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## On Rivera's 'Detroit Industry': community beyond knowledge

### **Abstract**

In this essay I will read one of the Mexican muralist Diego Rivera's (1886-1957) most important works, 'Detroit Industry' (1932-33, Detroit Institute of Arts [DIA], Detroit, Michigan, USA), as a work about the nature of community construction. 'Detroit Industry' depicts a car factory in Detroit in the early 1930s, the labour processes that are involved in the production of the car, and the community's labour that sustains and reproduces itself. Rivera is a communist straightforwardly depicting labour and alienation in the capitalist mode of production, and the problems that this presents for building a community. The Marxist critique of the bourgeois state is at the core of the problematic of community construction, though not the sole difficulty.

# On Rivera's 'Detroit Industry': community beyond knowledge

John McKay<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

In this essay I will read one of the Mexican muralist Diego Rivera's (1886–1957) most important works, 'Detroit Industry' (1932–33, Detroit Institute of Arts [DIA], Detroit, Michigan, USA), as a work about the nature of community construction. 'Detroit Industry' depicts a car factory in Detroit in the early 1930s, the labour processes that are involved in the production of the car, and the community's labour that sustains and reproduces itself. Rivera is a communist straightforwardly depicting labour and alienation in the capitalist mode of production, and the problems that this presents for building a community. The Marxist critique of the bourgeois state is at the core of the problematic of community construction, though not the sole difficulty.

The social imaginary of the bourgeois state creates a clear sense of belonging, cohesion and exclusion. As human knowers we are tied to the social, and as members of society we are bound to knowledge projects. At the core of this essay is a question about whether it is possible to contemplate a social-epistemological project that has openness and understanding as opposed to cohesion and exclusion as its primary organising principles. I read Rivera as offering a non-orthodox Marxist response to this problem. Ultimately, if we are to have a community whose limit is to be its opening (Derrida 1995) we must conceive of a different epistemology to make this possible. Hardt and Negri seem to touch on this possibility in *Empire* (2000), but their

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invocations of the ideas and ethos of a different epistemology that comes from Deleuze and Guattari falls into the traps of a classical Marxism in the end. It is in these latter thinkers that I find the possibility of a different epistemology and a commitment to different ways of being in the world that offer up a more hopeful solution.

A central part of understanding that different epistemology is through a spatial metaphor about how we should understand the relationship among knowing subjects, between these subjects and things in the world, and among things in the world. Deleuze and Guattari (1987) privilege network relations, webs, or what they call ‘rhizomes’, over orthodox hierarchical relations. I will expand below on what I see this as productive of, but one of the central suggestions of the spatial metaphor is a fundamental difference between contiguity and connection such that things unexpectedly link up across spatial divides — as, for example, do the rhizomatic connections in the root systems of grasses. This spatial metaphor contrasts strikingly with both the clear boundedness of the typical epistemological subject of the Enlightenment, epitomised by Descartes’ *cogito* (1954), as well as the standard conceptions of communities as being clearly bounded, as in standard social contract theory of any variety.

‘Detroit Industry’ in fact offers a representation of this different epistemology. It represents working bodies and the community they construct within a space that is divided by the limestone structure of the building. The mural cycle offers up connections across its different panels, and across any attempt to construct a linear narrative about the story told by it. The murals reach across not just the bounded spaces within which they exist, but beyond the bounds of the building that house them into the city and surrounding community. My reading is intended to contrast with Foucault’s reading of Velázquez’s ‘Las Meninas’ in the opening chapter of *The Order of Things* (1994). In that chapter Foucault reads ‘Las Meninas’ as depicting a perfectly bounded space within which occur subject–object relations. ‘Detroit Industry’ reaches out into the community and counters the divisive forces of the bourgeois state, of a bounded or static mode of social imaginary, and of the insistence of particular kinds of knowledge.

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In what follows there is a mixture of sections that are designed to set out in more detail the argument that I have just outlined, and other sections that are descriptive or narrative both of Rivera's murals and of the spaces beyond the confines of the gallery walls. These latter sections, while less obviously a part of the argument of the essay, are intended to participate in that argument. The mixing together of these different forms of writing is, to some extent, intended to imitate the general thrust of the argument, and thus enhance it.

### Main panels — labour at the Rouge

In the two main panels of the north and south walls we see the major stages in the production of cars at the Rouge. On the north wall are foundry processes and the manufacture of the engine. On the south wall the large body parts are stamped, welded together and painted. These come together along the assembly line as we see a stream of components coming together to join the chassis being lowered onto the assembly line in the foreground.

In both of these panels it would be easy to think that Rivera is anthropomorphising the machinery, but he has painted these machines just as they are. On the north wall two rows of machining equipment face each other, electric motors are the heads to boxy bodies with flexed arms driving the bits into the engine block. On the south wall a large stamping press at the right of the panel is Hercules at work. On the other hand, the overhead roller tracks on which parts are carried from one part of the plant to another have an exaggerated organicity, their sinuous lines the venous flow of the Rouge.

Despite the striking presence of machines it is people more than anything that occupy the space of the paintings. North wall — men straining to move engine blocks, recognisable figures from the plant and the gallery at the time, and Rivera's self-portrait hidden among the mould-makers, the green of glass. South wall — groups of workers in the foreground bump and grind body panels, they look away, down, or their faces are covered. In the centre of the panel we see the final assembly line moving away from us towards the vanishing point. We would expect

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the workers to lose detail and colour intensity as we move into the depths of the picture, but this happens much more rapidly on the south wall. Indeed all the persons on the south wall are less detailed and colourful than those on the north wall.<sup>2</sup> This fading of recognisability, colour, presence, conveys the following sense: as the manufacture of the automobile becomes more complete the human figures lose colour and detail, and become less complete. This is why the figures on the south wall either look away or lose colour almost immediately, before the fading of perspective calls for it. The specificity of their humanity is being poured into the automobiles; labour is immediately transformed into the materiality of the car.

### **Epistemology without an outside**

‘Detroit Industry’ represents, in a cycle of 27 panels, both the production of a 1932 V8 Ford, and the reproduction of the labour that builds it, that is, the reproduction of the people of the community of Detroit. Rivera takes this moment of automotive production as a point of origin for a discussion about the conditions of production of this community, an arbitrary origin for something whose origin is quite beyond our grasp, just as I read these murals as an insertion in a discussion about the nature of communities, and an evocation of some of the problematic that we find when we begin, as we must, in the middle. We must begin in the middle because while social contract theorists imagine a point of origin it is always mythic. We are always born into something, or come into consciousness, and find ourselves in the middle of it. We find ourselves in the middle of languages, communities, systems of knowledge and are faced with the impossibility of escape, epistemological or otherwise, and live the always already-ness of this experience as Derrida suggests. The murals figure this reality about the social by presenting an image of a factory, and its workers, building cars and a community. The spark in the cylinder of an internal combustion engine initiates the flow of energy that is the running of the engine. But this initial moment is dependent on many other conditions and any mechanic knows that the engine can only be understood holistically.

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But this always-alreadyness does not render impossible our imaginary escape, our taking a critical stance in the middle of where we find ourselves. One of the ways to do this is to imagine some limits to that lived experience, finding the edges so that we might peel them back and peer underneath. This is what social contract theorists do when they imagine that perfect limit in time, the beginning, and the spatial, or quasi-spatial edges to the community. And this too is what Marx does in his description of a necessarily phasic history with its temporal limits. In this second phase where we always find ourselves<sup>3</sup> he describes a world of communities in tension, the capitalists with their states continuing to divide the proletariat from their essential unity.

My reading of Rivera's mural cycle does not treat him as a classical Marxist and offer up an orthodox reading, but rather takes its cues from Marx's figure of the mole (see, for instance, the *Eighteenth Brumaire*), or Deleuze and Guattari's ideas in *A Thousand Plateaus* of rhizomes and of smooth and striated space.<sup>4</sup>

The mural itself is composed of 27 panels defined by the pre-existing limestone building. These panels offer Rivera an opportunity to conveniently divide the cycle into a narrative sequence and there is an obvious way in which the murals can be read this way. But at other moments Rivera blocks this very simple reading. The elements unexpectedly tie from one to the other like hypertext links, or indeed, like rhizomes. Linearity and arborescence as well as clear borders break down. This is a reality of Rivera's text that invites me all the more to read it as concretely inserted in its specific location, now more like a piece of the landscape than the sorts of mobile texts to which we are accustomed.

Despite its location in an elite institution its statements fold into a local history from the moment it becomes present. As the work of a Mexican communist financed by Edsel Ford and installed in the heart of an elite cultural institution in the US's pre-eminent industrial city at the time it is painted in the early 30s, 'Detroit Industry' is already in a complicated position of enunciation. Indeed, a subsequent mural by Rivera at Rockefeller Center was destroyed in no small part for its portrayal of Lenin. 'Detroit Industry' faced similar calls for its effacement after it had been unveiled, but it survived. However, the complications

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did not end for 'Detroit Industry' just because it escaped this fate. This Mexican muralist's painting portrays an American factory sitting on the waterfront facing Canada. In the texture of the painting and its use of space it describes communities beyond borders, communities beyond knowledge, not free from the forces of inclusion and exclusion which, in some sense, make communities possible, but more within a dynamic that sees the very possibility of human relationships as bound to the energies of human activity.

For Marx there is an intimate connection between the conditions under which persons work and the very possibility of creating community. The alienation of workers from (1) the product of their labours, (2) their work, (3) their 'species being', or their own nature, and (4) other human beings under capitalist conditions of production, undermines the creation of communities (Marx 1964: 110-115, also see note 16). Exchange value becomes the sole measure of value, ignoring real human needs. However, capitalism also works in tandem with fascism to create arbitrary community commitments that shield capitalists from wider class identification. Rivera represents both the alienation of workers as they pour their lives into the fabrication of a car, and he also represents the machines of war of the bourgeois state. On the other hand, in different ways, he represents the possibilities of creating connections that transcend and transect boundaries, connections that flow between the separate spaces he is given both imagistically and narratively. And because there is a narrative about the bourgeois fascist state, and also an imagistic transcending of, or reaching across, boundaries and arbitrary limits in the mural cycle, I read the murals as reaching out rhizomatically into Detroit. They reach into a Detroit that is emblematic of the forces of alienation pulling apart a community that might otherwise be constructed on real human needs and sympathies. Race and class divisions infect the city, flowing through its arteries into each corpuscle, each person, house and street, seeming to almost render impossible some greater imagined community of commonality, some Andersonian national project (Anderson 1991).

As I have noted my reading of 'Detroit Industry' should be seen in contrast to the introductory chapter of Foucault's *The Order of Things*



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which builds on a reading of Velázquez's 'Las Meninas' (1656 Prado, Madrid). Foucault finds in 'Las Meninas' a representation of 'classical representation' (Foucault 1994: 16) with a perfectly empty space occupying the zone between subject and object.<sup>5</sup> But classical representation is, for Foucault, what is current before a fundamental shift in the human sciences in the 19th century. As that century developed its sciences of administration, police and social control, the Benthamite panopticon (Bentham 1995) (paragon of an arborescent structure with its single focal point (trunk) and its branches<sup>6</sup>) comes to dominate representation, understanding and knowledge. Unlike either Foucault's model of classical representation, or his later story of the diffuse and invasive power of epistemes<sup>7</sup> insidiously and virus-like inserting themselves into the individual psyche and constituting a kind of internal police, I want to read 'Detroit Industry' as sending rhizomes into the space around it. Rather than circumscribing a theoretical space of possible knowledge, or suggesting a diagnosis for the illness of modernity, 'Detroit Industry' offers both a critique of the bourgeois state's dream of a national unity that divides humanity and a playful and joyous suggestion of human *possibility*. In 'Detroit Industry' the human beings pouring their labour into the production of an automobile and the multi-faceted story of the construction of not just an automobile but of forms of consciousness becomes a text ever present in the landscape even as the city underwent radical social change: an influx of African American workers, economic collapse, race riots and white flight. The Detroit in which this text is inserted, more than any other American city, becomes emblematic of the failure of the American project of a united community. But I want the Rivera murals to stand for a new way of thinking about representation and the constitution of communities in relation to frames or boundaries just as 'Las Meninas' stands for an earlier way of thinking about just those things.

In my reading of the murals the text of its panels reaches out to a mural on the city streets a couple of miles away where the death portrait of a black motorist, Malice Green, slain by police with a flashlight, stares from the wall of an abandoned building in front of which the murder took place. This rhizomatic reaching out into its home is part of what

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'Detroit Industry' offers as a questioning of the communal project of labour and nation. Surely places like Detroit must put the lie to the fantasy of a great national community, at least in the United States. Rivera's murals cut across the desire of the bourgeois state to clearly maintain the national territory, the nation-ness of territoriality. But neither I, nor the Rivera I am here conjuring, are orthodox Marxists who believe all states are bourgeois fascist states and the only possible community is that of the international, or of Hardt and Negri's imagined immanent community in *Empire*.<sup>8</sup>

For Marx the national state as a place of imagined commonality is a tool of the bourgeoisie used to divide the worldwide community of workers. And for all their Marxist heterodoxies and transmogrifications of the terms of reference, from the industrial revolution to the Enlightenment (and counter-Enlightenment) Hardt and Negri are, in the end, likewise orthodox Marxists, seeing the only possible solution to the bourgeois-fascist state in a worldwide unity of the multitude. There is a tendency among Marxists to see the solution to the problem of difference, to the separation of communities one from the other, in eliding or even erasing these differences.

And certainly one can see the temptation, for the idea of community is no doubt dangerous. For all the warmth of the idea it is charged with the constant threat of a violent exclusion. Whether Marx is right that the national state is merely a tool of the bourgeoisie, or this is simply an inevitable by-product of cleaving together, the epistemic and political violence seems never far behind community conceived in a certain way. It is, no doubt, why Derrida says 'I don't like the word community, I am not even sure I like the thing' (1995: 355). Yet he goes on to suggest that perhaps there is a tolerable notion of community when community knows its limits and its limit is its opening.<sup>9</sup> The ethical point is well taken, but Derrida has been insistent throughout his career on the always-alreadiness of both linguistic meaning and the social order. The very possibility of each of these is underpinned by arbitrary differences. Marx's rejection of such differences leads to a reification of an essential totality of humanity, which to my mind is perhaps as great a mistake as the Capitalist reification of the state form.

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In *Imagined Communities* Benedict Anderson (1991) considers different historical conditions that lead to growing levels of commitment to the modern nation-state. The growth of mass communication makes possible new forms of social imaginary which, combined with the vicissitudes of a colonial administration of the Americas from Europe, helps to produce new zones of belonging which are bigger than village, smaller than religion or empire and not necessarily defined along linguistic frontiers. By, among other things, restricting creole (white person of the Americas) administrators to a world of possibilities defined by the arbitrary boundaries of the colonial administrative district into which they were born, the colonial powers inadvertently foment 'nationalisms' which bring about the fragmentation of empires into a multiplicity of new world states. The rejection of colonials as Others and potential sources of contamination ensures that these new administrative spaces contain within them persons belonging to the whole gamut of social classes who, at the same time, have in common a sense of belonging exclusively to that territory.

It is important not to forget of Anderson's writing here that he wants to consider the historical conditions for something that he sees as anomalous (Anderson 1991: 4). That the 'nation' and nationalism have come to play such an important role in the political life of the whole world is the reality whose origin is being queried. Of course the community that is nation is only one form of community and even throughout the period of the growth of the nation-state not the only one to which one might belong. Anderson points out, for instance, the rebelling creole liberator Simon Bolívar feared a 'Negro revolt' more than an invasion by the Spanish (Anderson 1991: 49). This is so presumably because there is some other imagined connection (race, 'national' origin?) that is greater than that of the newly arising social imaginary. The connection of black slaves and natives to the creoles of their 'nation' is that of the shackled oarsman to the captain. At a later point in history of American nations poor *mestizos* and even whites will begin to have a relationship to the domestically monied that begins to approach (though still does not equal) that of other races.

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Imagining a community involves, in part, splitting that community off from others — setting up borders. But, there are very different ways in which community can be imagined. According to Anderson, the nation-state form, which he sees as beginning in the Americas, is a new form of social imaginary. There exist myriad other possible formations. Now that the nation-state covers the whole surface of the globe these other imagined communities overlap the nation-state in place and time.

### ***Borders***

Any space is transected by various borders, elements of the physical geography which impede transit — rivers, mountains, escarpments, lakes, ravines, forests, deserts — or those waterways which create transit routes lifting up our heavy burdens upon their waters. Then there are the rapids and cataracts, the oceans staring us down like another desert. The cold of winter congeals and stops up the flows. These physical borders are the simplest line, over which are inscribed other lines. Like those physical features they may be simply accidents of history, of glaciation, of plate tectonics. The crashing plates do not want to separate a wet West Coast from a desertic interior. Nor does a retreating continental glacier want to create the Great Lakes-St. Lawrence drainage basin.

### ***Nomadism***

If nation is not the given or the sub-stratum which we can read as underlying other possible community identifications then the force of its social imaginary, though more powerfully institutionalised, nonetheless functions on the same plane as other forms of social identification. In opposition to the state there are nomads.

The nomads invented a war machine in opposition to the State apparatus. History has never comprehended nomadism, the book has never comprehended the outside. The State as the model for the book and for thought has a long history: logos, the philosopher-king, the transcendence of the Idea, the interiority of the concept, the republic of minds, the court of reason, the functionaries of thought, man as legislator and subject. The

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State's pretension to be a world order and to root man. The war machine's relation to an outside is not another model; it is an assemblage that makes thought itself nomadic, and the book a working part in every mobile machine, a stem for a rhizome (Deleuze & Guattari 1987: 24).

Deleuze and Guattari evoke a whole realm of other possible metaphors by which we can understand epistemology and the social. Well past the mere pragmatic point that knowledge is a social product, the question is what kind of sociality and what kind of knowledge are connected to each other. The clear boundedness of the book and the state are explicitly rejected for something else — nomadism and the war machine, which are not 'another model'. This contestation to the state is an attempt to move past the bourgeois state, or indeed that form of community feared by Derrida for its lack of openness.

There are a number of important interventions in the development of a theory of the mechanisms of a rhizomatic theory of epistemology/ontology (Marx's recurrent figure of the mole in *Capital* is, perhaps surprisingly, an early version). The core of the development of such a theory is rooted in an understanding of the immanence of the semiotic. That is, the realm of encoded meaning, the realm of ideas and mind, is in no way set off from some other realm (say the material) as a zone of 'representation'. There are moments where the conceptual distinction between ideas and materiality remain valuable, but these two 'realms' are so thoroughly interwoven that to describe them as separate in any pure way comes up against an eventual conceptual impossibility. Some important moments in explaining why this is true, why the realms of information and materiality, mind and substance, are the same come from thinkers who account for the nuts and bolts of biological mechanisms. Richard Dawkins (1981) argues that ideas exist within an environment (mental or memetic) and are subject to the same mechanisms of selection, in their environment, as chemical bits of DNA are subject to in theirs.

It is a clearer material description of the means of social evolution described by Nietzsche in *Human, All too Human* (1986). And Gregory Bateson (1972) describes how the separation of materiality from mind and the semiotic is impossible because there is a constant feedback

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mechanism between the states of the material world and the states of my mind (cybernetics). They are *both* semiotic and fully interconnected. Any mark at all that I make in the world, an axe mark in a tree, a footprint in wet sand, and the marks I am putting here on this page, are equally semiotic and meaningful, feeding back to me materially the realm of meaning.

Meaning is produced, then, not merely socially but also materially. At one moment my bounded notions of myself as an organism are useful, say in reminding me to assert to myself my value and right to exist, and at another make me think I am spiritually or epistemologically alone. There is a blurriness around my edges — Buddhists call it inter-being (Thich 1998: 125). There is a centrality to the social, then, as pragmatist epistemology suggests; knowledge is produced socially. But the complicated codifications of meaning in the social, the meaning of labour, the boundedness of persons, and social spaces like states, are, at the same time material.

Nomads inhabit this reality, this rhizomatic epistemology that forgoes the confusion of the transcendental ego as knowing subject, the mythos of the book and letter as transcendental offering, the pretensions of the state to root 'man'. The nomad reminds us to pursue ways of thought that keep things open — allowing new and unexpected connections. When we create new enclosures that we hope will be defensible positions they leave us trapped. Rivera's 'Detroit Industry' functions as a node in a rhizome problematising the grid space into which it is fit and reaching into the surrounding territory from under the heavy stone walls of the Detroit Institute of Arts. The nomad epistemology it invokes and evokes has a principle of humility and an openness at its core. It cannot be the state epistemology of an exclusionary force because it is not static — it keeps moving.

## Detroit

I'm heading to the DIA to look at the Rivera murals again — to try to develop an intimacy with them. I want to sit with them a while — feel their textures, their warm and cool areas, their vitality and death. I come

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here as a pause in a fairly short journey from Ann Arbor, Michigan to Windsor, Ontario. I want to take the Davison Freeway but discover it is being rebuilt and then I am left meandering through neighbourhoods to the north of the Gallery. I don't know the neighbourhoods but they have a familiarity, the texture of Detroit. There are houses and persons like fish in a stream. Fresh faces and paint jobs working against the flow. And there is the flow — long faces of the distraught, buildings falling down, or more strikingly — beautiful, elegant, pristine and windowless. The opposite of a dead body with departed soul, here the soul remains. In the Boston-Edison historic district of beautiful mansions everybody is doing repairs. It is a sunny late fall day and mature oak and elm stand leafless and grey against the hard light of the sky. For some reason I am feeling hopeful. Detroit is reminding me of Chicago — somehow not quite the blighted zone of despair that lost half its population in the third quarter of the 20th century, though beyond my momentary fantasy that is precisely what it is. But what is the difference? Why should the home repairs of the wealthy make me feel anything? I don't even know if that is what it is.

#### ***Rivera Court***

I find Rivera court, a glass covered courtyard in the middle of the DIA where Rivera created 'Detroit Industry', awash in elegantly set tables — green linen, crystal, large orange bouquets — in preparation for a gala fundraiser — 'Under the Stars'. The section is closed but they let me sit here in the corner and write. There is shuffling about as they make their preparations and a man tunes the grand piano in the corner. This place is serene, and beautiful. Tonight it will be festive. At least they have not given up on this place. 'Under the Stars' indeed, I wonder how many auto executives will reflect on the stars under which they were born as they champagne and caviar for the cause in the presence of 'Detroit Industry'? Perhaps some will. Perhaps ...

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***Aviators***

I'm stuck sitting on a bench against the east wall in the north corner. I'm trying to take in different elements — soak in details while I am here with them. There is an aviator facing me from the west wall, in front of his aircraft with his gas mask pulled down against his chest. The image continues onto another panel in the corner. Separated from him stand three others. They wear their masks. Round eye lenses point somewhat outwards, and a seam creates a ridge running over the crown, down between the eyes and attaches to a hose that runs out of the mask like a snout. The one in the panel has a bladder inflated, rising straight up between his eyes like a horn. In a small panel around the corner chemical weapons are manufactured. More bug-eyed masked figures stand as perfectly still abstractions. But these figures are only the most immediate contrast to the one unmasked aviator who is unique in the whole 27-panel cycle. On his face there is complete dejection. He is not lost in his work nor caught into being the representation of something beyond himself. He stands there with a look of sorrow that would wipe away the world.

In the gallery guide Linda Downs (1994) reads the frescos linearly from the child in the bulb of a plant on the east wall to the finished automobile at the vanishing point on the south wall. She renders transparent the complicated elements, but for all the representation of the assembly line there is not the nearly perfect linear story she describes.

Rivera was presented with a space divided into rectilinear sections by the cut limestone of the structure. He played with connection and discontinuity along the contiguities of these spaces in which he found himself working. The aviation panels along the top of the west wall are the one place that Rivera ignored the division of space absolutely. The two columns that divide the space into three seem to sit over the surface of the paint simply obscuring our view from the continuity that lies underneath them. But the dejection of the one pilot across the line of that divide from the other three holds him more alone. The image is separated by the building, but drawn together as a single representation.



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But the gas-masked aviators are thematically separated from the sad pilot and drift towards the workers in the gas factory charging their bombs with cyanide or mustard gas.

#### *Memory*

Vertically there are three levels of fresco panels. The centre panels run around the room in a thematic continuity that focuses on the intimate connection between life and the earth. On the North Wall Rivera seems to transcend the divisions of the panels thematically connecting the vertically contiguous panels without making an imagistic continuity of them. The heat of the foundry's blast furnace in the main panel pushes up and striates the rock of the centre panel as it builds towards a volcanic peak in the top panel. At the same time the furnace is pulling down from either side above it the black coal and the red iron from the black and red hands scraping it from the earth in the top panel. The quiescent form of the volcano symbolically erupts as the force of the furnace drives straight up centrally and spills out to the sides pulling back to itself its heat — coal, and its purpose — iron.

This spark across the gap is a synaptic leap, the commencement of a motion that drives itself. Life and the internal combustion engine perpetuate their own motions spilling out energy to draw it back into the centre creating a cycle which expends energy in order to draw more in. The fossilised remains of ancient life drive the blast furnace which smelts the iron out of its crystals in the tarsk topography and from the pyrite — the fool's gold — lying in sedimentary layers. The carbon-based molecules of life allow them to store potential energy in their chemical bonds. It is that same potential to form the basis of complex molecules which makes them energy rich. The artificial vulcanism of the foundry releases the stored energy of dead life. It is like the burning of memory.

Marx describes the capitalist's possession of capital goods (like machines and factories) and money as the holding of dead labour. It makes sense, for we consumers too, in each object we buy there is human labour poured into it, now mostly anonymous labour. This is

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true whether it is a T-shirt, a pie, a car or the gasoline we put in the car. And of course Henry Ford, like Marx, understood that consumption must be there, must complete the cycle for the energy, the labour and the money to flow. When I interact as a consumer with a person who has worked freely in the idealised Hegelian sense, who has become more fully herself by objectifying her subjectivity, then I participate in the cycle which brings that about. Conversely when I consume as the completion of alienated labour then what do I purchase? Not only alienation, but dead labour, life sold and crystallised in the form of capital. I am purchasing lost time, spirit, memory. In either case there must be a cycle of energy — this is the way of life and the world. Indeed, it is not just human labour and economy but the continuity between our social economic reality and the rest of the material world. In the labour theory of value in Marx it seems to some degree that the response to capitalism is repetitive of the values of capitalism. Both capitalism and Marx focusing on an abstract value based on exploitation of the earth without a thought about the earth.

## ***Predellas***

Along the bottom of the two main panels run a series of panels in monochrome grey. These predella panels<sup>10</sup> are separated out from the main panels, though within them, and framed by a railing in front of the factory floor. Downs suggests the panels describe ‘a day in the life of the workers’ (Downs 1994: 5), which they certainly do, as they enter the factory on the left side of the north panel, go through their day’s activities and file out on the right side of the south panel. But more than a day in the life of the workers the predellas repeat the continuity of the cycle of energy and materiality that connects the workers and the factory to the rest of the world.

The workers enter the factory in long coats with collars turned up against the cold, and hats, punching the clock. Their form is mimetic of the ingot moulds in the next panel being filled with molten metal. The workers and the steel are one. The ingots are fed into the mouth of a crazed duck; the billet machine like so much of the machinery has an

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organic appearance — but in photos of the Rouge plant we can see that Rivera has painted them just as they are.

At lunchtime, without moving, the men feed themselves. Then, continuing on the south wall, the workers feed the soil with the by-products of the earlier processes of the coke ovens. The workers and the factory feed directly into the agricultural processes whose products they consumed in the previous frame.

In the machine shop a man has his huge forearms draped heavily over a bar of steel with a giant saw blade in the background. Soon a machine part will be broken and he will be at work making a new one from a 'raw' block of steel, produced in the preceding sequence. The machine shop is both the foundational moment and at the same time dependent on the whole process. His heavy arms are a waiting spark, ready to ignite, to begin ever anew, a process that produces the resting moment of potential. He is the machine corollary of the cellular and immunisation panels.

In a panel that seems to stand alone Henry Ford lectures to a group of engineers. Next to him sits a complete engine. The belt and wheels on the front of the engine describe a face and the shifter rising out of the gearbox is a tail; like a claw foot bathtub it sits on four animal paws. No doubt quiescent, the engine sits like an animal-form cyborg awaiting the spark of life.

In the final panel the human bodies which had been fed into the apparatus, like ingots into the mill, and whose reproduction occurred through the middle of the sequence, are paid at an armoured car and file out to their cars. They are, no doubt, heading to the bank to make a car payment for a fine Ford automobile. The energies that spill out of this assemblage pour back in.

#### ***Time, energy, repetition, entropy***

In the deliberate compartmentalisation of the predellas Rivera reproduces the division of space given to him by the building. The limestone divisions are as much a part of the painting as if Rivera had put them there himself. He embraces the fortuitousness of accident by repeating

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its form, laying down a grid which splits the content into distinct moments. How does Rivera draw those moments together? In the predellas of the north wall the unity of movement of the production line seems to obtain, but is lacking on the south wall. But Rivera does not set up a linearity only to break it down and then attempt to recover it in the final moment. The straight vector is an illusion, or an accident. There is only a grid penetrated by a swirl. Not the swirl of a Hegelian pseudo-cyclical history.<sup>11</sup> Time is transcended, or remains in its instantaneous form, more visceral and viscous than Hegel's. The formation of crystalline iron deposits, from a moment in earth history that predates life, fold into the instantaneity of human gestures in the small panel at the top right of the south wall in which the motion of workers is captured in the futurist style.

The arrival and the departure of the workers in the first and last panels, with lunch in the middle, speak to us of the hours of the day, but this is not the purposiveness of an historical inevitability, as in the inevitability of the worker's revolution. That would be like suggesting the tide fell in upon itself to let us know about the coming of day. These sections cut across *space*. There is no linear time; all these processes occur at once.

The spark across the gap in the distributor or in the spark plug cannot be reduced simply to a reproduction of energy from an already running engine, nor to the power of the starter motor. Neither simply a moment in an indefinite cycle, nor something with a clear starting point. A spin-off tornado from a hurricane is not simply a part of the hurricane. The tornado taps into conditions of potential energy and tends to perpetuate itself. Like all the motions of the internal combustion engine, each one becomes a condition of possibility for the other. Each element must already exist for the existence of the others.

The internal combustion engine like a tornado is a swirl that wastes energy. But energy does not dissipate that easily. The tornado cuts across a gap of potential energy and attempts to dissipate it, but in so doing becomes a motor generating and holding energy for the preservation of its own processes. The releasing energy draws more in from the surrounding potentials producing a vortex.

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I am trying here to invoke the idea of a deeper physical reality — that does not trap us but sets up conditions of possibility for other realities. Unlike Hardt and Negri proclaiming the tyranny of number (Hardt & Negri 2000: 355) — math and science are liberating when they are genuine. A scientific attitude is an embrace of the mystery of an unresolved and unresolvable complexity. It is unresolvable not because we do not come up with answers to particular problems and questions but because we, as human beings, are inherently limited and so will *never* foreclose new possibilities with the deific vision of complete knowledge. Only the bureaucrats of science in their Kafkaesque exuberance for their own stations can imagine that science has foreclosed mystery through a technocracy of the known.<sup>12</sup>

#### ***North — South***

On the west wall below the aviation panels a monochrome panel depicts a waterway with ships and two shores. The water is at once the Detroit River and the space between the industrialised north and the resources (in this case rubber) that come from the south. The lake freighters without access to the sea until the 1960s cannot really bring the rubber, but ply the upper lakes from Buffalo to Duluth bringing oil from Sarnia or casting sand from somewhere else. Rivera has placed the Port of Detroit on the left and the rubber cutters on the opposite shore, on the right, in the north. He placed the north in the south and the south in the north.<sup>13</sup> Is Rivera simply ignoring the actual cardinal directions? Is he trying to subvert something? Is he staying in a hotel downtown looking across the river at Canada and thinking north even though it is south?

#### **The land and the body**

In Canada, across the river from the Rouge plant and the belching behemoths of the steel producers that have grown up around it, there is an area of woods, scrub and prairie grass. The lands are owned by mining companies whose shafts burrow deep into the ground. Huge machines roam around the caverns, digging out the salt, and go right

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underneath the river. Far beyond finding any relevance in surface features the mining companies on the both sides of the border need to respect the border so as not to run into each other.

The mining lands adjoin a nature preserve. From this idyllic setting you can see the lake ships pass, and across the water the Rouge plant and the steel producers belch smoke into the prevailing winds carrying it right at you. The Detroit River — *détroit* is French for strait, which is what it really is carrying water from Lake St Clair down to lake Erie — passes through a series of islands and adjoining wetlands with cranes, herons, ducks and geese. I have often canoed and swam somewhere between that industrial complex and the cattails, and drunk the tap water that comes from the Detroit River.

When I was a kid Jacques Cousteau sailed up to Lake Superior to explore the wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald. At the end of his trip he stopped to speak in Detroit and said in his heavy French accent, ‘The Great Lakes are a cesspool of industrial waste.’ My blood and my body are Detroit River water. I am that cesspool of industrial waste. Cousteau may have been right but to say such things about my body and sail away seemed like the unforgivable fomenting of despair.

In the monochrome panel of the west wall fish and pleasure craft charge each other. Above the two lake freighters crossing each other there is a split image of face and skull. Downs (1994) says of the star betwixt them that it ‘symbolizes aspirations and hopes for civilization’. On the south side of the doorway an ‘engineer’ sits at a table holding a hammer in a gloved hand, the heavy splayed cuff flaunting a red star, and across the room ploughshares cut the earth. Over 60 years later and institutions here still find it necessary to skirt over the fact that Rivera was a communist.

Why is there so much ideological resistance to the notion that people are of the earth? Had Rivera laid that hammer against the plough perhaps these murals would have met the same fate as the Rockefeller Center murals where the representation of Lenin proved intolerable. Is Rivera giving us a traditional Marxist perspective in these paintings? I mean, is he as techno-utopian as Marx was?<sup>14</sup> Does he imagine the means of

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production being taken over by the workers at a moment of historical inevitability where the objective conditions necessarily bring this about? Hegel discusses the alienation of labour whereby a person puts her efforts into the manufacture of something and thereby transforms her subjective energies into object.<sup>15</sup> Alienation for Marx is different though related. The fundamentals of the process are the same but for Marx alienation describes the pernicious force of utter divorce between a person and the object she manufactures under capitalist conditions of production.<sup>16</sup> At the moment in which Rivera produces this cycle of murals he is observing the zenith of capitalist production.

#### *Windsor*

When I was a kid across the river from here there was a stamping plant, Kelsey-Hayes, a few blocks from where I lived; they made wheels. In the summer the doors of the plant would be open, a picnic table outside where the workers could lunch or have a smoke on their breaks. We would go up to the door and look inside. There was a horrible din of Herculean stamping machines turning flat pieces of steel into wheels going, ka-chung, ka-chung, ka-chung. Later we moved and lived next to a foundry. Steam poured out of the plant from quenching the metal with an intense acrid smell. There is no way that Rivera could convey the intensity of the Rouge factory, but still we see humans fade into machines — the product of their labours. They pound and grind at the steel, they are deafened by the pounding, blinded by the welding, lose their tactile sense through vibration and callusing. They become increasingly sensitised to the patterns of production at their stations and increasingly incapable of sensing anything beyond that.

At home I am looking at the gallery guide and its black & white photographs of 'Detroit Industry'. In the texture of the aircraft behind the sad aviator I begin to see something. First there is one eye. I focus intently. Another comes out at me. That is it, just these two eyes and the shadings of a face. It is looking down right over the sad aviator. After looking enough it becomes perfectly clear — almost the first thing I see. I begin to believe that these other sad eyes hidden in the texture of the

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fuselage are in fact Rivera's large, sad, droopy eyes. I visit the murals again to see if the eyes are really there. The fuselage is a muddy reddish brown and I don't immediately see the eyes. I am surprised that they are not there, and then another face where the left eye should be begins to emerge. These eyes are as clear as the ones in the photo had been, but now I don't know what to think.<sup>17</sup> There is a beautiful dynamism within the cycle of murals. I find myself continually drawn back to the sadness of these faces. Rivera has weaved a textile and twisted the material. I keep seeing sad faces in the squeeze of a fold of fabric.

## ***Malice Green***

The DIA is on Woodward Avenue just north of Warren Avenue. Warren runs well out into the countryside, north of Ann Arbor where it is a hilly, wooded, gravel lane. On Warren near the DIA it is much like large areas of this city — a strange mix of destruction and preservation, or just lingering. I can't make any sense of the forces that lead to these circumstances. Try to understand why in a plane crash some die and others live, some go unscathed and others are maimed. There is a faith that says that everything has causes, and if we look hard enough tracing backwards we can piece them together. Faced with this sort of religiosity I am more agnostic than atheist. This god of causality may really exist I am just sceptical about the possibility of the beatific vision.

On Warren about two miles west of the DIA there is a mural on a boarded up storefront building. The background is a pale lime green. The face of a man looks out at the road and across the sidewalk from him there is a small bench like the back of a church pew. There always seem to be fresh flowers here. The Christ-like figure is Malice Green, and this is the place where he was murdered by the police.<sup>18</sup> His face is sad, caught in the texture of a twisted fabric.



## Conclusion

As I noted above, my reading of 'Detroit Industry' is done with Foucault's discussion of 'Las Meninas' in the first chapter of *The Order of Things* in mind. He moves through a description of the painting; seeing in it a study of subject-object relations and of representation generally as the means by which these relations are achieved. In the last paragraph of the chapter he writes:

Perhaps there exists, in this painting by Velázquez, the representation as it were, of Classical representation, and the definition of the space it opens up to us. And, indeed, representation undertakes to represent itself here in all its elements, with its images, the eyes to which it is offered, the faces make it visible, the gestures call it into being. But there, in the midst of this dispersion which it is simultaneously grouping together and spreading out before us, indicated compellingly from every side, is an essential void: the necessary disappearance of that which is its foundation — of the person it resembles and the person in whose eyes it is only a resemblance. This very subject — which is the same — has been elided. And representation, freed finally from the relation that was impeding it, can offer itself as representation in its pure form (Foucault 1994: 16).

This is an excellent summation of what he has carried out gesturally throughout his chapter, working his way around the room of 'Las Meninas' and finally to the space which we as observers occupy facing the canvas. This space, it turns out, is really the space occupied by the King and Queen, the '*Reyes*', whose reflections can be seen in the mirror at the back of the room. It is through these little tricks of representation that Velázquez manages to describe for Foucault a perfectly empty space as foundation, at once the empty space that Lacan (Lacan 1988: 96) finds at the centre of the Cartesian ego, and the empty space of the arbitrary connection between signifier and signified.

In 'Las Meninas' Foucault finds a dense metaphor for what he wanted to examine as an epistemological problem in the human sciences. I have tried to read 'Detroit Industry' as a dense metaphor for the difficult construction of meaningful human community. The organisation of human energies and the goodness of the earth are invariably faced with

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forces that resist the construction of community. *E pluribus unum* — from many one — this is the idea of community. But just as Foucault sees that there is an epistemological hollow — a space — between subject and object, described in ‘Las Meninas’, so too is there an epistemological problem in the construction of community. Foucault outlines the intimate connection between epistemological questions and the exercise of power. Knowledge and epistemes are constructed, as are communities. So, in the construction of community, how do I know that you are a member, want to be a member, have volunteered to join up? Who is here together, and how do we know whether you are in or out? Is it spatial, a question of your activities, your agreeing to a contract, or submitting to the sovereign? Are you a part of the sovereign? Is it your labour that makes you a part? Must we know the answers to these questions or can we stumble along heuristically hoping to foment a shared sense of belonging without quite knowing how to do it?

I have tried to suggest a different kind of epistemology that might make a different kind of community possible. In *Empire* (2000) Hardt and Negri suggest that a radical democratic possibility is born with the Enlightenment and the scientific revolution. Yet they see this Enlightenment potential as having been undermined by a counter-Enlightenment. In their understanding of things the potential of the Enlightenment has been shackled to state sovereignty. Like Marx they oneirically see a better world beyond the horizon in a great unity of humanity.

I think a more hopeful ground might be found in a much more limited vision. My vision of a post-Enlightenment (perhaps post-structural?) epistemology is both sceptical and wary of tendencies to claim knowledge as functionaries of ‘science’ or of state, but without rejecting the knowledge projects of science and community (or even state). A genuinely scientific attitude inherently embraces mystery, and is thus open. This epistemological attitude derives much of its possibility (as Hardt and Negri, as well as Deleuze and Guattari see) in understanding that knowledge is inherently produced in networks, and not controlled

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by the bureaucrats of science or of state. The scientific attitude of mystery maintains an openness to revision because it appreciates the inherent epistemological limits of humanity; we are not permitted the beatific vision. But part of what this means is the acceptance of limited forms. If there is a plane of immanence on which this occurs it remains unclear how any attempt to conceive of the *unity* of that plane will not undermine it. As knowers, and as animals that might live in community, we must accept our limits, live within the contingencies we are given even as we strive for an ever-deeper understanding. But within these limits, and with that ethos of openness to mystery, we can perhaps still construct a community beyond knowledge.

I read 'Detroit Industry' as a suggestion of this sort of possibility — a possibility embedded in contingency and materiality but not oriented to class or to nation but to a *difference* which connects us. Rivera looks at the rigidities of territories and the lines that cross over them and finds a way to create a new whole within a space that is divided. But he connects in unpredictable and imaginative ways the elements that make that whole so that there is a harmony within and across it, not stridently insisting on its wholeness but making the various parts work together. I am trying to understand how we can both strive to understand, to have certain kinds of knowledge that will let us build something, build a community, and at the same time keep this in tension with an appreciation of the vicissitudes this tendency to paint clear territories has. I think Rivera understood this.

## Notes

- 1 A version of this paper was presented at the International Roundtable for the Semiotics of Law, at McGill University in April 2005. I would like to thank Desmond Manderson for the invitation to participate in the Roundtable, as well as for his helpful comments on that earlier version. I would also like to thank the two anonymous referees whose comments are also much appreciated.
- 2 This is true except for the images of Charles Sorenson, in charge of production at the Rouge, who looks over the workers bumping and grinding on the left,

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and of Dr William Valentiner — DIA director, and Edsel Ford on the right. These figures are not really in the painting at all; they are painted in a completely different style from all the rest of the people. Their portraits, the persons responsible for financing and commissioning the work, for part of Rivera's signature to the work and as such lie over the top of the painting. Dr Valentiner holds a paper in his hand that contains Rivera's signature.

- 3 It is not necessarily a criticism to say that we always find ourselves in the second phase. Partially at least this is a product of the necessary psychological reality that we find ourselves in time (and space) as Kant observes in the *Critique of Pure Reason* (1929 [1781]). Space and time are the human forms of perception. Whenever a temporal analysis of history with some prospect of a future is invoked we are bound, at least by this psychological necessity, to speak of past, present and future. In this triad we ineluctably find ourselves located in the second phase. Even Nietzsche singing the possibility of the overman (the *übermensch*) must do so from the dreary present of a condemnable 19th century Europe in which the will to excellence has been sacrificed to an unwillingness to offend. See for instance, *The Genealogy of Morality* (Nietzsche 1994).
- 4 The opposed terms of smooth and striated space fit into a larger scheme of opposed ways of being in the world for Deleuze and Guattari. Striated space is, prototypically, the space of the state and all its accoutrements of law and regulation including the concrete spatial elements of streets, hydro lines and border fences. Smooth space is, on the other hand, prototypically deserts, seas and any space that tends to be crossed rather than occupied. Figured as such smooth space is less homogenous than striated space and figures emblematically as the realm of possibility. There are no pure spaces of either modality but each is always to some degree occupied (or crossed) by the other. Rhizomes are the root systems of grasses which Deleuze and Guattari oppose to arborescence, that is, trees. Rhizomes serve as a key figure for Deleuze and Guattari in understanding modes of knowledge and forms of social organisation. This is so because the nomads, those who cross smooth spaces, are not lacking in sociality, indeed they are if anything more social in that their relations play out within these network relations, rather than being governed by hierarchical systems of control, that is, arborescent structures. The figure of the rhizome, then, is precisely the figurative representation of the network relations that constitute the nomads' ways of being in and knowing the world.

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- 5 'Classical representation' for Foucault is a mode of representation and understanding of the 17th and 18th centuries (the period that Anglo philosophers refer to as early modern) that is superseded by modern representation in the 19th century, the latter form still being in effect now.
- 6 The panopticon (literally 'all seeing') is a prison structure designed by Jeremy Bentham (1748-1832) with an outer ring of prison cells and a central guard tower. The structure is designed to isolate all the prisoners from each other but leave them subject to the scrutiny of prison guards in the tower. By tricks of backlighting and blinds the guards are supposed to be able to observe the prisoners while not being visible to the prisoners, thus giving the prisoners the sense that they are always under surveillance and tending to induce them to internalise that surveillance (Bentham 1995). In *Discipline and Punish* (1977) Foucault suggests that this tendency to induce self-surveillance is a central element of modern times.
- 7 The Foucauldian notion of episteme is somewhat like the idea of world-view or paradigm, it is the regime of 'truth' underlying the discourse of an epoch. The basic point is that the worlds we inhabit are constructed by human systems of knowledge so that all the objects in our world, and not merely the 'social' objects, are dependent on human knowledge projects. Foucault's suggestion moves beyond a claim of the theory-ladenness of perception to notions of a much more active construction of lived reality by the whole gamut of social forces. For Foucault then, any genuinely critical politics must confront the serious epistemological problem of what he refers to as power-knowledge. What we are able to see and know is conditioned by the society we inhabit, which is the very thing we might want to change. The difficulty then lies in seeing the given or assumed in order to be able to critique and change it.
- 8 I read *Empire* as offering a classical Marxist account of social history but with a somewhat expanded understanding of the terms of reference by which we must understand that history, switching the seminal moment from the industrial revolution to the Enlightenment. According to Hardt and Negri, up until the Enlightenment there are those who would make claims to authority and root those claims in transcendence. Rooting a claim in transcendence might manifest, for instance, by asserting that I have a privileged relationship with God. I claim that knowledge and power flow through me from Him in virtue of my special access. The Enlightenment proposes to undo this through transcendence and its claims to power

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through the development of science and a different kind of politics that is connected to this science. Hardt and Negri refer to this undoing as immanence, which is suggestive of a new intimacy between all the elements of the world in this new view. There are no privileged points; Priests, Kings and scientists are all subject to the same rules of science and scientific explanation. And that this is true suggests a new sort of validity for a truly democratic politics because there are no reasons for any person to be privileged over another. But no sooner has this come about, according to Hardt and Negri, than there is a move afoot to defeat it. Hardt and Negri suggest that this is also part of the Enlightenment (and they attribute it to certain thinkers such as Descartes — which is frankly ridiculous). Finally, because they have a Hegelian/ Marxist model of history in which thesis meets antithesis to resolve into a synthesis, they assert that this countering is resolved in the synthesis which is the constitution of the modern state. The modern state takes immanent politics and transcendent politics and combines them. It is this Hegelian bastard child which Hardt and Negri propose as a new thesis to be overcome. For them the death of the bastard child is nigh. The death is coming in the form of Empire. Whereas Marx saw the death of capitalism in communism (and this too entailed the death of the modern state which Marx conceived of as the slavish handmaiden of the capitalist) Hardt and Negri see it in Empire. But this prospective history (both Hardt and Negri, and Marx see this as a movement of inevitability so that the future can be seen with the clarity of the past) suffers the vagueness and vagaries of a classical Marxism. Most problematic of all is that throughout the argument the immanent, humble and open epistemology of Deleuze and Guattari's nomad seems to guide the core of the project, and yet they ultimately transcendentalise the multitude reifying them as Marx had earlier done with humanity (or the working class, depending how you read him).

- 9 The quote is taken from an interview. Here is what Derrida says in response to a few questions. I have removed the questions and the text flows along the issue of community and its desirability: 'I don't much like the word community, I am not even sure I like the thing. If by community one implies, as is often the case, a harmonious group, consensus, and fundamental agreement beneath the phenomena of discord or war, then I don't believe in it very much and I sense in it as much threat as promise. There is doubtless this irrepressible desire for a 'community' to form but also for it to know its limits — and for its limit to be its *opening*. Once it thinks it has

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understood, taken in, interpreted, *kept* the text, then something of this latter, something in it that is altogether *other* escapes or resists the community, it appeals for another community, it does not let itself be totally interiorised in the memory of a present community. The experience of mourning and promise that institutes that community but also forbids it from collecting itself, this experience stores in itself the reserve of another community that will sign, otherwise, completely other contracts.' (Derrida 1995:355, italics in original)

- 10 Predella is an Italian term that refers to the base of an altar, and by extension, to the painted panels of that base. Typically a series of predella panels will tell a narrative, such as moments in the life of a saint. The term has been incorporated into standard English as a term of art (about art), and so I have left it unitalicised.
- 11 In *Hegel's Science of Logic* (1969) Hegel explains the inevitable development of thought through contradiction and reconciliation. Thesis, antithesis, synthesis is the formulation of Fichte. Hegel applies this dialectic to notions of cultural progress, and history, which are essentially thought processes for Hegel. He maintains that history is teleological, or headed towards some goal. This is, of course, a theory of history that is picked up by Marx. I describe it as a swirl as a spatial metaphor for a dialectic that progresses towards a goal.
- 12 Again this would seem to be a rather Kantian point. Kant asserts that there are some absolute limits to knowledge that leave the possibility of God, freedom and immortality (I 1929 [1781]). I am arguing that the inherent epistemological limits of humanity are much more immanent to our lived experience. I cannot say where the border between the known and unknown are, unlike Kant who sees a clear border between the knowable and unknowable. I cannot say where that frontier is, and yet I know that it is out there along the falling-away horizon. But what is the measure of that horizon? A swimmer's bobbing head disappears long before the mast of the tall ship beside which she swims.
- 13 In the uppermost panels on the north and south walls where Rivera has presented iconic 'race' figures he has placed the figure of the African race on the north wall and that of the European on the south wall. Apart from my suggestion of a possibly subversive move it may be that he reversed north and south because he conceives the south as having more sunlight. Of course, in the courtyard, the north would receive more light.

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- 14 My suggestion that Marx is a techno-utopian is merely this: Marx is neither a Maoist, nor a Luddite. He sees the industrial revolution as a great advancement over feudalism and not merely because of the progression of social relations, but also because of the very great potential that scientific and technical progress present for humanity. The point, for Marx then, is to liberate this progress from the capitalist social relations that prevent the benefits of technical progress being shared by humanity. I think that he is a techno-utopian in no small part because of his imagined unity of humanity. This sort of faith in a totalising vision suggests to me a utopian vision, and in Marx's case this is tied up with scientific progress. My argument throughout this essay, as I hope is apparent, is that such a totalising vision is inconsistent with a truly scientific attitude and inconsistent, as well, with the needed ethos to build real community.
- 15 For Hegel this process of alienation whereby I make my subjective energies into an object, whereby I objectify myself, has a thoroughly positive value. Indeed this is how we become ourselves as we must through a movement out into the social. Marx would seem to be critical of the value Hegel places on the bourgeois state and ultimately on Spirit. Hegel subordinates the lived reality of being in the world to an idea of spirit that is greater than the individual person and in the direction of the state.

Hegel's standpoint is that of modern political economy. He grasps *labor* as the *essence* of man — as man's essence in the act of proving itself: he sees only the positive, not the negative side of labor. Labor is man's *coming-to-be for himself* within *alienation*, or as *alienated* man. The only labor which Hegel knows and recognizes is *abstractly mental* labor. Therefore, that which constitutes the essence of philosophy — the *alienation of man in his knowing of himself*, or *alienated* science thinking itself — Hegel grasps as its essence (Marx 1964: 177).

Marx's point is really not that producing myself through my outward production of material reality and ideas is not valuable, but more that Hegel is out of touch. Hegel thinks that *whenever* we labour it is good and productive of a desirable self and society. Marx thinks that we not merely objectify ourselves through our labour, which can be a very good thing, but that we really do, under certain conditions, alienate ourselves — we sell ourselves, or give ourselves away. When this is the case we do not realize ourselves through objectification, but rather lose ourselves.



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- 16 Alienation is a result of living as commodified labour. Marx defines four different kinds of alienation: 1. The worker is estranged from the product of his work (which is no longer an object of his own mind but merely something his hands now disconnected from his mind participate in creating). 2. The worker is estranged from the labouring process. 3. Everyone under capitalism becomes estranged from their species being or their human nature, and 4. Everyone is estranged from other human beings because exchange value becomes the sole measure of value in ignorance of real human needs. Real human needs are most easily understood as a sort of median. They are distinct from false needs of luxury that capitalism wants to create in us, but at the same time are more than the squalor and diminishment of spirit that capitalism would produce in the working class. So, real needs are connectedness to others in a community, clean air and water, books, art, education and health care. Artificial needs are just those things that we come to imagine we need when we are marketed to. However through marketing, the creation of false needs, we do not get closer to the ideal of a healthy connectedness to our world and those around us, but insofar as the creation of false needs is effective it really only participates in our alienation (Marx 1964: 110–5).
- 17 Lest I seem the naïf I should point out the obvious: when I, or anyone, looks at a mottled texture intently and starts seeing things, especially facial elements, it is because my brain is actively struggling to distinguish such features. If I were another person I might see Jesus instead of Rivera. Modern research on the cognition of perception tends to confirm Kant's contention that intuitions (that is, raw sense perception) without concepts are blind (just as concepts without intuitions are empty) (Kant 1929 [1781]).
- 18 Malice Green was beaten to death with a flashlight on the evening of 5 November 1992. Officers Larry Nevers and Walter Budzyn were tried and convicted of second-degree murder. Nevers won an appeal of his conviction on 6 March 2003 in the Michigan Court of Appeals.

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