Digital Anarchy, Social Media and WikiLeaks.
Or, Skynet doesn't look anything like we thought it did.

For those who have been unaware of geopolitical news of late 2010, WikiLeaks
(http://213.251.145.96/) is an online Wikipedia-like database that "whistle-blows" against
questionable governmental/corporate activity by releasing controlled/classified documents. As of
December 2010, they have released copious numbers of cables (transmitted internal memos), as
of late largely having to do with US foreign policy and international intelligence. This sudden
transparency to power has the First World, especially the US State Department, in a
panic. Why? WikiLeaks shows an unflattering side of the US, committing any number of gaffes,
like calling Russia a "mafia state" [BBC Staff], and disclosing unflattering mentions of Middle
Eastern leaders [Milmo, Taylor, & Usborne]. In addition, the range of other undisclosed
information spans from the revelation of transfers of weapons technology from North Korea to
Iran [Orkube.com] to US drug companies targeting African politicians [BBC Staff]. The WikiLeaks
disclosures, as well as social media for that matter, have sent the First World into diplomatic
chaos, with geopolitical politics reconfiguring itself like a planet-sized Rubik's Cube.

The Internet was conceived by the US military (DARPA) as a decentralized network for the
sharing and redundant storage of information in multiple locations in case of nuclear attack
[Abbate]. By design, one node could be destroyed, and the network still functions despite the
loss. In my discussion of virtual versus conventional power and their constituent streams of
capital, I want to use the terms "atomic/conventional" and "Info-" power and capital. The use of
the former is a double entendre of "atomic" as emblematic of the ultimate extension of
material/conventional loci of power exerted by the traditional the nation-state. But the
infrastructure of atomic power created distributed power through the exchange of information
through the Internet. This extension of conventional/"atomic" power (i.e. distributed society) has
mutated into a concurrent, distributed, heterogeneous field of power that I will call the Infostate,
which includes the Web, E-mail, social media, and all functions of networked
communications. Although the aspects of conventional power have restructured themselves in
terms of the informational milieu, the latter is not necessarily congruent with the former. This is
due to the fact that while the Internet spans most physical/material nation-states, it resides in no
single one, and therefore redefines power boundaries along much different vectors than the
atomic/material.

With the rise of WikiLeaks and uprisings in Tunisia organized through social media, First World
power has been bitten by its own child. The Net has become an emergent social system as
typified in popular science fiction franchises, like The Matrix [*The Matrix*] and Terminator
[*Terminator*] where technology finds its own agendas. Infopower becomes autonomous from its
material (atomic) roots, with "atomic" power being a personal metaphor for material potential and
its ultimate extension (nuclear weapons). Instead of robots, it is the Infosphere that asserts
itself. In The Porcelain Workshop [Negri, 20], Antonio Negri states that one of the three major
shifts into the postmodern is the primacy of informatics/cognitive capital as central to
contemporary postmodernism. The shift from material capital to that of the cognitive redirects
much of power discourse to discussion of data flows and immaterial/info-capital that the material
sphere has become so dependent upon. As such, it is the refocusing of society on this flow of
cogno-capital that reveals alternate foundations of power in the new millennium.

Despite the Internet's decentralized nature, there are physical zones where the nation-state
attempts to territorialize, filter, and limit the flow of cognitive capital through "firewalling" or
Domain Name Server (DNS) limitations, examples being Turkey, China, and especially Egypt's
shutdown of the Internet proper during the late January 2011 revolution [Ackerman]. Efforts to
enforce firewalls remain porous and slippery, with technologies like proxy servers outside the
confines of the nation-state, showing the transborder nature of the Infostate. The de-
territorialization of the Infostate creates an asymmetrical power relation that, due to its amorphous
nature, is highly problematic for conventional nation-states to engage, let alone control.
Conventional power requires a hierarchical control structure; it needs centralized faces upon

which to focus fear or hatred upon, such as Saddam Hussein or Osama bin Laden. Infopower resides in the digital cloud-culture, and it is mercuric and morphogenic. When confronted by the centralized, hierarchical nature of conventional power, it merely splits, morphs or replicates, sidestepping the command and control structure like a cloud of dust. This relationship signals the new balance of power between the nation-state and Infostate as Krokerian Panic Bimodernism [Kroker 12, 24], a distinct combination of impossibilities in which the ability of the one to relate in terms of the other implodes.

With the bleeding of information from the hierarchical material to the distributed, rhizomatic networks of the digital realm through WikiLeaks (i.e. the US diplomatic cable leaks) and social media, WikiLeaks, Anonymous, and resistant sites within the distributed Infostate have mounted an asymmetrical insurgency against conventional power. Negri's conception of cognitive/infocapital as locus of power situates infopower to asymmetrically challenge that of material capital; in that its modes of production and circulation are so different (especially cognitive capital's amorphous nature) that it creates social effects more fluidly than material culture. Cognitive capital is hit-and-hit-and-hit-and/or run culture, swarming like digital bees. This is analogous to mention of the rise of technology and the creation of the virus as told in the movies, *The Matrix* and *The Matrix Reloaded*, as the data being overrides/supersedes embodied conventional power. Neo (the prior paradigm/conventional) tries to destroy Agent Smith (the informatic), only to viralize him and create a swarm of Smiths, with no apparent "head", symbolizing the asymmetry of the Net to the conventional (hierarchy vs. dustcloud).

As Deleuze [Deleuze/Guattari], then Agamben [Agamben, 43] assert that power is the separation of the subject from potentiality, and as such mitigates dissent, the nation-state tries to exert power by separating the means of support, and figurehead, from WikiLeaks or social networks. However, distributed, asymmetrical cyberwarfare such as denial of service attacks, where users overload a website's server computer through mass visitation, has already disrupted numbers of online sites of banks, online commerce and others. It even awakened the amorphous hacker youth subculture of "Anonymous" which is best known for its mass protests against the Church of Scientology [BBC Staff]. Social media like Facebook and Twitter, combined with smart phones, has caused an explosion of infopower with the lensing of populist sentiment through these channels. But conversely, the backlash of conventional symbiotic nation-state/corporate power against WikiLeaks, created anonymous to rise against the opponents of WikiLeaks. And in the case of Tunisia and Egypt (which have median ages in the mid-20's), Twitter and Facebook, paired with cellphones, have caused an amorphic infostructure for dissent to flourish in the transnational milieu of the net. The children of the Internet, as children of the military-industrial complex (conventional power), and those of the digitally savvy third world turn upon their "parents" in an oedipal turn, which elicits the expected reflexive response.

Effect II
The Emperor's New Bits, or Hans Christian Anonymous
In the classic Hans Christian Andersen story, *The Emperor's New Clothes* (Andersen), an emperor who cares for nothing but his wardrobe is swindled by twin weavers that offer clothing that is invisible to anyone unfit or too stupid to see the couture. After completion, the emperor would parade the new line for the populace. Of course, the emperor comes out nude, having been hoodwinked by the weavers. The Masses are cowed into an Orwellian acceptance of the ruse by the power of the Emperor, save for one lone boy, who exposes the Emperor as naked. Perhaps this is the metaphor of Critical Art Ensemble's discussion of youth as cyber-interventionists [Critical Art Ensemble], although this author understands that the context of the era in which Electronic Civil Disobedience was written was to address a malaise in parts of the left who had "bunkered" itself. In addition, this author realizes the radical changes in discourse between the 1990's and the 2000's but this text aptly foreshadows many of the events of 2010-2011. However, we will see that not only is it Anonymous who could be seen as the 20-something demographic of which ECD speaks, but also consider the aforementioned digitally savvy media demographic of Middle Eastern areas in revolt. But in the initial case of WikiLeaks. The youth of

the Andersen fable is embodied by the online "Anonymous" subculture which also represents the interventionists of the online public sphere.

Anonymous is analogous to the child in the Andersen story, an ad hoc group of hacktivists which is largely skewed to a younger demographic. This "group" is anarchic, emerging from sites such as 4chan.org to satirically speak its truth to power, the best known being previously mentioned actions against the Church of Scientology in 2008. In these actions a series of online video addresses called upon the Church for transparency, and flash mobs came forth, all wearing Guy Fawkes' masks to physically "troll" (or aggravate) the Church locations by playing boom-boxes loaded with recordings of Will Smith ("Bel-Airing") and Rick Astley ("Rick-Rolling") . These gestures are classic online trolling postures, and Anonymous' actions against the church satirically were intended as a momentary physical DDoS attack, or simply, an old fashioned sit-in. Basically, Anonymous arrived from nowhere, came together as a group of no-ones, and returned to the ether from which they were summoned. Anonymous is a cloud of asymmetrically acting Andersenian "children" speaking truth to power to the emperor.

Anonymous is not an organization – it is an anarchic ad hoc group that emerges through the underside of the Internet. It represents a key aspect of Infopower – it is emergent, distributed, and utterly flat in its (dis)organization, with its conduits of power surging through ANY connection in the net. Anonymous is like dust; eliminate part of it and it replicates as long as there are net connections. Monitor them; they encrypt. Cut a connection, they reroute. Anonymous are a human computer virus. Secondly, Anonymous is deemed as what is called "troll" culture, or youth motivated to aggravate power of any kind as a form of entertainment or loose ideology of true anarchism. Anonymous is (largely? Can we be sure?) a possible youth hacker demographic spoken of by CAE, but by its nature, it is anyone or anything that chooses to take up the cause.

In Electronic Civil Disobedience, The Critical Art Ensemble proposes that in the age of informatic power, physical (atomic) resistance speaks to dead capital, as the physical protester is corralled or elided entirely by authority [Critical Art Ensemble]. Disruption of capital resides in the virtual. The real interventionists are the 20-something year-old hackers (Anonymous? Young Facebookers, Tweeters? The youth of Tunisia and Egypt?), who punch through the firewalls and reroute flows of information, creating irruptions of redirection, disruption, and detournement of Infocapital at will. The disruption of infocapital/infopower is predictably met with harsh indictments from conventional power. The case of Ricardo Dominguez and the Electronic Disturbance Theatre's virtual sit-in against the University of California was a relatively benign case of the disruption of data as political act. But the asymmetrical response by the university system in attempting to remove Dominguez' tenure [To] reifies the tension between atomic and informatic powers. But the disruption of infocapital is explicated on a larger scale by Chinese governmental hackers' compromise of Google (as revealed by WikiLeaks) [Glanz, Markoff], as well as the near hack of an Iranian reactor by computer viruses [McMillan]. All of these illustrate Negri's idea that postmodern power/capital has shifted to that of the informatics and cognitive fields, and signal a primary shift in the balance of power in the First World, if not globally, from the nation-state to the Infostate.

As I have discussed, atomic power reacts hysterically to asymmetry from any source, as it instills a Krokerian panic-site in which the dissonance of power creates situations in which the conventional cannot deal with infopower in terms of command and control. In the Netherlands, members from an Anonymous rally were beaten in the streets, and two "Anonymous". A 16 and 19 year-old were brought up on charges relating to the Anonymous Denial of Service attacks against government and commercial sites seeking to stop WikiLeaks [Singel]. Also, in the UK five men between the ages of 15 and 26 were subject to a 7 am raid [Halliday] for temporarily crippling the websites of MasterCard, Visa and PayPal, all of which were part of the corporate/nation-state coalition seeking to disable WikiLeaks. From the perspective of power, the Anonymous member is written off as a deviant, a "troll", but in terms of the Christiansen fable, he is a harbinger of decentralized power of the Infostate, speaking power to the conventional

corporate/national power. From my own experience, during this time, DNS's (Domain Name Servers) from controlling service providers like Comcast (which has proposed measures against net neutrality on its networks) became erratic; resulting in intermittent Web access that seemed highly circumspect. The effect of youth hacker cultures as resistance to conventional capital is an effect of the emergence of infopower. But this new form of emergent power of the Infostate (Wikis, social media, networked culture) has been a contributing factor for the toppling of unstable nation-states, such as Tunisia and the focusing of dissent in the Middle East, especially Egypt.

Effect III
The Fall of Tunisia/The Rise of EgyptBook
The effects of infopower have perhaps had effects on creating tipping points for the fall of entire nation-states and/or created lenses for existing unrest. On Friday, January 14th, President Zine al-Abidine Ben Ali left Tunisia after over two decades in office due to massive [Kirkpatrick] uprisings. This was following the self-immolation of college student Mohamed Al Bouazzizi after the seizure of his vending cart. The Tunisian government had been unstable due to increasing unemployment and lack of opportunity, but Internet-based social networks such as Facebook have served as conduits for dissent. Tunisians able to access the Internet saw the (at least perceived) disparity in opportunity between their country and the world; this has been expressed in informal social media for some period of time. In addition, information disseminated from WikiLeaks stated that the US called Tunisia "Sclerotic", and talked about how Ben Ali's family had a role in nearly all parts of the economy, causing further dissent through online social media [Maha]. This represents three points of destabilization, one physical, two informatic; the immolation as the spark setting off the powder keg of unrest and aggravation, which had been further exascerbated by the leaked cable. The exercise of infopower in this case exerts itself in the consolidation of communication/lensing through the networks, creating channels/batteries for cognitive power; tensions created by the WikiLeaks cable, and the final spark set by Al Bouazzizi. Therefore, one cannot say that infopower has not created the singular fall of a nation-state, but created the impulse and means of organization to a: push a delicate political situation beyond a "Tipping Point" [Gladwell], and b: created the channels and concentration of cognitive capital necessary to organize the revolution. But we can also see the reaction of atomic power to the informatic in Ben Ali's instructions for the police (termed as militias in the Western press) to react against the revolutionaries and general populace after his escape.

In late January, unrest broke out in Egypt after the fall of Tunisia, with masses calling for the ouster of President Mubarak, and anarchy breaking out in outlying areas, according to NPR and CNN. In watching the coverage of CNN, it's interesting to note that pundits on a Jan. 30 CNN broadcast stated that the Tunisian revolution "awakened the Arabic imagination", for the possibility of actual revolution. Also, the repeated mention of the use of Twitter and Facebook through cellphones begs consideration of an epistemic arc from the political effects begun by WikiLeaks and to the channeling of cognitive capital of dissension through social media. Although at the time of this writing, the status of Egypt is still in question, but the rise of the Infostate and its supersession of infopower upon the material are at least evident in the mass media, which rides the line between the conventional/corporate state and the mediasphere. It's also important to note that Facebook does not support the focusing of these streams of infocapital except only in terms of its corporate agendas, as it stands against WikiLeaks. The infosphere is amorphous, "lumpy" discontiguous and heterotopic – and asymmetrical in power relations and structure to the material state, which causes severe anxiety to conventional power.

The reaction of the nation-state/conventional power to asymmetric power was evident in 2001, where decentralized "cellular" physical social networks circumvented centralized power. Although my previous sentence says decentralized *physical power,* this is merely an intermediary step to the development of asymmetrical distributed Infopower. The centralized, hierarchical nature of the material corporate nation-state has been unable to contain the decentralized flow of cellular power, which has become Infopower, created by the emergency of distributed networks. This is seen as we look again at *Matrix Reloaded*, where in, as in The Matrix Trilogy, the informatic body/state (Agent Smith) reacts to the intervention of conventional human power (Neo, or "The

One") through asymmetry by massively replicating WikiLeaks sites (the Smiths, or "The Many"). Conventional power now has a cloud of moving, replicating targets rather than one to aim at. This is the difference between the anthropomorphized asymmetric foe-network and the faceless cloud of agency-potential that represents the true nature of Infopower.

The First World then reacts to being challenged by expediting material/physical diplomacy that would take months, days, or weeks by arresting Assange, possibly for extraditing him to the United States, his locus of challenge [Adam]. But although the "head", (the object of leverage of conventional power) is in custody, the "body" of WikiLeaks and the rest of its "computational cloud of dissent" stated on December 7th (incidentally, the day of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor), that it will continue to release information through the WikiLeaks network [Booth]. Like the anthropomorphization of centralizing identity/placing a single "face" on challenges to hegemony (as in the Queens of the movies Aliens and The Borg in Star Trek), the true face of asymmetry is that of facelessness and morphogenic dissent. It is like trying to hold mercury, because decentralized dissent can only be addressed through decentralized means, and this is not the structure of conventional power structures of command and control.

In light of this redistribution of power, what would the solution for conventional/"atomic" power's reassertion of hegemony? This would be to contain the rise of informatic power by containing its means of distribution. This would be by the means of national firewalling, and trunk-line disconnection or limited Internet disabling, disrupting infopower, but also crippling the flow of digitized material capital as well. This exactly what happened in Egypt, where the Internet was disabled, and severely limited information flow and the social and material functions that are dependent on the networks, although as of Jan. 29, smart phone networks have come back online. [Jackson] The cutting of the digital backbone is problematic at best, as conventional power and informatic power are in symbiotic relation, the latter being more nimble, and a step ahead of the former, and to attack a symbiote always means to cripple its partner as well. The logical result of such actions would be the elimination of net neutrality (the free and open flow of data across the Internet) or even the severance of typologies and flows of information across the networks. The symbiotic effect is that conventional power/capital is also hobbled, as the physical is dependent on the same flows of information across the distributed nets, disabling itself in the process. It is for this reason that it cannot engage in this means of retaliation, as it would be the digital suicide of the First World nation-state.

This is the brilliance of WikiLeaks, and social media for that matter– its use of infrastructure upon which conventional power relies as site of anarchic resistance proves the potentiality of informatic power rendering conventional power impotent. In this case, the iPad is mightier than the sword in the milieu of the Net. As nuclear détente created "aesthetics of uselessness" in the ridiculously high numbers of times the world's nuclear stockpiles could destroy the Earth, this potential reduction of the "atomic/atomic" to aesthetic nullity arises as the Infostate merely shuts down the control systems of the bunker. We see a nation of nuclear gophers, lifeless in their burrows. Power is reconfiguring in light of informational vs. conventional power, and this is why the rise of WikiLeaks, and social media as political lever for that matter, is significant, and why the geopolitical panic-site it creates is so powerful.

But what is significant in the rise of WikiLeaks, and the effect of social media in Tunisia, Egypt and elsewhere are its related effects. Assange is significant only in regards to specific situations, but he is not important in terms of overall the systemic effect of these events, as they are "symptoms" of the emergent system of power, as social media makes visible. Decentralized power renders hierarchical conventional power impotent, signaling the beginning of the 21st Century paradigm. 20th Century revolutionary thought in itself speaks to dead capital. In *The Coming Insurrection*, the French anarchist group, The Invisible Committee, posits a Communo-Anarchic insurgency to overthrow the conventional nation-state [Invisible Committee]. What would replace it is the creation of a cybernetic proto-industrial model of networked communes with high tech microproduction that would be established during and after a mass armed insurrection. The issue is that any anarchic model still relies on the superstructure to exist, as in

Egypt. The sustainable creation and maintenance of infrastructures, again relies on the symbiotic relation between the atomic infrastructures and the informatic.

But if we are to believe that the Committee actually suggests a substructural relation through anarchic enclaves and the networks, that tactical position is entirely sustainable. The Insurrection, as I see it, will be symbiotic; tactically acting upon conventional capital in a cybernetic loop of transparency of power. The revolutionaries will have an Android in one hand and a Molotov cocktail in the other. They are more likely to ride horseback across the digital Grid more likely than the savannah. They will also be equally ad hoc in organization, technology, and distribution, using whatever means necessary, tapping free Wi-Fi from Starbucks on courier bikes. Perhaps this is overly romantic, but given Do-it-Yourself culture, readily available digital equipment, and with all sorts of Open Culture, the symbiotic citizen of the Infostate can surf across the regions of the atomic world with its swarm of siblings.

So, the Insurrection will not be fought with guns, but with Androids and iPhones. WikiLeaks and social media have created a situation in which it, its concurrent effects, and the role of social media for that matter, are creating distinct and palpable effects upon the domain of conventional power. This is as obvious as the First World backlash elicited by WikiLeaks to the torrent of dissent offered by social media, flash mobs, and tweets, and the "awakening of imagination" they offer. This reifies Negri's assertion that capital in the postmodern has shifted to information/cognitive capital, and that conventional power merely marginalizes material (atomic) dissent. The real theatre of engagement is the infosphere, and WikiLeaks has realized info-insurgency as real power first world/digital society has become informatic. Anarchy in its most powerful form is now in the disruption and release of data withheld by the nation-state. Information, as it seems, and the people who circulate it, still want to be free.

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