

Internationalism revisited or In praise of Internationalism

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Empire
Michael Hardt & Antonio Negri
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Although proceeding from very particular theoretical premises, the Hardt/Negri thesis on the epochal shift from imperialism to the decentred and deterritorialized terrain of 'Empire'¹ impinges on contemporary debates about globalization. Whether this is conceived as a break with capitalism's pre-existing forms or an intensification of its inherent contradictions and conflicts, will decide the deductions made by theorists about prevailing modes and relations of production, the location and dissemination of power, the actual or potential oppositional energies of classes, and the sites, shapes and goals of revolutionary projects. On these issues the positions of *Empire* reiterate and countermand those advanced by both Marxist and postmodernist theorists, rendering the book's variable perspectives consistent and discrepant with its declared ambitions as a manifesto of political insurrection.

A decade ago Michael Sprinker had observed that with the demise of the Soviet Union, the disintegration of the socialist bloc, and the end of the heroic era of liberation struggles, there had been a retreat of traditional left intellectualism and the development of other intellectual formations situated on the left but disengaged from Marxism². Were Sprinker alive and writing now he would have had the pleasure of noting the many signs of Marxism's return to intellectual life, and amongst the numerous glosses on *Empire* are those which consider whether a study that situates itself as preserving/transcending Marxism, can be received as part of this trend. Stephen Shapiro, for example while welcoming *Empire* for 'inaugurating a long-overdue confrontation between contemporary strands of neo-Anarchist thought ... and a reconstituted Marxism', has observed that by 'refusing the geography of uneven development, Hardt and Negri's work cannot align itself, in any meaningful sense, with Marx's diagnosis on capitalism's need to appropriate new zones of labour-power, the primitive accumulation that results in core/periphery differences'³. In a less forgiving critique, Tim Brennan, who traces the book's conceptual provenance to the *autonomia* movements of the Italian far left, council communism, the theoreticism of Continental philosophy and nineteen-sixties counter-culturalism, maintains that this cognitive apparatus is translated into 'a gathering together of positions that are substantively incompatible', the 'pattern of reverential borrowings from Marxism' involving 'simultaneously, its rejection and diminishment'⁴.

But if *Empire* is not recognizably Marxist in its methodology, eschewing as it does the necessity of confronting state power, neither is it post-Marxist since it has not relinquished economic and political explanations for cultural ones, or subordinated class, however radically this is redefined, to ethnicity, gender and sexuality, nor discarded class struggle, even if this is abstracted from its accustomed usage. Moreover the authors declare an idiosyncratically articulated allegiance to communism. In this, *Empire* remains outside of the current consensual ideology, retaining as it does a commitment to a revolutionary transformation that is *beyond* capitalism⁵. A mode suggesting an

*aufheben*⁶ rather than an abandonment of Marxism may predispose some on the left to give *Empire* a cordial reception, and I for one am able to sign up to much of the book's recapitulation of capitalism's historical development, its indignation at the system's iniquities and its undimmed hope in an emancipatory politics. All the same there remain for me problems with a dizzying conceptual promiscuity induced by the heady cocktail of Marxist, autonomist and postmodern paradigms. In particular because the Deleuzian notion of lines or paths of flight, of flows and borderless continuums is used as a trope of thinking processes and invoked as a template of real world conditions, these disposals converge in an insouciant disregard of the actually existing circumstances in what the authors insist is a post-imperialist era. A mismatch between a retrospect resting on received Marxist narratives and delivered with sober mien, and the fantastical prospect on the present and future enunciated in an euphoric rhetoric, makes the reading of this book a lesson in the difference between intimations of a reasoned Utopia, and wish-fulfilment presented as imminent event.

As troubling are the consequences of transposing the localized theoretical heritage of the *autonomia* movement onto a world arena. Elsewhere Hardt had written that 'Laboratory Italy refers no longer to a geographic location, but ... to a specific modality now available to all of us, of experimenting in revolution'; and having surveyed the economic and political shifts unique to western Europe, and more particularly as these were played out in workers' struggles in Italy during the nineteen-seventies⁷, he goes on to insist that 'Italian revolutionary thought ... can now be recognized as relevant to an increasingly wide portion of the globe in a new and important way'⁸. So insular a vision of spaces that once constituted the empires of Europe is, I suggest, contingent on the authors' neglect of the heterogeneous socio-economic formations existing within capitalism's global system, and it is salutary to contrast the indiscrimination of the fuzzy world-outlook pervading *Empire* with the close analyses of geographical terrains, institutional structures, modes of production and class forces undertaken by Marxist theorists in the colonized world when devising their own experiments in revolution.

There are moments when it could appear that it is an extravagance of style which distinguishes *Empire* from previous attempts to detect a radical rupture within capitalism's forms, and in this sense the book has received proleptic replies. For some time now Neil Lazarus has argued against 'discontinuist historico-philosophical assumptions' and 'endist' logic, insisting that the intensification and reconfiguration of capitalist social relations do not represent a new era of capitalist development⁹. Also writing prior to the appearance of *Empire*, David Harvey had asked whether the quantitative changes that have occurred within capitalism's global process did indeed constitute a qualitatively 'new era of capitalist development', to which self-posed question he initially gave a qualified 'yes', which was immediately countermanded by the assertion that because globalization entailed the profound and uneven temporal and geographical reorganization of capitalism, 'there has not been any fundamental revolution in

Notes

- 1 Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*, Cambridge, MS: Harvard, 2000, pp. 49, 50
- 2 'The National Question: Said, Ahmad, Jameson', *Public Culture*, 6:1, p. 3-29
- 3 Shapiro 2002: 'Mythologies of Autonomy: Capitalist Space and Left Institutionalism', unpublished paper.
- 4 'The Empire's New Clothes', to appear in *Interventions*.
- 5 For a brilliant inveighing against those who hold positions under the 'spell of universal permanent capital', see István Mészáros, *Beyond Capital: Towards a Theory of Transition*, London: The Merlin Press, 1995.
- 6 "Aufheben: (past tense: hob auf; past participle: aufgehoben; noun: Aufhebung). There is no adequate English equivalent to the German word Aufheben. In German it can mean "to pick up", "to raise", "to keep", "to preserve", but also "to end", "to abolish", "to annul". Hegel exploited this duality of meaning to describe the dialectical process whereby a higher form of thought or being supersedes a lower form, while at the same time "preserving" its "moments of truth". The proletariat's revolutionary negation of capitalism, communism, is an instance of this dialectical expression of this movement in the method of critique developed by Marx." *Aufheben*
<http://www.geocities.com/aufheben2/>
- 7 For a critique of the theoretical thinking of this epoch see 'From *operaismo* to "autonomist Marxism"' in *Aufheben*, No 11, 2003, pp. 24 - 40.
- 8 *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics*, ed. Paolo Virno and Michael Hardt, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996, pp. 1, 4. Since it is impossible to follow the arguments in *Empire* without some acquaintance with the concepts and esoteric vocabulary of the Italian extra-parliamentary left, Hardt's explanatory introduction to *Radical Thought in Italy* is an invaluable guide to the book's theoretical assumptions. Asserting that the axes of revolutionary thought within the Euro-American framework have now shifted from German philosophy, English economics and French politics to French philosophy, U.S. economics and Italian politics, Hardt claims that Italian revolutionary politics can serve as a model 'for experimentation in new forms of political thinking that help us conceive a revolutionary practice in our times ... the experiments conducted in laboratory Italy are now experiments of our own future' (p. 9).
- 9 See *Nationalism and Cultural Practice in the Postcolonial World*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999, pp. 41-51
- 10 Globalization in Question', in *Rethinking Marxism*, Vol. 8, No 4, Winter 1995, pp. 1 -17, pp. 5, 12.
- 11 *Capitalism in the Age of Globalization: The Management of Contemporary Society*, London: Zed Books, 1997, p. 147. Writing about China, Chinese scholars have shown that 'about 80% of the Chinese people live either at the bottom or the margins of society', some 14% of the total available workforce or 100 million people are unemployed or pauperized, and the implementation of market-led modernization has issued in 'a return to conditions common during the Industrial Revolution of the nineteenth-century'—low wages, long hours, absence of safety regulations, frequent disastrous accidents. See He Qinglian, 'China's Listing Social Structure', *New Left Review*, 5 Sept/Oct 2000, pp. 69-99, p. 85, 87; and Wang Hui, 'Fire at the Castle Gate', *New Left Review*, 6, Nov/Dec 2000, pp. 69-99
- 12 Amin defines this world market as dictated by the

the mode of production and its associated social relations¹⁰.

This unevenness, according to Samir Amin, intensifies capitalist social relations on a world scale even though the South is now being differentiated between those peripheral societies that are undergoing industrialization (East Asia, Latin America, India and South East Asia) and those (Africa and parts of Arab world) which are not¹¹—the last including nation-states where in world terms the whole nation is the active and reserve army of labour. Amin goes on to observe that with the erosion of the great divide between industrialized centre and non-industrialized periphery, there has emerged 'new dimensions of polarization' defined by a country's capacity to compete in the world market¹², resulting in 'a new hierarchy, more inequality than ever before, in the distribution of income on a world scale, subordination of the industries of the peripheries and reducing them to the role of subcontracting' (*Capitalism in the Age of Globalization*, pp. 3-5)¹³. Thus although an enthusiast of *Empire* has claimed that Hardt and Negri 'do insist on the unevenness of capitalist development'¹⁴, it would seem that the 'rhizomatic method' which they favour, together with their passion for decentring, contrive to inhibit adequate attention to the structural hierarchy and polarization endemic to contemporary capitalism¹⁵. And where inequalities persist, so do borders remain in place and so are flows of populations, cultures and socialities distorted.

At stake in the argument advanced by Hardt and Negri is the question of whether autonomous struggles that have dispensed with class organization and party formations can mobilize an effective 'counter-globalization'. To doubt the efficacy of spontaneity is not to dismiss the significance of the proliferating 'New Social Movements'¹⁶, or what John Holloway, who is sympathetic towards autonomist or *operaismo* / workerist theories, has called the lived struggles against invisibility, 'the hidden world of insubordination' and anti-power—even if, as he concedes, these remain in the absence of class consciousness and interconnectedness, harmless to capital¹⁷. Nor is it to minimize the importance of anti-capitalist protest directed at the regulation rather than the transcendence of the global system. Such movements command the critical support of Ray Kiely who in refusing a 'reform-revolution' dichotomy, advocates a position 'somewhere between on the one hand Leninist vanguardism, where struggles are subordinated to the will of the Party that holds the "correct knowledge", and on the other direct action and autonomist perspectives that uncritically celebrate struggle without attempting to analyse the efficacy and progressiveness of such struggles'¹⁸.

But this too, I suggest, rests on a false dichotomy since it misconstrues the Marxist conception of a dialectical interaction between revolutionary spontaneity, or the voluntary and active agency of the masses, and a central vanguard party. As Ernest Mandel has written, it was understood by the theorists of the Russian Revolution that the leading role of the party 'had to be continuously fought for politically and won democratically; the majority of the workers have to be convinced, they have to give their consent ... the party is an accompaniment to the self-activity of the masses'¹⁹. In Gramsci's exposition the relationship is posited as an institutional dialogue with the subaltern classes where the work of the party must be structured by 'the formation of a national-popular collective will, of which the modern Prince [Gramsci's coded word for the Communist Party] is at one and the same time the organiser and the active, operative expression'²⁰. Rejecting the twin errors of intellectuals who either display contempt for spontaneous struggles or extol spontaneity as a political method, Gramsci endorsed as exemplary those movements where the leadership set out to mediate, organize, educate and direct spontaneity rather than to lead it: "This unity between "spontaneity" and "conscious leadership" or "discipline" is precisely the real political action of the subaltern classes, in so far as this is mass politics and not merely an adventure by groups claiming to represent the masses' ('The Modern Prince', p. 198).

We could also consider Georg Lukács' gloss on Lenin's concept of party organization: 'the group of professional revolutionaries does not for a moment have the task of either "making" the revolution or—by their own independent, bold actions—of sweeping the inactive masses along to confront them with a revolutionary *fait accompli*. Lenin's concept of party organization presupposes the fact—the actuality—of the revolution (italics in original)²¹. Thus, Lukács maintains, when Lenin urged that the role of revolutionary intellectuals was to bring socialist consciousness to the workers' movement 'from the outside', this should be understood as providing theoretical knowledge about the regime as a totality. The relevance of this perception surely persists, for without understanding capitalism as a system, spontaneous struggles are limited in their capacity to challenge its institutions, threaten it globally, or offer the prospect of a different social order.

How then does *Empire* conceive a project of 'counter-globalization' that in ideology, composition and method is distinct from the traditions which envisaged nation-based proletarian movements joined within a socialist international? Post-Marxists appear to be agreed that proletarian class analysis is exhausted, received notions of class agency and organization anachronistic, and the nation-state no longer an adequate framework for opposition to contemporary capitalism. As a consequence all declare internationalism obsolete. One such instance is a blunt rejection: 'Proletarian and socialist internationalism ... have become embarrassments to contemporary socialists ... if the old internationalism is dead, then the internationalisms of the new social movements (women, ecology, peace, human rights) are alive and kicking'²². A less blatant case for 'rethinking ... the older Marxist notion of internationalism' within the current global restructuring and heterogeneity of contemporary capitalism, has been made by Lisa Lowe and David Lloyd who challenge 'class antagonism as the exclusive site of contradiction', and fault those movements which prescribe political and state-oriented goals, proposing instead the equal importance of cultural, feminist and anti-racial struggles 'that do not privilege the nation and are not necessarily defined by class consciousness'²³. But the most elaborate obituary of proletarian internationalism is to be found in *Empire*.

Proceeding from the supposition that the supranational operations of capitalism have rendered an international proletarian formation inconceivable, Hardt and Negri are able to pay their retrospective respects to proletarian internationalism for having 'constructed a paradoxical and powerful political machine that pushed against the boundaries and hierarchies of the nation-state', while pronouncing that its time 'is over' (p. 49). For, according to the authors, 'the restructuring and global expansion of capitalist production' has in 'the absence of a recognition of a common enemy against which struggles are directed' (p. 55) caused the death of class solidarity and given birth to a new proletariat which 'is not a new industrial working class' but 'the general concept that defines all those whose labor is exploited by capital, the entire cooperating multitude' (p. 402, italics in original). If the categories of 'a new proletariat' and 'the multitude' here appear to be conflated, they are elsewhere differentiated. Concerning the new proletariat, the authors relegate industrial, artisanal and agrarian labour on the grounds that 'the figure of immaterial labour power (involved in communication, cooperation, and the production and reproduction of affects) occupies an increasingly central position in both the schema of capitalist production and the composition of the proletariat' (p. 53)²⁴. This paradigm, dubious even when restricted in its application to Western Europe and North America²⁵—where manual labour, wherever its operations are located, remains the ground on which communicative and affective labour can exist and flourish²⁶—is offered as a universal model and therefore relevant to those parts of the world subject to combined and uneven development where pre-nascent and 'classical' capitalist conditions remain prevalent.



monopolies he names as: technological, financial control of world markets; access to planet's natural resources, media and communication monopolies, monopolies over weapons of mass destruction.

13 According to the World Outlook Report of the IMF which appeared in 2000 'in the recent decades, nearly one fifth of world's population have regressed. This is arguably ... one of the greatest economic failures of the 20th century'. In the same year the World Bank reported in frustration: 'One legacy of socialism is that most people continue to believe the State has a fundamental role in promoting development and providing social services'. Cited in Greg Palast, *The Best Democracy Can Buy*, London: Polity Press, 2002, p. 50, 47. We can also consider the case made by the sociologist Michael Mann who while acknowledging that 'North' and 'South' are not strictly geographical designations, finds that the North continues to widen inequalities, the most important divide being what he calls an 'ostracizing imperialism', whereby 'one part of the world both avoids and dominates the economy of the other', since 'most of the world's poorest countries are not being significantly integrated into transnational capitalism', being considered 'as too risky for investment and trade'. 'Globalization and September 11', in *New Left Review*, 12 Nov/Dec 2001, pp 51-72, p. 53-4.

14 Peter Green, 'The Passage from Imperialism to Empire: A Commentary on *Empire* by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri', in *Historical Materialism*, Vol 10 :1, 2002, pp. 29 - 77, p. 43

15 In reviewing George Soros's book *On Globalization*, Joseph E. Stiglitz, the economist who was fired by the World Bank for his measured criticism of its policies, mused: 'The world of international finance and economics is astonishing. What would seem to be basic, and even obvious, principles, often seem contradicted. One might have thought that money would flow from rich to the poor countries; but year after year exactly the opposite occurs.' *New York Review of Books*, May 23 2002, p 24-26.

16 See Leslie Sklair, 'Social Movements and Global Capitalism', in *The Cultures of Globalization*, ed Fredrick Jameson and Masao Miyoshi, Durham: Duke University Press, 1998. For some statements from the horses' mouths on the new social movements and notions of a new internationalism, see Naomi Klein, 'Reclaiming the Commons', *New Left Review*, 9, May/June 2001, pp. 81-89, John Sellars, 'The Ruckus Society', *New Left Review*, 10, July/August. 2001, pp. 71-85, José Bové, 'A Farmers' International?' *New Left Review*, 12, Nov/Dec, 2001, pp 89-109 and David Graeber, 'For a New Anarchism', *New Left Review*, 13, Jan/Feb 2002, pp 61-73, all in Series entitled 'Movements'.

17 *Change the World Without Taking Power: The Meaning of Revolution Today*, London: Pluto Press, 2002, p. 157.

18 'Actually Existing Globalisation, Deglobalisation, and the Political Economy of Anticapitalist Protest', in *Historical Materialism*, Vol 10:1, 2002, pp 93-121, footnote 95, pp 115-6.

19 *Trotsky as Alternative*, trans Gus Fagan, London: Verso. 1995, pp. 80-1.

20 'The Modern Prince', in Selections from the *Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, ed and trans. by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith, London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971, p 133.

21 *Lenin: A Study on the Unity of his Thought* (1924), London: New Left Books, 1967, p. 26.

Having redefined the composition of the proletariat, the authors then implicitly differentiate this constituency from 'the multitude'—the dispossessed masses who while certainly exploited by capital, are certainly not coterminous with those 'involved in communication, cooperation, and the production and reproduction of affects'. This introduces a category that could appear to be pre- or non-Marxist—a subset akin to populist notions of the people or the poor, classifications from which class self-understanding is absent—but which claims to supersede Marxism. As used by Hardt and Negri, the multitude, now exceeding its original Italian connotation²⁷, signifies all who by engaging in fragmented and dispersed forms of resistance are the actual and potential agents of global revolution. It is they who moved by deterritorializing desires had dismantled imperialism's structures and called empire into being; and it is they who by '[p]roducing and reproducing autonomously', construct both 'a new ontological reality' (p. 395) and a new historical moment. Where the international cycle of struggles 'based on the communication and translation of the common desire of labor in revolt seem[s] no longer to exist', and communicable solidarity in struggle is impossible, it is the multitude who inaugurate local, specific and immediate events which 'blocked from travelling horizontally in the form of a cycle ... are forced to leap vertically and touch immediately on the global level' (pp. 54-5). Thus through spontaneous struggles without programmes, strategies and party, the always mobile multitude is destined to construct 'a counter-Empire, an alternative political organization of global flows and exchanges' (p. xv).

That this assertion is repeated does not mean that it is substantiated or even elucidated (see pp. 55, 58, 60, 61): consider the labyrinthine enunciation of an elusive case premised on a perception of globalization as a depthless body invisibly undermined by the microscopic and poisonous circulation of disaffection: because 'Empire presents a superficial world, the virtual centers of which

can be accessed immediately from any point across the surface', the multitudes, by 'focusing their own powers, concentrating their own powers in a tense and compact coil', initiate 'serpentine struggles' which 'slither silently across [the] superficial imperial landscape ... [and] strike directly at the highest articulation of imperial order' (p. 58; the order of phrasing has been rearranged). Although conceding that political alternatives to empire do not yet exist, Hardt and Negri confidently proclaim, and in the present tense, that '[d]esertion and exodus are a powerful form of class struggle within and against imperial post-modernity' (p. 213)²⁸. And they go on to prefigure a luminous future: 'A new nomad horde, a new race of barbarians, will arise to invade or evacuate Empire', a species which will destroy 'with an affirmative violence and trace new paths of life through their own material existence' (pp. 213, 215). Gone is the political and economic battle of organized revolutionary subjects against the state power vested in a ruling class. And given Hardt and Negri's modest proposals for the Right to a Social Wage and Global Citizenship, gone is a real politics of insurrection²⁹.

The sheer academicism of the Hardt/Negri pronouncements on appropriate forms of struggle against what they refuse to name as imperialism, emerges when two articles, one by Hardt, the other by an activist in the Brazilian landless movement, are juxtaposed. In his report of the World Social Forum at Port Alegre in Brazil, Hardt identifies the political differences cutting across the forum: the anti-globalization position which 'poses neoliberalism as the primary analytical category' and looks to 'national sovereignties, even if linked by international solidarity ... to limit and regulate the forces of capitalist globalization'; and that position which 'is more clearly posed against capital itself ... opposes any national solutions and seeks instead a democratic globalization'³⁰. For Hardt both stances identify the same sources of the crisis; however each implies a different form

22 Peter Waterman, 'Internationalism is dead! Long Live Global Solidarity', in *Global Visions*, ed. Jeremy Brecher, John Brown Childs and Jill Cutler, Boston: South End Press, 1993, pp. 257-61, p. 257.

23 Introduction to *The Politics of Culture in the Shadow of Capital*, ed. Lisa Lowe and David Lloyd, Durham NC: Duke University Press, 1997, p. 2.

24 On concepts such as "immaterial labour", "mass intellectuality", and "general intellect" see also Hardt, *Radical Thought in Italy*, pp. 2, 5.

25 For a close reading of the flaws in their 'faddish version of the technological and institutional changes in the sphere of production', see Leo Panitch and Sam Gindin, 'Gems and Baubles in Empire', in *Historical Materialism*, Vol 10:2, pp. 17-43 pp. 34-5.

26 The Hardt/Negri recognition that 'the great innovative sectors of immaterial production, from design to fashion, and from electronics to science' could not function without 'the "illegal labor" of the great masses', seems not to extend to acknowledging the dependence on 'legal' manual labour.

27 Previously Paola Virno, in 'Virtuosity and Revolution: The Political Theory of Exodus' had defined the multitude as a new species once 'radically heterogeneous to the state' but who as 'a historical result' of the transformations 'within the productive process and the forms of life', have become absolute protagonists obstructing and dismantling 'the mechanisms of political representation'. *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics*, ed. Paolo Virno and Michael Hardt, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996, p. 201.

28 Exodus as Hardt is party to explaining elsewhere, is a term 'that might be understood ... as an extension of "the refusal to work" to the whole of capitalist social relations, as a generalized strategy of refusal or defection'. See Glossary of Concepts in *Radical Thought in Italy*, no page number.

29 Although I hesitate to cite Slavoj Žižek because I lose my way in the labyrinths of his arguments, I cannot resist quoting his call to 'repeat', in present worldwide conditions, the Leninist gesture of reinventing the revolutionary project in the conditions of imperialism and colonialism ... the key Leninist

of political organization, the one adhering to traditional parties and centralized campaigns, the other working via vertical networks of the multitude in a global democratic movement.

If we look at how the fight against global capitalism is narrated by an activist in the land occupations taking place in Brazil, the Hardt/Negri strictures on the limitations to an anti-globalization position appear inconsequential for in this account the perspective of centrally organized local struggles of agrarian labour conducted within and against the regime of a nation-state is one directed 'against capital itself'. Nor does usage of the term 'neoliberal' suggest anything but an understanding of and a will to counter and overcome the capitalist system. The story of the Movimento Sem Terra told by João Pedro Stedile³¹ is about a planned and organized mass social movement, independent of but not detached from left political parties; a movement acknowledging that 'the comrades with the greatest ideological clarity' have played an indispensable role in organizing, educating, and promoting class consciousness; a movement which has forged relations of solidarity with the Zapatistas—despite considering that this remains a national struggle not yet able to broaden into a class struggle (p 99); a movement perceiving its own activities as part of an international network of farmers' movements with a presence in eighty-seven countries ('Landless Battalions', p. 99).

In response to his interlocutor's question on the help that groups in North America and Europe could give, Stedile, reiterating the axiom that internationalism begins at home, replied: 'The first thing is to bring down your neoliberal governments. Second, help us to get rid of foreign debt ... Third fight—build mass struggles. Don't delude yourself that because you have a higher living standard than us, you can build a better world. It's impossible for you to maintain your current patterns of consumption without exploiting us' ('Landless Battalions', p 103). What emerges from Stedile's revisions of the analysis and strategies of the older communist movements and his sophisticated political grasp of what internationalism might mean to-day, is that his stance is more insurrectionary in fact and revolutionary in prospect than Hardt's nebulous 'vertical networks of the multitude' destined to build 'a democratic globalization'.

Hardt and Negri's theoretical aversion to nation-based struggles replicates that of the post-nationalists for whom all nationalism, at all times, is a tainted form of oppositional consciousness, and the nation-state always a doomed site of resistance³². This tendency chooses to overlook that in traditions which gave theoretical and political sustenance to socialist and internationalist anti-colonial movements, the nation was regarded, as Neil Larsen puts it when describing Lenin's position, 'from a consciously historico-political, even strategic perspective'³³. I will not here rehearse the powerful arguments made by Neil Lazarus and Tim Brennan on the need to distinguish between the different historical forms of nationalism; and in response to the assertion that nation-state has effectively been superseded, I will do no more than refer to those who, writing from various vantage points, observe that 'although contemporary globalization has complicated the nation-state form, it has not rendered it obsolete as a form of political organization'³⁴; or maintain that the nation-state remains 'the only concrete terrain and framework for political struggle'³⁵, or locate it as the singular site on which international solidarity can grow and the one way under modern conditions 'to secure respect for weaker societies or peoples'³⁶.

Despite conceding the historical role played by what they call 'subaltern' nationalism, and even while saluting 'the freedom fighters of all the anti-colonial and anti-imperialist wars' (p. 412), Hardt and Negri are adamant in castigating the outcome of these struggles:

The very concept of a liberatory national sovereignty is ambiguous if not completely contradictory. While this nationalism seeks to liberate the multitudes from foreign domination, it erects domestic structures of domination that are equally severe ... The postcolonial

nation-state functions as an essential and subordinated element in the global organization of the capitalist market ... From India to Algeria and Cuba to Vietnam, *the state is the poisoned gift of national liberation*. (pp. 133-4; italics in original)

This adamant stance disregards the distinctions between the programmes of bourgeois and Marxist currents within liberation movements, the first seeking to inherit an intact colonial state and appropriate it to promote their own class interests, the other aspiring to abolish the state apparatus and replace it with democratic institutions. Furthermore, not only do Hardt and Negri appear uninterested in the circumstances that have culminated in the retreats of almost all left post-independence regimes, but they overlook that where the postcolonial nation-state is complicit with the capitalist market, this is a consequence not only of capitalism's universal power but of an ideological choice made by the comprador leaderships of many/most new nation-states who refuse any moves towards delinking the local economies from the global system³⁷.

Within postcolonial studies, the verso to the post-nationalist recoil from nation-based political struggles, is an affection for dispersal, transit and the unhomely³⁸. Although *Empire* does not situate itself in this discussion where 'diaspora' is a privileged term, the authors' discovery of new figures and new forms of international resistance in the non-systemic mode of perpetual and irrepressible subjective movement will be congenial to many postcolonial critics. And indeed it is in the Hardt/Negri book that acclaim of dislocation and dissemination takes manic form: 'Nomadism and miscegenation', Hardt and Negri announce, 'appear here as figures of virtue, as the first ethical practice on the terrain of Empire ... The real heroes of the liberation of the Third World may really have been the emigrants and the flows of population that have destroyed old and new boundaries' (pp. 362-3)³⁹.

If those who concentrate on physical movement and cultural volatility do draw a necessary attention to the acceleration of 'transnational circuits'⁴⁰, an embrace of geographical displacements as the desirable norm pays little heed to the punitive barriers hindering the passage of populations from South and East to North and West—restrictions that are structural to an uneven capitalist world-system. Neither do they address the material and existential conditions of the relocated communities which include economic migrants, undocumented immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers and victims of ethnic cleansing, and whose mobility far from being an elective ethical practice, is to a large degree coerced⁴¹. Most significantly, the focus on diaspora leaves in obscurity the vast and vastly impoverished populations who cannot and might not choose to migrate, who are not part of the reservoir of cheap labour in either the home cities, the Gulf States or the old and new metropolitan centres; who still engage in subsistence farming, or in extracting raw materials and producing goods under pre-capitalist conditions for consumption in the North, or who are economically redundant and constitute an under-class.

Without suggesting that such populations inhabit a timeless world, or that their material and psychic lives, not to speak of the commodities they produce as labourers, peasants and artisans, are invariably unaffected by the penetration of the world-market⁴², I am proposing that these communities do not have access to the pleasures of the multiple consciousness available to those émigrés who occupy an agreeably liminal location within a cosmopolitan environment. If such reservations should not preempt recognition of the new energies that can be generated amongst migrant populations, especially when relocated in protean urban environments, the Hardt/Negri description of the multitudes in perpetual and life-enhancing motion must all the same appear illusory rather than visionary: 'In effect what pushes from behind is, negatively, desertion from the miserable cultural and material conditions of imperial reproduction; but positively what pulls forward is the wealth of desire and the accumulation of expressive and productive forces that the processes of

lesson today is that politics without the organizational form of the party is politics without politics'. 'A Plea for Leninist Intolerance', in *Critical Inquiry*, Vol 28: No. 2, Winter 2002, pp. 542-566, pp. 553 and 558. For an expanded version see Zizek's Introduction and Afterword to *Revolution at the Gates: A Selection of Writings From February to October 1917*, London: Verso, 2002

30 'Today's Bandung?', *New Left Review*, No 14, March/April, 2002, pp 112-118; p. 114

31 'Landless Battalions', *New Left Review*, No 15, May/June, 2002, pp. 77-104

32 Vilashini Coopan remarking on 'the ease with which hybridity displaces race and nation' in the postcolonial discussion, has made a strong case for locating these categories within other axes of social existence (class and ethnicity, gender and sexuality, culture and community) and theorizing the coextensiveness of the terms in a context that is both comparative and historical. See 'W(h)ither Post-colonial Studies? Towards the Transnational Study of Race and Nation', in *Postcolonial Theory and Criticism*, ed Laura Chrisman and Benita Parry, Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, for The English Association, 2000, pp. 14 and 19.

33 *Determinations: Essays on Theory, Narrative and Nation in the Americas*, London: Verso, 2001, p. 11

34 Pheng Cheah, 'Given Culture: Rethinking Cosmopolitanism in Transnationalism', in *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling beyond the Nation*, ed. Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998, p. 291

35 Fredric Jameson, 'Taking on Globalization', *New Left Review*, 4 July/August 2000, p 65

36 'Cosmopolitanism and Internationalism', in *New Left Review*, 7, Jan/Feb 2001, pp 75-84, p 77. For an overview on the debate, see Crystal Bartolovich, 'Global Capital and Transnationalism' in *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies*, ed Henry Schwarz and Sangeeta Ray, Oxford: Blackwell, 2000.

37 For some discussion on revolutionary liberation movements, see my 'Liberation Theory: Variations on Themes of Marxism and Modernity', in *Marxism and Modernity*, ed. Crystal Bartolovich and Neil Lazarus, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002

38 For articulations of positions which welcome diaspora for the enriching experiences this affords, as the location from which to theorize the contemporary condition, and as in itself engendering a mode of thinking that can roam far and wide because liberated from the fixity of place and community, see for example Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, London: Routledge, 1994; Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996; Ali Behdad, 'Global Disjunctions, Diasporic Differences, and the New World (Dis-)Order', in *A Companion to Postcolonial Studies*, ed Henry Schwarz and Sangeeta Ray, Oxford: Blackwell, 2000

39 It is sobering at this point to be reminded by Nigel Harris that 'Most people are fundamentally rooted at home, and only the margin of the most energetic, talented and ambitious move—if they can afford the high costs ... And when they move, they do so specifically to earn money with which they can then return home, not to go into exile.' 'Everybody in?' *Red Pepper*, August, 2000, pp. 26-7, p 26.

40 See for example Manthia Diawara observation that in West Africa '[a]ll sorts of merchandise from a variety of origins are on display in traditional markets ... Everything from computers, fax machines, and brand-name shoes to gold jewellery is found covered with dust in the market-place.' 'Regional Imaginary in Africa', in *The Culture of Globalization*, ed Jameson and Miyoshi, Durham: Duke University Press, 1998

41 Consider the women from China, Bangladesh, Thailand and the Philippines who 'have paid a recruitment fee in order to be shipped to Saipan, a half-forgotten US island in Micronesia. On arrival they are crowded into barracks where they have to work 70-80 hours a week without anything but a floor to sleep on. Because Saipan is a US territory, everything produced there is duty-free and without quotas, ready to be sold in the mainland at The Gap, J. Crew and Ralph Lauren stores, proudly bearing a "Made in USA" label'. See 'Sweatshops are everywhere', in *Red Pepper*, Jan 2002, p 10

42 See *The Cultures of Globalization*, ed. Jameson and

globalization have determined in the consciousness of every individual and social group (*Empire*, p. 213). Such optimistic projections are a reminder of *Empire's* spectacular failure to address the substantive and experiential situations of the settled populations of the nation-states of Asia, Africa and Latin America.

Paul Smith has drawn attention to theorists and critics seduced by '[m]agical notions such as that of fully global space replete with an ecstatic buzz of cyber communication, or of an instantaneous mobility of people, goods and services, or of a global market place hooked up by immaterial money that flashes round the globe many times a minute'⁴³. Without suggesting that Hardt and Negri advance this facile case, the delivery of their thesis on 'perpetual motion' and 'the processes of mixture and hybridization' generated by *Empire*, (p. 60) is all the same as resonant of a spacious exhilaration:

The passage to *Empire* emerges from the twilight of modern sovereignty. In contrast to imperialism, *Empire* establishes no territorial center of power and does not rely on fixed boundaries or barriers. It is a decentred and deterritorializing apparatus of rule that progressively incorporates the entire global realm within its open, expanding frontiers. *Empire* manages hybrid identities, flexible hierarchies, and plural exchanges through modulating networks of command. The distinct national colors of the imperialist map of the world have merged and blended in the imperial global rainbow. (pp. xiii-xiii)

The Hardt/Negri definition of 'Empire' as decentred and deterritorialized coincides with others that also circumvent the might of an actually existing colossus which has aptly been described as 'an empire ... predicated, like past empires, on political control for the purpose of economic control, and resource and surplus extraction'⁴⁴. For as Peter Gowan argues, '[A]ny prospect of bringing humanity towards genuine unity on a global scale would have to confront the social and political relations of capitalism with a clarity and trenchancy from which most representatives of this

current shrink; and any hope of altering these can only be nullified by evasion or edulcoration of the realities of the sole superpower'⁴⁵.

Significantly when Samir Amin urges the building of a global political system that is not in the service of the global market, he looks to the creation of anti-comprador fronts within the old and new nation-states that would be capable of preparing 'the ground for a people's international, robust enough to deal with world-devouring appetite of capital' (*Capitalism in the Age of Globalization*, p.150). This is a reminder that Old Internationalism offers an inspiration to those engaged in reinventing programmes, structures and strategies in the fight against contemporary global capitalism⁴⁶. The backing of institutionalized Internationalism is no longer available; nor are the histories of past Internationalists invariably edifying. But those who regard themselves as anti-imperialist should surely acknowledge the urge towards and the practice of a borderless resistance to capitalism's unbounded oppression. It therefore seems imperative that Internationalism and the Internationalists, for long objects of study in the social and political sciences⁴⁷, become part of a broader interdisciplinary discussion⁴⁸. If this happens, then the concrete and refined historical analysis of Lenin and Trotsky on the national question and internationalism is essential reading; as is the need to become acquainted with the paradoxical programmes and strategic interventions of the Third International under the Stalin regime, during which the project of building socialism in one country and the immediate interests of the Soviet Union deformed the commitment to international solidarity⁴⁹. This is not to deny that for whatever byzantine reasons, the USSR did render military and financial assistance to embattled colonial populations, and did by its very presence stay the armed fist of the United States.

For some time Marxists had anticipated that the most immediate prospects for organized mass class struggles against capitalism's dominance lay in the once-colonized world where the urban and rural poor are experiencing exploitation at the hands of recently empowered native ruling classes and popular dissent is endemic. Writing now David Harvey claims that '[t]here is not a region in the world where manifestations of anger and discontent with the capitalist system cannot be found' ('Globalization in Question', p.13), and he goes on to urge the necessity of systematically coordinated struggles against capitalism, arguing that because local and broad-based movements lack coherence, direction and a vision of an anti-capitalist alternative, it is urgent that dispersed popular resistances which do not immediately appear to be proletarian in the traditional sense, are brought together. And although Harvey is not committed to an old-style vanguard party 'that imposes a singular goal', he insists that '[w]e still badly need a socialist avant-garde ... We need not only to understand but also to create organizations, institutions, doctrines, programs, formalized structures and the like' ('Globalization in Question', pp.15,16). To embark on such work presupposes that globalization is recognized as yet another reconfiguration of systemic capitalism, that the theoretical repudiation of internationalist anti-capitalist movements is dispelled, that the concept of the party is restored in a form disentangled from its Stalinist distortions, and that the notion of the engaged intellectual is again in place. If this perspective makes sense, then the Hardt/Negri insistence on 'Empire' as a paradigm shift from capitalist-as-imperialism will appear mistaken, and their trust in the autonomous and spontaneous creative capacity of the multitudes to deliver communism, must seem a mirage.

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Miyoshi, Durham: Duke University Press, 1999

43 *Millennial Dreams: Contemporary Culture and Capital in the North*, London: Verso, 1997, p 13.

44 Rahul Mahajan, author of *The New Crusade: America's War on Terrorism* (Monthly Review Press) writing in *Red Pepper*, September 2002, 'Iraq and the new Great Game', pp. 17-18, p. 18.

45 'Neoliberal cosmopolitanism', *New Left Review*, 11, Sep/Oct 2001, pp 79-93. p. 93. For another optimistic vision of globalization from below, see Richard Falk, 'The Making of Global Citizenship' in *Global Visions*, ed. Jeremy Brecher, John Brown Childs and Jill Cutler, Boston: South End Press, 1993, pp. 39.

46 It is surely fitting to recall some recent and more distant manifestations of a theoretical position and a political allegiance grounded in class affiliation, and anti-imperialist partisanship: an Indian exiled by the Raj who assisted in the formation of the Mexican Communist Part (N.N.Roy); the participation in the Spanish Civil War of African-Americans volunteers to the Lincoln Brigade; a Caribbean intellectual (C.L.R James) who involved himself in both Pan-Africanism and metropolitan left politics; African insurgents who during the nineteen-seventies greeted the popular anti-fascist upsurge in the imperial homeland while engaged in fighting the Portuguese army in Mozambique, Angola and Guinea-Bissau; an Argentinean (Ché Guevara) instrumental in the making of the Cuban insurrection, subsequently a combatant in the anti-imperialist Congolese war and then a prime mover of the abortive revolution in Bolivia during which he was killed; a French intellectual (Régis Debray) who was imprisoned for his part in the same uprising; Cuban troops defending the newly independent regimes of Mozambique and Angola against the military incursions of the then South Africa acting on behalf of international capitalism.

47 See Alejandro Colás, 'Putting Cosmopolitanism Into Practice: the Case of Socialist Internationalism', in *Millennium: Journal of International Relations*, Vol.23, No.3, 1994, pp 513-534

48 This process has already begun: see Robert Young, *Postcolonialism: An Historical Introduction*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2001, Tim Brennan, 'Postcolonial Studies Between the European Wars: An Intellectual History', in *Marxism, Modernity and Postcolonial Studies*, ed. Crystal Bartolowich and Neil Lazarus, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002 and Perry Anderson, 'Internationalism: A Breviary', *New Left Review*, 14, March/April 2002, pp 5-25.

49 The conduct of the Soviet Union towards the anarcho-syndicalists and the P.O.U.M during the Spanish Civil War is one such notorious instance, as is the failure of the PCF to support the colonial wars in French Indo-China and Algeria.