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The Silent Guerrillas: Under Slavery, In Peasant Politics, And Throughout The Industrial And Social Factories

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THE SILENT GUERRILLAS: UNDER SLAVERY, IN PEASANT POLITICS, AND
THROUGHOUT THE INDUSTRIAL AND SOCIAL FACTORIES

by

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A master's thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Political Science in partial fulfillment of
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ABSTRACT

THE SILENT GUERRILLAS: UNDER SLAVERY, IN PEASANT POLITICS, AND
THROUGHOUT THE INDUSTRIAL AND SOCIAL FACTORIES

by

Kevin Van Meter

Advisor: Professor Mark Blasius

In the work that follows, I will examine what political theorist James C. Scott calls "the hidden transcripts" of social struggle, which are written between the lines of the political record through the quotidian and clandestine practices of resistance and mutual aid that are the first and last recourse of subjugated populations. By engaging with literature on contemporary and historical social movements, I will explore the emergence and brief legibility of these practices among chattel slaves in the American South, the peasantry in various settings, and in a number of other industrial and social settings in an attempt to determine the role of these practices in the formation of formal social movements.

ACKNOWLEGEMENTS

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I   INTRODUCTION

Recording resistance in everyday life is part of a larger task that is intended "to recognize the new society, align ourselves with it, and record the facts of its existence."[1] James Scott's visits to the peasant village of Sedaka, George Rawick's extensive oral histories of slave resistance, and C.L.R. James' studies of wildcat strikes in the Detroit auto plants are all attempts to contribute to recording everyday resistance.[2] I will draw from these three as well as other authors who believed that they were "closest to these events and will best serve them" as they "have trained themselves to recognize that the new society exists and to record the facts of its existence."[3] It is in these recordings that we begin.

Exploring everyday resistance under slavery, in peasant societies and throughout the industrial and social factories[4] is a process of reviewing a substantive and rich set of materials that describe the varied forms of struggle taking place inside and against imposed forms of life and relations of power. But as vastly different epochs with different forms of power, further complicated by their differences along geographical, geological, and genealogical lines, it is important to understand these resistances in both their particular and their general forms.

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[1] C.L.R. James, Grace C. Lee, and Pierre Chaulieu, *Facing Reality* (Detroit: Bewick Editions, 1974), 125.

[2] James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (New York: Yale University Press, 1985); George Rawick, *The American Slave: From Sundown to Sunup* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Company, 1972); James, et al. *Facing Reality*; see also: Anna Grimshaw, ed. *The C.L.R. James Reader* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 1992).

[3] James, et al. *Facing Reality*, 166.

[4] The social factory refers to the utilization of the factory model outside of the factory gates that began in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Factory struggles forced capital to reorganize itself as forms of work and discipline were increasingly socialized. On the concept of the social factory, Guido Baldi writes, "from the plant to the university, society becomes an immense assembly line, where the seeming variety of jobs disguises the actual generalization of the same abstract labor." See: Guido Baldi, "Thesis on Mass Worker and Social Capital," *Radical America* 6, no. 3 (May 1972), 3-21.

Capital was born in the violent process of enclosure and primitive accumulation[5] and it has undergone a continual process of technical reorganization since the 16th century in response to everyday as well as spectacular resistances and refusals. It is apparent that "the role of the working class" is "dynamic, forcing, at times, capital to redefine itself and develop along new lines."[6]

Capital and the regimes of power that define it function differently under slavery, in peasant societies, and throughout the industrial and social factories. Additionally, capital does not develop in a linear fashion either on a global scale, with respect to what is described currently as a global North/South or historically as a First/Second/Third world divide, or along even geographical lines. Rather, capital often creates pockets of uneven development as needed for resource extraction, social reproduction and the reproduction of labor power, the general imposition of work and production of commodities, and the important maintenance of a base commodity (hydrocarbons – wood, coal, oil, and gas – and uranium). Along with this, throughout its history the state-apparatus (that is, the forces of the state and those instruments of power coordinated by and intertwined with the state-form) has changed considerably as the coordinator of and interloper in relationships of power, from societies of discipline to "societies of control."[7]

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[5] Karl Marx, *Capital, Volume 1* (New York: Penguin, 1990), 871-940.
[6] Ann Lucas de Rouffignac, *The Contemporary Peasantry In Mexico* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 1985), 25.
[7] In overlaying Gilles Deleuze's analysis of this shift with the work of American autonomists and Italian *operisti*, we can chart the rise of societies of control along with that of neoliberalism, as they are intertwined. Clearly processes of enclosure are still vital to capitalist command, but they have developed beyond their traditional boundaries. As Deleuze outlines, "In the disciplinary society, the enclosures (schools, prisons, and so forth) are independent of each other. We might think of each of them as presenting a kind of psychological mold that shapes the mind and behavior of the people within them. There were controls in terms of wages and discipline, but the molds of the enclosures were largely successful in maintaining order. In a society of control, on the other hand, the vestiges of these disciplinary molds are accompanied by technological controls that deform the original castings and monitor and shape the state of things in an ongoing kind of way." Gilles Deleuze, "Postscript on the Societies of Control," *October* 59 (Winter 1992), 3-7.

Here it is important to understand the particular relations of power, production, and social reproduction as capital and the state-apparatus seek to coordinate, capture, and impose particular forms of life. An approach that is developed from the perspective of the working class in its process of political recomposition is what I am proposing.[8] "By political recomposition," the Zerowork collective states, "we mean the level of unity and homogeneity that the working class reaches during a cycle of struggle in the process of going from one political composition to another. Essentially, it involves the overthrow of capitalist divisions, the creation of new unities between different sectors of the class, and an expansion of the boundaries of what the 'working class' comes to include."[9] Here we begin with these perspectives, these stories of everyday resistance, as they create new relationships and new subjectivities, overthrow capitalist command (even temporarily), and are recomposed vis–à–vis capital and the state-apparatus.

The question before us at this point is how to understand these recordings as they have been created under different regimes of power, which have then been replaced with new forms of power, a technical response, and reorganization by capital and hence a decomposition of working class power. How can this be useful without falling into broad generalizations, a universalizing project that ignores the contemporary political composition of the working class, or a totalizing project that attempts to justify capital and the state-form as inevitable in their dominant positions over the social field?

A partial answer is contained in a metaphor of the silent war that is taking place in everyday life, and of the *silent guerrillas* as the agents of this war.

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[8] Harry Cleaver, *Reading Capital Politically* (Oakland, California: AK Press, 2000).
[9] Zerowork Collective, "Introduction to Zerowork 1" in *Midnight Oil: Work, Energy, War 1973-1992*, Midnight Notes Collective, eds. (New York: Autonomedia, 1992).

The *silent guerrillas* are part of "the dream work of language" – a metaphor – and to understand "a metaphor is as much a creative endeavor as making" one.[10] As an engaging and participatory form, metaphor becomes the perfect theoretical structure for this task. This is an attempt to create a set of stories – using this guerrilla war as its framework – that sets fires to the imaginations of those who encounter these records. It is here that the recorded stories of slaves, peasants, and workers will find each other and are amplified in the act of abstracting them.

The theoretical structure of the *silent guerrillas* functions in two distinct ways (we have already begun to construct the first):

First, and metaphorically, it is directly connected to the project of "recording the existence of the new society," of producing the future in the present and the dreams that come from "the next step we are going to take." In this way, as a form of guerrilla war, it is more attuned to the Zapatistas than previous guerrilla struggles. In a poetic communiqué, Subcomandante Marcos speaks to this sentiment perfectly:

> In our dreams we have seen another world, an honest world, a world decidedly fairer than the one in which we now live. … This world was not a dream from the past, it as not something that comes to us from our ancestors. It came from ahead, from the next step we were going to take. And so we started to move forward to attain this dream, make it come and sit down at our tables, light our homes, grow in our cornfields, fill the hearts of our children, wipe our sweat,

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[10] Donald Davidson, "What Metaphors Mean" in *On Metaphor*, Sheldon Shacks, ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 29.

heal our history. And it was for all. This is what we want. Nothing more,

nothing less.[11]

It is exactly this dream world that our metaphorical structure allows us to access as these are

dreams that arise out of everyday life.

Secondly, and conceptually, the *silent guerrillas* function as a war-machine.

Rather then just "warding off the formation of the State-apparatus,"[12] the *silent guerrillas* prevent

the total colonization of everyday life as they create a smooth space against the striated space of

the state-form. It is these practices of everyday resistance, as "guerrilla warfare," that "aim for

the nonbattle"[13] and continue to force the state-form to develop along new lines; whilst the state-

form attempts to capture and liquidate the activity of the *silent guerrillas*. Deleuze and Guattari

offer an interesting approach with the concept of the war-machine. They propose to:

> Make the desert, the steppe, grow; do not depopulate it, quite the contrary. If
>
> war necessarily results, it is because the war-machine collides with States and
>
> cities, as forces (of striation) opposing its positive object: from then on, the war-
>
> machine has as its enemy the State, the city, the state and urban phenomenon,
>
> and adopts as its objective their annihilation. It is at this point that the war-
>
> machine becomes war: annihilate the forces of the state, destroy the state-form.[14]

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[11] Subcoomandante Marcos is the masked spokesperson for the armed Mayan resistance movement called the Zapatista Army of National Liberation based in Mexico's southernmost state of Chiapas. They are popularly known as the Zapatistas or by their Spanish acronym EZLN. Marcos, a pen name, is an author of countless communiqués and a dozen books, including the collection *Our Word is Our Weapon*, from which I draw from here. Subcomandante Insurgente Marcos, *Our Word is Our Weapon* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2001), 18; originally published in the communiqué "In Our Dreams We Have Seen Another World" dated March 1, 1994.
[12] Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 357.
[13] Ibid, 416.
[14] Ibid, 417.

The *silent guerrillas* function conceptually as an answer to a political problem and as part of a political project.[15]   That is, they seek to counter the domination of the social field by capital and the state-form on the terrain of everyday life and through their efforts prevent the complete capture of their affective, corporeal, productive, and reproductive activities. The *silent guerrillas* immediately and directly confront the existing forces of the state as they experience them in their daily lives. For example an individual police officer is confronted rather than the police force, or the tax collector rather then the taxing system. As Deleuze and Guattari suggest in their fragment on the war-machine, the *silent guerrillas* collide with capital and the state-apparatus. Through this confrontation the *silent guerrillas* move toward the creation, amplification, and cultivation of new forms of life. Similar to Marcos's suggestion, such confrontations are taken precisely so that new worlds and new ways of life can be imagined and lived in daily lives. Here the two complementary theoretical structures that ground this project become clear.   The confrontation with the state-apparatus becomes a concept when it is abstracted from the concrete examples that are described below, while these imagined new forms of life becomes a metaphor as it is generalized beyond the experiences of particular *silent guerrillas*.

In his classic book *Workers' Councils*, Anton Pannekoek states that, "every shop, every enterprise, even outside of times of sharp conflict, of strikes and wage reductions, is the scene of a constant silent war, of a perpetual struggle, of pressure and counter-pressure."[16] It is through Penneokoek's lens and the lenses of many who follow that we begin to see the *silent guerrillas*

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[15] I have adopted the process of concept formation from Deleuze and Guattari. In *What is Philosophy?* they write that, "All concepts are connected to problems without which they would have no meaning and which can themselves only be isolated or understood as their solution emerges. We are dealing here with a problem concerning the plurality of subjects, their relationship, and their reciprocal presentation." Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?* (New York: Verso, 1994), 16.
[16] Anton Pannekoek, *Workers Councils* (Oakland, California: AK Press, 2002), 8.

not only as a subset of slaves, peasants, and workers in the industrial and social factories but as a subset of the working class struggling against the general imposition of work. We see the working class as all those who are resisting and refusing the imposition of work – waged and unwaged, productive and reproductive, material, immaterial, and affective. Not just those toiling in the factory, but in offices and service positions, fields, kitchens, and classrooms, the *silent guerrillas* are those resisting and refusing the imposition of work on the terrain of everyday life – from the working class on the social field to the *silent guerrillas* in a series of moments in/on/at sites of breaks, flows, and intensities in everyday life. Theft of time and materials, feigned illness, acts of sabotage, arson, murder, exodus, and the myriad forms these resistances take – as well as the process of creating counter-communities – are recorded in everyday life, on its surface, as the *silent guerrillas* flow through them. The resistances of these slave, peasant, and industrial and social worker guerrillas are bound together in the metaphorical abstraction of the *silent guerrillas*. They become strategic in their conceptualization and are concretized in the stories that follow, as these stories become the communiqués from a new world "from ahead, from the next step we were going to take."

II   UNDER SLAVERY

> Under slavery, as under any other social system, those at the
>
> bottom were not totally dominated by the master class. They
>
> found ways of subverting the worst of the system and even at times
>
> of dominating the masters.[17]
>
> - George Rawick

The *silent guerrillas* can be found constantly circulating in the social field under the system of

chattel slavery in the Americas as it existed between the 16th century and the mid-/late 19th

century. Here the slaves participated in a whole set of practices and everyday resistances such as

the "deliberate slowing up of work, destruction of property, feigning illness and pregnancy,

injuring oneself, [and] suicide."[18] This guerrilla war prevented those in slavery from being

completely "dominated by the master class" and was a vital component in the building of a

counter-community and the "creation of their humanity."[19] In this spirit George Rawick, author

of the opening salvo for this chapter, appropriately subtitled his text on the subject *From

Sundown to Sunup* as that was the time slaves had for themselves, a time when they were able to

construct their own lives. Rawick continues, reflecting that, "the slave revolts came out of the

natural development of the black community and were a stage in the development of that

community."[20]

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[17] Rawick, *American Slave*, 95.
[18] Raymond A. Bauer and Alice H. Bauer, "Day to Day Resistance to Slavery," *Journal of Negro History* 27, no. 4 (October 1942), 388-419.
[19] Rawick, *American Slave*, 96.
[20] Ibid, 113.

In a similar fashion Herbert Aptheker, in his encyclopedia of slave resistance, *American Negro Slave Revolts*, commented on how the nearly 250 recorded actual or attempted overt revolts by American slaves developed directly from these spaces and everyday resistances. According to Aptheker, these revolts developed into cycles of struggle lasting an average of eight years. Occurring in clusters from 1790 to 1802, 1810 to 1816, 1820 to 1832, 1835 to 1842, and with major rebellions in 1856 and 1860, the struggle of slaves in general intensified until the onset of the Civil War.[21] Herein some of the ways that capital and the state-form were forced to develop in response to the *silent guerrillas* included developing slave patrols, legislation, and disrupted relationships between slaves and poor whites.

The work of Rawick, Aptheker and others is vital to our task as they provide massive documentation of slave resistance, both as overt rebellions and as everyday resistance. Our project is made more rewarding as a result of these undertakings, but also because slavery is a closed system in both temporal and territorial terms. In a similar fashion to the industrial factory, and at times even more so, slavery can be placed in a framework and particular areas of production and reproduction can be explored. Unlike everyday resistance in peasant societies, which poses a conceptual problem, slavery, and the resistance to it are part of a general cycle of struggle against capital and the state-form in the regime of power that defined slavery.

With this sentiment guiding us, we will explore the stories of our *silent guerrillas* as they rebel against being forced into slavery and transported across the planet, build counter-communities, and adopt myriad forms of resistance.

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[21] Herbert Aptheker, *American Negro Slave Revolts* (New York: International Publishers, 1994).

Refusal: From the Indigenous Population to the Middle Passage

From it's beginning, the African slave trade was part of a large-scale process of planetary enclosure, of which the enclosure of commons across Europe was its initial epicenter. With this began capital's march across the globe and the construction of imperial nation-states. The displacement of European peasants from common lands in the process of primitive accumulation was then immediately applied to the Americas and Africa. This entire process was marked by at times violent, overt rebellions and massive noncompliance by Europe's own early *silent guerrillas.*

For instance, peasants who had previously foraged in the communal woodlands in what today is the state of Germany were excluded from doing so by a growing body of legislation and a strong state-form to implement it. The "mass illegal appropriation of forest products represents an important moment in the development of German capitalism"[22] and was not just an act of everyday resistance but the insistence on communal land rights. These actions on the part of the *silent guerrillas* were part of a larger network of peasant uprisings that marked early capitalism.

In response to these struggles and in the endless search for raw materials and cheap labor, capital, supported by the bourgeoning state-form, began an attempt to enslave the indigenous peoples of Brazil and then the entirety of the Americas. Through its colonies in Brazil, European capital encountered an auto-consumptive, reciprocal, and communally based economy – a form of life "based on production for use rather than for exchange."[23] As this early form of capital could not extract surplus value from these systems in the process of "primitive accumulation," the *encomienda* system and the enslavement of the native peoples became the strategy for

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[22] Peter Linebaugh, "Karl Marx, the Theft of Wood, and Working Class Composition: A Contribution to the Current Debate," *Crime and Social Justice* 6 (Fall / Winter 1976), 5-16.

[23] Stuart B. Schwartz, "Indian Labor and New World Plantations: European Demands and Indian Responses in Northeastern Brazil," *The American Historical Review* 83, no. 1 (February 1978), 43-79.

capturing work and disciplining the population. This relationship began with indigenous (Tupinamba) communities trading their surplus with Europeans and soon expanded to a point at which trees were being harvested for Europeans. In the 1530's, as more Portuguese settlers came to Brazil, agricultural production was needed to sustain this growing population and the colonists "turned to chattel slavery as a means of securing labor."[24]

Within thirty years the indigenous peoples' massive exodus from the plantations and the antagonisms within the system began to reach crisis levels. This destabilization created opportunities for further resistance, through which both overt rebellions and silent guerrilla wars began to break out. Stuart B. Schwartz, who has written extensively on the subject, describes these activities:

> In 1567 a general slave insurrection swept the region of the Bahia
> Reconcavo. Masters were killed and slaves fled the cane fields in
> large numbers. … [Additionally, there] was a large-scale
> Millenarian resistance movement called *Santidade*, which
> flourished among escaped Indian slaves and formed *aldeia*
> inhabitants in the region of southern Bahia. Combining Roman
> Catholic and native beliefs, the *Santidade* followers began burning
> sugar mills and plantations in the 1560's, and despite Portuguese
> military reprisals their activities continued into the seventeenth
> century. In 1610 their numbers were reported at twenty thousand
> and included escaped blacks as well. As late as 1627 their raids

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[24] Schwartz, "Indian Labor," 43-79.

continued in the southern Reconcavo and served as a beacon to

those still in captivity.[25]

Consequently, the Portuguese turned to the African slave trade in the 1570's to fulfill their labor requirements. This massive undertaking, unparalleled in human history, sought as part of its project to directly confront the effectiveness of the most crucial weapon our indigenous *silent guerrillas* had at their disposal, namely exodus, the art of escape from enslavement and the return to their indigenous (or the construction of new) communities.

While the process of enslavement provided the necessary labor power for the slave system, both at the point of capture and in the middle passage, resistance dogged every aspect of this endeavor. Harold D. Wax explains:

> Negro resistance to slave status first appeared, however, with the
>
> trading procedures in Africa, which resulted in the sale of the
>
> Negroes to white slaving captains for transport to the market.
>
> Every stage in the Negro traffic was marked by slave behavior,
>
> which was uncooperative and belligerent. … Rebellions near the
>
> coast, and the records are filled with them, were a prelude to the
>
> later mutinies associated with the middle passage. … In addition
>
> to sickness and disease, tension on the middle passage increased
>
> because of the persistent threat of violence by the slaves.[26]

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[25] Ibid, 43-79.

[26] Harold D. Wax, "Negro Resistance to the Early American Slave Trade," *Journal of Negro History* 51, no. 1 (June 1964), 1-15.

During the Middle Passage, slaves used what leverage they had to resist, including non-cooperation, mutinies, and, in extreme cases, starving themselves to death. In one instance a mutinous passengers on "[the slave ship] the *Creole* overpowered the crew [and] sailed for the British West Indies," where slavery had been abolished some years earlier.[27] Our *silent guerrillas* now took the form of enslaved Africans and their desire to be free forced the state to begin to provide massive resources for these expeditions. Deep within the depths of the slave ship, in their disease- and rat-infested bowels, packed tightly so as to maximize the profitability of the journey, the men were separated from their wives, children from their mothers. But this could not prevent the slaves from undoing the chains that bound their hands and feet "and hurl[ing] themselves on the crew in futile attempts at insurrection."[28]

These *silent guerrillas*, as one would expect, continued to resist enslavement up to their arrival in the Americas. As we will explore in more detail shortly, one of the most successful forms of slave resistance was feigning disability and mental or physical defect. Strategically deployed in the slave market, everyday resistances would drive down the price of the slave and could cost a former owner dearly. This is just part of the web of practices used by the *silent guerrillas* that formed the substance that would define the counter-communities that emerged during, and would continue after, the slavery era.

Creating Counter-Communities

The everyday resistances of our enslaved *silent guerrillas* interacted with a network of social relationships and modes of communication that defined slave communities. Aspects of these

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[27] Howard Zinn, *A Peoples History of the United States* (New York: Harper Collins, 1995), 178.
[28] C.L.R James, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L'Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989), 9.

communities existed in opposition to the system of slavery, but this aspect was below the surface and beyond the perception of the overseers even while it utilized the normal everyday interactions of slavery as cover for its operation. For that reason, I have called it a counter-community. There were three intersecting areas within these counter-communities that interacted and furthered everyday resistance: solidarity, communication networks, and mutual aid.

Solidarity

Solidarity among slaves was remarkable and was a vital element of the other two components. It was the sense of solidarity that permeated the social relations within the counter-community as it created trust among the slaves that was necessary for the communications networks to function and for mutual aid to take place.

Additionally, a sense of solidarity provided cover for the actions of the *silent guerrillas*. In the following example from Alice and Raymond Bauer, slaves captured positions traditionally held by whites and in the process lessened the effects of the disciplinary order:

> In some cases it was noted that the slave resisting punishment took
>
> pains not to treat his fellows with any more than the absolute
>
> minimum of violence. … With such demonstrations of solidarity
>
> among the slaves it is not surprising to find a slave telling of how
>
> he and his fellows 'captured' the institution of the driver.[29]

The act of one *silent guerrilla* telling others of his resistance is quite profound and reflects the sense of solidarity that was necessary for more complex communications networks to function.

---

[29] Bauer and Bauer, "Day to Day", 388-419.

Communication Networks

Communication was routed through an informal network and spaces that were distributed throughout the plantation and, indeed, connected plantations with one another. Freed slaves developed their own communities and in turn continued to communicate with those who were still in enslaved. For instance, rumors surrounding the Haitian Revolution of 1789 circulated among slaves in the United States. In addition, word of local rebellions or even individual acts of resistance spread far from the immediate community. Rawick notes that:

> There must be ways whereby individual acts of repression become
>
> known throughout the community, ways whereby individuals learn
>
> from each other that resistance is legitimate, and ways whereby
>
> individuals learn from each other of particular ways to resist.[30]

Communication flowed along the existing lines and contacts within the community. Shipment of slaves from one region to another, contact among slaves from neighboring plantations, grog shops where slaves came into contact with poor whites, and encounters in the towns and cities are only the most general of contact points. In addition, the slaves who worked in their masters' homes or were rented out to others' passed along useful information throughout the community.

By extension, the church and religious services became spaces outside of the daily routine for communication and the formation of community among the slave populace. These liberated zones developed to such a point that the slaveholding class had to respond, which is why they began a process of surveillance and limiting church activities. Originally planned by

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[30] Rawick, *American Slave*, 107.

the slave-owning class as a method for preventing uprisings, black churches became spaces in which rebellions were fomented.

Moving through and extending beyond these spaces, myths and songs spread the stories of the slaves' lives. In song, the performers carried the voices of the slaves who in turn utilized these tunes to foster desire for rebellion. The mythic tale of Br'er Rabbit was just one among many stories that would allow slaves would prefigure their freedom and share notions of everyday resistance. Here Rawick expands upon my point:

> There are variety of myths and folk tales from black populations in
> Africa and the New World in which a relatively weak creature
> succeeds in at least surviving in his competition with greater
> beasts, usually by trickery. … He is often absurd, but he is also
> filled with life and keeps struggling against his situation.[31]

Additionally, using the particular example of Br'er Rabbit, Alex Lichtenstein describes a "weaker creature" who tricks a stronger one:

> Trickery is used by 'Br'er Rabbit' in numerous instances not only
> to steal livestock from men, but to lay the blame on others or cheat
> his accomplices, so he can distribute the food to his own family or
> sweetheart.[32]

The "trick" in the story explains, and justifies, the actions of the *silent guerrillas*. This communication contains the construction of a counternarrative that presents the acts of stealing, lying, and cheating as legitimate under slavery. The slaves went beyond the immediate situation

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[31] Ibid, 97.

[32] Alex Lichtenstein, "That Disposition to Theft, With Which They Have Been Branded: Moral Economy, Slave Management and the Law," *Journal of Social History* 8 (Spring 1988), 413-440.

within these folk tales, accomplished the freedom that they so craved, and furthered the possibility of achieving just that. It was these elements that developed into both mutual aid and resistance.

Mutual Aid

Finally, slaves assisted one another, brought food to those who were hungry or had run away, and created a pulsating Underground Railroad to assist escaped slaves. It was in these expressions of mutual aid that feelings of solidarity were acted out and the material conditions for further action by the *silent guerrillas* and overt slave rebellions were produced. In this, the material support supplied to the guerrillas arose from the "function of breaking through the bonds, always prone to become crystallized, which tribe, the village community, the city and the State impose upon the individual. In other words, there is the self-assertion of the individual taken as a progressive element."[33] It is this self-assertion that would become the impetus for the eruption of a multiplicity of guerrillas' assaults against the regimes of power that defined slavery.

A Multiplicity of Faces, A Myriad of Forms

Enslaved *silent guerrillas* take on a multiplicity of faces to provide cover for the myriad of forms their struggles take. While the tactics of the *silent guerrillas* are many, they fall into a few descriptive categories, such as: feigning illness and pregnancy, suicide, theft, exodus, arson, destroying the machinery of production, and the refusal of work. Exploring the particulars of these forms will lead us toward an understanding of the general guerrilla war against the regime of power that defined slavery.

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[33] Peter Kropotkin, *Mutual Aid: A Factor of Evolution* (London: Freedom Press, 1993).

From Feigning Illness to Suicide

The feigning of illness was a tactic commonly deployed by slaves to resist the regime of imposed work. The master, not wanting his or her slaves to die, often allowed a day off for a sick slave. Additionally, choosing the opportune moment, slave would often feign illness on the auction block to lower their price, thereby reaping revenge upon a cruel master or, in some cases, preventing the sale all together. Alice and Raymond Bauer describe this practice:

> The purpose of feigning illness was generally to avoid work, although occasionally a slave who was being sold would feign a disability either to avoid being sold to an undesirable master, or to lower his purchase price to obtain revenge on a former master. [34]

Feigning illness at the auction block was a strategic move applied when the master was at his most venerable. Harold Wax writes of slaves who were being "shipped from Jamaica in 1709. Jenny was lame and in poor health, which, coupled with her attitude, made it almost impossible to find a buyer for her."[35] Jenny, by combining illness with a "poor attitude" regained some semblance of control over her life and destiny. Illnesses would also arise in interesting patterns with "everybody sick on Saturday, and scarcely anybody sick on Sunday."[36] Sunday being the slaves' day off, an extended weekend was won in this battle for control over work time.

In a similar fashion, women would feign pregnancy and, for the short time before they were inevitably discovered, be granted both time off from the most strenuous work and additional food. These "pregnant" women must have understood that their lie would be

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[34] Bauer and Bauer, "Day to Day," 388-419.
[35] Wax, "Negro Resistance " 1-15.
[36] Bauer and Bauer, "Day to Day", 388-419.

discovered and that they would be punished, but the short-term relief from work must have been just too tempting.

To permanently escape from work, there were examples of slaves who committed suicide, performed acts of self-mutilation, and even killed their own children. While these are not common forms of resistance, they do arise throughout the history of slavery. Suicide was the permanent act of refusal, ultimately removing the slave from enslavement. It is a testament to the brutality of slavery that so many slaves killed themselves, often in groups, rather than remain the property of another. At times "new slaves commit[ed] suicide in great numbers. Ebo landing in the Sea Islands was the site of the mass suicide of Ebo slaves who simply walked in a body into the ocean and drowned themselves"[37] and "on at least one occasion, in 1807 in Charleston, mass suicides occurred; in this case two boat loads of newly-arrived Negroes starved themselves to death."[38] Additionally, there are accounts of slaves cutting off a hand, arm or leg, to make themselves useless to their masters.

Theft: Reclaiming One's Own Labor

Theft was likely the most common form of everyday resistance under slavery and the act itself included the reclamation of the time and product of one's labor. To combat this widespread activity, the slave system adopted two strategies. On one hand, harsh, violent punishment was increasingly doled out and, on the other, a system was developed whereby slaves could grow their own crops in the hope that this would lessen the need to steal. When the former ceased to function on a plantation-to-plantation basis, slave owners turned to the latter and the state for assistance. At its core, the struggle against theft was a struggle for power. In this struggle, for

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[37] Ibid, 388-419.
[38] Aptheker, *Slave Revolts*, 142-143.

every pig stolen for a feast, ounce of grain pilfered to ward off starvation, or any other item appropriated, the slaves acquired some of "that which one's labor produced."[39]

As the *silent guerrillas* pilfered the property of their masters, they developed ethical positions around this activity. Slaves viewed taking property from the master as fundamentally different from stealing. In this

> The slaves made a clear distinction between the legitimate "taking"
>
> of property from whites and the reprehensible "stealing" from their
>
> fellow slaves. Such mixed feelings were the result of the
>
> contradiction between slaves' Christian sense of morality … and
>
> their desire or need to steal.[40]

The goods that slaves had taken were not exclusively used for their own consumption. Often they were bartered and found their way into underground networks and "grog" shops; the latter refers to an unlicensed liquor store. This was a space where slaves could sell goods, liquors could be purchased, and where blacks and poor whites came into contact, forming relationships. These establishments were usually owned by non-slaveholding, poor whites and when the slave masters sent vigilante patrols to break those spaces apart, class antagonisms arose:

> There existed widespread autonomous slave participation in the
>
> local economy. Thus theft and the slave economy were intimately
>
> linked; "appropriating" white property became a form of resistance
>
> to slavery, and from such practices a dialectic of moral economy
>
> and the law emerged.[41]

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[39] Ibid, 142-143.
[40] Lichtenstein, "That Disposition to Theft, With Which They Have Been Branded", 413-440.
[41] Ibid, 413-440.

This distinction between taking and stealing created a problem for the slave system and shows that there was an awareness around the question of who benefited from the slave's labor. Furthermore, theft was a tool of economic resistance against a set of legal frameworks and relations of power and in this regard it can be read as a battle over the products of one's labor. Theft threatened the entire social order, as "the constant pilfering of goods disrupted the plantation production system and eroded the social control of slave labor that made such a system possible and profitable."[42]

To address this, the slave-owning class attempted to "use the social force of religion to inculcate a morality in slaves that could serve as a barrier to theft [but] the construction of a counter-morality of theft that was reinforced [rather than neutralized or contradicted] by religious and moral beliefs is evident."[43] Slaves used religious teachings to justify their actions and used its arguments against slavery as a whole.

Additionally, slave masters began to use the task system, under which slaves would have a certain number of assigned tasks to complete during the workday. When completed they would have the rest of their day to do activities of their choosing, such as cultivating small garden plots. The easing of restraints and allowing the slaves to have their own space would, the slave-owning class hoped, lessen the need to steal.

When the system responded by giving slaves their own plots of land, it was an attempt to destroy the underground economy and bring this activity under the control of the state. In 1740, South Carolina passed the "Act for the Better Ordering and Governing Negroes and Other Slaves in this Province," which prohibited slaves from engaging in the sale of any item without the explicit permission of the master. This aspect of the law was ineffectual and theft continued. In

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[42] Ibid, 413-440.
[43] Ibid.

1796 another law was passed to prevent grog shopkeepers from selling goods purchased from slaves without the master's permission. State regulations continued with subsequent acts that increased fines on those who had traded illegally with slaves starting in 1817 and then prohibited any purchase of goods from a slave starting in 1834. The slaveholding class was desperate to keep this under control and limit contact between slaves and poor whites, both of whom had begun to explore their common interests.

Exodus and the Threat of Palmares

Nat Turner, leader of a great slave revolt in Virginia in 1831, wrote in his "confessions" about a personal act of everyday resistance, stating that,

> I was placed under an overseer, from whom I ran away and after
>
> remaining in the woods thirty days, I returned, to the astonishment
>
> of the Negroes on the plantation, who thought I had made my
>
> escape to some other part of the country, as my father had done
>
> before.[44]

We can imagine that this act of everyday resistance was a step in his development from a *silent guerrilla* to a not-so-silent one. The simple act of running away was quite an effective tool that the slave possessed. When they were "placed on plantations, they would not work they were given instead to sulky absenteeism or simply running away."[45] This was clearly a direct action, one of removing oneself from enslavement, and is most recognizable in the United States by the Underground Railroad, through which runaway slaves fled to the North or to freedom in Canada. In the underground, "there was no regularly organized institution. Rather, the runaway slaves

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[44] Nat Turner, *The Confession of Nat Turner: and Related Documents* (New York: Bedford / St. Martins Press, 1996).
[45] Schwartz, "Indian Labor," 43-79.

naturally utilized the resources of the black community – the slave quarters and the homes of freedmen."[46]

The act of running away can be delineated into two categories based upon the length and purpose of the act. Running away for a short time for the purpose of a strike was a demand for the reform of the conditions that the slaves lived under. But exodus, or running away to form maroon communities, was the semi-permanent removal of their labor. This course of action then constructed an example of a possible alternative mode of organizing society, one created by free *guerrillas* themselves.

Exodus was also combined with other forms of everyday resistance. For example "solidarity was often extended to runaway slaves who stole food from plantations as their sole means of survival."[47] These small acts by *silent guerrillas* grew into communities that existed outside of, and against, slavery.

Throughout the Americas and the Caribbean, runaway slaves formed maroon communities and raided neighboring plantations., These maroon communities were already resisting before the Haitian Revolution in 1789. C.L.R. James's brilliant text on the revolution states that,

> Those, whose boldness of spirit found slavery intolerable and
> refused to evade it by committing suicide, would fly to the woods
> and mountains and form bands of free man [sic] — maroons. They
> fortified their fastnesses with palisades and ditches. Women
> followed them. They reproduced themselves. And for a hundred
> years before the 1789 [Haitian Revolution] the maroons were a

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[46] Rawick, *American Slave*, 30.
[47] Lichtenstein, "That Disposition to Theft, With Which They Have Been Branded", 413-440.

source of danger to the colony. In 1720, 1,000 slaves fled to the

mountains. In 1751 there were at least 3,000 of them.

He continues:

Many of these [maroon] rebel leaders struck terror into the hearts

of the colonists by their raids on the plantations and the strength

and determination of the resistance they organized against attempts

to exterminate them.[48]

As described earlier, exodus from enslavement was utilized extensively by the indigenous

peoples of Brazil, preventing the slave system from functioning. In response, capital turned to

enslaving Africans. Stuart B. Schwartz explains:

By far, the most common form of slave resistance in colonial

Brazil was flight, and a characteristic problem of the Brazilian

slave regime was the continual and widespread existence of

fugitive communities called variously *mocambos, ladeiras,*

magotes, or *quilombos.*[49]

In Mexico, on the other hand, slaves ran to the mountains in search of a new life, as Edgar F.

Love describes:

Numerous Negro slaves, called *cimarrones*, seeking to escape the

harsh, cruel, monotonous life in the mines and haciendas, defied

the Spanish authorities by running away from their masters and

sought refuge in the mountains. … A number of these *cimarrones*

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[48] James, *The Black Jacobins*, 20.
[49] Stuart B. Schwartz, *Slaves, Peasants, and Rebels: Reconsidering Brazilian Slavery* (Champaign, Illinois: University of Illinois Press, 1996).

became *vagabundos* and frequently attacked, plundered, murdered

and created havoc on the roads and in the pueblos and haciendas.[50]

In Brazil, Mexico, the Caribbean, and everywhere slavery existed, the slaveholding class responded to the constant flight of slaves in the form of legislation, vigilante patrols, punishment of slaves who assisted runaways, and the extermination of maroon communities. This was necessary to maintain the slave system and disciplinary order as the simple existence of slave resistance in the form of running away challenged the fabric of these systems and created the possibility of another society. Returning to the United States, the response of the state and the slaveholding class to this practice is quite clear in the form of legislation in reaction to this form of resistance. Passed in 1850, "the Fugitive Slave Act mobilized some Northern whites into a movement to abolish slavery and protect fugitives, [but] it was the fugitive slaves who created the need for the Fugitive Slave Act."[51] This legislation called attention to the resistance of the slaves but also opened space for anti-slavery whites to push for the abolition of slavery. Rather than being granted freedom, the *silent guerrillas*, through their resistance, made freedom possible.

Two fascinating examples of slave resistance and exodus are the Buraco de Tatu *mocambo* of Brazil, which lasted for around twenty years, and the Palmares maroon community, which existed for nearly a century. Many of these communities were quite large, as Schwartz states:

One *mocambo* was reported in 1723 to have over four hundred

inhabitants, but size alone was not the sole determinant of

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[50] Edgar F. Love, "Negro Resistance To Spanish Rule in Colonial Mexico," *Journal of Negro History* 52, no. 2 (April 1967), 89-103.
[51] Rawick, *American Slave*, 111.

> *mocambo* danger … as word of these events reached the slave
>
> quarters of the *engenhos* and planters feared a similar outbreak.[52]

Maroon communities became a beacon for runaway slaves, as well as those still living on the plantation. While armed revolt was a concern and "rumors of planned slave revolts circulated in 1719, 1725, and 1756, the main problem continued to be *mocambos*."[53] Armed revolts and conspiracies could be put down, but preventing the individual slave from leaving the plantation was a much greater challenge.

Palmares was one of the longest running communities of *silent guerrillas*. It had its own form of government and its own agricultural system, which were not common among maroon communities. Schwartz provides details:

> Palmares, located in the interior of Alagoas, was by far the longest-
> lived and largest fugitive community. For almost the whole
> seventeenth century [about 1605 to 1694] it persisted despite
> determined attempts to eliminate it by the Dutch and Portuguese
> colonial governments and by local residents of the neighboring
> captaincies. … Within Palmares people called each other *malungo*,
> or comrade, a term of adopted kinship also used among slaves who
> had arrived together on the same slave ship.[54]

Palmares, like other maroon communities, was more than a community of runaway slaves – it was a threat to the existence of the entire regime of power that defined slavery.

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[52] Schwartz, *Slaves, Peasants, and Rebels*, 108.
[53] Ibid, 118.
[54] Ibid, 122 and 124.

The Fire Next Time: Arson and Murder

A lit match placed in a barn would economically threaten a plantation and a series of such fires could level a community. The fear this struck into the slaveholding class was enormous. Aptheker clearly saw the threat this activity posed:

> Arson was more frequent and appears, indeed, to have been one of
> the greatest dangers to antebellum Southern society. … Members
> of the hated patrols were at time especially selected by the slaves
> to suffer the destruction by [sic] a slave-created fire.

Aptheker further described "fires deliberately created by individual slaves in protest against their oppression and as a means of revenge against their exploiters."[55] Arson was a danger to the pre-Civil War American south due to the fact that the majority of the population was enslaved; the flames of a burning "big house" reflected the faces of the entire slave community. Arson was common because it was easy and at times struck not only the master's immediate property but often surrounding forests and lands as well.

Poisonings of masters' families have also been recorded, exemplifying a gendered nature to this tactic: it was women who most often had access to the master's house and kitchen. Female *silent guerrillas* were more often than not the perpetrators of this act, since they had access to the masters' house and food supply. Slaves poisoned the master and his family or themselves or their own families in order to free themselves from slavery. While "in 1751 South Carolina enacted a law providing the death penalty, without the benefit of clergy, for slaves

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[55] Aptheker, *Slave Revolts*, 143.

found guilty of attempting to poison white people,"[56] this didn't prevent slaves from killing those who enslaved them.

The "Nigger Hoe" and Sabotage

Like the Luddities smashing the machines of early industrialization and the former peasants tossing their wooden shoes into the gears, slaves had a strange habit of destroying the tools on the plantation. This destruction of farm implements or working livestock to death was also a form of resistance to enslavement and work. Capital, the state, and the disciplinary order had to respond to these tactics. Capital and the state would react with technological improvements or the creation of new laws and the cycle of struggle would begin again. These tools were the first line of enslavement, the master in their hands.

Given its subtleties and low risk of getting caught, this was one of the most common forms of slave resistance. The master simply thought that the slaves were being careless or destructive and that it was their nature to do so. Aptheker notes that "the carelessness and deliberate destructiveness of the slaves that resulted in broken fences, spoiled tools, and neglected animals, were common phenomena."[57] Since it was quite difficult for the master to implement new farming techniques, this lowered both the productivity and the profitability of the plantation. Essentially the slaves held back the progress and development of the plantation system by their actions. The point came when "mules were substituted for horses because horses could not stand up under the treatment of the slaves."[58] Here again, slaves attacked the master's property as it was immediately before them and the master was unable to punish the slaves for their actions.

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[56] Ibid, 143.
[57] Ibid, 141.
[58] Bauer and Bauer, "Day to Day," 388-419.

The development of the "nigger hoe" is a vivid example of the power of the *silent guerrilla* as it forced capital to adapt to the actions of the enslaved. As described in Bauer and Bauer:

> The "nigger hoe" was first introduced into Virginia as a substitute
>
> for the plow, in breaking up the soil. The law fixes its weight at
>
> four pounds – as heavy as a woodman's axe. … The planters tell
>
> us, as the reason for its use, that the negroes would break a Yankee
>
> hoe in pieces on the first root, or stone that might be in their way.[59]

Slavery was a constant battle between the disciplinary order and the everyday struggles of the *silent guerrillas*. If the slaves could drive capital to develop new technology to deal with slaves' breaking of implements, then the point would be reached when capital could not develop new technologies within the confines of the slave system. We will see echoes of this later within Fordism and the reaction of capital to the organization of working people on the shop floor. But for the moment, it is important to see the "nigger hoe" and similar developments as characteristic of slavery.

Dysaethesia Aethiopica or the Revolt Against Work

The revolt against work is complementary to the forms of everyday resistance discussed above, such as theft and the breaking of the machinery of production. The *silent guerrillas* recognition that their labor only benefited the master is expressed in the slaves' refusal to work, "slowness," and disinterest in their tasks.

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[59] Ibid, 388-419.

> The Negroes were well aware that the work they did benefited only
>
> the master. … It is thus not surprising that one finds many
>
> recurring comments that a slave did not do half a good day's work
>
> in a day.[60]

Numerous slaveholders commented that the slaves had to be constantly monitored in order to get them to work, that they would do all they could to resist up to the point of receiving punishment. The fullness of slave management – and the fact that its constant pressure and presence was needed for it to work – becomes apparent. This raises the issue of the complex relationship between indifference and deliberate slowing up of work. It is now next to impossible, even looking in detail, to determine if slaves were simply indifferent to work or deliberate about their insubordination. On one plantation it was recorded that the slaves neglected to guard the cattle and "they were fully aware that the cattle were ruining the sugar cane, but kept right on singing and dancing."[61] I suggest that they were at times indifferent, at times deliberate, and at times both of these. What is key here is their actions and that the revolt against work was an expression of the need to control their own destiny outside the realm of work. This adds to our understanding of everyday resistance under slavery. The different forms of everyday resistance are general categories that represent the struggle against slavery and the imposition of work.

Dysaethesia Aethiopica is a mental condition that many southern doctors found in slaves; some believed it to be widespread. Its symptoms included mischief, destruction of property, theft, and the slowing of work. This disease illustrates the widespread and systematic nature of the revolt against work and how, with this condition, the specific revolts of particular slaves become the general revolt against work.

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[60] Ibid, 388-419.
[61] Ibid, 388-419.

Slave strikes were the manifestation of the daily revolt against work and these strikes combined with a form of everyday resistance: exodus. This form of overt rebellion arose directly from the slaves' everyday resistance. And we can say with some confidence that this form of overt rebellion could not exist without the everyday actions of the slaves. Here "individual acts of truancy became slave strikes."[62] To expand upon this,

> The slaves were well aware of their economic value and used it to good advantage. The skilled laborers among the slaves knew their worth and frequently rebelled against unsatisfactory work situations. Slaves who were hired out would run away from the masters who had hired them and then either return home or remain in hiding until they felt like returning to work.[63]

During times of crisis, these everyday resistances and slave strikes became even more effective. At the time of the most profound crisis of the Civil War period, we see that,

> In the absence of many slaveholders, overseers, and patrollers, hundreds of thousands of slaves worked sporadically or not at all other than for their own immediate needs. … In the South, the slaves systematically sabotaged the war effort by refusing to produce.[64]

Resistance and rebellion in times of crisis, when the disciplinary order has broken down, when the state is not performing its usual duties – maintenance of a stable labor pool, maintenance of a

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[62] Rawick, *American Slave*, 30.
[63] Bauer and Bauer, "Day to Day," 388-419.
[64] Rawick, *American Slave*, 116.

police force and a judicial system, enforcing borders, and coordinating resources – and capital's mechanisms – discipline and imposition of work – no longer function, compounds the situation and leads to further crisis and hence opportunity for revolution, as nearly occurred during the Civil War.

Generalized Revolt Against Work

It is also important to understanding slaves as a class that, under slavery, there was a general revolt against work. The most common form of resistance was the slowing of work to the point where slaves were branded as slow and dim-witted. The implication of slaves revolting against work is key to understanding the revolt against work throughout the history of capitalism. Slavery, which created the necessary surplus labor for the beginning of industrialized capital, can be considered the testing ground for capital and the state – and for the worker resistance that would develop later. The slaves also keenly understood that they were not benefiting from their labor. Slaves viewed the "taking" of goods from the master as morally acceptable and necessary for their survival while pilfering from a fellow slave or a poor white's crops was "theft."[65] In this, seeing slaves as a class becomes even clearer. As a class, both in the form of *silent guerrillas* and as overt rebels, slaves overthrew the regime of power that defined slavery, as Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri explore in their book *Empire*:

> European capital would not relinquish slave production until the
> organized slaves posed a threat to their power and made that
> system of production untenable. … Political unrest did of course
> undercut the economic profitability of the system, but more

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[65] Lichtenstein, "That Disposition to Theft, With Which They Have Been Branded", 413-440.

important, the slaves in revolt came to constitute a real counter-

power.[66]

Only when we see slaves, as part of the working class, functioning autonomously from capital and the state does the effect of their resistances on the regime of power that defined slavery come into focus. While the majority of slaves can been seen as unpaid agricultural workers, as peasants in the general sense, addressing peasant *silent guerrillas* will stretch our metaphorical structure to a further point than this chapter will allow. Hardt and Negri continue:

> The history of black slavery in the Americas demonstrates both the
>
> vital need to control the mobility of labor and the irrepressible
>
> desire to flee on the part of the slaves: from the closed ships of the
>
> Middle Passage to the elaborate repressive techniques employed
>
> against escaped slaves. Mobility and mass worker nomadism
>
> always expresses a refusal and a search for liberation: the
>
> resistance against the horrible conditions of exploitation and the
>
> search for freedom and new conditions of life.[67]

It is this nomadism that will return as a constant form of resistance to capitalism and it is something that the system is currently addressing through the limits that states are placing on movement between national boundaries. But with all struggle, as is certainly clear here, "only when the slaves, through their own struggles, saw the necessity and possibility of freedom, could they struggle to overcome, to transcend that bondage."[68] These are themes that will be explored in the following chapters on the peasantry and the class of industrial and social workers. It is the

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[66] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2000), 123.
[67] Ibid, 212.
[68] Rawick, *American Slave*, 95.

resistance against capital, against the imposition of work that defines the working class. Slaves had resisted, and peasants would resist, this imposition.

III   **IN PEASANT POLITICS**

> Formal, organized political activity, even if clandestine and
> revolutionary, is typically the preserve of the middle class and the
> intelligentsia. To look for peasant politics in this realm is to look
> largely in vain.[69]
>
> - James Scott

Between October 25th and November 3rd 1842, Karl Marx contributed five articles on the theft of wood to the *Rheinische Zeitung*. In these passionate pieces, Marx decries the legal apparatus that was in the process of being constructed to enclose Europe's communal lands. That attack on customary rights was a way of decomposing the relationships and means of subsistence that had defined peasant life. Enclosures were present at the beginning of our exploration of everyday resistance under slavery and it will return in our investigation of the development of the industrial and social proletariat in the following chapter.

This process of primitive accumulation, of enclosure, was a violent one. Laws were developed to punish, by fines or prison, the gathering of berries, dead leaves, and fallen branches. Peter Linebaugh writes:

> Under this progressive erosion of their material power, a life and
> death struggle took place for the re-appropriation of wealth, a
> struggle that was endemic, highly price sensitive, and by no means
> restricted to timber and fuel rights. … In the spring women and

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[69] Scott, *Weapons*, xv.

children ranged through the fields along the Rhine and its

tributaries, the Mosel, the Ahr, and the Lahn, cutting young thistles

and nettles, digging up the roots of couch-grass, and collecting

weeds and leaves of all kinds to turn them to account as winter

fodder.[70]

As an expression of the power struggles taking place here, this "theft" was taking place with the

enclosing of the commons. Linebaugh continues: "The capitalist offensive against traditional

handicraft and small workshop production met setbacks that were partially the results of workers'

power in the detail of the labor process or of the obstacles remaining in the traditional, often

agrarian, relations that engulfed such productive sites."[71]

Traditional ways of life were being criminalized and falling under the control of the state-

apparatus. Alongside the control and capture of peasant life, the peasants were disengaged from

the land and began to flow into the cities and, therefore, into the factories as cheap labor. The

French peasants would become fond of throwing their *sabots* – their wooden shoes that were

adapted for the muddy fields but had followed them into the factory – into the gears of the

machines. It is from this activity and the wooden shoes that were used that we draw the word

sabotage.

As peasants were removed from the commons and arrived in the cities, they discovered

that a similar set of laws had being constructed there as well. These laws were targeting this

uprooted population and sought to put them to work in the factories of early capitalism.

Pauperization records are no less indicative of active state control

of the relative surplus population than they are of the magnitude of

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[70] Linebaugh, "Karl Marx."
[71] Ibid.

the problem. Arrests for mendicity [begging] increased between 1841 and 1842 in Franconia, the Palatinate, and Lower Bavaria by 30 percent to 50 percent. In the 1830's one in four people in Cologne were on some from of charitable or public relief. [Additionally,] emigration policies and the repression of paupers alike were organized by the state.[72]

An entire apparatus was constructed to produce, through decree, a class of workers that would accept the horrid conditions in the factories. Once separated from their means of subsistence, these new city dwellers had to survive by finding wage labor or obtaining "public relief" so that, in this regard, they found themselves at the whim of either capital or the state. The flow of peasants was now dictated by legalized violence and the requirements of the growing labor market.

This labor market required an apparatus for enforcing its dictates and preventing the wayward peasants from escaping to find new lands to subsist on. Many did in fact escape and participated in expropriations of land and goods as they fled. As Scott offers, "[t]he pace of 'forest crime' rose as wages declined, as provisions became more expensive, and where emigration was more difficult; in 1836 there were 207,000 prosecutions in Prussia, 150,000 of which were for forest offenses."[73] Police forces were created to prevent "theft" from the forests and fields and to enforce these new laws. This was the expression of violence that was concealed behind the law; it was the point at which these legal mandates placed their hands upon the peasant population.

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[72] Ibid.
[73] Scott, *Weapons*, 35.

While the peasants were flowing into the cities and having their subjectivities forged as waged workers, the forest itself was also being seen as a commodity. This privatization of forest rights required a discourse and knowledge so that the forest could be managed both within capital and by a set of practices that justified the exclusion of those who didn't have the intellectual tools and harvesting practices that could maintain the integrity of the forest. The forest, as a part of the commons, came under the direction of "scientific forestry." Schools were created to teach these new techniques while traditional knowledge was attacked and suppressed among the peasantry. This was of course as part of a larger discourse on private property rights swirling around Europe at the time, which would come to infest all of social life.

Other processes were also swirling around Europe during the enclosure process. As life activities were to fall under these new regulations and the violence of the state, other processes were at play that attacked the relationships at the core of the peasants' way of life. The witch-hunt was utilized as a way to separate women from sources of power, communal activities, and each other. Unmarried women who had once survived by gleaning in the fields were forced into other activities. Any transgression from these developing laws, and the corresponding morality, would be met with violence and the threat of being burned at the stake. Here women were not just targeted as peasants or as thieves of wood but because of their standing in the social order. Women, being separated from the means of subsistence, were increasingly dependent on husbands, fathers, and the state. Silvia Federici, in her epic book on the subject, describes the effect of this process: "The witch-hunt destroyed a whole world of female practices, collective relations, and systems of knowledge that had been the foundation of women's power in pre-capitalist Europe and the condition for their resistance in the struggle against feudalism."[74]

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[74] Silvia Federici, *Caliban and the Witch: Women, the Body and Primitive Accumulation* (New York: Autonomedia, 2004), 103.

Patriarchal systems of domination were put into place as male members of the community asserted increasing power over women both in the home and in public.

While the period being described by Marx, Linebaugh, and Federici is quite late with respect to the original enclosure process, which can be traced to the 12th century, it is where many of our modern institutions originated. Michel Foucault drew on this period for his two great studies of the prison and the mental institution and, as he states in *Madness and Civilization*, "something had been born, which was no longer repression, but authority."[75] Forms of power began to develop that defined modern systems of power that flow through and are coordinated and produced by capital and the state-apparatus.

The processes described here existed not only during the birth pangs of capitalism but rather are ongoing mechanisms of enclosure that increasingly bring areas of life into capitalism as access to the means of subsistence, by the imposition of wage labor and legal frameworks of exclusion, are eroded. Two contemporary examples of struggles against the process of enclosure include the Zapatistas in the jungles of Southwest Mexico and demands for increased local control over agricultural land taking place across the Indian sub-continent. "Peasants" continue to challenge capitalism and the state as they struggle to maintain their communal lands. For instance, migrant agricultural workers, family farmers, and those producing for subsistence outside of the market are social actors that the state is still attempting to manage. While it is clear that peasant populations had utilized tactics of everyday resistance prior to the advent of capitalism, our exploration of the peasant *silent guerrillas* here will begin with the enclosure

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[75] Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Madness in the Age of Reason* (New York: Vintage, 1973), 251.

movements and address resistances both to the violence of enclosure and to agricultural production under capitalism.

Silent guerrillas: In the Belly of the Peasant

James Scott, who has been at the forefront of the study of contemporary everyday peasant resistance for the past three decades, stated in our opening epigraph that one would need to look beyond "formal, organized political activity" to find the fire burning in the belly of the peasant. Here the image of the peasant marries quite well with our figure of the *silent guerrillas* as the struggle they are waging "is less a pitched battle than a low grade, hit-and-run, guerrilla action."[76] Our *silent guerrillas* utilize a myriad of symbolic and practical forms of resistance that stem from a set of communal relations and active solidarities that are at the base of peasant communities.

Scott writes that, "There is no organization to be banned, no conspiratorial leaders to round up or buy off, no rioters to haul before the courts – only the generalized noncompliance by thousands of peasants."[77] This noncompliance is rooted in the material conditions and set of relations of power that the peasants find themselves in. And in power vis-à-vis capital, the experiences with both everyday and overt struggles, the level of integration into capitalism, the strength of the agricultural sector in the economic life of the country, and the state-apparatus are all factors that determine this activity.

The enclosure process, as an ongoing factor in capitalist development, has always sought to undo non-capitalist relations of agricultural production and life. These other forms, as Pierre Clastres states, "wouldn't do, and it didn't last: the Indians were soon put to work, and they died

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[76] Scott, *Weapons*, 241.
[77] James Scott, "Everyday Forms of Resistance" in *Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*, Forest D. Colburn, ed. (Armonk, New York & London: M.E. Sharpe Press, 1989), 11.

of it. As a matter of fact, two axioms seem to have guided the advance of Western civilization from the outset: the first maintains that true societies unfold in the protected shadow of the State; the second states a categorical imperative: man must work."[78] It is this imposition of work that illustrates how "peasants are exploited by capital in the sphere of production."[79]

These *silent guerrillas* are attacking this imposition and are in the process creating an oppositional culture. The forms, such as "sabotage, theft of public or private grain stores,"[80] are similar to those of slaves but become less clear when understood as part of a general phenomenon. When exploring the forms of peasant resistance, symbolic action, the criminalization of communal behaviors, and the revolt against work, the metaphor of the *silent guerrillas* will allow us to explore this activity over a broad set of situations and time periods. Within this framework are two specific examples of peasant resistance and their effect on capital. They will be explored before addressing the general forms of resistance utilized by these peasant guerrillas.

Dead Sparrows and the Green Revolution

There are two modern examples of attacks on peasant composition that had disastrous results, one in the short term and the other in some ways still unfolding. Both illustrate how problematic state and capitalist planning and development techniques are. The Great Leap Forward, Mao Zedong's second Five Year Plan (1958-1963), sought to vastly increase production in both the industrial and agricultural sectors. Beginning nearly two decades earlier in the Western world, the Green Revolution utilized military technology (i.e. chemicals, that is pesticides, created for battle field conditions and then appropriated for domestic agriculture) to increase agricultural

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[78] Pierre Clastres, *Society Against the State* (New York: Zone Books, 1987), 193.
[79] Lucas de Rouffignac, *Contemporary Peasantry*, 55.
[80] Ibid, 55.

yields and food production. Both of these, in their own particular ways, were attacks on the peasantry and were periods of capitalist decomposition of working class power globally through the state-capitalist and militarized social-democratic variants that dominated the separate blocks of the planet during this time.

Mao's Great Leap Forward was a process of rapid industrialization and reorganization of agricultural production that came just a decade after the Communist Party seized control of the Chinese state. After a series of failed attempts, the Great Leap Forward put both agricultural and industrial development on the same path beginning in 1958. But agricultural yields fell behind early on due to labor being reshuffled into the factories. To address this and to increase agricultural production, problematic farming techniques were utilized such as planting seeds six feet deep as to increase root capacity. But in the wake of droughts in 1959 and 1960, production was far below what was necessary to feed the growing rural populations and little was left for the peasants in the countryside. The most disastrous of these problematic farming techniques was the chasing of sparrows, that stealer of seed, from the fields. At the insistence of the party, farmers began banging on pots to keep the sparrows in flight. After a few minutes, the sparrows would collapse from exhaustion and fall out of the sky. Thousands of sparrows were killed in this way. But what Communist Party policy didn't take into account is that the great enemy of the locust is the sparrow and the locusts overran the countryside. This, in concert with other policies, resulted in the worst famine in modern human history leaving between 20 million and 43 million dead. This set of imposed policies sought to separate the peasant from their traditional knowledge and their own autonomy within Chinese society and effectively decomposed these relations – violently.[81]

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[81] Dali Yang, *Calamity and Reform in China: State, Rural Society and Institutional Change Since the Great Leap Famine* (Palo Alto, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996).

Western governments, led by the United States, had their own strategy to increase agricultural production after World War II. The Green Revolution utilized pesticides as inputs to increase yields and it has had the effect of taking an area of life that had a certain element of autonomy and placing it under capitalist command. The Green Revolution was an extensive undertaking that was directed, at least initially, at the "developing world" and all agricultural production under capitalism was reorganized. Agricultural yields were increased by controlling irrigation, the institution of monocropping, development of high-yield varieties, and use of pesticides. The result of this was the increasing and continuous consolidation of food production and the loss of political power by peasants and small farmers.

Harry Cleaver stated that,

> The story of the Green Revolution is far more than one of plant breeding and genetics. It is woven into the fabric of American foreign policy and is an integral part of the postwar effort to contain social revolution and make the world safe for profits. When understood in this broader perspective, the Green Revolution appears as the latest chapter in the long history of increasing penetration of Third-World agriculture by the economic institutions of Western capitalism. Thus the term Green Revolution encompasses not only the increased output associated with a new technology but also the political, economic, and social changes, which have produced and accompanied it."[82]

Here the purpose was not simply to create an insecure food system that would be dependent on

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[82] Harry Cleaver, "The Contradictions of the Green Revolution," *American Economic Review* 62, no. 2 (May 1972), 177-186.

capital but also an insecure peasant population that would be sufficiently decomposed as not to rebel and reorganize agricultural production along more communal and self-sufficient lines. The input of new technologies often followed peasant uprisings and rebellions and when these technologies were not sufficient, war was declared, for instance, on Southeast Asia while low intensity conflict was instituted against the population of South America.

The effects of the Green Revolution have been disastrous, albeit in a way far more diffuse than the Great Leap Forward, and have resulted in large swaths of the peasant population being removed from their communal lands, insecurity in local and regional food systems, an increase in famine and malnutrition, pollution of agricultural lands, and dependency on international corporations for seed supplies and food distributors. This is illustrative of the attempt by capital to reorganize planetary agricultural systems, of which biotechnology, structural adjustment programs, and neo-liberalism are related attempts. Against these plans, peasants across the planet have participated in a series of resistance activities from carving out plots from larger farms and reclaiming public lands to overt rebellions. This is a counter-plan, instituted by peasants as they maintain their communal structures in the face of enclosures and those that are already functioning as agricultural workers under capitalism. Intertwined with these activities is a set of symbolic and actual resistances that can be found in everyday life and these form the base from which overt rebellions circulate in peasants' everyday lives.

The Power of Symbolic Action

The power of symbolic action is not that it serves as an example of distaste for the social order or that it addresses to any intrinsic good in the dominant classes. Rather, it reflects larger processes of action that are taking place and the shifting of power relationships under a given order.

Symbolic actions are part of the web of activities that challenge relations of power and capitalist planning that intersect with the lives of peasants.

Taxes, cropping patterns, development practices, market transactions, and laws are not directly confronted but rather they are nibbled away at through "gossip, slander, the rejection of demeaning labels, the withdrawal of deference,"[83] and the creation of a narrative that runs counter to the discourse that flows through these institutions. In reference to peasant resistance, James Scott describes these activities as, "requir[ing] little or no coordination or planning; they make use of implicit understandings and informal networks; they often represent a form of individual self-help; they typically avoid any direct, symbolic confrontation with authority."[84] A popular culture of resistance arises at the same point as these symbolic actions and they reinforce one another.

This is an attack on the symbolic order, on the spectacle, and the legitimacy of power relations are undermined by these actions. "In place of open insult, the use of gossip, nicknames, and character assassination; in place of direct physical assault, the use of sabotage, arson, and nocturnal threats by [a] masked man; … in place of labor defiance, shirking, slowdowns, and spoilage; in place of the tax riot or rebellion, evasion, and concealment."[85]

These plays "amount to an exchange of small arms fire, a small skirmish, in a cold war of symbols between rich and poor"[86] and are part of a larger set of actions that are taking place. Symbolic action is not a separate category of activity that takes place prior to practical or actual everyday resistances. Rather it is part of a web of activity that circulates in peasant communities.

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[83] Scott, "Everyday," 8.
[84] Scott, *Weapons*, xvi.
[85] Scott, "Everyday," 24.
[86] Scott, *Weapons*, 22.

These actions are contained within stories. Or, as James Scott has theorized, they are part of a play. He argues, "What we have here is a difference between 'onstage' and 'offstage' behavior; to the extent that the deference expressed in public, power-laden situations is negated in the comparative safety of offstage privacy, we can speak unambiguously of false difference. … Those with power in the village are not, however, in total control of the stage. They may write the basic script for the play but, within its confines, truculent or disaffected actors find sufficient room for maneuver to suggest subtly their disdain for the proceedings."[87]

Creating Counter-Communities

As we witnessed with slave struggles, elements of solidarity, communication, and mutual aid are vital to the creation of a counter-community as a base for both symbolic and actual acts of resistance. Additionally, women have played an important role in the construction of these counter-communities and at times take on particular aspects and avenues of everyday resistance that they have opened against both the social order and the patriarchal relations they are entangled in.

Solidarity, Communication, and Mutual Aid

In a situation where "open declarations of defiance are replaced by euphemisms and metaphors; clear speech by muttering and grumbling; open confrontation by concealed noncompliance or defiance,"[88] a set of strong relationships of solidarity are important. This sense of commonality and trust is vital for a population involved in resistance and often criminalized activities.

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[87] Ibid, 25-26.
[88] Scott, "Everyday," 26.

A "conspiracy of silence" can be found amongst the peasant populations and it "consisted of three elements: the refusal to report crime, the refusal to identify criminals, and the refusal to tell the truth about crime."[89] This reflects a reliance on traditional methods of addressing social transgressions, ones that maintained the integrity of the community. But this also calls attention to a counter-morality that is functioning in many of these spaces as our *silent guerrillas* see the difference between stealing from neighbors and stealing from the landowning and capitalist class. This "conspiracy of silence" is only possible when a considerable sense of solidarity has permeated throughout the community.

This illustration is furthered by the black market that at times develops in the course of peasant life. Michael Jimenez describes this activity:

> In order to avoid the revenue collection agents, the peasantry
> developed extensive networks to protect a contraband economy
> based primarily on the production and sale of untaxed liquors.[90]

At times women played a particularly important role in this activity. Jimenez continues:

> Women participated extensively in the contraband economy that
> flourished in the coffee zones after the turn of the century. Some
> women manufactured and distributed cigarettes in nearby towns in
> violation of revenue laws, but, most importantly, they were key

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[89] Nathan Brown, "The Conspiracy of Silence and the Atomistic Political Activity of the Egyptian Peasantry, 1882-1952" in *Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*, 109.
[90] Michael F. Jimenez, "Class, Gender and Peasant Resistance in Central Columbia, 1900-1930" in *Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*, 128-129.

players in the production and marketing of local fermented and

distilled liquors.[91]

While in this example the contraband is spirits, other goods often travel outside the view of the

tax collector and at times illegal items such as armaments and medicine are exchanged in this

fashion. These illegal activities require community institutions and cohesion.

The Mexican peasantry, for example, has historically had a high level of political composition

due to a series of communal institutions that populate the landscape. The *ejido*, *comunidad*

indgena, and *pueblo* have all led to an extraordinary level of direct participation in the

community. These institutions, and at times the municipality as well, have been utilized to

express demand and solve the needs of the community. Ann Lucas de Rouffignac, in her study

of contemporary Mexican peasantry, describes this activity:

> Peasants organize themselves in a myriad of ways (from the total
>
> parcelization of the land – through the formation of *grupos*
>
> *solidarios* of various sizes and characteristics who work together
>
> for specific productive or commercial tasks – to complete
>
> collectivization).[92]

These forms of mutual aid and communal organization do not simply reorganize life, they create

spaces for other activities. Continuing, Lucas de Rouffignac states that, "For peasants in the

Mexican countryside, the integrity of the peasant community, the *pueblo*, is where they can

begin to create space for their own self-valorization activities, not capital's."[93] An entire area of

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[91] Ibid, 139.
[92] Lucas de Rouffignac, *Contemporary Peasantry*, 116.
[93] Jimenez, "Class, Gender," 126.

life is created in these counter-communities and institutions, and these are made possible through feelings of solidarity, communication networks, and acts of mutual aid. As with this cooperative labor, forms of everyday resistance require these elements. Without this important, and intangible element, the methods of everyday resistance explored in the sections that follow would be impossible.

Gender and Peasant Resistance

Gender is a terrain of struggle that we approached under slavery and peasant women are no different in that they fight on two fronts: against work and against patriarchal systems of power. Plantation owners and other males in power often victimized peasant women. Women's self-protection, and therefore the creation of safe spaces, is of crucial concern. In Colombia during the 1920's, this concern became a point of struggle:

> The deep anxiety aroused by planters' sexual predations was certainly as responsible for fueling the organized opposition of the rural poor in the following decade as demands for the alteration of work obligations or efforts to guarantee the autonomy of the peasant household.[94]

Poor women throughout the history of capitalism have had their bodies and sexuality subjugated to the interests of both particular men in their lives as well as capital in general. Thus, in peasant societies, sexual violence has been used as a weapon interpersonally against women and, by proxy, against the peasant household. This is just another way that plantation holders maintain control over the peasantry. As the Colombian women cited above were under attack, the

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[94] Ibid, 131.

peasants themselves would hide their daughters from the plantation owners in a way creating a safe space outside of the realm of the state-apparatus and its controlling mechanisms.[95]

Peasant women create safe spaces on a continuous and daily basis and they do so by hiding their daughters and by carving space out of the disciplinary order. This is done in two ways: by asserting communal ways of organizing and by creating networks and relationships with other women. This space is created when women agree to provide a sense of physical or affective safety for one another or when women forge their own relations with men on their own terms.

Here another issue arises: These women previously held positions of power in their communities and the actions of the plantation owners must be seen as an attack on women's communal power. While what we have just been describing took place in South America, similar conditions exist in other parts of the world.

A Multiplicity of Faces, A Myriad of Forms

Peasant *silent guerrillas* utilize a multiplicity of approaches to the forms of everyday resistance they took part in. These actions are at the core of peasant life and help to construct the spaces where other relationships can flourish. It is by looking at these struggles that the relationships of power that intersect with peasant life become clear. While a set of categories define this activity, the *silent guerrillas* are quite fluid and utilize a number of tactics to gain an advantage. These categories include: criminal acts, destruction of the machinery of production, theft, strikes, oscillation between exodus and squatting, and, finally, arson and murder.

Criminal Acts

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[95] Ibid.

The criminalization of everyday modes of communal life during the enclosure process is a key element in the construction of an apparatus that sought to separate the peasant population from their ancestral lands. As we saw above with the theft of wood, "the inception of commercial forestry … signaled a dramatic change in the level of state interference with the everyday life of the peasantry."[96] These vestigial communal behaviors, along with a set of acts taking place in everyday life, many of which will be explored below, have been criminalized to protect private property rights and the integrity of the commodity form. Apparatuses of the state have been constructed to prevent the gleaning of fields and the farming of land that had been public prior to the enclosure movement. Here the state-form becomes the coordinator for the suppression of this activity. "Criminal acts were no longer violations of local standards of conduct; they became offenses against the state."[97]

The legal apparatus that was constructed throughout the enclosure movement directly addresses the attempt by capital to prevent the peasantry from having access to the means of subsistence. It is the state that has the ability to construct the definition of crime and, with the construction of a discourse about crime, the state is also granted a monopoly on the use of violence. The development of the modern nation state was born in this period of enclosure; it is constructed from these discourses about public order. The words of Nathan Brown, writing specifically about Egypt, would certainly apply to states in general: "For in the eyes of those who controlled the country, almost any challenge that was made to the social and political order – no matter how local – was criminal."[98]

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[96] Romachandra Guha, "Saboteurs in Forest: Colonialism and Peasant Resistance in the Indian Himalaya" in *Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*, 68.
[97] Nathan Brown, "Conspiracy of Silence," 98.
[98] Ibid, 94.

The struggle over the definition of crime is as important to our understanding of peasant resistance as the struggle around particular criminal acts. For the peasants, as they attempt to maintain communal forms of life, struggle on these two fronts. This should be considered while exploring particular forms of guerrilla activity since all of these activities are transgressions against the law and state power.

Destroy the Machines

Destroying the machines of production, overusing livestock, or breaking farming equipment is the most immediate form of resistance since these are the most immediate representation of the landlords and landowning class. As we saw with our *silent guerrillas* under slavery, farming implements are easy broken and the act of resistance is hidden as normal wear and tear on the tools themselves. Additionally, vandalism against crops often takes place on the periphery of the workday and raids against a landlord's crops are often a way of adding to the peasant diet.

James Scott provides us with an example of a less hidden from of this activity from his research in Malaysia:

> Batteries were removed from the machines and thrown in irrigation ditches; carburetors and other vital parts such as distributors and air filters were smashed; sand and mud were put into the gas tank; and various objects (stones, wire, nails) were thrown into the augers. … Starting in 1976, when combine-harvesting began with a vengeance, peasant acts of vengeance likewise spread throughout the paddy-growing region."[99]

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[99] Scott, *Weapons*, 248.

These methods were used to protest the use of the combine-harvester in the fields, which deskilled their work and was a direct attack on their level of composition. The combine-harvester had been a technological fix for peasant resistance in that it replaced peasant labor with machine labor. Anonymous individuals always did these acts in the night and word of the actions was spread through existing communications networks while anonymity was maintained by a culture of resistance.

Theft: Reclaiming One's Own Labor

In a manner similar to the destruction of the machinery of production, thefts of small quantities go almost unnoticed and are considerable additions to the peasant diet. Speaking particularly of peasants in Poland, Jacek Kochanowicz writes that, "any manorial property that could be stolen was. Grain was taken from barns, fish were taken from ponds. Fruit trees were cut down."[100] These were in fact products of the peasants' own labor and the act of stealing them was one way in which peasants reclaimed the product of their work.

Stories situating forms of resistance within the counter-discourse taking place in peasant communities have often developed elsewhere as well. Describing highland Peru, Gavin Smith explains that, "the villagers are known as 'the foxes' and, in the talking of their tactics, they endlessly contrast the cunning of the fox with the strutting by empty courage of the rooster."[101] These stories played out actual acts of "cunning" that the peasants participated in that often were utilized to gain an advantage over the landowning class or those who had purchased agricultural products.

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[100] Jacek Kochanowicz, "Between Submission and Violence: Peasant Resistance in the Polish Manorial Economy of the Eighteenth Century" in *Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*, 47.
[101] Gavin Smith, "The Fox and the Rooster: The Culture of Opposition in Highland Peru," *This Magazine* 19, no. 1 (April 1985).

Theft is not always simply the taking of goods or the cheating of a landowner: The struggle over land itself often utilized this tactic as well. In Poland, "small pieces of land were added to peasants' strips little by little."[102] Here, peasants stole back pieces of their communal lands and this added to the crops that they were able to produce for the market and for themselves.

A Peasant Strike

As a strategic suspension of work a strike is usually associated with political institutions such as unions or factory workers, but under particular conditions a strike could be launched in the peasant community. While studying in Malaysia, James Scott discovered this is quite the case and wrote that, "if the farmer has a reputation for stinginess, the women will strike, as they do once or twice a year. The 'strike' is not announced, but everyone understands what is happening."[103] This sort of community work stoppage is often combined with the boycott of a particular buyer and is a practice that has been found in peasant communities. For where work is imposed on peasants, they periodically strike until better conditions are granted.

In these spaces we see a daily antagonism over the conditions of work, for instance how often a paddy must be thrashed, and these smaller work stoppages and avoidances often circulate and become strike actions.

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[102] Ibid, 45.
[103] Scott, *Weapons*, 259.

Exodus

Beyond the theft of goods, lands, and time, destroying the machinery of production, and striking, the peasant's "ultimate form of 'passive' resistance was to run away."[104] Capital's need for peasant labor fluctuates and, for that reason, the state often restricts migration and attempts to hold the peasants to particular regions. Jimenez found that in Colombia, "Taking flight was an extreme, thought not unusual, response to the pressures from departmental officials, but certainly disturbing to the planters desiring stable work forces."[105] The likelihood of exodus becoming a successful tactic is certainly dependent on the conditions in which a peasant community finds itself. These include: the possibility of returning to communal or ancestral lands, the possibility of obtaining other forms of work, the level of community participation in exodus, and the level of internal community cohesion. Here the question of mobility and the struggle over mobility depends on the agency of the peasant population as defined by the political power and the strategic use of this power during particular crises and labor shortages.

Squatting

Along with peasant populations in exodus, squatting is a way in which our *silent guerrillas* can maintain control over the land that they cultivate. This has been a tactic utilized throughout the history of peasant struggle and the struggle over land has been a factor of every capitalist epoch. This arose during the enclosures movement as peasants struggled to maintain their ancestral lands and it continues to be a common tactic of peasant struggles across the planet. Currently in Brazil the 1.5 million members of the Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra are squatting land under the slogan "Occupy, Resist, Produce!"

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[104] Kochanowicz, "Between Submission," 52.
[105] Jimenez, "Class, Gender," 129.

This is often combined with other tactics. Looking at Nicaraguan peasants during the 1970's, for instance, Forrest Colburn observed that:

> Throughout rural areas, peasants seized land and farms they claim were idle or abandoned. Strikes were a continuing problem. Although many of the workers' demands were undoubtedly justified, continued labor indiscipline was crippling the economy. Many owners of private farms and government officials administering state farms claimed that labor indiscipline was their most serious problem. Labor productivity was widely held to be down at least 25 percent.[106]

As revolution broke out in July 1979, this process was expanded and furthered. Colburn continues:

> Peasants and rural laborers acting on their own seized many farms, particularly those of absentee landlords. However, it proved impossible for the rural poor "to suddenly have everything": there were few liquid assets to seize and redistribute. Rural Nicaragua is poor, and the productive infrastructure that exists cannot be turned quickly into household goods.[107]

Here we see peasants taking advantage of a situation by occupying the lands that were left fallow by landlords and going on strike when it was most advantageous. It was these resistances and

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[106] Forrest D. Colburn, "Foot Dragging and Other Peasant Responses to the Nicaraguan Revolution" in *Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*, 181-182.
[107] Ibid, 178.

the support of the peasant population for the Sandinistas that led to the revolutionary upheaval during this period.

During the same period, peasants were struggling to maintain their hold on squatted lands in the highlands of Peru. Since the late 1940's, villagers had occupied their ancestral lands and defended themselves against the repression that had followed. From 1963 until 1972/1973 there a legal battle and silent war raged, including acts of arson, sabotage, and trickery. This resulted in a series of treaties, but each time the government looked for the signatories they had disappeared.

Smith shares one of a series of stories about this silent war:

> On one occasion people had gone to the trouble of cutting a tree down some way off (the pampa is above the tree line), carrying it up to the spot, replanting it, decorating it with objects and then, to the sound of a small band, danced around it in the traditional fiesta of the *corta monte*. Liquor was brought up, and an axe so that dancing couples could take turns at felling the tree. Soon the soldiers too were participating and by early afternoon, in their drunken stupor, they were carefully put to sleep in a hut and their rifles buried nearby, as the remainder of the 'roisterers' [i.e. the noisy revelers] set off for the hacienda hinterlands.[108]

Throughout the history of capitalism, the peasantry has sought to control either the land that it has cultivated by theft and squatting or its own labor power by fleeing in exodus. To this end they have often defended themselves or seized goods and lands by means of arson and murder.

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[108] Smith, "Fox and Rooster."

As was the case for our *silent guerrillas* under slavery, these tactics often resulted in direct relief from a particular brutal landowner.

Arson and Murder

Arson and murder, while at times rare under slavery and in peasant politics, have been utilized by peasant *silent guerrillas* toward a number of ends. This final pair of tactics is the most direct and carries the most risk. But arson and murder should still be considered part of a *silent guerrilla* war as they are often utilized by individuals or groups of individuals outside of the context of an overt struggle. Arson against a grain storage facility or a landowner's home can be placed on a continuum ranging from an act of revenge to a single element in a protracted struggle. In a similar fashion, the outright murder of an official or an unscrupulous farmer can alleviate a particular imposition, if only temporarily.

In the early years of the 20th century, India experienced a series of protracted peasant struggles and arson was used at times in the battle for the forests. Romachandra Guha describes this activity:

> In 1916 a number of 'malicious' fires were set in the newly
>
> constituted reserved forests. … The "deliberate and organized
>
> incendiarism" of the summer of 1916 brought home to the state the
>
> unpopularity of the forest settlement and the virtual impossibility
>
> of tracing those who were responsible for the fires.[109]

During a similar period of struggle in Egypt, Nathan Brown sees that murder became an acceptable tactic. In this regard, he explained that, "a primary weapon used by peasants was

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[109] Guha, "Saboteurs," 74.

direct physical – often murderous – attack. Assassinations of local officials and notables unsettled many landowners and other members of the elite."[110] Clearly the most dangerous of the tactics discussed here, it is a direct strike against the power structure. In point of fact, all of the tactics described here are an attack on the power of the elite classes, capital, and the state-apparatus and together represent a generalized revolt against work.

Generalized Revolt Against Work

These actions taken on the terrain of everyday life by peasant populations can only be discussed within the context in which they occur. To speak of these as general peasant phenomena would exaggerate their tactical use and would dissolve peasant relations and other forms of resistance taking place in that context. Though, by abstracting from the concrete, these actions can be placed within the framework of resistance against the imposition of a particular set of social relations, a particular form of life that defines capital, that is: the imposition of work itself.

This also provides a linkage to a larger conceptual framework that the *silent guerrillas* fit into: that of the working class. If we understand the working class as including all of those who are revolting against the imposition of work, then the peasantry would clearly fall within this category. It is clear from our descriptions of the struggle taking place here that the peasantry is resisting the imposition of work on a continuous and daily basis.

In "Between Submission and Violence," Jacek Kochanowicz summarizes how peasants refuse work discipline, stating that they, "resist[ed] labor obligations, […] perform[ed] them carelessly [and] showed up late for work, worked carelessly, and took prolonged lunch breaks."[111] This slow down of work is part of the generalized revolt against work and the attempt

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[110] Ibid, 101.
[111] Kochanowicz, "Between Submission," 48.

to thwart capitalist command takes the form of 'counter-planning in the fields.' Kochanowicz continues his discussion of peasants in Poland, but clearly similar reflections can be found in other situations:

> They brought the worst tools and weakest animals to work. They
> resisted, often successfully, the introduction of more efficient, but
> more labor-intensive tools, for example scythes instead of sickles
> for harvest.[112]

In a similar fashion, Colburn describes the resistance of peasants as they attacked absolute surplus value:

> Rural laborers throughout Nicaragua spontaneously took advantage
> of the near anarchy in rural areas to reduce dramatically their labor
> obligations. Those employed for daily wages simply cut back on
> the length of the workday.[113]

Additionally, Zweig contributes an example of peasants attacking relative surplus value:

> In one team, peasants spent more time during the busy summer
> season planting potatoes in their own fields than working on
> collective land.[114]

By decreasing the workday and expanding wages, peasants function as workers within the capitalist system and in effect force capitalism to develop new strategies to contain this resistance and decompose its organizational power. These strategies only become effective in their challenge to capitalist command and development when they link up. When these forms of

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[112] Ibid, 48.
[113] Colburn, "Foot Dragging," 180.
[114] David Zweig, "Struggling Over Land in China: Peasant Resistance after Collectivization, 1966-1986" in *Everyday Forms of Resistance*, 164.

daily revolt against work combine, they increase their effectiveness and pressure on a particular regime. There is a point at which "individual grievances become collective grievances,"[115] and whole new sets of potentialities arise (some of which can erupt in overt rebellions).

As these individual acts become collective acts, aspects of the social order and capitalist command begin to break down. Brown describes this development and the example illustrates the power of collective action among peasant *silent guerrillas*:

> That is, they could ignore or evade unfavorable policies; they could slack off if they received too little for their crops or labor. Such passive resistance has been held responsible for completely disrupting economic policies over much of the continent of Africa in recent years.[116]

Peasants often find themselves resisting the imposition of work – in direct ways, such as negotiating over wages, and in indirect ways, including haggling over the sale price of crops – that is coordinated by a state-capitalist regime and the cost of resistance is often brutal suppression of their activities.

Peasant Power and the State

To return to one of the examples that we began with, peasant resistance on the terrain of everyday life became an increasing problem for the Chinese state during Mao's Great Leap Forward. *Silent guerrillas* created cracks in the state system, leading to reforms, and attacked the collective and ideological controls that define this state-capitalist regime. From the poaching of rice and other crops to violating the ban on migration, peasants chose four main areas of

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[115] Scott, *Weapons*, 44.
[116] Brown. "Conspiracy of Silence," 105.

resistance: manipulation of policy, original creation of policy, aggressive productivity, and inflating the costs of state policy preferences.[117]

The Chinese state proposed a series of "Four Modernizations" to address the state of the country's economy. These came after a series of failed attempts at modernization and two decades after Mao's Great Leap Forward. Agriculture was the first area that was to be modernized and it was to supply an extensive amount of capital for the modernization process, placing a great burden on the peasant population.

"In the years 1979-89," Kelliher explains, "state and peasant fought, cooperated, cheated, stumbled, lied, and compromised their way toward reform of everything fundamental in rural life. They dismantled the commune, China's core structure of rural governance and management, and sliced the landscape into an uncountable profusion of tiny family farms."[118] He continues: "Peasants do not merely resist state policy (a passive act); they reshape policy into something new, something the state never intended (a creative act)."[119] Here, as with the resistance to Mao's Great Leap forward, Chinese peasants resisted the reorganization of their lives in accordance with capitalist command and the imposition of work and they sought to create new forms of life.

Peasant Silent guerrillas

Peasant *silent guerrillas* fit into a larger continuum of war in everyday life under capitalism. While these activities were certainly found before the enclosure of the planetary commons, capital's attempt to impose work discipline and, by extension, the state's role in fixing the

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[117] Daniel Kelliher. *Peasant Power In China: The Era of Rural Reform, 1979-1989* (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1992), 242.
[118] Ibid, 242.
[119] Ibid, 239.

population in space, preventing access to the forests and forms of subsistence, and breaking up traditional allegiances developed following the enclosures. To these impositions, peasants' everyday resistances are not a rejection of a particular state but rather of the state-form itself as it is the state-form that maintains these relations.

These peasant resistances in everyday life often come together and form overt rebellions and both of these form cycles of struggle that connect with other sectors of the planetary peasantry. Additionally, these connections intersect with the resistance of *silent guerrillas* struggling under slavery until the late 19th century and with those struggling throughout the industrial and social factories.

With the understanding that the peasantry is a broad, ahistorical category, the *silent guerrillas* described herein are resisting a regime of work on an everyday basis – that of capital's endless *imposition* of work. As I illustrated above (and I will return to this task in describing everyday resistance throughout the industrial and social factories), the forms of resistance against the conditions of agricultural production place peasants within the metaphor of the *silent guerrillas*. But I want to link the *silent guerrillas* to another conception: the working class. Here I am expanding the working class as a concept to refer to all those who resist the imposition of work, including slaves, peasants, industrial workers, and the women who perform the majority of unpaid, specifically gendered work. The *silent guerrillas* specifically refer to the section of this broadly defined working class that is resisting on the terrain of everyday life. In this regard, and in an attempt to broaden what the working class has come to represent, Ann Lucas de Rouffignac reflects:

> If the social workday produces, reproduces, and accumulates new
>
> capital and new labor power, then the working class must be

redefined to include those doing the work of producing and
reproducing labor power. Workers are not only those producing
value in the factory but must now include those working in the
social factory reproducing labor power.[120]

As we continue outside of agricultural labor to describe work in both the industrial and social factories – both productive and reproductive work – we begin to see the similarities with slave and peasant *silent guerrillas* on a allegorical level, as well as the particular struggles of both productive and reproductive workers inside and outside of the factory, that is on a conceptual level.

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[120] Lucas de Rouffignac, *Contemporary Peasantry*, 24-25.

IV   THROUGHOUT THE INDUSTRIAL AND SOCIAL FACTORIES

> Against this monster, people all over the world, and particularly
>
> ordinary working people in factories, mines, fields, and offices, are
>
> rebelling every day in ways of their own invention.[121]
>
> - C.L.R. James, Grace C. Lee, & Pierre Chaulieu

The period that E.P. Thompson describes in his astounding book *The Making of the English Working Class* was not simply the end of the original enclosure movement, the onset of the Industrial Revolution, and the march of capital across the globe but rather a period of intense class struggle.   Between 1790 and 1830, a set of activities and struggles developed into organizations that explicitly identified themselves as working class.   These organizations emerged from a set of activities that were taking place in the everyday lives of the workers themselves and arose from the everyday resistance and overt rebellions that the industrial revolution and the factory system sought to contain and impose order upon. Thompson writes:

> The making of the working class is a fact of political and cultural,
>
> as much as economic, history.   It was not the spontaneous
>
> generation of the factory-system.   Nor should we think of an
>
> external force – the 'industrial revolution' – working upon some
>
> nondescript undifferentiated raw material of humanity, and turning
>
> it out at the other end as a 'fresh race of beings.'   The changing
>
> productive relations and working conditions of the Industrial

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[121] James, et al., *Facing Reality*, 5.

Revolution were imposed, not upon raw material, but upon the free-born Englishman. … The factory hand or stockinger was also the inheritor … of remembered village rights, of notions of equality before the law, of craft traditions. He was the object of massive religious indoctrination and the creator of new political traditions. The working class made itself as much as it was made.[122]

In making itself, both as a class and as a form of life, the working class struggled against new forms of power that were developing. Entire regimes of production and reproduction were set in motion, and discourses developed, to impose work for extraction of surplus value and the accumulation of capital. All of this began nearly 150 years before the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) declared that the "working class and the capitalist class have nothing in common."

Village rights and craft traditions were part of the planetary commons and a set of social relationships that were torn from the social fabric by the enclosure movement. Here we return to the point where we began with our *silent guerrillas* both under slavery and in peasant politics. As Marx wrote, "This history, the history of [the] expropriation [of the peasants from the commons], is written in the annals of mankind in letters of blood and fire."[123]

Silent Guerrillas: Working Class Struggle

A set of class struggles on the terrain of everyday life and eruptions of overt rebellions took place between the original enclosure movement and cycling through to the struggles that marked May 1968. Describing these generally fits our goal of understanding the *silent guerrillas*.

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[122] E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage, 1966), 194.
[123] Marx, *Capital,* 875.

Enclosures and the Proletariat

The violence of the enclosures was preceded by a series of peasant struggles that swarmed through Europe and the construction of a merchant class that required private property rights in order to further their growing class interests. This merchant class, as a bourgeoisie in its infancy, was a "progressive" power against the power of the kingdoms and principalities that had dotted the European landscape for hundreds of years. But outside of these princely territories, a rich set of life practices and means of subsistence were flourishing.

The creation of a legal order and outright organized violence were used to separate the European peasantry from the commons and with that both the resources of the now-enclosed commons and the labor power of the displaced peasantry were captured by this new bourgeoisie and early industrial capital. This is the capital of Marx, of William Blake's "Little Black Boy" covered with soot, as he wrote in 1789:

> My mother bore me in the southern wild,
>
> And I am black, but oh my soul is white!
>
> White as an angel is the English child,
>
> But I am black, as if bereaved of light.[124]

It was the light that went out of a child's life while toiling in early factories. Similarly, the peasants were "bereaved of light" as they were forced from the communal lands, into the cities, and into the factories and the growing urban proletariat.

Women, their bodies, their relationships with each other, and their communal bases of power were subject to the most violent episodes. The reconstruction of gender relations between men and women was also at the heart of this process of enclosure. Women were kicked out of

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[124] William Blake, "Little Black Boy," *Works of William Blake* (Hertfordshire, UK: Wordsworth Editions, 1994), 58.

the guilds and their access to particular areas of paid work was increasingly limited. Access to the means of subsistence and survival in the forests and in the fields, as in the case of the practice that gave the right of first gleaning of the crops to widowed women, was eliminated. Along with this, the practice of midwifery and use of contraception, both at the heart of pre-capitalist European women's control over their bodies, were criminalized. These particular examples become even more severe with the onset of the witch-hunts. Silvia Federici in her book on the subject states:

> The witch-hunt destroyed a whole world of female practices,
> collective relations, and systems of knowledge that had been the
> foundation of women's power in the pre-capitalist Europe, and the
> conditions for their resistance in the struggle against feudalism.[125]

As mentioned above, peasant women had their relationships with one another and their strength in relation to men decomposed by capital. As the population shifted to the cities and the domestic sphere developed, this immensely violent attack on women confined them by the imposing unpaid work of social reproduction, of housework. When women would leave the home to seek out and obtain paid labor, their status was from then on to be defined as subordinate to that of men. The progression of enclosures enclosed women in the home as they enclosed men in the factories.

Working Class Refusal and the March of Capital

As we have previously explored in the sections on slaves and peasants, since its onset capital began a march across the globe seeking to extract material resources and impose its command in

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[125] Federici, *Caliban*, 103.

the form of the imposition of work, be it on men in the factories, women in the home, or slaves and peasants in the fields. But it was the struggles against work, both on the terrain of everyday life and in overt rebellions, that forced capital to develop both technological and spatial fixes to the flight of labor; and it is the state-apparatus, with its monopoly on legitimized violence, that would attempt to discipline this workforce.

Sabotage would arise again, this time against enclosures and the factory system, with the revolt of the Levellers and the Diggers in the 17th century and across Europe with the revolutions of 1848. It is following this latter period of revolutions that Marx would be part of creating the First International in 1864, famously calling the working class of the world to unite. Joining the International four years later, Mikhail Bakunin and the Collectivists would put forth a program for a "direct economical struggle against capitalism" and, in the United States in 1869, the Knights of Labor would become one of the first labor organizations west of the Atlantic to organize industrially. Within ten years of the founding of these organizations, massive and violent waves would attack the European and American working classes while cycles of struggle would continue to mark the history of capitalism through to the present.

These cycles of struggle have taken place on two general levels that intersect and flow together: the terrain of everyday life and the overt rebellions I have just identified. The American class struggle has been especially violent and sabotage, theft, arson, slowdowns, and other practices have been used to avoid the violence perpetrated by the state and the private thugs of capitalist enterprise. These acts have become part of the lexicon of strategies and tactics utilized by labor organizations. The Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) is a perfect example of this. As an organization, it arose out of a set of preexisting organizations and practices that developed in a rebellious counterculture that existed as a strong undercurrent in

American life. Midway through its first wave, the Russian working classes would overthrow the Tsar and, for a number of years until power was centralized, cooperative and communal activities flourished.

Louis Adamic maps this history of class violence in his 1931 book *Dynamite*, which shows how working class organizing and resistance in all its forms was met with violence from capital and the state-apparatus. While his engaging study explores this history in detail, one of the more interesting sections of the text is when he discusses his own experiences working alongside an IWW member who was adapt at slacking and sabotage at the job site. Here the extent of activity, of the silent war taking place in everyday life, becomes clear:

> Indeed, not a few [IWW members] with whom I came in contact, though intensely serious, were genial, amusing, and intelligent fellows, quite frank about their ideas and doings. They were freelance missionaries in the cause of the underdog to whom the end justified the means, with the self-imposed duty to harm the propertied class as much, and wherever, possible: guerrilla soldiers in the class war.[126]

As the IWW developed its base of power from the coalmines of the American Midwest to factories of New England and the forests of the Pacific Northwest, it was met with violent repression at every turn. The nationalist and anti-radical fervor of World War I was used to justify the Palmer Raids and the red scares that would last though World War II and into the 1950s. This was not simply an attempt to attack working class organization but to decompose the working class and the form of life it was creating. It was the composition of the working

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[126] Louis Adamic, *Dynamite: The Story of Class Violence in America* (London and New York: Chelsea House Publishers, 1958; originally published in 1931), 380.

class that prevented the pendulum swing of capitalism, the ability of capital to lower wages and dispose of workers at whim. Thus wages became "sticky downward" as capital could not longer decrease wages and fire workers at whim. Along with the crisis of overproduction, this led to the crash that would signal the Great Depression.

From Autoworkers to Civil Rights

On the heels of the first wave of repression in December 1936, the United Auto Workers (UAW) incited a series of strikes at the Flint, Michigan General Motors (GM) plant. These would develop into one of the largest upsurges in working class struggle in American history. The Flint strike cycled through from the Atlanta, Georgia GM plant, which had struck just a few months earlier. During the UAW strike actions, sabotage, slowdowns, and other forms of guerrilla warfare would proliferate through the daily lives of the strikers. It was the contribution of these tactics that would win the strike actions and recognition of the UAW's demands. Meanwhile, across the Atlantic, on July 17th the Spanish working class had risen against the state and for the next three years would fight not just against fascism but for a new world.

The strikes of 1936-37 would be the initial articulation of the struggle against the Fordist assembly line and Taylorism. According to Guido Baldi, "The 'scientific organization of labor,' the technological leap of the Twenties, serves but one purpose: to destroy the specific articulation of the labor force which was the basis for the political re-composition of the working class during the first two decades of the century."[127] In the failure of Fordism and Taylorism to sufficiently decompose the working class globally, followed by World War II, new strategies were developed. This would mark the onset of auto-capital, that is the nexus of capitalist industry around the auto industry, and autoworkers won strike after strike in North America

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[127] Baldi, "Thesis," 3-21.

throughout the late 1930s. Beverly Silver, in her study of workers' movements between 1870 and the present, titled *Forces of Labor*, describes how capital sought out cheaper and unorganized pools of labor: in the United Kingdom in the 1950s, France and Italy in the 1960s, Germany and Spain in the late 1960s, and South America, South Africa, and Korea in the 1980s.[128] Each flight and point of development of capital sought to escape the struggle of the working class on both the micro and the macro level. Here it is clear that "the working class has a dynamic role, forcing, at times, capital to redefine itself and develop along new lines."[129]

African-American soldiers returning from World War II would challenge racial injustice at home after fighting it abroad, igniting the spark that began the Civil Rights Movement. Struggling for the recognition of their dignity as human beings was an extension of the desire for a new form of life and equality under the law. Bus boycotts, sit-ins, and other acts of refusal took place on the terrain of everyday life and were accompanied by forms of everyday resistance, sabotage, and the like. Describing the struggling in Birmingham, Alabama, historian of African-American history Robin D.G. Kelley writes:

> In the twelve months beginning September 1941, there were at
> least 88 cases of blacks occupying "white" space on public
> transportation, 55 of which were open acts of defiance in which
> African-American passengers either refused to give up their seats
> or sat in the white section. But this is only part of the story;
> reported incidents and complaints of racial conflict totaled 176.
> These cases included at least 18 interracial fights among
> passengers, 22 fights between black passengers and operators, and

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[128] Beverly J. Silver, *Forces of Labor: Workers' Movements and Globalization Since 1870* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2003).
[129] Lucas de Rouffignac, *Contemporary Peasantry*, 25.

13 incidents in which black passengers engaged in verbal or physical confrontations over being shortchanged.[130]

These activities were part of a larger movement to dismantle racism and shift class power and, as the movement progressed, demands for income that was not connected to work, e.g. for reparations, for wages due, for welfare payments – that is, the access to wages that were not directly connected to the performance of imposed work – increased.

Additionally, African-Americans in the prison system would set upon the guards, the most immediate representatives of their oppression, in revolt after revolt as waves of struggle circulated through the prisons. Whites and blacks often participated in these rebellions together as their forebears at Harpers Ferry had. At other moments when the *silent guerrillas* overcame the racial categories that had previously separated them, they took extreme actions. This happened in 1951 when, in Robert Perkinson's account, "Beginning in the disciplinary barracks for white men, a group of prisoners started slashing their own Achilles tendons with contraband razor blades. It was a desperate and reckless protest [against prison conditions]."[131]

Every point and development in this struggle would be met with violence from the state-apparatus and from both the official and unofficial representatives of state power. For instance, the Freedom Riders experienced violence at the hands of these unofficial representatives in the form of white vigilante groups. In a similar fashion, and in the same Detroit plants that spawned the UAW strikes in 1936-1937, black workers organized into revolutionary unions and then were met with the violence dispensed by company thugs. As the Civil Rights movement bled into the Black Power movement, state-sponsored violence against it intensified with the implementation of the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Counter Intelligence Program.

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[130] Robin D.G. Kelley, "We Are Not What We Seem: Rethinking Black Working-Class Opposition in the Jim Crow South," *Journal of American History* 80, no. 1 (June 1993), 104.

[131] Robert Perkinson, "Angola and the Agony of Prison Reform," *Radical Philosophy Review* 3, no. 1 (2000), 8-19.

May 1968

While black power circulated through the Detroit auto plants via the Detroit Revolution Union Movement (DRUM) and the League of Revolutionary Black Workers, student struggles and anti-colonial movements were circulating around the planet. These extended up to and beyond the May 1968 events in Paris, protests against the Vietnam War, and demands for a new world made by students occupying universities and city centers. In response to these struggles, the state launched a campaign of violence: by early October the Mexican state had begun massacring university students, and on May 4th, less than a year after the revolts by Parisian students and workers, the United States government had murdered its own citizens on the Kent State campus, and then in August Soviet tanks entered Prague.

These struggles that intersect through the historical symbol of May 1968 were eruptions that took place outside of the factory walls and the previously existing political channels of struggle. Instead, this struggle took place outside factory gates in homes and streets, showing that it "is not an area of freedom and leisure auxiliary to the factory, but is integral to the capitalist way of producing, and increasingly becom[ing] regimented like a factory, … a social factory."[132] It is through this lens that the rebellions of Paris become clear and the blended activity of university students and factory workers is understood.

Against this social factory and from the conditions of their everyday lives, those of housework and unpaid labor, women began to rebel. On the terrain of everyday life, women constructed new lives outside and against the nuclear family, and against the imposition of

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[132] Mariarosa Dalla Costa, *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community* (London: Falling Walls Press, 1972), 65.

unpaid reproductive labor hidden by the male wage. Mariarosa Dalla Costa and the Wages for Housework Campaign were among the first to articulate the problem:

> Housewives make up a hidden reserve work force: unemployed women work behind closed doors at home, to be called out again when capital needs them elsewhere. … The family under capitalism is a center of consumption and reserve labor, but a center also of production.[133]

Women in recomposing their lives became *silent guerrillas* as millions of women began to refuse housework, and this, as well as nearly a decade of overt rebellions, led to a crisis of reproductive labor that required capital and the state-apparatus to attack and seek to decompose the power of women. In a similar fashion, from a small bar in Manhattan's Greenwich Village, the gay rights movement would launch itself through the police lines that sought to contain them and onto the world stage. From this riot on June 28, 1969, gay, lesbian, trans, and genderqueer people began to redefine the processes of hetero-normativity that defined their lives and the processes of social reproduction that utilized the nuclear, heterosexual family as its mechanism of production and control.

Class and Everyday Resistance

By 1972, the peak of strike activity and the cycle of struggle described above would be over in the United States. The early 1970s would also mark the onset capital's offensive – of neoliberalism – which would include: food, oil, and the New York City fiscal crises; the busting

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[133] Ibid, 64.

of the Air Traffic Controllers Union; dismantling of gains in education and welfare (free tuition and welfare benefits, for instance); and an extensive culture war.

Throughout the nearly 500 years of class struggle that I have described here, forms of struggle have oscillated between a *silent guerrilla* war and overt rebellion. These activities have often blended into the everyday lives of the participants. For more on this, we return to E.P. Thompson, who wrote:

> If we stop history at any given point, then there are no classes but simply a multitude of individuals with a multitude of experiences. But if we watch these men over an adequate period of social change, we observe patterns in their relationships, their ideas, and their institutions. Class is defined by men as they live their own history, and in the end, this is its only definition.[134]

It is specifically to the "multitude of experiences" of the *silent guerrillas* as a subset of class struggle, as a stand-in for all those struggling against capital and the state-apparatus, against the imposition of work on the terrain of everyday life that we now turn our attention.

Creating Counter-Communities

To discuss the creation of counter-communities in the industrial and social factories would be a monumental task. It thus requires a certain degree of theoretical abstraction. As we have seen, the history of the working class is one of cyclical, at times violent, struggle. Capitalist technological and spatial development as well as repression and attempts at direct decomposition

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[134] Thompson, *Making*, 11.

by the state-apparatus have take place on both the micro and the macro level. Additionally, the struggles of the *silent guerrillas* have their own cycles and these intersect with overt actions.

Forms of everyday resistance, as with overt activities, require, as we have seen from the examples of slave and peasant *silent guerrillas*, forms of solidarity, communication, and mutual aid. These life activities intersect in the everyday lives and with the everyday practices of those struggling in the industrial and social factories. These forms of life begin to escape through what is called "self-valorization," which is "the people's definition of self-needs that are outside and autonomous to capital."[135] To use a metaphor drawn from Zapatistas, these are the mountains from which the *silent guerrillas* descend in order to strike at the forms of power that are capturing their activities and imposing work.

Solidarity, Communication, Mutual Aid

A network of communication existed throughout the industrial and social factories for the purpose of sharing tactics and keeping conversations out of range of the boss. The *silent guerrillas* meet in bars, churches and other non-work sites, in addition to breakrooms and backrooms, where they have discussed and continue to discuss conditions on the job and hence strategies to resist the imposition of work. Often these communications broke out in song as it was an easy transition for slave songs to become those of working men and women following slaves into the factories. Robin D.G. Kelley comments on one such instance among tobacco workers in the south:

> Singing in unison not only reinforced a sense of collective identity
> in these black workers but the songs themselves – most often
> religious hymns – ranging from veiled protests against the daily

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[135] Lucas de Rouffignac, *Contemporary Peasantry*, 30.

indignities of the factory to utopian visions of a life free of difficult

wage work.[136]

It is these songs that have always populated working class culture and expressed the experiences and dreams of those who sang them.

A working class language developed that intersected the working and community lives of the industrial and social proletariat. It often provided a way to conceal everyday resistances. From a shared experience of solidarity in life and struggle, forms of mutual aid developed periodically among the working class only for capital and the state-form to attempt to disrupt, decompose, and divide the class along lines of race, gender, skilled verses unskilled, and others. In a sense, the working class is already organized.

In *Facing Reality*, which contributed the opening epigram to this chapter, C.L.R. James, Grace Lee Boggs, and Cornelius Castoriadis commented that:

> There is no need for these shop floor organizations to be formally
>
> organized. As soon as the men in a department know one another
>
> and go through the work together, they are organized.[137]

They continued later in the text:

> In the factories, workers develop methods and forms of
>
> cooperation, of mutual help and solidarity, of organization, which
>
> already anticipates socialist relations. Here also the task of a
>
> revolutionary organization is, first, to recognize these forms, to

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[136] Kelley, "We Are Not," 75.

[137] James, et al., *Facing Reality*, 31.

explain the significance of them, and to let itself be guided by them

in what it is doing and in what it is saying.[138]

By reading these activities of cooperation as well as the struggles, as *Facing Reality*'s authors suggest, a whole set of practices come into view. From and through these points of activity, we find linkages with the existence of countercultures and life activities outside of the factory walls. In dance halls, clubs, grog shops, churches, bars, parks, on street corners, and in the almost unaccountable number of spaces, forms of life emerge and resistances are planned.

It was these languages, spaces, acts of mutual aid, and sense of solidarity that created a culture of silence and counter-morality that served as the support network and arms trade for the *silent guerrillas* throughout the industrial and social factories.

Self-Valorization

As counter-communities developed and forms of everyday resistance penetrated through the ground and flowed into overt actions, a set of practices began to develop wherein the working class was defining its needs as autonomous and outside of capital. This self-valorization is an attempt to construct a life outside of capitalist command and the relations of power that define the state-apparatus. Harry Cleaver describes this concept:

Self-valorization denoted not merely the self-activity of workers,

but those aspects of struggle which went beyond mere resistance or

negation to the creation of new ways of being. Because the term

has been developed in a way that conceptualizes working class

self-valorization not as unified but as diverse, it provides a

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[138] Ibid, 91.

theoretical articulation of the tradition within autonomist Marxism of recognizing the autonomy not merely of the working class but of various sectors of it. To both recognize and accept the diversity of self-valorization, rooted like all other activity in the diversity of the peoples capital seeks to dominate, implies a whole politics – one which rejects traditional socialist notions of post-capitalist unity and redefines the 'transition' from capitalism to communism in terms of the elaboration from the present into the future of existing forms of self-valorization. In other words, communism is reconceptualized in a manner very much in harmony with Kropotkin's own views, not as a some-day-to-be-achieved utopia but as a living reality whose growth only needs to be freed of constraint.[139]

It is the immanence of struggle and the importance of seeing self-valorization as a way to construct new ways of being that come through in Cleaver's words. Self-valorization is also the theft of time away from capitalist command within the workday. Here the carving of space for personal needs, for the construction of new forms of life, represents the political project of the *silent guerrillas* and it is through the myriad of forms of everyday resistance intersecting with the counter-communities that this project is realized.

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[139] Harry Cleaver, "Kropotkin, Self-Valorization and the Crisis of Marxism," *Anarchist Studies* 2, no. 2 (Autumn 1994), 119-135.

A Multiplicity of Faces, A Myriad of Forms

As we have seen previously "under slavery" and "in peasant politics," *silent guerrillas* throughout the industrial and social factories have taken on a multiplicity of appearances and utilized a myriad of ways to resist the imposition of work. In the industrial and social factories the specter of sabotage returns, as does theft and exodus. To these we will add counter-planning – reorganizing the process of production and reproduction – and will explore the act of refusing the discipline of the union. Exploring the particulars of these forms will lead us toward an understanding of the general revolt against work. That is not just a revolt against work as such but against work as a general imposition and against the regime of power that has defined capitalism.

Every Worker Wears Shoes

Acts of sabotage have followed every technological and compositional shift under capitalism – to attack speed-ups and other impositions – and the disciplinary mechanisms of capital are designed to prevent them. They take place within their immediate context and under the immediate conditions in which the *silent guerrillas* find themselves. Such acts would function differently, have different intended targets, and have different levels of secrecy depending on whether they take place in a factory, office, or home. In the latter, housewives often "sabotaged" their products by providing alternatives and other forms of reproduction to their families outside of the capitalist command of reproductive labor.

As women left the home to take on a second job, black women often utilized such tactics against paid reproductive labor. Robin D.G. Kelley comments:

> There is evidence of household workers scorching food or spitting
> in food, damaging kitchen utensils, and breaking household
> appliances, but employers and white contemporaries generally
> dismissed these acts as proof of black moral and intellectual
> inferiority.[140]

Here Kelley calls our attention to the racial component in sabotage, and how black *silent guerrillas* in the industrial and social factories were, like their enslaved forbears, assumed to be dumb or subhuman as they resisted the conditions they were forced to live under.

Sabotage in the industrial factory has brought on a series of overt struggles, forms of discipline, and discourses. As illustrated by Kelley, acts of sabotage were often organized as part of a larger campaign or circulated through the factory circuits. To counter speed-ups or in response to grievances, wrenches would be thrown into the works or products themselves would be rendered unusable. There was a long history of this activity in auto plants, one of the key commodities and areas of production during the last century. Bill Watson states that:

> In several localities of the plant, organized acts of sabotage began.
> … Such things were done as neglecting to weld unmachined spots
> on motor heads; leaving out gaskets to create a loss of
> compression; putting in bad or wrong-size spark plugs; leaving
> bolts loose in the motor assembly; or, for example, assembling the
> plug wires in the wrong firing order so that the motor appeared to
> be off balance during inspection. Rejected motors accumulated.[141]

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[140] Kelley, "We Are Not," 91.
[141] Bill Watson, "Counter-Planning on the Shop Floor," *Radical America* 5, no. 3 (May-June 1971), 77.

As these "rejected motors accumulated," so did the experiences and acts of the *silent guerrillas*. These simple acts could bring entire assembly lines to a halt or make clear the intent of the workers without risking a strike or other overt action. Silently, individual acts of sabotage would accumulate, forcing capital to capitulate to the demands of the workforce and often shift productive capacity and strategy.

Theft

Beyond destroying the products of production, the *silent guerrillas* would often pilfer them. Materials regularly left factories, construction sites, and offices and headed for the black market or the personal use of the *silent guerrilla* who smuggled them out. This is an act of directly stealing back the product of one's own labor and at times this activity rose to the level of an overt tactic in struggle. "Proletarian shopping" was the term used by the Italian *autonomia* movement for mass expropriations of goods during an action or the self-reduction of prices ("self-reduction" occurs when a group of militants would sit in an establishment and demand lower prices on goods before leaving).

Entire discourses were developed to prevent such activity inside and outside of the factory, mechanisms and a whole set of disciplinary procedures were created to incarcerate offenders, and the science of criminology was deployed for the purpose of cataloging and producing the "criminal class." The statutes forged in the violence of enclosure, with the gallows as its ultimate representation of violence, were modified and at times reconstructed to address different regimes of power throughout the history of capitalism. Theft at the point of production was dealt with through a set of surveillance and disciplinary mechanisms that were particular to the location.

Mapping out the boundless thefts throughout the industrial and social factories would be a nearly impossible task, but here our purpose is to draw out general categories of everyday resistance, such as theft.

Before the Strike: Slowdown, Shutdown

Leading up to a strike action, and as part of the periodic outbreaks of everyday resistance, the *silent guerrillas* would often slow down or shut down the production process. Workers on the assembly line decrease their work pace by "working to rule," meaning following the rules in order to deliberately slow the imposed rate of work while office workers make sure to check their work over and over again, thus decreasing the rate of production. These actions often target the imposition of a particular pace of work and are a direct form of struggle against that imposition. Returning to the southern tobacco farmers, Kelley writes that, "When black women stemmers had trouble keeping up with the pace, black men responsible for supplying tobacco to them would pack the baskets more loosely than usual."[142]

In this example, the level of communication and solidarity needed to perform such acts bubbles up to the surface. Slowdowns, unlike thefts and sabotage, require a certain degree of cooperation among workers. Here, the timing of such acts, such as during a peak business period, as contracts are being renewed, or after the firing of a fellow worker, conveys the disgruntled sentiment of the *silent guerrillas* without erupting into overt rebellion.

Slowdowns are simply one end of a labor action since, as the work is slowed to the point where it is stopped completely, another form takes its place: that of the shutdown. Alternating between these two at particular intervals within the class struggle is a tactical decision made by

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[142] Kelley, "We Are Not," 90.

the guerrillas themselves. Both of these actions take place before the strike and on the terrain of everyday life. Bill Watson, comments:

> The shutdown is radically different from the strike; its focus is on the actual working day. It is not, as popularly thought, a rare conflict. It is a regular occurrence, and, depending on the time of year, even an hourly occurrence. … The shutdown is nothing more than a device for controlling the rationalization of time by curtailing overtime planned by management.[143]

Here the concept of the shutdown, and we can include slowdown here too, intersects with a larger set of actions centered around counter-planning the workday. The shutdown and the slowdown allow the working class to control the pace of work and the particular attributes they take on depend on the direct, immanent conditions that confront the particular workers.

Counter-planning

The reorganization of production and reproduction is the reorganizing of the imposition of work itself. Here on the terrain of everyday life among sectors of the working class, a counter-plan is implemented. This is what Bill Watson and others have called "counter-planning on the shop floor." In addition to this form of factory struggle, Silvia Federici refers to "counter-planning from the kitchen" and to this we can add counter-planning in the social factory. "It is the freedom to organize their work as they please," writes Watson, "combined with all sorts of

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[143] Watson, "Counter-Planning on the Shop Floor," 80.

details, such as smoking on the job, the condition of the restroom, not working when it is too hot, which pass under the title of 'local grievances.'"[144]

These local grievances are part of the framing and justification of the activity of the *silent guerrillas* throughout the industrial and social factories, and it is from the formation of collective grievances that further actions are sparked.

This ability to reorganize production is paramount for the daily survival of the working class in the factory, where the discipline of the work regime is ever-present. Work is reorganized as to create free time or to protect fellow workers. On this matter, C.L.R. James, Grace Lee Boggs, and Cornelius Castoriadis reflect:

> In one department of a certain plant in the United States, there is a worker who is physically incapable of carrying out his duties. But he is a man with a wife and children, and his condition is due to the previous strain of his work in the plant. The workers in that department have organized their work so that for nearly ten years he has had practically nothing to do. They have defied all efforts of the foreman and supervision to discharge him, threatening to throw the whole plant into disorder if any steps are taken to dismiss the invalid. That is the socialist society.[145]

This invading "socialist society" also takes place in the home, where housewives are under a different work regime. Both serve as examples of counter-planning. And while the process of domestic work is not always monitored, social pressure and the direct imposition of work by

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[144] Ibid, 80
[145] James, et al., *Facing Reality*, 107.

husbands is continuous and pervades women's entire lives. There is little escape other than through resistance.

Housewives reorganize their reproductive work in a series of ways in order to create free time for other activities and to connect with other women. This act of defiance against both the imposition of work by men and the imposition of work through men and society as a whole creates space for other forms of life to flourish and for bases to be built from which other resistances develop. It is this seized time that the working class seeks to provide itself in utilizing this form.

While Watson is specifically referring to the industrial factory, his comments certainly apply to the social factory as well:

> The seizing of quantities of time for getting together with friends and the amusement of activities ranging from card games to reading or walking around the plant to see what other areas are doing is an important achievement for laborers.[146]

This act is also connected to the previously mentioned concept of self-valorization as both embody the ability of the working class to begin to define its own needs outside of capitalist command. It is in these quantities of time, these moments of escape that the working class begins to construct new lives and new ways of being.

Exodus

The working class has also sought to escape the work regime, or the spatial conditions of particular work regimes, on a permanent basis. The massive human migrations unleashed by

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[146] Watson, "Counter-Planning," 80.

capital contain two contradictory elements: the process of enclosure and forced migration on one hand and the attempt of the working class to flee particular conditions on the other. One of the clearest examples is the migration of African-Americans from the South to the North during the 1890s. Here the black working class sought to reconstruct their lives in the North and West and in the process recomposed the entire United States. A similar process took place in Italy during the 1950s and 1960s. In both countries, these migrations launched major urban rebellions.

Additionally, periodic migrations from the Global South to the North have illustrated and continue to illustrate ways in which workers seek to recompose their own lives. Too often these migrations are seen as forced movements in which migrants leave areas of high exploitation and state violence rather than an attempt at massive reorganization and recomposition. It is in exodus, in fleeing as their peasant and slave counterparts had before them, that the *silent guerrillas* throughout the industrial and social factories have often sought to create new forms of life against all of the institutions and relations of power that contain and capture their activity.

Against the Union

While unions were initially one of the institutions that expressed working class needs and desires and functioned as the organized demand of those needs and desires, by the mid-1950s it was clear that the union had become a tool of the state-apparatus and capitalist discipline. As our purpose here is to understand the activity of the *silent guerrillas* and not the entirety of union history, we begin with the general revolt of the working class *against* the unions.

The state sought, quite successfully, to decompose the industrial unions and radical organizations that arose in the United States during the latter part of the 19th century. Using legal and extra-legal means, the state raided offices, arrested self-identified radicals, deported

immigrants associated with radical organizations, and, through local police and with the tacit support of the Department of Justice, violently beat suspects. Trade unions and the "loyal opposition," out of fear or opportunism, compromised with the state and were incorporated within its framework. By signing no-strike pledges and working on the Council of National Defense and other so-called "war boards," as the American Federation of Labor (AFL) unions did, unions were tied to the state. Additionally, with the development of the Keynesian productivity deal, increases in wages become tied to production as wages wouldn't increase unless production increased, which brought the working class into the engine of capital. It was the unions too that would be required to discipline the workforce in part through the contracts they signed in order to make good on the "deal." On this matter, George Rawick writes:

> In return [for wage increases and keeping up with increases in productivity] unions have had to insure industrial peace by disciplining the workers and curtailing their demands on all issues save money and fringe benefits. … The CIO unions became through the process the political weapons of the State against the working class. Carefully-legalized mass industrial unions were a necessary part of this development; industry-wide bargaining agents able to impose wage rates high enough to drive out all marginal producers who cut prices by super-exploitation of workers were in effect incorporated into the State-apparatus.[147]

As part of this process, the unions expelled syndicalists and other radicals as well as those who challenged the reconstitution of the union movement on behalf of the nationalist fervor sweeping

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[147] George Rawick, "Working Class Self-Activity," *Radical America* 3, no. 2 (March-April 1969).

the United States, both politically and organizationally. This de-radicalization of the union movement was part of its arrangement with the state and was required for the new political environment and power relationships that it was enmeshed in and that it had helped forge.

By the mid-1950s, a series of strikes began to spread across the planet, but this time the working class defined itself against capital, the state, and the union – all of the mechanisms that attempted to discipline it. Often these strikes took place on the terrain of everyday life, a terrain that allowed for abandoning the union form and the creation of other organizational bodies. Sabotage, slowdowns, work stoppages, and eventually strike actions, all developed in response to the attempt to decompose the working class and prevent its further political recomposition. In this context, "strikes" took place against the unions' wishes and against the unions' command over political activity. In *Facing Reality* James, Boggs, and Castoriadis describe such a strike by workers and how it is part of a larger phenomenon:

> In the U.S. Rubber Plant in Detroit during the 16 months prior to April 1956, there were on average two wildcat stoppages a week. The Rubber Union is powerless to stop them.
>
> That is the abiding situation in thousands of plants all over the United States. It is no secret. Since the war over a hundred studies by industrial psychologists have appeared, seeking in vain to find some means of controlling and disciplining these workers. Pension plans, guaranteed annual wage, wage increases, sick benefits, all these the union wins, promising in return to discipline

> the working class, i.e., to force it to submit to the schedules of
>
> production as planned by the employers.[148]

In this particular example, we see the working class counter-planning beyond the immediate conditions of the factory and toward a general revolt against the unions. At this time a new form of working class organization develops and participates directly in the class struggle that would carry the class through the May 1968 period to the high point of union activity, at least in the United States, in the early 1970s. A series of wildcat strikes would shake the foundations of both capital and the union itself and workers' councils, a form of working class organization with a rich history, would develop.

Wildcats and the Revolt Against Work

As a strike against the union, the wildcat strike began to circulate as the organized form of defiance of the working class. "Wildcats are a constant defiance and rejection of the capitalist system and of the union bureaucracy which has tied its fortunes to capitalism," and from these struggles a new organizational form, one that was direct rather then representational, developed: that of the workers' council.[149]

These forms and expressions that took place on the field of everyday life, at times, and in certain sectors of the working class, coordinated the activity of the *silent guerrillas*. In France, Italy, and Germany these workers' councils developed linkages with the growing student movement, while in the United States they often intersected with, and at times were defined by, Black Power. It was in these struggles that the "revolt against work" was first articulated as a political concept and as a framework for the working class movement. The working class

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[148] James, et al., *Facing Reality*, 21.
[149] Ibid, 23.

against work emerged and the organizational forms developed in the industrial factory (workers' councils) and the social factory (while workers' councils certainly were present, community-based organizations developed as well). It would take a complete decomposition of the working class and massive, violent political repression to reimpose capitalist command.

Generalized Revolt Against Work

During the 1970s, the Keynesian state suffered an irreparable crisis of its command over the working class brought on by the workers' councils, student movements, Civil Rights and Black Power movements, anti-colonial struggles, welfare, feminism, and lesbian/gay movements. Here, with capital reasserting its dominance, the crisis became a tool for decomposing the working class and re-imposing work and discipline. Capital could not longer discipline the working class so extraordinary state violence was necessary, as were the monetary policy that ended the gold standard, the food and oil crises, and the New York City fiscal crisis, which were then utilized across the planet as part of capital's strategy now known as neoliberalism.[150]

It wasn't until the early 1980s, with the firing of the Air Traffic Controllers Union, that a larger struggle against trade unions and other working class organizations was unleashed and through the culture wars that capital and the state-apparatus regained control. With this came neoliberal capitalism and the reorganization of the working class on a global scale with massive new enclosures, the imposition of violent and repressive regimes in the Global South, the threat of nuclear war and the use of low intensity warfare, and the reorganization of production and social reproduction.

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[150] The importance of the New York City fiscal crisis to capitalist strategy on a planetary scale, as well as to early neoliberalism, has been well documented by David Harvey in *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (New York: Oxford University Press USA, 2007) and Eric Lichten in *Class, Power and Austerity: The New York City Fiscal Crisis* (South Hadley, MA: Bergin and Garvey Publishers, 1986).

During this time, in the 1980s, the working class went on the defensive, the women's movement was brought within the state-apparatus, unions were attacked, ghettoization and police violence dampened revolts among African-Americans, and new forms of work began to appear that were increasingly precarious and immaterial (that is, based upon the production of non-material commodities). The anti-nuclear movement, focusing on abolishing nuclear weapons as well as stopping the development of nuclear power plants, was one of the few notable struggles on the left in the United States. Meanwhile working class struggle left the direct field of conflict by creating new forms of activity and life, most notably focusing on white and black working classes in the form of of punk rock and rap music.[151] The feminist movement also found its own articulations within these communities and countercultures and fought its capture by the academy.

The activities of the *silent guerrillas* throughout the industrial and social factories can only be discussed in the context in which they occur, as was the case with the actions of these guerrillas' enslaved and peasant brethren. By abstracting from this perspective and looking historically at the totality of activity against capital and the state-form, we can see the guerrillas as a sector of the working class. More precisely, the *silent guerrillas* are that sector of the working class which is resisting the imposition of work on the terrain of everyday life.

To understand this revolt against work, it is important to look at both the productive sphere, a well mined area, and reproduction, which is far less frequently discussed and often ignored. Mariarosa Dalla Costa writes that women "must refuse housework as women's work, as work imposed upon us, which we never invented, which has never been paid for, in which

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[151] Benjamin Holtzman, Craig Hughes, and Kevin Van Meter, "DIY and the Movement Beyond Capitalism (in the United States)" in *Constituent Imagination: Militant Investigation / Collective Theorization*, David Graeber, Stevphen Shukaitis, and Erika Biddle, eds., (Oakland, California: AK Press, 2007).

they have forced us to cope with absurd hours, 12 and 13 hours a day, in order to force us to stay at home."[152]

Seeing all who struggle against the capitalist imposition of work – that is slaves and peasants as well as students, women, immigrants, and factory and office workers – as the working class (and the *silent guerrillas* as a particular tendency within that class and an articulation of that antagonism) reveals the breadth of struggle and generalized revolt against work that has taken place and continues to take place in everyday life. During the shift from the "mass worker" of the factory to the "social worker" of the social factory, the generalized revolt against work became reified in the locus of the movements: the *refusal of work*.

The entirety of working class resistances to the imposition of work throughout the history of capital, and specifically the cycle of struggle that began with the wildcat strikes and rebellions by people of color across the planet from the Civil Rights Movement and anti-colonial struggles and continuing through the 1970s, has forced capital onto the terrain of everyday life. Capital now increasingly seeks to control the biopolitical elements of life itself and thus the "foster[ing] of life or disallow[ing] it to the point of death," to use Foucault's words, is the site of its current interventions.[153] The question before us today is one of time, of the struggle over capitalist time or what Antonio Negri and others have called communist time, or time outside of capitalist command. George Rawick, commenting on the situation with respect to his own political project, wrote:

> We need the figures on how many man-hours were lost to production because of strikes, the amount of equipment and material destroyed by industrial sabotage and deliberate

[152] Dalla Costa, "Women," 87.
[153] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Volume 1, An Introduction* (New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 138.

negligence, the amount of time lost by absenteeism, the hours
gained by workers through the slowdown, the limiting of the
speed-up of the productive apparatus through the working class's
own initiative.[154]

It is in these moments – delineated by the time inhabited by the *silent guerrillas*, the myriad of forms that everyday resistance takes, the multiplicity of workers who act directly against the conditions they are faced with, and counter-communities – that new life rhythms and a new form of time develops beyond capitalist command and the punch clock. These moments are sites of immensely rich and substantive activities. In this regard, Kelley describes the daily lives of these *silent guerrillas*:

> Thus for a worker to accept reformist trade union strategies while
> stealing from work, to fight streetcar conductors while voting
> down strike action in the local, to leave work early in order to
> participate in religious revival meetings or rendezvous with a
> lover, to attend a dance rather than a CIO mass meeting was not to
> manifest an 'immature' class consciousness. Such actions reflect
> the multiple ways black working people live, experience, and
> interpret the world around them. To assume that politics is
> something separate from all these events and decisions is to
> balkanize people's lives and thus completely miss how struggles

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[154] Rawick, "Working Class," 26.

over power, autonomy, and pleasure take place in the daily lives of

working people.[155]

The *silent guerrillas* represent a form of immanent politics and call attention to the importance of everyday life as a site of struggle but also of inquiry, intervention, and theorization. The act of creating concepts is similar to that of the metaphor but they have different purposes and take place at different levels of abstraction.

The purpose of the concept of the *silent guerrillas* was to describe the totality of struggles taking place on the terrain of everyday life, to connect these struggles to dreams, and to examine how this activity of the *silent guerrillas* prevents the complete domination of everyday life by capital and the state-apparatus.

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[155] Kelley, "We Are Not," 112.

V   Theoretical Conclusions: Politics as War by Other Means

On the surface the *silent guerrillas* record and circulate revolts against work and these struggles arise out of the antagonism at the center of capitalist command. As they feign illness, steal, commit sabotage, squat, flee, slow down, shut down, counter-plan, and at times set fire to or murder the "organizers of their boredom," as Guy Debord famously said, they are in struggle over this antagonism. Furthermore, Karl Marx, in *Capital*, wrote that:

> The bourgeois mode of production is the last antagonistic form of
>
> the social process of production – antagonistic not in the sense of
>
> individual antagonism but of an antagonism that emanates from the
>
> individuals' social conditions of existence – the productive forces
>
> developing within the bourgeois society create also the material
>
> conditions for a solution of this antagonism.[156]

To Marx's bourgeois mode of production, we might add social reproduction and the reproduction of labor power. We might also look to the material conditions that currently exist and the process of working class self-valorization, of the creation of needs and desires that stem from this material reality and move toward new ways of being.

The issue before us is the form and result of this *silent guerrilla war*: its organization, amplification, and effects. It is important to reiterate the purpose of such a task, which is to understand the *silent guerrillas* conceptually at a particular level of abstraction that generalizes the material reality and forms of struggle but does not remove this abstraction from the terrain of

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[156] Karl Marx, "Marx and the History of His Opinions (Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*)" in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, Robert C. Tucker, ed. (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1978), 5.

struggle and everyday life. Such a removal would divorce the concept from its use in amplifying and expanding struggle and thus it would come to be judged by its ideological content in relation to other ideological positions rather then its ability to coordinate and further the activity it describes.

Describing a particular situation in the social factory, Mario Tronti's comments apply perfectly to the struggle of the *silent guerrillas*:

> The situation demanded a specific form of self-organization,
>
> entirely within the class, based on a spontaneous passivity: an
>
> organization, in other words, without organization – which meant
>
> not subject to bourgeois institutionalization.[157]

Silent guerrillas, as a form of organization, are in constant revolt against the process of bourgeois institutionalization. They are war-machines preventing the total domination of capital and the state apparatus over everyday life. The struggle against the union and the state can be read in this way: as a means of preventing the institutionalization of their activities in organizations that are outside of their direct control and that seek to capture and redirect their activity. Once the struggles of the *silent guerrillas* leave the terrain of everyday life and are captured and utilized by overt organizations, the strength of the myriad of forms that their struggles take is often undermined and the multiplicity of faces dissolves behind the unified face of the union or the state apparatus.

The actions of the *silent guerrillas* are neither individual nor collective. Particular actions require an individual component, but these individual actions, in their immediacy, often develop into collective actions. As Rawick notes, "the oppressed, in order to prevent themselves

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[157] Mario Tronti, "The Struggle Against Labor," *Radical America* 6, no. 3 (May-June 1972), 22-25.

from becoming total victims, lash out against their oppressors and in doing so, create their humanity."[158] Rawick's reflections call our attention to the way that the *silent guerrillas* create their humanity and how it is not bestowed upon them from outside their experience. The working class is never completely dominated or subsumed under capitalist command. On the contrary, looking at the terrain of everyday life and these micro-political struggles between capital and the working class illuminates the fact that capital and the state are actually attempts to impose work and a certain set of power relations on to the working class. The class struggle doesn't simply take place on picket lines or in voting booths but rather in the constant need for capital to impose work and the working class's desire to escape it and create new forms of life.

The effect of the *silent guerrillas* on macro-politics is of course tied to a particular epoch of capitalism, the strength of the state-apparatus as it responds to working class power, and a set of relations that cannot be generalized since that would remove the strategic content of the concept. In turn, abstracting from everyday resistance activity offers us a theoretical understanding without any imposition on the activity. As Scott writes:

> Collectively, however, these small events may add up almost surreptitiously to a large event: an army too short of conscripts to fight, a workforce whose foot dragging bankrupts the enterprise, a landholding gentry driven from the countryside to the towns by arson and assault, tracts of state land fully occupied by squatters, a tax claim of the state gradually transformed into a dead letter by evasion.[159]

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[158] Rawick, *American Slaves,* 95.
[159] Scott, "Everyday," 6.

To Scott we add the point that the imposition of work, and hence capitalist command, is an attempt by capital and the state to impose the particular social relations of production and social reproduction on their life activities. Looking at everyday resistance theoretically and calling attention to the potential for these "small events" to have major effects on capital and the state apparatus allows this concept to be utilized in the field of battle. Describing the activity of the *silent guerrillas* in the abstract allows a set of activities to be linked together in a particular kind of assemblage: a concept. In a way similar to E.P. Thompson's understanding of class as a way of framing a set of resistances, power relationships, and ways of life, when one looks through the lens of the *silent guerrillas*, one finds a multiplicity of faces and a myriad of forms of resistance.

"Concepts," Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari held, "are like multiple waves, rising and falling, but the plane of immanence is the single wave that rolls them up and unrolls them."[160] Here the *silent guerrilla* is just one concept that is, as Guy Debord said with confidence, "thrown at the right moment into combat."[161]

This way of approaching political theory is one that is immanent to the field of political struggle. The concept of the *silent guerrillas* "rises and falls" with respect to its use on this field and relates not to a metaphorical battle but an actual one. These are actual struggles: of the body and of desire. In *Society Must Be Defended*, Michel Foucault offers a perspective on the subject we have been dealing with, i.e. the guerrilla war taking place in everyday life:

> We are therefore at war with one another; a battlefront runs
>
> through the whole of society, continuously and permanently, and it
>
> is this battlefront that puts us all on one side or the other. There is

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[160] Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, 36.
[161] Guy Debord, *Complete Cinematic Works* (Oakland, California: AK Press, 2006).

no such thing as a neutral subject. We are all inevitably someone's

adversary.[162]

Here Foucault offers a perspective on politics, one that inverts military historian Carl von Clausewitz's famous maxim that "politics is the contiuation of war by other means."[163] The project of the *silent guerrillas* has been to describe this war taking place on the terrain of everyday life. The project involves exploring this material metaphorically so as to link together a wide rage of activities throughout the history of capitalism only to revise this structure of thought and proceed conceptually so that, as a theoretical abstraction, the *silent guerrillas* function as a concept. It is with this concept that the project seeks to inquire into, intervene in, and participate in the struggles taking place in everyday life under neoliberalism. This concept will serve as a point of reference and theoretical abstraction to explore contemporary material reality and the potential struggles taking place within it. As historical actors within a conceptual-theoretical project, the *silent guerrillas* are illustrative of new forms of life that arise during protracted struggles in everyday life and it is with these new forms that new worlds will invade the old one.

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[162] Michel Foucault, *"Society Must Be Defended:" Lectures at the Collège de France, 1975-1976* (New York: Picador, 2003), 51.
[163] Ibid, 16.

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