

aid based on biopolitical or military objectives, he is positive toward others coming from those concerned with civil rights and who fight for states that take citizenship seriously. Indeed, Moore argues that such humanitarians "have to be etched into the new wave of global solidarity Hardt and Negri assert as necessary."<sup>4</sup> Because they operate at such a general and abstract level, Hardt and Negri are unable to see clearly such a role for humanitarians and more generally to have much to say about the realities of Africa today. Moore concludes with the point that what African nations need today is democracy, but *Empire* has little directly to say about such a mundane matter and what it does say is not stated boldly enough.

Aronowitz also critiques Hardt and Negri for their abstractions. They fail to deal with such global organizations as the World Trade Organization, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Bank as concrete examples "of the repressive world government of Empire."<sup>5</sup> More importantly, they deal with resistance abstractly and theoretically rather than dealing with numerous real-world examples of resistance. Aronowitz argues that people continue to need to test the mettle of, and to resist, contemporary institutions

## NOTES

1 Tarak Barkawi and Mark Laffey, "Retrieving the Imperial: Empire and International Relations," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 31, 2002: 111.

2 *Ibid.*, 122.

3 *Ibid.*, 124.

(such as those mentioned above) and to force the still predominant nation-state into making reforms. They can do this while at the same time they can form the kinds of global alliances that Hardt and Negri associate with the multitude.

Finally, Hardt and Negri make it clear that they do not deny the reality of the nation-state, or argue for its end, but rather see its role as being transformed within empire. They defend their abstract sense of multitude, but recognize that they need to move toward a more concrete analysis of it as a revolutionary subject. To that end, they emphasize the "real transformative actions of the multitude" involving "resistance, insurrection, and constituent power."<sup>6</sup> Hardt and Negri recognize that the globe is not smooth and that there are differences among and between areas of the world. They also see their analysis as applying to areas usually considered outside it (such as the case of Africa mentioned above). Hardt and Negri close by acknowledging the fact that they have not provided all of the answers and they welcome the debate their work has stimulated. They see their work as contributing to a collective project and a collective (and emerging) body of knowledge.

4 David Moore, "Africa: the Black Hole at the Middle of Empire?" *Rethinking Marxism* 13, 3/4, 2001: 114.

5 Stanley Aronowitz, "The New World Order (They Mean It)." *The Nation* July 17, 2000: 27.

6 Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, "Adventures of the Multitude: Response of the Authors." *Rethinking Marxism* 14, 3/4, 2001: 242.

## READING 30

### Empire

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri

#### Preface

*Empire* is materializing before our very eyes. Over the past several decades, as colonial regimes were overthrown and then precipitously after the Soviet barriers to the capitalist world market finally collapsed, we have witnessed an irresistible and irreversible globalization of economic and cultural exchanges. Along with the global market and global circuits of production has emerged a global order, a new logic and structure of rule – in short, a new form of sovereignty. *Empire* is the political subject that effectively regulates these global exchanges, the sovereign power that governs the world.

Many argue that the globalization of capitalist production and exchange means that economic relations have become more autonomous from political controls, and consequently that political sovereignty has declined. Some celebrate this new era as the liberation of the capitalist economy from the restrictions and distortions that political forces have imposed on it; others lament it as the closing of the institutional channels through which workers and citizens can influence or contest the cold logic of capitalist profit. It is certainly true that, in step with the processes of globalization, the sovereignty of nation-states, while still effective, has progressively declined. The primary factors of production and exchange – money, technology, people, and goods – move with increasing ease across national boundaries; hence the nation-state has less and less power to regulate these flows and impose its authority over the economy. Even the most dominant nation-states should no longer be thought of as supreme and sovereign authorities, either outside or even within their own borders. *The decline in sovereignty of nation-*

*states, however, does not mean that sovereignty as such has declined.* Throughout the contemporary transformations, political controls, state functions, and regulatory mechanisms have continued to rule the realm of economic and social production and exchange. Our basic hypothesis is that sovereignty has taken a new form, composed of a series of national and supranational organisms united under a single logic of rule. This new global form of sovereignty is what we call *Empire*.

The declining sovereignty of nation-states and their increasing inability to regulate economic and cultural exchanges is in fact one of the primary symptoms of the coming of *Empire*. The sovereignty of the nation-state was the cornerstone of the imperialism that European powers constructed throughout the modern era. By "Empire," however, we understand something altogether different from "imperialism." The boundaries defined by the modern system of nation-states were fundamental to European colonialism and economic expansion: the territorial boundaries of the nation delimited the center of power from which rule was exerted over external foreign territories through a system of channels and barriers that alternately facilitated and obstructed the flows of production and circulation. Imperialism was really an extension of the sovereignty of the European nation-states beyond their own boundaries. Eventually nearly all the world's territories could be parceled out and the entire world map could be coded in European colors: red for British territory, blue for French, green for Portuguese, and so forth. Wherever modern sovereignty took root, it constructed a Leviathan that overarched its social domain and imposed hierarchical territorial boundaries, both to police the purity of its own identity and to exclude all that was other.

The passage to *Empire* emerges from the twilight of modern sovereignty. In contrast to imperialism, *Empire*

This reading comprises extracts taken from throughout the original book.

establishes no territorial center of power and does not rely on fixed boundaries or barriers. It is a *decentered* and *detritorializing* 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.

The transformation of the modern imperialist geography of the globe and the realization of the world market signal a passage within the capitalist mode of production. Most significant, the spatial divisions of the three Worlds (First, Second, and Third) have been scrambled so that we continually find the First World in the Third, the Third in the First, and the Second almost nowhere at all. Capital seems to be faced with a smooth world – or really, a world defined by new and complex regimes of differentiation and homogenization, deterritorialization and reterritorialization. The construction of the paths and limits of these new global flows has been accompanied by a transformation of the dominant productive processes themselves, with the result that the role of industrial factory labor has been reduced and priority given instead to communicative, cooperative, and affective labor. In the postmodernization of the global economy, the creation of wealth tends ever more toward what we will call biopolitical production, the production of social life itself, in which the economic, the political, and the cultural increasingly overlap and invest one another.

Many locate the ultimate authority that rules over the processes of globalization and the new world order in the United States. Proponents praise the United States as the world leader and sole superpower, and detractors denounce it as an imperialist oppressor. Both these views rest on the assumption that the United States has simply donned the mantle of global power that the European nations have now let fall. If the nineteenth century was a British century, then the twentieth century has been an American century; or really, if modernity was European, then postmodernity is American. The most damning charge critics can level, then, is that the United States is repeating the practices of old European imperialists, while proponents celebrate the United States as a more efficient

and more benevolent world leader, getting right what the Europeans got wrong. Our basic hypothesis, however, that a new imperial form of sovereignty has emerged, contradicts both these views. *The United States does not, and indeed no nation-state can today, form the center of an imperialist project. Imperialism is over. No nation will be world leader in the way modern European nations were.*

The United States does indeed occupy a privileged position in Empire, but this privilege derives not from its similarities to the old European imperialist powers, but from its differences. These differences can be recognized most clearly by focusing on the properly imperial (not imperialist) foundations of the United States constitution, where by “constitution” we mean both the *formal constitution*, the written document along with its various amendments and legal apparatuses, and the *material constitution*, that is, the continuous formation and re-formation of the composition of social forces. Thomas Jefferson, the authors of the *Federalist*, and the other ideological founders of the United States were all inspired by the ancient imperial model; they believed they were creating on the other side of the Atlantic a new Empire with open, expanding frontiers, where power would be effectively distributed in networks. This imperial idea has survived and matured throughout the history of the United States constitution and has emerged now on a global scale in its fully realized form.

We should emphasize that we use “Empire” here not as a *metaphor*, which would require demonstration of the resemblances between today’s world order and the Empires of Rome, China, the Americas, and so forth, but rather as a *concept*, which calls primarily for a theoretical approach. The concept of Empire is characterized fundamentally by a lack of boundaries: Empire’s rule has no limits. First and foremost, then, the concept of Empire posits a regime that effectively encompasses the spatial totality, or really that rules over the entire “civilized” world. No territorial boundaries limit its reign. Second, the concept of Empire presents itself not as a historical regime originating in conquest, but rather as an order that effectively suspends history and thereby fixes the existing state of affairs for eternity. From the perspective of Empire, this is the way things will always be and the way they were always meant to be. In other words, Empire

presents its rule not as a transitory moment in the movement of history, but as a regime with no temporal boundaries and in this sense outside of history or at the end of history. Third, the rule of Empire operates on all registers of the social order extending down to the depths of the social world. Empire not only manages a territory and a population but also creates the very world it inhabits. It not only regulates human interactions but also seeks directly to rule over human nature. The object of its rule is social life in its entirety, and thus Empire presents the paradigmatic form of biopower. Finally, although the practice of Empire is continually bathed in blood, the concept of Empire is always dedicated to peace – a perpetual and universal peace outside of history.

The Empire we are faced with wields enormous powers of oppression and destruction, but that fact should not make us nostalgic in any way for the old forms of domination. The passage to Empire and its processes of globalization offer new possibilities to the forces of liberation. Globalization, of course, is not one thing, and the multiple processes that we recognize as globalization are not unified or univocal. Our political task, we will argue, is not simply to resist these processes but to reorganize them and redirect them toward new ends. The creative forces of the multitude that sustain Empire are also capable of autonomously constructing a counter-Empire, an alternative political organization of global flows and exchanges. The struggles to contest and subvert Empire, as well as those to construct a real alternative, will thus take place on the imperial terrain itself – indeed, such new struggles have already begun to emerge. Through these struggles and many more like them, the multitude will have to invent new democratic forms and a new constituent power that will one day take us through and beyond Empire.

The genealogy we follow in our analysis of the passage from imperialism to Empire will be first European and then Euro-American, not because we believe that these regions are the exclusive or privileged source of new ideas and historical innovation, but simply because this was the dominant geographical path along which the concepts and practices that animate today’s Empire developed – in step, as we will argue, with the development of the capitalist mode of production. Whereas the genealogy of Empire is in this sense Eurocentric, however, its present powers are not

limited to any region. Logics of rule that in some sense originated in Europe and the United States now invest practices of domination throughout the globe. More important, the forces that contest Empire and effectively prefigure an alternative global society are themselves not limited to any geographical region. The geography of these alternative powers, the new cartography, is still waiting to be written – or really, it is being written today through the resistances, struggles, and desires of the multitude.

[...]

## The Constitution of Empire

Many contemporary theorists are reluctant to recognize the globalization of capitalist production and its world market as a fundamentally new situation and a significant historical shift. The theorists associated with the world-systems perspective, for example, argue that from its inception, capitalism has always functioned as a world economy, and therefore those who clamor about the novelty of its globalization today have only misunderstood its history. Certainly, it is important to emphasize both capitalism’s continuous foundational relationship to (or at least a tendency toward) the world market and capitalism’s expanding cycles of development; but proper attention to the *ab origine* universal or universalizing dimensions of capitalist development should not blind us to the rupture or shift in contemporary capitalist production and global relations of power. We believe that this shift makes perfectly clear and possible today the capitalist project to bring together economic power and political power, to realize, in other words, a properly capitalist order. In constitutional terms, the processes of globalization are no longer merely a fact but also a source of juridical definitions that tends to project a single supranational figure of political power.

Other theorists are reluctant to recognize a major shift in global power relations because they see that the dominant capitalist nation-states have continued to exercise imperialist domination over the other nations and regions of the globe. From this perspective, the contemporary tendencies toward Empire would represent not a fundamentally new phenomenon but simply a perfecting of imperialism. Without underestimating

these real and important lines of continuity, however, we think it is important to note that what used to be conflict or competition among several imperialist powers has in important respects been replaced by the idea of a single power that overdetermines them all, structures them in a unitary way, and treats them under one common notion of right that is decidedly postcolonial and postimperialist. This is really the point of departure for our study of Empire: a new notion of right, or rather, a new inscription of authority and a new design of the production of norms and legal instruments of coercion that guarantee contracts and resolve conflicts.

We should point out here that we accord special attention to the juridical figures of the constitution of Empire at the beginning of our study not out of any specialized disciplinary interest – as if right or law in itself, as an agent of regulation, were capable of representing the social world in its totality – but rather because they provide a good index of the processes of imperial constitution. New juridical figures reveal a first view of the tendency toward the centralized and unitary regulation of both the world market and global power relations, with all the difficulties presented by such a project. Juridical transformations effectively point toward changes in the material constitution of world power and order. The transition we are witnessing today from traditional international law, which was defined by contracts and treaties, to the definition and constitution of a new sovereign, supranational world power (and thus to an imperial notion of right), however incomplete, gives us a framework in which to read the totalizing social processes of Empire. In effect, the juridical transformation functions as a symptom of the modifications of the material biopolitical constitution of our societies. These changes regard not only international law and international relations but also the internal power relations of each country. While studying and critiquing the new forms of international and supranational law, then, we will at the same time be pushed to the heart of the political theory of Empire, where the problem of supranational sovereignty, its source of legitimacy, and its exercise bring into focus political, cultural, and finally ontological problems.

[...]

[We note] the renewed interest in and effectiveness of the concept of *bellum justum*, or “just war.” This

concept, which was organically linked to the ancient imperial orders and whose rich and complex genealogy goes back to the biblical tradition, has begun to reappear recently as a central narrative of political discussions, particularly in the wake of the Gulf War. Traditionally the concept rests primarily on the idea that when a state finds itself confronted with a threat of aggression that can endanger its territorial integrity or political independence, it has a *jus ad bellum* (right to make war). There is certainly something troubling in this renewed focus on the concept of *bellum justum*, which modernity, or rather modern secularism, had worked so hard to expunge from the medieval tradition. The traditional concept of just war involves the banalization of war and the celebration of it as an ethical instrument, both of which were ideas that modern political thought and the international community of nation-states had resolutely refused. These two traditional characteristics have reappeared in our post-modern world: on the one hand, war is reduced to the status of police action, and on the other, the new power that can legitimately exercise ethical functions through war is sacralized.

Far from merely repeating ancient or medieval notions, however, today's concept presents some truly fundamental innovations. Just war is no longer in any sense an activity of defense or resistance, as it was, for example, in the Christian tradition from Saint Augustine to the scholastics of the Counter-Reformation, as a necessity of the “worldly city” to guarantee its own survival. It has become rather an activity that is justified in itself. Two distinct elements are combined in this concept of just war: first, the legitimacy of the military apparatus insofar as it is ethically grounded, and second, the effectiveness of military action to achieve the desired order and peace. The synthesis of these two elements may indeed be a key factor determining the foundation and the new tradition of Empire. Today the enemy, just like the war itself, comes to be at once banalized (reduced to an object of routine police repression) and absolutized (as the Enemy, an absolute threat to the ethical order). The Gulf War gave us perhaps the first fully articulated example of this new epistemology of the concept. The resurrection of the concept of just war may be only a symptom of the emergence of Empire, but what a suggestive and powerful one!

[...]

## There Is No More Outside

The domains conceived as inside and outside and the relationship between them are configured differently in a variety of modern discourses. The spatial configuration of inside and outside itself, however, seems to us a general and foundational characteristic of modern thought. In the passage from modern to postmodern and from imperialism to Empire there is progressively less distinction between inside and outside.

[...]

Finally, there is no longer an outside also in a military sense. When Francis Fukuyama claims that the contemporary historical passage is defined by the end of history, he means that the era of major conflicts has come to an end: sovereign power will no longer confront its Other and no longer face its outside, but rather will progressively expand its boundaries to envelop the entire globe as its proper domain. The history of imperialist, interimperialist, and anti-imperialist wars is over. The end of that history has ushered in the reign of peace. Or really, we have entered the era of minor and internal conflicts. Every imperial war is a civil war, a police action – from Los Angeles and Granada to Mogadishu and Sarajevo. In fact, the separation of tasks between the external and the internal arms of power (between the army and the police, the CIA and the FBI) is increasingly vague and indeterminate.

In our terms, the end of history that Fukuyama refers to is the end of the crisis at the center of modernity, the coherent and defining conflict that was the foundation and *raison d'être* for modern sovereignty. History has ended precisely and only to the extent that it is conceived in Hegelian terms – as the movement of a dialectic of contradictions, a play of absolute negations and subsumption. The binaries that defined modern conflict have become blurred. The Other that might delimit a modern sovereign Self has become fractured and indistinct, and there is no longer an outside that can bound the place of sovereignty. The outside is what gave the crisis its coherence. Today it is increasingly difficult for the ideologues of the United States to name a single, unified enemy; rather, there seem to be minor and elusive enemies everywhere. The end of the crisis of modernity has given rise to a

proliferation of minor and indefinite crises, or, as we prefer, to an omni-crisis.

It is useful to remember here [...] that the capitalist market is one machine that has always run counter to any division between inside and outside. It is thwarted by barriers and exclusions; it thrives instead by including always more within its sphere. Profit can be generated only through contact, engagement, interchange, and commerce. The realization of the world market would constitute the point of arrival of this tendency. In its ideal form there is no outside to the world market: the entire globe is its domain. We might thus use the form of the world market as a model for understanding imperial sovereignty. Perhaps, just as Foucault recognized the panopticon as the diagram of modern power, the world market might serve adequately – even though it is not an architecture but really an anti-architecture – as the diagram of imperial power.

The striated space of modernity constructed places that were continually engaged in and founded on a dialectical play with their outsides. The space of imperial sovereignty, in contrast, is smooth. It might appear to be free of the binary divisions or striation of modern boundaries, but really it is crisscrossed by so many fault lines that it only appears as a continuous, uniform space. In this sense, the clearly defined crisis of modernity gives way to an omni-crisis in the imperial world. In this smooth space of Empire, there is no place of power – it is both everywhere and nowhere. Empire is an *ou-topia*, or really a *non-place*.

[...]

## Counter-Empire

[...]

Being-against: nomadism, desertion, exodus

[...] One element we can put our finger on at the most basic and elemental level is the *will to be against*. In general, the will to be against does not seem to require much explanation. Disobedience to authority is one of the most natural and healthy acts. To us it seems completely obvious that those who are exploited will resist and – given the necessary conditions – rebel. Today,

however, this may not be so obvious. [...] The identification of the enemy, however, is no small task given that exploitation tends no longer to have a specific place and that we are immersed in a system of power so deep and complex that we can no longer determine specific difference or measure. We suffer exploitation, alienation, and command as enemies, but we do not know where to locate the production of oppression. And yet we still resist and struggle.

[...] If there is no longer a place that can be recognized as outside, we must be against in every place. This being-against becomes the essential key to every active political position in the world, every desire that is effective – perhaps of democracy itself. The first anti-fascist partisans in Europe, armed deserters confronting their traitorous governments, were aptly called “against-men.” Today the generalized being-against of the multitude must recognize imperial sovereignty as the enemy and discover the adequate means to subvert its power.

Here we see once again the republican principle in the very first instance: desertion, exodus, and nomadism. Whereas in the disciplinary era *sabotage* was the fundamental notion of resistance, in the era of imperial control it may be *desertion*. Whereas being-against in modernity often meant a direct and/or dialectical opposition of forces, in postmodernity being-against might well be most effective in an oblique or diagonal stance. Battles against the Empire might be won through subtraction and defection. This desertion does not have a place: it is the evacuation of the places of power.

Throughout the history of modernity, the mobility and migration of the labor force have disrupted the disciplinary conditions to which workers are constrained. And power has wielded the most extreme violence against this mobility. [...] Mobility and mass worker nomadism always express a refusal and a search for liberation: the resistance against the horrible conditions of exploitation and the search for freedom and new conditions of life. [...]

Today the mobility of labor power and migratory movements is extraordinarily diffuse and difficult to grasp. Even the most significant population movements of modernity (including the black and white Atlantic migrations) constitute lilliputian events with respect to the enormous population transfers of our times. A specter haunts the world and it is the specter

of migration. All the powers of the old world are allied in a merciless operation against it, but the movement is irresistible. Along with the flight from the so-called Third World there are flows of political refugees and transfers of intellectual labor power, in addition to the massive movements of the agricultural, manufacturing, and service proletariat. The legal and documented movements are dwarfed by clandestine migrations: the borders of national sovereignty are sieves, and every attempt at complete regulation runs up against violent pressure. Economists attempt to explain this phenomenon by presenting their equations and models, which even if they were complete would not explain that irrepressible desire for free movement. 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 capacities that the processes of globalization have determined in the consciousness of every individual and social group – and thus a certain hope. Desertion and exodus are a powerful form of class struggle within and against imperial postmodernity. This mobility, however, still constitutes a spontaneous level of struggle, and, as we noted earlier, it most often leads today to a new rootless condition of poverty and misery.

A new nomad horde, a new race of barbarians, will arise to invade or evacuate Empire. Nietzsche was oddly prescient of their destiny in the nineteenth century. “Problem: where are the *barbarians* of the twentieth century? Obviously they will come into view and consolidate themselves only after tremendous socialist crises.” We cannot say exactly what Nietzsche foresaw in his lucid delirium, but indeed what recent event could be a stronger example of the power of desertion and exodus, the power of the nomad horde, than the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the entire Soviet bloc? In the desertion from “socialist discipline,” savage mobility and mass migration contributed substantially to the collapse of the system. In fact, the desertion of productive cadres disorganized and struck at the heart of the disciplinary system of the bureaucratic Soviet world. The mass exodus of highly trained workers from Eastern Europe played a central role in provoking the collapse of the Wall. Even though it refers to the particularities of the socialist state system,

this example demonstrates that the mobility of the labor force can indeed express an open political conflict and contribute to the destruction of the regime. What we need, however, is more. We need a force capable of not only organizing the destructive capacities of the multitude, but also constituting through the desires of the multitude an alternative. The counter-Empire must also be a new global vision, a new way of living in the world.

[...]

### New barbarians

Those who are against, while escaping from the local and particular constraints of their human condition, must also continually attempt to construct a new body and a new life. [...]

These barbaric deployments work on human relations in general, but we can recognize them today first and foremost in corporeal relations and configurations of gender and sexuality. Conventional norms of corporeal and sexual relations between and within genders are increasingly open to challenge and transformation. Bodies themselves transform and mutate to create new posthuman bodies. The first condition of this corporeal transformation is the recognition that human nature is in no way separate from nature as a whole, that there are no fixed and necessary boundaries between the human and the animal, the human and the machine, the male and the female, and so forth; it is the recognition that nature itself is an artificial terrain open to ever new mutations, mixtures, and hybridizations. Not only do we consciously subvert the traditional boundaries, dressing in drag, for example, but we also move in a creative, indeterminate zone *au milieu*, in between and without regard for those boundaries. Today's corporeal mutations constitute an *anthropological exodus* and represent an extraordinarily important, but still quite ambiguous, element of the configuration of republicanism “against” imperial civilization. The anthropological exodus is important primarily because here is where the positive, constructive face of the mutation begins to appear: an ontological mutation in action, the concrete invention of a first *new place in the non-place*. This creative evolution does not merely occupy any existing place, but rather invents a new place; it is a desire that creates a new

body; a metamorphosis that breaks all the naturalistic homologies of modernity.

This notion of anthropological exodus is still very ambiguous, however, because its methods, hybridization and mutation, are themselves the very methods employed by imperial sovereignty. In the dark world of cyberpunk fiction, for example, the freedom of self-fashioning is often indistinguishable from the powers of an all-encompassing control. We certainly do need to change our bodies and ourselves, and in perhaps a much more radical way than the cyberpunk authors imagine. In our contemporary world, the now common aesthetic mutations of the body, such as piercings and tattoos, punk fashion and its various imitations, are all initial indications of this corporeal transformation, but in the end they do not hold a candle to the kind of radical mutation needed here. The will to be against really needs a body that is completely incapable of submitting to command. It needs a body that is incapable of adapting to family life, to factory discipline, to the regulations of a traditional sex life, and so forth. (If you find your body refusing these “normal” modes of life, don't despair – realize your gift!) In addition to being radically unprepared for normalization, however, the new body must also be able to create a new life. We must go much further to define that new place of the non-place, well beyond the simple experiences of mixture and hybridization, and the experiments that are conducted around them. We have to arrive at constituting a coherent political artifice, an *artificial becoming* in the sense that the humanists spoke of a *homohomo* produced by art and knowledge, and that Spinoza spoke of a powerful body produced by that highest consciousness that is infused with love. The infinite paths of the barbarians must form a new mode of life.

[...]

Now that we have dealt extensively with Empire, we should focus directly on the multitude and its potential political power.

### The Two Cities

We need to investigate specifically how the multitude can become a *political subject* in the context of Empire.

[...]

How can the actions of the multitude become political? How can the multitude organize and concentrate its energies against the repression and incessant territorial segmentations of Empire? The only response that we can give to these questions is that the action of the multitude becomes political primarily when it begins to confront directly and with an adequate consciousness the central repressive operations of Empire. It is a matter of recognizing and engaging the imperial initiatives and not allowing them continually to reestablish order; it is a matter of crossing and breaking down the limits and segmentations that are imposed on the new collective labor power; it is a matter of gathering together these experiences of resistance and wielding them in concert against the nerve centers of imperial command.

This task for the multitude, however, although it is clear at a conceptual level, remains rather abstract. What specific and concrete practices will animate this political project? We cannot say at this point. What we can see nonetheless is a first element of a political program for the global multitude, a first political demand: *global citizenship*. During the 1996 demonstrations for the *sans papiers*, the undocumented aliens residing in France, the banners demanded "Papiers pour tous!" Residency papers for everyone means in the first place that all should have the full rights of citizenship in the country where they live and work. This is not a utopian or unrealistic political demand. The demand is simply that the juridical status of the population be reformed in step with the real economic transformations of recent years. Capital itself has demanded the increased mobility of labor power and continuous migrations across national boundaries. Capitalist production in the more dominant regions (in Europe, the United States, and Japan, but also in Singapore, Saudi Arabia, and elsewhere) is utterly dependent on the influx of workers from the subordinate regions of the world. Hence the political demand is that the existent fact of capitalist production be recognized juridically and that all workers be given the full rights of citizenship. In effect this political demand insists in postmodernity on the fundamental modern constitutional principle that links right and labor, and thus rewards with citizenship the worker who creates capital.

This demand can also be configured in a more general and more radical way with respect to the post-modern conditions of Empire. If in a first moment the

multitude demands that each state recognize juridically the migrations that are necessary to capital, in a second moment it must demand control over the movements themselves. The multitude must be able to decide if, when, and where it moves. It must have the right also to stay still and enjoy one place rather than being forced constantly to be on the move. *The general right to control its own movement is the multitude's ultimate demand for global citizenship*. This demand is radical insofar as it challenges the fundamental apparatus of imperial control over the production and life of the multitude. Global citizenship is the multitude's power to reappropriate control over space and thus to design the new cartography.

### Time and Body (the Right to a Social Wage)

[...]

This is a *new proletariat* and not a *new industrial working class*. The distinction is fundamental. As we explained earlier, "proletariat" is the general concept that defines all those whose labor is exploited by capital, the entire cooperating multitude. The industrial working class represented only a *partial* moment in the history of the proletariat and its revolutions, in the period when capital was able to reduce value to measure. In that period it seemed as if only the labor of waged workers was productive, and therefore all the other segments of labor appeared as merely reproductive or even unproductive. In the biopolitical context of Empire, however, the production of capital converges ever more with the production and reproduction of social life itself; it thus becomes ever more difficult to maintain distinctions among productive, reproductive, and unproductive labor. Labor – material or immaterial, intellectual or corporeal – produces and reproduces social life, and in the process is exploited by capital. This wide landscape of biopolitical production allows us finally to recognize the full generality of the concept of proletariat. The progressive indistinction between production and reproduction in the biopolitical context also highlights once again the immeasurability of time and value. As labor moves outside the factory walls, it is increasingly difficult to maintain the fiction of any measure of the working day and thus separate the time of production from the time of reproduction,

or work time from leisure time. There are no time clocks to punch on the terrain of biopolitical production; the proletariat produces in all its generality everywhere all day long.

This generality of biopolitical production makes clear a second programmatic political demand of the multitude: *a social wage and a guaranteed income for all*. The social wage stands opposed first of all to the family wage, that fundamental weapon of the sexual division of labor by which the wage paid for the productive labor of the male worker is conceived also to pay for the unwaged reproductive labor of the worker's wife and dependents at home. The family wage keeps family control firmly in the hands of the male wage earner and perpetuates a false conception of what labor is productive and what is not. As the distinction between production and reproductive labor fades, so too fades the legitimization of the family wage. The social wage extends well beyond the family to the entire multitude, even those who are unemployed, because the entire multitude produces, and its production is necessary from the standpoint of total social capital. In the passage to postmodernity and biopolitical production, labor power has become increasingly collective and social. It is not even possible to support the old slogan "equal pay for equal work" when labor cannot be individualized and measured. The demand for a social wage extends to the entire population the demand that all activity necessary for the production of capital be recognized with an equal compensation such that a social wage is really a guaranteed income. Once citizenship is extended to all, we could call this guaranteed income a citizenship income, due each as a member of society.

### Telos (the Right to Reappropriation)

[...]

Now we can formulate a third political demand of the multitude: *the right to reappropriation*. The right to reappropriation is first of all the right to the reappropriation of the means of production. Socialists and communists have long demanded that the proletariat have free access to and control over the machines and materials it uses to produce. In the context of immaterial and biopolitical production, however, this traditional demand takes on a new guise. The multitude not only uses machines to produce, but also becomes

increasingly machinic itself, as the means of production are increasingly integrated into the minds and bodies of the multitude. In this context reappropriation means having free access to and control over knowledge, information, communication, and affects – because these are some of the primary means of biopolitical production. Just because these productive machines have been integrated into the multitude does not mean that the multitude has control over them. Rather, it makes more vicious and injurious their alienation. The right to reappropriation is really the multitude's right to self-control and autonomous self-production.

### Posse

[...]

The name that we want to use to refer to the multitude in its political autonomy and its productive activity is the Latin term *posse* – power as a verb, as activity. [...] *Posse* refers to the power of the multitude and its telos, an embodied power of knowledge and being, always open to the possible.

[...]

As in all innovative processes, the mode of production that arises is posed against the conditions from which it has to be liberated. The mode of production of the multitude is posed against exploitation in the name of labor, against property in the name of cooperation, and against corruption in the name of freedom. It self-values bodies in labor, reappropriates productive intelligence through cooperation, and transforms existence in freedom. The history of class composition and the history of labor militancy demonstrate the matrix of these ever new and yet determinate reconfigurations of self-valorization, cooperation, and political self-organization as an effective social project.

[...]

The *posse* produces the chromosomes of its future organization. Bodies are on the front lines in this battle, bodies that consolidate in an irreversible way the results of past struggles and incorporate a power that has been gained ontologically. Exploitation must be not only negated from the perspective of practice but also annulled in its premises, at its basis, stripped from the genesis of reality. Exploitation must be excluded from the bodies of immaterial labor-power just as it must be from the social knowledges and affects of



reproduction (generation, love, the continuity of kinship and community relationships, and so forth) that bring value and affect together in the same power. The constitution of new bodies, outside of exploitation, is a fundamental basis of the new mode of production.

The mode of production of the multitude reappropriates wealth from capital and also constructs a new wealth, articulated with the powers of science and social knowledge through cooperation. Cooperation annuls the title of property. In modernity, private property was often legitimated by labor, but this equation, if it ever really made sense, today tends to be completely destroyed. Private property of the means of production today, in the era of the hegemony of cooperative and immaterial labor, is only a putrid and tyrannical obsolescence. The tools of production tend to be recomposed in collective subjectivity and in the collective intelligence and affect of the workers; entrepreneurship tends to be organized by the cooperation of subjects in general intellect. The organization of the multitude as political subject, as *posse*, thus begins to appear on the world scene. The multitude is biopolitical self-organization.

Certainly, there must be a moment when reappropriation and self-organization reach a threshold and

configure a real event. This is when the political is really affirmed – when the genesis is complete and self-valorization, the cooperative convergence of subjects, and the proletarian management of production become a constituent power. This is the point when the modern republic ceases to exist and the postmodern *posse* arises. This is the founding moment of an earthly city that is strong and distinct from any divine city. The capacity to construct places, temporalities, migrations, and new bodies already affirms its hegemony through the actions of the multitude against Empire. Imperial corruption is already undermined by the productivity of bodies, by cooperation, and by the multitude's designs of productivity. The only event that we are still awaiting is the construction, or rather the insurgence, of a powerful organization. The genetic chain is formed and established in ontology, the scaffolding is continuously constructed and renewed by the new cooperative productivity, and thus we await only the maturation of the political development of the *posse*. We do not have any models to offer for this event. Only the multitude through its practical experimentation will offer the models and determine when and how the possible becomes real.

[...]

## READING 31

### The Global Coliseum: On *Empire*

Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri interviewed by  
Nicholas Brown and Imre Szeman

[...]

**B&S:** Your invention of the concept of 'Empire' itself would have to be the master example of this operation, and the older category it challenges is, of course, 'globalization'. The phenomenon that 'globalization' refers to has, for the most part, been treated as an empirico-historical event that requires intellectuals to consider how the speed of the present relates to the past, but which doesn't seem to require a wholesale invention of new concepts to make sense of it. Do you think you could encapsulate, briefly, what it is that

'Empire' allows us to think that 'globalization' is unable to encompass?

**H&N:** It may be right, as you imply, that globalization, especially in its economic guise, has often been conceived in quantitative terms – the increasing number, speed or distance of exchanges – rather than in qualitative terms and this has been an obstacle to understanding the real novelty of our contemporary situation. However, this may also be an indication of the limitation of the concept of globalization itself as the marker of our era. Many authors today, particularly on the Left, point

out that globalization is nothing new or even that the quantity of global economic exchanges is lower than it was 50 or 100 years ago. This may be true from this limited perspective, but we think it is largely beside the point. We insist on the fact that what goes under the label 'globalization' is not merely an economic, financial or commercial phenomenon, but also and above all a *political* phenomenon. The political realm is where we most clearly recognize the qualitative shifts in contemporary history and where we are confronted by the need to invent new concepts. But, really, this distinction between the political and the economic (and the cultural) is no longer very satisfying either. We attempt to use the concept of biopower to name the zone characterized by the intersection of these old fields – an economy that is eminently cultural, a cultural field that is equally economic, a politics that comprehends the other two equally, and so forth. From this perspective, the concept 'globalization' is clearly too vague and imprecise. Empire seems to us a much more adequate concept for the new biopolitical order.

**B&S:** This vagueness or imprecision in the concept 'globalization' may explain why analyses based on it always seem to come down to the relatively banal question of periodization, that is, whether it indeed marks a genuine break with the past or whether it is merely the same old wolf in a new sheepskin. *Empire* insists on the need to abandon certain concepts and modes of critique in order to make sense of the present conjuncture. In particular, you point to the need to give up a form of critical thinking characteristic of Marxism and of postcolonial and postmodern critique – critique in general, for that matter – which was conceived as a challenge to a specific tradition of modern sovereignty that is tendentially extinct: the old wolf is in fact a dead horse. How easily can we give up our old habits of critical thought – not just concepts like 'globalization' but the very habits and structures of our current modes of thinking – and what are the consequences if we can't?

**H&N:** It does seem to us that posing the question in terms of sovereignty clarifies a variety of contemporary debates, such as those about the powers of nation-states in the age of globalization. There is no doubt that nation-states (at least the dominant nation-states) are still important political actors and exert significant powers. We argue, however, that the nation-state is

no longer the ultimate form of sovereignty as it was during the modern era and that nation-states now function within the imperial framework of sovereignty. The nature and locus of sovereignty have shifted and this, we believe, is the most significant fact that must be taken into account. This has a whole series of consequences that extend throughout the social field well beyond questions of the nation-state.

The consequences of recognizing this shift are indeed very high for both political thought and political action. Political arguments and strategies aimed against old forms of sovereignty may be ineffective against the new forms or they may even unwittingly contribute to its functioning. For example, propositions of hybrid identities or multiculturalism can seem like liberatory projects when one assumes that the power being confronted rests on pure notions of identity and stark oppositions of self and other. But when the sovereign power no longer resides on pure identities but rather works through hybridization and multicultural formations, as we claim it does in Empire, then those projects lose any necessary relation to liberation or even contestation. In fact, they could be complicit with imperial power itself. We do not mean to say because Empire works through multiculturalism and hybridity that we need to reject those strategies – rather we mean simply that they are not sufficient in themselves. In the face of the new forms of sovereignty, new strategies of contestation and new alternatives need to be invented.

[...]

**B&S:** Back to the notion of counter-Empire: you refuse categorically the now more or less accepted wisdom that globalization signals a crisis for agency and for politics. Instead, you suggest that Empire has produced the conditions of possibility for the production of new identities, collectivities and radically democratic polities – what you memorably describe as '*homohomo*, humanity squared, enriched by the collective intelligence and love of the community'. It is for this reason that you caution against a misplaced nostalgia for older forms, such as the nation-state, that might be imagined as protecting groups and individuals from the harsh winds of globalization. As we touched on earlier, this positive characterization of globalization might be resisted by many on the Left as a form of wishful thinking. Can you point us toward any situations or movements that exemplify the politics involved in the production of