

Content Providers of the World Unite! A Critical Canadian Analysis and Agenda

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L. M. Findlay
University of Saskatchewan



**Institute on Globalization
and the HUMAN CONDITION**

KTH 234, 1280 Main St W, McMaster University, Hamilton, ON L8S 4M4
(905) 525-9140 Ext. 27556 <http://www.humanities.mcmaster.ca/~global/>

Preface

Professor Findlay's paper served as the opening address to a conference on globalization and culture entitled "Content Providers of the World Unite!", held at McMaster University in October 2001. Two Institute members, Susie O'Brien and Imre Szeman, organized the meeting and a companion volume of papers from the conference is also being published by the Institute.

Findlay's title thus takes its lead from the conference organizers. He seeks to provide a framework for thinking about a 'cultural politics' that is appropriate to the contemporary globalizing situation. In the end, he wants to build on Marx's earlier notions of the proletariat to build alliances between 'workers' and 'aboriginal peoples' in forging a strategy of resistance to globalization in Canada. These ideas are revealed gradually in the paper and are developed to the greatest degree in the concluding sections.

What is particularly helpful in the paper is Findlay's historical situation of what Jan Aart Scholte (2000) and others refer to as 'globality': the development of a sense of the world as one place. He reflects on three different examples of the development of globality in the nineteenth century: Marx's use of the phrase *Workers of the World . . .*, Goethe's reference to the idea of Weltliteratur or World Literature, and Goldsmith's *Citizen of the World*. He links these reflections to Adam Smith's sense of the 'world' and to works by Schlegel and Hegel, where the notion of the 'world' also features prominently.

In the end, Findlay's understanding of the need for struggle and resistance is informed by the nature of earlier struggles in a time of increasing globality in the late 18th and throughout the 19th centuries. His emphasis on the continuity of certain themes related to globality is helpful when he proceeds at the end of the paper to reflect on discontinuities and differences between the earlier period and our contemporary era.

Len Findlay's article has also been published in *TOPIA: Canadian Journal of Cultural Studies* Topia 9 (2003) <http://www.yorku.ca/topia/content9.html>

William D. Coleman
Editor, Working Paper Series

Content Providers of the World Unite!

A Critical Canadian Analysis and Agenda

L. M. Findlay, University of Saskatchewan

The theme of the McMaster conference, “Content Providers of the World Unite!,” was a wonderfully provocative re-writing of the slogan on the title page of *The Communist Manifesto*. This slogan was rewritten as modish media lingo, that pseudo-lingua-franca that bears such a freight of treacherous reassurance under the banner of global culture, the communications revolution, trickle-down prosperity, and endlessly expanding consumer ‘choice.’ The combination of allusion and revision in the conference title evinces both continuity and change. Indeed, such rewriting is an effective combination of solidarity and resistance. But rewriting alone, while crucial as we will see, will not of itself do the job necessary in the current conjuncture.

In what follows I will come at the notion of content provision in relation to capitalist notions of value, including those derived from or injected into aesthetic and historical understanding of relations between form and content; I will talk also about historical derivations of the current cultural politics of globalization from three sources: notions of the citizen of the world, of world literature, and of workers of the world.¹ I do so because historical work is the one of the best ways to validate Percy Shelley’s insistence in *Queen Mab*, a poem that quickly achieved eminence in the radical canon, that whatever the nature and location of injustice in the world, “This is no unconnected misery,/ Nor stands uncaused and irretrievable” (IV.75-6: 35). And the denial or suspension of history (in the name of moral absolutism or the curiously resurgent term “existential”) is of course a defining feature of current weapons-grade rhetoric about terror and the Taliban. It is time to awaken from the nightmare of the end of history. To this end, I will conclude my presentation by urging the reader to engage with some thoughts about how, in multi-cultural, responsibly internationalist Canada, today, we might go about giving social and political content, including what Hayden White calls “the content of the form,” to the exhortation that brought people to McMaster, and to the exclamation point that concluded Marx and Engels’ exhortation and that of the conference.

I also urge you to bear in mind from the outset that, despite translation and common parlance, the exhortation on the title page of that first edition of the *Manifesto* in February 1848 (illustration 1), was not *Arbeiter aller Länder vereinigt euch!* but *Proletarier*, an address directed neither to all workers, nor to the unfortunately named Lumpenproletariat, but to the particular class created by the bourgeois capitalist mode of production in opposition to itself.² That particular class antagonism complicated and consolidated itself in the course of the bourgeois century whose long shadow lies over us still. It did so even within the allegedly middle-class continent where class is usually purveyed as quaintly anachronistic while history itself has apparently come to an end, and Francis Fukuyama and Alan Greenspan (who claimed the US economy has gone “beyond history” [cit. Callinicos 2001:39]) have themselves been updated in the sentiment that “we are all Americans now.” Rather than being abandoned or eviscerated as an analytical category during the current debate about empire, dying of underuse and misuse even as “democracy” is dying through overuse and abuse, “class” needs to be made rigorous once again. It is needed to help account for the most current versions of immiseration and deskilling and to make accountable capital’s ever faster and more ruthless practices, including new developments like “information exceptionalism”³ “flexploitation” (Bourdieu 1998:85), micro-serfdom (Coupland 1995) or the idiocy of cyber-life, and the pressing challenge to form coalitions that go beyond Eurocentric notions of



Cover of the first German 23-page edition of the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*

solidarity and allegiance to include – respectfully and hence productively – Canada’s “Indigenous difference” (Macklem 2001). What class formations, fractions, or intimations can be identified and mobilized in Canada today? And how can that mobilization become more responsibly internationalist as well as more transformatively Canadian?

The appeal expanded from industrial proletarians to all workers of the world has historical warrant in English-speaking working-class movements (see, e.g. Beamish 1998:221-2), and may be read as harmless synonymy and belief in the greater catchiness of alliteration. Or it may be seen as an attempt to define work combatively, or to undermine work as perhaps the most dangerously dissembling set of

social relations under capital. I return shortly to work understood as content provision. For now, I wish to underscore the need to appeal to unity and to develop some sense of what a defensible appeal to good unity might look like. I do so first by introducing the following icon and slogan of bad unity (*illustration 2*).



THE YELLOW PERIL.
(THE GERMAN VERSION.)

Drawn, in 1895, by H. Knackfuss, from a Design by His Majesty William II., German Emperor,
King of Prussia

Die gelbe Gefahr: the Kaiser's yellow peril:

Here is an example of the form that continentalist, in this case pan-European, impulses and identities can take and the motivations behind them. It is an image that partitions the world in ways from which we still have much to learn today; it is a making visible of what people know **and** fear to be true about the Other. To begin to come to terms with this image here I quote at some length from an account that appeared in the anti-Chinese but also anti-German *Morning Post* for November 11, 1895, from the pen of its Berlin correspondent:

On a plateau of rock bathed in light radiating from the Cross stand allegorical figures of the civilized nations. In the foreground is France shading her eyes with her left hand. She cannot altogether believe in the proximity of danger, but Germany, armed with shield and sword, follows with attentive eye the approach of calamity. Russia, a beautiful woman with a wealth of hair, leans her arm as if in close relationship on the shoulder of her martial companion. Beside this group Austria stands in resolute repose. She extends her right hand in an attitude of invitation as if to win the co-operation of the still somewhat reluctant England in the common task. In front of this martial group of mailed figures stands unmailed the winged Archangel Michael,

holding in his right hand a flaming sword. At the front of the rocky plateau stands the vast plain of civilized Europe. In the foreground is the Castle Hohenzollern, but over these peaceful landscapes clouds of calamity are rolling up. The path trodden by Asiatic hordes in their onward career is marked by a sea of flame proceeding from a burning city. Dense clouds of smoke twisting into the form of hellish distorted faces ascend from the conflagration. The threatening danger in the form of Buddha is enthroned in this sombre framework. A Chinese dragon, which at the same time represents the demon of destruction, carries this heathen idol. In an awful onset the Powers of Darkness draw nearer to the banks of the protecting stream. Only a little while and that stream is no longer a barrier. (Hindle 1937:195-6, 228)

This is one of the foundational moments of what became widely known as the yellow peril. It is 'art' on demand, an elite attempt to manufacture unity out of fear, using political power, cultural command, religious allegiance, and the presumption of whiteness. The Kaiser claimed to have invented the idea of *die gelbe Gefahr* (the yellow peril; see Gollwitzer 1962:42ff.) for much the same reason that Napoleon claimed to have invented the term "ideologue." The figure of emperor as neologist, somehow owning and enriching the language that binds the polity together, derives from the romantic cult of genius, as well as from the authority of inventiveness in technological modernity, and the attendant legal and economic rights articulated in patent and copyright law.

All of these developments are impressive in their own terms and in combination, but still insufficient to mask dependency or pre-empt the uncertainties and differences dependency brings. The Kaiser may use his political savvy, his training as a watercolourist and knowledge of art history, to create a visual allegory, but his control over it is instantly complicated by his delegation of formal execution of his "sketch" of an idea to a professional. The person chosen was Hermann Nackfuss, professor at the Cassel *Kunstakademie*, expert on Holbein, and compliant painter of state and imperial themes (Van der Kiste 1991:71; Diosy 1904:ch.8). The image was designed to do a number of related things: display the Kaiser's aristocratic taste; ingratiate "Dear Nicky," the Russian Tsar with whom the Kaiser corresponded about world affairs and who was given the 'original' painting (Graw and Levine 1920:17-22); inform the other leaders of nations who ought to be on side; be instantly intelligible to ordinary citizens of "civilized" countries as a warning that must be heeded; and be a maritime logo on the "funnels of all ships of the Hamburg-Amerika and the North German Lloyd Lines sailing to the Far East" (Waite 1998:84-86, 114; Coules 1963:149).

In other words, the power of representation was both imperious and self-subverting. Its gothicism, in stark contrast to the revolutionary gothicism of spectral communism in the *Manifesto*, recalled the mediaeval crusades against another homogenized Other. It required, implausibly, the suppression of those rivalries and differences that had so often and would soon again soak Europe and its colonies in blood. It envisioned an imagined community of nations overdetermined also in its self-distortion, its vulnerability intensified by the ambiguities of German leadership, and by the hazards of translation: from image into words, and from German into other languages.

The slogan designed by the Kaiser to accompany this image reads: *Volker Europas, währt eure heiligsten Güter!* (see also Gollwitzer 1962:206-7) : "Nations of Europe, guard your most sacred possessions!" This linguistic supplement and the slogan itself summarize one of the Kaiser's occasional pamphlets issued and re-issued in an attempt to complete the alarmist project it promotes. And of course the propagandist problems do not begin when we seem to move beyond the visual to the textual. The visual image itself simplifies the Other through the reduction of all eastern religions to one, and the

tenuous linking of the Buddha to belligerence through his apparently dispassionate contemplation of fiery destruction. The image inaugurates symbolic violence in preparation for (further) military and economic violence, all the while affirming that Christian Europe is merely striking back in self-defense against developments initiated elsewhere. As an episode in the history of stereotyping and propaganda, and of history as sequence skewed to make the aggressor appear to be the victim, it gives a boost to bigotry through new or improved technologies of dissemination, as well as through a remarkably homogeneous and receptive press. The largely superceded form of allegory gets a new lease on life through the theatrical medievalism of the scene, but is itself split along the axes of outmodedness and prophecy. It cannot fully suppress a sense of overmanagement of multiple meanings whose incompatibilities can neither be dispersed nor harmonized allegorically. The allos or otherness at the heart of the term “allegory,” is inescapably resistant to appropriation.

The more completely you try to assimilate (or exorcize) the Other, the more clearly coercive that attempt becomes. There is no form or expressive mode, no visual or verbal means of sanitizing Euro-imperialism and eliciting full unity among its friends. The Kaiser is in fact a self-styled crusader like Christian crusaders for capitalist democracy against godless communist tyranny and homegrown traitors in the 1950s, or moral crusaders against multiple sexualities or Taliban terror today, crusaders for whom the cross at the etymological heart of the term “crusade” works both for and against their project.

There is a great deal more to be said about this image and its reception history. But I use it here as an example of cultural politics practiced en route to world war. In this respect, it helps us face the challenge of developing a cultural politics appropriate today to globalization and asymmetrical ‘war.’ I offer the Kaiser’s sketch and slogan also as a warning to all of us against exempting unity from critique. Unity, is not in itself necessarily a good thing, and when we are urging unity we need to be clear about the reasons why we are doing so. We should clarify how we understand the differences, residues, and excesses that all unity produces and tends to traduce. We should be cognizant of the problem of uneven access to communications that had the Kaiser’s propaganda conveyed almost instantly throughout Europe and across the world while Marx and Engel’s *Manifesto* gathered dust for two decades before beginning to make a comparable impact from below. Another general point that the Kaiser’s practice luridly underscores is that moral panic is a process of making difference visible as a quasi-absolute. It is a process that requires the masking of greed and the selective definition and attribution of democratic nationhood by those who at the same time appeal to an *Endkampf* (or proto-Hollywood Armageddon, the mother of all showdowns), and to the power of colour and religion to characterize, unite, or polarize human populations.

How would one distinguish the appeal for unity entailed in *Content Providers of the World Unite!* from the Kaiser’s, or ensure it has a more immediate impact than Marx and Engel’s? How could one specify the target audience, and what would that mean for the connectedness or remoteness of academic workers from other workers? What would specification mean for the academic proletariat, if there is, or ought to be, such a thing, or its twenty-first century equivalent? And if there is an “Education Industry,” as Sergio Marchi and many political and business leaders attest (Barlow and Clarke 2001:97), how could there **not** be a proletariat in the industrialized academy, particularly in the humanities and social sciences, where the bulk of university teaching is done while the bulk of the resources go elsewhere? But, when it comes right down to it, is an appeal to class these days any better than an appeal to race and religion and nation?⁴ It is time to begin reweaving what I have been busily and perhaps bewilderingly unraveling so far.

Content and its discontents:

The recent outbreak of media convergence, vertical integration, the dalliance of the titans like America On Line and Time Warner, seems to be driven by the necessities of global competitiveness where size most certainly matters and only the cyber-sumos will survive. The magnitude of asset holdings determines corporate survival, which, in turn, involves owning the means of distribution. These means are primary, the form. They involve owning the ‘air,’ controlling the source and medium of the signal which can be bought by advertisers and sought by potential providers of media content, news, entertainment, infomercials, etc. As the Cipro/anthrax controversy after 9/11/2001 in Canada attested, the structure of ownership is the foundational, formative entitlement to which everything else is subject. It might even be seen as the primary instance of that semiotic economy in which significance as a stream of signifieds is produced according to the competencies furnished by the system or structures of signification. Except perhaps on the internet, where, it can be argued, independent outlets and activities can more effectively escape regulations protecting ownership than in the case of print, radio, cinema, television. I would not look exclusively to the net however, to subvert the property regimes and communications protocols of the corporate mainstream. We need instead a double strategy for conventional media plus new media. Otherwise we will succumb to a naïve techno-utopianism and information exceptionalism, which continue to undervalue or disregard the social relations of production, however formal or informal, including knowledge production and dissemination.

The ancient distinction between *forma* and *materia* was not only a distinction but a hierarchy legitimated and enforced by an epistemology and theology throughout a carefully if imperfectly stratified polity. Today, this relationship of superiority and subordination continues to hold, buttressed by the ranking of mind over body, theory over practice, mental over manual labour, circulation over stasis, the mobile over the rooted, the global over the territorial, and the fast over the fixed. One might offer as an alternative to this hierarchical division, the political as understood by Hannah Arendt. In her view, (at least in *On Revolution*) political action is its own content. In understanding communication and culture as political action, one might argue, one is promoting participation as its own justification and meaning. In my reading, however this argument would favour a weakly empiricist pluralism while at the same overpoliticizing exchange so as to strike a fairly major blow at notions of press freedom, media independence more generally, and the connection of these two to civil society and democracy. There are certain attractions to such outcomes, not least of which is the rapid exposure of partisanship, of the manufacturing of consent, and of the reservoirs of real power beyond the jabber and jamming of the electronic agora, and of power residing in the places where the real decisions are made by real men with the right stuff and real women at home awaiting their return.

These days, however, when notions of civility and democracy are used in highly selective and punitive ways by elites whenever they are called to account, I would like to contract if not entirely collapse the distinction between form and content. I would collapse it not into an Arendtian politics but rather into a version of what Fredric Jameson calls the “fundamental dialectical law of the determination of a form by its content – something not active in theories or disciplines in which there is no differentiation between a level of ‘appearance’ and a level of ‘essence,’ and in which phenomena, like ethics or sheer political *opinion* as such, are modifiable by conscious decision or rational persuasion” (1990:99). As will become clear shortly, I share Jameson’s concern for the “deeper affinities between a Marxian conception of political economy in general and the realm of the aesthetic” (1990:99). But I want to explore that affinity via a “Marxian” understanding of praxis.⁵ I mean praxis which values the

transformations wrought by production as well as those ascribable to consumption, and hence rehabilitates use value at a time when exchange value is so dominant. Conceived and achieved as the unalienated effort to unite knowing and doing or Engels' "experiment and industry" (1941:22) Praxis opens a way towards the "cunning of production"⁶ as the cunning of content provision. But before I get to what this step might mean **in praxis now**, I need to make two further historical connections to ideas of the world on which globalization today continues to depend, connections which raise the crucial question of the relation of academic and aesthetic values to the definition and distribution of economic value.

Citizen of the world:

In getting from the confident declaration "I am a Roman citizen," St. Paul's *civis romanus sum*, to eighteenth-century ideas of being a citizen of the world, is a long and complicated story linking exclusionary and expansionist citizenship to specific phases in the history of European imperialism. I wish to highlight here only a couple of points. First, the world exists for us via a set of human relations to it, often political relations with social organization, territoriality, language, and power, all implicit within them. Accordingly, the world can be understood as the Other of country, an Other too often knowable only through imperialist acquisition and exploitation, and therefore never fully or accurately known. Or the world might be seen as the Other of country according to an anti-or post-national claim to transcend narrow or inflexible allegiances and identity politics. In fact these options flourish together, as two sides of the same Euro-colonial coin, those twins, domination and contemplation, separated at birth in the later eighteenth century (see Findlay 1998:15ff.). The immanent project of empire (see Hardt and Negri: 2000) and the transcendent project of philosophy and art developed together in ways intimately related to discourses of diverse nationality developing in accordance with the chief imperatives of modernity known as the civilizing mission and the division of labour.

The latter phrase evokes the name of Adam Smith, of course, and it is important to remember how clear **he** was about the new, distinctive worldliness of economic man:

There are, however, two different circumstances which render the interest of money a much less proper subject of direct taxation than the rent of land.

First, the quantity and value of the land which any man possesses can never be a secret, and can always be ascertained with great exactness. But the whole amount of the capital stock which he possesses is almost always a secret, and can scarce ever be ascertained with tolerable exactness. It is liable, besides, to almost continual variations. A year seldom passes away, frequently not a month, sometimes scarcely a single day, in which it does not rise or fall more or less. An inquisition into every man's private circumstances, and an inquisition which, in order to accommodate the tax to them, watched over all the fluctuations of his fortune, would be a source of such continual and endless vexation as no people could support.

Secondly, land is a subject which cannot be removed; whereas stock easily may. The proprietor of land is necessarily a citizen of the particular country in which his estate lies. The proprietor of stock is properly a citizen of the world, and is not necessarily attached to any particular country. He would be apt to abandon the country in which he was exposed to a vexatious inquisition, in order to be assessed to a burdensome tax, and would remove his stock to some other country where he could, either carry on his business, or enjoy his fortune more at his ease. By removing his stock, he would put an end to all the industry it had maintained in the country which he left. Stock

cultivates land; land employs labour. (Smith: 847-8)

Like the Kaiser's illustration and slogan, this is another foundational moment worth far more extended commentary than I can accord it here. Note, however, the derivation of two kinds of citizenship from two kinds of ownership, the one static and public, the other variable, private, and already showing the jitteriness of ever faster capital ("A year ... a month ... scarcely a single day"). Like citizenship, propriety is derived from property, and the political regime and the property regime appear to coalesce in the refusal by "a people" to tolerate the overseeing of their personal investment income, even as other sectors of that very same people were increasingly subject to surveillance and policing. Building on Montesquieu's comments in *The Spirit of the Laws* (1964:XX.xxiii.i) about a world state whose member societies are joined by the experience of stock ownership and those other *effets mobiliers* so crucial to capital,⁷ Smith moves from what he takes to be an inevitable and desirable global reach back to the rights of the individual fashioned by this emergent economic system and to the genius loci of capital flight. Economic man, and it always is a man here, has a right to largely unregulated freedom at work and at play and he and his money will migrate if the investment 'climate' is unattractive. Bourgeois individualism, and its expansion via "gentlemanly capitalism" (Cain and Hopkins: 2001) and self-improving improvers (Hancock: 1995) into the newly reconfigured areas of the aesthetic and the cosmopolitan, represents consumption whose necessary but not sufficient condition is relative surplus value tied increasingly to the instruments of exchange.

Smith uses the term "inquisition" three times in this passage, to promote his own economic orthodoxy at the expense of backward Catholic linking of interest with usury, a backwardness that would help cause the French Revolution and circumscribe Napoleon's efforts to finance his imperialist efforts. Smith's nominal universal reveals itself to be covertly sectarian and nationalistic, even within the family of Christian nations⁸. The virtues of interest are not all disinterested. Try as he may to remain anti-colonialist because of his antipathy to mercantile monopoly (see Winch 1965:6-26), Smith encourages nineteenth-century imperialism's attempt to monopolize the means and meanings of increasingly mobile economic exchange. His concern for the migration of capital and capitalists would be reduced by others to a concern for domestically accumulated capital *tout court* combined with the enforced migration of capital's human opposition and excrescences (cf Winch 1965:75-6).

The interest income privileged by Smith might have been mocked by Goldsmith a decade earlier in his *Citizen of the World* as proof of a commercial and therefore unscholarly capacity to "find pleasure in superfluity" (1996 Letter 2:16). Goldsmith's Mandarin persona, however, needs sufficient resources to provide the leisure and mobility necessary to his version of the philosopher as global citizen rising above crass partisanship. Goldsmith and Adam Smith are in fact talking about two different ways of using a surplus to maintain mobility as growth, the economic growth stimulated by finance capital and the personal growth achieved through physical and mental travelling. *Homo oeconomicus* and *homo academicus* are both under formation in the later eighteenth century, in a surge of productivity which is also a crisis of inclusivity. Prosperity in the metropole was secured increasingly by the exercise of a global reach, and by the supplementing of economic appetite by scholarly and aesthetic taste. For those reasons empire and culture remain key sites for the understanding and contestation of the way we live now, or are urged to live now. Empire and culture **have** to be on the globalization agenda, especially in a white invader-settler colony like Canada where treaty federalism relies on the Indigenous acculturation of the judiciary,⁹ but where, in the eyes of too many, culture is supposed still by too many to be something imported for consumption as an additive to, or sedative for, economic servitude.

World Literature/*Weltliteratur*

The economic and cultural constitution of the citizen of the world is promoted under the aegis of freedom. And so, for instance, connections between cultural credibility and economic credit are seen by some in the wake of the French Revolution as securing free speech and related democratic freedoms while showing trust to power. For Madame de Stael, Britain is the supreme exemplar of “that perfect good faith, the sublime of calculation” (*Cette bonne foi parfaite, le sublime du calcul* [*The French Revolution* 1818:ch.3; cited in Wilkes 1991:151]). This is a view certainly not shared by British radicals, but it is a view that facilitates the demonizing of revolution as always ending in political and economically backward autocracy, and the promotion of infinite capitalist expansion under cover of admiration for the leading world power of the moment. De Stael’s assessment is based on first-hand observation, and on the knowledge she acquired as the devoted daughter of the French Minister of finance who had heralded credit as the glue of modern democratic societies, *la véritable découverte moderne qui a lié les gouvernements avec les peuples* (Wilkes 1991:151). However, there is profound unease at the heart of de Stael’s juxtaposition of perfection and sublimity. That unease is a symptom of constitutive asymmetry and contradiction, and of the role of cultural workers in commercial society who help market extortionate profit as the product of trust, dynamism, indeed internationalist modernity itself. The extraordinary inventiveness and cultural acquisitiveness of the advertising industry endlessly update and refine the “sublime of calculation” which is global capitalism today and which was only too evident in the design and location of the World Trade Center in New York City. The asymmetries, contradictions, injustices, and dangers of the international economic order are still there to see and contest, if there is a will to do so. “Adbusters of the world unite!”

Post-revolutionary Europe witnessed freedom separate out into elitism and insurgency, recurrently and despite every effort to treat difference and division as the manageable content of modernity. This freedom became available through democratic extension of the political and economic franchise, and in the energies of class struggle. Demands for free speech and communicative entitlement were gradually heeded while themselves helping legitimate expansionist theories of language and literature. These theories tried both to assimilate and subdue domestic and exotic difference in the interests of the deeply flawed and but immensely resourceful harmony which is capitalism. Thus, we witness the rise of comparative philology, most notably perhaps in Germany where the consolation for the absence of political revolution was intellectual, cultural, and educational development whose cosmopolitan pretensions could be mocked by radical opposition¹⁰. It is also similar to when Byron in his Ravenna journal for 28 January 1821 criticizes W. F. Schlegel’s *History of Literature* for its “rather rich confusion of meaning,” and the author’s claim to knowledge he could not possibly possess of “things *all over* the world.” (Wilkes 1999). Byron, the seasoned traveler and exile, smells a sedentary, bookish rat here, and marks that bookishness as both excess and deficiency, confusion and ignorance. Meaning is not knowledge, and certainly not knowledge of “things.” But such skepticism would surely have intensified had Byron lived to encounter an even more globalizing version of the imaginative gaze in Goethe.

Schlegel’s theories, and his brother’s, combine with Goethe’s to provide impetus and much edifying content for comparative philology and comparative literature, two related developments whose histories are deeply implicated in the temporary success of European and then American imperialism. Here I note two articulations of the notion of world-literature that capture the consonance and dissonance between capital and culture, and the challenges of cultural work as content provision within the framework and as part of the domestic and imperialist trajectory of the self-globalizing bourgeoisie.

Goethe is widely credited with inventing the term World Literature. Rather than debating that attribution, I want to stress its derivation from the growing power of literary and cultural cosmopolitanism. It is evident in the specific renegotiation of Franco-German relations ushered in by Madame de Stael's *De L'Allemagne*, in the role of the higher journalism in Britain and its few Germanists, and in the fact that Germany for a time looked to *Bildung* to salve the wounds of military defeat and entrenched political conservatism.

There are about twenty references in Goethe's writings to the idea of world literature, starting in January 1827 (Strich 1972:349-51). These formulations are Eurocentric rather than truly global. They reaffirm art's foundations in ancient Greece and the need to find another mode of interaction among Europe's Nations than the one favoured during the Napoleonic wars. Here is how he puts it in his Introduction for Carlyle's *Life of Schiller* (1830):

There has for some time been talk of a Universal World Literature, and indeed not without reason; for all the nations that had been flung together by frightful wars and had then settled down again became aware of having imbibed much that was foreign, and conscious of spiritual needs hitherto unknown. Hence arose a sense of their relationship as neighbours, and instead of shutting themselves up as heretofore, the desire gradually awoke within them to become associated in more or less free commerce." (*Werke* 42.1: 187-7)

Schlegelian *Universalpoesie* is part of the "talk" to which Goethe refers here, in order to make his own views seem those of an important and progressive cultural and spiritual constituency. The aftermath of war is seen not as territorial redistribution but as a process of voluntarily seeking out the very differences to which war had forcibly exposed European citizens. This process is given the name of neighbourliness rather than conquest, and made reassuringly gradual rather than impulsive or radical. And it comes to rest in the unsettlingly conditional ambiguities of *Verkehr*: "more or less free commerce," a phrase concealing a volatile and often ferociously unneighbourly history.

In a draft version of this introduction, Goethe made the advent of world literature more certain still, but no less problematic because still economically conditioned: "But if this kind of world literature – as is inevitable from the ever-quickenning speed of intercourse – should shortly come into being, we must expect from it nothing more and nothing less than what it can and does perform" (Strich 1972). Here we have inevitability and indeterminacy reminiscent of Smith's ever faster capital mapped onto the field of cultural exchange. In the nineteenth century, European powers, as Goethe well knew, would not easily forsake nationalism for neighbourliness, and they would solve that problem by worlding themselves in another way. They would find themselves lucrative *Lebensraum* in new or more efficiently exploited colonies around the world until their empires were once again bumping shoulders as belligerently as their nations had. The only important differences between then and now are that the nation-state is in most cases less powerful today than it was. In addition, capital, which fuelled the nation state's ascendancy, has now shifted its allegiance to the transnational corporation, while military conflict between states and empires has given way in substantial part to economic and ecological violence and the global development of underdevelopment. Whether high or popular, culture is no reliable or adequate consolation for political defeat. And culture which avoids or denies its complicity with capital will only further depoliticize the academy and the arts while helping transform domination into the already well established hegemony of peace, order, and good government.

Goethe's version of World Literature needed to be rewritten in strongly classist, and subversively diffusionist terms if intercultural contact was not to prove every bit as imperialist as economic

exchange. And Marx and Engels met that need with rigour and prescience:

The bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world market [*Weltmarkt*] given a cosmopolitan character to production in every country. To the great chagrin of the Reactionists, it has drawn from under the feet of industry the national ground on which it stood. All old-established national industries have been destroyed or are daily being destroyed. They are dislodged by new industries, whose introduction becomes a life and death question for all civilized [*civilisierte*] nations, by industries that no longer work up indigenous raw material [*einheimische Rohstoffe*], but raw material drawn from the remotest zones; industries whose products are consumed, not only at home, but in every quarter of the globe. In place of the old wants, satisfied by the productions of the country, we find new wants, requiring for their satisfaction the products of distant lands and climes. In place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse [*Verkehr*] in every direction, universal inter-dependence [*allseitige Abhängigkeit*] of nations. And as in material, so also in intellectual [*geistigen*] production. The intellectual creations of individual nations become common property [*Gemeingut*]. National one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness become more and more impossible, and from the numerous national and local literatures, there arises a world literature [*Weltliteratur*]. (*Manifesto*, para 26)

Goethe had spoken of nations flung together by war, while the *Manifesto* shows us a far more deliberate, ambitious, and irresistible project undertaken by the European bourgeoisie.

Here in 1848, we encounter intimations of the post-industrial and the post-national, as well as the impending series of **world** exhibitions which will link world citizenship and world literature ever more firmly to exchange value and commodities markets (Benjamin 1999:18). The *Manifesto* describes the emergence of an international bourgeoisie whose changing patterns of production and consumption attest to the importance of the material **and** the intellectual in the shaping of civilized society. Admittedly, the intellectual comes after the material and is allotted far less space in the *Manifesto*'s ironically generous hymn to the transformative bourgeoisie. But note that the relation between the two allows the intellectual to be analogous rather than ancillary or merely abject. The sentiments are closer to Goethe than one might at first suspect, and differ from his views principally in seeing the bourgeoisification of the world not as a destination but as a stage that must be achieved before proletarian resistance can be fully and appropriately globalized too.

This argument is the one that I ask you to accept rather than dismiss as crass determinism or economic reductionism. And I would ask you to do so because capital has not changed in its basic nature and direction in the last century and a half, but only in its pace, range, invasiveness, and intolerance. I think it follows from this premise that anti-capitalism must remain in essence the same too, but inflected in appropriately reactive and unpredictable ways. This concludes not a doctrinaire reaffirmation of the metaphor of base and superstructure or the rigidities of communist party discipline. Nor does it imply looking to culture as merely epiphenomenal to the economy. What it does demand is a revaluating of economics and politics by cultural and intellectual workers within a reinvigorated praxis. We must distinguish between resistance as the product of domination, created by it and still captive to **its** agenda in important respects, and resistance as domination's Other and never fully knowable to it or assimilable by it.

Domination created the industrial proletariat and therefore the conditions of proximity-in-squalor through which to mobilize against the factory owners who abused the workers on whose labour and subservience they so sorely depended. Domination in the knowledge economy today may work more

by the physical dispersal of its workforce and the outsourcing and concealment of its residually industrial and emphatically toxic operations in *maquiladoras* and export processing zones (Klein 204-29). Capital has found in globalization new forms of elite cohesiveness – let’s name them by the shorthand of airport lounges for the business traveler and insider trading. But the conditions of info-cohesiveness or cyber-clubbability have, in turn, produced new forms of cyber-solidarity. And if unencumbered capital has an element of indeterminacy or self-heroicizing ‘risk’ or ‘venture’ essential to its operations, then one unexpected, Othered outcome can well be resistance inconceivable in advance to elites. And Canada’s contribution to this process of resistance, while in some respects inconceivable, should in my view be deliberately and vigorously un-American, anti-capitalist, and Indigenizing, a kind of **praxis, eh?** or *Gemeingut* Canadian style.

Workers of the World

When the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* appeared early in 1848, there was no such thing as a communist party. This text was an impudent reprise on “We the people,” alleging the pre-existence of that socio-political entity which linguistic performatives of the Declaration of Independence themselves bring into being. And the notion of a political party like no other buys again into, while threatening to explode, the categories of traditional political organization. But what Marx and Engels could not adequately envisage was how the Other of Euro-American capital could internalize the *Manifesto* and put it to work, all the while critiquing its residual Eurocentrism, its gender blindness, its ecologically damaging productionism, and so on. The content of the manifesto form is analytical, oppositional, strategic, hortatory, and readily translatable. Choosing the right form can mean providing critical content through mobilizing and reflecting the social determinants of cultural genre and communicative medium. And this choice ought to work in concert with content provision of a thematic or empathetic sort in a version of praxis which elicits good unity in the product and those who receive or consume it.

The transnational capital currently functioning most freely under the aegis of the United States and its world-regulatory bodies uses two key moves, one cultural and one political – the colonizing of popular taste, and the appropriation of the meanings of democracy – in order to sustain and extend its hegemony. It is apparently both all-powerful **and** the helpless instrument of the free market. Such constitutive contradictions can be read as the market guaranteeing diversity while functioning as the sanctuary of dogmatic singularity and as the engine of monoculturalism (Shiva 1993). So, what is to be done, where, and by whom?

Content Provision and Good Unity

Inside the institution of the University we can look to humanities content, for instance, as historical continuity. We can see it as the ‘real presence’ that makes a university something other and somehow better than a technical institute. In contrast for those who think universities ought to be more like technical institutes and private vocational colleges, the humanities are seen as a minimally tolerable, embarrassing but decorative addition to an institution that really means business. These three options move from authenticity through ornamentality to instrumentality. And academic instrumentalism goes further in seeing communicative form as subservient to scientific and technological content, the tidying up of the grammar and format that in no way modify the knowledge purveyed in a scientific paper. Humanities content and its providers are valued very unevenly across the institution, while humanities form is considered functionary and cosmetic at best.

Outside the institution in the wider society, the University is associated with unique forms such as

autonomy, academic freedom and tenure, collegiality, and disinterestedness or objectivity. These are important components of that “democracy staple” (Findlay 2002) which is connected intimately to the notion that universities are the best guarantors of freedom in a democratic society. The democracy staple, however, means that Canada’s publicly funded universities and colleges are much more geared to the changing needs of the work force than to the creation of critically engaged citizens. Under the aegis of the brain drain, value is added to raw Canadian brain power elsewhere, usually in the United States. At the same time, the only loss of Canadian graduates that mainstream media mark and mourn is that of those whose attachment to Canada seems more economic and opportunistic than critically engaged. It is certainly not the loss of those who cannot afford tuition. Such migratory academic labour functions, like capital itself, largely outside the categories of citizenship and nationhood. Its mobile or even global lustre is used to devalue the responsibly internationalist activities of many young Canadians and the less materialistic values of the majority who are ‘content’ to stay at home, because of the form of society we have or aspire to.

Out of this stark summary of academic content provision and form/content relations, we can begin to detect a version of good unity and an agenda appropriate perhaps to many content providers today. Good unity needs first to be historically informed, which entails facing up to contingency and complexity, as well as to causality that is always only arguable at best. It also requires reading the present rigorously and sharing that reading candidly, despite the unwelcome and potentially divisive nature of what is to be faced and shared. Communities of concern overlap with, but are not identical with, interpretative communities. Romantic or ultra-fastidious particularism will guarantee that we are swept aside by moral panics and the blunt instruments of outraged patriotism and righteous vengeance. But content providers uniting against what or whom? There is a more generous allowance available on the margins for strategic essentialism and even strategic simplification of the dominant. But what do we stand for, in addition to being against the existing order? We need to be **for** the facilitation of emerging otherness. We must seek a robust version of openness and indeterminacy, beyond the Levinasian or Derridian ethics of “clotural reading” (Critchley 1999: 30, 41, 88, etc.) and even perhaps beyond Spivak’s practice of keeping the question alive. Is the rationale for good unity anything more than convoluted partisanship? Maybe not. But I see it as more than a formation reacting predictably against dominance on the offensive. Indeed, I would argue that justice is a property of resistance because resistance is the instant or deferred response to unjustifiable power, privilege, and infinite ambition.

Conclusion

The International Labour Organization’s covenant 169 specifically envisages and encourages the connection of aboriginal self-determination to organized labour at a time when the disparagement of both creates the conditions for their solidarity, including their cyber- and educational solidarity, in a truly post-colonial proletariat. The governmental and corporate opposition to aboriginals and (other) workers uniting is intense and ruthless, as David Bedford and Danielle Irving have recently re-emphasized (2001). The specificities of the Canadian settler experience must be more widely understood before they can be used against the colonial-capitalist formation which is the Canadian establishment. Here is where an understanding of conceptual tools, mediations, and current needs and opportunities is essential to an emergent agenda.

1. I could well have dealt with the roughly coeval entity of “world history” too, if time and space had permitted, but will play only with that part of Hegel’s formidable legacy known as the “cunning of reason” (see note 6). The reader may wish to bear in mind that world history was defined at the end of Hegel’s *Elements of Philosophy of Right* as “universal mind ...[and] the actuality of mind in its whole compass of internality and externality alike” (216). In the *Lectures on the Philosophy of World History* he could begin in 1830 by declaring that “the common conception of it is adequate, and we are more or less agreed on what it is” (1830:25). For anyone interested in pursuing the logical and philosophical implications of “root metaphors” in this area, a good place to start is Stephen Pepper’s *World Hypotheses: a Study in Evidence*.

2. The reasons for specifying “Proletarians” are provided in the trial number (in German) of the *Communist Journal* published in London by the Communist League in September 1847 and using Marx’s sharpening of democratic fraternalism into a slogan more firmly linked to industrial capitalism. Here, the ancient Roman proletarians are defined as “that class of citizens who owned nothing but the arms of their bodies and the children of their loins.” This oppressive situation holds true in the nineteenth-century too, the principal difference being that proletarians now have in hand, in the form of literacy and organizational ability, the means for ending their exploitation. See Ryazanoff, appendix E.

3 Schiller 1997; for the American exceptionalist tradition more generally see Pease 2000.

4. Alongside recent and related attacks by the likes of David Cannadine on class and race, it is useful to put Macaulay’s insistence in the (in)famous *Education Minute* which urges mediating the clamour of the dusky multitude by endeavouring to “form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern, a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect” (1967:729).

5. I will continue to look regularly to Arendtian understanding of *The Human Condition* for unsettlement and critique, as well as to Bruce Robbins’ employment of Laclau’s notion of “particular content” [2000:562ff.] on behalf of international human rights and other emergent, progressive universals. Robbins is aptly challenging to scholars often too smugly vanguardist and inadvertently parochial: “to believe one is fighting colonialism by deconstructing the Enlightenment is a bit too convenient for European or American scholars. They can study pretty much the same Western tradition they would have studied anyway, for that tradition is assumed to have been proto-imperialist all along, well before actual colonization began to be, in effect, an imperial essence. Thus they need not actually find anything out about the rest of the world or listen to the people from it” (2000:562-3).

6. The phrase “the cunning of production” is Alexander Chryssis’ rewriting of Hegel’s “cunning of reason” which, in the second (1830) draft of *The Philosophic History of the World* he uses to convey what he takes to be the privilege of the universal: “for it is not the universal idea which enters into opposition, conflict, and danger; it keeps itself in the background, untouched and unharmed, and sends forth the particular interests of passion to fight and war themselves out in its stead. It is what we may call the cunning of reason [*die List der Vernunft*] that it sets the passions to work in its service, so that the agents by which it gives itself existence must pay the penalty and suffer the loss” (1830:89). This version of delegated agency and its undervaluing of the particular is the Other and negative inspiration of Marxist praxis. For the substance and implications of this opposition, see, e.g. G. H. Parkinson.

7. “[L]es effets mobiliers, comme l’argent, les billets, les lettres de change, les actions sur les compagnies, les vaisseaux, toutes les marchandises, appartiennent au monde entier qui, dans ce rapport, ne compose qu’un seul État, dont toutes les sociétés sont les membres: le peuple qui possède le plus de ces effets mobiliers de l’univers, est le plus riche” (Montesquieu 1964:655-58; emphasis added).

8 The Holy Office overseeing the Catholic inquisition was abolished in France in 1772, only four years before Smith’s *opus magnum* appeared.

9. For treaty federalism see Sakej Henderson (1994); for the ongoing cultural education of the Supreme Court of Canada see Isobel M. Findlay (2002).

10 See, for example Saine 1998.

A CANADIAN AGENDA

1. Conceptual tools:

'Theirs': neo-Manichean binarism; asymmetry/"infinite justice"; *sui generis* evil, terror; the civilized world and the truly human; "the great wheel of circulation is altogether different from the goods which are circulated by means of it" (Adam Smith 1776).

'Ours': cultural-communitarian memory and prescience; justice as property of the finite; organized labour as critical content ("the cunning of production"); the "democracy staple" (Findlay 2002); internationalism from below; the evidentiary earth; "modernization fatally short-circuits the formation of social goals" (Raymond Williams 1968).

2. Mediations:

'Old' politics: pushing the commitment to smart/wired Canada and weird Canada;

'New' politics: connection and causality; generational, local/global; the New Politics Initiative and rabble.ca, etc.?

Terra virtualis, cyber-solidarity, and cyber-civil society;

3. Coalitions: organized labour and Indigenous peoples, implementing ILO 169; campus 'vets' of the WTO, FTAA and other 'wars' teaching their teachers and transforming curriculum;

4. Events:

(UNESCO Canada) Dialogue and Declaration, Native Law Centre, Saskatoon, November 22-23, 2001 (see Henderson et al); (Coon Come at Durban, Thobani and Javed after 9/11);

Mayday Manifestoes project, May 1, 2002: contact findlay@sask.usask.ca; Kananaskis and the G8 meetings, June 2002.

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“Content Providers of the World Unite! A Critical Canadian Analysis and Agenda

L. M. Findlay
findlay@sask.usask.ca
Department of English
University of Saskatchewan
Saskatoon SK, S7N 5A5

