Content Providers of the World Unite!
The Cultural Politics of Globalization

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Preface

This collection of short essays comes to the Institute by way of a conference entitled *Content Providers of the World Unite! The Cultural Politics of Globalization*, which was held at McMaster University in October 2001. The initiative for the conference came from Susie O'Brien and Imre Szeman, both faculty members in the Department of English at McMaster University. They were ably assisted in their organizational efforts by Stephanie Parker, a part-time employee of the Institute at the time and a student in McMaster's Theme School on Globalization, Social Change and the Human Experience.

As a collection, these essays examine various aspects of the relationship between culture and globalization, while keeping questions of agency in the front of their thinking. Given the multidimensionality of globalization, it is always a danger that if one abstracts one dimension, culture, one will leave behind other critical dimensions such as the economic, the political, or the demographic. In fact, if one is concerned with agency as these essays are, then the analysis must remain fully multidimensional. As John Tomlinson (1999:14) has cautioned us, "lose the complexity and you have lost the phenomenon."

None the less, some theorists argue that culture is not just one dimension of several, but a crucial one. If we accept for the moment Tomlinson's (1999:18) understanding of culture as "the order of life in which human beings construct meanings through practices of symbolic representation", then culture becomes crucial because it enables or constitutes how we use contemporary technologies and cultural products to connect to others. These choices about how and with whom to connect can be constitutive for agency in a globalizing context. Or so, this is the message that is argued in many ways in the following essays.

Arjun Appadurai (1996) helps us take this point further. In reflecting upon contemporary developments and the nature of the 'rupture' they introduce into history, Appadurai lays particular stress on the imagination. He suggests that the imagination as social practice is new because it has 'broken out of the special expressive space of art, myth, and ritual and has now become a part of the quotidian mental work of ordinary people in many societies' (1996:5). As cultural products enter the lives of these ordinary people, they provoke resistance, selectivity and occasionally agency. Research has increasingly shown that these people are not simply the dupes of the products of transnational media and cultural corporations. As Appadurai adds (1996:7), 'it is the imagination, in its collective forms, that creates ideas of neighbourhood and nationhood, of moral economies and unjust rule, of higher wages and foreign labor prospects. The imagination is today a staging ground for action, not only for escape.'

The following essays thus provide us with considerable intellectual stimuli for thinking through these issues. In their introductory essay, O'Brien and Szeman sketch out the context and the core questions that presenters at the conference sought to address. The remaining essays are grouped into three sections. First, Vetters, Henley and Brown focus on particular cultural forms. Vetters looks at how 'celebrities' acting through the mass media can serve as focal points or instigators for mobilization of resistance to particular aspects of globalization. Henley looks at how local cultural practices that arise from the indigenization of hip-hop culture in Vancouver create a basis for acts of resistance to global corporate culture and for assertions of local identities. Brown also takes us away from visual culture, so often analyzed in connection with globalization, and discusses more generally how music enacts relationships between individual bodies and constructed social worlds.

The second section focuses more specifically on electronic communication and cyber-culture. Wiltse examines the dimension of 'fandom' and 'communities of appreciation' as affective tools that enable the construction of maps of what matters in the cultural world. And as individuals come to redefine their identities based on these maps, they imagine new cultural worlds, which may, in turn, become the basis for activism and 'intervention'. Friedman deals even more explicitly with the imagination by examining the role of utopia in imagining alternative futures. He illustrates his argument by reflecting upon the utopian ideals and thus alternative futures associated with open source software.

The third group of essays turns to look specifically at activism. Varadharajan uses *Empire* by Hardt and Negri in combination with the thinking of Amartya Sen to reflect upon the general possibilities for resistance to globalizing processes. Metzger takes us to media coverage of the protests in Quebec City during the meeting of political leaders on the Free Trade Area of the Americas. Finally, Draper uses a materialist standpoint epistemology to reflect upon two competing models of non-governmental organizations for challenging globalization. One model uses a kind of 'top down' approach, while the other begins at the ground with the standpoint of the Brazilian rural poor. He argues that the latter approach is more likely to be successful in constructing alternative imagined worlds that might serve as a basis for agency.

William D. Coleman, Editor
Working Papers Series.

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Content Providers of the World Unite!

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What about that feeling that it's all been done? Not in the techie department, of course; there, the possibility of novelty seems to be unlimited. But in those areas occupied by what platform proprietors call "content providers." What a phrase! Could anything register the devastation of the spirit more completely than that little generic? Could meaning suffer more complete evacuation? Not since we landed on the moon and found nothing has our cultural unconscious encountered so traumatic a void. (de Zengottia 2002: 37)

"Content" is a topic discussed by the sponsors of cyberspace, and "counterculture" is a weekly show on the Bravo channel. In this bizarre context, artists don't seem to perform any meaningful role other than that of decorators of the omnipresent *horror vacui* and entertainers of a new and much more cynical consumer class that is more open to radical behaviors: www.radarts.com. The paradigm shift is drastic, total, and irreversible. It truly feels like the day the TV antennas arrived in Brazil and many forms of popular theatre and community fiestas died overnight. (Gómez-Peña 2001: 11)

Depending on which accounts of globalization one reads, culture is either at the center of the new global economy or it has been totally eclipsed by it. On the one hand, cultural objects and practices now appear to be absolutely constitutive of economic, political and social practices, to such a degree that analyses of the latter that do not take culture into account have to be treated as theoretically and empirically impoverished. It is no longer possible to treat culture as epiphenomenal or secondary, that is, as a site where one merely reads the tea leaves of the "real" material forces outside of culture (but expressed in it) that propel history along. On the contrary, there are constant, daily reminders of the ways in which the economic, political and social have folded into what was once thought to be the semi-autonomous sphere of culture. Major manufacturers, most infamously Nike, have moved out of production (the margins are too low) and reconfigured themselves as purveyors of sign-systems (brand-names) that can be attached to any object whatsoever. Political and economic imperatives and initiatives are driven along by the mythology of movies and the ubiquity of lifestyle culture, by myriad and contradictory fantasies generated out of the global web of consumer culture, rather than (as it is still often assumed) the coldness of *Realpolitik* or the hardness of economic data (think of George Bush Sr. quoting Schwarzenegger in his pursuit of Sadaam Hussein, or George Bush Jr. evoking the language of the Western in his quest for Osama bin Laden). The insistence made after 11 September 2001 by politicians and business leaders that we continue to shop in order to save the economy only made visible what the bloated stock-markets of the 1990s were already pointing to: contemporary Western social life, *especially* the economy, is buoyed along by forms of desire that bind subjectivity and capital together through the medium of one's credit card.[1] In accordance with Fredric Jameson's formulation of postmodernity, it seems that the moment has arrived "at which everything in our social life - from economic value and state power to practices and to the very structures of the psyche itself - can be said to have become 'cultural' in some original and yet untheorized sense" (Jameson 1991: 48).

Of course a crucial point of Jameson's argument more than ten years ago, which has today become a critical commonplace, is that culture's seeming apotheosis marks the final death of its (always ambiguous) utopian promise. If there was something in the postmodern that spoke to possibility or newness, to the definitive movement beyond the inelegant modern bulk of train engines and production lines to disembodied (and so more exciting!) vectors of speed and energy, the discourse of globalization

that has emerged as its apparent heir signals more clearly the conditions of possibility—and limits—of the present form of "cultural capitalism." Postmodernism was criticized justly as a myopically first-world discourse. By contrast, globalization makes connections between the privileged sectors of the postmodern which exist around the world (and not just in the West), and those multitudes consigned to generating the raw materials and cultural energy that are the very conditions of this privilege. Zygmunt Bauman (1998) has proposed a social taxonomy for the global age based on differing experiences of mobility and temporality.[2] In addition to this classification, another distinction needs to be grasped: the division between *content providers* and network providers. The former term connects low-wage workers in free trades zones to first-world artists, sex-trade workers enduring new and intensified forms of slavery to comparatively coddled and well-fed academics in the West, high-tech wage slaves in Silicon Valley with their low-wage counterparts in New Delhi and Manila. Network Managers are those who control the means of distributing and circulating this content. Normally, they are capitalists who exploit ideas and cultural expression as well as human brawn and ecological resources, and who generate wealth out of circulation and at the expense of the future.[3]

For a system that thrives on the consumption of "newness," the production of endless amounts of content is essential, whether in the form of experiences (tourism, theme parks, shopping malls, Vegas, etc.) or physical or cultural goods (three-blade shaving systems! the *Sopranos!* value-added coffee drinks!). Globalization is nothing if not modernity squared, a situation in which newness has become the primary product for some, and the primary occupation and desire of even those who continue to eke out a bare existence in factories located in Third World "free trade" zones.

Content has become the pre-condition for the success and profitability of those who build and maintain networks of distribution: television networks, Internet providers, phone companies, book distributors, major international art shows, and so on. No content, no profit. The centrality of culture today, the importance of content in keeping the wheels of commerce moving, might suggest that cultural workers have new-found powers. Or, at the very least, it may imply that their relationship to the social is now of a very different kind than the one assumed in the production of an autonomous cultural sphere. But something far different and more contradictory has taken place. When it was imagined as an autonomous sphere of social life, culture was generally seen as a socially benign but largely irrelevant force, except by aesthetes and humanities professors (who alone were shocked by the transformation of Kurt Weill into Bobby Darin into a jingle for McDonald's), and by the politically motivated formulators of national culture commissions (see Milz's essay, this issue). Its only other defenders were socially marginal cultural producers—African-American musicians (see Brown, this working paper collection), dissident writers in the former Soviet Bloc, street theatre collectives in apartheid South Africa—who maintained its vital role as a vehicle for maintaining and expressing the human spirit.

If culture is now immanent to politics (and vice-versa) in a new way that is described in part by the term globalization, one might expect the dreams of the artistic avant garde (if not the literary professoriate) to be finally (and paradoxically) realized at the very peak of consumer culture. As one and the same as politics, culture can itself reshape the socio-political landscape through its effects, shocks and transgressions. Something of this very dream was expressed in the most celebratory writings about the aesthetic and democratic potential of the Internet, new media, anti-copyright practices like Napster, and even in contemporary design and architecture (for example, in the recent string of enormous, glossy design books by the likes of Rem Koolhaus and Bruce Mau).[4]

The bankruptcy of this hope is succinctly observed in Ed Wiltse's comment on the promise of the Internet, which "has become much easier to see. . . as simply another site of globalized commodification and popular

stupefaction than. . . [as] the brave new electronic frontier envisioned by some of its geeky progenitors" (this issue). The maturation of the poster-child for cultural globalization into yet another profit-grubbing media giant is only the most visible manifestation of the consequences of the transformation of culture into content, a transformation to which the epigraphs to this introduction bear further witness. In different ways, Thomas de Zengottia and Guillermo Gómez-Peña both address the challenge of continuing to produce culture in what Gómez-Peña describes as

> the culture of the mainstream bizarre... where so-called 'radical' behavior, revolution-as-style and 'extreme' images of race, violence, and sexual hybridity have become daily entertainment, mere marketing strategies... From the humiliating spectacle of antisocial behavior 'performed' on infamous U.S. network talk shows to TV specials on mass murderers, child killers, religious cults, kinky sex, predatory animals, and/or natural disasters, and the obsessive repetition of 'real crimes' shot by private citizens or by surveillance cameras, we've all become daily voyeurs and participants of a new *cultura in extremis*. (Gómez-Peña 2001: 13)

For Gómez-Peña, "the mainstream bizarre" has created a serious challenge for artists and performers. Having appropriated, commodified and normalized the aesthetic strategies of even the most extreme performance artists—without thereby appropriating their concomitant political or ethical imperatives—there is now little to distinguish Andreas Serrano's morgue photographs from the Fox Network's "When Animals Attack."

It recently seemed as if the hegemony of the mainstream bizarre was in danger of collapsing. Following 11 September 2001, cultural commentators busied themselves generating media content about the paradigm shift that would follow in the wake of the "Attack on America." Irony was supposed to be banished forever (if *Seinfeld* hadn't already been off the air, it would have had to be cancelled) and the faux civic virtues of small-town America reproduced in Celebration, Florida, by the Disney Corporation were assumed to be back in fashion (even if they had never truly existed before).[5] Of course, as de Zengottia points out, and as we all now know, what came to pass instead is more of the same: 11 September 2001 has become something of a stylistic as well as a political marker, inspiring (among other things) the "True Blue" line of vintage Americana clothing (which includes skirts made up of prints of fashion magazines covers), and acting as yet another node of "newness" around which to generate content. As the fallout of 11 September 2001 shows, today shifts of cultural style tend to confirm the perpetuation of underlying forces rather than signaling a genuinely new set of relations. In an age in which culture has been reduced to content, every new style is read vaingloriously as the start of a new *episteme*, even while its energies are recuperated to managing the future so that it looks just like the present. So while everything is cultural, it is also certainly the case that as culture has become reduced to mass culture on an intensified, global scale, the liberatory and resistant impulses once associated, if in different ways, with both high and low culture seem to have been almost fatally diminished.

The term "content providers" first began to circulate in the discussions surrounding proposed changes in the Federal Communications Commission act at the beginning of the 1990s.[6] It has since shifted meaning, from a term for companies that provide on-line access (so-called "on-line service providers" like AOL) to those that produce the content that these companies make available or circulate, to a more general cultural usage that extends beyond the Internet to film studios and television networks.[7] The way in which the term is most often used is highly suggestive of the relations of production it denotes. With few exceptions, there is very little discussion of, or interest in, the actual content of content, whether it be its narrative, theme, image, style, quality, ethics, morality, or social utility - all those things that have traditionally pre-occupied cultural critics. It is content alone that is abstractly referred to, and the space that it occupies within networks of circulation can and will be occupied by other content down the road (if this year's sitcom fails, another one will be created to

take its place). This abstraction of what was once referred to as aesthetics—the discourse that sought to make sense of the character of content—mirrors the abstraction of money in finance capitalism. Or rather it reflects what Jameson refers to as its second degree of abstraction, from "cotton money, or wheat money, textile money, railway money and the like" to forms of money completely abstracted from the "'concrete context' of its productive geography" (Jameson 1998:142). The content of content matters less than its actual provision, and the application of aesthetic categories like "quality" or "originality" to the content produced in contemporary culture seems not just to be beside the point. It also misses the fact that for culture to have become understood as content means that there has been "a modification in the very nature of cultural tokens, and the systems that they operate in" (Jameson 1998: 154).

Though they are on very different topics, the essays in this special working paper collection try to theorize this modification in order to understand how one examines and produces culture in the era of globalization. Significantly, the gloomy scenario we have sketched out here in lugubrious detail does not loom large in these essays. The long shadow of the Culture Industry is mostly absent, and not because the insights of Adorno, et. al. are rejected in favour of a more sanguine view of the potential for cultural commodities to functional as "resources" in the production of identities. Rather, these essays offer an only apparently less substantial cause for optimism: life goes on, in spite of ever-intensifying processes of reification, in which not only culture, but the biological processes of human existence, have been commodified in ways that Adorno could not have imagined. This simple observation, in another time, another context, could be seen as a form of resignation, a dismal consolation for dreams of freedom crushed. In the formulation offered here, however, one which owes a lot to Hardt and Negri's jubilant defence of the creative force of the multitude, "posing against the misery of power the joy of being" (Hardt and Negri 2000: 413), the movement of life, a movement informed by an irreducible mixture of culture and corporeality, continues to resist containment by the empire of network management. This point is advanced in different ways by most of the essays here, each of which demonstrates that "even in the most obviously commercialized of settings… one finds a kind of communal, pluralistic resistance to corporate packaging and marketing of culture" (Wiltse) and that Utopian desire is never wholly eradicated, but merely "blocked and deflected, to emerge again somewhere else" (Brown, this working paper collection)

Hardt and Negri's arguments are taken up most explicitly in Asha Varadharajan's essay, which, by examining them in counter-point with the work of economist Amartya Sen, exemplifies the necessary movement, traced in nearly all these essays, between a buoyant culturalism and a more sober materialism. At the centre of many of these essays is the body, a figure which is not simply the "site" for the inscription of competing discourses that is so often invoked in postmodernist writing. Nor is the body only the essential, biological organism appealed to in more positivist accounts (and which is sometimes characterized, earnestly or playfully, in cultural studies, as the "suffering body" or the "desiring body"). It is all these things, informed however by a crucial sense that the body that lives and dies, suffers and desires, precedes the body that writes or is written on. In other words, there is a recognition here, more or less explicit, of how the human body works as a collection of energies, driven towards survival, rejuvenation and resistance, fuelled above all by its awareness of its own mortality. Issues of mortality speak necessarily to the imperatives of social justice, and the growing disparity in resources necessary to the sustenance and enjoyment of life. Culture, at first glance, seems at best impotent and at worst irrelevant to these concerns, bereft as it has seemingly become even of the generally empty humanist promise it wore when it was smug and comfortable enough to refer to itself with a capital "C". However, now that it has become bedded-down so

thoroughly—and so scandalously comfortably—with economics, culture has acquired a new purchase, not through its status as content, but as an increasingly significant form of labour.

The connection between culture and labour is highlighted in the title of this collection (which was also the title of the conference from which these papers are gathered). It is also explored in detail in a companion working paper to this collection by L. M. Findlay. Leaving aside, for the moment, the fundamental connections between content providers and other workers, it is important to recall that what connects artists and academics, wage labourers and net-slaves, is a form of labour discounting that has allowed capital to fill its pockets through the manipulation of aesthetic ideology in two ways. First, the 'backward' craft character of popular music (its production by individuals as opposed to a mass industrial system) that Theodor Adorno saw as essential to the perpetuation of individualism and categories such as taste and choice, has today been generalized, with both positive and negative consequences. On the one hand, new technologies have meant that anyone can produce a CD in their apartments (e.g., Moby) or a feature film on a digital video camera (e.g., *Blair Witch Project*), resulting in a (qualified) democratization of mass culture. Less straightforwardly, and more insidiously, the commodification of vegetarianism and organic food production, packaged as new/old-fashioned modes of (President's) Choice, together with Martha Stewart's empire of simplicity, signals the final attenuation of the value of craft production into the bloated economy of lifestyle consumption. No matter how standardized life may seem, the craft origin of content, bolstered by the (copyrighted?) assurance that "it's a good thing", continues to act as an index of humanity, authenticity and originality, which helps to move units and empty shelves.

Second, the labour discount that has accompanied artistic and academic labour for a long time is itself being generalized into other areas of content provision, most notably as Andrew Ross has pointed out, into the knowledge industries of the "new economy" that were until recently celebrated as a model for a new, less alienated form of labour. The connection between artists and high-tech workers is not limited to the airy loft spaces that the latter took over from the former (who in turn were free to adopt them only when sweatshop and industrial labour migrated elsewhere)—sometimes quite explicitly, as in New York City's Silicon Valley or San Francisco's Mission District. Rather, what makes artists and academics models of labour in the knowledge industries is the "cultural discount" that is partially the result of the Romantic vision of the artist, which suggests that s/he is "willing to accept non-monetary rewards—the gratification of producing art—as compensation for their work, thereby discounting the cash price of their labour" (Ross 2000: 6). It is not difficult to see why this model has become

> The ideal definition of the postindustrial knowledge worker: comfortable in an ever-changing environment that demands creative shifts in communication with different kinds of clients and partners; attitudinally geared toward production that requires long, and often unsocial, hours; and accustomed, in the sundry exercises of their mental labour, to a contingent, rather than a fixed, routine of self-application (Ross 2000: 11)

Just as the love of literature was supposed to offset long-hours of grading and dismal levels of compensation, especially for academic contract and sessional labour, so, too, crunching code for long hours is offset by the informality of the high-tech workspaces and the quixotic promise of stock options, — the techie equivalent of the accrual of cultural capital in the artistic and academic fields. The labour conditions of content providers tend to mitigate against the possibility of uniting to overcome the cultural discount that ends up as profit in the hands of network managers. Higher education, especially in Canada, where the state (apparently against its will) still provides some of the operating costs of universities, seems to operate somewhat differently than the cultural

discount model suggests. But it only seems to do so. As Ross incisively points out, "not only is [higher education] a massive anchorage for discounted labour among its own workforce, it is also a training site, responsible for reproducing the discounted labour force amongst the next generation of knowledge workers" (Ross 2000: 25). Thinking about the significance of culture as content is thus not only a theoretical and labour issue, but also one that implicates pedagogy and scholarship as well.

Making these connections should not be taken as another indictment of the political impossibilities of the corporate university and of contemporary culture more generally. Rather, it is a way of activating the possibilities that still remain by understanding thoroughly the new situation in which we live. L. M. Findlay points to the revolutionary possibilities that might be realized through the process of "the campus 'vets' of the WTO, FTAA and other 'wars' teaching their teachers and transforming curriculum" (see the companion working paper), while Jack Draper argues for the need for large NGOs to take their cues from the standpoint epistemologies of smaller, grass roots organizations. We also need to consider other, perhaps less obvious, venues for educational and political alliance. As we write, the City of Toronto is embroiled in a labour dispute with municipal workers (Canadian Union of Public Employees [CUPE] locals 79 and 416), which include daycare workers, public health nurses, ferry operators and garbage collectors. The main issue at stake is job security, with the city demanding concessions on current guarantees that would allow them to privatize essential services ("City" 2002). The effect of the outside workers' strike was heightened not only by the arrival of a heat wave, whose attendant conditions of humidity and smog created an almost apocalyptic haze over the city complemented by the stench of rotting garbage, but also by its coincidence with the Canada Day weekend and the arrival of thousands of tourists for scheduled cultural events—most significantly (i.e. most lucratively) the Gay Pride Parade.

Gay Pride symbolizes many things in the realm of cultural politics. Most notably, perhaps, it represents the most successful conjunctions of culture and style with progressive politics. While anti-homosexual discrimination is still rife in Canada (as demonstrated, for example, by the recent furor in the Anglican Church over blessing same-sex unions), the almost total retreat of official opposition to Gay Pride Day (a retreat which may have had more to do with a sense of commercial opportunity than with a new concern for human rights), testifies to the success of gay and lesbian movements—movements that have been explicitly and self-consciously *cultural*—in advancing the cause of equal rights for homosexuals. The nature of these battles exhibits perhaps more acutely than any other similar movements, the inextricable connection alluded to above between desire and mortality, as they are inflected both biologically and politically. The massive popularity of Gay Pride in Toronto testifies to the ambivalent success of culture as a political force. The ambivalence stems from the seemingly inevitable incorporation of the energies of gay culture into the engines of commerce. The extent of that incorporation was particularly evident in the juxtaposition of the Gay Pride celebration with the garbage strike. Amidst scenes of revelry, in which placards celebrating the "uncensored" theme of the parade blended in with Labatts ads, and passing floats rained down product samples on enthusiastic crowds, the demands of the picketing city workers seemed, well, cranky and boring. Concerted efforts by parade organizers to provide their own garbage collection, and comments by participants who praised the decision to go ahead with the parade, on the grounds that "Toronto should go on and have its life" in spite of the inconvenience of the strike only emphasized the disconnect between the two activities ("Garbage" 2002). Although an alliance between the fabulously decked-out parade participants and striking garbage collectors might seem ludicrously incongruous,[8] at least on aesthetic grounds, the connection between the concerns of both for the preservation of the fundamental rights to determine the conditions of their lives mandates closer examination. In essence, unless the producers of culture, whether in the form of mass-produced "content", or self-consciously critical

politics, recognize our status as labourers—a status that marks their commonality with the providers of other services to Empire, the call of our title "Content Providers of the World Unite!" will remain just another ironic obituary to the death of cultural possibility. As this collection insists, there's life—and resistance—in us yet.

The essays published together in this Working Paper collection here were first presented at "Content Providers of the World Unite! The Cultural Politics of Globalization," a conference held at McMaster University in October 2001. They are presented here in close to the same form in which they were presented—short presentations rather than full papers—in an effort to maximize the diversity of opinions and positions.

NOTES

1 "Shoppers are once again foot soldiers in a battle between good and evil, wearing new stars-and-stripes bras by Elita and popping special red, white and blue M & Ms." (Klein 2001).

2 Bauman (1998) divides the world into tourists*, who experience an historically unprecedented access to the entire globe and find themselves perpetually short of time, in a hurry, filled to the brim with activities and responsibilities, and* vagabonds*, who are fixed in space, discouraged from crossing borders, bored and beset by empty time. The global crisis in refugees numbers, in the movement of peoples from country to city, and in legal and illegal migration tell us that vagabonds also move; the distinction is that this movement isn't a matter of choice, but of the most basic kind of necessity: survival in the face of impossible circumstances.*

*3 See Blackburn (2002). Blackburn reports that the pension funds of more than 85 million US employees were negatively effected by the Enron crisis, in part due to the participation of pension funds in forms of "*financial engineering*" that allowed Enron to take out loans against future earnings—which were never to come. Most of the policies enacted within the regime of global neoliberalism take this form of discounting the future: maximizing profits today at whatever social costs tomorrow (as a result of reduced social investments, deferred infrastructure maintenance, environmental degradation, etc.)*

4 See Koolhaus (1998) and Mau (2000).

5 See, for instance, Saunders (2001) and Cox (2001) on the reactions of the film and advertising industries in the immediate aftermath of 9-11.

*6 See Karpinski (1992). Karpinski uses the term "*content providers*" in his discussion of the FCC's decision to allow telephone companies to enter the "*video dial tone market*"—what is now more commonly referred to as the provision of broadband services.*

7 Take, for instance, a recent article on Thomas Krens, the director of the Guggenheim Museum: "He was the guy with a business degree from Yale who rode a motorcycle to work, spoke of Chagall and Klee as 'content' and invented the concept of the global museum" (Solomon 2002).

8 In fact significant alliances between Canadian labour and gay and lesbian rights organizations do exist. The Canadian Labour Congress*, for example, has initiated significant political and educational activities around the issue of gay and lesbian rights, including the* Canadian Labour Congress Solidarity and Pride Conferences*, held in 1997 (Ottawa) and 2001 (Vancouver). Organized labour has mobilized in support of gay and lesbian activism in general (see, for example, Pride in Print), as well joining campaigns around specific issues (see Come Out). In a somewhat different vein, "*Gay Shame*" events, co-ordinated to coincide with* Pride day *activities, while not explicitly addressed to labour concerns, takes issue with the commercialization of* Gay Pride*, which it sees as a co-option of its initial message (see Sanchez 2002).*

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‘You Can’t Beat the Feeling’

Celebrity, Affect, and the Ordinariness of Global Culture

Trui Vetters, University of Ghent, Belgium

We are telling stories that are natural and honest … because the power of Coca-Cola is in the authentic way it can connect people to themselves, to others, and to a culture that it is part of.
Nick Bishop, Vice President of Consumer Connections on the latest Coca-Cola campaign

Knowing that, at this very moment, somewhere a person is suffering or even dying from starvation, a curable illness or an unjust war, why is it that we do not simply jump on a plane to go and help this person? Before we can even begin to formulate a possible answer to this very simple question, we need to take a closer look not only at how the local and the global are related but also, and especially, at how we can and do relate our everyday lives to those far-off events which are seemingly beyond our control. Using the example of celebrities and their emotional impact, this article emphasizes the importance of affective structures as a necessary precondition for promoting political awareness and, as is the case with regard to how the anti-globalist movement works, for forging transnational alliances.

In *Welcome to Sarajevo*, Michael Winterbottom’s 1997 film about the civil war that tore apart the former Yuguslavia, Woody Harrelson, playing an American television reporter named Flynn, is accused by one of his British colleagues of not caring about the people of the war-torn country, that he ‘isn’t doing this for Sarajevo but for himself.’ Flynn’s response is short and to the point: “Back home nobody’s heard of Sarajevo but they all know me.” His sarcastic – indeed cynical – comment may seem a little simplistic or uncritical in its assessment of the ignorance of an American audience, but it was not too far from the truth at the time when the film is set: 1992, at the very early stages of the conflict.

Shot on location in Sarajevo, Skopje, and Trogir, right after the 1996 cease-fire, the movie tells its story from the perspective of a group of British and American war correspondents, thus reflecting, as one critic suggests, the pro-interventionist outlook of the so-called “laptop bombardiers.” This group included New York Times editorialist Anthony Lewis and cultural critic Susan Sontag. In her 1995 article, “A Lament for Bosnia: ‘There’ and ‘Here,’” Sontag seems to share the Harrelson character’s assumptions regarding the West’s lack of interest, deploring the “widespread indifference, or lack of solidarity” with the “victims of an appalling historical crime.” “[P]eople don’t want to know what you know,” Sontag laments; they “don’t want you to talk about the sufferings, bewilderment, terror, and humiliation of the city you’ve just left” (1995: 818-9). Sontag’s own actions, which included traveling to the besieged city nine times, actually mirror those of some of the British journalists in *Welcome to Sarajevo*, who decide to ‘get involved.’ This behaviour makes it harder to imagine her agreeing with another possible interpretation of Flynn/Harrelson’s remark, namely that it is precisely his status as a celebrity that may help to raise awareness about the atrocities. Since he stands closer to the intended audience, since they ‘know’ him, they may actually notice what is going on. Seeing that he cares, they may start caring themselves.

Of course, Sontag herself is somewhat of an intellectual celebrity, part of a small set of unusually influential and affluent academics, a fact which Bruce Robbins also remarks on in *Feeling Global*, where he opens his discussion on “Internationalism in Distress” with an excellent critique of her article. Robbins is especially interested in the ambivalent response which the article, and particularly Sontag’s accusation that intellectuals have become “morosely depoliticized,” generated (1999: 11). According to Sontag, in this “era of shopping,” it has become harder for intellectuals, “who are anything but marginal and impoverished, to identify with less fortunate others,” (1995: 820), and so she sets herself up as an example, conveniently ignoring the privileged

context of her own position, which is precisely what enables her to do what she obviously wants others to do as well, namely to pack up and go 'over there.' Sontag "suggests it is the poor who go and the rich who stay home," but, as Robbins explains, " her ethics presupposes a very different sociology," namely that everyone must act "as if they were as free and as privileged as I am." In other words, Sontag not only expects her readers to "compare their everyday routines with her traveling," but she also presents this traveling experience as "a process of alienation from ordinary life," as if self-alienation and "defamiliarization" are necessary preconditions for any kind of political involvement (Robbins 1999: 13-5).

Harrelson's privileges undoubtedly far exceed Sontag's [no doubt, he owns more than his fair share of those "comfortable upper-bourgeois apartments and weekend country houses" (1995: 820) that Sontag fulminates against in her article] and his reasons for going to Sarajevo and participating in the movie are rather vague and at the very least simplistic. [1] But if, like Flynn, he is indeed trying to put his personal newsworthiness to good use – as Robbins suggests Sontag may have been doing – he does so in a very different way. Harrelson does not pretend to speak for anyone,[2] he is not asking his audience for any exceptional personal sacrifices (such as traveling to a war zone), and he certainly is not interested in setting himself up as an example. For Harrelson, the emphasis on his status as a celebrity neither sets him apart nor makes him special. It neither alienates nor defamiliarizes. On the contrary: what is highlighted is precisely its very familiarity.[3] The audience is not urged to compare their everyday lives with his experience; instead, Harrelson simply inserts himself into those lives, if he is not already part of them to begin with.

Harrelson's presence in the movie works like one of the billboards that Lawrence Grossberg describes in an article on popular culture and postmodern sensibility: "a moment of positivity through the production and structuring of affective relations" (1988: 181). Billboards no longer (and probably never did) point to an underlying reality or a concealed truth. We usually drive past them without paying much attention, because we know what they say and we have seen them all before. But this does not mean that they cannot still tell us what road we are on or which direction we are traveling in, or that we are, in fact, moving. Grossberg compares them to the "tags" of hip-hop culture: billboards mark sites of investment and empowerment, not just affirming our affective existence but enabling it as well. Postmodernism's tendency to turn reality and ideology into a question of affect, suggests that the importance and implications of particular ideological elements are no longer determined by their meanings but "by how they can be incorporated into particular mattering maps, particular affective structures" (Grossberg 1988: 181). The popularity of someone like Bruce Springsteen in the 1980s, for example, depended on his ability to construct affective systems in which apparently contradictory positions, such as identity/difference, image/authenticity, ordinary/extraordinary, are maintained simultaneously. The fact that these systems are often manipulated and commercialized does not diminish their effectiveness or their potential with regard to community formation. On the contrary, as Grossberg illustrates, Springsteen's success affirms not only the power of affect but also its political usefulness, the implications of which are "rarely embraced" (1988: 184).

Harrelson's political usefulness works along similar lines. In his article "Can Woody Harrelson Really Save the World," Carlo McCormick refers to the actor as an Everyman,

> not because he is just like us – for he certainly is not – but because we can somehow identify with him. It is in this age of mass alienation that Harrelson has become the Everyman because he is so different. Sure he's a bit of a nut, but he brings personal idiosyncracies onto a human level we can all relate to. (2001: 2)

Harrelson's ability to relate to his audience is indicative of his success as a celebrity. It is the ease with which he seems to establish a connection with the public that affirms his status not only as a famous person but

also as "a voice above others, a voice that is channeled into the media systems as being legitimately significant" (Marshall 1997: x). David Marshall is not the only one to note that there has been an increasing validation of celebrities as legitimate voices speaking out on social and political issues. According to Richard Schickel, the culture of celebrity has "reached a point where most issues, whether political, intellectual, or moral in nature, do not have real status – that is, literally, the status of the real – until they have been taken up, dramatized, in the celebrity world" (1985: 8). What makes Harrelson's voice (as opposed to Sontag's, for example) so effective, however, is precisely the *perceived immediacy* that McCormick refers to. Harrelson's persona is that of an ordinary person, someone people can 'relate to.' It is an ordinariness that becomes extraordinary on screen, but that is also, by the very nature of the medium, made accessible to everyone. It can thus be appropriated and used for political purposes by anyone. Operating at the intersection of these two economies, Harrelson is both familiar and strange, both accessible and distant, the same and yet very different.

In *Celebrity and Power*, Marshall refers to celebrities' ability to influence their audience as "affective power," arguing that, once this power begins to function within a political context, "affect moves the political debate from the realm of reason to the realm of feeling and sentiment" (1997: 240). But is not the opposite true as well? And, more importantly, is not the opposite precisely what is needed for people to become involved in politics at all? For better or worse, politics often rely on "feeling and sentiment." In "Communities that Feel: Intensity, Difference and Attachment," Sara Ahmed takes a closer look at the role emotions play in the formation of social and political communities. She maintains that "emotions are crucial to politics" in the sense that "subjects must become 'invested' in and attached to" forms of power in order to negotiate that power (2001: 10). Even though some of Ahmed's examples point to the inherent dangers of such attachments, her main argument emphasizes the positive implications and political potential of what she calls "affective economies" (2001: 13), especially with regard to the constitution of a global community "as the impetus for forms of global justice" (2001: 19). According to Ahmed, emotions are never fixed; rather they are economic, not residing in but circulating between subjects (and objects) and aligning bodily space/individuals with social space/communities, "through the very intensity of their attachments" (2001: 11). Such attachments or "affective encounters" can take different forms – Ahmed differentiates between alignment, identification, and appropriation – but, above all, they are marked by movement. Referring to Sartre's notion of "contingent attachment" to the world, Ahmed explains how

> what attaches us, what connects us to this or that place, or to this or that other, *such that we cannot stay removed from that other*, is also what moves us, or what affects us such that we are no longer in the same place. Hence movement does not cut the body off from the 'where' of its inhabitance, but connects bodies to other bodies – indeed, attachment takes place through movement, through being moved by the proximity of others. (2001: 11-12)

The ability to feel close to others who are distant is absolutely essential to the formation of global communities, but Ahmed's account leaves too much of a gap between the two levels of attachment, which must surely be connected in other ways apart from the fact that they should follow a similar economy. To put it differently, if there is no connection except for a very abstract attachment to "*the imagined form of globality itself*" (Ahmed 2001: 21), then *how* does one ever get from the reality of the local to the imagined community of the global? Using Martha Nussbaum's ideas on cosmopolitanism and world citizenship Ahmed tries to formulate an answer to that question, but her statement that "globality works as a form of attachment" (2001: 20) remains rather vague and fails to take into account Nussbaum's profound critique of rootedness as a natural given.[4] Moreover, Ahmed also disregards Nussbaum's very useful metaphor of the "concentric circles," an image which Nussbaum borrows from the Stoics, to describe the affective mediation that takes place between the

local and the global not as a leap of faith but rather as a process of progressive participation. In his more positive assessment of Nussbaum's project, Robbins talks about this move from narrower to broader loyalties as an "urging…to make the outermost circle (humanity as a whole) more like the innermost circle (self and family)" (1999: 151).

But even so the question remains about what could jumpstart such an "urging." If, as Ahmed maintains, the first reflex in any form of attachment is always to look for the familiar, then maybe we need to turn our attention to instances in which this notion of sameness is used as the starting point for a more encompassing involvement. Within a global context, such an involvement would necessarily imply the proximity of others as "a form of contingency," through which an initial – predominantly emotional – attachment can be established. Moreover, taking into account the many advantages and possibilities offered by the new media and its attendant technologies, it seems obvious that such a shared proximity should not necessarily require an actual, physical co-presence. Computer-, TV-, or movie-screens are often an important – sometimes the only – medium of information for people who are prepared to 'engage with,' but unable or unwilling to travel to, (troubled) places caught up in social or political crisis. Images, even though they sometimes amount to little more than illustrations and even though they are always to a greater or lesser extent manipulated or commercialized, can and do inspire people.

An image that has been particularly powerful in its suggestion of a unified world is the image of the globe itself. Ever since photographs of the earth became widely available in the late seventies, versions of and variations on this image have been used to promote the, largely utopian, idea of a universal brotherhood.[5] In fact, this symbol of the earth's oneness has, especially since the late 1980s, become *the* image used by international corporations and multinationals to promote the oneness of a global market. They are selling not so much a series of products and services as a single, reassuring idea, namely that despite our differences, we are all the same because we want the same things. Recently, however, one group has snatched up this image and recycled it for more constructive purposes, reinserting it with a new, more pragmatic utopianism to counteract the type of universalism propagated by the global market economy. With one of its more prominent logos displaying an image of the globe in which neither the American nor the European but the African continent occupies the central position, the so-called anti-globalist movement distinguishes between different kinds of globalization, working towards international solidarity on the one hand and fighting, as its logo says, "Against Imperialism," on the other. In other words, the movement's success lies in its ability to take advantage of existing technologies, commercial models, and corporate infrastructures to counter the negative effects of global capital.

Determined to "Globalize Resistance" the movement also relies on regional resistances and existing social movements to forge transnational alliances. These pluralist tactics, which make anti-globalist interventions so effective, follow the logic of what critics like Chantal Mouffe refer to as "a radical democratic citizenship," providing "a form of identification that enables the establishment of a common political identity among diverse democratic struggles." The notion of pluralism that underlies Mouffe's project in *The Return of the Political* is a particularly useful one because it opens up spaces of inscription in which "neither the totality nor the fragments possess any kind of fixed identity, prior to the contingent and pragmatic form of their articulation" (1993: 6-7). In other words, disgruntled farmers, environmental activists and sacked airline personnel can come together as one political entity in which, however temporarily, the existing subject positions of the various forces are modified so as to meet the requirements for a common struggle.

To make such an inscription or identification work on a transnational scale, however, the anti-globalist movement also makes use of what Sharon Marcus calls "the politics of universal pathos – a pathos imagined as

one that everyone can feel, in which one feels for everyone" (2001: 93). In " Anne Frank and Hannah Arendt, Universalism and Pathos," Marcus, very much like Mouffe, tries to reclaim universalism not as an abstract Enlightenment notion of an undifferentiated human nature but as a contextualized and, above all, particularized concept that has ethical as well as political merits. Unlike Mouffe, however, Marcus relates this idea of a particularized universalism directly to a discussion of transnationalism and globalism, presenting it as the basis for a form of sentimentality that promotes not a mimetic but a universalizing identification that has enormous political potential. Referring to Hannah Arendt's remarks in *On Revolution* and Cynthia Ozick's reactions to readings of *The Diary* in " Who Owns Anne Frank?," Marcus points out how identification has traditionally been seen as either a negation of politics, action, and active goodness on the one hand, or an appropriation and therefore obliteration of otherness on the other. Still, the fact remains, as Marcus emphasizes, that readers of Anne Frank's *Diary* identify with the girl "on the basis of perceived similarities," even though many of them may seem trivial. Moreover, this perception of similarities "does not automatically eliminate the perception of difference; the very work involved in establishing an identification acknowledges difference as identification's ongoing condition" (2001: 105). As I have already pointed out, Ahmed makes a similar observation regarding the mechanics of identification, thinking of it as a form of alignment in which identifications involve "dis-identification or an active 'giving up'" of other possible identifications (2001: 18).

What makes Marcus' form of identification different, however, is the idea that aligning oneself with some others does not necessarily – or only – imply that we automatically align ourselves against other others. In Marcus' account, the acknowledgment of difference happens *within* the identification, not primarily against others but *within the same*: " Anne Frank's diary does not move us only because we identify directly with her helplessness; rather *we realize we are not helpless in the way she was* " (2001: 106, emphasis mine). The realization of difference enhances the process of identification and intensifies our feelings of sympathy, which, in turn, make it possible for us to both imagine and condemn the horror of the Holocaust. As Marcus sees it Anne Frank, as a representative figure, allows us "to bring a problem of unimaginable scale into individual focus" (2001: 110), not by making the problem personal but by *personalizing it*. Our identification with and feelings for her particular suffering, in no way diminish the magnitude or scope of the (larger) horror. On the contrary, Frank's immediacy and availability – she remains forever present through her diary, pictures, etc. – multiplies[6] both the terror and our reaction to it. If anything, the processes of individualization and differentiation turn the horror into something concrete, a particular instance that affects us directly and to which, because of its recognizability, we can respond.

Such a response will always include feelings of helplessness, precisely because we can see the larger horror through the specific experience of one individual, and because, as Marcus maintains, we realize we are no longer able to help that particular individual. However, this does not mean that we cannot help *others like her*. Considering the extent to which the pathos of *The Diary* is related to a sympathetic identification, in that it promotes "the impulse to help another" (2001: 106), our affective response may also induce us to *act* upon that impulse by extending our sympathy to other individuals caught up in a similar situation. Such a stretching of sentiments would then automatically open up new possibilities for action and could serve as the basis for the kinds of affective communities described by Ahmed. Marcus herself refrains from taking this next step, but by putting the notion of difference at the center of her definition of universal pathos, she creates the critical distance necessary for us both to extend and to act upon our feelings of sympathy. In other words, if our empathy not only depends on perceived similarities but also on the apparent differences within those similarities, any acknowledgment of what it is that makes us different has to emphasize the fact *that we are not helpless*. Whether or not we will actually help the person and/or group we sympathize with, will depend on our perception

of the ease or difficulty involved in engaging with a particular situation.[7]

To what effect a politics of universal pathos can be applied within a global context, is illustrated by the activities of a regional anti-globalist group working in Dublin. Trying to gain sympathy for the hunger-strikers in Turkish prisons, the group uses the representative figure of Bobby Sands, to generate what is clearly an emotional response from their audience. The group's website combines fragments from Sands' diary with articles on and testimonials from the Turkish hunger-strikers to create a (virtual) space in which the individual – and surely also national, in this case – body becomes a point of reference for transnational feeling. In other words, they use Sands' immediacy – every self-respecting Irish citizen knows who he is and what he represents – and his availability – his suffering can be reproduced and redistributed on a massive scale – to inspire a pathos that will move us, both in a literal and emotional sense, beyond the singular so as to include others who are not fellow citizens. In one of their more recent calls for solidarity, for example, the group uses the famous picture showing Sands during his hunger-strike in the Maze. It is a particular and very a/effective piece of Irish history indeed, if the purpose is to jumpstart a chain reaction of feeling that should take us beyond the "existing limits on the West's perception of its responsibility for non-Western suffering and oppression" (Robbins 1999: 20). According to Robbins, an insistence on the "already existing" is "precisely what is needed to break through those limits." As the Sontag debate illustrates, people have a hard time feeling or taking responsibility for something that they cannot affect or change without completely stepping outside of their daily routines. What we need instead, Robbins argues, is "an internationalist ethics of the everyday" that regards international commitments not as something cold, or distant, or culturally alien but as "an extension of existing interests, affections, and loyalties" (1999: 22-3).

How this "everyday" can be used as a relay-station depends on the situation as well as the available technologies, but it is obvious that the ever-present and all-powerful media play an important role in how, when, and where the global is brought into our living-rooms. The problems and possibilities involving global news coverage and its power both to inform and to influence our decision-making are well-known,[8] but movies and commercials can be just as effective or problematic, even more so, in fact, because they are always already geared towards eliciting an emotional response. This ability to manipulate emotions is also what makes celebrities such efficient mediators when it comes to promoting certain political or social issues. By attaching their name or persona to a specific cause, celebrities have the power to influence public opinion on a vast scale, and the fact that this power – whether we like it or not – is often backed by corporate sponsorship and manipulated by marketing strategists does not make it any less effective in diverting our attention to urgent political problems.

Megan Pincus makes a similar observation in her article on the impact of celebrity on the V-Day movement and its campaign (based on the famous *Vagina Monologues*) to end violence against women around the world. She notes that celebrities are tremendously successful " in drawing an audience, a reputation, and an energy" to the movement, but she also adds: "they are not necessarily or always the most affective – emotionally powerful – aspect" of the campaign. In her description of the V-Day 2001 gala at New York's Madison Square Gardens, Pincus explains how there was a shift in the audience's response during the various performances, which coincided with a move from celebrity to non-celebrity speakers: "The focus moved from star presence (quite surreal) to the presence of 'reality,' from women of Hollywood (larger than life) to women of local communities around the world, and from celebrities being an effective marketing tool to celebrity actually becoming a problem in the affective realm" (2001: 199). The move was marked by a change in the intensity with which the audience responded to the performances: Oprah Winfrey doing a monologue called " Under the Burqa" about the plight of Afghani women, for example, did not elicit the same emotional response

as the nameless Afghani woman representing the Revolutionary Association of the Women of Afghanistan (RAWA), speaking right after Winfrey. This difference in what I would like to call the quality of representative personification, has to do with the distinction that has to be made between representative figures and celebrities. For even though representative figures can and often do become celebrities (like Anne Frank or Bobby Sands), most celebrities are not representative figures, they do not stand for a certain group of individuals.

Once again, however, this fact does not diminish celebrities' usefulness in making certain "realities" visible. As long as they do not pretend to speak for others (and this also goes back to the difference between Sontag and Harrelson), celebrities can be very valuable as relays or go-betweens, connecting us to far-away places, persons, and events to which we do not have direct access. They can raise awareness or, as Jib Fowles puts it, help people "negotiate the universe of abstractions" (1992: 180), and they can do so very effectively since they are, to a greater or lesser extent, always already part of our everyday fiction. In a recent interview, Naomi Klein, who has become somewhat of an official spokeswoman for the anti-globalist movement, refers to an incident regarding the political effectiveness of what I would like to call everyday celebrity and how it inserts itself into the lives of people. Describing what happened when Tom Yorke, the lead singer of Radiohead, started talking about *No Logo* during interviews, Klein explains how she " was flooded with letters from sixteen-year olds from all over the world." "They absorb every word from Tom Yorke as if it was the Gospel," Klein says, "and because of him they began to read my book en masse… For a lot of them *No Logo* was the first political book they ever read. It had an incredible impact and many wanted to know how they could get involved, where they could go, and what they should or should not buy." Klein's response to this has been to take her 'fans' "very seriously, feeling an incredible, massive responsibility to offer them something" (2001: 28-33).

Like her book, Klein's persona has helped to gain media attention for the cause, moving the focus from her own (academic) star-presence to the urgent business of setting up global communities. In a sense, then, she too functions like one of Grossberg's billboards, determined to help us "continue to struggle to make a difference." Unlike Grossberg, however, she consistently refuses to buy into postmodernism's cynicism any longer. This is a struggle we can win, as long as we find a way to construct a sense of global belonging that does not merely reflect global capital. We must construct a sense of transnational feeling that, as Robbins puts it, can "only be made, or made real to us, within the shared vocabulary of everyday over-commitment."

NOTES

1 As is his assessment of the situation: as Harrelson himself puts it in his interview with Carlo McCormick: "I was really interested in what was going on in Bosnia."

2 In Sontag's account, Bosnians are actually relegated to the background. She refrains from quoting Bosnians directly in her article, "even as survivors or witnesses" (Robbins 1999: 12).

3 It does not really matter whether or not Harrelson is playing a role, because we already know his persona and we recognize the type of situation in which he finds himself: we have all seen Bob Geldof in Africa and Sting in the Amazon rainforest.

4 See also "Root, Root, Root: Martha Nussbaum meets the Home Team" in Feeling Global*, 147-168.*

*5 For a detailed analysis of this image and its history, as well as its influence on spatial theories and social practices, see Trui Vetters, "*Night on Earth*: Urban Practices and the Blindness of Metatheory" in* The Urban Condition: Space, Community and Self in the Contemporary Metropolis*, ed. by GUST, Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 1999, 343-358.*

6 Both in a literal sense, in that the suffering can be multiplied through the use of technology and as such be made accessible to more people, and in the sense that it intensifies our feelings of sympathy. In this context, Marcus also refers to Homi Bhabha's ideas on cosmopolitan communities and how they are " made global by the repetition of singularity" (2001: 90).

7 For an excellent discussion on the function, social impact, and especially emotional effects of news coverage, see

Susan Moeller, Compassion Fatigue: How the Media Sell Disease, Famine, War andDeath. *New York and London: Routledge, 1999.*

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Urban Guerrilla Tactics

Hip-Hop Culture and the Art of Resistance

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The age of globalization is characterized by the transnational flow of capital, the global polarization of wealth, and by wide-spread political instability. Multinational corporations currently scour the earth for the lowest wages, the most liberalized trade, and the most easily influenced governments. These alarming trends have led to the popular perception that the multinationals are engaged in a form of cultural imperialism, forcing a Western consumer mentality on the rest of the world through the proliferation of advertising and products, and thus engineering a hegemonic globalized culture. This perception is particularly prominent in journalistic circles (Tomlinson 1999). An extension of this argument can be found in journalist Naomi Klein's book *No Logo—Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies*, wherein Klein explores the notion of Western cultural imperialism from the standpoint of international marketing campaigns that purport to embrace cultural diversity. She describes the evolution of a "mono-multiculturalism," which is promoted as a "cure-all for the pitfalls of global expansion" by corporations who simultaneously launch an "assault on choice" (2000:117, 130). Klein explains:

> The branded multinationals may talk diversity, but the visible result of their actions is an army of teen clones marching into the global mall. Despite the embrace of poly-ethnic imagery, market-driven globalization doesn't want diversity; quite the opposite. Its enemies are national habits, local brands and distinctive regional tastes. (2000:129)

Although Klein convincingly argues the dynamics of multinational corporate expansion, her characterization of the cultural results of globalization as an "army of teen clones marching into the mall" is somewhat problematic. Globalization scholar John Tomlinson has offered a thorough discussion on how the notions of cultural imperialism and of the resulting 'global monoculture' prove overly simplistic (1999). Alternatively, Tomlinson views cultural globalization as a dialectical process marked by the "uneven balance of forces" (1999:62). He acknowledges that globalization often has devastating effects on local culture, but asserts that the relationship between corporate forces and receiving cultures cannot be described as simple domination. Local places often absorb North American cultural products in unexpected and unpredictable ways. The adaptation of cultural forms into local contexts can often constitute a form of political resistance to globalization—a dynamic that Tomlinson describes as "'localizing' resistance to the 'globalizing' moment of capitalism" (1999:88). Thus, although Klein advances the cultural imperialism thesis, her analysis rightly identifies local cultural practices as a threat to both multinational corporate control and to the prospect of a hegemonic globalized culture.

Many communities throughout the world resist globalization by aggressively asserting local identity. These communities function as small pockets of subversive potential and are often subsumed in layers of negative media attention. Hip-hop culture in Vancouver is an excellent example of one such community. In this paper, I will explore how American hip-hop cultural practices have translated across the border and how local Vancouver artists adapt these forms in ways that highlight contemporary conflicts over the ownership of public space.

In order to explore local adaptations of hip-hop culture, it will be necessary to have an understanding of its roots. Hip-hop sprang up in New York's Bronx in the late 1970's. The economic and political climate was extremely volatile—the period saw cuts to federal funding, mass closures of factories, and a shift in the job market from unionized labour to short term service sector employment. This transition to post-industrial economies disproportionately affected working-class people of colour, and particularly inner city African-Americans—throwing many into unemployment and forcing them to rely on social assistance or on the drug

and sex trades in order to survive. It is worth referring to scholar George Lipsitz, who notes that between 1965 and 1990, "black family income fell by fifty percent, while black youth unemployment quadrupled and white youth unemployment remained static" (1994:19).1 This period witnessed the transformation of many working-class neighborhoods into ghettos. Hip-hop began within this type of neighborhood, essentially the nightmarish flip side to the so-called 'American Dream.'

During the late 1970s, youth in the Bronx lacked athletic and artistic outlets. Their solution was to create music out of two turntables and a microphone. Pioneering artists like the now legendary Afrika Bambaataa, Grandmaster Flash, and Kool DJ Herc, pirated energy from city light posts and held street and park parties. Breakdancing groups such as the Rock Steady Crew set up on street corners and displayed dance moves on cardboard platforms. As an art form, hip-hop gave voice to those who have been traditionally marginalized in American culture—poor people, 'criminals,' uneducated people, unemployed people, and people of colour. As a result, hip-hop culture registers a legacy of racial oppression, economic inequality and political repression.

As such, hip-hop is a cultural form that has been historically politicized; it calls up a powerful stigma and involves a resistant set of actions. Hip-hop's elements—which include MCing (or rapping), DJing, graffiti art, breakdancing, and I would also add street entrepreneurialism and street fashion—can constitute a powerful and subversive practice of resistance which maps the politics of race and class in ways that no other current musical form or subculture does. Hip-hop culture can be seen to participate directly in a global movement that contests private, corporate control of physical, cultural and psychic space on a wide range of different levels. Hip-hop attacks the notion of a hegemonic, corporate-dictated culture from all sides—legally (through DJs and producers pirating samples and violating intellectual property laws), spatially (through breakdancers, graffiti artists, and MCs reclaiming public space for art, music, and dance), and ideologically (by offering the perspective of those who have not benefited from advanced capitalism).

It is important to recognize, however, that hip-hop itself has also become a global cultural product—endlessly commodified and widely distributed by multinational record labels. Thus, hip-hop is simultaneously both an imported influence to be contested and locally adapted (as Tomlinson's theory would suggest) *and* the very framework that youth utilize to resist global structures of culture, commerce, and authority.

The global hip-hop community is constituted of thousands of individual subcultures. While these subcultures appropriate initially African-American cultural forms, they adopt them into local contexts. The original African-American cultural context resonates with the emerging subcultures, but does not necessarily define them. Rather, hip-hop's origins mingle with the regional concerns of the new subculture—and particularly with the local political climate—to create a new and distinct cultural space. From this standpoint, hip-hop can be viewed as a dialectical process of cultural negotiation, or as Tomlinson puts it, "the dynamic interaction between external cultural influence and local cultural practise" (1999:85). Keeping these patterns in mind, it is interesting to examine how the original politics of hip-hop inform the Vancouver hip-hop community, and how cultural practices are adapted in ways that contest private control over public space.

If global hegemony relies on the erasure of local culture, then asserting local identity becomes a political act. Hip-hop has a strong tradition of emphasizing local identity, or in hip-hop lingo, 'representing' where one is from. The Vancouver hip-hop community is no exception. Local artists go to great lengths to assert place in their work, and here place is anything but monolithic. Vancouver hip-hop can be viewed as a cultural hybrid, or what hybridity theorist Nikos Papastergiadis would call an "energy field of different forces" (2000:170), involving the collision of American and Canadian cultures, the mingling of people from African, European, Asian, First Nations and mixed descent, the representation of radically different economic backgrounds, and

the articulation of a wide range of political perspectives and artistic intentions. In other words, it is a subculture full of ambiguities and contradictions.

Despite this process of hybridization, certain elements of African-American hip-hop seem to have stuck. One of these lingering elements is the negative image of hip-hop artists that is present in the media, in academia, and in the general public. Rap is commonly perceived as violent and misogynistic. While neither of these allegations is entirely without substance, rap's violence and misogyny should not be de-contextualized from the violence and misogyny that is inherent to contemporary capitalist culture. As Harvard professor Cornel West points out, "rap is imprinted with the economic degradation that it intends to confront, and which at times it also reflects. The real obscenity is not the vulgarity coming from the mouths of the rappers but the society in which they were born and raised" (Younge 2001:18). Hip-hop music has too often been the locus of censorship debates that ostensibly attack regressive behaviours. In fact, these debates also function to de-legitimize a powerful method of black and working-class expression and resistance. Academic explorations of hip-hop culture need to be wary of falling into this line of criticism.

It is important to recognize that young people of color in the United States, particularly young black men, have been routinely subjected to police surveillance, harassment and brutality. In the U.S. one out of every four black males under the age of twenty-five is either in jail or prison, or under some kind of supervisory probation (Lipsitz 1994). Hip-hop scholar Tricia Rose has provided lengthy analysis on the ways that hip-hop performance is wrought with conflicts over the containment of young black men. These conflicts have manifested themselves in governmental, police, and citizen-based censorship, denial of insurance coverage, limitation of performance venues, and the implementation of harsh and humiliating security measures at concerts (Rose 1994). Public performance of hip-hop music often takes place against all odds and in spite of extraordinary pressures. Thus, rap enacts a rebellion against State control—a reclaiming of public space as a forum for those who are disenfranchised. As Lipsitz has noted, hip-hop artists have "answer[ed] a culture of surveillance with a counterculture of conspicuous display" (1994:20). This theme of conspicuous display, or the desire for recognition, is central to hip-hop discourse.

Interestingly, these legacies of containment and of conspicuous display have reverberations in the Vancouver hip-hop community in the arena of street fashion. Many young white men in hip-hop complain about being continually stopped in public and questioned by the police. These complaints about police harassment correspond to the African-American discourse on police brutality, but significantly depart from it in that the reported harassment is not always racially based. Many local white artists believe that they are being targeted because of the hip-hop style of dress that they sport, and that this targeting constitutes a form of punishment aimed at the community in which they chose to participate. This position could easily be dismissed as a form of posturing that aligns white Canadian rappers with their more 'authentic' black American counterparts. But such a dismissal would ignore some very concrete social realities. To begin with, it is important to take into account prevalent prejudices against hip-hop music and culture that are informed by American discourses. In the context of these wide-spread prejudices, it is highly plausible that young men in Vancouver are being routinely stopped as a result of their physical appearance. In addition, it should be noted that the majority of hip-hop artists in Vancouver come from single-parent, low-income families. Most support themselves with a combination of short-term service sector employment and independent entrepreneurialism. In short, issues of class enter the equation.

It may be that for Vancouver (and possibly other cities globally), the street fashion of hip-hop evokes the original fears provoked by American hip-hop—the fears of black and working-class collectivity. People of colour and working-class white people have historically been kept apart by powerful political and economic

forces, notably to the benefit of the ruling classes. As hip-hop gains global presence and becomes increasingly multicultural, the potential for it to unify young people for political purposes increases. Thus, the rapid spread of hip-hop culture to local subcultures could represent the threat of solidarity among oppressed peoples, which could in turn lead to the overturning of asymmetrical social relations that distribute wealth and opportunity. Local culture has responded to this political potential with a hybrid form of discrimination that mingles race and class-based fears. The process involves a displacement of the original target of prejudice—the young black male—and the formulation of a new target by positing the perceived threat he represents onto an entire subculture, and thus onto items of clothing as subcultural signifiers. This way of engineering stereotypes renders the backwards baseball cap, the puffy jacket, the baggy jeans, and the expensive jewelry as symbols of violence and fear.

This is not to say that such a transfer is a straightforward process. It is likely mitigated by unpredictable factors such as visible markers of class, the area of the city involved, the time of day, and the criminal activities in which the individual may be involved or may have previously been involved. I would also caution that this form of profiling involves external factors that can potentially be controlled. For example, one Vancouver rapper who was driving a stolen car discovered that wearing his hat forwards allowed him to escape being stopped by the police.[2] Clearly, skin color is not a performative or fluid identity in this immediate way. It is also crucial to recognize that this hybrid form of prejudice does not replace racist sentiment. Complaints of harassment of young people of colour in Vancouver, regardless of subcultural context, still surface regularly.

Street fashion is not the only highly politicized cultural form that local artists inherit. Hip-hop's graffiti artists engage with society on similarly tense terms. Street art can be seen as a reaction to the saturation of marketed physical, cultural, and psychic space. Local graffiti artists tend to articulate their intentions along these lines. Take5 is

a Vancouver artist who has been active for over ten years. He draws direct parallels between graffiti art and the current debate over private ownership of public space.

Take5 explains:

> We have public spaces—we all have to live here—and it's basically monopolized by corporations and private property owners. What the taggers are doing is reclaiming a piece of that. We have images being cranked down our throats like Coca-Cola and McDonald's and the Gap. The public has no say in what we see. The kids are saying: "I'm here too. I have a voice. You can't shut me up. You can't paint over me. I'm going to be here whether you like it or not."[3]

This debate over graffiti has recently exploded in Vancouver, and is currently being playing out on the streetscapes and in the media. Vancouver's hip-hop graffiti artists have become increasingly active. One artist, Deez, estimates that there are 30 to 50 crews of artists that currently operate in Vancouver, which have up to twenty members each (Kinghorn 2001). A city survey conducted in July 2001 found that approximately 3,000 properties in Vancouver had been hit by graffiti.[4] In response to this marked increase in graffiti activity, the City launched a consultation process in the fall of 2001, ostensibly to gauge public opinion on strategies for dealing with graffiti.

However, the consultation process merely reflected the views on graffiti that are typical of business and government. City literature framed graffiti as a criminal act of vandalism. A brochure launching the project invited public input, but asserted:

> The City of Vancouver is very clear in its view of graffiti. Graffiti is vandalism. Graffiti is not pretty. Nor is it about freedom of expression. Graffiti damages buildings and neighborhoods. Graffiti affects how

residents and visitors see Vancouver. It costs a lot of money to clean up. Graffiti is a crime. [5]

This position clearly privileges economic interests (business and tourism) over cultural interests (artistic expression).

Local media have also taken a fairly conservative approach. In a recent article in *The Vancouver Courier*, journalist Kevin Kinghorn characterizes graffiti as "an underground war raging throughout the Lower Mainland" between "an army of marker and spray-can-toting youth bent on turning the city into a colorful billboard" and "the police, a handful of security guards and a small but determined band of cleaners" (2001). Kinghorn compares graffiti art to "battle scars" and expresses the fear that "Vancouver [will] wake up one morning in a cloud of aerosol looking like a tattooed circus freak."

Interestingly, although this sentiment is echoed by Vancouver's business community, there is no evidence to suggest that it is shared by the majority of Vancouver's citizens. Graffiti expert Special Constable Wendy Hawthorne points out in her interview with Kinghorn that the public hasn't tended to take graffiti seriously. She notes that, " Most people look at it as minor vandalism…some even think it's art" (2001). A recent policy report from the City's Anti-Graffiti Strategy team also comments on this trend in public opinion. The document noted that "there is quite broad tolerance for legitimizing as artists the creators of artistic graffiti, and supporting them by providing designated 'freewalls' or even a 'graffiti alley' as sanctioned canvasses for their art." [6]

It seems that there is broad support for the notion that graffiti writers engage in a necessary form of artistic expression that is triggered by the aggressive corporate take-over of public space. Kinghorn's article generated numerous letters to the editor of *The Courier* that express this view. In one letter, Vancouver resident Keanu Meyers claims that "Vancouver is a city, and by definition not much more than a huge billboard." He adds, " God forbid there be an artist's expression, painstakingly created over eight hours of labour placed on—gasp!—a wall on one of our many fine McDonald's franchises." [7] In another letter, Alex Evans suggests that citizens should "think of what's worse—the piece of art which took hours of a person's time and creativity, covering a gray, boring wall—or the ever present ads for Chubby Chicken which seem to cover every billboard in town lately." [8] Evans calls advertising "the real graffiti, defacing our city, unwanted by all, but for some reason tolerated by almost everybody." Letters that advance this argument appeared for weeks after Kinghorn's article was published. Anya MacLeod reflects in her letter that " most graffiti I see is ugly, but no uglier than the huge billboards featuring vacant-eyed models pushing more image-based products we don't need." [9] Brooke Ballantyne's letter asks: "Is it such a crime for 'kids' to want to reclaim their public spaces, putting their own name on their city, rather than have it infiltrated by the names of Coke and du Maurier?" [10] This response from the public foregrounds conflicts over public space in the discussion of graffiti; the letter writers demonstrate how graffiti is seen to rebel against corporate control over public space.

From this standpoint, graffiti writers fight back against the corporate colonization of public space, forcing local artists and community culture to the forefront. They forge a cultural conversation in which the writer rejects the authority of private ownership of public space and re-inscribes the relationships of power by asserting his/her own name or 'tag'. The letters in support of graffiti demonstrate that the artists, rather than performing senseless vandalism (as portrayed by business, media, and government), in fact embody a popular public impulse to subvert corporate control. This local phenomenon can thus be linked to a global movement which Naomi Klein has described as anti-corporate activism, or "aggressively reclaiming space from the corporate world, 'unbranding it', guerrilla-style" (2000:81).

The Vancouver hip-hop community highlights hip-hop's ability to contest both global capitalism in general and the issue of private ownership of public space in particular. However, this resistance to multinational corporate control should not be read as a single, cohesive theme within local hip-hop culture. Cultural theorist

Sarah Thorton has noted that many youth subcultures present themselves as rejecting societal control and authority, while they simultaneously inscribe their own hierarchy of power relations (1997). Hip-hop can also be seen to demonstrate this tendency, as it often embraces the very societal structures that it purports to attack. An example of this tension between resistance and conformity would be local hip-hop's strong entrepreneurial impulse. Another example would be the hierarchy of gender relations that exists within the Vancouver hip-hop scene.

These contradictions need not function to dismiss hip-hop's subversive potential. Despite the remarkable ambiguities and contradictions that result from hybridity, Vancouver hip-hop culture powerfully asserts local identity and effectively reclaims public space. Thus, Vancouver hip-hop is linked to grassroots communities throughout the world that are currently struggling against the power of multinational corporations and the specter of a global monoculture.

NOTES

1. Lipsitz cites his source for this information as Kent, N. 1991: A Stacked Deck, Explorations in Ethnic Studies, 14,1, January, 13.

2. This information is taken from an interview with a local rapper, name withheld, on October 19, 2001.

3. These comments are from an interview with graffiti writer Take5 on July 29, 2002.

4. This information appeared on a pamphlet distributed to the public, soliciting input on city anti-graffiti strategies. It can be viewed at www.city.vancouver.bc.ca/graffiti

5. See the Anti-Graffiti Team Policy Report to Vancouver City Council on April 9, 2002, pg. 12.

6. See the Anti-Graffiti Team Policy Report to Vancouver City Council on April 9, 2002, Appendix A: Public Consultation Process, Item B3.

7. From Keanu Meyers letter to the Editor, 2001: The Vancouver Courier, *7 May.*

8. From Alex Evans letter to the Editor, 2001: The Vancouver Courier, *14 May.*

9. From Anya MacLeod letter to the Editor, 2001: The Vancouver Courier, *7 May.*

10. From Brooke Ballantyne letter to the Editor, 2001: The Vancouver Courier, *29 April.*

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The Music of the Sphere

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What I want to offer is nothing more than a meditation, in the light of current discourses on globalization and the postmodern, on a quote from Jacques Attali's *Noise:*

> For twenty-five centuries, Western knowledge has tried to look upon the world. It has failed to understand that the world is not for the beholding. It is for hearing. It is not legible, but audible. (Attali 1985:3)

Not only has postmodern culture generally been thought in terms of the image and of the visual (television, video, billboards, advertising, film), but the contemporary globalization of culture as well tends to be conceived as the diffusion of visual vocabulary, technique, and of course cultural products themselves outward from the dominant economies. "Cultural imperialism," is generally theorized in terms of the visual, and the visual seems to lend itself quite naturally to the narrative of cultural imperialism. I would not want to disagree with this narrative, but there does seem to be something missing in our current thinking about globalization and culture.

In the short space of this essay I can not begin to suggest a well-developed alternative; instead, I want to point to the lack of a certain kind of theory, and speculate about the kinds of counter-narrative which such a theory might offer up. My intuition is that if we were to think the globalization of aural culture then we might begin to see another globalization of culture, quite different from the one we are accustomed to privileging as dominant. At the very least, we might take note of different and surprising zones of flow — the Congo-Cuba nexus, for example, which has existed for half a century. Of course, visual and aural culture do not lead isolated existences. But if we separate analytically what we can less and less separate empirically, we may be able to discover a hidden, Utopian possibility beneath a globalization which is, to all appearances, profoundly dystopic.

Of course, we are not lacking popular futurisms, brave-new-world narratives of cell-phones, laptops, and regional MTV in carefully selected third-world metropolises, of the notion that with "the end of the Cold War capitalism and the market should be declared the final form of human history itself" (Jameson 1998:88). But these explicitly Utopian narratives are not, of course, genuinely Utopian at all in that, after the model of Hegel's "bad infinity," they fail to think the future except as an infinitely perfected extension of the present. Instead they predict a kind of "heat death" of the end of difference: a dystopia which, as Fredric Jameson has pointed out, is indissolubly bound up with the spread of the visual itself. They point to an end to history which is also "a colonization of reality generally by...visual forms which is at one and the same time a commodification of that same intensively colonized reality on a world-wide scale" (1998:87). We should be reminded, however, of another, now long-forgotten narrative of globalization, one which, for a brief moment, imagined the abrupt reversal of the Hegelian flow of history, or rather opened up a whole new theater on which History could be staged. The rhetoric of the African independence movements (let's say, between the Mau Mau uprising beginning in 1952 and the Biafran civil war of 1967, with notable exceptions) was, in its strongest expression, never merely about political self-determination or even about economic self-sufficiency. Instead, it undertook the project of imagining Africa (and the colonized world more generally), left out of Hegelian historiography altogether, as precisely the space where, in the struggles for national independence, the dialectic of world history would work itself out once and for all. In an independent Africa (and I am thinking here of Césaire, Sartre, and Fanon in particular, but this is just one of many isomorphic traditions), humanity would, for the first time, be able to forge its own destiny.

Of course, Fanon's genius was to have envisioned not only the utopian possibilities in the struggles for independence, but also the possibility of their perversion into sterile nationalization schemes that would simply amount to transfers of privileges from the settlers to the emerging African political class, without significant

structural change. And as we all know, the Utopian trajectory mapped out by the writings of the period was indeed hijacked, as Fanon feared it might be, by national bourgeoisies only too happy to profit through the old economic relationships and to celebrate their own mystified wealth as national triumphs. This Utopian moment is brutally shut down by History itself.

Or is it? Certainly the postcolonial history of Africa has been very far indeed from what Fanon and others hoped it would be. But was this Utopian desire eradicated, or was it merely blocked or deflected, to emerge again somewhere else?

That period of American history which the 90s tried so hard either to forget or to remember in mystified form, the 60s, was marked politically by the civil-rights movement, starting with the sit-ins of the early 1960s, and by the protest against the war in Vietnam, which escalated from the mid-sixties. I am not the first to suggest that both of these apparently independent and quintessentially American phenomena are coordinated through and take their meaning from that other globalization, the worldwide expansion of the struggle against colonialism. If the anti-colonial moment is a determining factor in "our" political 60s, it also is an essential factor in the decade's cultural developments. As Jameson (1998) has pointed out, the Utopian imaginary that disappears in anti-colonial theory with the first military coups reappears in the emergence of high theory in the first world. Similarily, I have suggested elsewhere when speaking of this apparently parochial European discourse that *all theory is postcolonial theory*. Theory as we know it today owes its very existence to the struggle against colonial domination and its echo in the political urgency of the First-World-60s (Brown 2002). Limitations of space prevent me from making this point emphatically, but I would point out that the canon of high theory — I will mention as examples only Derrida's "Structure, Sign, and Play," Barthes's "Myth Today," Foucault's *The Order of Things*, Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus*, and Bourdieu's *Outline of a Theory of Practice* — is dominated by texts whose conditions of possibility are often explicitly rooted in the crisis of classical imperialism brought on by the anticolonial movements.

The 60s, then, encompass two political movements (in the First World, civil rights and the "peace movement," both of which refer to the anti-colonial revolutions) and one cultural movement: the rise of "theory." It is not difficult to discern a fourth term to this formulation. When the decade of the 60s is remembered, even if it is remembered in a completely commodified and contentless way, it is remembered through the figure of music. But of course, *this* music is already global in some way, although exactly what that might mean is not yet clear. We might take a clue from the fact that the designation "Western music" plainly refers, from the mid-20th century on, to something that is merely one parochial and increasingly threatened tradition among many. The music that emerges with real cultural weight in the 60s is no longer, then, "Western" in this sense. It is a commonplace that the first and still most significant leap in the globalization of aural culture came with the Atlantic slave trade. The meaning of this leap was that an utterly exploited and dominated group managed to colonize not European music, which is henceforth relegated to the outermost margins of "high" culture, but Music itself. Such colonization involves the desire for freedom not some imagined African rhythmic or pentatonic essence.

At this point I wish I could launch into the more or less time-honored method of literary studies and begin the concrete analysis of a few recordings that demonstrate what I am trying to say. But this is impossible. Music is not a text. It produces text; the events, subcultures, debates that surround it can be read as texts; its internal history can be discussed as a text. In the early 1990s musicology belatedly discovered structuralism and tried desperately to rejuvenate itself through semiotics. But it ran across the problem that music is not a text, that difference does not create signification in the same way in music as it does in language or even in painting or sculpture. Accordingly, every new book on musical semiotics has the desperate air of starting from

scratch, realizing that the previous attempt had been utterly fruitless and yet seeing no other way out of a sterilely descriptive discourse. Meanwhile, cultural studies, having been enormously fruitful in terms of the meanings it has managed to tease out of all of the intertwined texts surrounding the production and consumption of music, has generally failed to find much significance in the actual sounds themselves. To put it in short hand: musicology has been powerless to make music *mean*; cultural studies has failed in any systematic way to make *music* mean.

Strangely, the discourse which has come closest to understanding music, if not explaining it, is a non-musical one. In Don Ihde's phenomenology of sound, *Listening and Voice*, music names an appeal, an almost literal "call" that demands a response of a particular sort:

> If, on the one hand, music is sound calling attention to itself, the temptation then is to conceive of music as "pure body"... But what occurs in this engagement is clearly anti-Cartesian. It is my subject-body, my experiencing body, which is engaged, and no longer is it a case of a deistic distance of "mind" to "body." *The call to dance is such tha*t involvement *and* participation *become the mode of being-in the musical situation* [my emphasis]. The "darkness" of music is in the *loss of distance* which occurs in dramatically sounded musical presence (159).

It is not that no other discourse had managed to think of music and the body, although certainly musicology, with its traditional emphasis on those relatively few aspects of music that can be derived from notation, has dramatically failed on that score. Roland Barthes, for example, has written interestingly on timbre and the relationship of the body and the voice. Cultural studies has often enough evoked the body, but again, the tendency has been to focus on those spectacular aspects of performance that can be read as text. The other, more promising tendency is to emphasize the *affective* qualities of music. In practice, however, this approach has managed to deploy only a very limited number of concepts, such as jouissance, to describe the effects of radically different kinds of music.

What Ihde's formulation implies is that music is essentially that activity by which bodies are synchronized into a social body: "*involvement* and *participation* become the mode of being-in the musical situation." In other words, music enacts fundamentally not just a relationship to the body, but a relationship between the individual body and the social world. One might, as is customary, point for evidence of this to ritual music, martial music, or to the work song, and go from there to the dance. These steps certainly would seem to locate the origin of music, particularly perhaps that of the music currently in question, in bodily *movement*. But this would imply that everything since has been either a freeing from or a falling-away from this original bodily music, which would make its return either atavistic or a restoration of essence — which is exactly how post-slavery musical forms have been treated during this century. Instead, we ought not to take this synchronization as something straightforward or given, but open it up in each instance as an object of study.

In 1722, Jean-Philippe Rameau established the triad as the fundamental structuring principle of all music, which had heretofore been considered rather in contrapuntal terms. Since his method of musical analysis has not only dominated music theory, but also has even fundamentally determined musical notation and composition itself, its principles seem unassailably self-evident. But the triad, which can be derived mathematically and expressed in terms of ratios, fails to account for a great deal of the actual acoustic complexity that musical instruments at the time were capable of. Moreover, the harmonic series produces several notes that Western harmony considers un-musical. Indeed, the tempered scale (which had been in existence since before the 17th Century) is developed through a number of compromises and deformations of the natural harmonic series. As Jaques Attali has pointed out, classical harmony, a half-century in advance of political economy, formulates the relationships among the instruments and musicians of the orchestra as subject precisely to the equilibrium of a

natural law. We might think of classical time in the same regard; the clockwork time — expressed, like harmony, in ratios (the regularly spaced bar lines that make this conception possible became common practice in the 18th Century) — serving to lock the performers into a rational (quite literally rational in the sense of being based on ratios) synchronization which enacts the drama of a social world founded on an image of itself as the expression of a universal order.

Romanticism's fundamental break is with this time, which no longer seemed to reflect the ratios of natural law but instead, in retrospect, to perform a reification of social life which had already been theorized, if not under that name. In the early 19th century a conductor is, for the first time, called up to the podium to coordinate this new, more fluid rhythmic time. This freeing up of rhythmic time in Romantic music is paralleled in harmony by the introduction of those tones disallowed by the tyranny of the triad: purposeful dissonance, extensions of the chord beyond the triad into the upper partials, momentary modulations. It is precisely the irrational remnant, the excess for which the classical beautiful fails to account, that Romanticism deliberately introduces. (This process can be heard quite clearly in Debussy's preludes.) The conductor's job is not only to conduct in the sense of coordinating the orchestra, but also in the sense of serving as a conduit through which the audience is to feel the force of the harmonic tensions. The conductor — at this time, often the composer himself — performs the experience of an audience of monads, each experiencing the solipsistic confrontation with the irrational through his stereotypically tortured movements.

The next moment, overdetermined by the foregoing history, would have to be the twelve-tone system, where rhythm is released not only from rational time but also from irrational, "organic" time, and where the tonal system is finally exploited to the full, precisely *as* system, as an artificial and contentless structure in which melody has no choice but to eke out its existence. All this has been theorized exhaustively by Adorno and I need not linger over the point, except to remind ourselves that the privileged interval is no longer the third but the minor second, whose social content will be clear to any attentive filmgoer. The great modernist film scores written by exiled German expressionists introduce the minor second into a vocabulary where — whether conventionally aligned vertically among the strings or spread out horizontally in the famous *Jaws* motif — it will henceforth signify paranoia.

This is not, *pace* Adorno, the end of the line, although it is certainly the end of a certain line. The transformation of Music which began, behind the scenes — or rather, on the other side of the tracks — in the late 19th Century, now steps forth with the invention of the blues scale and a new conception of time. Here, one might go along with the conventional narrative of the evolution of the blues scale as a syncretic form, the product of a compromise between an African pentatonic and a European diatonic scale. This narrative is a fine allegory of a certain conception of American history, but it does not seem musically likely: the minor pentatonic produced by some traditional African instruments — a scale which certainly forms the basis of the simplest blues scale — lays perfectly over the diatonic and can be played on any Western instrument without difficulty. It seems more likely to me that the appearance of the blue note marks something radically new, not simply a fusion between two systems. Here, for the first time, emerges a musical practice which does not so much abandon the tonal system as free itself from it at will. Again, contrary to the standard conception of the blues, there is no "blue note:" the flat fifth appears in Romantic melody and no doubt elsewhere, and in the most harmonically developed blues any of the twelve tones can be used. The "blue note" is not a particular pitch at all, but rather a shorthand by which we name the instant of the freedom from pitch.

Neither is the new relationship to rhythmic time so easily codified as music historians would have us believe. "Swing," for example, cannot be reduced to the ratio 3:2. Adorno is famous for saying that jazz made no rhythmic innovations that had not been already discovered by Western music. He was right, but what he

meant by this was wrong. Because what is fundamentally new is not this or that rhythmic pattern, but that the relationship to time is a product of collective practice and an almost erotically intense intersubjectivity. The almost mythical status ("if you have to ask, you'll never know") ascribed to such concepts as swing, "blues feeling," soul, and so on, is due to the fact that they do not name anything that can be notated. Rather, they refer to an emergent property of a performance practice that must bind together a collectivity that is *not* bound together externally, either by a single controlling consciousness or by a rigid system of metronomic ratios. No doubt, too, the racial mystique of these concepts originates not so much in anything essentially racial or even musical, but to the kind of intersubjective relationships fostered in an embattled community engaged in collective struggle.

I have not even begun to address what I set out to discuss, which was the globalization of this music, which is already, from the moment of its creation, a global music. I have implied that there is a Utopian content to the music. It might be objected that this content has been and is being exploited, commodified, watered down, packaged. Those who profit from its expansion are the same conglomerates that profit from the globalization of visual culture; that globalization once more stands for the Americanization of everything. These things are all, to a certain extent, true, and any theory of the globalization of music would have to take these thoroughly into account. But it must take account, too, of the essentially musical aspect of aural culture, the kind of social body it calls forth. I would argue that the demand for this music, as artificial as it might be in any particular instance, is the desire to experience the Utopian possibility that this music — even in its most reified and degraded forms — perpetually enacts.

Visual culture, particularly television and film, seems to reproduce in its proliferation the primary flows of a U.S.- dominated global economy – surplus value and raw materials in, advanced finished products out. In contrast, by means of musical culture we can dimly perceive an immanent globalization quite different from what we are accustomed to call by that name. I'd like to conclude not with a theory but with an image. At the end of the novel *Yaka* by the Angolan writer Pepetela, a young character, the new protagonist, goes off to join the anti-colonial army. He heads off not to the sound of the Internationale, nor to a patriotic song, not even to the Ngola Ritmos, but to the sound of Otis Redding. Ultimately, this musical globalization which marks the resistance to established flows and the generation of new ones is the *same* globalization as that of the proliferation of the independence movements and the circulation of revolutionary desire between the First and Third worlds. The immanent totality sometimes constructs itself openly, but sometimes, as now, it is driven underground, living a subterranean existence whose presence, if we keep our ears open, we can sometimes dimly perceive. In a later novel by Pepetela, the protagonist writes in his notebook that, faced with the seeming victory of the ideologies of globalization, "Marx must be spinning in his grave, in a subterranean groove, poor old Marx in a frenetic shuffle" (Pepetela 2000:275, my translation).

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Globalization, Fandom, and "Cyber-Solidarity"[1]

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Fans, geeks and nerds—overlapping but not identical social and cultural categories—have long been vilified in the mass media with "get-a-life" stereotypes and marginalized by images of social, sexual, and economic impotence. Surprisingly, they may be staging a comeback. Recently, Hollywood films like *High Fidelity* and *Galaxy Quest* have presented less pejorative versions of music and science fiction fans (respectively); a *Spin* magazine cover story has affirmed that "geek rock" is here to stay; and the expanding dominance of the computer industry has necessitated a massive reconsideration of "the nerd," and what he or she might be up to in his garage. It is no accident, for instance, that PBS titled its plucky, optimistic documentary cum paean to the rise of Steve Jobs and Bill Gates, *The Triumph of the Nerds.* This film bizarrely but aptly welds together Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will*, in all its unabashed fascist boosterism, with moronic mid-80s campus romp *The Revenge of the Nerds*. Here the geeky stock figures finally get even with the football players and cheerleaders who torment them. PBS's *Triumph of the Nerds* suggests that, after all, the geeks may really be inheriting the earth, and woe betide those who are not keeping up.

Of course the "geeks" currently running the show are not doing it from their garages any more, and the Microsoft anti-trust trial has revealed, as if there remained any doubt, how fully and ruthlessly corporate today's high-tech robber barons are. And in a moment when the lines between Microsoft's "campus" outside Seattle and our own corporatized campuses seem increasingly blurry, it's become much easier to see the on-line world as simply another site of globalized commodification and popular stupefaction than to see the brave new electronic frontier envisioned by some of its geeky progenitors. The apparently endless process of media consolidation under current regimes of global capital accumulation, which McKenzie Wark suggests we call not "post-Fordist" but "Sonyist," offers little hope for the kinds of personally or politically liberative potential once routinely associated with what we used to geekily call "cyberspace" (1991:44). And in the wake of the Napster shut-down even the *cultural* liberation offered by the Internet may seem destined to be an unfulfilled promise.

And yet, for all these very real indicators that, even on the *up*side of the digital divide, "your modem may not set you free", there are some interesting counter-trends emerging, associated with what I will discuss as on-line "fandom," or "communities of appreciation." The linkages between fandom and the high tech world run deep, and not just because, according to the media stereotype, every computer nerd knows all the words to a Monty Python sketch or two, and Captain Kirk's cabin number on the USS Enterprise. John Perry Barlow's famous transition from Grateful Dead songwriter and Deadhead extraordinaire to cyberspace guru and founder of the Electronic Frontier Foundation was mediated, he says, by his prior participation in a "virtually physical town," "the mysterious, nomadic City of the Deadheads" (1995:52). And from the earliest days of dial-up bulletin boards and the WELL on through the Usenet to today's proliferation of electronic "groups" of various kinds on the Web, fans have flocked to the on-line world to find people who share their passions and pursuits.

Today, communities of appreciation are forming at a startling rate, around every possible hobby, avocation, cultural pursuit, and so on. And I would submit that people who would not be caught dead at a "fan club meeting" are being irresistibly interpellated into such communities by the sheer ease and pleasure of participation. To take one not-quite-randomly-chosen example, those who enjoy hunting animals, certainly an activity coded as solitary and masculine, have their choice of 185 different, often specialized e-groups on Yahoo's Groups

page alone, where they can easily find others who share their passion for, say, taxidermy, or squirrel hunting. And while it may rightly be objected that participation in such groups does not necessarily constitute "fandom," in my admittedly limited sampling I've found remarkable similarities at both the discursive and affective levels between the conversations on, for instance, Gunsmithing-L and the Hounds of the Internet, a Sherlock Holmes fan e-mail list I enjoy. In a related project to this essay, I explore the overlapping and vexed worlds of fannish and academic criticism of the Sherlock Holmes stories. I argue for a new kind of academic engagement with the expanding world of what we might loosely call "literary fandom," from the Sherlockians to lunch-hour book groups at nearly every workplace to Oprah's "Book Club of the Air." Beginning from the old adage in literary academia that we enter grad school as fans and leave as critics, I argue in that essay that a repressed relation to our own fannish origins prevents us from engaging successfully with the ways that most people read. Here, at the risk of stretching the concept of fandom beyond coherence, I want to suggest that behaviours and attitudes traditionally understood as "fannish" have expanded much further, into far-flung social and geographic regions, as a result of the growth of on-line communities.

Lawrence Grossberg has argued that fandom constitutes an "affective sensibility" through which fans construct "mattering maps" of the cultural world, with which to determine where to invest time, money, and self. Of course everyone's relation to culture is affective, and we all map the cultural world one way or another, but what makes fandom unique in Grossberg's account is that fans redefine their identities with relation to those maps, "divid[ing] the cultural world into Us and Them" (1992:60). Such divisions, Grossberg points out, are much clearer and sharper when the "Us" perceives itself as a persecuted or at least an unjustly ignored minority—the "imagined community" of Sherlock Holmes or *Star Trek* fans has much clearer boundaries than the fans of the latest hit sit-com. And fandoms generally rewrite their marginal status as socio-cultural superiority—in Grossberg's terms, their map of the cultural field is the "true" one—hence, among some science fiction fans, non-fans are known as "mundanes."

I appropriate Benedict Anderson's well-traveled idea of the nation as "imagined community" somewhat reluctantly, as it has already been stretched far beyond its original applications.[2] But it's worth considering the connections between Anderson's story of the contributions of 18th century print-capitalism, the novel and the newspaper, to the formation of the "deep horizontal comradeship" of modern American and European nationalism, and the contributions of global, electronic print and image technology, especially the Internet and e-mail, to new kinds of "imagined communities" (1991:7). Few at this point would dispute that a transformation in literacy and communications and, more arguably, in the social field itself, is currently underway parallel to (if not exceeding) that instantiated by the proliferation of print in the European eighteenth century. And anyone who has been a regular participant in an e-mail group with dedicated, passionate fellow-travelers has seen the fascinating ways in which individuals arrive at a kind of "deep, horizontal comradeship" with the imagined collective, often forming powerful cathexes with other group members and with the group itself. The strength of those bonds can be quite invisible until a dispute arises among group members that threatens the existence or unity of the group itself—both the oft noted venom that marks such angry e-mail exchanges *and* the passionate pleas for tolerance and efforts to bridge differences are suggestive of participants' profound affective investments in the group. A recent *New York Times* article details the collective, on-line and face-to-face mourning, "scattered across at least a dozen states and three continents," for a member of the Opera Forum e-group who died in the September 11 attacks. It suggests that the many similar stories around the web reveal that "the seemingly superficial bonds forged in cyberspace are often turning out to run deep" (Harmon 2001).

While the members of the Opera Forum or the Gunsmithing list may not be ready to go to war on behalf of their "imagined community" (though some of the postings from the latter group suggest that they might), there

are other interesting links to Anderson's paradigm. The shift to a notion of "simultaneity in homogenous, empty time" crucial to the establishment of modern nationalism is at least accelerated in the "hyper-simultaneity," or, in Paul Virilio's term, "instantaneity" of the web (1995). From Anderson's image of people across the nation imagining themselves simultaneously opening their morning newspapers, we modulate into a world in which someone in one's community is *always* "logged on" and time zones are nearly irrelevant (1991:25). And of course the consolidation of national print-languages is echoed in the evolution of languages and jargons on-line, both in the polyglot varieties of web-speak common to broad sectors of on-line communication and in highly specialized, quickly evolving discourses unique to individual communities. Here it's worth noting that just as those outside the language communities of the new European and American nations were all the more likely to be conscripted by them to build the infrastructures and fight the wars. So are those on the wrong side of the "digital divide" both in terms of access to computer technology and web connections and in terms of literacy in the dominant web languages, particularly English, all the more likely to be the ones assembling the circuits under globalization.

For all that our participation in global communities of appreciation may be seen as simply a symptom or pleasant side effect or even agent of global capitalism, there are a number of other sides to the story. For starters, even in the most obviously commercialized of settings, like the customers' book, music, and movie reviews on sites like Amazon, one finds a kind of communal, pluralistic resistance to corporate packaging and marketing of culture that complicates a Frankfurt School-style picture of popular media stupefaction. That that resistance is repackaged and sold back to the fans faster than you can say " Alternative music" does not, for me, entirely negate the rebellious energy of its moment. This observation holds particularly when we link it to the broader rebellion of the growing on-line cultural "free-for-all," in a weirdly literal sense, that seems barely abated by the Napster shut-down. Altogether unabated, of course, are fan exchanges of the fruits of their own cultural production, not only in the obvious case of "spinoff" cultures like fan fiction written about characters from a mass media product, but also in a thousand other ways, from boatbuilding fans swapping canoe plans to digital music fans e-mailing each other break beats.

And even post-Napster, the prospects for shutting down copyright piracy seem dim. On KaZaa, a peer-to-peer media sharing network, one frequently finds over two million users logged on and swapping files. Those users are no longer just teenagers with more time and tech-skills than money—a recent survey funded by the Pew Charitable Trusts found that 40% of all music pirates were over 30 (Mann 2000:53). In 1999, in an earlier effort to stem the tide, Microsoft released a new version of *Windows Media Audio*, an MP3 equivalent touted as secure: songs in the format could be restricted to a single personal computer. Within hours of its release a program known as "unfuck" was in circulation on the Internet that intercepted the decrypted data and stripped away the restrictions (Mann 2000:48). For every Napster shut down, the on-line world of media fans, like some Hydra with thick glasses and bad haircuts, seems to spawn 10 new high-tech ways for fans to get what they want, without always paying Sony.

As resistance to the Borg of global late-capitalism goes, fan cultures and media piracy seem like tame stuff indeed. Or, to return to the previous metaphor, if such resistance is a contemporary head on Linebaugh and Rediker's " many-headed Hydra," then it would seem to be relatively toothless (2000). But then of course there's a good deal of more active resistance both organized through and conducted on the Internet. One of the first and most interesting cases is the Zapatistas' use of the web to weave what's been dubbed "the electronic fabric of struggle," both to disseminate information from the on-the-ground struggle in Chiapas, defying the Mexican government media controls and creating alongside the thousands of observers who have gone to Chiapas tens or hundreds of thousands more virtual observers, and to enlist the allegiance of leftists

worldwide in the cause of the EZLN (Cleaver 1998). The latter function has proven particularly interesting in complementing the Zapatistas' canny use of a range of cultural media and genres to carry their messages. Marcos's famously literary communiqués, with their interwoven political and aesthetic appeals, have found a perfect medium on line, where we gather, translate and trade them avidly—even fannishly.

More recently, the upsurge of activism in resistance to globalization, from Seattle to Washington DC to Quebec City to Goteburg to Genoa, has been crucially enabled by e-mail and web organizing. It's worth noting that those demonstrations have themselves taken on a more "web-like" character and logic. No longer simply the march down Pennsylvania Avenue to the White House, the new demonstrations feature a thousand different nodes: a street blockade here and puppet theater there, organized labour on one side of town and the Black Bloc on another. Both alongside such demonstrations and independently of them, a new category of on-line activism and civil disobedience has also emerged, popularly known as "hacktivism" (though this term irks many practitioners). During the January 2002 protests against the World Economic Forum (WEF) meeting in New York, Ricardo Dominguez' Electronic Disturbance Theater group distributed software to over 50,000 web-users who joined a "virtual sit-in," as their computers repeatedly loaded the websites of the WEF and some of its primary corporate constituents, eventually causing the WEF site to crash (Shachtman 2002). As a look at the e-zine *The Hacktivist* (www.thehacktivist.com) suggests, a wide variety of approaches and activities get lumped together under this term, from actions linked to political demonstrations and campaigns, to more generalized resistance to corporate control of media (including relatively apolitical actions that correspond to popular expectations of "hackers"), to progressive elements in the "new media" and "net.art" communities. Their interventions remain sporadic and limited in scope, and advocates of electronic civil disobedience almost universally maintain that their actions are meant as a supplement to more traditional, "on the ground" struggles. Nevertheless, they suggest an interesting opening for application of the global character of the web, in resistance to corporate globalization.

Perhaps more significantly, the Internet has made a global circulation of independent media reporting and analysis of current struggles possible, a phenomenon that has become much more visible since September 11. If the Gulf War belonged to CNN, then the "war on terrorism," for many of us, has unveiled a new potential for the Net, to provide both mainstream and alternative media, in both "push" and "pull" modes. More than ever before, in recent months I've been grateful for the inundation of e-mail, sent to me directly or to the various lists I'm on, circulating the responses of journalists, academics and others. I've actually found it weirdly comforting to receive an Edward Said piece from *The Nation* or an Arundhati Roy essay from *The Guardian* for the fourth time. The circulation of these analyses has begun to take on a talismanic quality (in addition to their more obvious function), reminding me that despite the nauseating mainstream media insistence on a national consensus, the community of people resisting the U.S. war in Afghanistan, now broadening out into a permanent war on "terror" everywhere, is more than imagined.

To say that our circulation of our favorite responses to U.S. imperialism, or our favorite passages from Subcommandante Marcos, has a fetishistic quality suggestive of fandom is in no way to denigrate the importance either of the works themselves or of our engagement with them. Just as the computer has enormously complicated the distinction between work and play, much to the consternation of countless employers, so too has an "affective sensibility" percolated out into cultural and political work of all kinds, infusing that work with the potential for fannish kinds of pleasures and affiliations. While the title of the conference for which this essay was written, "Content Providers of the World Unite!" seems at least ironically laced, if not outright facetious, the fans—longtime inhabitants of a world in which nearly everyone is both a consumer and a "content provider," a reader, writer and publisher in one, a world which many of us are only just joining on-line—know that

moments of unity are not only possible, they're essential. I am aware that this statement may sound a bit misty-eyed and utopian, if not altogether wrong-headed, and that my enthusiasm for on-line communities risks indulging in what Carlos Alonso recently dubbed the "Internet sublime" (2001:1299). So let me suggest using a final, more grounded and local example how I think that fannish pleasure can enable political engagement.

I have been a fan of detective stories since I was a kid. For the past few years I have taught a sophomore-level literature class for non-majors on detective fiction, with the usual emphases on both aesthetic and political questions raised by the genre, as it evolves from white guys writing stories about white guy detectives and, often, Other criminals, to stories written by those Others. This fall, I have been meeting once a week with a group of inmates at the local jail, who have been provided with the books for the class and a reading schedule, to discuss them. I am not teaching them and they are not receiving any academic credit; we are sitting down together as fellow readers, and in some cases as fellow fans, to talk about the books and how they relate to our lives. None of us has anything much to gain from the experience beyond the pleasure of doing it (although I realize that in writing this I am compromising that precept, making academic capital out of our play). But as the weeks have gone on and the twelve of us have come to know and trust one another more, the experience of reading in preparation for each meeting has changed radically for me, as I imagine them in their cells simultaneously puzzling over the Flitcraft story in *The Maltese Falcon*, and I wonder if they too now include each other and even me in the imagined community of fellow fans. That may not seem like much, but it's more than what we started with. In the spring semester I'll be asking small groups of students in the detective fiction class to sit down with small groups of inmates to discuss the books, and hopefully, the imagined communities will be wider, and perhaps deeper. At the same time, those students will be working on-campus, conducting a book and magazine drive for the jail library, and spreading the word about the demographics and conditions of incarceration in the U.S. If the students' experience is anything like mine, they will find connections as a community of appreciation, across divides of class, race and privilege, and they'll never again think the same way about the vast and growing population of "criminals." And, I hope and believe, the inmates' connections to the students will enable at least some of them to see themselves differently in relation to literacy and higher education. And in the end, such consciousness cannot help but be political…

NOTES

1 The term "cyber-solidarity" was introduced to me by Len Findlay's keynote address to the conference for which this paper was written. I'm grateful to Findlay for his inspiring presentation, to the conference organizers, Imre Szeman and Susie O'Brien, and to the participants who helped me clarify the argument presented here.

2 For one response to this proliferation, see Aijaz Ahmad's critique of Anderson's paradigm as applied to Indian nationalism (290, 342 n.3).

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The Politics of Linux

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The Utopian Sphere

One of the great challenges facing critics of global capitalism is to develop alternative models of trade and production beyond contemporary capitalism – to move past piecemeal reform, and begin to imagine compelling alternatives to the present global system. This sort of project demands more than critique – it demands creativity, a new spirit of utopian thinking through which to transcend the shackles that the doxa of neoliberalism has placed upon our social imagination.

Some critics on the left feel that this kind of utopian thinking is dead. So claims Russell Jacoby in *The End of Utopia: Politics and Culture in an Age of Apathy* (2000). Richard Rorty makes a similar lament in *Achieving Our Country: Leftist Thought in Twentieth-Century America*. I think these writers underestimate the strands of utopian thinking flowing all around us. As Fredric Jameson argues in his essay, "Reification and Utopia," capitalist culture always, inevitably, contains within it utopian elements; these glimpses of utopia are what make popular culture compelling to its consumers. It is the utopian element in popular culture which captures the imagination; but that utopianism is then quickly squelched, resistance assimilated. Critical engagement with popular culture, then, demands not simply the demystification of ideological fantasies, but also the embrace, interrogation, and extension of utopian impulses. So, if we are beginning to ask, what alternatives can we imagine to the present global system, we might start by looking at the undercurrents of utopian hope in the practices of popular culture and pop subcultures. It is there that we dream of better worlds than this one.

Now, if all of popular culture contains undercurrents of utopianism, those currents certainly rise closer to the surface in some discourses than others. One discourse that has been particularly productive of utopian thinking is found in the realm of computer culture. The reasons for this occurrence seem pretty clear: computers represent to many people the future. To talk about computers is, in a sense, to debate what kind of future we will have, and what kind of future we want. Computer culture, as I have argued elsewhere, operates as a kind of utopian sphere – a safe space, within the public sphere, to imagine different kinds of futures. In the context of a public sphere in which the range of acceptable political debate has shrunk to whether the Fed should lower interest rates by a quarter point or not, speculation about computers is one of the few spaces in which – freed from the necessity for immediate pragmatic justification – there's still room to experiment with more radical visions. Fredric Jameson in *The Seeds of Time* (1994) suggests that these days, it seems easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism. The discourse over computers is one of the few spaces where it still is possible to think past capitalism.

What Is Linux?

Linux is a computer operating system, like Microsoft's Windows and Apple's Macintosh OS. What makes it different from these other systems is that it's "open source." This means that it can not be "copyrighted" in the traditional sense. Rather, it is distributed under a General Public License, which "allows free use, modification and distribution of the software and any changes to it, restricted only by the stipulation that those who received the software pass it with identical freedoms to obtain sources code, modify it, and redistribute it" (Rosenberg). Rather than a copyright, the GPL is often referred to as a "copyleft," and Open Source software is sometimes called "freeware." Linux software is developed collaboratively, among a large group of volunteer

"hackers" around the world, communicating via the Internet. Several for-profit companies, such as Red Hat and Caldera, sell packaged versions of Linux along with documentation and product support, but the same software is also available for free online.

What interests me about Linux, and Open Source in general, is how it has emerged as a space in which to experiment with economic and social relations outside the bounds of what we normally think of as capitalism. The development of open source software, of course, is specialized work, which has emerged in the context of a specific, distinct community. But what has captured the imaginations of so many developers and users of Linux is its broader *utopian* promise – the way it seems to point to a future organized around a very different set of social relations than those of late capitalism. I do not assume that open source development, as a distinct practice, could necessarily serve as a template for a broad range of economic relations. Not every product needs to be debugged; not every worker has the skills of a Linux programmer. But I do think that the open-source vision of unalienated, uncommodified labor can serve as a *model* for what we might want work to look like in the 21st Century.

Of course, as Jameson tells us, the flip side of utopia is reification. Capitalism omnivorously absorbs dissent through the process of commodification. Radical ideas are appropriated, packaged, and sold through the very system they sought to criticize. The early radical vision of the PC as a tool for the democratization of technology was successfully packaged and sold by Apple, then Microsoft. The PC certainly did change the world – hegemony is always a process of negotiation – and certainly many more people have access to the power of computing technology than every before. But the mass proliferation of the PC failed to fundamentally alter structures of power. This story is familiar. Think of the dilemma of independent rock bands wary of "selling out" to major labels. To reach the public sphere, you need to get your product out into the marketplace. But once you do, you are a part of the system you are trying to oppose.

Tiziana Terranova makes a version of this argument in "Free Labor: Producing Culture for the Digital Economy" (2000). Terranova argues that rather than being a resistant alternative to capitalist production, the free labor donated by open source programmers, amateur web designers, chat room moderators, and the other unpaid volunteers who populate cyberspace is best understood as an integral part of capitalism in a digital economy. These intellectual workers provide much of the "content" which makes the web so lucrative for AOL, Microsoft, and the other organizations who have no compunctions about making money from their work.

Similarly, Andrew Ross in "The Mental Labor Problem" (2000) describes the submission of so many software developers to exploitative conditions (80-hour work weeks, temporary contracts, lack of health benefits) – and even the glamourization of those conditions (the cult of the caffeine fueled "all-nighter") – as an example of the spread of the "cultural discount" to an ever-increasing portion of the postmodern workforce. The "cultural discount" describes the phenomenon of creative professionals who are willing to accept wages lower than they could receive in other professions, in return for the opportunity to perform more personally satisfying labor. Ross's point is that this system – rooted in the bohemians' Romantic rejection of the market – is now a structural component of the capitalist knowledge economy. It allows, for example, universities to get away with paying miniscule wages to teaching assistants and adjuncts, overproduced by the graduate system and desperate to retain a foothold in the life of the mind.

Linux developers might be seen as the quintessential victims of the creative discount, donating the intellectual capital from which corporations like Red Hat and IBM can then get rich. What is so distinctive about open source is how it structurally short-circuits the process of appropriation and commodification. Linux developers donate their labor, but with a particularly resilient set of strings attached in the form of the GPL. The content *of*

the strings, ironically, is that no *other* strings be attached – that the developers' work remain freely available and modifiable. Thus, while the cultural discount often entails ceding control of one's work in exchange for access to an audience – think of all the musicians forced to cede ownership rights of their master recordings to their record labels – Linux developers forego renumeration in return for ongoing assurance of creative control.

Corporations such as Microsoft recognize the fundamental threat this system offers to their current regime of intellectual property. Microsoft has even begun red-baiting the open-source community. CEO Steve Ballmer has described Linux as "communism" (Greene 2000), and told one reporter, "Linux is a cancer that attaches itself in an intellectual property sense to everything it touches" (Lea 2001). Windows chief Jim Allchin stated, "I'm an American. I believe in the American Way. I worry if the government encourages open source, and I don't think we've done enough education of policy makers to understand the threat" (Bloomberg News 2001).

The Politics of Open Source

So, if Linux offers a utopian alternative to capitalist relations as we know them today, what does this model consist of? What are the politics of open source development?

These are not easy questions to answer. The meanings of Linux – the narratives which attempt to explain and draw lessons from this inspiring project – are themselves a subject of conflict. Scouring the net for different perspectives on Linux, I've encountered an astounding range of competing, incompatible explanations. I have seen open source described as communism, socialism, anarchism, a form of academic research, a gift economy, an e-lance economy, and the triumph of the free market. Of course, not all the descriptions are incompatible – although I think some concurrently-held ideas are more incompatible than their holders admit.

There's a struggle going on right now to define the significance of Linux, this startling, inspiring success story. In the rest of this paper, I'd like to look at the two most influential conceptions of Linux: the visions put forward by Eric Raymond and Richard Stallman. Raymond and Stallman have much in common: both are computer programmers whose work has been critical for the development of Linux. Stallman developed the GNU operating system, which was the antecedent for Linux; Raymond has helped put together many critical pieces of open source software, including the program "fetchmail." Both have become advocates for and theorists of Linux, winning converts with influential essays– Stallman's "GNU Manifesto," Raymond's "Cathedral and the Bazaar." Both are what we could call, using Antonio Gramsci's term, "organic intellectuals" – not academics studying a community from outside that community, but intellectuals who have emerged from within the community they write about, who are attempting to help their own community define itself, for itself and for the world outside. (Of course, I am one of those outsider academics myself. I do not think that disqualifies me from writing about Linux. But it does make me anxious to properly represent the voices inside the Linux community.)

While Raymond and Stallman speak from within the same community of Linux programmers, they represent close to diametrically opposed views about the politics and ultimate significance of their project. Raymond celebrates open source as the triumph of the free market, and is most interested in open source as an efficient tool for software development. Stallman anchors his vision for free software in a broader critique of the system of intellectual property. Raymond's and Stallman's visions are often labeled "libertarian" and "communist," respectively. But I do not think that is quite right. Both Raymond and Stallman, I argue, start from the libertarian values so endemic in hacker culture – they just end up in different places. I call Raymond a corporate libertarian, and Stallman a left-libertarian. Moreover, I am firmly in the Stallman camp. In the rest of this discussion, I want to look at what I see as the limitations of Raymond's approach, and the virtues of that of

Stallman.

First, a little background on Raymond. Eric Raymond is a software developer who has been very active for almost 20 years in the development of open source software tools. He has also become a kind of hacker linguist and anthropologist, compiling the *New Hacker's Dictionary* and writing a widely-read "Brief History of Hackerdom." In the last few years, Raymond has become perhaps the most influential ideologue of open source. Raymond's self-appointed role has been to explain open source to skeptical businesspeople, as part of the attempt to widen the influence of Linux and win the war against Microsoft. His essay, "The Cathedral and the Bazaar," helped convince Netscape to make Navigator open source. And his exposure and analysis of leaked internal memoirs from Microsoft, dubbed the "Halloween Documents," inspired hackers with the news that the Behemoth itself is taking Linux very seriously indeed. "The Cathedral and the Bazaar" is now included in a collection of essays of the same name, published by open-source publisher O'Reilly & Associates (1999).

Raymond's politics are a familiar form of hacker libertarianism – what Richard Barbrook and Andy Cameron (1998) have described as "The Californian Ideology," and Paula Barsook (2000) labels "cyberselfishness." Hacker libertarianism values the free flow of information above all else, and typically celebrates the unfettered capitalist marketplace as the great maximizer of liberty. Libertarianism is of course skeptical of all concentrations of power, but tends to worry much more about the government than about corporate power – other than perhaps, Microsoft, which as a monopoly impedes the free market. Hacker libertarianism has turned out to fit comfortably into the net economy, providing an ideological justification for the vast amounts of wealth accumulated by a fortunate few.

But what's particularly striking, on reading *The Cathedral and the Bazaar*, is how much work Raymond has to do to fit the open source development process into the comfortable framework of the free market. The organizing metaphor of Raymond's tome contrasts the hierarchal command structure of cathedral-building with the decentralized competitive world of a bazaar. But of course, merchants at a bazaar are trying to sell their products for a profit. Open-source developers, are volunteers contributing their time.

To get around this seeming contradiction, Raymond develops an account of open source development as a "gift economy." Now, the notion of open source development as a gift economy is an intriguing one, developed most fully in Richard Barbrook's essay "The High-Tech Gift Economy" (1998):

> Within the developed world, most politicians and corporate leaders believe that the future of capitalism lies in the commodification of information . . . Yet, at the "cutting edge" of the emerging information society, money-commodity relations play a secondary role to those created by a really existing form of anarcho-communism. For most of its users, the Net is somewhere to work, play, love, learn and discuss with other people. Unrestricted by physical distance, they collaborate with each other without direct mediation of money or politics. Unconcerned about copyright, they give and receive information without thought of payment. In the absense of state or markets to mediate social bonds, network communities are instead formed through the mutual obligations created by gifts of time and ideas.

The problem with *Raymond's* account is that it shunts aside the very aspects of the gift economy which *distinguish* it from commodified relations. Raymond sees the gift economy as the free market extended by other means; in what he calls a "post-scarcity" environment, hackers no longer feel the need to compete for money. Instead, they compete for prestige – or "egoboo," as he calls it (short for "ego boost"), borrowing a term from science fiction fandom. Drawing on the assumptions of evolutionary psychology, he writes, "One may call [hackers'] motivation "altruistic," but this claim ignores the fact that altruism is itself a form of ego satisfaction for the altruist." But this line of argument is a tautology; if one defines in advance every choice a person makes as inevitably a maximization of personal utility, then even seemingly selfless behavior can be

explained in selfish terms – thus, the old freshman philosophy saw that even a Mother Theresa is really maximizing her own self-interest, not just helping others for the sake of it.

To get outside this tautology, you need to ask under *what circumstances* altruism reigns over other forms of perceived self-interest. To Raymond, the answer is a "post-scarcity" economy, in which money no longer matters, and so other markers of status take its place. It is here that Raymond reveals the solipsism and ahistoricism endemic to corporate libertarianism. Now, by "post-scarcity," Raymond claims to mean something very specific: "disk space, network bandwidth, computing power." But consider what this assumption takes for granted: the social infrastructure open source research rests on – its long-term subsidization by state-sponsored research universities, and of course the development of the Internet by the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency.

What is even more breathtaking is Raymond's casual, broad reference, in the introduction to *The Cathedral and the Bazaar*, to "the information rich post-scarcity economies of the 21st Century and beyond." Raymond does not pause to consider the vast portions of the United States, to say nothing of the rest of the world, in which not only is computing power scarce, but also so are the necessary conditions of survival. These are not moving any closer to post-scarcity under the present regime of capital.

While Raymond obliviously takes a post-scarcity economy for granted, Richard Stallman sees post-scarcity as a goal that must be struggled for, and which demands structural economic changes if it is to be achieved.

First, a little background on Stallman. Stallman was one of the great programmers of the MIT Artificial Intelligence Lab immortalized in Steven Levy's *Hackers* (1984).In the early 1980s, Stallman left MIT, upset by the privatization of software that Stallman had always viewed as community property. Stallman founded the Free Software Foundation, and began the project of developing an open-source version of the UNIX operating system, which he dubbed GNU, for "GNU's Not Unix." (In a typical example of hacker humor, the name is a "recursive acronym" that defines itself only by itself in an endless loop.) GNU, in turn, became much of the basis for the subsequent development of Linux. Stallman developed the concept of "copyleft" as an alternative to copyright – a way to ensure that the free software he developed could not subsequently be appropriated and privatized.

Now, as I suggested before, I think Stallman starts out with the same libertarian framework as Raymond. The difference is that Stallman pushes it further. His investment in the free flow of ideas leads him to a more fundamental interrogation of the right to own information. While Raymond anchors his analysis in the essay " Homesteading on the Noosphere" in a kind of para-Lockean theory of property rights, Stallman rejects intellectual property altogether. As Stallman told Byte magazine, "I'm trying to change the way people approach knowledge and information in general. I think that to try to own knowledge, to try to control whether people are allowed to use it, or to try to stop other people from sharing it, is sabotage. It is an activity that benefits the person that does it at the cost of impoverishing all of society."

Stallman contrasts a piece of software to a loaf of bread. If somebody takes my loaf of bread, I don't have it anymore; it is a limited resource. But software is like an infinitely replicable loaf of bread. To not share your loaf with me, when you would still have your loaf, is what Stallman calls "software hoarding."

What I find inspiring about Stallman's line of reasoning is how it embraces the best parts of the hacker ethic – its respect for the free flow of information, and its idealistic desire to change the world. By pushing this reasoning to its logical conclusions, it reaches a more egalitarian, communitarian vision that begins to question the capitalist sanctity of private property. As such, I think it offers a way out of cyberselfishness, an alternate cybertopian vision. In fact, I think it is this vision which is largely responsible for the sense of mission among so

many open source developers and users.

Of course, it is not surprising that Eric Raymond's version of free software is more popular with the new Linux entrepreneurs like Red Hat's Bob Young. It fits much more comfortably into conventional capitalism, even if it takes some getting used to and perhaps offers lower profit margins. But thanks to the genius of the copyleft system, Stallman's ideas cannot fade away so easily; even in its capital-friendly form, open source software still challenges the regime of intellectual property, and offers a compelling utopian alternative. The power of that alternative can be seen in the explosion of interest in similar challenges, such as Napster.

In his GNU manifesto, Stallman offers his own image of the future, a familiar vision of technological utopianism that draws on the tradition of Edward Bellamy, Buckminster Fuller, and Isaac Asimov. Utopian projections can be ideological fantasies, blinding us from life as it is actually being lives. But at their best, they point us to a set of future goals – and suggest some tools for getting there. Bellamy's *Looking Backward* may not have come true, but it nonetheless inflected progressive reform in the early 20th Century. Likewise, Fuller helped inspire the New Left of the 1960s. Similarly, I take heart from Stallman's vision of the future: "In the long run, making programs free is a step toward the post-scarcity world, where nobody will have to work very hard just to make a living. People will be free to devote themselves to activities that are fun, such as programming, after spending the necessary ten hours a week on required tasks such as legislation, family counseling, robot repair, and asteroid prospecting" (1992).

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Radicalizing Globalization Theory:

Materialist Espistemologies and NGOs

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Samir Amin has stated that "[e]mphasis on cultural diversity relegates the major differences of position in the economic hierarchy of world capitalism to secondary importance" (Amin 1997:104).[1] My paper will seek to prove that such a claim upholds a false and deceptive dichotomy. Contrasting an analysis of cultural diversity with one of economic hierarchy fails to take into account the fundamental admixture of the cultural and politico-economic spheres in the operations of current global capitalism. Amin's statement hints at his own tendency to focus excessively on elite regulatory bodies, an error committed by other social scientists such as Saskia Sassen (Sassen 1996). But Amin's view is useful in that it also critiques another error committed by globalization theorists, that is, the error of simplifying or reifying culture in order to posit it as the essential determining factor of certain politico-economic bodies. This kind of misstep is exhibited by John Gray's focus on the cultural attributes of nation-states vis-à-vis their success in the global capitalist system (Gray 1998). If a critique of economic hierarchy alone is too simplistic, neither does an essentialist emphasis on cultural diversity qua difference (e.g. Gray's portrayal of "indigenous capitalism" as panacea) provide an adequate hermeneutical schema for critiquing the darker side of globalization.

Before we can critique the status quo, let alone even consider forming new national or regional conglomerations (or reshaping existing ones) to counteract the dominating global trend, standpoint epistemologies need to be developed for as many of the subaltern groups of people involved as possible. Since global capitalism is affecting all people now in some form or another, all oppressed groups will have their own unique insights into the operations of globalization, standpoints that can be revealed and developed through epistemological analysis combined with political action. The task before us now is to adopt and theorize those standpoints which continually reveal and transcend the oppressive nature of present relations between social groups, relations increasingly embedded in a global politico-economic structure. Only by recognizing the epistemologies of these marginalized groups can one account for "the intersecting axes of exploitation [each one of them] inhabits and the differentiating operations of contemporary capital that exploit precisely through the selection and the reproduction of racially, culturally, gendered-specific labor power" (Lowe 1997:356). In this description of contemporary capital's exploitative use of culturally-specific labour power, it becomes apparent that, pace Amin, analytical views from diverse cultural standpoints can in fact *highlight* the various intersecting, culture-based inequalities maintained by world capitalism.

Such a materialist reading demystifies culture, bringing it into the politico-economic sphere and revealing its relationship to power. A materialist epistemology begins with a reading of culture in this vein, drawing from the experience of systemic oppression of a specific subaltern collective (marked by race, gender, class and/or other similar axes of exploitation) in order to produce knowledge, that is, a critical episteme. This foundation in materialist, practical knowledge allows one to transcend reified cultural difference and look towards the mobilization of a specific standpoint in the name of a radical political praxis. Thus culture is actualized through material experience and collective knowledge as a critical mode of "being-in-the-world," enabling it to expand at any strategic point in time, always flexible and radically immanent in the moment of expansion, into a subalternist ideological framework, a politicized materialist standpoint (Heidegger).

Once the standpoint epistemologies are formed and integrated into groups with common interests, these groups need to be the driving force behind any move to redirect the course of globalization. The means by which to begin dealing with the problem are described effectively by Nancy Hartsock, in her discussion of

feminist standpoint epistemology:

> As an engaged vision, the understanding of the oppressed, the adoption of a standpoint exposes the real relations among human beings as inhuman, points beyond the present, and carries a historically liberatory role. (Hartsock 1983:232)

The fact that this is an *engaged* vision means that it must be struggled for, and requires both scientific analysis to see beneath the surface of the social relations in which all are forced to participate, and the education that can only grow from the struggle to change those relations (Hartsock 1983). Such a struggle against the grain of the reality that has been forced upon society by those in power cannot merely be entrusted to the contingencies of a national or localized indigenization of a (putatively inevitable and immutable) universal liberal economic system, as John Gray suggests. They must be painstakingly fought for with a scientific, epistemological approach of global, utopian proportions (Gray 1998). A truly scientific analytical paradigm as I see it cannot overlook the substitution of one type of elitist and oppressive distribution of power and resources (such as modern European colonization or imperialism) with another analogous primitive accumulation and centralization of power (such as neocolonization or neoliberalism on a global scale). A standpoint that scientifically formulates its existence through a materialist episteme rather than a cultural essence is critical of economic oppression or exploitation. It also distinguishes itself from those extremely limited analytical models of global socio-economic hierarchies that found their arguments for reformist political praxes upon reification/ essentialization of the other. In such models, the fetishized cultural difference functions either as an inherently effective agent for change or an inherently ineffective one. The distinction is contingent upon whether the critic sees the culture as progressive or backward, respectively. For example, Gray sees the economic success of international Chinese diasporic networks tied by family loyalty as an example of successful "indigenous capitalism." In contrast, he describes the Mexican political culture as one of duplicity and points to this culture as the reason for the failure of liberal economics there in the crises of the 1980s (Gray 1998). These divergent characterizations of two nations are incredibly simplistic and too conveniently attribute their divergent relationships with capital to cultural difference. Abstract social science empties politico-economic structures and agents of all cultural content, or worse, reifies culture so that it is alienated from any material historical specificity. In comparison, standpoint epistemologies foreground culture as a historical way of being in, experiencing and knowing the world and thus as the foundation of ideology and ultimately of ethical political action.

Using standpoint theory as an analytical schema, the first segment of this presentation will involve a critique of a text by an influential theorist of globalization which tends towards an overly structural approach to analyzing the politics of the global economy: Saskia Sassen's study, *Losing Control? Sovereignty in an Age of Globalization.* In this text, Sassen uses a "top-down" theoretical approach, focusing excessively on what she sees as an emergent international juridical regime of human rights. Aside from existing international and national institutions of governance, the subject of this globalizing regime is what Lisa Lowe calls an "abstract citizen," a vague, unhistoricized individual that has none of the analytical advantages of a person qualified by a standpoint through materialist epistemology. Such an abstraction seems to be useful only in easing the rapid implementation of technocratic social engineering far afield from any notion of democratic participation in governance.

In the latter section of this paper, I will move on to discuss non-governmental organizations and the extent to which they are effective as institutionalizations of subaltern standpoints. We will consider examples of NGOs that operate on various levels from the global to the local, focusing on two more closely: the international, US-based organization Human Rights Watch (HRW) and a Brazilian national/regional organization, the Movement of Rural Landless Workers (*O Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra*, or *MST*). To

help with this analysis and generate a schematic idea of how non-governmental organizations are situated in the power structure of global capitalism, we can refer to Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's preliminary definition of NGOs and their mapping of international humanitarian NGOs onto the world system. I will complement their diagram with James Mittelman's five-part tiering system of environmentalist NGOs (Hardt and Negri 2000, Mittelman 2000). The ultimate goal will be to present different NGOs with their own distinct structures and spheres of influence and to gauge their relative ability to approximate some form of participatory democracy deeply embedded in the material experience of oppression.

My critique of the missteps of globalization theory involves a reading of Sassen's *Losing Control? Sovereignty in an Age of Globalization*. It is important to emphasize here that I am analyzing this text as symptomatic of larger trends within theories of globalization, rather than as representative of Sassen's oeuvre as a whole (which has certainly advanced beyond this text in works such as *Guests and Aliens*). However in *Losing Control?,* Sassen falls into the trap of underestimating the importance of cultural standpoints in her discussion of globalization. She sacrifices the particular in favour of a universal fundamentally structured around international regulatory regimes. As a result, one of the major flaws in her argument is that the object of her proposed solutions is an "abstract citizen." Although she seemingly tries to incorporate the perspective of the individual vis-à-vis global capitalism into her discussion, Sassen's notion of the individual is too vague. It is unconnected to any cultural grouping for it to give her the advantages of a standpoint epistemology and the resultant deeper view of the current workings of the global capitalist network. At the point in her work when she mentions most explicitly different potential standpoints ("women, unemployed workers, the poor, discriminated minorities, or some other group"), her focus is not on these collectives themselves but rather the current schools of thought in international legal discourse which could represent these people (Sassen 1996:58).

Another major problem with Sassen's analysis has to do with her failure to recognize the highly (re)differentiated and hierarchical space of the (First World-dependent) application of human rights, and her corollary undue faith in the efficacy of current legal regimes with respect to the protection of immigrants. If we imagine for a moment the standpoint of a refugee fleeing Afghanistan or a Kosovar Albanian fleeing Serbia, it becomes clear that it was much easier for them to emigrate to a neighboring non-First World country, such as Macedonia, both due to proximity and the greater absence of an effective state resistance to immigration. The standpoint of the refugee or emigrant (choosing where to flee or be an immigrant) accounts for the fact that Sassen herself recognizes in a different context, "Only about half of [the 120 million immigrants worldwide] are in the rich developed countries. Similarly, of the 20 million estimated refugees, only thirty percent are in the rich developed countries" (Sassen 1996:63). Sassen's leanings towards taking the viewpoint and championing the regulatory regimes of a First World, elite intelligentsia become very apparent when shortly afterwards she writes, "Immigration is really more of a management problem than a crisis." Not only does this statement belie her faith in top-down management, it also reveals Sassen's complete obliviousness to any kind of subaltern standpoint.

Refugees in Macedonia are only protected by the international juridical regime of human rights to the extent that international institutions like the UN (dominated by the First World) are willing to question the sovereignty of less-developed nations and invade or sanction them on behalf of internal oppressed groups. Unless a state is blatantly antagonistic like Serbia or Iraq, it is highly unlikely that the human rights of individuals or collectives within that state will trump state sovereignty from the perspectives of NATO or the UN (witness the lack of effective response to ethnic cleansing in Chechnya or Palestine, for instance). This problem cannot be solved by merely adjusting management strategies. Rather, what is required is a radical shift in the structure of global institutions of governance (and ideally national ones as well) towards representing and empowering

marginalized epistemologies.

A materialist epistemology from below would allow Sassen to see the frequent oppression that immigrants are submitted to in non-First World countries, as well as the intricate, society-wide oppression of illegalized immigrants that continues even in the First World countries of North America and the EU, precisely because of the solidarity of the First World as an economic bloc. Sassen does not recognize the critical nature or "omni-crisis" of current trends in globalization, especially for subaltern groups like emigrants/immigrants, refugees and residents of the historical Third World. Accordingly her text cannot provide the basis for a response to unequal access to human rights based in the polarization of capital and accumulation of power in the hands of a few privileged subjects (quoted from Hardt and Negri 2000). Therefore, if we acknowledge that theorists like Sassen have a bird's-eye view of globalization, we must also understand that they are caged birds. But do NGOs escape this cage?

James Mittelman's categorization of NGOs in *The Globalization Syndrome* will provide a starting-point for the concluding section of my paper. His five-part vertical schema is divided by levels of generality into 1) international environmental organizations such as Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth as well as humanitarian NGOs like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch that work closely with indigenous groups or have local affiliates under their aegis; 2) national coalitions or networks, such as the Caucus of Development NGO Networks, an umbrella organization of fourteen major NGO networks in the Philippines, or the Indigenous People's Union (*União das Nações Indígenas*, UNI) in Brazil; 3) individual NGOs at the national level such as the Nature Society of Singapore, or the Brazilian Landless Workers' Movement (*O Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra*, MST)–notably this tier of NGOs consists of those that require and seek what Mittelman calls "analytical paradigms," a concept very similar to my study's focus-point, standpoint epistemologies; 4) grassroots organizations engaged in the actual implementation of projects, also called people's organizations and community-based organizations – some excellent examples in Brazil would be individual landless worker communities and church-based communities (CEBs, comunidades eclesias de base), and an example that Mittelman provides is the Negros Island Consumer Cooperative in the Philippines; 5) this final sector constitutes the pure potentiality of NGOs arising from the collectivity that Hardt and Negri call the multitude and Mittelman calls the "large swath of unheard masses who are unorganized but not unconcerned citizens" (Mittelman 2000:190).

Obviously these different levels often overlap and interact in complex ways. For the purposes of schematically gauging their potential as institutionalizations of standpoints, however, this five-point schema will be sufficient. With regard to the first strata of NGOs, Hardt and Negri define their politics as consisting of "life in all its generality" (2000:313). This form of political action does not really distinguish first-tier NGOs' epistemological ground from that of abstract social theorists like Sassen. Consequently, it seems that *international* NGOs as institutions represent rather limited possibilities of developing their own unique and flexible standpoint epistemologies, even though alliances of them do rally around standpoints at certain times in order to achieve certain goals. The exact extent to which these campaigns for certain subaltern groups result in significant structural change in the first-tier NGOs varies between organizations, but tends to be negligible.

Closer to materialist standpoint epistemologies are the national/regional and the local NGOs. Of course these are not perfect either, after all, even local and regional NGOs, as Christina Ewig demonstrates in the Nicaraguan context, can be pulled away from revealing and liberatory standpoints by connections with international NGOs and the state (and with private corporations as well) (1999). Further, Hardt and Negri demonstrate with their schematic of global power that NGOs can be conceived of as "the capillary ends of the contemporary networks of power" (2000:313). As such, they provide a widely-dispersed means for the

dominating practices of Empire (a pyramidal system of global, parasitical control topped by the US and G7) to extend itself into the everyday lives of people around the world. On the other hand, by the very nature of this description of power distribution one must recognize that NGOs have the potential to provide a space for a revolutionary response to the status quo imperial system. It is simply a question of mobilizing the productivity of the multitude, the economically poor but infinitely—materially and in terms of subjectivity—productive masses that feed these capillaries. If we make a more concrete comparison between an international humanitarian (first-tier) NGO and a regional (third/fourth tier) NGO, we can see more clearly that politicizing a standpoint epistemology is one means by which to empower the multitude in its struggle to upend the global pyramid of power. Moreover, it will become manifest that this strategic potential to empower the pyramid's base is one which only certain NGO structures can actualize.

To make this comparison, it will be helpful to analyse the actions of two distinct NGOs vis-à-vis the standpoint of a specific oppressed group, namely the Brazilian rural poor. The two NGOs I will focus on are first, a US-based international humanitarian organization, Human Rights Watch (HRW), and second, a Brazilian national organization for land reform, the Landless Rural Workers Movement (*O Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais sem Terra*, or MST). The rural poor in Brazil face economic marginalization, stemming from the extremely unequal distribution of land, and a government whose primary focus is on large scale commercial agriculture and urban industrialization. This marginalization represents both a human rights and a civil rights violation. On the one hand the right of the poor to economic security, as outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, is violated as the poor are restricted from accessing resources needed to provide for themselves. On the other hand, the civil rights of the rural poor are being violated as the federal and state governments fail to enforce the right of all Brazilians to appropriate uncultivated, privately-owned land for productive use, as outlined in the Brazilian constitution of 1988. When the rural poor have attempted to appropriate land, they have been brutally repressed by both government agents and paramilitary forces of landowners.

As with other international NGOs, HRW's response to the plight of the rural poor and the violation of their civil and human rights has been limited. Rural poverty has been largely ignored as HRW focuses on other, often more urban issues (particularly those of police brutality and prison conditions). When HRW has given its attention to the conditions of the rural poor, its critiques have been focused on the violence committed against squatters and demonstrators, rather than on the socio-economic factors at the root of these conflicts. In contrast MST, the Landless Workers' Movement, is directly involved in the struggle to expropriate land for the use of poor farmers. This NGO works with the rural poor to occupy and legally claim land as well as to organize demonstrations for land reform. MST has become the largest social movement in Brazilian history, advocating and acquiring land for over a million people (Wolford 2001). The question I would like to address here is what international NGOs can learn from the strategies of more "grassroots" groups like MST. Would restructuring their approach to human rights abuses create a more effective representation of the standpoints of oppressed people on the local, national and international levels? To answer, we must first further explore the nature and limitations of a specific international NGO.

Although HRW states that it seeks to advocate for economic, social and cultural human rights, it acknowledges that its methodology is more oriented towards political and civil rights. The tendency to emphasize these kinds of rights is reflective of the civil rights struggle in the US, which spanned most of the three decades before HRW's inception in 1978 and was clearly a significant influence on the development of their methodology for addressing human rights abuses. Conversely, some of the rights outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights but not prominent in the American imaginary, particularly economic rights, do not

figure prominently in HRW's agenda. This is a very serious lacuna, for as outlined above, with the global expansion of capital, economic exploitation (often culturally-based) is increasing in significance over and above more traditional civil rights abuses, as can be seen in the case of many poor Brazilians. But even if HRW were able to incorporate more criticism of economic exploitation into its projects, there would still exist the problem common to many human rights paradigms, that is, that socio-economic factors which are structural or systemic are not addressed. This despite the fact that such structural factors often lie at the heart of human rights abuses. Thus HRW has not effectively recognized that the violence committed against landless workers is symptomatic of the larger systemic problem of wealth disparity in Brazil.

HRW is a large, multinational organization that is burdened with certain limitations due to its own structure. Its headquarters are located in the US and the First World, a fact which as mentioned above creates the potential for cultural bias regarding which issues are given priority. Furthermore, HRW does not work with local oppressed groups and NGOs in developing their campaigns but instead sends out "field" agents (to primarily urban areas). The objective of the field agents is mapped out for them before research is begun in a given country, making it difficult for them to adapt their programme to the priorities and standpoints of the people they try to represent. Finally, the focus of HRW's efforts has been to pressure *governments* to effect a change in human rights conditions. This methodology may prove to be ineffective in countries with weak governments that are unable to restrain human rights violators. These circumstances are becoming more common as transnational corporations and wealthy individuals (such as landowners in Brazil) become more powerful players than many state governments. HRW has recognized this problem, but change has been slow. One disturbing symptom of this contradictory stance is that HRW staunchly avoids donations from governments, but has accepted funding from large corporations and wealthy individuals.

Clearly HRW has some major limitations. Perhaps by studying the structure of more "grassroots" NGOs such as MST and incorporating some of their strategies into their projects, HRW can develop into an organization that is more representative of materialist standpoints. Poor rural Brazilians participate in the development of MST's project at every stage, and the organization is therefore acutely aware of the standpoints of the people it represents. Because of its ability to structure itself around the epistemologies of various communities of landless workers, MST is able to move beyond traditional human rights discourse and move to address the foundations required for true transformative possibility. In this way, the organization is able to focus on the economic disparity and related political marginalization that are the central problems for so many rural Brazilians, as opposed to the more blatant yet ultimately symptomatic occasions of violent repression.

MST's structure, both its flexibility and its participatory nature, contributed to the impressive success of the movement. Individual communities were able to adapt the movement to their own very local needs while still strengthening their solidarity with the national struggle (Wolford 2001). Instead of *advocating* for their constituents, MST's strategy is to *act with* them, empowering them to take a proactive role in creating solutions to rural poverty in Brazil. In this way, the utopias imagined by these poor communities can begin to materialize.

NGOs based in standpoint epistemologies represent a potential counter-force to the abstract disciplinary regimes of international NGOs and the related theories of many social scientists. From the example of the rural poor in Brazil, we can realise the extent to which a politics of "life in all its generality" is inadequate to suit the immediate needs of marginalized groups. Even after instances of blatant and horrific repression, the international human rights organizations have responded slowly to the call of the landless workers' movement, while the international environmental NGOs have been uninterested or even antagonistic despite common ground (Benjamin and Mendonça 1997:151-2). Of course an entity like HRW cannot be all things to all people. In

order to more effectively achieve their own stated goal of "standing with victims and activists" and using strategies "informed by the perspectives of those people whose rights [they] defend," however, the members of this multinational NGO should reformulate its ideological and material structure in order to better reflect and empower standpoint epistemologies of the oppressed (HRW 2001). Such structural change can only occur with the realization that the only way to gauge the full extent of the matrix of oppression that is status-quo global capitalism requires continuous formulation of new and flexible standpoint epistemologies. In many cases, these have the potential to be institutionalized "just-in-time" in national/regional or local NGOs. In this sense, NGOs could provide a new and increasingly effective space for the production of revolutionary subjectivities. Academia plays no small part here, for as HRW itself has noted, universities play a critical role in the preservation and strengthening of civil society, and thus academics certainly have a responsibility to aid in the empowerment of strategically politicized standpoints. There is dire need for these materialist epistemologies–as opposed to abstract and ahistorical NGOs and theory. As the Brazilian saying goes, "o buraco está muito mais embaixo:" the hole is very much deeper than a top-down approach can reach.

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The Media as Medium:

Democratic Visions, Conflict, and Cultural Content in Media

Media Coverage of the Quebec City Protests of the Free Trade Area of the Americas

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Globe and Mail theater critic Kate Taylor was unique in reporting details of the festivities taking place at the Summit of the Americas protest in Quebec City in April 2001. She lauded the actions of non-violent demonstrators, "chanting, waving banners, banging drums…the juggler with his clubs, the man in a bunny suit handing out eggs." Yet despite her citation of a government official "complaining that [the protestors] were winning the public-relations war," such feel good imagery of activists was largely absent from the mainstream liberal press (Taylor 2001: A3).

Since the Seattle protests of 1999, considerable mainstream media attention has focused on street protesters and their targeting of the perceived organs of the global economy—the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organization—on the grounds that these institutions inhibit global democracy. Liberal U.S. papers such as the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* largely ignore activist articulations of alternative political visions and images of non-violent performance. Rather, demonstrations are framed as spectacles of conflict: a showdown between police and demonstrators—authorities versus rogues—against a backdrop of tear gas, rubber bullets, burning eyes and bloodied batons. Such was the case with *Times* and *Post* coverage of the 3rd Summit of the Americas held in Quebec City from April 20th-22nd, 2001 where protestors took to the streets to denounce the proposed Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), for fear of its potential role in furthering the global divide between rich and poor.

To prevent protestors from accessing the site of the summit, the Canadian government erected the "Wall of Shame," a chain link fence surrounding historic Quebec City. "This is a symbol of the struggle," said French farmer and activist Jose Bové (Brown 2001: A16) as demonstrators contributed to the spectacle, focusing their anger on bringing down the wall, the "humiliation of Canadian democracy" (Oziewicz 2001:A4).

Even as the "Wall of Shame" was touted as a symbol of the suppression of the democratic rights to organize and to speak freely, George W. Bush fused the summit's goal with the American foreign policy vision of exporting democracy to Latin America and the rest of the Western Hemisphere: the headlines on the front page of the *New York Times* read "Talks Tie Trade in the Americas to Democracy" (DePalma 2001:A1). The incongruity between the visions of the 30,000 voices in the street and that revealed in Bush's statement highlights a divide in perceptions of democracy. The resolution of this schism is central to the creation of a global democracy.

As such, this paper seeks to define and address this democratic divide through the following questions: what are the historical roots of the divide? How did the mainstream liberal press handle the divide in reporting on the Quebec City protests? How, historically, did the press handle this divide when the United States ostensibly exported democracy to Latin America, and more specifically, Nicaragua? How do these issues affect the activist community?

The democratic divide as manifest in recent protests can be generalized as one between two groups with divergent interests: an international capitalist elite, and an international activist community. Presumably there are a number of other communities concerned about the effects and expanse of this democratic divide. This generalization is intended as a model to establish the dynamics of the tension characterizing what is, perhaps, the most *visible* dialogue between conflicting perceptions of democracy in North America.

The divide between elite and activist conceptions of democracy can be characterized as a manifestation

of the historical shift from 18th-century "classical" democratic models to contemporary free market or neo-liberal models. This schism can be represented along a continuum bound by the poles of neo-liberalism and social justice. The continuum is paralleled by the shift from pre-19th century democratic thought to those models theorized in the early 19th century, a shift documented by C.B. Macpherson in *The Life and Times of Liberal Democracy* (1977). The degree to which a hierarchical class structure is projected onto democracy defines positionality along the continuum. Hence, the social justice pole represents a nonhierarchical democratic model that privileges the interests of the majority while the neo-liberal pole favors elite property owning interests and the corresponding need to maintain class divisions to insure such interests.

The social justice pole of the continuum was charted by 18th century democratic thinkers such as Rousseau and Jefferson. As Macpherson suggests, they theorized the necessity of a single class structure to ensure the representation of the interests of the general will or majority. Rousseau denounced unequal property distribution and its polarization of interests as the cornerstone of inequality (1977:16-17). Jefferson suggested the danger of a hierarchical class structure in arguing that wealthy aristocrats "fear and distrust the people, and wish to draw all powers from them into the hands of the higher classes." Such fear, distrust, and diversification of interests away from the general will, toward what Jefferson referred to as elite "banking institutions and monied [sic] incorporations" (Chomsky 1994:14-15), served as the impetus for a neo-liberal democratic model that often operates at the expense of social justice concerns. Such a model developed with the fusion of democracy and class divisions, as noted by Macpherson, in the liberal theories of James Mill and Jeremy Bentham in the early 19th-century (1977:20).

Mill theorized the righteousness of the substitution of elite interest for the general will, "The desire…which is necessary to render the persons and properties of human beings subservient to [elite] pleasures is a grand governing law of human nature" (1977:26). This "law" was expressed in relation to economic gain in Bentham's declaration that "Equality must yield" to maintain the elite " incentive to productivity" (1977:30). Thus, the suggestion that elite happiness derives from a state of maximized productivity justified the projection of class divisions onto democracy. In 1830, Mill wrote bluntly, "the business of government is properly the business of the rich, and [knowing] that [the elite] will always obtain [wealth] by bad means, or good…[t]he only good means of obtaining it are, the free suffrage of people" (1977:42). As such, the liberal model of democracy was founded with an "acceptance of the market freedoms of a capitalist society" and the concession of suffrage for some (1977:20). Mill's and Bentham's elitist model falls toward the neo-liberal pole in its reluctance to promote majority interests.

This class polarization dominates 20th-century democratic thought as well, despite the influential nonhierarchical thought of John Stuart Mill. The resulting practice of neo-liberal or free market democracy represents a union of the economic and the political: the need to seek ever-expanding markets for capital parallels the advancement of elite democracy.

This conflation of democracy and economic policy was evident in Bush's rhetoric in Quebec City where, reacting to the demonstrators he claimed, " Trade helps spread freedom" (Milbank 2001:A1). The *Times* promptly endorsed his neo-liberal agenda in an editorial ("The selling" 2001:A18).

Bush's agenda is manifest in the proposed Free Trade Area of the Americas. The FTAA is an attempt to expand the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) to encompass the entire Western Hemisphere. The mainstream media debate predicated the potential value of the FTAA on the perceived successes of NAFTA in integrating United States, Canadian, and Mexican markets as touted by Bush: "We already know from the North American Free Trade Agreement that free trade works…It has created good jobs for our workers" (Sanger 2001:A1). Mexico's president Vicente Fox augmented Bush's observations speculating

that the power of free trade is a panacea for Western hemispheric poverty: "Those who connect trade agreements with poverty…are totally mistaken…for the first time, we can have the opportunity to overcome poverty through opportunities for these 220 million poor" (Peritz 2001:A7). Fox's statement was a challenge to FTAA detractors who argue the agreement will allow developing nations to dilute "environmental regulations and labor laws [in] seek[ing] unfair trade advantages [to] attract investment" ("The selling" 2001:A18), furthering a NAFTA trend toward promoting elite wealth at the expense of the poor.

The difference in logic between Bush and Fox on the one hand, and protestors on the other, can be traced to the democratic divide whereby the elite, certain that free trade will safeguard their interests, claim the free market will yield financial equilibrium. Activists argue that such equilibrium fails to materialize—that wealth never "trickles down"—so the effects of free trade must be anticipated and regulated. Hence, Bush's touting of the jobs created by NAFTA is not a point of contention in itself according to an activist cited in the *Washington Post*. Rather, the issue is the ethical question, "What is the cost of creating jobs?" (Ahrens 2001:A10). In other words, what are the effects of creating sweatshop jobs that exploit workers by thwarting unions and requiring sixteen-hour workdays? Are these jobs created to serve as substitutes for former Mexican farmers, forced by structural adjustments out of a subsistence lifestyle to seek work in the city? Thus, activists attuned to capital's failure to redistribute itself showcase these results as evidence of the continued trajectory of a widening gap between the global poor and elite.

Concern for poverty in the wake of the Seattle mobilization has arguably created a public relations battle, as evidenced in Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chrétien's defense of the social justice consciousness of the FTAA proposal on grounds that, "there will be a better preoccupation in many of these countries about human and democratic rights" (Sanger 2001:A6). Chrétien was referring to the administrative triumph of the summit: implementing a "democracy clause" into the FTAA proposal. The clause states that "any unconstitutional alteration or interruption of the democratic order in a state of the hemisphere constitutes an insurmountable obstacle to the participation of that state's government in the Summit of the Americas process" (Sanchez 2001:A19). Hence, the summit's success was predicated on a statement concerning the importance of upholding democratic standards. Despite the visual incarnation of a democratic movement in the form of protestors on the streets, mainstream media within the United States largely failed to interrogate the qualities of these democratic standards espoused by the elite.

To be sure, many articles address issues raised by activists, though such information is usually subordinate: it comes later in the article and appears as an aberration to the dominant journalistic tone of conflict. This emphasis on the spectacle of conflict reduces the textual space in which social justice visions of democracy see articulation. As noted by the *Globe and Mail* in the week preceding the summit, "The focus on the…security measures has taken …the attention away from the issues to be debated at the summit" (Seguin 2001:A4).

The tone of conflict is established linguistically through use of the prefix "anti-" in describing protestors. The label "anti-globalization" produces an oppositional relationship where rogue-demonstrators are portrayed as pathological against the norm of elite democratic authority. This relationship is reinforced by consistent media reports juxtaposing the exclusion of "anti-globalization" protestors with references to Cuba's exclusion from the summit on grounds of the pariah nation's communist leanings (DePalma 2001:A6). Civil-rights lawyer Clayton Ruby drew attention to this distorted image of the demonstrators: "The Canadian government cannot tell the difference between democratic protest and criminality…" (Oziewicz 2001:A4).

These images of criminality are reinforced by reporting on the "Wall of Shame." Yet as Kate Taylor notes, "Who else [but the federal government] could have provided anti-globalization demonstrators with such a fitting backdrop for their protests? Ladies and gentlemen, please put your hands together for the fence"

(2001:A3). Taylor suggests that the conflict was provoked by the Canadian government's construction of the wall and the concomitant containment of protestors. The demonstrators' attempts to break through the wall established a dramatic focal point for much of the conflict, as noted by the *Times'* Anthony DePalma in his article "In the Streets, Fervor, Fears and a Gamut of Issues," which suggests that "One of the most prolonged confrontations took place at a weak point in the…fence" (2001:A4).

DePalma, like most journalists, fails to cite the complicity of the Canadian government in encouraging conflict through its unprecedented focus on security. As such, protestors are portrayed as the aggressors and are often dehumanized in the press. A *Washington Post* headline contrasts the wildness of demonstrators with the civility of the elite, "Protestors Disrupt Summit on Trade: Demonstrations and Tear Gas Undercut 'Spirit of Civility' Called for by President" (Milbank 2001:A1). At its most extreme, protestors undercutting this "Spirit of Civility" become enemies on the battlefield. As noted ironically by *Washington Post* reporter Dana Milbank in an article entitled "For Bush and Quebec Summit, a Light News Weekend," "For reporters, the tame demonstrations provided a safe way to play war correspondents." Beneath the irony, Milbank's article is revealing on a broader level as she equates the newsworthiness of demonstrations with the relative level of chaos stirred up by activists. She cites "Bush's linguistic gymnastics," his butchering of words and phrases as "more invigorating than the demonstrations," which turned out to be tame. In other words, Milbank implies that the issues protested are not newsworthy in and of themselves insofar as they are articulated by protestors. The voice of protest is only effective in communicating conflict (2001:A11).

This media malaise regarding the articulation of democratic alternatives has an historical precedent as evidenced in coverage of the United States' attempts to export democracy to Nicaragua in the 1980s. The following analysis provides insight into the tension between neo-liberal and social justice interpretations of democracy and the extent to which these latter interpretations prove threatening to United States elite interests.

Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky document the process by which U.S. elite interests employed mainstream media to "manufacture [the] consent" of the American people for the funding of the Nicaraguan counterinsurgency movement in the 1980s in an effort to export neo-liberal democracy to Latin America (1988). As Chomsky observes:

> In U.S. political theology, the term "democracy" has a technical meaning: it refers to a system of governance in which elite groups that dominate the private economy are ensured control…If the public becomes organized to enter the political arena and participate in shaping affairs, that is not "democracy," but rather a "crisis of democracy." (Chomsky 1992:291)

Such a "crisis of democracy" emerged in the aftermath of the Nicaraguan Sandinista revolutionaries' overthrow of the Somoza regime in 1979. The Sandinista government initiated a social justice democratic project that threatened United States hegemony in Central America. The mainstream American press, in covering Nicaraguan elections, internalized the Reagan administration's consequent demonizing of the Sandinistas (Herman 1988:117-127), thus promoting the neo-liberal model without reflection on the Sandinista's alternative vision; a vision that included increasing literacy, land reform, dialoguing with the public, and conducting transparent elections.

The Reagan administration campaign to slander the Sandinistas began with the release of The State Department White Paper in 1981 characterizing the Sandinistas as communists and thus enemies of democracy. The White Paper falsely suggested that the Soviets were running arms to Salvadoran rebels through Nicaragua, proving that the Sandinistas intended to spread their communist revolution to all of Central America (Sklar 1986:44-45). This charge plagued U.S. media coverage of the Sandinistas for half a decade (Chomsky 1992:292).

In a State of the Union address in 1986, Reagan maintained that "no issue is more important…for the protection of our vital interests—than to achieve democracy in Nicaragua and to protect Nicaragua's neighbors" (Sklar 1986:35). The *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* generally followed Reagan's lead drawing scant attention to Nicaraguan social justice reforms (Chomsky 1992:292).

The extent to which the U.S. government espouses democracy in the mainstream media as a cozy vision for global prosperity and the corresponding elite unwillingness to acknowledge alternative democratic perspectives seemingly indicates an elite fear that the First World public will become politicized by infectious revolutionary intentions. Chomsky's phrase "crisis of democracy" was borrowed from the title of a Trilateral Commission Report issued in 1975. The product of a group of corporate executives, academics, bankers, and politicians from the U.S. and Canada , the report declares, "The vulnerability of democratic government in the United States…comes from…the internal dynamics of democracy itself in a highly educated, mobilized, and participant society" (Sklar 1986:5). Given the Trilateral Commission Report's warning of the danger of a politicized American public and the mainstream media's demonizing of the Sandinistas even as they enacted a social justice democratic vision, it is no surprise to find mainstream American print journalism championing neo-liberal democracy and criminalizing protestors. Yet the role of activists in facilitating this dominant media perspective cannot be ignored.

The presence of zones of protest in Quebec City evidence a willingness on the part of activists to participate in conflict: "The red zone was the front line, for those prepared to fight by any means…to tear down the wall" (Brown 2001:A16). The green zone gave demonstrators a space in which to protest non-violently, a space in which to teach and engage in cultural productions. Yet even the nonviolent activities of the green zone led to infighting within the leftist movement over the issue of the effectiveness of culture, of theatrical performance, as a medium for communicating political issues. The *Globe and Mail's* Leah McLaren speculated, "If Woodstock was the cultural love-in that turned into a political event, Quebec City could be the political event that turns into a cultural love-in" (2001:A1). Calling the protests "a form of communal cultural theatre," McLaren ends her article by framing a number of quotations within the context that cultural activity dilutes the exchange of political ideas. She cites the observation of a grassroots organizer: "'We have to remember that counterculture can be bought off—we saw that from the 60s. [The demonstrations] have to be about a lot more than hanging out…with a joint'" (2001:A7). Both McLaren and the commentators she cites caution activists to avoid acting too cultural. Yet a review of the mainstream liberal U.S. press suggests that the imagery of conflict is much more pervasive and disturbing than that of festivity, of demonstrators "hanging out."

In light of the cultural brokerage of elite institutions in promoting neo-liberal democracy and vilifying protestors, the language of street performance, artistry, and "culture" may paint a healthier visual portrait than those of conflict or those attempting the verbal articulation of social justice democratic principles. Should protestors continue to bang their heads against walls of authoritative design, the design will arguably be reinforced and the conflict will continue without resolve.

If activists consider mainstream media coverage a viable medium for the dissemination of their political viewpoints, it might prove worthwhile to assess the visual and ideological imagery inspired by conflict. Productive dialogue that promotes understanding seemingly requires a safe environment, an environment more closely aligned with cultural tactics, with the inviting potential of theater, art, and music. Whatever may come of media coverage of large-scale demonstrations, activist groundwork will no doubt continue. As tear gas sprays and puppets perform, community activists will continue with the glamourless grassroots process of holding meetings, writing letters to representatives, researching, and gathering for small-scale protests. These are actions to span the divide, to promote understanding, and to build a socially just democratic model beneath the radar of the media.

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"The Art of Insurrection":

Nomad Thought in the Age of Globalization

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This paper is deliberately aleatory and idiosyncratic and my juxtaposition of unlikely figures is intended as an experiment and a polemic. The incentives for these musings were the concluding sentences of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's *Empire* where they encapsulate the aim of their book : it "[poses] against the misery of power the joy of being" and thereby "makes rebellion into a project of love" (413). It's been some time since I have been able to articulate such desire without embarrassment or irony; therefore, the challenge, as I see it, is to take seriously their attempt to produce a radical, immanent, and materialist ontology, to enable the "construction of a purely positive, inventive society" (Hardt, *Gilles Deleuze: An Apprenticeship in Philosophy* xvii). The utopian vision that animates *Empire* appears decidedly anomalous, even counter-intuitive, in the face of the rapacity of global capitalism; precisely for that reason, however, its evocation of the singularity and militancy of the joyous, labouring "multitude" united against "the will of power and corruption" (413) deserves critical scrutiny. The insurrectionary force of a book that glides smoothly over the terrain of ontology, society, ethics, and politics, calling into question the horizon of critical reflection on the politics and culture of globalization, is not, I think, in question; what puzzles me, however, is (if I may use Hardt's words in *Gilles Deleuze* out of context) that Hardt and Negri pose the question of the joy of being with a flourish without offering concrete means of actualizing their goal.

In *Gilles Deleuze: An Apprenticeship in Philosophy*, Hardt explains that Deleuze's affirmative philosophy, rather than tarrying with the negative, engenders "a real rupture, a transmutation. The subsequent affirmation, then, looks only to its own power" (1993 116). Hardt's earlier work on Deleuze functions, I believe, as the prolegomenon to the spirit that animates *Empire.* By the same token, his description of the movement of affirmation makes it possible to determine whether his collaboration with Negri has indeed "flesh[ed] out the constitutive mechanisms of a democratic politics" (1993 122) or, in the terms of *Empire*, posed the problem of the "becoming-subject of the multitude" (407). A brief detour by way of Deleuze's "Nomad Thought" might help explain the originality and legitimacy of *Empire*'s claim to trace the lineaments of democracy in the restlessness and inventiveness of creative speculation and in the corporeality of being. This is a struggle, in other words, that occurs simultaneously on epistemological and ontological terrain.

Some cautions seem appropriate at this juncture. My intention is not to situate *Empire* within the field of globalization studies or to contend with the considerable scholarly (even peevish!) attention it has already generated. As for Amartya Sen's work on the relations between gender discrimination and deprivation or on the questionable and prevalent split between the intrinsic and instrumental value of political economy, I do not wish to imply that he is alone in this regard or to ignore the considerable contributions of feminist scholarship to the questions of the agency of the gendered labouring body and of the multiple sites of resistance to capital. I also choose a relatively early example of his work because its narrow scope enables me to illustrate its methodological and ethical promise in a way that a more diffuse consideration of his *oeuvre* would not allow me to do. Instead, I offer the beginnings of an approach, or, if you will, a series of provocations that I hope to flesh out in the larger project of which this is an extremely modest and preliminary part. In this piece, I have granted myself the liberty of running with perceptions, impressions, and not always justifiable conclusions in the hope of generating dialogue, argument, insight without, for the moment, a discernible goal. My title is intended to emphasize the word "art;" that is, I consider *Empire* less as a prescription, prognosis, or blueprint for change

and more as a *labour* (with all its processual implications) of love (I hesitate to say "aesthetic" for fear of turning it into mere rhetorical flair or into an object of contemplation rather than an intensity in flux). In short, I am puzzling through ideas and possibilities rather than producing a full-blown critical analysis if only for the reason that the medium in this instance grants me that freedom. I hope that webs, constellations, unstable configurations or communities of dissensus will begin to cohere around the contentions I offer here.

I

The element of the unforeseeable gives *Empire* its verve and panache as well as, paradoxically enough, its prophetic power. The figuration of the multitude is precisely not a representation, an embodiment, a fantasy, or even a catachresis. Instead, the italicized interludes in the text move whimsically between history and poetry, nature and technology, and even sound curiously enough, like the beatitudes, like paeans to the meek who shall inherit the earth, "to the poor and exploited humans" (413) who will articulate a great refusal in order to produce anarchy within social order. These interludes catch one off guard but serve to generate the desire that already pulses through the pages of *Empire*. These "punctual interventions" (1993 xix) risk being dismissed if one doesn't read them in conjunction with Deleuze's projection of a thought that would reside in intensities, in abandon, in style, and in nomadic force.

Like Nietzsche, who is the subject of " Nomad Thought," Hardt and Negri seek "to transmit something that does not and will not allow itself to be codified…." The " multitude," in their scheme of things, is "the body that can receive it and spill it forth…." While I am uncertain whether the interludes in *Empire* could be construed as "a masterful siege of the language" ("Nomad Thought" 143)—they are unexpected but not unconventional—the authors certainly conceive them as eruptions from within the frame of the work that simultaneously escape it. Deleuze attributes this movement to intensities rather than representations that nevertheless can only be experienced "in connection with [their] mobile inscription in a body" (147). Hardt and Negri hope to trace the contours of these forces as they traverse the body of the multitude, itself continually subject to the flux of generation and corruption, affected [I shall return to the significance of this word] by desire and power, and invisible within the codifications of law, labour, and the state. The interludes are deliberately fugitive and unclassifiable. even the rousing finale makes militancy quaint, residing modestly in "love, simplicity, and also innocence" (413) because, fascinatingly, the "nomadic force" of *Empire* exists in these "imperceptible, unexpected, and subterranean" (Deleuze 149) mo[ve]ments rather than in the work's critical violence.

II

Hardt and Negri argue that a new world order has emerged from the globalization of economic and cultural exchanges. They call this new world "Empire," suggesting that nearly all of humanity is to some degree subject to capitalist networks of exploitation. It is therefore naïve to search for resistance to and transformation of this order in some realm seemingly outside of and protected from the global flows of capital. The authors indicate, instead, that struggle can only be mapped if one confronts the terrain of Empire in all its complexity and if one conceives of "the multitude" as continuously engaged in creating new public spaces and new forms of community. Hardt and Negri acknowledge that their analysis of the passage from imperialism to Empire is European and Euro-American because they believe that practices of domination that originated in these contexts now permeate the globe just as the forces that contest Empire are not limited to any one geographical region. *Empire* enjoys enormous critical currency but the work of careful discrimination between the genuinely provocative and more questionable aspects of its argument has only just begun.

In order to demonstrate the pertinence of Hardt and Negri's observations (they define their work as "theoretical") concerning the respective power and impotence of citizens within globalization I turn to Amartya Sen. *Empire* seems curiously oblivious to the historical limits of capitalism, that globalization is in fact unrealizable except as an uneven and cruelly polarized process. If many have seen hope in the delinking of the periphery from the subsumptive force of globalization and its corollary (uneven) development (Samir Amin for example), Sen has made his life work the resolution of the internal tensions within capitalism's myth of progress. Sen's controversial work may be summed up as follows: if the world is torn between untold opulence and chronic deprivation, how can the removal of substantial unfreedoms become constitutive of development? In other words, Sen envisions development as constitutive of, rather than inimical to, survival and freedom within the relations of globalization.

If, as Hardt and Negri suggest, struggle cannot but be immanent, Sen's work demonstrates the potential inherent in their contention while offering an interesting twist to their articulation of the question that drives *Empire*: "how [can] the body of the multitude configure itself as a telos[?]" (404). For the purposes of this paper, I hope to suggest how a focus on deprivation, on endemic hunger and excess mortality, can expand the implications and challenge the ethnocentrism of Hardt and Negri's redefinition of all forms of struggle as biopolitical, as struggles over the production of being and therefore indivisible into economic, cultural, and political planes.

In a fascinating essay entitled " More than 100 Million Women are Missing" (*New York Review of Books* December 20, 1990), Sen highlights the failures of ethnocentric presumption in demographic studies. In the course of exploring the misconception that women outnumber men (a consequence of generalizing from the situation in North America and Europe), Sen explodes the category "Third World" because every hypothesis that seeks to explain the excess mortality of women is defeated when confronted with the "facts." Sen wonders, therefore, "how [we can] understand and explain these differences (in the population of women in South and West Asia and China), and react to them" (61). Sen institutes a complex dynamic between the biological and the political because women's biological superiority in terms of their capacity to resist disease or their sheer longevity is in inverse proportion to the attention paid their health and nutrition in the aforementioned countries. Rather than determine what the political function of the biological itself might be, Sen traces the overdetermined political causes and effects of " matters of life and death" (61). Sen, in short, cannot contemplate the retrieval of these women's consciousness or agency or co-operative labour yet—he looks in vain for their *bodies* first.

Sen's remarkable essay serves not only to convict the eidetic of its failings but to tell the tale of the " inequality and neglect" the " missing" women have suffered (61). Sen's unriddling of the absence of these women simultaneously becomes a powerful undermining of the independent value of cultural and economic categories of analysis. For instance, to explain the excess mortality of women in parts of South Asia as a function of sexism in the East, does not account for their electoral successes, for example, as opposed to the near lack of female representation in the United States Senate. Similarly, wielding the club of underdevelopment does not account for the "substantial excess of women" in " poor" countries like those of sub-Saharan Africa. Sen rejects the "superficial plausibility" of the "alleged contrast between "East" and "West" [as well as] the simple hypothesis of female deprivation as a characteristic of economic "underdevelopment" (63) in favour of a changing constellation of economic, social, and cultural factors, the meaning of whose configuration is elicited on behalf of the missing women. The insubstantiality of the object of analysis gives way to its concretion in terms of the factors that determine that very absence.

Sen's essay must be understood as more than merely plaintive. His determination to make the difference

in the physical presence of women across the globe mean something is responsible for the momentary illumination offered by the unstable configuration of particulars that the essay assembles. Moreover, the configuration of particulars that can be read as an *answer*, is a sympathetic tribute to the cruelly eclipsed reality of these women, and a critical and political challenge to the indifference of demographic studies that deems the *question* of their absence or mortality insignificant. Sen's nuanced attention to "the potentially interesting variables" (66) that might explain why women "are simply not there" (66) is an exemplary performance of critique in the name of survival and freedom.

Sen's transgression of the boundaries between economics and ethics shares Hardt and Negri's affirmation of being and of speculation but strikes a cautionary note. His focus on endemic hunger and mortality reduces being to naked defencelessness and strikes at the core of their investment in both the productivity and the producibility of being . Instead, Sen's " organization" of the particulars at his disposal reveals the continuous depletion of the resources of being—the labouring and desiring body. If Hardt and Negri create their dream of community based on the body's power to effect, Sen concentrates on the body's power to be affected (see Hardt 1993 54). A materialist ontology is premature in Sen's world but he does demonstrate that the labour of the intellect must begin with corporeality. If *Empire* intervenes to force corruption to cede its control to generation (392), Sen's attention to the bodies that will/might have been is the necessary first step. Sen reverses the process undertaken by Hardt and Negri—instead of the movement of the ontological incorporating the social, political, and ethical, Sen makes the social, political, and ethical account for the impossibility and imposability of being in an antinomial world.

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