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**Intergalactic War of the Many-Headed Hydras, Chthonic vs. Capitalist:
A Gameful Approach to Shattering the World Eating World**

[WORKING DRAFT]

This paper takes as its starting point that we are currently experiencing what the Zapatistas call the “Fourth World War.” The first two world wars being WWI & WWII and the Third World War being the “Cold War” won by the USA and the Neoliberal world powers. The Fourth World War is capitalism’s current war against (our) being(s) and existence itself. The primary adversary is taken to be that which has been extensively described since at least May 2015 as the “Capitalist Hydra,” a shapeshifting and ravenously regenerating mythical creature that is the foremost threat and barrier to peoples of all worlds. In accord with the noble and righteous goal of struggling for a “world in which many worlds fit” despite the unceasing appetite of the Capitalist Hydra and the will of “those from above” that compose the body of this world-eating world, this paper is written as a counterspell, or counter-narrative, that is meant to expose vulnerabilities in this epic adversary and create opportunities for cauterizing its wounds and preventing patriarchal regeneration in order to allow for the sustained cultivation, existence and expansion of the multitudinous worlds and lifeways it might otherwise destroy and enslave. In dispelling the authoritative illusions which concoct the Capitalist Hydra, I convoke a variety of powerful feminist writers to collectively aid in summoning, protecting, and nurturing an *other* hydra as the primary channel for this counter. With the epistemic, methodological, and worlding tools offered to us by the feminist writers I write this counterspell with, we are allowed a hopefully coherent-enough outline of a very particular and powerful ally. The hydra-from-below, or Chthonic Hydra, that I describe in this paper can be seen as much-needed kin capable of and interested in weaving together our myriad stories of care, creation and resistance. This Chthonic Hydra simultaneously supplants Hercules as the patriarchal, Greek-Empire-defending hero of the story and disrupts the illusion of the Capitalist Hydra’s intergalactic dominion by shattering it as a mirror. The many scattered shards of mirror then allow us to deepen and multiply our perceptions and relations with one another’s worlds and to gather and rearrange various bits of light and darkness to project holograms and shadow puppets foretelling futures of fortune.

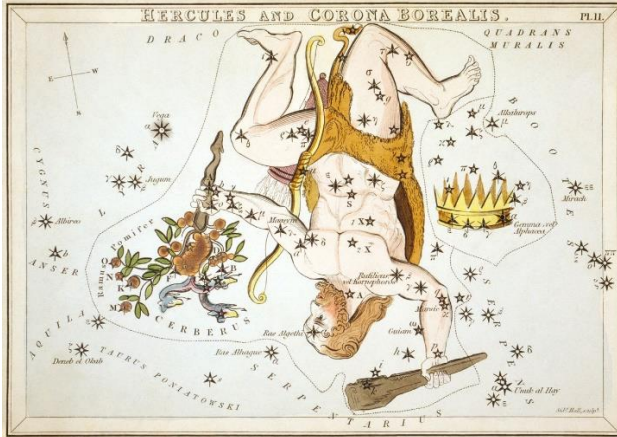


Figure A – “Hercules as depicted in *Urania's Mirror*, a set of constellation cards published in London c.1825. The figure appears upside down in the sky relative to neighbouring [sic] constellations.”¹



Figure B – “Hydra and surrounding constellations, from *Urania's Mirror* (1825).”²



Figure C – Screenshot from the open source planetarium program *Stellarium* viewing the layout of the sky, constellations, and astronomical objects at 2:11 AM Hawaiian Standard Time on October 2nd, 2017. Note the Hydra (large serpent) just to the right of the Sun and Virgo. Hercules is on the left side, shown struggling with Cerberus just below Draco who is to the left of Ursa

¹ Image and caption from Wikipedia entry for Hercules, (constellation), accessed September 30th, 2017. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hercules_\(constellation\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hercules_(constellation))

² Image and caption from Wikipedia entry for Hydra (constellation), accessed September 30th, 2017. [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hydra_\(constellation\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hydra_(constellation))

Major. Cancer, the crab, can also be seen just above and to the left of Hydra. A giant crab has been known to come to the aid of Hydra...

What's DnD got to do, got to do, got to do with it?

Life is a Game

I have long seen life as a game. A game that I take *very* seriously and that I hope to “win” as much as possible, but something that merits commitment and play. Capitalism itself can also be seen as a game; a game that the majority of lifeforms on earth, and perhaps some beyond earth, are forced to play whether or not they/we want to...but nonetheless a game. The framework of a game offers a very helpful analytical tool to map out/navigate the ways by which “the game” of capitalism functions and even more so as an opportunity for creating and sharing entirely other ways of living, playing and working—creating our own alternative games as forms of organizing our individual and collective selves—under, over, against, in between and beyond capitalism.

I came to this space of seeing life and (anti-)capitalist struggle as a game by way of growing up an avid gamer who eventually had enough access to just the right stories to deconstruct my experiences. I played Dungeons & Dragons (DnD) since I was in first grade. I spent my recesses in the library exploring imaginary dungeons, casting spells, fighting imaginary monsters, and finding imaginary treasures alongside my friends and their imaginary representations. We did all this and many other self-created pencil and paper roleplaying games with nothing more than our bodies, imaginations, voices, pencils, paper and dice. Reflecting on it now it seems that Dungeons & Dragons and the other games were and are simply the result of adapting and ordering with newer technologies a similar type of play that we naturally performed as children. We would run around and perform make-believe games from “house” to intergalactic ninja battles with interdimensional portals and hordes of imaginary enemies coming at our all-powerful-but-occasionally-vulnerable imagined super-selves. As I got older the amount

of spontaneous “free play” scenarios of running around at recess during school and in parks after school with friends fighting make believe wars or doing the more gender-diverse games of “house” eventually ceased entirely and from middle school onward it became exclusively video games and more organized forms of Dungeons & Dragons and other pencil and paper roleplaying games. My third year as an undergraduate at the University of Washington studying the Comparative History of Ideas I “discovered” or was made to learn for the first time the bitter truth about colonialism and some hint of what was lost in terms of lifeways, lives, and knowledge systems of Indigenous peoples through the European invasion of the Americas and Hawai‘i Nei. This “ah-ha” moment when I finally had the epistemic capacity to have some sense of what my White childhood games and play really entailed, the violences materially involved in bringing me into existence in the first place *and* the similarity to those same violences being unconsciously replayed and retold with new dressings in our roleplay scenarios, struck me with an imperative. I had to create games for good, not for colonial fantasizing.

I decided I needed to salvage and reassemble the collective storytelling games and skills I grew up honing. I love(d) that the games I played so cultivated my imagination, my internal visual imaging capabilities, and creativity by having storytelling time away from television screens that did all the hard work for us. But most of the content we created in our collectives would be seen as abhorrent from any sort of anti-colonial, anti-racist, anti-patriarchal, decolonial or feminist perspective. Yet we put so much energy and time into *Dungeons & Dragons* growing up because the story we were told about “the real world” was so bland and boring that we had to create something more exciting. We just didn’t know enough about what was actually behind what made it so boring to come up with any truly divergent stories. I think that same lack of historical and present-day knowledge is at the root of the racist and misogynist gamer and online

culture epitomized in “gamer gate.”³ Once I found out there was still real struggle to engage in and the veil of my schooled reality had been pulled back just far enough I no longer wanted to retreat to fantasy but engage in the epic stories and plots of the real world. For awhile I abandoned gaming entirely, no longer able to tolerate such a waste of time on uncritical and ignorant media.

At some point I taught an undergraduate class titled “Dungeons & Dragons: A Way of Imagining.” In that class we basically went through the process of playing Dungeons & Dragons for several weeks and then the final three weeks of the ten-week quarter I facilitated collective critical media analyses of the representations in the game, culminating in a group discussion provoked by reading a “Nerd Nite” presentation on “Race in Dungeons & Dragons” by Chris Van Dyke (2008)⁴ where the presenter explains exactly how and why the stock representations and suggested storylines presented in the first four editions of DnD are racist and colonialist. Many students were intrigued, others quite displeased. I was accused of stealing from them the pleasure of slaughtering orcs, the inherently evil and powerful enemies classic to so many DnD campaign settings.

If I were to teach the class again, I would begin early on with a collective reading and discussion of Toni Morrison’s (1992) *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness & the Literary Imagination*, with particular attention to the following passage:

Black slavery enriched the country’s creative possibilities. For in that construction of blackness *and* enslavement could be found not only the not-free but also, with the dramatic polarity created by skin color, the projection of the not-me. The result was a playground for the imagination. What rose up out of collective needs to allay internal fears and to rationalize external exploitation was an American Africanism—a fabricated

³ See Angela Nagle’s *Kill All Normies: Online Culture Wars from Tumblr and 4chan to the Alt-Right and Trump* (2017).

⁴ See <https://raceindnd.wordpress.com/2008/11/18/nerd-nite-presentation-november-18th-2008/>

brew of darkness, otherness, alarm, and desire that is uniquely American. (There also exists, of course, a European Africanism with a counterpart in colonial literature.)

What I wish to examine is how the image of reined-in, bound, suppressed, and repressed darkness became objectified in American literature as an Africanist persona. I want to show how the duties of that persona—duties of exorcism and reification and mirroring—are on demand and on display throughout much of the literature of the country and helped to form the distinguishing characteristics of a proto-American literature.

Earlier I said that cultural identities are formed and informed by a nation's literature, and that what seemed to be on the "mind" of the literature of the United States was the self-conscious but highly problematic construction of the American as a new white man. Emerson's call for that new man in "The American Scholar" indicates the deliberateness of the construction, the conscious necessity for establishing difference. But the writers who responded to this call, accepting or rejecting it, did not look solely to Europe to establish a reference for difference. There was a very theatrical difference underfoot. Writers were able to celebrate or deplore an identity already existing or rapidly taking a form that was elaborated through racial difference. That difference provided a huge payout of sign, symbol, and agency in the process of organizing, separating, and consolidating identity along culturally valuable lines of interest (38-9).

This passage is particularly useful for informing an ethics of feminist, anti-racist, decolonial play and storytelling because the common tropes, struggles and storylines of an average Dungeons & Dragons experience tend to be highly dressed up fantastical and customized replicas of the same new white man mind that Morrison highlights above. In book form that white man is a rather static and less fantastic representation based on the specific texts that Morrison focuses on in *Playing in the Dark*. Where the white mind and creation and proving of a free white manhood is created in Morrison's examples by rather mundane white people playing out the dramas of their lives and developing their characters in contrast to the backdrop of Black slavery, an average and uncritical game of Dungeons & Dragons is likely to be composed of a white knight, or any variety of paint and other costumes applied to the same figure to suit personal preference, carving out their character in rivers of orc and otherwise monstrous blood. Slavery might appear in a campaign setting of Dungeons & Dragons and if and when it does it is likely to be identified as part of some uncivilized, backwards, people where the heroes prove how civilized, free and

superior they are by liberating the slaves. What could seem to be divergent from the white mind narratives and American Africanism described by Morrison above in a game of Dungeons & Dragons is often likely to be just another adaptation and not divergent at all. For example: outlaw narratives, playing the thief, the underdog, and/or the revolutionary might occur, dethroning a corrupt tyrant rather than simply fighting for a King(dom) to tame the untamed lands are not uncommon themes. A Druid might be defending their forest grove from encroachment by empire. But then one might be inclined to ask why the character classes most strongly suited to storylines of Indigenous land defense are either rooted in Celtic (later to become White) identity, the figure of the Barbarian, or the Sorcerer? Going beyond the core rulebooks in search of explicitly non-white character classes doesn't do the authors any favors if we were hoping for a more generous interpretation of the game to see it as anything other than a platform for DIY storytelling for reproducing the same "playing in the dark" narratives that Morrison so brilliantly critiques. To make the point I will just offer the name of one such book, *Oriental Adventures*. All of this is to say that Toni Morrison's *Playing in the Dark* seems an indispensable tool for one such as myself who is interested in adapting Dungeons & Dragons to anti-racist, feminist, & decolonial ends⁵.

Since I first noted the problematics of Dungeons & Dragons detailed above, I have been interested in not only creating alternative campaign settings more well suited to feminist worlding but also to creating entirely alternative games (see WebsOfSamsara.wordpress.com). While at the Zapatista's First World Festival of Resistances and Rebellions⁶ the idea of a game

⁵ Basically I am interested in doing what *Octavia's Brood* does with writing but with the playful structuring and collectivizing technology of roleplaying games.

⁶ See <http://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/2014/11/28/first-world-festival-of-resistance-and-rebellion-against-capitalism/> and <http://enlacezapatista.ezln.org.mx/2015/01/09/declaration-from-the-first-world-festival-of-resistance-and-rebellion-against-capitalism/>

focused on an intergalactic war engaging all the alternatives, ills of, and resistances implicated in the Fourth World War came to me. In attending the Seminar of Critical Thought vs. the Capitalist Hydra I began to see a central plot of such a game and war could be the Hydra from Above vs the Hydra from Below. Haraway's concept of Chthulucene inspired the latest innovation toward Capitalist Hydra vs. Chthonic Hydra but the latter set of hydras can be seen as interchangeable with the former—Capitalist is the world of, in Zapatista jargon, those above, and Chthonic corresponds to those from below, the working classes, the earth itself.

Let's Play!

This writing is an invitation to address the extreme urgency of our present storical⁷ moment by seeing the perils we face to the fullest extent we can and moving through the fear and terror which naturally comes from that acknowledgement by carving, creating, falling into, and weaving together our own flows and places of power, collective and individual. Monstrosity in ourselves and others, in our “friends” and “enemies,” is a major theme embedded in the process of navigating the stories that populate this intergalactic war. Empires defining their subjects, domestic and foreign, as monstrous and thus as not meriting humane treatment has long been an acknowledged theme with a wide variety of vocabularies identifying the process. That variety of monstrosity is apparent in the consistent narratives of the ruling classes identifying those below as the Many-Headed Hydra, always to be defeated by the figure of Hercules their hero, thereby justifying any level of terror to destroy, divide, cauterize and conquer strong and rebellious peoples (see Linebaugh and Rediker, 2000). Yet the same frame of monstrosity, that of the

⁷ Storical is a form of locating oneself in relation to stories being told. “The present storical moment” in this context can be read as a moment or set of coordinates being shared with the reader by way of a particular set of stories. The set of stories in this case can be most briefly summarized as Chthulucene (see Haraway, 2016).

Hydra, has also been applied by those from below toward those from above⁸. While one narrative strategy has been to reject this categorization of the proletariat by those from above, because of how the “...idiom of monstrosity sanctioned violent, steady repression,”⁹ another strategy has been to embrace the label of monstrous to strike fear into those above and embrace our power¹⁰. For the purposes of this counterspell we will embrace monstrosity and humanity on all sides of this intergalactic conflict and at the same time disintegrate, regenerate, and rearrange those categories, or whatever seems most useful to the reader in a given moment of observation.

My methodology in approaching the themes of this paper is primarily inspired by five (feminist) authors. I take up Donna Haraway’s (2016) call to “stay with the trouble” and make kin in the Chthulucene. I am particularly inspired by her phrase and examples of “sympoietic, multiplayer, multispecies thinking and action” (Ibid, p. 71). The act of summoning the figure of the Chthonic Hydra which this writing attempts is meant as a vehicle for precisely that sort of multispecies thinking and action. I also take guidance from Anna Tsing, particularly her (2015) text *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in the Capitalist Ruins*. Her complex and detailed portraits of conflictual, precarious, multispecies, and multicultural thriving and struggling in matsutake-assisted forests offers a lot in terms of making space for the details and expansion of the Chthonic Hydra—especially thinking of conceptual and literal

⁸ See English language materials from the Zapatista seminar of Critical Thought vs. the Capitalist Hydra at http://radiozapatista.org/?page_id=13233&lang=en and <https://dorsetchiapassolidarity.wordpress.com/critical-thought-against-the-capitalist-hydra/>; also see Linebaugh & Rediker, 2000, pp. 330-332.

⁹ Linebaugh & Rediker, 2000, pp. 340 and

¹⁰ Note, as one example of this (Ibid. p. 341):

Henry Redhead Yorke, who had been born in the West Indies, spoke against slavery at a mass meeting in Sheffield in the spring of 1794. The speech got him arrested, imprisoned, and tried. At his trial he brilliantly defended himself by turning the rhetoric of monstrosity back against the authorities, promising, “The more sacrifices, the more martyrs you make, the more numerous the sons of liberty will become. They will multiply like the hydra, and hurl vengeance upon your heads.”

forests, ecological regeneration, and *potentially* non-capitalist but certainly chthonically connected economics and survival. I look to Kathy Ferguson and Phyllis Turnbull (1999) for the insights their book chapter “Looking in the Mirror at Fort DeRussy” offers for our understanding of the immensely destructive and instructive actions and illusionist disguises of the US military. Ferguson and Turnbull show us how the US military wreaks havoc throughout the world, particularly with nuclear weaponry in the Pacific, and they likewise explain by way of detailed example with the case of the occupation of Hawaii Nei exactly how they justify their mass destruction by narrating a story, complete with very expensive props, of the military’s Hawaii as though it was one and the same with the real Hawaii and the real Hawaii really needed and needs the US military to occupy it for its own good. And the last but most certainly not the least in our list of five crucial feminist writers who acted as guides in locating the necessity and possibility of this counterspell, is Toni Morrison who writes (1992):

I want to draw a map, so to speak, of a critical geography and use that map to open as much space for discovery, intellectual adventure, and close exploration as did the original charting of the New World—without the mandate for conquest. I intend to outline an attractive, fruitful, and provocative critical project, unencumbered by dreams of subversion or rallying gestures at fortress walls (Ibid, p. 3).

I take Morrison’s prompt for intellectual adventure and critical insights into (White) America’s literary imagination and thus general scope of possibility and reality and attempt to assist in navigating the known and unknown multiverse ahead, behind and beyond the timespace coordinates of the present writing. What territories, worlds and possibilities are implicated, invisibilized, conquered, liberated, occupied and transformed in this intergalactic war? How and what might we play to win? We will begin our search with an investigation into the respective genealogies of the Chthonic and Capitalist Hydras as the Titans of this intergalactic war.

Genealogy of the Hydra(s)

We could reduce the existence of everything to a single being, a hydra devouring itself, and risk conflating it with the figure of Ouroboros, the dragon that eats its own tail and whose body contains all tales. Perhaps a comparative study of hydra and ouroboros could yield valuable results, but for our present purposes we aim for clarity in understanding a particular plurality that we experience as suffering and violent conflict. Thus, we'll analyze two types of hydras: one fitting the bill of Chthonic kin & friend & the other as a clearly hostile sort bent on total domination and destruction. A very brief section from Clifford's (2009) dissertation on *Numerical phraseology in Vergil* reveals to us that even in the Greek storytelling context there existed more than one Hydra, beyond that most famous Hydra of Lerna slain by Hercules:

In the sixth book, however, the hydra that sits before the gate of Orcus is represented as a monster with fifty black throats:

A. 6.576: quinquaginta atris immanis hiatibus hydra saevior intus habet sedem.

This last is not actually the Lernaean Hydra, but only a similar monster..." (Ibid, pp.63-4).

So I will attempt to describe the entangled existence of two particular types of hydra, the major, titanic contestants of this intergalactic war whose bodies we collectively compose in mutually monstrous and a non-mutually exclusive manner i.e. due to tentacular relations my body, your body, our bodies carry and carries out aspects of both forms of hydra described below.

A Scattered Genealogy of the Chthonic Hydra

I begin with an attempt at the genealogy of the Chthonic Hydra before that of the Capitalist because the former pre-dates the latter, at least in terms of the economic and political phenomena of Capitalism and what is generally understood by the term capitalism if not the primordial essence that led to what we now know as Capitalist/Capitalism. Of course the story that the Capitalist Hydra is likely to tell might claim that it is as old as existence itself and the purest and

most natural thing in the multiverse. At least for the purposes of the present counterspell I will maintain that the Chthonic Hydra predates the Capitalist and argue that any claim to the contrary is merely the works of the Capitalist Hydra telling the story of the existence it needs rather than existence as it is. In any case, we shall begin with Haraway's endnote offering the etymology of Chthonic just so my meaning of Chthonic Hydra is clear:

Chthonic derives from ancient Greek *khthonios*, of the earth, and from *khthōn*, earth. Greek mythology depicts the chthonic as the underworld, beneath the earth; but the chthonic ones are much older (and younger) than those Greeks. Sumeria is a riverine civilizational scene of emergence of great chthonic tales, including possibly the great circular snake eating its own tail, the polysemous Ouroboros (figure of the continuity of life, an Egyptian figure as early as 1600 bce; Sumerian sf worlding dates to 3500 bce or before). The chthonic will accrue many resonances throughout my chapter. See Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness*. In lectures, conversations, and e-mails, the scholar of ancient Middle Eastern worlds at uc Santa Cruz, Gildas Hamel, gave me "the abyssal and elemental forces before they were astralized by chief gods and their tame committees" (personal communication June 12, 2014) (Haraway, 2016, pp. 173-4).

Considering that the Lernean Hydra¹¹ was known for coming from the swamp and terrorizing the people of Lerna before being destroyed by Hercules, it seems clearly enough a Chthonic Hydra. Being of the swamp (wetlands), a notoriously difficult terrain—militarily and otherwise—for the Capitalist Hydra, and defending the earth against encroaching development and being targeted by that age-old representative of state terror and patriarchy, Hercules all combine to a certain identification of the Lernean Hydra as chthonic. Furthermore, that hydra's parents have been identified as the titan Typhon¹² (father) who was a storm giant who waged war

¹¹ See "LERNAEAN HYDRA" @ <http://www.theoi.com/Ther/DrakonHydra.html>

¹² See "TYPHOEUS (Typhon)" @ <http://www.theoi.com/Gigante/Typhoeus.html>

against Zeus¹³ and the Olympians and Echidna¹⁴ (mother), a “monstrous she-dragon” that came from the primordial swamps. Typhon and Echidna are both direct children of Gaia which would make the Lernean Hydra a grandchild of Gaia, of the same generation as Zeus himself. So in Hercules’s murder of the Hydra we observe a—half mortal, demigod—child of Zeus destroying a Chthonic entity.

¹³ For a slightly tangential but highly intriguing and generally relevant discussion see pages 204-205 of Gerda Lerner’s (1986) book, *Creation of Patriarchy*, where she offers a concise and helpful for our purposes discussion of Zeus and also the patriarchal woman figure and Greek state defending figure of Athena, Zeus’s daughter from-no-mother:

Hesiod’s *Theogeny* defines and elaborates the ascension of the storm-god Zeus to the leading position in the Greek pantheon of gods. Certainly, Hesiod did not invent this myth of transformation, which is somewhat similar to the Mesopotamian myths we have discussed, in which male gods take over power from the forces of chaos identified with the fertility-goddesses. Hesiod’s *Theogeny* reflects a change in religious and gender concepts, which had already taken place in Greek society. As described by Hesiod, the conflict between the gods is expressed in terms of male-female and generational tension. In the earliest mythical period the sky-god Ouranos, trying to prevent a challenge to his rule by his son, holds his children in Gaia’s (the earth-goddess’s) womb. But Gaia and her son Cronos castrate Ouranos and overthrow him. Now Cronos in his turn fears that he will be overthrown by the sons his wife Rhea bears and so he swallows them each. But Rhea hides her son Zeus in a cave protected by the earth-goddess. When he is grown, Zeus fights and overthrows his father and ascends to power. To prevent his own overthrow, he swallows his wife, Metis, thus keeping her from bringing forth a son, and by this act assimilating into himself her power of procreativity. Thus, Zeus himself can give birth to Athena, who springs full-grown from his head. She comes to symbolize the forces of justice and order. We should note here not only the takeover of the male god but his assumption of the power of procreativity, which is similar to the symbolic definitions we have discussed in Genesis.

[In *The Furies*, the last play of Aeschylus’ *Oresteia* trilogy, Athena casts the deciding vote among the deities in defending the righteousness of Orestes’s act of matricide against his mother Clytemnestra who he had killed in the name of his father Agamemnon who Clytemnestra had killed to avenge their daughter Iphigenia who Agamemnon had sacrificed to the wind-gods in order to sail to Troy in conquest. Athena’s argument in favor of Orestes and Agamemnon and to stay the vengeance of the Furies against him is to corroborate Apollo’s claim that mothers are not parents to the children they bare but “the nurse who tends the growth... Of young seed planted by its true parent, the male...” by explaining that “No Mother gave me birth. Therefore the father’s claim and male supremacy in all things... wins my whole heart’s loyalty.”] (pp. 204-5)

¹⁴ See “ECHIDNA (Ekhidna)” <http://www.theoi.com/Ther/DrakainaEkhidna1.html>

What seems useful at this point is to ponder the surfacing of “the many-headed hydra” as a representation of the working class(es). Linebaugh and Rediker (2000) highlight for us various capitalists who identify themselves with the figure of Hercules and the proletariat as the hydra:

The classically educated architects of the Atlantic economy found in Hercules—the mythical hero of the ancients who achieved immortality by performing twelve labors—a symbol of power and order. For inspiration they looked to the Greeks, for whom Hercules was a unifier of the centralized territorial state, and to the Romans, for whom he signified vast imperial ambition. The labors of Hercules symbolized economic development: the clearing of land, the draining of swamps, and the development of agriculture, as well as the domestication of livestock, the establishment of commerce, and the introduction of technology. Rulers placed the image of Hercules on money and seals, in pictures, sculptures, and palaces, and on arches of triumph. Among English royalty, William III, George I, and George II’s brother, the “Butcher of Culloden,” all fancied themselves Hercules.¹ John Adams, for his part, proposed in 1776 that “The Judgment of Hercules” be the seal for the new United States of America. The hero represented progress: Giambattista Vico, the philosopher of Naples, used Hercules to develop the stadial theory of history, while Francis Bacon, philosopher and politician, cited him to advance modern science and to suggest that capitalism was very nearly divine.

These same rulers found in the many-headed hydra an antithetical symbol of disorder and resistance, a powerful threat to the building of state, empire, and capitalism. The second labor of Hercules was the destruction of the venomous hydra of Lerna. The creature, born of Typhon (a tempest or hurricane) and Echidna (half woman, half snake) [...] When Hercules lopped off one of the hydra’s heads, two new ones grew in its place. With the help of his nephew Iolaus, he eventually killed the monster by cutting off a central head and cauterizing the stump with a flaming branch. He then dipped his arrows in the gall of the slain beast, which gave his projectiles fatal power and allowed him to complete his labors (Ibid, pp. 2-3).

“Complete his labors” in the original context here means slaying several other “monstrous” beings otherwise blockading empire’s expansion. If we read our present understanding of the Chthonic and Capitalist Hydras back into the excerpt above we can see that the growth of the Capitalist Hydra at the storical coordinates of Hercules’s original “Twelve Labors” was accomplished in no small part through his conquest and weaponization of the (chthonic) Lernean Hydra. To translate that into modern colloquial might be to say that through destroying the general sense of solidarity among various creatures/peoples of the earth and the earth itself as

represented by the Hydra of Lerna, the Capitalist Hydra rendered the myriad other “monsters” of the earth and body of the Chthonic Hydra vulnerable with its blood as a story of their already defeated existence. This seems a rather key and repeated maneuver of the Capitalist Hydra.

As a way of transitioning our genealogy of the Chthonic Hydra into our brief genealogy of the Capitalist Hydra, we will take a look at Russel Maroon Shoats’s “The Dragon and the Hydra: A Study of Organizational Methods” (2012) and a subsequent discussion between Shoats and Bloom (2013) in response to that original essay. The essay examines maroon communities as an organizational method of revolution, praising its benefits and identifying it as the hydra method. Shoats identifies the dragon method as that used in the Russian and French revolutions as centralized commands and armies which he is highly critical of. Basically, he argues they simply turn into new hegemonies and become the very capitalist entities they were created to combat. For the purposes of our genealogy this transition from revolutionary proletarian forces to hierarchically organized armies can be seen as one way that Capitalist Hydra(s) become(s). Shoats is thus preferential to the hydra as method of revolutionary organization. In the discussion between Shoats and Bloom (2013) Bloom argues that the dragon method is still necessary but that perhaps needs to be kept under lock and key in a cage and guarded by the hydra. In my reading, it seems like Shoats reluctantly agrees to that analysis but maintains a critical eye to the dragon method and a preference for the hydra.

Genealogy of the Capitalist Hydra

“The genealogy of the Capitalist Hydra, in a word, is war”

[my translation of the original Spanish audio]
—Supcomandante Insurgente Galeano (2015c)

“Food won’t grow, the land stays barren. What sense do it make to be at war with the planet?”
—Stic of Dead Prez, in *FOOD FIGHT: Bullies Poisoning the ‘Hood Get Splattered*¹⁵

In addition to the simple enough genealogy above and the ubiquitous enough sources detailing the origins of Capitalism generally, it is also important to highlight the centrality of civilization, displacement of play, domestication, patriarchy and schooling.¹⁶ Agriculture, patriarchy, war, and the (poisonous) food and money system that we are made dependent on through schooling and its destruction of Indigenous & autonomous/sympoietic ways of knowing and being are key to understanding the genealogy and the daily operations and expansion of the Capitalist Hydra. On the topic of food, in addition the highly recommended music video referenced in the opening of this section, a concise genealogy of the Capitalist Hydra’s use of war on food and food as a tool of warfare is offered in Marcelo Felipe Garzo Montalvo and Haleh Zandi’s “The Modern/Colonial Food System in a Paradigm of War.”¹⁷ From their essay we can note amaranth as an ancient and presently powerful ally in forming and nourishing the body of the Chthonic Hydra despite the intimate warfare of Monsanto—and other less oft named biotech companies—thanks to its resistance to Round Up and how it is generally seen as a plague by transgenic Monsanto fields. The topic of transgenics and biotech companies is specifically identified as a key aspect of the Capitalist Hydra in the May 5th, 2015 talk given by Elena

¹⁵ See complete music video with subtitles at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mu8QthlZ6hY>

¹⁶ On patriarchy, see Lerner (1986) and Federici (2004). On civilization, domestication, and schooling see AbdelRahim (2012) and Lestelle (2015). For more on domestication and non-human animal resistances, see Hribal (2011, 2003, & 2002). On play see Brabazon (2016) and McGonigal (2016, 2011, & 2010). Also for a shorter polemic on education and addiction to money as a key tool of growth for the Capitalist Hydra, see my essay “[ON THE NEED TO AVENGE MY FATHER’S SUICIDE: ADDICTION, EDUCATION, EMPIRE AND MONEY](#)”

¹⁷ For original article see the Planting Justice web page @ <http://www.plantingjustice.org/resources/food-justice-research/the-moderncolonial-food-system-in-a-paradigm-of-war/>, for a zine adaptation of the same essay, see <https://freeuniverseity.files.wordpress.com/2013/05/mcfspw.pdf>

Álvarez-Buylla titled “The Capitalist Hydra Disguised as Science and Corn.”¹⁸ On the topic of education the most concise and deepest genealogy I have come across is Layla AbdelRahim’s (2013) *Wild Children—Domesticated Dreams: Civilization and the Birth of Education* where she explains that the very category of “human” is unique to the educated subject and education is unique to civilization which generates humans as inherently domesticated beings with an intimate and internalized understanding of the proper (colonial) directionality of violence. Another key moment to locate is the advent of the individual, individual identity and how it makes us more susceptible to the Capitalist Hydra’s use of envy, fear, and terror to manipulate our bodies to its will. For this reason we will turn to a Chthonic deity presiding over liminal spaces as a likely very fruitful entity for assistance in countering the Capitalist Hydra’s divide and conquer thrust of toxic individualism and terror and in regenerating & multiplying our heads.

On Hekate

As an especially ancient and powerful chthonic deity with a thing for crossroads and liminal spaces, Hekate merits our attention as we summon the Chthonic Hydra. Her ancient and very high (deep? formidable?) standing places her as someone I recommend looking to for guidance in the crucial moment we find ourselves in this intergalactic war. By several accounts pre-dating the existence of Zeus (Jupiter)¹⁹ and in any case being widely acknowledged to hold a great deal

¹⁸ My translation of the original title “La hidra capitalista disfrazada de “ciencia y maíz””; original Spanish audio available at <http://radiozapatista.org/?p=12977>

¹⁹ In terms of physically observable cosmic objects, Hekate has been identified with Earth’s moon and the constellation Virgo, & “Asteroid 100” but more ancient than any of those as with the very essence of darkness. In terms of the Greek genealogy of deities, Hekate’s parentage is told in a variety of ways, but usually in the same generation as Zeus. There is one genealogy of Hekate that claims she is the daughter of Zeus but that seems dubious since so many sources claim she was adapted into the Greek pantheon from more ancient religions. For variations on Hekate’s parentage in the Greek pantheon, see “HECATE (Hekate) - Greek Goddess of Witchcraft, Magic & Ghosts” at <http://www.theoi.com/Khthonios/Hekate.html>. For one reference to Hekate’s pre-Greek origins, in this case coming from Caria, in Asia Minor, see the *ENCYCLOPEDIA OF RELIGION, SECOND EDITION* entry on Hekate (p. 3900).

of power even with that patriarchal sky god and veteran of intergalactic wars—not to mention holding power over heaven, earth, and sea—Hekate is perhaps uniquely positioned to aid us in the present task of cultivating, protecting, and nurturing Terrapolis and confronting the Capitalist Hydra. Since war itself has been identified as the most fundamental aspect of the Capitalist Hydra’s genealogy and therefor more would only be likely to multiply its heads, Hekate’s favor with Zeus is an asset.

If we consider Zeus in a physical sense as the planet Jupiter and the countless asteroids, meteors, and other objects he has averted from catastrophic collision with earth/terra/Gaia, any critiques we hold against him are unlikely to be fruitfully resolved by simply seeking his destruction. We might take a moment to meditate on Hekate’s unique position to mediate against Zeus-as-rapist and divine abuser of mortal and immortal women. At least in my writing I often tend toward a much less forgiving or generous, much more fire and brimstone, go get the guillotine insurrectionary approach to such patriarchal transgressions. Yet Donna Haraway’s discussion of treating her dog companion with Premarin and how that makes her more accountable than she otherwise would be to a host of interconnected individuals/communities including a particularly violent population known as ranchers gives me pause in thinking about Zeus. Haraway (2016) writes:

Having eaten Premarin makes me more accountable to the well-being of ranchers, northern prairie ecologies, horses, activists, scientists, and women with breast cancer than I would otherwise be. Giving my dog DES makes me accountable to histories and ongoing possibilities differently than if we never shaped kinships with the attachment sites of this molecule. Perhaps reading this chapter has consequences for response-ability too. We are all responsible to and for shaping conditions for multispecies flourishing in the face of terrible histories, but not in the same ways. The differences matter—in ecologies, economies, species, lives (Ibid, p. 116).

The same ethic of responsibility for “shaping conditions for multispecies flourishing in the face of terrible histories” worded to the predicament with Zeus and Jupiter might be stated as, “having

had our lives saved by countless catastrophic cosmic collisions makes us more accountable to Zeus/Jupiter than we otherwise would be.” This with the combined uncertainties I maintain on the subject of Zeus, Jupiter, and the potential for mortal retaliation for his crimes gives me great pause. Namely, I remain uncertain regarding how one would possibly attack the planet Jupiter to punish such patriarchal violences, whether or not the planetary body is actually the same Zeus who commits the crimes of the Greek stories or not, and what the actual consequences for ongoing “living and dying on [this] damaged planet” would be of such retributive actions regardless of their relative righteousness or lack thereof.

This line of questioning brings me to a more direct question: what is the relationship of Zeus to the Capitalist Hydra? Based on the Disney representation, a notoriously reliable source on traditional stories and anti-capitalist analysis, Zeus was quite proud of his son Hercules when he slew the Lernean (Chthonic) Hydra and thus should be understood as allied with the Capitalist Hydra. On a more serious note, the genealogy of the Capitalist Hydra drawn already above identifying patriarchy and war as crucial in its advent would seem to place Zeus in allegiance with the Capitalist Hydra. Yet we just spoke of the need to remain committed or accountable to the livelihoods of others despite “terrible histories” and relations of enmity. So then perhaps the new question becomes, how does a Chthonic Hydra engage with the Capitalist Hydra in effective combat and struggle while shifting beyond a paradigm of war? Perhaps Hekate as ancient chthonic feminine deity of darkness can eventually offer some council on this matter.

I am more full of questions than answers at this point and the particulars of the strategies and tactics of an intergalactic war determining the fate of all existence in myriad timelines is more than I am prepared to take responsibility for. So I will emphasize that I see my role in writing this paper as drawing our attention to some key figures and coordinates, exposing

illusions of omnipotence and vulnerability, but certainly not providing council on how or where to strike (im)mortal blows in this epic battle. Jade Sol Luna's (2009) *Hekate II – The Awakening Hydra* is a book aptly named for the purposes of the present investigation and *possibly* quite valuable as a guide for growing the Chthonic Hydra and getting some level of clarity and answers from Hekate herself on various questions of priority, tactics & strategy in this intergalactic war. I have not had a chance to make a determination on how I feel about the veracity of the author, the source, or the claims this book makes but the fact that I came across it in the course of researching and writing this paper urges me to at least share the title and what I do know of it and how it might apply. The author makes the claim that the Greek figure of the Hydra is equivalent to that of Kundalini and that one can serve Hekate well by going through the yogic process of awakening the kundalini/hydra. An interesting proposal for future investigation to be sure. For the remainder of our present look at the intergalactic war though I will stick more closely to the externally observable and forms of social linkage, learning and expansion. So then, what are some details of the battlefields?

Some Current Terrains & Horizons

On Interplanetary & Intergalactic Colonization & (De)Colonial Delving in (Virtual) Worlds

Now that the Capitalist Hydra is nearly running out of “resources” to deplete, also known as our chthonic relations, on Earth it is focusing ever more intensely its gaze and fuel sources and expansive vision toward the stars as the final frontier. As co-founder of The Planetary Society with Carl Sagan and Bruce Murray, Louis Friedman (2016) would certainly be considered a valid authority on the subject of multi-planetary colonization by humans. His article “Future Tense—Becoming a Multi-Planet Species” takes the form of a dramatized exploration of a future multi-species human kind, focusing on two primary figures to depict Friedman's reality of 2069:

Dr. Angela Okonjo, the “highest ranking human resident on Mars” (Ibid, p. 136) and Carlos Gupta, an explorer of Europa who utilizes virtual worlds technology to do his job as a “stay-at-home explorer of other worlds” (Ibid, p. 135). To my mind this is an alarmingly accurate view of what teaching (living, working) in virtual worlds is likely to shape up to. Where Friedman and so many others see nothing but rosy benefits of virtual worlds and their enabling function to space exploration and colonization to provide “an infinite vista for growth and development” (Ibid, p. 135), we ought to recognize it is as a patently false image and merely as “the space the Capitalist Hydra needs” or the “Capitalist Hydra’s space,” taking our cue from Ferguson & Turnbull’s (1999) analysis of the U.S. Military’s Hawaii. Or in a more general sense we could adapt Morrison’s “American Africanism” to the space age of settler-colonial capitalist expansion with a term I will suggest as “Capitalist Cosmism”—necessary for Cosmic Capitalism, of course.

Yet the particulars of Ferguson & Turnbull’s (1999) analysis seem especially salient for interpreting and seeing beyond Capitalist Cosmism because of the contrast they highlight, with the help of Epeli Hau‘ofa, between the U.S. Military’s Hawaii and its view of islands more generally and the way that Indigenous Oceanic peoples tend to perceive the situation:

To Epeli Hau‘ofa, there is “a gulf of difference between viewing the Pacific as ‘islands in a far sea’ and as a ‘sea of islands’” (Hau‘ofa 1994: 152). The first envisions small and isolated bits of land remote from places that matter where the second stresses the dynamic relations among humans, water, and land. To the peoples of Oceania, who have lived in the Pacific for more than two thousand years,

their universe comprised not only land surfaces, but the surrounding ocean as far as they could traverse and exploit it, the underworld with its fire-controlling and earth-shaking denizens, and the heavens above with their hierarchies of powerful gods and named stars and constellations that people could count on to guide their ways across the seas. Their world was anything but tiny. (Hau‘ofa 1994: 152) (Ibid, p. 66)

Adapting this analysis of ‘islands in a far sea’ (Capitalist) and ‘sea of islands’ (Chthonic) to the context of extra-terran space is likely to reveal a great depth of denizens between planetary bodies, stars, and other “objects” otherwise unseen or seen in distorted ways by Capitalist

Cosmism. A little known key motivator behind the Intergalactic Multiversity for Magic & Wonder's²⁰ intergalactic intervention on earth against mass extinction is actually the harmful effects that Capitalist Cosmism has on what it sees as "empty space," not to mention the myriad "celestial objects" it consistently fails to identify the existence of intelligent life upon and throughout thanks, quite ironically, to its own ignorant definitions of intelligence and life.

In understanding the significance of the present plans for interplanetary colonization by the Capitalist Hydra it is worth a brief analysis of the particular bodies involved and their traditional significance. The moon is intended as the first long term based specifically as a launch pad for Mars where the first "self-sufficient" human colony beyond earth is planned. If we read the moon as the symbol of female power that it so often has been seen as and Mars as the Roman version of Aries, the Greek god of war, we can see a similar process to earth's historical narrative to this point repeating itself in the patriarchal space age imagination. By spreading his empire to space focusing on Mars and using the moon as a literal launchpad, Mankind (yes, Mankind, I don't want to suggest any culpability for women and non-men here) is gearing to use the (female/feminized) body of the moon to launch itself into perpetual war and pillage of the galaxy and beyond by way of settling on Mars to begin perfecting its skills, knowledges, and (un)lifeways of intergalactic settler colonialism—delusions of intergalactic dominion held by the Capitalist Hydra in our present war. A similar process of (men) utilizing female bodies as resources in their quest to dominate the earth itself in the advancement of patriarchy and the evolution of the state system and the Capitalist Hydra on earth took place on earth prior to being exported beyond²¹. Reading further into Friedman's article we can see this deeper narrative

²⁰ See <https://immwe.org/>

²¹ See Lerner, 1986, pp 52-3 and listen to Havin Güneser's May 6th, 2015 talk (audio in English) from the Seminar for Critical Thought vs. the Capitalist Hydra. Both of these sources more or less offer a chronology of what we are now

disguised in classic Capitalist Cosmism, American Africanism, American Indianism, and American Latinism if you will, with the figures—Dr. Okonjo and Carlos Gupta—who are used to tell the story of inter planetary “progress” (toward what?).

Friedman’s use of Dr. Okonjo as a rhetorical tool is telling. He uses Dr. Okonjo (an African / Nigerian name) to draw a direct and uncritical comparison to Columbus’s (genocidal) invasion of Quisqueya / Haiti / “Hispaniola” and the America’s, which he euphemistically calls the “first landing on a small Western Hemisphere island” and “the beginning of a first European settlement in North America,” with the hopes and dreams and predicted future reality of further exploration and settlement (colonial invasion) into the cosmos. The colonial violence of Columbus’s “landing” is invisibilized while at the same time its continuity into the cosmos is rendered immune to charges of racism or colonialism because the first Black president of the U.S.A. promoted that expansion in the 2010 speech Friedman references (Ibid, p. 135) and the overall speech that Dr. Okonjo gives about the great accomplishments of Martian colonization is being given by her as the highest-ranking member on Mars who, like President Obama, is of African descent. Then, Carlos Gupta, the virtual worlds explorer with apparently Indian and Latina/o ancestry, is used as a device to instruct the reader on the wonders of virtual worlds as tools of space exploration. The use of virtual worlds for colonial exploration of the cosmos is an alarming tool in the repertoire of the Capitalist Hydra but perhaps equally blinding and even laughable. By using virtual worlds, via picking up sensory input through scout robots/drones on other planets and creating a virtual reality world for the “stay at home explorer,” the Hydra

calling the Capitalist Hydra as beginning with man’s domination of the land through agriculture and subsequent domination and objectification of women as a result of the new social systems in agricultural societies and then going to wars of conquest for more land and women as their “resources” in growing their dominion. Complete audio of Havin’s talk is available thanks to Radio Zapatista at <http://radiozapatista.org/?p=13020&lang=en>

creates the world by mapping it. They might just as soon get lost in their own virtual reality as complete their intergalactic domination effort. Friedman's article is emblematic of Capitalist Cosmism and the stay-at-home virtual worlds exploration technologies he describes, which already exist to an extent, are a dangerously powerful tool of the Capitalist Hydra.

The main problem with Capitalist Cosmism in my mind is that it is basically Manifest Destiny ad infinitum. Infinite room for growth and development in space, without any attention to critique the very same technologies that are at the cause of most of the planetary crises that Friedman (along with countless others) claims to be escaping. Just as the empires of the "old world" failed to resolve their problems at home through self-critique and readjusting their intra-societal economic and social relations and their modes of relating to the earth, Friedman represents very succinctly with this article the same lack of will to confront those issues as Empire Earth and erroneously imagines that solutions are to be found in space.

I am inspired by this article to create non digital roleplay scenarios and virtual world learning environment that contains the very future that Friedman describes along with some key additions. Perhaps a roleplay scenario where some participants / players / students could have the prestigious jobs of Dr. Okonjo and Carlos Gupta while others are forced to live unemployed, in prison, and/or working in the mines and low wage service industries and factories that enable those same high-status positions. I am inspired by the imagery of the film *Sleep Dealer* (2008)²² and the stories of cosmic mining colony uprisings in classes afrofuturism described in Lou Catherine Cornum's "The Space NDN's Star Map."²³ Perhaps it could also be possible to create virtual world representations of what it is like to experience the colonization Friedman writes

²² <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0804529/>

²³ <https://thenewinquiry.com/the-space-ndns-star-map/>

about from the perspective of the planetary bodies and elements themselves. Could the pain and suffering, resistances and rage, love and joy of chthonic forces find their way into the sensory instruments and virtually recreated realities experienced by Friedman's stay at home explorer? How would such narratives and actual sensory experiences impact the literary imagination and therefore actual colonization, decolonization, and entirely chthonic life efforts of the next century? Taking our cue from our adaptation of Morrison's *Playing in the Dark* to the context of Dungeons & Dragons in the beginning of this paper I want to end with some thoughts on collective storytelling games. Call them chthonic storytelling games or chthonic worlding games.

Foretelling Futures of Fortune

Taking as our inspiration the theme and details of the present intergalactic war of the many-headed hydras, our ethical compass and goal as making kin in the Chthulucene, our companions for confidence in the possibilities for life in capitalist ruins as matsutake and the hydra²⁴, and our imaginative landscape for exploration of the cosmos as that opened up by the shattering of the Capitalist Hydra's projections of its false and distorted images onto all-that-is, we shall now consider a series of analogue worlding game exercises that can contribute to our collective storytelling efforts. These exercises are based in the analogue but could all be adapted to digital and mixed media realities. Haraway (2016) discusses the Inupiat worlding video game *Never Alone* (Ibid, pp. 86-89). With that game and discussion as my inspiration, this final section is my proposal to utilize some particular exercises for creating worlding games in primarily non-digital forms as tools for telling stories and mutual capacitation suited to our collective self-realization, mutual visibility, & expansion as Chthonic Hydra. The ideas I offer below could be adapted to

²⁴ As in the little tiny one that can regenerate its entire body from any piece of itself, see "This Animal Tears Its Face Off to Open Its Mouth" @ <https://phenomena.nationalgeographic.com/2016/03/08/this-animal-tears-its-skin-apart-every-time-it-opens-its-mouth/>

many different contexts, in whatever age groups of institutional or non-institutional education. I would like to imagine someday a multilingual version of this sort of chthonic worlding genre being played by otherwise mutually antagonistic matsutake pickers in any of the recuperating forest ecologies where they are flourish and nourish forest. Or perhaps at a Zapatista gathering of rebel peoples from throughout terra. Or amid any other sort of encampment that challenges and creates alternatives to extinction. Played among friends and family in a more domestic and less conflictual scenario, this genre can be taken as itself a form of encampment or spreading of chthonic spores.

Given that matsutake foragers are so commonly survivors of war (Tsing, 2016, pp 85-94) and that the genealogy of the Capitalist Hydra is itself war, I would be particularly interested in seeing the insights for the present struggle that might come from engaging in any of these worlding games with crews of matsutake hunters/pickers/foragers. Yet more immediately I want to suggest this genre of chthonic worlding games as a sort of matsutake for regenerating the blasted ruins of our particular collective home in academia. Speaking of the necessity to stretch our imaginations in grasping how to get along in capitalist ruins, Tsing urges us to take a clue from Matsutake, “Matsutake’s willingness to emerge in blasted landscapes allows us to explore the ruin that has become our collective home. Matsutake are wild mushrooms that live in human-disturbed forests” (Ibid, p. 3). In reading this last sentence over again, I find myself identifying with matsutake, as a wild (something) living in a human disturbed intellectual ecology. With this in mind and a hope toward making an improved home for myself and this forest (institutional education) I refer again to a key lesson Tsing draws from matsutake:

“What if we imagined intellectual life as a peasant woodland, a source of many useful products emerging in unintentional design? The image calls up its opposites: In assessment exercise, intellectual life is a plantation; in scholarly entrepreneurship, intellectual life is pure theft, the private appropriation of communal products. Neither is

appealing. Consider, instead, the pleasures of the woodland. There are many useful products there, from berries and mushrooms to firewood, wild vegetables, medicinal herbs, and even timber. A forager can choose what to gather and can make use of the woodland's patches of unexpected bounty. But the woodland requires continuing work, not to make it a garden but rather to keep it open and available for an array of species. [...]

In this spirit, the Matsutake Worlds Research Group—the group that made my matsutake research possible—has tried to build playful collaborations into our individual and collective work” (p. 286).

Thus the following chthonic worlding game adaptation ideas are all being shared in a spirit of invitation to playful collaboration. They are not fully developed but rather shared as seeds or spores awaiting collective cultivation, harvest, enjoyment, digestion and cycling.

Chapter 18 of Brenda Brathwaite and Ian Scheiber's (2017) *Challenges for Game Designers: non digital exercises for video game designers* is on “Games as a Teaching Tool” (Ibid, pp. 249-262). The chapter consists of five challenges all of which could be adapted to create gameful capacitation tools for Chthonic purposes. Whether in the conventional context of K-12 or higher education or in less institutional and more autonomous contexts of mutual capacitation these challenges have a lot to offer the intergalactic war at hand. The first challenge “Old Game, New Life” encourages the reader to adapt an existing board game to a new setting (Ibid. 253-4). The example board game given in the book is *Monopoly*. The benefits for anti-capitalist struggles of adapting that particular game to new settings and/or new sets of rules, narrative focus(es) and players is a perfect example of what I mean by opting to play our own game despite being forced to play Capitalism.

A novel variation on the authors' suggestion in this exercise I will offer now is that instead of *just* adapting an existing board game to a new setting, a challenge could involve creating an expansion or parallel and eventually intersecting games. That is to say, one group of people continues to play *Monopoly* (or *RISK* or *Settlers of Catan* or any of the grand majority of

commercially available board games that are uncritical reproductions of the micro and macro machinations of the Capitalist Hydra) and another group plays an entirely different game that has been created around a different set of assumptions about what is real, what is possible, and/or desirable. In other words, games come with embedded epistemologies and assumptions about reality, so having multiple games that then collide will shake things up. Whatever the particulars, the alternative should be chthonic in nature. For example, an expansion created for *Monopoly* the parallel game could involve urban farming collectives of artists who, through the structure of the game, form mutual aid associations that span individuals and collectivities with private property privilege and those without it whose living situations tend to be more criminalized, precarious and squatting based. Their goal is to create beautiful and loving works of art and autonomous, or rather sympoietic, systems of exchange and knowledge cultivation capable of rendering each other capable, i.e. mutual capacitation to be the best they can be. The non-*Monopoly* playing group could even begin with a more far out and fantastic game setting that has nothing to do with the mundane world of capitalism. Whatever it be though, the alternative game setting should be something well suited to making kin in the *Chthulucene*. When the alternative game (Chthonic) collides with the original uncritical (Capitalist) game, a simulation of a particular battle or set of battles in the Intergalactic War of the Many-Headed Hydras can be seen playing out.

One group of people begins playing *Monopoly* and the other group...let's say, *Anti-Monopoly* or ... *Chthonopolis* or, borrowing more directly from Haraway, *Terrapolis*, and at some point, the two groups of players have to begin playing with one another and gameworlds collide.²⁵ There is conflict because the standard rules of *Monopoly* are interrupted when a high-

²⁵ Gameplay could get really messy once the two separate games/worlds collide. The designers of the process could put more or less work into what the clash of games/worlds looks like in terms of rules and game mechanics and balance will be key here. Too much planning and pre-creation of new rules and structure for this phase might make the whole

profile eviction defense of a prized squatted community center leads to debt, general and/or rent strike that leads to the capitalists playing *Monopoly* ceasing to be able to collect money. Then the capitalist players have to regroup and roleplay through how they plan to respond while those playing the roles composing the Chthonic Hydra have to attempt to anticipate the next moves of the Capitalist Hydra, to continue cultivating their capacities for mutual aid, care and collective self-defense. Is diplomacy likely or possible? Can even one of the capitalist players be converted to kin? What is at risk for the chthonic communities in pursuing diplomatic solutions? In more overt and violent forms of struggle? All players involved should do their best to roleplay from the perspective of someone who begins one hundred percent committed to their worldview, whatever variation of chthonic or capitalist. The game goes on as long as it is useful and fun.

Brathwaite and Schreiber's (2017) second challenge for developing games as teaching tools is "educational entertainment." While their focus is on creating "a concept for a PC game that teaches any middle grade school subject in a way that is entertaining without being didactic" (Ibid, p. 255), the following excerpt applies more broadly as principles for game design for teaching/learning purposes regardless of age, context, or medium and thus can be adapted to the task of Chthonic capacitation games:

- 1. Choose a subject**

[...] subjects that are easiest to model in games are those with interacting systems, comparisons, tradeoffs, and cause-and-effect situations. [...] if you focus too much on content rather than concepts, you ignore the greatest strength of the medium: the ability to model systems and show what happens when they are set in motion. You do not have to teach a complete subject over the course of a full year. You can focus on one aspect of a subject that lends itself particularly well to games. The scale and

experience seem extra artificial and thus more difficult for "willful suspension of disbelief." Can we really expect a clash of worlds to play out in such an orderly fashion? It is also important to note that one of the key challenges and growth areas for players in this clash of worlds/rulesets and objectives is to analyze, create, communicate defend, intuit, transform and negotiate relations and ways of being suited to the ethics of staying with the trouble and making kin in the Chthulucene. Yet if there is no structure at all then all but the most practiced improv theatre and roleplay gaming groups are likely to descend into random banter, meta-game discussion, and entirely other activities beyond the game scenario.

complexity of your game should be proportional to how much course material it covers.

2. **Create a game model**

Find aspects of your subject that are inherently game-like. Think of ways to model the systems in the context of a game, based on the mechanics that drive the systems in the real world. If you feel stuck, a browse through BoardGameGeek.com should help. As you look over the descriptions of the games, think of how you could insert your subject into its design. You may encounter some content that needs to be preserved exactly in the game mechanics. Other content can be simplified so that the game isn't needlessly complex. The tradeoff between gameplay and reality is difficult in educational games, and as both educator and game designer, you need to consider both. From your choices, a set of core mechanics should emerge (Ibid, p. 255).

Brathwaite and Schreiber's (2017) third challenge of the chapter is "Historical Battles."

This is perhaps one of the most useful of the challenges for creating Chthonic games for "rendering each other capable"²⁶ in the context of conflict and war. It does not necessarily need to be exclusively tactically or militarily focused as there are myriad reasons for losing battles and even more ways to win them that do not involve a military defeat. But let's see the prompt the authors offer with the challenge and see what can be done from there.

Challenge 3 – Historical Battles

The details of historical battles can be lost on students, particularly because there are so many of them. How can we make historical battles come to life? The same way that millions of players have—by turning them into board games. In fact, there's a whole genre of games called "war games" that allow people to replay battles.

²⁶ This exact quote is from Haraway (2016), p. 7. Before reading Donna Haraway's *Staying with the Trouble* I had consistently been using the term "mutual capacitation" in my own writings and speech. I also use the term "to capacitate" which I picked up the habit of from spending time in Chiapas and Oaxaca, Mexico where it is common to use the term "capacitar" (Spanish). Capacitarnos being the infinitive form, in one word, of mutual capacitation or "to capacitate one another." In translating capacitar to English I am only left with the option "to capacitate" which reveals "the absent positive." Meaning that we have the negative version of the word, to incapacitate, or incapacitated, but somewhere along the line and I am not sure when, we lost the positive "capacitate." So in order to regenerate that much-needed vocabulary for the English language I will continue to use that terminology in my own speech and writing but I will also rotate it with this new to me and more consistent with English-as-it-is way of saying the same thing "to render (each other) capable." Haraway, in giving the genealogy of "becoming with" and "rendering capable," in endnote 7 of chapter 1 (Ibid. p. 170), credits Vinciane Despret with the latter phraseology:

Despret, "The Body We Care For"; Despret, "The Becoming of Subjectivity in Animal Worlds." Despret gave me "rendering capable" and much more. "Becomingwith" is developed in Haraway, When Species Meet, 16–17, 287.

For this exercise, select a historical battle and create a game that incorporates key features of the battle into it. One way to do this is to modify an existing war game, such as *Risk*, *Axis & Allies*, or *Memoir '44*. Another way is to create your own game from scratch, which may be necessary if the battle you choose takes place under unique conditions that aren't easily covered by another game.

The purpose of your war game is to teach the choices that were faced by the leaders of each side. Therefore, the players should be making these kinds of strategic choices and not just rolling lots of dice (Ibid. p. 256).

The rest of the challenge lays out a suggested process, as follows

1. Choose a battle. [...] **2. Research and more research** [historical context, why was it fought? Who was in command of each side? What forces did they have? Relative capabilities? What was the terrain like and how did that effect it? Special abilities, equipment, training? What were the goals of each side? What innovations of strategy or tactics came from it?] **3. Create the core.** [try to select the most important information of the battle and preserve it in the gameplay] **4. Create the mechanics.** [Simplify the historical data to preserve general idea while making the game easy to learn and fun to play]. **5. Create deliverable** (Ibid. p. 257).

Again with war? If the genealogy of the Capitalist Hydra is war, can we really be expected to gain any advances for the Chthonic Hydra in the present Intergalactic War by playing war games? The idea here is not to use this in a conventional military history type of way as the authors describe above. Rather consider novel ways to critically analyze historical battles that are usually considered to imagine ways that the Chthonic Hydra grows more than the Capitalist as a result of the conflict. Try applying this exercise to the context of a strike, say the Seattle General Strike of 1919. How did the main representatives of the Capitalist and Chthonic Hydras, if such lines can even be clearly identified in that particular strike, fair with their efforts? Do all players agree on everyone else's identifications with who counts as Chthonic and who Capitalist? Why or why not? How did various participants, official and unofficial leaderships and everyone else engaged in the event otherwise, play out commitments to the Chthonic Hydra or the Capitalist Hydra? Which side were different individuals and groups hydra-ing the strongest? Where do the lines seem to blur and why? How might things have feasibly happened in a different way that

would have resulted in a perceptible net gain/win for the Chthonic Hydra? If you were to travel from a sustainable future²⁷ back to the General Strike of 1919, what insights might you share with participants? What other playful exercises might be useful in engaging with this particular scenario for drawing out (hi)storical insights useful to the present storical coordinates of the intergalactic war? What other struggles beyond the General Strike of 1919 seem salient?

As tentacular beings that exist throughout bodies, from the most extreme of micro and macro scales, the Chthonic and Capitalist Hydras do not fight their intergalactic war as a human empire does with troops of distinct bodies and soldiers. As we learn from the seminar on critical thought against the capitalist hydra, generally from Zapatista method, and from our collected authors referenced throughout this paper: critical thought is a key weapon against the capitalist hydra. Yet that does not mean it can merely be thought out of existence and that nothing physical has to take place. The suggested adaptations of game exercise from Brathwaite and Schreiber (2017) here are meant as tools to help in the formation and mutual capacitation of various collectivities that make up the already existing Chthonic Hydra. Now for the seriously playful work of foretelling futures of fortune, make it so!

²⁷ For two splendid resources on exploring sustainable futures scenarios in a gameful way, see Goodyear-Ka'Ōpua (2015) and Enos & Vint (2015)

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