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# Autos, Allos, and World: Life and Identity in the Situation of Contemporary Global Modernity

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# Abstract

By bringing the machinic ontology of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, together with Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela's machinic theory of autopoiesis, this thesis presents a rethinking of world and identity in what we call the situation of contemporary global modernity. It argues that worlds and identity co-arise with one another through a poietic structuring. Globally, this is defined by organizational processes of autopoietic capitalism that attempts to self-separate from worlds. These processes involve an ontology of abstractive creation destruction, which continuously re-inscribe histories and identities in the image of capitalism.  Locally, worlds and identities are structured by allopoietic processes, or, ontological and political machinations of becoming-other. This becoming-other accommodates the global and specific identity of autopoietic capitalism in a local space and history to form poietic subjects. We find that by holding ontology and politics together on equal ground, new implications for political belonging and collective identity are revealed.

## Keywords

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# Preface: Two Theories on Machines and the Living

Forty-five years ago Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari published the now infamous first volume of *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Through a reconceptualization of the machine, *Anti-Oedipus* at once traces the relentless individuation of late capitalist production while also exposing how this impersonal process creates conditions within which individuals come to desire their own repression for the sake of inclusion. Machines, then, are not the product of human *technē*, nor a mere political metaphor for the ontological effects of capitalist production. Rather, machines present a rethinking of ontology as immanent production and production as eminently political, a critique of practical reason where desire simultaneously forms connections, disjunctions, and conjunctions while constituting the territorial fields of nature, society, politics, economics and culture.[1] "It is functioning everywhere," Deleuze and Guattari write in the opening lines of their work, "sometimes without ending, sometimes discontinuously. It breathes, it heats, it eats. It shits and fucks. What a mistake to have ever said *the* id. Everywhere *it* is machines, and not at all metaphorically: machines from machines, with their couplings, their connections. […] Something is produced: the effects of machines and not metaphors."[2]

In the same year, another landmark text on machines was published in the field of biology by Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela. *Autopoiesis: The Organization of the Living* (originally titled in Spanish *Of Machines and Living Beings*) expounds a fierce mechanistic framework that attempts to think what is common to all living systems. As such, Maturana and Varela propose the theory of *autopoiesis*, or self-production, which defines living systems as machines whose dynamic relations constitute a unity in space and allow for

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[1] See Daniel W. Smith, "Dialectics: Deleuze, Kant and the Theory of Immanent Ideas" in *Essays on Deleuze* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), 106-121.

[2] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *L'Anti-Oedipe: Capitalisme et schizophrénie* (Paris: Les éditions de minuit, 1973), 7. Translation is modified from *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane (New York: Penguin Books, 2009), 1-2. While generally decent, I believe that this standard translation of Anti-Oedipus has the tendency to obscure the structure statements, often rearranging the order of words and at times excluding turns of phrase in order to achieve a certain coherence of style throughout the text. As such, I will use my own translations of *Anti-Oedipus* throughout this paper, unless otherwise indicated, and place the page number from the original French first, followed by the English pagination in brackets. In this case, for example: 7(1-2). When the Hurley, Seem and Lane translation is used only one page number will be indicated.

the maintenance of identity through time. The decisive innovation of autopoiesis is to conceive of the operational closure and structural coupling of living systems' machinic self-production. Operational closure refers to the unitary organization of autopoietic machines as being immanently closed to the outside, whereas structural coupling maintains that the components of these machines must be eminently open to the outside. To this end, Maturana and Varela's work begins with "A universe comes into being when a space is severed in two. A unity is defined."[3] Life and the definition of the living, then, remains incomprehensible without this paradoxical exclusionary closure and inclusionary coupling.

Autopoietic machines produce their unitary identity according to their own internal organization by severing a space in two, or, by closing themselves off. This closure forms their *world*. But as they exist in physical space, they necessarily remain open to and are acted upon by an *environment*. Identity in these circumstances comes to be understood as the open transformation and destruction of an autopoietic machine's structural components for the sake of the closed survival of a unitary world. In this sense, world and identity are co-arising for autopoietic machines, formed simultaneously through the internal relations of its organization and external coupling of its structural components. This is why Maturana and Varela will conclude, "Autopoietic systems define the world in which they can exist in relation to their autopoiesis, and some interact recursively with this world through their descriptions."[4]

This is more than a mere synchronicity. Maturana and Varela's theory of autopoiesis comes to serve as an inspiration for Deleuze and Guattari's refinement of their reconceptualization of machines, and philosophy itself, toward the end of their lives.[5] In their final collaborative

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[3] Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela, *Autopoiesis and Cognition: The Realization of the Living* (Dordrecht, Holland: D. Riedel Publishing Company, 1980), 73.

[4] Ibid, 123.

[5] Indeed, while providing feedback for *What is Philosophy*? Guattari wrote to Deleuze in one instance that "I'd like to suggest the theme of opposition between mixture and interaction. … About the brain's operation on itself: see Francisco Varela's autopoetic systems. … I talked about this a little bit in "Machinic heterogenesis." See Félix Guattari, typed notes on *What is Philosophy?* IMEC Archives, quoted from François Dossé, *Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari: Intersecting Lives*, trans. Deborah Glassman (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 15.

work *What is Philosophy?*, the term autopoiesis appears only once, albeit, at a crucial juncture that brings together the relationship of philosophy to reality, namely, with regards to the status of the concept. Here, Deleuze and Guattari write that "the concept is not given, it is created; it is to be created. It is not formed but posits itself in itself—it is a self-positing. Creation and self-positing mutually imply each other because what is truly created, from the living being to the work of art, thereby enjoys a self-positing of itself, or an autopoetic characteristic by which it is recognized."[6] They continue on, in discussing the self-positing, self-producing dynamic of the concept to return to their conceptualization of the machine. Concepts, they claim, are akin to the configurations of the machine, with all its connections to themselves and couplings to reality, to a space, a plane which itself is another machine.

The foregoing is an example of the productive possibilities in bringing together Maturana and Varela's theory of autopoiesis with Deleuze and Guattari's reconceptualization of the machine. Our path, influenced by Deleuze and Guattari, and Maturana and Varela, returns to the relationship between ontology and politics within the purview of capitalism. What is of interest is not so much the relationship between concepts and the world, but the way politics, ontology, and an organization of the living can be wed to examine the co-arising of world and identity in our present day situation where everything appears as 'together-with-time-everywhere-just-now.'[7]

Why is this intervention necessary? Part of this problem stems from the manner in which identity has been said to be constructed and produced by the processes of globalization and the enactment of global capitalism throughout the past few decades. In *The Parallax View*, for example, Slavoj Žižek maintains that global capitalism's ability to reproduce its socioeconomic processes has created a 'world-less' horizon for globalization, one which functions regardless of a specific history or tradition. Unlike previous socioeconomic

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[6] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, trans. Hugh Tomlinson and Graham Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 11.

[7] This last formulation, 'together-with-time-everywhere-just-now', is my play on the etymologies of 'contemporary' (from the Latin *con* - together with – and *tempus* – time ) 'global' (globe, from Latin *globus* – a sphere or ball – through Old French *globe* – either a, or relating to a sphere or globe, or concerning all parts of the world –everywhere is invoked as a spatial metaphor) and 'modernity' (Medieval Latin, as a quality *modernus*, from Latin *modo*, as just now in a certain manner).

regimes, he states that global capitalism de-totalizes meaning with the effect that "(there is no global 'capitalist-worldview,' no 'capitalist civilization' proper—the fundamental lesson of globalization is precisely that capitalism can accommodate itself to all civilizations, from Christian to Hindu and Buddhist); its global dimension can be formulated only at the level of truth-without-meaning, as the "Real" of the global market mechanism."[8] Similarly, in describing globalization *avant la lettre,* Niklas Luhmann posits that "in spite of all the political borders that exist within it, today there is only one world society," which produces the effect that "everyone's experience is contemporary."[9] More than simply being contemporary, however, we must claim that global capitalism's injunction for worldlessness creates a situation which could be described as *contemporary global modernity*: *namely, a uniform horizon within which politics always already guarantees a culture that continuously conforms to the actualization of profit 'together-with-time-everywhere-just-now.'*

By returning to a conceptualization of world within the situation of contemporary global modernity, our investigation begins precisely with the question of borders, of relations between an inside and outside, the global and the local, with the co-arising of world and identity. Motivated by the productive possibilities of bringing together Deleuze and Guattari with Maturana and Varela, this thesis shall develop a theory of world creation termed the poietic structuring of worlds. In this regard, we hope also to stage a reconsideration of the relationship between ontology and politics, which will claim that they too must be understood through a dynamic of co-arising. One reason to think ontology and politics together, particularly when considering the concept of world, is precisely as a means to avoid any lingering traces of onto-theology in the assessment of contemporary global modernity.

Capitalism may very well occupy a sort of religious hold on the global subject today; as Mackenzie Wark writes (in a way that is reminiscent of Mario Tronti) "the only thing worse

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[8] Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 2009), 181.

[9] Niklas Luhmann, *Ausdifferenzierung des Rechts: Beiträge zur Rechtssoziologie vmd Rechtstheorie* (Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main, 1981), quoted from Roberto Esposito, *Immunitas: The Protection and Negation of Life*, trans. Zakiya Hanafi (London: Polity Press, 2014), 46.

than being exploited is *not* being exploited."[10] But while such statements capture the precarious nature of subjective desire, they say nothing as to how such a desire is created both for a subject's identity and within their world. Identity is not static, it is always a becoming. The worlds produced to support capitalism reflect such a dynamism. And this dynamic relation comes to be inscribed within the production of capitalism itself, such that it cannot form a singular principle of being, but necessitates a constant process of becoming.

Thus, when Žižek writes that 'the fundamental lesson of globalization is precisely that capitalism can *accommodate* itself to all civilizations' what he misses is that it is not so much a question of capitalism 'accommodating' itself to various 'civilizations'. Here is the second part of our problem: capitalism does not form a natural order which separates itself from all political or social life.[11] Capitalism always already requires a society, *a* world in particular and *worlds* in general. Thus, participation in the global market necessitates the production of local, individualized meaning within a *particular culture* that is nonexchangeable and yet makes the universal truth of the market mechanisms present in local space and history. If there seems to be something like a worldless horizon within global capitalism, it is only because it's truly global dimension arrives in its ability to nullify not only rural provincialism, but also urban diversity by continuously recreating society to the singular demand of the generation of profit. As such, it is local, individualized meaning that accommodates global capitalism to its-self, and this accommodation is what capitalism requires for the survival of its organization through time and its structure within space.

The wager of this thesis, then, is as follows: first, that global financial capitalism should be described as an autopoietic machine whose global, particular identity can be defined as the production of profit from profit itself. Second, the interior organization of capitalism relies on the proliferation of local, non-particular worlds for the survival of its identity; local worlds accommodate autopoietic capitalism, and function as its structure by producing social, political and ontological relations to guarantee its survival. Third, the local, non-

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[10] Mackenzie Wark, "Inventing the Future," *Public Seminar* (October 27th, 2015) np. Accessed on: May 6th, 2016. DOI: http://www.publicseminar.org/2015/10/inventing-the-future/

[11] See Wolfgang Streeck, *How will Capitalism End? Essays on a Failing System* (London: Verso Books, 2016). We will address some of Streeck's positions throughout the body of this thesis.

particular worlds of global capitalism can thus be defined as allopoietic, that is, machines which tend toward the production of something other than themselves. Finally, that these worlds need to become naturalized for individual subjects to form a new collective identity, an onomatopoeial process, that comes to stand in for individual subjects themselves by continuously making the global and specific identity of autopoietic capitalism present, a prosopopoeial process. This allows for the formation of poietic subjects, whose identity is non-exchangeable with other local worlds or the global, autopoietic functioning of capitalism, but comes to be understood as non-specific insofar as their forms of dwelling tend towards the reproduction of profit. Taken together, these processes describe a poietic structuring of worlds and identities.

In our first chapter, what is at stake is a description of the situation of contemporary global modernity. In order to outline common narratives which describe financial global capitalism's and globalization's disposition towards the world in general and worlds in particular, problematics of exhaustion and containment are thought in relation to the concept of world and examined through the work of Franco 'Bifo' Berardi, Frederic Jameson, and Peter Sloterdijk. In these views, it appears as though capitalism's ever accelerating processes of abstraction tends toward replacing the quality of a world with the monetized quantity of a financialized globe. We argue, however, that such descriptions mistake how we are here in a world with what there is in the globe, namely, 'commodity, text, number, image and celebrity' and abstract combinations of communication. Thus, we pose the central question of this chapter: do we still live in a world? This question is invoked both for its ontological and political significance. If it appears as though we no longer live in a world, we argue that it is precisely owing to a series on ontological mis-alliances between the political and the social, and the economic and cultural, which *continuously conforms to the actualization of profit 'together-with-time-everywhere-just-now.'* To overcome this deadlock of thinking, we argue that it is necessary to think world and identity together, through and within politics and ontology, by positing the poietic structuring of worlds and identity outlined above.

Chapter two takes up the tension between the notions of world and worlds within the functioning of global financial capitalism. This tension allows for the theorization of the autopoietic and global dimension of the poietic structuring of worlds in the situation of contemporary global modernity. To this end, financial capitalism is first thought through two

of its main organizational characteristics, namely, real abstraction and creative destruction. The work of 'Bifo' once again serves as our starting point, invoked here for its creative theoretical matrix which emphasizes the thought of Deleuze and Guattari along with Italian autonomist Marxism. Working through Bifo's analysis of abstraction provides us with a historically grounded reading of capitalism's development, while also allowing us to situate certain key terms for Deleuze and Guattari. I argue that although global financial capitalism wishes to be rid of the world, to become frictionless self-creation, or autopoietic, it necessarily relies on worlds for its reproduction. Thus, financial capitalism only becomes autopoietic by creating a dimension of global, particular, truth, which simultaneously abstracts from the world and is accommodated by worlds through means of creative destruction. A brief history of the relationship between capitalism and the theory of autopoiesis ensues for the sake of developing three main processes of the later: structural coupling, operational closure, and reciprocal causality. The work of Sir Stafford Beer and the late work of Guattari is invoked here to provide us with a way to think through the connection between a biological theory of living and the organization of human socio-political life. Finally, financial capitalism's abstractive creative destruction is read through and within the paradigm of autopoiesis, as a means to trace how capitalism comes to embody an autopoietic dimension of worlds in the situation of contemporary global modernity. The last part of our chapter stages a creative re-reading of the three passive syntheses of production from Deleuze and Guattari's machinic ontology, namely, connection, disjunction, and conjunction through the organizational characteristics of the theory of autopoiesis. Our aim is to update *Anti-Oedipus'* concrete articulation of the relationship between capitalism, politics and ontology by thinking them through and alongside the situation of contemporary global modernity.

The third chapter brings together our previous discussion of autopoietic capitalism and global life with an examination of local, allopoietic world creation and the formation of poietic subjects. It thus begins with a theoretical exploration of allopoietic world creation, focusing on the function of prosopopoeial and onomatopoeial processes which make the global, autopoietic dimension of financial capitalism present to a local world by re-inscribing the history of that world within this autopoietic dimension so as it naturalize its transformation, destruction, and re-creation for its subjects. We then argue that the co-arising of local worlds

and identity in the situation of contemporary global modernity (re)presents an allopoietic becoming-other which is always contingent, but owing to the functioning of autopoietic capitalism, come to be understood within a universal necessity. To give life to this theoretical discussion, the recent history of China's economic, social, and political reforms are explored through a reading of Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the *socius*. This allows us to rethink identity within the problems of borders and boundaries, and to understand how the allopoietic processes of world creation bring about new political and ontological forms of inclusion and exclusion. The final two sections of this chapter respectively take up inclusion and exclusion by examining the lives of migrant workers and nail-house inhabitants in China's new allopoietic world, one which can be understood as embodying the organizational principles of creative destruction in its reconstruction of urban space. Cinematic representations of the reconfiguration of space in China and interviews with nail-house protests are invoked in this regard as a means to begin to think again about how we are here in a world in the situation of contemporary global modernity.

In conclusion, I lay out the implications of thinking *autos, allos* and world through a poietic structuring in the situation of contemporary global modernity. Namely, the poietic structuring of worlds and identities entails the unification of thought and action in a particular time and space so as to *continue* a local world, even though this unification is founded on a becoming-other, a series of ontological, political, and historical *discontinuities* without breaks. Thus, we come to an understanding that the global and local dimensions of world and identity are inextricably intertwined, that the global must continually be made present in the local, that the global depends upon the local for its coherence, and that the local thus tends towards the reproduction of the global, something other than itself. Finally, while I seek to develop a macrocosmic perspective of world and identity in this thesis, its theorization is far from complete, especially where allopoietic processes of world creation and the formation of poietic subjects are concerned. As such, I close my thesis by raising objections to my theorizations of the poietic structuring of worlds, as a means to suggest future possibilities for research.

# 1    The Situation of Contemporary Global Modernity

## 1.1      Do We Still Live in a World?

The world is exhausted: how is this statement to be understood? On a first glance, this situation evokes nothing but fatigued (and yet increasingly urgent) narratives. First, a socio-scientific consciousness that is rightly consumed by implications of bio-ecological ruin, namely, the exhaustion of the world as an impending collapse of life. Second, a socio-political imaginary that endlessly consumes ruinous visions of a future unable to escape the implications of global capitalism. To this end, and to repeat the formula commonly attributed to Fredric Jameson, "someone once said that it is easier to imagine the end of the world than to imagine the end of capitalism."[12] Indeed, the pervading common sense of our time is captured by Peter Sloterdijk when he claims that we have been caught up within "the most effective totalization, the unification of the world through money in all its transformations – as commodity, text, number, image and celebrity."[13] Under these conditions, wherein any evocation of 'world' is immediately subsumed within the totalizing order of capitalist financialisation, it seems impossible to even go to the end of Jameson's statement. In the place of amending the order of "capitalism by way of imagining the end of the world," a strategy for biological survival, we instead are restrained by (re)visions that seem "to be nothing but a monotonous repetition of what is already here."[14] In this sense, the belief in capitalism's irreversibility and infinite repetition lobotomizes 'worldliness,' understood as a living and created relationality of meaning in which individuals, persons, and communities are implicated, through which they come to care for one another, and within which they come to understand their-selves and their identity.

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[12] Frederic Jameson, "Future City," *New Left Review* 21 (May-June 2003): np. https://newleftreview.org/II/21/fredric-jameson-future-city

[13] Peter Sloterdijk, *In The World Interior of Capitalism: Towards a Philosophical Theory of Globalization*, trans. Wieland Hoban (London: Polity Press, 2013), 7.

[14] Jameson, "Future City". Both quotations are from Jameson's essay.

The totalization of the world through capitalism ends up signaling the erasure of the concept itself. In a short but crucially insightful section of his *And: Phenomenology of the End*, Franco 'Bifo' Berardi claims that the process of abstraction, what Karl Marx described as the main trend to describe the relationship between the economy and the Real world, must be thought along the lines of *invisibilization*. He proposes the term *Semiocapitalism* as a means to describe the present configuration of capitalism. Semiocapitalism emphasizes the absolute coincidence between the production of goods (material or immaterial) and their translation into abstract combinations of communication (algorithms, figures, digital differences). "In the Indust-Reality," Berardi explains, "the invisible goal of abstract valorization was obtained by physical manipulation of visible things. Semiocapitalism dissolves the visible process of production, and financial capitalism, at last, is the utter dissolution of the sphere of visibility and the melting of capital accumulation into the abstract kingdom of virtual exchange."[15] With the dissolution of the sphere of visibility comes the destruction of the soul, the principle of life: the affective, intellectual and libidinal forces that weave a world together are lost, thereby amounting to nothing other than the invisibilization of the world as such.[16] The engine of capitalist production tends towards the ever greater invisibilization of the world, and with this increasing invisibilization comes the acceleration of production freed from material referent. To this end, Berardi remarks elsewhere that today we find ourselves dwelling on "a *continent* of exhaustion."[17] No world without capitalism, no capitalism without exhaustion, and no exhaustion without containment in the *globe*.

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[15] Franco 'Bifo' Berardi, *And: Phenomenology of the End: Cognition and Sensibility in the Transition from the Conjunctive to Connective Mode of Social Communication* (Unigrafia, Finland: Aalto University, 2014), 92-94.

[16] On relationship between the notion of the soul and the world, see Jason Smith's "Preface" to Franco 'Bifo' Berardi, *The Soul at Work: From Alienation to Autonomy*, trans. Francesca Cadel and Giuseppina Mecchia (Cambridge, Massachusetts: semiotext(e), 2009), 9-20.

[17] Franco 'Bifo' Berardi, "Reassessing Recomposition: 40 Years After the Publication of *Anti-Oedipus*," December 3, 2012. http://th-rough.eu/writers/bifo-eng/reassessing-recomposition-40-years-after-publication-anti-oedipus

These global narratives present but one side of the exhaustion of the world, that which is readily visible. Or, given the emphasis that was just placed on Berardi's notion of the invisibilization of the world, perhaps it would be more prudent to claim that this presentation is that which is forcibly made visible through capitalism's ever accelerating process of replacing the quality of the world with the monetized quantity of a financialized globe. What is made visible in this obverse presentation is what immediately appears *there in the globe, what is produced everywhere through globalization* —'commodity, text, number, image and celebrity' and abstract combinations of communication all elide rather than explain the reverse of *how we are here*. Thus, in the substitution and cancellation of the world for the globe what is operationalized is not simply a terminological difference, but a conceptual array of ontological, socio-political, and cultural implications.

While the terms *globe* and *world* are often used interchangeably, Jacques Derrida captures the significance of their terminological slippage in his distinction between the English globe and globalization and the French *monde* and *mondialisation*. The concept of the globe purportedly invokes a neutral geometric and geographical formation, a sphere, removed from a particular history or socio-cultural origin, and globalization a process of universal inevitability tending towards material self-completion, or auto-finality.[18] "If I maintain the distinction between these concepts [of monde and mondialisation] and the concepts of globalization," Derrida writes, "it is because the concept of world [*monde*] gestures towards a history, it has a memory that distinguishes it from that of the globe, of the universe, of Earth."[19] The globe in this sense can be

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[18] Commenting on this passage, Victor Li astutely remarks that for Derrida "Mondialisation acts as an elliptical interruption of the term "globalization" because it disputes the latter's sense of autofinality and universal inevitability unmarked by any historical or religio-cultural origin. Derrida insists on marking the Eurocentric provenance of mondialisation and on distinguishing it from a globalization without history or memory." Thus, for Derrida the world brought about through mondialisation cannot be separated from a process of Latinization, of transforming the whole world into the Judeo-Christian world that serves as the origin of capitalist production. See Victor Li, "Elliptical Interruptions: Or, Why Derrida Prefers *Mondialisation* to Globalization" *The New Centennial Review* 7, No. 2 (2007): 141–154.

[19] Jacques Derrida, "Globalization, Peace, and Cosmopolitanism" in *Negotiations: Interventions and Interviews 1971–2001*, ed. E. Rottenberg (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2002), 374-375.

understood as an ontic container, whose circular, self-referential trajectory accounts for everything just now, without history and without worldliness. Alberto Toscano repeats Derrida's definition in a different register, claiming that it is not only globalization but capitalism's trend toward abstraction that results in a particular worldlessness, or the emptying of the historical socio-political content of the world for the material referent of the globe. This abstraction, he claims, must be understood as the ontology of capitalism itself.[20] Benjamin Noys aptly summarizes Toscano's reading of abstraction *qua* ontology of capitalism as follows: "first, the concrete articulation of reality as a series of differences, and second, the void of its absence of determinations, the lack of a historical or cultural content to capital."[21] To differentiate between globe and world in relation to global capitalism and globalization, then, is to begin the task of rethinking the situation of *how we are here* within its immanently ontological and eminently political and historical nature.

There is nothing metaphysical in this last formulation. To ask how we are here is not to forsake the present in a search for origins, to retrieve some first order principle that would explain the peculiarity of this situation. Rather, it is to seek out what has truly been rendered invisible through the global capitalist totalization of the world into a globe, to unfold the series of differences between the global and the local, and to once again raise the question of the relationship between an inside and an outside. It is to resist the idea of the capitalist globe as a monad, as an absolute folding of the outside world to the inside of the globe, a formula and a site that has "no windows, by which anything could come in or go out," as Gilles Deleuze writes in *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*.[22] It is to take seriously Deleuze and Félix Guattari's claim in *What is Philosophy?* that "believing in this world, in this life, becomes our most difficult task, or the task of a mode of existence

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[20] Alberto Toscano, "The Open Secret of Real Abstraction," *Rethinking Marxism* 20, No. 2 (April 2008): 273–287.

[21] Benjamin Noys, *The Persistence of the Negative: A Critique of Contemporary Continental Theory* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 10.

[22] Gilles Deleuze, *The Fold: Leibniz and the Baroque*, trans. Tom Conley (London, Continuum, 2006), 30.

still to be discovered on our plane of immanence today. This is the empiricist conversion (we have so many reasons not to believe in the human world; we have lost the world, worse than a fiancée or God). The problem has indeed changed."[23] Not to think what there is in the world, then, a problem captured solely within the coordinates of capitalism which seem to produce a frictionless metonymy of the global for the local, totality for part. But, rather, by renewing the problem of how we are here we may catch a glimpse of that forgotten exergue impressed upon the surface our times: *do we still live in a world?*

To address this seemingly simple question, it is necessary to move beyond the purview of global capitalism as the sole determination of the world. Rather, the functioning of global capitalism must be held together with its correlative process of globalization if we are to avoid its elevation into a natural order, a new metaphysics of onto-theology which defines the first cause of the world *as* globe. What seems to be forgotten in the definitions and various terminologies of global capitalism that have been outlined thus far is that while capitalism relies on the trend of abstraction as a means to counteract its own tendency towards the falling rate of surplus value, it also needs a society. "Once upon a time sociologists knew that modern society is capitalist society," Wolfgang Streeck remarks, "that capitalism is not one thing – a particular kind of economy – and modern society another."[24] More forcefully even, we should emphasize that in addition to capitalism needing a society it needs a society to *become* capitalist, to become modern according to its own image. Capitalism needs a whole series of becomings – a becoming-society, a becoming-politics, a becoming-culture – in order to continuously ensure its totalizing processes of the unification of the world into the globe. To invoke globalization alongside the becomings of global capitalism, then, is to emphasize processes of abstraction alongside the necessary development of modernization. Capitalism needs to secure not only time but space for its own totalizing ends of erasing the world for the sake of a globe. Terms such as Semiocapitalism, or even global capitalism, fail to

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[23] Deleuze and Guattari, *What Is Philosophy?*, 75.

[24] Streeck, *How Will Capitalism End?*, 201.

describe these processes. What is made invisible is not only the world itself, but capitalism's various becomings. We propose the term *contemporary global modernity* as a means to explain this situation where capitalism's globalization tends towards the singular production of conditions that are always seen as being *'together-with-time-everywhere-just-now.'*

If it appears as though we no longer live in a world, that we exist within a uniform horizon of the globe, it is precisely owing to the fact that the unifying situation of contemporary global modernity relies on a series of ontological misalliances to produce and secure its status as reality itself. In this regard, ontology may be defined as the enterprise which seeks to answer the questions 'what is existence' or 'what does existence mean.' To claim that contemporary global modernity is structured by a series of ontological mis-alliances, then, is to claim that capitalism substitutes local ontological implications of existence for the global metaphysical application of its singular reality. Deleuze and Guattari capture this distinction in *Anti-Oedipus* when they describe how capitalism increasingly transforms individuals into abstract quantities defined only by their labour capacity and thereby reduces them to "a role of *application*, and no longer of implication."[25] This situation, however, is not only immanently ontological but as we previously insisted, eminently political. Political, here, may be defined as the local instantiation of a way of life which governs the interactions of a society by determining that which belongs inside its domain from that which is foreign, thereby guaranteeing its-self. Within contemporary global modernity, the political guarantee of a way of life is supplemented for a singular law of dwelling: the economic.[26] Defining the situation of contemporary global modernity, and the manner in which capitalism conceals its own becoming through a series of ontological mis-alliances, will form the first task of this

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[25] Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus,* 251.

[26] This last formulation, law of dwelling, is an etymological play on economics: *oikēsis,* the Ancient Greek verb to dwell, or dwelling, from the root *oikos,* house, or family property, and *nomos*, the Ancient Greek for Law.

chapter, insofar as it will allow us to begin to approach our question 'do we still live in a world?'

By raising the question of living in a world in relation to ontology and politics we necessarily find ourselves in the terrain of identity as a social category. Thinking identity in relation to ontology and politics has traditionally revolved around two axes: first, an ontological turn to politics, wherein politics is seen to generate and secure the ground of existence;[27] second, a political turn to ontology, wherein political implications are drawn out from purportedly apolitical and timeless ontologies.[28] We will attempt to formulate a

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[27] The oeuvre of Carl Schmitt may be invoked as the example *par excellence* of this operation. His concepts (such as sovereignty's state of exception with regards to the law, or the friend-enemy distinction as a strategy of communal organization) not only serve to explain the practical functions of a politics attempting to preserve the autonomy of a national borders through the exclusion of the other: more explicitly, they work to canalize a particular order of being whose *sine qua non* is the existential basis of the political as such. Regardless of Schmitt's direct avowal of anti-Semitism and card-carrying membership in the National Socialist party, Schmitt's ontological turn to politics continues to be an influence on contemporary theorists. See for example Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998); Chantal Mouffe ed., *The Challenge of Carl Schmitt* (London: Verso Books, 1999); Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject: On the Absent Center of Political Ontology* (London: Verso Books, 2000).

[28] The recent case of Martin Heidegger is striking in this regard. Here we have a thinker who is constantly lambasted for 'hiding' his true affiliations, whose confirmed anti-Semitism in the recently published *Schwarze Hefte,* or Black notebooks, is said to be operating at a distance in his work, such that we are left with a sort of *mésalliance*, a mis-alliance between his ontological and metaphysical writings and hidden political commitments. The political-ontological *mésalliance* seems to divide scholars and thinkers alike into the friends and enemies of Heidegger. This, at best, places the relevance of his work on shaky ground and, at worst, allows for a simple rebuttal to any mention of his name: 'But he was a Nazi!' These positions can be encountered in a series of responses to Gregory Fried's *The King is Dead: Heidegger's Black Notebooks* published through the Los Angeles Review of Books. See Gaëtan Pégny, Andrea Martinez, Sidonie Kellerer, Jordan Hoffman, Alexander S. Duff, 'Response to Gregory Fried's "The King Is Dead: Heidegger's Black Notebooks"' *LA Review of Books* (November 7th, 2014): https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/response-gregory-frieds-king-dead-heideggers-black-notebooks/#!. To this list, however, we should add other voices that more or less correspond to this essential division. For example, Jean-Luc Nancy's assertion that Heidegger's willingness to follow a banal principle of evil throughout his writings, Emmanuel Faye and Richard Wolin's parallel claims that Heidegger's thinking must be directly seen as establishing the founding rhetoric of the National Socialist party, and Trawny's argument that Heidegger's anti-Semitism directly corrupts his characterization of the history of Being. See Jean-Luc Nancy, *Banalité de Heidegger* (Paris: Éditions Galilée, 2015); Emmanuel Faye, *Heidegger: The Introduction of Nazism into Philosophy in Light of the Unpublished Seminars of 1933-1935*, trans. Michael B. Smith (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 2011); Richard Wolin, '"Over the line": Reflections on Heidegger and National Socialism" in *The Heidegger Controversy*, ed. Richard Wolin (New York: MIT University Press, 1992); Peter Trawny, *Heidegger and the Myth of a Jewish World Conspiracy* (New York: Chicago University Press, 2015).

different option. The second task of this chapter is to posit a co-arising of world and identity, namely, a dynamic that places the political and ontology together on equal footing so as to create a new means to understand how identity is, and by extension, how we are here locally in a world. This dynamic shall be called *the poietic structuring of worlds*. It shall bring together Deleuze and Guattari's theorization of capitalism in *Anti-Oedipus*, with Humberto Maturana's and Francisco Varela's theory of autopoiesis. A world, then, can be understood as creating the conditions in which an identity can ontologically be referred to as a "becoming for," politically, a "becoming together," and socially as a "being with"; taken together, these three basic components work on, through and with each other to form what may be defined as a *unitary* organization of living together. The invocation of poïesis shall explain the particular manner in which worlds and identities are inextricably intertwined with the situation of contemporary global modernity, which is to say *how* they become unified. Thus, by understanding the co-arising of world and identity through the poietic structuring of worlds, our theory forms a viable alternation to the current framework of globalization by, first, emphasizing that the global cannot exist without the local, and second, that the connection between the global and the local entails a constant becoming-other of each.

## 1.2    The Ontological Mis-alliances of Contemporary Global Modernity

With the rising prominence of identity politics, today we seem to speak primarily of something like an ontological turn in the terrain of social production, academic scholarship and general media coverage and reception of the Left.[29] As William E. Connolly writes in the "Foreword" to *A Leftist Ontology: Beyond Relativism and Identity Politics,* "the ontological dimension of political thought and practice is robust, even while it may be marked by internal tensions, and a case can be made that the attempt to expunge this element from political thought recoils back on theory, making it less active

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[29] See, for example, Bruno Bosteels, "The Ontological Turn," in *The Actuality of Communism* (London: Verso Books, 2014), 41 *sq.*

and robust than it otherwise might be."[30] To a large extent this same tension between the not unlikely but rather unwieldy bedfellows of the political and the philosophical (that there is a sort of natural and assumed, and thus nigh in-articulable connexion is evident enough) can be already be inscribed in the 'origins' of both disciplines. This is a problem, as Jacques Rancière would maintain in his *Disagreements*, that is as old as philosophy itself,[31] and that can be summed up by the neat dichotomy contained in the center of Raphael's "School Of Athens": do we point to the sky and erect a Platonic transcendental structure of reason whose values resonate outwards, or do we ground ourselves firmly on the floor of the earth, beginning only with what is readily apparent, in conventional Aristotelian fashion?

This portrait is obviously fallacious, rudimentary, and lacking insight. But when we speak of an ontological turn to the 'thought and practice' of politics proper, we seem to find ourselves returned precisely to this fundamentally poor choice. Either we begin with utopian (or impossible) demands rooted in transcendental, timeless, inalienable universal structures of human, animal, social rights and then filter down to the level of concrete critique in order to demonstrate how their espousal has failed to be guaranteed; or we plant the seeds of the *polis* to come within the soil of subjective (or 'relativist' to use Connolly's term) lived experience of particular subjects that while located in a particular time and bearing the mark of a bleeding history must come to represent a universal injunction to name (in)justice. In effect, the result of either option is the same. Once the movement from subject to universal, or universal to subject, is effectuated, how does one either return to the sky or come back down to the earth to produce an effect on the center

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[30] William E. Connolly, "Foreword: The Left and Ontopolitics," in *A Leftist Ontology: Beyond Relativism and Identity Politics*, ed. Carsten Strathausen (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Minnesota University Press, 2009), ix.

[31] In this regard, Rancière writes that "That there has (almost) always been politics *in* philosophy in no way proves that political philosophy is a natural offshoot of the tree of philosophy. […] The first person in our tradition to come up against politics, Plato, did so only in the form of a radical exceptionality. As a philosopher, Socrates never reflected on the politics of Athens. He is the only Athenian to 'do politics', to be involved in politics *in truth* as opposed to all that is done in Athens in the name of politics. The first encounter between politics and philosophy is that of an alternative: either politics of the politicians or that of the philosophers." Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*, trans. Julie Rose (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Minnesota University Press, 1999), viii-xi.

of belief from which all transactions of meaning are produced and within which all the coordinates of identity are fixed within ever growing concentric circles of exclusion: namely, to what extent can these solutions disorient, disrupt, or actually change anything other than the social codes of our current socio-political matrix?[32] Ultimately, each pathway always already begins with the failure to articulate a new mode of thinking and practice that is able to effect a complete return to its starting place, thereby producing a deterministic framework for identity.

This deterministic framework for identity comes to be mirrored, albeit in an asymmetrical way, in the manner in which theorizations of global capitalism take up the notion of the world. Let us begin, then, by advancing the following claim: our engagement with the world of contemporary global modernity is endemically structured by two sets of mis-alliances. A first set emerges in the form of what, to once again invoke Jacques Rancière's *Dis-agreement*, could be described as the persistent collapsing of the political into the social, or the becoming political of the social and the becoming social of the political. To understand this dynamic as being out of sorts, as forming an incongruent coupling, would appear to be antithetical to Rancière's entire argument. Indeed, he explicitly rejects the logic of 'the end of history', one that believes that the collapse of state Marxisms and Marxism's theoretical fatigue "which turned the political into the expression, or mask, of social relationships" in fact opens up a pathway for politics to find "its contemplative purity in the principles and forms of a politics itself returned to its

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[32] In their recent and wildly popular work *Inventing the Future: Postcapitalism and a World without Work*, Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams invoke the derogatory term "folk politics" to address this situation. Prefacing Srnicek and Williams' chapter on the most recent cycle of struggles is a quote from Jodi Dean that pointedly and almost viciously forecloses the prospect of resistance in the face of global capitalism: "Goldman Sachs doesn't care if you raise chickens." (25) The failure of varying uprisings and demonstrations following the Financial Crisis of 2008 along the lines of various local platforms and demands not only fails to enact change according to Srnicek and Williams, but more significantly lacks a basic understanding of the complexity of global capitalism's current articulation. See *Inventing the Future: Postcapitalism and a World without Work* (London: Verso Books, 2015), 5-25. Franco 'Bifo' Berardi makes a similar claim in his *The Uprising: On Poetry and Finance*, when commenting on the various riots and demonstrations following the 2008 Financial Crisis he writes, "I don't think that the English riots and the Italian revolts and the Spanish *acampada* should be seen as consequential revolutionary forms, because they are unable to really strike at the heart of power." Franco "Bifo" Berardi, *The Uprising: On Poetry and Finance* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: semiotext(e), 2012), 55.

original purity thanks to the retreat of the social and its ambiguities."[33] The connection between the political and the social, with all of its ambiguities, is for Rancière an essential modality for critique. However, when politics is solely limited and contained within the terrain of the social we essentially empty both fields onto a flat horizon: we are unable to distinguish between, on the one hand, what pertains to the political and social proper, and, on the other hand, what is operative within the logic of policing as "the practices and legitimizations of the consensus system" [34] and the *social* as "the place where politics is played out," a space for where this logic unfolds and falls back on ways of being with one another.[35]

While a necessary strategy to re-address liberalism's failure to actually guarantee its formal guarantee of an equal, open and tolerant society, it is in this precise sense that the becoming political of the social and the becoming social of the political essentially forms a mis-alliance that, to return to Jameson, lobotomizes its own capacity to produce at a global level anything other than 'a monotonous repetition of what is already here'. Part of this problem, however, stems from the manner in which identity has been said to be constructed and produced by the processes of globalization and the enactment of global capitalism throughout the past few decades.

In *The Parallax View*, Slavoj Žižek maintains that global capitalism's ability to reproduce its socioeconomic processes has created a 'worldless' horizon for globalization, one which functions regardless of a specific history or tradition. Unlike previous socioeconomic regimes, he states that global capitalism de-totalizes meaning with the effect that "(there is no global 'capitalist-worldview,' no 'capitalist civilization' proper— the fundamental lesson of globalization is precisely that capitalism can accommodate itself to all civilizations, from Christian to Hindu and Buddhist); its global dimension can be formulated only at the level of truth-without-meaning, as the "Real" of the global

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[33] Rancière, *Disagreement*, vii. Both quotations are located on this page.

[34] Ibid, xiii. Rancière further elaborates this point on pages 28-31 in the same work

[35] Ibid, 91.

market mechanism."[36] If we place this definition alongside our first mis-alliance, we must claim that the logic of police aims to maintain the global dimension of truth (the continuous production of profit for profit's sake within the world marketplace) in a local social space by writing out the traumatic effects, or meaning, that this process engenders. The trickle-down effect from global markets to local policing allows us to identify our second mis-alliance that Jameson describes as *the* defining feature of globalization's impact on identity: "the becoming cultural of the economic, and the becoming economic of the cultural."[37]

The 'becomings' of economics and culture were perhaps best theorized by Zygmunt Bauman in his now classic work *Liquid Modernity*. In his view, modernity at the end of the twentieth century could be understood as a process where economic and cultural production is, amongst other indicators such as private, atomized, and individuated, increasingly 'light and liquid'. In this sense, "a radical change in the arrangement of human cohabitation and in social conditions" has been enacted based on the increasing acceleration of economic power to instantaneously rearrange the demands and desires of cultural consumption.[38] The liquid, light, diffuse and network oriented processes of modernization necessarily subordinate the heavy, solid, condensed and systemic orientation of politics, as the latter are too slow to do anything other than guarantee the essential feature of modernity: "needing to *become* what one *is*."[39] If we are willing to push Bauman's analysis to its logical conclusion, we should claim that any society that wishes to guarantee the proper production of identity within contemporary global modernity such that 'one can become what one is', necessarily bears the mark of our two sets of mis-alliances: *namely, they must open a uniform horizon within which politics*

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[36] Slavoj Žižek, *The Parallax View*, 181.

[37] Frederic Jameson, "Notes on Globalization as a Philosophical Issue," in *The Cultures of Globalization*, ed. Fredric Jameson and Masao Miyoshi (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1998), 60.

[38] Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (London: Polity Press, 2000), 10.

[39] Ibid, 32.

*always already guarantees a culture that continuously conforms to the actualization of profit 'together-with-time-everywhere-just-now'.*

But what happens to the supposedly worldless horizontal schema of contemporary global modernity when profit is not able to be guaranteed? Let us take the occurrence of the 2008 economic collapse as an example. In the wake of this event which has yet to conclude, we have witnessed a stark inversion of the processes that inform this schema. In a first instance, economic recovery has been a slow, uneven and precarious venture.[40] In a second instance, and perhaps what is even more interesting, is the manner in which the slow processes of economic revitalization have been accompanied by the rapid and seemingly ubiquitous emergence of a highly antagonistic form of nationalism thought to have withered away when the twentieth century prematurely ended in 1989.[41] There is a crucial moment in Žižek's definition of global capitalism that might allow us to

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[40] See again Srnicek and Williams, *Inventing the Future*, and Berardi, *The Uprising*. For a completely different account from the field of social innovation, see "After Capitalism" in Geoff Mulgan, *The Locust and the Bee: Predators and Creators in Capitalism's Future* (New York: Princeton University Press, 2013), 1-16.

[41] Wang Hui, a Chinese cultural theorist and proponent of China's New Left, speaks to this point in describing the violent suppression of the 1989 social movement in China, embodied by the famous instance of the 'Tank Man' where a man with a briefcase boldly stood in front of a tank on its way to engage with the demonstrations at Tiananmen Square. On this point, summarizing the theoretical tendency embodied from Francis Fukuyama's end of history thesis, Wang Hui writes that "From the countless conclusions drawn by the media about the [democracy] movement to the new ways in which it has been carried on [by Chinese] abroad, all have given expression to a powerful single tendency: they have all understood the 1989 social movement that took place in China as an exception to the process of 'the end of history.'" See Wang Hui, *China's New Order: Society, Politics, and Economy in Transition*, trans. Theodore Huters (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2006), 65. The ability for China to continue to strengthen its economic development by means of national coordination, and thus rely on a strong nationalist platform without democratization has been understood for the most part not only as an exception to the rule of globalization, but a sign of its impending failure. See Roger des Forges and Luo Xu "China as a Non-Hegemonic Superpower? The Uses of History by the China Can say No writers and their Critics," *Critical Asian Studies* 33, No. 4 (December, 2006): 483-485. We will return to this problem in our third chapter. Though now more than 25 years old, Frederic Jameson's classic text *Postmodernism*, further speaks to this tendency to legitimize a de-politicization of Nation-states generally and nationalism particularly with regards to economics, when he writes that "Everyone is now willing to mumble, as though it were an inconsequential concession in passing to public opinion and current received wisdom (or shared communicational presuppositions that no society can function efficiently without the market and that planning is obviously impossible. This is the second show of the destiny of that older piece of discourse, "nationalization," which it follows some twenty years later, just as, in general, full postmodernism (particularly in the political field) has turned out to be the sequel, the continuation and fulfillment of the old fifties "end of ideology" episode." Frederic Jameson, *Postmodernism: Or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1991), 263.

understand what is happening here: 'the fundamental lesson of globalization is precisely that capitalism can *accommodate itself* to all civilizations.' What Žižek misses is that it is not so much a question of capitalism 'accommodating' itself to various 'civilizations'. Rather, participation in the global market necessitates the production of local, individualized meaning within a *particular culture* that is nonexchangeable and yet somehow makes reference to the universal truth of the market mechanisms. If there seems to be something like a worldless horizon within global capitalism, it is only because the truly global dimension of capitalism arrives in its ability to nullify not only rural provincialism, but also urban diversity through the logic of policing that continuously reforms society to the singular demand of the generation of profit. Thus, it is local, individualized meaning that accommodates itself to global capitalism by tending towards a surplus national homogeneity. And it is here that we can finally begin to see how the two couplings between the political and social, and the economic and the cultural, form sets of *mis*-alliances proper.

We already briefly examined the deficient mode of thinking and action that results from the becoming political-social. To restate the underlying dynamic, we could say that this becoming operates by flattening difference such that the political and the social not only gain coherence when they are placed alongside one another, but end up becoming inseparable from one another. Each pole comes to inflect a single function with a singular meaning that in essence is always already the same: if politics is leveled down to the logic of police, then society becomes an object whose only function is to be policed, regulated and rendered into inert passive mass. If we consider this dynamic in terms of our second set of the becoming economic-cultural, when economics is only operative within the logic of producing profit for profit's sake, culture becomes an object from which profit must be produced: what is 'cultural' only makes sense, only becomes meaningful, as that which generates profit. To claim that these couplings form mis-alliances is not to play the naïve game of postulating alternative histories, to state that we should return to some past situation where these configurations differed or, at every turn, to believe that things could have developed in other ways. Rather, to name the becoming political of the social and the becoming social of the political, and the becoming economic of the cultural and becoming cultural of the economic as sets of mis-alliances is

simply to re-orient ourselves within a framework from which to understand the history of the present. Moreover, these mis-alliances are not simply a matter of a false consciousness if by this we only maintain that they have ceded to an ideological illusion – they are real, they have real effects that come to structure reality and our engagement with contemporary global modernity.

This is perhaps best explained by Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus*, when they write "false consciousness is the true consciousness of a false movement, the true perception of an apparently objective movement."[42] If we read this back upon the narrative we have constructed so far, globalization's injunction for worldlessness forms an apparently objective movement within which something like nationalism is not required. Rather, nationalism is deemed a separate occurrence that corrupts the perfect, natural functioning of markets in a society whose politics guarantees the continuation of the generation of profits. But if we are willing to open up our sets of mis-alliances we begin to understand that the creation of new, local, national 'worlds' is always already accomplished by the act of locally accommodating global capitalism.

Therefore, we claim that contemporary global modernity can only function through a series of disavowals and displacements that form mis-alliances not only within these two sets of becoming but between them as well. The violence produced by the 'real' of market mechanisms must be displaced onto all *others*, including those within their own space, in order to legitimize the specific political-social configuration of global capitalism within a particular culture.  But when the 'real' of market mechanisms becomes intrusive, which is to say when the truth they generate in the form of the bad infinity of profits fails to continue, this latent displacement rushes to the foreground. The local national worlds that were created to support and accommodate market mechanisms are simultaneously reoriented in an antagonistic way, such that the problem is not local, or global, but belongs to the *other(s)* who corrupt their world. In this precise sense, the ubiquitous emergence of nationalism today must not be read as a symptom, or accidental effect, nor

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[42] Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 16(10).

even as a *syndrome,* or collective group of signs that run together; the language of medico-scientific discourse must be abandoned all together insofar as it would ascribe to the logic of global capitalism and the process of globalization some ideal, healthy pathway and normative function that could be returned to. Rather, it is in the language of identity and morphogenesis, the onto-biological discourse of living, environmentality, and adaptation that must be evoked in order to describe the mis-alliances of contemporary global modernity.

As such, I will argue that although the world may be exhausted, worlds violently proliferate to re-shape and protect the identity of those they deem proper to them. For the fact that worlds not only form and reform to create a national identity within the functioning of global capitalism, we need only list a few recent examples: the failure of Grexit, the success of Brexit and the election of Donald Trump, the emergence of far right policies and parties in European elections (France, Austria, the Netherlands), as much as the success of China's reform process and what has more generally been called the advent of capitalism with Asian values. What we can glean from such a list is that 'developing' and developed nations alike maintain and adapt their local history and meaning for the sake of securing their place within the specific truth of markets. Thus, we maintain our guiding hypothesis that given the situation of contemporary global modernity what is needed is a new framework to describe the relationship between ontology and politics in order to understand how identity is and how we are in a world through the co-arising of world and identity.

## 1.3      Towards a Poietic Structuring of Worlds

A re-examination and reformulation of the concept of world is a crucial first step towards repairing the relationship between ontology and politics in order to confront the framework of contemporary global modernity. Such an endeavour cannot be attempted without first briefly responding to the work of Heidegger. In *Being and Time*, Heidegger's multi-dimensional phenomenal delineation of world as a world (*Welt*),

'world' ('*Welt*'), surrounding world (*Umwelt*) worldliness (*Umweltlichkeit*)[43] are inextricably intertwined with the forgotten question of the meaning of being as such and in general.[44] In order to gain access to this question (whose attempt ultimately fails to come to fruition) he begins with *Dasein*, a being like the human-being, whose character of being is such that it has the ability to inquire into its being-there, which is its existence, for *Dasein* has always already been thrown into its "here" by being-in-the-world. But because *Dasein* is thrown into the world in which it exists, *Dasein* is necessarily preoccupied with ensuring its own survival; its engagement with the world is one primarily of use, in the sense of interacting with beings unlike itself that appear ready at hand, in order to accomplish projects, for the sake of its own survival. In this precise sense, the ontic meaning and understanding that *Dasein* gains of itself is always already ontologically other to what it is in its being. While we do not have space to outline the various phenomena that stand out to Dasein and attuned modes of existence within which *Dasein* can draw itself out to its-self towards its being, it is enough to note here that the structures of temporality occupy the privileged role in this procedure. It is time, with its particular consistency that moves being from the present, back into its past to project a continuity through to the future that allows *Dasein* to realize that it is other than its-self, to draw its-self out to an authentic mode of being-there, here-in-the-world-taking-care-of…in-order-to…for-the-the-sake-of-its-self.

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[43] Let us break down the variations between these four conceptions as they appear in *Being and Time*: 1) *Welt*, world, is "an ontic concept used to signify the totality of beings which can be objectively present within the world"; 2) '*Welt*', 'world', is an ontological designation that "signifies the beings of those beings" contained by the world; 3) *Umwelt*, or surrounding world, as that condition that *Dasein* finds itself in its *pre-ontological* meaning; 4) *Umweltlichkeit*, or worldliness, is the *a priori* conditions of any world which determine how our understanding of a particular world unfolds. See Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*¸ trans. Joan Stambaugh, revised by Dennis J. Schmidt (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2010), 64-65 in English pagination.

[44] It is important to note the various turns that occur in Heidegger's thinking with regards to the question of being. In *Being and Time*, as stated within the text, Heidegger is asking after the meaning of being as such and in general—later it will be the truth of being, and in the end, the site/place/event of being. While this middle period seems to fall out for most post-Heideggerians, as we shall see briefly, the first and last instantiation of his thought remains. I owe this point to Rachel Bath and am grateful to her for her suggestions on this discussion in general.

We raise all of this for the following reasons: first, as Deleuze writes in his foreword to *Difference and Repetition*, Heidegger's "more and more pronounced orientation towards a philosophy of ontological Difference" must be maintained to be *the* founding moment of modern and post-modern philosophy and theory alike;[45] second, and directly related to this point, Heidegger continues to serve as an inspiration, if not direct foundation, for theories of world in relation to globalization and global capitalism that wish to emphasize their spatial determination.

As Pheng Cheah writes in her recent work *What is a World?*, "it has also been argued that contemporary globalization has created a genuinely transcultural zone that undermines the territorial borders of cultural […] production, thereby leading to the emergence of a global consciousness."[46] This notion rests between the worldless characterization of contemporary global modernity that we have previously outlined, and the temporal-ontological delineation of world we just encountered. In this third view, space comes to be the predominant determining factor of world insofar as national interdependence on the global market necessitates a spatial conception of exchange that informs and cultivates identities. The effect is one that not only minimizes difference but moreover "conflates the world with the globe and reduces the world to a spatial object produced by the material processes of globalization."[47] Cheah believes that this incessant movement towards a spatial conception of world has as its motivation a desire to bury the intrinsic connection between capitalist accumulation and time. In this regard, she writes that "capitalist accumulation needs and takes time. […] But capital can neither give itself time nor destroy it and, moreover, does not want to destroy it. This means that an irreducible principle of real messianic hope is always structural to capitalist globalization. The

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[45] Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, trans. Paul Patton (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), xi.

[46] Pheng Cheah, *What is a World?: On Postcolonial Literature as World Literature* (Raleigh, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2015), 23.

[47] Ibid, 28

persistence of time is infrastructural to capital and cannot be destroyed."[48] Her response
to this scenario, then, is to seek in world literature a return to ontological difference, in
the precise sense that it enacts an "opening of worlds by the coming of time, world
literature points to something that will always exceed and disrupt capital."[49] To do so, she
returns to Heidegger via the Post-Heideggerian tradition (and perhaps this return to
Heidegger is only for the sake of this post-tradition) to retrieve and revitalize a concept of
world with its connection to temporality.

Our return to a conceptualization of world will take a different trajectory from these past
and present formulations. The continuous shifting of local values within a supposedly
stable global framework leads to the conclusion that world formation in contemporary
global modernity may best be understood as an form of creation, or poïesis. The modern
instantiation of poïesis also has its roots in Heidegger's oeuvre, however, and is most
commonly defined as a bringing forth, or an emergence that in a threshold moment forms
an ecstatic movement of becoming.[50] Our use of poïesis differs: broadly defined, poïesis
is the unification of thought and action in a particular time and space so as to *continue* a
world, even though this unification is founded on a becoming-other, a series of
ontological, political, and historical *discontinuities* without breaks. In this sense, poïesis
is not simply a bringing forth which manifests a self-becoming, a trait common to all
living things. It is rather a continuous re-shaping of that which belongs inside of its-self,
and that which is foreign to it, that which is outside of its-self. Understanding world
formation from the vantage point of poïesis provides us with several advantages to
overcome the current deadlock we have outlined. First, it expresses itself as a dynamic, in
the terms of relationality between the basic coordinates of life (thought, action, time, and
space), such that we do not have to posit a ground to all being or a founding
transcendental principle that comes to structure reality and offers a promise of some

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[48] Ibid, 11.

[49] Ibid, 11.

[50] See, for example, Heidegger's "The Question Concerning Technology," in *Basic Writings*, ed. and trans.
David Farrell Krell (London: Harper Perennial, 2008).

*future* to come. We begin, rather, *in medias res*, with the result that there is no privileging of either time over space, thought over action, and so on. We have only a continuous process of closing and constricting as much as an opening and clearing that brings about a consistency of life, a unity, that always already transforms the static categories of mere existence (being and beings either as the who or the what) into the relational movements of living identity (the who or what *with… as… against…*).[51]

Second, it is a matter of significance and intrigue that throughout the Western canon poïesis, and poetry more broadly, have almost *de jure* been excluded from the terrain of politics and philosophy alike. Perhaps the example *par excellence* arrives in the infamous moment from "Book X" of Plato's *Republic*, where the founding of the ideal *polis* can only be accomplished by an outright exile of poets from its space. Why the need for this injunction? Indeed, in his recent work *The Age of Poets* Alain Badiou goes so far as to call this an uncharacteristic moment of "subjective complication, *the embarrassment*, of this gesture that excludes the poets from the city-state."[52] The answer to this question may lie in another dialogue, namely, Plato's *Cratylus*, whose subtitle is 'On the

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[51] In this last discussion, it may initially appear as though the relationship between the organization of a self, *poiesis* and world brings us into the territory of Henri Bergson's concept of creative evolution. Indeed, as he writes in the book of the same name "if language were to be modelled on reality, we would not say "the child becomes a man," but "there is becoming from the child to the man." In the first proposition, "becomes" is a verb of indeterminate meaning, intended to mask the absurdity into which we fall when we attribute the state "man" to the subject "child" . . . In the second proposition, "becoming" is a subject. It comes to the forefront. It is the reality itself." Henri Bergson, *Creative Evolution,* trans. Arthur Mitchell (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1911) 7. The association of relational becoming and reality now appears indistinguishable from our insistence on the link between poïesis as the unification of a consistency of life. However, as we have mentioned, our perspective is above all else to think the co-arising of a subject and a world, even if, as we shall explore, it is the identity of a world that initially and for the most part (to borrow a Heideggerian phrase) comes to stand in for the subject in the situation of global capitalism. The point is that in our formulation there is no emphasis on exteriorization and temporalization as Roberto Esposito maintains in the case of Bergson. See Roberto Esposito, *Two: The Machine of Political Theology and the Place of Thought*, trans. Zakiya Hanafi (New York: Fordham University Press, 2015) 181-189. The unity brought about through becoming is not a question, then, of relating inner experience to reality, or the circular determination of the globe as we mentioned earlier wherein the center determines all. Nor is it a question of getting outside the subject into the world, or the world getting 'inside' the subject. These are processes that could be rather modelled on the geometrical figure of the ellipse, whose center is in a sense incomplete, present but lacking not only descriptive but self-determining properties, always supplemented by two foci, which form the constant, the consistency, of reality and life: world and identity.

[52] Alain Badiou, *The Age of Poets¸* ed. and trans. Bruno Bosteels (New York: Verso Books, 2014), 31.

correctness of names'. Contained here is the argument that language, and names in particular, should reveal in their very formulation the natural essence of what is being named in reality.[53] Poetry errs insofar as it fails to directly name the essence of the thing it describes, but rather evokes and conjures other images in the form of imitations, *onomatopoeias*, to give meaning to it: as Socrates states, "And may not the same be said of a king? A king will often be the son of a king, the good son or the noble son of a good or noble sire; and similarly the offspring of every kind, in the regular course of nature, is like the parent, and therefore has the same name. Yet the syllables may be disguised until they appear different to the ignorant person."[54] Thus, the imitative names that the poets ascribe to life can only generate a reality, to return to *The Republic*, wherein "pleasure and pain will be kings in your city instead of law or the thing that everyone has always believed to be best, namely, reason."[55]

If this last discussion of poetry's exclusion seemed to lead us away from our goal to bring about a conception of world that places politics and ontology in an equal and reciprocal relationship, let us here invoke the continuation of Plato's legacy of names: within contemporary global modernity we seem to continuously cling to this naming game, whose diseased remnants fall prey, as Hayden White states, "to the illusion that 'the order of things' could be adequately represented in an 'order of words,' if only the *right order* of words could be found."[56] As a precise example, let us simply refer once again to our sets of mis-alliances that ascribe a singular essence and function to a name. In order to combat this logic, it is imperative that our return to the concept of world does not take the form of a definite structure where everything has a singular, ready-made place and every

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[53] Francesco Ademollo, *The Cratylus of Plato: A Commentary* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 4.

[54] Plato, *The Cratylus*, trans. Benjamin Jowett, accessed September 15th, 2016. Located on: http://classics.mit.edu/Plato/cratylus.html

[55] Plato, *The Republic*, trans. G.M.A Grube, revised by C.D.C Reeve (Cambridge: Hackett Publishing Company, 1992), §600.

[56] Hayden White, "Foucault Decoded: Notes from Underground" in *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (London: John Hopkins University Press, 1978), 232.

name a single, ready-made definition. It is rather a process that we seek, something that could be imagined as a *poietic* structuring of worlds that continuously relates and relays the living in a unified way: this unification is always still other than it was, but provides a continuity through a re-narrativisation of its history.

To this end, let us return to the opening line of Humberto R. Maturana and Francisco J. Varela's now classic work *Autopoiesis: The Organization of the Living,* as it grants us a pathway to further elaborate how the *poietic* relates to the world, and to begin to understand how the world undergoes a structuring along *poietic* lines: "A universe comes into being when a space is severed into two. A unity is defined."[57] Why the need for this second order operation? What is at stake here in this movement from the being of a universe, the movement of the one out of the two, to a redefinition of the one itself? Is there a sense in which a unity and a universe come to be at odds with each other? Already we are confronted with a complex matrix of possibilities that inform the relationship between *a* universe, its being within a space and time and then the description of a unity: in short, we have complicated the relationship between what always already exists 'out there' in space, the event of originary being that brings about the one, and the inscription not of the event itself but of its arrangement *post facto* into something other than what it was. The crucial insight of Maturana and Varela is to distinguish something like a universe – a divisive turning of the one of being against a space, and into something other than what it was – from something like a world, a unity that is not simply a container filled with matter but an organization that dictates the flow of matter such that the severed space of being temporally becomes one again.

This passage from being-universe to becoming-world may best be explained by way of Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus*, when they elaborate their thoroughly overlooked concept of *miraculation* in their discussion of Marx's insight into the genesis of capitalism.[58] They cite Marx's statement that capital appears not as the product of labour,

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[57] Maturana and Varela, *Autopoiesis and Cognition*, 73.

[58] In his article "Machining Fantasy: Spinoza, Hume and the miracle in a politics of desire" Kyle Mcgee notes that "only a handful of the most perceptive theorists to engage the thought of Deleuze and Guattari

but rather as the natural or divine presupposition of it: namely, that "machines and agents cling so closely to capital that their very functioning appears to be *miraculated* by it. Everything seems *objectively* to be produced by capital."[59] Coming from the French term *miraculé(e)s*, *miraculation* has two separate but related meanings: in the first instance, it is used to describe an individual that has been healed (or *cured*) from illness by means of a miracle; in the second instance, it defines an individual who, with exceptional chance, has been able to avoid a catastrophe. We should note that in its etymology the word *catastrophe* has nothing at all to do with some disastrous or cataclysmic event, but rather denotes a change in position and perspective– 'I turn, I overturn, I turn away'. 'Bifo' sheds light on the potential in retrieving the archaic definition of this term when he writes that "Catastrophe means, in Greek, a change of position that allows the viewer to see things that s/he could not see before. Catastrophe opens new spaces of visibility, and therefore of possibility, but it also demands a change of paradigm."[60]

So when the machines and the agents of capitalism (labourers as such) 'cling so closely to capital that their very functioning appears to be *miraculated* by it', it is evident that the process of miraculation makes it impossible to create an alternative vision of any kind. To this end, Deleuze and Guattari write that "as Marx observes, *in the beginning* capitalists are necessarily conscious of the opposition between capital and labour, and of the use of capital as a means of extorting surplus labour. But a perverted, bewitched

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have made anything at all of the logic of antiproduction or the concept of miraculation." He notes Brian Massumi's *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect Sensation* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2002) which takes up miraculation for an engaged radical empiricism (in a footnote, Massumi states that his usage differs from Deleuze and Guattari as it refers to any *quasi-causal* and not just paranoid formations – a strange assertion as Deleuze and Guattari make clear that the function of the paranoiac machine is precisely an attempt to "demiraculate" the organs, what should also be read as deterritorialize the organs when the body without organs is no longer able to tolerate them.); Eugene Hollands delineation of miraculation for universal history in *Deleuze and Guattari's* Anti-Oedipus: *Introduction to Schizoanalysis* (New York: Routledge, 1999); and Alberto Toscano's work on antiproduction in his "In Praise of Negativism," in *Deleuze, Guattari, and the Production of the New*, ed. Simon O'Sullivan and Stephen Zepke (New York: Continuum, 2009).

[59] Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 10-11 – italics added to *objectively*

[60] Franco "Bifo" Berardi, "Communism is back, but we should call it a therapy of singularisation", located on *Generation Online*, (London: February 2009). Accessed on: April 19th, 2016. http://www.generation-online.org/p/fp_bifo6.htm

world quickly comes into being, as capital increasingly plays the role of a recording surface that falls back on (*se rabat sur*) all of production."[61] If we read this back upon Maturana and Varela's statement, we can claim that the capitalist universe comes into being in the severed space between capital and labour. But in order to conceal capital's function of 'exhorting surplus labor', a new unity must be defined: the malignant property of this operation is written out of its functioning, such that the identity produced within and alongside capital's worlds can become indistinguishable from the universe of capital within which they exist. This is precisely why it is not only easier to imagine all sorts of 'catastrophic' events than to implement some change in the fabric of global capitalism, but also why capitalism itself is all the more content to solicit these eschatological scenarios: crises occur out there, for instance, again, in the improper local, political instantiations of nationalism that deviate from the natural and divine functioning of capital, because capitalism is always already the *cure*. We either give ourselves over to the 'worldless' horizon of this universe-being, or else our identity is cast out from being as such.

Without explicitly highlighting the particular procedures of *poietic* world structuring, we have already implicated their relational functioning in our foregoing discussion of Maturana and Varela, and Deleuze and Guattari's respective work and its relation to contemporary global modernity. The particular procedures of *poietic* world structuring stem directly from these four voices and, as such, they will bear the brunt of our investigation in this thesis. Before concluding with a final restatement of our discussion of contemporary global modernity in lieu of these procedures, let us now directly, albeit briefly, outline these procedures as a means to foreground the presentation in the next two chapters. First, we have the *autopoietic*, or universal, self-regulating sphere in control of its own creation and destruction that, in its self-regulation, appears to objectively define the global totality of beings; second, the *allopoietic*, or the convergence between the demands and values of the universal sphere and its local historical translation which displaces and represses historical trauma and violence to provide a sense of continuity

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[61] Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 11.

from the past to present and into the future; and third, the *poietic-subject*, or the process of subjectivization that allows an individual to gain a sense of their 'world', its relation to the universal sphere, and themselves. The process of subjectivization turns around two axes, namely, the *prosopopoeial* and *onomatopoeial*. The former refers to the manner in which the creation of a singular, homogeneous, public identity within the *allopoietic* procedure comes to stand in for individual difference by forcing individuals to give themselves over to this identity; the latter refers not to those imitative linguistic processes evoked in our earlier discussion of Plato's *Cratylus*, but rather an immediate process of naturalization of the singular *allopoietic* identity within local space such that it always already appears to have been that way *ex novo*, from the beginning.

Thus, when the capitalist universe comes into being in the severed space between capital and labour, it is not yet the autopoietic dimension of a world. It becomes autopoietic when the malignant property of its operation is written out of its functioning, such that the circulation and production of capital seems to occur from capital itself, when it comes to reflect its own divine or natural precondition for all creation and destruction and the identity produced within capital's worlds can become indistinguishable from the universe of capital within which they exist. But this objective, universal functioning of the capitalist universe can only come about by becoming *other* than it was, when allopoietic procedures intervene to support its functioning such that the demands and values of capital are translated in terms of a local history which naturalize its functioning, an onomatopoeial process, and are made present within a local space individuating subjects, a prosopopoeial process. This allopoietic procedure displaces and represses the violence of the autopoietic coming into being, such that the malignant property of its operation is written out of its functioning: capital thus no longer confronts labour, but labour is to always already have sprung out of the precondition capital. And in this way the poietic-subject emerges within the horizon of this universe-being. As the allopoietic procedure not only legitimizes the autopoietic, but translates it into a local space that comes to appear universal, the poietic-subject undergoes a prosopopoeial re-arrangement of the situation which presents itself in onomatopoeial terms of always already having been this way.

It is within this process of poietic structuring that 'a unity is defined', a unity of description within which to locate that principle of living which seems to be founded on and given by common sense as both what is of, from and pertains to the commons and what is always already experienced in everyday life and language: *identity*. This description of the living *qua sensus communis* only ever seems to come about as secondary process which attempts to force emergent processes back into the severed origins of being, thereby canalizing an indivisible remainder in the principle of identity between *autos* and *allos*. Where being is evoked there is always the inherent potential, possibility or perhaps even necessity to slip back into that fundamental relation of origins which is produced by the severed space of the universe: being *contra* nothingness. This origin, then, returns us to our original question, 'do we still live in a world', by continuously threatening to predicate the self, or *autos*, on the inverse possibility of a 'fall', a loss, a deprivation. As Roberto Esposito maintains in *Persons and Things*, the structural coupling of *'ente'* to and within *'niente'* inscribes a continuous slippage of identity from the self of personhood to the thing of otherness.[62] This is not merely a question, then, of alienation from one's-self or objectification of one's labour but the total transformation of the person to *'das Ding'*: a totality of overwhelming indiscernibility that confronts the fullness of being-*autos* with the obscene nothingness of being-*allos*, the *less than nothingness of being other – in short, we appear forced to either give ourselves over to the 'worldless' horizon of this universe-being to 'become what we are', or else our identity is cast out from being as such.* By understanding how this fundamentally poor and forced choice is created through a poietic structuring we open up a pathway to view our being anew, to understand that how our identity is and how we are in a world co-arise with one another in a relational becoming.

Neither world nor identity can be reduced to poïesis, however. Simply put, there exist poetic structures and processes that are not for world, nor for identity. For example, in *The Uprising* Berardi connects symbolist poetry with its direct enunciation of *the* world without referent to capitalism's processes of financialisation (profit produced

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[62] Roberto Esposito, *Person and Things*, trans. Zakiya Hanafi (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2015), 59 *sq.*

from profit without ever having to touch the world). He will go so far as to claim that this process destroys the real world, and presents us with a situation wherein nothing is created, only destroyed, a claim we will explore in our next chapter in further detail by examining its relation to capitalism's ontology of creative destruction and abstraction. Moreover, in *And: Phenomenology of the End*, Berardi continues this disjunctive operation by emphasizing the invisibilization of *the* world of Semiocapitalism, while nevertheless continuing to speak about cultural worlds. There seems to be no way within his rhizomatic phenomenology to bridge the gap, to provide a meaningful articulation of how *a* world relates to *the* world, and how we become together with our world. In short, Bifo's position ends up simply repeating the problematic formulation of 'no world without capitalism, no capitalism without exhaustion, and no exhaustion without containment in the globe.'

What is different about a *poietic* structuring of worlds is the manner in which it comes to be naturalized for subjects by making the global and specific identity of capitalism present within local space and history, thereby individuating their-selves. As the co-ordinates of a world are always in a process of becoming other, identity as well must become other. It is precisely this constant creation and destruction that global capitalism generally, and its processes of globalization in particular, tries to conceal in presenting itself as emptied of history, as a natural order in itself, as a substitute for God or as a *natura naturans.* The global and autopoietic dimension of capitalism creates *a* self which is discontinuous. It needs to be locally accommodated and provided with meaning that can seemingly present a continuity of life, identity, and world, that can continue a world at a local and allopoietic level. It is precisely this point that is missed by current theorizations of global capitalism and globalization and why our onto-political investigation of the poietic structuring of worlds is a necessary step to disentangling the situation of contemporary global modernity.

# 2    Autopoiesis, Global Capitalism, and World(s)

## 2.1    To be rid of the World

Capitalism wants to be rid of the world. To become a universe cut off from the world. Capitalism desires the globe without the world, circulation without an environment, and profit without waged or paid labour: global financial capitalism's wish is to become frictionless self-creation, to become autopoietic.

There are several ways to understand this global characterization of financial capitalism's organization, or, rather, to understand the organizational characteristics of capitalism that tend towards its self-referential auto-production. In our first chapter, one of these characteristics was invoked under the name of (real) abstraction, what Marx noted as *the* defining trend of capitalism's relationship to the Real world. To reiterate, real abstraction was explained as a dual transformation that dissolves the relationship between the visibility of production and its value for individuals in reality, and, simultaneously, a process that empties capitalism of determinate historical and cultural content. A second complementary and supplementary organizational characteristic emerges alongside abstraction, and it is called *creative destruction*. Whereas abstraction denotes the relationship between capitalism and the real world, thereby describing the concrete (or absent) determinations of the world, creative destruction can be understood as the dynamic which produces these concrete structural determinations. It is simultaneously capitalism's driving force towards the globalizing expansion of its processes of production (what capitalism consists in), and its reality principle (the constantly changing global coordinates of what it means to live in a world 'together-with-time, everywhere, just-now').

On the one hand, we must be willing to offer a more complex, nuanced definition of abstraction than the relationship between the economy and the real world, and to trace out the history of its effects on the structure of production. This last statement concerning effects, however, is not to insist on some vulgar Marxist determination of reality as the translation of base-causes into superstructural-effects. To claim that abstraction produces effects on the structure of production is to resist, as we shall explore, the facile

understanding that with abstraction comes nothing but destruction: destruction of ways of life, destruction of meaning, destruction of a meaningful way of engaging with reality and a world. It is instead to begin our re-evaluation by taking seriously Žižek's incisive observation that what needs to be opposed today is "the simple commonsense [sic] solution: 'we have to get rid of the speculators, introduce order there, and real production will go on' – the lesson of capitalism is that these 'unreal' speculators *are* real here; if we remove them the reality of production suffers."[63]

On the other hand, if we are to grasp how capitalism wants to become autopoietic, abstraction's real effects on reality must be tied to creative destruction. Creative destruction does not only reveal structural effects on the reality of production, nor a replacement of one socio-cultural history for that of capitalism. At a more fundamental level, creative destruction implies an ontological ungrounding of a world, a process of adaptation that transforms and destroys old structures of existence for the sake of creating new, faster, more profitable ones. It is at work not only in worlds hitherto untouched by capitalism but even those made in the image of capitalism itself. Understood together, abstractive creative destruction thus creates a paradoxical relationship between the world, capitalism, and worlds: capitalism needs worlds to secure its autopoiesis and conserve the interior of its organization, but at the same time it wishes to be rid of the world, the material conditions of an outside which threatens its identity.

 In order to illustrate this tension between world, worlds, and capitalism, this chapter will first explore the organizational characteristics of abstraction and creative destruction. The work of 'Bifo' shall serve as our guide insofar as it operates within a creative theoretical matrix that emphasizes the thought of Deleuze and Guattari along with Italian autonomist Marxism—in other words, philosophy and theory together with political economy. Working through Bifo's analysis of abstraction will provide us with a historically grounded reading of capitalism's development, while also allowing us to situate certain key terms for Deleuze and Guattari. Second, we shall trace a brief history of the

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[63] Slavoj Žižek, *Living in the End Times* (London: Verso Books, 2011), 403.

relationship between capitalism and the theory of autopoiesis, paying particular attention to developing three main processes of the latter: structural coupling, operational closure, and reciprocal causality. The work of Sir Stafford Beer and the late work of Guattari shall be invoked to provide us with a way to think through the connection between a biological theory of living and the organization of human socio-political life. Finally, we shall re-read abstractive creative destruction through and within the paradigm of autopoiesis, elaborating how capitalism comes to embody an autopoietic dimension of worlds in the situation of contemporary global modernity. To this end, the three passive syntheses of production from Deleuze and Guattari's machinic ontology, namely, connection, disjunction, and conjunction, will be explored as a means to update *Anti-Oedipus'* concrete articulation of the relationship between capitalism, politics and ontology. Taken together, the analyses of this chapter will advance the autopoietic dimension of the poietic structuring of worlds. Capitalism becomes autopoietic by creating a dimension of global, particular, truth, which simultaneously abstracts from the world and is accommodated by worlds through means of creative destruction. This will prepare our analysis of local, allopoietic worlds, which undergo a transformative process to become structurally non-particular in their accommodation of autopoietic capitalism.

## 2.2     A Note on Two Trends: Abstraction and Creative Destruction

In *The Uprising*, 'Bifo' summarizes three historical levels of abstraction that have occurred throughout the history of capitalism:[64] the first level is the separation of a labourer's use-value from concrete forms of human activity. This is the particular process that Marx describes in *Capital* when he claims that production under capitalism is not simply producing commodities, but in essence, the production of surplus-value. This view implies a veritable transformation of material goods into something other and more than themselves, no longer simply 'useful' *things* but social relations that tend towards the excess of themselves. To repeat an almost comical example that Marx provides,

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[64] The following critical discussion draws its general schema from Berardi, *The Uprising*, 102-104, albeit, modifying some of the terminology and its articulation.

whether one's labour involves the production of sausages in a sausage factory or the production of teaching in a 'teaching factory' (i.e. a school generally and a university in particular), the result is the same. The effect of one's labour is no longer contained by the production of labour itself, but its abstraction into surplus-value for capital. "The notion of a productive labourer therefore implies not merely a relation between work and useful effect, between labourer and product of labour," Marx writes, "but also a specific, social relation of production, a relation that has sprung up historically and stamps the labourer as the direct means of creating surplus-value. To be a productive labourer is, therefore, not a piece of luck, but a misfortune."[65]

The abstraction of labour-production into social relations that create surplus-value necessarily rests upon certain homogenizing elements: the homogeneity of time as discrete measurements of productive-labour; the homogeneity of labour as quantifiable social labour; and the production of labour-value as "abstract, homogeneous labor-time."[66] Taken together, it becomes clear that the homogeneous abstraction inherent in this first level of capitalist production can explain Berardi's previously quoted remark that 'in the Indust-Reality the invisible goal of abstract valorization [the production of surplus-value] was obtained by physical manipulation of visible things [the transformation of both labour and commodities into socially homogeneous quantifiable objects].'[67]

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[65] Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume I*, trans. Ben Fowkes (New York: Penguin Books, 1982) 644 – translation modified according to that found on Marxists.org for sake of readability: see https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/pdf/Capital-Volume-I.pdf

[66] This last formulation is quoted from Jamie Merchant's remarks on the renewal of Marx's critical theory of society in the 1970's and 80's, put forward under the name "Wertkritik." He writes that: "The ineluctable abstraction of human labor under the capitalist production of commodities, that is to say, its role within the valorization processes of capital, produces value as abstract, homogeneous labor-time. It is the blind, relentless drive to accumulate surplus value regardless of and often at the expense of human life itself that constitutes the peculiar form of wealth at the core of capitalist modernity." See Elmar Flatschart, Alan Milchman, and Jamie Merchant, "Marx and 'Wertkritik'" *Platypus Review* 56 (May 2016): https://platypus1917.org/2013/05/01/marx-and-wertkritik/

[67] Berardi, *And: Phenomenology of the End,* 94.

A second level of capitalist abstraction arrives in the phase of what Berardi calls late-modern capitalism. Here, 'Bifo' insists upon breaking up what is normally referred to as late capitalism, the period of capitalist development following the Second World War and continuing up until the present. Implicitly, he argues against placing the emphasis of capitalism on its material globalizing trajectory, what Ernest Mandel described in 1972 as "far from representing a 'post-industrial society,' late capitalism thus constitutes *generalized universal industrialization* for the first time in history."[68] Indeed, to emphasize the generalized universal industrialization of late capitalism is to remain only within the first level of abstraction. In this regard, 'Bifo' draws attention to precisely those elements of abstraction which would lead to the characterization of capitalism's development towards a post-industrial society. The second phase of abstraction, then, arrives in the digital abstraction of production where the production and exchange of information comes to supplant the production and exchange of things. It is no longer production as such which yields the greatest surplus value. To amend Mandel's formulation, it is rather the constitution of the first truly generalized universal markets which marks this development of capitalist abstraction and which begins to signal its *deterritorialization*, *the emptying of its qualitative socio-cultural and historical content.*

The third level of capitalist abstraction, and that which 'Bifo' is most concerned with, is the financialisation of a universalized market economy where value becomes abstracted from the production of information and physical goods as such. Here, wealth is directly able to beget more wealth. This push towards greater abstraction directly stems from the dissolution of the Bretton-Woods agreements by American President Richard Nixon in 1972, where money was freed from the Gold Standard guarantee.[69] Because of this

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[68] Ernest Mandel, *Late Capitalism* (London: Humanities Press, 1975), 387. For the sake of clarity, Mandel also recognized that late capitalism would be marked by the increasing fluidity of financial capital. However, the greater trend, he claimed, would be the widespread commodification and industrialization of increasingly inclusive sectors of human life.

[69] In addition to Berardi, Benjamin Noys also cites the dissolution of this agreement as ushering in the abstractive processes of financialisation. See Benjamin Noys, *The Persistence of the Negative*, 10. Moreover, in a footnote, he writes that "Giovanni Arrighi, in his article 'Hegemony Unravelling II', has argued, by drawing on the work of Fernand Braudel, that financialisation is a recurrent cyclical dynamic of capital. This is important for drawing attention to the long- term dynamics of capitalism, and the possible

'dereferentialization' of capital from material guarantee, capital breeds more capital from itself without ever having to pass through the real, or as Berardi writes "accumulation no longer passes through the production of goods, but goes straight to its monetary goal, extracting value from the pure circulation of money, from the virtualization of life and intelligence."[70] If the result of the first level of capitalist abstraction was, as Marx claimed, the sheer misfortune of becoming a productive labourer, then the effect of this third level of abstraction for Berardi is nothing short of utter disaster: the deterritorialization, dereferentialization of financial capital not only signals the destruction of the labourer but the world as such.

*The Uprising* is rhythmically punctuated with a refrain that goes so far as to claim that through processes of financial abstraction "nothing is created from this destruction"[71]: "The destruction of the real world starts from this emancipation of valorization from the production of useful things, and from the self-replication of value in the financial field. The emancipation of value from the referent leads to the destruction of the existing world. This is exactly what is happening under the cover of the so-called financial crisis, which is not a crisis at all."[72] In these last passages, Berardi appears to be captured by a dangerous line of theorization.  He simultaneously views capitalist abstraction as unreal in the sense that capitalism no longer creates anything but capital itself thereby becoming closed off from the world, and *too real*, insofar as the lack of creating useful things results in the destruction of both 'the real world' and 'the existing world.' It is my view that 'Bifo's' description of the process of abstraction defining the relationship between capitalism and the world amounts to an aporia. It appears as both detached from the world and yet continues to immanently effect the world. Despite his careful genealogical

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crises of these dynamics. Therefore financialisation is not 'new' as such, although its depth, penetration and scope do appear to mark a qualitative shift. This shift, combined with the dynamic of real abstraction, poses particularly acute questions for the status of theoretical and critical work that has to engage, whether it likes it or not, with this 'ontology' of capital." Ibid, 20.

[70] Franco 'Bifo' Berardi, *The Uprising,* 23-24.

[71] Ibid, 24.

[72] Ibid, 105.

tracing of the process of abstraction, 'Bifo' seems to forget that financial speculation is but the latest instantiation of this trajectory whose transformation of society always seems to signal the possibility of its total destruction and dissolution. Even more crucially, and to expand upon Wolfgang Streeck's comment from our last chapter, Bifo ultimately forgets that capitalism always needs societies to guarantee the conditions for its own possibilities. As such, even the survival of financial capitalism is inextricably bound up with the force of life manifested by nations, states, societies, communities, and persons.

On this point, commenting on the paradoxical relationship between capitalism's transformation of society and the impending automation of production in the 1950's, Hannah Arendt prophetically commented that "the modern age has carried with it a theoretical glorification of labor and has resulted in a factual transformation of the whole of society into a laboring society. The fulfilment of the wish, therefore, like the fulfilment of wishes in fairy tales, comes at a moment when it can only be self-defeating. It is a society of laborers which is about to be liberated from the fetters of labor."[73] If we bring Arendt's quotation together with the financialised abstraction of capitalist organization as described by Berardi, it becomes evident that from a certain point of view capitalism's wish to become frictionless self-creation is eminently self-defeating. It is capitalism itself that has created contradictory conditions for the process of abstraction to smoothly unfold. But nevertheless, capitalism continuously overcomes the drag of its own de-territorializing contradictions, those destructive tendencies that 'Bifo' focuses on: it continues to create, to reterritorialize itself. To this end, critical theorists, philosophers, and political economists alike invoke a different moniker to describe its abstractive desire to expand the borderless existence of globalization and to be rid of the material world, namely, creative capitalism. Let us (all too) briefly work through a few examples which form a counterpoint to the narrative we have been working with thus far, before returning to a final evaluation of Bifo's position.

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[73] Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, 2nd Edition (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998), 4-5.

In his critical work *The Persistence of the Negative*, Benjamin Noys defines creative capitalism as a form "predicated on invoking the inexhaustible value creating powers of novelty, production and creativity."[74] Here, creation does not deal with the production of useful things, a material referent for value, but the production of energy and desire, immaterial production and labour, production and labour without limits and without boundaries. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri expand on this line of thought in the larger context of globalization with their concept of Empire. "The concept of Empire is characterized fundamentally by a lack of boundaries" whose processes of globalization are sustained by "the creative forces of the multitude."[75] Much like our description of the contradictory conditions brought about through abstraction, for Hardt and Negri the creative energy which sustains the logic of Empire carries with it the possibility of negation and destruction, of liberation from capitalism itself. In this regard, the relationship between Empire, the political, economic and ontological fabric of global capitalism,[76] and the multitude, namely, the anonymous mass subjectivity constituted within capitalism's structuring, is one constitutive of an antagonism generating positive *creativity*: "the deterritorializing power of the multitude is the productive force that sustains Empire and at the same time the force that calls for and makes necessary its destruction."[77] In a different register, Streeck provides a third notion of creative capitalism, tying together Noys, Hardt and Negri's lines of thought. He explains that "rather than restoring the protective limits to commodification that were rendered

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[74] Benjamin Noys, *The Persistence of the Negative*, 10.

[75] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2001), xv.

[76] The logic of Empire is established between the permanent alliance of a monarchic organization (a ruling national power, international agencies of political control, and supranational financial institutions), an oligarchic structure (other nation-states and multinational organizations) and democratic constitutions (non-governmental organizations and international mediating organizations). In short, an alliance between politics and economics which generates a particular ontological horizon for existence. It has done so through the construction of new figures of subjective revolt 'within and against' what Hardt and Negri call the 'ontological fabric' of capitalism *qua* Empire. Ibid, 45.

[77] Ibid, 61.

obsolete by globalization," what could be captured by the antagonism between the creative potential of the multitude and the untiring energy of their creative labour, "ever new ways will be sought to exploit nature, extend and intensify working time, and encourage what the jargon calls *creative finance*, in a desperate effort to keep profits up and capital accumulation going."[78]

What 'Bifo' misses, then, is that financialised abstraction is not only real in the sense that Žižek describes, as necessarily producing effects upon the structure of social and economic production—*in a more fundamental way, this organizational characteristic of capitalism always already creates a particular ontological texture in its destruction of an existing world, a world as it once was, even a world that has been made in the image of capitalism itself.* It is precisely owing to the ontological necessity inscribed in this operation that the relationship of labour to, and the transformation of society within, the processes of capitalism's abstraction differ from more traditional notions of alienation understood as either estrangement or expropriation. Abstraction supplants the expropriation of waged-labour in order to overcome its drag on the production of surplus-value. It transforms the soul of societies, the principle of life which predicates survival on the estrangement of the individual from the collective by implicating the survival of societies themselves within the success of capitalism's self-referential processes of abstraction. Therefore, having transformed all of society into a labouring society, global financial capitalism cannot simply create. To create, it first must destroy labour, environments, and finally, worlds, even as it relies on these very structures for its existence. As Alain Badiou reminds us, "the opening of a space of creation requires destruction."[79] Badiou raises this point in his *Logics of Worlds* as a means to explain the manner in which an event comes to disrupt a world. He views this creative potential as a means to counteract the totalizing hegemony of global capitalism, for the truth unleashed by the site of events to free us from the effects of capitalist doxa on the (political)

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[78] Streeck, *How Will Capitalism End?,* 67.

[79] Alain Badiou, *Logics of Worlds: Being and Event 2*, trans. Alberto Toscano (London: Continumm Books, 2009), 396.

world.[80] In light of our forgoing presentation, however, we should instead argue that with these last formulations we have been witness to the emergence of a second organizational characteristic that supplements abstraction and facilitates capitalism's tendency towards its own self-referential auto-production: namely, creative destruction.

The notion of creative destruction was popularized by Joseph Schumpeter in his 1945 work *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* to describe a dynamic view of capitalism.[81] From this dynamism, Schumpeter intends to elaborate the reality principle of capitalism, as he (like Marx with abstraction) believed creative destruction to be *the* defining trend of capitalism's relation to itself, and to the world. In a sober statement, Schumpeter writes that "Capitalist reality is first and last a process of change."[82] Creative destruction, then, was meant to elucidate this constant dynamism in general, and capitalism's drive towards innovation in particular, marking its discontent with structural stability, stasis and the sedimentation of monopolistic corporations. It is worth quoting Schumpeter's definition of the concept at length in order to explicitly involve its function within our discussion of abstraction:

> The fundamental impulse that sets and keeps the capitalist engine in motion comes from the new consumers' goods, the new methods of production or transportation, the new markets, the new forms of industrial organization that capitalist enterprise creates. […] The opening up of new markets, foreign or domestic, and the organizational development from the

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[80] He writes: "It will be easier to understand this if we refer to that dimension of the state represented by the contemporary capitalist economy. Everybody knows that one must bend before its laws and its inflexible power (one must be 'realist' and 'modern', and 'make reforms', meaning: destroy public services and position everything within the circuits of Capital), but it is also clear that this notorious power is devoid of any fixed measure. It is like a superpower without a concept. We could say that the world in which there appears such a power (the state)—a measureless power which is infinitely distant from any affirmative capacity of the mass of people— is a world in which political sites can exist." Ibid, 69-70. For more on Badiou's theory of worlds as it relates to truth freed from capitalism, see Ian Graham Ronald Shaw "Sites, truths and the logics of worlds: Alain Badiou and human geography," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 35, Issue 3 (July 2010): 431-442.

[81] When Schumpeter's *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* was published, Joan Robinson wrote that "Professor Schumpeter's […] argument blows like a gale through the dreary pedentry of static analysis." Joan Robinson, "Review of Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy," *The Economic Journal* 53 (1943) 382.

[82] Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (London: Routledge Books, 1976), 77.

> craft shop and factory to such concerns as U.S. Steel illustrate the same process of industrial *mutation—if I may use that biological term*—that incessantly revolutionizes the economic structure from within, incessantly destroying the old one, incessantly creating a new one. This process of Creative Destruction *is the essential fact about capitalism.* It is what capitalism consists in and what every capitalist concern has got to *live* in.[83]

Whereas real abstraction forms a sort of 'open secret of capitalism', something it acknowledges but whose negative effects and consequences are nevertheless rebranded under the banners of positive freedoms (precarity and risk), and purchasing power generating individual accumulation (readily available debt),[84] it is interesting to note that the notion of creative destruction is openly embraced as a positive rhythm of capitalist production.[85] In this sense, abstraction can be understood primarily as the organizing principle of structural content, the particular manner in which the production of profit and

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[83] Ibid, 82-83. Emphasis added.

[84] Alberto Toscano argues that "In all these instances of the singular abstractions at work in capitalist society, we do well to heed the lesson that Žižek draws from his chiasmic reading of the Freudian theory of dreamwork and the Marxian analysis of the commodity: "the 'secret' to be unveiled through analysis is not the content hidden by the form (the form of commodities, the form of dreams) but, on the contrary, the 'secret' of this form itself " (*The Sublime Object of Ideology,* (London: Verso Books 1989) 11). In other words, the secret of real abstraction is precisely an open secret, one that is to be discerned in the operations of capitalism rather than in an ideological preoccupation with the concrete truth or hidden essence that the abstractions of capital supposedly occlude." Toscano, "The Open Secret of Real Abstraction," 282. The problem, however, is that the operations of abstraction cannot be taken up alone. As we shall argue, the *form* of abstraction is inextricably intertwined to its content. In fact, abstraction itself is insufficient to explain its form, or how it is formed (hence the problem that 'Bifo' encounters in his reading of financial abstraction as pure destruction).

[85] One need only look at such popular journals and publications as *The Wall Street Journal*, or *Forbes* to witness this trend. For example, an article in the *WSJ* describes a crisis of Samsung's quality control in producing smart phones invokes creative destruction as a solution to overcome the company's difficulties, a push towards finding new ways for it to "drive its development". See Geoffrey Cain, "From Crisis to Creative Destruction at Samsung: Combustible smartphones are a symptom of deeper management problems at the Korean company." *WSJ* (Oct. 12, 2016): https://www.wsj.com/articles/from-crisis-to-creative-destruction-at-samsung-1476291039. Even more striking is an article from Forbes, which speaks of creative destruction as an almost spiritual practice, namely, "Practice Creative Destruction to avoid becoming a victim of it." Harold L. Sirkin, *Forbes*, (May 20, 2016): https://www.forbes.com/sites/haroldsirkin/2016/05/20/practice-creative-destruction-to-avoid-becoming-a-victim-of-it/#4022ef4131c2. This is true as well for some (poor) theorizations of globalization, whose slogan may as well be 'give up your culture, globalization makes it better!' See to this effect, Tyler Cowen, *Creative Destruction: How Globalization is Changing World Cultures* (Princeton, NJ, Princeton University Press, 2002).

surplus value are guaranteed, and creative destruction quintessentially a question of form(ing), an organizational process generating forms. If we think of the abstraction inherent to industrialization, the processes of creative destruction that Schumpeter was describing, this last statement makes concrete sense: the creation of a form to *live in* the abstractive reality of capitalism that destroys old ways of life; *the mutation* of this form to generate the content of abstraction (the shift from craft shop to the factory to the US steel industry); the *opening up* (or creation) of new markets as the burgeoning global expansion of this form. To grasp the essential fact about capitalism, then, abstraction must be thought together with the notion of creative destruction in economic as well as ontological terms.

What does this mean for a world, then, as it exists in the situation of contemporary global modernity, where abstractive creative destruction no longer primarily involves bringing capitalism into reality but attempts to set it apart from the world, to have capitalism become reality as such by becoming frictionless self-creation? In a first instance, it requires denouncing the view that abstraction is occlusion. 'Real' reality is not somehow masked by abstractions which empty particular historical and socio-cultural forms and thereby estranging individuals from themselves. Abstraction is not simply a question of invisibilization as 'Bifo' claims. Invisibilization may be paramount to abstraction, if it is understood as rendering invisible capitalism's reliance on societies and their forces of life, but abstraction itself is not equivalent to invisibilization. Rather, as what is at stake in capitalism is still a particular way of living, capitalism also necessarily requires a specific ontological texture to make life visible, a speculative framework that makes it present. To this end, in *Anti-Oedipus* Deleuze and Guattari provide us with a powerful conceptual toolbox for thinking the abstractive creative destruction of capitalism with their characterization of capitalism as an axiomatic and their de-/re-territorialisation couplet.

Understanding capitalism as an axiomatic is first, along Schumpeterian lines, to claim that it is dynamic and always in a process of incompletion. In order to replace the qualitative codes of historical and socio-cultural content for the quantitative content of surplus-value, capitalism must de-code, abstract, and destroy its links to fixed territories.

Capitalism must deterritorialize itself. But this is an intolerable process, a process of misfortune that cannot contain the entirety of the socio-political and historical field. Thus, and not to belabour the point, what 'Bifo' misunderstands in his reformulation of Deleuze and Guattari is that capitalism is not simply a spectral process of deterritorialization. With every movement of abstractive destruction is another movement of abstractive creation, a *re*-coding of persons, individuals and things defined now by their abstract quantities (the value of their productive labour-time, their exchange value, and so on.) What is re-coded is the structural dimension of a local world, its ontological, political, social and cultural forms which emerge through creative destruction to support and make present the organizing principle of abstraction. Capitalism thus reterritorializes by means of restoring "all sorts of residual and artificial, imaginary, or symbolic territorialities."[86] To this end, "everything returns or recurs," as Deleuze and Guattari write: "States, nations, families. That is what makes the ideology of capitalism 'a motley painting of everything that has ever been believed.' The *real* is not impossible; it is simply more and more artificial. […] There is the twofold movement of decoding or deterritorializing flows on the one hand, and their violent and artificial reterritorialization on the other."[87]

Despite the power of these tools to describe the de-/re-territorializing movements of financial capital's abstractive creative destruction, they nevertheless fall short in articulating the manner in which capitalism relates to a world in the situation of contemporary global modernity. As Noys writes "although the couplet de- /re-territorialisation provides perhaps one of the most powerful means for grasping the new articulation of capitalism [as financial abstraction], the conception of such a 'structure' as positive neglects the 'creative destruction' of capital, which operates by a 'negation of negation' that captures and integrates elements into new positivities of accumulation."[88] As such, if Berardi is at fault for over-emphasizing the negative consequences of

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[86] Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 34.

[87] Ibid, 34.

[88] Noys, *The Persistence of the Negative,* 65.

financial deterritorialization in his deployment of the concept, according to Noys, Deleuze and Guattari overly-positivize the process, where "this positivisation of the economy gives capitalism a 'full' reality."[89] Although we forcefully disagree with Noys that Deleuze and Guattari neglect the 'creative destruction' of capitalism, his point concerning capitalism *qua* full reality is well placed.

While the machinic ontology of *Anti-Oedipus* is describing capitalism's burgeoning process of financial abstraction, it is *as if* it remains too closely aligned to Schumpeter's analysis of creative destruction whose referent was industrialization. This is to say, it remains trapped within the biological paradigm of *mutation* wherein changes to an organism have no immediate consequence on the environment in which they exist. Put differently, they theorize a situation where one's only option is to enact a *ligne de fuite*, a line of *escape* as it is translated in the English version of *Anti-Oedipus* rather than flight, or an image of capitalism closed off from the world.[90] It is from this point that I will propose an alternate way of conceptualizing capitalism's drive towards becoming frictionless self-creation through abstractive creative destruction, and thereby understanding its relationship to worlds under these conditions. As I show in the coming sections, if Deleuze and Guattari's work is to continue to provide us with the means to theorize capitalism's necessary relationship to and reliance on worlds in its organizational processes of abstractive creative destruction, then we must be willing to think de-/re-territorialisation otherwise: namely, alongside the biological theory of autopoiesis. To this end, we must re-affirm the descriptive and critical potency respectively produced by Deleuze and Guattari's and Maturana and Varela's machinic ontologies, and implicate

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[89] Ibid, 64.

[90] As they write with regard to subjugated groups and subject-groups: "In the subjugated groups, desire is still defined by an order of causes and aims, and itself weaves a whole system of macroscopic relations that determine the large aggregates under a formation of sovereignty. Subject-groups on the other hand have as their sole cause a rupture with causality, a *revolutionary line of escape*; and even though one can and must assign the objective factors, such as the weakest links, within causal series that made such a rupture possible, only what is of the order of desire and its irruption accounts for the reality this rupture assumes at a given moment, in a given place." Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 377.

their correlative potential for grasping how the global dimension of a world emerges through capitalism in the situation of contemporary global modernity.

## 2.3        A Brief History of Conceptual Difficulty: (Human) Life and Autopoiesis

At the point of intersection between theorizations of capitalism and the theory of autopoiesis lies a conceptual difficulty, an uncertainty of perspective: to what extent can a general biological organization of the living be implicated in the domain of human life? This is an issue that is raised by the originators of the concept of autopoiesis themselves.[91] And while Maturana and Varela gesture towards certain social and ethical implications of their theory at the very end of their "Autopoiesis and the Organization of the Living," they abruptly curtail their discussion. Maturana and Varela remain safely in the domain of epistemology to address the potentially perilous consequences of applying biological functions to human socio-cultural systems, and do so in order to distance their theory from others that claim to collapse the nature-culture distinction into a mere application of 'nature' unto culture.[92] What does appear, then, could be called an

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[91] As Maturana writes in the introduction to *Autopoiesis and Cognition,* "The essay on autopoiesis [Autopoiesis: The Organization of the Living] was supposed to have a second appendix on social and ethical implications. This appendix, however, was never included because Francisco Varela and I never agreed about its contents." Maturana and Varela, *Autopoiesis and Cognition*, xxiii-xxiv.

[92] Maturana and Varela rightly take issue with the manner in which the Darwinian theory of evolution was used to justify socio-political inequalities, insofar as they came to be implicated in racist assumptions regarding the natural aptitude and fitness of certain races and members of society over others: "The development of the Darwinian notion of evolution with its emphasis on the species, natural selection and fitness, had an impact in human affairs that went beyond the explanation of diversity and its origin in living systems. It had sociological significance because it seemed to offer an explanation of the social phenomenology in a competitive society, as well as a scientific justification for the subordination of the destiny of the individuals to the transcendental values supposedly embodied in notions such as mankind, the state, or society. In fact, the social history of man shows a continuous search for values that explain or justify human existence, as well as a continuous use of transcendental notions to justify social discrimination, slavery, economical subordination and political submission of the individuals, isolated or collectively, to the design or whim of those who pretend to represent the values contained in those notions. For a society based on economic discrimination, competitive ideas of power and subordination of the citizen to the state, the notions of evolution, natural selection and fitness (with their emphasis on the species as the perduring historical entity maintained through the dispensability of transient individuals) seemed to provide a biological (scientific) justification for its economic and social structure. [...] Thus, from the Darwinian perspective it seemed that the role of the individual was to contribute to the perpetuation of the species, and that all that one had to do for the well-being of mankind was to let the natural phenomena

*Introduction to the Non-Dispensability of Life*, or, how not to apply a biological theory to social life.[93] While a detailed examination of their critical remarks remains outside the scope of our present analysis, it is within this space that their discussion opens up that we may begin to see the fruitful potential for our analysis of autopoiesis, capitalism, and worlds.

But what is autopoiesis? To repeat the definition from our Preface, autopoiesis defines living systems as machines whose dynamic relations constitute a unity in space and allow for the maintenance of their identity through time. Its conceptual innovation in this regard is to differentiate the relational independence of the organization of a machine from its structural components: "the relations that define a machine as a unity, and determine the dynamics of interactions and transformations which it may undergo as such a unity, constitute the *organization* of the machine. The actual relations which hold among the components which integrate a concrete machine in a given space, constitute its *structure*."[94] Machines in this regard may be defined as the invariant features of living systems: namely, unities that are constituted by the actual relations of its components connecting it to a space (structure) but whose identity is not reducible to these relations insofar as the specific functioning of components is generated by the unity of the machine itself (organization). Although autopoietic machines are generally described as a closed system of relations whose identity and unity depend on this closure, they nevertheless remain open to, act on, and are acted on by the outside. Looking ahead for a moment, this is what Maturana and Varela respectively describe as the *operational closure* and *structural coupling* of autopoietic machines. Thus, autopoiesis is as much a description of a living system, detailing the relative independence of its organization from its structure, as it is the procedure by which a living system comes to be a unity, the interdependence

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follow their course. Science, biology, appeared to justify the notion 'anything for the benefit of mankind', whatever the intention or purpose of whoever." Ibid, 117.

[93] We are thinking here of Foucault's description of *Anti-Oedipus* as an "Introduction to the Non-Fascist Life."

[94] Maturana and Varela, "Autopoiesis and the Organization of the Living," 77.

of the organization and structure self-separating from their background,[95] and wherein its identity co-arises with the bringing forth of a world.[96] To this end, what we must avoid by avowing a connection between capitalism and autopoiesis is the application of yet another metaphor to explain its organizational characteristics, to re-inscribe its functioning within a biological framework so as to 'naturalize' it and thereby explain away its transcendental hold on the (seemingly absent) world. Instead, I claim that capitalism must be thought of as a *real* machine whose relationship to the world and reliance on socio-cultural worlds is explicitly autopoietic. Thus, before moving onto our proper analysis of autopoiesis, capitalism, and worlds, it is necessary to trace a short history of how the theory of autopoiesis has been taken up in relation to the domain of human life. This will not only clarify our own position, but serve to strengthen the legitimacy of its operation.

The connection between capitalism and autopoiesis has, in a certain sense, been present since its introduction to the English language community. When "Autopoiesis and the Organization of the Living" was first published in English, it contained a preface by Sir Stafford Beer. He was a prominent theorist of cybernetics who worked closely in the early 1970s with the visionary Cybersyn project.[97] Predisposed by his background, as Beer puts it, he seizes upon Maturana and Varela's silence with regard to the social and

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[95] Francisco Varela, "Autopoiesis and a biology of intentionality," in *Proceedings of the workshop "Autopoiesis and Perception"*, ed. B. McMullin (Dublin: Dublin City University, 1992) 6.

[96] For a discussion of the co-arising of identity and world in Maturana and Varela see Cary Wolfe, *Critical Environments: Postmodern Theory and the Pragmatics of the Outside* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Minnesota University Press, 1998) 59-70.

[97] Nick Dyer-Witheford provides a succinct summary of Cybersyn's history, writing that it was led by the "cybernetician Stafford Beer, [Cybersyn] was conceived as a system of communication and control that would enable the socialist regime to collect economic data, and relay it to government decision makers, even while embedding within its technology safeguards against state micro-management and encouragement for many-sided discussions of planning decisions. This was an attempt at socio-technical engineering of democratic socialism that today perhaps seems more attractive than the post-Stalinist manoeuvres of the Soviet computer planners. But it met an even more brutal fate; Project Cybersyn was extinguished in the Pinochet coup of 1973." See Nick Dyer-Witheford "Red Plenty Platforms" in *Culture Machine*, Volume 14 (2013) 5, as well as Eden Medina, *Cybernetic Revolutionaries: Technology and Politics in Allende's Chile* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011).

ethical implications of their work to advance his own understanding of the relation between society and autopoiesis, claiming that above all else, social systems are biological systems. He writes "that any cohesive social institution is an autopoietic system. […] In the first place it means that every social institution (in several of which any one individual is embedded at the intersect) is embedded in a larger social institution, and so on recursively — and that all of them are autopoietic."[98] Thus, Beer claims that everything which exists as a social system, and thus all of human life, is autopoietic. But Beer moves one step further, pushing his analysis of autopoiesis and human life into the domain of politics. Any country, institution, family, or individual, autopoietic as they may be, become limited in their potential for change insofar as each is caught up in a recursive relationship with a larger autopoietic system. Ultimately, what this entails is that no autopoietic social system can escape the eminent hold of capitalism: "A country attempting to become a socialist state cannot fully become socialist; because there exists an international autopoietic capitalism in which it is embedded, by which the revolutionary country is deemed allopoietic."[99] From a socio-political standpoint, Beer's conclusion that capitalism represents the recursive limits of an international autopoietic machine is a crucial movement in the right direction. However, in a strange way his initial premise regarding the ubiquitous emergence of autopoietic socio-political organizations, from the individual to the nation-state, is suspect at best.

From a biological perspective, to claim that 'everything which exists is autopoietic' is sound where existence is tied to notions of living *qua* autonomy. Certainly, Maturana and Varela's theory is only meant to provide a concrete means "to understand the organization of living systems in relation to their unitary character," which is to say how individual, autonomous organizations maintain their autonomy as living machines.[100] In

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[98] Stafford Beer, "Preface" to "Autopoiesis and the Organization of the Living" in *Autopoiesis and Cognition*, 70.

[99] Ibid, 71.

[100] Ibid, 75.

this sense, to not possess a unitary character of autonomy is not to be alive. Early on in their work, Maturana and Varela are also clear that the organization of an autopoietic machine may contain other structural autopoietic components. The human body, for instance, is an autopoietic organization (once it comes into existence it works towards maintaining and producing its own self-existence) containing an immune system that is also autopoietic in itself. From this perspective, Beer's assertions regarding the recursive network of autopoietic machines comprising social systems appears unassailable.

As Beer himself points out, however, Maturana and Varela clarify and nuance these points. Indeed, they write that "we may treat autopoietic systems as if they were not autopoietic (that is, they are allopoietic) when the boundaries of the system are enlarged."[101] In this sense, by enlarging the boundaries from the individual to the international organization of capitalism in the recursion that Beer traces, does he not miss the manner in which this movement transforms these smaller autopoietic social systems into allopoietic ones, that is, machines which produce something other than themselves? That it is not only countries, institutions, families, or individuals attempting to effectuate a line of escape away from capitalism that become allopoietic, but that their very relationship to these larger social systems is already allopoietic? That, as our analysis of abstraction demonstrated, the survival of their identity already depends on producing something other than themselves? Varela provides an interesting point of clarification for this discussion of boundaries in a later essay, wherein he raises the notion of global and local levels in the production of autopoietic organizations. Here, he insists on a dynamic of *reciprocal causality* to define the operation and observation of autopoietic machines that moves between "local rules of interactions (i.e. the components' rules, which are akin to chemical interactions) and the global properties of the entity (its topological demarcation affecting diffusion and creating local conditions for reaction)."[102] In this precise sense, then, to enlarge the boundaries of an autopoietic organization whereby it

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[101] Ibid, 68.

[102] Varela, "Autopoiesis and a biology of intentionality," 6.

may be considered allopoietic is not simply a question of observational perspective, but more fundamentally an ontological problem for its definition insofar as a change at the global level of its organization immanently effects the local rules of its structural interactions.[103] The same local processes and interactions may be occurring, but what they are occurring *for*, *with* and *against*, whether they can be maintained as becoming auto or allopoietic, changes depending the global dimension creating their conditions of possibility and interaction. *To become autopoietic, then, is never guaranteed — it is only a possibility in the domain of human life*.

Thus, to claim that 'everything which exists is autopoietic' raises a particular series of problems when considered from an ontological and socio-political perspective in general, and Deleuze and Guattari's machinic ontology in particular. First, is a problem of connection, or, to what extent does the interaction, combination, and transformation of autopoietic machines effect the production of their autopoietic status? Second, a problem of disjunction, or, how can certain autopoietic organizations become dominant over others, whose production can be said to determine the production of other autopoietic organizations without those other autopoietic organizations losing their autonomy? Third, a problem of conjunction, or, how can diverse collective or individual identities be consummated under these conditions where, again, everything is autonomous, where connection to an outside is necessary but the interior autopoietic organization attempts to preserve itself, to defend itself from the outside? Finally, how can the co-arising of identity and a shared world be explained from this perspective without recourse to an *a priori* transcendental subjectivity?[104] Answering these questions will be integral to our theorization of capitalism as an autopoietic machine in the next section of this chapter,

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[103] In the above quoted essay from Varela, he explicitly invokes ontology in his delineation of autopoiesis: "Autopoiesis addresses the issue of organism as a minimal living system by characterizing its basic mode of identity. This is, properly speaking, to address the issue at an ontological level." Ibid, 6.

[104] While we are thinking of Husserl's conception of the life-world here, in Beer's formulation of the autopoiesis of social systems, autonomy stands in as a transcendental *a priori*: autonomy appears given, a cosmic guarantee of life. And yet, initially and for the most part, within capitalist abstraction one's actions and doings are not for one's self, but always already tend towards the reproduction of capitalist surplus-value.

and our understanding of how this autopoietic procedure effects the onto-political structuring of worlds in the situation of contemporary global modernity. Although Beer's preface to Maturana and Varela's work cannot and is not meant to satisfy these problems, it is this line of questioning that Guattari attempts to take up in his last book, *Chaosmosis: An Ethico-aesthetic Paradigm*.

Guattari's analysis of autopoiesis occurs from the strict vantage point of re-interpretation, of rethinking its potential from the perspective of identity and difference, subjectivity and alterity. His primary concern is to extend its description not only to human life or social systems, but technical regimes as well, to the domain of human-made machines in their interactions with humans. As such, he sees in autopoiesis the machinic operation of liberating subjectivities through their relation to alterity: "we are not confronted with a subjectivity given as in-itself, but with processes of the realisation of autonomy, or of autopoiesis (in a somewhat different sense from the one Francisco Varela gives this term)."[105] The autopoiesis of social systems is not a given, then, as it was for Beer, but emerges through a process of becoming. Gary Genosko provides a concise reading of the implications of Guattari's understanding of autopoiesis when he writes that "Guattari's concern is not self-realization through widening of a pre-given self, but processes of singularization that resist the frames of reference imposed by an identity (a process-collapsing circumscription) yet bear upon everything concerning the way one lives, feels, thinks, and acts."[106] In Guattari's view an autopoietic machine is not solely defined in positive terms, by the survival of its identity, but is rather implicated in a dialectic of finitude with the other. Autopoiesis is therefore equally constituted through a breakdown of its operational closure (the interior, self-separating organization of its-self) and its structural coupling with alterity (its connection to the outside). [107]

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[105] Félix Guattari, *Choasmosis: An Ethico-aesthetic Paradigm*, trans. Paul Bains and Julian Pefanis (Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1995), 7.

[106] Gary Genosko, *Félix Guattari: A Critical Introduction*, (New York: Pluto Press, 2009), 23.

[107] Varela explains the functioning and organization of autopoiesis both in terms of a dialectic, and as the procedure of an organism/organization self-separating from its environmental background: "It appears to me that this reciprocal causality [between global and local] does much to evacuate the mechanist/vitalist

In this regard, quickly delineating and critiquing Maturana and Varela's biological distinction between allo- and auto-poietic machines, Guattari brings alterity back into the functioning of autopoietic machines themselves:

> But autopoiesis, which uniquely defines autonomous entities – unitary, individuated and closed to input/output relationships – lacks characteristics essential to living organisms, like the fact that they are born, die and survive through genetic phylums. Autopoiesis deserves to be rethought in terms of evolutionary, collective entities, which maintain diverse types of relations of alterity, rather than being implacably closed in on themselves. In such a case, institutions and technical machines appear to be allopoietic, but when one considers them in the context of the machinic assemblages they constitute with human beings, they become ipso facto autopoietic.[108]

'They become ipso facto autopoietic': in this last passage, then, Guattari is willing to take the logic of Beer's problematic claim that 'everything which exists is autopoietic' to the end, but in so doing he not only obliterates any functional difference between allo/autopoietic machines, but more importantly erases the significance of autopoiesis itself.  Thus, in a first instance, the move to collapse the distinction between auto/allopoietic machines is understandable, insofar as  'processes of the realisation of autonomy' entail a shared autopoiesis, wherein autonomy is not reserved for a self but shared *with*, *for*, and *as* the other. But what does this mean for the self and other as such? Indeed for all of Guattari's emphasis on alterity and the reworking of subjectivity which is not a given in-itself but a becoming-self-with-others (or as he puts it later, 'a being-for-the-other'), he nevertheless ends up flattening difference when he collapses the distinction between auto and allopoietic machines.[109] Is there not a sense, then, in which this realization of autonomy ends up transforming both the self and other to the extent

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opposition, and allows us to move into a more productive phase of identifying various modes of self-organization where the local and the global are braided together explicitly through this reciprocal causality. Autopoiesis is a prime example of such *dialectic*s between the local component levels and the global whole, linked together in reciprocal relation through the requirement of constitution of an entity that self-separates from its background." Varela, "Autopoiesis and a biology of intentionality," 6-7.

[108] Guattari, *Choasmosis*, 39-40.

[109] Ibid, 52.

that alterity and difference becomes meaningless, that it is all subsumed within one big machine?

This leads to a second and perhaps even more crucial problem in Guattari's all-encompassing formulation of autopoiesis. Guattari seems to misunderstand that operational closure does not entail that autopoietic machines are 'implacably closed on themselves' according to a pre-given self and closed off from input/output relations. Genosko attempts to clarify Guattari's objection to Maturana and Varela on this point, writing that Guattari "does not misunderstand Maturana and Varela's idea of 'operational closure' […] but objects to their recursive definition of environmental perturbations because they entail that encounters with alterity may destroy the machinic or are impossible."[110] We can think of Jacques Derrida's delineation of the autoimmunity of democracy to help clarify this deadlock of interpretation. In *Rogues*, he writes that there is an "an autoimmune necessity inscribed right onto [*à même*] democracy, right onto the concept of a democracy without concept, a democracy devoid of sameness and ipseity."[111] By claiming that democracy is inscribed with an autoimmune necessity, Derrida is signalling the tension between an openness to the outside and the need for this openness to remain minimized, for the inside to protect itself from the outside while simultaneously compromising "its own forces of self-affirmation so as to become open and vulnerable to its outside," as Michael Naas comments.[112] Returning to Guattari's dissatisfaction regarding the operational closure of autopoiesis, the point we take from this discussion is that autopoietic machines are not implacably closed in on themselves. Rather autopoietic machines necessarily remain open to the outside through their processes of structural coupling, and this openness constantly threatens the autopoietic status of the machine.

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[110] Gary Genosko, *Félix Guattari: An Aberrant Introduction* (London: Continuum Books, 2002), 196.

[111] Jacques Derrida, *Rogues: Two Essays on Reason*, Trans. Pascale-Anne Brault and Michael Naas (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2005), 36-37.

[112] Michael Naas, *Derrida From Now On* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 34.

In a difficult but illuminating passage related to structural coupling, Maturana and Varela comment on composite autopoietic unities, or autopoietic machines formed by enlarging their connections to their environment and subsuming them within their organization: "Such a composite system will necessarily be defined as a unity by the coupling relations of its component autopoietic systems in a space that the nature of the coupling specifies, and *will remain as a unity* as long as the component systems *retain their autopoiesis*, which allows them to enter into those coupling relations."[113] Here is the hard kernel of autopoietic organization: it must be retained by, through, and with its connection to its environment. There must be difference in order for it to exist, to have something to self-separate from, and this difference necessarily threatens its autopoietic status. If we were to accept Guattari's flattening of difference between *autos* and *allos* and his rejection of operational closure the ultimate result is a flat machinic ontology, *a smooth space of indetermination where the becoming of a self with and for the other is meaningless insofar as they inhabit one big machine: a world without outside*.

And yet, in an article entitled "The World without Outside", Andreas Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulous repeats Guattari's insistence on autopoietic alterity as a potential of an autopoietic organization, though he relates it in this particular essay to the field of legal theory and spatial justice.[114] In a particularly telling passage, he writes that "the creation of world, of *a* world (a multiple world, a flurry of worlding) that is nothing but the furthering of *the* world; the act of making world out of world, of constant unfolding of the world. Worlding has no negativity, it finds itself in no dialectical composition, it faces no otherness. […] Worlding proliferates the world by folding body into body and space into space, without gaps or voids, yet being 'opened up by' the radical outside, which in

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[113] Maturana and Varela, "Autopoiesis and the Organization of the Living," 121.

[114] It is interesting to note that Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulous brings Deleuze's concept of the fold, as well as Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the rhizome from *A Thousand Plateaus* into relation to Luhmann's appropriation of autopoiesis for communication, and Maturana and Varela's original biological theory.

its turn can only be inside."[115] Much like Guattari, Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulous views this folding of the outside inside, replacement of *a* world for *worlds* for *the* world, to have a positive effect for subjectivity in general, and justice in particular. It is redemptive and unifies *autos* with *allos*. But, to re-iterate our critique of Beer, what both Guattari and Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulous miss is that this unification towards alterity, or positive inclusivity, is only a *possibility*, and one whose completion can potentially nullify the autonomous identity of autopoiesis as such. What they obscure is the force of negation inherent in autopoiesis, its structural transformation and destruction of components based on inputs from the outside for the sake of producing a coherent organization inside. When this dimension is taken into account, the collapse of difference in Guattari and folding of the world in Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulous end up signalling a process that is much closer to the colonization of daily life, identity, institutions, and machinic ontology: it is a vision of an all-consuming autopoiesis that wishes to become pure-creation. The positive and negative, creative and destructive possibilities of autopoiesis cannot be extricated from one another at either the ontological or operational level. As Maturana and Varela write, "the being and doing of an autopoietic unity are inseparable, and this is their specific mode of organization."[116]

In light of the foregoing analysis let us reiterate and expand our claim regarding the relationship between capitalism and autopoiesis with which it began: in the situation of contemporary global modernity, capitalism must be thought of as a real autopoietic machine, one whose global organization tends toward the local creation, transformation and destruction of components to produce its-self and worlds. Under these circumstances to describe capitalism as an autopoietic machine is not a perversion or co-opting of autopoiesis as Guattari claims towards the end of his discussion, calling capitalism the

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[115] Andreas Philippopoulos-Mihalopoulous, "The World without Outside," *Angelaki: Journal of the Theoretical Humanities* 18, No. 4 (December 2013): 166.

[116] Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela, *The Tree of Knowledge: The Biological Roots of Human Understanding* (Boston: Shambhala, 1992), 49.

"vertiginous collapse in the black hole of the aleatory."[117] Capitalism does not destroy the potential for alterity, but rather through its abstractive functioning controls, mitigates, and distributes various forms of alterity within the creative-destruction of its local components. In this regard, social systems, nation-states, institutions, and individuals are qualitatively transformed into allopoietic machines, insofar as their being and doing no longer tend towards the organization of their-selves. Rather, they enact an accumulation of surplus value for the autopoietic machine of capitalism. This is precisely what other theorizations of autopoietic organizations miss when they wish to extend its description to human life, or in extreme cases such as Guattari, to technical machines in connection with human life.

The remainder of this chapter will complete our global examination of capitalism, autopoiesis, and worlds. We will unite our forgoing discussions of capitalism's organizational characteristics with the description and processes of autopoiesis by addressing the four ontological and political problems that we raised in relation to the claim that 'everything which exists is autopoietic'. To address these problems will require reading Deleuze and Guattari's syntheses of production within their machinic ontology together with the organizational and structural characteristics of autopoiesis. Therefore, we shall bring the first synthesis of production, connection, together with structural coupling; disjunction, or recording, with abstractive self-separation; conjunction, or consummation with operational closure; and finally, world and identity with reciprocal causality, in order to understand capitalism as an autopoietic machine that creates the global dimension of life through the de-territorialisation of particular abstraction, and local worlds through the re-territorialisation of non-particular, creative-destruction.

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[117] Guattari, *Choasmosis*, 56.

## 2.4    Autopoiesis and Global Life: Capitalism and the Production of World(s)

Autopoiesis, capitalism, and worlds are processes of production. Whereas the first two produce machines as much as machinic processes, the last is the unification of the processes of production which arises to sustain those machines. Worlds are immanent to the existence of machinic assemblages, co-arise with the production of their identity, and eminently define the reciprocal causality between their particular global organization, their identity, and the non-particular local interactions producing the organization. Just as autopoiesis describes a form of autonomous self-production, capitalism can be understood as a particular autopoietic machine.[118] Capitalism is a composite autopoietic machine whose co-production of world and identity simultaneously relies on connective structural couplings to local environments, disjunctive self-separation, or transformative miraculation of those environments, and conjunctive operational closure, abstracting from those environments to create worlds for the re-production of its global organizational unity, or identity. In this sense, and to expand on two postulates of the machinic ontology framing the opening pages of Deleuze and Guattari's *Anti-Oedipus*, "everything is a machine"[119] and "everything is production,"[120] but not everything is autopoietic. As Varela maintains, this implies that "we can admit that (i) a system can have separate local components which [sic] (ii) there is no center or localized self, and yet the whole behaves as a unit […] as if there was a coordinating agent "virtually" present at the center."[121] This is why capitalism structurally appears as a diffuse network in its organization as an autopoietic machine, why it simultaneously appears as worldless

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[118] Varela writes "the distinction between autopoiesis as proper to the unitary character of living organisms in the phy-sical space, and autonomy as a general phenomenon applicable in other spaces of interactions, has been consistently confused and left unclarified." Francisco Varela, "Autonomy and autopoiesis," in *Self-Organizing Systems: An Interdisciplinary Approach*, eds. G. Roth & H. Schwegler (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 1981), 14.

[119] Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 8(2).

[120] Ibid, 10(4).

[121] Varela, "Autopoiesis and a biology of intentionality," 10.

and an all-encompassing globe that wishes to be rid of the world, or why from any local situation capitalism appears as a *selfless* self: "a coherent global pattern […] emerges through simple local components, appearing to have a central location where none is to be found, and yet [is] essential as a level of interaction for the behavior of the whole unity."[122] As such, capitalism cannot produce *its*-self only through itself at the local level. This is why it appears devoid of all historical socio-political content yet remains essential for the interaction of the global unity and requires local worlds to sustain its organization. Conversely, this is also why socio-political institutions cannot be considered autopoietic. Their centre would not only be readily apparent at the local level of the global capitalist organization, but their being and doing would be *self*-producing: their production would remain autonomous, auto-immune from the global organization of capitalism, instead of tending towards the reproduction of the global organization and being immanently defined by it.

In order to address the rift between the self-less localization of capitalism and its global organizational identity we should pause for a moment and further explain the notion of process for Deleuze and Guattari's and Maturana and Varela's machinic ontologies. We can understand the relationship between process, capitalism and autopoiesis through the two statements, 'everything is a machine' and 'everything is production.' Following the advice of Michael Hardt, these statements are comprised of two distinct, and yet related parts that immediately thrust us into the realm of ontology.[123] The first part of the claim, "everything is…" indicates a certain flatness to being: it is 'one', everywhere the same, and *univocal* insofar as one being does not stand out above all others, does not have a greater access to the meaning or question of its essence. Deleuze and Guattari make the univocity of being explicit when they write that "Man and nature are not like two terms that oppose each other, for even if they are taken to be within a relationship of causation, of comprehension or of expression (cause-effect,

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[122] Ibid.

[123] See Michael Hardt, "Reading Notes on Deleuze and Guattari Capitalism and Schizophrenia" (accessed on April 19th, 2016): http://people.duke.edu/~hardt/Deleuze&Guattari.html

subject-object, etc.), they form one and the same essential reality." [124] To understand that within the univocity of being everything is production is to understand that even to speak of 'nature' or 'humanity' as though they were static, *a priori* and opposing principles is to already make the error of assuming that all of being emanates from some ideal source or a point of perfection and divides up reality according to these principles: "There is nothing else now, not man, not nature, nothing but processes that produce the one within the other and couple machines together. Everywhere there are producing-machines or desiring-machines, schizophrenic machines, machines which characterize life as such: the self and non-self, outside and inside, can no longer be spoken of with significance."[125] As is made clear in the above quotation, machines work on both humanity and nature so that reality and being can be considered an asubjective process of becoming that does not culminate in a natural end or human design. *Rather, life as such is connection, creation, disjunction, destruction, transformation and conjunction through which world and identity co-arise with one another.*

Thus, to maintain that everything is production is to understand process neither as "a goal [n]or end in itself, nor must it be confused as an infinite perpetuation of itself" that would lead "to some horror of intensification and extremity wherein the *soul* and the *body* ultimately perish."[126] Rather, it is to give unto production what is production proper, which is to say, the completion of its processes. This is what Maturana and Varela refer to when they address the homeostatic nature of autopoietic machines. In their structural coupling to an environment, self-separation from and transformation of that environment into a world, the variable defining the being and doing of autopoietic machines is the completion of its own organization.[127] But, and to again bring up the question of

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[124] Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus* (11)5.

[125] Ibid, 8(2).

[126] Ibid, 5. Italics added

[127] They write that "an autopoietic machine is an homeostatic (or rather a relations-static) system which has its own organization (defining network of relations) as the fundamental variable which it maintains constant." Maturana and Varela, *Autopoiesis and Cognition*, 79.

operational closure, this does not mean that autopoietic machines are either implacably closed in on themselves or somehow immutably, eternally recurring in their exact form. They not only remain open to the outside, thereby transforming the inside-outside distinction, but "due to their homeostatic organization autopoietic systems can couple and constitute a new unity while their individual paths of autopoiesis become reciprocal sources of specification of each other's ambience, if their reciprocal deformations do not overstep their corresponding ranges of tolerance for variation without loss of autopoiesis."[128] If these last statements appear incompatible with our foregoing description of capitalism as a process of incompletion, it is only from the local level of its structural determinations. Just as capitalism is constantly connecting to new environments and re-creating local components to ensure the global organization of its identity, namely, the production of surplus-value and profit from capital itself, for autopoietic machines in their structural coupling to an environment "the coupling remains *invariant*" necessary for the survival of the machine and its identity, "while the coupled *systems* [autopoietic and environment] undergo structural changes selected through the coupling and, hence, commensurate with it."[129] Structural coupling and the first synthesis of production, connection, must be understood together then.

Structural coupling and connective synthesis form the basis for the development of life as a series of inter-connections between machines which allow for the production of the processes of production. When this is thought through the purview of capitalism, to be modern no longer means being inner *cogito* machines which somehow find themselves outside in a world, nor trapped in a world with no outside (their own subjectivity). It is rather an understanding of machines becoming inextricably intertwined with their environments, producing global organizations with, as, and against local structures. This is why Guattari was correct to insist on an intrinsic dialectic of finitude for autopoietic machines. Through structural coupling and the first synthesis of production there exists

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[128] Ibid, 108.

[129] Ibid, 108.

an "opposition here between two uses of the connective synthesis: a global and specific use," namely, the organization of a machine, "and a partial and nonspecific use," or the local structure of a machine.[130] While connection, creation and structural coupling are necessary for the survival of machines and constitute the local, partial, and non-specific components of their structure, they nevertheless constantly threaten the existence of the global, specific organization. As Varela writes, "whence the intriguing paradoxicality proper to an autonomous identity: the living system must distinguish itself from its environment, *while at the same time* maintaining its coupling; this linkage cannot be detached since it is against this very environment from which the organism arises."[131] Local components not only break down, or need to be re-created *with* and transformed for the autopoietic machine to remain *as* autopoietic. They actively exist in opposition to the machine, *against* it as such, in their open connection to both the environment and the machinic organization. This is why any autopoietic machine must continuously become autopoietic through its self-separation from its background, or its disjunctive synthesis of production.

The disjunctive synthesis of production was already addressed in our first chapter when we invoked Deleuze and Guattari's concept of miraculation with regard to capitalism's process of becoming autopoietic. To repeat, miraculation described the manner in which the opposition between capital and labour, and the use of capital as a means of extorting surplus labour, is transformed such that capital comes to represent not the product of labour but its origin and presupposition. If we re-read this statement through the connective structural coupling of capitalism, there necessarily exists an opposition between the generation of capital as the identity of capitalism's global and specific organization and the constitution of labour as its local, non-specific structural components. This is so because initially and for the most part labour is not simply an economic relation in the strict use of the term, nor even a social one, but drawing on the

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[130] Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 70. Deleuze and Guattari will later make the connection between the partial and local explicit. See *Anti-Oedipus*, 295.

[131] Varela, "Autopoiesis and a biology of intentionality," 7.

early Marx can be understood as a specific ontological condition of existence.[132] Capitalism's organizational characteristic of abstraction implicates the ontological dimension of labour within a social relationship, such that existence comes to be tied to the survival of capitalism as such through the generation of surplus-value and profit. To repeat an aforementioned quote from *Anti-Oedipus*, "a perverted, bewitched world quickly comes into being, as capital increasingly plays the role of a recording surface that falls back on *(se rabat sur)* all of production."[133] Therefore, in order to sustain its global and specific organisation, capitalism must become an autopoietic entity that disjunctively "self-separates from its background,"[134] injecting what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as an element of anti-production into its operation.

If what we have been describing thus far can be said to involve the creation of the *soul* of autopoietic capitalist production in the form of machines connecting to one another to constitute the global organization of their identity and coupling to their environment to constitute their local components, then anti-production explicitly involves the *body* of production. Anti-production is a necessary *stasis* of counterinvestment to the constant connecting, coupling, creation and transformation of machinic-production: this stasis is what allows for the formation of the unity of an autopoietic machine as distinct from its environment. In order retain its homeostatic organization, an autopoietic machine replaces the background of its existence, its environment which it requires for life, with its-self through disjunction. This is what allows an autopoietic machine to form a unity which replaces the opposition generated by the connection of its local components to an

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[132] We make this inference drawing from Marx's articulation of estranged labour in the "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844" as the transformation of the species being of humanity into the estrangement of the species from the individual: he writes "In estranging from man (1) nature and (2) himself, his own active function, his life-activity, estranged labour estranges the *species* from man. It turns for him the *life of the species* into a means of individual life.[…] For in the first place labour, *life-activity, productive life* itself, appears to man merely as a *means* of satisfying a need—the need to maintain the physical existence." Karl Marx, "Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844" in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, 2nd Edition, ed. Robert C. Tucker, trans. Martin Milligan (New York: W.W. Norton, 1978), 75-76.

[133] Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 11.

[134] Varela, "Autopoiesis and a biology of intentionality," 7.

environment, with the abstractive self-separation of its organizational identity from that environment. Thus, with each phase of abstraction capitalism secures its autopoiesis by further self-separating its-self from its background: labour becomes transformed and re-created first, by its disjunction from immediate qualitative existence into quantitative social relations; second, from the production of physical goods into social information; and finally, from social information into pure economic quantification. "Everything seems *objectively* to be produced by capital as *quasi cause*" as the global organization which produces its specific autopoietic identity successively moves from the generation of social relations, to the generation of social information, to the generation of profit from profit itself.[135]

The result of abstractive disjunction can be understood along the lines of Arendt's remark on the factual transformation of society into a labouring society: in Deleuze and Guattari's parlance "machines attach themselves to the body without organs [the transformation of the environment into the global organization of the autopoietic machine] as so many points of disjunction […]: no matter which two organs are involved, the way in which they are attached to the body without organs must be such *that all the disjunctive syntheses between the two amount to the same*."[136] With each successive abstractive disjunction of capitalism from its environment, then, is a process of conjunction that allows capitalism to maintain its operational closure and secure the uniform co-arising of its homeostatic global identity, and local identification through worlds that allow everything to appear as 'together-with-time-everywhere-just now".

Given everything that has been said with regard to operational closure throughout this chapter, we need only briefly expand its understanding in relation to the co-arising of identity and worlds. As Varela strictly emphasizes, "the qualification 'operational' emphasizes that closure is used in its mathematical sense of recursivity, and *not* in the sense of closed*ness* or isolation from interaction, which would be, of course,

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[135] Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 10-11. Emphasis added

[136] Ibid, 12.

nonsense."[137] Thus, each connection and coupling, and self-separating abstractive disjunction allows for the operational closure of capitalism's autopoiesis, such that it can produce a global and specific truth for self-identification, or a "conjunctive synthesis of consummation in the form of a wonderstruck 'So *that's* what it was!'"[138] Operational closure, in this regard, allows for a point of identification between the global organization and local components of autopoietic capitalism. In the conjunctive synthesis of production, capitalism's self-separation from the physical world comes to form the recursive limit of contemporary global modernity. From the perspective of this global organization, operational closure informs financial capitalism's transmutation of the physical world, and of historical, socio-political worlds into the globe. To recall, in our first chapter we defined the financialized globe of capitalism as an ontic container, one produced by processes of auto-finality that replace its historical and socio-political origin with its own immanent self-production, with its identity as the production of profit from profit itself. To turn a passage from *A Thousand Plateaus* on its head as it were, global financial capitalism's operational closure enacts a process wherein each local world must become an assemblage "that will prolong itself in and conjugate with others, producing immediately, directly *a* world in which it is *the* world that becomes, then one becomes-everybody/everything."[139] But the closure of the globe of financial capital from the world in general and worlds in particular is not simply unsustainable; factually, which is to say

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[137] Varela, "Autopoiesis and a biology of intentionality," 10.

[138] Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 16.

[139] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*: *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis, Minnesota: Minnesota University Press, 1987), 280. In this passage from their "1730: Becoming-Intense, Becoming-Animal, Becoming-Imperceptible…" plateau, Deleuze and Guattari return to their main ontological postulate from *Anti-Oedipus* that reality be understood as an asubjective process of becoming. To this end, they focus on the problem of world-making, which they understood as a free-floating, a-signifying process of asubjective becoming. The end of this quote, then, to become everything/everyone is intended as a means to counteract the quantification of life under capitalism that, drawing on Zygmunt Bauman, we previously described as the need 'to become what one is.' From the purview of financial capitalism's operational closure and the global level of its organization, however, we would argue that in the situation of contemporary global modernity this conjunctive becoming everything/becoming everyone is already accomplished by the disjunctive processes of abstractive self-separation and conjunctive processes of structural coupling. The function of capitalism as autopoiesis is precisely an attempt to write history, origin, etc. out of the functioning of its-self.

operationally, it is impossible. In order for capitalism to maintain its autopoietic identity, it necessarily requires a relationship of reciprocal causality with its local components. Nation-states, institutions, communities, families and individuals not only immanently comprise the *environment* of global financial capital, which is to say that which runs up *against* global financial capitalism's drive to be pure creation, but eminently defines the composite relations through which, *with* which, and *as* which the global level of financial capitalism maintains its autopoietic status.

Global financial capitalism's desire to purely identify its-self through its operational closure is but an attempt to discursively do away with its connective structural coupling to the world. To recursively substitute the reciprocal causality of local worlds with a teleological determination of a quantitative globe. To forcefully replace the friction and violence of its abstractive creative destruction with its disjunctive, self-separating identity of frictionless self-creating profits and universal markets. However, global financial capitalism forms but the recursive limit of the situation of contemporary global modernity. In this sense, far from unifying the globe as a totality, capitalism's expansive, composite autopoiesis generates and proliferates local worlds which co-arise with the abstractive creative destruction of its identity. To recall Deleuze and Guattari's statements concerning de-/re-territorialization, "everything returns or recurs: States, nations, families. That is what makes the ideology of capitalism 'a motley painting of everything that has ever been believed.' The *real* is not impossible; it is simply more and more artificial. […] There is the twofold movement of decoding or deterritorializing flows on the one hand, and their violent and artificial reterritorialization on the other."[140] In order for it to continuously *become* autopoietic, in its abstractive transformations, creations, and destructions capitalism's violent deterritorialization must be accommodated by local *allopoietic* procedures. Worlds must be created, histories transformed and repeated, and a whole series of becomings must be enacted to support

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[140] Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 34.

capitalism's global identity and its recursive unification of contemporary global modernity.

But as Maturana and Varela write, "through this ongoing recursiveness, every world brought forth necessarily hides its origins."[141] If everything appears as 'together-with-time-everywhere-just-now', it is because in the re-territorialisation of states, nations, and families, the co-arising of local worlds with the global identity of financial capitalism displaces and represses the historical trauma and violence of capitalism's de-/re-territorialisation. It does so through the local historical translation of the demands and values of capitalism's autopoietic identity. This provides a sense and sign of continuity from the present to past, and projects possibilities for this continuity into the future. The continuity inscribed through the allopoietic processes of local worlds comes to replace the empty origin of capitalism, namely, its ontological processes of abstractive creative destruction. What results is the full body of a world creating conditions in which a local identity can ontologically be referred to as a "being for," politically, a "being together," and socially as a "being with." These re-articulations of local identity allow for the creation of *poietic-subjects*, whose understanding of themselves and their world is joined through reciprocal causality to the global identity of capitalism, a prosopopoeial process which makes the global identity present in local space and individuates it for local history. This is accompanied by an onomatopoeial process of naturalization such that every new allopoietic identity already appears to have been *ex novo*, from the beginning. Our third chapter, then, will stage a recovery of the theory of allopoiesis by considering the relationship between the local level of national identity and poetic subjects, and the global level of autopoietic capitalism in the poietic structuring of worlds. In this way we may come to realize "that the world everyone sees is not *the* world but *a* world which we bring forth with others. It compels us to see that the world will be different only if we live differently."[142]

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[141] Maturana and Varela, *Tree of Knowledge*, 242.

[142] Ibid, 245.

# 3 Allopoiesis, Local Worlds, and the Precarious Lives of Poietic Subjects

## 3.1 Allopoietic Worlds: The Prosopopoeial and Onomatopoeial Processes of Poietic Structuring

This final chapter will bring together our previous discussion of autopoietic capitalism and global life with an examination of local world creation. At stake for our introduction to this chapter is a theoretical foregrounding of how the poietic structuring of worlds provides concrete meaning to financial capitalism's abstract and specific identity. We seek to unfold how historical and ontological discontinuities brought about through capitalism's abstractive creative destruction are locally reinscribed into a continuous generative narrative, such that a singular relationship between politics and economics, and thus the political and ontological is produced in and for a world. Ultimately, this will serve to outline how local worlds allow for the production of poietic subjects whose identity is non-specific, and yet non-exchangeable with other local worlds or the global organization itself. In a recent interview Bifo provides a precise example of this process by considering the form of salaried labour from the purview of gestalt theory. He argues that "the very form of salary is the creation of a social perception, a social vision, in which you don't see that salary is an inessential historical and determinate form of relations between survival, labour, and social life. […] Salary is a gestalt in the proper sense," namely, a form creating other forms. Berardi continues: "If you want to disentangle the other forms of possibility you need to forget about the gestalt, you have to *cancel* the gestalt in your brain […] you have to disentangle the potency of human activity from the limitation of salaried work."[143] A first step towards disentangling the prevailing gestalt, the universal form(ing) of autopoietic capitalism, is a thinking of local worlds and local identity as *allopoietic—as machines which become-other and whose becoming other can be described as non-specific insofar as they tend towards the*

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[143] Franco 'Bifo' Berardi, "Warming the Algorithm and Possibilities for the Future," interviewed by Dillon Douglas and Thomas Szwedska, *Chiasma: A Site for Thought*, Vol. 4 (2017): 113-114. All quotations are taken from this interview.

*production of forms of existence other than themselves, in order to accommodate the organization of global financial capitalism's autopoietic, quantitative, and specific identity.*

As we have seen, the quantitative globe of financial capitalism expresses itself in terms of universality, as an autopoietic machine whose identity is global and specific, and whose functioning tends towards material self-completion, or auto-finality. This is achieved through organizational processes generating forms *qua* markets, the accumulation of creative energy, and an ontology of abstractive creative destruction. Although it desires to become frictionless self-creation, capitalism's autopoietic identity cannot escape the co-arising of local worlds. Individuals, persons, institutions, societies, states, and nations are all required to support capitalism's autopoietic becomings and to secure its global and specific identity. As such, the global and specific identity of autopoietic capitalism does not fully replace local values in a deterritorializing movement towards absolute abstraction. Processes of abstractive creative destruction rather require a concrete articulation in a world for their reproduction. The universality and coherence of capitalism's expansive autopoietic organization depends upon its successful re-territorialisation within local space and history. As Judith Butler reminds us, the very notion of universality "is what pertains to every person, but it is not *everything* that pertains to every person. […] The abstract requirement of universality produces a situation in which universality itself becomes doubled: in the first instance, it is abstract; in the second, it is concrete."[144]

In the situation of contemporary global modernity, we will argue that this doubling from abstract to concrete universality functions through a poietic structuring to create *full-worlds* which situate the global in the local and ensure the continuous local production of the global. This is not a process of abstract substitution, that is, the production of a frictionless metonymy that replaces the qualities of local life with totalizing quantities of

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[144] Judith Butler, "Restaging the Universal," in Judith Butler, Ernesto Laclau, Slavoj Žižek, *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left* (London: Verso Books, 2000), 17.

financial capitalism's global and specific identity. Rather, it is a question of local worlds making the absent and abstract global identity present to them-selves. Through a *prosopopoeial* process of connection an individuated, nonspecific local presence of the global autopoietic organization of capitalism is created. This connective creation requires a disjunctive mode of representation. Signs and names are enacted *within* a concrete local history and space to justify its violent destruction, transformation, and re-creation according to the global and specific, albeit, incomplete logic of capital. New structural relations are produced to hold local components (States, nations, institutions, societies, persons, and individuals) together with the global and specific autopoietic organization of capitalism. But these relations also re-arrange the social, political and ontological codes of belonging in a world. In order to displace the inherent violence of this re-territorialisation, local history must be re-inscribed within its concrete space so as to naturalize the poietic structuring of worlds. An *onomatopoeial* process of conjunction presents the re-coding and re-inscription of local worlds as having already been as such *ex novo*, from the beginning, as new identities and processes of production fall back on worlds as they once were and inscribe them with a necessity of what they must become: *contemporary, global,* and *modern*.

As such, the co-arising of local worlds and identity in the situation of contemporary global modernity (re)presents an allopoietic becoming-other which is always contingent. Worlds and identities are in a continuous and precarious process of structuring. Initially and for the most part these processes find expression and embodiment through the necessity of locally and concretely securing the identity produced by the universality of global autopoietic capitalism. But owing to the prosopopoeial and onomatopoeial, rather than metonymic, means through which local worlds become allopoietic, they retain some of their individuality, their personal, social and cultural history. As such, although the components of local worlds form the structure for capitalism's autopoietic machinic organization, they simultaneously form its environment, that which confronts capitalism and that which capitalism always already attempts to inoculate itself against. This is to say, local components arise as a structure *inside* the global capitalist autopoietic machine to ensure the production of its organization while also forming an environmental boundary *outside* of it. As global autopoietic capitalism necessarily functions through

reciprocal causality between the local and global, and enacts so many structural couplings to environments, local allopoietic worlds can also disrupt the composite autopoietic unity of capitalism through their (mis)functioning. This is not to argue, then, that worlds do not exist prior to their poietic structuring in the situation of contemporary global modernity. It is rather an attempt to reframe the question of autonomy and identity alongside the problems of borders and boundaries. We aim to understand that in the poietic structuring of worlds, local spaces and histories embody contingent, violent, and precarious dynamics which produce varying levels of inclusion and exclusion in order to ensure that the experience and identity of everyone and everything exists 'together-with-time-everywhere-just-now' for the sake of generating profit from profit itself. In this sense, the creation of allopoietic, local and nonspecific meaning to accommodate the abstract, creative destruction of autopoietic capitalism enacts a fundamentally poor choice: *we either give ourselves over to an allopoietic becoming-other, or else our identity is cast out from being as such.*

Insofar as global financial capitalism needs societies to secure its autopoietic becomings, the recursive levels of states and nations, the history of nation-states, and the local production of national worlds shall be emphasized throughout this chapter. Therefore, to give life to the foregoing theoretical discussion and understand its implications for poietic subjects, this chapter will explore the allopoietic procedures of local world creation through the recent history of China's economic reform process, the political transformation of its citizenry, and the social destruction of their traditional ways of life. This choice may appear odd, given the overwhelming emphasis on occidental thinkers throughout this thesis and the Western nature ascribed to the processes of globalization. And yet, to paraphrase E.P. Thompson's description of the industrial revolution, it is precisely owing to the explicitly Western focus of many accounts of globalization and global capitalism that the history of its development is no longer advanced as a description of how we are in a world, but a totalizing explanation of all that is here in the

globe.[145] From this perspective, and to recall a passage from Stafford Beer, it is simply not the case that "a country attempting to become a socialist state cannot fully become socialist; because there exists an international autopoietic capitalism in which it is embedded, by which the revolutionary country is deemed allopoietic."[146] States and nations involved in the global dimension of the poietic structuring of worlds are *already* allopoietic insofar as they produce components which secure the identity of international autopoietic capitalism by allowing its continuous connection, disjunction, and conjunction. My wager is that by implicating the radical transformation of China in the historical vision of the West and the functioning of autopoietic global capitalism, we may, to borrow from Hannah Arendt, begin to think again about what we are doing and how we are here in the situation of contemporary global modernity.

Our analysis of China will explicitly focus on the relationship between space and history in its economic, political, and social reform process. To this end, the normative creation of a new Chinese national identity that makes the abstract global demands of financial capital present in local space shall be read alongside the emergence of two new and inter-related urban phenomena: ghost cities and *dingzihu*, or nail houses. On the one hand, ghost cities are large urban developments that are erected without a concrete local need for their production but are constructed in anticipation of and for China's growing upper and middle class. On the other hand, nail houses are sites of resistance where individuals refuse to abandon their homes while their traditional urban district is being demolished for urban renewal. While ghost cities and nail houses initially appear to present inverse images of one another – the former being absolutely new while the latter pertaining to the protection of the old, or tradition – I will claim that as the people inhabiting these spaces maintain a common status of non-belonging, these two phenomena must be seen as interconnected. By examining interviews and cinematic representations of urban re-

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[145] E.P. Thompson remarks that "the Industrial Revolution, which commenced as a *description*, is now invoked as an *explanation*." E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London: Victor Gollancz LTD, 1980), 210. Italics added.

[146] Stafford Beer, "Preface", 71.

construction in China, migrant workers and nail-house protests shall be understood as respectively embodying the division between the structural function of allopoietic worlds, the precarity of being inside, and their environmental dimension, the violence of being forced to exist outside allopoietic worlds. From this perspective, the way ghost cities and nail houses figure into China's reform process provides a unique vantage point to consider the problem of borders and boundaries produced through the formation of poietic subjects in the situation of contemporary global modernity.

The first section of our chapter will explore the transformation of local life inherent to the *structural* function of allopoietic worlds. We shall first examine accelerated prosopopoeial transformation of urban space in China's recent economic, political, and social reform process alongside the eruption of social anxiety concerning the future of its identity, or the uncertainty of its onomatopoeial process. As such, this transformation will be conceptualized through a reading of Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the *socius*. A society becomes a *socius* when its functioning, history and meaning are re-inscribed according to an organizing principle, such as capital. By providing a secure political codification for its organizing principle, the re-territorialised formation comes to appear as the only possible ontological organization of local production, and the organizing principle of a new *socius* becomes an *a priori*, universal condition for life. In this way, the *socius* forms a *full-body* that demarcates clear zones of distinction between all spheres of life, structurally reforms the private and public, social, cultural, and political, and in so doing re-inscribes possibilities of inclusion and exclusion. The concept of the *socius*, then, allows us to understand how the local allopoietic world of China has re-inscribed the process of making the global identity of autopoietic capitalism present with positive social meaning in order to overcome social anxiety, thereby producing new poietic subjects and subjectivities.

Our second section shall think the re-ordering of inclusion and exclusion produced by China's new *socius* alongside the emergence of ghost cities and migrant workers in China. In leaving their home to build ghost cities, migrant workers gain access to better wages but are excluded from participation in the middle or upper-class status of the *new poietic subjects* their production is meant to accommodate. Considering how migrant

workers come to exist on the borders of China's new *socius* presents an ideal case to think through the precarity inherent to the prosopopoeial and onomatopoeial processes which produce the structural function of allopoietic worlds.

The final section of our chapter will explore the *environmental* dimension of allopoietic worlds, examining the violence of exclusion brought about in the re-structuring of local life. Here, we shall recount two stories of nail-house protests staged at two different points in China's reform process. Their differing fates, and the status of nail-house protests in general, shall once again be examined through Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the *socius*, this time thought together alongside Jean-François Lyotard's general theorization of language and specific concept of *pagus* in *The Differend.* The *pagus* comprises a liminal space, a border zone wherein conflicts over modes of linking, or connecting ensue in language in general and in narratives in particular. It is here that a relationship of inclusion and exclusion, demarcating what is inside and outside of a local world takes place for the sake of auto-identification, or how poietic subjects come to know themselves and their world through the unification of thought and action in time and space. Because nail-house protests refuse to give up their homes, they embody a physical *pagus* in the Chinese landscape, an environmental disruption in China's allopoietic world. Their identity comes to be violently excluded from the life of the nation, and thus, being as such.

## 3.2      The Allopoietic Restructuring of Life in China's New Socius

From its beginning in the 1980s, China's reform process has been dominated by the production of space. This process has emphasized the development of infrastructure and the (re)construction of cities as a means to re-form its national identity and naturalize the creation of new markets, modes of production, and social structuring. These statements may appear odd considering the ubiquity of goods bearing the mark "Made in China." Indeed, while the process of (re)development and (re)construction of urban infrastructure

has been met with awe by some Western observers,[147] its relationship to the larger narrative of globalization predicated on initiating reform through capitalist modes of production is as contested as the ways to describe China's particular form of capitalism.[148] In this regard, China's recent past is simultaneously appropriated as a case of 'alternative' modernity defined by a new potential for political reassertion in the conditions of depoliticized postmodernity, and as an exception to the rule of globalized modernity itself where political interference in the natural order of market mechanisms is seen to constantly threaten China's future.[149] This distinct tendency to (mis)understand China's economic reforms as an exception to the rule of global development has resulted in its casting as the constituent *other* to Western nations and international organizations. Originating with Ronald Reagan's belief that when China opened itself up to the free market, democracy would necessarily follow, the result of this *othering* tendency is a pervasive view that its success could only be guaranteed by the emergence of a local democratic political system.[150] But after the short span of 30 years of reform, by 2008 China's economic reforms had brought "300 million people from agricultural backwardness to *modernity*."[151] Perhaps it is our dependence on, and unease with, cheap products arriving in the global market from the *past* so to speak – a place unwilling to relinquish its allegiance to socialism– that has unconsciously blinded Western academics

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[147] For a comparative discussion of Western and Chinese urbanization and infrastructural growth see Timothy B. Weston, "China's Historic Urbanization: Explosive and Challenging," in *China in and Beyond the Headlines*, ed. Timothy B. Weston and Lionel M. Jenson (New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2012).

[148] For example, Authoritarian capitalism, State-capitalism, Capitalism with Chinese Values, and so on.

[149] See Chapter 5 "Alternatives? The PRC and the Global South" in Arif Dirlik, *Global Modernity: Modernity in the Age of Global Capitalism* (London: Paradigm Publishers, 2007)

[150] See again Roger des Forges and Luo Xu, "China as a Non-Hegemonic Superpower? The Uses of History by the 'China Can say No Writers' and their Critics," 463-485.

[151] Mark Leonard, *What Does China Think?* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 2008), 6. Italics added

and media outlets alike to the fact that in China the production of space is often significantly more valuable and transformative than the production of goods.[152]

Thus, from Deng Xiaoping's initial policies of "Reform and Openness" in the early 1980's to today, in China "the production of space, which fosters marketization and urbanization, is not initiated by a certain mode of production as one expects to find in capitalist countries."[153] Space, rather, has been manipulated and rebuilt to instantiate a new capitalist economy, a means of making the demands and identity of global autopoietic capitalism present in local space and naturalized for its society. Wade Shepard describes the transformation of the Chinese social landscape as a process where "the old is being replaced with the new, and the new is being replaced with the newer, in a cyclical process of creation and destruction."[154] From the perspective of global life, this logic is easily explained by our discussions of autopoietic capitalism's trend towards abstractive creative destruction. In this regard, we would argue that rather than forming an exception to the rule of globalization, China's reform process provides an archetypal example of the functioning of local worlds in the situation of contemporary global modernity: the global and specific identity of autopoietic capitalism has undergone a prosopopoeial accommodation in space. But for a nation that boasts a continuous narrative that can be traced back almost 4000 years, contemporary China has effectively been emptied of all signs of its traditional history.[155] From the local perspective of national history, then, the manner in which this accelerated production of social, political, and spatial creative destruction has been naturalized in China by its onomatopoeial process in order to secure a new allopoietic world warrants further exploration.

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[152] Zhang Yiwu, "Žižek's China, China's Žižek" *positions* 19:3 (Raleigh, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2011): 726.

[153] Jing Nie, "A City of Disappearance: Trauma, Displacement, and Spectral Cityscape in Contemporary Chinese Cinema," in *Chinese Ecocinema: In the Age of Environmental Challenge*, ed. Sheldon H. Lu and Jiayan Mi (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2009), 197.

[154] Wade Shepard, *Ghost Cities of China: The Story of Cities without People in the World's most Populated Country* (London: Zed Books, 2015), 5.

[155] Ibid.

In a first instance, we need only briefly consider the histories of Shenzhen, Zhuhai and the other coastal cities designated as Special Economic Zones (SEZ) by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to understand how this logic has come to dominate the transformation of the Chinese landscape. In 1978, Deng Xiaoping officially implemented a policy known as "The Four Modernizations," namely, modernizations of agriculture, industry, national defence, and science and technology.[156] In order to accelerate the modernization process, the SEZ were created to mark the beginning of the aforementioned policies of "Reform and Openness," what Deng described as "socialist modernization" at the Twelfth Party Congress in 1982: namely, continuing the "socialist spiritual civilization" through "opening up" economic development as "the basis for the solution of our external and internal problems."[157] These previously existing urban centers were rebuilt and developed in the 1980's as the first cities to begin trading and business operations with the global market. They were designed primarily as an experiment to test the viability of carrying forth market reform and privatization nationwide.[158] In this sense, the urban spaces of the SEZ were re-built to immediately generate production and wealth, thereby giving physical embodiment to the global organization and identity of the autopoietic capitalist order within local space. Thus, reform in China during this period, and the decision to privilege the production of space, can be directly thought as a prosopopoeial process: the restructuring of urban space was implemented first, as a means for space to become efficient and rational for the sake of external connection, of making global autopoietic capitalism present in its local world; and second, to transform a population traditionally comprised of rural farmers tied to their land into mobile urban labourers, for the sake of internal conjunction and identification. While the economic success of the SEZ marked the beginning of a

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[156] See "Four Modernizations" in *Encyclopedia of Modern China,* Ed. David Pong. Vol. 2. (Detroit: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2009): 89-90.

[157] Richard Baum, *Chinese Politics in the Age of Deng Xiaoping* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994), 143.

[158] Jing Nie, "A City of Disappearance," 197

sweeping nation-wide prosopopoeial transformation, the naturalization, or onomatopoeial process of its political and social implications for China's citizens stuttered.

In a second instance, almost a decade into the economic reforms a rift in China's social and political identity began to emerge as a result of the drastic reconstruction of the country's urban landscapes and the allopoietic transformation of daily life. Speaking to the effects of China's process of becoming-other by transitioning into global markets and transforming its local population, the dissident journalist Liu Binyan wrote in 1988 that "the biggest problem we face today in China is not commodity prices or the cost of living. […] The most serious problem is the wide spread spiritual malaise among people of all walks of life, a growing mood of depression, even despair, [and] a loss of hope for the future."[159] To ease the growing tensions amongst Chinese citizenry by attempting to naturalize China's prosopopoeial transformation, the late 1980's witnessed a period of lax intellectual, cultural and social censorship. It is in this climate that a six-part documentary entitled *Heshang*, or *River Elegy* aired on China Central Television in June and August of 1988. Part five of the film entitled "A New Age" opened with a warning about the cost of modernization in China: "How many Chinese people are there nowadays who clearly realize that reform doesn't just mean […] color TVs, refrigerators and higher salaries[. …] In its deeper sense, *reform is rather a burst of pain* in which a civilization is transformed, a task fraught with danger […] which will require sacrifices from our generation and even several yet to come."[160] What is described by these two instances from the late 1980's is the precarity inherent to the poietic structuring of worlds, namely, an overwhelming sense of anxiety brought about by the prosopopoeial transformation of an existing society. To understand how the creation of a new local Chinese world and identity has been able to transmute this anxiety and effectively displace the pain arising

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[159] Lin Binyan, *China's Crisis, China's Hope: Essays from an Intellectual in Exile* (Harvard University Press, 1990), 22.

[160] Su Xiaokang and Wang Luxiang, *Deathsong of the River*: *A Reader's Guide to the Chinese TV Series* Heshang, trans. Richard W. Bodman and Pin P. Wan (Ithica, New York: Cornell University Press, 1994), 228. Italics added

from processes of abstractive creative destruction in its allopoietic re-territorialization, let us turn to Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the *socius*.

Throughout the discussions of miraculation in our first chapter, and the disjunctive, self-separation of autopoietic capitalism from its environment in our second chapter, we have implicitly been dealing with the formation of the *socius* and traversing the terrain of what Deleuze and Guattari call social production. To recall, miraculation describes the process through which capitalism's functioning is re-arranged and re-inscribed, ensuring that the initial antagonism between capital and labour falls back on labourers as such. This is to say, whereas capital is initially generated through the production of new social relations whose value is measured by quantifiable labour time, through the processes of miraculation it is labour and social relations themselves which *objectively* appear to stem from capital. Through this miraculating re-inscription, autopoietic capitalism is able to disjunctively self-separate from its environment to not only secure its identity but further its organizational processes of abstraction. Disjunctive self-separation allows for the repetition of its own conditions, such that every point of identification or conjunction with autopoietic capitalism is the same insofar as it produces a recursive operational closure moving from the global to the local: "no matter which two organs are involved, the way in which they are attached to the body without organs must be such *that all the disjunctive syntheses between the two amount to the same*."[161] Although Deleuze and Guattari explicitly reference the body without organs in this last passage, a concept attached to desiring-production in their machinic ontology, they advance a correlative concept in the domain of social-production: namely, *the full body of the socius.*

Through the anti-productive, counter-investment of miraculating disjunction, an existing society is transformed into a *socius*. A society becomes a *socius* when its functioning, history, and meaning are re-inscribed according to an organizing principle, such as capital. In this sense, the socius forms a surface where the organizational processes of autopoietic capitalism are re-arranged into an allopoietic formation. Why is

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[161] Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 12.

this re-inscription necessary? In a general statement concerning their machinic ontology and the three syntheses of production, Deleuze and Guattari suggest we must realize that "production is immediately consumption and recording, and this recording and consumption directly determine production, but do so throughout production itself. Thus, everything is production: *productions of productions*, of actions and of passions; *productions of recordings*, of distributions and reference points; *productions of consumptions*, of sensual pleasures, of anxieties and of anguishes."[162] By delimiting and distributing the contingent processes of production along its surface, the formation of the *socius* acts as a means to quash anxiety and anguish brought about through the transformation of an existing society.

In this regard, the new structural relations born out of a society's reformation into a *socius* appear as both the only possible ontological organization of production and as a means to ensure the political codification of its organizing principle (the earth, the tyrant, and capital, as Deleuze and Guattari state). This entails that the *socius*, like the body without organs, represents a universal *founding* act, a transformation "through which man ceases to be a biological organism and becomes a *full body*, an earth, to which his organs become attached, where they are attracted, repelled, miraculated, following the requirements of a *socius*."[163] Contrary to Benjamin Noys' objection that Deleuze and Guattari present capitalism as a totalizing and full world, through their theorization of the *socius* we can understand that the point is not that capitalism is *always already full*, or complete. As Varela explains, world making always arises through "breakdowns in autopoiesis, be they minor, like changes in concentration of some metabolite, or major, like *disruption of the boundary*. Due to the nature of autopoiesis itself […] every breakdown can be seen as the initiation of an action *on what is missing on the part of the system* so that identity might be maintained."[164] Thus, global autopoietic capitalism must

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[162] Ibid, 4.

[163] Ibid, 144.

[164] Varela, "Autopoiesis and biology of intentionality," 10.

continuously become complete by incorporating new local environments and destroying, transforming, and re-creating them in their own image. It necessitates the formation of new allopoietic worlds that *become full* by re-organizing structural relations of production, and capturing the anxiety produced therein.

This is why Deleuze and Guattari cite Marx's statement that capital appears not as the product of labour, but its natural or divine presupposition: to repeat, "machines and agents cling so closely to capital that their very functioning appears to be *miraculated* by it. Everything seems *objectively* to be produced by capital as *quasi cause*."[165] If this description is thought back through the narrative of China's reform process that we have outlined thus far, we appear to be at a standstill, however. While the prosopopoeial processes of making autopoietic capitalism present in China function smoothly within our description of the *socius*, the coordinates of its onomatopoeial naturalization still remain at odds with the elevation of capital into a quasi-cause. Indeed, both the Four Modernizations and the policy of Reform and Openness were predicated on a principle of *socialist modernization*. To this end, we further situate the *objectivity* of capitalism's global autopoietic organization and its specific autopoietic identity of 'capital as quasi-case', in the history of China's local, allopoietic, and non-specific world creation.

Drawing from Deleuze's *Logic of Sense*, we can understand the 'quasi-cause' capital as replacing the continuous geneses of the processes of production with a series of "non-causal correspondences forming a system of echoes, of reprises and resonances, a system of signs."[166] Though capitalism is not a cause, in a false movement capital is transformed into a fixed point of origin, the organizing principle of a new *socius* which becomes an *a priori* universal condition for life as such. This is the moment of anti-production proper, where capital forms a counter-investment, injecting a definite causality to the echoes, reprises, resonances and thereby constructs its own system of signs out of the new *socius*.

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[165] Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 10-11. Italics added to 'objectively' and 'quasi-cause'.

[166] Gilles Deleuze, *Logic of Sense,* 199 quoted from Jay Lampert, *Deleuze and Guattari's Philosophy of History* (New York, Continuum, 2006), 7.

Ontologically, everything then seems to be objectively produced by capital in the sense that the entirety of being and history has led to its development. Politically, this entails that local history and the relationship between the social, political, cultural, public, and private spheres of a local world are re-inscribed in the image of capital itself. If we pay close attention to the opening lines of "A New Age" previously quoted from *Heshang*, the imperceptible ontological and political re-codification of China's society during its reform process, or the onomatopoeial naturalization of its new *socius*, becomes clear: "how many Chinese people are there nowadays who clearly realize that reform doesn't just mean […] color TVs, refrigerators and higher salaries. […] In its deeper sense, *reform is rather a burst of pain* in which a civilization is transformed." Communication, material goods, and the construction of a new system of signs wherein higher salaries replace traditional society and displace the pain of reform all demonstrate that while China remained socialist in name, this name would henceforth be submitted to capitalist economics in command of the nation's prosopopoeial structuring.[167]

To conclude this discussion, we must state that Deleuze and Guattari's description of the anti-productive element of social production as a *socius* is revealing. Historically the term describes autonomous tribes and city-states on the Italian Peninsula who were in permanent military alliance with the Roman Republic. To this end, the role of socius is first and foremost one of segregation, of carving up the social field so as to maintain those who are within the system and outside it—*put differently, the socius functions as an instrument of war to secure an economy, to forcefully ensure the production of a singular way of dwelling that nevertheless retains a certain degree of autonomy, of history.* Thus, the formation of the *socius* brings about an allopoietic world that comes to be triply defined: it is ontologically defined as a becoming towards the production of capital, politically defined as a codification of becoming together whose identity is shaped by the

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[167] We are thinking here as well of the displacement of Mao's 'politic-in-command' platform to Deng's 'economics in command'. See Li Xing's "From 'Politics in Command' to 'Economics in Command': A Discourse Analysis of China's Transformation," in *The Copenhagen of Asian Studies,* Vol 18, (2003): 65-87. Interestingly, Li also notes a transition from Logocentricism to econocentrism in this regard, namely, an inverted Marxist topography during the Mao era, and a return to the standard Marxist topography during the Deng period.

continuous generation of capital, and socially defined as a being with one another as labourers, understanding one another through a new capitalist system of signs, such as salary, commodities, images, text and celebrity. As Deleuze and Guattari write in *Anti-Oedipus*, this could be characterized precisely by the recognition that within the capitalist socius there is truly *only one class*: "Membership in a class refers to the role in production or anti-production, to the place of inscription […] and from this viewpoint it is indeed true that there is only a single class, that class which has an interest in a given régime."[168] But with this interest in the regime of autopoietic capitalism, we must recall Deleuze and Guattari's description of its ideology as a motley painting of everything that has ever existed. This is why the production of space in China has been so fundamental to its successful entry into the global economy. China has literally had to inscribe its social surface with the interests of capitalist production and dwelling, carving its demands into space to naturalize its functioning within their history.

At this point, then, we must turn our discussion of the *socius* and its function of creating a full world *for* the global level of financial capitalism *as* the local level of national worlds towards a thinking of the recent urban phenomena of ghost cities and the category of migrant labourers. In this way, we may begin to see how the creation of poietic subjects generates new forms of inclusion and exclusion, thereby demonstrating the precarity of inclusion in the structural function of allopoietic worlds.

## 3.3    The Precarity of Inclusion: Ghost Cities and Migrant Workers

What, exactly, is a ghost city? Or perhaps a better question would be: what is a ghost city in China? This term has previously been reserved to describe spaces that were once lively, booming areas of economic production which have decayed and withered away. Indeed, China's National Science and Technology Department's Terminology Committee would seem to describe ghost cities in exactly this way, as "an abandoned city with

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[168] Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 344.

depleted resources, a high vacancy rate, few inhabitants, or *that is dark at night*."[169]
Against this image, Chinese ghost cities are spaces that are *dark at dawn,* that "have yet
to come to life" and thus are epitomized by complete potentiality.[170] Indeed, although the
construction of these sites appear to follow China's privileging of space over
commodities, the fact that they remain relatively underpopulated and unproductive
sometimes a decade after completion would seem to suggest an excess of development.
While there is no immediate need for their construction, with China's middle-class
expecting to reach 800 million people by 2025 the hope is that these ready-made
cityscapes will pre-emptively serve the needs of the future economy.[171] And it is this
future necessity that Stephen Roach claims critics of China's ghost cities miss all together
when he writes that "China cannot afford to wait to build its new cities […] instead
investment and construction must be aligned with the future influx of urban dwellers."[172]
However, with their emphasis on the future, the current spectral nature of these urban
developments bare an uncanny resemblance to the identity of speculative financial
capitalism: namely, a logic of production for production's sake akin to the production of
profit from profit itself.

It is interesting to note that both spectre and speculate share a common linguistic root,
*specere,* or the Latin verb 'to look'. Thus, when thought through ghost cities and
speculative financial capitalism both terms can be seen to present a common vision that
comes about as a *dis-appearance, occurrences that risk being suspended between the real
and unreal, the present and an uncertain potential future*. To repeat once more the quote
from Slavoj Žižek "it is crucial to avoid the simple commonsense [sic] solution: 'we have
to get rid of the speculators, introduce order there, and real production will go on' – the

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[169] Shepard, *Ghost Cities of China*, 39. Italics added

[170] Ibid, 39.

[171] Thomas L. Friedman, "China Needs its Own Dream" in *New York Times Op-Ed* (October 3, 2012):
http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/03/opinion/friedman-china-needs-its-own-dream.html

[172] Stephen Roach "China is Okay" *Project Syndicate,* (August 29, 2012): http://www.project-syndicate.org/commentary/china-is-okay-by-stephen-s--roach

lesson of capitalism is that these "unreal" speculators *are* real here; if we remove them the reality of production suffers."[173] The lesson of ghost cities, then, presents itself in an inverted but analogous way: the "real" material content of these urban spaces is "unreal". While the current reality of their production further stimulates growth demanded by and for China's new *socius*, for the time being the function of these spaces is suspended, awaiting a future, artificial reterritorialization by those able to fill the space. What is even more striking than this, however, is that the local municipalities who orchestrate the construction of ghost cities do even not try to hide their state of *dis-appearance*. Rather, these new districts are flaunted for their potential to house luxury commercial sectors and apartments, presenting China with a new ideal for its future that writes out the anxiety of its transformation.[174] In this sense, ghost-cities allow us to catch a rare glimpse into the prosopopoeial and onomatopoeial processes demanded by local world's non-specific structural accommodation of the global and specific organization and identity of financial capitalism.

In his book *Ghost Cities of China*, Shepard writes about his experience walking through the Great Orient Mall in Zhengdong, a massive shopping complex without a single shop open for business: "We [Shepard and a security guard] walked together into the belly of the empty mall. Fake signs for Western stores lined both sides of the hallway to demonstrate what this place could look like if it actually had any business in it. KFC, Starbucks, Zara, Adidas and Nike were all represented…"[175] In this one description we already witness a qualifying property of ghost cities' potentiality. These new spaces are not accessible to everyone, but aimed at a particular type of subject: it is those people have truly become modern, middle and upper class poietic subjects that can fill these empty cities with life by being able to afford to actualize its ready-made commercial meaning. In this way, with the provisional standing-in of the logos of multinational

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[173] Žižek, *Living in the End Times*, 403.

[174] Shepard, *Ghost Cities of China*, 53.

[175] Ibid, 53.

corporations the global identity of capital is made present, articulating those who can and cannot partake in its space, or a prosopopoeial process which comes to stand in for identity. But the fact is that in their current state ghost cities are speculative spaces for a reason other than their un-actualized economic potential. Namely, it is their reliance on "the lives of the urban 'other', [sic] that is the *nongmingong* [migrant labourers]" whose identities, straddling the line of inclusionary-exclusionary, imbue these spaces with a quality of non-belonging.[176]

The success of China's reform process and its allopoietic transformation is inextricably tied to the complex history and identity of migrant labourers.[177] The literal translation of the term *nongmingong* either as farmer worker or peasant worker reveals much about the dislocation of these people. Comprising approximately 270 million individuals, [178] migrant workers travel from the countryside to urban developments and carry an ambiguous status of (non)belonging as they are deprived of the rights secured by their local household registration of the *Hukou* system.[179] The *Hukou* system originated in 1958 during the CCP's first push for industrialization. It served both as an index to register and divide rural and urban production as well as to implement "a system of social control aimed at excluding the rural population from access to state-provided goods, welfare, and entitlements" of urban areas by tying individuals' access to services with their area of registration.[180] This system continues to make it virtually impossible for an

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[176] Gary Sigley, "Metropole Power: Approaches to Centre and Periphery in Contemporary China," *International Journal of China Studies,* 4:2 (August 2013): 178.

[177] Kam Wing Chan, "China: Internal Migration," in *Encyclopedia of Global Human Migration*, ed. Immanuel Ness and Peter Bellwood, (New York: Blackwell Publishing, 2013).

[178] W. Raphael Lam, Xiaoguang Liu and Alfred Schipke, "China's Labour Market in the 'New Normal'," from *IMF Working Paper* (July 2015): 3. https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/wp/2015/wp15151.pdf Accessed on: 11-17-2015

[179] Zai Liang and Zhongdong Ma, "China's Floating Population: New Evidence from the 2000 Census," *Population and Development Review* 30, No. 3 (2004): 468.

[180] Kam Wing Chan, "The Household Registration System and Migrant Labor in China: Notes on a Debate," *Population and Development Review* 36, (2010): 358.

individual registered in a rural *Hukou* to permanently relocate outside of their home designation.

However, starting with the opening up of the SEZ in the 1980's the surplus-demand for cheap manual labour in the areas of construction and factory production led the CCP to allow "temporary contract workers" from rural areas to migrate to urban areas.[181] And the industrial demand for these labourers has essentially split Chinese citizenry in two: again, those who comprise modern and urban poietic subjects, and those 'other' second-class citizens who are not only allowed but encouraged to fill undesirable labour positions in developing cities so as to fulfill production demands. Thus, while migrant labourers are 'free' to seek higher wages abroad, in so doing these workers lose not only the social security but legal status of their home. It is precisely in this sense that migrant workers come to embody a state of non-belonging, which essentially exiles them from any sense of fixed identity within the larger framework of China's reforms—their identity, although necessary, falls outside those whose interests support the *socius* of China in the situation of contemporary global modernity.

As can be seen in the work of film maker Jia Zhangke, the precarious nature of this new reality has not been lost on the Chinese people. His films focus almost exclusively on migrant workers' attempts and failures to form new, lasting identities in urban areas as they simultaneously work in, and are excluded from, the rituals of social, public and commercial space. His 2004 drama *Shijie*, translated as *The World*, is particularly telling in this regard. Set in a fictional Beijing, *The World* centers on an amusement park of the same name to tell the story of migrant workers who are hired to inhabit and perform in replicas of landmarks from around the globe. The film pays particular attention to space that is both worked on by migrant workers and that works on them. Commenting on the effect of this dialectic, Jing Nie writes that "as subjects, they experience a double displacement in the park: they move from the countryside to Beijing where they are surrounded, not by an urban Chinese culture, but by a fake and inaccessible global micro-

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[181] Ibid, 359.

environment."[182] It is difficult to ignore the parallel between the environments of migrant workers in The World Park with what has already been described about the localizing world of ghost cities as an example of the prosopopoeial process demanded in the poietic structuring of worlds. As for the subjects themselves, the strained and turbulent relationship of the film's two main characters, Xiaotao and her boyfriend Taisheng, presents a cautionary tale about the impossibility for these individuals to create a private sphere at the margins of society – a space in which, as Hannah Arendt once described, "through friendship, sympathy and love, we can cope more or less adequately with mere human existence."[183] And the ambiguous death of Xiaotao and Taisheng at the end of the film, which could be read either as a suicide or the failure of these subjects to withstand the adverse effects of an all-consuming global identity imposing itself in a local space, points to the costs of reducing the migrant work force to human capital: they are included in the global autopoietic organization of capitalism, but excluded from the local, allopoietic world of China, and thus serve only a role of application, not implication.

We began our first section by briefly considering the impact of the "Made in China" story that is both celebrated and a cause of anxiety in the landscape of contemporary global modernity. However, if we are to truly engage with China's recent past and understand how the lives of migrant workers figure into this history, then it is necessary to acknowledge the other half of this narrative: namely, the "Made *for* China" story. While the rapid reconfiguration of the Chinese landscape may be presented to the world with the construction of new, futuristic skylines, and with it a new allopoietic world, the integral function but displaced identity of migrant workers within this process appears to complicate our notion that identity within the situation of contemporary global modernity exists 'together-with-time, everywhere, just-now.' In the West we too quickly forget that the foundation of our economies rests on the backs of underpaid, disadvantaged labourers. When China's reform process is cast as an exception to the rule of global

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[182] Jing Nie, "A City of Disappearance," 206,

[183] Hannah Arendt, "The Rights of Man, What are They?," *Modern Review* 3, No. 1. (1949): 32.

modernity, this exception comes in the form of a fantasy – a desire to rewrite our past and secure the founding *myth* of our age: that the pursuit of profit, and the production of profit from profit itself, is a peaceful endeavour accessible to everyone. With the story of migrant workers, we have created a new ghostly caste that is necessary to both sustain growth locally in China, and produce cheap, ready-made commodities globally. Thus, to our analysis of the spatial creative destruction enacted through China's reform process and its means of securing the production of a new *socius* for China's allopoietic world must be added the dimension of history, tradition and its onomatopoeial transformation.

## 3.4 "Everybody has their own Dream": Nail-House Protests and the Violence of Exclusion[184]

With the construction of Chinese ghost cities and their reliance upon migrant workers we saw how this new urban phenomena embodies the manner in which the local allopoietic accommodation of a capitalist *socius* forces individuals into a new role of application within a national world. Their labour, although demanded by the tenants of China's new *socius*, nevertheless excludes them from the spaces they constructed. Thus, while migrant workers' labour tends towards the production of the structural dimension of allopoietic worlds, they remain on the margins, in a permanent position of precarity. For our second urban phenomena of *dingzihu* or nail-house protests, however, China's new poietic landscape entails a different relationship: namely, a fear for the disappearance of traditional culture and personal history.[185] Nail-house protests arise as a desperate attempt of individuals to hold onto their *personal* history and communities as traditional urban spaces are demolished to make way for rational, economic districts. The effects of the economic, social, and political reforms upon the people of China, have therefore shifted from anxiety about the future to a mourning of the past. By recounting two stories

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[184] For an earlier version of this section which focused on the becoming economic of the cultural and cultural of the economic, and its relationship to nail-house protests see my article "'Everybody has their own Dream': Nail houses and Resistance to the Landscape of Globalization in Contemporary China in *e-topia: [Intersections | Cross-Sections 2016] Re: Turns* (2017): http://etopia.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/etopia/article/view/36771

[185] See Appendix A for images of nail-house protests.

of nail-houses protests we shall connect the dislocation of individuals from their home –
and ensuing loss of their identity–this section will demonstrate the violence of exclusion
born from resisting the prosopopoeial and onomatopoeial process of allopoietic world
creation. We shall connect these stories to Hannah Arendt's critique in her essay "'The
Rights of Man': What are they?" of the modern public sphere as a space where "men
cannot act or change at all."[186] As the collapsing of the traditional public and private
sphere for the sake of economic interest in China levels down the identity of personal
difference to create national homogeneity, it is only fitting that we allow the voices of
nail-house inhabitants to speak to their lived experiences.

The point here is neither to moralize these acts of resistance as noble efforts against the
universalizing force of globalization or the universality of contemporary global
modernity, nor is it to theorize precisely how resistance arises. Rather, it is to investigate
the vital role of history and narrative within the poietic structuring of worlds demanded
by the situation of contemporary global modernity, and how the loss of one's history can
be understood as intolerable act. It is precisely this point that allows us to link Deleuze
and Guattari's concept of the *socius* with Lyotard's dual notions of the *Heim*, or home,
and *pagus*, or border zones. By thinking these concepts together, we can understand how
space, language, and history, or actions, thoughts and identity are enchained within a
world by deferring confrontations to a border zone, a *boundary or environment*. The
phenomena of nail-house protests present us with a striking image of this process, as in
many cases a single house will remain of an entire neighbourhood and community,
forming a literal boundary between the old and the new.

If the 2008 Beijing Olympics was a display of China's successful entry into the world
economy, then the 2010 World Expo in Shanghai demonstrated that the country had once
again become a global power.[187] The city used the event to justify a decade long process

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[186] Arendt, "'The Rights of Man': What are They?,": 33.

[187] For a brilliant and enlightening discussion of China's early role in the initial processes of globalisation
in the 17th century, and its status as a major cultural, economic and political hub which displaces narratives

of reconstruction and development of the business district along the Huangpu River, resulting in it being granted the title of a 'global city.'[188] During the late 19th and early 20th century this area was named the "Bund", or *alliance* in German, by Western banks and countries who used it to establish a soft colonial presence in China. Therefore, what better place to reveal the image of 'the next great global city' at an international event whose theme was "Better City, Better Life"?[189]

For the inhabitants along the Huangpu River, however, forced evictions became a routine part of life as entire urban communities were reclaimed to support the public interest of Shanghai, a popular slogan used in proxy for the reform policies of the Chinese government. Though technically Chinese law stipulates that "all persons should possess a degree of security of tenure which guarantees legal protection against forced eviction, harassment and other threats," since the founding of the People's Republic of China the CCP has owned all the land.[190] While an individual may own their home, a common case in traditional urban communities where houses are inter-generational spaces, the land a house sits on can be requisitioned at any moment for minimal compensation. And yet despite the legality of the relocation process in Shanghai, when the time came for inhabitants to leave their homes and lives behind some refused.

This was the case of Mr. Han and his family who vocally cried out against the actions of Shanghai while attempting to go on with their lives in what remained of their community. Mr. Han told his family's story to a reporter from the *Daily Telegraph*: "My house was on the main site of the expo. They waited until we left home one day and then knocked it

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concerning the Western dominance of globalization, see Timothy Brook, *Vermeer's Hat: The Seventeenth Century and the Dawn of the Global World* (London: Bloomsbury Press, 2009).

[188] On this point see the description of Shanghai from the Global Cities Research Institute, hosted by RMIT University in Melbourne, Australia: http://global-cities.info/placemarks/shanghai-china. It is interesting to note as well that the term global city, popularized by sociologist Saska Sassen in her 1991 work *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo*, is but a re-iteration of an older term dating back to the late 19th century: namely, world city.

[189] Shepard, *Ghost Cities of China*, 11.

[190] Ibid, 27.

down. I have not had any payment for my property and, because I complained, my son was refused entrance to university and the army. I am unemployed, and so is my wife and son. We live on the bare minimum."[191] In this case, we can understand the effects of opposing the redevelopment of Shanghai as a double displacement. Mr. Han's family lost not only their past lives as it was embodied by their home and community, but moreover the possibility of integrating themselves into the fabric of the new Shanghai. So unlike the migrant worker who experiences a loss of self by labouring in a space they cannot be accepted into, one of the risks of nail-house protests is being forced to inhabit a place that was once yours but in a new public sphere that refuses to accept you. To understand the violence brought about through the transformation of one's home into a border zone, a liminal space of exclusion which destroys one's history, let us now turn to Lyotard's discursive analysis of language and history, his concept of the *pagus* and its relationship to a home for a subject's auto-identification.

In the 'Enjeu' or 'Stakes' section of *The Differend*, Lyotard begins with the following statement: "to convince the reader […] that thought, cognition [*connaissance*], ethics, politics, history, being, depending on the case, are in play within the enchaining of phrase onto phrase."[192] There is, already, a twofold interruption of language and signification at work within this statement. First, the unity and the sense of coming to agreement over a definite meaning within language is abandoned by the suspended series that Lyotard presents between thought, the enterprise of reason, and being, the conditions of possibility. The implications here are that language must be extricated from any possible position of neutrality, the sense that language simply 'is' and shows 'what there is'. Indeed, Lyotard writes that "there is no 'language' in general, except as the *object of an Idea*."[193] We will recall from our discussion of the *socius* that its formation comes about

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[191] Ibid, 10.

[192] Jean-François Lyotard, *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute*, trans. Georges Van Den Abbeele (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), xii. Translation altered to reflect grammatical differences and openness of the original French.

[193] Ibid, xii. Emphasis added.

precisely as a means to provide a specific re-codification of an existing society, one where an organizing principle, or Idea, is elevated to an *a priori*, universal condition for life which falls back on those who exist within it. Thinking this movement through Lyotard's first statements, we can already understand a further qualification of the *socius*: its guiding principle, such as capital, forcibly falls back on language as such, transforming it into an object through which the universality of capital may be known. Through this process, the play between thought, cognition, ethics, and so on, may enter into a free accord as the condition of possibility of every determinate relationship, as the presuppositions between the enchaining of phrases, but in so doing the meaning of each phrase regime is exposed to a *reordering* based upon their transformation into the object of an ideal: capital.

This brings us to the second interruption: that language always implies a use and involves a certain measure of violence that is brought about through the enchaining (not simply linking but the subordination and enslaving of possibilities) of phrase onto phrase. Lyotard continues in 'Enjeu': "to refute the prejudice anchored in the reader by centuries of humanism and of 'human sciences' that there is 'man', that there is 'language', that man makes use of language for his ends [que celui-là se *sert* celui-ci], that if he does not succeed in attaining those ends, it is owing to a lack of good control over language 'by means' of a 'better' language."[194] Let us note Lyotard's use of the verb *servir*. While the English translation renders 'se sert' into 'makes use of', the verb also has connotations of dutiful obligation, as in serving a community, as well as being forced into servitude, enchaining in the literally sense of enslavement. Thus, if there is no language in general except as the object of an Idea, it is owing to the position of language as *the object of the Idea* of humanity. But we would argue that insofar as humanity has become inextricably intertwined with capital, with the formation of local, allopoietic *sociuses*, language is *made use of* in servitude to the ends of capital by enchaining phrase onto phrase and with

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[194] Ibid, xiii. Translation modified.

each chain foreclosing the play of phrase regimens. Lyotard moves in this direction when he claims that there are, initially and for the most part, two ends of language.

On the exterior, we have "the genre of economic discourse" that makes use of language within exchange, circulation, and the accumulation of capital (continuous enchaining of phrases, or generating profit from profit itself) for the sake of succeeding in gaining and earning time. We can think this notion of economic discourse *qua* exteriority through Varela's statement that the global identity of an autopoietic machine is not immediately present with or to local components: that its signification must *be made present* as it does not immediately generate a localized self. Within the interior, "the genre of academic discourse", the sense of mastering language so as to neutralize meaning in general such that it reflects a particular order of reality and prevents the dispersion of thought.[195] This neutralization, when thought together with the re-ordering of phrase regimes in service of an *Idea*, brings about another level of significance to the *socius'* process of miraculation. In its apparent objectivity and elevation of an Idea to a quasi-cause, the *socius* captures the diffusion of thought locally within its-self for the sake of securing a principle which is altogether exterior to it. When subsumed within the situation of contemporary global modernity these two trends can be understood as an injunction to capture reality within a local nonspecific *socius*, thereby producing a universal and specific presentation of its-self 'together-with-time, everywhere, just-now.' Against this understanding of language as forming the object of an Idea, that makes use of it to present its-self just now for the sake of producing conditions of possibility that appear everywhere, together with time, Lyotard seeks to "defend and illustrate philosophy in its *differend* […] by showing that the enchaining of phrase onto phrase is problematic and that this problem is *politics*."[196]

It is here that Lyotard delineates the true stakes of his project: to bear witness to the *differend* as a philosophical politics that allows the play of thought, cognition, ethics,

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[195] Ibid, xiii. Both quotations are from this page, but the connections draw on the Reading Dossier as a whole.

[196] Ibid, xiii. Translation modified.

politics, history, being, in such a way that it does not bear on the content of reflection, a positive iteration of an order of reality. Rather, and as he will write in "Address," the differend, or differends, "concerns (and tampers) with [reflection's] ultimate presuppositions. Reflection calls us to be on guard for occurrences, that we do not already know what will arrive."[197] Differends, then, can be defined as a case of conflict between heterogeneous parties without resolution, to which we cannot be indifferent, but neither can we presume to decide, for this would be to use language for the sake of …. Rather, the differend calls us to be on guard, to alter the presuppositions of reflection and suspend judgement, such that what is at stake on the outside comes to inflect the interior of reflection itself, the differends which emerge in an *event*. Nail-house protests can be understood precisely as an event producing differends, insofar as the history, narratives and identities which emerge present a situation without resolution insofar as the worlds of the protestors and that of the new allopoietic *socius* of China are fundamentally incommensurable. This is also why we cannot moralize these acts. Resistance is necessary, but the means through which it arises cannot be universalized. To clarify Lyotard's position and the abstract conclusions we have arrived at by situating the differend within his discussion of narrative, myth, and the event which opens the chapter "The Signs of History" before returning to our discussion of nail-house protests and their implication for the local world of China.

"The Signs of History" begins on the margins, in the liminal space of the *pagus.* It allows both passage from the interior to the outside, in the sense of a border, while also firmly separating the interior from the exterior, in the sense of a boundary. In the opening paragraphs of this chapter Lyotard will implicate his twofold delineation of the relation of discursive ex-interiority in his notion of the *pagus*. To this end, he enchains language as the ends of the success of *commerce* directly to language as the ends of the success of mastery, or *war*: "A phrase, which enchains, and which is to be enchained, is always a *pagus*, a border and confinement zone where genres of discourse enter into conflict over

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[197] Ibid, xv. Translation modified.

the mode of linking. War and commerce."[198] Lyotard will mark this interior/exterior distinction by way of separating the *pagus* from the *Heim*, home, and the *Volk*. The home, then, is the site where the people shut themselves in and where an internal peace may be achieved through the suspension of differends. "An 'internal' peace is bought at the price of perpetual differends on the borders," Lyotard writes, and "(the same arrangement goes for the ego, that of auto-identification.) This internal peace is made through narratives that accredit the community of proper names as they accredit themselves."[199] Let us linger here for a moment and expand on the phrases 'narrative' and 'auto-identification'.

Lyotard explains in the next paragraph that narrative is a genre of discourse where heterogeneous phrase regimes and even other genres of discourse are difficult to recognize, or rather, that they go unnoticed. In this sense, "narrative recounts a differend or differends and imposes an end on it or them, a completion which is also its own term. Its finality is to come to an end."[200] Thus, and as we will further explore, the *home* is the space of the public sphere *par excellence*, a space where individuals and persons cannot act or change at all insofar as their identity has already been re-coded by the formation of the *socius*. To this end, Lyotard makes a subtle distinction in French between the narrative genre, *le récit* indicating a calling forth that puts into motion again, and *la fonction narrative*, the narrative function that is 'redeeming in itself' insofar as it has already settled the accounts of that which it calls forth. Everything has been settled by enchaining phrases together that are made use of for 'auto-identification', an identity that is stable and repeating: *auto-identification* as *and* for *one's-self, repeating in a closed circuit that displaces differends to the borders and confines, a space to identify one's-self* against. Through the mechanism of repetition and identification, narratives function by domesticating the now within a recurrence of the before and after, which is to say, a

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[198] Ibid, 151. Translation modified.

[199] Ibid, 151.

[200] Ibid, 151.

history that provides consistency to the poietic subject and solace to the community insofar as this history is already redeeming in itself and continuously calls the community into motion within itself. Narrative is that which allows time to go on uninterrupted: the genre of discourse makes use of diachronic structures and diegetic modes of presentation to bring about the finality of the object of an Idea, to gain mastery over time in a way that is self-relating for the constitution of a local home and socius. This is best exemplified by narrative's relationship to the event, a relationship that will allow us to return to nail-house protests in China.

Narrative, Lyotard writes, "pushes the event back to the border and confines."[201] Narrative displaces the event, for the sake of securing a *Heim*, a home, the birth of an allopoietic world connecting to, and disjuncting and conjuncting with a global and specific autopoietic organization. If we think of the emergence of nail-house protests precisely as an event, we can understand how the poietic structuring of worlds relies on historical and narrative displacement to write out the violence of its production at the same moment it enacts this violence. Personal homes, communities, and histories must be excluded for the sake of securing new names of history, and allow for processes of social auto-identification. To repeat Mr. Han's description of his family's new life, "I have not had any payment for my property and, because I complained, my son was refused entrance to university and the army. I am unemployed, and so is my wife and son. We live on the bare minimum." Their existence has directly come to embody the status of a *pagus*, *a differendial border zone, a zone of exclusion without home and without resolution, an environment which disrupts the functioning of China's new socius and local, allopoietic world.* With such stark consequences the question arises as to why individuals would risk staging a nail-house protest? Our second testimony speaks to logic of resistance in China's new allopoietic landscape.

In the fall of 2013, the city of Taizhou was in the middle of being rebuilt. An urban space whose history spans back to the Han dynasty that originated in the 3rd century BCE, the

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[201] Ibid, 152. Translation modified.

totalizing project of redevelopment in Taizhou witnessed "the ancient neighbourhood of meandering alleyways and age-old old brick homes that covered this area […] cleared away, effectively erased from the slate of modern China."[202] At this time only a single house remained, occupied by 8 members and 4 generations of the Zhang family whose ancestors first came to Taizhou 300 years earlier.[203] Wade Shepard interviewed Mrs. Zhang about her family's experience, their history, and what they would say to Wang Jianlin, the CEO of the company charged with the reconstruction of Taizhou and one of the wealthiest individuals in China, about their situation:

> 'We have not left the house in three months', Mrs. Zhang told me 'because if we do they will destroy it. We have someone bring food in to us.' […] 'In China', Mrs. Zhang continued, 'when people don't have a house they have nothing. […] I asked Mrs. Zhang what she would say to Wang Jianlin if she had the opportunity: 'I would tell him that everybody has their own dream, not everyone wants to live in an apartment. […] This represents our roots', she said. 'Chinese culture cannot be replaced by money. What a pity to destroy this.' A week or so later the eviction squad showed up. 'It was around three in the morning. They closed off the street and a hundred police in riot gear charged in', a man who witnessed the event told me. […] The Zhang family went down with their ship.[204]

Between Wade Shepard's description of Taizhou and Mrs. Zhang's statements we are able to glimpse into the complex matrix that constituted traditional Chinese identity in urban communities. It would be a superficial procedure to try and parse apart the personal and private narrative of a family's roots in their old-brick homes from the *hutong*, those public alleyways where identities are formed by residents who "smell and taste each other's meals and exchange help and favors."[205] In precisely this way, when Mrs. Zhang equates the absence of a home to having nothing, *she evokes the symbiotic nature of belonging in traditional urban communities where the private realm extends out into*

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[202] Shepard, *Ghost Cities of China*, 28.

[203] Ibid, 29.

[204] Ibid, 28-31.

[205] Jing Nie, "City of Disappearance," 203.

*public space, so individuals simultaneously shape and are shaped by common rituals, practices and values.*

Zhang Yang's 1999 film *Xizao*, or *Shower*, is instructive in this regard. Set during the restructuring and rebuilding of Beijing in the 1990's, *Shower* tells the story of a family run bathhouse in a traditional urban community. It acts as a nexus between the public and private, as it "is not only a place to become clean, but also a social place where neighbors gather, exchange news, help and entertain each other."[206] Master Liu, the patriarch of the family who runs the community bathhouse, represents the heart and history of this society; in addition to performing traditional Chinese acupuncture and bathing rituals he serves as a mediator for his clients' and neighbours' conflicts ranging from disputes over cricket fights to a couple's fraught marriage. While some critics have lauded the film for constructing a self-orientalising fantasy, the power of this film comes precisely in its unwillingness to stage the life of its community, and thus traditional life as a whole, as a harmonious and yet diverse environment, where everyone has their place and all are de facto accepted into the fabric of social life.[207] The point is that precisely because the private affairs of individuals extend out into the public spaces of the bathhouse and *hutongs*, social order in *Shower's* traditional community is not a destructive force solely bent on "eliminating or reducing to a minimum the dark background of difference" as Arendt describes – rather, this extension guarantees a minimal space and potential for heterogeneous identities to continuously be (re)negotiated and affirmed.[208] However, when Master Liu dies at the end of the film, so too does the history and life of the community. As the last scene of the film depicts the once lively area reduced to rubble and a silent resignation of its inhabitants, *Shower* ultimately signals the irreversibility of economic development and the inability of the old

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[206] Ibid, 200.

[207] With regards to this critique of Shower as self-orientalising, Jing Nie writes that film seems to appeal to "the globalized western countries [who] eagerly seek heterogeneity and diversity to counterbalance their keenly felt homogenization." Ibid, 200.

[208] Arendt, "'The Rights of Man' What are They?," 33.

world of China to survive its allopoietic accommodation of contemporary global modernity.

From the time in which Mr. Han's family staged their protest in the early 2000's to Mrs. Zhang's resistance in 2013, the historical foundation for the poietic structuring of China's world drastically changed. This change can be represented by the ideological shift from President Hu Jintao's totalizing platform of "Harmonious Society" that was established in 2002, to current President Xi Jinping's universal proclamation of the "Chinese Dream" in 2013. In the first case, the insistence on harmony indicates the theoretical possibility for a plurality of voices to be tolerated within the transitional goals of economic reform; in the second, however, polyphony has been replaced by monophony. Through the prosopopoeial process of making the global and specific identity of autopoietic capitalism present, the local national demand for and 'public interest' in this process brings about a new private and non-specific identity which collapses onto the older history and tradition of communities and individuals. This is the onomatopoeial logic of the allopoietic structuring of local worlds at work, a process of naturalization which not only presents the situation 'just now', but represents it as always already having tended towards this course. History, then, is continuously re-written, re-shaped to displace the violence of this becoming-other to the margins, or boundaries. A new origin is inscribed into the fabric of the *socius*, such that the discontinuities which present themselves as incommensurable differends can be written out of the new arrangement of a *socius*. This is why in *A Thousand Plateaus*, Deleuze and Guattari write that "History is made only by those who oppose history (not by those who insert themselves into it, or even reshape it). […] History may try to break its ties to memory; it may make the schemas of memory more elaborate, superpose and shift coordinates, emphasize connections, or deepen breaks."[209] And here, we must be willing to push this logic to its end if we are to understand the differing fates of Mr. Han and Mrs. Zhang's families.

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[209] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 295-296.

Thus, while Mr. Han's family was forcefully evicted in their nail-house protest, for the sake of 'harmony' they were at least permitted to remain on the *pagus* of Chinese society, where they now represent "nothing but his own absolutely unique individuality" and are reduced to conditions of bare-life in the new Shanghai, differends in the purest sense.[210] For Mrs. Zhang and her family, however, their belief that 'everybody has their own dream' and their desire to retain their personal and communal history regrettably mis-recognizes that it is no longer a question of Chinese culture being replaced with the pursuit of profit. In the new Chinese Dream, expressed through the narrative of its *Heim* and the function of its *socius*, Chinese culture and the pursuit and production of profit have become inseparable for the sake of producing a world. The historical origin and development of China's world is rearranged as a *full body*, a full world where ontologically, everything seems to be objectively produced by capital in the sense that the entirety of being and history has led to its development; politically, the relationship between the social, political, cultural, public and privates spheres of its local world are re-inscribed in the image of capital itself; and socially, those who do not comply fall out of this new, local history, are no longer permitted to be together with others. In this sense, nail-house inhabitants are at best relegated to the *pagus* of the new Chinese *socius*, where, to extend Rachel Bath's theory of world-shifting to the realm of politics and society, their existence and their world end up being suspended between what once was and what is yet to come.[211] Their differendial status forcibly transforms them into ontological, political, social and cultural *remainders*, a caste with no-place who stand out in the new, allopoietic world of China.

In this situation of contemporary global modernity it is no longer the case that, as Arendt maintained, the public sphere is a space where individuals cannot act or change at all. Rather, they can only act and change by becoming-other, allow themselves, their

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[210] Arendt, "'The Rights of Man': What are They?," 33/

[211] Rachel Bath, *In-Between What Once Was and What is Yet to Come: On the Phenomena of Bereavement and Grieving*, MA Thesis, Electronic Thesis and Dissertation Repository. 4170. (Western University, 2016): http://ir.lib.uwo.ca/etd/4170

families, communities and institutions to be structured by the non-specific identity of citizens demanded by the global and specific economic or cease to exist. In this way globalization forces the creation of local national worlds that are highly antagonistic to all others, including those within their own space. The truly global dimension of capitalism arrives in its ability to nullify not only rural provincialism, but urban diversity. And is there not a better image to demonstrate this than the negative spatiality of the nail-house, representing an inverted modern skyline where the space of private dwelling refuses to be levelled down to public, economic necessity? In 1955 Claude Lévi-Strauss already warned against this phenomena in his *Triste Tropiques*. He writes that "mankind has opted for monoculture; it is in the process of creating a *mass civilization*, as beetroot is grown in the mass. Henceforth man's daily bill of fare will consist only of this one item."[212] In the end this one item is the recursive generation of profit, the production of new, local allopoietic worlds embodying the abstractive creative destruction of the global production of profit from profit itself and the exile from contemporary global modernity of those who refuse to comply with this specific autopoietic organization.

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[212] Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*, trans. John and Doreen Weightman (New York: Penguin Books, 1992), 38.

# 4    Conclusion

Do we still live in a world? In the situation of contemporary global modernity, the answer to this question at first appears uncertain. Initially and for the most part, the abstractive processes of global financial capitalism and the correlative processes of globalization present us with an effective totalization of life defined by the production of profit from profit itself. The possibilities of how we come to know our-selves are thus captured by the perspective of what there is, materially, in a globe. This a movement that conflates the world generally and worlds specifically with the spatial object of the globe, thereby reducing the living and created relationality of meaning in which individuals, persons, and communities are implicated, through which they come to care for one another, and within which they come to understand their-selves and their identity. In this sense, the situation of contemporary global modernity is marred by a series of ontological mis-alliances: first, between the becoming political of the social and the becoming social of the political; second, between the becoming economic of the cultural and the becoming cultural of the economic; and third, between these two sets of mis-alliances themselves, wherein economics comes to determine not only the production of culture, but nullifies the potential for social or political autonomy. Therefore, a uniform global horizon is produced within which local politics always already guarantees a culture that continuously conforms to the actualization of profit 'together-with-time-everywhere-just-now'. A first step towards overcoming this deadlock arrives in an injunction to think politics and ontology together as a means to reconsider not what there is in a globe, but how we are here in a world.

In this sense, the situation of contemporary global modernity necessitates a poietic structuring of worlds and identities for its coherence. The poietic structuring of worlds and identities entails the unification of thought and action in a particular time and space so as to *continue* a local world, even though this unification is founded on a becoming-other, a series of ontological, political, and historical *discontinuities* without breaks. The poietic structuring of worlds and identities is doubly marked by autopoietic and allopoietic processes of connection, disjunction, conjunction, and reciprocal causality. Through their functioning, the global, autopoietic formation of financial capitalism is

simultaneously situated in the local, allopoietic worlds while these local allopoietic worlds tend towards the re-production of global, autopoietic capitalism. From a philosophical perspective, one the implications of this double movement is that identity and worlds must be understood as co-arising with one another at the local, allopoietic level, as a means to make global financial capitalism's autopoietic identity present within local space and histories, a prosopopoeial process. A second implication, then, is that far from representing a natural order that is self-producing and tending towards material self-completion, or auto-finality, the survival of autopoietic capitalism is predicated on its continuous accommodation and production in local spaces, histories, worlds and identities, an onomatopoeial process. A third implication is that identities and worlds must continuously re-arrange themselves, thereby re-codifying ontological, political and social dimensions of inclusion and exclusion for the sake of existing 'together-with-time-everywhere-just-now'.

Therefore, from a political and practical perspective, thinking the poietic structuring of worlds and identities in the situation of contemporary global modernity provides us with a new framework to consider how boundaries, borders, inclusion and exclusion locally function. In this regard, the identity of poietic subjects, their communities, and ways of life are continuously in a process of becoming-other. Identity and world are uprooted from traditional, landed tied to space and time, and re-ordered according to the global demands of autopoietic capitalism, whose organizational processes must be structurally accommodated to produce an experience of everyone and everything existing 'together-with-time, everywhere, just-now' for the sake of generating profit from profit itself. In this way a singular mode of dwelling is produced and instantiated which comes to privilege the economic application rather than existential and communal implication of individuals and persons in their world.

While I have elucidated a new framework of poietic structuring to understand the co-arising of world and identity in the situation of contemporary global modernity, its presentation necessarily remains incomplete. As such, I will now outline possible objections to my project. While these objections highlight the shortcomings of my current project, it is my belief that they do not present unresolvable problems for its framework.

Rather, these objections provide us with future avenues for research, and underscore the continuing possibilities within which our understanding of the co-arising of world and identity in the situation of contemporary global modernity can be expanded.

Owing to the predominantly transcendental nature of my presentation I have outlined what could be referred to as the macro-processes of the poietic structuring of worlds and identities. The foregoing presentation, then, could be objected to, first, on the grounds of what Maurice Merleau-Ponty describes as *la pensée de survol* or 'high-altitude thinking', a mode of analysis resulting from the position of an 'observing-subject' rather than an embodied, limited subjectivity.[213] In this sense, a philosophical mode of inquiry has come to eclipse more immediate political categories and concerns. The danger of this operation is that in trying to understand identity, world, politics, and ontology as a poietic structuring, I have simply repeated the violence of subjecting these experiences to the universalizing demands of autopoietic capitalism. Indeed, while emphasizing the interplay between the global level of autopoietic capitalism and the local, allopoietic levels of nations and states, and to a lesser degree, communities and individuals, a second objection arrives that I have necessarily elided discussions of other recursive levels and formations, such as gender, race, or even a detailed exploration of class outside of my discussion of migrant labourers in China. While outside the scope of my current thesis, a consideration of how racial, gendered, and class formations come to inform one's experience of their-selves and their worlds is a crucial avenue for thinking history, becoming, borders and boundaries beyond their homogenizing national dimensions.

A rethinking of allopoietic world creation from these perspectives would allow us to empirically incorporate a thinking of structural dimensions of power, alongside environmental potential for allopoietic worlds to create themselves otherwise than according to an accommodation of global, autopoietic capitalism. I would claim the groundwork for this future work is already contained in my discussions of the prosopopoeial and onomatopoeial processes of allopoietic world creation, insofar as what

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[213] I owe this point to Rachel Bath.

is at stake are concerns of spatial embodiment and onto-political naturalization. By expanding my discussions of poietic embodiment to other forms of embodied subjectivity, I would be able to resolve the transcendental obfuscation of eminently political issues.

This brings us to our final objection, namely, the minimization of resistance and its lack of theoretical exploration. This may appear especially troubling when thought through my statements regarding resistance in my third chapter. There, I claimed that the resistance of nail-house protests must not be moralized. My point was not to dismiss their efforts, nor to argue that their attachment to their homes and histories could be seen as a nostalgic lamentation for something already lost. Rather, I claimed that moralizing nail-house protests itself comes to form a universalizing act that seeks in particular events a totalizing formula that could simply be applied to and repeated in future situations. Thus, future work will have to seriously implicate resistance within the poietic structuring of worlds if we are to avoid a theorization of world and identity in which poietic subjects are completely determined by their allopoietic world formations. This means, in my view, elaborating a politics of sincerity. From the Latin root, *sinceritatem*, sincerity in the situation of contemporary global modernity would mean the implication of wholeness rather than authenticity, from the Greek *autos* and *hentes*, or a being whose identity is based on *self-doing*. Insofar as the self is always in a process of becoming-other, and the fact that worlds and identity co-arise with one another, a politics of sincerity, to recall Maturana and Varela's statement, "compels us to see that the world will be different only if we live differently."[214] And in this sense, living differently means replacing the structural *autos* of poietic subjects, with a new organizational *allos*, a new organization of living together.

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[214]Maturana and Varela, *Tree of Knowledge*, 245.

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# Appendix A: Images of Nail-House Protests[215]

**Figure 1:**



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[215] Images from Alan Taylor, "And Then There was One," *The Atlantic* (April 14th, 2015): https://www.theatlantic.com/photo/2015/04/and-then-there-was-one/390501/

**Figure 2:**



**Figure 3:**

# Curriculum Vitae

**Name:**           Thomas Szwedska

**Post-secondary**    Concordia University
**Education and**      Montreal, Quebec, Canada
**Degrees:**           2009-2014 B.A. History and Western Civilization and Culture.

                        Western University
                        London, Ontario, Canada
                        2015-2017 M.A.

                        Duquesne University
                        Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, United States of America
                        Fall 2017 Ph.D.

**Honours and**      Ontario Graduate Scholarship (Master's)
**Awards:**           2016-2017

                        Western Graduate Research Scholarship Award of Excellence
                        2016-2017

                        Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC)
                        Master's Scholarship
                        2015-2016

                        Western Graduate Research Scholarship Award of Excellence
                        2015-2016

                        Concordia University Liberal Arts College Entrance Scholarship
                        (Renewed)
                        2010-2011

                        Concordia University Liberal Arts College Entrance Scholarship
                        2009-2010

**Related Work**    Research Assistant
**Experience:**     Western University
                        2017

                        Conference Moderator
                        *New Italian Thought*
                        King's University College
                        2017

Interview Editor
*Chiasma: A Site for Thought*, Volume 4
2016-2017

Research Assistant
Western University
2016

**Publications:**

 "Warming the Algorithm and Possibilities for the Future: An Interview with Franco 'Bifo' Berardi" by Dillon Douglas and Thomas Szwedska. *Chiasma: A Site for Thought* 4 (forthcoming).

Szwedska, Thomas. "'Everybody has their own Dream': Nail houses and Resistance to the Landscape of Globalization in Contemporary China in *e-topia: [Intersections | Cross-Sections 2016] Re: Turns* (2017): http://etopia.journals.yorku.ca/index.php/etopia/article/view/36771

--------------------. "The Burden and Bliss of Survival: Restoring Anna Akhmatova's Portrait as Poet, Prophet and Muse" *historiae*, Concordia Undergraduate Journal of History, Volume XII, (2014): 107-124

--------------------. "Bridging the Boundaries of Sino-European Dialogue: A (Re)Evaluation of Yan Fu's Translation of Mill's *On Liberty* in Benjamin Schwartz's *In Search of Wealth and Power: Yen Fu and the West*" *The Mirror: University of Western Ontario Undergraduate Journal of History*, Volume XXX (2013): 341-357

--------------------. "The Road to Self Examination: Lu Xun's Call for the Transvaluation of Chinese Culture in *The True Story of Ah Q*" *historiae: Concordia Undergraduate Journal of History*, Volume XI (2013)

**Presentations:**

"Capitalism and Schizophrenia as 'Becoming-critique': Miraculation and Lines of Flight"
10th Deleuze Studies Conference, Toronto, Ontario (June 2017)

Invited lecture on Jacques Derrida's "Structure, Sign and Play" for PHIL2206X—
Modern and Postmodern Philosophy, King's University College (March 2017)

Invited speaker at Liberal Arts College, Concordia University "Graduate School
Preparation and Funding Applications Workshop"; Contributed to information
handout, (May 2016)

"'Everyone has their own dream': Nail-Houses and Resistance to the Landscape of
Globalization in Contemporary China." Intersections Cross-sections Graduate
Conference: Re:turns, York and Ryerson Universities Joint Program for
Communications and Media (March 2016)

Invited speaker at Liberal Arts College, Concordia University "Graduate School
Preparation and Funding Applications Workshop" (May 2015)