

Five theses on sabotage in the shadow of fossil capital

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What will it mean, and what will it require, to trigger transition from fossil fuels to some other energy form – one incompatible with exploitation, and so with the social relations of capitalism? If ethics were the prime mechanism for such transition today, then oil would be done and dusted. Oil’s ascendancy in the twentieth century – on the back of coal-powered industrialisation in the nineteenth – cannot be properly understood, much less politicised, so long as fossil fuels remain sequestered conceptually and imaginatively from their primary function in the political economy of capital. Carbon – whether oil, natural gas or coal – serves as the glue that holds together the global economy: from the literal fuel of its inter-connective modes of mobility to the plastic materiality of the commodity form; from the fertilizers that multiply the extensive gains of industrial agriculture with the intensive gains of per-acre productivity to the electrical surge required for concentric waves of deindustrialisation across the globe.

Today, the production of virtually every commodity and service, from textiles to data storage, depends on resource-intensive mechanisation. What’s more, the dialectical relations modulating production and consumption cannot do without the *energy deepening* perpetuated by the fossil economy, such that petro-power names not just the fuel or substance driving this or that form of production or consumption but also, and more importantly, the governing logic and operative logistics that set the conditions of possibility for modern capitalism as such. Liberals and leftists alike have rather minimised the historical character of fossil fuels in recent efforts to transition beyond them. What we offer here are five theses that are

attentive to energy’s technical, logistical, material historicity. We aim to help inspire a politics alert to such historicity – an alertness crucial, we hold, to the work of refining political strategy in the coming years. In order to do so, we lay out perspectives with which both to devise a periodising frame and to cultivate a critical disposition that are together adequate and sensitive to the moving target of energy.

In connecting the question of energy transition’s trigger to the matter of sabotage, we draw inspiration from Evan Calder Williams’ provocative claim that ‘the history of sabotage is the history of capitalism unmaking itself.’¹ For Williams,

sabotage tends to suggest a form of inflection, one that sees the ground of its daily activity as a diachronic map and tremendous reserve of materials, aspects, and properties constantly contested and open to inversions. It suggests, in part, that we begin to treat that ground – the lived terrain of capitalism – as itself an enormous inhuman and self-drafting design project, both seemingly made for and by us, however viciously, and yet driven by principles and tendencies that can be assigned to no one, to no plan of action or authored project of accumulation.²

What follows is an attempt to draw out those forms of energetic inflection key to the diachronic map of capitalism’s lived terrain – a lived terrain saturated all the way through by fossil fuels, and so open for struggle by means of energy.

We begin with the premise that the reigning condition of productivity gains – achieved in industry by increasing energy input while decreasing human-labour input – minimises the political consequences of wage-based struggle, yet, simultaneously and para-

doxically, exposes capital to non-wage-based forms of struggle. In the following account, these latter forms of struggle, specific both to oil's infrastructure and to the periodicity of fossil fuels more generally, are not reducible to pipeline politics even if they very much include such politics. Collective bargaining at scale was once the mechanism of democratisation bound to the physical infrastructures of coal capital, vulnerable as they were to what Timothy Mitchell calls 'stop-pages or sabotage' directed at rail lines connecting mines to factories.³ Oil's fiscal and physical infrastructures work by design to minimise such vulnerability and thereby to obstruct democratisation, even as the unemployment fuelled by energy deepening and the scorched air fired by carbon emissions together conspire relentlessly to increase the global army of surplus populations. Immiseration comes twofold under fossil capital: from above and below, in the air and at the factory gates. In the modern carbon era, the passage from coal to oil as predominant or hegemonic fuel has caused the ground of fossil capital to shift from the industrial *concentration* powered by coal to the industrial *dispersion* powered by oil. The terrain of sabotage follows this shift. We find ourselves in a setting that requires a kind of collective bargaining on a massive economic and ecological scale, where battles over social reproduction (the air) will come to

determine the character of battles over production and wages. And in such a setting, the question with which we began – what will trigger transition away from fossil fuels? – cannot be answered except by reckoning how capital became dependent on energy both to dominate and to exploit. No amount of ethical delegitimation will divorce capital from energy. Collective forms of struggle will.

Neither some 'natural' market force nor the market force of nature served to trigger the passage into fossil capital. The trigger for that system, as we shall see, was instead fully historical and material: a deliberate endeavour to subsume the core elements of capital's value-form into the predictable, manageable and exploitable conditions of the urban factory that, in so doing, effectively transformed energy from mere input into the regulative substance of value. Framing the passage into the fossil system this way is different from saying that energy is the primary *source* of value. Labour-power remains the mechanism by which surplus value is made available to capital. But labour-power is not mere calories or time. Labour-power's historically specific character is regulated by physical energy surging in and around the factory. Periodising labour-power requires the periodisation of energy. Politicising fossil fuels requires an infrastructural politics of labour.



The postindustrialisation of all sectors and spaces of the economy expresses the persistent logic of capital's orientation towards energy, a logic that extends, unbroken, back to the first industrial revolution. The endeavour operative in triggering the onset of the fossil system – which we will here describe as capital's sabotage from above, the sabotage of the nascent conditions of a self-organising labour force – materialises today in the managerial malignancy of cloud computing, digital technology, automation, renewable energy and the great swell in the (post)industrial reserve army of labourers. Hence any genuinely meaningful transition today cannot trigger a change in energy form without simultaneously triggering wholesale social transformation – precisely because carbon energy and capital remain inextricable. Given such indivisibility, the triggering of transition will necessarily ripple across the economic, environmental and political landscape of the global economy, thereby providing a unique opportunity for the left to create a coherent and cohesive political imaginary. Understanding energy transition as a political trigger, in both the passive and active voice, helps redefine energy as a contest, an unstable and volatile contradiction, between today's stack of fossil capitals and a practice of sabotage from below, ever convergent on the means of economic and social reproduction: the under- or unemployed labour force choking on black carbon, asphyxiating on the climate of history, growing into the simmer and swell of collective forms of politics that we will here explore as a disposition with its own energy, a different kind of trigger.

Thesis 1: The history of fossil capital is the history of capital's sabotage of labour through fossil fuelled subsumption

'In the beginning, there was sabotage', observes Antonio Negri in his theorisation of the strike.⁴ Sabotage, for Negri, constitutes the strike in germinal form – or indeed as energetic: the spark that starts the strike-fire. Much the same might be said, however, about the rise of what Andreas Malm calls fossil capital, a rise keyed to the sabotaging power entailed by a wholesale shift in energy form. Such at least is the schema

advanced by Malm in his recent study of fossil capital: the move to coal in capitalist manufacture occurred decisively in Britain's cotton industry in the 1820s and 1830s despite the fact that, at that moment, water remained a considerably more potent (and cheaper) source of power to drive industrial machines.⁵ What might seem puzzling about this switch from water to coal only remains so as long as energy is viewed as a neutral input, as overhead or as mere force of production. Switching from water to coal allowed factory owners to liberate production from water's spatio-temporal constraints by moving manufacture into dense urban settings where workers were numerous and cheap while intensifying the (newly-legalised) ten-hour workday. In order to break free of 'natural' limits, capital needed to reinvent the conditions of labour. By way of such resituated exploitation of more labour at higher levels of intensity, fossil fuels effectively triggered the industrialisation of both machine power and labour power, enabling cotton capitalists to solve the falling rate of profit and to circumvent – or indeed sabotage – the nascent power of organised labour by turning to the unemployed and so driving production costs down. Not the sabot in the gears, but instead the coal lump in the social machine.

This take on steam power will underscore yet also reframe Elizabeth Gurley Flynn's seminal insight (from the Wobblie tradition) that '[t]here are many forms of interfering with efficiency, interfering with quality and the quantity of production: from varying motives – there is the employer's sabotage as well as the worker's sabotage.'⁶ The historical transition from water to steam constitutes sabotage of labour by cotton capitalists not simply through a temporary interference within the existing system of production but instead through a wholesale reconfiguration and recomposition of that system itself via the efficiency, quality and quantity achieved through an intensification of manufacture's logic and processes. 'The employer's sabotage', that is to say, comes from above and involves subsumption through energy transition. Coal power in this first stage provides capitalists with a potent means of concentrating both workers and machines in physical space, and so with a new genre of social relation that would come to define the industrial era: the proletariat and its other.

Thesis 2: Sabotage by fossil capital is serial sabotage

In an essay periodising energy and capital, Malm draws on Ernest Mandel's wave theory to emplot the recurrent, accumulative significance of energy shifts across capitalism's turbulent history.⁷ According to Malm's account, the historical specificity of each wave – or what we would call each era of upswing and downswing in the rate of profit – issues from an increasing quantity and complexity of fixed capital generated by new modes of energy. Each era in capitalist history deploys new energy sources at the expense of labour forms from the prior era, compounding and intensifying capital's depredations through what amounts to a recursive or indeed serial sabotage of proletarian counter-powers. Crucial here are what Mandel calls motive machines, translated by Malm as prime movers: those energy technologies – coal in the 1830s, oil and electricity in the 1890s, or diesel, omnipresent since the 1940s – that, singular in their capacity to permeate every facet of the mode of production in a given era, offer capital the most effective means possible for recomposing labour processes in the service of increased profits. Thus, the energy form at any one moment is not merely an input incidental to the mode of production. It rather sets and materialises the shifting asymmetries in power requisite to capital's continuing domination of labour.

The serially sabotaging force entailed in capital's periodic shift in energy is potent – and therefore extremely challenging to counter – not least because of its durative sedimentation. Energy deepening in the form of fossil capital gives the system of capitalist production historical durability, composing a recursive loop that mires labour within energy-powered capital accumulation across successive waves of growth. The intensifying logistics of path dependency in petroinfrastructures constitute one manifestation of such durability; as Malm suggests, the very concentration of carbon in the atmosphere might well indicate another.⁸ The point is that fossil fuels not only power the furnaces of capitalist production but also, by expanding in scale and concentrating in force from one era to the next, fire the serial surge of capital's en-

ergic force across all machines, buildings, infrastructures and relations in the industrial and postindustrial paradigms. Fossil capital thus deploys its serial sabotage from above in the service of an enduring petrification.

Implicit in our condensed account of the modern history of energy transition under theses 1 and 2 is a concept of labour as value's source yet also its impediment. We might speculate that one aim of capitalist sabotage is precisely to fracture this dialectic so as to maximise value *from* labour while simultaneously preventing value's impediton *by* workers. As disposition, the sabotage of capitalist sabotage will look by contrast to sustain and intensify the volatility in such contradiction in order to prime the movement of some larger abolition to come.

Thesis 3: Sabotage from below targets energetic dispositions

Capital's energetic disposition is a feature of its composition of human and non-human sources of energy – labour power on the one hand and the forces of production on the other. Without managing labouring bodies necessary for the production of value with the enormous density of ever greater quantities and qualities of energy, capital would lose its capacity to maintain profits. Different energy sources come with different dispositions – different material tendencies, imperatives and capacities. When Timothy Mitchell associates the age of coal with the birth of mass labour politics, he does so because coal-powered steam production was both enormously productive and relatively easy to disrupt. If coal bends the worker closer to the furnace of production, however, oil in Mitchell's account repels her away. Oil's energetic capacity, material plasticity and economic elasticity are all compounds of its infrastructural evasiveness. It is everywhere and thus nowhere. A pipeline may burst but the pipeline network – and with it the pipeline imaginary – remains. Coal was the fuel of industrial concentration; oil is the fuel of industrial dispersion.

The passage from coal to oil (one affording an intensification of industry worldwide) contained from the outset the seeds of 'de-industrialisation' to come. Such recognition necessitates an alternate period-

isation: one in which the signal shift occurs not simply in the passage from industry to post-industry but in the decoupling of industry from the motive force of human labour (and its potential withholding), first through the efficiencies and speed-ups of Taylorisation, then through the denationalisation and outsourcing of industrial production, and now through robotics and AI (all material manifestations of a much more ragged and lurching process of ‘post-industrialisation’). It is in light of this reframed periodisation that sabotage of oil as the fuel of industrial dispersion must critique and attack an energetic disposition specific to postindustrial capital.

Sabotage from below is the material practice of counter-disposition. Dispositions, like counter-dispositions, extend beyond platforms and platitudes. Instead, they eventuate, and they seethe. Thus, resonant with moods and (revolutionary) counter-moods, as these have been theorised by Jonathan Flatley,⁹ dispositions and counter-dispositions channel struggle as *poiesis* – as contest over world-making. It seems appropriate then to glean the shape and feel of counter-disposition from poetics.¹⁰ Ida Börjel’s recent poetry manifesto, *Miximum Ca’Canny The Sabotage Manuals*, affords a vivid means of such gleaning. Börjel’s manual offers an orientation towards the objects of production that intuits their interconnected temporalities. In this short poem, the practice of disrupting the energetic flow of capital is made consistent across formally distinct scenes of work, so that a worker’s insertion of an error or flaw begins to gum up the circulation of capitals across sectors like a great greasy grime:

metal dust or fillings fine sand
shattered glass materials for polishing
hard gravely substances
stick in the tip of a pen and bend
a small amount of corrosive acid lacquer
linseed oil regular spit
knotted balls of human hair
threads dead insects
a fistful of hard grains such as rice or wheat
sawdust or hair
rubber crumbs from old rubber bands
or erasers
and if you can get a hold of sugar pour it into

the fuel tank
honey and molasses work just as well
when the machine is paused you can make a
small hole in the fuel line
cover it with wax
a small cut in the wire insulation
loosen or remove rings and screw nuts
press in some grease spill dust and dirt
make a small hole in the tank
[...]
as the engine starts up the wax will
melt as it burns with the gas
a sticky goo forms and spreads
as it swells the steam is blocked
the air bubbles the circulation it
will need disassembling and
repair soft scraped finishes
engines will gradually swell and
choke break burn¹¹

Sabotage plans its own multiplier effect down the line, to ‘gradually swell and / choke break burn.’ In a strike, the worker withholds her labour in order to resume work a little later. Sabotage takes the technical composition of her exploitation as the field of politics and pushes the disposition of her exploited energy to the point of contradiction. The many materials that make up her condition are turned into deliberate impediments to the energetic consistency of capital. The contradiction turns the operative, the activity, the disposition, into the inoperative, the problem, the counter-disposition. The counter-disposition is the energetic glitch or break out of which abolition is made possible and then durable. Sabotage is its means.

Thesis 4: Sabotage after the onset of oil is a form of critique that takes capital’s ‘hidden factory’ as its object

In a report to the *Harvard Business Review* in 1985 on what they craftily termed ‘the hidden factory’, Jeffrey Miller and Thomas Vollman argued that ‘the indirect work embodied in logistical, balancing, quality and change transactions now account for the lion’s share of value added in most production-based industries.’¹² Putting a name to an economic narrative that had been unfolding since the 1970s, Miller and Voll-

man thus parsed the increasingly specialised, automated and globalised production chain that helped accelerate the drop in remunerated labour time, or variable capital, relative to the fixed part of capital, or its machinic assets. This is no secret in the world of business, nor in the world of Marxism: the rate of profit, or competitiveness, depends upon it. By 1975, variable capital made up (on the authors' account) twenty percent of 'value added' compared to the eighty percent added in 'the hidden factory'.¹³ But Miller and Vollman, both professors of Operations Management in Boston, broke with conventional wisdom when they further claimed that value added came not just or even primarily from the hardware of production, such as factory equipment, but more decisively from the logistical chain that wraps the globe in an economic embrace. Especially in industries increasingly dependent on electronic forms of production – which by our millennium would be every single one – the 'hidden factory' involves everything from data management and processing to certification, standardisation, shipping, accounting and engineering designs. The challenge for those generating curriculum at leading US management schools was clear: it is relatively easy to configure the components of a factory, the contents of which are yours to manage; it is much more difficult to manage a hidden factory, the contents of which are neither yours to manage nor in your field of vision. The opportunity, however, was equally clear: if the 'lion's share of value' was now produced in the hidden factory, all the better for US firms looking to offshore production. Minimising the value of labour in the brick and mortar factory meant freeing up more dynamic resources spread out and shared across the hidden factory of servers, undersea cables, power lines, algorithms and Chinese labour.

Automation in the 1980s was thus understood by leading management schools as a way not simply to cut labour costs (though it was and is always about that too), but also to capture the value contained in the larger logistical infrastructure of a globally integrated economy. The factory, once understood as the sacred site of profitability, now became a mere terminal or portal into the hidden factory, an instance or multiple of a serial. The difference, in other words, is between what Keller Easterling terms object form

– here, the factory: its architecture, hardware and spatial composition – and what she terms *active form*, or the infrastructural code that drives the disposition of development, financial exchange, standardisation, and so on.¹⁴ If the field of value concerns the calculus of the saboteur, then capital's passage from object form to active form reconstitutes the range of multiplication confronted by sabotage.

Thesis 5: Sabotage as counter-disposition is hermeneutic and aesthetic: a new way of knowing and seeing

Late fossil capital presupposes increased productivity in one sphere and relative surplus population in the other. The latter ensures that wage-based forms of struggle elsewhere effectively maintain, rather than minimise, its condition *as surplus*. If oil provides capital's postindustrial disposition, then it does so through the many dispersions – atmospheric, social and geographical – that keep the employed, unemployed and under-employed separate. Without a cognitive map of what keeps the figure of the worker contemporaneous with the non-worker, and both historically bound to the character of fossil capital, there is little reason to imagine the coming transition as anything other than more sabotage from above. How do we light up the cartography of the present so that struggles over the wage are made resonant with pipeline politics, bread riots, reproductive labour and the crushing weight of superfluity? Sabotage from below is a means toward making visible the interconnectivity of otherwise heterogeneous spheres of capital, conditions of labour and experiences of precarity. Late fossil capital thus occasions a form of praxis that involves everyone from community groups committed to sustainability to indigenous groups protecting land from extractive industries, from longshoreman blocking the port to midnight saboteurs slowing the flow of a pipeline. A multiplier is a reverberation that intensifies as it travels across social, economic and ecological landscapes: a bug, like a design code, that calibrates disparate scenes to a unifying purpose. Since sabotage is about the creation of a counter-disposition contingent on the rupture of cap-

ital dominion, its political modality requires not the masculine imposition of a counter-will but a series of unexpected openings through which we can find one another. Multipliers imply a gathering of labour (both paid and unpaid) across the now jammed circuit of capital (workers in Oakland; longshoremen in Beijing; farmers in Ethiopia). In other words, sabotage from below implies a negation of flow and a capacity to collectivise.

Unlike object form, active form proves hard to see. Infrastructural code eludes the experience of volume or spatial extension that attends factory architecture, hardware, space. Sabotage as a counter-disposition to capital's energetic disposition therefore hinges on recalcitrant, oppositional capacities of visualisation and perception. Sabotage from below, that is to say, works to apprehend so as to render and capture the active forms of capital. Thus understood, sabotage is not merely tactical – and its value as tactic by comparison to other tactics such as negotiation or reform is beside the point we are aiming to make. What's more, the import of any act conventionally emblematic of sabotage – jamming the gears, adulterating the dye, breaching the pipeline, hacking the server – remains incidental to the task we pursue here: to isolate, theorise and generalise the critique of capital's energetic disposition (and so energy's capitalistic disposition) in the transition from different energy systems as a way to historicise the impasse of fossil fuels and to demystify the active forms of capital and their ostensible immunity to labour-based struggle. The endeavour to unnerve by mapping capital's energetic disposition amounts to a form of collective struggle *not* reducible to wages. Framed in these terms sabotage from below provides an immanent critique of capital's energetic disposition – arguably the only one in the history of revolutionary praxis that has consistently positioned energy and capital as mutually embedded forces. There has been a theory of capital's imbrication with energy all along, except it has gone under the radar of a labour movement dominated, in the twentieth century, by wage-based struggle. The theoretical mediation of energy and capital animates the standpoint imagined and germinated by sabotage, a mediation (we are suggesting) henceforth indispensable to both environmentalist and labour-based forms

of collective politics.

It is in this sense that sabotage from below constitutes a hermeneutic and an aesthetic, rather than an ethical, moral or even strategic question. It provides a way of looking at fossil capital in 3D. By way of such reframed perspective, sabotage can help to trigger a new kind of energy transition – one powered not by the search for profits or a novel technique for exploiting labour but by revolutionary and collective forms of politics.



Coda: Counter-disposition's Climate

Let us return to the image of a hidden factory of infrastructures named in the management theory of value added services. Implied in the electronic theory of value put forward in *Harvard Business Review* and many other business journals in the 1980s and 90s are two consequences for labour politics accidentally named in the category of 'indirect labour'. From the perspective of the manager, the hidden factory is an aggregation of offshored labour coordinated by legal and electronic protocols and procedures – the software and hardware of the global economy – all of which (and this is why the hidden factory contributes the lion's share of value by 1985) is an enormous heap of dead labour hardened into everything from processors to shipping containers. It's not that there's no labour in the hidden factory; rather, it's labour all the way down. And yet the other consequence for locating the source of value outside the visible or object form of the factory – the move to the verb tense of capital definitive of the postindustrial economy – is that the prime mover of logistical infrastructure turns

into an on / off switch, a chokepoint or a trigger, for the entire field of value. In the age of oil, according to Vaclav Smil, the on / off switch is diesel: 'The massive (mostly two-stroke) diesel engines', he argues, 'that power every kind of ocean-going cargo vessels and the gas turbines that propel jet airplanes are fundamentally (that is, in energetic, physical sense) more important to the global economy than are any particular corporate modalities or international trade agreements.'¹⁵ Just-in-time production, global logistics chains and nanosecond financial exchange made possible by the electrification and computerisation of production, in other words, depend upon the uninterrupted supply of diesel, the two stroke and turbine engine, in addition to the circuitry of the hidden factory. These two sides to the active form of post-industrial capital constitute the means of its sabotage from above, its progressive dialectic. But they are also and simultaneously the two sides to the practice of sabotage after oil, motivated by a dialectical critique of its own impasse.

On the circulation side, then, dirty diesel, and on the production side, the stack of automated capitals weighing on the wages of workers all over the world. In May of this year, Foxconn replaced 60,000 of its workers with automated machines.¹⁶ With the company already notorious for building suicide proof facilities during the uptick in smartphone production in the early part of this decade, Foxconn's shedding of labour came as no real surprise in an economic forecast that predicts 35% redundancy in the Chinese labour market in twenty years. The 'robot revolution' that Chinese capitalists are currently spearheading is not the first of its kind when viewed as a form of sabotage from above in the long view of fossil capital.¹⁷

But what happens to the open secret of the hidden factory when Chinese labour is turned into a redundancy? Riots begin to take the place of strikes. Since the early 2000s Chinese workers rendered redundant, harassed by police and stifled under the weight of haze, have turned to 'mass incidents' at a rate higher than anywhere else in the world.¹⁸ The radical collective *Chuang* noted the shift in collective norm: 'Despite the fact that both are increasing, 2009 saw almost eight times as many riots as strikes.'¹⁹ Sparked by rising costs of labour, fuel and food, and by the

pressure exerted by waves of automation on families already displaced from earlier phases of development, this proliferation of riots suggests that the so-called factory of the world is reaching a point of contradiction without a geographical fix on the horizon.

Moving manufacturing from the industrial core in the 1960s and 70s was made possible by the absolute surplus value available in Southeast Asia. Workers in the earlier context of US deindustrialisation understood all too well what distinguished the coming replacement of workers with machines from earlier waves of industrialisation. In Detroit, revolutionary black organiser James Boggs names what's new as early as 1963:

Automation replaces men. This of course is nothing new. What is new is that now, unlike most earlier periods, the displaced men have nowhere to go. The farmers displaced by mechanisation of the farms in the 20s could go to the cities and man the assembly lines. As for the work animals like the mule, they could just stop growing them. But automation displaces people, and you don't just stop growing people even when they have been made expendable by the system.²⁰

The spectre of a new wave capital deepening – the deliberate decision by firms to increase capital investment in the fixed part of production (the machines, wires, pistons) and to decrease the variable part (its workers) – conjures as well the spectre of surplus populations, the pivotal breach in the labour-capital relation whence anything like wage-based struggles would need its other: the struggle to lower the cost of social reproduction in America's inner cities; or as Joshua Clover argues, the struggle to collectively control prices of key commodities that defines the era of the riot in which we find ourselves. Boggs' theorisation of capital's new wave marks the dawn for Clover of 'riot's significance as a form of collective action'.²¹ For our purposes here, capital's lateral pivot away from labour towards the electric, the machinic, the post-industrial, is also – and, politically, perhaps just as importantly – a horizontal dive deeper into the historical contradictions of fossil-fuelled growth. Since 1963, world energy consumption has risen from 250 exajoules per year to over 600, the lion's share of which comes from oil, coal and natural gas.²²



For *Chuang*, there are two distinguishing features to the current waves of automation sweeping across Chinese factories. First, ‘engineering knowledge and basic technical acumen is widespread, supply chains are tightly-knit and redundant within industrial agglomerations, and the blockage of a single factory complex’s output can prevent significant portions of global production from going to market.’²³ This prospect means that while wage-based struggles are becoming harder to conduct, the multiplier effect of blockage impacts the entire hidden factory. Second, ‘the “global factory” constituted by logistics infrastructure is itself built largely in China, where 82% of the world supply of shipping containers are manufactured.’²⁴ Thus even as the supply chain remains most sensitive to multipliers in China, the very mechanisms that constitute the hidden factory are concentrated in the same spaces currently shedding labour from the production process. Unhesitatingly, *Chuang* understands this proximity as unique in the global economy, since ‘some proletarians ... are closer to the levers of global production than others.’²⁵ Our point is that the levers of global production hinge on the enabling capacity of fossil fuels. What would it mean to mount a sabotage of fossil capital, its diesel lines and

financial instruments, in solidarity with rising surplus populations gathering at the gates of the world factory? What changes in the contemporary climate might the counter-dispositions of sabotage serve and work to render?

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Notes

1. Evan Calder Williams, ‘Manual Override’, *The New Inquiry*, 21 March 2016, <https://thenewinquiry.com/manual-override/>.
2. Ibid.
3. Timothy Mitchell, *Carbon Democracy* (London: Verso, 2011), 144.
4. Antonio Negri, ‘Strike’, trans. Evan Calder Williams, in *Energy Cultures*, eds. Imre Szeman and Jeff Diamanti (Morgantown, WV: West Virginia UP, forthcoming).
5. Andreas Malm, *Fossil Capital: The Rise of Steam Power and the Roots of Global Warming* (London and New York: Verso, 2016).
6. Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, ‘Its Necessity in the Class War’, in *Sabotage*, Industrial Workers of the World, accessed 15 November 2017, <https://www.iww.org/gu/culture/library/sabotage/sabotage1.shtml>.
7. Andreas Malm, ‘Long Waves of Fossil Development: Periodising Energy and Capital’, *Materialism and the Critique of Energy*, eds. Brent Bellamy and Jeff Diamanti (Chicago: MCM, 2017).
8. ‘For every year global warming continues and temperatures soar higher, living conditions on earth will be determined more intensely by the emissions of yore, so that the grip of yesteryear on today intensifies – or, put differently, *the causal power of the past inexorably rises*, all the way up to the point where it is indeed “too late”. The significance of that terrible destiny, so often warned of in climate change discourse, is the final *falling in of history on the present*.’ Andreas Malm, *Fossil Capital*, 9.
9. Jonathan Flatley, ‘How A Revolutionary Counter-Mood Is Made’, *New Literary History* 43:3 (Summer 2012), 503–25; and ‘Refreshments of Revolutionary Mood’, in *Literary/Liberal Entanglements: Toward a Literary History for the Twenty-First Century*, eds. Corrinne Harol and Mark Simpson (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017), 103–47.
10. More profoundly, Franco Berardi recently suggests that the second coming of communism will arrive on a wave of new poetry, since that’s virtually all we have left, and because communism is a ‘rhythm’ that breaks capital’s consist-

ency. The claim comes from the canon of philosophy, from Wittgenstein's limits of language: 'Rhythm is the singularisation of time. Rhythm is scanning time in attunement with cosmic breathing. Rhythm is the vibration that aims to harmonise the singularity of breathing and the surrounding chaos. *Poetry is the error that leads to new continents of meaning*' (emphasis added). Franco 'Bifo' Berardi, 'The Second Coming', *e-flux* 83, June 2017, <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/83/142355/the-second-coming/>.

11. Ida Börjel, *Miximum Ca'Canny The Sabotage Manuals: You Cutta da Pay, We Cutta da Shob*, trans. Jennifer Hayashida (Oakland: Commune Editions, 2014), 11, 13.

12. Jeffery Miller and Thomas Vollman, 'The Hidden Factory', *Harvard Business Review* 63:5 (September/October 1985), 142.

13. Ibid., 143.

14. Keller Easterling, *Extrastatecraft: The Power of Infrastructure Space* (London and New York: Verso, 2014), 14.

15. Vaclav Smil, *The Prime Movers of Globalisation: The History and Impact of Diesel Engines and Gas Turbines* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2010), 18.

16. Jane Wakefield, 'Foxconn replaces "60,000 factory workers with robots"', BBC News, 25 May 2016, ac-

cessed 15 November 2017, <http://www.bbc.com/news/technology-36376966>.

17. Ben Bland, 'China's Robot Revolution', *Financial Times*, 6 June 2016, accessed 15 November 2017, <https://www.ft.com/content/1dbd8c60-0cc6-11e6-ad80-67655613c2d6>.

18. Chuang, 'No Way Forward, No Way Back: China in the Era of Riots', *Chuang* 1 (2016), <http://chuangcn.org/journal/one/no-way-forward-no-way-back/>.

19. Ibid.

20. James Boggs, 'The Challenge of Automation', in *The American Revolution: Pages from a Negro Worker's Notebook, History is a Weapon*, accessed 15 November 2017, <http://www.historyisaweapon.com/defcon1/amreboggs.html>.

21. Joshua Clover, *Riot. Strike. Riot* (London and New York: Verso, 2016), 119.

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