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Logistics Genealogies: A dialogue with Stefano Harney

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We are imagining this conversation as a historical progression about the logistics "evolution." In genealogical terms, we actually would like to start with a deeply historical gaze and then, passing through the development of our conversation, arrive at the global present.

According to this approach, we would like to start with a really general question. Most of the current literature about logistics tends to place the origins of logistics within the transformation of the military apparatus during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. According, for example, to the historian Martin van Creeveld (1977), "The period from 1560 to 1660 has been described as 'the military revolution' where logistics arises as a reaction against 'the tyranny of plunder.'" However, in your book The Undercommons, *written with Fred Moten, you wrote that the truth is that "modern logistics . . . is founded with the first great movement of commodities, the ones that could speak. It was founded in the Atlantic slave trade, founded against the Atlantic slave."*

*Could you just explain why you are proposing this different perspective? In fact, we find your attempt to introduce a multilinear approach very intriguing and productive, because, as Michel Foucault said, we need an approach to a critical logistics gaze not limited to a single or punctual origin (*Urspung*), but rather, we would prefer a perspective based on a "multiple source" (*Entstehung or Herkunft*).*

Modern logistics is a *commercial* logistics, with all the multiple sources that feed what Cedric Robinson calls racial capitalism. And it's a capitalist science. Even today's military logistics is most commonly outsourced to commercial firms, who make huge profits off the logistics of contemporary permanent war. As a commercial logistics, as a capitalist science, it

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can be traced directly and emphatically to the Atlantic slave trade. The Atlantic slave trade was the birth of modern logistics, as it was also the birth of a new kind of war on our species being, and the birth of racial capitalism, which amounts to saying the same thing. This trade entailed the first global movement of mass commodities, voluminous and grotesque. Moreover, these humans were also perishable and volatile commodities that could "go missing" and were hard "to extract," requiring complex, even diabolical, logistical technologies, supported by finance, insurance, law, and of course state and extrastate violence. Ian Baucom locates the origins of modern insurance in the Atlantic slave trade in his important work *Spectres of the Altantic*. We know from Sergio Bologna how much contemporary finance and logistics are entwined in today's overleveraged global shipping industry, but this was true of the Atlantic slave trade too, where speculative finance was already at work. The story of the *Zong* slave ship is central to Baucom's account and is also beautifully, unbearably rendered by M. NourbeSe Philip in her book-length poem *Zong!*, capturing what the birth of modern logistics did to any possible project of the human by bringing finance and logistics together in a devilish alliance over the commodity that really "could speak," the "thing" that talks or is somehow in touch, neither subject nor proper object, a massive, subterranean, ethereal, undercommon threat to the individuation of modern "Man" emerging at the same time.

But the Atlantic slave trade was also the birth of modern logistics because modern logistics is not just about how to transport large amounts of commodities or information or energy, or even how to move these efficiently, but also about the sociopathic demand for *access*: topographical, jurisdictional, but as importantly *bodily* and *social* access. The nearly complete access that was imposed upon the African enslaved, upon the African continent, and upon the lands and indigenous peoples settled for plantations, this kind of access remains the ambition of logistics today, and it is for this reason that the slave trade remains so contemporary, that abolition as Jared Sexton rightly says is yet to come. And we might add that this abolition requires the abolishment of logistics which in its flows created a people without standing anywhere. We act in abolition not for a ground to stand on but for groundations beyond standing. Modern logistics, with its warehousing and its containers, is as much about *controlling* the flow as ensuring the flow, as much about the *interface* of movement of commodities and financialization of commodities as it is about just getting goods somewhere. That interface is an opportunity for speculation, and today the line itself, the supply line and the assembly line, their speed, efficiency, and metrics, are a source of massive financial speculation. This is also the horrific legacy of the Atlantic slave trade, the containerization of people, of the sociopathic access demanded to labor and sex, and the

storage, in forts, in the hold. And even more murderously, the elimination of goods, of cargo, when the price falls, or considerations of finance as in the incident of the slave ship the *Zong*, in which 133 enslaved persons were thrown overboard for insurance purposes during a logistical operation. In short, this aggregated access allowed for the most evil calculations about the perishability of goods, the planned obsolescence of products, and the cost of replacement, in a word, financial speculation on the supply line that was in the case of the African enslaved in the Atlantic trade often indistinguishable from the assembly line. Marx said the first thing the worker makes is himself. The slave was worker on the line and at the same time the supply coming off the line and into the line. The same concerns with speculation on the line, the line as a modulation of investment and exploitation of labor are still found today at Walmart or Starbucks, not so far from their origins, at least for the most part. As Susan Zieger reminds us in her study of "Box" Brown and logistics—he was the slave who mailed himself in a box to "freedom" from the slave-plantation South to the slave-dependent North in the United States—logistics incorporates loss in its logics. As Fred Moten and I say, logistics tracks us because it assumes fugitivity. *Indeed, what is called* surveillance *might also be called preemptive logistics*. It is possible that all we know of surveillance studies, including its most incisive work in black surveillance like Simone Browne's, could also go under the name preemptive logistics, even predictive logistics, the anticipation not of resistance but of a kind of impenetrability even in the give.

In other words, our entangled, indeterminate, undercommon rub-up of curvy lines, kinks, loops, and crooked lines summons logistics. It reacts to our sumptuous tangle. Our entanglement requires them to draw up contingency plans, which are plans to make our indeterminacy mere contingency, to account for what goes missing. Logistics is the science of loss, the science of their lost means, which is to say it will always be the white science and the science of being white. Logistics is the science of their loss, not ours, though we, and those closest to blackness in particular, suffer horrific losses from their loss.

However, it was not just modern logistics that was born in this hellfire. It was also the birth of what Fred and I call logisticality, a social capacity found most intensely amongst those who found themselves, who found each other, under the duress of almost total access but in the grip of each other. As Frank Wilderson writes at the end of *Incognegro*, his brilliant more-than-memoir: "Something happened to us in the hold." And not just in the hold. In her heart-breaking but unavoidable book *Lose Your Mother*, Saidiya Hartman speaks of the fugitivity that the ungoverned and the ungovernable of Africa were forced to invent because of the reach of the Atlantic slave trade. Those captured by the trade either were or

became the people Cedric Robinson understands in Africa as living by a principle of "individual" incompleteness. Such peoples existed everywhere, as James Scott asserts in *The Art of Not Being Governed*. Scott details how highland peoples in Southeast Asia avoided the massive slave trade of the padi states, at trade that dominated precolonial Southeast Asia to the point that slaves became not only the biggest trade but currency itself. In many languages of the padi states these peoples were already known by the name *slave* before they were enslaved. These peoples refused to form political societies, have leaders, or see land as owned or even shared in ownership. They gathered, and they wandered. No written languages, they sought refuge with each other. But the hold, the middle passage, the fire that African peoples went through, those who were captured, and those who became fugitive, created something perhaps unprecedented in its total span across societies and histories. This is what Fred and I call logisticality, the ability to find each other, to move together, to break the rule of Newtonian time and space, disorder it, and legislate new time and space to disorder, to gather, stranded into refuge together. A people came into existence without origin—anoriginal, as Nahum Chandler would say—who were "in touch," whose response to the sociopathic demand for access was paradoxically and necessarily a radical opening of being, a practice of touch without surface or border or edge, a practice of hapticality. Fred and I understand hapticality as a kind of touch without surface that undoes, that saps the fever of individuation, in a sometimes violent and profane exorcism. It is not a reassuring touch. It unensures precisely because it's a loving touch.

In a sense, African slaves who came through the fire could be said to have reversed logistics and overturned it. Now the slaver sought this logisticality, sought but could not fully capture something that had been produced in capture but also preceded it as Robinson and Scott suggest, calling capture into being in all its murderous regulatory force.

We can understand this logisticality in two registers, as I've suggested: First, in C. L. R. James's famous contention that slaves ran the plantations in the Caribbean—that it was the slaves who had the capacity and know-how to work across half a dozen African and European languages in this early crucible of world capitalism—it was the slaves who worked the nascent capitalist machinery of the sugar mills and who handled the logistics of transport to the ships, and sometimes on the ships. It was the slaves who worked in exchanges of different currencies, commodities, and calculations of the future, with world prices. The slaves also ran the households, providing the care, nurturing, and attention. Now as James would be quick to point out, all this occurred despite the unbounded inhumanity and cruelty of the owners, as for instance he

details in his chapter on owners and on the property in the Black Jacobins. All of this was also going on in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries at a time when, as James notes, most of our families in Italy and across Europe, as we might say, "still only knew the bell tower."

This logisticality—the quantum finding, this hapticality, this feel without surface that hurts and loves—could also be understood as a capacity to recreate Robinson's principle of incompleteness and, indeed, to detect and translate such principles of incompleteness and ungovernability, of the unregulated, the disorderly and the unruled, to feel these things, and feel others feeling you being undone. This hapticality was never going to be fully enslaved, even when American slavery turned to its specific Taylorist brutality and slave breeding with the rise of the cotton trade and industrial capitalism at the end of the eighteenth century. But more importantly, it survives as the basis of the black radical tradition, in radical social poesis, as Laura Harris says. It survives in/as blackness.

So the shipped, the containerized, the accessed of the Atlantic slave trade gave birth to modern logistics but also conjured something in the break of this massive enclosure of those who lived together by the principle of incompleteness. And despite this, it is fundamentally necessary to place that hapticality against what Christina Sharpe, writing recently about the slave ship and its wake, might call its "weather," the pervasive antiblack racism that this founding of modern logistics also bequeathed the contemporary world and perpetuates today.

It is really interesting what you are writing because in this perspective logistics and counterlogistics were basically born at the same time. Now we would like to follow this genealogical line which keeps together logistics and counterlogistics, asking you how this relationship was evolving in the historical periods following the ones we have been referring to up until now. More specifically, how was this union developing during the first "industrial revolution" and in the consecutive first stage of globalization?

We could begin the next chapter of logistics with Kant. He says famously that we should treat men as ends and not means. It's true. It's in all the business ethics textbooks! This would appear at first sight to run counter to the history of logistics, where people seem to be treated as means to an end. At first people and things seem to be mobilized as means to the end of profit through war and conquest, and then with the Atlantic slave trade and settler colonialism mobilization of people and things is for the end of profit through racial capitalism. Logistics delivers humans, animals, energy, earthly materials to an end, to a point, the point of production. But this includes, crucially, the point of production of the settler, the pro-

duction of the entrepreneur, the banker, the slave trader, and the investor. These figures I mention are produced as ends. So it is not that Kant does not mean what he says, or that logistics is in conflict with what he wants. It is just that what he understands is this: that man is an end when he is *this kind* of figure, a figure who posits himself as self-made, self-sufficient, and self-determined. Kant may want this for everyone. But his very formulation, seeking this self-possessed man as an end, this man who has come out of the tutelage of someone else this kind of "man" requires the rise of logistics. Because the only way to create this kind of man as an end—or any kind since this man is Man—is to mobilize and deliver resources that allow for this *false and indeed delusional* claim of independence to appear plausible, at least to this man and men like him, such as Kant. These means are utilized for but one end: the production of profit and cispatriarchy that support and make possible this illusion of self-authored man who can declare himself an end. This end of man is, in other words, *a degradation of means*. Indeed, if I were asked to give a short definition of logistics, I would call it *the general degradation of means*. This is how Fred and I understand modern logistics. Other histories, other ways of living, might suggest to us that not being capable of being an end in oneself, indeed, of every fully being oneself, is in fact a way to disabuse this "oneself" delusion and place the incomplete self in the hands of others for use, for service, for love. Here means are enlarged, enriched, and entangled for each other. You may hear echoes of Agamben on use here, but let's be cautious about that. We would have to do something for our comrade he will not do for himself, any more than Hegel would. We would have to bring him out of the ancient world of master and slave, because we are not talking here about countering logistics with a mutuality of means that allows all of us to reach a more balanced individuation, as in Agamben's forgotten preclassical world. And more importantly, all that we have developed historically in the *fugitivity of use*—history and future in the present of logisticality and hapticality—all of this Agamben has chosen not to inherit by his willful disregard of the black radical tradition. We need only recall Fanon here on the difference of the colonial relationship of master and slave to see that the break or escape must be with recognition (of an end) itself, with both subject and object, and indeed, we should perhaps read Fanon as saying revolt and revolution are laboratories of a means without ends. In other words, when Fred and I speak about hapticality we are talking about a materialism beneath materialism, under materialism, an undercommon materialism, what our friend Denise Ferreira da Silva calls difference without separability. Our ability to be in the feel of each other is historical and magical, painful and beautiful. It emerges in its strongest form—from a thousand rivers—in the nautical event, the

first horrible logistics dedicated to the ends of man/Man. An event that is the dispersion of event, its shoreless strand. It's a way we inherit—or we can inherit—an experimental undermaterialism of sound, feel, taste, touch, including at a spooky distance. This is an undercommon materialism that, having been denied an end, already rejects that end for this spooky means. This includes what Cedric Robinson calls the capacity "to retrieve things that presumably no longer existed." And if it has a theory—like Marx's early theoretical senses—it is a theory that somehow, always, escapes. This hapticality is the fugitive call-and-response in the face of logistics, that degradation of means to produce man as an end. The call-and-response and the ring shout are sonars of logisticality. It's our endless revolution, and again as Robinson says, revolution is magic because it should be impossible.

Admittedly this creates a problem for Enlightenment thinkers who seek a universality of the end, including some of the Left today. We see this problem most clearly with Hegel, and most symptomatically in his discussion of usufruct. In the *Philosophy of Right*, following a long discussion on slavery, in which Hegel asserts that both slaves and masters will cease to exist and will become independent wills when they are historically ready, Hegel turns—without an apparent linkage—to laws and customs of usufruct. The use of someone else's property for production, and the idea of improving someone else's property, the history of usufruct is for Hegel profoundly disturbing. He tells us that you cannot have two wills, two would-be owners, in one property. There can be no progress for Hegel where there are usufructuary owners and "naked owners," as they continue to be called, for instance, in Louisiana. One will has to prevail in the property. Hegel is clearly on the side of the improving owner, the usufructuary owner. Improvement requires one will to dominate, or simply that *will itself*, or man as an end, dominate over naked owners (at least before Hegel moves on to other ends). Hegel was already amidst a historical era where improvement was coming to engulf both all property and all persons. Self-improvement and the improvement of property melded, for some, while the harsh regime of the improvement of others would be claimed as the management rights of these self-improved. All of this will reach new saliency with total quality management, *kaizen*—defined as the continuous improvement of everything all the time—and the audit society, and the algorithmic institutions at the end of the twentieth century, with the full realization of logistical capitalism. The "usufructuary will" must hasten this process for itself and for the naked owner by imposition of its will as fully as possible. Improvement and development demand intervention wherever the naked owner is found. This is where Fred and I see a key torque in capitalist logistics. It is not a clean periodization, as

you both understand well in the way you are phrasing your questions, not least because the black radical tradition is the pause not the period, the break in/of the beat.

Still, because there is said to be no more naked owner, no owner with less will, in Hegel's time than the African slave, who is constructed as such when ownership is projected onto her, where ownership's nakedness is posited, paradoxically, as the radical incapacity for that brutal and necessary redundancy, proper ownership, as real property, insofar as she cannot own it, it is as if she is indigenous land—at once land and person, doubly unaware of their own nakedness. Man's end demands the subsumption of what is seen (or, more precisely, unseen) as etiolated will; logistics instantiates that subsumption as the degradation of means.

Indeed, in the absence of the will of the naked owner, whose "property" is said to be fallow, who bears no possibility of becoming an end in herself, the more total and vicious can be her penetration by the will of another, for improvement, for productivity. We get confirmation of the ascendancy of this usufructuary will with the first trials of the assembly line, not yet in the workshops but in the cotton fields. Many have written about the practices of modern management first developed and tested through what is euphemistically called plantation management—the management of slave labor camps. Bill Cooke at York University, who works in a business school and does not get enough credit, is a pioneer here. But in an important new book, *The Half Has Never Been Told*, by Edward Baptist, we see the origins of the coming together of modern management and logistics. This new line, Baptist teaches us, was developed in response to the demand for cotton and the shift from other slave crops such as rice, sugar, indigo, et cetera. Now with new profits available to those who could supply the emerging garment industry, slave owners "innovated." Slaves were formed in lines of pickers who followed each other down long rows of cotton plants. Previously, slaves might work in groups or gangs on other kinds of crops like rice or indigo or even the back-breaking work of sugar cane, dividing the hard labor amongst themselves in service of the demands of an overseer and a slave owner. Now all this was organized by management to measure and increase productivity through the logistics of this line. The best picker was placed first to keep the pace. Each individual slave was now responsible for an ever increasing weight of cotton. No one could help anyone else on pain of torture or death. Indeed, helping another was punished more severely than weighting your own bag with a stone or fruit. In this way individual productivity could become a means to measuring and improving the entire line and thereby also linking each working body to metrics, and therefore to finance, to loans. Each naked (non)owner of his or her labor, already owned by another, was willed to improvement by this usufructuary owner, and since this naked owner-

ship was itself already essentially negated, there was no end unto death to this willed improvement. The degradation of the means reached zero. Logistics and the management of production had become one. There was never a more brutal example of the reduction of logisticality to logistics.

Marx will try to fix this, in his way, as Frederick Douglass would in his. I never really understood why the early Marx is considered the humanist and the later Marx less so. It always seemed the opposite to me. Early Marx appears ready to explore an undercommon materialism without the subject, straining toward a synesthesia that is unowned by Man. Later Marx once again has a subject of history, first capital and then the society of producers, leaving the Left with the task of a better logistics for this collective subject, something we can see in recent debates on the left about logistics. Maybe this is what Althusser, later on, was trying to amend. In any case, logistics would soon become indistinguishable from infrastructure with the rise of industrial capitalism on the back of the cotton line. Whereas once infrastructure, as a village or even imperial waterworks, might be for sustaining life, now it was clearly for improving it. And infrastructure itself would become nothing but logistical, nothing but degraded means, until it reaches what might well be its conclusion in "resilience" today.

But Douglass, like the early Marx, has hidden something for us. We can find it, in part, in a recent book, a very cool book titled *Ariel's Ecology* by Monique Allewart, where she traces the dissolution of land into sea, of personhood into earth, flowers, birds in the plantation biosphere. Here the most naked of owners, owners not even of the flesh, still become rich means of life for each other and for us—a kind of decomposition and recomposition, an earthly hapticality. However, we also take heed here that we are already, that we already can be, a means to a means encourages the predations of capital, so invaluable is this dissolution.

And then the factories arrive. . . . The fascinating and original historical reconstruction which is rising from your answers is offering an overall picture that put together logistics with many elements that are usually only analyzed in separate perspectives. Continuing our historical path and grasping your references to Marx, we reach the true heart of the first industrial revolution and the consequent spread of the factory system. How could we read the development of logistics in this outline? Could we state that we can only fully understand the "factory system" if we arrange it since its beginning in a complex and widened logistics structure?

And then, do you think that it would be useful to look at W. E. B. Du Bois, who claimed that to fully understand the industrial revolution it would be more useful to look at the Atlantic Ocean rather than at Manchester?

To conclude, which kind of "expression" could be characterizing for the

counterlogistics when the cornerstone of the production became the "new factory" around which the new urban centers were starting to spread? In other words, if during the Atlantic slave trade the "expression" of counterlogistics was the slaves themselves, who would represent the "expression" of counterlogistics after the industrial revolution, and how?

With the rise of the "kingdom of cotton" and the industrial revolution, the coming of the factory raises the prospect of two kinds of "flows" coming together, as they were already doing in Barbados, Haiti, Jamaica, and other early centers of logistics centuries earlier. On the one hand, you have the flows of raw materials, and on the other hand, the flow of the line inside the factory, or in other words, colonialism and capitalist industrialization. This is why you both are right in your question to speak of Du Bois because to look at Manchester *is* to look at the Atlantic and then never to look at Manchester again the same way.

The integration of these two flows into a "continuous flow," as Marx himself first called it, will eventually be the job of operations management in the second half of the twentieth century, largely leaving in place or deepening the interdependence of this pair. The job of logistics remains in a sense to manage the relationship between the two social relations in/of production, in conjunction with finance, of course. The belt and road project of the Chinese government shows how much the relationship remains the same, and perhaps, concerning the debates around the Chinese and the question of neocolonialism, even settler colonialism reminds us to look for changes too.

But in the industrial revolution itself the two flows are not yet integrated—though their dependency on each other does intensify the world market. There are, however, a number of *prefigurings* of this future integration of the two flows and the subordination of labor to these flows. And these are to be found in abundance in the black radical tradition. We find an example again in the work of C. L. R. James, for instance. He recasts the New England whaling boat of Herman Melville's *Moby-Dick* as a factory in *Renegades, Mariners, and Castaways*. The supply chain and the factory processing have become one on the boat. The whales are caught and processed on board. The multinational crew has been thrown together on this line, each with a specialized task, and the factory boat literally tracks its own supply chain through the ocean. I have already spoken of James's other prefiguration—the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Caribbean plantation, town, and dock as the first instance of a production process, and the first instance of workers, being fully inserted in a world market. On the other side of our dialectic, or perhaps appositional to this world market, we find an example of this emerging logisticality in a new book by Marisa Fuentes on enslaved and fugitive women in

Barbados in the eighteenth century, *Dispossessed Lives*. As she attempts to reconstruct the lives of these women, Fuentes appears to have little to work with except absences. Escaping women in Bridgetown had nowhere really to go, and the official archives contains only the coldest and cruelest bare facts. Enslaved women, most burdened of all by the flow of the lines coming together in these early logistical hubs, had to invent, to draw upon, to conjure some way to protect and practice their logisticality, to exercise with other and those they loved the open secret of their hapticality. And they do this precisely through an archive. Soon it becomes clear in her brilliant account that these women were building their own archive every day as they disappeared into the market or "down the gap." As Hilary Beckles teaches us, Barbados may appear to us by the nineteenth century to be amongst the more pacified islands of slave labor camps, but in fact this is because it was amongst the most conspiratorial in the Caribbean, with a number of total island conspiracies and revolts in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries requiring small and large slaveholders to unite and militarize into the unified fort Barbados became. But even in "the in-between" of that fort Fuentes shows us all the acts of escape, resistance, solidarity. These women produced forms of communication and movement appropriate to and appropriating of the duress of extreme surveillance and topography. They crafted an archive of the throat and the fingertip, of the glance and "the cut eye." The absence of the official archive is precisely the condition for the emergence of this fugitive, rebel archive. The menace of this archive of hapticality is that it cannot be enclosed, to recall Foucault's thought, or ever totally collected. And the painful beauty of it, the beautiful pain of it, is that this archive appears without warning, now as then. It is, as Nadia Ellis says, blackness "at large," a sabotage of the line that the line does not see coming, a crop-over party of the accursed sharers.

Amidst these *prefigurings*, however, something also starts to emerge—something Du Bois would teach us about as he came to understand the global color line. (I recommend the unmatched work of Nahum Chandler on Du Bois here.) These global supply chains and the way they are labored, most especially by African slave labor, by the motley crew, and by indentured colonial labor, produced a new kind of collectivity that runs not only along those lines but along and across the ones collectively forged in flight from these lines—the archive of curves, swerves, revisions, and improvisations of logisticality. This is Nadia Ellis's being "at large." And of course, we hear an echo of criminality in the notion of being at large, uncaptured, escaped. The lines and the curves mean such collective being can show up anywhere. Collectivity at large, logisticality, produces the generalized fears of blackness, of communism, of queerness. Being at large along these lines means "they could be anywhere." Yet against these

possibilities the beginnings of the factory also mark a frightening new development with which we still live and against which we must still fight.

As I mentioned, Fred and I have adapted that term *usufruct* to talk about this coming together at the end of the eighteenth century of two kinds of improvement—economic improvement and especially the improvement of property, including human property—and self-improvement, especially the quest to prove one can improve oneself and by so doing be qualified to supervise the improvement of property and of others. The rise of this self-improving "subject" who needs only himself to improve, to be self-authoring, self-sufficient is truly a genocidal and geocidal figure. This figure has been threatening since the birth of European colonialism, but he was initially guided by anti-Moor Christianity then and thus not self-improving, as only God can improve someone, though this makes the figure no less brutal in his way. But he really takes hold with the combination of improvement in commercial and plantation agriculture and the improvement ideologies of the Enlightenment. And then he becomes the factory owner. His claims to self-sufficiency, to being self-made, are as ludicrous and as dangerous as the idea that the colonial fort was sovereign and self-sufficient. Of course, it relied on the land and people it was built to attack continuously for their resources. So, too, with this self-made, self-improving bourgeois subject—he too requires massive resources to pronounce himself self-sufficient, resources he can never acknowledge. Beyond all the social reproductive labor of women, children, the elders, and servants, he requires these supply chains and the labor on them, and the assembly line and all the labor on that, and behind this the massive exploitation of the earth upon which that system is based, monocrop destruction of biospheres, mining, et cetera. That's the "self-sufficient" bourgeois subject, the entrepreneur, and with his "democratization," as Angela Mitropolous says, through what Du Bois calls democratic despotism "he and his" confront us still with genocidal and geocidal consequences. Of course the proliferation of these modern subjects chases the logisticality of those who reject the idea of the individuation all around the globe. Thus, the situation is more volatile than ever worldwide. Continuous improvement only barely "holds the line" against continuous revolution.

After this wide historical overview, we would like to conclude this dialogue with some considerations more related to present times. First of all, many authors are proposing to date a "logistics revolution" in the fifties and sixties of the twentieth century. According to the various insights you have given us up until now, we are actually problematizing this kind of clear-cut temporalization. Instead, we would prefer to highlight the logistics' multiple historical proveniences, framing it as a process of longue durée. *Or do you think that considering the "logistics*

revolution" as a historical turning point is a truly productive approach, such as, for example, the one that Edna Bonacich and Jake Wilson (in "Getting the Goods") adopt?

Second, what is according to your conception the contemporary relationship between logistics and counterlogistics? We would like to hear your opinion about the today's dynamics defined by this relationship both from the theoretical side and from a more grounded perspective (with the latter we refer to the many episodes of struggles that have been developed worldwide in the last decade in many logistics hubs).

Last but not least, we would be pleased if you could give us some perspectives, hints, or possible tendencies and developments which logistics could gain in the next future both as a tool to analyze global capitalism and as a political element to grasp the possibility of an alternative politics.

Here is the fuller quote from Marx I sampled earlier. He says: "The collective working machine . . . becomes all the more perfect the more the whole process becomes a continuous one." Marx was already talking here about what we would later call total quality management and continuous improvement, or in Japanese, *kaizen*. Logistics is as old as the circuits of capital, Marx teaches us, and those circuits, as I have suggested, take shape in the Atlantic slave trade and colonialism. This is the *logistical revolution*. But of course, something important does happen after World War Two. And it is not because of the advent of containers or the Vietnam War, or any of those manifestations. It is in my view because the inner workings of capital—what Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilsen would call the "operations of capital"—these inner workings change, the class struggle in racial capitalism on the ground changes. In particular, operations management, the study of the movement of the assembly line, encounters and incorporates supply chains, on the one hand, and customers, on the other, in new ways. This is the new collective working machine. Supply, production, and consumption become linked by capitalist sciences of management, and integrated, at least to some extent. This historical process culminates in *kaizen*. Now each person is individually responsible not just for the flow of the assembly line—wherever it flows through finance, services, unpaid work, personal health—but also the continuous improvement of that line, regardless of whether you are formally employed and tied to that line by a labor contract. The metric of the economy is a brutal one, and it works because logistics produces access, and access inserts the metric, in a vicious circle. This is a story of management science, the conscious search for access and application of the metric throughout the circuits.

That said, the both of you are right to speak of many provenances with different stories to tell about logistics as befits a central force in global capitalism. First and foremost, Deborah Cowen's work is vitally impor-

tant, as was the foundational work of Edna Bonacich, but we also have fascinating work of Sergio Bologna, of Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson, and linked to all this the relationship between logistics and the algorithm, and the groundbreaking work of Ned Rossiter, Tiziana Terranova, and Matteo Pasquinelli, to name three theorists who have been important to me. I think we should also be grateful for work on infrastructure like that of Abdoumalik-Simone and others. And there is very good work on counterlogistics from the Oakland Public School, from Alberto Toscano, as usual, and more. And let us not forget the work both of you are doing! For me, it is nonetheless important to make a distinction between counterlogistics and what Fred and I call logisticality. Counterlogistics is a vital strategy, as vital as the strike or movements in the street, as vital as resistance and opposition remain to the very possibility of life on this earth. But sometimes counterlogistics confronts logistics much as the state was once (and still is) confronted: faced with what seem like two choices, take over logistics or abolish it (or most of it).

Logisticality is something else and therefore does not confront that choice. The term *logisticality* we use to suggest we have the capacity to anticipate and exceed logistics. Or the term (and the term does not matter just the concept) might help us reverse our view, and our practice. We suggest our logisticality is *prior*, as Mario Tronti might have it, that our abilities to move each other and access each, our movement through and within each other and in and with the earth, comes first. From this viewpoint, logistics chases our capacity, but something more. Logistics needs to "straighten us" to pass through, and indeed when it does, it is then we who pass, as if straightened, made proper by logistics, proper conduits, enhancers, stimulators of logistics. Our straightening is our degradation, the reduction of our means to the ends of Man. Logisticality suggests that we do not begin in this straightened form (I think about Deborah Cowen's use of queer theory here), nor do we consent to end there. We don't begin by letting logistics pass through us or have to end as people who pass. We might even say logistics wants to make us white and straight, to get us to aspire to be a man, even as it must deny us this on behalf of the Man. What Fred and I mean by straightening, by passing, under conditions of logistical capitalism is this: logistics degrades all the ways we move without position, all the curves and swerves and reverses, in favor of the "efficiency" of flow-through. It misses most of our capacity to be a means for each other, or it brutally suppresses all these capacities by passing straight through us. (This is why all *white people* have to do is walk through a room to fuck something up. Logistics, the science of whiteness, instructs how they walk through and occupy space. But they can't ever fuck it up completely—unless they destroy the earth—because they depend on our capacities, this logisticality, these means without ends, the means not just

in themselves, but for themselves.) These means are radically open, we who embrace them are radically open to each in this logisticality, in our hapticality, in our incompleteness. And of course, logistics exploits this in its degraded, limited, but nonetheless destructive way.

But what if we don't pass, don't straighten? This would be a kind of counterlogistics, but it would also be "a return to who we will be" and therefore something more than counter-, something closer to logisticality, our prior and ongoing undercommon invaluable debt and enrichment. In American (and in Latin American and Caribbean) literature the figure of the person who passes is a well-known tragic figure. The figure is taken by society to be white but comes from a black family and community (or a native or aboriginal one), one which the character hides for social advantage. But *logistical capitalism* raises a question: What if we are all passing? What if none of us is straight until straightened? What if we begin as something monstrous to logistics? What if we appear in our logisticality, our rich curving, swerving, revising means, to be opaque, impenetrable? What if we appear to logistics as monstrously misshapen, unfathomable, dense, and slow! Then, in a sense, logistical capitalism *is* the counterlogistics. Logistical capitalism must counter this threat, find a way to pass through us, straighten us, access us. Fred and I have written about the murder of black people by police with this partly in mind—the way black people violate the demand for full and immediate access by the police—and violate it a priori because of the white supremacist order which posits black people both as unknowable and as without an interior that could be then rendered transparent. Michael Brown, murdered by the police in the United States in 2013 near St. Louis in the town of Ferguson, was described by his killer, the police officer, as appearing like a monster.

Now for us the question becomes, with access forced upon us by logistical capitalism, brutally demanded with the job or with the bullet or with sexual violence, how do we maintain and cultivate our hapticality? Which is to say, how do we remain radically open amidst the war against us waged by *logistical capitalism*, a war that demands in the most sociopathic ways, total access to us? This seems to me to be our task—to find ways where we can remain open to each other, allow our means to explore the full entanglement of our lives together and our full entanglement of this love, pain, and joy with each other in and of the earth. We have to find what my friend Manolo Callahan calls new habits of assembly that are not those of the logistical line, the logistical assembly line.

Though the final part of your question is important, I am perhaps not the best person to predict what shape the new confrontations with logistical capitalism will take. I will look to some of the theorists who are really grappling with the algorithm like Luciana Parisi, and those I mentioned: Tiziana Terranova, Matteo Pasquinelli, Ned Rossiter. And at

the same time I'm learning from a new generation of scholars in the black radical tradition like Terrion Williamson, Alvaro Reyes, Che Gossett, Dhanveer Brar, and Fumi Okiji. What I would repeat is something I heard Judith Butler say recently: perhaps it is time to return to the early Marx, to his interest in the senses as theoreticians. Remember that another word for our means might be our senses. Traditionally, our senses were supposed to deliver something, transmit it, logistically as it were, to our brains, minds, reason. Many debates follow. But what Marx suggested in this "early" moment is perhaps something we can place against his prediction of total quality management and continuous improvement. What if we could rediscover a materialism equal to the confrontation with logistical capitalism—would this be a materialism of the theoretical senses, a development of our means as ends in themselves? Could this theoretical development be a radically open access that at the same time withdraws its relationship to ends, refuses to straighten, to pass? Could the haptically of the black radical tradition that anticipated Marx already be this theory and practice? Could we plot a general strike against *logistical capitalism* through the radical self-organization, collective organization of our senses, a commune of the senses with what Manolo Callahan calls new habits of assembly? This would be a renewed habit of the assembly of means, by any means necessary, our haptical, subnautical assembly.

Note

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