

# Beyond the Myth of Woman: The Becoming-Transfeminist of (Post-)Marxism<sup>1</sup>

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... the principle of citations, as Spivak reminds us, echoing Derrida. Letting others speak in my text is not only a way of inscribing my work in a collective political movement; it is also a way of practicing what I preach. The dissolution of steady identities advocated by the poststructuralist generation is no mere rhetorical formula for me: the dethroning of the “transcendental narcissism” of the philosophizing “I” is a point of nonreturn. Letting the voices of others echo through my text is therefore a way of actualizing the noncentrality of the “I” to the project of thinking, while attaching it/her to a collective project.

— Rosi Braidotti (1994, 37-38)

This essay is situated at the intersection of two trajectories of critical thought: feminism and post-workerism. In the displacements brought about by feminism, it seeks to grasp the need to rethink the categories of the critique of political economy. The feminism to which I am referring here is essentially that which reconfigured itself following its confrontation with the homosexual and post-colonial movements—a feminism that I will call *transfeminism*, using a term borrowed from Beatriz Preciado—that is, a feminism that is a thinking of and a political experimenting with multiplicity. I am joining the other trajectory, post-workerism, essentially at the level of the developments that have resulted from the contributions of Maurizio Lazzarato, Christian Marazzi, Yann Moulier Boutang, Antonio Negri and Carlo Vercellone over the past dozen years—their effort to rethink labor, social cooperation, the wage and income today. Despite the different paths followed by these authors, their analyses converge on one essential point: what is emerging from the metamorphoses of capitalism is a new relationship between capital and life, which Christian Marazzi calls “the biopolitical turn of the economy.” Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri speak of “biopolitical labor,” meaning labor that produces not “just material goods but social life itself.” Knowledge, know-how, language and affect are the fundamental stakes in production today, and they imply a new nature of labor within a

capitalism with a “feminine” face, for capital’s hold is now being exercised over the sphere of reproduction historically “reserved” for women. By inscribing myself in a somewhat critical (and self-critical) perspective, I seek to extend the displacement of binary categories that feminism has brought about, particularly the displacement of the categories of production and reproduction. Consequently, I want to ask the following questions: Can the category of labor as developed since Marx encompass all the forms that human activity can take? Can the category of living labor still resist once the divisions that subtend it—body/mind, culture/nature, man/woman—are called into question? Is the separation between living labor and dead labor pertinent, or has the infinite extension of living labor, the displacement of binary divisions such as living labor/dead labor or productive labor/unproductive labor, instead reached the point where it has become quite unstable, and as a result, inoperative? I will explore this vast worksite by following a little path that is as surprising as the one that links its two figures: the lesbian and the intermittent worker or the “non-jobless unemployed” [*non chômeur-non employé*].

### I. Very Disordered and Undisciplined Multiplicities<sup>2</sup>

What does “feminist” mean? “Feminist” is formed with the word *femme*—woman—and means: someone who fights for women. For many of us it means someone who fights for women as a class and for the disappearance of this class. For many others it means someone who fights for woman and her defense—for the myth, then, and its reinforcement.

—Monique Wittig (1992, 14)

From the perspective opened up by Monique Wittig, women can become a class only by destroying a myth—the myth of woman. The disappearance of the class (of women) occurs through the destabilization of heterosexuality as a *political regime*, as a social system of oppression “that produces the doctrine of the difference between the sexes to justify this oppression” (*ibid.*, 20). Conceiving heterosexuality as a political regime allows us to escape from the dialectic of the sexes: female and male are products of the same mechanism of power, to which women are no more external than men are. It is not a matter of uniting as women against men, but of inventing political strategies of deterritorializing “man and woman” in order to “destroy politically, philosophically and symbolically the categories of man and woman.” The assertion that “lesbians are not women” joyfully opposes a radical strategic alternative

to emancipation conceived as “escaping from a minority,” as the “affirmation of a joint-sharing in a common world,” as a “demonstration of equality” between the sexes (Rancière, 1995, 48-49). The assertion that “lesbians are not women” is a constitutive act, the condition for opening up other perspectives for political action. It is a matter of using “our strategic position to destroy the heterosexual system,” says Louise Turcotte (Wittig, 2001, 39). “Not only are we not women, but we don’t have to become them,” adds Marie-Hélène Bourcier (*ibid.*, 39). One is not born a woman, and we don’t have to become women.<sup>3</sup>

The category of sex does not refer to any natural disposition, to some oft-claimed biological essence/difference, but is instead an absolutely political category; female-male sexual difference is an eminently political binary articulation, the product of oppression, just like racial difference. Feminism thus contributes to the radical questioning of the nature/culture division on which Western thought as well as critical thought is based. “Lesbian,” writes Monique Wittig, “is the only concept I know of that is beyond the categories of sex (woman and man) because the designated subject (lesbian) is *not* a woman, either economically, or politically, or ideologically” (1992, 20). Dis-identification with “woman” is the absolutely basic position both for destroying the idea that women are a natural, homogeneous, innocent group, and for creating other possibilities beyond this world that would like to be the only one possible—this world that produces man, woman and women as an oppressed class. Lesbians are not women, and like fugitive slaves they flee their class. This is Albert Hirschmann’s “exit,” but even more Gilles Deleuze’s line of flight: “to flee,” writes Deleuze, “is not to renounce action; nothing is more active than a flight” (Deleuze and Parnet, 36).

According to Wittig, feminism is engaged in demonstrating that “supposedly ‘subjective,’ ‘individual,’ ‘private’ problems are in fact social problems, class problems; that sexuality is not for women an individual and subjective expression, but a social institution of violence.” “The personal is political”: this is surely the key concept of feminism that makes it a power that overflows the “shores of politics” and compels us to seek new answers to the question, what is politics? (1992,19).

Monique Wittig’s figure of the lesbian is not a figure of the trinity; it is not the Holy Spirit; and it is not, as Diane Griffin Chowder emphasizes, “the third gender” (166). It is, as Jacques Derrida says, the figure that allows a “displacement of binary oppositions.” Homosexual positioning does not re-institute a binary articulation that would oppose heterosexual to homosexual. As Teresa de Lauretis points out, if at one time lesbians were not women, today some of them do consider

themselves women, while others call themselves *butch* or *femme* and still others prefer to call themselves *queer* or *transgendered*, and so on (35). The dis-identification with woman thus appears as a moment in the process of differentiation of sexual identities—the beginning of a proliferation of hybrids.

Further, Wittig writes, “maybe we must do without the admirable instrument of the dialectic,”<sup>4</sup> and it is precisely by doing without and surpassing the dialectic that queer theories<sup>5</sup>—of which Wittig’s work can be considered a precursor—withdraw from the materialist lesbian feminism that is trapped in a logic of binary oppositions (homosexual/heterosexual) whose resolution must be dialectical. As Beatriz Preciado writes, “Queer theories work with a transversal notion of oppression in which power is neither articulated nor resolved by means of dialectical oppositions” (2003, 40). Feminist, post-feminist and queer politics allow us to think politics after the dialectic and beyond the dominant sex/gender regime.

There is not just one single feminism, but multiple feminisms. Usage of the singular is only justified, as Wittig puts it, by the will to “assert that our movement has a history, and to emphasize the link with the first feminist movement” and thereby to accept all the ambiguities that the word “feminism” conceals. But the singular will never be a homogeneous unity, since as Donna Haraway argues in her response to Sandra Harding, “There is no single feminist standpoint because our maps require too many dimensions for that metaphor to ground our visions” (196). All the same, as Teresa de Lauretis emphasizes, the term “feminist theory” does not refer to a unity but rather to a process of knowledge, a function of historical specificities just like the contradictory confrontation of different, differentiated, situated practices and positionings (see her *Soggetti eccentrici*). The multiplicity of critical positionings and practices, as much on the plane of theory as on the plane of strategies, renders feminism irreducible to unity.

The history of feminism is also a history of ruptures. Post-feminism has been the mode of marking rupture brought about by what Teresa de Lauretis calls the “feminist critique of feminism”—a critique constructed at the intersection of post-colonial thought, black feminism, homosexual movements, and lesbian feminism. Adriana Cavarero accounts for it in the following terms:

The use of “post” arises from the will to affirm the existence of a theoretical barrier, a sharp and powerful rupture that separates what comes before from what comes after. Before, there was the phallogocentric subject; afterward, there are multiple and fragmented multiplicities that open up the territory for feminist critique. Before,

there is the long history of the binary economy; afterward, there is the liberating whirlwind that destabilizes the dichotomous codes of this economy. (94)

Nevertheless, the use of “post” does not refer to a temporal dimension, to a rupture in some sort of natural history of feminism; instead, it must be grasped as the index of a displacement of the subject “woman” toward a complex and heterogeneous multiplicity of feminist subjectivities. Faced with contestation within feminism from “women of color,” Chicanas, and Jewish women as much as from lesbians, transgenders and transsexuals, feminism has had to account for the presence of power relations that cannot be understood using concepts of gender and sexual difference. “Simultaneity of oppressions” (Barbara Smith), the intersection of power relations, “transversality of oppression” (Preciado)—the category “woman” is as awkward (Wittig) as it is unstable (de Lauretis). Feminist theory is thus led to define the multiple figures of feminist subjectivity by means of a non-exhaustive series of qualifiers referring to class, color, ethnicity, sexuality, etc. The list never ends, as Judith Butler says:

This failure, however, is instructive: what political impetus is to be derived from the exasperating ‘etc.’...? ... It is the *supplément*, the excess that necessarily accompanies any effort to posit identity once and for all. This illimitable *et cetera* offers itself as a new departure for feminist political theorizing. (182-83).

Transformed by the encounter with lesbian and gay studies, with post-structuralism—in particular with Jacques Derrida, Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze—and with post-colonial thought, feminist thought is becoming “feminist political theorizing.” It has no “nationality;” it is *mestiza*; it is becoming in a borderland. As Gloria Anzaluda writes,

A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants. *Los atravesados* live here: the squint-eyed, the perverse, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulatto, the half-breed, the half dead; in short, those who cross over, pass over, or go through the confines of the “normal.” (25).

Thus feminism is plural, but in a double sense: first, the plurality of feminisms, and second, a political philosophy of multiplicity. The principle of biological, ontological difference having been called into question by approaches that deconstruct the very concept of “woman” in favor of a political thought of differential differences, of very disordered and undisciplined sexual, ethnic and racial multiplicity; one could speak, as Beatriz Preciado does, of “transfeminism”—that is, “the form that feminism takes when it runs the risk of situating itself within

multiplicity.”<sup>6</sup> What is in question here is precisely feminist political theorizing as the political theory of disordered and undisciplined multiplicity, as the politics of confused multitudes, or rather the specific and fundamental contribution of feminism to political experiments with multiplicity, the displacements that ethnic and sexual minorities bring about, the displacement of categories, discourses, forms of politics and borders.

Paraphrasing Wittig (1992, 4), we could then pose the following question: is Marxism willing to reverse itself in order to comprehend that which calls it into question? Is the concept of the multitude, as a class concept,<sup>7</sup> the expression of a Marxism that would allow itself to be vampirized by transfeminism?

## II. Chaotic Processes in the Proliferation of Post-Identitarian Identities

As a result of the deconstruction of the woman subject of historical feminism undertaken by the anti-racist and homosexual movements, and as a result of the fact that gays, lesbians, transgenders, transsexuals, women of color and Chicanas are becoming subjects of enunciation, multitudes without identities are emerging from the masses by destabilizing the order of the multiplicity and of the disciplined heterogeneities. Wouldn't the multitude, then, be the proliferation of post-identitarian identities? Post-identitarian identities, a “foreign” and “aporetic” category that would define a logic and practice of the “construction of a belonging that would not be an assignment to an identity but rather an engagement in a becoming” (Lazzarato, 205).

As Teresa de Lauretis reminds us, the African-American Combahee River Collective was the first to theorize an *identity politics*, in the 1970s.<sup>8</sup> Despite being feminists and lesbians, and in the face of the separatist pretensions of white feminists, the members of that collective insisted upon their solidarity with black men in the struggle against racism. As bell hooks said, “It's easy to give up an identity, when you got one.”<sup>9</sup> Gloria Anzaldúa writes, “Mi identidad chicana está forjada en la historia de la resistencia de la mujer india. Los rituales de luto de la mujer azteca eran ritos de desafío para protestar contra los cambios culturales que rompieron la igualdad y el equilibrio entre mujeres y varones, y protestar contra su desplazamiento a estatus inferior, su denigración.”<sup>10</sup> With ethical vigor, the originary culture is here transformed into a vital expression, as Rosi Braidotti emphasizes in *Nuovi soggetti nomadi*. But such identities are contradictory, partial, transitory, strategic: “With the hard-won recognition of their social and historical constitution, gender, race and class cannot provide the basis for belief in ‘essential’ unity,” writes Donna Haraway in “A Cyborg Manifesto” (1991, 155). Feminist and queer

post-feminist identities are not fixed, congealed identities; rather, they are shifting identities—Teresa de Lauretis's eccentric subjects, Rosi Braidotti's nomadic subjects, the hybrid, *mestiza*, negotiated identities of the young migrant women of the second generation of whom Nirmal Puwar speaks (19). They are Donna Haraway's fractured, cyborg identities, the deviant identities of queer theory, Judith Butler's non-natural, non-ontological, constructed identities, post-national, post-gender and post-identitarian identities. Thus, writes Marie-Hélène Bourcier apropos of queer practices, "Some practice politics of differences, others politics of the multitudes, but what is certain is the fact that queer thought and practices are located on the side of the multiplication of identities and post-identities, indeed on the side of the mechanisms for the production and de-production of identities" (2003, 98).

If this is possible from a theoretico-political point of view, it is not just because these feminisms have deconstructed the subject "woman" in order to think "women," in order to think sexual and gender hybridizations and mixings, but also because of the fact of thinking each individual as a multiplicity, which makes it possible to think fractured, uncongealed, shifting and deviant identities. Thus Alice Walker writes, "We are the African and the trader. We are the Indian and the settler. We are oppressor and oppressed" (545). "We are the mestizos of North America. We are black, yes, but we are 'white,' too, and we are red. To attempt to function as only one, when you are really two or three, leads, I believe, to psychic illness: 'white' people have shown us the madness of that" (540). Thus it involves thinking each individual—and being thought—as a multiplicity, as multiple in our possibility of being simultaneously inside and outside, inhabiting several worlds in contradictory ways. Unity with others, then, could only be a process of partial (and never totalizing) assemblages. The "we" would be the result of a negotiation, opening up other collective becomings in the here and now.

Post-identitarian identity politics are not the politics of identitarian or communitarian enclosure; rather, they proceed from a *de-ontologization* of, a *dis-identification* with the identities assigned by disciplinary techniques (of control) that order heterogeneities and differences and, at the same time, they necessitate strategic identifications according to a chaotic movement.<sup>11</sup> In *What is Philosophy?* Deleuze and Guattari write, "chaos is characterized less by the absence of determinations than by the infinite speed with which they take shape and vanish" (42). It is in this sense that we can think the proliferation of post-identitarian identities: as a chaotic process.

Why do I consider it so important to stress this point? First, because the question of post-identitarian identity strategies is a way of thinking multitudes differently, thinking the possible transformation of ordered multiplicity into confused multitudes. Because it seems to me that accounting for the proliferation of post-identitarian identities is one of the preconditions for surpassing the two limits that Gayatri Spivak sees in the notion of the Multitude elaborated by Hardt and Negri in *Empire*—namely, the fact that it is a concept that, although non-naturalized, is hardly “operative in the field.” In other respects, the Multitude may well be the alternative in the midst of Empire, but the Empire of which the authors speak is conceived with hardly any account of “subaltern” countries. “If we admit,” says Spivak, “that Empire does not operate in the same way everywhere and that its impact differs depending on which social strata or countries are implicated, it becomes difficult to think the concept of a homogeneous multitude” (21). We might add that the multitude appears damnably asexual here. Must we repeat it? Michel Foucault has forcefully demonstrated that exploitation does not exhaust the forms of domination, since the different forms of domination are superimposed upon and interact with one another. This is not the concept of creolization so dear to Edouard Glissant,<sup>12</sup> which would allow us to escape with a pirouette; instead, it would have to be measured against the concept of mixing [*métissage*] that puts sexuated bodies and everything that resists the creolization of the body into play.<sup>13</sup>

The “common” of the multitude cannot be sought in the lowest common denominator given, such as the common essence of exploitation. Common ground is the very object that has to be constructed politically, by fully accepting the task of accounting for the “simultaneity of oppressions,” as what I (following Preciado) have been calling trans-feminism does—even if it means taking the risk of falling back into the Marxist reductionism contained in the concept of class and in the theory of conflict as class struggle. This is a good moment to recall that extremely luminous page of Wittig’s essay “Homo Sum” in which she writes,

Marx and Engels, in summarizing all the social oppositions in terms of class struggle and class struggle only, reduced all the conflicts under two terms. This was an operation of reduction that did away with a series of conflicts that could be subsumed under the appellation of “capital’s anachronisms.” Racism, antisemitism and sexism have been hit by the Marxian reduction. The theory of conflict that they originated could be expressed by a paradigm that crossed all the Marxist “classes.” (1992, 48)

Here I would like to develop another rationale for understanding the meaning and importance of post-identitarian identity strategies, by referring again to the work of Beatriz Preciado and Marie-Hélène Bourcier, who have forcefully contributed to the demolition of protectionist

cultural barriers in France—barriers that have long blocked the translation of post-feminist and queer political/theoretical production coming from the US, and which are responsible for the almost total absence of translations of theoretico-political productions elaborated by post-colonial thought in general and, *a fortiori*, post-colonial feminist thought. Beatriz Preciado emphasizes the risks of a liberal reading, which is unfortunate but possible, of Michel Foucault.<sup>14</sup> The risk is that of thinking multitudes in opposition to identitarian strategies. The multitude could then be thought as a unified and homogeneous set of “equal” individuals. This would constitute a major mystification by concealing the privileges of the majority that has no need to name its identity, since it is dominant. In other words, such a conception of the multitude would contain the political limit of Marx’s concept of class: the annihilation of different subjectivities, the failure to account for power relations within the class. In this same sense, Marie-Hélène Bourcier foresees the possible perception in France of queer positionings as the radical politics of the production of post-identitarian sexual, racial and class identities (2003, 102). Identitarian strategies are immediately rejected in the name of “communitarian drift” by French republican universalism, which rejects every identitarian politics *except its own*.<sup>15</sup> Thus identitarian/post-identitarian strategies must also be grasped as the destabilization of the identity that is not named, the identity of the one-universal [*UN-iversal*]. They are also opposed to the abolitionist theses that would have us believe that we are living in a post-gender era.<sup>16</sup>

Trans-feminism has taken seriously the philosophy of difference, while the philosophy of difference has grasped the range and meaning of the politics of feminist, homosexual and post-colonial movements. If differences are a product of oppression, then the strategies of dis-identification and proliferation of post-identitarian identities, following a process of repetitions and infinitesimal variations, are not explosions or atomizations. But they cannot be integrated in the name of the lowest common denominator. Multitudes are rhizomatic connections in the process of their becoming.

### III. Apropos of the Multitude

In 1971 Mario Tronti, one of the principal theoreticians of Italian workerism, published the book *Operai e capitale* [*Workers and Capital*]. A passage drawn from this work can help us to appreciate the radical reversal that this Marxist current produced and the political range of that reversal: “We too have considered capitalist development to be primary, and workers’ struggles to be only secondary. This is a mistake. The problem must be reversed by changing its sign and starting over

from the beginning—and the beginning is the working class's struggle" (89).<sup>17</sup> The history to be constructed, then, is not that of capital, but that of the working class and its struggles. This struggle explains the history of capital, and not the other way around, as Marxism has always done. Wishing to remain faithful to this revolutionary move at the very heart of Marxism, we could ask if the authors of *Empire* (2000) and *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (2004) should not have begun with the Multitude, rather than as they did, with *Empire*, and thus with the so-called "anachronisms of capital." Perhaps they should have begun with an account of the simultaneity and transversality of oppressions in the multitude, the complexity of power relations, but also with resistances and insubordinations, and the rhizomatic connections among these resistances and insubordinations—the rhizomatic connection of ideas, gestures, words, groups, and minorities that escape from the mortifying mythology that consists in thinking that domination is absolute, but also from the blindness that consists in continuing to think that the only domination is that of capital, that exploitation exhausts the forms of power, that power is located in a single site. The beginning is the struggle of the queer, post-colonial and also post-Fordist multitudes, and the result is certainly not the development of capital, following the "bad dialectic between struggle and development" to which Italian workerism leads. These are the same concepts of progress and development called into question by these struggles.

The authors of *Multitude* tell us that the Multitude is a class concept.<sup>18</sup> They take into account, of course, the multiplicity of differences (ethnic or community membership, geographical location, gender, sexuality, as well as other factors)—a multiplicity of differences that are not uniformly related to the economic order and that mark the plurality of social classes. But what seems most striking is the fact that this conception of difference is so damnably static. Differences are naturalized and essentialized. They are not becoming by means of a process that is already political—that is, the chaotic process examined above. What is at stake in the definition of the multitude as a class concept is, we are told, the fact that "class itself is defined politically [...] class is determined by class struggle [...] class is also a political concept [...] class is really a constituent deployment, a project [...] This political project is what most fundamentally divides Marx's binary class conception from the liberal models of class pluralism" (Hardt and Negri, 104-05.). So far we are still in Marx, and still confronted with the "anachronisms of capital" whose resolution would have to come from the proletariat's taking of power. Nevertheless, in the pages that follow, the "anachronisms of capital" are resolved in the multitude

as a concept that “is meant to repropose Marx’s political project of class struggle” (*ibid.*, 105).

What is the multitude?

An irreducible multiplicity; the singular social differences that constitute the multitude must always be expressed and can never be flattened into sameness, unity, identity or indifference. The multitude is not merely a fragmented and dispersed multiplicity [...] The fracturing of modern identities, however, does not prevent the singularities from acting in common” (*ibid.*)

By speaking of fracturing, they set the differences into motion, but it is too bad that they do not grasp the political dimension of this motion and the subjectivities that produce it. Above all, they do not grasp how these subjectivities act in the direction of a displacement of binary oppositions to the point that these very oppositions become inoperative. On the contrary, the authors of *Multitude* seek to lead these deviant subjectivities back to the binary: the multitude and capital, the multitude defined in relation to capital. If the concept of the multitude as a class concept is, according to Hardt and Negri, a biopolitical concept, simultaneously economic and political, then the political is immediately led back to the figure of labor. “One initial approach is to conceive the multitude as all those who work under the rule of capital and thus potentially as the class of those who refuse the rule of capital. The concept of the multitude is thus very different from that of the working class,” since the working class was that which was directly subordinated to the rule of capital, a group from which housewives, independent workers, peasants and the unemployed were excluded, while the multitude will include all forms of labor (*ibid.*, 106). The concept of the multitude is thus an extension or rewriting of the concept of the “socialized worker” elaborated by Negri—a concept that conceives the territory as the site of production of the “socialized worker,” the figure of labor that emerges from the disappearance of the boundary between the factory and its outside. The figure of the worker will, according to the authors, encompass everyone: “In contrast to the exclusions that characterize the concept of the working class, then, the multitude is an open and expansive concept. The multitude gives the concept of the proletariat its fullest definition as all those who labor and produce under the rule of capital” (*ibid.*, 107). But subjectivity is only thought on the basis of the labor-subject. In other words, we are all workers under the rule of capital, which is what makes us political subjects. What would make us a multitude is our common refusal of capital’s rule. If the refusal of work was a possible strategic perspective in the 1970s, today it is impossible since we are productive even when we are sleeping or making love. Flight is no longer possible. How, then,

are we to refuse capital's rule? How are we to produce beyond the rule of capital? We are all potentially multitude, but we are all under (and within) the rule of capital. And if instead we tried to say, "No, I am not a worker, and I don't have to become one, and I no longer have to become unemployed, or a precarious worker, or an inactive one," what then?

Another question: are we all equal under the rule of capital? If we are not all equal under the rule of capital—and we are not—what constitutes our "commonality" that permits us to think and act as a multitude? According to our two authors, it is a question of seeking, by means of empirical analyses, "the common conditions of those who can become the multitude" (*ibid.*, 105). The authors seek this "commonality" of the multitude in immaterial labor—that is, the hegemonic forms of labor that arise after the end of the hegemony of industrial labor. What is immaterial labor? "Labor that creates immaterial products, such as knowledge, information, communication, a relationship or an emotional response [...] we call the other principal form of immaterial labor 'affective labor'" (*ibid.*, 108). To gain more clarity, but without continuing to analyze this book (which is not the objective of this article), it is worthwhile at this point to recall two things. The first is what Hardt and Negri understand by "hegemonic"—a concept that does not refer to a numerically dominant form, but rather to one that is emerging qualitatively as a "tendency" that imposes itself on all forms of labor and on the whole of society. The question that arises at this stage, then, is how do we know if we should seek the multitude in this pattern that is becoming a new "norm" of labor, or if, instead, we should seek it in everything that does not fit into the norm—everything that flees the norm, seeking the direction of failures, of those I would call "economic abnormal"—the direction of those who act in the "borderlands" according to an inside/outside logic, or even the direction of the "interstices" as Philippe Pignarre and Isabelle Stengers conceive them?<sup>19</sup> This does not mean falling into the ideology of the margins, but, rather, seizing agency. Agency lies in "the possibility of a variation on repetition" (Butler, 185). The subject does not pre-exist the action; instead it is constructed in and by the act, by affirming itself as a creative force, and creation lies in this possibility of a variation on the repetition. But more fundamentally, I see a major risk there—the risk of simply incorporating feminist and post-colonial critique, a sort of indifference toward the cacophony that produced decolonization, in the sense that the critique is incorporated but does not modify or reconfigure the analytic schema. And the very concept of the hegemonic form of labor poses problems if one recalls the aporias to which the analysis of industrial labor as a

hegemonic form leads: the impossibility of grasping the multiplicity of processes and forms of life that are invented in the spaces of the “anachronisms of capital.”

The second point to which I would draw attention concerns the references that the authors give for identifying the traits of “affective labor.” They are thus going to integrate into their concept the labor that Marx did not take into account because it was not exchanged with capital and was not done for a wage—that is, the labor of reproduction (of the species and of labor-power) undertaken by women. But they do so in the following way: this new hegemonic form of labor will be defined as “kin work,” “caring labor,” “maternal work”— in short, labor that is “naturally” feminine. Therefore, the task with which feminism—but we should speak instead of *transfeminism*—ever since Virginia Woolf’s day has been charged in its struggles, namely to kill “the angel in the house,” returns as a myth. And we are to expect to see realized Marxist feminist Nancy Hartsock’s utopian dream of a world in which women’s activities are generalized and thus bring about the possibility of a “completely human community.”<sup>20</sup> And then if, following Hardt and Negri’s analysis, everything becomes labor and is within capital, must we conclude that capital is “becoming-woman”? Should we not instead change the mode of exposition by accepting the radical impossibility of re-essentializing or re-naturalizing the category of sex and by assuming the consequences that this implies for the very concept of labor?

#### IV. Labor, Freedom and Income

Before that I had made my living by cadging odd jobs from newspapers, by reporting a donkey show here or a wedding there; I had earned a few pounds by addressing envelopes, reading to old ladies, making artificial flowers, teaching the alphabet to small children in a kindergarten...But what still remains with me as a worse infliction...was the poison of fear and bitterness which those days bred in me. To begin with, always to be doing work that one did not wish to do, and to do it like a slave, flattering and fawning, not always necessarily perhaps, but it seemed necessary and the stakes were too great to run risks... — Virginia Woolf (37-38)

The western economies are characterized by a double process, one that equally implicates the economies of the east and south: a growing use of wage relations [*salarisation*] and, at the same time, a flexibilizing of employment along with a resulting precariousness of living conditions,

a veritable pauperization among wage-earners. Wage labor, while imposing itself on everyone, is far from being a guarantee of access to a decent standard of living. Out of this double process of expanding wage relations and flexibilizing emerges a multiplicity of “economic abnormal”: the unemployable, welfare recipients [*assistées*], non-workers [*inactifs*], the handicapped, those without qualifications or professional credentials, the inept, the old, the sick, the unemployed, precarious workers, students, researchers who cannot find knowledges to sell on the knowledge market, bastard artists or artists without credentials, documented or undocumented immigrants, sex workers. This mass does not constitute a smooth space, but rather a striated space—one fashioned by complex relations of gender, sex, race, ethnicity and age. It involves many heterogeneous singularities that do not answer—and each in its own way—to the injunction “You must be a good, capable worker.” It involves what we might call, paraphrasing Judith Butler, “economic failures.” How can we displace the dominant forms of knowledge that stigmatize the “failures,” the “economic abnormal,” and class them in the category of the “supernumerary” [*le surnuméraire*]?

Quoting Larry Mitchell, Starhawk writes, “It is categories in the mind and guns in their hands that keep us enslaved” (174). If the category of the “supernumerary” is such a gun in their hands, “a machine for manufacturing people who are ready to do anything in order to avoid falling into that category,”<sup>21</sup> many other categories are also in our minds to make their guns effective. Among them, the category “labor” is particularly central and problematic and has been so from the moment in western culture when labor came to constitute that which gives a person dignity and a social identity, that which allows the person to join humanity. Human life, writes Italian Marxist Claudio Napoleoni, has other dimensions on which to found a “dignified existence.” The category of labor is problematic and has been so from the moment when, in Marx, labor became what Maurizio Lazzarato calls that “activity that is constitutive of the world. Labor is not a simple, determinate economic activity, but rather praxis—that is, the production of the world and the self, a generic activity not merely of the worker but of human beings in general” (13). Labor as a category is so problematic that western culture bears within itself all the ambiguity of the statement, “Work is freedom.”

Geneviève Fraisse, a philosopher and historian who has dedicated most of her work to the question of women, has analyzed the meaning of the ambiguity this formula conceals: the fact that labor (and women’s access to wage labor) is a condition of emancipation and, at the same time, a factor of enslavement (as wage labor). Thus, in women’s history, access to work (understood in its accepted modern sense as wage labor),

which is to say winning the right to work (and thus to a job), would be that which allows one to secure the means of subsistence, to win economic independence, and at the same time that which allows one to emancipate oneself in the sense of possibly gaining autonomy—that is, independence vis-à-vis the institution of the family, at the price of the enslavement that is part of wage earning. Only in this sense, the sense of winning autonomy and independence, is it possible to understand the positive political meaning of a statement as ambiguous and disturbing as “Work is freedom” — “a formula that has been used in different ways for over a century to support emancipation or to impose servitude,” as Fraisse notes (544). In Marx, to the extent that it operates in a determinate historical situation (capitalism), labor has been turned into something other than the way it is realized in human life. And if he defended the idea that the emancipation of women occurs through labor, it is a fact that labor has two faces: it is a factor of alienation, but also a factor of emancipation. For women, Fraisse argues, this tension does not operate within the sphere of production, as it does for men, but between the two spheres of production and reproduction. In the sphere of reproduction, what is at stake is women’s freedom.

Women have always worked, as emancipationist feminism asserts, but on the one hand, as “homemakers” or collaborators with their husbands they were considered non-workers, and on the other hand, they had no access to money in the sense that they had no right to manage their own goods and could only practice a profession with the consent of their husbands. Thus Fraisse observes that “women’s work is a massively obvious fact as well as a problem,” and she adds that the problem lies in the figure of the woman worker: “the woman worker becomes a problem because she then [in the nineteenth century] established the opposition between private and public, between the family and work” (543). The cause of the problem was the questioning by the feminist movements of the “naturalness” of the sexual division of labor and the labor status that women had without a corresponding wage. The cause of the problem was the questioning of the social conditions, the disciplinary mechanisms of control by which this division/separation legitimated the non-remuneration of a form of labor corresponding to a sphere considered by political economy—including the Marxist critique of political economy—to be outside of the economic. The cause of the problem was the questioning of the oft-proclaimed heterogeneity of production and reproduction, and the separation between private and public. Fraisse then locates the subversive character of feminist analyses in the demands for monetary recognition of the value of the domestic labor of reproduction: “taking note of the analogy between production and

reproduction, they would demonstrate that the fundamental issue was the unpaid status of domestic labor" (551). But from the feminist point of view, specifically the viewpoint of the European feminist movements of the 1960s and 1970s, the solution did not lie in obtaining a wage corresponding to the labor of reproduction (of the species and of labor-power); it was not a matter of demanding monetary recognition for wealth produced, but rather of winning the conditions of freedom, even by means of wage labor.

In the 1970s, the feminist movements attacked the model of Fordist/Keynesian growth. As Christian Marazzi's analysis has shown, the crisis of Fordism was intimately bound up with the emergence of feminist movements, in the sense that the struggles against the sexual division of labor—which feminists showed to be a social construction, a political mechanism of control over women's freedom—destabilized the welfare state and its corollary, familial welfare. Marazzi recognizes in the welfare state the first political experiment with a social income of existence or bio-income [*biorevenu*], a social investment in the biological reproduction of labor-power; as he further emphasizes, welfare also ensured the continuity of capital's cycle of valorization.<sup>22</sup> But the welfare state, above all when configured according to Bismarckian models of social protection, could only function by preserving the sexual division of labor. To recognize feminist struggles as struggles against welfare is to recognize the power of a movement against the institutional compromise that ties us to the welfare state and connects the capitalist enterprise, the state and the family. The meaning of this "revolution" at the heart of the western world can be grasped by examining what these struggles also reveal: the sad myth of full employment (a full employment that means only full male employment, and even then only a certain category of males)—a situation that assigned social rights to a twin category consisting of the wage labor of men plus the subjection of women, both genders constrained to marriage and normative sexuality. Welfare was that economic but above all biopolitical mechanism that consolidated the heteronormative regime and trapped women in the "house," the domestic space which was, we must remember, becoming a space of high technology as a result of consumer products (from the washer and dryer to the dishwasher, etc.) and, far from being the mythical space of affect and loving care, was a space of enclosure and violence.

By killing the "angel in the house," the feminist movements destabilized the welfare state and revived the political figure of the witch. Who were the witches? The archetype of rebellion in every framework, witches were sages, doctors, practitioners of other knowledges who could no longer find a place in the redistribution of knowledge that scientific

positivism brought about.<sup>23</sup> Witches were women without husbands who refused marriage, figures of a sexuality that resisted normalization, a sexuality that did not find its goal in procreation, but in a non-productive, deviant sexuality. Witches were also figures of homosexuality, of nomadic sexuality. As Michela Zucca has noted, they also represented “the cardinal element of continuity, the charismatic leaders and spokespeople of a society and culture that were essentially anti-productive, in the capitalist sense of the term” (292). The persecution of witches, as Starhawk demonstrates, is linked to three interlocking processes: “the expropriation of land and natural resources; the expropriation of knowledge, and the war against the consciousness of immanence” (189). She adds, “Western culture bases its ethics and its justice on the stories of estrangement...The ethics of immanence encourage diversity rather than sameness in human endeavors, and within the biological community” (33, 38). If the enclosure of communal land compels those who had lost their source of independent living to submit to wage relations and thus to construct the history of western economy over the past several centuries, then the persecution of the witches is a *war on immanence*. “If twentieth-century barbarism is not the same as the barbarism of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries,” writes Esther Cohen, “their common origin is beyond doubt: both cases involve a ‘violent’ allergic reaction to radical alterity, a negation of the other as absolutely other, who is called Jew, witch, woman, black, or native” (132).

Thus a reading of feminist struggles solely from the angle of work and the sexual division of labor is a highly reductive operation that prevents one from grasping the displacements that these struggles have produced on the plane of knowledges and around the political issue of their production. The sexual division of labor and the separation between production and reproduction are only corollaries of sexual difference insofar as they are products of oppression. Feminism uncovers the mechanisms of power concealed by the scientific discourses on difference and sex, on nature and culture. Above all, the question posed here is the following: what concept of labor can we retain once all the divisions/separations that founded it are destabilized? Furthermore, such a reading prevents one from grasping the destabilization of the institutions of capitalism, and first among them the bourgeois family; it prevents one from grasping the impact of a revolution in the conception and practices of sexuality that is irreducible to sexual difference. “Power,” Foucault writes, “does not operate in one single site but in multiple sites: the family, sexual life, the treatment of the mad, the exclusion of homosexuals, relations between men and women...all these relations are political relations” (2001, 473). Feminism will act at the level of these relations by

radically destabilizing the capitalist order of the so-called “virtuous growth” of the postwar period that reigns throughout the western world. Finally, an “economistic” reading of feminist struggles prevents one from grasping the “other as absolutely other” in its becoming-multiplicity, a becoming in which the feminist movements of the 1970s constituted a moment and the opening of a space of possibility, as did the movements of ethnic and homosexual minorities in the US.

Since the crisis of Fordism, unemployment and precarious employment have been established as norms of wage labor, but far from being strictly economic phenomena, unemployment and precariousness are the results of a societal upheaval, as Margaret Maruani and Emmanuèle Reynaud convincingly argue.<sup>24</sup> Thus, for example, during the period 1965-1996 in France, the percentage of women employed has risen from 43 to 78 percent. In the US during the same period, this percentage grew similarly: from 45 to 76 percent. The near-explosive growth of women’s presence on the labor market has spawned studies and research from several directions. A first approach seeks to denounce the wage and career discrimination women face on the labor market. A second approach, not too distant from the work of Hardt and Negri, involves grasping the new nature of labor by means of some sort of feminine model of labor that would become a common matrix for everyone.

The feminization of labor is often mentioned in order to account for the confusion between production and reproduction that is scrambling the categories of political economy, and making the borders between the time and space of life and those of so-called “productive” labor seem to disappear, in order to account for the phenomenon of “setting affect to work” or “setting life to work.”<sup>25</sup> Does the fact that the borders between labor and non-labor are being effaced mean that everything is becoming labor? The question I am raising is not new, and elsewhere, while inscribing my work within the kind of Marxism of which I spoke earlier, I have tried to point out the erasure of the border between labor time and life time. All of life has become productive for (and within) capital, which leads to the justification of the legitimacy of a guaranteed income for all, unconditionally, as a monetary recognition of the wealth produced, even though it is outside of the realm of business.<sup>26</sup> If the concept of “guaranteed income” can act as a factor that destabilizes the category of labor, one that brings about a displacement of the hegemonic discourse on employment and unemployment, can it translate the multiplicity of groups that are rising against the capitalization of the living? Can it express a heteroglossia without claiming to be a common language? These

are the questions I am posing today, along with the question of what perspective one should adopt in order to think about guaranteed income.

### V. Some Hypotheses

Without claiming to provide definitive and perfectly coherent answers, and as part of a critical and self-critical process, I want to risk advancing several contradictory hypotheses that will open up some rather different perspectives. My point of departure will be an analysis that bears not so much on the structure of the labor market as on the metamorphoses of capitalism, the nature of labor, and the modes of valorization of the various capitals.

According to these analyses, the entry of women into the so-called sphere of production would have contributed significantly to the cultural modification of the nature of labor by introducing into it the characteristics proper to the social reproduction of life: interrelationality, flexibility as an intelligent response to the unforeseen, creativity, subjectivity, and the heterogeneity of tasks as so many characteristics that could not be left trapped within the standardization of time and the objective measurement of value. Sara Ongaro has analyzed these ongoing transformations over the course of thirty years in terms of a process of integrating reproductive activities into production, a process that she defines as "productive reproduction" (145-53). In other words, the sphere of reproductive activities is integrated into that of production, so these activities no longer function to reproduce labor-power but instead are activities that directly produce surplus-value. In the fusion/confusion between production and reproduction, political economy's categories of "production" and "reproduction" go into crisis. What is reproductive activity? It is the set of activities that create life, the cognitive, cultural and affective universe, a set of activities that runs from biological generation to domestic labor and activities of social, emotional, communicational and relational reproduction. What is happening with these activities today? Biological generation is becoming a new market, a field of valorization in itself, through the sale of "organs without bodies" and the renting of the uterus. As for domestic labor, a new division of labor between women arises here. Women are externalizing this activity of low "social value." We are thus witnessing the development of personal services, clusters of jobs that reproduce the life of others. Ultimately, the labor of reproduction as a set of activities that create life, the cognitive, cultural and affective universe, enters into production by modifying the nature of labor.

From this perspective it should then be possible to speak in terms of a “becoming-woman of labor.”<sup>27</sup> The becoming-woman of labor would concern the very nature of labor, its being as an activity that produces economic value, goods and services on the basis of extra-economic human qualities such as language, relational ability, and affectivity. Corresponding to this setting to work of feminine competences is a generalization of specifically feminine conditions to a growing fraction of the active male population: precariousness, instability and atypical contractual forms will no longer be exclusively the feminine condition, but will encompass all of human activity. By entering the labor market, women will have exported what had been their condition to the rest of the world. This is the sense in which one could agree to analyze the feminization of labor as a situation that extends “the mechanisms of subjection applied above all and historically to women,”<sup>28</sup> a situation consisting of forms that are worth investigating and resistances, obstacles, and modes of flight that are worth grasping. This will involve grasping the relations of domination in the field of the production of knowledges, images and information not merely from the angle of exploitation, but also from that of subjection and oppression.

In an article I co-wrote with Maurizio Lazzarato, we proposed to speak of the passage from the capital/labor relation to the capital/life relation, which we explained in the following terms:

[W]e are confronted with a capitalist accumulation that is no longer founded on the exploitation of labor in the industrial sense of the term, but on the exploitation of knowledge, living entities, health, free time, culture, relational resources between individuals (communication, socialization, sex), the imaginary, personal development, habitat, etc. What is produced and sold is not merely material or immaterial goods, but forms of life, forms of communication, standards of socialization, education, perception, habitation, transportation, etc. The explosion of services is directly linked to this evolution, and it no longer exclusively involves industrial services, but also the mechanisms that organize and control “forms of life.” For capitalist accumulation, ethnic, religious and cultural differences are becoming commodities, as is the biological reproduction of life. Life and its differences are becoming factors of valorization for an increasingly nomadic capitalism. The globalization through which we are living is not only extensive (delocalization, etc.) but also intensive, and it involves cognitive, cultural, affective and communicative resources (the lives of individuals) as well as genetic territories and heritages (human, vegetable and animal), the resources of the lives of species and the planet itself (water, air, etc.). This “setting to work” of life by an increasingly globalized capital, made possible by neoliberal logic, generates insecurity—

insecurity and risk for life in its globality, and no longer just for labor as in Fordism. From poverty to Mad Cow Disease, from exclusion to AIDS, from the problem of housing to "sexual identity," the very foundations of life are being undermined. (178-79)

From this perspective, the demand for guaranteed income can be considered according to two logics: one that claims monetary recognition for that power of creating life which largely surpasses employment—countable and measurable labor time and the enterprise; and another that considers guaranteed income as a precondition for re-appropriating spaces in which to experiment with other forms of life and to re-appropriate knowledges and land, spaces that offer "the power to reshape our common lives, the power to change reality" (Starhawk, 219). These two perspectives converge at a single point: the idea of depriving money of its power to command by significantly weakening the wage relation as a constraint or condition of access to income. Nevertheless, according to the first perspective, even though it is detached from employment, this income is still presented as a form of wage—even if it is largely socialized—since it remains inscribed within a logic of monetary "recognition" of the productivity of life for and within capital. In other words, it responds in terms of social "justice" within capital and its logic of valorization by setting life to work, thus it posits a limit to capitalist exploitation but does not allow other becomings. But the setting of life to work does not consist solely of exploitation. Here the concept of the feminization of labor can be a tool if it is considered as an extension of mechanisms of subjection and oppression.

Far from the rationality of economic calculation, but also far from Marx's progressive vision of capital that is closely bound up with a certain positivist vision of science as the human domination of nature,<sup>29</sup> the foundations of an income that would not be a wage can be sought in the feminist literature of the early twentieth century. At the end of the 1920s, Virginia Woolf, a friend of John Maynard Keynes and a member of the London bourgeois intelligentsia, published *A Room of One's Own*. To the question, "What are the necessary conditions for the creation of works of art?" she answered, "it is necessary to have five hundred a year and a room with a lock on the door if you are to write fiction or poetry...That is it. Intellectual freedom depends upon material things. Poetry depends upon intellectual freedom...That is why I have laid so much stress on money and a room of one's own" (109, 112).

From this perspective, revenue (or whatever other form of income is sufficiently beyond the categories of wage and profit) is presented as a "necessary condition" *ex ante*. Income *ex ante* imposes the need to rethink

the creation of money *ex nihilo*, a “public” money that would not be capital since it would not be produced within an already capitalist relation of production. Far from claiming abstract universality, these “necessary conditions” can only be defined “locally.” Thus we must begin with an interrogation of practices and the “necessary conditions” that make them possible. The universality of socially guaranteed income is constructed as a politics of situated knowledges.

## VI. The Becoming-Transfeminist of the Production of Knowledge: The Politics of Situated Knowledges

We need to learn in our bodies, endowed with primate color and stereoscopic vision, how to attach the objective to our theoretical and political scanners in order to name where we are and are not, in dimensions of mental and physical space we hardly know how to name. So, not so perversely, objectivity turns out to be about particular and specific embodiment, and definitely not about the false vision promising transcendence of all limits and responsibility. — Donna Haraway (190)

Without wanting to claim a unity which, as Alice Walker writes, can lead only to madness, but also wanting to avoid schizophrenia, I have asked myself what it can mean for me to be an economist, well integrated into the university institution, after having confronted post-structuralist philosophy, feminist political theorizing, and post-colonial thought. Marxism, with all its variants, constituted a less and less stable and satisfactory frame of reference in which to situate my critical positioning.<sup>30</sup> Using the marginal (but nevertheless privileged) strategic position of having access to a wage guaranteed by the state in return for 192 hours of teaching per year, I invested my time in *Multitudes*, a journal of non-academic political philosophy, a space in which I could escape the disciplinary enclosure that characterizes the French university, and then, since 2003, in an experiment in the co-production of knowledge within the movement of intermittent workers in entertainment [*intermittents du spectacle*]. The latter is a space in which I am experimenting with the figure of the “organic intellectual” in Aurora Levins Morales’s sense, a space for experimenting with a politics of situated knowledges.<sup>31</sup>

What is an intermittent worker in entertainment? “Manufacturing the sensory,” an intermittent worker in entertainment is a wage laborer discontinuously employed by multiple employers at rates that vary according to the projects and the employers. Since the 1960s, these wage

laborers who are “not like the others” have benefited from an “exceptional” regime of unemployment compensation, in the sense that the relative flexibility of the conditions of access to the right to unemployment compensation allowed a growing number of people to assure themselves of continuous income in a situation of radical discontinuity of employment. This “growing number” is conceived by power (that of the state, but also employers, as in the case of some workers’ unions) as “supernumerary,” a number that exceeds the “normal” equilibrium of the market between the supply and demand of cultural goods (but we should speak instead of the goods produced by the “entertainment industry” [*industrie du spectaculaire*]). This is a comforting vision for the producers of “economic truths.” The “supernumerary” has a cost: the deficit in unemployment insurance funding. The challenge to their specific regime of unemployment compensation already loomed as a real threat, but this is only the mark of the reform protocol, out of which a movement of great breadth has arisen. Its strength derives from its duration and from the fact that it has taken the organizational form of coordination, which is quite distinct from that of hierarchical organizational structures.<sup>32</sup> Its strength also derives from the fact that it has taken into account the multiple subjectivities that compose it. Far from constituting a homogeneity from the viewpoint of labor skills, competences and practices, intermittent work [*intermittence*] covers a vast field, from machinists to composers, from directors to administrators, etc. Here we certainly find the characteristics of the immaterial worker of which Hardt and Negri speak, but the modes of existence, the life trajectories, labor practices, sensibilities and subjectivities implicated in the process of manufacturing “immaterial” goods are heterogeneous. Whatever it is that constitutes an “us” is not given; it is instead a problematic and passionate construction.

More than just the imbrication of time of living and labor time, intermittent work can be conceived as a “borderland” between employment and unemployment, a site beyond employment and unemployment from which to interrogate the meaning as well as the contents of labor—a borderland as a space for experimenting with forms of life that feed on the hybridization of space-time inside/outside of employment.<sup>33</sup> The supernumerary is thus the expression of flight from “normal” work, whose contents and meaning appear less and less obvious to us, toward the “borderlands,” since it is not only a matter of fleeing from wage-earning but also of engagement in the search for “meaning,” engagement in a becoming-other of the self and of what one makes of it. But the history of the movement of intermittent workers is

also one of permanent “expertise,” which inspires a reflection on the politics of knowledge and poses the relationship between minoritarian and majoritarian knowledges as a problem.<sup>34</sup>

If I refer to this experience of the movement, it is because it somehow constitutes the site of a singular assemblage between the problematic of “minoritarian knowledges” or the politics of knowledge and the issue of the “continuity of income” in the discontinuity of employment, or rather, another way of thinking labor, activity and the multiple spaces of life. This assemblage passes by way of the very particular step that this movement took from the first days of its constitution. To try to sum up this step in a few words, I will draw upon two major titles of its initiatives: “We have read the protocol” and “We have a proposition to make to you.” The reform protocol is read collectively, as all the reports of the “experts” will later be, and the “employment practices” and “labor practices” are confronted with one another in order to determine the consequences of their application. The instituted truth-knowledge that makes up the law is confronted with the knowledges of those who have experience. By basing itself on the experiences and competencies of the greatest number, the reform protocol is criticized not only for the inequalities and exclusions it produces, but also for its inadequacy in dealing with the concrete and heterogeneous employment practices those concerned have experienced first-hand.

To say the least, the result is disappointing: the reform does not bring about the hoped-for economies that have justified it. What is revealed is the political import of the economic reforms placed under the rubric “it must be done,” in order to bring about a refoundation of social policy. It no longer involves mechanisms of income transfer, but rather mechanisms of capitalization, according to a principle of individual insurance, intended to create the conditions for the existence of that economic and social regulator, the market. The old system of compensation, which limited the randomness inherent in discontinuous employment practices and assured a certain continuity of income each year, constituted a powerful tool by which flexibility could be reappropriated by intermittent workers as freely-chosen mobility; it constituted a tool of resistance to the processes of devalorization of labor and pauperization of workers, but it also freed them from the grip of employment and opened up other possibilities, other areas of the sensory and other temporalities. The experience of “expertise” within the movement of intermittent workers is very rich, and it allows the movement to shift the battleground to the very terrain of the production

of power-knowledge, to what Foucault calls the “regime of truth.” Isabelle Stengers has emphasized the specific contribution of this movement: it is not merely a matter of laying claim to expertise; rather, it is the fact of having revealed the logic of the reforms imposed under the slogan “You are too numerous; it must be done.” The intermittent workers have revealed the bookkeeping logic on which neoliberal policies are based: fabricate deficits and use populations as adjustable variables. It appeared, then, that “the meaning of ‘it must be done’ [...] refers not to a necessity that everyone must recognize, but rather to a global operation of reassembling the relations between the state and capitalism.”<sup>35</sup>

“We have a proposition to make to you” is the second moment, the second stage of “expertise”: it involves not only saying “no” to reform, since it is not just the conservative defense of the past, but also the occasion to elaborate a “New Model” of unemployment compensation for wage laborers in discontinuous employment on the basis of a collectively constructed representation of “necessary conditions” so that labor practices and other forms of life—extracted from the constraints of employment flexibility—will be possible. Far from claiming universality, the “New Model” is intended as an appropriable “open base,” adaptable to the “local” criteria belonging to different practices. The battle for social rights, for the assurance of income continuity, here takes on the meaning of a battle to protect and even enlarge this borderland between employment and unemployment that is intermittent work. The New Model brings about a displacement of the logic of employment/unemployment. It foreshadows neither a total inside (permanent employment) nor a total outside (a universal dole). The New Model expresses neither the claim to permanent employment nor the claim to income, but rather guarantees the conditions for “making it,” for making something different, and making it differently. It displaces the centrality of labor, and *a fortiori* wage labor, without claiming to eliminate the class of wage-earners; it does so by destabilizing wage labor to the point that it can no longer be the “norm” imposed on everyone. The New Model articulates an income of activity and social income conceived within a logic of insurance that is neither individual nor assistance-based but rather mutualist. It utilizes the “inside” (cultural institutions and those of the market) and the “outside” (sites of experimentation outside the normalizing structures of aesthetics and cultural contents). In other words, this New Model is configured as a “necessary condition” for being able to “make it” and also to “make differently” the artistic creations that its own life extracts from employment time, from the caprices of the

market and the rule of capital. It presents itself as a range of possibilities large enough that each person can choose her own forms of mobility and own practices of activity.

Some researchers, myself included, have joined the movement. We did not bring with us the idea of collective expertise; it was already there, constitutive of the movement. And our presence in the movement certainly cannot be defined by the figure that Foucault called the universal intellectual, "a master of truth and justice...the spokesman of the universal" (1980, 126). There is something that makes us academics akin to the intermittent workers in the entertainment industry—something that has to do in part with the "borderlands" (between one contract and another for free-lance researchers, between teaching and research for those who are tenured, but even more, something that has to do with the borderlands between disciplines, between the narrow walls of the universities and their outside). But above all it is the fact that the production of knowledge, with which intermittent workers are experimenting, involve us directly as makers of "knowledges," as university professionals (especially in the social sciences), and as engaged intellectuals. In the experience of co-production our practices are transformed, our categories metamorphosed, our interpretive schemas altered. Furthermore, what brings us together is the fact of knowing that an income is no guarantee that we can "make it" and "make it differently," knowing that we still need tools of production and distribution. What brings us together is also the fact that we are this figure of which Hardt and Negri speak, producers of knowledges, symbols, information, relations and culture—the fact that we can also be co-producers of the culture that we are contesting. And we are experimenting with the complex relationship between exploitation and subjection. But what constitutes our common trait is the fact that in France, the producers of knowledges, symbols and information are all damnably white-faced.

On the basis of her experience as an ethnologist, Vinciane Despret writes the following:

Are not our categories, our problems, our history, the things that make us describe others as those things describe us? It is not just a matter of breaking with some versions of the "us," but with the very idea that we could, without constructing it, seek universality—a universality that is so much more suspect than history has taught us, that has regularly served to impose the point of view of the dominant groups [...] In place of abstract universality given as an a priori condition, we must substitute what feminists have called a "concrete universality," made up of a multiplicity of viewpoints. (194)

The experience of co-production fits into this construction of local concrete universality. It implies the confrontation among multiple viewpoints, but also the mobilization of multiple and singular competences. It involves the invention of a tool for producing sharable knowledge. There is no diploma for such manufacturing, but in any case this operation is not transferable since it is constructed within a fold of local institutional and political history, and it must be conceived instead as an "open base."

Foucault spoke of a "specific intellectual" in opposition to the figure of the universal intellectual in order to account for "a new mode of the 'connection between theory and practice'" (1980, 126). But in our experience, the new mode is also defined by the implied figures: what in Foucault's terms we could call specific intellectuals, but also "those concerned [*concernés*]." Far from being an acquisition, the production of "transversal links of one knowledge to another knowledge" between "specific intellectuals" and "those concerned" as experts—in the sense of "those who have experience"—is an everyday challenge: to avoid the risk of reverting to the figure of the "acknowledged expert" or worse, the "universal intellectual," as well as the risk of the romantic idealization of minorities or "those concerned." The risk of falling into a sort of "romantic" approach to the "margins" as exteriority is always great. But "[t]he margins," writes Rosi Braidotti, "are always within, inside a social space that is not smooth but multilinear, discontinuous and pitted everywhere."<sup>36</sup> There is always a risk of falling into a no less romantic, naturalizing/essentializing approach to "those concerned" that idealizes the knowledge they bear as "pure," "naïve," "bare," or "independent," as if those knowledges were not already traversed by representations and visions, as if seeing did not require learning to see, and indeed "learning to see with the help of others without claiming to see for them." From the critical perspective of hegemonic knowledge and its pretense of objectivity, there is a great risk of falling either into absolute relativism or into a position that, by idealizing the knowledge of "those concerned," ends up in an approach that imagines that only identity will produce science.

The feminist epistemologists, scientists and philosophers have posed the objectivity and universality of knowledge as a problem, and they have also shown that there is no *becoming-woman of intellectual labor* but rather many *becomings-feminist*: it is not "as women" that scientists have produced other modes of production of knowledge and other knowledges, since it is not identity that produces science, but rather critical

positioning, as Donna Haraway has shown. “[F]eminist objectivity means quite simply *situated knowledges*” (188), but the knowledges of “those concerned” are not immediately situated knowledges. “Situated knowledge,” as Beatriz Preciado remarks in rereading Haraway, “does not constitute a transgression coming from the margins of normality” (2005, 149). Haraway notes that “feminist objectivity is about limited location and situated knowledge, not about transcendence and splitting of subject and object. In this way we might become answerable for what we learn how to see” (190). “I am arguing,” she adds, “for politics and epistemologies of location, positioning and situating, where partiality and not universality is the condition of being heard to make rational knowledge claims” (195). “Situated knowledges act as practices of subaltern objectivity in the face of universal scientific authorities and cultural relativisms,” writes Beatriz Preciado (2005, 149). As Haraway notes, such objectivity is a practice that privileges contestation, deconstruction, passionate construction, networks of relations that cover the world and include the ability to partially translate knowledges between communities that are themselves very different and differentiated in terms of power.

Hence it is impossible to recompose a “universal” subject, either out of a paradigmatic figure (the precarious worker or the cognitive worker, for example) or out of a figure that incarnates the tendency (Hardt and Negri’s immaterial worker), but this impossibility of totalizing the critique, as Preciado emphasizes,

does not imply the impossibility of local alliance among multiplicities; on the contrary, a minor alliance only exists in the multiplicity of enunciation as a cross-section of differences [...] It is a matter of inventing “relational politics,” strategies of political intersection that challenge the spaces at the “intersection of oppressions.” (2005, 153)

The politics of situated knowledges can then be conceived as the politics of knowledges that connect differences, that establish rhizomatic alliances in discontinuity and not in consensus—a politics made up of networks of differential positionings, to use Chela Sandoval’s terms.<sup>37</sup> The question of how to make the concept of the multitude “operative in the field” can only find satisfactory answers by planting itself firmly in the analysis of the terrain on which the connections are in the process of being made—the possible connections that imply not homogeneity, but rather multiple assemblages—by “manufacturing intelligence of the heterogeneous as heterogeneous, in which each term is an opportunity for others to experiment a bit differently with their positions” (Pignarre and Stengers,

152). We have experimented with such a politics in this local experience, which has allowed us to produce a knowledge that will only ever be partial, and its partiality will make it objective. We have not discovered a "truth," but instead have revealed the rules according to which the knowledges that institute the law, in their partiality, can be set up as truth. The political dimension of this movement is measured less by what it has won or lost in the short term than by the displacements that it brings about, and the metamorphoses that the collective experience has produced in each of us.

Paris, January 2006

Translated by Timothy S. Murphy

### Notes

1. This article is dedicated to the memory of my grandmothers Amelia and Gabriella, to my young son Tom, and to my friend François Matheron. I would particularly like to thank Thomas Berns for his attentive reading and his advice, as well as the editors of this issue who, by inviting me to contribute, have also given me the opportunity for a new reflection on my experiences and my journey.
2. In the chapter "Docile Bodies" in *Discipline and Punish*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 1977), Michel Foucault writes: "The first of the great operations of discipline is, therefore, the constitution of 'tableaux vivants,' which transform the confused, useless or dangerous multitudes into ordered multiplicities" (148).
3. For a critique of Deleuze's "becoming-woman," see in particular Beatriz Preciado, *Manifeste Contra-Sexuel* (Paris: Balland, 2000).
4. Wittig 1992 (56). (Translator's note: the citation has been modified to conform to Corsani's translation.)
5. For American readers, I think it is important to emphasize the fact that in France, nationalist universalism (also called the politics of the "cultural exception") has hidden from view the richness of the movement of ideas imparted by post-feminist thought as well as post-colonial thought. If the history of ideas has always been nomadic, "nomad feminism" (to follow Rosi Braidotti's terms) must also settle accounts with "the symbolic mothers who have colonized the heritage of a movement that belongs to all."
6. Preciado, "Savoirs\_Vampires@war." In *Multitudes* 20 (2005). The term "transfeminism," according to Preciado, "marks the displacement of the site of enunciation from a universal 'female' subject to a multiplicity of situated subjects. It involves a conceptual overturning of the debates concerning equality/difference, justice/recognition, and essentialism/constructivism in favor of debates concerning the transversal production of differences."
7. See Hardt and Negri.
8. De Lauretis 1992 (50). (Translator's note: See also Combahee River Collective, "A Black Feminist Statement," in *Words of Fire: An Anthology of African-American Feminist Thought*, ed. Beverly Guy-Sheftall, New York: New Press, 1995, 231-40).
9. hooks, interview with Andrea Juno in *Angry Women* (San Francisco: RE/Search, 1991).
10. Anzaldúa, "Movimientos de rebeldía y las culturas que traicionan." In *Borderlands/La Frontera* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 1987). (Translator's note: During her lifetime Anzaldúa refused to allow her Spanish writings to be translated into English, in order

- to reject the “universalizing” ambitions of the hegemonic language, and I have respected her wishes in this case as well.)
11. Preciado, “Multitudes queer,” in *Multitudes* 12 (2003), p. 21.
  12. See Glissant, *Introduction à une poétique du divers* (Paris: Gallimard, 1996).
  13. See Jean-Yves Mondon, “La parole du créole qui ne se dit pas ‘créole’ en créole.” In *Multitudes* 22 (2005).
  14. *Multitudes* has already dedicated a dossier in issue 4 to the liberal reading of Foucault; the title of the dossier is “Foucault chez les patrons” [“The Bosses’ Foucault”]!
  15. For a caustic analysis of the republic and the riots in the Parisian suburbs in autumn 2005, see Yann Moulier Boutang, *La révolte des banlieues ou les habits nus de la république* (Paris: Editions Amsterdam, 2005).
  16. “The loss of gender norms,” writes Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble*, “would have the effect of proliferating gender configurations, destabilizing substantive identity, and depriving the naturalizing narratives of compulsory heterosexuality of their central protagonists: ‘man’ and ‘woman’” (187).
  17. (Translator’s note: Corsani is referring to the augmented second edition; the first edition of Tronti’s book appeared in 1966. The quotation is from the chapter “Lenin in Inghilterra.”) The French translation by Yann Moulier and G. Bezza, as well as a substantial amount of literature on related subjects, is available on the *Multitudes* website, [www.multitudes.samizdat.net].
  18. See in particular chapter II.1 of *Multitude*, “Dangerous Classes.”
  19. “The interstice,” write Philippe Pignarre and Isabelle Stengers, “is defined neither against nor in relation to the bloc to which it nevertheless belongs. It creates its own dimensions through the concrete processes that confer upon it its consistency and its range, that on which it bears and that for which it matters”
  20. Hartsock cited by de Laetis in “Eccentric Subjects.” In: *Feminist Studies* 16 (1990).
  21. Isabelle Stengers, “Le défi de la production de l’intelligence collective.” Interview by Andrée Bergeron. In: *Multitudes* 20 (2005).
  22. See Christian Marazzi, *L’ammortamento del corpo macchina* in *Multitudes* 27 (2007), pp. 27-37.
  23. See Robert Muchembled, *Le roi et la sorcière* (Paris: Desclée, 1993) 155.
  24. See Maruani and Reynaud, *Sociologie de l’emploi* (Paris: La Découverte, 2001).
  25. See *Multitudes* 12 (2003) 125-145, especially Anne Querrien’s “Femmes, Multitudes, Propriété.”
  26. From a strictly economic viewpoint, the nature of the split between guaranteed income and the universal benefits of liberal logic rests on the conditional or unconditional character of this income, and on its level. See in particular Carlo Vercellone, ed., *Sommes-nous sortis du capitalisme industriel?* (Paris: La Dispute, 2003).
  27. Here I am referring to an unpublished text by Christian Marazzi, but traces of this notion are also to be found in his book *La place des chaussettes: Le tournant linguistique en économie politique* (Paris: Eclat, 2000). (Translator’s note: Corsani is referring to the French translation of Marazzi’s *Il posto dei calzini*, one chapter of which is translated in this issue.)
  28. Judith Revel (ed.), *Devenir-femme de la politique*, 12 (2003).
  29. A vision against which multiple voices are being raised, voices that pose the ecological question not as a constraint imposed on development but as the need to rethink the very notions of progress and development passed down from the Enlightenment thinkers.
  30. Moreover, while changing the terms and historicizing the categories, Marxism preserves a binary logic, and if there is no more *homo oeconomicus*, there is still *homo laborans*...
  31. “When I call myself an organic intellectual, I mean that the ideas I carry with me were grown on soil I know [...] How I think and what I think about grows from my identity

- as a *jibara* shtetl intellectual and organizer." Morales, "Certified Organic Intellectual." In: Latina Feminist Group, *Telling to Live: Latina Feminist Testimonios* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001) 27-28.
32. Unlike other organizations born in the 1990s and after 2000 that do not have hierarchical structures, this form of coordination no longer has official spokespeople, since no one can be one.
  33. In issue 17 of *Multitudes* we dedicated a dossier to "Intermittence dans tous ses états" ["Intermittent work in all its states"].
  34. A dossier in issue 20 of *Multitudes* was dedicated to the question of expertise.
  35. Stengers, "Le défi de la production de l'intelligence collective." Interview with Andrée Bergeron, in *Multitudes* 20 (2005).
  36. Braidotti, "L'Europe peut-elle nous faire rêver?" Interview with Antonella Corsani, in *Multitudes* 14 (97).
  37. See Sandoval, *Methodology of the Oppressed* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000).

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