connected also to the theme of the preservation of the territory (also as landscape) and of the ecosystem; initiatives and debates coming from other countries have focused more on other themes, namely the preservation of natural seeds and of subsistence agriculture and its traditional methods. In general, in countries of the first kind the farmer has a farm, it is not a case of subsistence agriculture. And of course the preservation of natural seeds and cycles is a fundamental instance also in the first kind of countries. (Author's note, added upon request.) For some of the problematics concerning a farmer in Italy, cf. Dalla Costa and De Bortoli (2005).

6 Wikipedia defines Local Exchange Trading Systems as "local, non-profit exchange networks in which goods and services can be traded without the need for printed currency"

production and exchange inspired by equity and solidarity rather than simple profit. But the peasants occupy a *crucial* position in the general movement for ethical action specifically because they deal with the earth, which is the fundamental means of humanity's reproduction. Against those who predict their extinction, not only as individual subjects but also as social subjects *tout court*, they are still overwhelmingly numerous on the planet, and they represent a true force. With the diverse wealth of their agricultural systems, the peasants indicate an alternative path to all those who – after being made dependant by multinational corporations – want to escape their condition of debt and misery.

In fact, one of the merits of the peasant analysis in its logical shift has been the dismantling of the myth concerning the *productivity of capitalist agriculture*. When we factor in the hidden economic, social and environmental costs of this productivity, it is clear that this choice is not convenient at all. There is more hunger in the world today than before the Green Revolution. This is attributable to several factors: the stealing of lands formerly devoted to local crops; the high cost of chemicals, seeds, and (despite all promises) the failure of crops – one of the most flagrant being transgenic cotton in India, which has already led to thousands of suicides –; the nutritional impoverishment and the pollution of food sources; the loss of biodiversity and of work environments. All of these losses have occurred without the proportional creation of new working opportunities within the modernised agricultural practices, mostly as a result of the worsening of the international debt incurred when building new infrastructures and of the huge amount of water required by hybrids and GMOs. The breeding of farm animals is subject to the same critique. Against the imposition of this 'productivity sham', which only generates sterility in nature while provoking illness and death for human beings, the peasant revolt exploded onto the world stage. One of its actions has been in the organisation of an event parallel to the World Social Forum in Mumbai in January 2004, where key peasant networks, such as the Movimento Sem Terra from Brazil, came together with networks of fishermen and other groups gave life to Mumbai Resistance 2004 and Peoples' Movements Encounters II (Dalla Costa and Chilese, 2005: 95-96).

The agricultural disruption of capitalist productivity discredits another myth, i.e. the view which maintains that we can save productivity while destroying capitalist class relationships. I have always been sceptical of this view. Certainly this is neither possible nor desirable in agriculture. This kind of productivity is a poisoned apple. We want to grow healthy apples. Consequently, we should simply abandon – some have already done it – the hypothesis that says that anti-capitalistic struggles should only aim for a more equitable *reappropriation and redistribution of products*, without worrying about *what* is produced, and *how*. Starting from agriculture, which in its 'separate world' has preserved the capacity to formulate an original knowledge and new propositions, we see the opening up of a planet-wide debate about what and how we produce, and the human ability to make meaningful and sensible choices while drafting a different social project.

[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LETS]. Cf. also http://www.gmlets.u-net.com/. For alternative currencies, http://www.ithacahours.com/; http://www.strohalm.net/en/site.php.

On the other hand, the questioning of the meaning of work within the human-earth relationship quickly leads us to a confrontation with the *problem of limits*, which is typical of the dimension of care and responsibility. In other words, we have to face the ethical dimension with regard to all that is alive, and first of all the animals, which have always been the mainstay of non-industrial agricultural systems. The number of animals which we can raise on the land that we own or use is limited, if we want them to graze freely. If we want to preserve their uniqueness, we need to raise different breeds in dry or wet climates. We need to preserve and respect the earth's vital cycles and biological balance if we want to maintain its ability to generate and regenerate harvests and crops every single year. We cannot till too harshly if we want to use humus instead of chemical fertilizers. We should not drill the earth too deeply if we do not want to exhaust the water tables. We cannot send too many cattle to the wells, because if we do so the vegetation will not grow and the farmers will suffer the consequences. The herd will be led by the bigger animals, and then the smaller ones will follow, eating the shorter grasses left behind. Most importantly, we have to remember that the earth can contain many human beings and create many working opportunities, if we do not upset it with big mechanical instruments, reducing it to a desolate landscape without trees, bushes or animals.

With regard to this issue, it is important to point out that peasant logic does not think of rural labor as a mere artifice to be implemented during a time of grave unemployment or instability in other sectors. It does not propose to purposefully support backward rural provinces which could be developed in other ways just as a place for the unemployed. It is not a matter, as Keynes used to say, to be willing to send the unemployed to dig holes, fill them up with paper and then empty them again just to boost employment. In our case, the necessity to increase rural employment is objectively derived from a respectful management of the earth, which makes sense because it preserves it as a source of nourishment and life by preserving its natural cycles. Not only would such an increase re-establish a balance between city and country, revitalizing the territory, but it would also discourage us from considering as transitory figures on the verge of extinction 250 million farmers worldwide still using animal rather than mechanical traction (used only by 27 million), or one billion farmers (largely women) who still use only their hands (Bové, 2005: 205-206). Peasant analysis considers in real terms the issue of where, how and in what conditions human labor assumes a vital role and is therefore necessary, and most of all refuses to accept the death sentence pronounced against millions of farmers living from the earth simply because somebody decided to 'modernize' agriculture.

The problem of the limits and of ethical responsibility pertains more directly to women and farmers. It is not by chance that an entire section of feminist discourse, Ecofeminism, has merged gender and Earth-related issues, revealing not only the crucial role of domestic labour but also of the agricultural labour performed by women all over the globe, and joining its voice and its activism to together with that of the peasant movement, especially in the South of the planet. Both peasants and women had to face the issue of the limit. This is why women have not been able to keep fighting against reproductive work. The peasants, forced by the agrochemical-industrial complex to ignore the limits of earth management, have been forced to negate their own identity while destroying the meaning and the dignity of their profession. There is nothing new

in the struggle of the secretaries and the nurses who reject the added burden typical of all 'work of love' (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 135-136), that is all the material and immaterial aspects of reproductive work constituting the normal corollary to their extra-domestic work. These struggles were already typical[7] of the 1970s' feminist movement, with its all-important rebellion against domestic work. The real problem is different: the question is not the refusal to buy fresh flowers for the boss' desk or to remind him of his wife's birthday, but the refusal to take care of one's son or elderly relative. No woman, except for rare cases, will take the struggle against unpaid reproductive work to the point of threatening the well-being of her family. When the issue of reproductive – others may call it 'caring' or 'domestic' – labour exploded, women's rebellion went as far as to reject motherhood causing a decrease in birth rates in the countries where it occurred, whilst also refusing marriage and cohabitation with male partners in order to avoid the additional work this produces. Nevertheless, when a pressing family emergency arises, women do not hold back. They do not jeopardise the well-being of their dependents, because of their love for them, of their sense of responsibility and their unwillingness to negate themselves to such a point in their relationships to others. This has been in the past and still is today the limit of the struggle around reproductive work.

Regarding the earth, the problem is similar, but distinct. It is similar because the earth is alive and needs care just as human beings do. It is different because the rejection of an earth-conscious agriculture has not been the result of peasant struggles – who never wished for an agriculture dependant on oil – but an imposition on the part of the agrochemical complex' demand for profits. But when we work the earth without respecting its vital cycles and ecological environments we are faced with a limit: the earth dies, losing its generative ability, becoming sterile or only producing poisoned harvests. This negation, therefore, backfires on the peasant and compromises the dignity of his work, because he will be the provider of a food which will no longer bring life, but illness. In both cases, the negation of the ethics of care backfires on humanity itself, to which women and peasants belong. Consequently, the issue of achieving different conditions of life and work is necessarily destined to be treated at another level, namely that of building networks of cooperation among subjects ethically determined to refuse any false solutions to these fundamental problems. Preserving the integrity of the earth's body and its reproductive abilities remains at the very core of the rediscovery and affirmation of a responsible peasantry. At the same time, it is also the necessary precondition for guaranteeing nourishment and health to the human body and providing stability and life to the community. This is why the great battle for a different agriculture unites in the same struggle women – who are historically responsible for human reproduction – and peasants.

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7 An enlightening example of this kind of struggle, which mobilized several professional firms from Trieste to Bergamo and Genoa, can be found in the article 'Le segretarie non conciliano', published in a double issue of *Le operaie della casa*, November-December 1975/ January-February 1976. About domestic work as 'work of love' and the peculiar forms of violence that it fosters, cf. Dalla Costa (1978), currently being translated in English by Autonomedia, New York.

April 17: this spring disclosed by the rewakening of the agricultural world tears down the fences and reopens the pastures.[8] The time for transhumance has come also for us; we who are on our way to meet rural civilization. Let's shed our coats and become less eurocentric, less anthropocentric and a little more animal, between rustic and ethical.

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8 April 17th is the day Via Campesina has chosen as International Day of the Peasant. Consequently, the spring here is in the double sense, also political. That is, since when the autonomous organizing of peasants for another agriculture started, a new kind of spring is arriving in the world that tears down the barriers where humanity was confined, (I had in mind population in our countries very urbanized in an industrial world.) Transhumance means the action that happens in spring (but also in autumn on the contrary path) to bring the cattle or the flock to the better pastures, on the mountains or to the lowlands. The animals go to another world, and certain kinds of animals also change their fur. Here I invite also humans to move toward another world, towards the rural world, to find again the connection with the land, in the reconnection that in many ways is happening with these networks of peasants. Cf. also some of my writings in *The Commoner,* 6 (2002); 10 (2005); and 12 (forthcoming); www.thecommoner.org (Author's note added upon request).

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Producing the Dining Experience: Measure, Subjectivity and the Affective Worker*

Emma Dowling

abstract One of the major contributions of the operaista tradition is the concept – and hands-on investigation – of class compostion. A detailed analysis of the real conditions of workers today is necessary to validate any analysis of contemporary capitalism, as well as its potential sites of struggle; only thus can the concepts of immaterial and affective labour be useful politically. This article is a contribution to such an effort. Working as a waitress in a restaurant in a metropolitan city, where both the product of my work and the means by which it was produced were highly 'affective', I have been in a privileged position to experience first-hand the material conditions of this type of labour. This article addresses the way in which affective and immaterial labour have been characterised in the literature from the point of view of my experience. How well does the way in which these forms of labour are defined apply to the service work I performed? In particular I will take up the debates around the organisation and (im-)measurability of affective labour, and how this can (or cannot) open up possibilities for resistance in the specific context of my example. I then wish to show what can be generalised from this case study and consider what this means for the further development of the debates around affective and immaterial labour.

In the immaterial labour literature service work, as affective work, is considered one of its components. Having worked as a waitress for ten years, I have been in a privileged position to think about the lived experiences of such a worker. The contribution I offer here is an autobiographical engagement with one particular employment experience. I have not conducted a full-scale inquiry or co-research using interviews; nor did I work as a waitress for research purposes, hence I did not engage in conscious covert or overt participant observation whilst working. Rather, as someone employed full-time as a waitress in this establishment over a period of 18 months, I draw from my recollections the points I discuss in this article.

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* This is a slightly reworked and renamed version of the article 'Formulating New Social Subjects? An Inquiry Into the Realities of an Affective Worker', which was first presented at the Conference *Immaterial Labour, Multitudes and New Social Subjects: Class Composition in Cognitive Capitalism*, organised by Ed Emery at King's College, University of Cambridge, 29th-30th April 2006 [http://www.geocities.com/immateriallabour]. It generated some very interesting discussions on the web, which can be found at [http://poltergeist.blogsome.com/2006/08/01/the-problematic-aura-of-immaterial-labour/] and [http://whatinthehell.blogsome.com/2006/05/15/makes-it-so-easy-to-fuck-up-electronically/]. I am also very grateful to Massimo de Angelis, Rodrigo Nunes, Ben Trott, Nate Holdren and Erik Asall for their helpful comments. All shortcomings remain my own.

In this endeavour, Maurizio Lazzarato's 1996 text on immaterial labour provides a starting point for analysis, whereby the writings of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2000 and 2005) are where I find the most explicit incorporation of affective labour into the immaterial labour thesis. My view is that this thesis is indeed useful in understanding the labour process affective work is part of, but I think that a wholesale application of the theory to my example poses an important problem.

I wish to argue in my example of an affective form of labour that whilst we can see how capital attempts to control worker's subjectivity, we cannot say that it this labour is 'beyond measure' or 'immeasurable' (Hardt and Negri, 2000: 294; 2005: 145), nor can we take for granted that this labour carries with it such a definitive potential for an 'elementary communism' internal to the labour itself and external to capital (Hardt and Negri, 2005: 147). My argument is that we must be more cautious about what forms of labour the immaterial labour thesis might pertain to and need to have a much more nuanced understanding of what is at stake in particular struggles. Further to this, if we desire to understand potential openings for a liberatory politics, we can only make sense of the affective work of a waitress in relation to other more explicitly material forms of labour without which the service element of the work would not be possible; crucial here is also the necessity of situating service work within the overall production cycle of the restaurant. Consequently, I argue that we need to ask (for my example here), what this might mean for a politics beyond singular or individual moments of resistance and microconflictuality. In short, we must re-think not only how certain forms of affective labour as the one I'm describing fit the assertions made in the immaterial labour literature, but more importantly how these kinds of workers can create and act upon the openings for 'exodus' or 'self-valorisation' in their context.

With this argument, I am not attempting to call into question the whole of the immaterial labour thesis with regards to the problems I raise. Of concern to me here is what motivated our desire to explore immaterial and affective labour with this special issue of ephemera, namely the insufficient attention paid to affective work in the immaterial labour literature. Not much analysis appears beyond a definition of what affective labour is coupled with a mere mention of affective labour as 'service with a smile', 'care labour', 'women's (reproductive) work', 'kin work', or the 'entertainment industry' (Hardt and Negri, 2000: 292; 2005: 110). Firstly, this implicit conflation of the paid and unpaid forms of affective labour actually poses a problem for analysis, because these different types of activity - whether understood as labour or not, which is an important debate in itself - carry with them different political issues in relation to exploitation and the capital relation. Not only this, but much of the development of the actual theory of immaterial labour as advanced by Hardt and Negri pertains to types of such labour which are more closely associated with informatic labour mediated through communication technology, of which affective labour becomes an implicit part by virtue of being considered to be immaterial labour,[1] as opposed to being an explicitly discussed element with reference to the forms in which it exists today.

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1 Dyer-Witheford notes, "although the concept of immateriality [has been enlarged by Hardt and Negri] to embrace 'affective' work […], it's defining features continue to be attributes of the 'cyborg' worker" (Dyer- Witheford, 2005: 157). Crucially, Dyer-Witheford recognises a "theoretical

My analysis begins with a contextualisation of how my waitressing work, as a form of paid work, can be considered to be affective labour. Secondly, I discuss the mechanisms through which I was subjected to forms of control and how my work was measured and its nature altered by the active constitution of it by the wage relation. Thirdly, I will place my affective labour in the politico-economic context of the restaurant and the wage hierarchy, before finally concluding with some questions about the problems for a political organisation of restaurant workers in this context.

The Waitress as Affective Worker

Generally, immaterial labour is labour that "produces immaterial goods, such as a service, a cultural product, knowledge or communication" (Hardt and Negri, 2000: 291), it is "labour which produces the informational and cultural content of the commodity" (Lazzarato, 1996). Of the three types of immaterial labour set out by Hardt and Negri,[2] affective labour is the one that "involves the production and manipulation of affect and requires (virtual or actual) human contact, labour in the bodily mode (…) the labour is immaterial, even if it is corporeal and affective, in the sense that its products are intangible, a feeling of ease, well-being, satisfaction, excitement or passion" (Hardt and Negri, 2000: 292). Importantly, it is not the labour in itself which is immaterial, as "it involves our bodies and brains as all labour does" (Hardt and Negri, 2005: 109), but rather its product. Affective labour, according to Hardt and Negri, produces "social networks, forms of community, biopower [where] the instrumental action of economic production has been united with the communicative action of human relations" (Hardt and Negri, 2000: 293).

What was striking about the restaurant I worked for was the omnipresence of a discourse of affect, imposed by management.[3] Affect played a significant role in the management strategy, both in terms of enhancing the affective quality of the service work performed, but also in structuring relations amongst co-workers, whereby kitchen porters, cleaners, bar staff and waiters were all required by management to behave

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slight of hand" in that, "In *Empire*, there is a continuing affirmation of the immaterial labour thesis, ostensibly expanding the designation to very broad swathe of workers, yet still deriving its primary models from those in close proximity to computer and communication technologies" (Dyer-Witheford, 2005: 154). Even with the publication of *Multitude* (2005), where some aspects of immaterial labour are restated, I would argue this problem still persists.

2 The first type denotes labour "involved in an industrial production that has been informationalised and has incorporated communication technology in a way that transforms the production process itself", the second type is "the immaterial labour of analytical and symbolic tasks which itself breaks down into creative and intelligent manipulation on the one hand and routine symbolic tasks on the other" (Hardt and Negri, 2000: 292).

3 When I refer to 'management' in this article, I am aware of the fact that many workers who occupy management positions are equally wage labourers, albeit with higher incomes and more freedom the higher up the management hierarchy one moves. In this article, I do not wish to engage in the important discussion about class composition and management hierarchies and the complex antagonisms that pertain to this discussion (see for example Hindess, 1987) as I think it goes beyond the scope of analysis at hand; thus, I use 'management' as a shorthand for the structure which acts on behalf of and in the interest of capital and the owners of the restaurant.

towards one another as well as towards guests in line with the company's 'core values'.[4] In other words, there was an increased attention to the affective aspects of a form of labour that has always had an affective quality to it.

As a waitress, my job was explicitly to make the customer feel happy, contented and entertained, in a way that they experienced "the restaurant as theatre".[5] Indeed, "performance ha[d] been put to work" and "the product [was] the act itself" (Hardt and Negri, 2005: 200). This centrality of affect was achieved through a restructuring of the labour process in order to put the affective element at the heart of the server's work. In my example, a good deal of the time that I might otherwise have spent carrying plates, mopping up spillages, polishing cutlery or cleaning the coffee machine was now freed up for me to focus on the guest, because other workers were doing these tasks.

My role entailed following a designated sequence of service involving an enthusiastic welcoming of the guest to explain the concept of the restaurant, providing in-depth information about the dishes served (the composition, tastes and content in case of allergies and other dietary requirements); recommendations for drinks (wine and cocktail suggestions), with an emphasis on providing both in-depth knowledge about the products as well as making them sound irresistible whilst keeping the guest entertained with light conversation; constantly anticipating their unspoken needs which I was there to satisfy, so long as these were within the realms of ethics and the law.[6] In order to do this, I received training in all aspects of the food and beverages served as well as on the sequence of service that would maximise the efficient (hence most productive) running of the restaurant operation and thus, customer satisfaction and expenditure. A substantive element of the investment in me on behalf of the company was in the training of my affective skills in line with the requirements of the restaurant and the script provided, although the service provision also relied extensively on my social skills, on me 'being myself' for its success.

In sum, it is the waiting staff's creation of the dining *experience* that restaurants like the one I worked for look to for the increased production of value.[7] What makes this restaurant special is understood to be predominantly the overall *sensual* package it provides. This excerpt from the restaurant's *Philosophy of Hospitality* explains it.

> We are throwing a party – it's going to be very hip and fun, lots of people will be coming and going. We want our guests to feel at home and cared for. We have to make them feel that they are the only ones at the party that are important to us. We never want our guests to feel ignored, unwelcome or rushed. You are the key (…) you have to be the perfect host or hostess: cheery, relaxed, unflappable. You set the tone for each table the way you greet each guest. In short, you are graceful, sincere and refined. We will achieve this by anticipating guest needs.[8]

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4 I shall explain the core values in detail as this article unfolds.

5 Restaurant *Philosophy of Hospitality*, undisclosed source. Funnily enough, when the restaurant first opened, part of the concept was to employ actors as waiting staff.

6 This is specifically stated in this way in the restaurant training manual, undisclosed source.

7 See also Arlie Hochschild's work on emotional labour in the airline industry, 1983.

8 Restaurant *Philosophy of Hospitality*, undisclosed source.

From the moment when the guest sat down, my performance began. How to behave at the table, what tasks had to be performed and how revenue was to be generated were meticulously set out in a 25-point 'sequence of service' by management, which I was continuously assessed on through written examinations and oral spot tests. At the same time, the provision of the service depended on me using my intelligence, charisma and charm to create the table performance, because it was understood that the workers should not all be completely the same and that further value (and thus competitive advantage for the company) would be added to the product by granting us the scope to let our own personalities shape our engagement with the guest. I was supposed to understand myself as a real person interacting with other real people, not 'merely' a paid worker providing a service for a paying customer. If we were not too busy, conversation (as entertainment) with guests was encouraged by management, as the feeling of familiarity (uncomplicated, non-conventional engagement with the guest) was paramount to the product we were selling. This was a different process to one where the employee is supposed to simply 'sell the product' more effectively, either by being extra nice to the customer or by encouraging the customer to buy a product by pointing out all of its positive features etc. This process was one in which the experience of dining in the restaurant was intrinsically part of the overall product being sold, thus our labour as affective workers was constituent not attributive.[9]

Much of the management's aim was to free up as much of our time as possible to spend it at the table, a central tenet of our training being to entertain our guests as if they were our own personal guests in our own homes. We should 'own the guest'[10] and their experience with us personally.[11] The company pledge read:

> We believe that 'experience rules'; we believe we must satisfy our guest's lust for differentiated experiences, we will keep it continuously new and fresh, we will be guest-centric and put the guest at the centre of everything we do, we will delight our guests, we will fully engage all of our employees in fulfilling this promise.[12]

This meant pretending that guests were our personal acquaintances despite the fact that they were not and extremely seldom ever became. Also, this exemplified a form of management which sought to ensure that an explicit responsibility was taken for every task and that it was followed through effectively, so as to engender a decentralised form of management that gave us a sense of independence and expertise, whilst avoiding costly and ineffective micro-management.

This resonates with the observation of Lazzarato (1996) that "what modern management techniques are looking for is for the worker's soul to become part of the factory (...) the worker's personality and subjectivity have to be made susceptible to organisation and command". On the one hand, I was supposed to act in this 'restaurant as theatre', but on the other hand, I was supposed to really mean what I did and said and

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9 Thank you to Erik Asall for his comments on the original conference article on [http://www.poltergeist.blogsome.com], which provoked to make this clarification.

10 Hotel training manual, undisclosed source. Cf. footnote 25 for a brief clarification on the difference between the hotel and restaurant in this case study.

11 Cf. Crang (1994) for a different study that registers the same phenomenon.

12 Restaurant training manual, undisclosed source.

in so doing, as was the intention of the company, also learn transferable skills for my own personal life, a process I unpack in more detail below.

In conclusion, what has changed today from former articulations of service work is the extent to which the affective element of this labour is systematically made productive for capital. Strikingly, this focus on affect increases the higher up the ladder we climb, in that it is prestigious, 'high-class' establishments like the one I analyse here that look to the service experience to provide them with their qualitative differentiation, both in relation to other outlets within the same price range attracting the same kind of customer, as well as to differentiate themselves from more 'mundane' eateries. This is their competitive edge, captured neatly in this particular company's self-image: 'The EDGE', the 'Engaging Dynamic Guest Experience'.[13]

Active Subjectivity and Core Values

Core values, incentive schemes and participatory management are all examples of how employees were managed in a way that encouraged their active participation in the running of the restaurant. In the following paragraphs I will explain how these processes functioned in a way that resonates with what Lazzarato (1996) describes when he says that,

> Work can thus be defined as the capacity to activate and manage productive cooperation. In this phase, workers are expected to become 'active subjects' in the coordination of the various functions of production, instead of being subjected to it as simple command.

On the one hand, there were specific prescriptions or 'commands' that sought to engender certain types of behaviour. Obviously, the aforementioned sequence of service was one, but also, there were prescriptions with regard to how workers were supposed to treat guests, co-workers and management in attempts to foster more 'affective' relations. For example, there was the 'five-ten rule': When approaching someone, you had to smile at them and make eye contact when you were ten feet away and at five feet, greet them[14]. In training sessions that were undergone by all staff from floor managers to kitchen porters, role-play was used to 'teach' these core values. Each worker received a plastic card the size of a credit card to carry around with them and an accompanying pocket-size booklet, so that they could always check what the values of the company were if they ever needed to, at work, or in their personal lives. Subsequently, these core values, ordained from upon high personally by the ethical guru of the company, its founder and previous owner,[15] would be continuously invoked in the every-day running of the restaurant in the discourses of management.

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13 Hotel training manual, undisclosed source.

14 Restaurant training manual, undisclosed source.

15 The restaurant was part of a high-class hotel chain, however the two companies were separate entities, nevertheless working together on a variety of aspects, including personnel management.

The seven (patented) core values of this company were to be 'gracious', 'attentive', 'authentic', 'fun', 'friendly', 'accountable' and 'original'.[16] Importantly, we were expected to actively 'embody', not just simply adhere to, these core values and were paid to be 'engaging', 'intelligent', to 'enjoy' our work, to 'have fun and make money'.[17] Independent thought and originality signalled not only the requirement of providing individually tailored guest-centric, 'outside of the box'[18] service, but encompassed the demand to think independently even if this meant challenging management decisions. This strategy of determining an environment for the active role of workers in decision-making processes that directly affected them (a form of 'participatory management') was implemented through daily meetings between staff and management, not only for management to reinforce rules and regulations but also for staff to express their concerns and problems, discussing together with management how a given problem could be ameliorated. Obviously, this process existed for the sole purposes of enhancing productivity whilst seeking to foster a subjectivity in which workers see the company's interests as their own (Lazzarato, 1996). This process did not have to be explicitly hierarchical for one to recognise that this chain of command remained top-down. This is because in itself, the socialisation process at work here tended to produce the kinds of subjects who would fulfil the required function of being 'good' employees. In turn, this was backed up by a certain element force. Not only were there surveillance cameras installed in most parts of the restaurant[19], it was also clear that anyone who (as an individual) were to resist the disciplining process too openly, would not last very long in the job.

Incentive schemes existed to reinforce the core values and the necessary subjectivity of the workers. Each week there would be a £50 cash prize for the employee who had most eminently exhibited one of the core values. The process by which it was decided who would win was one in which all employees were encouraged to write to the management telling them about how they had experienced a situation in which a colleague had exhibited a core value in either being a 'good colleague' to co-workers or providing a personalised, individualised service to a customer. For example, I was 'rewarded' once for helping a guest who had had far too many cocktails get home safely. It is perhaps interesting to note that my motivation for assisting this person stemmed, not from coercion, the prospect of reward or an adherence to my designated job description, but from my genuine fear that something might happen to them if they were not put in a taxi and taken home. It is precisely this kind of human emotion/compassion that the company wished to profit from, thus trying to encourage it through incentive schemes (which is different from remuneration). At the same time, such schemes were not just limited to the affective aspect of my work. There were also prizes for the server who generated more revenue in selling the highest number of weekly or monthly special drinks or dishes.

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16 Restaurant training manual, undisclosed source.

17 *Ibid.*

18 *Ibid.*

19 These were hidden from view, but existed with our knowledge due to the fact that whilst it is legal under UK legislation to monitor one's employees (to 'enhance productivity', to prevent theft etc.), it has to be done with their knowledge and consent. (UK Information Commissioner's Office, Employment Practices Code [http://www.ico.gov.uk]).

The production of the 'willing worker' was further reinforced through loyalty creation and discourses of privilege to be working for this company. Staff were given considerable discounts when dining in the restaurant and the management discourse was one of 'yes we can', rather than prohibition. As employees, we were constantly reminded that we were working for the company out of choice; as stated in a management training session, we had the option to 'vote with our feet'; we could either 'accept the company and its values', or go and work somewhere else, the suggestion being that it wouldn't be as rewarding. Feeding into this was, as already mentioned, the fact that this restaurant was a well-known, high-class establishment which was supposed to be (and in my experience was) a much more interesting environment to be working in than the fast food outlet around the corner, not least because it was financially more rewarding, especially for the waiting staff because of the tips that we could make in serving people who had money to spend.

Beyond Measure?

The basis for Hardt and Negri to argue that immaterial labour is today beyond measure lies in their assertion that socially necessary labour time ceases to be the relevant measure today. This is based on Marx's own articulation that,

> As soon as labour, in its direct form, has ceased to be the main source of wealth, then labour time ceases, and must cease, to be its standard of measurement, and thus exchange value must cease to be the measurement of use value. (Marx, 1973: 705)

Hardt and Negri state that "labour does remain the fundamental source of value in capitalist production" (2005: 145) thus these authors cannot be critiqued for denying the continued importance of direct labour. They state that the "temporal unity of labour as the basic measure of value today makes no sense" (2005: 145). Their concern is that we "have to investigate what kind of labour we are dealing with and what its temporalities are" (*ibid.*). They posit that "today, with the passage from Fordism to Post-Fordism, the increased flexibility and mobility imposed on workers, and the decline of stable, long-term employment typical of factory work" (*ibid.*), the "regulatory rhythms of factory production and its clear divisions of work time and non-work time tend to decline in the realm of immaterial labour" (*ibid.*). In my investigation of a specific form of service work, the above does not hold true because not only were there very clearly demarcated lines between when I was 'on duty' in the factory that is the restaurant and when I was not, the way I behaved, the social relations I engaged in were different in the workplace and outside it.

Nonetheless, it would be a too superficial reading of the immaterial labour thesis to counter the overall argument with this observation, although I would maintain it remains an important fact. Hardt and Negri state that crucially, it is in the nature of immaterial/affective work, the fact that it "produces social life itself", as opposed to simply the "means of social life", that we find its liberatory, and its 'excessive' qualities

with respect to the "value that capital can extract from it";[20] because ultimately, it holds its "foundation in the common" (Hardt and Negri, 2005: 145-7). This is the reason why it is designated as 'immeasurable', because this feature leads the labour to be unquantifiable in separate units of time and supposedly because exchange value ceases to be the measurement of use value.

Of course any type of affective work by definition is social in nature, whereby the worker produces "forms of community" (*ibid.*: 293) of sorts which rely heavily on the worker's interpersonal skills that they learned in common with other people throughout their working and non-working lives. The fact that I was nice to my guests, engaged with them in conversation and read their every desire from their body language, personalities and conversations, did not mean that we were together creating a common "internal to labour" (*ibid.*: 147) and "external to capital" (*ibid.*). Firstly, the form of community that was created between the guest and myself was an unequal one in which I was not simply under command to relate to other people in a way that I would anyway whether the capital relation existed or not, but one in which precisely because of the capital relation, I had to behave towards my guests in a particular way, namely one which involved me pandering to their needs and desires so that the company could make its profit. Hence, the active involvement of capital fundamentally changed the nature of my relationship with the people who were my guests. Whereas the potential for the kinds of life activity that my labour as a waitress consisted of existed prior to the capital relation I was bound up in, it was capital that gave it its particular form in the relations established in the restaurant. The exaggerated treatment of the guests, this exaggeration of what any normal relationship would be like, and not least the fact that the relationship was not just about creating social forms of life with them, but in serving them, in ways that also are often sexualised, within a complex power relation that cannot be separated from the capital relations with which it exists,[21] set the measure for this kind of labour. This form of labour was not just alienating because it was performed under command (Hardt and Negri, 2005: 111) or because it became automated and mechanical as opposed to spontaneous and natural. Importantly, the social relations created were completely altered by the active presence and active intervention of

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20 An important discussion to be had beyond the limits of this article is the discussion around 'living labour' as that which capital can never capture completely. I agree with Hardt and Negri that capital can never capture the whole of human existence; but to refer to "the fundamental human faculty – the ability to engage the world actively and create social life" (Hardt and Negri, 2005: 146) as a form of labour I think elicits problems. In my view, perhaps "living labour" could be better understood as 'life activity' (David Harvie, personal conversation). This is because referring to all life activities as 'labour' seems to me to reinforce the exploitation of our every action by capital. Thus, rather than refusing to allow all human interactions to become subsumed under capital, both actually and discursively, we endorse denominating them as 'labour', as that activity which is organised through the capital relation, thereby entering into the discussion on capital's terms. This goes to the heart of the meaning of 'labour', and posits the question of whether 'labour' is to be understood as exclusively being about waged labour and the organisational process of capitalism that creates it as such. This is something both Marxist feminist critiques with regard so-called unproductive labour and the reproductive labour of women's domestic work address (Cf. James and Dalla Costa, 1972), as well as being an issue that lies at the very core of the premises by which Hardt and Negri speak of real subsumption under capital. This is a serious issue within the debate at hand but warrants a more in-depth assessment than I can do justice to here.

21 Cf. Ogbonna and Harris (2002).

capital. At the same time, my example of helping the drunken guest get home safely as described above in many ways is a case that proves rather than disproves Hardt and Negri's point. Thus, I think it is important to understand the nuanced ways in which affective labour interacts with capital and the wage relation, which pertains to the debate about measure. Below I wish to elaborate on how the use value of my affective labour was constantly 'objectively' established through specific processes of measurement that served to quantify its corresponding exchange value.

Mystery Dining

'Mystery dining' is a common practice in the service industry.[22] Restaurants employ mystery dining firms to assess how well the dining experience conforms to the standards they set for themselves, which are continuously assessed and improved upon. Neither floor managers nor workers know they are being visited by a mystery diner, as obviously this would defeat the purpose of the objective. In the case of the restaurant I worked at, mystery diners would dine in the restaurant and conduct their reports on a monthly basis.

As a waitress, I was assessed by mystery diners as to how well I performed the sequence of service in the minutest of detail.[23] The mystery diner also performed the corresponding checks on the person in the call centre receiving the original table booking and the performance of the receptionists and floor managers, as well as assessing that of the kitchen and bar staff (through the evaluation of the food and beverages) during the same visit, i.e. the whole experience was evaluated.

This information was then collated in an overall report and sent to the company. The written report correlated elapsed time and key moments in the sequence of service with the overall fulfilment of the service requirements, measured in percent. In a further correlation, the scores for fulfilment by department (reservations, kitchen, management etc) and fulfilment by key indicators (service, hospitality, attention to detail, revenue generation, food, atmosphere) were compared with former reports at the same restaurant as well as the percentage averages of other restaurants owned by the same company, shown in bar charts and correlation matrices with the respective percentage figures. Good results were shared with the staff at briefings and used to promote enthusiasm amongst workers. The assessed waiter was also rewarded with an invitation to dine at the restaurant, an incentive not to get bad results. Extra training would be provided for those performing badly; although this seldom occurred. Due to the fact that these standards were associated with generating more revenue and earning more tips through providing excellent service, this acted as the most effective incentive to comply with the requirements (and management would leave you be).

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22 See for example, http://www.mysterydining.co.uk.

23 It was recorded what time the customer sat down at the table, what time I first approached the table, what time I took the order, how much time elapsed until the drinks arrived, repeating this for each of my moves through the whole meal until I presented the check at the end (we had two hours max. to complete each dining experience). What was being measured was my efficiency and time keeping, coupled with how well I completed the desired tasks and generated the maximum amount of revenue.

In the example of the mystery diner we can see that in order to increase productivity, workers were measured in relation to an ideal standard of what they should be doing and how they should be behaving. As De Angelis argues, "a measure is always a discursive device that acts as a point of reference, a benchmark, a typical norm, a standard" (De Angelis, 2007: 176). Further, he argues,

> when we reflect on this connection [between individuals and the social body peculiar to it], we encounter another measure of commodity value, a translation of the external one and one that shifts our attention from the done to the doing, from commodities to work, from things to life processes and their corresponding social relations. Following Marx, we can call this the immanent measure of value that corresponds to that labour which is socially necessary for the production of a commodity. As its corresponding external measure, this immanent measure of value is also constituted by the ongoing working of capitalist disciplinary processes (and therefore value struggles) passing through markets, as well as their state-implanted simulations. To appreciate this immanent measure we must look at the market as a continuous process of value (price) formation through the distribution of rewards and punishments and not, as in mainstream economics and a variety of strands of radical political economy, as a static structure. (De Angelis, 2007: 180)

Thus, whilst we might believe that we cannot place a value on affect in any abstract way, we can see that activities are not beyond measure when the purpose of the measurement activity described is to place an objective value on the affective labour of the worker, to measure and through this determine the value produced. This practice of mystery dining is not simply a mechanism of control; although it has a disciplining function, it actually serves to create a use-value for the customer out of the affective work done by the waitress and other staff, and this creation, this output, is subjected to the calculating eye of capital and its measure, interested in the exchange value that can potentially be generated for the company and the correspondent profit rate. The mystery diner, in other words, serves the purpose of setting standards as to what, and how much can be demanded of workers. To a certain extent, this process is influenced by the intervention of the consumer, in some ways both the customer and the worker co-constitute the product, as Lazzarato (1996) argues. Granted, the capital relation is one which exploits, it does not create, but this relation is much more interactive, a two-way process or a feedback mechanism, one in which capital simply relies on the creative capacities of labour. Thus understanding the role that measure plays in this process is useful to understand the specificity and significance of this relationship.

Restaurant owners or shareholders wish to make money through both fulfilling and creating desire on behalf of their clientele in order to make a profit and this, as the example of the mystery diner shows, requires a process in which the value that could be produced through this manipulation of desires and their subsequent fulfilment by workers can be 'objectively'[24] measured. Whereas there is an element of interplay between the innovative input of workers and the imposition of standards by capital, hence the reliance on so-called participatory forms of management, this process is much

24 'Objective' here has to be understood not in epistemological or metaphysical terms, but in terms of the 'objectivity' of the measurement of value that the mystery dining process serves to place on the work of the employees. If we discard this notion because we understand that we cannot place any abstract value on human activity, then we undermine our analysis of the specific types of exploitation that pertain to this process; thus here, I wish to hold on to the term 'objective' as understood within the parameters of the measurement process that is taking place.

more complex, and capital's interests, as embodied by the management of the restaurant, play a much more dominant role in shaping how worker's input is made productive for capital than is acknowledged by Hardt and Negri when they celebrate the power of the communicative and innovative activities of immaterial workers. A second example of measurement practices is found in the wage structure, characterised by service charge and gratuity.

Wage Relations

Service charge is a percentage, usually between 10 and 15% of the sum total of the products consumed added to the guest's bill. This is a discretionary charge, i.e. the guest can opt out of paying it if they feel that the service was not up to the standard they expected. This service charge, collected by the company when diners pay their bill, is divided up amongst the workers to constitute a wage per shift in addition to a basic shift pay (with different percentages of it going to workers who perform different tasks, e.g. the manager gets a higher percentage than the waitress and the waitress gets a higher percentage than the receptionist). What is interesting about this service charge is that it is a direct outsourcing of labour cost to the customer, and thus an indirect form of control that the management exercises over the staff, as well as a measuring device which not only forces the waiter to conform to the standards in order to get paid, but also measures the performance of the restaurant in relation to other restaurants in the same price category, as it is based on this experience of other restaurants that the guest will measure whether the service is worthy of the service charge or not.

Gratuity or tips are monetary 'gifts' made directly to the waiting staff as an incentive or 'thank you' for the service provided. Whilst empirical research has shown that there is little statistical relation between customers actually tipping more due to good service and vice versa (Videbeck, 2004; Lynn, 2001), it is the reward aspect of tipping that management use as a motivation for workers to do their job better or more efficiently. This practice also further complexifies the relationship between service staff and guest, because it is a wage relation set up directly between the guest and the server, or to put it in different terms, it is collusion between employer and customer, where, similar to the service charge, the employer seeks an indirect control over the worker's performance through asking the customer to evaluate how well the duties are performed (Ogbonna and Harris, 2002: 744). Here, the server is being directly measured and disciplined into performing her role of producing affect; the better she does, the more money she will make.

However, the dining experience the customer is evaluating and valuing by agreeing to pay a service charge and leave a tip, does not depend solely on the affective work of the waitress. This affective labour is part of the end product of a whole array of material labour without which the waitress would not be able to provide her services. A central importance of tips is that they serve as a mechanism of keeping the wages of the waiting staff down whilst retaining the kind of staff that are used to being able to demand a higher income than the minimum wage. This example shows how capital continuously

seeks to externalise labour costs;[25] by outsourcing the variable cost of labour to the customer through the service charge and through the active endorsement of a tipping culture, management can keep actual wages to a minimum. Moreover, from my personal experience I can confirm that service staff are usually more than happy to consent to this, because they know they can always earn a great deal more by agreeing to this arrangement than if they were to only receive a wage from the company. Even if wages were a little higher to compensate for the absence of tips or service charge, it is almost inconceivable they would be as high as the money staff are able to make with tips.[26]

At the same time, a hierarchy between workers exists in that it is only the waiting staff that get the tip in many establishments, including the one I am discussing in this article, where tips are not divided up between all workers. For example, if the kitchen staff perform badly, they risk reprehension, if the waiting staff make mistakes, they 'only' risk losing their tip, which is one reason why we need to look at the overall political economy of the restaurant.

The Political Economy of the Restaurant

In my introduction I argued that the affective worker cannot be seen out of context of the labour process that he or she is part of. In the restaurant that forms the basis of my inquiry here, the affective work of the waitress could not be done without the labour of the person who cleans the uniforms and all the linen, the chef, the kitchen porter, the drinks dispenser, or for that matter, any of the material labour involved with creating the interior of the restaurant (the tables, chairs, plates, glasses, sound system etc). All of the labour process is subject to specific measuring processes, the rationale of which is the maximisation of profit for the restaurant and the correspondent minimisation of cost. For this reason, it seems to me that we cannot so quickly do away with the idea that the process creating socially necessary labour time constitutes the exchange value (even of immaterial labour) and that this value is a site of struggle.[27] Whilst there are different aspects to the way that when we look at the aggregate worker, socially necessary labour time remains a vital measure of all of the manual and immaterial labour that goes into producing the product of the dining experience with all its components. As Marx himself states,

> If we consider the aggregate worker, i.e. if we take all the members comprising the workshop [in this case the restaurant] together, then we see that their combined activity results materially in an aggregate product which is at the same time a quantity of goods. And here it is quite immaterial whether the job of a particular worker, who is merely a limb of this aggregate worker, is at a greater or smaller distance from the actual manual worker. (Marx, 1976: 1040)

Whilst Hardt and Negri do not dispute this, they use this argument of Marx's to state that it provides the grounds to understanding the potential of the commons, if we

25 See also Wright (2005: 39).

26 See for example interviews conducted with waiting staff by Ogbonna and Harris (2002).

27 See also, Cleaver (2000); De Angelis (2006).

understand how the practices of immaterial labour are inherently co-operative (Hardt and Negri, 2005: 144-5). This may be true at specific times and in specific instances, but, the form of labour that I was a constituent part of as a waitress is predicated upon capital creating the conditions for the co-operation. Without capital's active intervention, this form of co-operation would not exist in the way that it is performed within the confines of the restaurant. Moreover, it is capital that provides certain necessary means for the workers to produce in this particular way, even if the workers means are drawn on too, e.g. their skills, emotions, abilities and creativity. This is why I argue that we must interrogate this interplay as mediated and constituted by forms of measure.

In the relations between staff, capital set up measures between workers and established a wage hierarchy which sought to impose capital as the structural force upon all relations. There may have been a certain degree of 'general intellect'[28] guiding the production process of the dining experience, because we used our interpersonal skills to assess the requirements of the moment and worked co-operatively using our 'common sense' and acquired skills to make the operation happen. Yet, crucially, there remained a clear division of labour, clear assignments and a clear command structure as opposed to a networked decentralised form of activity that are understood as a predominant feature of immaterial forms of labour (Hardt and Negri, 2005 : 142). Not least, once we move from understanding the individual labour form of the waitress as affective worker to analysing the aggregate labour of the restaurant, we see that socially necessary labour time remains the basic measure of value, precisely because put in a rather straightforward way, management still seeks to generate the maximum amount of profit whilst paying staff as little as they have to in order to achieve this goal: this is inherent to the logic of the undertaking.

Thus, it seems to me somewhat contradictory that Hardt and Negri do not dispute Marx's assertion as cited above but then make the claim that socially necessary labour time is no longer a valid form of measure, which we can see is still valid when we situate the affective worker within the labour process of the restaurant with regard to the type of labour performed, as well as in terms of the wage hierarchy and sociological make-up of the workers who occupy different positions within the labour process. For example, the fact that, when one takes both service charge and gratuity into consideration, waiters are paid a lot more than kitchen, bar or cleaning staff (and actually more than junior managers as well), shows that we need to put affective labour into the context of material and 'immiserated labour'.[29] Moreover, most visible 'front of house' staff were middle-class, well-educated and predominantly from countries of the so-called 'Global North', or if not, then they were nonetheless from middle-class backgrounds with excellent English skills, usually with secure permanent contracts, often only doing service work as a stepping stone to becoming an academic, an artist, a media worker or a lawyer. The flipside of this was the invisible more precarious and most often migrant labour at the 'back of house' (with the exception of qualified chefs).

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28 A concept taken from Marx, to mean "the general productive forces of the social brain" (Marx, 1973: 694) or "general social knowledge" (Marx, 1973: 706); for a further discussion on the concept of the 'general intellect', see Dyer-Witheford (1999, 2005).

29 See Dyer-Witheford (2005: 15).

Beyond Capital? Concluding Questions

In this article, my intention has been to apply the immaterial labour thesis as developed by Lazzarato and Hardt and Negri in particular to a specific example of affective labour to assess how the general tenets of this thesis conform to the specificities of such work. I acknowledge the relevance of the concepts of immaterial and affective labour as developed in the literature; particularly Lazzarato's understanding of active subjectivity conforms to much of my experience of management strategies within the restaurant. Also, it is evident that the inherent and learned emotional and interpersonal skills, i.e. workers' ability to create affective relations, are exploited in the valorisation process. But in turn, they are also manipulated and transformed for the purpose of surplus value extraction. The specific problem I address here is that affective labour cannot be said to be 'beyond measure', nor is it indicative of an 'elementary communism', if we understand how capital actively changes the nature of affective relations in its pursuit of profit, whereby measure must remain a central component of our analysis. On the one hand, I chart how specific forms of measure such as mystery dining, service charge and tipping, are used as both a form of control, and as a form of measure, on the other, I situate the affective labour of the waitress within the labour process of the restaurant whereby I argue that socially necessary labour time is still a relevant category of analysis. Whilst on the one hand we may be able to talk about a 'production of value from below', ready to be expropriated, manipulated and in turn determined by capital, it is much harder to see where any liberatory politics might become possible. Where in the restaurant lies the line of flight, apart from individual moments of micro-conflictuality that exist in the everyday life of any working environment (for example petty theft, workers not following company rules in wearing their uniform properly or a chef cooking some food for a colleague when they not supposed to)? What happens when affect becomes both a form of command as well as the actual product as I have shown in this article?

The struggle between capitalist valorisation, self-valorisation and politics is one that remains to be elaborated. My goal here has been to add an analysis of a concrete affective labour experience to the debate. In offering my insight of how capital functions to organise the labour process of the restaurant as opposed to merely extracting value from the immaterial labour performed, I am equally posing the question of how we articulate what 'exodus' can mean and what role affective labour plays in this, understood as situated within the overall production cycle it is a constitutive part of where the struggle over measure remains central.

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Call Center: The Art of Virtual Control

Experimental Chair on the Production of Subjectivity

translated by Nate Holdren

Editor's Prefatory Note[1]

The Experimental Chair on the Production of Subjectity (*Cátedra Experimental sobre Producción de Subjetividad*) is a project developed by a group of militant students, researchers and lecturers in Rosario, Argentina. It is an attempt at producing a constituent form of university militancy that intends to move beyond the critique of the decomposition of the state-funded university and the emergent market university. In this sense, it would prefigure the non-state public university, an alternative model to that of the market.

It is meant as an experiment in constructing a space of continuous self-formation, with weekly meetings and organized in modules of one month each. The general decisions concerning the coordination of the project – global political and institutional relations, funding and publicizing the initiative – are taken by a *management assembly* (*asamblea de gestión*). The format of each module is the responsibility of the *autonomous elaboration teams*, who decide on its contents, bibliography, invited participants and the pedagogical engineering. On top of that, they are responsible for making texts available on the website and in the module readers. A *network of external collaborators* can participate virtually by becoming involved in elaborating the modules and being consulted by participants.

In 2006, the five modules chosen developed a research trajectory across the different mechanisms of the contemporary production of subjectivity: Labor, State, Market, Communication, University. And through them, inside them, against them, beyond them, the Chair looked into the processes of self-organization and the devices of self-alteration of life that produce alternative times and spaces in which we can decide how to live.

1 Information compiled, 'remixed' and translated from Spanish by Rodrigo Nunes from the Catedra Experimental [www.catedrasubjetividad.com.ar] and Apex [www.apex.sykes.com] websites and private communications with Franco Ingrassia.

From this process of constructing an experience of self-organization of university knowledge, we have moved towards a horizon of composition with other processes of self-organization developed by social movements that create new modes of subjective existence and production in community.

The following text is the result of a work developed in the Labor and Subjectivity module, in collaboration with workers/union delegates of Apex, a local call center. Apex has been installed in Rosario since December 2004. It also has offices in Cordoba (Argentina), South Africa, Colombia and Peru. In Rosario there are 800 people working for it. In the course of 2005, when it had 600 employees, it had a turnover of around 1,100 people, almost all of them between 20 and 30 years old, mostly university students with multiple language skills – qualifications that Apex exploits for free and remunerates very badly. The first union delegates at Apex Rosario were elected in March 2006; more than a third of the workers participated.

00. Co-research

We have recently started a long term project with some union delegates at a call center in our city, Rosario, Argentina. This is the first such project that we started in what has developed into an ongoing relationship. It all began with the invitation we made for them to speak to us about their experiences at work during the last meeting of our Module on labor. After a series of exchanges which began with the presentation of a text from the newsletter the union delegates were working on, we found ourselves at the beginning of a collaborative project of militant research. The idea was to make practices – political practices as much as research practices – into problematics, which is to say, to interrogate them in such a way that they produce multiple collisions that simultaneously inhabit multiple strategies for intervention.

01. 'Next Year: What Next?'

The workers told us a rumor they had heard: 'We don't know if the business is going to be here next year, there's a rumor that they're going to leave Rosario.' Without any prior planning, having barely begun the conversation, we found a problem with which to open a dialog: work in conditions of total instability. A question arose, one which is timely for work today: what tools can one use to counteract this permanent instability when not only one's job is at risk, but the firm itself might close?

In addition to the short time that the workers stay on – 'If you work a year in the call center then you're a veteran' – there is another even greater aspect of uncertainty: doubts over the permanence of the firm itself in Rosario. With the rumor of the firm closing and the chance that it might be true, the effects mount: instability, precarity and firings. The threat of the firm leaving Rosario is a way to pressure the workers. Those who demand better pay and conditions stand in opposition to the supposedly common good that the company represents, and the State which faces thousands of unemployed over a matter of months.

If the rumor has its basis in reality, then this is an example of the most extreme form of an operation typical of neoliberal capitalism: where it can't find the best conditions – that is to say, legal, labor, economic, and natural conditions – optimal for maximizing profit, it leaves for another location which it considers preferable. The fate of the workers at Apex-Rosario is a clear case.

02. A Matter of Speaking

If there is one thing a telephone operator does constantly, it's *speak.* One sits at a stripped-down computer, with a small microphone at one's mouth and a metal panel that separates you from your co-workers. The workers answer the repetitive calls that come in throughout the work day.

At the same time, in an apparent paradox, at every meeting we have, they point out the compulsive need to speak that the workers have. The conversations stretch from the moment we step through the door to the most casual of conversations on the street.

There are two ways to understand speech here. The first, where each word is emitted at high speed, mechanically, during the phone calls, is linked to the economic interests of the firm. They told us how many calls they made per minute, more than they considered the performance of the telephone operators. These are dynamic and uninterrupted flows of calls. Failure to achieve the stated objective will mean firing or immediate sanctions.

The second form of speech, on the other hand, is outside the logic of the firm. This is a subjective operation capable of constructing a terrain of encounter, affect, and common endeavors on the basis of the workplace instability, control, and fragmentation.

The objective operation is the same – speech – but the subjective effects are diametrically opposed: one provokes intense ill-feeling, general isolation, and links to a sinister logic of the firm; the other is a tool for collective construction. Inside Apex, silence is a synonym for health. Outside of this logic, to share with others means to confront the ill-feeling that results from the mechanization of vital processes like speech, communication, and intellect, through the constitution of bonds which are more or less precarious but no less vital.

A similar paradox occurs in the firm. If one does nothing more than talk, at the same time the rules inhibit communication between operators: 'We can't talk with our co-workers'; 'We're constantly listened to and filmed, even at breakfast we can't talk'. The workers respond to this obstacle to communication with the generation of collective spaces: 'In order to humanize work, we hold get-togethers, parties, film screenings. It's all an excuse to be able to talk among ourselves.'

03. Virtual Controls

The testimonies reveal the intensity of the everyday controls: 'We can't go to the

bathroom when we need to unless they say so'; 'We can't use the same computer, we also rotate to another one, and we can't take pictures'; 'Everything is run by the company, even our speech, the breaks, the handouts'; 'They always have to have us feeling like we're being monitored and feel in doubt. If you do 20 they praise you until you produce 23, and so on'; 'They tell the clients to complain to management in order to be able to punish us or accuse us of being inefficient.'

Surveillance is permanent at Apex. The management of control is not only by negation: 'The employee should not ignore the company's metric'; 'No one should participate in any political party that interferes with the functioning of the company'; 'No gum chewing, eating, smoking, drinking, etc'. There are also 'Motivation Actions':

> Top Quality Action: Cinema tickets
> Top Monitoring Score: Instant entry
> Best agent in each team: Gift certificate at Alto Rosario
> Good performance recognition (to be raffled among the Agents with Perfect Attendance and no excess breaks): dinner
> Performance recognition (for the Best Team of the Month): Gift[2]

Based on the workers stories we see a school-like quality to the workplace: the type of treatment of the operators, the discursivity, the graphic, etc. There seems to be an air of study: grades, groups, coordinators.

The technologies allow control of a virtual type, which is omnipresent and felt on the body of the operator. Its effectiveness is rooted fully in its primarily silent character. Through the microphones and cameras the workers feel the weight of the demands. Errors result in punishment or firing. Thus methods of control are established by the 'Basic Rules and Ethical Conditions' of the firm:

> The dependents of Apex will be audited and monitored as management finds necessary. Apex and its clients will record conversations. Employers will require that all dependents be supervised during the execution of their tasks.

No process of control and management can be efficient without adequate 'Virtual Observation Posts' understood as strategic places from where the regular march of work can be surveilled. This climate of pressure in multiple directions generates a generalized distrust without clear distinctions between workers and hierarchic sectors: 'Anyone can report on you: a co-worker, a supervisor, the client. They misrepresent you as the friend of an enemy. In sum, it's stressful.' This is a structural management that promotes self-control and reciprocal surveillance between co-workers under the name of a competitive co-operativism which is more belligerent than a matter of solidarity, and which causes greater individualism. When a future punishment can depend on a co-worker or the evaluation of a client, the levels of (self-)control become extreme. The grave subjective consequences do not wait in this climate.

2 From the internal manual of Apex.

04. Machinic Subjectivity

During our meetings an idea was repeated by the workers: 'It's a job which annuls subjectivity. You can't put any of yourself into it.' The difficulty of this testimony makes us reflect on two complementary dimensions of this regime of work: rather than not putting anything into the work, one puts in intellectual, communicative, and affective capacities – which is a lot to put into one's job – which are appropriated and used in accomplishing the work and carrying out the economic interests of the firm. This does not mean, of course, that subjectivity is annulled, but rather that a specific subjectivity is produced. To the degree that Apex obliges one to behave like a machine, with submission to a strict metric, what is created is what we call a machinic subjectivity: a subjectivity molded by the imposition of exasperating times and surveillance and workload.

This is a subjective production proper to present labor conditions: capital demands excellence in products and constant attention to variable demand; and demands that the workers respond in the best way possible, constantly adapting their mental practice to the mentality of constantly actualized capital.

05. Paradoxical Micro-Resistances

Persistences

In opposition to the logic of the flow and rotation of persons, the delegates pose a logic of persistence. They opt for a persistent picket in the firm for two years, a persistence opposed to a place where everything occurs and transforms rapidly. The delegates, by decelerating the flows of the workplace, create points of conflict. This suggests that politics is possible where the time which is inhabited differs from the velocity imposed by capital (in this case, finance capital). All politics, then, presupposes and requires a dromology, a thought of speed.

Exodus

For Apex, instability, in all of its dimensions, is a fundamental in the design of its strategies of exploitation. But we can also make another interpretation of this instability, as no longer a threat on the part of the boss, but rather as the ground for a worker strategy. The mobility of the workers is still an important political element: it constitutes a mode of refusal of work. Is this a matter of deceleration? Not necessarily. Even less certain is that deceleration is solely a matter of inhabiting one place. If the classical – Fordist – syndicalism was configured on the basis of the stability of workers in their jobs, their jobs also constituted a point central to the political strategy.

Is it possible that today's syndicalism not only undo its reliance on the stability of the workplace but also of the centrality of the workplace? Perhaps this is a matter of thinking both, detention and the force of displacement, as sites of politicization and not of affirming one in order to draw an immediate antagonism.

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Immaterial Labor and Its Machinization

Leopoldina Fortunati

abstract

This article claims that the real promoters of the recent discourse on immaterial labor have been feminists, which should come as no surprise, given that immaterial labor has traditionally always involved women directly. But, in addition to asserting the beginnings of this analysis as part of the feminist tradition, this article carries out an analysis of immaterial labor in relation to old and new media in the process of the de-materialization of reproductive labor. It also claims that technologies of communication and information have played a crucial role in the valorization process of the domestic sphere and more extensively in the sphere of social reproduction. In the first section of this paper, the concept of immaterial labor is discussed in relation to the domestic sphere. Then the theoretical background of the notion of immaterial labor is analysed. In the final part, the quantitative expansion of immaterial labor in the domestic sphere and its 'machinization' are assessed.

Discussing the Concept of Immaterial Labor in Relation to the Domestic Sphere

Let us immediately proceed to a few observations on the concept of immaterial labor, as first elaborated by Marx. In his works we find only some brief considerations on immaterial labor. Marx addresses the concept in the *Theory of Surplus Value* where he provides a secondary, supplementary description of productive labor as labor that produces material wealth. He indicates that it is a "characteristic element of productive workers, that is, workers who produce capital, that their labor produces goods, material wealth" (Marx, 1961: 609), the implication being that those who produce immaterial wealth do not constitute productive workers. Marx continues his analysis by stating that immaterial production can be of two kinds. One which results in material goods (books, pictures, etc.), and one in which the product is not separable from the act of production itself, as is the case of artist performers, orators, actors, teachers, doctors, priests, and so on. But, he adds, "all these manifestations in this field are so insignificant, if we compare them to the whole of production, that they can be completely ignored" (1961: 610-11). Marx's observations clearly refer only to the labor invested in the production of commodities, as he does not take into consideration, for example, how much of domestic labor is constituted by immaterial labor.

Domestic or reproductive immaterial labor[1] mostly belongs to the second type of immaterial labor as characterized by Marx, i.e. labor that is not separable from the act of production. Examples are care labor, affection, consolation, psychological support, sex and communication. Whereas post-industrial capitalism has brought a quantitative expansion of immaterial production with it (Lazzarato, 1997; Hardt and Negri, 2000), ever-more elements of domestic immaterial labor are also being transformed, shifting from the second type of immaterial production to the first: that is, to immaterial production outside the home, whose products are goods that are acquired and consumed domestically. In fact, in the sphere of reproduction, immaterial labor, while not being inseparable from the act of production, often requires support. Think, for instance, of children's fairy stories, read to send them off to sleep, or toys that serve to sustain their games. These, like other supports, have become increasingly technological devices, by means of which reproductive immaterial labor has been largely 'machinized' and industrialized.

But what part of reproductive immaterial labor has been 'machinized'? Whilst that which is more similar to material labor still tends to resist the process of machinization, it is the less tangible part (thinking, learning, communicating, amusing, educating, and so on) that has been machinized. The reason is that after the development of household appliances in the 1950s in Europe and the US (e.g. the refrigerator, washing machine, vacuum cleaner or dishwasher), no new significant appliances have been developed (except perhaps for the microwave oven in the late 1970s). This possibly signals a resistance on the part of the economic system to produce new innovative technologies specifically aimed at material domestic labor. It seems as if there is still a reluctance towards this potential market. Although very much a mass market, the domestic market is characterized by labor that is unpaid and which produces a commodity that the current productive system holds in increasing disesteem: the human being. Not even 'intellective technologies',[2] as they are called by Maldonado (1997), have managed to act as a driving force for technological innovation of the material tasks of domestic labor. Much has been said about home Information Technology (IT), of the home re-organized by 'domotics' (Lorente, 2004), thus becoming an 'electronic cottage' (*ibid.*),[3] but so far home automation has not advanced much further.

> Whilst it may be simple to make a theoretical distinction between immaterial and material labor, it is not so easy in everyday life. In practice, the two are actually closely intertwined. Immaterial labor, as we have seen, often needs supports (tools, technologies) as a vehicle, well-grounded in the material. It needs to be performed in concrete contexts. But, above all, immaterial labor very often sets material labor in motion. Showing one's affection for a person means possibly setting off on a journey, buying a present or preparing a dinner, it means following an immaterial expression with concrete acts.

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1 Understood as synonymous for the purposes of this article.

2 In this context, the term 'intellective' is to be understood differently to 'intellectual'. This is because this term refers to machines that are not intelligent in themselves but stimulate intellectual work in their users (see also Fortunati, 2006).

3 These expressions describe the household where information and communication technologies enable the integration and automation of domestic appliances and equipment, enabling the remote control of these applications from inside and outside the home.

At the same time, it must be emphasized that in the sphere of reproduction it is immaterial labor that forms the basis of the whole process. Material production is usually set in motion not immediately, but after the first exchange of immaterial use-values (communication, affect, love) has taken place. For example, when two persons fall in love, they usually go through a period during which they learn to love each other, to express affection and make love. The material part of reproductive labor remains subordinated to immaterial labor. If the labor, exchange and consumption of immaterial use-values works in the relationship, this will initiate the material part of labor and consumption. If instead the immaterial part does not work, the material part will be interrupted, leading possibly to separation. The subordination of material to immaterial labor at the reproductive level may also explain why many couples manage to survive, even if there is an iniquitous division of material domestic labor.

In short, in the domestic sphere there has always been a situation opposite to that which exists in the sphere of the production of commodities. Here, up to the last decades, the most crucial goods had always been material, 'real' labor always material labor, which is why Marx, as mentioned above, understood productive labor as that which produced material wealth. At the reproductive level, on the other hand, the most crucial part has always been the immaterial one. However, once immaterial domestic labor has set in motion the material part, the former becomes less important than the latter. To be able to prepare the food and clean the house, the job of looking after the children has been relegated to the TV set or the computer, in a labor process which is predominantly still carried out by women (Fortunati, 1998: 26). It is as if entertaining children by speaking to them and playing with them has been considered less urgent than getting the dinner ready or cleaning the windows. In other words, it is as if material domestic labor, once initiated, has obtained the upper hand over immaterial labor, sanctioning its secondary nature.

Last, but not least, immaterial labor is carried out to a different degree by men and women and by children and adults: there are those who consume more (children, adult males, the elderly) and those who continue to perform more of this type of labor, namely women (Bonke, 2004). Negotiation over the division of domestic labor continues to be open, even if in the last two decades there has been a kind of stalemate in negotiations between men and women. What I mean by 'stalemate' is that as a result of the decline of the feminist movement in Europe and the US, negotiations between men and women have remained at an individual level. The lack of collective negotiation has meant that the division of labor inside the family has registered very slow progress, whereby in other spheres of everyday life there is stagnation (e.g. with regard to political participation and representation), if not regression (e.g. in relation to women's security). In this stalemate, the spread of new technologies in the home has often been used by men as a way of getting out of doing domestic work, thus establishing a kind of presence-absence in their relations with their partners and children.

The Historical Debate on Immaterial Labor

After Marx, reflections on immaterial labor were developed by Gabriel Tarde (1902) and Werner Sombart (1902/27). Although they never made explicit use of the term 'immaterial labor', these two authors clearly contributed to revealing mechanisms and laws governing the wide territories of immaterial labor in Europe at the beginning of the twentieth century. In addition to the notion of natural forces of social labor (such as cooperation) elaborated by Marx as working in an immaterial way inside the production process, Tarde in his two works *Les Lois de L'imitation* (1890) and *La Logique Sociale* (1895), stressed the existence of other forces (or laws) acting on a socio-psychological level, such as imitation, the law of minimal effort, and innovation. In doing so he argued that the social teleology imposed by classical economists unaware of the true foothold of political economics was at fault for the omission of affections, and especially of desire, in analyses of valorization (spheres which were also neglected by subsequent Marxisms). Tarde's analysis has also influenced Deleuze's and Guattari's work (1972/1980), with the realms of fashion, language and conversation in turn drawing the attention of Berger and Luckmann (1966).

Tarde's concept of 'imitation' is important in explaining how social formations are transmitted and overstated: "we are not born similar, we become so" ([1890]1903: 115). Analysing this social force of imitation, Tarde discovered some very subtle mechanisms of social control and dominance of the social body, working at the psycho-sociological level. According to Tarde, 'imitation' generally moves *ab interioribus ad exteriora*, that is from inside to outside, the implication being that the imitation of ideas anticipates that of their expressions and that the imitation of aims anticipates that of instruments (Tarde, [1890] 1903: 225-226). Of course, within certain limits this imitation is always bi-vocal, in the sense that there is an inevitable imitation also on the part of dominant classes towards the 'multitude', or conquered populations, but this twofold movement does not ever bring about a real reciprocity (Tarde, 1890[1903]: 233). Furthermore, dominant classes sometimes imposed Sumptuary Laws[4] in order to discourage this imitation.

Tarde makes us reflect, for instance, on the complex situation in which consciousness of one's social status or class operates. While the working classes might have a strong class consciousness, it can be weakened by the social tendency to imitate dominant classes. Copying the clothes, furniture or entertainments of another class, means to have already appropriated their feelings and needs, of which these goods are exterior manifestations (Tarde, [1890]1903: 216-17). The imitation of dominant class attitudes and behaviour is a sign of the fact that their political and cultural dominance is accepted. For instance, the 1960s in Europe and the US signalled a complete turnover of this social mechanism, when the working class and students began to refuse this

4 "Sumptuary laws (from Latin *sumptuariae leges*) were laws that regulated and reinforced social hierarchies and morals through restrictions on clothing, food, and luxury expenditures. They were an easy way to identify social rank and privilege, and were usually used for social discrimination. This frequently meant preventing commoners from imitating the appearance of aristocrats, and sometimes also to stigmatize disfavored groups. In the Late Middle Ages sumptuary laws were instated as a way for the nobility to cap the conspicuous consumption of the up-and-coming bourgeoisie of medieval cities" [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sumptuary_law].

imitation and proposed themselves as the model to be imitated by dominant classes (Polhemus, 1994). This role reversal is a milestone in the recent history of class relationships, because, if we accept Tarde's interpretation, it means that dominant classes have already accepted at least at the cultural level, the dominance of the multitude. Tarde moreover, reflects on values as an immaterial engine which moves society and steadies it. With this proposal, he distinguishes two classes of goods or values:

> The former [are] of an individual nature, such as the pleasures of senses, and the latter of social nature, such as consideration, glory, honour. The former as well as the latter values might become, along their diffusion, the main objective of a society, even if it is only the latter values of course which produce the fullness and strength of social cohesion. (Tarde, [1890]1903: 490)

Furthermore, Tarde used to the concept of 'innovations' to explain how social aggregations could produce differences. He worked not only on the social role of innovation, seen as a very crucial element of the valorization process (for him capital is increasingly accumulated inventions), but also on the way in which innovation spread throughout society. His analysis provided the basis for the diffusion of 'innovations theory', formalized in 1962 by Everett Rogers in *Diffusion of Innovations Theory***.**

During the same period, Sombart in his book *Modern Capitalism,* put forward the idea that capitalist labor increasingly involved immaterial labor and social forces of various types, such as the drive towards the infinite, trust in progress, the formulation of a specific modern notion of duty, originally sustained by religion, and the emerging love for one's own work (Sombart, 1902/27: 520-21). Furthermore, he analysed the deep transformation that capitalism had produced with regard to the social acceptance and appreciation of inventors and technical invention as indispensable premises to the scientific development of technology and its use in the production process. Sombart depicted how the extraordinary development of technological inventions was due at least to three factors: first of all, the objectification of technical knowledge, which ensured a continued control over new ideas or inventions, their transmission and with it the diffusion of knowledge; secondly, the systematization of technical knowledge which allowed for a systematic progression of knowledge and its enlargement; thirdly, the mathematization of technical knowledge (1902/27: 577).

Sombart also succinctly analysed the development of the organizational apparatus of the capitalist system at the beginning of the 1900s, which had started to utilize immaterial labor constituted by inventions and scientific knowledge, as well as new techniques and procedures of selection and specialization. Amongst the processes he analysed was the development of economic rationalism, which he saw as "the increase of intelligence, knowledge, and abilities to apply this energy in the most efficient way" and on the increasing need of intelligent workers to use complex machines (1902/27: 517-518, 534). He also analysed the objectification of knowledge, the 'science' of bureaucratic organization and accounting, the training and specialization of workers and the rationalization of professional selection, which was predicated on the attempt to establish an exact measure of the psychological abilities required for doing different jobs (1902/27: 699/789-90). Finally, he examined the effects that this apparatus had on social reproduction and in particular, the specific strategies employed in this sphere. These included a de-personalization process among human beings at the social level,

through the strengthening of a schematism (that is, a system of norms, ordinances, conventions, rules and agreements) in which the typical elements of interpersonal relationships are fixed (1902/27: 447), whereby the uniformity of social needs is based on the dependence on fashion (1902/27: 766). He also examined the shifts in perceptions of time and space as social categories moulded to this new logic (for instance, producing an acceleration of rhythms of work, distribution and consumption, but especially of life itself) (1902/27: 515-16). In substance, Tarde and Sombart show how capitalism advanced through the development of immaterial labor. However, because the domestic sphere remains absent within their analyses, they are not able to fully comprehend the function, role and meaning of immaterial labor in individual and social reproduction.

More recently, a variety of scholars have contributed to the concept of immaterial labor, thus discovering the productivity of social reproduction: from Becker, who launched the debate on 'human capital' (Becker, 1964), to Foucault who talked about 'biopower' and 'biopolitics' (Foucault, 1976), and from Deleuze and Guattari who theorized human beings as 'desiring machines' (Deleuze and Guatarri, 1972, 1980), to Bourdieu, who coined the terms 'cultural' and 'social capital' (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1970; Bourdieu, 1980). But this debate, which developed in relation to aspects of the immaterial and the sphere of the individual, I argue, completely ignored the material labor of the domestic sphere (cleaning the house, cooking, shopping, washing and ironing clothes) and above all, ignored the labor done in order to produce individuals (sex, pregnancy, childbirth, breastfeeding and care), as well as the other fundamental parts of the immaterial sphere (affect, care, love education, socialization, communication, information, entertainment, organization, planning, coordination, logistics).

Becker (1964) argued that education, training and knowledge in general are crucial factors for the productivity of individuals and nations and used the term 'human capital' to indicate the importance of these elements for valorization. According to him, in advanced societies human capital would represent 80% of any Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Human capital develops from family efforts and public investments in the education system. But talking generically about 'family' prevented him from recognising that 'human capital' was produced by means of unwaged labor, that is housework, which produces not only education and knowledge, but also the whole subsistence of new generations, including their existence, their birth and bodies. For the discourse on valorization to be complete, it should include all of this labor too, not just the segment of education. Foucault (1976) also analysed the social mechanisms that allowed for the control of the social body and elaborated the concept of 'biopower'. In the eighteenth century, biopower developed in two directions: in the beginning, in the direction of 'anatomo-politics' which aimed at introducing practices of discipline and education among individuals, and later on in the direction of biopolitics, which aimed at controlling populations, as machines to produce wealth, goods or other individuals. Especially in the second half of the century, according to Foucault, a series of debates emerged around habitat, the material and social conditions of urban life, public hygiene and changes in the relation between birth-rate and death-rate. According to the French thinker, it was clear that for the capitalist state, regulating population flows became a power issue, whereby sex became a fundamental political element for transforming society into a machine of production.

Deleuze and Guattari (1972, 1980) also analyzed many aspects of immaterial labor such as the production of innovations, values, social relationships, affects and thinking processes, but they were much more interested in deconstructing notions, concepts and habits rather than building a systematic analysis of immaterial labor. Their work aimed more at liberating forces for a critical vision of 'political doing' and an imagination of 'anti-power'. With a strong sense of the moment, they proposed to social movements of affluent societies to focus on desires, while the culture of the working class until then was talking only about needs. Finally, Bourdieu (1986) introduced the notion of cultural capital, seen in three forms: the embodied state (culture), which is connected to the body, thus presupposing embodiment; the objectified state (cultural goods) and the institutional state (academic qualifications). As part of this work, he accused economists of neglecting the domestic transmission of cultural capital. In addition to this, also proposed the concept of 'social capital', made up of "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" (1983: 249). Especially this second notion of 'social capital' (which is later taken up by Coleman (1988) and Putnam (2000)) was a new opening towards considering social relations as something connected to capital and its valorization. But this definition in itself, I argue, is incorrect, because it refers to a kind of capital that belongs to individuals, whereas social relations and contacts represent one of the territories of the immaterial production that belong to the reproductive sphere, a means of valorization for capital.

In the last decades, the true promoters of the discourse on immaterial labor have been feminists, which is not surprising given that traditionally, a large section of immaterial labor has been domestic labor and caring, traditionally performed by women. In the early seventies, at the height of the feminist movement, a group of women who called themselves Marxist feminists began a more in-depth study of capacity of the Marxist categories to explain the condition of women (see for instance, Dalla Costa M. and James, 1972; Dalla Costa, F., 1978; Federici, 1980). In the second half of the seventies there was an attempt in Italy to produce a systematic theoretical analysis of the process of reproduction (domestic labor, nurturing and prostitution)[5] in respect to and beyond the Marxist categories (Fortunati, 1981). While Marx clearly saw the domestic sphere as an unproductive sphere, we saw the production of goods and services (prostitution included) as a crucial stage inside the whole process of production and reproduction. The productivity of housework and prostitution was understood as producing and/or reproducing the commodity most precious for capital, the labor force:

> Large areas of domestic labor cannot be socialized or eliminated through the development of technology. They can and must be destroyed as capitalist labor and liberated to become a wealth of creativity unchained from the yoke of exploitation. The reference here is to immaterial[6] labor (such as affection, love, consolation and above all sex) which among other things constitutes an increasing part of domestic labor. (Fortunati, 1981: 10)

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5 Prostitution refers here to labor that "attend[s] to the sexual desires of a particular individual (or individuals) with bodily acts in exchange for payment of money" (Zatz, 1997: 279).

6 *L'Arcano della riproduzione* [The Arcane of Reproduction] was published in Italy in 1981. It was translated into English and eventually published by Autonomedia in 1995. At that time the Italian term '*immateriale*' was translated as 'non-material', probably because the term 'immaterial' was not at that time used within the English language.

This passage is part of a critique of the Leninist strategy for the emancipation of women, which advocated the socialization of domestic labor through the development of social services, and called for women to obtain employment outside of the home. In the 1970s, the feminist movement had already recognized that immaterial labor was a relevant part of the process of reproduction and had given the concept a wider definition. This recognition was based on the fact that, while the factory was still solidly centred on material labor, an analysis of reproductive labor immediately revealed the existence of immaterial labor. In the sphere of the production of commodities, the limited amount of immaterial labor that existed was identifiable essentially at the bureaucratic-organizational level, and at the level of social reproduction (Caffentzis, 1996), as well as in the introduction of mass media and the growth of education sector. In contrast to these areas, within the domestic realm, immaterial labor was much more widespread and made up of many elements such as education, communication, information, knowledge, organization, amusement/entertainment, and specifically, the supply of love, affection and sex.

Calling the act of supplying of love, affection and sex a 'job' was in many ways a major theoretical challenge. Until then, only prostitution had been in some way considered work, even if there were still echoes of the Marxian anathema qualifying prostitutes as unproductive 'rabble'.[7] This anathema sprang from the consideration that the work done by prostitutes is configured as a mere consumption of income which is included in 'simple circulation', not in that of the circulation of capital.[8] At that time, love, affection and sex in the domestic sphere were considered more or less activities naturally congenital to human beings.

Recently, Hardt and Negri (2000) have taken up the concept of immaterial labor. They argue that

> Most services indeed are based on the continual exchange of information and knowledges. Since the production of services results in no material and durable good, we define the labor involved in this production as *immaterial labor* – that is, labor that produces an immaterial good, such as a service, a cultural product, knowledge, or communication […] The other face of immaterial labor is the affective labor of human contact and interaction […] This labor is immaterial, even if it is corporeal and affective, in the sense that its products are intangible, a feeling of ease, well-being, satisfaction, excitement or passion. (2000: 290/292)

This definition by Hardt and Negri, inspired in part by the feminist tradition, is not sufficiently coherent. In fact, in another essay, *Kairos, Alma Venus, Multitudo,* Negri seems to argue the opposite:

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7 Discussing productive and unproductive labor Marx in the *Grundrisse* (1968: 252) exactly writes: "Since one of the contracting parties does not confront the other as a capitalist, this performance of a service cannot fall under the category of productive labor. From the whore to the pope there is a mass of such rabble".

8 Marx differentiates between 'simple circulation' and the circulation of money as capital: "The simple circulation of commodities begins with a sale and ends with a purchase, while the circulation of money as capital begins with a purchase and ends with a sale. In the one case, both the starting point and the goal are commodities, in the other it is money" (Marx, [1876] 2000: 484).

> But if we wish to determine the current conditions of the teleology of the common, it is not so much necessary to understand the resignation of capital from the role of productive force, but above all to understand the intellect's accession to the status of sole producer of value. This dynamic of the intellect was explained above, when the brain was acknowledged as the sole tool of postmodern production. ([2000] 2003: 227)

This statement seems to emphasize that Negri does not actually grant affects, sex or emotions a true role in postmodern production, which contradicts what Hardt and Negri say with regard to immaterial and affective labour in the passage quoted previously. This secondary treatment of affects, sex and emotions is further reinforced by the fact that the first example of immaterial labor they provide in *Empire* is health care services and entertainment (2000: 292). Only after this do they refer to 'women's labor' as defined by feminist analyses. Their argument is that an understanding of 'affective labour' must begin from 'women's work' or 'labor in the bodily mode', but that this labor, is immaterial (2000: 293). However, it remains unclear here how 'affects' are conceptualized, and by whom and in what kinds of social relationships they are produced and consumed. The overall consequence of their discourse is that women again risk being reduced to the body.

Many other women (and men) in these past thirty years have continued to study the transformations of domestic labor and especially its immaterial elements (see for example, Hochschild, 1983, 2004, 2005). Today, the recognition of domestic labor and its immaterial elements as productive labor able to create surplus value, is widely shared, meaning we can turn our attention to other aspects. One important aspect of domestic labor is the process of the de-materialization of reproductive labor, which we can understand through an analysis of the role of old media (newspapers, TV, telephones) and new media (computers, the internet, mobile phones). The time saved through the diffusion and adoption of domestic appliances has been filled up by an increasing labor of housework organization and planning, micro-coordination of the various family members and their personal schedules and commitments, planning of childrens' transportation, the logistics of the flows of goods and people within the house, knowledge and information activity aimed at the development of 'informed' housewives/workers, and the adoption and use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) in order to remove the human body from education, communication, information, entertainment and other immaterial aspects of domestic labor.

The Increase in Immaterial Labor

After *The Arcane of Reproduction*, which, already in 1981, emphasised the tendential quantitative expansion of immaterial labour in the reproductive sphere, many other studies have highlighted this same tendency in the whole capitalist system of the most industrialized countries (Haraway, 1991; Lazzarato, 1997). Immaterial labor has spread like a virus to the whole economic system, whereby the dynamics that govern the reproduction of the labor force have been exported (Hochschild, 1997). This is because this is the only way to produce a labor force adapt to the complexity of the post-modern world of globalization. It was carried out through through the extension and

intensification of the working day, by making people consume television, cinema, the internet, mobile phones and computer games for the purposes of communication, information, education (e-learning), knowledge and organization. This has happened through machinization, but also through other mechanisms of social control and management of social representations. In the production of material goods, where processes like computerization, the rapid implementation of technological innovations, and the increasing importance of information have quickly taken hold, not only has immaterial labor spread, but so has precarious labor. Immaterial labor has become productive for capital in a way that signals a wider phenomenon which is the exporting of the logic and structure of the domestic sphere to the world of goods, which always ends up resembling and being assimilated to the reproductive world.

In the following part of this article, I wish to focus on one question that pertains to this development: why has the immaterial part of domestic labor grown so much? It has done so, on the one hand, owing to a thrust from below, and on the other, due to the initiatives of the economic system. As for the first aspect, in the 1960s and 1970s, the activity of strong mass movements on the political scene had redescribed the modes of social relations, refusing the disciplining and command imposed upon the labor of workers, students, women and youth. This cycle of social struggle conquered wide areas of self-determination in the sphere of feelings, affections, sex, education and so forth. Criticism of authoritarianism, the interjection of a new respect for childhood, widespread experimentation with sex by the younger generations, the new domestic and social role of women, were all elements that placed family and social hierarchies in difficulty, recovering new forms of solidarity and defeating old modes of hostility. With regard to consumerism, the development of a strong mass market furthermore contributed to the construction of new kinds of media which had to cater for the needs and desires of the mass man and woman and speak their language. Last of all, the fact that the majority of families now had a house of their own and money in the bank enabled workers stronger bargaining powers. For the first time, people were not so vulnerable with regard to employment. Therefore, there existed now within the labor market people who could count on a certain level of well-being, having had very comfortable upbringings and spending their early years of adolescence in new forms of sexual and affective freedom. In other words, ungovernable workers (but also buyers, customers, consumers, users, audiences and so on), who forced the industrial and economic system to radically change its style of command, forms of organization, and modes of cooperation. The formation of complex social workers could have been metabolized by the economic system if only this formation had not been turned against it (see also Codeluppi, 1995; Gallino, 2000; and Pianta, 2001).

> But this further development of immaterial labor also provided the means for a political response by the capitalist system to the cycle of social struggles of the 1960s and 1970s. Apart from launching a powerful attack against people by intensifying the rhythms of labor and increasing social complexity (due to the heightened levels of mobility, urbanization, urban logistics, etc.), capital took the initiative to reorganize certain problematic areas in families by industrialising them. These problematic areas arose due to the consequences of two factors that had existed for some time, but which at that time took on an important role. The first factor was the increasingly massive extension of waged work to women, which gave them a certain (limited) economic autonomy, although they found themselves involved in a double occupation: house and waged work. Many areas of immaterial domestic labor, such as caring for children and dedicating time to their education or looking after the elderly, had been notably compressed or had even been left

> unattended. The abandonment of strategic areas of immaterial labor was due on one hand to womens' inability to continue to guarantee their families the same quantity and quality of domestic labor, and on the other, to their refusal to go on doing unpaid work. The second factor that had contributed to opening up areas of distress in domestic life had been men's resistance to taking over those areas left unattended by women, i.e. tending to domestic chores. This widespread male behaviour was to be found as one of the reasons for the increasing of separations and divorces that followed (Barbagli and Saraceno, 1998).

The grand offensive of the economic system was to produce machines that would supply services to replace at least in part the immaterial domestic labor that was no longer carried out, or that had been compressed. For the first time, the worker masses found themselves in possession of means of immaterial (re)production. Certainly, these 'intellective' machines such as radio, television, computer, internet, telephone and mobile phone were still 'primitive', given that, apart from the telephone and the mobile phone, they were unidirectional or weakly interactive. Nevertheless, their potential should not be underestimated. However, the most important aim of the economic system was to ensure in some way that this mass machine consumption would always remain dependent on the needs of the market, and productive for the system itself (and unproductive for consumers). The ensuing increase in the amount of immaterial consumption (which, by the way, in the domestic sphere is an integral part of the work process)[9] is proof of the productivity induced by the machinization of immaterial domestic labor.

In the reproductive sphere, the development of immaterial labor was characterized by two phases, but with the same aim: to exercise strong control over the sphere of social reproduction through old and new media. In the first phase this aim was pursued by creating and spreading new models of masculinity and femininity and commanding over the rhythms and sites of domestic labor and care. In other words, initially intellective machines were fundamental aids to restore the supply of high levels of valorization in the immaterial reproductive sphere. In a second phase, this aim was pursued not only by continuing to expropriate the productive and reproductive capacity, but also by expropriating individuals from reality itself, making them live out a mediated reality. In this second phase there was a great leap in the mode of exploiting and controlling people, which aimed at intensifying the production of value in the domestic sphere. So there was an unprecedented offensive on the part of the capitalist system, which no longer turned its desire for exploitation only to the capacity for labor – content – but also the body – its container.

The diffusion and use of these intellective machines has had the effect of extending the immaterial domestic workday. The modes in which immaterial labor time has been lengthened are easy to list: while interpersonal communication is flexible, because it varies according to the moment, the argument, its aim, the functions and the kind of relationship existing between interlocutors, the temporal modules of media products, are quite long and inflexible. A film, for example, requires around two hours for its complete fruition, a news programme half an hour. In contrast, if I want to relax with a friend, have a conversation, laugh together, this might last half an hour or an hour or two hours. The time is not fixed. The regulation of the time depends on us. We stop

9 For a further discussion of this, please refer to Fortunati ([1981]1995: 69-89).

when we have had enough. Even reading a book is flexible. I can read the book for ten minutes before going to sleep, or for an hour on the train to work, or for two hours on a Sunday afternoon. It is up to me. Cinema and television disciplines our time much more rigidly: we are obliged to dedicate two hours if we want to see a film. It is up to the producers to decide the duration of the consumption, not us. It is these modalities imposed by the dynamics of supply that draw out the time dedicated to communication, whereas the intensification of the immaterial domestic labor day has been created by the increasing overlapping of the actions and obligations that we find in daily life: we drive and listen to the radio, we eat, we chat and follow the news, we phone and we water the plants, or we iron.

The mass media and the new media are devices that are very different from household appliances, the widespread use of which helped to reduce effort and time in some household chores. Unfortunately, after the first wave of household appliances, technological innovation on the material domestic labor front has come to a halt. Instead, intellective machines have spread in great numbers and variety. As a result of the spread and use of the mass media and ICTs as power-centred authoritarian 'monotechnologies' (Mumford, 1996), immaterial labor has become increasingly mediated, self-reproductive and self-disciplinary. Rosalind Williams (1998) is right when she maintains that women basically had to endure, at least until the late 1990s, the capitalist and male initiative of life-denying technological systems.[10] It is no accident that while the classic household appliances were aimed mainly at women, the new media made of "sand, glass and air" (Gilder, 1996) apparently ecumenical, were for a long time aimed especially at the young and male area of consumption. Access to these technologies by members of the family reflected the hierarchy of power as well as the division of and cooperation in domestic labor within the family itself. Life cycles and interpersonal dynamics also affected how these technologies were used (personally, collectively, in turns, and so on), as well as the age at which they were taken up or abandoned. On the whole, the development of the machinization of immaterial labor through the spread of old and new media on one hand strengthened, and on the other distorted, reproductive labor. In particular, the use of new media has been amplified by the fact that, differently from old media, there is less mediation here by a gatekeeper responsible for the entire process (e.g. a parent controlling what a child watches on television or who they communicate with over the household telephone).

The 'Theft of Reality'

In general, with the spread of IT and communication technologies, individuals have increased their acquisition of services to "construct a common social world through communicative interaction, putting it to work in generating economically valuable outcomes" (Arvidsson, 2006: 675). An analysis of immaterial labor cannot fail to also look at traditional mass media editorial groups and new media operators, manufacturers

10 When instead women historically were crucial in shaping democratic techniques especially in agriculture and horticulture, or 'biotechnics' (Mumford, 1996), true polytechnics, that is, life-centred technologies.

and service providers, and at the new culture industries (Power and Scott, 2004), or 'creative industries' (Florida, 2002; McRobbie, 1999), that is, contemporary industries producing symbolic meanings, images, music (see Reich, 1991). In the so-called 'IT model', a growing number of immaterial workers not only work with communication, information, sociality, imagination and knowledge, but also need and intensively consume immaterial labor such as affection or psychological support (Kakihara and Sorensen, 2002).

The result is that the use of these intellective machines as life-denying technological systems has in fact led to not only the lengthening and intensification of immaterial domestic labor but also the 'dematerialization of the real' and, more exactly, to its 'theft'. The dematerialization of the real has been a consequence of the alienation brought about by the mass diffusion of old and new media. How else can we explain the interest with which, for instance, while we are having lunch, we follow the news about what is going on in Iran, possibly telling our child to be quiet, and not asking what sort of day they had at school. Aren't the many hours of the day spent in front of the TV screen or surfing the internet or listening to the radio, hours in which we live out a second-hand reality, often narrated by mediocre narrators? Isn't the end of the grand narratives (Lyotard, 1979) not accompanied perhaps by this increase of the everyday mediated by *mauvais maîtres* (Popper, 2002)? Once again, exactly the opposite has happened in the domestic sphere to what has happened in the sphere of the production of commodities. Here, the alienation of workers has been pursued through the expropriation of their means of production. In homes it has been achieved through the opposite method, making available formidable devices of entertainment and social control, the contents of which are constructed by the immaterial labor industries. Much attention on the part of scholars has been quite rightly spread over the study of the contents of TV and radio programmes. It is important to study the content of messages because they can have a great impact on the user. But, apart from the contents, the aspect that is even more relevant is the effects themselves that the use of the device causes (Silverstone and Hirsch 1992; Silverstone, 1994). By means of the device, people actually are expropriated of large slices of life in order to live out this second-hand reality. The real leap produced in this stage by the system of capital is that it has gone from exploiting the labor force to expropriating the labor force of its very reality (Fortunati, 2003).

So, to have machinized not the part of immaterial labor bordering on material labor, but its less tangible part, namely language, communication, thought and the imaginary, has meant in fact not only the lengthening of the time of consumption/production dedicated to this element of immaterial labor, as well as its intensification, but also the dematerialization of the real. Let us add another example: the shift of large quantities of romantic and sexual human relations in the mediated imagination, in a more or less interactive way (Arvidsson, 2006). For sexuality, this process of machinization has selected only the erotic fantasies (Lane III, 2001), communication and information, (Liu and Lau, 2006) or dating (Arvidsson, 2006), leaving aside the actual practice of such interactions. By machinising the more etherial part of immaterial labor connected to sex, it has even more radically broken the chain of thought, of sexual saying and doing. Today we are assisting in the development of a great industry of erotic imagination detached from practice that recognizes more or less implicitly the 'freedom' to consume

it as a commodity. At the social level the effects can only be negative, given that the immaterial part of sexuality has developed in such a preponderant way, detached from material doing, as to make this latter more and more problematic. The feminist battle against considering masturbation as an asocial or even antisocial danger has been transformed not into complete and healthy sexual activity but into a kind of powerful urge towards a mediated erotic imagination often forced inside violently anti-woman canons (Arvidsson, 2006). In this new context the mediated erotic imagination has become violent and masturbatory, reflecting another aspect in which the narcissistic society expresses itself (Lasch, 1978). This transformation of material labor into immaterial and mediated labor has meant a strong vampirization and pauperization of the quality of the erotic life. In compensation, for the pornography industry it has meant an extraordinary growth of revenues which, according to Lane III (2001), was estimated at the beginning of this millennium at 20 billion US dollars. The same has happened to the body and beauty industry (clothes, make-up, surgery, fitness, dieting), or the industry of the 'online ghosts of sociability'. What I mean by this expression is that there is a use of the internet which reinforces socialization, and another that substitutes co-present socialization and perhaps distorts it. There are many types of web services such as chats, where people converse without building true relationships, or websites where people display their opinions without actually interacting with anyone. In this way people remain separated from others, each person in his/her room in front to a computer. Another crucial area that has been sucked out of the home and commodified in response to these very exposed areas of domestic labor is education, increasingly machinized at home but also exported in the social area of services where state control is easier. Social services in this type of society serve to guarantee the standardization of educational process, the assessment of the amount of knowledge and discipline embodied by new generations.

In general, the commodification of the less tangible elements of immaterial labor has also had the effect of redimensioning the process of decision and self-determination in the reproductive sphere. The industries and technical systems that have developed by starting from the exploitation of these areas have begun to dictate their rhythms, modes, places and contents of a disciplined and controlled consumption, substituting the individual pre-existing modalities of production which, within certain limits, were more free. Individuals, but more extensively families, have been increasingly made mere appendices to communication and information technologies. Furthermore, ever since the cultural or ICT industries began to produce these immaterial goods and services, in order to be freed from certain parts of immaterial domestic labor, and/or to strengthen what was left for them to do, people have also been obliged to pay for these goods and services. By buying these goods, people are doomed to reproduce in an increasingly unproductive way for themselves, and increasingly productive for the economic system.

Strategies of Survival and Self-determination

If the capitalist initiative is strong, equally strong is the multitude's initiative with respect to immaterial labor. The fact that people possess at a mass level a whole series of communication and information technologies and have become better at using them

for themselves, is setting in motion powerful processes of self-determination and hence of self-valorization. It is enough to remember, for example, how mobile phones have played a crucial role in many public demonstrations and social movements, but also within public solidarity chains (Fortunati, 2003; Rheingold, 2003). Or how users have not only reconfigured technological devices through using them, introducing many novel aspects, but have also obliged manufacturers and telecommunications companies to reconfigure themselves and accept these users as codesigners of new services and functions; how much the web has served as a space for public debate, or how much it serves also to redefine knowledge, its composition, the mechanisms of its production, and its modes of transmission. The alternative use of new media is crucial for the new political subjects. In fact, for them the possibility of implementing an effective strategy of self-valorization passes through the invention of a new theory of communication, as well as a new theory of organization, of new tools, procedures and communicative styles.

Nevertheless, it must be clear that machinization has been an important but by no means the only development as far as the abandonment of immaterial domestic labor is concerned. The other response has been the changes in the way that social services function. For example in Italy, no longer is it the case that elderly people can only be cared for in the hospitals or old people's homes. Increasingly, care services are more individualised in that social services provide care in the home. At the same time, there has been another response from below which has taken on the shape of a survival strategy for many upper middle class families, and increasingly the lower middle-classes: the resort to domestic labor outside the family. The double-income urban family, because of the increasing intensification of labor rhythms and mobility, has found itself no longer able to look after its more dependent members: children and the elderly. In Europe, in a number of families today, one part of the material and immaterial domestic labor is done by immigrant women (Anderson, 2000). Again, the contrary has happened for housework to what has happened in the sphere where commodities are produced. Here, material labor has been delocalized, that is, exported towards countries where the labor force costs less.

Conclusion

An attempt has been made in this article to reconstruct the historical and theoretical debate over the concept of immaterial labor. The intention has been to develop an articulated reflection on the concept of immaterial labor from a feminist perspective. I have tried to examine the increase in immaterial labor especially in the domestic sphere as a result of the increase in old and new media. This analysis has exposed the dematerialization of reality, but also some strategies of self-determination that people have initiated. The mass possession of these intellective technologies represents an important ground for political experimentation and for a new theory and practice of communication, as well as a strategic moment of self-valorization.

Elsewhere, I have attempted to show how the mind is forced to develop in the 'Global North' and the body in the emerging countries, where factory production, i.e. material

labor, has been located to. In the 'Global North' there remains more immaterial labor (Fortunati, 2003). Globalization separates the material elements from the immaterial ones of the same production process. The latter very often remains in the (post-)industrialized countries while the former is located in developing countries, which brings the international division of labour to another level. Planning, research, strategic organization, innovation and creation of new products within multinationals and other enterprises generally remain in the former. This tendency is of course increasingly contested by developing countries, which are becoming not only more autonomous in managing production processes but are also developing themselves as technological innovators (see China, India, South Korea). With regard to the old division between manual labor and intellectual labor, or rather between material labor and immaterial labor, a more subtle division is being established today, which does not limit itself to distinguishing between them, but which places them in opposition to one another. Material labor is scorned and devalorized, while immaterial is valorized. But it is on the body that the system has launched its most radical attack, even if there has still been no political awareness of this attack. Centuries away from the *Habeas corpus* Act of 1679, globalization is moving from an exploitation of the labor force as work capacity towards the command and control of the whole machinized body (Haraway, 1991), a control that, differently from before, can be exercised directly in a continuous cycle. Given these premises, there is no longer much sense in speaking of a technical collocation inside the productive cycle, as everyone, without exception, is subjected to the process of the machinization of the body, increasingly hybridized by means of machines. But it continues to make sense to speak of class difference, because it is among the folds of a lack of solidarity among the various political subjects that globalization's command passes. In any event, the offensive has now passed into women's hands.

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Doing the Math: Reflections on the Alleged Obsolescence of the Law of Value under Post-Fordism

Max Henninger

abstract

A recurring claim in the work of Antonio Negri and other post-*Operaista* theorists associated with him is that the law of value, which states that the value of a commodity is determined by the socially necessary labor time required for its production, is obsolete in today's post-Fordist economy. Negri supports this claim by arguing that the nature of labor has changed fundamentally – labor has become ever more complex, cooperative and immaterial – and that life time and labor time are becoming increasingly indistinguishable. These arguments distort aspects of Marx's theoretical framework in ways that yield counterfactual and contradictory claims. They also disregard the importance of Marx's quantitative approach to value for combating an entrepreneurial strategy that consists in expanding the sector of unremunerated or underpaid work within what has been called the 'social factory'.

Ever since the early 1990s, there has been a resurgence of interest – first in Italy, and then internationally – in the work of militant Marxists associated with the theoretical current known as *Operaismo* (or post-*Operaismo*, in its most recent transformation). Authors such as Antonio Negri and Paolo Virno are winning a growing audience for themselves by furnishing a conceptual apparatus that promises to unveil the secrets of capitalist exploitation during the decline of the Fordist economic regime. The theories elaborated by these authors have seemed to many to provide a convincing account of the new forms of work associated with information technology, science, and communication that have emerged in the leading capitalist nations during the past decades, and which are today widely associated with categories such as those of 'immaterial' and 'affective' labor.

Much of the current fascination with these theories appears to derive from their tendency to invoke a Marxist rhetoric while dismissing many of the more traditional elements of Marxist theory. The 'law of value' has been one of the first components of orthodox Marxism to fall by the wayside.[1] It was already dismissed as obsolete by

1 The law of value states that a commodity's value is determined by the socially necessary labor-time required for its production. To cite a classic (Marxian) example: Diamonds will be an unusually valuable commodity for as long as discovering, extracting, and processing them will require, on average, relatively large amounts of labor-time. Since, in Marx's view, labor-power is itself a

Negri as early as the 1980s.[2] In what follows, Negri's arguments for the obsolescence of the law of value will be placed within the context of *Operaista* and post-*Operaista* theory and critically examined. After explaining why I feel these arguments are unsatisfactory, I will offer some (very rudimentary) suggestions as to other directions in which the analysis of contemporary forms of exploitation might proceed.

The critique of Negri presented here does not engage with the debate on Marx's theory of value that has been ongoing at least since the publication of Piero Sraffa's *Production of Commodities by Means of Commodities*, even though that debate arguably constitutes part of the general backdrop of Negri's arguments.[3] Many aspects of Marx's theory – including those related to the so-called 'transformation problem', or the problem of the transformation of values into prices – undeniably require correction or at least further elaboration. Negri's arguments for the obsolescence of the law of value can however be refuted without extensive reference to the debate on Marx's theory of value – by indicating the counterfactual nature of the claims associated with them and the contradictions and conceptual confusions inherent in the underlying assumptions.

Labor Militancy and Productivity: The *Operaista* Narrative

It is worth emphasizing that Italian *Operaismo* was not the unified movement as which it is sometimes presented.[4] One point of disagreement between the various theorists

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commodity (which also needs to be produced and reproduced), the law of value has important consequences for workers *qua* workers (i.e. it does not affect them simply because they are also consumers). As will be seen below, Negri's claim that the law of value is now defunct is largely premised on his views about the qualitative transformations of labor under post-Fordism.

2 See for example Antonio Negri (1997), *La costituzione del tempo*, Rome: Manifestolibri, 33-34 (written between 1980 and 1981).

3 Piero Sraffa (1960) *Production of Commodities by Means of Commodities. Prelude to a Critique of Economic Theory*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Ian Steedman (1977) *Marx after Straffa*, London: New Left Books; Diane Elson (1979) 'The Value Theory of Labour', in Diane Elson (ed.) *Value: The Representation of Labour in Capitalism*, London: CSE Books, 115-180; and Ian Steedman (1981) *The Value Controversy*. New York and London: Verso. Two classic works on value theory also worth consulting are Ronald L. Meek (1956) *Studies in the Labor Theory of Value.* New York and London: Monthly Review Press, and Maurice Dobb (1973) *Theories of Value and Distribution since Adam Smith: Ideology and Economic Theory*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. As far as more recent contributions to the debate are concerned, the work of George Caffentzis and Harry Cleaver seems to me to be especially significant. See George Caffentzis (1992) 'The Work / Energy Crisis and the Apocalypse', in Midnight Notes Collective (eds.) *Midnight Oil: Work, Energy, War, 1973-1992*, Brooklyn NY: Autonomedia, 215-271 (especially p. 232-248); George Caffentzis (2005) 'Immeasurable Value? An Essay on Marx's Legacy', *The Commoner,* 10: 87-114; and Harry Cleaver (2005) 'Work, Value and Domination. On the Continuing Relevance of the Marxian Labor Theory of Value in the Crisis of the Keynesian Planner State', *The Commoner,* 10: 115-131. While they disagree with him on important points, Caffentzis and Cleaver share with Negri a theoretical approach shaped by *Operaismo*. The critique of Negri developed in this essay is strongly indebted to their work.

4 The most thoroughly researched English-language account of the development of *Operaismo* is Steve Wright (2002) *Storming Heaven: Class Composition and Struggle in Autonomist Marxism*. London: Pluto Press.

associated with the movement concerns the nature of the relationship between capitalist productivity and worker struggles. Mario Tronti argued famously that labor militancy constrains capitalists to find ways of increasing productivity in order to continue extracting surplus value, or that labor militancy accelerates the transition from the 'formal' to the 'real' subsumption of labor under capital and from the extraction of 'absolute' to the extraction of 'relative' surplus value.[5] By contrast, Raniero Panzieri seldom went further than suggesting a parallelism between capitalist development and labor militancy. He rarely makes claims about a straightforward causal relationship between the two. Where he does make such claims, Panzieri tends towards reversing Tronti's position by suggesting that it is the capitalist reorganization of the production process that engenders new struggles, not vice versa.[6]

Panzieri's position is often neglected in contemporary discussions of *Operaismo*. The most well-known theorists associated with *Operaismo* who are still active today, such as Negri, tend to take Tronti's position as the premise of their arguments. One might say that if there exists such a thing as an '*Operaista* narrative' of social struggle and labor militancy today, its main characteristic is that it recounts the history of capitalist development in such a way as to stress the primacy of worker struggles over the initiative of entrepreneurs.

Whatever the causal relationship between labor militancy and capitalist development may be, it is clear that both were amply in evidence during the heyday of *Operaismo* (the 1960s). What is more, it appears indeed to have been the case that the technology-based restructuring measures implemented by Italian corporations such as FIAT during the 1970s constituted a response to the labor militancy of the period.[7] Much of this

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5 See Mario Tronti (1966) 'Lenin in Inghilterra', in Mario Tronti, *Operai e capitale*, Turin: Einaudi, 89-95. In Marx's theory, the extraction of 'absolute' surplus value is proper to societies in which the capitalist mode of production is only beginning to emerge, and in which entrepreneurs appropriate labor-power for themselves without significantly transforming the production process – what Marx calls the 'formal subsumption of labor under capital'. At this early stage of capitalist development, surplus value is extracted from workers simply by ensuring that the workday exceeds the time required for necessary labor, or for producing commodities whose value is equivalent to that of the commodities required for reproducing the labor-power expended. According to Marx, the subsequent development of capitalism sees the production process being reorganized with an eye to making it more efficient from the standpoint of capitalist valorization. More commodities are produced in less time thanks to technological innovation. Productivity increases as the production process is transformed into a specifically capitalist production process. This is what Marx calls 'real subsumption'. If the exchange value of labor-power (the wage) remains constant or in any case does not rise as quickly as productivity, the proportion of necessary labor to surplus labor shifts in favor of the latter, since more value is produced in the same time. In this way, more surplus value can be extracted even without lengthening the workday. This is what Marx describes as an increase in 'relative' surplus value. See Karl Marx (1976) *Capital*, vol. 1, trans. B. Fowkes, Harmondsworth: Penguin, Chapter 14.

6 See Raniero Panzieri (1994) 'Lotte operaie nello sviluppo capitalistico', in Raniero Panzieri, *Spontaneità e organizzazione. Gli anni dei 'Quaderni rossi' 1959-1964. Scritti scelti a cura di Stefano Merli*, Pisa: Franco Serantini, 73-92 (especially p. 79-83).

7 On restructuring at FIAT, see the various documents in *Autonomie. Materialien gegen die Fabrikgesellschaft. Neue Folge* 9 (1982). See also Marco Revelli (1989) *Lavorare in Fiat.* Turin: Boringhieri; and Marco Revelli (1996) 'Fiat: la via italiana al postfordismo', *Le due destre*, Turin: Boringhieri, 116-130. It is worth emphasizing that the use of science as an instrument for reorganizing the production process, extracting relative surplus value, and curbing the possibilities

restructuring involved investment in semi-automated production processes. This in turn gave new importance to the capitalist recruitment of engineers and technicians (an issue already extensively debated during the 1960s).[8] Consequently, those passages in Marx that deal with automation and the integration of scientific knowledge into the production process – most importantly, the 'Fragment on Machines' in the *Grundrisse*, Marx's preliminary notes for *Capital* – assumed a new relevance and topicality.[9] Negri's claims concerning the obsolescence of the law of value largely derive from *Operaista* readings of the *Grundrisse*. Negri has long argued that this work by Marx provides more adequate tools for anti-capitalist struggle than those found in *Capital*.[10]

In the 'Fragment on Machines', Marx claims that "labor time ceases and must cease" to be the 'measure' of wealth once productivity has developed to the point where the expense of labor-power required for the production process becomes so negligible that workers become the 'overseers' rather than the agents of that process. In other words,

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for labor militancy predates the post-1945 period. The classic example of such an entrepreneurial strategy remains the application of Frederick Winslow Taylor's techniques of 'time and motion management' (or 'scientific management') in US steel factories during the early 20th century. See Frederick Winslow Taylor (1911) *The Principles of Scientific Management*. New York and London: Harper and Brothers; David A. Hounshell (1984) *From the American System to Mass Production (1800-1932)*. Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press; and Stephen Meyer III (1981) *The Five Dollar Day: Labor Management and Social Control in the Ford Motor Company, 1908-1921*. Albany NY: State University of New York Press. See also Antonio Gramsci (1975) *Quaderni del carcere*. Turin: Einaudi (entries under '*americanismo e fordismo*', eg. p. 1312-1313, p. 2146, p. 2160-2161, and p. 2164-2166); Harry Braverman (1974) *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in the Twentieth Century*. New York: Monthly Review; Karl Heinz Roth (1977) *Die 'andere' Arbeiterbewegung und die Entwicklung der kapitalistischen Repression von 1880 bis zur Gegenwart*. Munich: Trikont (especially p. 29-54 and p. 81-100, on Taylorism in Germany); and (on Taylorism in the Soviet Union) Angelika Ebbinghaus (1978) 'Taylor in Rußland', in Willi Bergmann (ed.) *Autonomie im Arbeiterkampf. Beiträge zum Kampf gegen die Fabrikgesellschaft*. Munich: Trikont, 143-164.

8 On analogous developments in the German Federal Republic, see Karl Heinz Roth (1970) 'Wissenschaft, Bildung und wirtschaftliches Wachstum im wissenschaftlichen Kapitalismus', in Eckard Kanzow and Karl Heinz Roth, *Unwissen als Ohnmacht. Zum Wechselverhältnis von Kapital und Wissenschaft*. Berlin: Voltaire, 9-160. Considerations on the integration of scientific labor into the production process were already central to debates that occurred within the Italian and German student movements during the 1960s. One of the most influential contributions to the German debate is Hans-Jürgen Krahl (1971) 'Thesen zum allgemeinen Verhältnis von wissenschaftlicher Intelligenz und proletarischem Klassenbewusstsein', *Konstitution und Klassenkampf. Zur historischen Dialektik von bürgerlicher Emanzipation und proletarischer Revolution*. Frankfurt: Neue Kritik, 330-347. The work of Krahl received considerable attention in Italy. For more recent, English-language analyses of the relationship between science, technology, and capitalism, see the 1997 anthology *Cutting Edge: Technology, Information, Capitalism and Social Revolution*, edited by Jim Davis, Thomas Hirschl, and Michael Stack. New York and London: Verso.

9 Karl Marx (1973) *Grundrisse*, trans. M. Nicholaus. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 699-711. On the *Grundrisse* and their relationship to *Capital,* see Roman Rosdolsky (1977) *The Making of Marx's Capital*. London: Pluto Press.

10 See Antonio Negri (1977) 'Dal Capitale ai Grundrisse', in Antonio Negri, *La forma Stato. Per la critica dell'economia politica della costituzione*. Milan: Feltrinelli, 13-24. See also Antonio Negri (1979) *Marx oltre Marx. Quaderno di lavoro sui Grundrisse*. Milan: Feltrinelli; English translation: Antonio Negri (1991) *Marx Beyond Marx*, trans. Harry Cleaver, M. Ryan and M. Viano. New York: Autonomedia.

the Marx of the 'Fragment' envisions the breakdown of the law of value being brought about by the increasingly scientific nature of the production process.

> […] to the degree that large industry develops, the creation of real wealth comes to depend less on labor time and on the amount of labor employed than on the power of the agencies set in motion during labor time, whose 'powerful effectiveness' is itself in turn out of all proportion to the direct labor time spent on their production, but depends rather on the general state of science and on the progress of technology, or the application of this science to production. […] [The] worker steps to the side of the production process instead of being its chief actor. […] As soon as labor in the direct form has ceased to be the great well-spring of wealth, labor time ceases and must cease to be its measure, and hence exchange value [must cease to be the measure] of use value. The *surplus labor of the mass* has ceased to be the condition for the development of general wealth, just as the *non-labor of the few*, for the development of the general powers of the human head. With that, production based on exchange value breaks down and the direct, material production process is stripped of the form of penury and antithesis.[11]

Much turns on the extent to which one takes this passage to be a description of contemporary capitalism. It would seem that interpreting what Marx says in the 'Fragment' as a straightforward description of the world we live and work in is problematic. In the era of global markets and transnational production chains, an era that sees computer programmers in the United States contributing to the production of the same commodities as miners in the Congo, it does not appear that "production based on exchange value" has "broken down" or that the "direct, material production process" has been "stripped of the form of penury and antithesis." The impression of historical necessity conveyed by Marx's phrase '*ceases and must cease'* would seem to be at odds with the historical development of capitalism during the past decades. Capitalism quite obviously disposes of the means to prevent even the most dramatic productivity gains from leading directly into communism, which is the development Marx seems to foresee in the 'Fragment'.[12]

What is one to make, then, of Marx's remark that when "labor in the direct form has ceased to be the great well-spring of wealth, labor time ceases and must cease to be its measure" – a remark that would seem to amount to the claim that, given a certain level of technological development, the law of value becomes defunct? The common-sense response consists perhaps in pointing out that such a degree of technological development has not been achieved throughout the capitalist world economy, and perhaps never will be. While the forms of work proper to high-tech economic sectors such as those associated with computer software do indeed often reduce the worker to a mere 'overseer', the development of these high-tech sectors has coincided with a

11 Marx (1973: 704-706).

12 The development of the semi-automated assembly line, of nuclear energy, genetically modified seeds, and Internet software all allowed for dramatic productivity gains, in the sense that they made forms of work previously required for the production of certain commodities expendable and increased the organic composition of capital (or decreased the relative magnitude of the wage bill with regard to investment in the means of production). None of these productivity gains led to the superation of capitalism. In fact, it does not take much imagination to recognize that at least one economic sector characterized by a high organic composition of capital and a strong reliance on "the general state of science" and "the progress of technology" – the nuclear sector – may herald for us a fate very different from communism.

proliferation of 'low-tech' work in other regions of the world. The two phenomena are also quite clearly related. As George Caffentzis wrote 26 years ago,

> […] an enormous amount of work must be produced and extracted from the Low sectors in order to be transformed to capital available for the High sector. In order to finance the new capitalist 'utopia' of 'high-tech,' venture-capital demanding industries in the energy, computer and genetic engineering areas, another capitalist 'utopia' must be created: a world of 'labor intensive', low waged, distracted and diffracted production. […] In this juncture, as always in capitalism's history, a leap in technology is financed out of the skins of the most technologically starved workers.[13]

If forms of 'high-tech' work have proliferated in parallel with forms of 'low-tech' work, and if this fact is to be explained economically, then the theory of value developed by Marx in the first volume of *Capital* presents itself as a relatively promising explanatory model (in the sense that the theory suggests entrepreneurs have an interest in workers not becoming mere *'overseers'*, but expending the greatest possible amount of labor-power). The ambivalent or multifaceted nature of global capitalism's development also raises questions about the accuracy of the theories developed by Negri on the basis of Marx's 'Fragment'. As will be seen below, Negri argues that the historical tendency of capitalist development is that of replacing low-tech work with the scientific or 'immaterial' labor alluded to in the 'Fragment'. It is on the basis of this assumption that Negri argues for the obsolescence of the law of value. But if the 'High' and the 'Low' sectors are actually expanding in concert, and if they are doing so for precise economic reasons related to the production and transfer of value, then Negri's claims about capitalism's historical tendency only tell half the story. His invocation of the concept of the historical tendency also begins to resemble an argumentative backdoor – one that allows him to dismiss those aspects of reality that don't fit his theoretical model by suggesting they will soon disappear anyway.[14]

Real Subsumption: The Post-*Operaista* Account

The stage of capitalist development Marx characterizes as that of the 'real subsumption of labor under capital' is the most advanced to have been described by him. As indicated above, some statements by Marx read as if real subsumption could be followed only by communism. Much of Negri's recent work exploits this feature of Marx's writing by identifying real subsumption with the present and suggesting that the superation of capitalism is imminent.[15] Negri and other theorists with an *Operaista*

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13 George Caffentzis (1992: 249).

14 While it is not explicitly invoked in the texts discussed below, the concept of the historical tendency is one Negri has been fond of referring to throughout his work. See for example Antonio Negri (1997) 'Crisi dello Stato-piano', now in: *I libri del rogo*, Rome: DeriveApprodi, p. 23-70 and p. 48-52. Arguably, Negri's invocation of the concept often betrays a desire to open such an argumentative backdoor.

15 See for example Antonio Negri (1996) 'Constituent Republic', in Michael Hardt and Paolo Virno (eds.) *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics*, Minneapolis MN: University of Minnesota Press, 213-222. In Marxist literature, the stage of real subsumption has been identified with a variety of historical periods, including the first industrial revolution, the years before the First World War (which saw the introduction of the assembly line), and today's transition to a post-Fordist economic

background take the description of real subsumption offered in the 'Fragment on Machines' to be a description of contemporary capitalism and claim that the law of value is now "completely bankrupt."[16] They argue that the surge in productivity that occurred in Western nations during the 1960s and 1970s has resulted in capital being "pushed *beyond value*", such that a "radical revaluation of labor" has brought with it the "suppression of the law of value."[17]

Before examining how Negri supports such claims, it may be worth stressing what exactly the obsolescence of the law of value would entail. At least two things would be the case. Firstly, there would no longer be any relationship between a commodity's exchange value and the labor-power expended to produce that commodity. Secondly, there would no longer be any relationship between the value of a worker's labor-power (also a commodity) and the reproductive costs of that labor-power.[18] The first of these two states of affairs would mean that – in the absence of a measure of value that could substitute for the one provided by the expense of labor-power in Marx's theory – commodities could no longer be said to have exchange value at all. In other words, commodities (including labor-power itself) would no longer be commensurable. They would exist only as use values, not as exchange values, and could not be brought to market.

The second of these two states of affairs (the absence of any correlation between the value of a worker's labor-power and its reproductive costs) would also have at least one significant consequence. It would entail that there is no longer any sensible distinction between necessary labor and surplus labor. This in turn would make it impossible to speak of exploitation in the Marxian sense (since for Marx exploitation consists precisely in the existence of surplus labor).

Of course, post-*Operaista* theorists such as Negri are not denying the existence of the market or of exploitation. They do argue, however, that the commensurability of commodities is not so much reproduced economically as enforced politically, through the authority of nation-states and transnational capitalist institutions. On this view, any attempt at formulating quantitative, value-based explanations for the development of the economy is simply behind the times. If the wealth produced during the era of real subsumption escapes determination by the law of value (indeed, all measure), then

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regime (or even a 'post-industrial' society and a 'postmodern' culture). Ás noted, Negri chooses the latter option. Marx's use of the term 'real subsumption' strongly suggests he was thinking of the development first of manufacture and then of the factory system in England. On the basis of what was said above about the concept of the historical tendency, one could argue that 'real subsumption' in some parts of the world co-exists with 'formal subsumption' in others.

16 Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (1994) *Labor of Dionysos: A Critique of the State-Form*. Minneapolis MN: University of Minnesota Press, 10.

17 Mario Montano (1992) 'Notes on the International Crisis', in Midnight Notes Collective (eds.) *Midnight Oil: Work, Energy, War 1973-1992*. Brooklyn NY: Autonomedia, 115-142.

18 Here, I assume Marx is correct in characterizing labor-power as a commodity, even though this has become a controversial issue. See for example Ingeborg Dummer (1997) *Die Arbeitskraft – Eine Ware? Eine werttheoretische Betrachtung*. Hamburg: VSA.

quantitative explanations of capitalism in terms of value transfers are simply of no interest.[19]

The concepts of labor and exploitation used in the work of post-*Operaista* theorists such as Negri abandon every attempt at quantitative determination. For example, they break with Marx in that they no longer speak of surplus labor (a quantitative concept). As will be seen below, Negri tends towards collapsing distinctions such as that between necessary labor and surplus labor. The distinctions between work and non-work, and between production and reproduction, are given much the same treatment by him. The result is a dramatically enlarged concept of labor, one that includes all forms of human activity.[20]

Another Marxian distinction Negri and other post-*Operaista* theorists have little patience with is that between productive and unproductive labor.[21] According to Paolo Virno, the proliferation of forms of 'immaterial' and 'affective' labor (or what most economists would call the expansion of the service sector) entails the obsolescence of this distinction.[22] At one point in his argument, Virno accuses Marx of mistakenly dismissing those forms of service work that don't result in a tangible and lasting product (such as an artistic performance, the care work of a nurse, or the lecturing activity of a university professor) as unproductive and hence irrelevant to the mechanisms of capital accumulation.[23] While a cursory reading of some Marxian statements on productive and unproductive work could lead one to agree with Virno, Marx does explicitly note, in *Capital*, that a worker does not necessarily have to directly produce a tangible and

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19 As George Caffentzis puts it: "If value is beyond measure […], then either Negri's and Hardt's ideal anti-capitalist theory is a self-proclaimed failure at quantitative explanation or the very task of quantitative explanation is to be rejected because its object, postmodern capitalism, is lacking any feature worth measuring" (2005: 99). In his essay, Caffentzis goes on to elaborate usefully on how many aspects of contemporary capitalism are in fact very much in need of quantitative explanation. See Caffentzis (2005: 100-104).

20 Caffentzis (2005) describes this as a collapsing of the Aristotelian distinction between labor and action. He rightly emphasizes that such a theoretical move constitutes a radical departure from Marx, and especially from the latter's attention to the quantitative aspects of economic interaction. Caffentzis writes that what Negri describes as labor "does not seem to refer to what billions of people across the planet do every day under the surveillance of bosses vitally concerned about *how much time* the workers are at the job and *how well they do it again and again*" (2005: 97, emphasis in original). See also Cleaver (2005: 121-122). This second passage convincingly demonstrates that many people's lives can still be quite accurately described using a more traditional Marxian concept of work.

21 For Marx, and as explained by him in Chapter 14 of the first volume of *Capital,* productive work is work that is directly productive of surplus value, or work that is performed in exchange for a wage expended by the capitalist for the purpose of generating an exchange value greater than that of the original investment. It follows from this definition that while all productive workers are waged workers, not all waged workers are productive workers. In *Theories of Surplus Value*, Marx considers workers whose activities are merely incidental to the creation of economic value, such as factory superintendents, unproductive. See Karl Marx (1972) *Theories of Surplus Value*, Part 3. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 505.

22 Paolo Virno (1994) 'Virtuosismo e rivoluzione', in Paolo Virno, *Mondanità: l'idea di mondo tra esperienza sensibile e sfera pubblica*. Rome: Manifestolibri, 87-119; trans Ed Emery 'Virtuosity and Revolution: The Political Theory of Exodus', in Michael Hardt and Paolo Virno (1996), 189-210.

23 Paolo Virno (1994: 90-93).

lasting product in order to be a productive worker, especially once capitalism has reached a certain level of development, characterized by a strong division of labor.[24] Virno's argument rests on the widespread observation that capitalism is rendering more and more formerly 'unproductive' activities 'productive' in the sense that it is re-organizing them in accordance with the exigencies of capital accumulation. It is not clear, however, that noting this fact obliges one to completely abandon the distinction between productive and unproductive labor. Such a theoretical move may be overhasty.[25]

Negri's penchant for dismissing central components of Marx's theoretical model is no less pronounced than Virno's. This is especially obvious in the case of the arguments Negri presents to demonstrate the obsolescence of the law of value. It is worth considering two of these arguments in greater detail. I will call them 'the argument from the qualitative transformations of labor' and 'the argument from substance and measure'. As will become clear, the two really converge so as to make up a single theoretical move. Distinguishing between the two arguments and discussing them consecutively is nonetheless helpful for understanding how they operate.

Writing Off the Law of Value (1): The Argument from the Qualitative Transformations of Labor

Negri distinguishes two functions of the law of value: that of establishing the commensurability not just of different commodities, but also of various economic sectors, and that of registering the value of labor-power.[26] In the first case, the law of value is a device for understanding transfers of value on the macroeconomic level. In the second case, which Negri is rightly more interested in, the law of value registers the magnitude of necessary labor and its relation to surplus labor. In other words, it registers the value of labor-power, thereby providing an index of the relations of power between workers and entrepreneurs.[27]

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24 See Marx (1976: 643-644): "With the progressive accentuation of the co-operative character of the labour process, there necessarily occurs a progressive extension of the concept of productive labour, and of the concept of the bearer of that labour, the productive worker. In order to work productively, it is no longer necessary for the individual worker himself to put his hand to the object; it is sufficient for him to be an organ of the collective labourer, and to perform any one of its subordinate functions." This passage suggests that the activity of the factory superintendent can eventually become productive work (perhaps when 'security' firms organize such activity as a specific form of capitalist exploitation). As Marx points out elsewhere, what matters is not the specific content of the work activity but its place within "the social relations of production" (Karl Marx (1969) *Theories of Surplus Value*, Part I. London: Lawrence and Wishart, 157).

25 For a discussion of the distinction between productive and unproductive work in the context of contemporary economic developments, see David Harvie (2005) 'All Labour Produces Value For Capital And We All Struggle Against Value', *The Commoner*, 10: 132-171. While Harvie's conclusions are in some ways unsatisfactory, he poses the problem excellently and with close attention to Marx's statements on the matter.

26 Antonio Negri (1992) 'Valeur travail: crise et problèmes de reconstruction dans le post-moderne', *Futur Antérieur*, 10 : 30-36. I take this opportunity to thank Antonella Corsani for drawing my attention to this article, arguably the most comprehensive formulation of Negri's position on the law of value.

27 Antonio Negri (1992: 32).

Having distinguished between these two functions of the law of value, Negri points out there is a relationship between them: When labor militancy shifts the proportion of necessary labor to surplus labor in favor of the former, entrepreneurs are constrained to respond by means of economic restructuring, both within single enterprises and on the macroeconomic level. Negri follows Marx in identifying increases in the organic composition of capital as a typical feature of such restructuring. He also follows Marx in identifying these increases in organic composition with productivity gains – that is, with the transition from formal to real subsumption, or from absolute to relative surplus value.

Negri closes his argument by claiming these productivity gains are now so great that the law of value has become obsolete, or that value can no longer be measured at all. He relates this alleged breakdown of the law of value to the aggravation of what he identifies as three of capitalism's 'internal contradictions' – the opposition between simple labor and complex labor, the opposition between productive and unproductive labor, and the impossibility of reducing scientific labor to either simple labor or cooperation.[28] In short, Negri argues that the obsolescence of the law of value results from labor having been qualitatively transformed. It has become ever more complex, ever more productive, and ever more immaterial. Each of these three 'contradictions' merits closer consideration.

'Complex labor' is the Marxian term for what is otherwise referred to as 'qualified labor'. In traditional Marxist theory, the labor-power of an engineer is considered an example of complex labor in the sense that its production and reproduction involve not just the costs associated with physical survival and recreation (food and shelter), but also those associated with education, training, and the various activities that allow a brain worker to keep abreast with developments in his or her field. The labor of such a worker is 'complex' with regard to the 'simple' labor of an assembly line worker in the sense that one needs to multiply the value of the latter by a coefficient in order to arrive at the value of the former. That the coefficient is a variable one – or that it is negotiable – makes no significant difference to this general state of affairs. The coefficient may change over time, but it is fixed for the purpose of every specific set of wage agreements.

The 'contradiction' Negri identifies between simple and complex labor turns out to be little more than indignation at the often gratuitous manner in which the coefficient is determined. As far as I can see, this is the only way of reading Negri's claim that complex labor 'cannot' be reduced to simple labor without making that claim counterfactual.[29] One can perhaps say that the reduction cannot be undertaken in the sense that there is something disrespectful or perhaps even scandalous in doing so. But this is to say no more than that the purely quantitative approach to value that is proper to capitalism, and which finds expression in the law of value, is unpalatable to some of us. The fact is that a precise quantitative relationship between the value of simple and complex labor is established every time an entrepreneur distinguishes between

28 *Ibid.*

29 *Ibid.*

'qualified' and 'unqualified' (or 'less qualified') workers, decides to pay them different wages, and determines the exact magnitude of those wages.

Negri goes on to note that there often seems to be a discrepancy between the value of qualified labor and the value of its products, which is to say no more than that one brain worker's bright idea can provide an entrepreneur with an amount of surplus value out of all proportion to the value of that brain worker's labor-power (as expressed in his or her wage).[30] But this simply means that capital uses workers to produce value greater than the exchange value of their labor-power. This phenomenon is in no way an example of the law of value breaking down. It is rather an example of how the law of value functions – by recognizing only the exchange value of labor-power (its reproductive costs, which are variable over time, but fixed whenever an employment contract is signed) and thereby allowing the entrepreneur to appropriate everything that is produced by that labor-power and exceeds its exchange value. To point out that this occurs is simply to recognize the existence of surplus value, or of exploitation. It is to confirm the law of value, rather than to diagnose its obsolescence.

The 'contradiction' Negri identifies between productive and unproductive labor amounts to the observation that, under the conditions of production proper to real subsumption, productive labor tends to be organized in a way that involves a high degree of cooperation between workers. Negri notes that the entrepreneur remunerates single workers for their labor-power but appropriates free of charge the additional value produced by the benefits of cooperation. In other words, Negri points out that the overall value produced by cooperating workers exceeds the aggregate of the values they would produce individually if they did not cooperate.[31] Much the same observation can be found in Marx's discussion of manufacture (in Chapter 12 of the first volume of *Capital*). In other words, the phenomenon it addresses is not specific to post-Fordist society. Here as in his remarks on complex labor, Negri does no more than indicate the existence of what traditional Marxist theory calls 'surplus value'. There is nothing in these remarks to warrant more than indignation over the persistent functioning of the law of value. In no way does Negri demonstrate that this law has become obsolete.

As for the claim that scientific labor is not reducible to either simple labor or cooperation, it does no more than re-state the same unsatisfactory argument in different terms. Negri invokes the concept of 'creativity' to address the often glaring discrepancy between the value an entrepreneur obtains from the scientific discoveries of his or her intellectual workers and the wages of those workers. Negri sees the value of such scientific discoveries as the product of an achievement that can never be fully explained in terms of the original investment (the wage bill and the means of production), just as it cannot be reduced to the conditions of production (cooperation).[32] While this is well and good, the fact remains that the entrepreneur is simply not interested in the nature of such creative achievement, but only in its capacity to yield surplus value. Whatever wonders and mysteries human creativity may allude to, what the entrepreneur cares about is the balance sheet.

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30 *Ibid.*

31 Antonio Negri (1992: 32-33).

32 Antonio Negri (1992: 33).

Writing Off the Law of Value (2): The Argument from Substance and Measure

Negri's second argument for the obsolescence of the law of value has a considerably more scholastic flavor. It is premised on his idiosyncratic interpretation of Marx's concept of real subsumption. As noted above, Negri posits that the transition to real subsumption occurred more recently than is often assumed. According to Negri, this transition was brought about by the labor struggles of the 1960s and 1970s. The socio-economic order that emerged in the wake of these struggles is identified by him not just as post-Fordist, but also as 'post-industrial' and 'postmodern'.[33]

The argument from substance and measure involves two claims that have struck many readers as both counterintuitive and counterfactual, where their sometimes cryptic character has not simply elicited puzzlement and frustration. In what follows, I will suggest several ways of understanding these claims before examining the assumptions that appear to underlie them.

The first claim is that, during the present era of real subsumption, all use value has been reduced to exchange value, or subsumed by capital.[34] One way of understanding this claim is by thinking of how the privatization of communally owned land has led to the use values contained in that land (such as natural resources) becoming commodities. Negri would then be arguing that this process has developed as far as possible.[35] In fact, Negri seems to be thinking not of this phenomenon, but rather of the use value of labor-power. His claim that all use value has been reduced to exchange value appears to be the claim that labor-power has become a commodity everywhere in the world, or that the capitalist conception of labor-power as a commodity has triumphed over every other conception of labor-power.[36]

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33 As George Caffentzis writes: "This conceptual move is attractive, but it certainly does not fit Marx's historical assumptions. For Marx real subsumption was not a thing of the 'future,' it was fully present in his time" (2005: 104).

34 Antonio Negri (1992: 34).

35 Interpreted in such a way, the claim is obviously counterfactual. For it too be true, it would not be enough for all land to have been commodified. The same would have to be true of water and air space, perhaps even of outer space. That such processes of commodification are in fact occurring today (although they are far from having been completed) is one reason why Negri's argument appeals to many readers. Negri's occasional invocation of Michel Foucault's concept of 'biopolitics' caters to this fascination with processes of commodification, but it remains purely suggestive and never opens itself to empirical verification.

36 Antonio Negri (1992: 34). It is worth stressing that this claim is quite obviously not true of housework, which is not remunerated and therefore not a commodity. See Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James (1972) *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community*. Bristol: Falling Wall Press; the various contributions to the 1975 anthology *All Work And No Pay: Women, Housework, and the Wages Due*, edited by the Power of Women Collective. Bristol: Falling Wall Press; and Silvia Federici (1975) *Wages Against Housework*. Bristol: Falling Wall Press. On the relationship between housework and the exploitation of women in the Third World, see Maria Mies (1986) *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale*. London: Zed Books; and, in German, Veronika Bennholdt-Thomsen, Maria Mies, and Claudia von Werlhof (1992) *Frauen, die letzte Kolonie. Zur Hausfrauisierung der Arbeit*. Zürich: Rotpunkt (originally published in 1983).

The second claim involved in Negri's argument is that all time has become productive for capital. To say this is to say considerably more than that the social workday has been extended as far as possible, if one assumes that the social workday continues to be divided into a period of necessary labor and one of surplus labor. By definition, necessary labor is not productive for capital. It does not involve the production of surplus value and is therefore unproductive in the Marxian sense.

Nor is Negri simply pointing out that someone is always performing surplus labor, even if not everyone is doing so all the time. Negri's claim is far more radical. It is the claim that every human being is productive for the entire duration of their life time. The only way of making this claim hold up is by assuming that there is no longer any genuine distinction between work and non-work, production and reproduction, necessary labor and surplus labor. This may in fact be what the first of Negri's two claims is meant to establish. If one posits that non-work, reproductive work, and necessary labor belong to the domain of use value, rather than to that of exchange value, then the abolition of every distinction between use value and exchange value would seem to entail that non-work has become work, that reproduction has become production *tout court*, and that necessary labor has become surplus labor – in short, that life time and production time fully coincide.

It seems to me that the claim does not hold up logically. More precisely, it renders non-sensical the very concepts by means of which it is formulated. The distinction between production and reproduction is indeed in many ways tenuous (a problem feminist theory has devoted considerable attention to).[37] As for the concepts of necessary labor and surplus labor, however, it ought to be obvious that they only make sense for as long as they are thought of as mutually exclusive. The same is obviously true of the concepts of work and non-work.[38] To continue using these concepts while claiming that the distinction between them has collapsed is to entangle oneself in contradictions.

From his claim that life time and production time fully coincide, Negri derives the conclusion that the law of value is defunct. [39] He appears to mean that where life time and production time coincide, it becomes pointless to measure one in relation to the other. But not only is this not quite the same as saying that such measurement has

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37 In addition to the works cited in the previous footnote, see Wally Secombe (1973), 'The Housewife and her Labor under Capitalism', *New Left Review* 83 (1973), p. 3-22; Christine Delphy (1977), *Close to Home: A Materialist Analysis of Women's Oppression*, Harvard MA: University of Massachussetts Press. In German, see Gisela Bock and Barbara Duden (1977), 'Arbeit aus Liebe – Liebe als Arbeit. Zur Entstehung der Hausarbeit im Kapitalismus', in *Frauen und WIssenschaft. Beiträge zur Berliner Sommeruniversität für Frauen, Juli 1976*. Berlin: Courage, 118-199; and Andrea Joosten (1980) *Mann, Marx spricht nicht über Hausarbeit*, Berlin: AHDE. On the useful notion of interconnected productive and reproductive cycles, see Harry Cleaver (1979) *Reading Capital Politically,* Brighton: Harvester Press, 123.

38 If there is such a thing as a physiological limit to the extension of the workday, as Marx always assumed, then it would seem there also has to be a valid distinction between work and non-work. The problem is of course at least partly one of definitions. Much of what Negri considers work would have been considered non-work by Marx.

39 Antonio Negri (1992: 34). This passage is virtually identical with another in Antonio Negri (1997) *La costituzione del tempo*. Rome: Manifestolibri, 30-31.

become impossible,[40] there also seems to be an underhanded argumentative move being made here, since the Marxian understanding of the law of value as a device for measuring the value of labor-power does not involve measuring life time and production time in relation to one another at all. It involves a distinction between necessary and surplus labor, both of which belong to production time. Life time is a variable that never enters the formula.

Negri provides an alternative formulation of his claim concerning the identity of life time and production time when he says that 'substance' (that which is being measured) and 'measure' (that which is used to measure) fully coincide. Negri tends to identify life time (substance) with use value and the Hegelian concept of quality, whereas he identifies production time (measure) with exchange value and quantity – in order then to argue that their having become identical renders the law of value obsolete.[41]

There are many objections that could be raised at this point. One could take issue, for example, with Negri's unwillingness to entertain the possibility that there may be a logically valid distinction between terms with an identical referent. This unwillingness is all the more puzzling in that it comes from someone who is at least partially reasoning in Marxist terms. After all, a central category of Marxist theory, that of the commodity, refers precisely to an object that has both a qualitative and a quantitative aspect (use value and exchange value).[42] In Negri's work, that use value has become identical with exchange value often seems to mean that use value has all but disappeared, whereas the Marxian concept of the commodity is precisely the concept of something that has use value and exchange value (quality and quantity) at one and the same time.

It seems that what is really at stake here is not so much Marx's critique of political economy as Negri's quarrel with the philosophy of Hegel, and more specifically with the Hegelian concept of dialectics. Negri seldom misses an opportunity to declare himself an enemy of dialectical thought, the latter being understood by him as a philosophical method that operates by exploring the co-implication of logically opposed concepts in order to posit their ultimate reconciliation.[43] Harry Cleaver and others have

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40 All that has happened is that any statement positing a relationship between life time and production time must necessarily have become tautological, just as the relationship between the expressions 'one day' and '24 hours' cannot be expressed other than tautologically (even though one can still draw a logical or linguistic distinction between 'one day' and '24 hours').

41 Negri's terminology alludes to that used by Marx in the opening chapter of *Capital*. There, Marx draws a distinction between labor as the substance of value (*Wertsubstanz*) and labor time as the measure or magnitude of value (*Wertmaß*). For a useful discussion of this passage, see Cleaver (1979: 87-127). Like Cleaver's entire book, his commentary illustrates how this and other Marxian distinctions can be put to a more rigorous and empirically verifiable use than that opted for by Negri. In Negri's work, *Wertmaß* becomes 'measure' (*misura* in Italian), whereas Cleaver speaks of 'magnitude.' Much of the confusion surrounding Negri's claims on the law of value could conceivably be dealt with by a closer look at this terminological slippage, one of whose more banal origins may simply lie in divergent translations of Marx.

42 See Cleaver (1979: 89-99).

43 Negri's quarrel with the dialectic strongly informs much of his work, in particular his readings of Spinoza and Leopardi. These are most consistently developed in Antonio Negri (1981) *L'anomalia selvaggia. Saggio su potere e potenza in Baruch Spinoza*. Milan: Feltrinelli; trans. as Antonio Negri

pointed out that many of the oppositions found in Marxist theory – such as the one between use value and exchange value and the one between quality and quantity – can be understood as dialectical oppositions.[44] Negri's claim on the obsolescence of the law of value may therefore be no more than one further example of his desire to establish that Hegelian 'dialectics is over.'[45] If the argument from substance and measure is often a source of confusion and bewilderment to those seeking to make sense of exploitation today, this may be because it has more to do with Negri's long-standing engagement with Hegel – and, more specifically, with Hegel's dialectial method as developed in the *Logic* – than with the critique of political economy.

One final remark on the argument from substance and measure: after making the claims discussed above, Negri goes on to state that exploitation continues to exist even though the law of value can no longer measure it. There is an obvious contradiction here, at least if one adopts Marx's usage of the term 'exploitation' as synonymous with 'extraction of surplus labor'. The existence of surplus labor can only be verified where it has been established that the length of the workday exceeds the duration of time during which necessary labor is performed. If this duration of time can be determined, then the law of value has not ceased functioning.

Doing the Math: Work and Non-Work in the Social Factory

The two arguments just surveyed are the most comprehensive arguments for the obsolescence of the law of value under post-Fordism that I have been able to find anywhere in Negri's work, or in that of other post-*Operaista* theorists associated with Negri, including the work produced by the various theorists of 'immaterial' or 'affective' labor. Often, the obsolescence of the law of value is simply stated by these theorists as if it were an obvious fact, without any attempt at a logical or empirical demonstration being made.

I hope to have shown why Negri's arguments are at best problematic. Many general criticisms of Negri's style of argument could still be made, especially with regard to his inclination to develop Marxian concepts to the point where they no longer function in the way intended by Marx – an inclination that often seems to involve the risk of losing sight of empirical reality.

(1991) *The Savage Anomaly*, trans. Michael Hardt, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press; and Antonio Negri (1987) *Lenta ginestra. Saggio sull'ontologia di Giacomo Leopardi*. Milan: SugarCo. See also Antonio Negri (1977) 'Il lavoro nella Costituzione', in Antonio Negri, *La forma Stato: per la critica dell'economia politica della Costituzione*. Milan: Feltrinelli, 27-110 (especially p. 110).

44 Cleaver (1979: 87-173). While Cleaver is wary of overly 'dialectical' interpretations of Marx (see p. 31-32), others have insisted very strongly on the importance of the Hegelian dialectic for Marx's theory. See for example Res Strehle (1991) *Kapital und Krise. Einführung in die politische Ökonomie*. Berlin and Göttingen: Schwarze Risse / Rote Straße, 7-21.

45 Antonio Negri (1977: 110).

It is worth asking just why Negri's theory remains so attractive to many readers. My own view is that – like much of the discourse of 'immaterial' labor – Negri's theory contains elements that are ideologically compatible with contemporary regimes of exploitation and may help stabilize those regimes. It offers an account of contemporary capitalism that certain relatively privileged sectors of the world's working population can recognize themselves in, albeit in a manner that leads them to take an affirmative stance towards their own exposure to and complicity in exploitation. This would seem to be the case for those segments of the metropolitan middle classes to whom the rhetoric of 'immaterial labor' is largely addressed. They include students and professional academics, artists, freelancers, and others to whom the association of work with creativity and claims concerning the (tendential or actual) identification of life time and production time are not entirely implausible. While these workers are certainly not privileged in terms of their conditions of employment (many work without a proper contract and lack possibilities for collective organization available in other sectors of the economy), their conditions of work are often quite comfortable. Many of them are also able to compensate for the economic risks involved in their status on the labor market by drawing on financial assets such as parental support or inheritances.

The status of these workers within the capitalist world economy is arguably that of an elite or even a 'worker aristocracy'. I will leave aside the – important – question of what function this elite serves in a process of economic globalization that entails racist violence, open state repression, famine, poverty, and war for much of humanity. Suffice it to point out that groups such as the 'Immaterial Workers of the World' are doing themselves no favors by throwing overboard the distinction between work and non-work.[46] They are themselves increasingly becoming the object of entrepreneurial strategies that involve the (often surreptitious) extension of the social workday and the delegation of formerly waged labor into the area of 'free time'.[47] By celebrating the new forms of underpaid or unremunerated work they perform as examples of an unleashed 'creativity' that just happens to be hampered by 'parasitic' mechanisms of capitalist valorization, a substantial part of Negri's readership is waving today's socio-economic realities goodbye about as vigorously as those who wax eloquent on how post-Fordism's "systematic application of technico-scientific knowledge to production" has led to "a great variety of human activity" being "thrown into the abyss of non-work."[48]

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46 'Immaterial Workers of the World' was the name of an Italian group of activists strongly influenced by Negri's theories. Their founding document was published (and extensively discussed, including by Negri himself) in *DeriveApprodi,* 18 (1999) p. 30-39.

47 Internet technology and microelectronics in general have allowed for delegating many activities formerly recognized as work (and remunerated) into the domain of 'free time' – from obtaining product information to acquiring computer skills. The various forms of 'self-service' (at gas stations and bank autoteller machines, for example) are also part of this trend. On the extension of the social workday under post-Fordism, see especially Sergio Bologna (1996) 'Durée du travail et post-fordisme', *Futur Antérieur,* 35/36, 125-138. Apart from Bologna, one of the few Italian theorists who has consistently refused to gloss over the fact that the technological innovations characteristic of post-Fordism lead to an extension of the social workday is Christian Marazzi. See Christian Marazzi (1999) *Il posto dei calzini: la svolta linguistica dell'economia e i suoi effetti sulla politica*. Turin: Boringhieri, 68 (where this fact is explicitly noted).

48 Franco Piperno (1996) 'Technological and Sentimental Education', trans. Paul Colilli, in Michael Hardt and Paolo Virno (eds.) *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics*. Minneapolis MN:

In other words, it may simply not be wise to let distinctions such as the one between necessary labor and surplus labor disappear into the obscurity that often surrounds Negri's concept of real subsumption. It is worth asking whether a militant practice adequate to today's forms of exploitation does not require something very different – namely, an empirically grounded effort at re-locating the ever more unpredictably shifting lines between necessary labor and surplus labor and, more generally, between work and non-work. Such an effort would obviously require one to resist the temptation to abandon these conceptual oppositions. (Whether or not one wants to think of the relationship between them as 'dialectical' would appear to be an entirely secondary issue.)

There is much to suggest that the most important prerequisite for developing an adequate approach to post-Fordist exploitation consists in a willingness to take seriously the fact that entrepreneurs continue to measure, compare, and remunerate labor-power in terms of clearly defined units of time.[49] Recognizing this means recognizing that the law of value is anything but defunct when it comes to issues as quotidian – and as important – as paying one's rent, obtaining one's means of subsistence, and conquering for oneself and others a measure of individual and collective autonomy that allows for combating the wage relation and the mechanisms of exploitation inherent in it. Such an approach requires one to draw the line between work and non-work without being fooled by the many ways in which entrepreneurs have succeeded in disguising work as non-work, often by refusing to remunerate it.[50]

This is not to say that there are no elements of *Operaista* theory – including several contributed by Negri – that could not prove useful in the elaboration of new militant strategies adequate to post-Fordism. It seems to me that one such element consists in the

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University of Minnesota Press, 122-130. Piperno does have the good sense to add to his paraphrase of Marx's 'Fragment on Machines' that the large-scale integration of "technico-scientific knowledge" into the productive process has in fact not "[made] the measurement of wealth in terms of human labor time completely impossible", since working hours quite obviously "continue to govern industrial relations and the distribution of income" (*ibid.*). Yet the developments analyzed by authors such as Bologna – most importantly, the delegation of activities formerly recognized as work into the domain of 'free time' – are completely ignored by Piperno.

49 As George Caffentzis writes: "Any reading of the financial press and economic policy makers' positions [sic] statements would give one the impression that the Law of Value, as usually understood, is a truism. Surely what is the prescription for any economic problem but more discipline of labor, more labor flexibility and productivity, a reduction of labor costs, and so on? This is so obvious one must be incredulous in hearing the snide comments academic economists make about the law of value" (2005: 106).

50 Clearly, some sense of these exigencies has survived in the theoretical positions elaborated by Negri and his colleagues – witness the persistency with which they return to the demand for a basic or guaranteed income. See especially Andrea Fumagalli (1999) 'Dodici tesi sul reddito di cittadinanza', in Andrea Fumagalli and Maurizio Lazzarato (eds.) *Tute bianche. Disoccupazione di masse e reddito di cittadinanza*. Rome: DeriveApprodi, 13-44; and Lanfranco Caminiti, Agostino Mantegna, and Andrea Tiddi (1999) 'Reddito garantito e lavoro immateriale', *DeriveApprodi,* 18: 82-84. Notwithstanding their claims about the newly 'immeasurable' character of labor-power's value, Negri and his colleagues seem quite happy to give post-Fordist entrepreneurs and the state institutions catering to their interests a helping hand when it comes to finding new ways of fixing that value in an effective and socially pacifying manner. Arguably, this is precisely what the demand for a basic income amounts to.

series of reflections that have developed out of the observation that exploitation does not take place at the workplace alone, and that it involves a greater number of social agents than those usually identified with the categories 'worker' and 'entrepreneur'. I am thinking especially of reflections around what has come to be called the 'social factory'.[51] This concept should not be interpreted as a justification for Negri's claims about the 'immeasurable' character of labor productivity today, but rather as a tool for understanding a Taylorization of social interaction that finds expression throughout our everyday experience, both at the workplace and beyond.[52] Feminist analyses of unremunerated reproductive work and the ways in which it lowers the value of labor-power (that is, its cost to entrepreneurs) by reducing the relative magnitude of necessary work within the immediate production process are highly relevant to the analysis of this development.[53] Feminist and Marxist analyses of the ways in which the welfare state and the tax measures associated with it reduce the cost of labor-power for entrepreneurs also merit reconsideration in this context.[54]

Another strand of the *Operaista* tradition that deserves to be taken up today is the one that examines the ways in which the relations of production are contained within the means of production, as Raniero Panzieri was fond of saying.[55] In his reflections on technology, Panzieri always stressed its capitalist birthmark, or its functionality for capitalist valorization – the fact that no technological innovation is ever economically or politically neutral. Such reflections might provide a useful antidote to the enthusiasm about contemporary information technology (and, more specifically, the Internet) that many theorists and activists still do not seem to have freed themselves of. A number of post-*Operaista* authors write as if the latest developments in information technology had created nothing less than the last missing prerequisites for communism, ruminating amply on what they take to be the emergence of new transnational communities of

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51 The concept of the social factory seems to have originated in the Italian feminist movement, although it was quickly taken up by theorists in the United States, Germany, and elsewhere. For early formulations, see Dalla Costa and James (1972: 32-42); and Cleveland Modern Times Group (1976) 'The Social Factory', *Falling Wall Review,* 5: 1-7. See also Cleaver (1979: 26-27, 57-59 and 122-23).

52 The development of home economics is perhaps the classic example of the Taylorization of reproduction. See Harry Cleaver (1976: 121-23) and Bock and Duden (1977). Another area where such Taylorization has occurred is urban planning. See Gisela Schmidt (1980) 'Entwicklung einer Strategie der Gewalt – Einkaufszentrum und Fußgängerzone', *Autonomie. Materialien gegen die Fabrikgesellschaft. Neue Folge,* 3: 33-42; Detlef Hartmann (1980) 'Zerstörung und Enteignung unseres Alltags', *Autonomie. Materialien gegen die Fabrikgesellschaft. Neue Folge,* 3: 97-100; and Detlef Hartmann (1981) *Leben als Sabotage*. Tübingen: IVA, especially p. 68-77.

53 In addition to the feminist works already cited, and especially Joosten (1980), see Ilona Bauer (1987), 'Frauenarbeit und kapitalistische Reproduktionsarbeit', *Autonomie. Materialien Gegen die Fabrikgesellschaft. Neue Folge,* 14: 147-214. This article develops an analysis of the 'real subsumption of reproductive work' whose importance for understanding contemporary forms of exploitation it would be difficult to overstate.

54 An unsurpassed account of the historical function of the welfare state is provided by Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward (1971) *Regulating the Poor: The Functions of Public Welfare*. New York: Random House. See also James O'Connor (1973) *The Fiscal Crisis of the State*. New York: St. Martin's Press. In German, see especially Inge Hehr and Carola Möller (1985) 'Die Illusion vom Sozialstaat', *Beiträge zur feministischen Theorie und Praxis,* 13: 95-104.

55 See Raniero Panzieri (1994) 'Sull'uso capitalistico delle macchine nel neocapitalismo', *Spontaneità e organizzazione. Scritti scelti a cura di Stefano Merli*. Pisa: Serantini, 25-41.

workers. In doing so, these authors collapse their own concept of 'communication' – which often seems to have been taken directly from a manual of social engineering – with the Marxian concept of cooperation in a way that conveniently forgets all the ambiguity inherent in the latter.[56] Writing about Italy's accelerated industrialization during the 1950s, Panzieri already recognized that capitalist cooperation always involves the atomization of the social workforce, especially when that cooperation develops in technologically sophisticated forms.[57] That contemporary information technology as it is being developed in the context of the 'social factory' may be an expression not of the liberation of work, but of its ever more efficient Taylorization (or subjection to the exigencies of capitalist valorization) is a possibility some Marxist theorists have unfortunately neglected during the past decades.[58]

Finally, it is worth stressing that taking up these various strands of the *Operaista* tradition and following them in the directions suggested is a project that cannot be carried out fruitfully without considerable self-criticism. In Italy, Germany, and elsewhere, the radical left has a history of developing putatively alternative forms of life and work, complete with their own elaborate theoretical baggage, whose reformist practice has turned out to be far more long-lived than the revolutionary rhetoric associated with it – where it hasn't simply fed into the rightward shift that many capitalist nations have witnessed during the past decades. Programs of social transformation should always be able to stand up to the question of whether their net outcome will not be more useful to entrepreneurs than to workers.[59]

My own position, the reasons for which I hope to have made clear in the preceding pages, is that Negri's arguments for the obsolescence of the law of value under post-Fordism may not be the kind the global workforce stands to benefit from. I feel that the same is true of the political strategies developed on the basis of Negri's arguments, such as those involving calls for a guaranteed income. It seems to me that what is most alluring about Negri's arguments is his suggestion that capitalist exploitation can be overcome without careful consideration of how categories such as those of work and non-work manifest themselves under today's socio-economic conditions – the

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56 See for example Patrick Dieuaide (1996) 'La crise du rapport salarial fordiste: une interprétation', *Futur Antérieur,* 35/36: 139-155. Similar tendencies can be found in Antonio Negri's recent work, perhaps most strikingly in Antonio Negri (2000) *Kairòs, Alma Venus, Multitudo. Nove lezioni impartite a me stesso*. Rome: Manifestolibri (see especially p. 65-121).

57 See Panzieri (1994). One of the few Italian theorists to critically analyze the forms of cooperation and atomization proper to post-Fordism is Andrea Tiddi. See for example Andrea Tiddi (1999) 'Narciso in vetrina', *DeriveApprodi*, 17: 41-49, and Andrea Tiddi (2002) 'La metropoli dei precari', *Posse: Mappe politiche della moltitudine*, 300-308.

58 The single most important exception I am familiar with is represented by Detlef Hartmann and the theorists associated with him. See especially Detlef Hartmann (1981) 'Das Maß technologischer Gewalt', in Detlef Hartmann, *Leben als Sabotage*. Tübingen: IVA, 49-51.

59 On the melancholy history of post-1968 left reformism in Germany, see especially Karl Heinz Roth (1979) 'Die Geschäftsführer der Alternativbewegung', in Karl Heinz Roth and Fritz Teufel, *Klaut sie! Selbstkritische Beiträge zur Krise der Linken und der Guerrilla*. Tübingen: IVA, 105-119. Roth's article should be supplemented by an account of how women have often been the prime victims of left reformism. Such an account can be found, for example, in Gertrud Backes, Gisela Notz, and Barbara Stiegler (1983) 'Sie nützen viel und kosten nichts', *Beiträge zur feministischen Theorie und Praxis,* 9/10: 92-103.

suggestion that an adequate communist practice can be developed today without empirically examining phenomena such as the extension of the social workday and 'doing the math.' I want to venture the hypothesis that we have an interest in taking the categories developed in the Marxist critique of political economy more seriously than Negri seems to do, for the simple reason that if we don't 'do the math' ourselves, others will do it for us.

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'Forward How? Forward Where?' I: (Post-)*Operaismo* Beyond the Immaterial Labour Thesis

Rodrigo Nunes

abstract

This text, the first in a three-part engagement with the political significance of (post-)*Operaismo,* attempts to read the 'dominant' form of the reception of (post-)*Operaista* thought in recent years – the immaterial labour thesis – politically, both in the sense of class composition analysis, and from the perspective of the 'global movement' as political event. Outlining a theoretical continuity between the original writings of Mario Tronti and recent developments, it weaves the themes of teleology, immanence and transcendence, objectivism and subjectivism and looks at the relationship between thought and movement in (post-)*Operaism*o in order to investigate the advantages and shortcomings of the immaterial labour thesis in appraising the contemporary condition. In so doing, it criticises the risk of falling back into an objectivism in tendential analysis, and draws some sceptical conclusions as to the emancipatory potentials the hegemony of immaterial labour is supposed to bring about, and the meaning of this hegemony itself – in order not to invalidate the ideas recently furthered by some (post-)*Operaista* writers, but to reveal blindspots that (hopefully) also open new paths for thought and action.

> *A/traverso* came out in June 1977 with the title: "the revolution is over, we won". Many read it as an irony; it was actually meant as serious and literal. (…) The demo that closes the [1977 Bologna] Congress, grand and striking, goes on for hours (…) In the end a subtle taste of bitterness, disappointment and frustration follows people to their houses and spaces of life and struggle. Everyone promises to go on, to move forward, but no-one can hide the dramatic question: forward how? forward where? (Balestrini and Moroni, 2006: 582-583)[1]

Introduction

All accounts of the period known in Italy as the 'Long 1968', which lasted from 1969 to 1977, necessarily have to end with the brutal State repression brought upon the Italian

1 All translations from the texts not quoted in English are mine unless otherwise noted. I also take the opportunity to thank Arianna Bove, Massimo De Angelis, Nick Dyer-Witheford, Brian Holmes and Steve Wright for their comments on previous drafts. All mistakes are just failed contributions to the 'general intellect'.

movement at the end of the 1970s. If one pays attention to the tone of these accounts, however, something odd stands out: the mass arrests and show trials appear more as an epilogue than as an end; like the Minotaur in Borges' (1996) 'The House of Asterion', it feels as if, having nowhere else to move forward to, the movement had stayed put in the place where the State could hunt it down. In a sense, it is the inability to find common ways forward shown at the Bologna Congress that counts as the real end of those years.

The theory and history written in that period have enjoyed a revival in recent years, dating back to the publication of Hardt and Negri's *Empire* in 2000. This is one of those cases where the production and circulation of ideas can be stripped of any semblance of necessity, and related to bare, happy contingence: *Empire* was so important not only because of its content – it remains arguably the most ambitious attempt at charting the present in terms of both what 'is' and what 'could be' – but because it came out at a moment where a new way of reading the present was in high demand. Those were the years of something that *Empire* itself, written as it was before the 'Battle of Seattle', did not directly predict: the resurgence of a powerful social movement in the global North, mostly embodied in the counter-summit mobilisations; and the growing capability of movements in the North and South to relay information and coordinate among them, generating the towering spectre of a 'global movement' capable of becoming a social and political force on a global scale. A 'second superpower', to use Chomsky's (2005) coinage? Or, to employ a key concept in (post-)*Operaista*[2] thought, a 'new cycle of struggles'?

It is no coincidence then that *Empire* should have been so greedily embraced by sympathisers and detractors alike, and from there a lot of attention should have been transferred to other authors from the same *milieu* and with similar trajectories (Virno, Bifo, Lazzarato, to name a few); as well as to these trajectories and *milieu* themselves. For those who in those years would attend a meeting or action in the day and read (post-)*Operaismo* at night – or vice-versa – the fascination came not only from what the theory said, but how it had been produced. These were not angelic beings who had written about politics, these were political beings who were still doing politics when they wrote. At last, people like us.

Political discourse is of course never 'pure'; in it are always mixed the personas of the scientist and the demagogue, the prophet and the partisan, the functions of description and persuasion, the affects of empathising and manipulating. So inextricably mixed, in fact, that it is normally in telling them apart that one or another reading of the same text differs. Much of (post-)*Operaismo*'s appeal was (and is) to a great extent due to both its unashamed one-sidedness, and to how much the texts are monuments of ongoing debates and struggles, living forces that a contemporary reader can conjure up or find herself in the middle of again. In short, much of the texts' appeal lies in their context-dependence – *both* in terms of what they carry of unreflected in them, *and* of how much

2 I use the term (post-)*Operaismo* so as to highlight the continuity, even if in very transformed terms, between the work being done today and some of the original hypotheses of Italian 'political' Workerism (*Operaismo*). In this way, '*Operaismo*' would refer to the theoretical and political work being done around the time of *Quaderni Rossi*, *Classe Operaia* and the organisation called Potere Operaio; post-*Operaismo* refers to what follows from that experience, from the early 1970s to now; and (post-)*Operaismo* is a way of referring to both moments at once.

in them is geared towards responding to immediate problems and needs. In other words, the immanence of this thought to a movement.

In what follows I wish to pay this context-dependence a double respect. Firstly, by being attentive to the conditions of production of texts and theory, and thus trying to avoid turning contingence into necessity, timeliness into atemporality. Secondly, by attempting to read the paths opened by (post-)*Operaismo* through the lenses of needs and expectations largely generated by the struggles of the last decade, and the generalised feeling of crisis and impasse that has grown in the last few years – when many people have felt as if they were living their own, never-ending Bologna Congress.

My starting point is to look at (post-)*Operaismo* in the 'dominant' form in which it has been received in recent years – the immaterial labour thesis as found, importantly but not exclusively, in *Empire.* In so doing I try to remain sensitive both to the intellectual and political history behind ideas and to their 'minoritarian' reconfigurations in other writings. Still, I am under no illusion about how much artifice there might be in this construction; it is up to each reader to decide how accurate and useful it is.

At first I try to trace a certain continuity between the immaterial labour thesis and the initial theoretical and practical wagers of *Operaismo*, in order to sketch out the internal mechanism of what I argue is a constitutive tension and oscillation in (post-)*Operaista* thought between subjectivism and objectivism.

What follows examines the immaterial labour thesis itself, in three steps. First, it lays out in general lines the claims that are made as to the emancipatory potential of immaterial labour; it then works backwards from these towards a discussion of how well they apply to the different forms of labour that are described as immaterial; and finally, it discusses what different meanings speaking of a hegemony of immaterial labour may have. My goal here is not a refutation of the basic elements of the thesis, but an attempt to, treating them as tools, sharpen their practical usefulness by refining their scope and exploring their political implications.

Finally, it must be said that this is the first instalment of three in a debate on the political significance of (post-)*Operaismo* today. In the second and third parts, to be published shortly, I develop more fully the weaving in of the themes of political practice and theoretical production, immanence and transcendence, subjectivism and objectivism; and then apply the conclusions drawn there to current debates on and experiences of political organisation, and how they relate to the challenges posed by a post-representational politics.

'Before Our Very Eyes'

In the theoretical toolbox of (post-)*Operaismo*, three elements stand out. The first is the famous *Copernican turn* that inverts the dialectical relationship between capital and labour by posing the second as the active element to which the first finds itself obliged to react. This inversion necessitates the second concept, that of *cycle of struggles*: instead of a linear accumulation towards an inevitable triad of crisis, fall of the rate of

profit and defeat of capitalism, the struggle between labour and capital is always being pushed to a next level by periods of intensification of the former's counterpower, which force the latter into restructuring measures aimed at dispelling the antagonist's strength.

Finally, the concept of *class composition* is both part of this narrative and broader. Its basic idea is that to the objective, material determinants of the capitalist organisation of labour at any given moment (technical composition) there correspond certain openings, behavioural patterns, a certain subjectivity among workers from which the forms of political organisation and action that correspond to this moment can be read, at least in embryonic form. It is hence part of the *Operaista* narrative, in the sense that a given technical composition implies a certain political composition which leads to a new cycle of struggles, and thence to capital's reaction – which in turn will lead to a new technical composition of the class, starting the cycle all over again. But it also goes beyond, since it provides, even if in skeletal form, a methodological instrument that subordinates theoretical enquiry to political practice, but grounds the former in the latter – and thus subordinates metahistorical constants to the experimental practice of contingence.

It is the double nature of the concept of class composition that provides us with a way of measuring the relative distance of *Operaismo* from a teleological philosophy of history. It is true that it breaks with the straight line of the accumulation of forces of the proletariat against capital, by reintroducing an element of contingence that is the affirmation of political subjectivity against the lifeless objectivism of orthodox Marxism – in this sense, it is clear there would be no *Operaismo* without Lenin. "[C]apitalist development runs along a chain of conjuncture", says Tronti (2006: 99). These moments of conjuncture are, however, both the eruption of the untimely in history – unpredictable times of creation and opening of possibilities[3] – and the affirmation of the proletariat as *the* metahistorical subject whose self-activity directs capitalist development; the *rude razza pagana* ('rude pagan race') becomes the secularisation of the Spirit that Hegel, via Plotinus, adopts from Christian Trinitarian theology. The Copernican turn is thus an inversion, merely displacing the active pole of the dialectical relationship, instead of exiting it altogether; and there is a *telos* in the movement of capital's responses, in that it always reacts by increasing the socialisation of labour, hence increasing the power of the proletariat to attack the capitalist social relation *from the inside* (Tronti, 2006: 49-54).[4] In other words, (post-)*Operaismo* will be more or less free from a Hegelian philosophy of history depending on where one places the emphasis. The conjunctural moments of opening and subjective affirmation yield an immanent process where enquiry provides the elements for potential (re)compositions, the possibility of an open-ended construction. The teleology of struggle-induced capitalist development reintroduces a linearity in the accumulation of proletarian force

3 Kathi Weeks (2005) develops this perspective in her treatment of the theme of the refusal of work in relation to the classic Marxist problem of transition, where the former eliminates any form of two-stage conception of the latter, and makes it appear as "process rather than result, a movement rather than a plan; it is prefigured in the desires that fuel refusal and is enabled – constituted – in the spaces opened up by the separation that this rejection enacts; it is thus by this account inextricably linked to the process of refusal." (Weeks, 2005: 129).

4 This *telos* is essential to the development of Negri's thought since the early discussions of real subsumption and the tendency (in 'Crisis of the planner-State') and the advent of the figure of the socialised worker (in 1976's 'Proletarians and the State'). Cf. Negri (2005).

and hence transcendence in the form of the necessary development of a metahistorical subject.[5] The oscillation and tension between the two poles, however, is constitutive of (post-)*Operaista* thought; the mechanic of the oscillation is in the relay between the production of theory and political activity, which is to say, in the immanence of thought to movement.[6]

Nowhere is this tension best expressed than in the constant reiteration of the *topos* of the beginning of a new epoch – something that is bound to ring familiar to ears accustomed to the discourse of more orthodox Marxisms. 'Lenin in England', in many ways the founding text of *Operaismo*, opens with: "A new era in the class struggle is beginning" (Tronti, 2006: 87). *Empire*, its best known offspring, opens with: "Empire is materialising before our very eyes" (Hardt and Negri, 2001: xi). One can recognise the origin of the *topos* in the Preface of *Phenomenology of Spirit*: at once a movement of historical and systematic completion, where a system finds its whole justification in itself by the achievement of its historical development – (self-)exposition and legitimation (Hegel, 1977).[7] The political utility of such discourse is obvious: it not only provides legitimation both to itself and whatever political activity is already underway, but also affirms a break with the past that opens up a new time which can only be grasped in its own terms.

This move is repeated in *Empire* in a way that is by now quite well-known. It is here a matter of, following a methodology that the Negri of the early 1970s had already found in the Marx of the *Grundrisse*, identifying a tendency that both allows one to see into the future – "which seeds will grow and which wither" (Hardt and Negri, 2006: 141; Negri, 2003) – and to identify the points of leverage in the present that can lead there. In line with the basic tenets of *Operaismo*, then, *Empire* seeks the present forms of resistance as given (even if just latently) in what is variedly described as post-Fordist, postmodern or biopolitical production. This tendency is identified with the becoming-hegemonic of a form of labour – immaterial labour – and it is from this hegemony that the possibilities of resistance can be read, both as openings and as already existing behaviours.

There is unfortunately no time here to go deeper into the relations between subjectivism and objectivism, immanence and transcendence and theory and practice in

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5 This can be compared to what Hardt and Negri (2001: 28) have to say about Deleuze and Guattari.

6 There is no space here to go into an analysis of this mechanic, which I develop in the sequel to this article. At this point, it is worth drawing attention to how Tronti, speaking from a perspective that sees the defeat of the mass worker as a defeat *tout court*, evaluates today the first years of the *Operaista* experiment: "[O]ut of juvenile enthusiasm, out of intellectual exuberance, perfectly justified and which I do not regret, we fell prey to an optical illusion. (…) [T]he situation then was coloured red, but it was not the red of dawn, but that of sunset" (Borio, Pozzi and Roggero, 2005: 294-5).

7 In particular, §§ 20; 29; 34-7; 47; 70-1. It is interesting to see what Foucault has to say on the subject: "I think here we touch upon (…) one of the most harmful habits of contemporary, or maybe modern, in any case post-Hegelian thought: the analysis of the present moment as being precisely the one of rupture, or the culmination, or completion, or of the dawn that returns. (…) It is only fair I should say that, as I have happened to do it" (Foucault, 2001: 1267).

(post-)*Operaista* discourse, which merit a study of their own. So before we move on, let us just raise two sceptical questions about the recurring theme of the new epoch.

The first is that determining an epoch is always a work of selection – naming in a given time what is essential and what is accidental to it ("which seeds will grow and which wither"), what makes it different from what came before. It is in this moment of abstraction, where the real is depurated of its messy plurality so that the actuality that underlines it can shine through, that teleology will tend to walk in through the backdoor, carrying objectivism by the hand. If the epoch we live in corresponds precisely to the culmination of the *Operaista* teleology of socialisation of labour, it is easy to endow it with an inertia where its 'natural' direction leads inevitably, objectively, to a conclusion that is no other than communism. The burden of agency in the dialectical relationship between capital and labour is shifted when it approaches its conclusion – it would be capitalist restructuring itself that now "works towards its dissolution" (Marx, 1973: 700).

The other question is: if the question of identifying the places "where the working class is strongest"[8] entails determining where to focus political activity (as the most likely to yield results in the form of agitation and social unrest that maximises conflict), this means that the areas where the possibility of (or already ongoing) political activity is the strongest will always tend to appear as *the* poles of class recomposition. Is one not entitled to suspect that it is precisely this immediacy of the theory-practice relay, this immanence of thought to movement, that contaminates such theory to the extent that, whenever it speaks the language of universality (*the* present epoch), what it is doing is in fact reorganising reality from the perspective given not by a universal condition (*the* point of view of *the* class), but by the position of the theory in relation to the movement, and the movement in relation to everything else? In other words, not from the god's-eye point of view (metahistorically, metaphilosophically) guaranteed by the proletariat's condition as universal subject, but from the conic perspective of the movement's (geographical, systemic, political) position.[9]

This is the crucial juncture where the thesis concerning the alleged hegemony of immaterial labour, ascribed the role of naming what is essential about the present condition, finds itself. Precisely because this is not theory for theory's sake, but purports to be able to produce political effects, my method in dealing with the immaterial labour thesis will be to turn its *Darstellung* around. This means working backwards from the claims made about the potentials for resistance that the passage to post-Fordism (and the hegemony of immaterial labour) allegedly bring about, so as to understand what features of immaterial labour justify such claims; and then to examine whether these features are applicable to all the cases that one intends to include under the common name of immaterial labour. If they are not – that is, if the features of immaterial labour

8 "[C]apitalist development runs along a chain of conjuncture. We say that each link of this chain will offer the occasion for an open conflict, for a direct struggle, an act of force, and that the chain will break not where capital is weakest, but where the working class is strongest" (Tronti, 2006: 99-100).

9 I thank Ana Mendez de Andes Aldama and Francesco Salvini for a conversation on cartography, urban planning, the 'God's eye' point of view, Leibniz and positionality; and Ana again for setting my memory straight about it.

that justify the claims made about the potential for resistance are not applicable to all forms of labour that are described as 'immaterial' – that still does not necessarily invalidate the arguments advanced, since it could be argued that such features, even if not universalisable, represent precisely what is 'hegemonic' about (at least certain forms of) immaterial labour. It is the idea of hegemony that must then be looked at: what is the nature of this hegemony? How is it exercised over other forms of labour, material or immaterial, and with what political implications?

The aim is not to invalidate any claims – one should always be very slow to invalidate claims about the possibility of resistance – let alone to prove or disprove anything: if a tendency is by definition what is not actual, but may be brought about, how can it be disproved? The question here is rather the extent of these claims' applicability. And this applicability is exactly not to be understood exclusively as a theoretical, but first and foremost as a practico-political question about the present's potential of resistance.

Resistance: Looking Forward

What are then, according to the immaterial labour thesis, the potentials that can be deduced from the present class composition? These "positive characteristics [that] are paradoxically the flipside of the negative developments" (Hardt and Negri, 2006: 66) are synthesised in *Multitude* in two: the fact that immaterial labour tends towards biopolitical production, or 'production of the common'; and the fact that it is organised in networks. Broken down, they reveal the full implication of the authors' claims.

The first one is based on the fact that "immaterial labour tends to move out of the limited realm of the strictly economic domain and engage in the general production and reproduction of society as a whole" (Hardt and Negri, 2006: 66). This new sphere where social production and reproduction coincide – biopolitical production – is that of the common. Biopolitical production has the common as both its ground – the general human capacities to affect and be affected, to communicate, to cooperate, to reproduce and innovate; and social relations themselves, symbolic and affective codes etc. – and its result: it produces new being, i.e., new subjectivities, new enunciations, new forms of social life. As such, it is "no longer to be limited to the economic but also becomes immediately a social, cultural and political force" (Hardt and Negri, 2006: 66).

This means two different things from the point of view of subjectivity and the point of view of the organisation of labour. From the first, we see a radical transformation in the relation between labour and production, in that the subject is now constituted outside the labour time imposed by capital; "immaterial labour does not reproduce itself (and society) in the form of exploitation, but in the form of production of subjectivity (…) 'mass intellectuality' constitutes itself without having to go through the 'curse of wage labour'" (Lazzarato and Negri, 2001).[10] From the second, this means that, since the

10 "Waged labor and direct subjugation (to organization) no longer constitute the principal form of the contractual relationship between capitalist and worker. A polymorphous self-employed autonomous work has emerged as the dominant form, a kind of 'intellectual worker' who is him or herself an

central characteristics of this form of labour are general human and social features, cooperation and communication would not be imposed from the 'outside' (through the intervention of the capitalist who provides the machines, controls access to raw materials etc.), but are "*completely immanent to the labouring activity itself*" (Hardt and Negri, 2001: 294). Unlike the Fordist factory, where the presence of the capitalist was necessary to put mass workers to work, capital here becomes parasitic on an activity that can go on without it. "Brains and bodies still need others to produce value, but the others they need are not necessarily provided by capital and its capacities to orchestrate production" – a "potential for a kind of spontaneous and elementary communism" (Hardt and Negri, 2001: 294). Under these two lights, what is often presented as a negative development can be seen from its positive flipside: the flexibility and mobility of immaterial workers is a sign of their latent independence.

Since social life itself appears in the productive cycle of immaterial labour as both the pool of wealth outside the direct process of production that is (always only partially) captured by capital, and the end-product of the cycle (that therefore produces more social wealth); since that entails a complete blurring of the boundaries between life-time and productive (for capital) work-time; and since it becomes increasingly impossible to ascribe a product to the contribution of an individual worker (because all innovation relies on the self-producing pool of social wealth) – the relation between abstract labour time and value as we have known it crumbles. The law of value therefore subsists only as command, an imposition of parasitic capital, and thus the site of struggle between labour and capital *par excellence*.[11]

Finally, the restructuring of capital that responded to the struggles of the mass worker in the 1960s and 1970s represented a dismemberment and decentralisation of the productive cycle made possible by the development of telecommunication technologies; the network form replaces the assembly line as the abstract form of production. Following three theses on the organisation of struggle – that it must find the most effective form of resisting a specific form of power; that this form is to be found in the dominant model of economic and social production at a given time; and that all new forms seek greater democracy than previous ones allowed – Hardt and Negri will conclude that the network organisation of the movements that appeared in the last decade is the model of resistance in the present. More than that, it is the point where the three principles coincide in "an absolutely democratic organisation that corresponds to the dominant forms of economic and social production and is also the most powerful weapon against the ruling power structure" (Hardt and Negri, 2006: 88).

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entrepreneur, inserted within a market that is constantly shifting and within networks that are changeable in time and space" (Lazzarato, 1991).

11 This, arguably the most controversial of the claims related to the immaterial labour thesis, is precisely the one that I will not go into at greater length here. I restrict myself to drawing attention to more capable discussions than I could possibly offer; cf. Caffentzis (2005), Cleaver (2005), De Angelis (2007), Harvie (2005), Henninger (2007), Trott (2007).

Resistance: Tracing Back

What is then immaterial labour? *Empire* locates three different forms of labour under this common name: the one involved in informatised industrial production; the one involved in "analytic and symbolic tasks, which itself breaks down into creative and intelligent manipulation on the one hand and routine symbolic tasks on the other"; and the one that "involves the production and manipulation of affect and requires (virtual or actual) human contact, labour in the bodily mode" (Hardt and Negri, 2001: 293). We are thus speaking of a category that encompasses the different realities of the software programmer and the production engineer, the call centre worker and the nurse, the loan manager and the waitress, the shop assistant and the 'IT guy', the teacher and the filmmaker, even (pushing the boundaries between production and reproduction) the student and the parent. So, following the method outlined earlier on, what is necessary is to determine to what extent their inclusion here is justified in relation to the claims made about the potential of resistance of immaterial labour; or, put in other terms, whether the potentials found in the hegemony of immaterial labour can be equally derived from all these forms of work.

Let us start with the network-form. *Multitude* asserts it has come to "define our ways of understanding the world and acting in it", and, more importantly, it is "the form of organisation of the cooperative and communicative relationships dictated by the immaterial paradigm of production" (Hardt and Negri, 2006: 142).[12] At the same time, it makes clear that it is not the case that networks (social, but also neuronal etc.) did not exist before. It becomes apparent then that what matters for this 'paradigmatic shift' is the introduction of a specific kind of network, namely that enabled by telecommunication technologies and the internet (as a many-to-many medium) in particular. Either this is the 'difference that makes a difference', or one will have to admit that, in general terms, the social was always immanently organised in the form of networks, and therefore there is no specifically new element to speak of.

Now, it is clear that this specific kind of network does not correspond to the productive reality of all the forms of labour that the category of immaterial labour encompasses. Shop assistants, for instance, may be said to behave like a network (and to manifest some form of immanent network intelligence) when, without a word being spoken, they 'decide' which one of them is going to deal with the customer that has just walked in. This does not mean, however, that they have an increased capacity to determine the content and form of their productive activity in the same sense that networks of software programmers can coordinate individual efforts over a great distance and long periods of time in order to come up with a common product.

On the other hand, it is undeniable that the "increasingly extensive use of computers has tended to progressively redefine (…) all social practices and relations" (Hardt and Negri, 2001: 291). The socialisation of telecommunication technologies, the internet in particular, has not only enhanced the potential for production of social relations, but also created the social landscape where the network-form appears as a possibility,

12 Their discussion here parallels Deleuze's (2004: 44-9) analysis of the immanent cause and the abstract machine in Foucault's panoptism.

almost necessity.[13] If the fact that production is more and more organised in networks does not make Starbucks workers any more capable of communicating with each other across different shops, it is clear from the developments of last decade that the network-form has become the key model for political organisation; something that can be observed even in the mode in which hierarchical organisations relate to each other or to non-hierarchical ones. To trace it all back to a change in the material conditions of production would seem, however, not only a gross reductionism that empties the event of the appearance and spread of these technologies, but to reintroduce a teleological scheme where the proletariat as metahistorical subject 'forces' capital into introducing them. More than that, it obscures Lazzarato's insight that the production of subjectivity tends to happen more and more outside the direct process of production and the wage relation. In other words, if it is true that networks have become the dominant model of the organisation of production and resistance, this cannot be predicated on the material conditions of production of all immaterial workers *as workers*. If shop assistants and Starbucks *baristi* are involved in the production and reproduction of social networks, it is not because this is the way in which their work is organised, but because of the contemporary social life makes available greater possibilities of networking than ever before.[14]

So it would seem that any talk of a hegemony of immaterial labour in this case must be qualified. From the point of view of 'autonomous' and computer-based work, it is the very form of its organisation that is networked. In less autonomous, less computer-dependent work, speaking of an increasing becoming-network is a conflation of two different factors: the present state of technological development; and how much this intensifies and reconfigures the being-network that has always been part of social life. In this case, it seems one could only speak of a hegemony if one were ascribing these two factors to the reshaping power of (some forms) of immaterial labour over the rest of social life – which seems a rather exaggerated claim to make.

The differences between the various forms of immaterial labour become even more important when one speaks of what would be the most important consequence of this becoming-social of work and becoming-network life – the "potential for a kind of spontaneous and elementary communism" brought about by communication and cooperation becoming "*completely immanent to the labouring activity itself*" (Hardt and Negri, 2001: 294, italics in the original). This phenomenon, I would argue, can only fully happen in the way in which it is presented in the forms of immaterial labour that combine three factors: creative work; low- or zero-cost reproducibility of the product; and an investment in fixed capital that can be easily shouldered by the worker (as well as the general human capacities of living labour). 'Spontaneous communism' could then be seen as a conflation of the capacity to determine the content and form of the product,

13 For the more sustained discussion I cannot provide here, cf. Nunes (2005: 299-301).

14 Of course one can say that while executing their work they are also involved in productive networks, such as the one that mobilises the process that goes from the coffee plantation to the decaf soya latte that the costumer buys. This, however, clearly does not have the significance that *Empire* ascribes to the network-form – workers' participation in this case is exclusively as relays of a chain that they do not exercise any control over, without any increased capacity to communicate with other chains of the network. If anything, the 'social reproduction' in which they are engaged with here is that of capitalist relations.

the product's belonging to a regime of non-scarcity, and the socialisation of the means of production and circulation of this kind of product.

As Lazzarato suggests, the key to understanding the non-scarcity of knowledge lies in understanding one distinction:

> The statement 'the value of a book' is ambiguous, for it has both a venal value as something that is 'tangible, appropriable, exchangeable, consumable', and a truth-value as something that is essentially 'intelligible, unappropriable, unexchangeable, unconsumable'. The book may be considered both as a 'product' and as 'knowledge'. As a product, its value may be defined by the market - but as knowledge? (Lazzarato, 2004)

Knowledge ('truth-value' in Gabriel Tarde's terminology) always exists as something which is 'intelligible, unappropriable, unexchangeable, unconsumable'; it can be shared with no cost for either side, without any of it being lost – it is outside both 'destructive consumption' (it can be shared and consumed without being destroyed in the process) and 'definitive alienation' (if I share it with someone, I do not lose any of it). It thus stands in opposition to what is 'tangible, appropriable, exchangeable, consumable', that is, as that whose possession and consumption by one requires the exclusion of others. It finds itself outside the regime of scarcity.[15]

The 'immaterial' quality of knowledge production identified by Tarde in the beginning of the last century is much increased in the beginning of this one by the present stage of technological development. If in the past some kind of 'materialisation' into a product (e.g. the book) was necessary for knowledge to be shared, today it is possible for it to be reproduced and shared at zero cost and in zero time.

Now, in the case of the 'creative' immaterial worker – that is, the worker that creates the content and form of the commodity she produces – we can see how the claim regarding the increasingly parasitic, external position of the capitalist to the productive cycle makes sense. Under the present conditions of technological development, not only does the creative immaterial worker tend to possess the means of production (a personal computer connected to the internet, a mobile phone, a digital camera), she also possesses the means that allow for zero-cost, zero-time reproduction and circulation of the product.[16]

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15 One must recognise two different levels of scarcity. One is that of its production, that is, the way in which a certain configuration of social relations regulates access to goods in ways that effectively exclude some people from them. In this sense, one could say capitalism is a system of enclosure, i.e., production of scarcity; and the fact that knowledge production is today *potentially* outside the regime of scarcity does not obscure the fact that the great line of conflict around it is precisely the attempts at enforcing scarcity represented, for example, by intellectual property rights (cf. Lazzarato, 2004; Rullani, 2004). The other level, which underlies the first one, is the one this paragraph speaks of. At this level there is a substantial difference between knowledge production and the production of material goods.

16 Of course, this does not mean that the production of knowledge goods is 'free'. There are costs involved in the reproduction of the knowledge worker, in the time put into the production of the knowledge good, in the overall social production of knowledge from which the individualised knowledge good draws from, the production of the means of production and circulation of knowledge etc. If the argument here seems to isolate the knowledge worker from the social relations in which

The capitalist then simply profits from what is brought into the productive cycle by the worker herself and, via the worker, society as a whole – her skills, knowledge, schooling, training; her imagination, creativity, control of cultural codes; her social networks of cooperation; even the essential machinery, in the form of a computer, telecommunication infra-structure. The capitalist's role is restricted to "placing in a sequence the segments of work that are not given in continuity, thus recuperating the implicit externalities produced by cooperative production and, more generally, the community" (Lazzarato, 2001: 96). One can see here why one would speak of a 'communism of capital'.

Let us take two examples. Both the waitress and, in a different way, the graphic designer who produces a billboard advertisement work in the production of affect; the feelings of ease, pleasure etc. they create and continue to produce effects long after the process of their production – reactivated in memory, generating new relations (people who recommend the restaurant or the thing advertised), and so on. The difference is, again, that once the design is finished, it can be reproduced without that implying any extra work for the designer. Relayed to the advertising agency via email (in the same way that the picture it includes had first been sent to the designer by the photographer), the product, from the point of view of the immaterial worker, is finalised – turning the design into a billboard is the agency's problem, not hers. For the waitress, however, even though the affect produced is unappropriable, unexchangeable and unconsumable, the relation in which it is produced is not: if affective work can be summarised as 'selling with a smile', the materiality of the smiles remains inescapable, and thus insurmountably scarce. In an industry where the capacity to produce more affect represents a competitive edge (Dowling, 2006; and this issue), a firm would have little future if the affective relation it supplied were to be showing a pre-recorded smiling waitress on a screen. In other words, even if it mobilises the general human capacities and shared social codes of the waitress and the customer; even if the affect it produces is immeasurable, that is, non-scarce and productive of new social relations; it remains a fact for the waitress that the performance that produces the affect will have to be repeated anew every time a customer or group of customers walks into the restaurant. The *performance* is therefore scarce – the attention given to one table detracts from the attention given to others; it requires the physical presence of the worker and the (always varied and variable) repetition of a certain sequence of acts; it is therefore measurable.[17] As long as each performance of affect has to be repeated for each new costumer, the waitress' condition remains different from that of the individual worker who "steps to the side of the production process instead of being its chief actor" in the highly mechanised industry Marx speaks of, where it is "the development of the social

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she is placed, this is because the argument is being made from *inside* the immaterial labour thesis – that is, this is a problem of the thesis itself, and in order to make sense of it in its own terms one has to incur in it as well. But to make the point of this paragraph clearer, I believe that this transformation – the growth in qualitative and quantitative importance of creative immaterial labour, and the way in which it is organised – is the main thought-producing event behind the immaterial labour thesis; which is to say, it is the main phenomenon that it attempts to grasp, and (as I wish to show here) it does so in a way that raises serious questions and highlights important limits.

17 Dowling (2006 and this issue) in fact shows how, in a high-end restaurant which has affect as its edge over other establishments (*Vorsprung durch Affekt*?), this relation can be meticulously controlled, prescribed and measured, while at the same time tied to the imperative to 'be oneself.'

individual which appears as the great foundation-stone of production and of wealth" (Marx, 1973: 750).

The difference between the creative immaterial worker and other forms of networked, computer-based work is of a different order. In the latter case (think of the workers who appear as the nodes in the communication between market, factory and supply chain in the Toyotist system), they have no particular control over the content and the form of the information flows they produce/relay. In this case, it is their very participation in the chain put together by the capitalist that provides the content of their work; as Trott points out, a distinction must be made between the "*qualitative* as opposed to the *quantitative* nature of the communication involved in productive processes" (Trott, 2007).[18]

Again, it appears that the potentials of resistance that are said to inhere in immaterial labour are predicated upon only a fraction – the smallest, in fact, from a quantitative perspective – of what the concept is supposed to contain. (Let alone the fact that they can only be made sense of if one does as I have done here, and takes the workers in isolation from the overall productive chains in which they are mediately related to 'material' workers.) It is no wonder then that free software production will tend to reoccur as the prime example of what is so emancipatory (at least in potential) about immaterial labour.[19] The problem is, these emancipatory potentials only appear in the fullness in which they are affirmed of the whole of immaterial labour – and, through an affirmation of its hegemony, increasingly of social life itself – in very specific and clearly delimited cases such as that of software production.

It would then seem that the immaterial labour thesis starts from the observation of a number of undeniable facts – the growing importance of telecommunication technologies in contemporary production and social reproduction; of autonomous, creative and computer-based work; of the service and creative sectors; the growing decentralisation of production and its reliance on mechanisms that place the different parts of the productive chain in sequence – but then derives its farthest reaching conclusion from some very specific labouring figures that this new situation creates. As Dyer-Whitheford (2005: 154) puts it, it works by "ostensibly expanding the designation [of immaterial labour] to a very broad swathe of workers, yet still deriving its primary models from those in close proximity to computer and communication technologies". What it should be able to tell us about the present's possibilities of recomposition, therefore, seems to fail to grasp the productive realities of most workers apart from a few, unevenly distributed across the globe and circuits of production. In other words, it presents a conic perspective that starts as an adequate response to how transformations taking place affect what is 'close' to it – but then, as is always the case in conic perspectives, it shows objects with more distortion the farther they are.

18 Cf. note 14, supra.

19 Cf. Bauwens (2006); Corsani and Lazzarato (2004).

'A Vortex that Gradually Transforms Other Figures': Hegemony, Tendency

As said before, this still does not necessarily restrict the claims of the immaterial labour thesis, since, when one speaks of its hegemony and tendency to reshape all other forms of labour, these could precisely be the features and forms that are being referred to. It is to how this hegemony is to be understood that we must now turn.

First of all, it is clear how it should not be understood. As Hardt and Negri are at pains to emphasise to various critics of *Empire,* their argument is tendential, and not quantitative, but qualitative; it is not a matter of immaterial workers being or even – one would assume – becoming the majority of the global workforce, but that, like industrial labour before, immaterial labour tends to reshape all other forms of labour, and social life itself, in its own image. "Numbers are important, but the key is to grasp the direction of the present, to read which seeds will grow and which wither" (Hardt and Negri, 2006: 141).[20]

Nevertheless, it is difficult to understand how exactly this process is supposed to take place. As shown above, it seems uncertain that certain qualities of immaterial labour – restricted to its creative form, or what Lazzarato symptomatically calls 'properly' immaterial instances[21] – particularly those that seem to offer the greatest emancipatory potential (like the capitalist's externality to the productive process), could really develop in other areas. If this 'reshaping' cannot then mean a (positive) levelling of labouring realities, one is left to wonder what else it could mean.

Negri's particular way of dealing with class composition is developed in dialogue with the Marx of the 'Method of Political Economy' in the *Grundrisse*, and with Lenin. From the former he extracts the basic idea that "[i]n all forms of society there is one specific form of production which predominates over the rest, whose relations thus assign rank and influence to the others" (Marx, 1973: 100-8). From the latter he appropriates the idea that a 'determinate social formation' can be identified through a set of relations of production that serve as the material, objective substratum that underlies the corresponding production of subjectivity; in this sense, the organisation of labour is a prefiguration of the political organisation of the proletariat. This is why, for the rather heterodox Lenin advanced by Negri, there is no discontinuity between the espousal of spontaneity expressed in economic struggles and the subsequent leap towards a specific form of political organisation (the party): it is in the divisions and hierarchies of the labour process of the Russian factory that the structure of the party can be found; the 'professional worker' as 'paradigm worker subjectivity' inside the factory is to be reproduced in the relation between vanguard and masses (Hardt, 2005: 18-9). In what is a characteristic mode of arguing for Negri (being the basic mode of his engagement with the *Grundrisse*), he can then show that the contemporaneous importance of the Leninist method lies in surpassing it: if it is "effective as a worker's organisation in pre-revolutionary Russia because it recuperates the specific

20 Cf. also Hardt and Negri (2006: 142-4; 221-2); Trott (2007).

21 The examples given are "[a]udiovisual production, advertising, fashion, software, the management of territory, and so forth (…)". Cf. Lazzarato (1991).

organisational forms which are immanent to the contemporary industrial production process" (Hardt, 2005: 19), today, when these forms do not apply anymore, the faithful application of the method must bear no faithfulness to the original conclusions it produced.

Could the hegemony of 'properly' immaterial labour be seen from this point of view – i.e., the point of view of organisation? This consideration does seem to play a role in what Hardt and Negri have to say about the importance of the network-form today; even if, as argued above, this does not necessarily have anything to do with labouring realities as such, but more with the modes of socialisation that are made possible by telecommunication technologies, and the internet in particular.[22] Of course, for some – both as workers and in terms of their general access to social wealth such as technology, education (literacy, computer literacy, knowledge of multiple languages) etc. – this can only appear in the present as a promise. In any case, the analysis of this case suggests two possible, intimately connected meanings to this 'hegemony': one political, the other one organisational.

The two are intimately connected in that they both come together as an avatar of the historical figure of the vanguard. Thus, from the organisational point of view, like the professional and the mass worker before it, the immaterial worker would represent the 'paradigm worker subjectivity' of our time. This seems to be a true claim in many senses – in that it expresses flexibility, casualisation, decentralisation of production, but also a more skilled, more independent, more connected, in short, more 'socialised' workforce. There are nevertheless some serious problems in this claim, particularly when one places the immaterial worker in the global articulation of capitalist production. The classic thought-experiment here is to consider all the labour that goes into producing a personal computer; it is 'negative developments' such as precarisation rather than 'positive flipsides' that seem to be the main commonalities. And if it is true, for reasons sketched out already, that not everything that applies to 'properly' immaterial labour can be extended, even in the imaginable future, to other forms, the corollary of that would be that it is precisely from this unbridgeable gap that the immaterial worker comes to occupy the same place that was bestowed upon the professional worker in Lenin's Russia.

The political point of view takes us back to the discussion of the conic perspective of a theory immanent to a political practice. One cannot reduce the trajectory of post-*Operaismo* from the mass worker to the immaterial labour thesis to the political and existential trajectory of the *Operaisti*; in the first section I hope to have shown some of the internal articulations that underpin and necessitate certain developments beyond any facile reductions of theory to (individual) life. Still, as soon as one recognises one of the distinctive marks of (post-)*Operaismo* as the immediacy of the relay between theory and practice, in the practical imperatives that make it more than 'theory for theory's sake', it is easy to see how the transformations captured in thought correspond to

22 At this point, as discussed above, the authors of *Multitude* could of course retort that these technologies are a direct consequence of the transformations in labouring realities – a claim that would seem highly reductionist to me. This discussion is not essential to the argument, however.

transformations in the social base that the *Operaisti* were in relation to.[23] This is, of course, part of the 'impurity' of political discourse, of the many who speak in the thought of one, in the 'unconscious' sense of a discourse that is *immanent to* something – "Who speaks and acts? It is always a multiplicity, even in the person who speaks and acts. We are all *groupuscules*", as Deleuze would have it (Deleuze and Foucault, 2001: 1175-6). But it is also 'conscious' in the way that the *Operaista* question remains Leninist in its attempt to read *in this immediate* reality the conditions for political action: given certain objective conditions here and now, what are the subjective possibilities that are open?

The problem then lies in the other sense in which the question is tied to Leninism, or to Marx (and Hegel) more generally – namely, the way in which the answer to the question is then transcribed into a universalising discourse where the immediate reality comes to stand in for the whole. In other words, how a conic perspective that organises reality and its possibilities from *a* point of view of the class becomes translated in theory as *the* point of view of the class. Understood in this way, a political hegemony of immaterial labour can mean two things. Firstly, that it corresponds to the topography that the theory speaks from: its immediate environment and audience, the place where it is meant to produce political effects; which can in turn be understood spatially (as corresponding more accurately to certain parts of the globe than others), temporally (as the places where the 'tendency' is more accentuated) and/or systemically (as the sites in which the particular configuration described by the immaterial labour thesis applies, but which in turn depend on a larger global chain of production and reproduction that runs through sites where the thesis is less applicable; which of course represents a serious problem for a simple temporal, 'developmental' understanding). As Dyer-Witheford (2005: 151) very acutely observes, *Empire* represents an extension of the thesis of the 'socialised worker', essentially developed in a (European, or, in very schematic terms, 'global North') metropolitan context to a global scale.

The second sense in which one can speak of a political hegemony of immaterial labour ties in with the organisational interpretation. In this case, the immaterial worker does appear as the vanguard subject, not only as the one whose 'paradigm subjectivity' determines what is to be done and how, but also as the one who is in the privileged position of starting and setting the tone for a new cycle of struggles – which fits squarely into Tronti's idea that a new wave of attack on capital must take place where the working class is the strongest, as well as with the ulterior development of (post-)*Operaista* thought, and its, quite unique in the 1960s-70s, thorough rejection of third-worldism.

This is one point in which the immaterial labour thesis can provide a light under which to interpret the political developments of the last decade. When speaking of a global movement in the beginning, I deliberately phrased it as two complementary phenomena

23 A text written by Negri in 1993 follows the trajectory of the "more than ten thousand workers" who had struggled in and subsequently been laid off from the factories of Porto Marghera, a pole of intense Autonomist activity, into the surrounding territory of the Veneto, where they will become 'political entrepreneurs' relying on the cooperative social energies of their immediate communities who will take a new position – outside the factory – in the emergent process of productive decentralisation that starts taking place in the Italian Northeast. Cf. Negri (1996: 66-79).

rather than a unified entity: the resurgence (or rather, quick intensification) of political and social struggles in the global North, mostly seen in counter-summit mobilisations, and the (exponential growth in the) capacity of movements and individuals to communicate and coordinate actions across the globe. This distinction is important because it helps to break down the (probably unworkable) idea of 'global movement' into the marks by which it became identified. Mobilisation and struggles had of course been happening all along and all over since before one could start speaking of a global movement – for instance, Via Campesina was founded in 1993, and most of the movements that are part of it today were already existent then. It was a quick succession of events, such as the Zapatista insurgency in Mexico in 1994 and the Reclaim the Streets! actions in the UK in the late 1990s, and above all their culmination in the massive protests against the WTO summit in Seattle in 1999 that 'created' the 'global movement'. That is, they increasingly produced the idea of a global circulation of struggles both in the sense that it produced 'more' struggle (got more people involved, provided a conjuncture in which more mobilisation was possible and, in a way, 'necessary' in order to act on that conjuncture) and provided it with a complementary dimension, the imperative to communicate, network, coordinate.[24]

In this sense, one can see the key role of creative immaterial workers – in the broad sense that, today, under certain conditions of access to the available technology, almost everyone can occupy the place of immaterial worker – in the process. The production of the event 'global movement' is to a great extent dependent on the increased existence of a highly skilled, flexible workforce that could produce the forms and contents of the communication that produced the 'global movement'. Even more, to the extent that it can be said that some events – namely, summit mobilisations like Seattle or Prague – produced the 'global movement' event more than others, one can geographically locate the crucial moments of this production in areas of the globe where the immaterial labour thesis' conic perspective is rooted. In this sense, one could perhaps see some sense in understanding the hegemony of immaterial labour politically. It is nevertheless clear that this 'vanguard' position is the very arrangement of the global system expressed in a different form; the division of labour that makes some into the 'marketing department' of the 'global movement' follows the lines along which the world economy unevenly distributes material and immaterial production, as well as the access to technology, education, skills, mobility, welfare etc.[25]

To make the immaterial worker into the vanguard figure of the present can in turn have different meanings. Some seem fairly unquestionable. For instance, to say that it is essential to widen the access to technology, education and mobility and, more than that, to make the production and appropriation of knowledge into a strategic site of struggle. In general, the immaterial labour thesis and the concept of biopolitical production seem

24 It is interesting to look at what Maurizio Lazzarato (2003) has to say about the same phenomena.

25 It should be made clear that I use 'vanguard' here in a very specific sense – as a function that can be occupied by this or that social subject in a given moment, rather than in the traditional sense. Perhaps the conclusions of my analysis of the 'global movement' event can be compared to what Bifo says when reminiscing about the journal *A/traverso*: "the position we had was centred around an idea of a process of self-organisation where political subjectivity played no role apart from that of an instrument of information, never a direction, but only ever an instrument" (cited in Borio, Pozzi and Roggero, 2005: 86).

to open onto a programme for reclaiming the 'positive externalities' appropriated by capital – that is, the public (education, transport, telecommunications infra-structure) or private investment (in education, in skills, in collaborative activities), as well as natural commons (water, air) and the "development of the social individual" (cultural and technological innovation) (Marx, 1973: 705). It is useful to the extent in which it provides a language that helps make visible and politically problematic the progressive encroachment of circuits of capitalist accumulation into more and more areas of social life and the parallel movement of externalising more and more all the risks of entrepreneurial activity to workers (flexibilisation, precarisation) and to living beings as such (negative externalities such as environmental degradation). It is perfectly in line with the programmatic tradition of *Operaismo* in refusing to accept a debate whose terms are posed by capital and the State as the need for an austerity to be shouldered mostly by workers, not enterprises – as a condition for a development that will then produce trickle down effects. It is the acceptance of these terms by the vast majority of the Left that marked the great victory of neoliberalism. The 'point of view the class' has always meant refusing to place oneself in the point of view of the totality, which would imply assuming the position of governance and management of the existing system, and on the contrary to affirm an absolute 'selfishness' that increasingly burdens that system with demands that it cannot accommodate.

The problem is that, if in the 1960s-70s this position corresponded to a struggle within the national limits of Italy, today it is possible and necessary to pose it in global terms. Consequently, the question now is whether the refusal of compromise and austerity by workers in one part of the world does not mean increased austerity and exploitation for those somewhere else; or to put it differently, whether the subjective affirmation of labouring subjects in one part (geographic or systemic) of the total system does not imply a selfishness not only towards capital, but towards other workers. Take the example of what is the greatest political expression of anything resembling a (post-) *Operaista* programme, the demand for a guaranteed social income by movements in Europe. Were such a measure to be adopted within the limits of the European Union, what would it mean for migrants who come to Europe looking for better work and life conditions? Even assuming a European guaranteed social income would be accompanied by a regularisation of migrants and an open border policy that would make them eligible for the benefit, it is likely that those who are less skilled and work to send money to their home countries would not refuse menial jobs, but only have one job instead of the two they have nowadays.[26] It is very likely that creative workers would flourish without the constraint put on them by having to sell their labour in the market; those in the worst and least remunerated jobs in the service industry would not profit as much (A similar argument can be made about the gendered division of labour: the fact that everyone would be paid a guaranteed income and hence be free from having to engage in the wage-relation would not necessarily change the fact that most

26 From my experience working as an organiser in the Justice for Cleaners campaign in London, I would wager that at least two thirds of migrants working as cleaners in the London Underground, the City and Canary Wharf, have two jobs, the (low) income of which they need to support themselves and their families in the UK as well as their extended families in Africa, Latin America, or Eastern Europe.

reproductive labour would still probably be done by women).[27] More importantly, it is likely that the tendency towards the 'immaterialisation' of economy (expansion of 'creative industries' and service sector) would cause more relocation of the 'material' sector to countries outside the European zone, reinforcing the global division of labour and possibly worsening the work and life conditions elsewhere; as well as, *ceteris paribus*, producing more environmental damage. Even if one can imagine a progressive mechanisation of agriculture and industry all over the world that would put more and more individual workers in the position of "[stepping] to the side of the production process instead of being its chief actor" (Marx, 1973: 705), it is more likely that given all the present conditions this would mean less the liberation from work and an increased emancipatory potential than the fact that an even larger share of the world population would be rendered entirely expendable, unskilled and immiserated. (Let alone the fact that in this case, the necessity for high investment in fixed capital makes the capitalist more, and not less, necessary. Sure enough, one can imagine that the power of the new 'overseers' of production over the entire process will be increased and thus their possibility of appropriating the means of production. It is however much more difficult to imagine that happening in the same peaceful way in which creative workers can appropriate their means of production – i.e., without intense political, even physical confrontations. In which case the strength in numbers of the mass worker will certainly be missed.)

The point here is that the ethical imperative to 'think global' is constitutive of the event 'global movement'; the 'point of view of the class' must be able to oscillate between the one-sidedness of subjective affirmation and an ethical care for the totality of life and social relations. Since the impossibility of finding a one-bullet solution that could bring movements all over the globe around a single set of rallying points is, as far as one can see, insurmountable, perhaps the only bet that we have today is an intensification of struggle everywhere that can eventually bring about a transformation of the global system.[28]

Here one can raise three sceptical questions regarding the Negrian reading of class composition as described by Michael Hardt. First of all, is the 'paradigm subjectivity' paradigmatic through necessity or through framing – that is, if Lenin were writing under very different conditions (where the Bolshevik party were mostly capillarised among the peasantry, for example) would he still see the professional worker as *the* pole of class recomposition? (This is the issue of the conic perspective again.) Furthermore, is the hierarchy reproduced in the Leninist party just a mirror effect of the determinate social formation in question, or rather precisely the consequence of the attempt to identify a paradigm subjectivity? In other words, can one not at least suspect that it is the political-theoretical requirement of identifying what is most relevant in a given situation that produces the political-theoretical necessity of subsuming different realities

27 Cf. Henninger (forthcoming).

28 "The problematic of individuating a hegemonic subject (…) risks reintroducing a centre-periphery model that, in the contemporary form of production, has imploded completely. In a composition characterised by the co-presence of different forms of labour, extraction of surplus-value and subsumption, each figure can speak at the same time the language of particularity and generality, with no one term having to be sacrificed for the other" (Borio, Pozzi and Roggero, 2005: 33).

under one – that is, what creates both all-encompassing categories *and* political directions? And finally, if one accepts those elements of the immaterial labour thesis that point to a 'becoming-work of life' – real subsumption, biopolitical production – is one not forced to conclude that there can be no paradigm worker subjectivity as such?

The ever-vague idea of the 'social factory' – that under Fordism 'society becomes factory' – finds no correlative in the idea that 'life becomes work', since life cannot become work without work becoming life. That is, if labour today is becoming more and more productive of new forms of social life and subjectivity, and the production of subjectivity happens more and more outside the direct process of production and the wage relation, that means the method of looking for the material, objective underpinnings of the resistant subject *in the organisation of labour* has its applicability substantially reduced. In other words, the 'social factory' thesis could confirm the centrality of the mass worker by pointing to its quantitative weight in the direct process of production and projecting the shadow of factory relations over the organisation of social life. But if one accepts the idea that the boundary between production and reproduction is becoming increasingly blurred, this would mean that subjective elements become just as, if not more, important than the objective organisation of production in determining the sites of potential conflict. This was a path somewhat forced upon post-*Operaismo* by the strength of the feminist and student/youth movements in mid-1970s Italy, necessitating a revision in the idea of the centrality of the mass worker – which produced the figure of the 'socialised worker' in Negri's thought, and was taken to its ultimate conclusions in the attention to the subjective elements of class composition in Bologna's 'The tribe of the moles' (1978).

In this text, Bologna refutes the thesis of the 'two societies' with which some intellectuals of the Italian Communist Party had tried to pit the 'productive' members of society – who, they would expect, would see how the Historical Compromise was in their interest – to those who formed the social base of what would become known as the 1977 movement.[29] It does so by identifying the objective underpinnings of these new subjects in the restructuring already well underway in the Italian North; but at the same time it is forced to conclude that these new conditions mean that

> [c]lass reproduction becomes a problem of political legitimation of social behaviours, a problem of cultural and ideological identity, of acceptance or non-acceptance of behaviours imposed by the State-form; classes lose all 'objective' character and become political subjects.
>
> But in this process the driving force comes from below, from the production of systems of culture and struggle, the continuous invention of codes of behaviour that are always more 'illegal', the liberation of spaces from official institutions (…). (Bologna, 1978: 19-20)

This is a conclusion that at once confirms and creates a recursive problem for the immaterial labour thesis: on the one hand, by posing the production of subjectivity as the essential site of struggle today, it would reinforce the claim that production becomes biopolitical under the hegemony of the immaterial worker; on the other, it would divest the immaterial worker *as immaterial worker* of any centrality – unless, perhaps, in the

29 On the 'two societies' thesis advanced by Asor Rosa on the pages of the official vehicle of the PCI, *L'Unita*, and the response it caused among the *operaisti*, cf. Wright (2002: 200-3).

residual (and very abstract) sense that, if immaterial production is the production of forms of social life, everyone is an immaterial worker.

Finally, it must be noted that 'properly' immaterial labour, while presenting those conditions that would make the best case for an intensified emancipatory potential, is at the same time one area where the subjective incentive for not 'exiting the game' is very strong. As Marcel Duchamp once observed, "[a]rtists [read: creative immaterial workers] of all eras are like Monte Carlo gamblers, and the blind lottery sends some on their way and ruins others".[30] That is, all properly immaterial workers know that they are entering a game where only a handful will succeed; the fact that the rewards for those who do are so high represents a powerful incentive to not opting for the 'exodus' strategy of producing collaboratively and outside the intellectual property rights system, since it is enforcing intellectual property rights upon their work that makes them eligible for eventually being picked among the crowd of also-rans.[31] In fact, if one enlarges the picture beyond the individual 'properly' immaterial worker and sees her within the context of the global circuits of production that provide her computer and mobile phone, as well as other conditions such as social welfare, it becomes rather doubtful whether one can speak of 'exodus' or only 'relative autonomy' from capital.[32]

So let us take stock of where we have got so far. We have seen that the hegemony of immaterial labour cannot be understood as a levelling of labouring conditions; that it can be understood from an organisational point of view (networks, the role of mediatic-symbolic actions), although it is questionable how much of this can really be ascribed to the so-called hegemony; and that understanding it politically can lead to both useful and potentially dangerous conclusions.

So in the end it seems that, if the formal hegemony of immaterial labour is going to have a meaning any more substantial – that of reshaping reality in its image – this meaning is synonymous with what is called in the immaterial labour thesis 'biopolitical production'. It is beyond the scope, and interest, of this article to discuss how 'accurate' this concept can be said to be.[33] There certainly is a lot to be gained from this perspective – not least, as I said above, a political language in which to reclaim as commons what capital appropriates as 'positive externalities'; or in which to articulate

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30 In a letter to Jean Crotti dated 17 August 1952. I believe this letter is, like others written by Duchamp, to be found in the Archives of American Art of the Smithsonian Institute in Washington; I have not been able to confirm this. The translation used here can be found at http://www.pseudopodium.org/search.cgi?Duchamp.

31 This can be compared to Virno's (2004: 86-90) analysis of the 'emotional tonalities of the multitude'.

32 Cf. Arvidsson (2007).

33 Which is not to say that this is not an interesting and important debate; if one wants somewhere to start, one could do worse than take the *majeure* of the first issue of *Multitudes* as a point of departure. Cf. *Multitudes* (2000, 1: 11-116). Generally, I would say that my position is that capitalism has always relied on the appropriation of externalities, although it might be possible to say that this has over time been constantly expanded to new areas; therefore, the situation described as biopolitical production is not new in itself, but only an exacerbation of certain structural determinants of capitalism. The one area where the emphasis on the newness of the present epoch appears as clearly problematic is that of reproductive work; the immaterial labour thesis takes on board the feminist critique of the 1970s concerning the importance of reproductive labour to production, but then only so often makes it seem as if this were a new feature, rather than having always been the case.

phenomena as disparate as the flexibilisation of labour, the externalisation of entrepreneurial risk and its attendant effects in the relation between life- and work-time and how this modulates the body and mind of the worker ('workfare'); or the way in which behavioural or linguistic trends can be captured to add value to commodities; or how data on individual and population behaviour can be made profitable in direct (e.g., Radio Frequency Identification [RFID]) and indirect ways (by projecting trends for the development of anything from pharmaceutical products to property developments).[34]

In the Guise of a (Partial) Conclusion: Recomposition

But one must also ask what is lost in, or what the dangers are of choosing such spectacles to see the world with.[35] First of all, as I have argued, there is something dangerous in speaking in terms of 'tendency' – precisely because of the tone of inertial inevitability that can be deprehended from it. If there is a tendency, it is not only one whose final effect of levelling of labouring and living realities is rather doubtful (I hope to have raised enough elements for such an argument), but there are also serious counter-tendencies in place.

Second, and partially as a corollary, there is danger in, by finding concepts in which the logical rigour of the tendency can be grasped, taking for granted what would be its end-result and place it as the starting point. If we can speak of a 'becoming-affective', 'becoming-woman' of labour today, this should not obscure the fact that some of us still enter the work market and the sphere of reproduction in their socially assigned roles of women.[36] If we can speak of the 'wealth of the poor' as the grounds on which to base a political project of new kind, this should not obscure the enormous stratification of immaterial labour, the differences between immaterial and material labour, or the immiseration of a good chunk of the world's population. If we speak of a process of becoming-Empire that spreads across the globe regardless of national borders, this cannot obscure how different parts of the globe are articulated in and by this process, or how important an element like national borders is in determining stratification. Finding formulas for a present day recomposition necessarily entails understanding these articulations and creating languages in which such different realities and subjectivities can be articulated.[37]

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34 For a thought-provoking extrapolation on such possibilities, cf. Clough et al. (2007); on RFID, Mako Hill (2004).

35 "[A] theory (…) must work, must function. (…) It is curious that it is Proust, an author considered a pure intellectual, who said it so clearly: treat my book as spectacles to look at the outside with, and well, if they do not serve you, take others, find yourself your apparatus, which is necessarily a combat apparatus" (Deleuze and Foucault, 2001: 1177).

36 It should not obscure either the fact that there is something problematic in the equation of 'affective' and 'woman'.

37 De Angelis (2007) develops a similar argument with a discussion on the law of value in mind; two of the points he makes seem particularly interesting to me: the first, that tendency should be seen as a category of (value) struggle; and that, as long as 'production in common' happens under capitalist relations, it will reproduce social stratification. Another angle of criticism which I have not employed

The most mysterious element in the narrative and methodology of class composition is the last one – recomposition. Initially, the main focus of *Operaista* agitation was wage struggles in the big factories where the *Operaisti* had managed to develop a social base. In the Keynesian compact, to turn the wage into an independent variable whose only measure was the relative political force of the mass worker was a key strategic moment in the affirmation of a subjective 'selfishness' that pushed the system to its limits. With the end of the welfare state arrangement and productive restructuring, the point of recomposition seems to become more and more abstract: – first the party-building fixation of Potere Operaio's last days, then, in Negri's work, abstract labour ('Crisis of the planner-State') and the socialised worker ('Proletarians and the State'), even if the political direction of the mass worker to some extent still goes affirmed. Less about what is already there, a concrete demand or rallying point, and more about what needs to be constructed (the party) or an abstract concept from which a direction can be logically derived – and which, following the *Operaista* teleology of a growing socialisation of the proletariat, will become more and more all-encompassing with time.

The problem with these abstract points of recomposition is that conceptual development and logical rigour can at best give indications as to where to move. They do not solve, or even pose, problems of organisation. Whereas any talk of composition is at least half objective, and can be absorbed in a Marxist discourse, the mystery of (re)composition is probably best understood in Spinozist terms – that is, as that striving of the *conatus* to select the things it enters in relation with so as to enhance its power of acting; as the arrangement of encounters that produce more *potentia* (Spinoza, 1992).[38] As such, it can only be determined experimentally; it is only after entering a relation, managing to produce a 'composition' (in the Spinozist sense), that one can tell what it can mean. Here again, "organisation is spontaneity reflecting on itself" (Negri, 1976: 26).

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here, but is intimately connected to any discussion on teleology and objectivism, is that of Jason Adams (2003) in identifying the productivist assumptions at work in *Empire*.

38 Cf. particularly P2-4, IV; P8, IV; P18-21, IV; P26, IV; P31. IV; P59, IV.

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Immaterial Labour and World Order: An Evaluation of a Thesis*

Ben Trott

abstract This paper argues that Hardt and Negri's claim that immaterial labour is becoming hegemonic, in the sense that is informing and influencing other forms of production and social life itself, goes some considerable way towards providing a theoretical framework within which we can make sense of the current and ongoing processes of transformation within the global political economy. It will be argued, however, that whilst many of the criticisms which have been levied at Hardt and Negri's work have been based, to an extent, upon a failure to comprehend the *tendential* nature of their argument, there nevertheless exist a number of real and important weaknesses in their work. In particular, it will be argued that the potential power of Hardt and Negri's revolutionary subject, 'the multitude', is over-stated in their work.

We are amidst a process of global transformation. Within the most advanced capitalist economies at least, many of the icons of the Fordist era have been steadily disappearing: mass productive processes geared towards providing cheap, standardised commodities for mass markets; full employment; 'blue-collar' work; the welfare state; mass political parties and trade unions. Within the academy, in the media, and throughout popular culture more generally, the emergence of a 'post-Fordist', 'post-industrial' or 'post-modern' reality – alongside processes of 'globalisation' (variously conceived[1]) – have been widely debated.[2] A number of overlapping, yet nevertheless distinct, schools of thought have sought to develop a theoretical and analytic framework to make sense of: the (passing) Fordist era; the origins of its crisis; the shape of things to come; and the agents of these (ongoing) processes of change.

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1 See for example, Altvater and Mahnkopf (1999); Held and McGrew (2003); Hughes and Wilkinson (2002); and Scholte (2005). For and excellent critique of globalisation theory, see Rosenberg (2002 and 2005).

2 Amin's (1996) edited volume, upon which this section heavily draws, is the best introduction to the debate.

Most prominent within the debate have been the 'regulation school'[3] which set out to explain the paradox within capitalism between its tendency towards crisis, instability and change, and its ability, nevertheless, to reproduce itself by coalescing around a set of rules, norms and institutions which serve to secure relatively long periods of economic stability (Amin, 1996: 7). They have done so primarily through the concepts of 'regime of accumulation' and 'mode of regulation'. Regime of accumulation refers to a "set of regularities at the level of the whole economy", such as norms pertaining to the organisation of work and production, and of demand and consumption, "enabling a more or less coherent process of capital accumulation" (Nielson, 1991: 22). Mode of regulation, on the other hand, describes the institutions and conventions which reproduce and regulate a given regime of accumulation through a range of laws, political practices, industrial codes, and so on (Amin, 1996: 8). Structural crises, such as that which is said to have ensued alongside the recessions and the slow-down of growth that have characterised the world economy since the mid-1970s, are said to arise from the breakdown of the set of norms and rules central to these concepts (Amin, 1996: 10).

A second key school of thought within the debate is the so-called 'flexible specialisation' approach. This school, associated primarily with the work of Piore and Sabel (1984) and Hirst and Zeitlin (e.g.1991), argues that 'mass production' and 'flexible specialisation' have existed alongside each other since the nineteenth century. Sporadically, they argue, either mass production (conceived as the deployment of a semi-skilled workforce and purpose-built machinery to produce standardised commodities), or flexible specialisation (understood as a process by which a far more highly-skilled workforce are employed to produce a range of customised goods) become regarded as best practice. The history of capitalist development, according to this school, has been characterised by two such industrial divides. The first, at the beginning of the twentieth century, is said to have occurred, in part, as a result of the emergence of techniques and technologies which facilitated mass production, limiting the growth of craft industries in much of Europe. The second is understood as dating from the stagnation of the world economy in the mid-1970s, coupled with the crisis in US Fordism.[4]

The 'neo-Schumpeterian approach', the third of the key schools within the debate, in fact has much in common with the regulation school, differing primarily in its placing of a far greater emphasis on the role of technology. This school tends to argue that capitalist development is characterised by long waves of 'boom' and 'bust', with the smooth transition from one long wave of growth to another predicated on leaps in productivity being secured through the diffusion of new technologies, industrial processes, and/or the re-organisation of working practices throughout an economy. The crisis in Fordism, for neo-Schumpeterians such as Freeman (1982) and Perez (1986), is said to stem from the limits placed on productivity gains by prices, wages and the purported inefficiency of large corporations. The current failure to move into a new

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3 See in particular Bob Jessop's edited five volume *Regulation Theory and the Crisis of Capitalism* (2001), containing some of the tradition's most influential texts along with works by a number of the school's staunchest critics. See also: Hirsch and Roth (1986) and Hirsch (1993).

4 Harvey's (1990) work on the shift from Fordism to a regime of 'flexible accumulation' overlaps with this tradition.

long wave of economic growth is said to stem, in large part, from the failure of contemporary neoliberal governments to provide coordinated industrial policy action.

The Italian Marxist tradition of *Operaismo*, or 'workerism', represents a radical departure from these perspectives.[5] It operates a Copernican inversion of the standard approach to the study of the relation between labour and capital, in which labour is portrayed as the "passive, reactive victim" (Cleaver, 2000: 65) in relation to capital's territorial expansion through imperialist and colonial projects, and developments at the point of production, such as those outlined above. Mario Tronti (1964), in a text which was enormously influential within the tradition, explained,

> We too have worked with the concept that puts capitalist development first, and workers second. This is a mistake. And we now have to turn the problem on its head, reverse the polarity, and start from the beginning: and the beginning is the class struggle of the working class.

Operaismo can be located, as Dyer-Witheford (1999: 62-64) points out, within the tradition of so-called 'class struggle' or 'subjectivist' Marxism. He describes this tradition as spanning (despite interruptions) from Marx and Engels' own work, through that of the theorists of the early-twentieth century council communist movement and moments in Luxemburg and Lukács' thought; over CLR James, Raya Dunayevskaya and the Johnson Forest Tendency, to the work of groups such as *Socialisme ou Barbarie* in France and German theorists such as Karl Heinz Roth writing in the 1970s and 1980s. These approaches are posited in contrast to the 'objectivist', 'one-sided Marxism' (Dyer-Witheford, 1999: 63) of Soviet-style 'scientific-socialism' which Dyer-Witheford elsewhere describes as providing a linear account of the "mechanical progression through capitalism's different levels or stages on the way to a final crisis caused by the inevitable declining rate of profit" (Dyer-Witheford, 2005: 137).

Overlapping in some ways with the work of the Frankfurt School, as well as Marx's own work on technological domination, theorists such as Panzieri (e.g. 1961 and 1976) and Tronti developed a theoretical framework within which to analyse transformations in the means of production and the organisation of workers within the dynamics of class struggle, offering an account of capital's technological evolution in terms of *a response to working-class struggles.*[6]

The notion of 'class composition' was developed by the tradition as a means of describing the relation between labour and capital at any particular historical moment. Forms of struggle, they argued, were expressed in terms of a particular 'composition' of the working class. Capital's response to these struggles, then, involved imposing a number of changes designed to restore discipline, forcing a 'decomposition', which then

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5 Wright (2002) is the most comprehensive English-language overview of Italian workerism. Cleaver (2000: 58-77) offers a less comprehensive account of the tradition, but explains its interaction with similar tendencies within what he calls 'Autonomist Marxism'. See also the recent German-language introduction to post-*Operaismo* (Birkner and Foltin, 2006) as well as Hardt and Virno's (1996) anthology.

6 Marx himself made a similar claim in Volume I of *Capital*, arguing, "It would be possible to write a whole history of interventions made since 1830 for the sole purpose of supplying capital with weapons against working class revolt" (1990: 563).

gave rise to new forms of struggle and, ultimately, a class 'recompositon'. It was this analysis which was deployed by the theorists of *Operaismo* to explain capital's response to the struggles of the so-called *operaio professionale* (the 'professional worker') which dominated the period up until the First World War. Capital's dependence on these workers afforded them a degree of autonomy and authority, occupying a position of privilege over other, less highly skilled workers within the productive process.

> In Russia this internal composition of the class led to the organization of factory soviets and ultimately to the vanguard party of classical Leninism, which constituted its highest political expression. The hierarchical structure of the soviets and the party corresponded to the hierarchical composition of the working class itself. (Murphey, 2005: xxxiv)

The Fordist/Taylorist restructuring of productive processes, as well as redistributive mechanisms enabled via the Keynesian welfare state, constituted the decomposition of *operaio professionale*. This in turn enabled a recomposition in the form of *operaio-massa* (or the 'mass worker').[7] *Operaio-massa* was largely unskilled, yet relatively well-paid and able to rely of the safety net of the welfare state. Its struggles tended to take the form of mass-based trade unionism and the widespread 'refusal of work', expressed in terms of absenteeism, sabotage and strike action.[8]

A number of *Operaismo*'s key theorists, and Antonio Negri in particular, have attempted to theorise the process of de- (and eventually re-)composition triggered by the ferocity of these struggles. Paolo Virno went so far as to describe the period of restructuring and the emergence of post-Fordism, as a 'counter-revolution' against the movements of the 1960s and 1970s (Virno, 1996b and 2004: 99). The decentralisation and flexiblisation of working practices were said to decompose both the technical structure of the mass worker's labour process and the political organisations which expressed their demands (Murphey, 2005: xxxv). The focus of the *Operaisti* now (and this is the point at which some have argued that the era of post-*Operaismo* is to have emerged (e.g. Birkner and Foltin, 2006: 7)) became an examination of new forms of production and wealth opened up by the counter-cultural movements of the 1960s: the social, cultural and artistic activities performed outside the realm of waged labour.[9] As production escaped the confines of the factory walls, creating what Tronti had earlier called a 'social factory' (1963), the whole of society was said to become a potential (or actual) site of struggle. It is in this context that Negri and others began theorising the emergence of *operaio sociale* (or the 'socialised worker') (Negri, 2005a and b), in a line of analysis that he was later to develop with Michael Hardt in their discussions of immaterial labour and the multitude.[10]

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7 See Wright (2002: 176-196) and Hardt (2005: 7-37).

8 In the so-called Italian 'Hot Autumn' of 1969, five and a half million workers took part in strikes and hundreds of thousands occupied factories, committed acts of sabotage and participated in demonstrations (Katsiaficas, 1997: 19). See also Zerzan (1974) on the scale of what he calls the "revolt against work" in the US during the same period.

9 See in particular, Virno's work on 'artistic virtuosity' (Virno, 1996a: 189-212; and 2004: 52-71) See also Hardt (2005).

10 It should be noted, however, that many of the debates within the Italian left in the 1970s were related to the validity or usefulness of this concept. See, for example, Bologna (2005) and Wright (2002: 152-175).

Hardt and Negri argue that the processes of economic and cultural globalisation which have taken place over the past few decades have been accompanied by "a transformation of the dominant productive processes… with the result that the role of industrial factory labour has been reduced and priority given instead to communicative, cooperative and affective labour" (2001: xiii). In other words, a shift has taken place in which 'immaterial' forms of labour now occupy a position of hegemony within the global political economy previously held by industrial labour. Hegemony, here, is understood as the ability of one form of production to inform and influence "other forms of labour and indeed society as a whole" (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 65).

This paper will argue that Hardt and Negri's claim as to the hegemony of immaterial labour provides a useful theoretical framework within which we can begin to make sense of a number of significant processes and transformations taking place throughout the global political economy up to the level of world order. It will also be argued that many of the criticisms made of Hardt and Negri's work have been based, to a large extent, upon a failure to comprehend the *tendential* nature of their argument. However, it will also be made clear that there nevertheless exist a number of real and important weaknesses in Hardt and Negri's work, related in particular to their claim as to the possibilities for radical social change opened up by these processes.

This paper is divided into four parts. Part One is dedicated to a detailed exposition of Hardt and Negri's concept of immaterial labour, and the means by which it is argued as exerting its hegemony. The work of other theorists, such as Paolo Virno and Maurizzio Lazzarato, who have explored similar phenomena, will also be touched upon. Part Two will describe the means by which, under the hegemony of immaterial labour, *networks* are said to be emerging as the dominant organisational form throughout society; including on the level of international power and organisation in the form of 'Empire'. Part Three will attempt to set out some of the primary criticisms which have been made of Hardt and Negri's analysis; along with an effort to illustrate how the failure of many of their critics to understand important aspects of their argument has led to a number of misunderstandings or misinterpretations, both in relation to the shift from the hegemony of industrial to immaterial labour, and from the era of imperialism to that of Empire. In the Fourth and final Part of this paper, I will set out what I believe to be the three primary weaknesses in Hardt and Negri's argument. Firstly, their rejection of Marx's so-called 'law of value'. Secondly, their positing of an external as opposed to internal relation between labour and capital. And thirdly, the importance that Hardt and Negri place upon the increased levels of communication and communicability within productive processes today (broadly conceived) as a means of enabling the constitution of common struggle.

Part One: The Emergence of Immaterial Labour

Periodisation and Hegemony: A Note on Method

Hardt and Negri (2001: 280-289) argue that it has become common to view the development of the modern economy in terms of three distinct moments, each of which

are said to have involved changes in both the nature and the quality of labour. The first phase saw the economy dominated by the extraction of raw materials and agriculture, the second by manufacturing and industry, and the third and current phase by the manipulation of information and the provision of services.

However, the means by which theorists have attempted to identify such paradigmatic shifts have varied. Castells and Aoyama (1994) are cited by Hardt and Negri as providing a *quantitative* explanation as to the emergence of an informational economy. Such analyses, Hardt and Negri argue, "cannot grasp either the *qualitative* transformation in the progression from one paradigm to another or the *hierarchy* among the economic sectors in the context of each paradigm" (Hardt and Negri, 2001: 281).

For Hardt and Negri, the process of industrialisation, for example, cannot be explained as having simply involved a decrease in the proportion of the population employed in the primary relative to the secondary sector, or merely in terms of a shift from agriculture to industry as the primary sphere in which value was produced. Rather, the shift involved a qualitative transformation exerted by one form of production (industrial) over another (agricultural). "The farm progressively became a factory" (Hardt and Negri, 2001: 284). The transformations ushered in by industrialisation were not, however, restricted to the realm of production. "More generally, society itself slowly became industrialized" (Hardt and Negri, 2001: 284).

It is in this sense that Hardt and Negri (2004: 141) claim to remain true to Marx's own methodology. Marx argued that relations of production always coexist within determinant hierarchies: "In all forms of society there is one specific form of production which predominates over the rest, whose relations thus assign rank and influence to the others" (Marx, 1973: 106-107).[11] Hardt and Negri argue that in the final decades of the twentieth century, industrial labour lost its hegemony and immaterial labour came to the fore, pulling, as industrial labour had done before it, other forms of labour and society itself into its 'vortex' (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 107).

Immaterial Labour: Towards A Definition

For Hardt and Negri, terms such as 'service work', 'intellectual labour' and 'cognitive labour' "all refer to aspects of immaterial labor, but none of them captures its generality" (2004: 108). Immaterial labour, they explain, is "that which creates immaterial products, such as knowledge, information, communication, a relationship or an emotional response" (2004: 108). In other words, it is not the *labour* which is immaterial, "it involves our bodies and brains as all labor does", but rather its *product* (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 109).

Immaterial labour can be conceived in two separate forms. Firstly, as that primarily involving either linguistic or intellectual activity, typically that involved in the production of images, ideas, symbols, codes, texts and so on (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 108). And secondly, as that which Hardt and Negri refer to as 'affective labour'. In

11 This quotation forms part of a short section, upon which Hardt and Negri draw extensively, entitled 'The Method of Political Economy' in the introduction to Marx's *Grundrisse* (1973: 100-108).

other words, labour which manipulates or produces feelings of "ease, well-being, satisfaction, excitement, or passion" (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 108).[12] Hardt and Negri (along with Lazzarato (1996: 140)) argue that a central feature of immaterial labour is the inherently co-operative, communicative and collaborative manner in which it is performed (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 147). In other words, co-operation, communication and collaboration are features which, unlike in previous forms of labour, are not imposed from 'the outside' by capital, but are "*completely immanent to the laboring activity itself*" (Hardt and Negri, 2001: 294).[13] This is one of the primary grounds on which Hardt and Negri justify their proposition that an important paradigmatic shift has taken place. Both orthodox Marxist and classical political economy perspectives have traditionally viewed labour power as 'variable capital', "a force activated and made coherent only by capital" (Hardt and Negri, 2001: 294). In other words, the capitalist is seen as having called the workers to the factory, directed them to co-operate in production and provided them with the means of doing so (see, for example, Marx, 1990: 439-454). Today, however, Hardt and Negri argue, *labour itself* increasingly "tends to produce the means of interaction, communication and cooperation for production directly" (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 147).[14] It is in identifying this shift that Hardt and Negri are led to develop their concept of the 'common'.

The common, for Hardt and Negri, is that upon which (immaterial) production is based, the manner in which it takes place, and its end result (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 148). "Our communication, collaboration and cooperation are not only based on the common, but they in turn produce the common in an expanding spiral relationship" (Hardt and Negri, 2004: xv).[15]

The Hegemony of Immaterial Labour

Hardt and Negri have attempted to explain the precise means by which immaterial labour exerts its hegemony. As we have already seen, their claim is a *qualitative* as opposed to a *quantitative* one. Agricultural labour remains, as it has done for centuries, dominant in quantitative terms. Yet despite the fact that immaterial labour "constitutes a minority of global labour, and it is concentrated in some of the dominant regions of the globe", it nevertheless imposes a tendency upon other forms of labour, and upon society itself, forcing it to "informationalize, become intelligent, become communicative, become affective" (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 109). I will attempt, in the following part of this paper, to summarise the means by which Hardt and Negri understand this process as taking place.

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12 For an elaboration of theories of affect, see Massumi (2002).

13 Virno makes a similar argument in his discussion of the means by which 'artistic virtuosity' is becoming "exemplary and pervasive" (2004: 58). See Virno (1996a: 189-212 and 2004: 52-71).

14 In this sense, we can see the way in which this aspect of Hardt and Negri's argument constitutes a development of Negri's earlier writings on the socialised worker (e.g.: Negri, 2005d: esp.57-58).

15 Terranova (2004: 73-78) describes something similar in her discussion of the work performed by 'knowledge workers' within the 'digital economy' which is said to have emerged in the late-1990s.

The Peasantry, Agricultural Work and Immaterial Labour

Hardt and Negri argue that a series of transformations have taken place within agricultural production in recent years. First of all, they claim that biochemical and biological developments, alongside innovations such as hydroponics and artificial lighting, represent a move away from large-scale (Fordist) agricultural production towards smaller-scale, more heavily specialised (post-Fordist) operations (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 112). Secondly, they claim that agriculture has become 'informationalized' (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 112), arguing that the production and control of agricultural information and knowledge, related in particular to the genetic make-up of plants, has become increasingly important to those involved in agricultural practices and an important site of struggle. And thirdly, they argue that the conditions of agricultural production are beginning to

> become common to those of mining, industry, immaterial production, and other forms of labor in such a way that agriculture communicates with other forms of production and no longer poses a qualitatively different isolated form of production and life. (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 116).[16]

Industrial Labour and Immateriality

For Hardt and Negri, the shift from a 'Fordist' to a 'Toyotist' production process in many industries provides one of the clearest illustrations of the transformation of industrial production under the hegemony of immaterial labour. Their argument is based on the claim that the shift involved an inversion of the communication structure within the production process (Hardt and Negri, 2001: 289-290). Fordism, in its heyday at least, had been able to rely on the large-scale production of standardised commodities being met by an adequate level of demand (Hardt and Negri, 2001: 289-290). As such, there was little need for communication between the factory and the market. Toyotist production, on the other hand, represents a reversal of this situation. Communication between production and consumption is constant. Factories maintain 'zero stock' and depend on 'just-in-time' production systems, able to respond directly and immediately to the market[17] (Hardt and Negri, 2001: 290). "[E]ven in 'heavy' industries such as automobile manufacturing; a car is put into production only after the sales network orders it" (Lazzarato, 1996: 141).

The Expansion (and Transformation) of the Service Sector

Whilst Hardt and Negri (2001: 286) argue that the expansion of the service sector, and the blurring of the distinction between services and manufacturing, provides one potential indicator of the hegemony of immaterial labour, Lazzarato argues that a number of transformations have taken place within the service sector itself. He explains that we are not so much experiencing a growth of the service industry as we are "a development of the 'relations of service.'" Services, he argues, as is the case with industry, are increasingly characterised by "the integration of the relationship between production and consumption, where in fact the consumer intervenes in an active way in

16 For a problematisation of Hardt and Negri's writing on the peasantry, cf. Dalla Costa, this issue.

17 Ohno (1988) offers a detailed explanation as to the means by which Toyota have attempted to achieve this 'ideal type' of production process.

the composition of the product." In other words, the service industry today is increasingly characterised by forms of labour which involve a direct relationship with the customer, and where the customer is herself involved in the processes of conception and innovation (Lazzarato, 1996: 142).

The Transformation of the Working Day, 'Biopolitical Production' and the Multitude

Hardt and Negri argue that under the hegemony of immaterial labour, the conditions of work are tending to change. In particular, the distinction between work- and leisure-time is becoming blurred (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 111). While businesses at the 'high end' of the labour market are offering free exercise programmes and subsidised meals in order to keep their employees in the office as many hours of the day as possible, at the 'low end', workers are forced to juggle several jobs simply in order to survive (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 145). Work-time is expanding to fill "the entire time of life" (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 111).

Furthermore, Hardt and Negri argue that a clear distinction can no longer be made between productive, non-productive and reproductive labour. Building on the concept of the 'social factory',[18] Hardt and Negri argue that production today has become 'biopolitical'. In other words, *all of social life* has been rendered productive: "life is made to work for production and production is made to work for life" (Hardt and Negri, 2001: 32).

'Biopower', of course, was a concept developed by Foucault to refer to a strategy of power, developed during the late-eighteenth century, which attempts to control and regulate the life of the population in general (Foucault, 1998: 135-159; 2003: 239-264 and 2006). Hardt and Negri use the term to describe the nature and operation of power within what they call 'the society of control' (2001: 22), the emergence of which they describe as similar to what Marx called "the passage from the formal subsumption to the real subsumption of labor under capital" (Hardt and Negri, 2001: 25).[19] Their concept of 'biopolitical production', however, is really an inversion of Foucault's concept, aimed towards describing the potential power of the productive forces within Empire. "Biopower stands above society, transcendent as a sovereign authority and imposes its order. Biopolitical production, in contrast, is immanent to society and creates social relationships and forms through collective labor" (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 94-5). *In other words, biopolitical production refers to a situation in which mechanisms of cooperation, communication and collaboration have become contained within labour itself, presenting new opportunities for economic self-management and political and social self-organisation* (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 336). The hegemony of immaterial labour, therefore, is said to afford labour the ability to valorise itself. "In the expression

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18 The argument made by *Operaist* feminist theorists such as Dalla Costa and James (1975) as to the means by which activities outside the realm of waged labour, such as housework, are directly productive of capital was also picked up upon and developed in relation to this concept, and should be considered formative of these discussions.

19 Hardt and Negri describe the real subsumption of society as coinciding with the emergence of the world market in the 1970s (Hardt and Negri, 2001: 254-256). The concept of the 'control society' derives from Deleuze (1995).

of its own creative energies," therefore, it "thus seems to provide the potential for a kind of spontaneous and elementary communism" (Hardt and Negri, 2001: 294).

Amidst these processes, Hardt and Negri argue, new forms of subjectivity begin to emerge. Whereas previously the industrial working class had been assumed to be the actor solely or primarily responsible for production in capitalist societies, and hence occupied a position of political hegemony under which the struggles of others must be subsumed, this is no longer the case today. The 'multitude' is proposed by Hardt and Negri as a category capable of describing the emergent forms of subjectivity within the contemporary global political economy.

The concept of multitude has previously been used, albeit in very different ways, by both Hobbes (2004) and Spinoza (2005). Both posited the notion in opposition to that of 'the people' (a concept which tended "toward identity and homogeneity internally while posing itself different from and excluding what remains outside of it" (Hardt and Negri, 2000: 103)). It is with this opposition, however, that the similarity between Hobbes' and Spinoza's multitude ends.[20] For Hobbes, the multitude is that which exists in the state of nature; a condition of *bellum omnium contra omnes* (a war of all against all (Hobbes, 1968: 185)), which can only be overcome once the multitude is united into a people beneath a single, sovereign power: the Leviathan.[21] For Spinoza, however, the multitude remains a multiplicity which can *never* be reduced to a One, it is "an incommensurable multiplicity" (Negri, 2002b). It is, of course, to this multitude that Hardt and Negri refer.

Hardt and Negri describe the multitude as 'legion' (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 138-140); at once *one* and *many*, composed of a set of singularities (social subjects "whose difference cannot be reduced to sameness, a difference that remains different") all of which are nevertheless said to produce within an increasingly common condition (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 99). Its boundaries are "indefinite and open" (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 226), and are said to include all of those involved in social production/reproduction today. The multitude, furthermore, is said to be "the only social subject capable of realizing democracy, that is, the rule of everyone by everyone" (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 100).

The multitude is explained as having "a strange, double temporality" (2004: 222). Whilst it constitutes the creative and productive force which called the current order into being, it nevertheless remains a political project as yet to be fully realised. In other words, the term is intended to give a name to that which is already said to be taking place, "grasping the existing social and political tendency", whilst the act of naming itself is said to fulfil "a primary task of political theory", providing "a powerful tool for further developing the political form" (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 220).

All of this, however, is said to have serious implications for social theory. Hardt and Negri (2004: 140) argue that what distinguished Marx from other social theorists of his

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20 On the difference between 'the multitude' and 'the people', as well as the difference between Hobbes and Spinoza's conceptions of the multitude, see Virno (1996a: 199-203 and 2004: 21-26).

21 See also Hobbes' exposition of man in the state of nature (1968: 183-188 and 2004: 13-19).

day was his theory of historical materialism[22] which rejected the 'one-size-fits-all' idealisms that proposed trans-historical theoretical frameworks to explain all social realities. Instead, he argued "our mode of understanding must be fitted to the contemporary social world" (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 140). Hardt and Negri argue that the paradigm of immaterial labour has created a new social reality, considerably different from Marx's time. A new theoretical framework, they argue, is necessary in order to explain this reality.

Value Beyond Measure

Marx (1990: 173-174) followed a number of classical political economists such as Adam Smith (1998: 36-44) and David Ricardo (1996) in identifying labour as the source of all value and wealth in capitalist society. However, in recognising that one could not fully understand either the logic or the functioning of such a society by examining the labour of isolated individual workers, he was able to move beyond their analyses. As Hardt and Negri (2004: 144) recognise, he argued that capital should be understood as having created "a collective socially connected form of production in which the labor of each of us produces in collaboration with innumerable others." In other words, Marx's analysis, rather than focussing on an examination of 'concrete' instances of individual labour, employed the category of 'abstract labour', "a rational abstraction that is in fact more real and basic to understanding the production of capital than any concrete instances of individual labor" (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 144).[23] The category allowed the productive work of a builder, cook or mechanic to be considered equivalent and measured in terms of homogenous units of time. It provided the means of understanding value production in capitalism. However, Hardt and Negri argue, the concept also allows us to recognise the difference between Marx's time and our own (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 144-145).

The relation between value and (abstract) labour was posed by Marx in terms of "corresponding quantities: a certain quantity of time of abstract labor equals a quantity of value" (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 145). This allowed Marx to eventually develop his notion of surplus value, and to articulate the means by which exploitation takes place within the labour process. Surplus value, for Marx, is the amount of value produced by a worker over and above that which she receives in the form of her wage. The greater the surplus extracted, the greater the rate of exploitation.

However, Hardt and Negri argue that, whilst labour remains the source of all value, *it is no longer measurable in terms of fixed quantities of time*. As we have seen, under the hegemony of immaterial labour, the distinction between productive and non-productive labour is far more unclear than it was in the time of Marx. As work time tends to expand to fill the entirety of life, and where what is produced is not simply the means of social life (the material objects which make modern forms of social life possible), but social life itself, production, according to Hardt and Negri, is rendered 'biopolitical' (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 146). Living and producing tend to become indistinguishable.

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22 Marx and Engels first set out their concept of historical materialism in the *German Ideology* (1998).

23 Marx's concept of abstract labour is set out most clearly at (1990: 142).

The relation between labour and value, Hardt and Negri therefore claim, needs to be rethought (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 146).

This claim, I believe, is one of the most problematic in Hardt and Negri's analysis. We shall return to a more detailed interrogation of this aspect of their argument in Part Four of this paper.[24]

Part Two: The Predominance of the Network Form and the Emergence of Empire

Network Production, Network Societies

Hardt and Negri (2004: 142) argue that networks – within businesses, communications systems, military organisations, social movements and so on – are becoming the 'common form' in an age of immaterial labour. They tend to define the way in which we understand the world and act within it. "Most important from our perspective, networks are the form of organization of the cooperative and communicative relationships *dictated* by the immaterial paradigm of production" (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 142, my emphasis).

Within the realm of immaterial production, Hardt and Negri argue, a centralisation of productive processes is no longer necessary (Hardt and Negri, 2001: 295). Innovations, such as the 'assembler network' developed by Toyota (Shiomi, 1995; Wada, 1995) mean that "the assembly line has been replaced by *the network* as the organizational model of production, transforming the forms of cooperation and communication within each productive site and among productive sites" (Hardt and Negri, 2001: 295). This tendency towards horizontal network enterprises is at its most clear within the processes of immaterial production, in which workers tend to be geographically dispersed, often even able to remain at home. Here cooperation and the communication of information and knowledge among workers occupy an even more central role (Hardt and Negri, 2001: 269).

However, Hardt and Negri's argument as to the becoming dominant of the network form is not limited to the direct realm of production. Indeed, in line with a number of other theorists (Arquilla and Ronfeldt, 1996 and 2001; Castells, 2000; McCarthy et al., 2004; Terranova, 2004), they argue this to be a phenomenon taking place throughout society (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 142). In their most recent collaborative work, and following a line of analysis characteristic of the workerist tradition which has always regarded resistance as ontologically prior to the techniques and strategies of power,[25] Hardt and Negri (2004: 51-91), present a genealogy of 'liberation struggles' and

24 Cf. also, Henninger, this issue.

25 In this way there is a clear resonance between Italian workerism and aspects of French post-structuralism, in particular, the work of Deleuze and Guattari (e.g.: 2004) and (in Deleuze's opinion at least) Foucault (Deleuze, 2006: 74 and 120). On the means by which elements of post-structuralist and Marxist thought can complement one another, see also Read (2003).

counter-insurgency strategies, culminating in the network form of today. In doing so, they attempt to illustrate,

> a correspondence between changing forms of resistance and the transformations of economic and social production: in each era, in other words, the model of resistance that proves to be most effective turns out to have the same form as the dominant models of economic and social production. (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 68)

'Netwars' and the Emergence of Empire

Modern revolutionary wars, Hardt and Negri explain, largely involved the coalescing of armed, largely peasant, guerrilla bands into 'people's armies' (2004: 69). A shift which they argue served as a motor for processes of modernisation, corresponding and contributing to the transition from peasantry to industrial working class (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 73). However, in the 1960s, the guerrilla model underwent a resurgence which Hardt and Negri argue corresponded in many ways to the shift which took place within the realm of production over the proceeding years. "The small mobile units and flexible structures of post-Fordist production correspond to a certain degree to the polycentric guerrilla model" (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 82).

The tendency described here, both within resistance movements and the realm of production, continued along a similar trajectory over the decades which followed. Whilst many of the movements to emerge towards the end of the twentieth century were characterised, to an extent at least, by 'old' organisational forms based around centralised and hierarchical command structures, many of them began to display 'network characteristics' (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 83). The Zapatista Army of National Liberation – described by Arquilla and Ronfeldt (1996: 73) as the "prototype of social netwar for the 21st century" – are only the most obvious example.[26]

Finally, Hardt and Negri argue, the 'globalization movements' which have emerged over the last decade provide "the clearest example to date of distributed network organizations" (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 86). These movements' tendency towards a network form of organisation has been widely documented (see, for example, Cleaver, 1998, 1999; Klein, 2001; Notes from Nowhere, 2003: 63-73, Nunes, 2005; Stammers and Eschle, 2005). Whilst largely being rooted in local struggles,[27] they have managed to develop substantial communication and coordination mechanisms. First of all, via a series of Zapatista '*Encuentros*', or encounters, in Mexico and Spain (Neill, 2001), later through the Peoples' Global Action network (de Marcellus, 2001), and most recently through the world and local social fora, the first of which took place in Porto Alegre, Brazil in 2001 (Cassen, 2003: 48-53). The use which these movements have made of new information technologies to facilitate coordination and communication has also been widely documented (see, for example, Cleaver, 1999; Coyer, 2005).

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26 Two of the best introductions to, and attempts at a theoretical contextualisation of, the Zapatista movement are Holloway and Peláez (1998) and Mentinis (2006). See also Holloway (2006).

27 The local struggles within which the globalisation movements have been rooted has been documented by Notes from Nowhere (2003) and Klein (2002) amongst others.

The emergence of, and tendency towards, what Hardt and Negri (2004: 79) call 'network struggles' has necessitated a rethinking and restructuring of military strategy by a number of dominant states, the US in particular. As the Cold War drew to a close, a number of new challenges, posed by potential enemies considered far less 'knowable' (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 56) than a traditional, sovereign military opponent began to emerge. In response, a so-called 'revolution in military affairs' (RMA) took place which corresponded to the concurrent shifts taking place within the realm of production (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 41-48). Battle units were reduced in size; air, land and sea capabilities combined; and soldiers required to perform a range of tasks from combat, to search and rescue, to providing humanitarian aid (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 41). "The RMA depends not only on technological developments, such as computer and information systems, but also on new forms of labor – mobile, flexible, immaterial forms of labor" (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 44). In other words, today's solider must not only be able to fight and kill, "but also be able to dictate for the conquered populations the cultural, legal, political, and security norms of life" (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 44).

In effect, Hardt and Negri claim, "military theorists have thus… discovered the concept of biopower" (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 53). They cite the post-September 11th 2001 US policy shift from 'defense' to 'security'[28], in which military strategy involves not just the *preservation* of the present order, but its *active and constant shaping* "through military and/or police activity" as one index of this (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 20). Hardt and Negri (2004: 54-55) argue that when confronted by an elusive and ephemeral network, traditional strategies are no longer effective. Instead, a positive strategy is required in which the social environment itself is created, maintained and controlled. Doing so, however, involves a restructuring of the military along the lines of, yet going beyond, the RMA described above, and furthermore, of the forms of sovereign power which the military represent: "not merely a revolution in military affairs but a transformation of the form of power itself" (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 59). Hardt and Negri argue that "this process is part of the passage from imperialism, with its centralized and bounded form of power based in nation-states, to the network form of Empire" (2004: 59).

'Empire', then, is the name Hardt and Negri give to the global order said to be "materializing before our very eyes" (Hardt and Negri, 2001: xi). As colonial regimes were overthrown and the barriers to the capitalist world economy collapsed along with the Soviet Union, an 'irreversible' process of economic and cultural globalisation is said to have taken place (Hardt and Negri, 2001: xi). Emerging alongside the global markets and circuits of production, Empire provided "a new logic and structure of rule" (Hardt and Negri, 2001: xi). The increasing mobility of people, money, technology and goods corresponded to the decreasing ability of nation-states to regulate these flows. "Even the most dominant nation-states", including the United States, Hardt and Negri argue, "should no longer be thought of as supreme and sovereign authorities, either outside or even within their own borders. *The decline in sovereignty of nation-states, however, does not mean that sovereignty as such has declined*" (Hardt and Negri, 2001: xi). Empire is said to constitute a new "global form of sovereignty", composed of "a series of national and supranational organisms" (Hardt and Negri, 2001: xii).

28 Bush (2002) is the primary text detailing this shift in policy.

Hardt and Negri (2001: 314-316 and Hardt, undated) borrow the concept of 'mixed constitution' from Polybius to explain the functioning of Empire today. Polybius (1979) used the term to describe (and celebrate) the Roman Empire as bringing together of the three 'good' forms of power: monarchy, aristocracy and democracy embodied by the Emperor, Senate and popular *comitia* respectively. Hardt and Negri argue that today's Empire is similarly composed of "various differing and often conflicting elements" which nevertheless function "within one coherent global constitution" (Hardt, undated). Today, Hardt explains, the supreme monarchical power is said to be variously represented by the military might of the United States, and a number of international organisations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Trade Organisation (WTO). The aristocratic powers are understood as a number of transnational corporations and nation-states, whilst the democratic powers appear in the form, again, of nation-states, but also media organisations and NGOs (Hardt, undated and Hardt and Negri, 2001: 314-316).

Having attempted to set out the extent to which Hardt and Negri regard the shift from the paradigm of industrial to that of immaterial labour as having brought about, or at least coincided with, a number of important transformations throughout the global political economy, the remainder of this paper will dedicate itself to exploring and evaluating some of the criticisms that have been made of Hardt and Negri's work, and to presenting my own assessment of the contribution they have made to the way in which we can understand and interpret the world today.

Part Three: Towards and Evaluation of Hardt and Negri – Understanding the Concept of the 'Historical Tendency'

Hardt and Negri have, I believe, correctly identified a number of important tendencies and trends within the global political economy. Whilst their argument at times seems abstract, appearing to be almost anti-empirical, there nevertheless exists a considerable amount of evidence to reinforce some of their core arguments. For example, research has recently been carried out suggesting, as Hardt and Negri have claimed, that the working day is indeed extending (see, for example, Henwood, 2003: 39-41); that working conditions in all industries, within the dominant economies at least, are becoming increasingly flexible and insecure (see, for example, Gray, 1995 and Kernow and Sullivan, 2004); that the network form is becoming dominant today (see, for example, Arquilla and Ronfeldt, 2001; Castells, 2000; Terranova, 2004); and that the service sector is expanding (Castells and Aoyama, 1994; 2002). Other claims, such as the increased blurring of the distinction between work and leisure, appear almost self-evident. One need only take a look, for example, at the recruitment pages on websites of major employers to see that companies are increasingly providing their employees with leisure facilities, increasing the number of hours that they spend at their place of

employment and contributing to the development of personal relationships between staff members.[29]

However, despite, in my opinion, having identified and drawn attention to a number of important trends, Hardt and Negri's work has drawn heavy criticism and sparked extensive debate within and beyond the social sciences. It is my belief, however, that many of those criticisms have, at least in part, been based on a failure to fully comprehend the *tendential* nature of their argument. For instance, Harman (2003), Henwood (2003: 184-185) and Thompson (2005: 84-85) have all gone to lengths in order to demonstrate that the industrial working class is not decreasing in size, and that those whom Hardt and Negri would describe as 'immaterial labourers' constitute a relatively small proportion of the global workforce. However, as we have already seen, this is a line of argument with which Hardt and Negri would certainly not disagree. Their argument, they repeatedly emphasise, is *qualitative* as opposed to *quantitative*. "Numbers are important," they explain, "but the key is to grasp the direction of the present, to read which seeds will grow and which wither" (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 141). In other words, their argument that immaterial labour is tending to inform and influence other forms of production – all of which, of course, remain singular but tend towards an increasing number of elements in common – is in no way contradicted by the claim that there has been *no overall decline* in the number of people involved in industrial or, for that matter, agricultural production.

More controversial than their argument as to the becoming hegemonic of immaterial labour, however, has been Hardt and Negri's claim as to the structural transformations said to have taken place alongside this process, and in particular the move from the era of imperialism to Empire.

From Imperialism to Empire?

The claim made by Hardt and Negri that "Imperialism is over" (2001: xiv) has proven to be one of their most controversial. A huge number of articles (for example, Barkawi and Laffey, 2002; Bull, 2003; Callinicos, 2001, 2002; Petras, 2001) and at least one book (Boron, 2005) have dedicated themselves, amongst other things, to illustrating the perceived weaknesses of the 'end of imperialism' thesis.[30]

The publication of *Empire*, was initially considered timely (Adams, 2001). The book had been written between the end of the 1991 Persian Gulf War and the outbreak of war in Kosovo (Hardt and Negri, 2001: xvii). This was a period in which the North American Free Trade Agreement had come into effect, the World Trade Organisation (WTO) had been formalised as an institution, and processes of liberalisation seemed to be unstoppable. 'Globalisation' was becoming a buzz-word both within the academy and popular culture.[31] Furthermore, *Empire*'s publication a couple of months after the

29 For example, American Express [http://www10.americanexpress.com/sif/cda/page/0,1641,13841,00.asp] or Microsoft [http://members.microsoft.com/careers/mslife/ benefits/plan.mspx].

30 Brewer (1990) offers a useful critical survey of various Marxian theories of imperialism.

31 Scholte (2000: 43-44) charts the rise of notions of 'globalisation' and the spread of the term across dozens of languages since the 1980s.

'Battle of Seattle' seemed, with the concept of 'multitude', to provide a framework within which co-operation between groups previously considered to have conflicting interests (trade unionists and environmentalists; anarchists and communists; nuns and queer activists) could be understood.[32]

However, almost as soon as *Empire* was off the presses, strong counter-tendencies appeared to be emerging. The collapse of the Cancun WTO Ministerial in September 2003, following the demand by a group of countries from the global south (the G21) that the north open its own borders in return for access to their markets (Wallerstein, 2003); the failure of the Free Trade of the Americas Agreement (FTAA) talks in Miami later that year, followed by their final collapse in Mar del Plata, Argentina in November 2005;[33] and, of course, the US-led military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq, considered by some as little more than "an old-fashioned European-style colonial occupation" (Ali, 2003: 9), provide just a few examples.

Once again, many of the criticisms made of Hardt and Negri's claim overlook the tendential nature of their argument. But it must be said that, although Hardt and Negri certainly went to some lengths in *Empire* to emphasise "real and important continuities" (Hardt and Negri, 2001: 9) with the past, this aspect of their argument became, at times, obscured by their own rhetoric. Even the authors themselves, in their more recent works (see, for example, Hardt, 2006; Negri, 2002a), appear to concede that their previous proclamations as to the end of imperialism were, perhaps, a little over-zealous.

Perhaps in light of the series of historical events which followed *Empire*'s publication, some of which are outlined above; or perhaps out of frustration at the way in which their work has been consistently misinterpreted, in recent works Hardt and Negri are far more explicit about their deployment of 'the historical tendency' as an analytic and descriptive tool (see, in particular, Hardt and Negri, 2004: 141-144).

As we have already seen, Hardt and Negri's analysis of counterinsurgency led to their arguing that the US military and, more generally, US power itself, "must become a network, shed its national character, and become an imperial military machine" (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 59). In other words, *military necessity itself* dictates that "[t]he network form of power is the only one today able to create and maintain order" (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 59). However, this is not to deny, as critics such as Callinicos (2002) and Wood (2003: 71) appear to believe has been argued, that single powers, such as the United States, may attempt to "circumvent [the] necessity of the network form" (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 61). Indeed, they do. "[B]ut what it throws out the door always sneaks back in the window. For a centralized power, trying to push back a network is like trying to beat back a rising flood with a stick" (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 61). The current war in Iraq is cited as one example of this.

In a recent paper, Hardt (2006) argues that the architects of the Iraq war "have fooled themselves into believing that the United States can repeat the glory of the great

32 For accounts from Seattle, see St. Claire (2004) or Notes from Nowhere (2003: 204-245).

33 Following the breakdown of negotiations, here, the Venezuelan President, Hugo Chavez pronounced the FTAA "dead" (Reuters, 2005).

imperialists." Likewise, he explains, many of the war's opponents have been quick to believe them, "returning to the old anti-imperialist discourses and concepts"[34] (Hardt, 2006). However, "all these comparisons" with previous eras of imperialism, he argues, "are really just ill fitting clothes that disguise what is going on underneath" (Hardt, 2006). Returning to the notion of the mixed constitution of today's Empire, he argues that the current war can, perhaps, better be understood in terms of a "coup d'Etat within the global system." In other words, "a usurpation of power within the ruling order by the unilateral, monarchical element [represented by the United States] and the corresponding subordination of the multilateral, aristocratic forces [represented by other dominant nation-states, major corporations, supranational organisations and so on]" (Hardt, 2006). Whilst Hardt recognises that the current US administration believes that it can successfully rule the world, "with merely the aid of passive vassals", he argues that they are very much mistaken. He cites the unilateralist adventures in Iraq as having proven 'untenable', with occupation having led to instability and civil war. "No one can doubt at this point that the current US masquerade as an imperialist power, capable of dictating global order unilaterally, will eventually collapse under the weight of its own failures" (Hardt, 2006).

And indeed, this is precisely what the monarchical powers of Empire – or at least some of the most senior advisors – appear to be learning. In early 2006, Francis Fukuyama, a former member of the Project for the New American Century and once-leading neo-conservative political economist, distanced himself from the tradition, on the basis of the crisis in Iraq. Despite having been a co-signatory of a 1998 letter to US President Bill Clinton,[35] as well as a similar letter to US President George W Bush following September 11th 2001,[36] both of which called for the overthrow of the Hussein regime, Fukuyama criticises the manner in which the war in Iraq has been carried out. Whilst continuing to argue for US world leadership, he argues for a serious re-thinking of the means by which foreign policy is carried out, arguing, "The solution is to promote a 'multi-multilateral world' of overlapping and occasionally competing international institutions organised on regional or functional lines" (Fukuyama, 2006a; see also 2006b). The recently published Iraq Study Group Report (Baker III et al., 2006) has similarly argued that the reimposition of 'order' in Iraq can only be ensured through the active deployment of the various elements of Empire.

In this sense, then, whilst imperialist *ambition* may be far from over, imperialism, as an effective mechanism of rule, is indeed in its final death throes. Ultimately, the network form of power will be imposed, "*strictly from the perspective of effectiveness of rule*" (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 62). In other words, the imposition and maintenance of (capitalist) order in Iraq and beyond is only likely to be achieved, if at all, through constant collaboration between what Hardt and Negri would call the 'monarchical' supreme power of the United States and various 'aristocratic' powers, such as the forces

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34 For an example of anti-imperialist discourse deployed by opponents of the current war in Iraq, see Ali (2003) or Cockburn and St. Clair (2004).

35 The letter, dated January 26th 1998, is available online here: [http://www.newamericancentury.org/iraqclintonletter.htm].

36 The letter, dated September 20th 2001, is available online here: [http://www.newamericancentury.org/Bushletter.htm].

of 'old' and 'new' Europe, the UN, and numerous NGOs, aid agencies and humanitarian bodies.

Part Four: The Limits of Hardt and Negri's Analysis

As I have already explained, I believe Hardt and Negri's central argument, that a series of transformations have taken place, or are in the process of taking place, within the realm of production, and that these transformations correspond to a large extent to changes taking place throughout society and even within the structures of international power itself, to be broadly correct. That a networked form of power – in which nation-states and a range of non-state actors, including major corporations, international organisations, NGOs and others, constitute a form of global governance – has emerged alongside post-Fordist forms of production seems almost undeniable. Indeed, Reid (2005) has gone some way towards demonstrating the role which international organisations such as the UN, humanitarian agencies and global civil society have played in creating the necessary preconditions for the current war in Iraq, perhaps the most oft cited example of the supposed resurgence of, or regression to, imperialist projects in which the power of the nation-state is considered primary.[37]

However, I believe that there nevertheless exist a number of real and important weaknesses in Hardt and Negri's analysis. The first of which, I believe, is their claim as to the immeasurability of value in today's global political economy. The second – which in some ways can be understood as derivative from (at least elements of) the workerist tradition more generally – is the way in which the relation between labour and capital (or the multitude and Empire) is conceived. And the third and final key weakness, I will argue, is the grounds upon which Hardt and Negri attempt to substantiate their claim as to the possibilities for liberation opened up in the age of Empire, namely: the increasingly communicative, collaborative and cooperative manner in which production is understood as taking place today. I will attempt to set out each of these lines of critique in turn.

The Value of Value Discourse

I believe Hardt and Negri's claim as to value being beyond measure, under the hegemony of immaterial labour, to be flawed on a number of grounds. First and foremost, it appears bizarrely at odds with their own observation elsewhere that the emergence of new forms of (immaterial) private property, such as intellectual property, has necessitated the development of new legal structures (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 187). Surely the fact that knowledge, for example, has been successfully transformed into a saleable commodity and acquired an exchange value indicates nothing other than the continued presence of value as a form of measure. Furthermore, their claim that the amount of labour embodied within immaterial commodities is immeasurable on the basis of the labour involved in its production not being traceable to an individual labourer, but rather taking place through a process of 'biopolitical' collaboration and

37 See also, Reid (2006).

cooperation (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 187), is truly surprising. As they themselves explain elsewhere (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 144-145), Marx's concept of value, unlike that of the classical political economists, is based on the concept of 'abstract' as opposed to 'concrete' labour. In other words, Marx's concept of value *never* required being able to identify the work performed by individual waged labourers. As Marx himself explained, "The labour objectified in value is labour of an average social quality, it is an expression of average labour-power" (1990: 440).

In an excellent recent article, George Caffentzis (2005) briefly outlines the positive contribution which value discourse made to the anti-capitalist movement of Marx's day. Firstly, he explains that it provided an "apparently precise and measurable definition of exploitation in capitalist society" (Caffentzis, 2005: 94). This was especially useful, he argues, since within the capitalist mode of production exploitation is formally 'hidden' (Caffentzis, 2005: 94).[38] Whereas under feudalism it was apparent to a serf when they were working on their own land and when on their lord's land, for capitalism's waged-labourer, however, the moment when she has completed the necessary labour-time to generate the value equivalent to that which she receives in the form of her wage, and hence begins producing a surplus, remains obscured. Secondly, value discourse provided "a narrative… that workers can use in an antagonistic way to describe themselves as fundamental actors in the drama of history and the capitalists and landlords as parasitic upon their labor, anxiety and suffering" (Caffentzis, 2005: 94). And thirdly, allowing labour to recognise itself as the creative and productive force within capitalism enabled it to understand its own potential to create a world beyond it (Caffentzis, 2005: 94).

Contra Hardt and Negri, Caffentzis, correctly I believe, argues that there is no particular reason why value discourse in general, and the law of value[39] in particular, should not continue to fulfil a similar function today. Indeed, he observes that the law of value has, in fact, "been most tyrannical in the current neoliberal period!" (2005: 106). "Any reading of the financial press and the economic policy makers' position statements" he argues,

> would give anyone the impression that the Law of Value, as usually understood, is a truism. Surely what is the prescription for any economic problem but more discipline of labor, more labor flexibility and productivity, a reduction of costs, and so on? …Of course, if you want your products to compete on the world market you need to reduce the socially necessary labor time required to produce them, by any means necessary. (Caffentzis, 2005: 106-107).

38 The specificity of exploitation within the capitalist mode of production is set out brilliantly by Wood (1995).

39 Caffentzis (2005: 90) argues that Marx himself rarely used the phrase 'law of value'. As a result, its meaning and implication have been variously interpreted. Caffentzis, following Leontyev, adopts the narrowest definition of the law: "the value of a commodity is determined by the socially necessary labor-time required for its production" (Caffentzis, 2005: 94).

The Capital-Labour Relation in Hardt and Negri

The second limit to Hardt and Negri's work is in some ways traceable to one of the workerist tradition's primary strengths; namely, its attempt to render labour, its struggles and agency visible.

To be absolutely clear: such efforts are certainly always to be commended. Indeed, a recent empirical study carried out by Silver (2003) has illustrated the very real extent to which workers' struggles have contributed to processes of globalisation since 1870, with capital constantly relocating and developing new strategies to escape and ultimately defeat workplace militancy.

However, a criticism could certainly be directed towards a number of *operaisti* – and Hardt and Negri in particular – as to having read Tronti's 1964 call to "turn the problem on its head", reverse the polarity and recognise "the class struggle of the working class" as *the* motor of capitalist development, far more literally than even he meant it. In doing so, they reproduce – albeit in reverse – the weakness of the orthodox approach. That is, emphasising one side of the capital relation, and obscuring the other in the process. The result is that the role that victories by capital over labour, such as the defeat of the British miners' strike in the 1980s, have played in shaping the current world order are overlooked (Callinicos, 2001; Thompson, 2005: 88-89). [40]

In this sense, Holloway's critique of elements of the workerist tradition is pertinent. He argues that the "movement of capitalist rule" can indeed be understood as "driven by the force of working class struggle", however, not in the way that Hardt, Negri and others have understood it (Holloway, 2002: 165). Whereas they have interpreted the relation between labour and capital as an 'external' one, with the history of capitalist development being one of reaction to the struggles of the working class, Holloway argues the relation to be 'internal' (2002: 165). In other words, "capital is a function of the working class for the simple reason that capital is nothing other than the *product* of the working class and therefore depends, from one minute to another, upon the working class for its reproduction" (Holloway, 2002: 165). Such an understanding, as Holloway points out, allows us to identify the extent to which labour is contained within capital (and hence capital's power over labour), but also the extent to which labour exists as an internal contradiction within capital (and hence labour's power over capital) (Holloway, 2002: 174).[41] Understanding both these aspects of the capital/labour relation is, I believe, key to comprehending both processes that have led to developments within the global political economy, and the potential for its transformation.

A Question of Communication

Hardt and Negri's argument as to the potential for liberation within what they call Empire is, as we have seen, based to a large extent upon their claim that processes of

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40 Lotringer (2004: 11) has also criticised Hardt and Negri's opposition to a "hybrid thesis" that would recognise the creativity and power of both labour and capital.

41 Ironically, in a 1964 article, published one year after *Lenin in England* which originally proposed the Copernican inversion that has characterised much of the workerist tradition, Tronti himself went to great lengths to illustrate precisely this 'internal' relation.

communication, coordination and collaboration are becoming 'immanent' to the labouring process itself, creating the conditions for "a spontaneous and elementary" form of communism (Hardt and Negri, 2001: 294). There are a number of problems with this argument.[42]

The first is related to their claim that capital today is increasingly parasitic, and hence more obviously disposable (Hardt and Negri, 2001: 294 and 2004: 147). Whereas in the past, capital was understood as functioning "like an orchestra conductor or a field general, deploying and coordinating productive forces in a common effort" (Hardt and Negri, 2001: 462), today labour, and immaterial labour in particular, as we have seen, is understood as being capable of self-valorisation (Hardt and Negri, 2001: 294). However, whilst a minority of 'privileged' intellectual, artistic or creative workers may well be both capable of, and willing to, valorise their own labour; this is unlikely to be the case in most other sectors. How many workers in a Toyotist factory, temporary labourers entering data into a spreadsheet, or affective fast-food workers would, I wonder, maintain the productivity levels currently expected of them if the individual personifications of capital responsible for overseeing, ordering and directing their daily work were to disappear over night?[43]

Secondly, Hardt and Negri's claim as to the changes taking place within the realm of industrial production under the hegemony of immaterial labour is based, to a large extent, on the presumption that industrial production is increasingly characterised by a Toyotist, as opposed to a Fordist, production process. However, there now exists a considerable body of literature which indicates that whilst the so-called 'Japanese model of production', developed at Toyota and elsewhere, did indeed proliferate during the 1970s and 1980s, its success was relatively short lived and it has now become regarded as an outdated management strategy (Bernard, 2000; Gambino, 1996; Moodey, 1997: 110-113; Silver, 2003: 69). Furthermore, whilst Hardt and Negri are certainly correct to identify the important role that communication plays in Toyotism, both in terms of communication between the market and the factory and within and between production plants, the means by which they understand these particular forms of communication as creating the necessary conditions for workers to develop a sense of collective identity, solidarity and, ultimately, agency remains an open question.

Hardt and Negri's ability to identify important tendencies and to generalise from them is, I believe, one of the greatest strengths of their work. However, there are a number of dangers involved in such an approach. The flattening out, or obscuring, of important differences, in this case between different forms of communication, is one such danger. Hardt and Negri correctly identified the inability of workers and peasants to effectively communicate and coordinate during previous waves of struggle as having severely limited their success (see, for example, Hardt and Negri, 2004: 122-124). However,

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42 This issue overlaps, of course, in many ways with that mentioned above, namely: the tendency to posit the relation between capital and labour as an external one.

43 De Angelis and Harvie (2006) and Dowling (2006) illustrate the means by which both the 'high' and 'low' ends of immaterial and affective forms of labour (higher education teaching and waitressing respectively) are both measured and disciplined. In both instances, capital's role appears far more than simply 'parasitic'.

their claim that communication and flows of information play an increasingly central role in all forms of production today appears to have led them to conclude that *communication amongst workers* (their ability to share their experiences, grievances and to coordinate their struggles) no longer constitutes a problem. The qualitative nature of the communication involved in most productive processes, however, remains completely obscured within their analysis. It is hard to conceive how communication between market, factory and supply chain in the Toyotist just-in-time (JIT) system, for example, constitutes any greater opportunity for the development of effective labour struggles than the Fordist assembly line. Indeed, a recently published study of workplace militancy in automobile factories worldwide found that in the original JIT system implemented at Toyota, levels of worker militancy were extremely low, a fact which the study's author attributed to the core workforce being offered employment security in return for their cooperation (Silver, 2003: 66-70). When the JIT system was implemented elsewhere, however, without the corresponding employment guarantees, workplaces were characterised by higher rates of employee turnover and more frequent industrial actions; although even within these plants, "the dynamic of labour-capital conflict has remained largely the same as in the traditional Fordist model" (Silver, 2003: 68).

In other words, I would argue that the *qualitative* as opposed to the *quantitative* nature of the communication involved in productive processes is of far more relevance to determining the likelihood of an emancipatory anti-capitalist workers' movement or struggle developing, a distinction which Hardt and Negri appear to largely overlook.

Concluding Remarks

I believe that Hardt and Negri's concept of immaterial labour, and the narrative they offer as to the means by which it exerts its hegemony, equips us with a theoretical framework within which we can make sense of a number of significant processes currently taking place within the global political economy. Similarly, the concept of Empire describes, I believe, an important tendency in the functioning of power on a global level today.

Of course, none of this is in any way to deny the existence of real and important counter-tendencies, of which the apparent resurgence of imperialist ambition – expressed most clearly in terms of the post-September 11th military adventurism of the United States – is merely one example amongst many. As Hardt and Negri have convincingly argued, however, the task of social theory is "to grasp the direction of the present, to read which seeds will grow and which wither" (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 141).

The possibilities for liberation opened up by the current processes of transformation, however, are somewhat over-stated in Hardt and Negri's work. As Lotringer explains: "That an alternative to the contemporary imperial order is 'necessary'… doesn't make its existence any more tangible" (2004: 15).

As we have already seen, Hardt and Negri's concept of multitude has a double temporality. It describes both an existing tendency and a political project as yet to be realised. Whilst it is indeed the case that, under the hegemony of immaterial labour, all of us produce within an increasingly common condition; there appears to be little or no

reason to believe that it is one in which the potential for communism – no matter how 'spontaneous' or 'elementary' in form – is any greater than in previous eras. Whilst effective communication, coordination and collaboration amongst all of those involved in productive and reproductive practices today may well hold the key to establishing the forms of democracy to which Hardt and Negri allude, that these features have already become immanent to labouring practices today appears as nothing more than a tragically flawed proposition.

This having been said, traces of something resembling the multitude, albeit in a very embryonic form, can indeed be identified within a number of social movements today. The counter-globalisation movements described above provide perhaps the most obvious example of this. At protests such as those surrounding the WTO Ministerial in Seattle in 1999, to cite only the most well known example, we have seen groups previously considered contradictory working together, not within a single, unified or unifying organisation, but relating to one another through a networked structure. In this sense, Hardt and Negri's *naming* of this tendency, which as they have themselves explained, in itself provides "a powerful tool for further developing the emerging political form" (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 220), may have made somewhat of a contribution to the second aspect of the multitude's double temporality – i.e. as a political project as yet to be fully realised.

The project of the multitude's self-constitution, then, is something which cannot be taken for granted. There is no *telos*; and there are no (longer any) certainties. For those of us interested in its further development, however, there would seem to be two overlapping fields in which we need to intensify our activity. The first is that of inquiry; and the second is that of practice/intervention.

In many ways, openly political 'militant research', 'workers' inquiry'[44] and (in particular) 'co-research'[45] have always been part of the *operaist* project, contrasting starkly to the supposedly 'objective' perspective often claimed within the social sciences.[46] Today, however, with the spilling of production out of the factory and into society at large and the tendential emergence of Empire, a particular kind of inquiry is called for. The proposal made elsewhere in this issue of *ephemera* by Conti et al. provides an excellent point of departure. It proposes a project of co-research which looks beyond the traditional workplace and at the whole of metropolitan social life; which examines the labour market and the realms and environments of production; which looks at the places of conflict and at the experience of mobility; and finally, which seeks to determine the locations and forms of governance and control. It is precisely such co-research which could guide and inform our political practice and

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44 One recent, interesting, project of inquiry was engaged with over three years by the Ruhrpott (Germany) based group Kolinko, examining the (potential) role of call centre workers within the new class composition (Kolinko, 2001).

45 For a helpful definition of 'co-research', and its methodological and political differences to 'workers' inquiry', see Conti et al., this issue.

46 Which is, of course, not to say that all research carried out from 'within the academy' is either 'non-political' or claims objectivity. The extremely interesting ethnographic research carried out by Ngai (2005) on the realities of internal migrant women working in China's factories is but one example of important and useful research to have recently come out of the social sciences.

enable us to determine the level and realm most appropriate (that is, effective) for social intervention.

Today, all political practice needs to be directed towards bringing about a class recomposition; that is, the constitution of the multitude – a productive power capable of confronting and, ultimately, breaking with neo-liberal, post-Fordist social relations. That precisely *how* this could be done remains somewhat abstract in Hardt and Negri's work represents no great weakness on their part.

Whilst Marx's *Capital* (and his other great works), provided generations of workers with a powerful weapon for both understanding their own exploitation and recognising themselves as the source of social wealth and productivity; it was not from these pages that solutions as to how the world could be remade were sought. Rather, 'the question of organisation' was addressed by the Paris Commune and the workers' councils and soviets in Germany, Russia and elsewhere. In the same way, today, it will not be *Empire* or *Multitude*, or a journal such as this that the answer to Lenin's old question will be found. What, precisely, is to be done? is being looked for elsewhere. And indeed, some tentative solutions are already being found. They lie in the mobilisations against international summits which have erupted around the world everywhere from Seattle to Prague and Genoa to Hong Kong; in Paris's rebellious *banlieu*; in the *piquetero* organisations set up after Argentina's financial crisis in 2001; and in the social uprising taking place in Oaxaca, Mexico at the time of this writing.

Careful, well-directed projects of co-research, which aim to uncover both the common and the singular; in constant relation with experiments in social and political intervention are the only ways in which we will be able, if at all, to contribute to the self-constitution of the multitude. It is with this project which we should busy ourselves.

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Life Within and Against Work: Affective Labor, Feminist Critique, and Post-Fordist Politics

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abstract

Feminist theorists have long been interested in immaterial and affective labor, even if the terms themselves are a more recent invention. Contemporary discussions of the concepts of immaterial and affective labor could be enriched by a better understanding of these lineages. Towards that end, this paper focuses on two pioneering feminist projects: the socialist feminist effort to add a critical account of reproductive labor to a Marxist analysis of productive labor and Arlie Hochschild's addition of the emotional labors of pink collar service workers to the critical analyses of white collar immaterial labor exemplified by the work of C.W. Mills. By focusing on what each of these feminist interventions contributes one can better understand the specificity of labor in the immaterial mode and the difficulties posed by its theorization. The two traditions are instructive for both the achievements and the failures of their analyses. Arguing that both of these critical strategies prove increasingly untenable under the conditions of post-Fordist production, the paper concludes with a brief attempt to imagine the terms of an alternative immanent strategy of critical/political intervention, one that might serve to open another angle of vision on, and frame a different kind of political response to, post-Fordist regimes of work.

Feminist theorists have long been interested in immaterial and affective labor, even if the terms themselves are a more recent invention. Their early explorations of immaterial laboring practices and relations were part and parcel of the struggle to expand the category of labor to include more of its gendered forms. Affective labor in particular has been understood within certain feminist traditions as fundamental both to contemporary models of exploitation and to the possibility of their subversion. Contemporary discussions of the concepts of immaterial and affective labor could be enriched by a better understanding of these lineages. Towards that end, this paper will focus on two pioneering feminist projects: the second wave socialist feminist effort to add a critical account of reproductive labor to a Marxist analysis of productive labor and Arlie Hochschild's landmark addition of the emotional labors of pink collar service workers to the critical analyses of white collar immaterial labor exemplified by the work of C.W. Mills. By focusing on what each of these feminist interventions

contributes, one to Marxist critique and the other to the critical sociology of service work, one can better understand the specificity of labors in the immaterial mode and the difficulties posed by their theorization.

The significance of these two feminist projects, however, lies not only in the quality of their analyses but in the force of their critiques; that is, they continue to be valuable not only for the way they map these developments theoretically but for how they confront them politically. Thus I want to pay particular attention to their contributions to the project of politicized critique: critical evaluations with political intent or analytics that are attentive to possible lines of antagonism. Socialist feminists, for example, built on Marxist political economics to conceive unwaged reproductive labor, particularly household caring labor, both as a locus of exploitation and as a site from which resistant subjects and alternative visions might emerge. Mills and Hochschild drew instead on versions of the Marxist theory of estrangement to gain critical purchase on capital's increasing reliance on immaterial and specifically affective forms of labor.

Both of these critical strategies ultimately fail in my view; but, as it turns out, their failures are as instructive as their achievements. Despite their many breakthroughs, each of the approaches is limited by its recourse to a critical standpoint and notion of political resistance grounded in an outside: in a reproductive sphere separate from capitalist production proper or in a model of the self prior to its estrangement. Regardless of whether or not these approaches were once adequate, such a reliance on an outside proves increasingly untenable under the conditions of post-Fordist production and reproduction.

The first part of this paper will briefly revisit the socialist feminist tradition and the second will take up, in a somewhat longer discussion, the contributions of Mills and Hochschild. In the final section I want to begin to think about the terms of an alternative theoretical approach. Drawing on both the insights and blind spots of these earlier projects, I want to present some very preliminary ideas about how one might approach the development of an immanent strategy of critical/political intervention, one that could perhaps afford another angle of vision on and frame a different kind of political response to post-Fordist regimes of work.

Socialist Feminism and the Exploitation of Domestic Labor

In order both to get a better handle on the concept of immaterial labor and to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges it poses, I think it is useful to return to the Anglo-American socialist feminist tradition, and specifically the analyses that were produced in the period from the late-1960s to the early 1980s. These were some of the earliest attempts to grasp the specificities of immaterial labor in a period still dominated by the paradigm of material production. As a project dedicated to mapping capitalist economies and gender regimes from a simultaneously Marxist and feminist perspective, the tradition was focused on understanding how various gendered laboring practices are both put to use by and potentially disruptive of capitalist relations of production. The literature was fairly broad and diverse; I will treat only two of the specific discourses,

one from the early part of the period and the other developed in the later years. These are the domestic labor debates, which attended to domestic labor in relation to Marx's theory of exploitation, and socialist feminist standpoint theory, which was more interested in the subjects situated within, and agents potentially poised against, the systems of capitalism and patriarchy.[1] At the highest level of generality socialist feminism in this period can be said to have focused on the contradiction between processes of capital accumulation and social reproduction. Although they gestured toward a more expansive notion of reproduction as the work of creating and sustaining social forms and relations of cooperation and sociality, they typically settled for a narrower conception equated with unwaged housework and caring labor, confined to the space of the household. They grappled with the questions of how to understand, assess, and confront the relationship between capitalist production and domestic reproduction. This recognition of the household as a site of social reproduction entailed the important struggle to expand existing notions of work. Certainly one of socialist feminism's major achievements in this period was to rethink dominant conceptions of what counts as labor and attend to its gendered relations in a time when work was typically still equated with waged production of material goods.

But as noted earlier, the 1970s tradition of socialist feminism is instructive not only for its successes, but for its failures as well. In particular I think it is useful to remember how much resistance there was to this feminist expansion of the categories of work and production. The earliest of these projects, grouped together under the heading of the domestic labor debates, is particularly interesting for some of the specific terms of the disagreements and their effects. Although the debates were fairly wide-ranging, over time the arguments came to hinge on the question of whether domestic labor was best conceived as internal or external to capitalist production proper. Was the domestic realm part of a capitalist system or a separate mode of production? Was domestic labor an instance of 'unproductive' labor which, since it does not create surplus value, is not central or fundamental to capital? Or was it a form of 'productive' labor that produces surplus value either indirectly or directly and hence must be conceived as an integral element of capitalist production? Was it subject to or exempt from the law of value and thus marginal or integral to the process of valorization? In short, was domestic labor properly inside or outside capitalist production?[2] The debate was thus reduced to roughly two positions: the more unorthodox participants conceived the waged labor and household economies in more integrated terms and struggled to challenge the basic map

1 A third discourse, socialist feminist systems theory, which concentrated on mapping the relation between the systems of capitalism and patriarchy, dominated the period roughly between the domestic labor debates and the early development of socialist feminist standpoint theory. For examples of the domestic labor debates see Malos (1995); for some of the original contributions to standpoint theory in its socialist feminist mode see Harding (2004); for representatives of systems theory see Sargent (1981). Alternative versions of these three projects, which are not subject to the same limitations I go on to outline and which continue to prove valuable today include, respectively, wages for housework (see, for example, Dalla Costa and James, 1972), post-Fordist socialist feminist standpoint theory (see, for example, Haraway, 1985), and unified or intersectional systems theory (see, for example, I. Young, 1981, and Glenn, 1985). Although socialist feminism lives on (sometimes under other labels), the late 1960s to the early 1980s marks the period of its peak.

2 Part of what was at stake here was a question of political strategy: should feminist struggles be autonomous from or integrated within working class organizations and agendas?

of capitalist production, whereas those holding to the more orthodox line, which came to dominate the debate, insisted on some kind of dual systems distinction. Drawing on Marx's original distinction between productive and unproductive labor, the more orthodox authors defended a narrow understanding of capitalist production tied closely to the industrial paradigm.

Given the dominance of this essentially Fordist industrial framework of the domestic labor debates, it is perhaps not surprising that there was a tendency on both sides to privilege the example of housework over affective forms of domestic labor. Indeed, one of the things that is so striking about the literature from a contemporary perspective was how rarely the specificities of caring labor were addressed, a tendency perhaps attributable to the feminization of the work (and hence its status as 'shadow labor'), to the preeminence of a rather orthodox brand of Marxism, and to the hegemony of the Fordist imaginary. Even the more unorthodox participants who claimed the fundamentally capitalist character of domestic work tended to overlook or underemphasize caring labor. On one hand, they recognized that labor was not only activity that created objects; on the other hand, they tended in this period to focus on domestic labor's resemblances to such work, possibly to help make the case that domestic work and the women to whom it was assigned were relevant objects of Marxist analysis and subjects of revolutionary politics. To the extent that housework, for example, could be characterized in terms of the production of use-values for consumption, it was perhaps easier to accept as labor. In this context it was no doubt more difficult to grasp the relationship between caring practices and value-production.

By the late 1970s the domestic debate had exhausted itself on the shoals of the inside/outside controversy. What started as a wide-ranging exploration of the relationship between capitalism and domestic work narrowed down to repeated stagings of the debate about whether domestic practices and relations were integral to or relatively autonomous from capitalist production.[3] The more orthodox claim that domestic labor was different from and hence part of a distinct circuit outside capitalist production emerged as the dominant line. Reproductive labor in the domestic realm was then either relegated to a territory outside capitalist production proper or perhaps included inside, but typically insofar as it could be likened to or directly implicated in industrial production. Dual systems logic predicated on a model of separate spheres came to dominate not only the specific terms of this debate but much of the subsequent socialist feminist literature in the period.

Socialist Feminist Standpoint Theory and the Subjects of Resistance

In contrast to the earlier domestic labor debates, socialist feminist standpoint theory – and here I am concentrating on the period of the later 1970s and early 1980s – more often focused on caring labor, embracing its differences from industrial production as a

3 For a useful overview and critical analysis of the domestic labor debates see Ellen Malos' introduction and concluding essay in Malos (1995).

potential source of alternative epistemologies and ontologies. Indeed, standpoint theory is of particular relevance for our purposes here both for its early explorations of affective labor and for its attention to the possibilities of resistance it might enable. Between the spheres of household and economy, the contradiction between the exigencies of capital accumulation and social reproduction gives rise to a variety of disjunctures and conflicts that could generate critical thinking and political action. Where the domestic labor literature concentrated on mapping the gendered patterns of exploitation, early standpoint theories focused more on the possibility that revolutionary projects could emerge from these exploited practices and marginalized subject positions. Reproduction, again typically equated with domestic space, is the site from which feminist political subjects might be constituted and alternative visions imagined.[4]

The terms of the inside/outside division figured differently in this discourse. In the context of the domestic labor debates, the most compelling contributions from a contemporary perspective were those unorthodox arguments that pressed for a more radical reconception of capitalist production that could encompass the domestic sphere as an integral node in the circuit of value creation. But again, given the way the debate was typically framed, domestic labor was often taken to be inside capital to the extent that it resembled and was thus comparable to waged labor in the industrial mode. Standpoint theories, in contrast, explored the differences of domestic laboring practices, embracing the otherness of caring labor as a potential critical lever and site of agency.

This reproductive 'women's work', which is at once necessary to and marginalized by capitalist valorization processes, was posed as a potential source of feminist standpoints: alternative knowledges, resistant subjectivities, and feminist collectivities. The possibility of alternatives was located in the productivity of practices, in a claim about what we do rather than what we are. Insisting that "[t]he production of people is…qualitatively different from the production of things", Hilary Rose, to cite one example from this period, argues that women's work in the household involves a distinctive kind of emotionally demanding caring labor, the labor of love (2004: 74). She then explores the possibility of a feminist epistemology that integrates the knowledges gleaned from labors of the hand, brain, and heart. "Bringing caring labor and the knowledge that stems from participation in it to the analysis", Rose claims, "becomes critical for a transformative program equally within science and within society" (2004: 78).

The problem is that although caring labor and its potentially subversive difference were brought to light, the achievements of the project were hampered by the assumption that resistance must come from the outside and the spatial division between production and reproduction by which that outside was secured. Thus although Rose recognizes waged forms of affective labor, she nonetheless tends to assume that affective labor of the heart is what distinguishes reproductive from productive labor, thereby fastening the distinction between material and immaterial labors to a division of social realms. That is, the specificity of labor in the affective mode was secured by recourse to the same

4 See, for example, the classic essays by Hartsock and Rose (in Harding, 2004). For examples of how standpoint theory continues to be a generative framework after this period see the introduction to and selections in Harding (2004) and Hartsock (1998).

logic of separate spheres that dominated the domestic labor debates. This difference in laboring practices and the subjectivities that might be developed on their basis was at the same time grafted by the logic of separate spheres onto a rather strict two-gender model. Women's laboring practices in the domestic realm, the realm of reproduction, which though necessary, are thereby posed as nonetheless fundamentally different from men's laboring practices in the realm of production. By relying on the logic of separate spheres to posit a radical difference between men's work and women's work, these standpoint theories risked, despite strong methodological commitments to the contrary, replicating undifferentiated and naturalized models of gender. The theories of revolutionary subjectivity were thus hampered by the reliance on gender dualism that was common to the period, as well as the homogenization and reification of gender identities it can enable.

The present utility of each of these older analyses is further called into question by the specificities of post-Fordist labor and production. First, the distinction between productive and unproductive labor, on which the claims about what is inside and outside were predicated in the domestic labor debates, is based in turn on the paradigm of industrial production and the model of a material commodity. Regardless of whether it was ever adequate, especially under the conditions of post-Fordist production, the very same practices deemed unproductive in one site directly produce value in another and thus this simple distinction between what is inside or outside the circuits of capitalist valorization becomes increasingly untenable (see, for example, Negri, 1996: 157). Second, the distinction between men's work and women's work, on which the hope for a feminist standpoint outside capital was based, is similarly troubled by the increasing integration of what were imagined as the separate locations of production and reproduction. The further development of post-Taylorist and post-industrial labor processes, for example, confounds the separate spheres model both in terms of its respective products and in terms of its various labor processes. For example, the merging of reproduction and production is visible in the ways that commodities continue to replace domestically produced goods and services and many forms of caring and household labor are transformed into feminized, racialized, and globalized forms of waged labor in the service sector. Moreover, particularly in the service sectors, processes of production today increasingly integrate the labors of the hand, brain, and heart as more jobs require workers to use their knowledges, affects, capacities for cooperation and communicative skills to create not only material but increasingly immaterial products (see for example, Hardt and Negri, 2004: 108). Thus production and reproduction are more thoroughly integrated in terms of both what is (re)produced and how it is (re)produced. What could once perhaps have been imagined as an 'outside' is now more fully 'inside'; social reproduction can no longer be usefully identified with a particular site, let alone imagined as a sphere insulated from capital's logics.

Nor can reproduction be identified with a particular gender, although the story here is complicated. Whereas women continue to hold primary responsibility for the privatized work of care and tend still to be relegated to the gendered occupational niches that the domestic division of labor helps to secure, the practice of affective labor and presumably the potential political subjects that can be constituted on its basis cuts across the older binary divisions of both space and gender. Women and men are indeed

still often engaged in different laboring practices, but these differences cannot be mapped onto a binary gender schema secured by recourse to a model of separate spheres. Thus this reconfiguration of the gender order in the context of post-Fordism presents the persistence of the gender division of work in a situation in which the binaries of productive versus reproductive, waged versus unwaged, and with them, 'men's work' versus 'women's work' are increasingly inadequate. Under the conditions of post-Fordism, what Donna Haraway once described as the "the paradoxical intensification and erosion of gender itself" (1985: 87) demands more complicated mappings of the gender divisions of material and immaterial labor.[5]

Mills and Hochschild: White Collar and Emotional Labor

One of the reasons these socialist feminist analyses ran into an impasse was their inability to register adequately the passage from Fordism to post-Fordism. By shifting our attention from the early socialist feminist traditions to a different intellectual tradition represented by Mills's and Hochschild's groundbreaking analyses of post-industrial labor, we will move beyond this particular limitation. In turning from the classic socialist feminist texts to these contributions to the sociology of labor the focus changes from Fordism to post-Fordism, from unwaged to waged work, and from the critique of exploitation to the problem of alienation. Although the two texts are comparable in terms of both analytical orientation and critical apparatus, Hochschild's concentration on the specificity of emotional labor and attention to its gendered dimensions enables some crucial insights into the significance of the rise of immaterial forms of labor.[6]

In his 1951 book *White Collar*, Mills offers a prescient analysis of the nature and significance of the shift from an industrial to a post-industrial labor order, a theoretical enterprise for which there were, Mills noted, few instructive precedents or capable guides. "[T]he outlines of a new society have arisen around us," he declares, and the category of the white collar middle class – a class between or beyond both proletariat and bourgeoisie – "is an attempt to grasp these new developments of social structure and human character" (Mills, 1951: xx). As Mills explains it, white collar work – including everything from managerial to teaching, office, and sales work – involves putting subjectivity to work in jobs that are less about manipulating things and more about handling people and symbols (1951: 65). From a contemporary perspective, Mills's insights into what he names the 'personality market', in which "personal or even intimate traits of the employee are drawn into the sphere of exchange" are particularly timely (1951: 182). This trade in personality entails new criteria for hiring based on the

5 This is a project that Haraway (1985), for one, has brilliantly advanced by extending and transforming the tradition of socialist feminist standpoint theory.

6 In comparing the two analyses, it is hard not to be struck by the rather traditional gendering of style. Each of the texts is conducted on a different affective register. One takes the form of a hard-hitting expose, the other is conducted in the mode of sympathetic inquiry; one deploys passion and indignation whereas the other evinces compassion and concern; one is designed to marshal outrage in a time of political complacency while the other seeks also, in the tradition of feminism's insistence on the relation between the personal and political, to invite identification and self-reflection.

assessment of personality rather than skill, a new ideal of successful education for children, a new target for managerial intervention and, above all, a new kind of commodification of the laboring subject. As Mills observes, the rapid expansion of the activity of selling into new social spaces and relationships makes this enlarged market paradoxically "more impersonal and more intimate" (1951: 161).

In many ways Hochschild takes up in 1983 where Mills left off in 1951, though narrowing her focus from the broad swathe of immaterial labor in white-collar occupations to the emotional labor of pink-collar workers, of which the flight attendant serves as an iconic example. In the preface to *The Managed Heart,* Hochschild acknowledges her debt to Mills's inquiry into how and to what effect we "sell our personality", while also noting the insufficiencies of his analysis (Hochschild, 1983: ix). The category of emotional labor, which "requires one to induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain the outward countenance that produces the proper state of mind in others" (1983: 7), would, Hochschild suggests, help to bring into focus what Mills's analysis of the personality market tended to obscure. More specifically, what was missing "was a sense of the active emotional labor involved in the selling" (Hochschild, 1983: ix). Whereas Mills "seemed to assume that in order to sell personality, one need only have it" (1983: ix), Hochschild's analysis makes clear that this 'active emotional labor' is first, a skillful activity, and second, a practice with constitutive effects.

First, unlike Mills, Hochschild acknowledges the specific skills required for emotional labor. Whereas Mills focused on exchange relations in the 'personality market', Hochschild's category of 'emotional labor' shifts the focus to the labor process itself. The salesperson or flight attendant, for example, does not only sell his or her personality in return for a wage, but engages in a distinctive kind of labor. Indeed, emotion work is not just a form of labor, but an example of socially necessary labor. When Mills considered these activities only from the perspective of market exchange he found nothing of value in these practices that, as Hochschild notes, are also part of the labor of social reproduction that helps to sustain relations of cooperation and civility. Using a feminist lens, Hochschild recognizes the strategic management of emotions for social effect as an everyday practice which, since it is traditionally privatized and feminized, is not generally recognized or valued as labor. Thus in the 'private' realm in particular, efforts to affirm, enhance, and celebrate the well-being and status of others (1983: 165) exist, like housework, as forms of shadow labor (1983: 167). To the extent that the expression of emotion has been not only feminized but in the process also naturalized – as a spontaneous eruption rather than cultivated display – the skills involved in managing it successfully remain difficult to grasp.

Second, as 'active' labor Hochschild, in contrast to Mills, offers a compelling analysis of the constitutive effects of immaterial labor. Mills did not acknowledge the skillful practices exhibited by the 'salesgirl', for example, which he reduced to the general and pejorative category of manipulation: the predatory behavior of "the new little Machiavellians, practicing their personable crafts for hire" (Mills, 1951: xvii). But in addition, he did not fully understand the labor process as a process of subjectification, let alone the specific performativity of emotional labor. What for Mills was only the production of insincerity in this new "time of venality" (Mills, 1951: 161) is recognized in Hochschild's account for its deeply constitutive effects. As Hochschild explains, it is

not only about the emotional laborer *seeming to be* but also about his or her *coming to be*; the work requires not just the use but the production of subjectivity. Thus, for example, when the emotional display of the worker is part of what is being sold in service work, "[s]eeming to 'love the job' becomes part of the job"; but what is more, "actually trying to love it, and to enjoy the customers, helps the worker in this effort" (Hochschild, 1983: 6). Indeed, as labor that "calls for a coordination of mind and feeling, and … sometimes draws on a source of self that we honor as deep and integral to our individuality" (Hochschild, 1983: 7), its impact is not even limited to what we do or what we think, to the body's health and energies or the mind's thoughts. It extends to the affective life of the subject, into the fabric of the personality.[7] In Hochschild's language, it involves not just 'surface acting' but 'deep acting', practices that have a transformative effect on the doer. The question that guides Hochschild's investigation, and which remains critically important today, is about what happens to individuals and social relations when techniques of deep acting are harnessed by and for the purposes of capital.[8]

Gender is also produced and productive when personality is put to work. As Hochschild points out, personalities are gendered and that is part of their value to employers. Although Mills reported that women constituted 41% of white collar employees in 1940 (1951: 74-75), he did not seem to grasp the significance of this in terms of the gendering of post-industrial waged work. That said, it is not the case that Mills ignored gender or abstained from gendered rhetoric. Indeed, he appeals to a betrayed masculinity to add punch to his critique of the white collared 'Little Man', tapping into a nostalgic ideal of masculine authority to highlight the realities of the new worker's powerlessness and subordination. Drawing on metaphors of emasculation, the members of the white collar 'vanguard' are characterized, in sharp contrast to an image of the heroic proletariat, as "political eunuchs … without potency and without enthusiasm for the urgent political clash" (1951: xviii). Thus to the extent he recognizes a shift in the gendering of work he represents it as a matter of de-gendering not of re-gendering. As Hochschild so effectively documents, the gender of the workers – feminized flight attendants and masculinized bill collectors in her study – is not so much compromised as it is shaped and put to work.

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7 To register the constitutive impact of these practices, the category of affect would be more useful to Hochschild's analysis than that of emotion. To the extent that the category of affect traverses the divisions of mind and body, reason and emotion, and confounds the ontological containment these dichotomies enable, it can better register the power of the subjectification effect that Hochschild's analysis reveals. Moreover, as a category that highlights the produced and productive qualities of the phenomenon it can better resist the kind of naturalization of emotion that Hochschild wants to contest. Here one can also see one of the advantages of the focus on affective labor rather than the kind of cognitive labor more often privileged in Mills's discussion as well as in many contemporary analyses of immaterial labor. Again, as laboring practices that are both expressive and constitutive of affect, their impact is potentially more pervasive than those that seem to signal merely a potential shift in consciousness.

8 Consequently, Hochschild recognized the challenge posed by the new labor order to the ideals of liberal individualism was not only, as Mills claimed, that it reduced the independent individual to a 'Little Man,' but was rather its more thorough-going challenge to identity; "so in the country that most publicly celebrates the individual, more people privately wonder, without tracing the question to its deepest social root: What do I really feel?" (Hochschild, 1983: 198).

The Estrangement of Immaterial Labor

Mills and Hochschild, despite their different analyses, employ very similar critical strategies, both relying on a Marxist analysis of estranged labor to provide some perspective on these new modes of cognitive, communicative, and affective labor. Each extends Marx's familiar critique of industrial factory production – which estranges workers from the product, process, self, and others – to new forms of relatively well-paid and high-status work. "The alienating conditions of modern work", Mill observes, "now include the salaried employees as well as the wage-workers" (1951: 227). As Hochschild explains it, with both manual and emotional forms of labor, there lies a similarity in the possible cost of doing the work: the worker can become estranged or alienated from an aspect of the self – either the body or the margins of the soul – that is *used* to do the work (1983: 7). Together they make a very compelling case that the critique of estranged labor is even more applicable to the conditions of immaterial labor than it ever was to industrial production. The alienation of immaterial laborers from the product and process of labor may be comparable to the experience of industrial work, but work that requires the application and adjustment of 'personality' threatens to carry "self and social alienation to explicit extremes" (Mills, 1951: 225). Hochschild too zeroes in on the potential for self and social alienation: the consequences for the individual's sense of self and the quality of social interactions when the "workers' psychological arts" (1983: 185) are subject to the law of value and with it, to the dictates of command and the imposition of standardization. "Estrangement from display, from feeling, and from what feelings can tell us is not simply the occupational hazard of a few", she notes; rather "[i]t has firmly established itself in the culture as permanently imaginable" (1983: 189). With the increasing interpenetration of production and exchange, of making, serving and selling, the problems of self-alienation and social cynicism are compounded. "Men [sic] are estranged from one another as each secretly tries to make an instrument of the other, and in time a full circle is made: one makes an instrument of himself, and is estranged from it also" (Mills, 1951: 188).

Once again, however, Hochschild's approach proves more timely. Mills uses the critique of alienated labor to make a point very similar to one of the claims that Marx advanced, namely, that the problem with work is that it engages too few of our skills and creative capacities. Given "the boredom and the frustration of potentially creative effort", we are left to find meaning in leisure activities (Mills, 1951: 236). "Each day men sell little pieces of themselves in order to try to buy them back each night and weekend with the coin of 'fun'" (1951: 237). This focus on the problem of work that did not engage *enough* of the self was also the version of the critique of alienation that made its way in the 1970s into popular public discourse in the U.S. The new modes of management that were advanced as cures by at least the 1980s – those that promised to engineer work cultures that would expect greater effort, inspire loyalty, and reward creative initiative – produce a whole new set of problems. Hochschild, writing in the context of a more developed service economy, saw what Mills could not yet grasp: when what workers offer for sale and command is "a smile, a mood, a feeling, or a relationship" (Hochschild, 1983: 198), it may be that work requires not too little but too much of the self. Hence we need to attend to the ways that work does not thus simply abandon us to non-work pursuits but is carried by subjects into the temporalities,

subjectivities, and socialities of non-work. Rather than focus solely on the familiar critique of the colonization of life by the market – through, for example, critiques of consumer culture – Hochschild's analysis extends also to the colonization of life by work.

At some point, however, the critique of alienation proves problematic. Both authors are well aware of the typical limitations of the theory of estranged labor as it was developed in humanist Marxism: a tethering of the critique to a nostalgic ideal of pre-industrial artisanal work and to an essentialist ontology of labor. Leery as they may be of these tropes, however, I would argue that they still deploy them, or variants of them, as standards by which to measure the estrangement of labor in the present context. Just as in the case of the standpoint theorists who grounded their critical analyses in a reproductive outside, we find these authors relying on an outside – in this instance, both a site of unalienated labor and a model of the self prior to its alienation – to animate their critiques.

The first of these traditional anchors of the critique of alienation was what Mills described as the ideal of craftsmanship (1951: 220), a standard of what work should be and mean against which the new forms of immaterial labor could be judged. Although Mills dutifully pursues the exercise, measuring the conditions of post-industrial white collar work against an essentially pre-industrial ideal of craft production, he has no illusions about its contemporary resonance. He knows that since the workers themselves have no memory of the world of work against which the present is assessed, the critique is of little practical consequence to 20th century workforce. "Only the psychological imagination of the historian makes it possible to write off such comparisons as if they were of psychological import" (1951: 228). So even though the distance between this oft-cited ideal of unalienated work and the present reality of work has grown, the classic critique of alienated labor, grounded in an historical outside that is no longer remembered, has been drained of political relevance.[9]

Hochschild, by contrast, does not look backward for an ideal with critical leverage. Instead she finds a standpoint from which to evaluate the conditions of emotional labor in the private realm, in practices, subjectivities, and relations that she suggests are not subject in the same way or to the same degree to the strictures of capitalist valorization. This public/private distinction was indeed central to Marx's original critique. The confounding of private and public – feeling at home when not at work and not at home when at work – was presented by Marx as one of the most striking symptoms of the alienation of labor.[10] Mills replicates this analysis quite faithfully in his account of the 'big split' between life and work. Our dissatisfaction with work, Mills claims, leads us to over-invest in leisure pursuits and consumption practices. Hochschild's analysis, by

9 This position is in keeping with Mills's political pessimism and insistence that white collar workers represent a dominant tendency but not a leading edge, an emerging class but not a nascent vanguard.

10 "The worker therefore only feels himself outside his work, and in his work feels outside himself. He is at home when he is not working, and when he is working he is not at home…. As a result, therefore, man (the worker) no longer feels himself to be freely active in any but his animal functions – eating, drinking, procreating, or at most in dwelling and in dressing-up, etc.; and in his human functions he no longer feels himself to be anything but an animal" (Marx, 1978: 74).

contrast, simultaneously depends on and usefully troubles this private/public distinction. On the one hand, she trains her critical attention on the 'transmutation' of a private emotional system to a public one, attending to what happens when "emotion work, feeling rules, and social exchange have been removed from the private domain and placed in a public one, where they are processed, standardized, and subjected to hierarchical control" (1983: 153).[11] On the other hand, she also effectively undercuts the very same distinction between social spheres on which she depends for her critique. That is, Hochschild is critical of what happens when the private management of feeling is socially engineered in the public sphere for the purposes of profit while also acknowledging that this private realm of feeling is similarly subject to the imposition of standardized feeling rules, the instrumentalization of affect, and the inequalities of emotional exchange. The differences between the private and the public instances of emotional work – the claim, for example, that in private life we are free to negotiate relations of emotional exchange that we are often obligated to accept in the public realm of work (1983: 85) – is troubled by her own astute observations about the social management and gendered hierarchies of so-called private relations. Thus the private realm serves as an alternative to the capitalist market at the same time that its distinction from that market is called into question.

The critique of estranged labor is traditionally anchored in a second outside as well, not only in a specific ideal of unalienated work but in a certain model of the laboring self from which we are estranged and to which we should be restored. Both authors are dubious of the essentialism of this approach. Mills declines to ground his analysis in "the metaphysical view that man's self is most crucially expressed in work-activity" (1951: 225) and Hochschild avoids affixing her critique to the authenticity of emotions, insisting that they are never independent of acts of management and thus always already social (1983: 17-18). But despite these misgivings and cautions, the fact remains that the critique of alienation works by evoking a given self, our estrangement from which constitutes a compelling crisis. Mills claims that one can pursue the critique without deploying a metaphysics of labor, yet tends to evoke instead an ontology of the liberal individual to animate his critique of the fate of the 'Little Man'. One also finds, once again, a tension at the heart of Hochschild's analysis: she insists on the social construction and malleability of the emotions while also positing them as fundamental to the self such that their alienation is a problem. Her strategy of placing references to the 'real', 'true' and 'authentic' self in quotes paradoxically serves to problematize – albeit in very useful ways – the essentialism on which the analysis, nonetheless, depends. Her argument, in other words, is animated by an ideal of the 'unmanaged heart' – associated either with a separate private world of emotional practice and contact or with what one may experience as one's 'true' self – the possibility of which it simultaneously disavows. Both Mills and Hochschild thus recognize the limitations of critical strategies that rely on nostalgic ideals of work and essentialist models of the self, but ultimately end up reproducing them.

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11 Posing as Hochschild does a categorical contrast between emotion work and emotional labor, one a public act with exchange value and the other a private act with use value, would seem to suggest that one can use the distinction to judge the latter from the standpoint of the former (1983: 7).

Life, Work, and the Logics of Immanent Critique

These excavations of the two traditions have recovered some important insights and revealed some crucial problems. Turning first to their many lasting contributions, I would mention socialist feminism's emphasis on the contradiction between accumulation and social reproduction, in both its functional moment as a way of realizing and sustaining the exploitation of labor and in its potential dysfunction as a site of antagonism. From the review of Mills's and Hochschild's accounts of white and pink collar work, I find of particular relevance today their focus on the impact of these modes of labor on subjectivity. Hochschild's analysis of the constitutive effects of affective labor and the colonization of life by work is particularly important, it seems to me, for the contemporary project of mapping and contesting the organization of immaterial/affective labor. And finally, from both Hochschild and the socialist feminist tradition we are reminded of the need to attend to the ongoing gendering of labor in the affective mode both in its waged and unwaged instances.

Despite their many contributions, however, these older critiques of reproductive and emotional labor prove limited as guides for future interventions. In predicating their analyses in the respective logics of separate spheres and estranged labor, both depend on a critical standpoint located in an outside: in a site separate from capitalism proper or in a model of the self prior to its estrangement, that is, in some kind of spatial or ontological position of exteriority.

But as I noted earlier, one can learn as much from the shortcomings of these critical strategies as their strengths. Indeed, perhaps the most significant lesson to be drawn from this genealogical exercise is a clearer recognition of our present predicament. Once the model of separate spheres is rendered finally unsustainable the problem is how to develop a politics in the absence of an outside in which to stand. Could different versions of these critical strategies be developed that do not rely on a sphere of existence or model of the subject outside capital? How might one conceive the terms of an immanent critique of and resistance to the post-Fordist organization of labor? If, as Hardt and Negri argue, it is "no longer possible to identify a sign, a subject, a value, or a practice that is 'outside'" (2000: 385), on what ground might one establish a critical standpoint? What are the ways by which one can advance a theory of agency without deploying a model of the subject as it supposedly once was or is now beyond the reach of capital? In Judith Butler's words, "[i]s there a way to affirm complicity as the basis of political agency, yet insist that political agency may do more than reiterate the conditions of subordination?" (1997: 29-30). Finally, there is the perennial feminist problem of how to make visible and contest the gender divisions of labor in relation to the construction of subjectivities and hierarchies without reproducing naturalized models of gender dualism and relying on familiar brands of identity politics.

Socialist feminism's insistent focus on the antagonisms generated at the intersection of capital accumulation and social reproduction can still function as a compelling point of departure.[12] The sometimes competing requirements of creating surplus value and sustaining the relations of sociality on which it depends, give rise to a series of

12 For a current example of this project see Bakker and Gill (2004).

problems the analyses of which can yield important critical levers. This problematic has, for example, served to frame pressing questions about the relative value of practices, including, notably, the undervaluation of caring practices both waged and unwaged in relation to the legacy of their gendering and racialization. But once "social life itself becomes a productive machine" (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 148), the terms of that distinction and its conflicts must be made more complex than once imagined. In contexts where reproduction is no longer identifiable with a particular space or a distinctive set of practices and becomes coterminous with production, there is a need for new ways to pose the antagonism and acquire some critical purchase.

Let me propose – if only in brief and speculative terms – the outline of one such alternative strategy. What if the older division between reproduction and production were to be replaced with the distinction between life and work? How might this different way of mapping the terrain of capitalist relations and lines of antagonism serve to help shift the terms of political analysis? There are, it seems to me, certain potential benefits of such a framework. For one thing, compared to the category of reproduction, life has the advantage of being a more capacious concept. As a more expansive category it does not risk corralling the practices constitutive of social life into the space of the household or, even more narrowly, equate them with the institution of the family. Thus the political struggle that poses life against work is less readily equated with and reduced to the project of re-valuing the private world of the family and defending its traditional values.

But more important to our discussion here, I wonder if the critical distinction between life and work can perhaps better register one of the key insights gleaned from Mills and especially Hochschild's analyses about work and the construction of subjectivities. Once we recognize that work produces subjects, the borders that would contain it are called into question. It is not only that work and life cannot be confined to particular sites, from the perspective of the production of subjectivity, work and life are thoroughly interpenetrated. The subjectivities shaped at work do not remain at work but inhabit all the spaces and times of nonwork and vice-versa. Who one becomes at work and in life are mutually constitutive. There is no position of exteriority in this sense; work is clearly part of life and life part of work.

This does not mean, however, that work and life are indistinguishable. Indeed, the language of work and life is also used popularly to pose the terms of a conflict between them. Consider the observation that someone who works too much should 'get a life'. What distinction and antagonism between work and life is referred to in this expression? It is not necessarily about getting something one does not have; presumably one already has a life. Neither is it necessarily about engaging in different practices. If, for example, one's work involves the exercise of affective labor to construct social relations with clients or customers and this is also what one wants to do in one's non-work time with family or friends, getting a life does not mean being able to do what one cannot do at work. Rather it would seem that such popular conceptions of antagonism refer primarily to a quality of living that one wants to achieve or expand. What if this familiar line of demarcation were to be made into the basis of a political project? Could this notion of a life that one might want to get that is distinct from and conflicts with work be fleshed out in a way that points in the direction of a liberatory project, one that

strives towards relations of equality and autonomy rather than hierarchy and command? To the extent that it could serve as an immanent standpoint of critique, life would be at once fully implicated in, but nonetheless potentially set against the spaces, relations, and temporalities now dominated by work.[13] This critical standpoint and political project thus requires not the discovery of a space or defense of a subjectivity that is outside, but the struggle for a different quality of experience.

The question remains, however, of how to register and challenge the gendered organization of labor within this frame. The production/reproduction division was designed to call attention to the gendered division of waged and unwaged service labor, even if not always in terms that could escape equating reproduction with the domestic sphere and 'women's work'. For this alternative framework to serve a feminist project, the gender hierarchies and divisions of labor within both work and life must be made visible and subject to contestation. The terms themselves will not secure a feminist content to inquiries framed under their rubric. But perhaps the distinction between life and work could be made to pose important questions, for example, about the status and organization – including the gender division – of unwaged household and caring practices: where in this case might one draw the boundary between what is work and what is life? What counts as work and as life, and the border between them, are not pre-given; they are, rather, matters of political determination and, I would add, important points of focus for feminist struggles. That said, it seems to me that with the continued integration of women into waged work under post-Fordism and the re-privatization of domestic labor under neoliberalism, the project of making visible and contesting the gender, racial, and international divisions of domestic labor is now more difficult (see B. Young, 2001).

Returning to the legacy of Mills and Hochschild's contributions, I think their analyses of the impact of immaterial labor markets and processes on individuals and society suggest the ongoing importance of a critical standpoint rooted in a discourse of subjectivity and in relation to some notion of an alternative model of the subject. The expansion of affective forms of labor today only makes these critical investigations into its impact on who we become as emotional laborers in relation to the 'personality market' and on the texture and quality of social relations in the 'great salesroom' more pressing. Once we recognize the constitutive force of labors in the affective mode, once it is subjectivity that is hired and managed and at work "the prescription and definition of tasks transforms into a prescription of subjectivities" (Lazzarato, 1996: 135), questions about how it is governed and who we become are more critical. The problem, it seems to me, is how to focus critical attention on work as a mechanism of subjectification without the conceptual apparatus of alienation and the distinction between existence and essence on which it inevitably depends. How might one formulate a critical assessment of what we are becoming in and through work without depending on a given model of what we truly are?

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13 Here the category of life serves a critical function analogous to the way that it served in Nietzsche's philosophy as a means by which to advance the critique of ascetic values; life was deployed as a kind of shorthand for that which ascetic values – in this case work and its traditional ethics – disavow and which exceeds and disrupts ascetic modes of conceptual and institutional containment.

One approach would be to ground the critical standpoint on subjectivity not in a claim about the true or essential self, but in a potential self. What if this alternative model of subjectivity, from the perspective of which existing models can be critically assessed, were to be imagined not in terms of subjectivities that now exist but in terms of those that might come to be? Once the temporal horizon of a possible future replaces the spatial confines of an existing sphere of practice or model of identity, the standard by which the present is judged could expand to visions of what we might want rather than the defense of what we already have, know, or are. The self at work could thus be judged in relation to a self that one might wish to become and both work and non-work time could be assessed in relation to the possibility of becoming different. What if the critique that had been developed around the logic of alienation were recoded so that it was no longer about a self to save or to recover but one to invent?

Once again, however, there is the question of what would happen to gender if the discursive frame of analysis were to shift in this way. As long as labor is signified and divided by gender, the critique of work as a mode of subjectification must be a feminist project. What this approach does call into question, however, is the adequacy of gender identity as a basis for making political claims and a means of political recruitment. Many have noted, especially with regard to sexuality and race, the problems with those models of feminist identity politics that risk reinforcing exclusive and normative models of gender. But what if feminist political analyses and projects were not limited to claims about who we are as women or as men, or even the identities produced by what we do, but rather put the accent on collectively imagined visions of what we want to be or to do? Confronting the ongoing gendering of work and its subjects would thus be more a matter of expressing feminist political desire than repeating gender identities.[14]

Rather than a true self versus its estranged form, or a reproductive sphere of practice separate from a sphere of properly capitalist production, an alternative critical strategy might thus hinge instead on the distinction between life and work and a vision of what subjects in relation could become in contrast to what they are. These would be, in short, critical standpoints grounded not in separate spheres of practice but in the possibility of different qualities of life; not in a claim about who we are but rather in a vision of who we might want to become; not in an essence but in a logic of political desire immanent to existence. These biopolitical standpoints might thus be able to direct us towards more promising lines of critical insight and frame more compelling political responses to the organization of labor under post-Fordism.

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14 Demarcating a similar alternative to feminist identity politics, Wendy Brown asks, "[w]hat if we sought to supplant the language of 'I am' … with the language of 'I want this for us'?" (1995: 75)

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Modelling a Way of Life: Immaterial and Affective Labour in the Fashion Modelling Industry

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abstract

In this paper, I elaborate how modelling is a form of immaterial and affective labour. Using interview data gathered in from a study of the industry in the United States, I argue that models work to arouse affective flows. Modelling work, emerging as it did from the post-industrial shift toward service work and consumerism, (in which non-material goods such as services, ideas and images have become products of capitalist development and circulation), exemplifies tendencies found in immaterial labour as defined by Maurizio Lazzarato, and affective labour as outlined by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri. These definitions, however, invite a tendency to elide affect and emotion. Yet affect, as a condition of the emergence of emotion, is a form of bodily vitality that does not reside in any particular subject, and the way models describe their work suggests an effort to engage with affect on a level below conscious awareness. I conclude that ignoring the non-subjective qualities of affective labour that certain aspects of modelling work illustrate misses an important dimension of affective labour's complex relationship with media technologies, where images attract affective engagements that fall in line with capitalist productive strategies.

Introduction

Models work in a fascinating space of liminality, in which the boundaries between images and reality are often blurred. By interviewing models, going to their casting calls, working at their photo shoots, and engaging in what one anthropologist has termed "deep hanging out" (Geertz, 2001: 107), I discovered that models do not just create alluring images that make us want to buy things. An examination of the history, structure, and practices of this industry[1] indicates that models work with affect in ways

1 This study involves 54 interviews with models and those who work with them. Contacts were made using a snowball sample, in which each person interviewed was asked for two or more contacts to further interview. My focus was specifically on fashion models (there are specialized models who do parts and hair modeling, or those who do specific ages, such as child models, but they fell beyond the scope of this study). I interviewed 32 models (24 female and eight male), eleven modeling agents (or 'bookers' as they are known in the industry), two photographers, two advertising executives, two art directors, one designer, one PR agent, one casting agent, one makeup artist, and one production

that are more complex and somewhat less obvious than this simple one-to-one equation of consumerism. Theorizing the model as a threshold between the images consumers see of them and the work that goes into producing those images, I describe modelling as work that not only sells products, but also calibrates bodily affects, often in the form of attention, excitement, or interest, so that they may be bought and sold in a circulation of affects that plays an important role in post-industrial economies.

This paper sets out to explore affective and immaterial labour using the real world example of fashion modelling. In the first section of this paper, I will elaborate how modelling work conforms to immaterial and affective labour as understood by Maurizio Lazzarato and Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri respectively. Second, I will present a more precise definition of affect, including an explanation of how and when affect is not just emotion, but rather, the condition of emergence of emotions. Finally, I will work through various examples of how modelling work may be used to refine these definitions, especially in terms of how media technologies engage with affectivity at the level of non-subjective flows, in a technical-affective link that modelling work helps to create.

Modelling as Immaterial and Affective Labour

Looking in from the outside, the job of modelling seems fairly simple. Legally, a professional model is someone who, "performs modelling services for; or consents in writing to the transfer of his or her exclusive legal right to the use of his or her name, portrait, picture or image, for advertising purposes or for the purposes of trade".[2] He or she will transfer the right to their image "directly to a retail store, manufacturer, an advertising agency, a photographer, or a publishing company".[3] The 'services' in question include "the appearance by a professional model in photographic sessions or the engagement of such model in live, filmed or taped modelling performance for remuneration".[4] In other words, models appear in person, or in photographs, either in advertisements or to promote commercial transactions.

What, in particular, makes this labour immaterial and/or affective? According to Maurizio Lazzarato, immaterial labour is labour, which "produces the informational and cultural content of the commodity" (Lazzarato, 1996: 133). With regard to the informational form, the skills used require "cybernetics and computer control" (*ibid.*), whereas the cultural forms of production involve a "series of activities that are not

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assistant. Interviews were semi-structured, conducted in public places, and lasted between one to two hours. The interviews were taped with consent, transcribed, and manually coded. They were conducted between 1999 and 2004. The age range for the sample was from sixteen to 28 years old for the models; the other workers tended to be slightly older, mostly in their thirties and forties. A book length treatment analyzing this data is forthcoming from New York University Press (Wissinger, 2008).

2 Section 511, subparagraph 3, Chapter 668 of the New York State Labor and Compensation Law (1992).

3 *Ibid.*

4 *Ibid.*

normally recognized as 'work' – in other words, the kinds of activities involved in defining and fixing cultural and artistic standards, fashions, tastes, consumer norms, and, more strategically, public opinion" (*ibid.*). Immaterial labour also involves processes of "codification and de-codification" in which personality and subjectivity become involved in the production of value (Lazzarato, 1996: 135). Typical forms of immaterial labour include "audiovisual production, advertising, fashion, the production of software, photography, and cultural activities" (Lazzarato, 1996: 137).

Modelling work corroborates Lazzarato's description of immaterial labour in several ways. Modelling is part of the process of defining fashions, particularly through the practice of the fashion show; it fixes cultural standards through advertising; and guides consumer norms through representing a lifestyle grounded in luxury consumption. Models arguably work with codes: dress codes, gender codes, and fashion codes. They project personality and are valued for what many respondents referred to as 'attitude'; the products of their labour include advertising campaigns, fashion, and cultural images. Their labour is organized on a project by project basis, and teams are assembled around specific jobs, which are then dispersed after the project is finished. These teams consist of many players whose relationships with each other represent complex productive networks. Thus, in the modelling industry, it is quite common to find that "small and sometimes very small 'productive units' (often consisting of only one individual) are organized for specific ad-hoc projects, and may exist only for the duration of those particular jobs," which Lazzarato claims are typical of immaterial production (1996: 137). This complex web of relations is not readily evident in the typical image of a fashion model; models are usually depicted as if they are alone, staring out of a magazine page in a solitary moment of fashionable repose. This iconic image (think of Kate Moss, clutching a purse to her breast, or Linda Evangelista caught in the rain under a plaid umbrella) belies the teams of workers surrounding the model at any given photo shoot. Take a step back, outside of the frame, and there are crowds of people working with the model, organized in teams: the photographer and her or his assistants; the stylist(s) and their assistants; the make-up artist; hairstylist; the client whose product is being advertised; advertising agency personnel; the shoot's producer and assistants; possibly a set designer; a manicurist; a prop stylist; and perhaps personnel from the venue where the shoot is taking place. These are just the people in the room.

In addition, each of these 'creatives' work with an agency that manages their career, helping them to find work. Initially, the client hires a photographer, who then recommends the other members of the team. These workers are hired by contracting with their management agencies, a process that forms a significant portion of the work to assemble these teams for a particular project. The photographer, client, or advertising firm may have contracted the services of a casting agency along the way, to search for the model with exactly the right look or image appropriate for a particular picture. In this organization of work, reputation is the central hiring criteria, and must be built and maintained through managing relationships on an ongoing basis. Thus, as the theory suggests, social networks are a key component of the productive process; "immaterial labour constitutes itself in forms that are immediately collective, and we might say that it exists only in the form of networks and flows" (Lazzarato, 1996: 137).

Arguably, then, this form of labour produces not only images for clients, but also a series of relationships. Nevertheless, whilst Lazzarato's idea of *immaterial* labour describes some of the basic aspects of modelling, the notion of *affective* labour is far more descriptive of what models do. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri develop Lazzarato's concept into the idea of the 'immaterial paradigm' of labour (2004: 112). In this formulation, they identify overarching tendencies that take three specific forms, which are, the informatization of production (via computerization or robotics),[5] the rise of 'symbolic-analytical services' (management, problem-solving and routine symbol manipulation),[6] and affective labour, performed either through actual or virtual human contact or interaction, which produce "intangible feelings of ease, excitement, or passion" (Hardt and Negri, 2000: 293). Health services and the entertainment industry, for example, both depend on outputs of affective labour such as caring and emoting. These types of services are usually in-person services, but the production and manipulation of affect or feeling can also be achieved through human contact that is virtual (such as the work of an actor appearing in a movie, or the work of a model appearing in a photograph).

The agency structure of the industry dictates that getting an agent is paramount, as it serves as the gateway to other relationships that can be career defining. An agent functions to manage a model's status. Status comes into play as professionals in these industries seek other professionals with whom they have interacted in the past, building their status through continued interaction (Aspers, 2001: 44). Reputation becomes very significant in determining the value of a person's work, and the value of a job lies just as much in the relationships produced by doing that job as it does in the actual financial amount paid to the worker.[7] Usually, a model develops these relationships on the job, which affords a very short time (sometimes just a few hours) to make a favourable (e.g. re-hirable) impression on the photographer, the stylist, the makeup artist, the client, the assistants, and/or the other models. Making this impression is key to getting rehired by some or all of the same people. Kay, a make-up artist, emphasized the importance of forming a strong relationship with a photographer in order to build a team:

> A lot of photographers have a lot of control as far as recommending their own team. People they have worked with, who they are comfortable with, and know what they'll get from them.[8]

Thus, many models 'work the room' as the saying goes, as they are acutely aware that they are expendable, sometimes even before a job is finished. It is not unheard of for a model to be fired from a job before the contracted time is up. One of the models I interviewed was working her way through graduate school, and described being kicked off a shoot for not being 'fun' enough, since she was reading her book between takes instead of chatting up the other members of the team.[9] This production of relationships

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5 See also Castells, 1996.

6 See also Reich, 1992.

7 It is for this reason that appearing in the editorial, or 'content' pages assembled by the editors of a fashion magazine pays far less well than regular commercial work for an advertiser or catalog. The assumption is that the gain in reputation and relationships formed with magazine editors and the photographers who work for them is more valuable than the actual pay received.

8 Interview with Kay, see table 1.

9 Interview with Kate, see table 1.

as one of the core activities of modelling work also speaks to Hardt and Negri's definition of affective labour as that which "always directly constructs a relationship" (2004: 147). Maintaining and building these relationships creates its own unique demands to which my discussion now turns.

The Working Day

The imperative to network extends beyond the workday to the social world of modelling as well. Many of my respondents saw going out socially as part of the job; model agents, for example, often organize dinners with models and clients, and throw parties that their models are expected to attend. Megan, a model agent at a prestigious agency claimed that, "Deals go down in bars frequently".[10] Julia, a veteran model with twenty years of experience was pragmatic about it, "They definitely have dinners, but it's business too. People who invest in modelling want to see what they are going to get".[11] In this manner, models and the professionals they work with engage in making relationships 'on spec' so to speak, socializing and conducting their lives with an eye toward making potentially lucrative associations with their peers, something they must be vigilant about. As one model put it, she pays attention to who is around her, whenever she is out of the house:

> I try not to, but if you're going out, even just down the block to go shopping, you don't want to run into somebody important. In that way, you are vigilant.[12]

The way my respondents described it, most of their work involves building relationships and forming networks, punctuated by brief moments of doing the 'actual' job of posing for the camera or walking a runway.

These practices are typical of what happens when immaterial labourers are not officially at work; "once the job has been done, the cycle dissolves back into the networks and flows that make possible the reproduction and enrichment of its productive capacities" (Lazzarato, 1996: 137). In other words, this kind of socializing produces new connections and inspirations outside the workplace, and brings new, and potentially valuable, collaborations back to it. In this sense, the porousness of the life/work divide is arguably one of the productive resources upon which a model's immaterial labour depends.

Another aspect of the porous life/work, leisure/labour divide found in modelling is the boundary-less working day. Many of the models I interviewed referred to their work as a job in which they are working all the time. Toni, a model in her mid-twenties who had been in the business for seven years explained: "First you have to distinguish what my job entails, which is keeping myself in shape, I consider going to the gym as part of my job, going to the manicurist and pedicurist".[13] Kate, who had worked in high-end

10 Interview with Megan, see table 1

11 Interview with Julia, see table 1.

12 Interview with Brigitte, see table 1.

13 Interview with Toni, see table 1.

fashion houses and appeared in the top tier magazines, referred to her work in modelling as 'the life', noting:

> You're always on display; you have to put on that show 24 hours a day. It's not as though you can go to the office and then go home and relax. You're always watching what you eat. You're always worrying about how you're coming across, always worried about being seen at the right places at the right times. It's just never ending.[14]

This model is describing how she brings her entire life into the productive process; there is no 'outside' to her production, her life, her body, her sense of self are all engaged in producing her as a 'model' for work. Tina, a model for twelve years, said she "never drew the line between being a model and being herself".[15]

The quotes above indicate that the notion of what part of models' activities qualify as work, and what falls outside of the norm, is rather fluid. Models do not do paid work every day, but most of my respondents reported feeling as though they never had a day 'off'. Several of them reported working in bouts of fifteen hour days punctuated by long periods of unemployment, during which they needed to work to look for work, by making the rounds going to castings and 'go-sees'.[16] Most of my respondents were careful to point out that the level of unpaid work is quite high. Thus, in addition to the rather amorphous tasks of building relationships and maintaining one's body and image, getting jobs comprises a large portion of model's work activity, actually doing those jobs takes up far less time.

Models often work as independent contractors who are self-supervised. Contemporary fashion models are less mannequins than they are the CEO of their own corporation; as one booker said she told the models, "you are like a company; we are making an investment in you, and we want the investment to come back soon".[17] In other words, models are responsible for their own success, they engage in a form of labour that is "characterized by real managerial functions that consist in a certain ability to manage social relations […] [where] workers are expected to become active subjects in the coordination of various functions of production" (Lazzarato, 1996: 138). This is coupled with the requirement to invest their time and energy into the job in ways that are impossible to measure within the normal bounds of Monday through Friday between 9 and 5. This aspect of the work supports Lazzarato's observation that, for the self-employed worker, "it becomes increasingly difficult to distinguish leisure time from work time," since, "in a sense, life become inseparable from work" (*ibid.*). This inseparability of life from work is especially evident on the modelling trip, in which a

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14 Interview with Kate, see table 1.

15 Interview with Tina, see table 1.

16 A 'go-see' is a kind of visual interview, in which the model goes to see a photographer or client in order to show that their pictures match their current physical appearance to possibly get work. So, for example, on a go-see for a bathing suit job, the model might be asked to put on a bathing suit so the client or photographer can see his or her skin or physique in person, to check for bruises or a change in body shape that might not appear in the model's portfolio, but would not recommend the model for the job.

17 Interview with Genevieve, see table 1.

model is hired to travel to a photographic location, to produce pictures in a specific backdrop.

Travelling is a constant in modelling work. Being hired for a photo shoot in an exotic locale is considered one of the perquisites of modelling, yet the already fuzzy lines between labour and leisure are blurred even more in this scenario. Brian, a photographer, would sometimes ask models to work for very little or for free when they are already on a trip, to build his photographic portfolio. Once, on a trip paid for by a client to shoot a commercial catalogue, he convinced a model to stay on in New Orleans at her own expense for a couple of extra days, to take more photographs after finishing the shoot for the client. He described the transaction: "she would get shots, and we got along, and she was like 'Yeah, I'll do it.'"[18] While models are not compelled to work this way, the power differential between model and photographer, as well as the attractiveness of getting more shots for their modelling portfolio, contributes to the models' willingness to work without pay. Arguably, the model may have been motivated to keep the photographer happy because she wanted to maintain a positive working relationship with him, to show that she was a willing worker, someone he would want to hire again. Gender, however, may also play a role in this transaction.[19]

The Precarity of Modelling

The Modelling industry is particularly sensitive to affective flow, with a volatile work environment in which, as the head of a major modelling agency observed several times during our interview, "You are only as good as your last booking."[20] Lazzarato has observed that "precariousness, hyper-exploitation" since the "cycle of production comes into operation only when it is required by the capitalist" (1996: 137). Similarly, Hardt and Negri observe that in the postindustrial or flexible economies immaterial labour is common, the labour is "flexible because workers have to adapt to different tasks, mobile because workers have to move frequently between jobs, and precarious because no contracts guarantee stable, long-term employment" (2004: 112).

Although modelling work is usually well paid, it is precarious insofar as models are usually hired by the day, with no promise of long-term employment. Often they are reminded that they are expendable. Modelling work can be tentative and contingent;

18 Interview with Brian, see table 1.

19 A detailed discussion of gender issues falls outside the scope of this paper and warrants separate, focused attention. The fact that models are mostly female, and are considered ideals of beauty and femininity whose unrealistic bodily attributes have proved dangerous for young girls (see Beckford 2007) and the desire to be accepted as a beautiful model may drive them to accept working conditions that call on resources that fall outside the norms of what is considered 'work'. An attention to gender further acknowledges the general tendency not to acknowledge women's work as 'work' (see for example, Mies, 1998; Glazer, 1993; Hartsock, 1983; Hartmann, 1981; Federici, 1975), and also the feminist critique that claims immaterial labor theorists do not sufficiently deal with gendered structures that inform understandings of work and work practices, tending instead to lump widely different forms of work into the homogenous category of immaterial labor (see for example Precarias a la Deriva [undated]).

20 Interview with Dawn, see table 1.

one model I interviewed was so uncertain about her prospects that "when I started working, I was saving money like crazy because I always thought that my last job was my last job. I was convinced, and there is no way to know otherwise".[21] Models must be flexible and adapt to peripatetic travel, unpredictable schedules, and a wide variety of situations. Because of the lack of guaranteed work, a model might find him or herself working every day for months, without a break, trying to ride the wave before it ends. Julie, a model that worked in couture fashion said she started out this way:

> I got a British Vogue spread, and everything just started rolling. I was travelling all the time. I was in my apartment maybe one night a month. I was everywhere, all over the world, doing shoots. [22]

It is a business of fits and starts, long lulls, sustained by the lure of instant stardom around the corner. Similarly to the movie industry, in the modelling industry, the labour process relies on 'team work', whereby workers are assembled to create a product and then dispersed, only to perhaps be reassembled in a different configuration for a future project. This organization of work typifies industries that must "face the incalculable every day" (Prindle, 1993: 5) in the production of their product. Like the screen industry, or any industry whose product is artistic on some level, there are two problems: "the difficulty of predicting public tastes and the impossibility of exactly duplicating a hit" (Prindle, 1993: 5). For executives in these industries, "each choice is a stab in the dark, every decision a wager against unknown odds" (Prindle, 1993: 5). The project-based nature of the work represents how models are organized in an extreme form of just-in-time production, partly to address the unpredictable impact of the product as well as a way to accommodate the fickle extremes of personality found both at the managerial level, and the level of audiences or publics. In other words, the modelling industry is organized to accommodate the unpredictable and volatile qualities of affective flow, which I will discuss in detail in the second section of this article.

Hardt and Negri trace the emergence of the tendencies described above against the backdrop of developments in economics and culture in which the rise of the service sector and the shift to a consumer economy has typified what could be termed postmodern or postindustrial capitalism.[23] They claim this type of economy is characterized by biopolitical production, which is "immanent to society and creates social relationships and forms through collaborative forms of labour" (2004: 94), where "labour and value have become biopolitical in the sense that living and producing tend to be indistinguishable. Insofar as life tends to be completely invested by acts of

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21 Interview with Toni, see table 1.

22 Interview with Julie, see table 1.

23 The terms postindustrial, deindustrialized, postfordist, or postmodern capitalism are often used to describe the structure of contemporary capitalism. In the move to a postindustrial economy (Bell 1976), space was appropriated from "populist, manufacturing, or tawdry uses," and transformed into "'clean' entertainment, commercial, and residential zones preferred by professionals, managers, and white-collar workers" (Zukin, 1995: 115). The phrase "deindustrialization" has also been employed to describe the geographical shift in the centers of production from developed nations, to developing ones (Bluestone and Harris 1982). Additionally, the reorganization of mass production in favor of niche or just in time flexible production has been referred to as post-Fordist (Harvey 1989). These reorganizations of production have also been referred to as the "informatization" of production (Castells 1996, Aronowitz 1981).

production and reproduction, social life itself becomes a productive machine" (2004: 148).

Within this tendency for all of social life to become a force of production, all kinds of activities that were formerly coded as private, and outside of the domain of capitalist investment are increasingly pulled into its domain. For example, in biopolitical production, we see social reproduction being subsumed by capital, thus becoming a force of production, as socialization, therapeutic interaction, cooking, cleaning, childcare, and healthcare, for instance, are increasingly pulled into the domain of commodification. These sectors of social life are part of what Marx called the "general productive power" (1973: 705) that fuels the social factory, in which work and cultural, community, or biological activities understood to lie outside of work, are appropriated in the "expansion of capitalist control in order to structure all of society into one great social factory so that all activities would contribute to the expanded reproduction of the system" (Cleaver, 1979; 2000: 122). In this expansion, "capital tries to shape all 'leisure' or free-time, activities – language, literature, art, music, television, news media, movies, theatres, museums, sports, in its own interests" (Cleaver, 1979, 2000: 123).

In this expansion, Hardt and Negri claim that it is the

> common that appears at both ends of immaterial production, as presupposition and result. Our common knowledge is the foundation of all new production of knowledge; linguistic community is the basis of all linguistic innovation; our existing affective relationships ground all production of affects, and our common social image bank makes possible the creation of new images. (2004: 148)

They claim that this kind of labour's tendency to be common and shared makes it immeasurable and difficult to control. Yet, they acknowledge that exploitation proceeds apace, not in the form of expropriating surplus labour time, but in the form of "expropriation of the common" (2004: 150), making this the locus of surplus value.

According to this notion, fashion models arguably produce surplus value not in the form of hours worked over and above the amount of labour time required for their subsistence, but rather in the form of affective connections in which affective responses to their activities and images are stimulated across a variety of networks in which those images and activities are portrayed. These networks are cultural, personal, and communal, but also technical, insofar as models make human contact virtually when their images are circulated in media networks. Models work to stimulate interest in and attention to images by playing on forces that can consciously be perceived as desire, envy, or a need to belong (through being fashionable or 'in the know'); in so doing, they produce networks for affective flow that create community. They also, however, produce affective images, by tuning into a felt sense of vitality, aliveness, or engagement that takes no particular form, but taps into affective energy that is then conveyed via the virtual human contact of the image.

The Relationship between Affect and Emotion

'More energy!' 'Give it to me!' 'I've got to see the fire in your eyes!' Models are often admonished to produce energy in this way. Their work is more physically expressive than verbal; successful models can be exquisite communicators without saying a word. What I found most intriguing about their work is that in order to succeed, most models have to develop a kind of sixth sense about the kind of energy they work with; in so doing, they become attuned to shifts in energy occurring below the surface of awareness.

The work of the fashion model, as I have shown, clearly exemplifies tendencies in the structure and function of labour that is arguably immaterial and affective. At the same time, however, I have also found that the qualities particular to modelling work demand a more nuanced analysis to bring out specificities the more general theories of immaterial and affective labour have left relatively unexamined. As Emma Dowling has rightly pointed out, in the immaterial labour literature, "not much analysis appears beyond a definition of what affective labour is" (see Dowling, this issue), leaving it to others to detail its particular characteristics.

My argument is that the hitherto definition of affective labour as found in Hardt and Negri's work, which I outlined in the first section of this paper and to which I wish to return in more detail here, presents two problems. First, the use of the term 'affect' is imprecise; the examples Hardt and Negri give, of "legal assistants, flight attendants, and fast food workers (service with a smile)" (2004: 108) invite a tendency to elide their definition of affective labor with emotional labour, especially in light of existing studies of flight attendants' emotional labour (Hochschild, 1983), the assistive work of legal assistants (Pierce, 1995), and labour performed in the service industries (Godwyn, 2006; Steinberg and Figart, 1999). Yet, differentiating affect from emotion is an important theoretical tool for understanding the non-subjective aspects of affective labour.

While it seems that much modelling work could easily be understood as emotional labour, the term describes only part of what it is that models do. Emotional labour, for example, deals with feeling management. Specifically, emotional labour is the "effort, planning, and control needed to express organizationally desired emotion during interpersonal transactions" (Morris and Feldman, 1996: 98), or in Arlie Hochschild's well known formulation, the effort to "induce or suppress feeling in order to sustain an outward appearance that produces the proper state of mind in others" (Hochschild, 1983: 7). Models do perform emotional labour, especially when they are asked to convey a particular emotion in the course of posing for the camera. This is particularly true of catalogue or commercial[24] models, for instance, who are most often asked to look 'happy' or 'content' while they show off the clothes, in a mode one model referred to as 'smiley'.[25]

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24 These are models on the lower rungs of fashion production, who are not well known, and work for lower level clothing catalogues such as *Sears, JC Penney,* or *La Redoute*.

25 Interview with Deedee, see table 1.

As models move up the fashion hierarchy, however, into the upper echelons of fashion modelling,[26] they often find themselves in situations where emotional labour is only part of their job. Frequently, models at this level are not given direction; instead they are called on to channel the mood and energy present in the room, to open themselves to the possibilities of the moment, to collaborate with the team assembled in the hope of capturing something unexpected, something that moves beyond the norm, toward the unknown. The models most adept at this are the ones who 'go with the flow', as one make-up artist described it:

> Some girls will get on the set and they'll just have a fabulous flow and variety and movement and they get it and they look at the outfit before and they look at the hair and the makeup before and they'll get on the set and they'll just…it's almost like watching an actress where there's no direction required they're just flowing with it, they get it and they've paid attention and the photographer can take pictures for over an hour and not have to say one word because everything is just wonderful.[27]

This example shows how models may convey emotion in the course of their work, but they are less frequently asked to convey emotion according to a specific script. In contrast to the flight attendant who has a specific reaction in mind, and works to produce that emotion both in him or herself and the passenger, a fashion model is not asked to capture and contain emotion, or direct it in a particular way. The work of models may resemble this activity periodically but, much of the time, fashion models are valued for their ability to unleash a wide range of responses, responses that might shift or be modulated faster than they can be subjectively recognized as emotions.

In my analysis, I use affect in this expanded register; I am careful to understand affect as a condition of emergence of emotion, and emotion as the capture, closure, and naming of affect. My perception is that Hardt and Negri do not follow this line of thought through to its specific implications for media technology's relationship to the body, although they do make a distinction between emotional and affective labour:

> Unlike emotions, which are a form of mental phenomena, affects refer equally to body and mind. In fact, affects, such as joy and sadness, reveal the present state of life in the entire organism, expressing a certain state of the body along with a certain mode of thinking. (2004: 108)

Focusing on the subjective qualities of affective labour minimizes an important dimension of the concept because it does not adequately explore affective labour's additional tendency to call on changes in energy that take place below the level of consciousness. Hardt and Negri do not theorize affect as a kind of energy that is not just subjective, e.g. not something one can consciously control.[28] This conception is important, however, for understanding the volatile nature of affect, and how it informs labour in the modelling industry. Affect is more than feelings or emotions: "it is energy, sensation and a force that drives things, that encourages bodily and social movements. It

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26 Models at this level usually work for the high fashion magazines, such as *Vogue, Elle, or L'Officiel.* They often model couture clothes and work for highly esteemed clients selling luxury goods, such as *Hermes, Chanel,* or *Louis Vuitton*.

27 Interview with Kay, see table 1.

28 In this sense, the body is not the sole cause of sensation or reaction, and affect is not the sole result of bodily cause, but rather, is socially caused (Zizek 2003: 28).

is human; it is what keeps everything else alive" (Wittel, 2004: 18). My framework for exploring affective labour has been shaped by Patricia Clough's concept.[29] She describes affect as,

> a substrate of potential bodily responses, often autonomic responses, in excess of consciousness...affect refers generally to bodily capacities to affect and be affected or the augmentation or diminution of a body's capacity to act, to engage, and to connect, such that autoaffection is linked to the self-feeling of being alive‹that is, aliveness or vitality. (Clough and Halley, 2007:2)

For Clough, affects are pre-individual bodily forces that increase or decrease "a body's capacity to act," and she seeks to "critically engage those technologies that are making it possible to grasp and to manipulate the imperceptible dynamism of affect" (Clough, forthcoming). These technologies include both biotechnologies that capture and make DNA available for commercial use, as well as what she calls 'new media' technologies, such as television and the internet. To further draw out the link between media technology and affective modulation, I called on Brian Massumi's notion that the affective realm lies between the levels of activity and passivity, between "volition and cognition," "mind and body," "quiescence and arousal" (Massumi, 2002: 33). For him, images are affective without necessarily having a subjective meaning. He posits the "primacy of the affective in image reception" (2002: 24) to say that there is a split between the qualities of the image and the intensity of the image, such that the image's content, its conventional meaning, does not necessarily correspond with its impact. Thus an image can have an effect that does not necessarily correspond to its meaning, or without meaning anything in particular to the viewing subject that it affects. In this formulation, media makes "affect an impersonal flow before it is a subjective content" (Massumi, 1998: 61). To feel the flow of affect is to feel the sense of "one's own vitality, one's sense of aliveness, of changeability" (Massumi, 2002: 36).

I also rely on the work of Silvan Tomkins (1963), recently revisited by Eve Sedgwick and Adam Frank (1995). Tomkins understood affect in terms of specific physiological responses that in turn give rise to various effects, which may or may not translate into emotions. By naming various bodily states as affects, and theorizing how they might precede emotions, he opens up the possibility of analyzing pre-lingual, pre-individual responses that occur below awareness, and so, in a sense, are not conscious.[30] In this sense, affects, which I want to be careful to differentiate from the flow of affect, are mental and bodily states that are distinct from emotions because they refer to syndromes the body may experience whether or not the subject is conscious of that experience. The

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29 Which she develops drawing on theorists indebted to Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, Baruch Spinoza and Henri Bergson

30 Silvan Tomkins has documented nine affects which correspond to specific facial and bodily configurations which occur when the body experiences a particular affective syndrome in response to stimulus. These are Interest-Excitement, Enjoyment-Joy, Surprise-Startle, Distress-Anguish, Shame-Humiliation, Contempt-Disgust, Anger-Rage, Fear-Terror, and Dismell (a form of contempt) (Tomkins, 1963; cited in Gibbs 2002 340 note 3). The conscious experience of an affective syndrome of Anger-Rage, may range from total unawareness, if this reaction is too dangerous to be admitted to consciousness, to a sense of slight irritation, to a rapid escalation to overwhelming rage, depending on how the subject has been socialized to feel or not to feel their affective responses, that is to say, how wide the subject's "band of intensity" within their "affect profile" is (Gibbs 2002: 338).

flow of energy called 'affect' flows through the body; when that flow has an effect, affects result, the physical and mental syndromes in which heartbeat, skin sensations, and energy levels change. The unpredictability of affect's effects speaks to its material nature – it involves the biological, but is not strictly reducible to biology. In fact, a "circus of affective responses" (Sedgwick and Frank, 1995: 11) can result from a single stimulus, and differ in the same individual at different times. In sum, affect flows between bodies, producing affects within those bodies as it passes through, in a volatile, unpredictable process that is difficult to control.

To push the notion of affect to include an interim space between body and mind, physiological arousal and conscious realization of it, is a move toward exploring post-structuralist notions of the body. This 'affective turn' in social theorizing (Clough and Halley, 2007) builds on post- structuralist feminist accounts of the self and the body[31] which seek to destabilize this notion of the rational, self-governed subject in favour of a conception of self, body, gender, and materiality that does not assume the existence of a subject that resides in an "epidermally bounded container" (Goffman, 1986: 572), but rather the self as a "material semiotic node" (Haraway, 1991; 1997) that exists through interaction, ineluctably entangled in shifting networks of culture, power, language, and images.

Working with affect shapes the character of the modelling industry in several ways. Recall that a "circus of affective responses" (Sedgwick and Frank, 1995: 11) can be the result of a single stimulus. As I have shown in the first section of this paper, the work of modelling involves constant 'schmoozing' to build productive relationships. Modelling also tries to elicit unwavering commitment from its employees, demanding '24/7' readiness to work, whether or not there are jobs available. Common practices of modelling blur the line between life and work and modelling is characterized by precarity, deferred rewards and instability. Part of this precarity is due to affect's volatility; change can occur at any moment in the fashion industry, a quality succinctly expressed by the supermodel Heidi Klum in the reality television show *Project Runway*, "In fashion, you are either in, or you're out". Since there is no quantifiable output, modelling 'products' can be wildly overvalued (as in the case of the supermodels in the 1980s and 90s who made millions of dollars, more than any other models previously), or lose value almost instantly (as was the case, temporarily at least, with supermodel Kate Moss, when her reputation was threatened by a drug scandal).[32] Models act as conduits for energies that are volatile, unpredictable, and difficult to control, in an aspect of affective labour that arguably goes on below the level of consciousness. Many of the models could not explain exactly what they were doing when they worked, only

31 Such as those found in the work of Elizabeth Grosz (1995), Judith Butler (1990; 1993), and Donna Haraway (1991; 1997).

32 In September of 2005, Moss experienced a "professional free fall, following publication by a London tabloid of a grainy video image said to depict her snorting cocaine at a London recording studio" (Trebay, 2005), after which several of her high profile clients yanked their campaigns. Less than a year later, however, she seemed to be in even more demand than ever, appearing in several high end campaigns (according to the author's informal accounting as of September 2006, in American *Vogue* she was featured in at least five, including such well known marks as Dior, Louis Vuitton, and Versace), as if the notoriety had boosted her career.

that they had to sense a 'way to feel',[33] to be 'vulnerable',[34] to be open to the unexpected. Julie, a model who had done many high fashion creative photo shoots described this sort of channelling as an almost out of body experience, saying:

> I'd go in my own little world. Like okay, it's not me anyway. It's weird! I mean, you are a thing. The thing. That's what Cindy Crawford calls herself. Absolutely. I read that somewhere and I was like, that's a perfect way of putting it. But it's true. You transform and you have to look at it, you have to observe it. You have to think of something to do, the way to feel, in that moment.[35]

In her experience, the energy level in the room was crucial to her ability to know 'the way to feel' for the shot; her ability to channel energy or be receptive to affective shifts was compromised by the lack of creativity common to catalogue shoots, which she found very difficult:

> That's why catalogue photos always look so terrible. Because someone is pinning you and they want no wrinkles, and they don't want it to look like that, and you kind of have to go, okay, I have to look nice anyway, and it's hard. [She laughs.] It's weird. So in that sense, catalogue is harder. I mean if you are wearing a polyester potato sack, or a muu muu, and you have to look good, then you kind of go, oh yeah, I'm going to get paid after this! That's what I'm smiling about![36]

Another model described this kind of channelling and modulating of affective flow in terms of how she had to feel it in her body in front of the camera:

> How do you just exude that image? It takes… I don't know, I'm just natural…You just have to know, like… [She demonstrated a druggy stare – her legs part at a splayed angle, she slumps back into a slouch, and she is looks up at me through her hair, but the look is unfocussed, like she has left her body behind]. You know what I mean? You just have to be familiar with your body and you umm… and I could totally be overanalyzing it and put way more thought into it than most people do, I don't know, but you just have to be familiar with your body…I can feel my body, like I can sit there and I know what it looks like.[37]

Clearly, models' affective labour involves the stimulation of bodily affects via several techniques. The work is supervisory and regulatory on the one hand, in terms of monitoring oneself or others in order to pick up on affective flow, but also involves the effort to let oneself go, to become a conduit of affective flow, thereby facilitating its movement. Cindy Crawford, a well-known supermodel during the 1980s, described this incident in which a photographer tried to get her to let go of her preconceived notions of what she should be doing, to get something new or unexpected from her:

> The first time I worked with him, he'd want you to do things like, you know, like can you be a rat? And then he would take pictures. This was in my big cover heyday, and I was like, oh my god, what if he runs this picture? I'm still not sure why he made us do that. I think it was just to break the [mood], so he got something different out of you. Because when you went from doing this [she

33 Interview with Toni, see table 1.

34 Interview with Tina, see table 1.

35 Interview with Juile, see table 1.

36 Interview with Julie, see table 1.

37 Interview with Tammy, see table 1.

> mimics being a rat by wriggling her nose and baring her teeth], at least you've broken the mood and when you went back to your more normal modelling, it kind of worked itself out.[38]

Arguably, if affects precede emotion, and the cultural sanctions, or personal definitions, which emotions bring with them, this photographer was trying to get the model to override the cultural sanctions or personal identifications she might have had if she had been asked to project a certain emotion. Perhaps this photographer was trying to get to something nonverbal, and somatic, to push the model beyond her comfort zone into a more vulnerable mode. In this moment of surprise or uncertainty, perhaps in the play of her features, or her bodily stance, the raw effect of chaotic bodily states with varying intensities, which have not yet been funnelled into culturally delineated modes of action, reaction, or other form of behaviour or expression, were more accessible to the camera.

Models' work with affect is twofold. On the one hand, they work to be sensitive to the flow of affect by opening themselves to affective shifts in the body that might then translate into an external change in demeanour, appearance, or attitude. These externalizations of affective flow can then be used to activate affective flow in others, which might perhaps then be captured as affects, and so on. Models work with affective flows both in person, or via virtual human contact made available through images. Especially when it comes to creating affective images, the job of a model is to be as open as possible to that flow, to keep it moving, without capping it off and defining it as any particular affect. As shown in the examples above, their work often involves efforts to amplify and modulate the flow of affect in ways that are not immediately assimilable to consciousness.

Affective Images and the Technical-Affective Link

The idea of a technical-affective link is an important element in the story of imaging technology's rapid expansion. Modelling work is intimately involved with imaging technologies, as it involves work to produce photographs or moving images of fashion, of lifestyles, of a way of being in the world. The exponential growth of the modes and types of images on offer has been matched by a corresponding growth in the number of models,[39] the amount they are paid,[40] and a global expansion of the modelling industry.[41]

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38 Cindy Crawford speaking in the documentary film, *And Again*, produced by Alvergue & Isabell, 2002

39 The number of modeling agencies has grown every year, for instance, since its first firm was incorporated in the 1920s. The number of agencies listed in the Manhattan Yellow Pages Business listings increased from eight to one hundred and twenty four between 1935 and 2000, with dips only during World War II and the recession of the early 1990s. There were one hundred and forty three modeling agencies listed in 2002. The 2006-2007 Occupational Outlook Handbook said that in 2004, models held about 2,200 jobs; the profession is expected to grow about as fast as average for all occupations by 2014.

40 Models' salaries have also increased. While superstar models in the 1960s, such as Penelope Tree, made $12 an hour and $60 a commercial, by the late 1990s, models of that caliber could make

While modelling growth is certainly related to that of the advertising industry's expansion in the shift to a consumer society, it is also implicated in the shift in media's functioning from "selling products to manipulating affect" (Clough, forthcoming). Here the technical-affective link is forged by the proliferation of images of models not just in fashion magazines and advertisements, but also walking runways, being interviewed backstage at fashion shows, shopping, going out, getting beauty treatments, or being talked about in the gossip pages. The modelling industry has been built on the increasing availability of imaging technologies such as photography, film and television, which not only increase the spread of affective labour, but also specifically work to modulate and articulate affect for productive ends. While Hardt and Negri do mention the idea that affective labour involves "virtual or actual" (2000: 293) human contact, including that produced by the entertainment industries, they have not to date explored the particularities of this relationship between affect and media technology. To really understand this aspect of modelling labour, it is necessary to think of affect as a kind of flow, as explained in the previous section of this article.

The speed and frequency with which the impersonal flow of affect is modulated has been intensified by the 24-hour availability of images on television and the internet that is now the norm, and is the result of a dramatic proliferation of image bombardment over the last several decades. Images are now available not only on television and movie screens, but also have been personalized through delivery through phones, ipods, DVD players and computers. This change in the mode of imaging, coupled with the increased speed with which these images come at us, has lead some theorists to postulate a shift from the 'cinematic gaze' (Mulvey, 1989) to the 'televisual glance' (Ellis, 1982; 1992), in which the subjective, meaningful quality of images becomes less important than the mere exposure to them. In the cinematic norm, images are edited together seamlessly to construct a narrative with which the viewing subject identifies, finding their subject position within the narrative structure (Silverman, 1996; Mulvey, 1989). In the televisual regime, "neither narrative nor stories are necessarily or primarily the way in which the viewer and television are attached to each other" (Clough, 2000: 99). With the televisual, in particular, comes the notion of automatic time, photographic time in which duration is conceived as instantaneous, moving faster than the subject, in which images are generated by imaging machines in an 'autonomous series' that "requires no interval to pass through a subjective formation" (Dienst, 1995: 160). Rather, images have a direct effect on viewers, making points of contact, leaving impulses, intensities, and perhaps actions in their wake.

In the televisual regime of imaging, the affectivity of images does not depend on subjective content or meaning, but rather on their ability to attract a 'televisual glance'

$50,000 in a day (Bailey 1999: 139). In 1994, supermodel Cindy Crawford's gross earnings were estimated at $6.5 million (Tillotson 1995). By 1998, they reportedly reached $8 million; that same year, Claudia Schiffer topped out at $10.5 million (Woolley, 1999).

41 The global expansion of the modeling industry is reflected by the number of agencies with offices worldwide. The three agencies in New York City with long term dominance, IMG, Ford, and Elite, all expanded in the 1980s and 1990s. Elite led the way in global expansion in the 1980s, opening more than 20 offices starting in 1986 and as of 2003, had 31 agencies representing over 750 models. By the mid 1990s, Ford had opened offices in Paris and Milan, and IMG was offering models access to 70 offices in 29 countries.

(Ellis, 1982; 1992), no matter how fleeting. When images can attract this glance, this glance develops an attachment to being exposed to images, to watching television, hooking into the internet, or browsing magazines, regardless of their content. The way modelling work produces images that arguably build this technical-affective link speaks to what Clough has identified as a shift in the functioning of media, in which "the function of media as a socializing/ideological mechanism ha[s] become secondary to its continuous modulation, variation and intensification of affective response in real time, where bodily affect is mined for value" (Clough, forthcoming). There is a socialization of time as media makes "affect an impersonal flow before it is a subjective content" (Massumi, 1998: 61). I am arguing that this attachment is part of what models produce, in fact its pursuit is part of what drives the modelling industry, as it tries to channel volatile and difficult to control affective shifts that occur below the level of awareness, but produce bodily effects nonetheless, thereby attracting attention to, interest in, or engagement with images.

How this type of modelling work described above works to construct this link can be clarified by considering how Brian Massumi understands the affectivity of images. In his work on affect and images, Brian Massumi postulates that the "event of image reception" (Massumi, 2002: 24) consists of two levels, intensity and qualification. The intensity of the image corresponds to the "strength or duration" (*ibid.*) of its effect. The qualities of the image are fixed by the indexing to meaning by the viewing subject; this indexing involves some conscious involvement, as it might put the image into narrative, associating it with "expectations that depend on consciously positioning oneself in a line of narrative continuity" (*ibid.*: 25). Both intensity and qualification excite autonomic reactions, at the surface of the skin, the level of the heartbeat, or breathing in the moments of qualification, or attachment to meaning. The intensity of the image, however, does not correspond to these mixing of conscious and depth responses. The intensity of the image is "outside expectation and adaptation, as disconnected from meaningful sequencing, from narration, as it is from vital function" (*ibid.*). The moment of an image's intensity is not one of meaning, but of impact. This intensity often functions below the level of awareness.

Massumi points out that intensity is "qualifiable as an emotional state" (*ibid.*: 26) but before it is qualified (before affect is captured as emotion), it is a moment that is not passive, but not active either. Rather, it is a moment filled with "motion, vibratory motion, resonation… it is not yet activity, because the motion is not of the kind that can be directed (if only symbolically) toward practical ends in a world of constituted objects and aims (if only on screen)" (*ibid.*: 26). Affective flow, if it is read as intensity, as Massumi eventually does, is a reaction that occurs before the direction of aims and objects. It is not an activity that is directed toward anything in particular; it is the source of such actions, but the effect of affects is always indeterminate until after they arise as physical states.

Conclusion

In this article I have shown how modelling conforms to the descriptions of immaterial and affective labour found in the work of Maurizio Lazzarato and Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri. In addition, I have sought to clarify with regard to the modelling industry how affect is to be understood as something that is different from emotion and elaborate on an understanding of 'affective flow'. To understand affective flow as a more indeterminate process is to think about how it might be possible that models, as affective labourers, not only perform many of the activities Lazzarato, Hardt and Negri say are typical of immaterial and affective production; they also are involved in an aspect of this production that speaks to Clough's notion that the media have shifted in function from a 'socializing/ideological mechanism' to one where bodily affect is made productive for capital in a continuous intensification, variation and modulation of affective flows. Affect may only be viewed from this perspective if a clear delineation between affect and emotion is made, and the non-subjective quality of affective flow is taken into account. By highlighting this dimension of affective labour via the example of modelling work, I've sought to reveal ways in which these definitions of immaterial and affective labour, although accurate in some ways, ignore a rather insidious method by which capital appropriates the common, exploiting human vitality even below the level of conscious awareness.

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Table of Respondents

Name	*Age*	*Ethnicity*	*Position*	*Gender*
Maya	21	Caucasian	Model	Female
Brigitte	19	Caucasian	Model	Female
Tina	32	Asian/American	Model	Female
Toni	19	Caucasian	Model	Female
Kate	24	Caucasian	Model	Female
Julie	34	Caucasian	Model	Female
Tammy	18	Caucasian	Model	Female
Deedee	19	Caucasian	Model	Female
Genevieve	40s	Caucasian/ French	Agent	Female
Megan	33	Caucasian	Agent	Female
Dawn	45	Caucasian	Model agency owner	Female
Kay	40s	Caucasian	Make-up artist	Female
Cameron	27	Caucasian	Agent	Male
Leon	32	African American	Model	Male

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Back to the Future: Italian Workerists Reflect Upon the Operaista Project*

Steve Wright

abstract

On the cusp of the new millennium, three Italian militant researchers undertook to record the reflections of leading participants in the history of *Operaismo*, the findings from which were then presented in the book *Futuro Anteriore* (2002). As one of those interviewed (Sergio Bologna, 2003) later put it, "It was a strange event and it surprised all of us, considering that amongst us there were people who had not spoken nor had any personal relations with one another on any level for years and years, so divergent were our individual paths. One day in 2000, without denying their past, though critical of their experiences, they agreed to recognise themselves in a common tradition". Drawing upon the transcripts used in the writing of *Futuro Anteriore*, this paper will explore, in a critical manner, the ways in which the *operaisti* interviewed by Guido Borio, Francesca Pozzi and Gigi Roggero address the themes central to the current issue of *ephemera*: from debates around immaterial labour and post-Fordism, to the nature of subjectivity and the role of workers' enquiries and co-research.

In recent times there has been considerable interest, in Italy and beyond, in the tendency of Marxism known as *Operaismo* (Workerism), a school many had thought consigned to oblivion along with the turbulent sixties and seventies of rebellious youth, women, and factory workers (first and foremost, the 'mass workers' of assembly line production). A large part of this curiosity is a consequence of the attention recently paid, in academic but also activist circles, to the work of former *Operaisti* such as Antonio Negri and Paolo Virno, as well as associated thinkers like Giorgio Agamben. Having once been treated primarily as a footnote to the intellectual phenomenon that is Deleuze and Guattari, such authors (and Negri above all) have become increasingly the subject of attention in their own right, through the publication and circulation of texts such as *Empire*, *Multitude*, *Homo Sacer* and *Grammar of the Multitude*.[1]

Given these circumstances, the 2002 book *Futuro Anteriore* authored by Guido Borio, Francesca Pozzi and Gigi Roggero, informed as it is by nearly sixty interviews with

1 While not himself a Workerist, Agamben's trajectory since at least the late eighties has regularly intersected with significant circles emerging from *Operaismo* (see, for example, his association with the journals *Luogo comune* and *DeriveApprodi*).

participants from the Workerist experience (along with some of their critics), is a crucial resource. It is crucial because it provides important insights both into the work of those theorists already somewhat familiar to English-language readers, as well into as the broader milieu of political and theoretical engagement from which they emerged. I have discussed the broad contours of *Futuro Anteriore* elsewhere (Wright, 2004): here I want to focus instead upon the discussion across the interviews of some themes at the heart of this issue of *ephemera*. While alluding to the overview of *Operaismo* that the authors of *Futuro Anteriore* themselves construct, I want to explore how these questions are addressed by some of those interviewed for the book: both the famous and the relatively unknown, both those who had been fundamental in developing Italian Workerism as a distinctive tendency, as well as those more sceptical about many of its central precepts.

What makes *Operaismo* and the various circles that emerged from it of interest and relevance today? The originality of classical Workerism in the sixties and seventies lay in its commitment to rethink political practice in the light of new problems thrown up by the post-war social compact in Italy, problems that the mainstream of the local left and labour movement too often seemed unable to comprehend. Foremost amongst these problems was the historical specificity of the relation between capital and labour: in the Italian case, the rise of what the *Operaisti* called a new *class composition*, centred upon the mass worker employed in Taylorist production regimes. In turn, the Workerist imperative to understand the mass worker and its distinctive political practices (notably, its struggle against the organization of work – even, in certain instances, against the wage relation itself) found attraction in the student movement and Hot Autumn of the late sixties, leading to a questioning of many precepts within the Marxist-Leninist canon. The flowering in the seventies of the so-called 'new social movements', and of workplace struggles beyond the domain of the mass worker, fuelled further research and engagement, much of it associated with the autonomist movement of that period. Eclipsed by repression and the defeat in Italy of the mass worker as a social subject, *Operaismo* was considered dead by the early eighties. To the surprise of most observers, therefore, 'post'-Workerist sensibilities have found a new audience since the nineties, contributing to contemporary debates in social movements and the academy alike, around the new forms assumed by capital's tyranny over labour, and the social antagonism this inspires in all spheres of social engagement in the Internet age. Thanks to the work of Borio, Pozzi and Roggero, it becomes possible to peer inside the kaleidoscope of viewpoints posited by ex-*Operaisti* and post-*Operaisti* alike, as they ponder the successes and failures of their political tendency, as well as how best to understand the nature of social domination and conflict today.

What follows will provide some glimpses into the discussion by *Futuro Anteriore*'s protagonists. Along with the interviews, I will also draw on transcripts from the series of seminars around Italy by means of which the book was launched in Italy in 2002. This seminar series, which culminated in a two-day conference – about which Enda Brophy (2004) has written a very useful account – is well worth examining, since it allowed participants in the project to respond both to the authors' interpretations, and their fellow-interviewees: in short, to participate in a collective exercise of co-research. But first, for the sake of context, some information on the scope and intent of what Borio, Pozzi and Roggero set out to accomplish with their project.

The authors of *Futuro Anteriore* make no pretence to be disinterested parties when it comes to trying to make some kind of sense of *Operaismo* as a body of thought, to ascertain the successes and failures of the movements it influenced (stretching from circles with the Italian Communist Party to Autonomia and sections of the libertarian left), let alone its legacy for anti-capitalist politics in the present. Deeply influenced by the worldview of Romano Alquati, one of the more distinctive participants in the history of Italian Workerism, Borio, Pozzi and Roggero do not hold back from expressing their own views in the book-length summation of their fieldwork that is *Futuro Anteriore*. At the same time, by including the transcripts of all interviews on an accompanying CD-ROM, they make it possible for others to construct their own readings of the primary sources they have drawn upon.[2]

Who was interviewed for the book? There were fifty-eight participants all tolled, of whom five were women. Borio, Pozzi and Roggero group those interviewed in a number of ways. For example, by generation: there are those born between 1929 and 1936, most of whom had become politically engaged by the fifties; those born between 1937 and 1944, who often entered radical politics in the early or mid-sixties; those born between 1945 and 1952, and were typically part of the generation of 1968 and its immediate aftermath; and finally, those born after 1952, who more commonly cut their political teeth in the movements of the seventies (or, in some cases, the eighties). Those interviewed played various roles in post-war Italian radical politics: some were part of that small intellectual and political elite seen by the book's authors as developing key categories within the Workerist lexicon; others were militants in local collectives, while a third cluster belonged to an 'intermediate stratum' of cadre that sought to bridge these two spheres. Perhaps a quarter of participants had been associated with *Quaderni Rossi* and/or *Classe Operaia*, two journals of the sixties in whose pages many of the distinctive sensibilities of *Operaismo* were first outlined. About a third had belonged to the organization Potere Operaio, and about one third had been part of the Italian autonomist movement that arose in the early seventies, coinciding with Potere Operaio's death throes. Many but not all of those who had participated in Autonomia had also been in Potere Operaio. Most had assumed the role of political militants at one point in their lives, most had been or were still academics, and all remained politically engaged.

Future Perfect: the book's title echoes the name of a journal that Negri and others founded in Paris in the late eighties. Searching for a definition of the term on the Internet, I came across this rather charming explanation: "when we use this tense we are projecting ourselves forward into the future and looking back at an action that will be completed some time later than now" (Edufind, 2004). While the purpose of *Futuro Anteriore* is largely to make sense of an historical experience (or better, an ensemble of experiences), almost a quarter of the book is given over to examining the opinions of interviewees concerning the nature of capitalism and social conflict today. Twisting the book's title around somewhat, Carlo Cuccomarino would argue that the aim of *Futuro Anteriore* is "to think ahead through looking back, to take what is useful [*buono*] from

2 All but one of the interview transcripts (that with Lauso Zagato) can be found online at http://usuarios.lycos.es/pete_baumann/futuroanteriore.html. Edited versions of some interviews have since appeared in Borio, Pozzi and Roggero (eds.) 2005.

things that happened 20-30 years ago, actualise it and use it for the possible attempt to change the state of things" (Cuccomarino et al., 2002: 2).

For Sergio Bologna, a key figure in the history of *Operaismo*, one of the most important things about the *Futuro Anteriore* project is its very existence, since this "broke the ice and created an ambit … in which the protagonists and witnesses [*testimoni*] could see their own history treated with respect" (Gambino et al., 2002: 2). At the same time, there were certain aspects of the book which he found problematic. For example, the dependence of *Futuro Anteriore*'s authors, at crucial points of their arguments, upon the stylised lexicon of Alquati, risked over-intellectualising the Workerist project, as if

> we went outside the factories with the German edition of the *Grundrisse*. In reality, it was exactly the opposite: that is, my perception and memory is that we were the first who succeeded in speaking a language that workers understood. The party militants didn't understand it, the leftwing intellectuals didn't understand it: when you gave a leaflet to a leftwing intellectual, they would say 'But what have you written? Who could understand these things?' […] it was a filtered and enriched political discourse that knew how to communicate or transmit certain messages to the working class or to workers, who received and perceived them. It was their language: we gave a certain form [*una veste nobile*] to their language, but it was theirs, it wasn't the language of leftwing intellectuals, who in fact always reproved us for writing abstruse things. (Gambino et al., 2002: 4)

One of the principal reasons that *Operaismo* scandalised so many of its contemporaries within the Italian left of the sixties was that it sought to ground a revolutionary politics within the contradictions of capitalist valorisation, as seen from the perspective of those whose ability to work capital attempted to subsume. As Paolo Virno would recall at a public meeting on *Futuro Anteriore* held in Cosenza,

> Think of the 1969 slogan ... 'the wage uncoupled from productivity'. Now, granted it's awkward, it lacks the nimbleness and elegance of 'equality, liberty, fraternity', it'll probably never inspire a national anthem … and yet this idea of the wage uncoupled from productivity provoked such antipathy precisely because it was not a theory of justice, it was not the Tobin Tax, it was the radical critique of the very fact that a commodity such as labour-power existed. (Cuccomarino et al., 2002: 5)

Opening the Turin book launch of *Futuro Anteriore*, Carlo Formenti reiterated a point made by many of those interviewed for the project: despite attempts to represent it from the outside as homogenous, the history of *Operaismo* had been marked by significant differences over theoretical frameworks and approaches to organizations, by divisions based upon 'situations of struggles' as well as of generation (Formenti et al., 2002: 1). That this remains so is evident in Formenti's assessment of the category *multitude*:

> To my mind, a long phase of conflicts with enormous risks and opportunities is opening before us. The only thing that I feel we can inherit as positive from a certain type of path, of experiences – above all of practice, less of theoretical reflection than of practice and of experiences of life in struggle – is to go back to reflecting on forms of social autonomy. That is, what today are the forces that are concretely in conflict, what are the needs, desires, subjects (not subject) that concretely incarnate them and move in the territory? Avoiding instead a continuity of abstract categories that at times irritates me greatly, such as when in *Empire* my friend Toni Negri reproposes categories of absolute abstraction like 'empire' and 'multitude'. (Formenti et al., 2002: 3)

Post-Fordism

Operaismo, as a distinctive political tendency with its own research agenda, had collapsed by the early eighties, with many of its Italian proponents at that point in prison or exile. For all their disagreements on other matters, most of the strains of thought that arose from its wreckage have used the term post-Fordism to describe a new configuration of capitalist social relations after 'les trente glorieuses' (Guinan, 2002) that followed the Second World War. One of the best known of such exponents of the term post-Fordism is Paolo Virno. In a number of texts since translated into English, he has emphasised not only the repressive nature of capital's attack upon the process of political recomposition in the sixties and seventies, but also the counterrevolution through which it sought to incorporate and normalise much of the creativity expressed by those challenging the post-war Fordist compact in Italy and similar social formations. In his interview for *Futuro Anteriore*, much of Virno's (2001: 13) emphasis is upon the anticipatory nature of Italian struggles of the mid-seventies, as responses to the crisis of Fordism and – parallel to this – the nature of contemporary capitalism, "precisely as post-Fordist … as translating in historical, social and also economic terms, the most general characteristics of the human animal". From this viewpoint, post-Fordism is addressed primarily as 'the communism of capital', a thematic to which much of Virno's book *Grammar of the Multitude* is devoted. In a broader sense, post-Fordism is read as the framework within which the new relationship of labour and capital is constituted, a framework which, depending upon how it is read, may well contain a host of latent possibilities, from struggles against social domination, to the risk that "the multitude can become fascist" (Virno, 2001: 14).

Unfortunately, much of the discussion of post-Fordism in the interviews for *Futuro Anteriore* is of a passing nature. Yet even these are, on occasion, suggestive. For Andrea Colombo (2001: 2), the term post-Fordism itself is 'horrendous', yet the fundamental shift that it seeks to address seems acceptable enough. Bruno Cartosio (2000: 16), in contrast, states that "I don't like the expression post-Fordism, because I believe that reality today is complex, in which Fordism lives alongside post-Fordism and pre-Fordism". Aldo Bonomi (2001: 13) adds a further twist by talking of the transition from Fordism to post-Fordism – "and from the latter to globalisation", although he doesn't elaborate as to the differences between these terms. Massimo De Angelis agrees: "within the modern global factory, post-Fordism doesn't exist without Fordism, wage labour doesn't exist without slavery, immaterial labour doesn't exist without material labour" (2001: 6).

One of the more extended discussions of the category post-Fordism is offered by Marco Revelli, who like Cartosio had once been an editor of the influential Workerist journal *Primo Maggio*. An acute chronicler of the rise and fall of the mass worker at FIAT (his 1989 book on the subject is a classic of its kind, informed by a wealth of firsthand recollections and his own experience there as an 'external' militant), his views concerning social conflict have shifted markedly since the eighties. More than a workplace regime, he argues, Fordism was a whole system: "Taylorism plus Keynesianism … based upon the hypothesis of an unlimited expansion of markets" that "incorporated pure instrumental rationality" in the project of formalising all aspects of

capitalist production (Revelli, 2001: 5). The situation now, Revelli insists, "is exactly the opposite":

> We can call it whatever – post-Fordism, post-immaterial, Empire, we could call it "cabbage" – but this mechanism has been broken: today capital's valorisation occurs in a context in which markets are increasingly saturated, and thus express a strong resistance to absorbing products; the cost of raw materials are climbing, and labour-power can't be disciplined in the hierarchical-authoritarian manner presupposed by the Fordist model. (Revelli, 2001: 5-6)

In what seems to be in part a self-criticism of his own earlier stance, Revelli argues that the *Operaisti* had assumed "the absolutisation of one of the many possible forms of capital's valorisation, as if Fordism was in some way the highest stage of capitalism". Thus, when capital succeeded in destroying the mass worker as a political subject (an event exemplified in the Italian case by the strike and subsequent mass sackings at FIAT in 1980), Workerism was unable

> to see the limits of that class composition, still completely closed within capital's envelope, [and so paid] scant attention instead to the processes of cultural accumulation in the sense of lifestyle, of styles of behaviour, the transformation of subjectivity and so on. (Revelli, 2001: 3)

What do the authors of *Futuro Anteriore* themselves say about post-Fordism? Their frequent reference in interviews to 'so-called post-Fordism' is something of a clue, as is their observation in conversation with Claudio Greppi (2000: 11) that "so-called post-Fordism is one of the themes on which the majority [of participants] have expressed many certainties and few doubts". Making a distinction between Fordism as a social model of mass consumption and Taylorism as a model of workplace organisation, they suggest that, far from having been surpassed, Fordism may well be flexible enough to attempt to incorporate workers' informal knowledges into its management of the accumulation process (Borio, Pozzi and Roggero, 2002: 116-21). Their views here are echoed by another participant, whose path from the sixties, unlike that of most interviewees, followed that of Mario Tronti's long-term engagement with the Communist Party. Enrico Livraghi (2000: 6, 4) is likewise doubtful about the usefulness of the category post-Fordism, asking whether the current age might not be better understood as one of 'hyper-Fordism'. For good measure, he adds that the category immaterial labour is a tautology, whose advocates forget that Marx had long ago established labour-power as 'the authentic immaterial commodity'.

Immaterial Labour and General Intellect

Much has been made in certain post-*Operaista* quarters of the term 'immaterial labour'. In the work of Negri (but others too), it is central in explaining the 'post' within post-Fordism:

> There is this enormous phenomenon that is the change in industrial paradigm … it's useless playing the knave and saying, 'immaterial labour, material labour, there's more of one here, there's more of the other there'. What changes is the model, in which the proportions of hand, muscles and head employed in labour changes radically. (Negri, 2000: 7)

Closely tied to the notion of immaterial labour is the category of general intellect. As Marco Bascetta (Parise et al., 2002: 6) pointed out during the Salerno book launch of *Futuro Anteriore*, "Italian Workerism had made almost a bible out of the 'Fragment on Machines' in Marx's *Grundrisse*", a passage which gives pride of place to general intellect. While Marx had understood the latter 'fundamentally as dead labour', the most common reading emerging from Workerist circles, continued Bascetta, interpreted it as "*not only* given in the form of machines and of technologies, but in the form of living labour" (Parise et al., 2002: 7, my emphasis). This 'not only' is intriguing, given the tendency within post-*Operaista* analyses to treat general intellect as *nothing but* an attribute of living labour. More typical amongst those interviewed is Yann Moulier-Boutang (2001: 9):

> If we characterise this passage […] as a cognitive capitalism, this entails changes in the framework of classical Marxism, indeed of *Operaismo*. I was thinking, for example, of the reduction of living labour to dead labour, naturally reading the *Grundrisse* and other classics, and now I think that we truly have a new type of exploitation, which is the production of living labour by means of living labour through living labour. That is, the impossibility of eliminating or reducing living labour to mere machinery, capital etc. This changes everything concerning the question of command, because the latter cannot be given by the apparatus of fixed capital: therefore command is recast as [*ridiventa*] the command of affects. These new cognitive workers have more power than was possessed by technicians over material capital, because they are no longer reducible or controllable by means of the weight of capital.

What is striking in the *Futuro Anteriore* interviews is the variety of different ways in which this matter is tackled by participants. For example, when Giaro Daghini (2000: 10) turns to the question of 'the immaterial', it is to interpret globalisation in terms of "the construction of an immaterial universe of communication that allows the *ad infinitum* localisation within the territory of units of production, of exchange, logistics of transfer". Here, in other words, the focus is less upon the immaterial as a realm of production somehow distinct from the 'material', than as a new means (for example, through telemetry) of deploying the material in previously unforeseen combinations and upon unprecedented scales.

One of the few non-*operaisti* interviewed for *Futuro Anteriore* (others include the historian Maria Grazia Meriggi and the Roman autonomist Vincenzo Miliucci) is Enzo Modugno. Long prominent within the intellectual circles of the Roman radical left, where he has often been critical of the local autonomist movement (Del Bello, 1997), Modugno has played an important role in a number of projects since the sixties: to take one example, the journal *Marxiana*, which aimed to publicise the work of Paul Mattick and other non-Leninist Marxists within the Italian movement. By the late eighties, Modugno (Collegamanti Wobbly, 1989) was also one of the first Italian Marxists to reflect at length upon the place of the immaterial within capitalist social relations. His take on the question is, he believes, "exactly the opposite" to that of Negri and other post-*Operaisti*: in his opinion, capital is actually seeking to separate knowledge from the human brain, because the latter has now become "totally untrustworthy" (Modugno, 2001: 3):

> The thing that I don't understand is why the ex-*potoppini*[3] want to assign the dignity of general intellect to this new worker. They consider him or her as precisely the finally realised general intellect that therefore possesses the dignity held earlier by intellectuals – which presumes that he or she also has that type of formation, that is that they have the capacity, with a computer, to produce all those things, therefore that they contain in their head all the knowledge. I don't agree: on the contrary, this is a diminished intellectual, it is an old intellectual separated from knowledge and learning [*dal sapere e dalla conoscenza*], exactly as the waged worker of early capitalism was an artisan deprived of their virtuosity, because that virtuosity had now been incorporated in a machine. (Modugno, 2001: 11-12)

Providing their own assessment of the category general intellect, Borio, Pozzi and Roggero also take the opportunity to polemicise with the likes of Franco 'Bifo' Berardi and Negri concerning the meaning of Marx's 'Fragment'. In doing so, they question those who see this text as an anticipation of capital's ability to free itself from the constraints of the so-called 'law of value'. Not surprisingly, they follow Alquati in talking about two forms of general intellect: on the one hand, "human capacities incorporated in machines"; on the other, that particular to living labour. More than this, they quote Virno's interview (now in Borio, Pozzi & Roggero, 2005: 319) – 'What is more material than a mental panorama?' – in support of their use instead of the category *non-tangible commodities*:

> We prefer this definition to that of immaterial commodities. It is in fact rather debatable to call immaterial all that one cannot touch: the commodity education or the commodity communication, for example, while they cannot be physically touched, have their indisputable, peculiar and fundamental materiality. (Borio et al., 2002: 126)

Subjectivity and Enquiries

For Borio, Pozzi and Roggero, one of the weaknesses of most strands within Italian Workerism lay in their efforts to deal with – but in fact, more commonly, to elide – the problem of subjectivity. The Workerists were correct in locating subjectivity as a distinctive attribute of that 'particular' commodity labour-power: indeed, the very two-sidedness of the latter means that while such subjectivity is not

> in itself antagonistic to the capitalist system … as peculiar [property] of the human agent, it implies at least a capacity of rather autonomous initiative: this autonomy, if partial, is already a first step beyond the actor and towards potential alternative projects. (Borio, Pozzi and Roggero, 2002: 178)

Yet, for all the emphasis upon workers' behaviour and championing of the force of the mass worker, both *Operaismo* in its heyday, and those (ex or post) *operaisti* interviewed more recently for *Futuro Anteriore*, actually

> say little about what that force was, not only in its revolutionary potentiality, but also in its subjectivity (certainly not all antagonistic), therefore in its totality of behaviours, needs, beliefs, knowledges, cultures etc. (Borio, Pozzi and Roggero, 2002: 107-8)

3 That is, former members of Potere Operaio.

I'm not convinced such criticisms are entirely fair, particularly if one takes into account the kinds of documentation (often in the form of workplace leaflets, many of them made available for wider circulation in journals such as *La Classe*) produced by the Workerists at the height of the Hot Autumn – or indeed, the kind of documentation made available through the 'life history in the guise of a novel' that is *Vogliamo Tutto* ('We Want Everything') by Nanni Balestrini. All the same, the question of reading subjectivity – and the implications that follows for understandings of class composition and mass organization – is one that deserves considered attention in any effort to unravel the *Operaista* experience.

In his discussion with *Futuro Anteriore*'s authors, Carlo Formenti (2000: 7) links the problem of subjectivity with what he calls "the old idea of class composition … within the theoretical tradition of global, but above all Italian, Workerism", one obsessed with the quest to identify 'a driving nucleus' within any given class composition. If this mindset dovetailed with the Leninist propensities of the self-styled 'organised' factions of the autonomist movement, it could also be found in the arguments of an anti-Leninist like Franco 'Bifo' Berardi, whose reading of the recent movements against global capital interpreted these as the manifestation of a new vanguard within production, the 'cognitariat'. As Formenti puts it:

> To my mind this is the old flaw of the Workerist tradition: that is, the constant attempt to chase what can be thought to be the most advanced 'point' of conflict and of contradiction, defining it as vanguard and thinking that the entire dynamic of conflicts can, in the last instance, be brought back to the paradigm, the model, the objectives, the culture, the practices and the behaviours of this most advanced point. (Formenti, 2000: 7)

Since, in his view, the discourse of class composition cannot be understood outside this process of identifying vanguards, Formenti's (2000: 8) preference, like that of his friend Romano Màdera (2000), is to abandon it altogether in favour of "a federalism of antagonisms" that accepts the contingent nature of the encounter between different struggles in society.

Aspects of Formenti's view are echoed in Christian Marazzi's recollection of a Negri "caught completely unawares" by his interest in the poor as a social subject in the Switzerland of the eighties. While this may sound strange to readers who know of Negri's work only through *Empire*, the exclamation "Poverty? What's this crap [roba]?" is consistent with the broad trajectory of Italian Workerism:[4]

> [*Operaismo*] was never a model of a theory that started from the poor: it started, from the strong points of capital. In this sense the critique of third worldism was political, it was the critique of the idea of attacking capital from the peripheries and from underdevelopment. We instead have always sustained the opposite: the struggle over the wage was for more wages, for a certain consumerism, but it was also political, a struggle for counterpower. (now in Borio, Pozzi & Roggero, 2005: 227, 227-8)

4 Although it should be added that those Italians more attentive to debates amongst North American Workerists following the emergence of the welfare rights movement saw the discourse around 'poor people' somewhat differently – see, for example, some of the articles published in the seventies and eighties in the pages of *Primo Maggio*. It should also be noted that the Materiali Marxisti column published by Feltrinelli, under the direction of Negri, Bologna and others at the University of Padua, translated Piven and Cloward's classic text *Poor People's Movements*.

For *Operaismo*, the means most suited to identifying subjects of struggle was through enquiry: best of all, a form of enquiry that involved those subjects themselves in the process of accumulating knowledge and deploying it to effect change. It is here that the debt of *Futuro Anteriore*'s authors to Alquati is most apparent. The opening pages of their book quote at length from a text by Alquati (n.d.: 35) included along with the interview transcripts, in which he calls for a new round of 'co-research' carried out by those in the workplace together, and 'on an equal footing', with 'intellectuals and researchers' based outside. In light of this, perhaps one of the most marked aspects of many of the interviews is the sense of isolation recalled in the wake of *Operaismo*'s defeat, often contrasted unfavourably with circumstances in the seventies. As Sergio Bologna (2001: 11) recounted,

> it was much easier to be an intellectual in the seventies, because basically you had before you such a wealth of subversive behaviours, of rebel fantasies, of desires, of innovation etc. that, when all is said and done, your behaviour was that of formalising things a bit.

For Alisa Del Re (2000), too, it is this absence of a broader context of collective projects of social change visible all around in one's daily world that is felt most strongly:

> If I miss those times it is because I have not witnessed the same feeling and power of a communitarian kind since then, even though subjectively and individually now I have much more power over my life and decisions about it than I used to: but it is a very solitary thing.

Conclusion

To date, only one transcript from *Futuro Anteriore* – the interview with Alisa del Re quoted above – has appeared in English. It is to be hoped that the present interest in 'Negri thought' will spark more such translations from this rich body of primary sources. Or perhaps intellectual fashion in the English-speaking left will move on, leaving the *operaisti* a mere footnote to a fad that will soon become yesterday.[5] If so, that would be a great pity. As Guido Borio (Cuccomarino et al., 2002: 9) put it at one of the *Futuro Anteriore* book launches, "You undertake research when you lack certainties, when you don't know which road to take". If nothing else, the materials collected by Borio, Pozzi and Roggero open a window upon a serious, collective attempt – even if in different circumstances, now passed – to make actual the time-honoured project of overturning 'the present state of things'. Given this, those seeking to do the same in today's uncertain times could do worse than to spend a few hours perusing the fascinating ensemble of opinions and reflections brought together in *Futuro Anteriore*.

5 One of the more charming aspects of Negri's two interviews for *Futuro Anteriore* is that he seems to be at a loss as much as everyone else to explain the success of *Empire* in the United States and other English-speaking polities.

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