On January 14, 1994, the day that NAFTA was implemented, in Chiapas, Mexico—an impoverished state in the Mexican southeast—the Zapatista Army for National Liberation (EZLN) rose up in arms against the Mexican government. The armed rebellion lasted twelve days, but, in a gesture that asks us to rethink the significance and representation of violence and rebellion, the Zapatistas renounced the traditional revolutionary call to seize state power and willingly withdrew from the towns they had occupied, moving back into the mountains and jungle of Chiapas. From this peripheral location, from the borderlands of global capital, the Zapatistas started writing as a means of creating political community and creating new literacy and organizing pockets of resistance against a conjunction of social, cultural and political forces that impoverish and erase them.

Reading Zapatista writing suggests questions about affectivity: how we encounter writing and interact with it and how it impacts us—or, as Jennifer Edbauer has explained, how it strikes us. The concept of affect, or affectivity, can help us understand how Zapatista writing creates meaning, how it impacts us, and what literate possibilities it suggests. Affect has been taken up by scholars in JAC and elsewhere who want to investigate productive capacities of writing to create new literacies. For example, in “Whoa—Theory and Bad Writing,” Christa Albrect-Crane conceptualizes affect as a capacity and power for meaning, the “in-between, the surplus of social matter that has not been localized on a social grid” (861). Creating an encounter between surplus of social matter, it is hoped, can create different dispositions, responses. An expanded theory and language of affect can change dispositions, expand-
ing ethical possibilities as it, as Dan Smith argues, "attempts to produce new modes of sociality and collective existence by trying to tap into, create, and alter affective dispositions that will foster new modes of experience, thought, desire, action, and social connectivity" (540; Crane 860–61).

Read with the Zapatistas, an indigenous group in struggle against neoliberalism who use writing to effect new literacies, Smith's desire for new modes of sociality and collective experience suggests questions about how and where we encounter sensations, desires, identities, or subjects who are culturally unfamiliar, untranslatable, or other. What happens when we encounter writing from borderlands, from the margins, that might strike us as not immediately translateable or capable of being brought into an affective literacy? What happens when, reading from the other side of global capital, we encounter the communiqués of the Zapatistas that claim solidarity with squint-eyed, queer, anarchist, bad borderland subjects who are "untolerated, oppressed, resisting, exploding, saying "Enough" (Marcos, Shadows 214). As Marcos has famously declared,

Majority-which-disguises-itself-as-untolerated-minority P.S.: About this whole thing about whether Marocs is homosexual: Marcos is gay in San Francisco, black in South Africa, Asian in Europe, Chicano in San Isdro, Anarchist in Spain, Palestinian in Israel, Indigenous in the streets of San Cristobal, bad boy in Neza, rocker in CU, Jew in Germany, ombudsman in the SEDENA, feminist in political parties, Communist in the post-Cold War era, prisoner in Cintalapa, pacifist in Bosnia, Mapuche in the Andes, teacher in the CNTE, artist without a gallery or portfolio, housewife on any given Saturday night in any neighborhood of any city of any Mexico, guerrillero in Mexico at the end of the twentieth century, striker in the CTM, reporter assigned to filler stories for the back pages, sexist in the feminist movement, woman alone in the metro at 10 p.m., retired person in plan ton in the Zocalo, campesino without land, fringe editor, unemployed worker, doctor without a practice, rebellious student, dissident in neoliberalism, writer without books or readers, and, to be sure, Zapatista in the Mexican Southeast. In sum, Marcos is a human being, any human being, in this world. Marcos is all minorities who are untolerated, oppressed, resisting, exploding, saying "Enough." (Shadows 214)
By borderlands, or borderland writing, I draw upon the work of Gloria Anzaldúa. The border between Mexico and the U.S. is the most obvious example as a space in which bodies are policed, regulated, and monitored. Borderlands are spaces of capital set up to divide and distinguish between those who are included, or not included, into dominant cultural narratives of capital. Created by these literal borders are spaces, identities, desire, sensations, consciousness, disruptions, and energy that are formed through encounters with others. Borderlands are the site of subjects who don’t, or refuse like the Zapatistas do, to fit into “internal colonization,” the colonization of affective capacities. Borders are spaces of affect, where desires, energies, identities, and subjects live in the ambiguous and unsafe spaces of the periphery; yet this affect remains unactualized, uncaptured, and inseparable. As Anzaldúa writes,

Borders are set up to define the places that are safe and unsafe, to distinguish us from them. A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A border land is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary. It is in a constant state of transition. The prohibited and forbidden are its inhabitants. Los atravesados live here: the squint-eyed, the perverse, the queer, the troublesome, the mongrel, the mulatto, the half-breed, the half dead: in short, those who cross over, pass over, or go through the confines of the normal. (3)

What happens affectively when readers from first world spaces and identities come in contact with borderland writing? Zapatista writing wants readers to be impacted, to be struck, to feel, and to have the sensation of difference that something cannot quite get across. By hearing and feeling queer voices saying, “Enough,” it wants to effect new literate practices, new writing, and to suggest that other worlds are possible. As it speaks about the failure of representative democracy in Mexico, the economic and social conditions of workers who cross borders to labor in unregulated factories (maquiladoras) or in the homes of wealthy Americans, and the oppression of indigenous peoples in Mexico that has its legacies in colonialism and that continue in capitalism’s newest phase, neoliberalism through a language that is sometimes playful, sometimes deadly serious, and sometimes explicit, sometimes implicit, Zapatista writing desires new capacities, new literacies, and new writing. 3
Politics of Translation

To explore these questions and to undertake this project of supplementing and expanding the concept of affect, this essay creates an encounter between writing that is produced by an indigenous group in struggle with global capital and writing of academics/cultural workers who are located in the Western academy. This encounter requires an explanation, not just a footnote. As Randi Kristensen argues, the move to create an encounter between rhetorics that are emerging from different locations of global capital could suggest a move to subsume the rhetoric of an indigenous social group into the rhetoric of academia. That move, as Kristensen aptly points out in her critique of cultural studies, subsumes the radical critique of race into an academic discourse and fails to acknowledge the traditions of critique that have emerged from locations, individuals, and groups who are not included in this discourse.

The traditional organization of knowledge production tends to position the writing of, say, Jacques Derrida, Karl Marx, and Gayatri Spivak and the Zapatistas in different rhetorical traditions—that is, academic, institutional, First World, and the center of global capital, or, social movements, Third World, and the margins of capital. We can productively read these rhetors as engaged in a common (although different in their form and mode of discourse) political and rhetorical project. Both the academic and political-communities-in-struggle rhetorics are sophisticated, in Susan Jarratt's understanding, in so far as they are working to determine the available means of effective intervention. They write as action and act (in a Derridan sense), as writing in a particular time and in a particular space, and as part of a particular historical phase of capital or crisis of that phase. Their writing is embedded in a particular cultural moment of capital.

As I point to writing that might be read as belonging to a common political project, it is also important to recognize that my reading runs the risk of translating Zapatista rhetoric, and Zapatista subjects, into academic language. And so at this moment, before I move into a reading of Zapatista writing, I foreground the problem of translation.

In my writing in English, the language of the majority and of the institution of American English can be done, without reflection, as the
“law of the strongest” (Spivak, “Politics” 182). I write in English, am employed in an American university, and institutional power might call me to bring others’ writing into academic discourse. In the context of institutional, corporate, and imperial power, how can Zapatista writing “call” me into rhetoriticity? Note that I am writing, and you are reading, an English translation of a Spanish text by a Spanish-speaking Latino (Marcos), an interlocutor for Nahuatl and Mayan indigenous speakers. This discussion, as Dan Moshenberg has suggested, is not about “accuracy” or “representation” but rather about asking “what are the layers of representation and translation that write and read the Zapatistas into political alliance with academic writers and academic discourse?” (Moshenberg). What are the ethics of encounter between writing that carry the traces of indigenous subjects and border identities? What are the pitfalls of this rewriting and what are its possibilities? How can a “productive crisis of representation” complicate this encounter, suggest protocols for reading, and suggest, perhaps, another world that is always to come? How can we see this crisis of representation productively, in other words, and what possibilities does it suggest rather than foreclose?

The problem with representation that I foreground and explore in the following section I read through Marxist theory of value, which emphasizes the circulation of commodities (borderland writing) in the political economy of capitalism (academic writing). This emphasis on reading how texts can be read through value is Spivak’s contribution in “Can the Subaltern Speak?” where she argues that in Western philosophy the rhetorical question is how to represent the subaltern, how to create a space in which subaltern peoples can articulate their cultural, social, political, and economic status. In other words, Western metaphysics is concerned with how knowledge of and about subaltern peoples can be described and accessed according to the criteria of representation as they are determined in a system of value.

In her reading of Foucault and Deleuze, Spivak argues that academic discourse “runs together” two senses of representation as it expresses political representation (Darstellung) and re-presentation (Vertretung) as an art or a philosophy. The former is when one person represents or stands in for a group politically; the latter is when someone imagines a subject or a constituency. That subject is the object of a representation.
The contrast between these two meanings of *representation*, the difference that Spivak makes between a proxy and a portrait, is a difference between standing in for a constituency or imagining that constituency. The slippage between these two terms, imagining a constituency that you are standing in for, allows Western academics to represent and re-present the subaltern, ignoring “their own implication in intellectual and economic history” (*Critique* 249). When the difference between representation (political representation) and re-presentation (imagined representation) is obfuscated, it is assumed that imagined constituencies are based on literal referents who can use and describe themselves in language. Writing about Foucault and Deleuze, Spivak says, “neither...seems aware that the intellectual within globalizing capital, brandishing concrete experience, can help consolidate the international division of labor by making one model of ‘concrete experience’ the model” (255–56).

Spivak’s work suggests that academic writing desires a politics of resistance (revolution, even) across histories, across languages, across ethnic groups, across gender, across labor, across nation-state borders, and so on. This desire can re-appropriate difference by assuming that one language, or the subjects who speak, can be brought fully into another. The risk here, as Kelly Cooper and Annie Lipsitz’s work suggests, is that Zapatista writing can be made to be translatable into a common political strategy and vision that subsumes cultural, rhetorical, and critical specificity, history, and status of the Zapatistas into and through academic discourse. When we represent words and subjects, as John Beverly argues, without attending to the process of translation we risk saying that the subaltern can of course speak, but only through us, through us, though our institutionally sanctioned authority and pretend objectively as intellectuals, which gives us the power to decide what counts in the narrator’s raw material. . . . In allowing or enabling the subaltern to speak lies the trace of the colonial construction of an other—an other who is conveniently made available to speak to us (with whom we can speak or feel comfortable speaking with). (69–70)
The other is conveniently made available to speak and create a political and rhetorical alliance with and to supplement our own political desires and political analysis.

Yet, as Spivak suggests, "Language is not everything" ("Politics" 180). By this I take Spivak to mean that writing carries traces of the subject, and these traces are not, as she points out, "not under our control" (180). This lack of control, the capacity of language for dissemination—our capacity to be altered, moved, struck, or impacted by sensations, excessive meaning, or desires that writing suggests—as well as the failure of capital to completely corral use-value, can be hospitable to others and other sensations from the borderlands. As we read, we can choose to enter into the language of others. We can feel moments where our language and our selves are broken down. We can hear moments in which the concepts and identities in which we ground ourselves are put into question because they are not grounded. As Spivak argues, "by juggling the disruptive rhetoriticity that breaks the surface in not necessarily connected ways, we feel the selvedges of the language-textile give way, fray into frayages or facilitations" (180; emphasis added). These moments are excessive of signification: they cannot be brought into language.

For Spivak, these non-representable moments, the feelings of the fraying of the self, are acts of love directed toward others. These moments are the ethical possibility of rhetoriticity. The imaginative act of moving outside of ourselves is about reading, about looking for "silence between and around words," the space where the words, tropes, or concepts where language and ideology come together. Spivak’s move is to disrupt this suturing, disrupt the connections made or inherited between a word and the world, opening up language, and language users, to different capacities for meaning, feeling, and knowing.

The feeling of fraying of the self that Spivak identifies as the site of ethics, the imaginative act of moving outside of ourselves, are moments of affectivity, a movement and a capacity for contact with others. An affective encounter with border writing can suggest a radical openness, expansiveness, and capacity. In *Death of a Discipline*, Spivak calls a move to encounter the other teleopoiesis: the imaginative act of moving outside of ourselves, without guarantees, that does not assume immediate
contact, feeling, shared sensation, or translatability (31, 110). This imaginative gesture is one that Spivak uses to direct her work toward activist networks of affiliation and communities outside the academy, and outside dominant rhetorics of political action, the movement, and the feeling, of "learning to learn from below" (36).

Rhetoric of Laughter

In a Zapatista communiqué entitled "The Story of the Tiny Mouse and the Tiny Cat," written in August of 1995, just after the armed uprising, and my reading of rhetoric as action, Subcomandante Marcos writes:

DON DURITO OF THE LACANDON, knight-errant, the undoer of wrongs, the ladies’ restless dream, the young men’s aspiration, the last and grandest of that exemplary race that made humanity great with such colossal and selfless feats, the beetle and warrior of the moon, writes to you.

I have commanded my loyal squire, the one you call "Sup Marcos," to send you a greeting in writing with all the requirements fit for today’s diplomacy, excluding the rapid-intervention forces, the economic programs and the flight of capital. Nevertheless, I want to write you some lines with the sole intent the spirit, to fill your minds with good and noble thoughts. That is why I send you the following tale, full of rich and varying feats. The story forms part of the collection Stories for a Night of Asphyxiation (which will probably not be published in the near future).

The Story of the Tiny Mouse and the Tiny Cat

There once was a tiny mouse who was very hungry and wanted to eat a tiny bit of cheese, which was in the tiny kitchen of a tiny house. Very decidedly, the tiny mouse went to the tiny kitchen to grab the tiny bit of cheese. But, it so happened that a tiny cat crossed his path, and the tiny mouse became very frightened and ran away and was not able to get the tiny bit of cheese from the tiny kitchen. Then the tiny mouse was thinking of what to do to get the tiny bit of cheese from the tiny kitchen and he thought and he said:

"I know. I am going to put out a small plate with a little milk and the tiny cat is going to start drinking the milk because tiny cats
like very much a little milk. And then, when the tiny cat is drinking
the tiny milk and is not paying attention, I am going to the tiny
kitchen to grab the tiny bit of cheese and I am going to eat it. That's
a veerly good idea," said the tiny mouse to himself.

And then he went to look for the milk, but it turns out that the
milk was in the tiny kitchen, and when the tiny mouse wanted to go
to the tiny kitchen, the tiny cat crossed his path and the tiny mouse
was very frightened and could not get the milk. Then the tiny mouse
was thinking of what to do to get the milk in the tiny kitchen and he
thought and he said:

"I know. I am going to toss a tiny fish very far away and then
the tiny cat is going to run to go eat the tiny fish, because tiny cats
like very much tiny fish. And then, when the tiny cat is eating the
tiny fish and is not paying attention, I'm going to go to the tiny
kitchen to grab the tiny bit of cheese and I'm going to eat it. That's
a veerly good idea," said the tiny mouse.

Then he went to look for the tiny fish, but it happened that the
tiny fish was in the tiny kitchen, and when the tiny mouse wanted
to go to the tiny kitchen, the tiny cat crossed his path and the tiny
mouse became very frightened and ran away and could not go to get
the tiny fish.

And then the tiny mouse saw that the tiny bit of cheese, the
milk, and the tiny fish, everything that he wanted, was in the tiny
kitchen, and he could not get there because the tiny cat would not
allow it. And then the tiny mouse said; "Enough!" and he grabbed
a machine gun and shot the tiny cat, and he went to the tiny kitchen
and he saw that the tiny fish, the milk, and the tiny bit cheese had
gone bad and could not be eaten. So he returned to where the tiny
cat was, cut it in pieces, and made a great roast. Then, he invited all
his friends, and they partied and ate the roasted tiny cat, and they
sang and danced and lived very happily. And once there was . . .

This is the end of the story and the end of this missive. I want
to remind you that the divisions between countries only serve to
illustrate the crime of “contraband” and to give sense to war.
Clearly, there exist at least two things greater than borders: one is
the crime disguised as modernity, which distributes misery on a
world scale; the other is the hope that shame exists only when one
fumbles a dance step, and not every time we look in the mirror. To
end the first and to make the second one flourish, we need only to
struggle to be better. The rest follows of its own accord, and is what
usually fills libraries and museums.
It is not necessary to conquer the world, it is sufficient to make it anew... 

Vale. Health to you, and know that a bed is only a pretext for love; that a tune is only an adornment to dance; and that nationalism is merely a circumstantial accident for struggle.

From the mountains of the Mexican Southeast
DON DURITO OF THE LACANDON

P.S. PLEASE EXCUSE THE BREVITY of these letters. It so happens that I must press ahead with my expedition to invade Europe this winter. How do you feel about a landing next January 1? (308-09)

While this story can be read as being directed to and about the indigenous Mexican people, and is rooted in local conditions, it also goes to the heart of Empire (read: to end the first [modernity] and make the second [dancing] flourish we need only to struggle to be better). The rhetoric of this story—its "silliness," its humor, its simplicity—and the affective relations that it creates is what make the intervention into Empire possible (read: It so happens that I must press ahead with my expedition to invade Europe this winter). This is a reversal of the colonialist enterprise through writing, opening the writing into difference. The rhetoric itself is affective action.

In "The Tiny Mouse and the Tiny Cat," Marcos gives us irrationality, play, silliness, and laughter as a radical discourse of resistance and action. That is, this allegory is veery "serious" insofar as it is offered as a public explanation of the Zapatistas' military incursion into San Cristobal. Its seriousness comes out of specific material, political, and cultural conjunctures, not from a specific discursive or political genre.

In Zapatista writing, the transgression of authoritative rhetoric through laughter has the effect of creating informal, discursive space where different identities, positions, and voices come together. We hear, in the laughter and humor, difference, the possibility of different discourses, different meanings, different relationships and sensations, and different ways of being, as the laughter speaks to how we think and how we feel, what we think and feel about, and possibilities for thinking that are also
about the possibilities for feeling. This discourse creates new ideas of community and participation by civil society. As Marcos argues,

> It is not just the Zapatistas who are fighters of resistance. There are many groups (and there are several gathered here) who have also made a weapon of resistance, and they are using it. There are indigenous, there are workers, there are women, there are gays, there are lesbians, there are students, there are young people. Above all there are young people, men and women who name their own identities: “punk,” “ska,” “goth,” “metal,” “trasher,” “rapper,” “hip-hopper,” and “etceteras.” If we look at what we have in common, that we are “other” and “different.” Not only that, we also have in common that we are fighting in order to continue being “other” and “different,” and that is why we are resisting. And to those in power, we are “other” and “different”; in other words, we are not like they want us to be, but what we are. (‘Why’ 168)

In this example, Marcos underscores the principle of difference as central to the kind of “other” world they are working for. The Encuentro was a moment of concrete envisioning, a shift from a reliance on an established center of power to future interventions and possibilities.

The effect of Marcos’ laughter is simultaneously joyous, transgressive, and renewing. Laughter suggests that there are other affects available, and that other meanings can fill our thoughts and emotions. The humor, by suggesting other words and other meanings, suggests change and renewal. This change and renewal disrupts both the bourgeois narrative and the stogginess of leftist critique that is anti-neoliberal.

When Marcos asks us to excuse the brevity of his letters because “I must press ahead with my expedition to invade Europe this winter,” we hear absurdity, joy, and an assertion of change to come. The transgression emerges from the humor that breaks boundaries of authoritative discourse with its “sense of the gay relativity of prevailing truths and authorities” (Bakhtin 11). This is the Zapatista’s “war for the word”: it is the recuperation of laughter in the face of authoritative discourse that poses a serious challenge to the hegemony of this discourse. This humor and laughter, to invoke Antonio Negri, has ontological possibility.

In this communiqué and others like it, Marcos deliberately plays with the borders and boundaries, suggesting silliness and mocking its serious-
ness, and leaving open a space for difference, for others. His unknowingness, his partially begun "next story," is a commitment to a future with and for others. In his discussion of constituent power, Negri similarly describes such a commitment to a future: "We are interested in a hermeneutics that, beyond words and through them, can grasp the life, the alternatives, the crisis and recomposition, the construction and the creation of a faculty of humankind: a faculty to construct a political arrangement" (*Insurgencies* 35). It is the creation of affective capacity that marks the revolutionary activity and pedagogical possibilities: these are specific conjunctural responses that create conditions for organic movements. Zapatista writing is more than a critique of neoliberalism. It is a "a wind from below" that creates new affective possibilities.

**Strong Rhetoric of Neoliberalism**

As we recognize affect as a means through which to act and to create expanded reading of value, this reading is immediately complicated, even compromised, by the "strong" rhetoric of neoliberalism, which carries the dominant logic of the current culture of capitalism, neoliberalism. For Marcos, our capacity for affectivity does not guarantee that communication, feeling, desire, or sensation will be translated across cultural borders and boundaries. In the context of neoliberalism, writing can fail to create affective connections.

To excavate the obstacles that neoliberalism poses to our capacity for affectivity, it is useful, or there is value in, unpacking the relationship that neoliberalism creates between different forms and levels of social experience, the relationship it makes culturally between economic policy, structures of feeling, and political processes. Most broadly, neoliberalism is an economic policy of upward redistribution where social and political discourses provide a coherent and structured philosophy, pedagogy, a rhetoric, ideas about identity, democracy, and citizenship that justify and explain privatization of public services and the opening of markets, and a lessening of government regulations on the ability of corporations to pursue capital by extending market relations ever deeper into our social
It can be described as the economic, political, and rhetorical practices of upward redistribution on a global scale and at the local level: the "greater concentration among fewer hands at the very top of an increasingly steep pyramid" (Duggan x). Neoliberalism is how this system is lived, felt, and experienced. It encompasses, and seeks to capture, the structures of feeling where we are connected in complex and contradictory ways to ideologies, desires, felt meanings, and economic practices that claim coherence and claim meaning.

Neoliberalism is a policy, a theory of a current stage and culture of capitalism, and as such is an affective rhetoric. As Susan Jarratt’s work suggests, neoliberal rhetoric are modes of personal, public, or private address that configure a relationship to power, that have their own internal logic, are connected to fixed forms and ideologies, and a dynamic history. In the particular forms that culture takes under specific historical conditions, neoliberal rhetoric configures relationships between complex, material formations. We experience what Judith Butler calls "norms," social categories of what is recognizable and what is acceptable through our selves. These categories "stage" and "structure" our relationship to larger formations so what appears to be personal is in fact negotiated through the social (Butler 15). "If there are norms of operation by which the "human" is constituted," Butler argues, then "... these norms encode operations of power" (13). When we use modes of address, we are connected to social relationships that produce (not just are produced by) relations to neoliberal formations. When we conceive of the personal as different from the political, we are connected to neoliberal formations.

Neoliberal rhetorics, Butler and Jarratt’s work suggests, are not simply just discourses or ideologies. They configure a relationship to power as they mediate a relationship between personal and everyday and these systems. Neoliberal rhetorics suture the capacities of human action to the economic. This rhetorical process, as Gramsci’s work on hegemony suggests, takes place inside and outside official discourse and is what bind people to a dominant system.

In this sense, neoliberalism is a new world order that seeks to reconstruct social relations, economic structures, pedagogy, and political institutions through structures of feeling. Neoliberalism seeks to fill the content of our communication and social discourse. If we see neoliberalism
as it works to bind different levels of practice, discourse, desire, feeling, and experience, is a vision of market as the arbiter of equality, as the definitive democratic form of social organization, a vision of politics as the arbiter of law and order that “protects” this market equality, and a cultural consensus that separates the economic, the political, and the cultural that creates (even as it mystifies) labor for production. Neoliberal rhetoric configures relationships of power; they bring us into dominant or hegemonic systems of meaning that capital produces.

In the context of “strong” rhetoric of neoliberalism, how is critique, dissent, and writing produced? In his well-known introduction to *Keywords*, Raymond Williams argues that words themselves are a crucial area of cultural intervention. If we see language as something that we use to actively shape, make, challenge, change our society, as Williams’ suggests, we can open up space for social change. We do things through and with rhetoric: rhetoric motivates people to take action, sets up boundaries of inclusion, establishes who is allowed to speak, who belongs to a community, whose work is valued, whose work can be spoken about (Powell 442). As Williams argues, a focus on rhetoric enables us to explore a

crucial area of social and cultural discussion, which has been inherited within precise historical and social conditions and which has to be made at once conscious and critical—subject to change as well as to continuity—if the millions of people in whom it is active are to see it as active: not a tradition to be learned, nor a consensus to be accepted, nor a set of meanings which, because it is “our language,” has a natural authority; but as a shaping and reshaping, in real circumstances and from profoundly different and important points of view: a vocabulary to use, to find our own ways in, to change as we find it necessary to change it, as we go on making our own language and history. (24–25)

While Williams draws our attention to the crucial role of language and discourse in political struggle, this analysis of rhetoric can be extended to the economic. That is, rhetoric is at the intersection of analysis and action insofar as it requires us to carefully analyze the particular conjuncture of events, discourses, interests, habits, and values of a particular exigency in order to discern effective courses of action. However, most
rhetorical theory is concerned primarily with linguistic intervention. If we are to take seriously Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri’s argument in *Empire* that the logic of Empire, what the Zapatistas call neoliberalism, channels relations of control and rule ever more into the “communicative machine” (32) and that neoliberal capitalism extends into the “production and reproduction of life itself” (24), then the historical association between rhetoric and the political/linguistic sphere seems limited. Put another way, rhetorics of rule and resistance cannot simply be thought in terms of culture as a separate and distinct sphere. That is, interventions and disruptions of neoliberalism need to take a broader view of the power to act that is conceived through a critique of capital.

For example, arguing with David Harvey’s interpretation of Marx that capital seeks to appropriate labor and to reproduce the social relations necessary to bring capital into the world, when we participate in rhetoric that is “intended to work persuasively in particular cultural situations,” we participate in social relations that are intended to create capital (Hewett and McRuer 103). Neoliberal rhetorics, then, are persuasive not simply at the level of ideology (as separate and distinct from a material base). They are persuasive in the material ways in which they craft and direct our very capacities, our “modes of life,” our bodies, identities, and emotions (Marx, *German* 42). Such rhetorics function to configure relationships to labor, production, and consumption. When we write, when we produce our own lives, and produce culture, we thus configure a relationship to labor and therefore to capital. In the context of neoliberalism, rhetoric acts, means, signifies, and produces affects as a means through which to expend capitalist labor-relations, with the particular purpose of creating and maintaining workers as appendages of capital and turning affect into affect-value (Negri’s term). In this context, rhetoric sutures the affective to the economic. To create and maintain workers in such a relationship to capital within neoliberalism requires material persuasion through “bio-political production” (Hardt and Negri 24), the ways in which social bodies (in Foucault, populations) are managed in conjunction with other forms of power. This management, as Inderpal Grewal extends Foucault’s work, includes how “populations are judged in relation to each other” and how “differences are produced between populations (18). Affect becomes biopower.
Within the specific formations of biopower that mark different stages of capital, rhetorics affectively do things: they locate subjects within, or without, system of power; they differentiate between subjects, align subjects with collectives; they produce desires, emotions, and relationships to both work and consumption; and they mediate between different forms (political economy, structures of feeling, social) in specific contexts. This coding of subjects into the culture of capital is a means of producing surplus value. They also produce the "prohibited and forbidden" inhabitants of the borderlands, queer social bodies who are dislocated from power and its desires.

Writing Value

In "Letter to John Berger," Marcos addresses the obstacles to writing and reading to communicate across affective borders in the context of neoliberalism. Marcos begins by quoting John Berger in Boarland, who writes, "The act of writing is nothing more than the act of approximating the experience of what is being written about; in the same manner, it is hoped that the act of reading the written text is another act of similar approximation" ("Letter" 266). Here Berger suggests a desire for writing and reading that is affective—it invites interaction, it draws on our capacities for contact and communication—yet does not assume immediate contact or translatability. To this language of encounter and approximation, Marcos says, and here it is worth listening to his language as well:

Or of distancing oneself, Mr. Berger. The writing and, above all, the reading of the written text could be an act of distancing. "The written word and the image," says my other self, who to make more problems imagines himself alone. I do think it's so, that the "reading" of the written word and the image could approximate the experience or create a distance. And so returns the photographic image of Alvaro, one of the dead in the battles at Ocosingo in January 1994. Alvaro returns in the photo; Alvaro speaks in the photograph with his death. He says, he writes, he shows: "I am Alvaro, I am indigenous, I am a soldier, I took up arms against being forgotten. Look. Listen. Something is happening in the dusk of the..."
20th century that is forcing us to die so we can have a voice, so we can be seen, so we can live.” And through the photo of Alvaro dead, a reader, far away, from a distance, can come closer to the indigenous situation in modern Mexico, from NAFTA, form the international forums, from the economic bonanza, the first world. . . . His photo says more, his death speaks, his shoeless body on Chiapas soil calls out, his head resting in a pool of blood: “Look! This is what the numbers and the speeches hide. Blood, flesh, bones, lives and hopes crushed, squeezed dry, eliminated in order to be incorporated into the indexes of economic growth and profit. Come!” says Alvaro. “Come close! Listen!” But Alvaro’s photo can also “be read” as a distance, seen as a vehicle that serves to create more space to stay on the other side of the photo, like “reading” it in a newspaper in another part of the world. (268)

In the context of long history of colonialisms, including its more recent neoliberal phase, writing and reading can be an “act of distancing,” a disavowal of an economic narrative where labor and exploitation (read NAFTA and economic bonanza). The photo can represent the failure of affectivity, the failure to be struck, to feel, to alter our movement to others. The photo of a dead Zapatista rebel, Alvaro, marks the “distance” between events in Chiapas and first world readers.

This violent disavowal of an economic reading can be supplemented by Spivak’s reading of value in Marx. In A Critique of Postcolonial Reason, Spivak says that Marx argues that “in the exchange relationship of commodities their exchange-value appeared to us totally independent of their use-value. But if we subtract their use-value from the product of labor, we obtain their value, as it was just determined. The common element that represents itself in the exchange relation, or the exchange value of the commodity, is thus its value” (263). The concept of value cannot stand for the labor that goes into the production of items for use value because it represents items only as exchange value. “Marx,” Spivak says, “makes the extraordinary suggestion that capital consumes the use-value of labor power” (“Scattered” 161).

If use value includes affect, it becomes value-affect, the power to act and the capacities of human activity that becomes “affectively necessary labor.” We can rewrite Spivak’s sentence as follows: Marx makes the
extraordinary suggestion that capital consumes affect as an aspect of labor. As a result, affectively necessary labor that is not part of exchange is not represented by the rhetoric of value: "the total or expanded form of value is incessantly coded, affectively, cognitively, and in ways that, by being named, are as much effaced as disclosed" (Critique 104).\textsuperscript{11}

Affect, in this reading, as a capacity for human action, is appropriated by capital as a means of producing surplus value. This process of appropriation conceals use-value and the productive process, including affective labor itself. If rhetoric leaves out use-value, then all signifying practices that give it meaning are characterized by this absence. As Stuart Hall points out, the affects that fill out capitalism that we identify with, believe in, feel, and organize our lives around, are the site of what is hidden in capitalism: the unconscious. As Hall argues,

The discourses of both everyday life and high political, economic, or legal theory arise from . . . the way real relations of production are made to appear in the form of the ideological or "imaginary" relations of market exchange. It is also crucial that "ideology" is now understood not as what is hidden and concealed, but precisely as what is most open, apparent, manifest—what "takes place on the surface and in view of all men." What is hidden, repressed, or inflected out of sight, are its real foundations. This is the source or site of its unconscious. (325)

All feelings, theories, images, tastes, identifications, emotions, popular knowledge, and everyday languages are rooted in the dislocation of use-value and not represented in the discursive economy of capital. This is the unconscious of capital.

As neoliberal rhetoric inserts us into a system of value, it reproduces the concealment and dislocation of use-value, thus reproducing the invisibility of affective possibilities that lie outside the political economy of neoliberalism. If representation leaves out use-value that induces affect, then all signifying and affective practices that give it meaning are characterized by this absence. Here, we see the violent suturing of representation to economics.
Outside of Neoliberalism

The Zapatistas are culturally outside of exchange value, not intelligible in dominant representations. As indigenous, they do not fit within the dominant meanings of the human within capital; they are therefore outside of representation. Those outside—the indigenous, and other “others” of neoliberalism—are violently eviscerated from capitalist rhetoric. Here, neoliberalism is a rhetorical system that effectively, and affectively, creates a world in which those who do not fit into it (those who are not part of mathematical calculations) are violently expelled from signification (meaning both sign and importance). There is no “hope” for encounter or approximation in the context of macroeconomic plans and figures, public announcements, state elections, and the rhetoric of peace. As Marcos says later in the letter,

“This does not happen here,” is the reader’s take of the photo. “That is Chiapas, Mexico, it’s a historical accident that can be fixed, be forgotten...is far away.” There are, in addition, other readings that confirm it: public announcements, economic figures, stability, peace. That’s what the indigenous war at the end of the century is good for, to give value to “peace,” like a stain does the white cloth that suffers its blemish. “I am here, and this photo happened over there, far away, small,” says the “reading” that creates distance. The end result of the relationship between the writer and the reader, through the text (“or from the image,” insists my other self again), escapes both... And that “pause” has everything to do with the new division of the world, with the democratization of death and misery, with the dictatorship of power and money, with the regionalization of pain and despair. (267)

Distancing is a mark of the violent operation of value that codes Alvaro as other. We could say, through this reading, that Marcos’ communiqué suggests that the concept “affect” must account for the violence of exchange value as it subtracts labor power and writes out labor and exploitation. Affect might be a capacity for action but this capacity, read via Spivak and Marx, can be understood as produced and as corralled by capital. In this reading, we could say that the Zapatistas strategically represent the economic in their writing, making visible the violence of
value-coding that subtracts affective and productive labor and renders this exploitation invisible.

Yet, my reading of Spivak, and a Marxist reading of value, suggests that use-value is outside capital. Capital, in this reading, produces nothing itself. It corrals use-value and turns it into exchange value. Use-value is outside of value; the Zapatistas are outside of the culture of capitalism. In Marxist theory, the independence of use-value, the capacity of humans to act and to produce their lives "aims to use the classical theory of value toward revolutionary ends" (Negri, "Value" 81)—that is, to use, or tap into, the potential of the power to act, that same power that capital seeks to colonize. The Zapatistas seek to tap into this same capacity in their writing: their affective capacity is drawn from outside of capital, from the borderlands, from below, as the site of struggle, an opening, a point of rupture. An affective literacy suggests the expansive power of affect is located, precisely, in the borderlands.

This expansive capacity and ethical opening, Marcos suggests in "Letter to John Berger," "has to do with Alvaro’s decision (and that of thousands of indigenous along with him) to take up arms, to fight, to resist, to seize the voice denied to them before, not to devalue the cost of blood that this implies" (267). This reading could supplement a writing and reading of encounter to suggest that tracing use-value, that includes the concept of affect, can be the site of affective possibility that is a political possibility.

At this point, it is useful to remember that the Zapatistas do not seek to overthrow the state or a particular regime of capital but to stage—or write—the violence of capitalism and its alliance with the nation-state and to suggest that another world is possible. A point of writing Zapatismo is in writing, civil society subsumes state. Zapatista writing seeks to tap into transformative power that is outside of state capital. How is writing different from stately? How does writing act, affectively change the way that power is imagined and articulated? How does writing become an act or re-imagining that says that another world is possible? What does this suggest, to return to my questions from the beginning of the essay, about translating, reading, encountering, and listening?
To consider these questions, I make a final detour into Jacques Derrida’s work where deconstruction posits “differance” as an ethics of literacy and writing. Discursive acts, and concepts, are open to different meanings, and thus, different possibilities. When a word, a discursive act, or a concept enters culture, it becomes opened to differance—that is, it is excessive of its origins, or in Foucault’s language, is dislodged from its fixed point in the nexus of power/knowledge. In Derrida’s terms, an author cannot control the range of responses by her audience just as capital cannot control how people relate to its logic. It is our capacity to innovate, to rework, to mock, to imagine, to articulate, to read, and to produce that is beyond the scope of capital’s control. The radical project of deconstruction is a constant undoing that does not claim to approximate or encounter but is the possibility of approximation or encounter. Writing, in this reading, has affective capacity that is not the promise of full representation but suggestion of an outside, an otherness.

To extend Derrida’s discussion, this undoing is not just an undoing of concepts or categories of thought or an overthrow of state power, but a rewriting of power. To act, or to read, in the world in a deconstructive logic is an undoing rather than a positing of another rhetoric, the promise of ethics, or the promise of a world to come.15 It’s not the creation of another rhetoric or ethics that could replace the current nexus of power/knowledge, or the creation of another state, or the “promise of plenitude,” but the work of rhetoriticity: an openness to human activity, an openness to action and to feeling, as action. For Derrida, in “Force of Law,” deconstruction is the positing that another world is possible; not positing what this world might look like. Derrida calls this openness a democracy to come, which has radical potential that cannot be corralled or contained (see Derrida, Rogues, Politics; Butler 39; Negri 87). As he argues, “There is not yet any democracy worthy of this name. Democracy remains to come: to engender or to regenerate. . . . It will always remain to come, it will never be present in the present, it will never present itself, will never come, will remain always to come, like the impossible itself” (Rogues 82, 73).
With Derrida, we could read and supplement our understanding of the Zapatistas with the following. Rather than naming another world or participating in representative politics, the Zapatistas strategically rearticulate the whole complex of social relations that set the stage for affectivity. The goal is not the creation of the new universal language, an imagined community, or an international revolution of the proletariat or another incarnation of the Mexican state. The goal is not to link everyone in one united—if by “united” is meant the same, or singular, in all locations regardless of context—struggle. The call to write is not a promise of plenitude, shared ethics, or a closing of a gap in representation. The photo of Alvaro might not claim to bridge the distance between First and Third worlds. Rather, the Zapatistas rewrite how we know and understand affective power:

We thought that it was necessary to reconsider the problem of power, to not repeat the formula that in order to change the world it is necessary to take power and then once in power, we will organize everything in a way that is best for the world, that is, the way that is best for me since I am in power. We thought that if we conceived of a change in the way power is seen, the problem of power, proclaiming that we do not want it—this would produce another way of doing politics and other kind of politics, other human beings that do politics differently from politicians of the entire political spectrum. (69)

To reconsider power, to change the way that power is seen, to write a literacy of power, writing Zapatismo does not seize the apparatus of state power or consolidate an imagined community. The Zapatistas listen to and tap into a strength in society, a capacity to act and to transform as a strategy of disruption or rupture of a familiar, or dominant, discursive terrain, as a means of remaking of old symbols (Marx, Eighteenth), and opening narrative to make visible exploitation and oppression. The Zapatistas have undertaken a campaign of listening, traveling around Mexico, symbolically on a motorcycle, meeting with people and taking notes. They refuse to engage in representative politics or political campaigns. Their move is to recognize an outside, constituent strength that could rewrite power. Reading with Gustavo Esteva, we can see Zapatismo as an “open call to that constituent force, or strength, inherent
in society—an invitation to its conscious exercise by those who are society, not those who try to represent it, to make the social transformation” (Esteva).

In the context of State power, aligned with capital, Zapatismo calls forth not new power but new literacy, an ethical move to encounter, a politics of listening, rather than a promise of a new world—this affective writing that is and remains, as Derrida’s discussion of democracy suggests, to come. Zapatista writing seeks to create openness for new practices and affective relationships that are already existing are not recognizable in hegemonic rhetoric, and are not yet articulated in a recognizable, strategic, or liberatory form. This complete re-articulation sets the stage for connections between seemingly unrelated bodily affects, personal feelings, desires, emotions, and experiences. As the writing makes these connections visible, it has the capacity to open networks of affiliation.

George Washington University
Washington, D.C

Notes

1. My thanks to friends who have read versions of this essay or helped me develop ideas presented here through conversation. They are, in no particular order, Jason Hipp, Kelly Cooper, Annie Lipsitz, Aliya Weise, Eric Drown, Robert Mcruer, Kevin Mahoney, Todd Ramlow, Dan Moshenberg, and Gustavo Guerra.

2. Zapatismo suggests questions about the constitutive elements of rebellion. What does it mean to violently resist? What is violence and who defines it? For a discussion of the Zapatista’s revisioning of revolution, see Halloway and Peláez.

3. For discussions of the “development” of neoliberalism in Mexico, see Cooper and Lipsitz, Jung, and Higgins.

4. Thanks to Susan Jarratt for suggesting this language for parsing what is a footnote, or supplemental, from what is significant to the rhetoric and the logic of a text. See ReReading xviii.


7. John Beverley asks, "But can one imagine the politics of the Left as detached from a telos of modernity," and Marcos' humor suggests that the question should be recast as, "Is it possible to re-imagine a discourse of the left that is not tied to the discourse of authority?" (49).

8. For discussions of neoliberalism globally, and critical pedagogy, see McLaren and Farahmandpur. For a discussion of neoliberalism in an American context, see Duggan. For discussion of neoliberalism and women's labor, see Chang. For a discussion of neoliberalism and disability, see Mcruer. For a discussion of neoliberalism and the corporate university, see Mohanty, especially chapter six.

9. I use the singular, rhetoric, here advisedly. With Inderpal Grewal, I realize that neoliberalism works through an assemblage of rhetorics and different forms of power to produce uneven, dependent, and hegemonic modes of power. Yet, I would also argue, as the Zapatistas do in their "Letter to John Berger," that neoliberalism seeks to produce a singular, undifferentiated mode of being that violently eviscerates other possibilities for being human. The singular, rhetoric, stands in for this move and desire for neoliberal coherence.

10. Hardt and Negri are working from Foucault's notion of biopower, power that works on and differentiates among bodies. In "Two Lectures," Foucault explains biopower in the following way: "studying power at the point where its intention, if it has one, is completely invested in its real and effective practices. What is needed is a study of power in its external visage, at the point where it is in direct and immediate relationship with that we can provisionally call its object, its target, its field of application, there—that is to say—where it installs itself and produces its real effect" (97).

11. There is significant feminist scholarship that reads the effacement of women's affective and reproductive labor in capitalist political economy. See Mies, as well as the work of Silvia Federici and Maria de la Costa.

12. Moreover, neoliberal rhetoric privileges written rhetorics, subsuming all others "under the heading of signification." This narrow representational system, as Marcos' letter suggests, has the effect of obfuscating culture, peoples, and identities.

13. Thanks to Dan Moshenberg for suggesting this connection between writing/state/civil society in my work.

14. Gustavo Esteva argues that "the genius of the Zapatistas consisted in giving expression to general insights and common perceptions, giving them new articulation. Well-rooted in their traditions but open to contemporary reality, they have made their words into verbs, into symbols of action."

15. My thanks to the members of the Cultural Studies in a Time of Danger reading group—Dan Moshenberg, Robert Mcruer, Jason Hipp, and Ned—
for helping me develop this reading of "Force of Law."

16. This work of listening resonates with Paulo Freire's discussion of "the radical," a person who he says is "committed to human liberation. . . . This individual is not afraid to confront, to listen, to see the world unveiled. This person is not afraid to meet the people or to enter into dialogue with them. This person does not consider himself or herself the proprietor of history or of all people, or the liberator of the oppressed; but he or she does commit himself or herself, within history, to fight at their side" (Pedagogy 21).

Works Cited


Moshenberg, Dan. "Encountering Distance." E-mail to Rachel Riedner. 27 Dec. 2006.


