POLITICS AND ECONOMY: THE OTHER SIDE OF THE COIN

Powers of Resistance to the New Postindustrial Order: Hardt/Negri and/vs. Jameson

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In their book *Empire*[1] the American literary theorist Michael Hardt and the Italian leftist activist and political scientist Antonio Negri warn us of the arrival of a new menacing but still barely visible world order gradually replacing old nation-state imperialism after the latter's apparent demise. But is it not paradoxical to talk about post-imperialistic empire? Those who think so, they imply, have made the mistake of associating the particular oppressive techniques and logics of capitalism with capitalist oppression in general. Indeed, it is perhaps only natural to look for more sinister heirs to imperialism, for post-imperialistic globalization has obviously not turned out to be a brave new moral order (except in some Huxleyan sense). The postmodern capitalism of Empire, Hardt and Negri contend, has a lot to do with old imperialism namely as an apparatus of social oppression; what has changed (indeed a great deal) is only the *form* of subjugation and exploitation. The radical decentralization and informatization of production and consumption (which has duped some thinkers into believing that capitalism, together with its mechanism of exploitation theorized by Marx, is gone never to return) has bred a more merciless, imperceptible, yet less brutal and more vulnerable apparatus of control (if resistance is carefully and thoughtfully deployed).

Although the authors in general accuse postmodern philosophy of misjudging the world situation, they aspire to employ the term "postmodernism" as a designation of the corresponding historical period they try to theorize. (It would have been utterly ungrateful not to do something like that in view of their actual conscious association, collaboration, and obviously heavy debt, sometimes acknowledged but often not, to some of the main postmodernist political thinkers around—namely, Deleuze/Guattari and Foucault.) Indeed, it is inconceivable that their book should not make such references, for anyone broadly familiar with the contemporary intellectual scene has come to realize that a specter has been haunting all modernist philosophy—the specter of postmodernism. Deprecated as the dead-end of capitalism or just a new mimicry of the old modernity, or celebrated as a new progressive world with infinite creative potential, it has become clear that postmodernism just cannot be ignored either as a historical postmodernity, an ideology, or a vision for a new ethical, cultural, and social deal. Aspiring Marxists-Leninists (especially Leninists, looking for yet further stages of capitalism after its last refusal to collapse) view the postmodern as the next stage of capitalism which should be clearly identified and analyzed, and whose dehumanizing tendencies, identified by Marx long ago but now appearing in new sinister guises, can and must be opposed. But anyone (like me) who delights at any new "neo-Marxism" as a potentially viable competitor to the arrogant neo-liberal fusion of state and market cannot, after reading another brilliant analysis of capital's triumph, fail to ask the ultimate question: is the alternative (if there is one) workable or is it just another utopia demanding too much of the intellectually enfeebled and brainwashed individual? This is, I think, the problem that had been plaguing all critical theory, especially since the collapse of state socialism between 1985 and 1989. Many otherwise inspired and brilliant analyzers (e.g., Baudrillard) do not even broach the question of resistance, while others deal with it half-heartedly. Here we might notice that although the chapter on "Alternatives within Empire" and the part on "The Decline and Fall of Empire" are not the best sections of Hardt and Negri's book; their theoretical insights, subjected to certain interpretation, can be the basis and inspiration of a much more concrete and detailed practical program of political action.

Here it would be very pertinent to look at Nick Dyer-Witheford's 1999 book *Cyber-Marx: Cycles and Circuits of Struggle in High-Technology Capitalism*,[2] a considerable part of which can be taken as an apology and concrete elaboration, as serious as it can be, of Hardt and Negri's more abstract treatments. His project, as their own ultimate alternative vision, amounts to nothing less than a global non-capitalist society which they do not hesitate to call "communism." Dyer-Witheford speaks about "a different future based on the common sharing of wealth—a twenty-first century communism."[3] He indeed prefers to call it "commonwealth"[4] but only to avoid the negative associations of the former word. (As for Negri, in 1990 he and Guattari published an English translation of their book *Communists Like Us*.) Dyer-Witheford finds fault with the various Marx-inspired alternatives to liberalism but finally gives his sympathies to thinkers such as Negri and Hardt (and their own inspirations, Guattari and Deleuze), which he puts at the center of the so-called "autonomist Marxist" school centered around the French journal *Futur Antérieur* and propelled in addition by figures like Paolo Virno, Maurizio Lazzarato, and Jean-Marie Vincent.[5] He takes it upon his shoulders to translate those masters' "characteristic abstraction" into real-worldliness:

> [W]hile Negri, Guattari, and Deleuze envisage these struggles [between the global rule of capital and various oppositional groups] moving toward the constitution of a non-capitalist society, they offer only limited hints as to what this alternative might be. They clearly see it… as an explosion of difference—a dissolution of the global command of profit…. However…these theorists have very little that is concrete to say about how such a self-organized society might operate.… [T]he aim should be to create a space where a diversity of social, cultural, and economic ways of being can coexist.… In spite of difficulties, we need to consider which within a plethora of possibly emergent non-capitalist ways of life are desirable and worth fighting for. So it is to these points that I turn….[6]

Thus Dyer-Witheford announces his ambition to a philosophy of practice. Here one must distinguish two, even three, separate tasks relevant to such theorizations. The first task is the one Marx himself so miserably failed

(or would have failed if he thought it necessary, pertinent, essential, or possible, which he rightly did not): namely, to *describe* an alternative future whose underlying logic will be different than of that of capital. He boldly suggests that there is not one but many such possible descriptions out of which he has the ambition to select one, probably the best (which turns out a bit more radical than the rather modest one suggested in the *Communist Manifesto* but in no case anything to be labeled "revolutionary"). The one to be selected directly involves making sure that it is not idealistic or utopian—which, in addition to being simply logically possible, involves taking into account the kind of creatures humans are, the types of needs they would have, and the behaviors they would be likely to exhibit, the types of authority they would willingly subject themselves: in short, some account of "human nature." (For instance, one might suggest that a good society is one where there is universal love, but this alternative is unrealistic in view of general human dispositions manifested throughout evolution and history.) The good news here is that Marx' account of human nature is rather minimal and not so different than the liberal one, emphasizing freedom and the satisfaction of various material and spiritual needs.

The second task concerns the type of political action necessary and relevant to achieve or at least make some progress towards the final vision. This is indeed the much more difficult and essential task which must supplement the former one if it is to be considered, especially in this historical moment, anything more than wishful thinking. Dyer-Witheford accuses various thinkers (e.g., Baudrillard) for neglecting it, and I would speculate that the reason they did neglect it, despite being conscious of it, was that they just did not see significant reasons for hope. Dyer-Witheford, as I argue alongside, must perhaps not have been so optimistic. Given his subscription to the Marxian thesis of the "real subsumption" of all spheres of life under capital, his sweeping alternative visions, and indeed many of his concrete suggestions of how to resist this subsumption, seem doomed. That explains the much more reserved and abstract stance taken by Hardt and Negri, yet in general the two books reinforce one another. Let us note that Dyer-Witheford's book was published before *Empire* and his analyses draw mainly on Hardt and Negri's preceding book *The Labor of Dionysus: A Cri-*

tique of the State-Form[7] and various essays. This, however, does not make their analysis obsolete since whereas *Empire* might be more systematic and focused, its political program, being quite abstract, badly needs to be supplemented by more concrete prescriptions.

One is, however, surprised to find in these two books only occasional mention of another colorful figure—the literary and cultural critic, critical theorist, and self-proclaimed "critical Marxist," Fredric Jameson, whose primary task through the years has been quite similar if not the same: to unmask the new order and, secondarily, to suggest ways of resistance. (Indeed, Hardt and Negri's silence is all the more curious given that Jameson is Hardt's colleague at Duke University's English department and a co-editor of an anthology of his works I will also bear in mind in this paper). Jameson tries to theorize, along Marxian lines, "post-modernism" as the cultural expression of the current historical period (i.e., the "high postmodernity" since the 1950's) of capitalist development. Being disposed to analyzing culture, he focuses on art, literature, and architecture to criticize subtly the depoliticizing, unhistorical, relativist, and reactionary tendencies of postmodernism as the "cultural logic of late capitalism." His thought unashamedly aims at a kind of "totalization" through confronting capital's own totalizing tendencies, even in the face of his rejection of the possibility for a total system in favor of a more historicist approach. Dyer-Witheford's criticism of Jameson (whom he mentions only disparagingly) is of the same kind as that of Negri's; Jameson is, however, much guiltier:

> These various postmodern/Marxist conversations [viz. Jameson's, David Harvey's, and Derrida's Specters of Marx, and others defending some combination of Marxism and postmodernism]… lack a crucial dimension.… [A]ll are virtually silent on the question of opposition to such an order.… Derrida's reassessed Marxism is undermined by his insistence that… communism is an ever-deferred futural project… Jameson suggests that postmodern culture has to be seen dialectically both as mystificatory veil over the realities of contemporary exploitation and a field of emancipatory potential, but says almost nothing about how this latter potential might manifest.… These silences signify a major problem… [which is that] Marxism cannot under contemporary conditions locate agents of contestation and practices of opposition….[8]

Dyer-Witheford claims to be able to solve the above problem. Hardt and Negri themselves are not so bold, giving Jameson some credit (although mentioning him much less frequently):

> We certainly agree with… Jameson, who see[s] postmodernity as a new phase in capitalist accumulation and commodification…. (*Empire*, 154)

> "Postmodernism," Fredric Jameson tells us, "is what you have when modernization process is complete and nature is gone for good." (*Empire*, 186)

> We might say, then, following Fredric Jameson, that postmodernization is the economic process that emerges when mechanical and industrial technologies have expanded to invest the entire world… and when the formal subsumption of the non-capitalist environment has reached its limit… [A]ll of nature had become capital. Whereas modern accumulation is based on the formal subsumption of the non-capitalist environment, postmodern accumulation relied on the real subsumption of the capitalist terrain itself (*Empire*, 272)

These quotes along with the absence of any credit for Jameson in their discussion of alternatives all imply that, should Hardt and Negri have concentrated on criticism, their criticism of him would be in the same vein: his poverty of alternatives. Superficially, the most Jameson could offer is the cultivation of certain utopian impulses, a special engagement in utopia. In the dialectical manner typical of him, he presents utopianism not as some kind of "opium of the masses" but rather its *employment* as perhaps the only way of resistance open amidst capital's "real subsumption" of life. His alleged weakness concerning alternatives may indeed be his realization that the ways of resistance others offer are too naive and contradict the thesis of real subsumption. My exclusive references to Jameson's work will be his *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*,[9] a programmatic collection of essays written between 1984 and 1990, and the above-mentioned *Jameson Reader*.[10]

So, for the rest of the essay I will be concerned with juxtaposing and taking sides on the respective ways of resistance to the new post-

imperialistic capitalist order (demonstration of whose existence is outside my scope of concern and will therefore be generally assumed) as proposed by Hardt/Negri and Jameson. Its working thesis is that, perhaps paradoxically, although Jameson pays much less attention to the explicit question of resistance, his account thereof is more cogent, realistic, and less utopian (in the bad, un-Jamesonian sense of utopia) in view of the most relevant features in the theoretical description of the new order.

For both Hardt/Negri and Jameson, there is a strong case that modernism, understood as the ideology and practice of modernity, is compromised beyond rehabilitation. So it would not make sense to try to "complete its unfinished project" (as, for instance, Jürgen Habermas took great pains to do). Jameson remarks that Habermasians today mistakenly think that [since] the revolutionary ideals of the bourgeois system—freedom and equality—are properties of real societies and "still present in the Utopian ideal image or portrait of bourgeois market society, it would be enough to improve the real 'model' for the ideal portrait".[11] Far from being a simple matter of pitting good versus evil, the question of resistance is rather about what good we could wring out of the overwhelming evil of the rule of capital. Although the emerging postmodern alternatives are indeed rarely new worlds of freedom and emancipation, for our authors they have indeed self-disguised as such, helped by militant neo-liberalism. The celebrators of postmodernism, as everyone else indeed, have abandoned brute force as no longer productive, and are instead trying to court the disillusioned victims of the old Enlightenment—of which, unfortunately for them, there are not very many. They in fact have been right to ask why it is necessary to try to patch up the old sack of modernism and prolong its death pangs instead of discarding it for something brand new. Put simply, for those the old modernity is bad and the postmodern order is good, whereas for Habermasians it is the other way around.

It is not that simple for Hardt/Negri and Jameson; for them the postmodern regime is not only another monster spurned by agonizing modernity and characterized by a new ubiquity and self-perfection of its repressive apparatus, but also by a new vulnerabilities we should learn to identify and attack. But there is no way back to modernism: it cannot be redeemed since its negative and positive aspects are inextricably coupled. They therefore con-

struct new cultural and theoretical perspectives—"late capitalism" and "Empire" respectively—which renounce modern humanistic Enlightenment discourse, despite their inescapable continuities with it. For all of them postmodernism, or late capitalism, is just an historical period, but one in which every aspect of life and all human relations has been totally and hopelessly captured by the inexorable rule of capital. This capture has been the final effect of a sweeping and unprecedented dialectical movement in multinational capital necessitated by the media technology and expressed in culture. History, they seem to suggest, moves through breaks and ruptures, and the present rupture, well revealed in social reality (Hardt/Negri, Dyer Witheford) and the artifacts of culture (Jameson), is indeed a major one.

Although Hardt and Negri adopt the political/economic perspective, while Jameson prefers to analyze culture, both sides paint a rather dismal picture of the new historical situation witnessing the "merger" of all spheres of life and the decentralization and deterritorialization of former "social centers." So there is no incoherence in suggesting that the result of the analysis of both approaches—the social-economic one of Hardt and Negri and the artistic-cultural one of Jameson—is essentially the same since in the postmodern fusion of former oppositions there remains only one curious entity to be analyzed from various viewpoints. This makes the difference between the old perspectives obsolete so whatever one is adopted (indeed we cannot help adopting one or the other) the results should be the same. For instance, since in postmodernism culture is economized (i.e., radically commoditized) and economy made part of culture, the analysis of the one should also reveal the workings of the other. Further, the distinction between types of things (commodities vs. cultural artifacts, images, relations) has nowadays become fuzzy. Reification (which according to Marx is the transformation of social relations into things), therefore, is not experienced since it has become our second nature.[12] But the extent to which this is the case is concealed by the fact that the "things in question have themselves changed beyond recognition."[13] Much in the spirit of Deleuze and Guattari (who attack capitalism in the generalized figure of Oedipus), they claim that even the unconscious has been colonized by the culture industry to such an extent that the only way to

react, if one ever realizes one's situation, is perhaps to simply "follow the vicious circle" in a Heideggerian fashion and hope for a higher totalization. Jameson attempts to live up to that and "still be cheerful" in a Kierkegaardian fashion, while Hardt and Negri are more optimistic and really think that something significant and capable of counter-action has escaped.

In terms of a general ideological orientation, then, both Hardt/Negri and Jameson can be designated as neo-Marxist postmodern theorists of *totality*. But is it necessary to revive such an obsolete concept. It could well be argued that the new pseudo-liberal order brands any perceived threat as "totalitarian" mainly to conceal its own totalitarianism. But there can be good and bad totalities. For Hardt and Negri totality is recognition of the "single logic of rule"[14] under which the various vestiges of the old nation-states synchronously operate. As such it is the factual totality of the "big picture."

Jameson's picture, however, is more dialectical. He implies that the concept of totality, if conceived under the traditional concept of unity, will be wasted as something that could potentially be put to work against the logic of capitalism. This becomes even more important in the face of the dearth of recourses in the maelstrom of capitalism where we find only the freedom to act in accordance to its relentless logic, where every thought is always already an exchange value. In this situation there is no hope for radical alternatives in the sense of Dyer-Witheford and Hardt/Negri. It is clear that the small-scale endeavors recommended by Dyer-Witheford (not-for-profit community radio stations, etc.) would not make a dint on the capitalist system. It is equally clear that larger-scale social endeavors will quickly be spotted and the perpetrators held accountable. We need not, however, entertain Orwellian scenarios of state henchmen using spying and closed-circuit surveillance even of people's sleeping cubicles to hunt down the perplexed and use psychologically sophisticated inquisitorial methods to bring them to their senses. The system wants to uphold the *prima facie* impression of justice, aided by the perceived lack of state oppression, even a justified one. There are no concrete institutions to practice oppression, no need for any kind of Iran-style "ministry of the promotion of good and eradication of evil," no need for anyone to dirty their hands and have compunctions. As in a nightmarish Baudrillardian picture where the hitherto distinct spheres of life have disappeared by interpenetration and amalgamation, the system has

eliminated its recognizable apparatus of repression simply by diffusing it—which is to say that the system has itself become an immense apparatus of repression. Due to psychological conditioning involving the use of appealing rhetoric of freedom the institutions are no longer recognized as oppressive, or oppression is seen as a necessary piece of evil, a small price to pay for the overwhelming good of freedom and prosperity. It has been long recognized that slaves could be made to believe that they are free, but no one before has ever matched Empire's success in this.

All of our authors agree that the system's cleanup operations have programed itself into the very fabric of the system. The system, of course, has beneficiaries; it rewards those who directly contribute to it with the greatest advantages. Yet, strictly, the system does not work for them; rather, they work for the system. They are quickly deprived of status should they cease contributing or try to frustrate the logic of the system. If we assume that the most successful efforts at defying the system could come from those who know its workings well (at least from an administrative point of view), things look even more discouraging since those have the least incentive to oppose the system and it would be wishful thinking to expect self-abnegation (not in the least because they would not be convinced in the system's immorality). It seems we should await a spontaneous break or crash to deprive those agents from their benefits and force them into thinking of the system's logic as oppressive and evil. I emphasize spontaneity since sustained effort to bring about such a disruption is not likely to be successful—as our authors and many others such as J. Kenneth Galbraith, a political scientist and activist with Marxist leanings, have realized. Necessary for any successful revolution (Galbraith's examples include the French and Bolshevik ones) is the internal corruption of the system; yet the present system has never been stronger, both materially and ideologically. As we hinted above, any potentially serious effort to defy the logic of the system—although, in light of the above analysis, we cannot quite imagine what is to count as a potentially productive effort—is bound to be spotted and incorporated by the system.

It is difficult to imagine how such an effort at resistance would lack a public aspect, yet every bigger public endeavor would have to be duly regis-

tered, numbered, filed, and approved according to the bureaucratic procedures of the system. All particular measures recommended by Dyer-Witheford are of that sort: from small-scale public ventures relying on information technologies (first, of course, somebody would have to educate the public how to use Internet in a non-capitalist fashion, e.g., to organize themselves as labor rather than for shopping, gaming, and entertainment) to fancy schemes of resource allocation (relying, again, on the capacity of the public to organize as it recognizes its common interest) to flagrant defiance of laws, such as transgression of copyright and even the abolition of intellectual property, states' repudiating dept even at the risk of intervention, etc., all highly unpopular measures giving the state the occasion to crack down on the offenders.[15] This is underlined by some ambiguous faith in the redeeming powers of the multitude, but it is not clear how the new concept of multitude is supposed to help ground such concrete oppositional projects. The manner of these easy recommendations is not so faithful to Hardt and Negri, who laud the capacities of the working multitude mostly in an abstract fashion, on the background of its future grand struggle to become a political subject and to effect a new subjective configuration of labor by a teleology that would permit it to increase its power gradually.[16]

The unrealism of schemes similar to Dyer-Witheford's, stemming from the otherwise recognized invulnerability of the system at the present moment, suggests that the effort against the system should not be such as to allow the system to recognize that it is being attacked. It cannot involve propositional truth—i.e., explicit statements of what is "true" or "false," going against the system—for any suspicious proclamations that threaten to rise above empty words and engender some action will be condemned and squashed by the official propaganda, much to the delight of the public. (Empire, of course, proclaims freedom of speech in this case, but it forgets to explain that what it means is freedom only of speech.) Propositional truth has long been colonized by capital in the form of ideology. Empire has determined, to its own advantage, capitalizing on well-sounding abstract principles (equality, democracy, human rights, etc.) to be fed to the public, and what is to count as true and false. Such a situation calls for responses that Empire cannot classify (perhaps ones that it cannot even recognize) and subsume under its categories and thus identify as dangerous. Experimenting with irrational impetuses which one

may not even understand might be a good beginning. (Here one is reminded of a strange, recent phenomenon in which large groups of unrelated people show up at a place posted on a website to behave in a particular way, e.g., to scream, cuckoo, or just be silent, and then disperse as if nothing happened. Dyer-Witheford would certainly celebrate these actions as ones defying the capitalist logic, yet it is unclear how they would contribute to the cherished radical change to communism.) While Dyer-Witheford's solutions are too concrete and local (and condemned to remain so, and thus insignificant or impossible to conceal from the system), and Hardt and Negri's are too abstract (depending on the mysterious powers of the even more mysterious multitude, avoiding concrete recipes for action), Jameson, I think, manages to recommend responses combining abstract principles modeled on a regulative ideal vision of final progress and emancipation with guidelines to concrete action that would not be identified by the system as a threat and so has a chance to come to embody those principles. This reminds one of Herbert Marcuse's *Eros and Civilization* (1955) and "The Aesthetic Dimension" (1978) where he argues for the liberating aspect of art through a sort of Freudian sublimation. This artistic sublimation, however, is no match for the imperial brown shirts: Empire completely subordinates all cultural spheres, including the "artistic" and the "aesthetic," to its logic, and its market mechanism provides the means to such sublimation and even encourages it as far as it stays under conceptual, ideological control. It ensures the involvement of the final product of sublimation (the work of art) in the system of exchange so that its "author" would get her deserved "due" according to the authorized ways of remuneration.

Certain heavy-metal music genres, for instance, feature the most violent, anti-social, anti-bourgeois, anti-Christian, and anti-establishment lyrics and attitudes one can find. Other genres celebrate heroic utopian new worlds, and still others deeply engage themes such as death, gore, evil, gloom, despair, profanity, and decay, in clear reaction to the facelessness and primitivism of the present. (One could think of the band Halo's 2001 album *Guattari: From the West Flows Grey Ash and Pestilence*, which, unfortunately, has nothing officially to do with our Félix Guattari.) This bombards us with a loosely improvised raw, uncompromising, and disturbing avalanche, resulting from their peculiar sound "demixing" process. One may

hope this might scare the system and trigger an open repressive reaction, in which case one would have a good reason to scream loud and complain that she is being suppressed, victimized, and her rights infringed; but alas: the system renders the apparent challenge harmless by internalizing it. It does not consider the attack to be against itself and even celebrates it as evidence of free speech, an important ideal professed by the system to be in favor of its subjects. Free speech, of course, is defined in such a way as never to be able to harm the system. Indeed, as we said, the system is enough decentralized as to be represented by no institution; in this case the anger against it (the "rage against the machine," as an important punk-metal band named itself) would be one against a ghost, an unproductive anger.

Furthermore, access to heavy metal depends on its distribution, which in turn depends heavily on its publishing and marketing—yet the market is Empire's primary tool of control. This, of course, does not mean that heavy metal is completely useless as a form of defiance—far from it. Dyer-Witheford places his hopes on the new technologies although he does not make it sufficiently clear how those can come to be used for liberation rather than control. Jameson, who (akin to Heidegger) indeed treats postmodern technology (which he conceives in terms of breakages and breakdowns in the manner of Deleuze and Guattari[17]) as a major ally to the new imperialism, contributing to the machinization of the body, etc. Were he acquainted with heavy metal, he might recommend it as a promising utopian practice in this age of hopelessness. Certainly we should continue to listen to it at least for its potentially liberating aspect. In an age where slaves enjoy being oppressed and there is not much recognizable as liberating, if we could, as if by some Hegelian "ruse of reason," sustain practices that are at least potentially emancipatory, one day they might actually contribute to liberation. I think, along Jamesonian lines, that scathingly anti-social heavy metal is one of those. Otherwise "decent," even religious, people find themselves attracted to it not because they explicitly conceive it as liberating but because they enjoy it (although they cannot explain why), yet it gives them potentially powerful emancipatory anti-imperialistic powers.

With all his faults and obsoleteness, however, Marcuse could be regarded as an inspiration to Jameson. He argues against the objectivist Marxist aesthetics which recognizes that under capitalism art is necessarily alien-

ated from real life and therefore seeks to ground the reaction potential of art in a new *content* which has to mirror reality—essentially, the so called "socialist realism." This picture fails to live up to the intricacies of the reality it is supposed to capture; it fails to recognize that all "content" is subject to propositional description and therefore colonizable by the imperial ideology which is specialized in manipulating propositional contents. Marcuse thus recognizes that only a non-propositional aesthetic *dimensio*n could escape the analytical grasp of the new Empire, yet fails to suggest what this dimension is and how it might be achievable today. Matters seem even more complicated once one realizes that *desire* must be an essential component of art, yet he argues that desire is influenced by social structures. Jameson, I think, makes progress on this picture using the concepts of utopia and totality; he expands it and makes it relevant to contemporary high-tech imperialism. He himself recognizes and celebrates this "expansion" of Marcuse: "[in the sixties] Marcuse virtually becomes the name for a whole explosive renewal of Utopian thinking and imagination."[18]

The main challenge for Jameson, then, is to articulate the nature of this non-propositional irrational impetus required for the successful defiance of Empire. He suggests that it may well, if not exclusively, appear in the form of an invigorating hypothesis, an abysmal thought that is essentially utopian. One could discern an underlying Hegelian inspiration: both history and goal-oriented human action work in mysterious ways, yet the unintended end result is progress. Here the redefined concept of totality comes to help. This totality is one that ultimately comprises the whole human experience in which the component parts are inextricably linked. In the spirit of Deleuze and Guattari, yet stressing political and ethical dimensions at the expense of metaphysical ones, Jameson conceives of an "open totality" to be strived for, composed of differences, discontinuities, anomalies, and contradictions not subsumable under a unity. This is opposed to the "closed totality" of capitalism which also features and feeds on internal differences, discontinuities, antinomies, anomalies, multiplicities of forces, breaks and crashes, but is ultimately subsumed under the order of a central controlling force—in this case the complicated but inexorable logic of capital which arrests the emergence of anything contrary to itself. In this sense the celebrated phe-

nomena of cultural diversity and tolerance, which allow Empire to claim that it is better than regimes labeled as "totalitarian," is only superficial. The totalitarian regimes follow a simplistic logic inimical to creation of wealth but conducive to social unity. The complicated logic of the market allows for the creation of potentially unlimited wealth, and is therefore all-too-often tempted to "civilize" the "totalitarians" by sheer physical force, as it is rarely able to do by the more civilized means of persuasion and replaces social unity by an even stronger one, when maintained well: the unity under the regime of exchange.

Underlying every possible practice of resistance must then be an "open" totality which is not recoverable within any unity. Jameson does not dig into the metaphysical aspects of this totality (such as its being which aspects, I suppose, would be no more intractable than those of any metaphysics whatsoever), but concentrates on its methodological, epistemological, and aesthetic qualities. But if a totality like this is to be normative, it should be stripped of the barren formality of moral tradition. It should offer unlimited possibilities for interpretation of phenomena in the context of the social forces that shape it. That no complete inventory of those directions and forces seems possible is indeed a positive feature of the totality in question. It suggests that no logic could manage to subsume and define the system's inexhaustible dialectic. This means that there could be genuine production of the new, defined as phenomena that cannot be deduced by rules and axioms specified beforehand. Totality is thus not vulnerable to the forces of empirical representation (as argued also in the *Political Unconscious*, 1981), and therefore will always be beyond our, and Empire's, propositional grasp. It is created by the peculiar operations of "cognitive mapping" and "transcoding" in which we "frame equivalents… [for phenomena] in other codes and theoretical languages."[19] This ensures that the fuzzy totality will never yield a stable meaning corresponding to the referent, and the creative process will always be an act of interpretation emphasizing the aesthetic over the systematic dimension (explaining Jameson's preoccupation with art and literature). Jameson conceives of Marxism (whose main virtue is its analysis of industrial capitalism) as the most appropriate methodological orientation to do justice to this approach. For him Marxism is neither a philosophical system nor a political ideology, but essentially a "dialectic" whose "ideal…is not the invention of a better philosophy…but rather the

transformation of the natural and social world into a meaningful totality such that 'totality' in the form of a philosophical system will no longer be required."[20]

Jameson's "dialectical historicist" approach acknowledges the futility of a central method of interpretation in the situation of "full postmodernity" where the very multiplicity of theories has rendered them something like closed-group ideologies. The only approach, then, to connect them up one with the other into some form of totality is through mutually transcoding them. As suggested above, this process of totalizing is indeed a positive one. It gives rise to discontinuities, antinomies, and contradictions born by the unpredictable efficacy of the new. For instance, postmodern reality is often described in spatial terms, making architecture the quintessential milieu for illustrating postmodern concepts through real-life metaphors. Postmodern space is characterized by disorienting the subjects by jamming their ability to "map" into it and position themselves within the decentered communication networks. Jameson's favorite example (Baudrillard's, for instance, would be Disneyland) is the glass-skin Westin Bonaventure Hotel in downtown Los Angeles. He contrasts this building, celebrated as "popular" by its architect John Portman and others, with modernist buildings such as those by Le Corbusier.[21] It features broken, formless, and depthless space without convenient entrances and exits that engulfs and disorients the visitor as it seems to be governed by a new kind of logic intended to present the interior not as part of the city but as a complete self-sufficient mini-world (although it offers images of the city distorted through glass windows).

Jameson takes this "hyperspace" to be the "analogon of that even sharper dilemma which is the incapacity of our minds… to map the great global multinational and decentered communicational network in which we find ourselves caught as individual subjects."[22] It seems that the hope placed by Dyer-Witheford on the new information technologies seems unfounded. Empire makes sure the technologies are not used subversively. So it becomes scary when one realizes (which few do) that Bonaventure is indeed a metaphor for the human situation in the new imperialism. Baudrillard would go further to claim, in the article "Disneyworld Co." that the world had become a giant Disneyland. Empire has been very successful in rendering us

incapable of global orientation. In such a situation the subject cannot even initiate a process of understanding toward some sort of wider consensus since all laws governing the process are relativized or marginalized to particular monadic sites from which no organized resistance could emerge. One cannot be sure if her "conceptual scheme," so to speak, is shared widely enough. (It seems that once-revolutionary writers like Habermas have given up all hope, recommending recipes amounting to no more than comfortable living within the existing liberal regime. It is this ill realism that makes those, at least for me, so irrelevant and uninteresting.)

Jameson's solution in terms of transcoding and cognitive mapping, then, though perhaps desperate from the point of view of its calculable chances for success, seems reasonable in the absence of anything better. It enjoins that one should not seek representation of some sort of reality but strive for a sense of orientation in a posited world of others by engaging in various esthetic practices and theoretical projects. This process is indeed imperfect and never complete, but this is indeed an advantage. The transcoding activity is not to be classified along the scale leading from no representation at all up to full representation; it is essentially different than representation. The creation of representations is unbridled, in the sense that they must not comply with any propositionally describable reality; the activity must lead to its own sur-reality, challenging any schematic propositional logic yet being able to move emotionally, to be lived, to "get under one's skin." Surely not just any postmodernist collage would be able to do that. Whether or not this gets accomplished would depend on how the representation without object would be able to stir up the dormant powers and symbolism in the individual, whose origins—drawing from ever complicating Marxist theses about the omnipresence of one's material circumstances—could be only social. Empire is trying to extinguish those powers and turn individuals into assembly-line clones with well-defined wants and needs. In this sense the cognitive mapping always has a political dimension, and the goal is to invoke it and turn it against the system in the form, at least initially, of disgust. Here one cannot help thinking of director David Lynch's postmodernist nightmares such as *Eraserhead* (1977), which the *Monthly Film Bulletin* called "a movie which must be rather lived than explained"; the same could be said about *Twin Peaks* (1992). There have been elaborate efforts by self-titled connoisseurs to enlighten the perplexed what is

going on in those movies—a step that would be welcomed by Empire. In the avant-garde documentary *Lumière & Co.* (1998), Lynch himself says that the goal of cinema is to create new worlds. His undisputed accomplishments in that come to suggest that the best way to turn these worlds against the new imperialism is to make sure its logic cannot monopolize their interpretation.

Jameson himself, as a literary theorist, places much hope with the *allegory*—a figurative technique in which the presumed subject of analysis is kept out of view but is represented by another resembling it—marking "the crisis of the older aesthetic absolute of the Symbol" and characterized by "a generalized sensitivity to breaks and discontinuities, to the heterogeneous…, to Difference rather than Identity."[23] Transcoding operations, he says, are "the allegorical projection of the structure of the analysis models."[24] The success of an allegory is, however, by no means entirely arbitrary. There is a primordial connection between the two realities and languages, "[f]or alongside a perspective in which my language comments on that of another, there is a somewhat longer vista in which both languages derive from larger families that used to be called *Weltanschauungen*, but which have today become recognized as 'codes'."[25] Allegory, of course, as a familiar device, is anticipated and channeled by the new order; indeed, it promoted it as a replacement to the more rigid representational techniques it itself rendered useless in its subversion of the modernist absolute values no longer needed. So to turn allegory back against the order is not a trivial business. Jameson addresses it at length alongside the more general question of how exactly to "map a totality,"[26] a glimpse into which I tried to provide here but to which I must return later (indeed in a further paper).

To take stock, all of this should suggest that there could be a viable analysis along the lines of Marx's doctrine of the real subsumption to counter the rightist "end of ideology" theories—for instance, à la Fukuyama and Daniel Bell—celebrating Empire and its alleged lack of alternatives. Such an account must diagnose the situation as falling within a certain historical period (situated by no means at the end of history) and tackle the question of the possibilities of resistance in a postindustrial situation in which every aspect of life is subsumed under the rule of capital and in which resistance cannot come from outside the system while it would take an impossible

transcendence of the available resources for it to come from within. I suggested that Jameson fully recognizes this limitation and so his vision of a return to a certain kind of utopianism of totality is more realistic, while, e.g., Hardt's and Negri's reliance on the mysterious multitude, accompanied by strong anti-utopian sentiments, and Dyer-Witheford's concrete practical recommendations could at best be conceived as, if not wishful thinking, then, respectively, abstract theorizations and prescriptions for some distant future.

A successful identification of the ways open to resistance will require an accurate analysis of the new order, which may not necessarily be a defense of it, as it may or may not compare it to rival orders. Our authors indeed tend to accept the general Marxist diagnosis that the system breeds its own corruption, i.e., that capitalism will be weakened or will collapse, to use the classical phrase, under the weight of its own internal contradictions. But Jameson is much representative of the treacherousness of taking such a line all too literally. Although Marx was sober enough to recognize that revolution cannot succeed without this internal self-weakening, he was still naive to think that the process is more or less straightforward. (This is, though, hardly his fault, for the power and chameleonic peregrinations of capitalism in the information age were beyond anyone's imagination in his historical situation.) Our authors are much more informed to recognize that the system has learned to mutate in order to benefit from its own internal crashes and emerge even stronger, at least for a foreseeable and theorizable future. This means that it would be useless to assail the new Empire in the brutal old ways, by inciting armed revolutions or provoking or rejoicing at economic crises. Rather, more sophisticated ways of resistance should be developed, ones using the system's own resources and logics and aimed at discovering its vulnerabilities. The system should be brought down from within by strangling it back internally with finesse, so to speak.

The difference between the Hardt/Negri/Dyer-Witheford trio and Jameson is that the former team is unduly optimistic about the possibilities of resistance. The ultimate form of resistance is, of course, revolution, which has traditionally meant bringing about radical changes towards improvement, if necessary by force, in the social-economic ways of a society. It is too bad that namely this essential conception has been compromised beyond redemption in the face of the seeming triumph of liberal capitalism and the collapse of obvi-

ously corrupt and rotten regimes self-claimed to embody successful revolutions. Thus moderate conservative apologists (like Anthony Quinton) have some right to argue (statistically-empirically, from the French or Russian revolutions) against revolution in general on pragmatic grounds: they are too difficult to organize, too risky and unpredictable, and grossly counterproductive; in other words, they never succeed in what they promise. Yet the picture underlying such critiques is a gross though common oversimplification of Marx' theory of revolution which Jameson tries to put aright. As he observes, the Revolution (*sic.*) is the central concept of any Marxian "unity-of-theory-and-practice". He states that

> we need to abandon to iconology everything that suggest that revolution is a punctual moment rather than an elaborate and complex process…. Social revolution is not a moment in time but it can be affirmed in terms of the necessity of change in what is a synchronic system, in which everything holds together and is interrelated with everything else. Such a system then demands a kind of absolute systemic change rather than piecemeal 'reform'…. [T]he system demands the ideological vision of a radical social alternative to the existing social order. We must imagine revolution—as something which is both a process and the undoing of a synchronic system—as a set of demands which could be triggered by a political or a punctual event such as a Left victory in an electoral struggle or the dismantling of colonial authority…. These waves…emerge from ever deeper layers of the hitherto silenced and deprived population…. The most basic issue… is not whether the concept of revolution is still viable, but…whether, in the world system today, it is possible for any segment of integrated sections to uncouple and de-link…and then to pursue a different kind of social development and a radically different type of collective project.[27]

A basic question implied in the larger concern of how revolutions are possible in the present age of hopelessness is about the revolutionary agent. *Who* will resist the system and affect the revolution? For Marx, as it is well known, the political subject of resistance and revolution was the working class, the industrial proletariat who must otherwise choose between starvation and selling its labor to the owners of the means of production. As Dyer-

Witheford observes, however, there is now consensus that not only class but the very idea of a single work force has met a "technological nemesis": the working class has disintegrated through a familiar process of automaton and informatization which is seen as capital's post-Fordist restructuring in response to class struggles.[28] In general, the problem of what will take the place of class has been severe. As observed above, Hardt and Negri (together with theorists such as Paolo Virno) place their hope in the hands of the multitude, a new metaphysically fuzzy social-political subject, adapted from Spinoza, as an agent of global change.[29] Jameson, on the other hand, prefers to stay more faithful to Marx and so adapts the notion of class to a category resembling a small atomistic group (here we could recall Sartre's analysis of groups in his monumental *Critique of Dialectical Reason*, 1960). Unlike the multitude, which "produces autonomously and reproduces the entire world of life…constructing a new ontological reality" and "produces itself in singularity…by inverting the ideological illusion that all humans are interchangeable…[s]tanding the ideology of the market on its feet,"[30] the new entity can have much smaller ambitions and could act and think only locally. Jameson suggests that leftist laments over the death of class (as perhaps any lamenting) are useless. He pictures postindustrial cultural aspects as irreducibly more heterogeneous than anything modernity had known. Those find their expression within group-based cultural localities within the capitalist system.

Groups are the carriers and symptoms of the irreducible multiplicity of forms of life in late capitalism. The new neo-ethnicity and micro-politics based on the group's ideology of difference is the only way to hope for consensus as a prerequisite for resistance.[31] Jameson implicitly attempts to cure the lack of a well-defined historical subject on the individual level by putting forward, à la Deleuze and Guattari, the fragmentary and schizophrenic one who has lost all capacity for radical critique due to the abolition of critical distance by commodification and the proliferation of images by the media. He realizes that it is a difficult task to identify ways of resistance open to such an entity yet places his hopes in a Marxism that will enable it to use its schizophrenic experience for transcoding foreign conceptual schemata into ones which will be potentially detrimental to the system. On a wider scale, he suggests that the new phenomena are analyzable by a Marxian po-

litical economy which works through the determination of culture by group praxis. The hope is that capital's frustration of the possibility for inter-group consensus and understanding, leading to the disappearance of inter-group life-worlds, may indeed foster richer local *intra*-group cultural lives, marked by totalizing utopian visions, ultimately to frustrate the rule of capital. This double character of information-age capitalism is fully recognized also by the Hardt/Negri/Dyer-Witheford tandem who, in addition, claim to identify and even guide the new ways of resistance (becoming perhaps a new communist party). It seems, though, that, while Hardt, Negri, and Dyer-Witheford emphasize outward action, however marginal and impotent, for Jameson emancipation can come only from within the "lifeworlds" of alienated groups or individuals. As he says, "the concept of alienation has rigor when specifically used to articulate various concrete privations of working-class life…at a specific historical moment.… It surely does not amount to much, however, as a general designation for (bourgeois) spiritual malaise."[32] Those agents must try to construct meaning through cognitive mapping in a thinking process which is genuinely utopian as it is not representational.

The concept of utopia is, for Jameson, already implied in postmodern cultural forms such as dystopian science fiction novels and films (as, for instance, Philip Dick's novels, the films *Blade Runner, Star Wars, The Godfather*) as an expression of a desire for collectivity. In those forms the good or bad "system" is readily presented more or less vigorously, enabling people to orient and formulate strategies for action.[33] The postindustrial system, however, is not given to us in this way, which may indeed be a good thing for it enables us to construct it hermeneutically almost anew. Now, if one wants to be able to use utopia for liberation purposes, one must theorize a Marxian framework that situates the system within a larger historical context. Jameson's recommendation to engage in Utopia (capitalized, as a positive concept) is, like in Marx, tantamount to a confession of ignorance concerning the future ideal or state of affairs, although entertaining such a *regulative* ideal reflecting a timeless domination of the lifeworld over the system is a better choice, in terms of emancipation potentials, than sanctifying liberal information capitalism as an "end of history." Such a framework would enable us to get clear about the irreparable deficiencies as well as the

strength of this order and realize that our only hope in this dreary time of need. To use a Heideggerian designation (*dürftiger Zeit*) of the epoch when truth has been concealed from Being, which is to be revealed only in poetry, by traditional metaphysics speaking in propositions, is to counter it with our own vision of totality. Utopian mapping is supposed to stimulate our sense of possibility to imagine such a totality. The limited success of this type of thinking (despite, or rather because of, the piles of cultural production of science fiction and fantasy) is due to the almost total commodification of life. Jameson, however, makes the reasoned suggestion that we could transcode the images of fantastic worlds media capitalism spews on us as "entertainment" to distract our attention and keep us into submission to possibilities concerning our own world. While he does not claim that utopian transcoding thinking would immediately change the world (indeed, at the present situation of unchecked rule of capital, nothing can) he might have well identified the only manner of resistance possible at the moment, and one which might bear rich fruit in the future.

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1 Michael Hardt, Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2001).

2 Nick Dyer-Witheford, *Cyber-Marx: Cycles and Circuits of Struggle in High-Technology Capitalism* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999).

3 Ibid., 2.

4 Ibid., 194.

5 Ibid., 221.

6 Ibid, 190 – 191.

7 University of Minnesota Press, 1994.

8 Dyer-Witheford, 170 – 1.

9 Duke University Press, 1991.

10 Edited by Michael Hardt and Kathi Weeks (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Blackwell, 2000).

11 Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 292.

12 Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 314.

[13] Ibid.; for instance, brand images have become mysterious things that sell and are consumed like tangible commodities. Further, *being* in a shopping mall is itself "consumed" along with the things bought there.
[14] Hardt and Negri, *Empire*, xii.
[15] Nick Dyer-Witheford, chapter 8.
[16] cf. *Empire*, sec. 4.3.
[17] Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 335.
[18] Ibid., 160.
[19] Ibid., 120.
[20] Ibid., 334.
[21] Ibid., 38 – 45.
[22] Ibid., 44.
[23] Ibid., 167.
[24] Ibid., 120.
[25] Ibid., 394.
[26] Ibid., 399 – 418.
[27] This is part of Habermas' third thesis from his 1996 article "Five Theses on Actually Existing Marxism."
[28] Dyer-Witheford, 79.
[29] A defense of Spinoza's "multitude" against Hobbes' "people" with reference to globalization is the exclusive topic of a recent book, *A Grammar of the Multitude* (MIT Press, 2003), by the Italian political theorist Paolo Virno.
[30] *Empire*, 395.
[31] Jameson, *Postmodernism*, 318 – 9; 340ff.
[32] Ibid., 89 – 90.
[33] Michael Hardt and Kathi Weeks, *Jameson Reader*, 382ff.