



A GRAMMAR OF THE MULTITUDE

PAOLO VIRNO

SEMIOTEXT(E) FOREIGN AGENTS SERIES

A Grammar of the Multitude

For an Analysis of Contemporary Forms of Life

Paolo Virno

Foreword by Sylvère Lotringer

Translated from the Italian
Isabella Bertolotti
James Cascaito
Andrea Casson

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FOREWORD:

We, the Multitude

Paolo Virno's *A Grammar of the Multitude* is a short book, but it casts a very long shadow. Behind it looms the entire history of the labor movement and its heretical wing, Italian "workerism" (*operaismo*), which rethought Marxism in light of the struggles of the 1960s and 1970s. For the most part, though, it looks forward. Abstract intelligence and immaterial signs have become the major productive force in the "post-Fordist" economy we are living in and they are deeply affecting contemporary structures and mentalities. Virno's essay examines the increased mobility and versatility of the new labor force whose work-time now virtually extends to their entire life. The "multitude" is the kind of *subjective* configuration that this radical change is liberating, raising the political question of *what we are capable of*.

Operaismo (workerism) has a paradoxical relation to traditional Marxism and to the official labor movement because it refuses to consider work as the defining factor of human life. Marxist analysis assumes that what makes work alienating is capitalist exploitation, but operaists realized that it is rather *the reduction of life to work*. Paradoxically, "workerists" are *against* work, against the socialist ethics that used to exalt its dignity. They don't want to re-appropriate work ("take over the means of production") but reduce it. Trade unions or parties are concerned about wages and working conditions. They don't fight to change the workers' lot, at best they make it more tolerable. Workerists pressed for the reduction of labor time and the transformation of production through the application of technical knowledge and socialized intelligence.

In the mid-30s the leftist philosopher Simone Weil experienced the appalling abjection of the assembly line first hand by enlisting in a factory. She wondered whether Lenin or Stalin could ever have set foot in a work-

place and celebrated workers' labor. "The problem is, therefore, quite clear," she concluded in *Oppression and Liberty* after renouncing Marxism and breaking up with the organized workers' movement. "It is a question of knowing whether it is possible to conceive of an organization of production" that wouldn't be "grinding down souls and bodies under oppression."¹ It was too early to achieve this goal through automation and her efforts remained isolated. It finally took the Italian Operaists in the late 50s to pick up where she left off.

Ideologically, Operaism was *made possible* by the Russian invasion of Hungary in 1956, which revealed the true nature of bureaucratic socialism. To young Italian intellectuals on the left of the left (among them Toni Negri and Mario Tronti) it became clear that the Soviet Union wasn't the Workers' Country, but a totalitarian form of capitalism. Around that time the first large emigration of Italian workers from the impoverished South to the industrial North proved even more unsettling. Instead of submitting to the new system of mass production, young unskilled workers ("mass-workers") bypassed established trade-unions, which privileged skilled workers, and furiously resisted the Ford assembly line. The Operaist movement took off in 1961 after the first massive labor confrontation in Turin. *Quaderni Rossi* ("Red Notebooks"), its first publication, analyzed the impact the young mass workers had on the labor force and the new "class composition" that emerged from recent capitalist transformations. *Classe Operaia* ("Working Class"), published in 1964, formulated a new political strategy, the refusal of work, challenging capital to develop its productive forces with new technology. This "strategy of refusal" (a seminal essay by Mario Tronti) was applied "inside" capitalist development, but "against it." It anticipated the post-68 analysis of capital by Félix Guattari and Gilles Deleuze in *Anti-Oedipus*, 1972, and brought Italian social thinkers and post-Structuralist French philosophers together in the mid-70s. What mass-workers objected to most was the transfer of human knowledge to the machines, reducing life to "dead labor." There was an existential dimension there, but active and creative. Their effort to change labor conditions was unknown to classical Marxism, mostly preoccupied with mechanisms of oppression and their effect on the working class.

In *Daybreak*, Nietzsche summoned European workers to "declare that henceforth *as a class* they are a human impossibility and not just, as is customary, a harsh and purposeless establishment." And he exhorted that "impossible class" to swarm out from the European beehive, "and with this act of emigration in the grand manner protest against the machine, against capital, and against the choice with which they are now threatened, of

becoming *of necessity* either slaves of the state or slaves of a revolutionary party..." This celebration of exile can be found in Michael Hardt and Toni Negri's *Empire*, a best-seller among American Marxist academics and art critics ("A specter haunts the world and it is the specter of migration...") as well as in Virno's *A Grammar of the Multitude*, which it complements in its own way. This call retroactively found its model in the unorthodox and mobile migrant labor force of the Wobblies (International Workers of the World) who organized immigrant workers throughout the United States in the 1920s. (Hence the paradoxical fondness of operaists for the American workers' movement and America in general). Migration as a form of resistance also recalls Marx's essay on modern colonization, laborers in Europe deserting famines or factory work for free lands in the American West.² It took the inventiveness of Italian social thinkers to turn this cursory account of the workers' desire "to become independent landowners" into an anticipation of the postmodern multitude. While Hardt and Negri consider this kind of Exodus "a powerful form of class struggle," Virno cautions that desertion was "a transitory phase," an extended metaphor for the mobility of post-Fordist workers (European laborers worked in East Coast factories for a decade or two before moving on). A nuance, maybe, but significant. Unlike Hardt and Negri, Virno refrains from turning exile, or the multitude for that matter, let alone communism, into another splendid myth.

Autonomist theory is found in many places, including the United States, but the movement developed most powerfully in Italy where the 60s' movement extended well into the 70s. Breaking away from the orthodox and populist Marxism of Antonio Gramsci, founder of the Italian Communist Party, young Operaist intellectuals learned from the workers themselves what the reality of production was. They helped them create their organizations and confront the system of production head on through strikes and sabotage. This pragmatic and militant aspect of workerism sets Italian social thinkers apart. They opposed the hegemony of the Italian C.P. and Gramsci's strategy of small steps (the "war of position" within civil society) which led to Eurocommunism and the "historic compromise" with the governing Christian-Democrats (conservatives). Operaists were the first to question the centrality of the proletariat, cornerstone of the entire socialist tradition, and call for a reevaluation of the categories of class analysis. The notion of "changing class composition" introduced by Sergio Bologna allowed them to re-center the revolutionary struggle on the "new social subject" just emerging at the time both from the factory and the university.³ The "Troubled Autumn" of 1969 was marked by the powerful offensive of mass-workers to obtain equality in salaries. Various workerist groups joined

together to create a new organization, both a group and a magazine: *Potere Operaio* [Workers' Power]. It gathered a number of theorists like Mario Tronti, Toni Negri, Franco Piperno, Oreste Scalzone and Bologna. Their reformulation of Marxism became seminal for the entire autonomist movement. In 1974, the clandestine line of the Red Brigades clashed with the open forms of collective organization within *Potere Operaio* and led to the group's self-dissolution.

The workers' formidable pressure to control the cycle of production met with serious provocations from the secret services and the Christian-Democratic government, starting with the bombing of Piazza Fontana in Milan in 1969. Hastily attributed to the anarchists by the government, it justified an intense police repression of workers' organizations. This "strategy of tension" tore Italy apart and sent shock waves well into the 70s, verging on civil war. It triggered among factory workers in the Fiat factories the creation of underground terrorist groups—the "Red Brigades" and "Prima Linea" are the most well-known—targeting leaders of the industry and prominent political figures. The kidnapping of DC President Aldo Moro and his cold-blooded execution by the Red Brigades after the government broke off the negotiations, further upset the political balance in Italy.

In 1975 *Potere Operaio* was replaced by *Autonomia*, a large movement involving students, women, young workers and the unemployed. Their rhizomatic organization embodied every form of political behavior—anti-hierarchical, anti-dialectical, anti-representative—anticipated by Operaist thinkers. *Autonomia* wasn't any kind of normal political organization. Libertarian, neo-anarchistic, ideologically open and loosely organized by regions, it was respectful of political differences. Autonomist groups only cooperated in common public actions. Experimental and imaginative, the mass movement was a far cry from the tight terrorist groups taking "armed struggle" into their hands. In 1977, an autonomist student was murdered by the fascists in Rome and *Autonomia* exploded into the "Movement of 1977."⁴ It swept the entire country, taking over the universities in Rome, Palermo and Naples, then in Florence, Turin and finally Bologna. It seemed as if they were about to take over Italy. What they would have done with it, Piperno recognized recently, they didn't really know. It was an inauspicious time for the movement to come of age. Challenged from its far left, the Communist Party used Moro's murder to eliminate *Autonomia*. Accused of being a shadow command for the "armed wing of the proletariat," all the autonomist leaders, including Negri, were arrested and jailed in April 1979. Others, like Piperno and Scalzone, went into exile (not by their own choice). Paolo Virno was on the editorial board

of the influential autonomist magazine *Metropoli* and spent two years in jail before being cleared of all charges. (Twenty-five years later many autonomists are still in prison). He is now Dean in the Ethics of Communication at the University of Calabria where he gave the three seminars that make up this book in 2001.

Michael Hardt and Toni Negri's *Empire* makes no explicit reference to this period of social and political creativity, and there is a good reason for that. The American Left at the time was siding with Eurocommunism and considered *Autonomia* with suspicion. And yet the theses Negri defended then were hardly different from those he is developing today. So what has changed? (Paradoxically, the ghostly presence of *Autonomia* is felt far more strongly in *Empire* than in *A Grammar of the Multitude* where Paolo Virno confronts it head on.) The strategy proved enormously successful. The bulk of reviews and critical studies of *Empire* now far outweigh its own mass (some 500 pages). Unfortunately, few people will realize that the multitude isn't just a philosophical concept lifted from Spinoza—the democracy of the multitude—that it has a history under another name, and has been the object of vibrant collective experiments. They will never suspect either that the issues raised at the time are being picked up again, and that some kind of intellectual renaissance is presently occurring in Italy. What has been resurfacing recently in the United States with *Empire* isn't just another American cultural fad (“*Empire*” replacing “*Globalization*”) but a bold and controversial social laboratory for the present. Virno's *A Grammar of the Multitude* is another sign of this return.

In “The Strategy of Refusal,” published in 1965, Mario Tronti warned against focusing too much on the power of capital, or assume that it curbs labor power to its own ends. Workers are a class for themselves *before* being a class against capital. Actually, it is always capital that “seeks to use the worker's antagonistic will-to-struggle as a motor for its own development.”⁵ *Empire* develops the same argument: capitalism can only be *reactive* since it is the proletariat that “actually invents the social and productive forms that capital will be forced to adopt in the future.”⁶ It was the Italian workers' stubborn resistance to the Fordist rationalization of work, and not mere technological innovation, that forced capital to make a leap into the post-Fordist era of immaterial work.

Hardt and Negri strongly oppose any “hybrid thesis” that simultaneously emphasizes the creativity of capital and of the working class. In this respect they differ significantly from Deleuze and Guattari's analysis of capital, whose theory of flows they adopted (*Empire* clearly echoes *A Thousand Plateaus*). Deleuze and Guattari saw capital as fluid, inventive and adaptive, using every

obstacle put in its path to rebound and move forward again. Yet they emphasized that it always fakes out in the end, never quite dares following through on its own movement. Because the limit of capitalism, like the stock-exchange, would be unregulated madness. Beating capital at its own game involves decoding its flows even further, or constantly displacing oneself in relation to them. They would certainly acknowledge as well that Italian capitalism was forced into a paradigm shift from the pressure of deterritorialized workers, but point out that it used this shift to regain the initiative and recode the working class into a less volatile social composition.

This is the conclusion Virno arrived at as well in *A Grammar of the Multitude*. Revisiting the tumultuous years of *Autonomia*, Virno realized that their struggle hadn't achieved their goals. The political confrontation only had a "semblance" of radical conflict, he says, because what autonomists were claiming wasn't really subversive in itself, just an anticipation of the post-Fordist mutation. Autonomists simply "had the misfortune of being treated [by those who still identified with the declining Fordist paradigm] as if it were a movement of marginal people and parasites," which it was not. And yet, Virno now estimates that it was just an "angry and coarse" version of the post-Fordist multitude because it often confused non-socialist demands (refusal of work, abolition of the state) with a proletarian revolution. ("A lot of people," he wryly notes, "were blathering on about revolution.") *Autonomia* was a *defeated* revolution, to which the post-Fordist paradigm was the answer.

But what kind of an "answer" is it? And in what way does the post-Ford era achieve what *Autonomia* failed to do by more direct means? The new proletariat didn't replace the working class, but extended it to all those whose labor is being exploited by capital. In the post-Fordist economy, surplus value is no longer extracted from labor materialized in a product, it resides in the discrepancy between paid and unpaid work—the idle time of the mind that keeps enriching, unacknowledged, the fruits of immaterial labor. As Marx wrote in *Grundrisse*, labor activity moves "to the side of the production instead of being its chief actor." The multitude is a force defined less by what it actually produces than by its virtuality, its *potential* to produce *and* produce itself. So is it really a gain over what existed before? Workers used to work in servile conditions, leaving them just enough time to replenish. Now their entire life is live labor, an invisible and indivisible commodity. Today all the multitude does is monitor signs on a screen. But machines are not "dead labor" anymore, they are part of the workers' "life labor" which now plugs into the "general intellect" disseminating knowledge across the entire public sphere. The more creative and adaptable the

workers are—the more *self-valorizing*—the more surplus of knowledge they can bring to the community at large. The multitude is a by-product of the technological mutation of the productive process just as the consumer class was a by-product of the metamorphosis of commodities from objects (*les choses*) to signs. In the post-Ford era, human communication has become the basis of productive cooperation in general. In purely social terms then, Virno is right. This is what autonomists were trying to achieve when they advocated “non-guaranteed” labor and nomadic ways in order to evade labor slavery and experience life to the fullest.

But is it also true in political terms? The multitude is a new category in political thought. But how “political” is it compared to the *autonomia* movement? It is, Virno suggests, open to plural experiences and searching for non-representative political forms, but “calmly and realistically,” not from a marginal position. In a sense the multitude would finally fulfill *Autonomia*’s motto—“The margins at the center”—through its active participation in socialized knowledge. Politics itself has changed anyway. Labor, politics and intellect are no longer separate, actually they have become interchangeable, and this is what gives the multitude a semblance of de-politization. Everything has become “performative.” Virno brilliantly develops here his major thesis, an analogy between virtuosity (art, work, speech) and politics. They all are political because they all need an audience, a publicly organized space, which Marx calls “social cooperation,” and a common language in which to communicate. And they all are a performance because they find in themselves, and not in any end product, their own fulfillment

Granted, this is not the assault on the Winter Palace, but autonomists never had that kind of performance in mind either. The contemporary multitude not being a class, it can’t build a class consciousness of its own, let alone engage capital in a class struggle. And yet its very existence as multitude, distinct from “We, the People” (always predicated on the State) speaks of “the crisis of the form-of-state” itself. *A Grammar of the Multitude* dwells at length on the changing nature of contemporary forms of life, but it doesn’t elaborate further on this crisis of the nation-state, simply attributes it to the “centrifugal character of the multitude.” It is at this point that *Empire* comes in.

Hardt and Negri embrace as well the notion of a “postmodern” social class, but they try and offset its increasing political disaffection by drastically changing its scale and ideological horizon. For them it isn’t just the crisis of the form-of-state that the multitude announces, but of the very form-of-empire presently being shaped by globalization. *Empire* is a powerful political synthesis of the momentous transformations that are relegating

parties and nation-states to a subsidiary role. Advanced capitalism is de-regulating markets, forcing modern states to transfer their sovereignty to a superior entity, an “acephalous supranational order” made of a pyramid of transnational corporations, trans-political organizations and advanced capitalist nations led by the only remaining superpower, the United States. (The United States may well be imperialistic, but it is *not* Empire). Sovereign states losing their power of mediation, a new constitutional process is beginning to emerge, allowing for enforceable international regulations to proliferate and more complex forms of hierarchy and inequality to replace the traditional antagonism between state and society, ruling class and proletariat. As a result the kind of multitude Hardt and Negri have in mind is of a fairly different order than Virno’s. Empire isn’t an “epochal shift” brought about by post-Fordist economy and the imposition of a transnational universal order, it is another concession extracted by the entire multitude fronting for the old working class. Empire, still rising, already harbors the seeds of its own destruction.

It is a bold claim that aims to shake Empire at its very foundation. Placing Virno’s multitude at the heart of Empire opens up an entirely new political paradigm, while conveniently keeping class struggle as the motor of history. The dwindling of the nation-states, though, could well have weakened the revolutionary movement, and many would argue that it did, but Hardt and Negri are emphatic that the “new social class” was indeed bolstered by the emergence of supranational structures. So they wouldn’t oppose globalization, actually welcome Empire as *Autonomia* praised America. Clearly, they needed an oversize enemy to build up the defeated Italian movement into a *global counter-power*.

The global multitude is hybrid, fluid, mutant, deterritorialized, just like immaterial workers of the postmodern world, and yet, in mysterious ways, it is supposed to encompass the world poor which replaced the working-class at the bottom of the ladder. (Traditionally the workers’ movement has been distrustful of the unorganized lumpenproletariat). The poor are not immaterial, they all-too-material themselves in their wretchedness, and Negri often evokes in general terms their *kairos* of “poverty and love.” (The rise of Christianity during the decline of the Roman Empire runs throughout much of *Empire* as an infectious, but problematic, analogy to revolutionary desire). For Hardt and Negri, the multitude is this new social class that removes itself from nations and parties to meet head on the challenge of Empire. “In its will to be-against and its desire for liberation,” the multitude “must push through Empire to come out the other side.”⁷

The other side, of course, is so much better. Paradise is another example. The problem is that a multitude capable of doing such a feat doesn't exist—or doesn't exist yet. At best, it remains a taunting hypothesis, and a promising field of investigation for whoever wants to follow the lead.⁸ But the idea that capital could simply be “destroyed” by such an essentialist notion is a bit hard to swallow. Unlike the industrial proletariat, the post-modern multitude doesn't make up “a workers' army,” the kind that is readily launched against capital, or against Empire. (The worker's army didn't exactly move against the State during May 1968 in France). The “other side” belongs, poetically, to the panoply of endangered ideologies. That an alternative to the contemporary imperial order is “necessary”—the multitude *must* push through like a battering ram—doesn't make its existence any more tangible. But Hardt and Negri are already busily thinking “how concrete instances of class struggle can actually arise, and moreover form a coherent program of struggle, a constituent power adequate to the destruction of the enemy and the construction of a new society. The question is really how the body of the multitude can configure itself as a telos.”⁹

The telos, in other words, *precedes* the multitude, and for the most part replaces it. No wonder *Empire* was so well received in America, and among the people who, incidentally, some twenty-five years ago, looked the other way as the Italian movement was being brutally crushed. (The embattled *Italy: Autonomia* issue of *Semiotext(e)*, now reissued, was first published in 1980, barely one year after the autonomists' arrests.) Frederic Jameson hailed *Empire* as “the first great theoretical synthesis of the new millennium” and Etienne Balibar, praising Negri's “hyper-Marxism,” acknowledged that it laid the foundations for “a new teleology of class struggles and militancy.” As for Slavoj Žižek, his conviction was that “if this book were not written, it would have to be invented.” Žižek may even be right there. Didn't Nietzsche say that thinking is always *untimely*?

What is exciting, actually, in *Empire*, is the question it implicitly raises by globalizing the multitude, not the assumption that it is “the productive force that sustains Empire and calls for and makes necessary its destruction.” This war is purely mythical, and so is the destruction of capital. That's why their confrontation quickly takes on an allegorical dimension, a war between *two principles*. The multitude being as immaterial as the work it produces, it is dressed, Hardt and Negri write, “in simplicity, and also innocence.” It is prophetic and productive, an “absolutely positive force” capable of being changed “into an absolute democratic power.” Even its will to destruction would eventually become “love and community.” Evil Empire, on the other hand, the con-enemy, is just an “empty shell,” a giant

with clay-feet, vicious, abusive, controlling, a predator always engaged in “an operation of absolute violence” (principles are necessarily *absolute*). Imperial command is nothing but an “abstract and empty unification,” a “parasitical machine” that only lives off the vitality of the multitude and constitutes “the negative residue, the fallback” of its operation. “A parasite that saps the strength of its host, however, can endanger its own existence. The functioning of imperial power,” Hardt and Negri conclude, “is ineluctably linked to its decline.”¹⁰ Why call for a counter-power then?

Because History can't wait. There is a question that keeps coming up again and again throughout Negri's writings, and it is the irreducibility of the moment of decision. Although he pays lip service to the tradition of “vitalist materialism”—Nietzsche, Bergson, Deleuze—the “will to power” or the “*élan vital*” obviously aren't enough for a lusty Leninist. These always run the risk, he writes, of “getting caught in the sophisms of the bad infinite: an infinite that dilutes the intensity of the decision...”¹¹ Without a telos, a big narrative, a decision would mean nothing anyway. *Empire* involves an original kind of class struggle: *a struggle looking for a class*. For Virno it would be just the reverse: a class looking for a struggle. But Hardt and Negri already know what kind of class they are looking for. Their real purpose is to jump-start the revolutionary machine. They quote Spinoza: “The prophet produces its own people.” They want to produce their own multitude, but they are not exactly sure it will work. They even admit it candidly: “It is not at all clear that this prophetic function can effectively address our political needs and sustain a manifesto of the postmodern revolution against Empire...”¹² A *postmodern* revolution, no less. The class struggle was postmodern too.

Virno doesn't have any telos up his sleeve, no ready-made program for the multitude—certainly not coming out “the other side.” It's been tried before, didn't turn out so well. Why should a “postmodern revolution” be any different? Anyone who cares for the multitude should first figure out what it is about and what could be expected from it, not derive its mode of being from some revolutionary essence. The ultimate goal of Virno's inventive inventory is “rescuing political action from its current paralysis.” *Empire* is trying that too, but a straw fight won't do—The Multitude Strikes Back...

Virno may be onto something when he suggests that Post-Fordism is “the communism of capital.” It doesn't say that there is no more fights in sight, that post-Fordism brought us “communism.” Fights should be expected, but not a war that would allegedly destroy the enemy. A *combat* rather, meant to strengthen some forces present in capital, and join them

with other forces in order to form a new communist ensemble. This is what Virno has been attempting to provide: the description of a combat, a cartography of virtualities made possible by post-Fordism, elements in contemporary life that could eventually be mobilized. The problem is not to destroy capital or Empire—destroy, they say—but bolster one's own power. What is a body *capable of*?

“The communism of capital”: there is as much communism in capital *as capital is capable of* too: abolition of work, dissolution of the state, etc. But communism in any shape or form would require equality, and this, capital is incapable of providing. Post-Fordism therefore can only satisfy the *demands* of a virtual communism. A communality of generalized intellect without material equality. How “communistic” can that be? And can this *virtual* communism be enough to turn subjected “people” into a freer “multitude”? This is what Empire is claiming to achieve, but the multitude isn't exactly thriving beyond the First World, or below. In under-developing countries the new labor class is finding freedom through uprooting and over-exploitation. Inequalities everywhere are growing exponentially, and so is cynicism, not especially of the creative kind.

This is no reason for disenchantment. One of the virtues of Autonomia is that it was never afraid of claiming out loud: “We are the front of luxury.” At the time the exploited proletariat was still considered to be the repository of revolutionary wisdom. But only those who are free from slavery can dare imagine what being really free would be. This is what the Italians were trying to experiment with before Autonomia was “defeated,” and that's what they are exploring again today through a lively intellectual debate. The idea of a multitude is part of this on-going project. It is a luxury that we should be able to afford: the luxury of imagining a future that would actively bring together everything we are capable of. These virtualities are present within capital in ambivalent and reversible features that are just waiting to be liberated. Immaterial workers are mobile and detached, adaptable, curious, opportunistic and cynical, also toward institutions; they are inventive and share knowledge through communication and language; they are mostly de-politicized, also disobedient. The multitude is an “amphibious” category that can veer toward “opposing developments,” or come to nothing, so a combat is constantly raging—not with Empire, *within itself*. A combat that first “defines the composition of forces in the combatant,”¹³ not its victory over an exterior enemy.

Capital affords us to project ahead, work it from within, knowing all too well that it will be quick to instrumentalize any creative move, turning it into binary oppositions, however radical they claim to be, proven recipes

that failed repeatedly *because they have become inadequate to think the complexity of the contemporary reality*. The paradoxical positions autonomists have assumed in relation to work, or the strategic embrace of Empire by Hardt and Negri, are part of a luxury of thinking ahead, unimpeded, which has become such a precious commodity in a world squeezed between mediocrity and self-satisfied gloom. So no one could reproach them for thinking that, only for *not thinking enough*, falling back too soon on the quick revolutionary fix that will please everyone and just reinforce a cozy feeling of powerlessness.

Capital doesn't have to be "destroyed." It is self-destructive enough, but not the way Hardt and Negri imagined it. Because it never stops provoking resistance to its own rule. "It is doubtful that the joys of capitalism are enough to liberate the people," Deleuze wrote in 1991.¹⁴ "Those who keep invoking the bloody failure of socialism don't seem to consider as a failure the present state of the global capitalist market, with the bloody inequalities it involves, the populations pushed off the market, etc. It's been a long time since the American 'revolution' has failed, even before the Soviet's did. The situations and revolutionary attempts are generated by capitalism itself and they are not going to disappear." Capitalism itself is revolutionary because it keeps fomenting inequality and provoking unrest. It also keeps providing its own kind of "communism" both as a vaccine, preventing further escalation, and an incentive to go beyond its own limitations. The multitude responds to both and can go either way, absorbing the shocks or multiplying the fractures that will occur in unpredictable ways.

A specter haunts the world and it is the specter of capital...

—Sylvère Lotringer

1. Simone Weil, *Oppression and Liberty*. Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1958, p. 56

2. In Karl Marx, *Capital* I, "The modern theory of colonization."

3. Cf. Sergio Bologna, "The Tribe of Moles," in *Italy: Autonomia. Post-Political Politics*. New York: *Semiotext(e)*, III, 3, 1980, pp. 36-61. Edited by Sylvère Lotringer and Christian Marazzi.

4. Cf. Bifo, "Anatomy of Autonomy," in *Italy: Autonomia*, op. cit., pp. 148-170.

5. See Mario Tronti, "The Strategy of refusal," in *Italy: Autonomia*, op. cit., pp. 28-35.

6. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2000, p. 268.

7. *Empire, op. cit.*, p. 218.

8. See Christian Marazzi, “Denaro e Guerra.” [Money and War]. In Andrea Fumagalli, Christian Marazzi & Adelino Zanini, *La Moneta nell'Impero*. Verona: Ombre Corte, 2003. The crash of the new economy signals the resistance of the multitude to the financialization of the general intellect. Also Breit Nelson, “The Market and the Police: Finance Capital in the Permanent Global War.” (Unpublished.)

9. *Empire, op. cit.*, pp. 403-4.

10. *Empire, op. cit.*, pp. 413, 344, 361, 63, 361.

11. Antonio Negri, *Kairos, Alma Venus, Multitude*. Paris: Calmann Levy, 2000, p. 194.

12. *Empire, op.cit.*, p. 63.

13. On “war” and “combat,” see Gilles Deleuze, *Critical and Clinical*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997, p. 132.

14. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, “Nous avons inventé la ritournelle” [We have invented the refrain], *Le Nouvel Observateur*, September 1991. In Gilles Deleuze, *Two Regimes of Madness*. New York: Semiotext(e), 1974. (Forthcoming.)