EPILOGUE: THROUGH THE UTOPIAN FOREST OF TIME

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Abstract. This essay poses three questions with regard to the studies presented in this special issue. What lessons regarding class politics do we draw from these studies of community and its crisis in Wood Buffalo? How are we to assess and understand the prolixity of the rhetoric of community in this context? How do the crises and contradictions of tar sands development in Fort McMurray, Alberta enable us to retheorize the concept of community itself? Bringing into critical juxtaposition postcolonial studies on subalternity with the alterglobalization literature on the multitude, this essay searches for the historical content of the truth that binds political rhetoric enabling various social movements to act in solidarity in opposing tar sands development, and interrogates *the community of politics* that this politics of community seems to promise. In doing so, the essay argues for the importance of an Utopian social poetics of mediation to the project of a sociology of absences.
Keywords: community studies, commons, tar sands/oil sands, multitude, subaltern, class

Résumé. Cet essai pose trois questions en ce qui concerne les études présentées dans cette édition spéciale. Quelles leçons concernant la politique de classe tirons-nous de ces études de la communauté et de sa crise à Wood Buffalo? Comment allons-nous pour évaluer et comprendre la prolixité de la rhétorique de la communauté dans ce contexte? Comment ces crises et contradictions nous permettent-ils de rethéoriser le concept de communauté lui-même? Rassemblant des études postcolonial sur le subalternity avec la littérature d'alterglobalization sur la multitude, cet essai cherche en outre le contenu historique de la vérité qui lie la rhétorique politique permettant aux mouvements sociaux différents d'agir dans la solidarité dans l'opposition au développement de sables de goudron, et interroge la *communauté* de la politique que cette *politique* de la communauté semble promettre. Donc l'essai argumente en faveur de l'importance d'une poétique sociale Utopique de médiation au projet d'une sociologie des absences.
Mots clés: études de la communauté, commun, sables de goudron, classe, subalterne, multitude

I

Each of the studies presented in this special issue draws to our attention in different ways a canonical thesis of the critical social sciences, namely that the persistent actuality of social and political conflict brings any and all discourses of community into crisis, just as it does the putative referent of such discourses. In the case of Wood Buffalo, a "regional municipality" — as instrumental an entity as it is one abstracted from its own history — we have "community by necessity" as Winters and Major (pp. 141–166) put it with felicitous precision. Community becomes a coping strategy, a strategy of "risk aversion," bringing people together against the various faces of endured exploitation, of official indifference or neglect, if not contempt; or, community is aesthetically engineered and incited as some compensatory affective hype by community branding strategies (such as Big Idea) rolled out by industry and government public relations agencies. The very transience, precariousness, and isolation of working and living in Wood Buffalo's mining camps, not to mention the racism, acute dependency, and ambivalent identifications generated in such situations of "differential exclusion," as Taylor and Foster's (pp, 167–190) study of the experiences of temporary foreign workers describes, also render hollow dominant claims of community belonging. Lozowy, Shields, and Dorow (191–210) evoke the poignancy and vitality of their youthful subjects' photographic resistance to, and re-workings of, the transformation of a resource town in the boreal forest into a mega-development by illuminating the forms of inclusion and exclusion specific to the experiences of teenagers growing up in a boomtown, as if these were the photographs' negatives, the ghosts of community that provoke the resisting mind's eye, an eye that then picks out ways of seeing friends and the mundane materiality of daily life as a counter-environment to the spectacular global flows through which Wood Buffalo is constructed as a site of desire, investment, and opportunity. Westman's (pp. 211–232) retelling of the Windigo and Trickster stories goes even further in its critique of the citing of community in this administrative/governmental geometry by reminding us not only of the history of dispossession and domination through which racialized Aboriginal subalterns of fur trade society continue to be colonized by resource development but also the absolute poverty of official and authoritative conceptions of community that have colonized and laid to waste our collective political imaginations as well. We have collected here accounts then not so much of the building of community but mostly of its crises: the making of community is also shown to be its breaking, a mask for precariousness, a site of contradiction and conflict. Canonically, for

the left, the social scientific problematic has always been of *society* rather than *community*, precisely insofar as exploitation means that social belonging is instrumentalized into a mode of exclusion as well. Here, as elsewhere, any (imaginary) universality of membership (in community, in nation, in the modern) is fractured and always nonidentical with itself. This is what the language of class politics once sought to describe, precisely to repoliticize "a politics where" community discourses assure us "politics are not necessary."

Consequently, these studies raise three key questions for us. First, what lessons regarding class politics do we draw from these studies of Wood Buffalo, after the complications and critiques of the politics of identity and difference, and where class relations themselves are "skewed," as Winters and Major argue? Second, what are we then to make of the claims to community here in Wood Buffalo? If community is impossible, why the persistent appeal to community? Does the incitement of discourses on community in this instance stand as a symptom of a governmental strategy that is, by now, in the twilight of the neoliberal ascendency, tried and true? Or is there something else at stake here? Last, to take up the invitation proffered by our editors, how do these studies enable us to retheorize the concept of community itself from this particular social location?

All of the studies in this collection endeavour to confront and critique the ways in which community discourses in circulation through Wood Buffalo manage to make a place where "politics are not necessary." Indeed, they seek to repoliticize community discourse and in this effort join in with the unfolding conjunctural process of repoliticization provoked by this mega-development itself. Especially in the past five years, big and small environmental organizations, activists from the First Nations of Athabasca Chipewyan, Chipewyan Prairie, Fort McKay, Fort McMurray, Mikisew Cree, the Alberta Federation of Labour, and the Council of Canadians, to name only a few organizations, have launched public campaigns to either reform, slow, scale back, or stop tar sands mining. This mobilization has continued to burst back into flames in ever different situations, beginning with the National Energy Board hearings regarding the Northern Gateway Pipeline proposal, opposition to the broad legislative sweeps of the Harper government's omnibus bills and most recently with the Idle No More movement. Given this diversity of social movement organizations and subject positions mobilized, how do we understand the affinity or alliance that is emerging as a new kind of politics here, the new form of subjectivity or becoming in common that this development and its social crises bring to life?

In a different context, Watts (2006) appeals to Polanyi's (2001) thesis of "double movement" to account for the politics of community provoked by oil development in the Niger delta. Community-making through oppositional mobilization can best be understood in this instance, Watts suggests, as one arm of Polanyi's "double movement" wherein populist movements for the "self-protection of society" are called into being by the very violence and creative destruction of the attempt to subsume social life under the utopian diagram of the "market mechanism" through the commodification of land, labour, and money. The expansion and deepening of commodification under the aegis of structural adjustment and other neoliberal reforms has led many observers to interpret the alterglobalization "movement of movements" through Polanyi's ideas. This does not seem very satisfactory in the present instance, even though commodification certainly plays some part here, albeit in more deeply mediated ways. Even more urgently, Watts' particular interpretative strategy does not shed much light on the singularity of the becoming in common that such politics seem to involve, i.e., it does not grapple with *the community of politics* that this politics of community seems to promise. This then is another crucial question this essay explores: What do we learn about the historical conditions of possibility of community politics from this singular becoming in common? What is the historical content of the truth that binds political rhetoric enabling various social movements to act in solidarity in opposing tar sands development? This epilogue, an invitation to build on the ideas provoked in the special issue, will endeavour to address each of these questions as well.

II

If, as I have been suggesting, community needs to be interrogated in relation to a process of depoliticization and repoliticization, then these studies also provide several crucial openings for us to reconsider the question of class in relation to any politics of community. First of all, there is the matter of class being "skewed," as Winters and Major observe, by relatively inflated wages in some branches of the division of labour characteristic of sudden and short booms, while precariousness, informalization, and the temporary labour recruitment program continue to depress both real and relative wages in many other sectors and services on which this development also depends. There is then the complicated differentiations problematically labeled by the high skill/low skill distinction. There is also a fundamental heterogeneity resulting from the transnational and transcultural scale of labour recruitment to

the region, from the historical, cultural, and juridical determinations of the division of labour, and crucially, as Dorow and O'Shaugnessey note, its gendering and its racialization. The elusive yet ultimately politically determined distinction between the formal and informal sectors needs to be especially emphasized here as well, whether with regard to domestic social reproduction, community volunteering in all manner of care and service work, or with respect to waged work and petty commerce in construction and other services, legal and illegal. Such an expansive and indeterminate informal sector is also necessary to the possibility of tar sands mega-development. Such social heterogeneity as this of course has been widely held to have displaced the usefulness of social class whether as an analytic category or as a mode of political identification. Insofar as this theoretical "solution" to the problem then also leaves us with no determinate ways to think through the politics of social reproduction and of resistances to exploitation, Winters and Major's strictures regarding the limitations of identity politics deserves consideration. The now extensive literature on intersectionality was supposed to have sorted all this out but has instead given rise to a growing chorus lamenting an unshakeable conceptual looseness in the idea's deployment and its undertheorization of class in the rare cases when it is not reduced to an afterthought to the race-gender matrix altogether (McCall 2005; Nash 2008; Walby 2007).

Several other bodies of literature provide us with more promising starting points for thinking through the problematic of class as it presents itself here. Of these, two register and respond to the matter of social heterogeneity directly. Hardt and Negri's (2000, 2004, 2009) concept of the multitude rejects any rhetoric of unity and offers itself as a concept of class heterogeneity by definition. The multitude, we are informed, is composed of "singularities of differences in common" rather than possessing or seeking the "unity of a people" (2000:103). This nominal solution improves on the intersectionality literature's version of the strategy by connecting to three historical transformations in capitalist production. The first of these is the widely discussed postmodern expansion, and, Hardt and Negri claim, "hegemony," of postindustrial production, of all kinds of services, of symbolic, managerial, affective, and caregiving work alongside industrial production. They quite rightly interpret these changes as the expansion of a world proletariat rather than its obsolescence. Second, they connect this concept of class with the lengthening of the working day, with precariousness and informalization and its autonomous networks of cooperation. Last, they point to the continuing if not deepening itinerancy of labour, whether of regular circuits of migration or perpetual displacement, that they claim is becoming a characteristic

fate for ever larger numbers of people after globalization (Hardt and Negri 2009:129–141).

These references to historical transformations in the lives of working people and in modes of production provide richer content for the specification of the concept of class than those intersectional approaches which seek to anchor class in a facet of identity, but they entangle the concept in other ambiguities, one of which we should note briefly before proceeding any further. What will surely strike the reader as indeed very strange about the preceding "definition" of class is that it seems to miss the basic insight we owe to Marx that class is a social relation and means nothing apart from that dependence upon and conflict with another class of people who are proprietors of capital. This part of the story is assigned to the concept of Empire in Hardt and Negri's work and this terminological displacement toward state power may hide but does not eradicate a contradiction to which I will return below. For the historical processes that attend the formation of the multitude for Hardt and Negri are more or less the same as those that Leslie Sklair (2001) identifies as giving rise to what he calls a super-mobile and flexible transnational capitalist class comprised of state officials, bureaucrats, technocrats, corporate personnel, and hyper-consumers of global brands. These two takes on the emergence of a new social space should not be construed as mere either-or alternatives; one burden of my argument will be to reframe this "either multitude or transnational class" alternative more precisely as a contradiction.

The second body of literature that takes up the question of social heterogeneity directly derives from Gramsci's appropriation of the term "subaltern" from military nomenclature to think through the differences between the situations of the rural agriculturalists in the south of Italy and the industrial proletariat of the cities of the north. In Ranajit Guha's (1988) redeployment of the concept to understand class politics and peasant revolution in postcolonial India, the social heterogeneity of subaltern locations receives special emphasis. The subaltern is offered "as a name for the general attribute of subordination in South Asian society whether this is expressed in terms of class, caste, age, gender and office or in any other way" (Guha and Spivak 1988:4). Subsequent usage of the concept, especially in the global south, also stresses the element of social heterogeneity, but Guha and his colleagues in the subaltern studies collective flexed this concept in two further related ways that will be important to my discussion below. The main item on the agenda of the historians in subaltern studies was to research, recover, and gain recognition for what they called the "autonomous domain of subaltern politics." The critical point here was, first, to insist — against the claims

of nationalist historiography — that elite leadership, particularly of the Congress Party, could not be assigned all credit for decolonization, given that autonomous subaltern insurgency was crucial to the destabilization of the Raj; and second, to further warn the Marxist intellectual milieu (with which they were affiliated) that the Left Front, coming to power in West Bengal by riding the wave of a peasant insurgency, ignored this autonomous domain of political agency at its peril. Consequently, the condition of subalternity then also stands for the crisis and failure of national universality insofar as "the fact of subalternity" contradicts the egalitarian ideals underpinning the mass mobilization of the decolonization movement. (Guha 1988:2009)

The thematic of autonomy is an important component of the concept of the multitude as well, being tied to Hardt and Negri's (2000:368–9) theorization of the historical changes noted above as biopolitical production and to Marx's seemingly ontological theses regarding the world-making potentiality of living labour power. At several points then, these two concepts, multitude and subaltern, in their complication of a canonical imaginary of class drawn from stereotypes of 19th and early 20th century European industrial proletariat, seem to possess a strong gravitational attraction for each other. In working with these two concepts to think through the relations of class and community in Fort McMurray and Wood Buffalo, however, I will insist that it is not a matter of choosing between them. As we shall see, the two concepts pull in different directions and articulate differences as well, not the least of which are the political situations and theoretical problematics out of which they were forged and the roads they have subsequently travelled.

Indeed, for the time being it is worthwhile to point out how the concept of the multitude seems to call for the concept of the subaltern in order to express its own content, as a supplement that completes the concept by exceeding it. To see how, though, we need to highlight the etymology of the word "subaltern" and remind ourselves that in the ordering of military hierarchy, subalternity is always a contextually relative condition, the point of the ordering being to immediately clarify the line of command. Unless you are cannon fodder at the very bottom, some will be subalterns relative to you and you will be subaltern relative only to some others. If we then consider the social and existential heterogeneity of the communities of the tar sands region described by the studies in this special issue to compose a multitude, then segmentation and differentiation — such as that among domestic migrant workers and temporary foreign workers, or in the racialization and gendering of occupations and social roles, or in the casting of youth as abject and of Aboriginals as either market-ready or market-recalcitrant — can only

be mapped as singularities of differences in common through this idea of social context-bound subalternity. Meanwhile, the possibility of any kind of autonomous political agency will derive, as we shall see, not from anyone's situational and conditional subalternity but from one's belonging to the multitude. Before we can explore that possibility however, we need to come to terms with the rhetoric of community so decisively in play throughout these studies.

III

How then are we to understand the persistent circulation of community discourses in Wood Buffalo, Fort McMurray, and the tar sands region? Winters and Major draw our attention to an important clue when they observe that "community is a lived concept that derives meaning in part because it enables social reproduction to happen" (p. 156). We need to set this insight against another formulation they offer us — "'Community by necessity' is the social manifestation of risk aversion" (p. 161) — in the course of their discussion of the reduction of community belonging to some absolute minimum beyond the sheer instrumentality of one's connections, of having, as they say, "someone to feed the cat." I will argue that it is between these two limits of risk aversion and social reproduction that the discourse of community finds its principle of recurrence. Before we can draw out the implications of this, we need to address another commonplace regarding community discourse today.

As many of our authors here note, some scholars, following in the wake of Nikolas Rose (1996), have argued for a link between the contemporary ubiquity of community discourses and neoliberal governmentality. Michael Watts' (2006) discussion of political violence in Nigeria also draws upon Rose's influential essay and focuses on what he calls the "sinister antinomies of community" connected with the Nigerian state's subsumption by petro-capitalism. His review of the desperate struggles of resistance, the cat and mouse games of cooptation and manipulation, and the sliding of politics into cynical and corrupt violence on the grease of Shell's cash buyouts in the Niger delta leads him to the conclusion that a

> striking aspect of contemporary oil development in Nigeria is the simultaneous production of differing 'scalar' forms of community … their forms of identification and the robustness of their spaces are often incompatible, indeed maybe antagonistic, with one another … standing at the center of each governable space is a *community contradiction*. (2006:135, emphasis in original)

Our task here, then, is to see if it is possible to escape being cornered into the same paralyzing conclusion Watts then finds himself in:

> Oil, empire, neoliberal capitalism and the Cold War made for a ferocious assault on, and radical destabilization of, a number of postcolonial states. Out of this maelstrom of failed secular nationalist development have emerged powerful communities of opposition and dissent articulated against both failed local states and American hegemony. From the ashes of failed secular nationalism can emerge all manner of communitarian alternatives: drug fueled child militias and warlords in Sierra Leone, the most retrograde forms of Muslim orthodoxy among the Afghan Taliban, and ferocious ethnic xenophobia in the Balkans. (2006:136)

Watts' list is nowhere near complete but he nevertheless nails it. This is where we are. Community, insofar as it exists in this world, contradicts its very sense as it is indeed nowhere to be found in this world. Thus it is that the Utopian assertion of our conjuncture exclaims that "another world is possible" and, accordingly, the alterglobalization movements of our time are in search for a new mode of politics in which the rhetoric of community continues to figure prominently. In light of this, what then are the limitations of the theory of community governmentality and how can we address them?

What needs to be noticed about Rose's (1996:338) account of the transition from government "from the social point of view" to "community government" is its theorization of history into the passive voice: "in the strategies of government that developed over the course of the twentieth century, the domain of the economic and the social were distinguished, but governed according to a principle of joint optimization." All the struggles against constituted power to which Pax Americana and the "Western" cold war welfare state were a strategic response — not only the century's great revolutions but especially the mass decolonization movements around the world — are simply written out of the theoretical record. This historical imagination then posits a series of natural ruptures that transcend the events, processes, and durations of historical capitalism, as if what happens in "advanced industrial countries" (1996:327) is somehow unrelated to what goes down in the rest of the world. (Geo) politics is thus rendered as an apolitical shift in the domain of metropolitan knowledge. How the unit of analysis "advanced industrial countries" might be relevant to the situation under discussion, for example, is hardly an uncomplicated matter. Most debilitating for our concerns here is the erasure of colonialism and imperialism in this problematic, which makes untheorizable any struggles against the coloniality of power (Quijano 2000). Given the astonishing experimental creativity of the cycle of

subaltern struggles unfolding around the world today, the stakes of extricating a history of truth from the contemporary deadlocks of Western identified theory have never been greater.

Since Rose (1996) announces the "death of the social" at the beginning of his discussion only to retract the proposition with the most sensible slyness in arriving at his conclusions, let us take our bearings from this ornament of Rose's argument in order to draw out the implications he is unable to think through. Rose reminds us of Baudrillard's provocative set of alternatives regarding the "end of the social" in the eventuality of the postmodern:

> … the social has never existed, but has always been a kind of simulation of a social relation that has now undergone a de-simulation, a disintegration of what was, in any event, an imaginary space of reference and play of mirrors; that the social has really existed and now invests everything, has extended from a process of the rational control of residues — vagrants, lunatics, the sick — to a state in which everyone is completely excluded and taken in charge for a project of functional integration sanctified by the social sciences; that the social has existed in the past but has ceased to do so — the sociality of the contract, of the relation of state to civil society, of the dialectic of the social and the individual has been destroyed by the fragmentations of the media, information, computer simulation and the rise of the simulacrum. (1996:328–9)

Baudrillard's "apocalyptic tone and opaque field of reference" here allows us nevertheless to specify precisely what Rose does not register. If we are to properly historicize the categories we work with and so recognize that the "social" does not "represent an eternal existential sphere" but involved rather "lines of organization and intervention cast across most European nations and in North America over the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth [that] intersected, connected and entangled in this hybrid zone of 'the social'" (1996:329), then the deliberate erasure here of the (indeed, class) political spatialization linking industrialization to colonialism (and the struggles against both) is only silent agreement with the entrenched imperial project of this Great Erasure in our times. Marx's (1977:128) theorization of the spectrality of the social (*gespenstisch Gegenständlich*) predicates itself on just the historical specificity of "society" at stake here. And contemporary rereadings of Marx's own sarcastic critique of classical political economy's discourse on primitive accumulation, from Sylvia Federici (2004) and Michael Perelman (2000) to David Harvey (2003) and beyond, dispel the standard apprehensions regarding teleology and linearity. They do so not only by underscoring the structurally continuous character of loot-

ing, pillage, patriarchal domination, and the necessary violence on which accumulation through the "purely economic" process of social exploitation rests, but also by rendering the debate between the neo-Braudellians (Braudel 1979; Wallerstein 2004), Eric Wolf (2010), Ellen Wood (2002), and Robert Brenner (1982) on the question of the social's origin empirically undecidable. Does "capitalism" begin with the subsumption of the "social relations" of wool production to the structural compulsions of market competition (Brenner and Wood), the subordination of sovereign power to *haute finance* (Braudel and Wallerstein), or with the full-blown dominance of industrial production that Marx analyzed as the expanded reproduction of capital (Wolf)? All of these are episodes of a historical constellation of capital accumulation global in scale, and how we decide the question depends on the theoretical definition of our terms; so it goes for the question of the birth of "government from the social point of view" as well.

The empirical undecidability of this historical passage enables us to restore to the problematic of the birth and death of the social a perspective from the subaltern counter-environment. I take the idea of *counter-environment* from Marshall McLuhan (2009) (who used it to describe the cultural "borderlines" characteristic of Canada's mid-century situation as a "low profile ground" for superpower rivalry) but repurpose it in terms of the various historical processes of subalternization itself: a subaltern counter-environment is the sacrificial ground against which emerges a figure of history as told by the victors. We are then able to grasp how Westman's (pp. 211–232) reworking of the Cree narrative tradition of Windigo — from a poetics of the inner limit of the collective life of hunting and gathering (in the experience of hunger as an apparition of the possibility of starvation) to a poetics of suicide — testifies to the experience of colonialism in the boreal forest as the sheer violent disintegration of community, the destruction of a mode of social reproduction, of the pillage and enclosure of *wîhkôhtowin*, and of an accumulation by dispossession that is without teleological recuperation as progress, development, or modernization. In this regard, the emergence of government from a social point of view, indeed of all the political blockages, compromises, and co-optations that would crystallize in the emergence of a new world system of colonial/nation-states, can then be understood as a process unfolding a new kind of social space through its counter-environment, involving precisely the nonexistence of the social in the social: its destruction in its formation, the establishment of a kind of apartheid-assimilation in its "peace and good government," involving indeed the unfinished project of colonialism especially in the "rational control and functional integration of its residues."

Nonetheless, Rose's (1996) subsequent characterization of the "birth of community governmentality" holds an important lesson for us here. His theoretical unmasking of the frenetic "empowering" activity of health and social service providers, of case and crisis workers, of social movement activists and other professional do-gooders — with their budgets cut to shreds and left to plead with their new auditors and private partners in the name of community — as the mere puppetry of a neoliberal calculus of rational self-management is not nearly as cynical as it may seem in its mystification of the neoliberal counter-revolution. To wit, it strikes home the point that with the proliferation of expertise in our now global knowledge society, and with this degree zero of politics and of total cooptation by a globalized class project, the multitude of knowledge and service workers can be differentiated from their identification with the transnational capitalist class only insofar as the multitude is not identical to itself but is, rather, subaltern. The multitude can become what it is posited to be as a concept — the possibility of a new kind of class politics — only insofar as it is subaltern and participates in a domain of politics autonomous from corporate governmentality, from postpolitical liberal democratic rule.

And for all its apparently purely descriptive precision, Rose's distinction between the "responsibly affiliated" versus the high risk "marginal" carries an Utopian charge as a barricade behind which new kinds of community are in the making, and across which some new space of class politics is now indeed unfolding.

IV

Before we can further untangle the implications of this contradiction involving the concepts of multitude, subaltern, and transnational capitalist class, I want to consider some of the community contradictions described by the special issue contributors in their studies of Wood Buffalo and the tar sands as a particular governable space. As Taylor and Foster observe, the Temporary Foreign Worker Program contradicts key assumptions about what makes a cohesive community insofar as the conditions it imposes strip everything down in the existence of these recruits to the sheer instrumentality of their bare labour power. This social isolation should not be confused with its relatively remote locations; the Canadian program needs to be understood in the global context of the relentless expansion and normalization of such programs in multiple jurisdictions around the world. As the debates about postmodernity and the work of many social geographers have taught us, these developments are best

grasped as the production of a new kind of social space. This would be the place then to specify that my appropriation of the concept of "multitude," rather than designating an identity or subjectivity, names a kind of space, or better, a specific synthesis of space and time. "Multitude" names here what Bakhtin (1982:84) usefully terms a "chronotope": the concrete setting together of space and time through which the action of narrative unfolds. I consider the temporal, narrative aspect of this issue below, but for the moment let us note that the redevelopment of Fort McMurray in this way involves not merely globalizing a remote resource town but linking it up to the multitude. The experience the locals have apparently had of being suddenly dropped into a "fishbowl" (and that our editors note here spurred community self-consciousness) is nothing less than the transformation and crisis in the local rules of community politics that accompanies this new mode of belonging.

In that case we need to reconsider the question Taylor and Foster themselves pose, not only with respect to the Canadian nation-state but also with respect to the chronotope of the multitude. As temporary foreign workers become permanent features in our communities, are they not remaking their differential inclusion into — not just more communities, but — political anti-communities or the resisting counter-environments of communities? The rising tide of racism and state repression around the world indicates that indeed this is so. For this reason, I can now further specify that in my deployment of the different concepts of class, "subaltern" names the nonidentity of the chronotope of the multitude with itself. We will see further on that this formula is reversible, and crucial to my argument will be a reciprocal characterization: "multitude" names the nonidentity of the chronotope of the subaltern with itself.

To move toward that conclusion, we need to return to Winters and Major's insight that beyond the sheer minimum of community as "risk aversion," the necessity of "community by necessity" involves securing the conditions of possibility of social reproduction. Here we can perhaps note another community contradiction. Winters and Major further observe that the logic that produces a "rationally organized and 'natural' world" enabling social reproduction is a "unity [that] needs to be made" (p. 146) and that "community becomes unified through it meaning nothing but everything" (25). On this last point, Winters and Major echo one of the central worries of Gerald Creed's (2006) influential discussion of the contemporary proliferation of community discourses which serves as frame of reference for nearly all of the contributors. Creed fears that the word is "like a monster that will not be controlled: energized by progressive political goals, its dangerous side emerges to strangle the unit(y) it was animated to support/foster" (2006:37). However, this matter of

monstrosity is indeed more complicated than Creed or Winters and Major seem to suspect. No doubt the signifier does float but "community" cannot apparently mean just anything in this governable space. As Westman here reminds us, there is a whole domain of meaning connected to the *wîhkôhtowin* ritual remembered and retold to this day where community includes relationships with the dead, with future generations, with animals, waterways, geographical features, and above all the forest. To write this off as religion or culture or the residue of enchantment, as colonialist social science continues to do, is to miss the centrality of this immanent ethico-political code to the secular rational planning of a (now destroyed) mode of social reproduction, as Levi-Strauss' (1968) studies of myth long ago argued. Yet, as Westman also observes, contemporary community discourse reaches some kind of structural limit with this domain of meaning. How then are we to understand and come to terms with this contradiction at the heart of the signifier's play, where this play is not only a matter of "community" meaning anything and therefore nothing but also a matter of not meaning something very specific?

Creed recalls that the historical conditions of possibility of the modern usage of the word lie with the separation of town and country fatefully sealed by the industrial revolution; for this reason "community," ever since, secretly carries within it an urban perspectival bias. From the 19th century onward critiques of industrial society have depended on an idealization of the agricultural rural past imagined to be liberated from the evils of contemporary society. The word community comes to generate a semantic field in which the signifier slides from community to harmony, homogeneity, purity, conformity, locality, immediacy, identity, unity, reciprocity, reconciliation, and so on. As Creed reviews the series of binary oppositions that then fall out from this rhetorical and aesthetic fantasy (which he names "Romantic pastoral"), it becomes clear that the stakes are very high indeed, for the historical conditions of possibility of the modern rhetoric of community are nothing less than that of the modern social sciences as well. And not only this; I will argue here, against Creed, that the very possibility of social and political critique depends both on some poetics of idealization as well as a rhetoric of negation.

The Romantic pastoral is an idealization insofar as such a golden age never existed in the past nor has it, for that matter, existed anywhere at anytime. Consequently, the cautions against reifying "community" that we are offered here can be usefully emphasized and underscored by appealing to the Fregean (Frege and McGuinness 1984) distinction between sense and reference. Considered with respect to its referent, the rhetoric of community is literally a species of Utopian rhetoric insofar as "community" in the sense of Romantic pastoral has never existed any-

where. As for the Romantic pastoral meaning of community (homogeneity, identity, unity, etc.), exercises of redefinition such as Jean Luc Nancy's (1991) scrub the word with sufficient deconstructive vigour, pitting the senseless "excessive" being-there of one's living body as a breach against the order of sense (of community) itself, to allow Creed to stop short of issuing a ban on the use of the word altogether. Such rewritings of community in terms of the theme of transcendental finitude are able to do not a whit to forestall precisely those dangers of racism, fascism, and communitarian violence that Creed is concerned about. Sense, whether inoperative or not, in this respect can only be monstrous (and reification then involves the confusion of sense for referent). We are thereby led to observe that the problem that Creed is trying to resolve here involves not so much the series of meanings which, in the 19th century were positively evaluated and which, after the experience of the 20th century, we now evaluate negatively. Rather than this exchange of valences, the "problem" stems from the Romantic pastoral's reduction of its poetics of idealization to this ethical binary of good and evil. The sense of community *qua* homogeneity and harmony is problematic because the Romantic pastoral idealization depoliticizes social belonging into a moralizing dead end of normative alternatives. The problem is not the usage of the word but rather its articulation of an ideological operation.

Insofar as the Romantic pastoral poetics of community discourse involve the imaginary resolution of lived conflicts and contradictions, the discourse of community is an ideological discourse that depoliticizes social belonging into normative morality whereby the social world is mapped exclusively in terms of "we who are good" and "they, the evil enemy." Barthes (2012) famously argued that ideological myth is depoliticized speech. The essential paradox here is that such depoliticization is itself a political tactic, but one that must repress or disguise its own political efficacy by aesthetic or representational means to constitute itself as a (pastoral) myth either of nature or the transcendence of history. This is precisely why Jameson's (1981) doctrine of the "political unconscious" of ideological and popular cultural texts is so crucially important for our discussion here. The doctrine of the political unconscious supplements Barthes' and Althusser's (1971) reformulations of the problematic of ideology in a way that dialectically underscores this crucial political character of ideology.

Barthes' and Althusser's reformulations both relocate the problematic of ideology from the domain of epistemology (false consciousness/science) to that of social reproduction and identification. Jameson's (1981, 2005) doctrine of the political unconscious adds the crucial further element of the Utopian dimension of ideology: not only does

ideology involve identification, mystification, and depoliticization, but ideology's Utopianism — insofar as all ideology allegorically and intertextually projects some discourse of community — leaves any ideology open to the possibility of repoliticization. As noted above, the referent of community discourse is nowhere existent, is precisely nothing and nowhere, and this is what makes discourses of community Utopian. It is this aspect of community discourse's ideological Utopianism, its negative referentiality or its poetics of idealization, that is the condition of possibility for the negation of any ideological symbolic universe that exists historically. The Utopian poetics of community discourse allow us to negate and criticize what is the case: the present system of domination and exploitation. Moreover, since there is no nonideological or postideological social science, social science is itself a specific kind of Utopian discourse, at least insofar as it liberates itself from scientism and state service. Public sociology (Burawoy 2008), or a sociology of absences (Santos 2007), requires some kind of Utopian poetics if its programmatic declarations and manifestos are to bear fruit.

The Jamesonian doctrine of the political unconscious allows us to respecify the urban bias of modern community discourse more rigorously as a structural repression of the immanent ethico-political mediations of environmental adaptations of all other modes of social reproduction; it is a repression that results from the domination of industrialization, from the domination of inner and outer nature, as the Frankfurt School famously put it.

V

The doctrine of the political unconscious and the question of Utopianism further hold a key lesson for the multitude-subaltern dialectic of class concepts I have been working out here. We need to begin by recalling the conclusions Etienne Balibar draws from his study of Marx's writings on the proletariat, a term ubiquitous in the early writings from the *Paris Manuscripts* on, but missing, symptomatically, from the analyses presented in the volumes of *Capital* itself. To get to the heart of the matter, Balibar concludes that there is no such thing as a "class-in-itself"; there can be only "classes-for-themselves." The socio-historical phenomenon, according to Balibar, is a process of massification (1994:144). There is no empirical dividing line, no frontier, no quanta of income, function in production, no last straw of data that breaks the camel's back and allows us to line up the class of proletarians over here and the class of capitalists over there. This is not because there is no such thing as class struggle or

because "class struggle" is only a theoretical construct but rather because there are too many straws in the wind and they are blown about historically. Moreover, the question is also not one of sorting out the relationship of individuals to this or that class structure as Wright (1997:266), for example, undertakes to do. Several currents of historical and feminist research have pointed out that the relevant social institution here is the household, not the individual (as if this could ever appear for empirical investigation without social relationships), and that free wage-labour households have always existed (to this day) within a social division of labour that includes nonwaged and unfree labour. Wage dependency, in other words, is always nonidentical to itself; it is always socially mediated and in becoming, insofar as all other modes of social reproduction are being enclosed, destroyed, or articulated to the dominant modes of capitalist production and accumulation by dispossession through the coloniality of power. Wage dependency, in being nonidentical to itself, is always articulated to one or another kind of (community) dependency.

Consequently, for Balibar there can be classes only so far as there is class struggle, classes-for-themselves, organized politically in class-based movements and class-based organizations and struggling over the conditions of social reproduction specifically. Balibar in this way dispenses with a false problem an old school sociological scientism holds onto with all the might of its insularity, although one could say that Balibar's argument does not exactly settle the question of whither class but displaces it from one domain to another. On the side of the transnational capitalist classes, Balibar's position is less problematic. Here there are innumerable organizations and institutions where proprietors of capital try to work out class policies and strategies from corporate and sectoral interests and stakes, though with the failure of the "Washington Consensus" conflict, rivalry, and uncertainty have all sharpened. On the side of wage dependency, however, the complexity of the situation with respect to social movement organization is perhaps best illustrated by the agency of pipefitter Dorothy Pacquette, an Aboriginal woman who made headlines by walking 450 kilometres from Fort McMurray to Edmonton to protest "people not speaking English, working our jobs" (*Fort McMurray Today* 2012). Labour movement supporters stepped in and did their part, in my view correctly, politically to reframe the antiforeigner sentiments of the testimony in the idiom of labour solidarity. This example might then serve to illuminate the reciprocal proposition mentioned above that "multitude" names the nonidentity of the chronotope of the subaltern with itself. The autonomous domain of subaltern politics, if it is not to unfold into the kind of war of all against all that Watts writes and despairs of, and if it is to be adequate to itself, must be a politics in com-

mon. Without a community of politics, there cannot be a class politics. The problematic of multitude and subaltern is then meant to describe as contradictions just those situations that intersectional politics embody and therefore can only tactically work through. Moreover, the "dialectic of nonrecognition" animating this problematic is meant to demonstrate that for politics to become class politics, intersectional politics not only needs to conduct cultural politics but needs to invent, tactically, a specifically Utopian poetics in order to do so.

It is on this level of cultural politics and specifically the poetics of Utopian tactics that we need to take very seriously one of the key assertions of Lozowy, Shields, and Dorow's work with a group of youth in Fort McMurray. In exploring the possibilities of photography, this research, they tell us, is "about the camera as an apparatus of community — itself a kind of organizing principle, a catalyst of people-place-research relations, and thus an aid in sensing some of the extant and possible meanings of community" (193). To this end they insist that their research not be misunderstood as yet another methodology for representing — archiving, documenting, informationalizing — community, nor for reifying it in the "manifestly visible." Rather than representation, rather than collecting and disseminating information, their tactics are those of *mediation*, as this term has come to mean after the work of Innis (2008) and McLuhan (McLuhan and Fiore 1968, McLuhan 2009). The photographs, they tell us, require us to "work up anew our personal formulations and enunciations of what is seen to be taking place in what amounts to a moment of second thought or a new encounter with the place in both its material and virtual aspects (such as community)" (208). An inescapable aspect of the situation of this project is indeed an archive of information that renders Fort McMurray and Wood Buffalo visible in a predictable range of stereotypical ways from the imagery of industry public relations, the environmental movement, and government propaganda. This also includes Burstynsky's photographs, which at the moment of their canonization as official art are drawn into the vortex of reification (Burnham 2012) or remediated into what Innis theorized more precisely as the "space bias" of "industrialized communication based on the eye" (2008:81) through which all kinds of media for the eye, all modes of seeing, foresight, and insight, are systematically reduced to the common denominator of information and its global footprint through the flows of state-corporate communication. Lozowy and his colleagues intervene in this "world environment" as McLuhan, building on Innis, would have it: "With almost all of the youths' images one witnesses a struggle that goes beyond the register of representation to the real – both

material and virtual — as what is truly at stake. It is a way of sensing" (203).

Through the strain in their attempt to explain themselves, we find a clue to Lozowy et al.'s tactic of mediation with regard to this struggle. The sheer impossibility of photographs themselves to hold a conversation or the camera to act as a listening device reminds us that Innis' "strategy of culture" in the face of absolute "present mindedness" of space bias was to turn to oral traditions for their bias toward time. As an apparatus of community, the camera-photograph device is deployed here to produce "its own mode of knowledge and its own truth-effects through what is revealed rather than via reference to a pre-existing set of moral judgments such as those on community" (203). This repoliticization of moral judgement can produce its own truth effects because the apparatus they have built here serves as an infrastructure of collective narrative memory. The two photographs they discuss seem to me to illustrate this vividly. For the incontrovertible truth, with all its ironies and tragedies, of the personal narrative observation "If you don't drink and do drugs in Fort McMurray then you are nobody" (200) emerges only so far as the moral judgement that would silence or censor from history the event and the kind of belonging the photograph suggests is tactically and narratively outmaneuvered. Similarly, the photograph of the heavy-hauler/housing development/forest tactically interrupts official visions of community development by enabling us to narratively remember the sacrificed forest as another mode of habitation and so recall the multitude of perspectives from which all this is "happening too fast." For this reason, I want to call the poetics of their Utopian tactics an aesthetic of *enforestation* and propose that their suggestion that cameras might provide the necessary conditions for community to be exposed, developed, enlarged, and shared is not at all trite, if one considers this tactic to create a material counter-environment of desubjectified and anonymous friendships, solidarities, bonds, and bands of molecular belonging.

We can now place this counter-environmental apparatus of memory alongside the one Westman evokes through his retelling of the Windigo and Trickster stories. As Westman notes, this retelling amounts to an allegorical reading of these narrative traditions in relation to history, not only of the destruction of another mode of social reproduction but also of the politics of treaty. We are then able to specify that what I have been calling *concepts* of the transnational capitalist class, the multitude, and the subaltern are in fact more precisely understood as *narrative characters* and that the dialectic here is rather a postmodern allegory of signifiers substituting for each other. Learning how to retell the Windigo and Trickster stories through these photographs or discovering what photo-

graphs can be taken by remembering these stories involves learning how to identify with an anonymous other and how to demand justice for an other named in the third person. Class politics, we can now see, involves a struggle over the contingent historical content of the universal. This enforested memory is not only of a historical truth (the instrumentalization of treaty) but truth as a specific kind of historical memory — the coloniality of power, the universality of the enclosure of the commons through which the world system of nation-states came into being — and so the truth of a common, singular, subaltern way of being-against. As a participant in the politics of our times, a sociology of absences needs to find a mode of solidarity with the dominated, the dispossessed, and the deforested that nonetheless preserves the researcher's critical autonomy, as this autonomy is also a necessity of our political terrain. In this regard, I have argued here that the studies in this special issue suggest future lines of research on community and on tar sands mega-development that not only undertake thick descriptions of contradictions in all their multiple, interconnected complexity but also elaborate such Utopian poetics of mediation.

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