

Anagrams of Orderly Disorder

(For the New Global Order)

GEOFF COX, JOASIA KRYSIA & ADRIAN WARD

```
sub degenerate()
    dim c1,c2 as integer
    c1=1+(rnd*len(myString))
    c2=1+(rnd*len(myString))
    swapchars(c1,c2)
end sub
```

An anagram is a word or phrase that contains all the letters of another word or phrase in a different order. This brief text attempts to apply this principle in making some introductory comments on the current world disorder to reflect the complex intersections of global and local issues. It employs the text presentation software Anagrammar (like a corrupt version of Microsoft's popular 'Power Point') but contains two contradictory operations activated through sound input – above or below an ambience threshold. The characters are either moved randomly out of order, or rearranged pragmatically back into order – to generate or degenerate accordingly. In doing this, we aim to evoke Hardt and Negri's description of corruption in that institutional forms (such as language) might be rearranged. To them, "The Empire's institutional structure is like a software program that carries a virus along with it, so that it is continually modulating and corrupting the institutional forms around it" (2000: 197-8). In this case, the arrangements are generated by two dialectically opposed subroutines at the beginning and end of this text. Despite the appearance of disorder, any complex system expresses deep structures of order. By analogy, can the new global disorder be rearranged by human action?

The current global context articulates considerable tensions over sovereignty, political commitment and action. The quotes we have selected present these debates in a historical context and investigate the local tensions around the ways in which artists and commentators respond to global processes, and the language and strategies they employ to do so.

sAllrfIx

d, fast froaanthelatinns, sitret oie tdfinoaf a cihn
 usnd ceerabelprej dices ane opindons, vwe aw h
 iray, ll new-aensrdrones become antiquated before
 they cAn ossify. all that is solid melts into air, all
 that is holy is profaned,wgh

urhs rsknt ast nsdpealed toioacoawitn srn t aecsesh
 piserlam coadbtioo erteefe,sind his re otin s with him
 kindo
 bhe h eyaae a oln tartly xpindien msetet foreito
 products cyatns ihm oeulgeosozl ovee the
 entwrf,suefaer f orhn gl.be.fi mws tne tle everriivte
 nTeitlv eee hwnete, esnaf isi concectab s,eeery hore.e

The present phase of production still remains predicated on the speed and frequency of communications technologies as well as its organisation on a global scale. But old and relatively ordered 'cold war' positions have been pacified and replaced by new complex, asymmetrical ones. This asymmetry is partly as a result of the 'decomposition' of communist power. Now, the phrase "all that is solid melts into air" simply begins to sound like a truism. The very idea of change has paradoxically become stable (or solid rather than melting) and digital technology appears to be the engine for this approach.

Like the communications industries that underpin it, Hardt and Negri describe the contemporary form of dominant power structure as 'Empire' – 'governance without government'. To define this power base more closely as plural and multiple (not centred), they draw upon

o[Empire is] ch
 ractegised by a flurdiroy oa wsrn -p neebbyand al l tf
 formation ans deformgdion, generation and
 degeneratIon. [

]

[it is the] decentered and deterritorializing
 apcaratuv

of rusu tfat rofr sf,lbl phc eporatic the rntie
 mlovili ealmrwfthin its opei, expanding ironnier t Emp
 re manuimsuhybrsd idectiteennaflexible hi rarnhirs,
 andoplual exchanges shrough modulatingenetworks of
 comsasd.' [

]

'Our politgiaw taado is notpsigply to re ost ehese
 erocessis btt tn rnorgaeise them and redirect ttem

network and rhizomic metaphors that privilege flows and mutability – in the tradition of Deleuze, wherein resistance is disrupted: no longer marginal, but active in the centre and expressed in networks, chaotic and indeterminable.

But if power cannot be grasped, how can it be resisted?

'g, tho a, encrooi n elclarld eu tg, ths list
forhodabl d inee y in must saceei pilioics
stsr disordera htt Dieor or i peedrn sI rye[treo unke
ittriyo aoh thisoteti of thy atnl e eved ltck]nioas ea
edafdanegnm

e brpngsoit fh bYbnfore Tdne isethe case godare alth
lgh omsy because nee-liberal ideology [...]
paradoxically considers disorder to be positive and
order negative, the equivalent ew.creabn er f pewsI.
he.ssmu epsyf ntataon eu pyisrterea,oromethenv
oarefll w s the erisinamnssirce of.t m aolitrral
ieoies fod ordeeh'

Alain Joxe sees Hardt and Negri's *Empire* as lacking crucial analytical questions, in its not taking sufficient account of the military question, and of seeing globality as only answerable in equally global terms. So how is resistance to be best characterised?

It is as if power has taken the form of resistance itself – that order is expressed through disorder if you like. In such a scenario, the strategic standpoint of resistance seems powerless to resist power.

Does political action require new forms, by basing resistance on the structure of chaos itself?

Is the new world order simply the logic of the post-political?

The very notion of politics stems from the conflict between order and disorder – politics, itself and its negation.

There is a paradox at work. To return to Marx's 'melting vision' – what appears as in flux is simultaneously stable – leaving the capitalist mode of production as solid as ever at its core. To Žižek,

'It is, if we can hardly imagine that the world is more than a far more remote change in the mode of production, as if liberal capitalism is the 'real' that will somehow survive even under ecological catastrophe

'how are we to reformulate a leftist, anti-capitalist political precept or moral or geopolitical principle in a non-ideological surplément libéral or democratic multiculturalism?'

This is what Žižek calls the 'failure of identity politics' – the hybrid, fluid, subject identifications that reflect the processes of globalisation itself.

How might resistant, creative subjectivities be conceived in the new global disorder – the proletariat or multitude, the activist, the hacktivist? Are artists and hackers merely locked in resistance mode only as a kind of rhetorical action, nostalgically repeating the tactics of the previous artistic vanguard?

How do we move beyond resistance to social transformation?

What chance does networked resistance have of being resistant in such a scenario?

What models (or metaphors) are there left to aspire to? Or to re-invent?

In relation to the postcolonial context, Homi Bhabha proposes to analyse the congruence between postcolonial and postmodern politics. He points to a crucial distinction that has to be made between "the semblance and similitude of symbols across diverse cultural experiences ... and the social specificity of each of these productions of meanings as they circulate as signs within specific contextual locations and social system of values".

This distinction can be extended to explain existing tensions within the current global cultural economy. It seems to reinforce a single, dominant model of social, political, cultural and economic organisation, while on the other hand, this seemingly universalist model is by no means homogenous in the context of specific locality.

Arjun Appadurai argues that rather than global disorder,

the new global cultural economy has a complex, overlapping, disjunctive order, which cannot any longer be understood in terms

of a central-emergent order [

] Even the most complex and flexible theories of global development have not come to terms with the 'disorganised

state'. The complexity of the current [global] economy has a certain fundamental disjunction between the economy, culture and politics which we have to try to theorize.'

Orthodox post-modern thinking would suggest that simple binary oppositions like global/local or homogenous/heterogeneous cannot be easily justified or maintained. Instead, Appadurai proposes a model in which the complexity of the current global economy is made up of 'flows' and 'scapes' (evoking Manuel Castells' 'space of flows'), which sweep through the globe carrying capital, information, images, people, ideas, technologies.

These evocative metaphors can undoubtedly be useful in describing current cultural practices in defying orthodox and simplistic distinctions and instead aiming to explore what might be described as a 'micro-politics of global media'.

Some key questions need to be posed: How can digital technologies that inherently serve to support processes of globalisation be used to promote and maintain what is locally specific, culturally and socially heterogeneous, and what artistic and curatorial strategies might be employed to respond to these conceptual tensions? How does contemporary artistic practice respond to these tensions, especially when using or reflecting the use of network technologies? Do artists and commentators simply respond using the same fashionable rhetoric as the system they seek to question?

Taken together, the form and the content of this script (programme script and the text itself) set out to raise these questions that arise in the new global disorder.

```
sub regenerate()
  dim l as integer
  dim targetCharacter as string

  targetCharacter=mid(myOriginalString,regen,1)

  if mid(myString,regen,1)<>targetCharacter then

    l=regen

    while mid(myString,l,1)<>targetCharacter
      l=l+1
      if l>len(myString)+1 then
        l=1
      end
    wend

    swapchars(regen,l)
    end
    regen=regen+1
    if regen>len(myString)+1 then
      regen=1
    end
  end sub
```

NOTES

1. The software and more information on Anagrammar can be obtained from the website <<http://www.signwave.co.uk/>> © 2001 - 2003 Signwave UK.
2. The initial ideas for this paper were first presented as an introduction to the symposium '[anti-] globalica: artistic and conceptual tensions in the new world disorder', organised by Geoff Cox & Joasia Krysa [i-DAT] as part of the WRO Media Art Biennial, 1 May 2003, Wroclaw, Poland <<http://www.wrocenter.pl>>. It included contributions from Adam Chmielewski (University of Wroclaw), Esther Leslie (Birkbeck, University of London), Andreas Broeckmann (transmediale, Berlin), Monica Narula (Raqs Media Collective, Delhi), James Stevens (DECKSPACE, London), Zoran Pantelic (APSOLUTNO & kuda.org, Novi Sad) and Piotr Wyrzykowski (C.U.K.T. collective, Gdansk/Kiev). The suggestion with these examples was that a number of current strategies have been developed by techno-art collectives that go some way to address the questions posed in this paper. The groups who presented at the symposium demonstrate antithetical uses of networked technologies, wireless networks, the re-purposing of technology and open source principles. A conference report 'Locality, locality, locality' by Esther Leslie was published in *Radical Philosophy* 121 (September/October, 2003) pp.63-64.
3. Some related ideas were also presented as a conference paper "Generating Orderly Disorder" by Geoff Cox, as part of Marxism and the Visual Arts Now, University College London, April 2002.

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