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Survival, or, the War Logic of Global Capitalism

Perhaps the logic of global capitalism is no longer cultural but has evolved into a logic of war. As Fredric Jameson and David Harvey, among many others, taught us, financial capitalism unfolded in the second half of the twentieth century based on a logic of difference that produced cultural and spatial identities throughout the globe. Capital itself functions according to a differential logic by which it expands as a multiplicity of phenomena that conceal the internal driving force of accumulation. In postmodernity, however, this logic became particularly tangible as localities, cities, nations and all types of spaces and communities were forced to develop distinctive qualities that attracted the investments and flows of global capital. Postmodern culture was thus fully subsumed in the production and marketing of difference. As Jameson wrote, we had "a prodigious expansion of culture throughout the social realm, to the point at which everything in our social life—from economic value and state power to practices and to the very structure of the psyche itself—can be said to have become 'cultural' in some original and yet untheorized sense" (Jameson 1991, 48).

While this process is still operative today, a different aspect seems to play the dominant role. This aspect is the war logic of globalization. Globalization appeared in the 1990s as the consolidation of a single world market, the establishment of post-Cold War peace, the successful union of capitalism and democracy, and the technological development that would make possible the interconnectedness of the globe. But in the 2000s, and especially after 9/11, globalization has shown a darker side: multiple forms of state and transnational violence have not proven exceptional moments of conflict, but the normal functioning of the system. Violence does not interrupt the smooth course of globalization; on the contrary, the global world needs to be in a constant state of emergency in order to function in an effective and profitable way.

Many theorists have described the unprecedented nature of this new state of war. For Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, globalization has turned war into a "*permanent social relation*" and has effaced the traditional distinction between politics and warfare (Hardt and Negri 2004, 12). Hardt and Negri emphasize three characteristics of the global state of war: the unlimited extension of conflict, both spatially and temporally; the intermingling of domestic and international politics; and the diffusion of the Schmittian distinction between friend and enemy (14-5). A certain ambiguity, however, traverses their narrative. On the one hand, they locate the origin of global war in the shift from modern warfare to biopolitical warfare, that is, in the emergence of

twentieth century biopolitical control of populations and bodies through state apparatuses. For Hardt and Negri, the technologization of death that culminated in Auschwitz and Hiroshima represents the full capture of social life by biopolitical control and destruction. On the other hand, they present a historical difference between twentieth-century wars and global war when they observe that the latter, starting with George Bush's 1991 Persian Gulf War, constitutes a "project to create a 'new world order'"(24). In this respect, a fundamental difference separates the two historical phases, and the complete destructiveness of total war has been supplemented by a certain constructive impulse of global war. Global war is constructive to the extent that it permanently redefines the spaces of globalization and rearranges the distribution of sovereign power.[1]

In his analysis of Marxist reflections on violence, Étienne Balibar connects different forms of social and political warfare to the historical development of capitalism. For him, while the processes of primitive accumulation led to imperial colonization, and the necessity of an industrial reserve army has successively produced and eliminated excess populations, global violence is related to the stage of the real subsumption of labor under capital. Thus, the commodification of all forms of labor-power results in "a situation of endemic, anarchic or anomic violence (a 'molecular' civil war, Enzensberger would say), which capitalism tries to control by incorporating a multiplicity of apparatuses

of control and 'risk management' (in Robert Castels's phrase) into its social-policy toolkit" (Balibar 2009, 112). Endemic violence has the creative-destructive role of reproducing capital through the endless production and destruction of people and labor.

Carlo Galli draws up a different historical typology of war based on Schmittian spatio-political categories. He divides modern war in three phases. First, the classic wars between nation-states within the Westphalian legality of the *Jus Publicum Europaeum* correspond to what Clausewitz called "real absolute war" (Galli 2010, 142).[2] In this phase, wars were limited conflicts between national enemies, in which states controlled the monopoly on violence and mobilized their peoples to protect… their own peoples. However contradictory this might have seemed, war had a distinct rationale, namely the protection of the national body against other national enemies. Second, what Raymond Aron called the "total wars" of the twentieth century led to mass destruction in both social and individual spheres.[3] The rationale of war was no longer protection but irrational destruction. Galli observes that, despite their genocidal logic, total wars still produced a primary spatial difference between "friend" and "enemy," which resulted in the bipolarity of the Cold War. Without a proper national distribution of sovereignty, conflict was defined within the frame of tensions between the American and Russian superpowers.

In global war, in contrast, we no longer find a clear difference between the spaces of the friend and the spaces of the enemy. For Galli, global war involves no telos and no division between internal and external spaces. Global war is the inherent obverse of globalization, in which "every local point become[s] an immediate function of a single global Totality (the principle of 'glocality')" (155). Globalization is "at every point, *an immediate short-circuit* between local and global" (160), which generates a "contradiction without system" (163) and makes violence a boundless mode of being. The difference between this situation and total war is that the latter was based on total mobilization and "*the immediate militarization of society*," whereas global war entails "*the global socialization of violence*" (174).[4]

From Recognition to Survival

The transformation of violence into a social relation has destabilized a central paradigm for political and theoretical practices. Whereas under the cultural logic of late capitalism the recognition of all types of differences and the unearthing of heterodox, queer, marginal and subaltern subjectivities were the main driving forces of critical efforts, in the new conjuncture recognition is no longer the last horizon of cultural and social politics. Under the war logic of globalization, another regime has become dominant: the regime of survival.

Two determinations conflated in the task of cultural recognition. First, the cultural logic of capital established a market of identities that made possible the recognition of multiple subject positions that had been previously invisible or nonexistent. Second, the destruction of total war in the twentieth century made imperative that an ethical task of recognition worked against the disappearances, forgetting, and repression it caused everywhere. Recognition encompassed, on the one hand, ethical work against the effects of total war and, on the other, an opening to the possibilities offered by the new postmodern marketplace.[5]

I will now focus on three important aspects of the regime of survival. These aspects are the new antagonistic relation between life and death; the post-*katechontic* nature of survival; and the overcoming of the modern paradigms of convivance and biopolitics.

The contemporary regime of survival contends with a new reality of life and death. While in the last decades of the twentieth century cultural recognition attempted to give visibility to what total war had erased, an effort that could generate positive effects, like reparation or affirmation, or more aporetic ones, like the impossibility of bridging the gap between visibility and invisibility amidst the infinite dimensions of justice, survival copes instead with the fact that, within global war, life and death are two absolute conditions, with no possible bridge or dialogue between them. A different logic is in effect: whereas

between visibility and invisibility there was once a movement of approximation and potential conciliation, between life and death today there is absolute distance, with no room for possible negotiation or compromise. Death produced by total war resulted in cultural exclusion and social destruction. As psychoanalysis and trauma studies have shown, death once marked the beginning of endless chains of haunting specters and mourning acts.[6] Death under global war, in contrast, is as constituent as life. It is as destructive as it is constructive. It is not hidden but fully apparent and exposed.

The logic of recognition established a relation of otherness toward death. In *The Inoperative Community*, Jean-Luc Nancy analyzes the (non-)relation by which subjects and communities reveal themselves through death. To the extent that death cannot be sublated as an operative element of communities (such as culture, nation, blood, soil, family, humanity, etc.), communities are the phantasmatic result of their own internal inoperativity in relation to death. In Nancy's words, "[c]ommunity is calibrated on death as on that of which it is precisely impossible to *make a work*" (Nancy 1991, 15). Thus, death both constitutes and deconstitutes the internal otherness of the subject and the community.

Nancy's theorization of the inoperative community opposes the communitarian logic of total wars. He explicitly refers to the logic of Nazism as the most extreme example of the attempt to exterminate the internal death of

the community (12). This logic contained a central contradiction: that the ultimate rationale of total war was to eliminate death itself as the internal other that makes the community inoperative. Total war, in other words, projected this inherent otherness onto a concrete collective (the Jews but also subsequent components such as the sick, the homosexuals, the gypsies, etc.) and proceeded to exterminate them to save the community from itself. Nancy's effort consisted in recognizing this "destructive" inoperativity so as to dismantle the really destructive, or genocidal, logic of total war.

Under the regime of survival, the relation of individuals and communities to death does not follow a structure of otherness but of absolute antagonism. When war is both destructive and constructive, life and death are indistinguishable and yet fully separated. Death is a transcendental and also banal event, overexposed and yet overlooked, real and virtual at the same time. Death has no function in the structuring of social life other than being productive elimination. Death is ultimately all that happens and is the complete absence of eventness. Survival is therefore the task of escaping death and establishing no connection to it. To establish a connection with it would imply the automatic destruction of the connection, and of the living being.

But we should not understand the new conjuncture of global as a return to a pre-political stage where *homo homini lupus est*. Global war is not the war of every man against every man, in which, as in Hobbes's famous phrase, there is

"continual fear and danger of violent death, and [where] the life of man [is] solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short" (Hobbes 1994, Ch. XIII, para. 9). In Hobbes's narrative, the natural war of all against all constitutes the incentive to form common powers to which humans transfer their individual rights for the protection of their lives. The contractual basis of the political, therefore, pursues "the security of a man's person, in his life and in the means of so preserving life as not to be weary of it" (XIV, 8).

Contemporary survival is not a natural state previous to the establishment of sovereign power. In fact, we may define it as the exact opposite, that is, as the post-political condition that results from the crumbling of the modern form of sovereign protection or, in other words, from the end of the state's monopoly on violence. It is well-known that state apparatuses are no longer the exclusive supplier of protection, as the privatization of security forces, the externalization of social services, or the professionalization of armies have transferred public services to a variety of civil agencies that go from private militias of the Blackwater-type to NGOs. But this transference is only the most visible aspect of the dissolution of the state system of protection of the life of its subjects. In our global conjuncture, the absence of an indisputable sovereign power that can contain antagonistic violence and limit the spaces of life and death produces a sense of permanent threat and an apocalyptic structure of feeling. Global war entails the end of Schmitt's *katechon*, that is, the demise of

"the power that prevents the long-overdue apocalyptic end of times from already happening now" (qtd. in Hell 2009, 283).[7]

In this situation, survival is an unregulated struggle to live on, with no form of governmentality that directs it and no *katechontic* principle that controls it. This struggle, again, may be irrational, but is also economically productive and politically constituent. Against the charge of irrationality, one often encounters the idea that the so-called "survival of the fittest" encapsulates the governmentality of our times. The premise is that we inhabit a sort of capitalist jungle in which only the strong survive and where, as Guns'n'Roses used to sing, "ya learn to live like an animal in the jungle where we play" (Guns'n'Roses 1987). Yet the problem with this idelogeme is not so much that it justifies the colossal inequalities produced by economic competition, but rather that it applies the rational template of the law of the stronger on a global reality in which the rationalities of modernity have imploded. In this respect, the "survival of the fittest" is a remnant of modernity that tries to make sense of a reality in which neither the nineteenth-century rationalities of progress, the enlightenment, or the defense of national interests, nor the twentieth-century anti-rationalities of total destruction and genocide, can organize the temporality of the period.

Thus, the logic of survival that we are theorizing here does not refer to the post-eventalcondition of those who come out alive from a war or those who

win in an economic battle. Rather, it defines an ongoing and productive life conditioned by the presence of immediate catastrophe. It is an endless state of war and peace with no *katechontic* borders separating the two spaces. Survival takes place not in the pre-political war of all against all, but in a fully political war against war, a war against itself, a war that is both catastrophic and constructive.

In this context, political practices are no longer oriented toward the modern question of convivance and living together, but, as French anthropologist Marc Abélès writes, they result from what he calls "the interiorization of the survival problem" (Abélès 2010, xv). For Abélès, the reflections and practices that go from Hobbes to Keynes, from the construction of the Leviathan to the implementation of the welfare state, aimed at finding the best possible political form for the organization of the living together of human beings. Within globalization, in contrast, "the political field finds itself overrun by a gnawing interrogation concerning the uncertainty and threats that the future possesses" (15).

Abélès points at major aspects of what he calls "the politics of survival." He argues that citizens have interiorized the distressing fact that "they will never again be 'sheltered' from the threats of distant places" (44). Everybody has understood that we live in a society of risk, where the state is no longer a firm "power of assistance" or "an *insurance* concerning the future" (103). He

mentions the European Union as a revealing example of a postnational entity oriented toward a future with no clear and definite goals, an entity that exemplifies the situation of all nation-states in the global world. Finally, Abélès also observes that the temporality of survival is not that of the "afterwards" of "those who have overcome the gravest peril;" instead, it corresponds to a forward-looking fear caused by the "uncertainty of a possibly futureless tomorrow" (104).

Abélès explains the transition from modern convivance to postmodern survival in terms of biopolitics, and he defines "survival" the "biopolitical dimension" (16) of neoliberal governmentality. But in this step we can detect the inadequacy of the Foucauldian paradigm to understand the present of global war.

Foucault defines the biopolitical regulation of life as the essence of modern power or, more precisely, biopower. The imperative of the biopolitical state is "to 'make' live and 'let' die" (Foucault 2003, 241), that is, to regulate life and pursue the disciplining and subsequent purification of the social body for the extraction of surplus labor. It is true that, in Foucault, biopolitics do not lead to a positive organization of convivance but rather to a system of terror of which the Nazi state is "the paroxysmal development" (259). Yet biopolitics do not engage in the governance of future uncertainty like the global politics of survival. The biopolitical state of terror maintains the horizon of convivance to

the extent that it pursues the purification of the community and the species. Within biopolitics, as Foucault writes, "the death of the other, the death of the bad race, of the inferior race (or the degenerate, or the abnormal) is something that will make life in general healthier: healthier and purer" (255). Despite its aberrant and contradictory content, this governmental premise still functions within the modern coordinates of social convivance.

To put it in other terms, if we assume that Nazism constitutes the extreme example of biopolitical destruction but also the beginning of a new paradigm of survival, then we must also assume that, as Abélès implies, there is a direct political link between the Holocaust conceived as a humanitarian problem and the multiple humanitarian crises (related to ethnic cleansing, climate change, migration, war, terrorism, etc.) that we experience in the global world. Indeed, for Abélès, survival and humanitarianism emerge at the moment when power adopts the right "to determine who should and who should not inhabit the world" (147), which, as is known, is how Hannah Arendt describes the rationale of the Nazi banal evil. Therefore, for Abélès, the political structure of survival conceives all global conflicts as humanitarian crises and justifies all political action through humanitarian ends.

But, again, the genocidal logic of the biopolitical state was not oriented toward the administration of future uncertainty. Systematic massacring did not pursue the control of future threats, but continued to organize convivance by

means of a radical extirpation of the perverted and inoperative elements of the population. For this reason, if the contemporary regime of survival is not about organizing communal living-together, then it cannot be biopolitical. For better or worse, biopower is not the primary catalyzer of the new world order.[8]

Survival as Intervention

We have so far examined the logic of survival in rather negative terms. The three aspects regarding the antagonism between life and death, the post-*katechontic* condition and the overcoming of biopolitics, describe what is no longer valid but not what is new in the new conjuncture. Now we must focus on the productive energies of the regime of survival and change the gloomy tone of our account for a more joyful register.

Survival involves continuous interventions. The interiorization of survival by individuals, which is a way of inserting the work of the state into one's subjectivity (an insertion that, again, is not biopolitical but rather post-*katechontic*), compels everyone to play a protective but also entrepreneurial role in the social field. In this respect, survival takes multiple forms of intervention. It may consist in the direct attack on other positions that are not necessarily dominant or oppressive, but that are perceived as threats in a given moment. It may be the effort to protect an inherited body of knowledge against external contamination or internal dissent. It can operate as preemptive manhunt that

neutralizes future conflicts. It can develop guerrilla tactics, with hide-and-seek movements and specific targets. It can consist of a mafia politics based on friendship and alliances of common interests. It can take the shape of a covert operation in the sphere of infowar and cyberwar. It can build on ideological interpellation and mystification. It can be firmly active or it can be passive-aggressive. It can be violent or non-violent, physical or symbolic, melodramatic or unspectacular, real or virtual, or a combination of both, or a synthesis of all of the above.

This brief list of forms is indicative of one central aspect: the neutral ideology of the work of survival. Survival is neither progressive nor reactionary; it is indeterminate and generic. It is a standard principle imposed on all political and critical interventions, and yet it does not make interventions indifferent to the world. On the contrary, the work of survival transforms all social practices into interventionist practices. Each individual and collective action becomes effectively militant and activist.

In the first stage of globalization, during the euphoric years of postmodernism, Reagan, Thatcher, and Fukuyama's "end of history," an opposition traversed the space for cultural and theoretical practice: the opposition between identity politics and subaltern critique. The recognition of different subjective positions and new identities constituted the dominant horizon of critical and political interventions. In a relation of

inclusion/exclusion vis-à-vis this process of recognition, subalternism

questioned the hegemonic articulations required to play the game of

multiculturalism and identity politics. Subalternism aimed to give justice to the

residues that could not be incorporated into this game, and it practiced an

aporetic exercise in recognizing what could not be recognized. Multiculturalism

and subalternism were the terms of a suprastructural discussion built on two

historical changes: the end of total war and the transformation of the nation

state into the corporate state. Specifically, these transformations involved the

replacement of national cultures by multicultural diversity, and offered the

possibility of imagining an end to war alongside utopian and alternative spaces

beyond the state.

In our second, post-9/11 stage of globalization, in which the euphoria of

postmodernity has been replaced by the permanent state of emergency of

global war,

the opening process of cultural recognition has turned into the activist

intervention for the common survival. This shift should not be interpreted as a

clear-cut break, but as a shift of valences or as an Althusserian tendential law.

But a crucial difference lies between recognition and survival. While

recognition involved a variety of actions oriented toward making the invisible

visible, speaking truth to power, bearing witness to the ashes of total

destruction and writing the unnameable names of the subaltern, the

interventions of survival pursue their own effacement in a realm of full visibility and control.

In fact, one is tempted to say that survival is the opposite of recognition. Instead of bearing witness to the erased traces, the challenge now is to erase the traces that one leaves when moving through the "modulations" of the society of control.[9] Contemporary interventions do not create evental changes; on the contrary, they produce changes without events, consequences without programs, itineraries without trails. The question is no longer whether the subaltern can speak, because everybody can speak. In fact, everybody must speak in order to survive. One must speak all the time in order to locate oneself in the field of war. One must speak so that she is not automatically seen as a threat and a target.

Thus, the paradox is that one must intervene in the field of war and yet one must also pass unnoticed. To put it in other terms, to survive is to accomplish a mission and at the same time remain peacefully static. To survive is to avoid being caught on camera in a permanently televised world. To survive is to delete the undeletable cookies of the computer; to avoid being shot when one crosses the street; to be somewhere else when a terrorist attack occurs; to withdraw the money before the investment fails; to be safe when a natural disaster wipes everything out. Contemporary *Dasein* is not being-there, but being-somewhere-else when something takes place.

A further aspect of this paradoxical condition is that the reality of global war in which interventions take place is ultimately eventless. Even if the media constantly focus on the horrifying components of the war (from Bin Laden to Afghanistan, from Palestine to Ciudad Juárez, from Syria to Guantánamo), the perpetual war of globalization is characterized by the eerie calm of everyday life. Anxiety and fear are prevalent structures of feeling, but traumatic and violent events are surprisingly absent in global war. Or, more precisely, violence is experienced through the mediation of the media and so it always seems to hit other people. As Judith Butler observes, today violence seems to affect others even when it affects oneself: "Television coverage of war positions citizens as visual consumers of violent conflict that happens elsewhere … enforcing a sense of infinite distance from zones of war even for those who live in the midst of violence" (Butler 2010, xv). Visual mediatization makes you feel safe, it reassures you that you are watching violence, not living it. At the same time, it reproduces the sense of permanent threat: you sense that you'd better be careful or next time you will be on TV too. In the end, the function of media violence is to inculcate the imperative of survival among the population.[10]

The mediatization of war not only generates distance toward reality, but it also reveals and conceals the fact that war is the normal state of things. It is true that global war manifests itself through multiple forms that involve the technologies of surveillance, the digitalization of control, the disasters of the

"shock doctrine" of capitalism, and all the incredible types of violence that we watch on TV and the Internet every day.[11] But global war is less an existential or phenomenological experience than a spectral structure that organizes social life. Global war, in other words, is a condition that determines individual and collective destinies without materializing in a clear and visible way. Of course, I do not mean to deny that conflict and violence are very tangible phenomena for many peoples in the world. Neither do I want to repeat the worn-out description of postmodern war as a "virtual spectacle," an approach that runs the risk of ignoring the actual realities of suffering. And it is not a matter either of assuming a transhistorical concept of violence or trying to measure the level of cruelty of global war in comparison with previous situations, as if one could compare, say, the Holocaust with today's Mexican narco-wars. Rather, the crucial point is to understand that war unfolds more as a chronic condition of fear and as a state of exception than as real battle and combat. Under global war people continue to lead their normal lives precisely because war permeates the very fabric of social life.[12]

One short story by Catalan writer Quim Monzó, "Durant la guerra" 'During the War,' is a perfect portrait of the practice of everyday life under global war. In it, a group of citizens become aware that a war has begun despite the fact that no government has officially declared it and no military action has taken place. The irrefutable sign that indicates the beginning of the war is that

everybody acts as if nothing happened, and they keep a "calma (aparentment apparent)" '(ostensibly ostensible) calm' (Monzó 1999, 619; Bush 2011, 113). It seems that the conflict resulted from the "enfrontament entre dues faccions (no declaradament antagòniques) de l'exèrcit" 'a confrontation between two factions (that weren't openly antagonistic) within the army' (620; 114). But none of the factions are interested in publicizing the fight: the winning side wants a discreet victory, and the victims do not want to have to admit defeat.

Symptomatically, radio and TV stations do not inform audiences about the conflict. They continue to program classical music, an Elvis Presley movie, a soap opera in which one of the leading characters reveals that he is gay, and the reports of a workers' demonstration and of the seven victims of a rugby match in which fans of the two teams began to fight. This situation of tension and misinformation lasts for years and years, until one day one of the citizens announces that the war finished that afternoon "tan inopinadament com havia començat" 'as unexpectedly as it had begun' (627; 119). Some citizens celebrate the event, but others become even more worried. They know that wars are hard, but that post-wars are even harder, and the peace treaty that had just been signed "en marcava inapel·lablement l'inici" 'was an ineluctable indicator that the post-war period had started' (627; 119).

Is this state of permanent fear but of ostensibly ostensible calm not our ordinary experience of global war? Even though we are constantly exposed to

all types of disasters and violent conflicts as they take place in the world, the overexposure also dissolves the traumatic reality of war, so that we are condemned to act as if nothing happened. To put it bluntly, the total mobilization of total war has been replaced by the apparent futility of global war. Global war is the dark obverse of globalization, but global peace is the even darker side of global war.

From the Subaltern Other to Internal Singularity

Three pressing questions result from the shift from recognition to survival: Is there something we can do in this futile global war other than trying to survive? Is there any available political form of disruption that does not reproduce the logic of war? If the subaltern was the locus of defiance to the cultural logic of late capitalism, how must we conceive spaces of nonconformity and acts of disobedience under the war logic of global capitalism?

In this new conjuncture, the (non-)work of the subaltern is replaced by the emergence of local singularities that produce some type of short-circuit in the immanence of global war. Singularities establish a common field that is inherent to the world of war and yet disrupts this immanence of the glocal. Disruption should not be interpreted as interruption or delinking, let alone denunciation or resistance. Rather, singular short-circuits or, to use Badiou's

terms, the forcing or torsion of truths, present new political constituencies. They create events that are open and unique, generic and unreproducible, transparent and enigmatic. In a certain way, these events just emerge, like a mushroom in the forest or a cactus in the middle of the desert.

Rather than Badiou's conceptualization of evental sites, however, it is Althusser's earlier notion of aleatory events that provides a theory more attuned to the singularities that emerge in the "eventless" global war. As is known, Althusser analyzed the way that Marxism dismantled the Hegelian inscription of all particulars in a universal explanatory structure. The Marxist rewriting of historical dialectics transformed particular situations into singular and overdetermined conjunctures that were not the expression of a spiritual principle but the complex unity of structures and their effects. For Althusser, singularities are not the product of teleological universal laws like Hegel's concrete universals, but aleatory events whose causes are immanent to their effects. Althusser uses two main terms to describe the (non-)causes of singularities. Depending on whether he wants to emphasize the structural causality in which they are inscribed or whether he wants to stress the contingency of their moment of appearance, singular events are alternatively interpreted as a dislocation or "*décalage*" (Althusser 2006b, 104) or as an "irruption" or "*surgissement*" (1996, 61).[13]

Event, intervention and singularity have become dominant notions in thinking a non-teleological logic of history. One particular aspect has been decisive: the openness of the intervention or, in other words, the emptiness of the event. Against the teleological template of Hegelianism and of previous, "dogmatic" versions of Marxism for which the content of historical events was determined by the proletarian road to socialism, Althusser put forward what he termed "*the void essential to any aleatory encounter*" (2006a, 202), that is, the unpredictability and openness of singular events and political interventions.[14]

And yet within post-Althusserianism other general contents and encoded premises have determined the meaning of interventions and events. These premises are in turn connected to the logic of recognition of postmodernity. Let us briefly examine this connection in the rewriting of singular events by three prominent post-Althusserians: Laclau, Rancière, and Badiou.

Laclau argues that the articulation of social heterogeneity needs a singular element that can act as an empty signifier and establish a chain of equivalences between the diverse political demands in a given conjuncture: "This is why an equivalential chain *has* to be expressed through the cathexis of a *singular* element: because we are dealing not with a conceptual operation of *finding* an abstract common feature underlying all social grievances, but with a performative operation constituting the chain as such" (Laclau 2005, 97). Here singularities are empty elements that are immanent to the social field, and

therefore the content of political interventions cannot be programmed or predetermined.

And yet Laclau predetermines not the content but the form of the political by conceiving politics as the articulation of a demand and as the expression of a social grievance. In this respect, his formal conception of political singularities is entwined in a logic of recognition, as it is assumed that politics are the struggle to articulate and recognize demands. Whether actual claims end up being satisfied or not does not matter as much as the fact that the political itself adopts the frame of the claim and the demand. Politics, in other words, have more to do with the expression and recognition of existing grievances than with anti-systemic torsions and future transformations.

Similarly, for Rancière (1999), singularities emerge in the universal space of the part of the no-part. He conceives political interventions as interruptions of the police order by way of a political demand of the excluded. The part of those who have no part embodies the egalitarian logic that calls for the inclusion of the excluded into the police order, even though this eventual inclusion will prompt the collapse of the established order. Thus, Rancière bases his conception of political events on an egalitarian logic that also implicates a structure of demand. The antinomy between the police order and the part of the no-part can also be related to the historical moment of multicultural inclusion and subaltern exclusion. After all, the part of the no-

part, like the aporetic subaltern, are ethical rather than political figures. They disrupt an unjust order in the name of justice; they promise forms of liberation in the name of equality, hospitality, or recognition. These ethical premises seem to overdetermine their political content.

Badiou disentangles singularities from both an egalitarian logic and a structure of demand. For him, singularities generate real change by bringing into being the inexistent in a given situation. In *Logics of Worlds*, Badiou distinguishes between "weak" and "strong" singularities to specify that, while a weak singularity has non-maximal consequences over the situation, a strong singularity can "be recognized by the fact that its consequences in the world is to make exist within it the proper inexistent of the object-site" (Badiou 2009, 377). The "inexistent" is not exactly Badiou's equivalent term for the part of the no-part, but it intersects with Rancière's concept to the extent that it is also that excluded element that, when it emerges, transforms the situation in a radical way.[15]

Badiou underlines the consequences of evental singularities. For him, the inexistent is neither immanent to the situation (as it is not one of its existing elements), nor is it transcendental to it (as it does not follow an abstract logic, such as the logic of equality). Instead, the inexistent only comes into being as a specific intervention in a concrete situation. However, even though Badiou lays the emphasis on the transformative consequences of events rather than on the

naming of the excluded part, his thinking of singularity continues to follow the model of inclusion and exclusion. While the inexistent is not an unnameable moment or a structural impasse but an occasion of transformation and change, Badiou assumes the premise of the logic of recognition that stipulates that the excluded becomes included and that the outside traverses the inside, in this case through the appearance of being and event.

But the basis or argument of "exclusion" is not as useful as it was under the cultural logic of late capitalism. One of the terrifying effects of global war is precisely that it does not exclude anyone. Within this structure of war, there is no part of the no part anymore and we are all fundamentally equal. Naturally, this does not mean that inequality and domination are not omnipresent. The point is rather that the main antagonism that traverses and constitutes the political no longer involves a closed order versus the excluded or inexistent part. It now seems to correspond to a different opposition: the antagonism between war and freedom.

Thus, in a situation in which exclusion itself has been excluded, singularities constitute acts of pure freedom not linked to a position of structural barring. They do not result from putting forward an egalitarian, inclusionary logic but from being the product of a desire for freedom. The desire for freedom manifests itself as escape from a state of oppression. As an original and generative desire for liberation, freedom always entails breaking away from a

dominant situation or a subjugating power. After all, the founding of freedom in the Greek polis was not only the result of an original, self-generating desire, but also of the victory against despotic Persia in the battle of Salamis. As Plato reminds us in *The Laws*, it was the fear of becoming slaves of the despotic laws of the Persians and of their Greek ancestors that gathered the Athenians to fight against the invaders and found the free polis (Plato 1988, 698b-699b). Given this linkage between freedom and fighting, the singular instances of liberation do not interrupt or oppose the order of global war; on the contrary, they fold up onto the same logic of conflict. Singularities of freedom do not cancel the state of war but have an immanent and yet dramatic relation to it.

Freedom, in other words, does not correspond to the dialectical counterpart of war, peace. Peace assumes that there is a difference between the spaces of the friend and the spaces of the enemy, so that the end of the war can represent, as Schmitt puts it, the "retreat [of the enemy] into his borders only" (Schmitt 1996, 36). The end of war is ultimately nothing other than this retreat. But given the vanishing of the friend/enemy distinction in global war, peace, let alone the utopia of perpetual peace, are uncertain and undefined.

For this reason, freedom cannot be celebrated as a pristine ethical notion like equality. The antagonism between war and freedom is muddled and paradoxical. Freedom is good and bad at the same time: the desire for liberation is noble, but the fight to achieve it is dangerous. To escape a system

of oppression is liberating, but it also leaves behind those who remain subjugated or it imposes change on those who do not want change. Freedom is a political creature, always involved in war operations, equally available to progressive and reactionary collectives. To mention a few current examples: the Occupy movement wants freedom from corporations, but the Tea Party also wants freedom from the corporate government; the Arab Spring wanted freedom for the people, but Islamic fundamentalists also want to free their countries from Western influence; the Catalans want freedom from Spain, but the Spanish government calls their desire for freedom a selfish act.

Singular acts of freedom inevitably generate acts of war and yet do not simply reproduce war. They take place both inside and outside war, in a field of immanent contiguity that simultaneously continues and negates conflict. They do not interrupt the system but they do not reproduce it either. They are not radical change but they are not war politics as usual. They are not made of only the desire of bodies, but they do not obey an abstract logic either. They are, of course, purely singular, and only materialize through concrete interventions and effective practices. They are as ineffable as they are irreducibly real. The movements of freedom that occur within global war are internal rearrangements of an established phase of the system. They are not the utopian seeds of a different future nor the transitional steps of an interregnum, but singular events in and against a situation of global eventlessness.

Capitalist War

In this situation, it is seemingly impossible to determine whether the intervention of a free singularity opposes the logic of the system or whether it reproduces it. And yet the planetary dimension of global capitalism and global war turn this Marxist dilemma into a pressing and inevitable one. How must we solve this dilemma, or even just pose it as a question, in our global conjuncture?

Galli observes that "the temporal vectors and spatial architectures of modern politics" are not capable of explaining globalization, which he defines as "*that ensemble of processes in which all the tensions of modernity explode*" (2010, 103). Galli locates Marxism among these outmoded political concepts, as it simply offers a "monocausal reading of globalization" (102).

Galli is right when he says that globalization has caused a general conceptual implosion and that reality can no longer be described with clear and distinct ideas. And it is true as well that Marxism's "great class war … is unrecognizable today" (175). Also evident, however, is that we have no other option but to continue using the concepts that we have inherited from classical and modern political philosophy to describe our present. The very idea of war, for instance, is equally problematic as an analytical category. War is apparently a self-evident notion and, in the context of the war on terror, seems to provide an accurate

description of the reality of the world. Then again, as Galli himself would accept, in a situation in which war has no limits and has become indistinguishable from society itself, the concept of war also loses its own explanatory meaning. Without the possibility of differentiating between friend and enemy and between an exceptional state of war and a normal state of peace, war cannot be an operative concept. Or, rather, war, as well as all concepts of political philosophy, can only be used "under erasure," that is, knowing that meaning is ultimately spectral and differed.

But Galli himself presents global war as the obverse of economic globalization, and he notices that, symptomatically, 9/11 has been most remembered not for the attack on the Pentagon (symbol of state power) but for the collapse of the Twin Towers in the "economic acropolis" of Wall Street (174). In fact, we can add that, after 2008, financial crisis has replaced the war on terror as the central thematic conflict of global war, and this shift has made the economic nature of the beast even more visible. In this respect, the immediacy between war, politics and capital is not a reason to dismiss Marxism as a reductive template but the opposite: Marxism provides a systematic set of concepts that explain the economic nature of the contradictions of our conjuncture. Rather than surrendering with a melancholic tone and a sense of defeat after the global implosion of ideas and languages, it seems more productive to continue the task of inventing new concepts by reworking those

passages of the past that help us illuminate and intervene in the present. The systemic logic of capitalism analyzed by the Marxist tradition continues to be indispensable in the understanding of global war as a form of appearance of the mode of production.

For this reason, the thinking of singular events cannot be disentangled from the thinking on the economic structure. While, as we have seen in Laclau, Rancière and Badiou, post-Althusserianism has tended to adopt the non-teleological logic of the event but has replaced the economic structural causality with other "structural" premises related to equality, inclusion/exclusion and recognition, the new logic of survival of the global capitalist war compels us to go back to Althusser's notion of event as both a contingent irruption and a structural dislocation. The tension between singularity and structure, between contingency and determination by the last economic instance, seems much more attuned to the new antagonism between acts of freedom and structures of war that traverses what Warren Montag has called "the global necro-economy" (Montag 2009, 138).

Althusser left no politics to replace the proletarian road to socialism. On the contrary, his lesson is that the content of the political can never be predetermined. Multiple singular political acts within global war pursue forms of survival that are a liberation and an escape from the constructive-destructive machine of war. They are not preprogramed progressive movements, but they

do aim to free individuals and collectives from the control of capital. To survive is to engage in open, empty, aleatory interventions that are also produced by, and directed against, the structural logic of capitalist war.

The articulation of a chain of equivalences between survival, singularity and freedom is a possible path for present transformative and combative politics. Jameson ends his analysis of the cultural logic of late capitalism with the motto, "We have to name the system" (1991, 418). After the shifting of valences from culture to war, perhaps a new slogan is needed: "We are at war with the system" is a possible option.

Notes

[1] Hardt and Negri's ambiguity may be indicative of the fact that the Foucauldian biopolitics from which they derive the notion of biopolitical war describes the total wars of the twentieth century but is not so useful to explain the nature of warfare within globalization. I will return to this point below.

[2] See also Clausewitz 1976.

[3] See also Aron 1954.

[4] Other terms that describe the new structure of productive violence are Warren Montag's "necro-economics" (Montag 2005 and 2009) and Robert P. Marzec's "militariality" (Marzec 2009). For an excellent analysis of recent works on war and capitalism, see Balakrishnan 2009.

[5] For studies on the logic of recognition, see, among others, Taylor et al. 1994; Fraser 1997; and Markell 2003.

[6] For studies on trauma and writing, see, among others, Caruth 1996; LaCapra 2001; and Felman and Laub 1992.

[7] For Schmitt's geneaology of *katechon*, see Schmitt 2006, 59-66.

[8] Given that biopolitics are no longer the explanatory horizon of the political field, the logic of survival does not correspond either to Agamben's notion of "bare life" referring to the capture of life by sovereign biopower. Similarly, the concentration camp, which for Agamben represents the

biopolitical space or "nomos" of the modern (Agamben 1998, 166-80), cannot exemplify the social project of destructive construction within global war.

[9] As is known, Deleuze defined control as a modulation: "controls are a *modulation*, like a self-deforming cast that will continuously change from one moment to the other, or like a sieve whose mesh will transmute from point to point" (Deleuze 1991, 4).

[10] For analyses of the relation between media and war, see Mitchell 2011; and Der Derian 2009.

[11] For a study of the shock doctrine of capitalism, see Klein 2007.

[12] In describing contemporary violence, Slavoj Žižek has distinguished between the subjective form (the epiphenomena of terrorism, crime, conflict, etc.), the symbolic form (the very imposition of a universe of meaning), and the objective form (the systemic violence of capitalism) (Žižek 2008, 1-2). While his analysis is very illuminating, my emphasis here is on the dominant political form or typology of war that adopts the inherent violence of the system and on the relationship of immanence between the two.

[13] Althusser develops his thinking of singular events in multiple texts, but see especially 2006b, 91-118 and 182-198; 1996, 57-64; "Contradiction and Overdetermination" in 2005a, 87-128; 2005b; and "The Underground Current of the Materialism of the Encounter" and the interviews with Fernanda

Navarro in 2006a, 163-207 and 251-89. For important reflections on the

encounter and dislocation/"*décalage*" of events without destiny, see Montag

2010 and 2013, 190-208.

[14] For an analysis of the Machiavellian geneaology of the emptiness of

Althusser's event, see Del Lucchese 2013.

[15] For a great analysis of Badiou's notion of singularity, see Bosteels 2011,

245-46.

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