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**J18: movements towards an ethico-
aesthetic paradigm**

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Abstract

This thesis offers a materialist account of political action from the perspective of the aesthetic, focusing on a global day of action, protest and carnival staged to coincide with the G8 Summit on June 18th 1999. An event known as J18.

Part one begins with a review of contemporary literature concerning the sociologies of contemporary political movements, theories of space and locality provided by geography, analyses of public interventions by art practice as well as the tactical deployment of media and writing related specifically to the cultural politics of anti-capitalism. The theory and methods chapter surveys historic shifts in thinking about political action, through an attendant Marxist epistemology, through three key events: the Paris Commune, the Russian Revolution and May 1968. The search for a materialist understanding of political action feeds the act of drawing together empirical material from J18 by way of the data gathering process and the reciprocal development of a critical framework used as a method of interpretation.

In Part Two a multi-centred account of the event is narrated by way of micro-examples that are each affectively attuned to, and constitutive of the events happening.

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Part One

1. Introduction

This thesis represents an attempt to understand a global day of action that took place on June 18th 1999. The perceptions of key players who participated in the production of J18 are drawn together to develop an understanding of the event. Key players include; the protestors, the government, mainstream media, the City of London Police force, the London Metropolitan Police force, British Transport Police, the Corporation of London municipality, residents, workers and corporations.

A desire to situate this PhD research in the aesthetico–political aspirations of J18 stems, in part from my sense of gratitude towards ravers with whom, in northern warehouse parties in Britain I danced through the late 1980’s and early 1990’s. At the time I was unaware that ravers were perceived as a threat. Beyond the confines of my experience, family and friends, rave was producing an endless tirade of disparagements, which along moral, ethical, aesthetic, and socio–economic lines called for its removal from society.¹ The government and the mainstream media focused their attentions on the use of drugs, such as ecstasy by ravers. The use of abandoned industrial warehouses for mass parties was also not legislated for and was thus deemed to be illegal.² The sonorous degeneracy of machine–made rhythms was perceived as environmental pollution, which combined with the youthful abandon of the

¹Richard Card and Richard Ward, *The Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994* (London: Jordans, 1996); Rupa Huq, “The Right to Rave: Opposition to the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act 1994,” in *Storming the Millennium: The New Politics of Change*, ed. Tim Jordan and Adam Lent (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1999), 15-33. In 1994 ravers were singled out by the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act. These accounts foster an understanding of the raves in this context.

²Drew Hemment, “Dangerous Dancing and Disco Riots: the Northern Warehouse Parties,” in *DIY Culture: Party and Protest in Nineties Britain* (London: Verso, 1998). Hemment emphasises that this view was worked up in part by local police forces, namely the Lancashire Police Force who note the initial difficulties of identifying rave as a crime, ‘It needed quite close scrutiny of the law by our legal people to actually find what offences were being committed.’

raves was conceived as a form of public disorder. The political censure and equally restrictive commercial colonisations of rave music, whereby many DJ's voluntarily channelled their talents into the legitimated realm of Manchester clubs, would eventually dispatch the northern warehouse parties altogether. This, I discovered only afterwards, through theorys and concepts, housed in books, written by cultural theorists. To re-emphasize this point; at the time my experience of the parties was not that they were in defiance, knowingly transgressive, deviant, subversive, a refusal of, or resistant toward an external force. As thrilling as the discovery of my unwitting protest was, this revelation came only afterwards in time.

In the 1990's cultural theorists, in search of latent political potentials in popular culture positioned the rave in a complex of youth formations brought under or adjacent to dance or club culture. Although there is no consensus about the political and social significance of the rave, descriptions always emphasised the democratic potential of the dance floor as a site for the expression and experience of popular pleasures. To give just a few examples, the feminist cultural theorist Angela McRobbie describes rave as a form of symbolic escape from social tensions and in this she considers rave to be a contemporary version of spectacular subcultural resistance.³ Following Angela McRobbie, Maria Pini argues that the rave dance floor acts as a vehicle for the expression of alternative forms of femininity that "do not clearly 'fit' standard, patriarchal definitions of sexuality, and eroticism".⁴

³ Angela McRobbie, *Postmodernism and Popular Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 162. Formative studies of spectacular subcultures include: Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson, *Resistance through Rituals: Youth Sub-cultures in Post-war Britain* (London: Hutchinson and CCCS, 38, 1976) and Dick Hebdige, *Subculture the meaning of style* (London and New York: Routledge, 1979).

⁴ Maria Pini, "Women and the Early British Rave Scene." in Angela McRobbie (ed), *Back to reality: Social Experience and Cultural Studies* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), 167.

Sarah Thornton building on the insights of Pierre Bourdieu's "cultural capital" concept describes how in the raves a subject can successfully integrate into an exclusive, underground scene, defined by hard-to-find dance parties and music collections, attaining in the process a certain level of 'subcultural capital'.⁵ As a form of postmodern cultural consumption clubbing itself was deemed, 'a series of fragmented, temporal experiences as [clubbers] move between different dance floors and engage with different crowds'.⁶ Similarly, Malbon emphasizes the temporary, fleeting, and apolitical character of the rave scene, arguing that rave's, 'resistance is found through losing yourself in the music, in the dance, in the social and physical surroundings, paradoxically to find yourself'.⁷

Cultural theorists connected the micropolitics of the dance floor to wider macropolitical and social processes. However the movement from the micro to the macro fell into the gap occupied by culture, understood as a thoroughly mediated terrain where values, beliefs, tastes and interests found their expression. The emphasis of cultural analysis was placed on the final signifying products of the subculture and the meaning produced by these images. Moreover, while a principle attraction of subculture was precisely that it offers strong subjectivity through the collective meanings that emerge from the characteristic combination of signs, symbols, objects, styles and other signifying texts, the cultural work involved in making them did not

5 Sarah Thornton, *Club Cultures: Music, Media and Subcultural Capital* (Hanover: Wesleyan University Press, 1995) and Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1984).

6 Andy Bennett, 'Subcultures or Neo-tribes? Rethinking the Relationship between Youth, Style and Musical Taste', *Sociology*, 33, no 3, 611.

7 Ben Malbon, 'Clubbing: Consumption, Identity and the Spatial Practices of every-night Life', in T. Skelton and G. Valentine (eds), *Cool Places: Geographies of Youth Cultures* (London: Routledge, 1998), 281.

figure in the analysis. McRobbie argues that subcultural theory was resistant to investigating some of these processes because they brought an analysis, itself dependent on notions of class and resistance, directly up against a set of practices which seemed far removed from the politics of class and resistance, namely the intense activity of cultural production involved as well as its intensely aesthetic dimension.⁸

The cultural politics of the rave while unhinged from the structural determinations and inequalities of the past (along identity lines of class or gender) promoted a micropolitics of group-being that was always structurally predetermined and bounded by wider social and political indeterminacy and media saturation. As such the democratising potential of the dance floor as an experience unhinged from the past was nevertheless tied to the fluid, unfixed and fragmented nature of postmodern cultural consumption. The rave was construed as a little resistant not by virtue of belonging to a subordinate class, but by way of an aesthetic appropriation of and experimentation with the explosion of media and imagery that was always already in circulation, as they also preexisted the bodies in the rave and the rave event itself.

'This hyper-reality of pleasure, this extension of media (one which is found also in 24-hour TV and radio) produces a new social state, a new relationship between the body, the pleasures of music and dance, and the new technologies of the mass media...It also transports this dance, drugs and music 'cocktail' into a distinctively British landscape, one which uses and celebrates a geography of small towns, new towns, motorways and rural 'beauty spots', not just all night or all day but for up to three days at a time. Not surprisingly these raves, especially during the summer, begin to look like the hippie gatherings or festivals of the late 1960s. The sight, in the summer of 1992, of working-class male football fans converging in secret rural locations to dance out of doors and sleep in their cars before returning, after this saturnalia of mind and

⁸ Angela McRobbie, *Postmodernism and Popular Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 155-176.

body experiences, to Liverpool, Leeds, or wherever, is a strong statement about the appropriation of pleasure and the 'right to party' on the part of this particular (but expansive) group of young people.'⁹

The relegation of aesthetics to elective consumption, pleasure-seeking nihilism, indifference and passivity meant the qualities of experience couched in the rave in its most literal sense (and sensing), fell outside of what was culturally-theoretically thinkable.

When, on June 18th 1999 the events in the City of London filtered through my office window their resemblance to the rave was palpable. I clearly recall cycling on my usual route home through the City, it must have been early afternoon, sensing the event's affects; the streets were strewn with colourful debris and oddly free of cars and city workers; small groups in lively spirits danced along otherwise unpopulated streets; fresh graffiti stood out from the smooth surfaces of corporate buildings. While these low intensity images made my own path-of-least-resistance home more pleasant I perceived, at the time, only enough to forget them instantly. I didn't, for example think about what might have caused them. I didn't question where they had come from nor what significance they might have.

When my flatmate arrived home shortly after me, she and her friend stood in the living room staring at the television, poised as if something were about to happen. I kept quiet and joined them. The BBC News reported that a violent mob had attacked the City of London that afternoon. They were disappointed; not only, they said was a mere 30 seconds allotted to the event whose magnitude as they experienced it had deserved far longer, but the

⁹ Ibid., 171.

story was a gross misrepresentation. The two of them, dancing all afternoon in the city with thousands of other people had managed to avoid encountering a single act of violence. The media however had skipped straight to the violence and over the point of the event altogether.

With the insights of cultural theory and my own experience of the event in mind this research into J18 evolved by trying not to confuse or conflate the nature of the event with the meanings ascribed it by virtue of being interpreted. The lived matter of organising the event, the bodies, practices and processes that went in to produce it are not meaningful simply because they were reflected upon, written about and documented. J18 meant for some being there, for others organising in a way that minimized the disruption, for others organising the disruption was precisely the point.

In an effort to acknowledge the limitations of writing an event after it has happened, the research included a historical review of ideas about combating capitalism. Three key moments were selected for being transformative at the level of the event, each marking a sea change in how people thought about mass mobilization. These historical precedents and their interpretation as presented in this thesis do not amount to, nor were they intended as, a history of political action. History is the narration of the past; it is never history as it is lived. In writing about J18 it has been essential to engage with the possibility of writing the event in a way that takes into account its lived experience, as well as the question of how to write such an account, and where to begin. J18 is inscribed in memory, in individual memory and in collective memory. The fieldwork was conducted between 2001 and 2003 when the event was still relatively fresh in people's minds. Drawing these

stories together helps to develop a sense of the different analyses of organising and action in the event. It was perhaps the most fascinating aspect of the fieldwork, and certainly the most unexpected; that each person I talked to narrated a different sense of the event. How then, to write about J18 when there are likely as many versions of the event as there are people for whom it exists? We cannot verify the events existence by ignoring these complexities and ambiguities and embedding them in a theory that suits. The event introduces an indeterminacy that is objective; J18 is objectively indeterminate, as Brian Massumi puts it.¹⁰ The question is how to write the event in a way that incorporates the problem that the event itself presents in this sense? Similarly how might transformation, of bodies, practices, processes and ideas in the production of the event be accounted for? Is it possible to write an account of J18 that can encompass this complexity? Perhaps it is a question of proportion, of writing the event in which transformation is depicted in proportion to its lived experience?

Francois Lyotard pointed to the *figural* nature of events, the ‘temporal aporia’ events introduce in history.¹¹ For Lyotard this has to do with the inherent incapacity of language to represent, to refer or to speak of things either directly or exhaustively. The discursive, the regime in which human beings communicate and can speak of things, offers a dim recollection of events. Understood as a discursive practice, the raves mentioned earlier, were descriptively qualified in terms of what ought not, should never, or can never be. This did not, even at the time, prevent people participating in them. Nor

¹⁰ Brian Massumi, “Navigating Movements,” interview by Maria Teresa Cruz, *Interact online journal*, 2003, 14, <http://www.interact.com.pt/interact8/default.htm>

¹¹ Jean-François Lyotard, *Peregrinations: Law, Form, Event* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988); Bill Readings, *Introducing Lyotard: Art and Politics* (London: Routledge, 1991)

were the descriptive qualifications merely discursive, in that they illegalised rave, turned its subjects into criminals and dispatched of it completely. In essence an understanding of the rave exclusively in terms of signification and representation does not get at what it was like to be there. In the context of developing an understanding of J18 I have attempted to avoid the impasse that an exclusive focus on the question of signification and representation generate. In this sense, I have chosen to understand that the event marks an excess of the world in relation to language.

J18 as performative event, theatrical event, protest event, as such is impossible to master or pin down. It will change constantly in peoples' minds, it will never be fixed and there is never going to be a point where it all coheres and makes sense, a J18 finale. The event remains open, and in opening the event to analysis I endeavoured to research the different understandings of it; why people take to the streets and what happens when they do.

2. Literature Review

Introduction

This study is based on a multi-disciplinary review of literature that includes sociology, geography, artistic practice, performance and digital media studies. The individual sections retain each discipline as a distinct set of concerns and questions tasked with developing an understanding of J18. I begin with the sociology of crowds and new social movements, moving on to geographies of space and place, interventionist art practice and digital media. Finally, I review literature that has emerged specifically in relation to the cultural politics of anti-capitalism, moving in the same section to the writings produced by protestors involved in J18.

Sociologies of New Social Movements

The French social psychologist Gustave Le Bon aimed to examine the characteristics of nineteenth century crowds ‘in a purely scientific manner, that is, by making an effort to proceed with method, and without being influenced by opinions, theories, and doctrines.’¹² It was precisely the crowd’s capacity to be influenced as such that led to the French Revolution in 1848 and the Paris Commune in 1871, according to Le Bon. Arguably, a social scientific investigation of the crowd provided ‘the last resource for the statesman who wishes not to govern them ... but at any rate not to be too much governed by them.’¹³ Le Bon advanced an understanding of the crowd as a ‘new body possessing properties quite different from those of the bodies that have served to form it’.¹⁴ In this sense, physical proximity is not a

12. Gustave Le Bon, *The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* (Macmillan: New York, 1896).

13. *Ibid.*, 11.

14. *Ibid.*, 17.

fundamental, though commonly held characteristic of crowds. Le Bon applied his theory to crowds in the street, to parliamentary assemblies and newspaper publics. The crowd, he maintains, forms a collective mind or mental unity and in so doing, creates the conditions through which individual sentiment and action become contagious. This is the creeping capacity of the crowd: feeding upon itself, latching onto its own movements and expressions it is without intention, and thereby swayed only by external forces. The crowd follows itself, and requires external movement. While Le Bon foregrounds the crowd as a powerful conductor of affects, he affords it a senseless, unreasonable, irritable, incredulous, barbaric and destructive nature.

By the mere fact that he forms part of an organized crowd, a man descends several rungs in the ladder of civilization. Isolated, he may be a cultivated individual; in a crowd, he is a barbarian ... a creature acting by instinct. ¹⁵

The crowd, Le Bon argues, strips individuals of the capacity for reason and rationality. Against this, the safe-house of scientific knowledge is essential in order to secure the ideas, conceptions and beliefs in society that it is the characteristic capacity of the crowd to propagate without sense or reason. He echoes the implicit criticism of the left – that the crowd’s suggestibility makes it susceptible to demagoguery.

Social scientific studies have since attempted to counter Le Bon’s negative association of the collective mind with violence and irrationality. Sociologies of crowd behaviour began to recognize the meaningful and purposive nature of actors, acting collectively.¹⁶ Research began to recognize that rather than being synonymous with crowds, collective behaviour varies in nature, in

15. Ibid., 13.

16. Ralph Turner and Lewis Killian, *Collective Behavior* (Prentice-Hall: Englewood Cliffs, 1957).

form, content, duration and complexity.¹⁷ Where an assembly involves collective behaviour that aims to promote or resist a change in the society or organization of which it is a part, a focus on the social motives for collective action emerges. Studies of new social movements take as their object of analysis, ‘the interactions (more or less organised, more or less formal) between a plurality of individuals, groups and/or organisations, engaged in a political or cultural conflict on the basis of a shared collective identity.’¹⁸ A distinction is made early on between social movements and social movement organizations (SMO’s), with the aim of incorporating loose affiliations and informal ties between different collective interests as dynamic social forces within nation–states.¹⁹ Movement precedes social formations, as the common or shared set of meanings through which actors, whether individuals, groups or organizations, come to recognise they are part of the same side in a conflict. What would otherwise be seen as an entirely random and unconnected set of actors, events, processes and practices is instead viewed as a collectivity connected by the contentious tissue of social movements. Social movements are contentious because, as Charles Tilly reminds us, they always ‘involve collective making of claims that, if realized, would conflict with someone else’s interests.’²⁰

Sociology of new social movements accounts for and assesses the diverse forms of collectivization involved in specific solidarities, groups and movements and to what extent such forms are disciplined, hierarchical or more or less situational, mobile and fluid. Consider the differences between

17. Clark McPhail, *The Myth of the Madding Crowd* (New Jersey: Aldine Transaction, 1991).

18. Mario Diani, “The Concept of Social Movement,” *The Sociological Review* 40, no. 1 (1992): 3.

19. Mark Granovetter, “The Strength of Weak Ties: A network theory revisited,” *Sociological Theory* 1 (1983): 210–33.

20. Charles Tilly, *Social Movements, 1768–2004* (London: Paradigm, 2004), 3.

demonstrations, protest camps and occupations. These studies look to how the object of contestation is formed, as the creation of a regulated system, or as in the case of HIV campaigns, the creative lack of such a system of regulation. They seek to show how truth claims are made about the object of contestation, whether through biography, bearing witness or utilizing alternative forms of knowledge as in the environmental movement.²¹ It shows how these truth statements are generated through the rhetorics of contestation and the mechanisms which support them, such as alternative information networks and the circulation of expertise, experience and critical reflection as sources of validation. It also looks at how a movement's endpoints are justified; whether by health, equality, or freedom.²²

Sociologies of new movements narrate a historical succession of underlying unities of forms, devices and techniques of protest, and how when turned to account for new purposes by new movements, inventive and innovative improvisations can occur within existing moral, intellectual and practical techniques. Following Charles Tilly, social movement theorists argue that these abilities, techniques and practices constitute 'repertoires of contention' that are external and predate and outlive the subjects who use them.²³ Sociology provides a useful taxonomy of the origins and forms of protest in terms that stress the multiple, heterogeneous and contingent conditions which give rise to them.

21. Brian Doherty, "Manufactured Vulnerability: Eco-activist tactics in Britain," *Mobilization: An international journal* 4, no. 1 (1996): 75-89; Kenneth Alan Gould, *Local environmental struggles: citizen activism in the treadmill of production* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

22. Marco Guigni, Doug McAdam and Charles Tilly, eds., *How Social Movements Matter* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

23. Mark Traugott, *Contentious Repertoires in Great Britain, 1758-1834* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995); Dieter Rucht, "The Strategies and Action Repertoires of New Movements," in *Challenging the Political Order* (Cambridge: Polity, 1990), 156-175. Repertoires of contention do not explain why nor how people come to prefer certain forms of protest over others nor engage with the question of the kinds of pleasure people derive from such practices.

A recent strand of sociological investigation is concerned with addressing the global extensions of new social movements. Sociological concepts that were used to understand movements operating within the confines of nation-states have in turn been reconfigured. Notable within this strand of scholarship are Graeme Chesters and Ian Welsh.²⁴ The use-value of this class of work has been to continue the legacy of social movement studies that validate the existence of the arena of extra-parliamentary politics. A clear delineation of their object, an attempt to define the alter-globalization movement of movements, is precisely the point of their analysis. Using new concepts drawn from the humanities and the physical and social sciences they elucidate the features that, they are confident, carry the potential for social change in a contemporary context. Crucially, an emphasis on identity is retained as a condition of social movements. However, analysing the role that identity plays, Chester and Welsh shift the scale of analysis from the nation-state to the 'planetary action systems' across which identities and the associated political potential of movements now operate.²⁵ This shift in scale bypasses the necessary formation of a unified collective identity by movements that, working through established structures of political opportunity, serve to represent particular interests at the level of the nation-state. This focus on identity retains the primacy of practices and processes of sense-making of movement actors, termed reflexive framings. Many sociologists they mention, notably Anthony Giddens, Ulrich Beck and Scott Lash, have tended to operationalize reflexivity in relation to the production of knowledge, freedom and truth. In reflexive framings of new social

24. Graeme Chesters and Ian Welsh, *Complexity and Social Movements: Multitudes at the Edge of Chaos* (London, New York: Routledge, 2006).

25. Alberto Melucci, *Challenging Codes: Collective Action in the Information Age* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

movements, Chesters and Welsh observe an aesthetic primacy, whereby music, dance and shared creative practices (making banners, for example) are 'communicative competencies vital in contexts lacking a common language'.²⁶ By means of these aesthetic registers, movements build trust, consolidate group ethos and generate positive energies as well renew and revitalize the philosophical underpinnings of protests, as through the introduction of carnival.

Geographies of Space and Place

Geographers who have introduced the concepts of space and place as significant dimensions of political struggle are discussed briefly in this section through the work of selected writers. In western thought, time (equated with movement) history and progress have taken precedence. As cultural geographer Doreen Massey argues, space and place tend to be associated with fixity, stasis and reaction, with a need to be rooted and with rootedness, with fixed identities, fervent forms of nationalism, or an obsession with conservation and heritage. Space and place, she says are the feminine other to masculine time.²⁷ Massey has sought a more politically progressive sense of place and space as fundamentally significant, if often unrecognized, components of changes taking place in society. Henri Lefebvre noted that space 'is conspicuous by its absence from supposedly epistemological studies...the fact that space is mentioned on every page

26. Chesters and Welsh, *Complexity and Social Movements: Multitudes at the Edge of Chaos*, 10.

27. Doreen Massey, *Space, Place and Gender* (Cambridge: Polity, 1994). A further elucidation of the argument that space is charged with gendered associations can be found in: Elizabeth Wilson, *The Sphinx in the City: Urban Life, the Control of Disorder and Women* (Berkeley: Virago Press and U. of California Press, 1992). Wilson argues that modern literary depictions of city spaces by male writers as threatening, disordered and as something to be feared extends to representations of women. The metropolitan territory as a space of uncontrolled sexual license, disorder and chaos is gendered female, while time, rationality and control is gendered male. Wilson also points out that literary works by modern female writers, far from fearing the city, tend to explore its vitality.

notwithstanding.²⁸ Space, especially absent by its ubiquity in social science, is politicized by geographers who retrieve the concept from where it had been emptied of political possibilities. Debates about conceptualizations of space and place are then never simply a question of semantics, never simply about the meaning of the words *space* and *place* given that, as Michel Foucault observes, 'it is in space that...language unfurls, slips on itself, determines its choices, draws its figures and translations.'²⁹

Geographers do not understand space as merely an absolute, predefined background or container of life. The set of knowledge geography has developed of space and of spaces foregrounds the spatial as part of our lived experience, perception and way of conceptualising the world. To this tripartite spatiality of lived, perceived and conceived spaces developed by Henri Lefebvre, Doreen Massey adds a fourth; time. She argues that social scientific knowledge dichotomises the relations of time and space according to the pairing A/not-A, where time is characterised positively by movement while change and space are characterised negatively by the lack of these things. Massey affirms that on the contrary, neither time nor space pass across a one-dimensional surface, the place where history and movement inscribe themselves, never stand still.

Space is not static, nor time spaceless. Of course spatiality and temporality are different from each other but neither can be conceptualised as the absence of the other. ³⁰

28. Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford, UK ; Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1991), 3.

29. Jeremy Crampton and Stuart Elden, *Space, Knowledge and Power : Foucault and Geography* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), 163.

30. Massey, *Space, Place and Gender*, 264.

Massey suggests that holding the spatial and temporal inextricably together is not as easy as it sounds, but it is extremely important to the development of a politically progressive sense of place. Where many geographers, following David Harvey, link the relations of time and space to an experience of insecurity and vulnerability occasioned by time-space compression, they observe the need amongst many people to develop a strong sense of place. As a form of refuge, Massey suggests a bit of peace and quiet, in the middle of this flux, whereby this sense of place is read, 'as a retreat from the (actually unavoidable) dynamic and change of real life, which is what we must seize if we are to change things for the better.'³¹ Again, in this argument space and place are equated with stasis and reaction, and emptied of change and movement, which are attached to time. Against this view Massey emphasizes the inseparability of space and place from social relations and processes. From this perspective, a sense of place develops as a particular, unique point of intersection, a meeting place of physical movements, social relations, links between people, invisible communications and notably, as all of these things stretch out over space, very different experiences of time-space compression.

The tendency to conceive of time as equated with mobility over space (and thereby equated with fixity) is perhaps no coincidence given that the knowledge of space which geography has developed links space and spaces to the exercise of power. Authoritarian and oppressive productions of space (the prison, the asylum) seek to immobilize or circumscribe movement in space and control and regulate the use of space by cutting it up, putting borders around it and boundaries within it. In 2002 Steve Pile and Michael Keith

31. *Ibid.*, 5.

edited a collection of essays entitled *Geographies of Resistance*.³² The authors acknowledge that geography has produced finely tuned critiques of social power while disproportionately little attention is given to political struggles. All too often the terrain of political struggle is conceived as the *outcome* of an opposition to power. This limited consideration of political struggle in terms of an opposition to the practices and institutions of social power is redressed, say the authors, by geographers who show that political identities and actions can take place on grounds other than those defined only through the effects of the powerful. This leads to an understanding of other spaces that, within the geographic imagination, have added to an understanding of resistance. The authors suggest that,

A spatial understanding of resistance necessitates a radical reinterpretation and revaluation of the concept: by thinking resistance spatially, it becomes both about the different spaces of resistance and also about the ways in which resistance is mobilized through specific spaces and times. ³³

Geographies of Resistance attempts to map resistance as its own extant geography, in possession of its own spatialities distinct from any straightforward relation to geographies of power and domination. Thus, resistance does not simply present an upside-down or back-to-front or face-down map of the world. More often resistances seek to occupy, deploy and create alternative spatialities from those defined through domination, oppression and exploitation.

How then is resistance (re)interpreted spatially by geography? Firstly, as mentioned, by observing the cultural politics of space and place as crucial determinants of social power. Also referred to as radical geographies, the

32. Steve Pile and Michael Keith, eds., *Geographies of Resistance* (London: Routledge, 1997).

33. *Ibid.*, 2.

'radical' is associated with pinpointing power relations involved in the production of space. Though too numerous to mention here, an unrepresentative sample of early works include; Manuel Castells on urban social movements;³⁴ the consideration of class by David Harvey;³⁵ the confluence of critical theory and space in Henri Lefebvre and Ed Soja;³⁶ global mobilities observed by Saskia Sassen;³⁷ the feminist geography of Elizabeth Wilson and the work on gender by Doreen Massey and Nancy Duncan;³⁸ the uneven developments detailed by Neil Smith;³⁹ and the geographic exclusion observed by David Sibley.⁴⁰

For radical geography, resistance is associated with forms of mass mobilization that operate in defense of common interests and are determined by action: the strike, the march, or the formation of community organizations. For David Harvey, resistance, to be effective, must take a position of class opposition over and above all other possible positions along identity lines. While Harvey acknowledges there are different kinds of oppression, when studied in-situ (a requisite for geographic imaginings) the overarching form of oppression he concedes is capitalist exploitation of the labour force. Where a group cannot organize alliances across differences of identity or grievance they remain vulnerable to exploitation. Thus, Harvey

34. Manuel Castells, *The city and the grassroots : a cross-cultural theory of urban social movements* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).

35. David Harvey, "Class Relations, social justice and the politics of difference," in *Place and the Politics of Identity* (London: Routledge, 1993), 41-66.

36. Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*; Edward W. Soja, *Postmodern geographies : the reassertion of space in critical social theory* (London: Verso, 1989).

37. Saskia Sassen, *The global city: New York, London, Tokyo* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1991).

38. Elizabeth Wilson, *The Sphinx in the City: Urban Life, the Control of Disorder and Women*; Massey, *Space, Place and Gender*; Nancy Duncan, *Bodyspace: destabilizing geographies of gender and sexuality* (London: Routledge, 1996).

39. Neil Smith, *Uneven development: nature, capital, and the production of space*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, UK ; Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1984).

40. David Sibley, *Geographies of Exclusion* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995).

argues, political struggles separating out along other lines of power such as race, gender and sexuality, are diluted as a result. Where other political identities have formed around new social movements, such as civil rights, peace and the environment, for example, this diluting threatens to obscure the shared experience of class that can unite radical politics around what in geographic terms is such a clearly discernible determinant of social power.

A single structural imperative such as capitalist power, Manuel Castells argues, does not explain the kinds of resistances to be found in inner city protest or the reasons why people participate in them. However, Castells is not in disagreement with Harvey in so far as he concedes that capitalism is the source of all political and economic injustices. In his book *The City and the Grassroots* Castells considers a wide range of examples of urban social movements, from the Paris Commune in 1871, the rent strikes in Glasgow in 1915 to Latin American struggles in the Mission district and gay rights in the Castro in 1960's San Francisco. He observes that resistances are formed by social groups who are located in unequal power relations and who are seeking to redress the inequality. The main targets of resistance that, in the process of political struggle act as structural determinants are threefold: social services such as housing, employment and education, cultural identity in terms of the group's specificity and political authority in the form of the state or local government. Castells demonstrates how not only social power, but the goal-oriented determinations of resistance constitutes city space and that this involves multiple political identities, not just class. Nevertheless the terrain of the struggle is always set in the terms and the spaces defined by social power.

The battlefield of political struggle, set in advance by oppression, inequality

and domination harbors the production of spaces by resistance. However, as previously stated, resistance does not simply inversely mirror these oppressive or exploitative geographies, it creates its own spaces in the process of the struggle. For example, following Castells, it was against the oppression of a hetero-normative world that the Castro district in San Francisco was used as a space in which gays liberated themselves, by coming out of the closet, launching in the process gay liberation movements. However, an emphasis on structural determination leads to a definition of resistance as action in spaces of power.

An emphasis on the meaning of actions in everyday life is deemed to show that the exercise of social power is intractable, indivisible and though determinate, is prone to rupture. Tim Cresswell, in *In Place out of Place*, suggests that the geographic setting plays a crucial role in defining our judgements of whether actions are good or bad, whether behaviour is appropriate or inappropriate. [REF] A suite of expectations connecting people and things in relation to one another becomes activated in place; what is appropriate here is not appropriate there. In this case, where everything has its place and is in place, space and place have become the invisible allies of ideology.⁴¹ For Cresswell, space and place are used to structure a normative world in which what is true, good and proper appears as given. However, as such space and place can also be used to question that normative world. The unintended consequence of place, as a signifying social space, is that it makes what is 'out of bounds', or 'out of place' a site of meaningful resistance.

41. For an elucidation of the concept of ideology see the section; Althusser, *Ideology and Structuralism* in chapter 3 of this thesis.

The creation of property leads to the existence of trespass.
The notion of 'in place' is logically related to the possibility
of being 'out of place'.⁴²

The example is given of graffiti artists in New York who, under the nose of authorities and on the surfaces of the city, inscribed images that were variously perceived as dirt to be cleaned, a virus to be contained, a crime to be punished, or an act of creative rebellion to be celebrated as art. Cresswell argues that the various translation of graffiti as a meaningful act depend upon 'the crucial where of graffiti'.⁴³ On the side of subway trains and on the walls of property, graffiti's transgressions of normative geography unleashed – rendering visible – not only the classifications and boundaries of order and propriety at work in place but the *who* that holds the power to assert them. Carried from subway trains into an art gallery, the meaning of graffiti changed from crime to art. Graffiti was injected with artistic and historical significance, legitimized as outlaw place-marking, and sold for vast sums of money. Cresswell makes sense of this paradoxical situation of graffiti in terms of high/low cultural distinctions. Graffiti's political struggle equates to a struggle over meanings, a distinctly discursive space of contested values and beliefs, invisible ties binding us to particular organizations of space and place. Graffiti inscribed itself onto the surface of the mainstream, in turn generating fluctuations in the frequencies of a hegemonic consensus. The crime of the art gallery was to incorporate graffiti in order to co-opt its counter-hegemonic meanings for the purpose of creating a commodity.

42. Tim Cresswell, *In Place Out of Place: Geography, Ideology and Transgression* (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 164.

43. *Ibid.*, 31-61.

Another way to understand geographies of resistance follows from the influential survey of the popular by Michel de Certeau.⁴⁴ De Certeau's insights usefully illuminate a terrain of micro-political processes by which people make do in everyday life, principally as the consumers of culture, whether shopping in the supermarket, watching television, or walking in the street.⁴⁵ From the perspective of the heterogeneous everyday practices through which ordinary people survive, the production of space by oppressive and exploitative social power is once again rendered ambiguous. De Certeau warns that, if in the mind's eye of the architect, master planner or urbanist, the image of a city taken from the vantage point of expertise and knowledge, appears to have an order, design, or rationale, this perception of space will always necessarily involve a descent into the street where no such view exists. De Certeau's prosaic pedestrians inscribe other spaces that escape the panoptic space of visibility, order and design. In this sense it is the *practice* of graffiti artists and not the legibility or appearance of graffiti that defines its resistance. For De Certeau, the modes of collective action practiced by everyday users of the city operate within the contours and fault lines of a political landscape that need not necessarily emerge in visible forms, in direct opposition or face-to-face confrontation. De Certeau therefore distinguishes between two ways of operating; the strategies of the strong and tactics which constitute the 'art of the weak':

44. Michel DeCerteau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1984).

45. De Certeau's notion of resistance, as outlined here, can also be found in James Scott, *Weapons of the weak: everyday forms of peasant resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985). Scott is an anthropologist who argued that too much attention is paid to the rare occurrences of open revolt, to grand gestures of opposition and too little to ordinary, everyday forms of resistance. Furthermore, Scott places individuals in their settings and not social structures at the centre of his analysis of resistance.

[A tactic] takes advantage of 'opportunities' and depends on them, being without any base where it could stockpile its winnings, build up its own position and plan raids. What it wins it cannot keep. This nowhere gives a tactic mobility, to be sure, but a mobility that must accept the chance offerings of the moment, and seize on the wing the possibilities that offer themselves at any moment. It must vigilantly make use of the cracks that particular conjunctions open in the surveillance of the proprietary powers. It poaches them. It creates surprises in them. It can be where it is least expected. It is a guileful ruse. ⁴⁶

Tactics, de Certeau argues, must play on and within a terrain imposed upon them and therefore manoeuvre 'within the enemy's field of vision'.⁴⁷ It is in tactics then that de Certeau is describing the complexity, plurality, temporality and improvisation of resistance. Tactical resistance manipulates, uses and diverts the spaces in which power is imminent and operative. In this way his analysis shows how the 'weak make use of the strong' to create for themselves a sphere of autonomous action and self-determination.⁴⁸

De Certeau's analytic framework can be criticized for drawing too rigid an opposition between the official and the everyday. However it is useful to consider strategies (that seek to envision, occupy and control space, define boundaries and exteriority) and tactics (which 'make do' below the level of legibility) as two distinct spatialities. In political struggle any strategic designs on space are never more than partial, while the spatialities of resistance need not necessarily implicate a subject of change that is coherent, intentional, goal-oriented or indeed visible.

⁴⁶. DeCerteau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, pxix.

⁴⁷. Ibid., 37.

⁴⁸. Ibid., xvii.

Art Practice and Performance

The term interventionist has been used to describe a legacy of social practice that falls between art and activism whilst traversing the traditional histories and contexts of both.⁴⁹ In her seminal documentation of these practices, *But is it Art?*⁵⁰ Nina Felshin asks, is it art or is it activism? The edited collection of twelve essays each respond differently to the book's title with a resounding, 'It doesn't matter!' The significance of this work is the artistic capacity to change its own practices, techniques and players as self-conscious representations of the social reality that ultimately it seeks to change. The practices documented by Felshin are ephemeral, site-specific, and processual insertions into housing projects, city sanitation systems, labour unions, environmental policy, HIV campaigns and feminist performance. Each work shaped the role of art and activism as a mediating discourse, breaking down the boundaries between the artwork and a realm of political decision making, between production and consumption and ultimately between the subject and object of social knowledge produced through the art work as text.⁵¹ The *Maintenance Activity* of Mierle Laderman Ukeles, as analysed by Patricia Phillips, illuminates these points well.⁵² *Maintenance Activity* is the philosophical underpinning of practices that Ukeles conducted from the late 1960's through to the 1990's. A year into negotiating conflicts that arose from

49. *The Interventionists: Art in the Social Sphere* is also the title of an exhibition of art in 2004 organised by MASS MoCA. The accompanying publication is Gregory Sholette and Nato Thompson, eds., *The Interventionists, Users' Manual for the Creative Disruption of Everyday Life* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004).

50. Nina Felshin, *But is it art? : the spirit of art as activism* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1995).

51. I use 'text' not because we are now exploring this art-activism after the event through its documentation, but because in documentation, this work is analysed as discursive practice which contributes to the production of an alternative public sphere, a point I return to below. Writers who have interpreted art-activism in this way include: Lucy R. Lippard, *Get the message? : a decade of art for social change*, vol. 1 (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1984); Grant Kester, *Conversation Pieces: Community and Communication in Modern Art* (Detroit: University of California Press, 2003).

52. Nina Felshin, *But is it art? : the spirit of art as activism* (Seattle: Bay Press, 1995), 165-92.

her role as a new mother, wife, housewife and artist she wrote a Manifesto for Maintenance Art that envisioned integrating her work as an artist and her work raising a family. The repetitive tasks of maintaining her own home, she extended into an analysis of all such repetitive tasks that are needed to maintain people, places, cities and environments.

I do a hell of a lot of washing, cleaning, cooking, renewing, supporting, preserving etc. Also, up to now separately I "do" Art. Now I will simply do these maintenance everyday things, and flush them up to consciousness, exhibit them, as Art. ⁵³

The *Maintenance Activities* series of projects that Ukeles conducted engaged with the maintenance staff of museums, corporations, the street, city sanitation systems and landfill sites, in each case serving to articulate indispensable, often overlooked regimes that sustain a society. Moreover in calling attention to these maintenance activities she unravelled the social conventions of behaviour and institutional hierarchies at work. In the projects *Cleaning of the Mummy Case* and *Keeping the Keys*, she interrogated the definitions of art and maintenance as social systems that function to regulate access and organise behaviour.

The writing that reflects on the significance of this work foregrounds the resistance, questioning and critical distancing of the artist from prevailing institutional structures of patronage, traditional audiences of art and formalised processes of meaning production. Similarly an artist's engagement in social issues (environmentalism, identity politics, feminism, public health, city sanitation etc.) is seen as uncontaminated from and resistant to official discourse, differing in terms of the forms of meaning construction and styles of expression. Socially engaged aesthetic practice operates in a way that is

53. Ibid., 171.

adaptive to local contexts, provides a responsive dialogue, invites the collaboration of viewers, presents a somatic and experiential (as opposed to a formalistic form of knowledge production) and is performative and improvisatory. The self-expression of the individual artist is supplanted by aesthetic practices that open space for the self-expression of social groups traditionally marginalised from access to the means of representation. As Felshin herself acknowledges, a 'desire to narrow the distance between art and audience and art and life can be seen as the art-world equivalent of the 'real world' urge toward greater participation, inclusivity and democratization.'⁵⁴

A growing field of the inter-disciplinary work of artists, architects, urban designers and cultural producers, following the legacy of art-activism, attempts to engage social and urban systems at local points along lines of their deployment and unfolding. This work is concerned with the ability to provide 'critical spatial practices' for a form of public participation that can be conceptualized as participation in an alternative public sphere.⁵⁵ In this sense there is a continuation of the epistemological authority given to certain aesthetic values developed from the relation between art and activism described above. However the debate about the political importance of public participation has recently been conducted amongst critics and practitioners as if 'participation' was an ontologically diverse yet fundamentally unproblematic conceptual category. The prevailing question has been: What experiences and life stories are made visible and how do these processes of selection and representation obscure other, potentially richer and more

⁵⁴. Ibid., 17.

⁵⁵. Roselyn Deutsch, *Evictions: Art and Spatial Politics* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1998).

accurate representations? Although this has been a fruitful line of investigation that draws attention to social and political exclusion, it is one which concentrates on intervening in processes which obscure, distort, and marginalize, and it fails perhaps to pay adequate attention to the degree to which these same interventions produce exclusionary forms of practice. Creative practitioners operating outside of the art establishment circuitry, as non-partisan agents of social change, and who are incorporating into the processes of art practice subjects excluded from the mainstream, tend to perceive their art practice as art-activism, as a-priori resistant to macro-political formations.

Tactical Media - Retreats from the Street

The tactical media practitioners, the Critical Art Ensemble, announced their retreat from the street in 1996.⁵⁶ In their book *The Electronic Disturbance* they describe power shifting into a virtual space where, they argue, political and cultural resistance must now assert itself. But, they warned, in this space the rules of resistance have dramatically changed.

The revolution in technology brought about by the rapid development of the computer and video has created a new geography of power relations in the first world that could only be imagined as little as twenty years ago: people are reduced to data, surveillance occurs on a global scale, minds are melded to screenal reality, and an authoritarian power emerges that thrives on absence. The new geography is a virtual geography, and the core of political and cultural resistance must assert itself in this electronic space.⁵⁷

Shortly afterwards, a wave of global protests, J18 among them, were produced by joining together virtual space with street based actions. The CAE

56. David Garcia and Geert Lovink, "The ABC of Tactical Media," in *Sarai Reader* (New Delhi, 1997). In 1992, Geertz Lovink, David Garcia and Caroline Nevejan, organisers of the first Next5Minutes conference held in Amsterdam, coined the term 'tactical media'.

57. CriticalArtEnsemble, *Electronic Civil Disturbance, and other unpopular ideas* (New York: Autonomedia, 1996), 3.

might be forgiven for not having been open to this potential conjunction, certainly they were not alone in understanding virtual space as the embodiment of new modalities of power, and often in terms that left the city in ruins, in bits or (what amounts to the same thing) deterritorialised by the globalization of capitalist culture.⁵⁸

Putting aside the distinctions made between the virtual and physical space,⁵⁹ early forays in 'virtual communities' stressed the emancipatory potential of networked, electronic forms of communication, citizen participation and political organisation.⁶⁰ In the late 1980s political campaigns began to operate alongside a degree of connectivity offered by email and bulletin boards, such as The PeaceNet news group. For early enthusiasts these resources affirmed the political potential of electronic media to revitalize citizen-based democracy and challenge mainstream media monopoly within the public sphere. The only impediment to virtual-democracy was economic; and their enthusiasm was accompanied by an ever-persistent wariness of co-optation by corporate players in a bid to create new markets.

Along with the explosion of the internet, concomitant with its commercialisation, text based communications were augmented by sophisticated graphic browsers, mailing lists, digital audio and video, desktop publishing, as well as by mobile telephones and broadcast media such as cable and radio. In *CyberMarx*, Nick Dyer-Witherford argues that new means

58. Manuel Castells, *The informational city: information technology, economic restructuring, and the urban-regional process* (Oxford, UK ; Cambridge, MA: Blackwell, 1989); Paul Virilio, *Speed and Politics: An Essay on Dromology* (New York: Semiotext(e), 1986); William J. Mitchell, *City of bits: space, place, and the infobahn* (Cambridge, MA ; London: MIT Press, 1995).

59. This separation is perhaps a result of equating the concept of the virtual with media and media-generated representations. City spaces and tourism are explored as sites of virtuality in David Holmes, *Virtual globalization: virtual spaces/tourist spaces* (London ; New York: Routledge, 2001). The virtual is also picked up in chapter three of this thesis as it appears in the work of Henri Bergson.

60. Howard Rheingold, *The virtual community: homesteading on the electronic frontier* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1993).

of communication vital for the smooth flow of capital's circuit now also;

'... create the opportunity for otherwise isolated and dispersed points of insurgency to connect and combine with one another. The circuit of high technology capital thus also provides the pathways for the circulation of struggles to form.'⁶¹

Previous eras of political struggle used localised resistance such as picket lines, strikes, occupations, sabotage, demonstrations and leafleting campaigns. Struggles for civil rights, equal pay, better working conditions, the protection of the environment, women's rights and student revolts were dispersed across a variety of spatially separated and qualitatively different sites, divided by degrees of privilege, ethnicity and gender and disorganised in that many were not operating within the realm of conventional labour movements.⁶²

Stephen Wray, co-founder of The Electronic Disturbance Theatre suggests that the internet very quickly activated what he terms grassroots infowar.⁶³ In the internet environment where the circulation of political struggle is coupled with the circulation of information, knowledge and debate, there are movements away from words to deeds. Wray notes that when 45 people were massacred in Chiapas, Mexico in 1997, the communiqués sent from Chiapas through pro-Zapatista internet networks were coupled with protests at Mexican embassies and consulates all over the world as well as virtual blockades and sit-ins of the embassy websites.

61. Nick Dyer-Witheford, *CyberMarx: Cycles and Circuits of Struggle in High Technology Capitalism* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2002), 200.

62. Even within the labour movement the attempt to shift resistance from a purely symbolic terrain was fraught with difficulties. Kristin Ross argues that in May '68 striking workers occupied factories so as to shift the strike away from compromised forms of centralised command and control in the form of trade union organisations and the French Communist Party. But, as she notes, 'The appropriation of the space of the dominant power would ideally be accompanied by an expansion of workers' movements outside the limits of that space.' Kristin Ross, *May '68 and its Afterlives* (Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), 70.

63. Stefan Wray, "Electronic Civil Disobedience and the World Wide Web of Hacktivism: A Mapping of Extraparliamentarian Direct Action Net Politics," *Switch* 4, no. 2 (1998), <http://switch.sjsu.edu/web/v4n2/stefan/>.

Moreover, as Witheford argues, the alliances formed and connections made across virtual social movements create new combinations of struggles.⁶⁴ A drive for better working conditions is combined with issues of race and gender discrimination and environmental protection. Alliances are formed and connections are made between feminist and ethnic minority rights groups, environmental protection groups connect-up with housing activists to challenge the same corporate entities on many different levels. This connectivity however is not used in an attempt to create a consensus. Indeed virtual social movements are actually articulating the lack of any identifiable unitary purpose. They introduce a diversity of causes and practices with the possibility of collaboration, convergence and recognition that does not rely for its existence on a consensus from within.

In this respect, Harry Cleaver questions the value of the concept of *netwar* to understand virtual social movements. Netwar relies on networks that are woven together by interlinked knots, meaning in social terms, groups who are organising in the form of identifiable organisations, such as NGOs or campaigning groups. What is missing, Cleaver suggests, is the sense of ceaseless, fluid motion, 'an ebb and flow of contact at myriad points.'⁶⁵ Cleaver suggests the hydrosphere is a more apt metaphor for virtual movements, '[they are]...a fluid, changing constantly and only momentarily forming those solidified moments we call "organizations." Such moments are constantly eroded by the shifting currents surrounding them so that they are

64. Dyer-Witheford, *CyberMarx: Cycles and Circuits of Struggle in High Technology Capitalism*; Nick Dyer-Witheford, "The New Combinations: Revolt of the Global Value-Subjects," *The New Centennial Review* 1, no. 3 (Winter 2001): 155-200.

65. Harry Cleaver, "Computer-Linked Social Movements and the Global Threat to Capitalism," (paper presented to the summer course "Computers, Networks and the Prospects for European and World Security," Rovereto (Trento), Italy, August 13, 1999), <http://www.eco.utexas.edu/faculty/cleaver/hmchtmlpapers.html>.

repeatedly melted back into the flow itself.’⁶⁶ This, the Critical Art Ensemble suggests, is a strength rather than a weakness. In their book, *Electronic Civil Disobedience, Simulation, and the Public Sphere*, they state that ‘a decentralized flow of particularized micro-organizations that would produce multiple currents and trajectories [and] a dialogue between a variety of becomings would resist bureaucratic structure as well as provide a space for happy accidents and breakthrough invention’.⁶⁷

Tiziana Terranova argues that on the internet we can glimpse a new politics.⁶⁸ She describes virtual social movements as difficult and highly fraught convergences between anti-disciplinary social movements, postmodern single-issue campaigners and the native tribes of cyber-space; hackers, cyberpunks and technolibertarians. These convergences clash between two incompatible cultures of communication; the culture of representation and the spectacle and the culture of participation and virtuality.⁶⁹ Terranova traces this confrontation to early net pioneers who expressed a common dissatisfaction with established mainstream media, such as television and the press, and sought a common investment in the internet as a medium of many-to-many communications, free of the commercial vested interests to be found in mainstream media. However, the clash between communication cultures now inheres in the lived confrontation of virtual social movements with mass media, an effect that is especially heightened during moments of protest. During the protests in Seattle in 1999 and Genoa in 2000,

66. Ibid.

67. CriticalArtEnsemble, *Electronic Civil Disobedience, Simulation and the Public Sphere* (New York: Autonomedia, 2001), 20.

68. Tiziana Terranova, *Network Culture: Politics for the Information Age* (London: Pluto Press, 2004).

69. Tiziana Terranova, “Demonstrating the Globe: Virtual action in the network society,” in *Virtual Globalization: Virtual spaces/Tourist Spaces*, ed. David Holmes (London: Routledge, 2001), 95-113.

independent media centres (such as Indymedia) were set up in an attempt to counter the biased reporting of the events by mainstream media as well as establish alternative, open and direct ways of reporting news. During the protest, both Indymedia sites as well as their mailing lists were filled with accusations that the capacity of television and the mainstream press obliterated both the real issues of police brutality and the larger context for the protests. Furthermore, Terranova observes that after the Seattle protests,

Commentators were split between looking at the movement as an early manifestation of a desire for more representation at a global level and shaking their heads at the naiveté of targeting nothing less than global capital itself. ⁷⁰

Furthermore critiques of virtual media movements often restrictively envisage them in terms of the logic of representation. Video artist Hito Steyerl examines the film *Showdown in Seattle*, produced in 1999 by the Independent Media Centre in Seattle and broadcast by Deep Dish Television. Steyerl argues that the film adopts a montage that is inadequate as a mode of representing the ‘voice of the people’ present in Seattle. Language, whether visual or verbal, is defined on both counts as a representation, a mediation of the diverse political interests of the groups present.⁷¹

The rejection by virtual movements of the spectacle and with it the representational logic of mainstream media, Terranova argues, marks the return to ‘a degree zero of politics’.⁷² A return that all grass-roots movements have historically made by posing the question; ‘Where does power come from? And how should power, defined as a collective will from below, be

70. Ibid., 97.

71. Hito Steyerl, “The Articulation of Protest,” *European institute for Progressive Cultural Policies* (September, 2002), <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0303/steyerl/en>.

72. Tiziana Terranova, “The degree zero of politics: virtual cultures and virtual social movements” (paper presented at the Media Research Seminar, London School of Economics, 2003), http://www.noemalab.org/sections/ideas/ideas_articles/terranova_degree_zero.html.

expressed as a political/cultural practice?’⁷³ The clash between virtuality and representation marks the return to a set of fundamental questions about what politics is about. ‘Should politics be about the rational debate between clearly articulated perspectives that confront each other in the nominally neutral public sphere which television (ideally) sets itself up to be? Or should politics be about the emergence of singularized and yet collective levels of engagement with practice, taking place below and above the level of representative, mediated communication (between electors and MP’s or between audiences and producers?)’⁷⁴

Previous eras of mass mobilization were premised on the need to liberate individual/collective subjectivities by building solidarities and through the creation of a collective consensus, based on establishing visibility and representation within the political public sphere. Virtual movements are premised on the creation of new collectivities, collaborations, convergences and their recognition. This is not for the purpose of their representation within the vectors of global mainstream media, although this cannot but be an affect of their efforts, nor is it for the purpose of creating a collective consensus. As such, virtual social movements do occasion a rethinking of the components that are used to understand previous eras of mass mobilisation.

Anti-Capitalism

A particular constellation of ideas about political action that continue to influence virtual social movements can be traced to sixties countercultures. In the late sixties a lexicon of anti-disciplinary protest created spectacles of mass disobedience that injected political organising with humour and

73. Ibid.

74. Ibid.

theatre. Guerrilla theatre groups such as the Diggers and the Yippies used tactical frivolity, absurdity and play to distance themselves from the, ‘puritanism, self-seriousness and self-punishment,’⁷⁵ of conventional leftist politics. These groups rejected the idea that revolutionary movements are ‘built on sacrifice, dedication, responsibility, anger, frustration and guilt.’⁷⁶ The same lexicon of civil disobedience is used in virtual movements. However tactical frivolity is used to privilege the field of action over representation, to ensure direct rather than mediated action. Virtual movements try to avoid contributing to the creation of ‘empty signs’⁷⁷ while groups like the Yippies and Diggers actively created them as an act of subversion.

However, a postmodern political disenchantment, pervades recollections of anti-disciplinary protest. Principally this is by association with the discourse of defeat or failure that followed the revolution in May ’68.⁷⁸ As Julie Stephens suggests, the arbiters of anti-disciplinary protest are commonly charged with failing to prevent the commodification of their values and recognise the capacity of the mainstream media to swallow all signs of dissent. Perhaps even more forcefully Kristin Ross suggests that May ’68 in the consensus view is countercultural; a harmless, ‘poetic, youth revolt and lifestyle reform,’⁷⁹ wherein:

75. Jerry Rubin, *We are everywhere* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 38. The same title is picked up by the Notes from Nowhere collective who edited a collection of stories of resistance to capitalism written by activists between 1999-2001. Notes-from-Nowhere, ed., *We Are Everywhere: The irresistible rise of global anti-capitalism* (London and New York: Verso, 2003).

76. Abbie Hoffman, cited in: Julie Stephens, *Anti-disciplinary protest: sixties radicalism and postmodernism* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 35.

77. Garcia and Lovink, “The ABC of Tactical Media,” *Sarai Reader* (1997), <http://www.sarai.net>.

78. Stephens, *Anti-disciplinary protest: sixties radicalism and postmodernism*.

79. Kristin Ross, *May '68 and its Afterlives* (Chicago, London: The University of Chicago Press, 2002), 6.

The official story does not limit itself to merely claiming that some of May's more radical ideas and practices came to be recuperated or recycled in the service of Capital. Rather, it asserts that today's capitalist society, far from representing the derailment or failure of the May movement's aspirations, instead represents the accomplishment of its deepest desires.⁸⁰

Yet anti-disciplinary protests acted upon manufactured mainstream consensus by operating within and upon its circuits. Therefore the links between the desires of the sixties as either failing or accomplished by their commodification simply do not hold. For it was through the creation, marketing, dissemination and consumption of principally American popular culture that alternative countercultural ideas, images, fashions, publications and understandings of anti-disciplinary protest were generated. As Jerry Rubin announced to soldiers at the Pentagon rally, 'We're really brothers because we grew up listening to the same radio and TV programs...I didn't get my ideas from Mao, Lenin or Ho Chi Minh. I got my ideas from the Lone Ranger.'⁸¹

Self proclaimed American dissident and standing member of the Yippies, Abbie Hoffman engaged throughout the 1960s, 70s and 80s across all facets of incipient civil rights, environmental, student, labour, indigenous peoples and anti-war struggles. To purge political convention and to manipulate mass media manipulators, Hoffman shunned clarity and elucidation of political purpose. It was through action that anti-disciplinary protest made its point, action conceived as a message. Language was not considered an adequate delivery device for action, in terms of generating understanding and explanation. So, in protest, Abbie Hoffman and the Yippies embraced

⁸⁰. Ibid., 6.

⁸¹. Jerry Rubin, *Do it! : Scenarios of the revolution* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970), 79; Stephens, *Anti-disciplinary protest: sixties radicalism and postmodernism*, 96-119.

incongruity, incoherence and contradiction as strategies that effected the clearest message. This extended to demonstrations and rallies that were conceived of as theatre in terms of how to effect the clearest message. While these events could be prepared for and planned, they could not be explained. The Yippies, in never being for or against anything, in never protesting an issue were announcing, as Rubin puts it, that 'the truth was contained in the act itself', and beyond the act there really was nothing to resist.⁸² The revolution was achieved by being it or living it; this was '*Revolution for the Hell of it*'.⁸³

An uneasy relationship exists between the theatrics of anti-disciplinary protest, countercultural critique and capitalism, which can be observed in the idea of the free. The guerrilla theatre group The Diggers, operating in the years 1966-1968, distributed free food in Golden Gate Park in San Francisco (through a huge picture frame) calling it *Free Frame of Reference*. They transplanted the name to the first of their numerous free shops in the Haight-Ashbury district of San Francisco. The second shop, *Trip Without A Ticket* gave away clothes, food, medical care, and legal services. As Peter Coyote, a former Digger says:

Not only were the goods in the store free, but so were the roles. A customer might ask to see the manager and be told that they were the manager. ... Some left, but some "got it" and accepted the invitation to re-do the store according to their own plan, which was the point. ⁸⁴

For Abbie Hoffman free meant testing the limits of free speech. His notorious survival guide to free living *Steal this Book* is an ante-descendant of 1980's

⁸². Jerry Rubin, *Do it! : Scenarios of the revolution* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970), 105.

⁸³. Abbie Hoffman, *Revolution for the Hell of it* (New York: Avalon Publishing, 1968).

⁸⁴. The Digger Archives. <http://www.diggers.org/>.

Do-It-Yourself culture.⁸⁵ It was part-written whilst in prison where, he says, ‘...you learn how to use toothpaste as glue, fashion a shiv out of a spoon... build intricate communication networks ... and learn the only rehabilitation possible - hatred of oppression.’⁸⁶ Yet as Stephens observes, ‘The tensions between disciplinary and anti-disciplinary politics are evident in the countercultural understanding of the antithesis of ‘free’: not unfreedom or confinement, as might be expected, but money.’⁸⁷ The ethics of the free developed as a commitment to the belief in the unreality of money. Hence the act of throwing dollars bills onto the trading floor of the New York Stock Exchange in 1967, as performed by the Yippies. The ethics of the free created circuitries that enabled yet more money and more media to flow, while all the counterculture could do was to observe the inherent contradictions in this situation.

Images of the Haight-Ashbury’s Summer of Love in 1967 proliferated in newspapers, magazines and on the television. People absorbed the psychedelic styles, the ‘V’ gesture for peace, the street performances-turned-parties, the music provided by the Grateful Dead, Janis Joplin and Jefferson Airplane, the free music festivals turned out infamously at Woodstock. All, ‘were unknowingly being manipulated by the Diggers. The vision of hundreds of young people in seemingly crazy clothing had a kind of disinhibiting effect. The media broadcast the costume plot to the world, and the play was on.’⁸⁸

85. George McKay, *DIY Culture: Party and Protest in Nineties Britain* (London and New York: Verso, 1998).

86. Abbie Hoffman, Izak Haber and Bert Cohen, *Steal this book* (New York ; London: Four Walls Eight Windows, 1995), xxi. Hoffman was imprisoned following his trial, as part of the Chicago 8, for staging the Yippies ‘Festival of Life’ outside the Democratic Party convention in 1968. Upon release, after 30 rejections, ‘Steal this Book’ was published in 1970.

87. Stephens, *Anti-disciplinary protest: sixties radicalism and postmodernism*, 44.

88. Marcus Del Greco, “Using Theatrical Devices to Counter Culture: A Partial History of the San Francisco Diggers in the Heyday of the Haight-Ashbury,” in *The Digger Archives* (2007), 6.

Virtual movements have absorbed the lessons of the sixties, namely that manufactured mainstream consensus and the attendant commodification of culture are formidable enemies. Still, the notion of free looms in the form of a high-tech gift economy, one that media theorist Richard Barbrook claimed in 1998, was about to replace markets driven by commodities. Barbrook's argument was threaded through with references to the Californian ideology of free exchanges of information, ideas and perceptions. The article also included a reference to the Situationists' rejection of the market (and State) altogether.⁸⁹ Very recently the Situationist Raoul Vaneigem mirrored the San Francisco Diggers and Barbrook's sentiments claiming that, 'the absurdity of money is becoming concrete. It will gradually give way to new forms of exchange that will hasten its disappearance and lead to a gift economy.'⁹⁰

Vaneigem argues:

Freeness is the only absolute weapon capable of shattering the mighty self-destruction machine set in motion by consumer society, whose implosion is still releasing, like a deadly gas, bottom-line mentality, cupidity, financial gain, profit, and predation. Museums and culture should be free, for sure, but so should public services, currently prey to the scamming multinationals and states. Free trains, buses, subways, free healthcare, free schools, free water, air, electricity, free power, all through alternative networks to be set up. As freeness spreads, new solidarity networks will eradicate the stranglehold of the commodity. This is because life is a free gift, a continuous creation that the market's vile profiteering alone deprives us of. ⁹¹

What is distinct about the contemporary notion of the free, Barbrook argues, is that these exchanges are firmly embedded within a technology that supports it; for many free downloads are entertained before their

⁸⁹. Richard Barbrook, "The High-Tech Gift Economy," *Subsol* (1998), http://subsol.c3.hu/subsol_2/contributors3/barbrooktext2.html.

⁹⁰. Hans Ulrich Obrist, "Hans Ulrich Obrist In Conversation with Raoul Vaneigem," *e-flux*, no. 6 (May 2009), <http://e-flux.com/journal/view/62>.

⁹¹. *Ibid.*

commodified counterparts.

There are a number of important reasons for bringing J18 into this story of anti-capitalism. Recent literature about anti-capitalism tends to take as its entry-point the WTO meeting in Seattle five months after J18, in November 1999.⁹² Firstly, criticism of the protests in Seattle and the protest events which followed in Prague, Gothenburg, Genoa, Evian and Gleneagles notes that the heightened attention given to these high-profile events has created a mythology of sudden, out-of-the-blue movements. This attention has effectively severed events from the eco-system of energy and commitments needed to initiate and sustain them. Summit-hopping has provided an impetus to strengthen solidarities, collectivities, new convergences and connections between locally embedded, globally dispersed issues and groups. It is argued that in terms of the political continuum of re-questioning power these events are significant, but they are not an unambiguous contribution. Re-introducing J18 and the work already in play and place before the protests in Seattle will perhaps will lend a hand in disputing mythologies of out-of-the-blue movements. This re-introduction is likewise important because the successes of large-scale events can so easily be ascribed to their size and scale, which are not necessarily the most significant features of these events, only the reason for the attention they are given.

However, there is a limited corpus of written work devoted specifically to J18. Scattered references do enter the literature concerned, in order to locate the event as part of the on-going processes of national and international anti-

⁹² Emma Birchman, John Charlton and Susan George, *Anti-Capitalism: A guide to the movement* (London: Bookmarks, 2001).

capitalist mobilization.”⁹³ As part of this teleology, June 18th 1999 is considered to be the effective outcome of a cycle of struggles spanning two decades of capacity building within the UK Environmental Direct Action movement (EDA). The event is considered to be part of an evolving development of anti-capitalist action repertoire, strategy and discourse. To add to this process of development, the J18 Editorial Collective produced and published *Reflections on J18*.⁹⁴ The contributions from participants analyse practices that are deemed to be preventative, abortive and obstructive to aims, purposes and outcomes. The analyses of J18 focus principally on the question of whether the event introduced an adequate critique of the system of contemporary capitalism. These analyses are forged by way of questioning what capitalism is, exactly.

Reflections from protestors at the event show that they are steadfastly aware how action-repertoires overstep certain boundaries or limits. Those who reflect on J18 transgressions point to the fact that actions intentionally overstepped territorial boundaries through the occupation of the City of London and multinational corporation offices; they violate the law by not seeking the necessary permit to assemble and cross the limits of morality by inviting the possibility of violence. The question however, is neither whether such boundaries exist nor whether they were or were not transgressed. The question asked is whether the political economy of action-repertoires equated to an adequate critique of the system of contemporary capitalism.

93. Notes-from-Nowhere, ed., *We Are Everywhere: The irresistible rise of global anti-capitalism*; Graeme Chesters, “The New Intemperance: Protest, Imagination and Carnival,” *ECOS* 21, no. 1 (2000): 2-9; Derek Wall, “Bakhtin and the Carnival against Capitalism,” in *Anti-capitalist Britain*, ed. John Carter and Dave Morland (Cheltenham: New Clarion Press, 2004).

94. J18-Editorial-Collective, *Reflections on June 18th: contributions on the politics behind the events that occurred in the city of london on June 18th 1999* (DIY published, 1999). Online at <http://flag.blackened.net/af/online/j18/>.

Underpinning the analyses of J18 from participants is the question of how one can adequately transgress. In this sense, the event is subject to question by protestors reflecting on the problematic positions the event occupies in relation to capitalism. This leads into an analysis of actions that produced the event in relation to capital, in essence a political economy of action, raising the questions; Who owns what you use? Who owns what you do? Underpinning these analyses, the question is how can J18, if it uses 'the master's tools' present a meaningful challenge to the 'masters house.'⁹⁵

What then are the terms to be used in order to analyse the political economy of actions involved in J18 so as to pin-point what the event shares with contemporary capitalism? A principal limitation or restriction on activist action was deemed to be identity, especially as identity is bound up and organised according to divisions of labour, namely the expertise of activist practice, as well as specific forms of alliance stereotypical of this expertise. J18 is also considered vis-à-vis capitalism in terms of the level or degree to which it was co-opted or co-optable. The question posed is how the organisation and labour involved in J18 presented a meaningful challenge to contemporary capitalism. Did either the labour or the organising rely upon the same alienated subjectivities, hierarchies and divisions that J18 was trying to critique? Did protestors adequately take into account the possibility of co-option by capital? In response to these questions a call is made to 'Give up Activism':

We still think in terms of being 'activists' doing a 'campaign' on an 'issue', and because we are 'direct action' activists we will go and 'do an action' against our target. The method of campaigning

95. Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider*, (Berkeley, CA: The Crossing Press, 1984), 13. Lorde argues, "The Master's Tools Will never Dismantle the Master's House," referring to the tools of analysis that are used to dismantle forms racist oppression.

against specific developments or single companies has been carried over into this new thing of taking on capitalism. We're attempting to take on capitalism and conceptualising what we're doing in completely inappropriate terms, utilising a method of operating appropriate to liberal reformism. So we have the bizarre spectacle of 'doing an action' against capitalism--an utterly inadequate practice.'⁹⁶

It is argued that subjectivity, intertwined with single-issue campaigning has over decades developed repertoires to direct actions towards specific targets, whether companies, industries, or issues. This view is now inadequate where, as in the case of J18, if there is a target it is the system of contemporary capitalism. 'The ways in which one might bring down a particular company are not at all the same as the ways in which you might bring down capitalism.'⁹⁷ Andrew X observes that the 'activist' as a particular kind of subjectivity obstructs the operations, aims and intentions of the event, confining modes of behaviour and interactions within it according to stereotypical role models that thwart new forms of collectivity and cooperations from being created. Andrew X puts this possibility down to the degree of expertise that certain political actions demand and that absorb activists within divisions of labour and class that sustain and strengthen capitalism.'⁹⁸

'The activist is a specialist in social change. To think of yourself as being somehow privileged or more advanced than others in your appreciation of the need for social change, in the knowledge of how to achieve it and as leading or being in the forefront of the practical struggle to create this change...the activist, being an expert in social change, assumes that other people aren't doing anything to change their lives and so feels a duty or a responsibility to do it on their behalf. Defining ourselves as

96. Andrew X, cited in Ibid.

97. Andrew X, cited in Ibid.

98. For an elucidation of the concepts of class and the division of labour, see the summary of the work of Karl Marx in Chapter 3. The protestor's point, that political action is the technical resource of a class which possess the actions and that the actions in turn produce the class, is closer to Sergio Bologna - by way of Marx see Bologna, 1976. In addition Andrew X is arguing that if these actions become a realm of expertise they separate the class from the common realm of social practices shared in everyday life.

activists means defining our actions as the ones which will bring about social change, thus disregarding the activity of thousands upon thousands of other non-activists. Activism is based on this misconception that it is only activists who do social change – whereas of course class struggle is happening all the time. ⁹⁹

Critiques of J18 are all threaded *through* contemporary capitalism, or at least an interpretation of it, rather than positioning J18 as a set of processes and practices outside of, or separate from capital. Furthermore, the observation is made that within the context of contemporary capitalism, established action repertoires are incorporated as a source of innovation; capitalism uses opposition to improve itself. J18, in this sense marks a discontinuity between the origins, purpose and aims of established ‘repertoires of contention’ with the EDA and a new and as yet ill-defined context in which actions at one time appropriate for single-issue campaigning, directed at specific targets, are now felt to be inappropriate.

We are now one ‘market risk’ among others...we may have actually assisted the rule of market forces, by forcing out the companies that are weakest and least able to cope.¹⁰⁰

That protest has been absorbed as a market risk extends to the concern, from the point of view of participation, that actions are providing spectacles of ritual protest. The Carnival against Capital, organised for J18 by Reclaim the Streets was perceived as an empty sign of spectacular protest by one protestor. Although the immediate history of carnival protest, as introduced into the EDA movement, emerged from critiques of the ritual choreography of demonstrations it was now arguably suffering a similar fate.

Participants’ turn up at the meeting point, await instructions, follow their leader(s), have a party, and express their frustration in the inevitable confrontation with police. ¹⁰¹

99. Andrew X, cited in Ibid.

100. Andrew X, cited in Ibid.

101. G Lancaster, J18 collective, cited in Ibid.

I was present outside the LIFFE building...There was little resolve in those present for an occupation, and yet with 100 or more people the building could have easily been occupied and perhaps even barricaded, with greater enthusiasm this could have been achieved with little in the way of violence and would have sent a resounding message around the globe. So why didn't it happen? Because the crowd gives the illusion of action but is essentially passive, there is a 'peaceful party' to be part of which seeks little in the way of serious engagement, we are stuck between the virtual activism of the party and the dedicated efforts of a far smaller number of activists whose vision is of a revolutionary carnival. ¹⁰²

Part of our difficulty is articulating a sustainable form of resistance outside of activist ghettos, finding forms of engagement which enable others to participate and constructing networks which go beyond those already in place. ¹⁰³

The *Reflections on J18* point to the discontinuities and situations where action, actualised in protest, has become delimiting, stalling and obstructing in terms of participation and capacity building. Across virtual social movements, the question posed is less about subversive uses of technical media, or the to find an easy supersession and escapes from capitalism altogether. Virtual movements now encompass self-referential networks, feedback loops that are initiating, sustaining and intensifying across multiple technical means; in publications, in postings, on websites and on the streets.

102. G Lancaster, J18 collective, cited in Ibid.

103. G Lancaster. J18 collective, cited in Ibid.

3. Theory and Methods

Introduction

This chapter works towards the delineation of the theoretical resources that allow a materialist understanding of political action from the perspective of the aesthetic to be developed. The chapter is divided into three interrelated sections.

In the first section a selective survey of 19th and 20th Century precedents of protest, focusing on the Paris Commune, the Russian Revolution and May '68, are recalled by way of a Marxist epistemology. While connected to Marx's own materialist intentions, each event marks an historical shift in thinking about political action. From Orthodox or Classical Marxism, to Marxist–Leninism, to Critical Theory and Structuralist Marxism, each trend, drawing on different approaches to the relationship between politics, culture and society. Across the next four sub-sections these shifts are outlined by Marxist thinkers who have been chosen to represent each trend: Karl Marx represents Classical or Orthodox Marxism, Vladimir Lenin represents Marxist–Leninism, Walter Benjamin and Theodor Adorno represent Critical Theory and finally Louis Althusser represents his own influential Structuralist Marxism. The section concludes with Antonio Gramsci as his work has been incorporated into analyses of contemporary British politics, culture and society.

The second section details the methodological measures that contribute to understanding how the political and the aesthetic are inextricably intertwined in the event of J18. The following sub-sections introduce particular concepts,

outlining their functionality in so far as each encourages an analysis of the political in J18 from the perspective of the aesthetic. The point of departure is a new problematic of resistance that emerges from the concept of biopolitics. A consideration of the techniques of resistance in the event are drawn from the concepts of the multitude, virtuosity and immaterial labour. The concept of affect, virtuality, field and potential are introduced following the work of Brian Massumi. The concluding section outlines this framework as it follows the ethico-aesthetic paradigm developed by Felix Guattari.

The third section of this chapter is devoted to outlining the data gathering process of the research. It will account for how the empirical material on J18 was gathered together, the methods of data collection used and how the search for a materialist understanding of political action and the theoretical commitments this involved developed in reciprocal relationship to the data gathering process.

Historical Precedents

Marx's materialism

The first principle of Marx's materialism is that there exists an objective and independent social world that can be known. For while different theories demarcate the world in different ways, demonstrate that knowledge of the world is theory dependent, it does not make the world itself theory dependent. For example, classical political economy and Marxism differ in their descriptions and analysis of industrial capitalism; while the former explains capitalism as immutable and as in some way corresponding to man's nature, the latter would argue that as an entirely unnatural system of social relations it

can be changed. These theories are not referring to different things, but are different interpretations of the same *thing*; something which exists independent of theories about it.

Secondly, Marx's materialism argues for the need to go beyond the surface appearance of things. We have to go beyond the manner in which social relations are experienced in order to arrive at knowledge of those social relations. Marx maintains that science would be superfluous if there was an immediate coincidence between the appearance and reality of things. This is where Marxism parts company with Empiricism. For Marxism does not identify the real with that which is empirically observable. Appearances taken at face value can be misleading. Marxism does however posit that there is a relationship between experience of the world and knowledge of the world. Marxism provides a method for analysing this relationship. It is what Marx called historical materialism.

Marx distinguishes between the real but concealed and the apparent but misleading behaviour of objects. He distinguishes between essence or inner structure and the phenomena or outward appearance. Marxism argues that in nature there may be many reasons for the appearance of things differing to the reality of things. He argues that this is particularly the case for capitalism because it uses ideology systematically to distort our perceptions of how it works because it is based on exploitation and oppression. To fully understand the relationship between appearances and essences Marx argued for the need to use abstraction. By this he meant that we must form concepts which capture the most basic and general features of the reality we are trying to understand,

removing all secondary matters. So for example, physics when addressing the gravitational pull on an object takes the mass of the body, and leaves aside questions of its colour and whether it is composed of living or dead matter. On the basis of this abstraction, science could develop the theory of gravitational pull and the law of free fall which are applicable to all bodies. The problem with abstractions is that they usually contradict appearances. The law of free fall for example, states that all bodies fall at an accelerating rate of 32 feet per second, but this is only true if the object falls in a vacuum. In reality objects fall at different rates because of air friction, so that a stone and a feather fall at different rates. This means that abstraction is only the starting point for scientific analysis. It permits us to isolate basic features. We must then explain how these features are related to the appearance. In other words, we must move from the abstract to the concrete.

The scientific method can be brought to bear on the relationship between ideas and the social world. While idealists argue that the social world is a product of the theories and ideas originating in the human mind, Marxist realism argues that this is a classic example of appearances being different to essences. Marx argues that rather than seeing social life as a product of ideas, ideas in fact are a product of social life. Human thought is thus a response to the material and social conditions in which people live. Therefore social change, and Marxism is first and foremost a theory of social change, does not come about as a result of human beings adopting new ways of seeing the world. Rather these new ways of seeing the world are a product of changes in social and material conditions. Materialism then holds that humans are products of circumstances – we are

shaped by our material conditions.

But Marxism doesn't leave it at that. For Marx also argued that social reality is contradictory, what he terms dialectical, and that these contradictions in material conditions throw up different ideas and attitudes. In other words, people are not passively shaped by material circumstances. In fact, human beings are actively engaged in thinking about and acting upon those material circumstances. The historical process does not take place in the absence of human thought or action. Or as Marx himself put it:

History does nothing; it does not possess immense riches, it does not fight battles. It is men, living men, who do all this, who possess things and fight battles. It is not 'history' which uses men as a means of achieving – as it were an individual person – its own ends. History is nothing but the activity of men in pursuit of their ends.¹⁰⁴

Many critics of Marxism argue that it is deterministic in that it posits what people do as an inevitable consequence of material circumstances. But they ignore the way that Marxism posits humans as active agents within those structuring material circumstances. Just as a feather does not fall in a vacuum, Marx argues that ideas do not develop in a vacuum. What human activity can achieve in any historical period depends upon the prevailing material and social conditions, but these conditions do not preclude human thought and actions.

Marx and Marxism

This section is dedicated to a more specific exposition of some of the main concepts and ideas of the work of Karl Marx. First and foremost, Marx's work

¹⁰⁴ Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Marx and Engels Collected Works (MECW)*, vol. 4, Marxists Internet Archive, (1845), 92, http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/holy-family/cho6_2.htm.

is an attempt to challenge the insufferable inequalities and oppression that working people experience in industrial societies, their proletarianisation as he calls it, by explaining the dynamics at work in producing these conditions. Marx was the first 19th century thinker to conceptualise society as a set of systematic material relations governed by their own laws and values. His own systematic analysis of social relations in capitalist society is empirically grounded in actual worker's struggles throughout the 19th century. Although Marx can be read as a work of political economy, as philosophy or even as sociology, a recent economist notes that it was Marx's original purpose in writing about the dynamics of working class struggle, to put a tool in the hands of the working class:

By reading *Capital* as a political document, workers could study in depth the various ways in which the capitalist class sought to dominate them as well as the methods they themselves used in the struggle against that domination. ¹⁰⁵

Marx's turn to a materialist conception of man and history is expressed very succinctly in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* published in 1852.

There he states that:

Men make their own history, but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered and inherited from the past. ¹⁰⁶

Here we find a materialist conception of human activity. Indeed human activity is the motor at the centre of all historical development, but in so doing it is always within the parameters of social relations, which always transcend

105. Harry Cleaver, *Reading Capital Politically* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979), 23.

106. Karl Marx, "Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte," in *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels Selected Works (MESW)* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1968), 93, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1852/18th-brumaire/>.

the limits of individual consciousness. So consciousness is indeed central in the formation of human societies but consciousness itself always develops in interaction with particular social conditions. This thesis is at the centre of all of Marx's work; in fact, his later works are an elaboration of the precise ways in which human consciousness interacts with social relations, the material conditions of modern societies, and especially empirically, specific economic and political relations.

In Marx's terms, how does human consciousness develop in capitalist societies and in relation to what material forces? The first major attempt to answer this question is found in *The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*, which set out to provide a critique of the political economy of the time.¹⁰⁷ Marx's main criticisms are twofold: Firstly, political economy takes for granted the existence of a market economy and of private property, rather than seeing these things as a particular historical and social phenomenon which can and ought to be analysed as such. Secondly, and following from the first, that 19th century political economy attempts to formulate rules of economic relations as separate from all other social relations, as if the economy is a sphere that is somehow separate from society.

Marx, on the contrary, argues that any and every economic phenomenon is at the same time necessarily a social phenomenon, and the existence of a particular economy presupposes and is the condition of a definite kind of society. Following this principle, Marx argues that capitalist society as a whole

107. Karl Marx, "The Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844," in *Marx and Engels Collected Works (MECW)*, Marxists Internet Archive (1844), <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1844/manuscripts/preface.htm>.

is based on the class division between the proletariat, or working class, who sell their own labour power in return for wages, and the bourgeoisie, or capitalist class, who own the means of production. This means that the proletariat and the bourgeoisie are in relations of conflict, or, at least potential conflict with each other. In this system of social organisation the proletariat is alienated from its own labour. This means that in the first instance, workers have no control over the disposal of their products, as in capitalist economy goods are produced for exchange and profit. Secondly, workers are alienated from the work itself, as work is not the fulfilment of man's creative potential, but only a means to an end, the end being subsistence. Thirdly, as economic relationships are always at the same time social relationships, the alienation of labour means that a general characteristic of human relationships in capitalist societies is that they are reducible to the operations of the market.

Relations of production and ideology

According to Marx, in the *German Ideology* and later on in *Capital*, social classes are defined on the basis of their position in the relations of production. Marx refers to relations of production as the total sum of all the relationships between, on the one hand, the means of production (both physical and machinic) and, on the other, the forces of production (that is, the sum of all available techniques of production, including the knowledge and the persons necessary for the productive process). According to the schema, the bourgeoisie who own the means of production are dominant in the relations of production, and by extension the whole of the social organisation, including intellectual and knowledge production. A

s Marx and Engels put it in the *German Ideology*:

The class which has the means of *material* production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of *intellectual* production, so that thereby, generally speaking, the ideas of those who lack the means of intellectual production are subject to it. ¹⁰⁸

As such the dominant class is able to disseminate ideas which are the legitimisation of its dominant position. The ideas of freedom and equality which come to the fore in bourgeois society cannot be taken at face value. On the contrary, they have to be examined as ideas or ideologies which were produced within the context of concrete relations of production. When examined this way, Marx argues, the legal freedoms which exist in capitalist societies actually serve to legitimise the reality of contractual obligations where wage labour is heavily disadvantaged as compared to the ownership of capital.

Commodity, value, and commodity fetishism.

Marx's last and in many ways most complete work, *Capital: a critique of political economy*, is primarily concerned with revealing the economic laws of motion within capitalist society through an examination of the foundational dynamics of the relations of production. His starting point is the commodity.¹⁰⁹

Capitalism, Marx argues in the first volume of *Capital*, is a system of commodity production. Every commodity, Marx argues, has a two-fold aspect. It is both use-value and exchange-value. Use-value, according to Marx, is 'realised only in the process of consumption'. That means that the use-value

¹⁰⁸ Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, "The German Ideology," in *Marx and Engels Collected Works (MECW)*, Marxists Internet Archive (1845), Chapter B, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/german-ideology/index.htm>.

¹⁰⁹ Karl Marx, *Capital: a critique of political economy*, Marxists Internet Archive (1972), <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/index.htm>].

of a commodity lies in the degree to which it can fulfil particular needs through its properties as a physical artefact. Exchange–value, on the other hand is a more abstract value. It is the value a product acquires when it is offered in exchange for other products. So, in contrast to use–value, exchange–value presupposes “a definite economic relation” and is inseparable from the market in which goods are exchanged; it only has meaning with reference to the way that other commodities are also shaped and valued within a specific market. The exchange value of commodities is determined in the market place and as such it is expressed in abstract and quantifiable form, i.e. as money. This means that exchange–value is not directly related to use–value, neither is it determined by it, even though both exchange and use–value are the product of human labour.

Just as exchange value is expressed in the abstract and quantifiable form of money, so is the labour power used in its production. Marx argues that all commodities have a value of which the exchange–value is merely a reflection. The value represents the cost to society of producing that commodity. Because human labour is ultimately behind all production, despite the amount of machinery involved, the value of a commodity can only be measured by the amount of labour time that went in to producing the commodity. Again, Marx is asking us not to think of the specific concrete labour involved, but to see the measure in terms of abstract labour.

In capitalist systems of production, Marx argues, labour is divided; each producer cannot meet his own needs out of his own production; a worker in a tin opener factory cannot eat tin openers. In order to live, to meet human

needs, the tin openers must be sold to others. The producers are bound together only by the need to exchange their products. This system is what Marx calls generalised commodity production. Production under capitalism is not based on fulfilling a human need – on use-values or useful labour, but on using human labour to create commodities, which can be exchanged. A commodity is only useful once it can be sold. The relationship between human beings labouring to meet their needs under capitalism takes on the appearance of a relationship between objects called commodities. As Marx says:

A commodity is therefore a mysterious thing, simply because in it the social character of mens' labour appears to them as an objective character stamped on the product of that labour; because the relation of the producers to the sum total of their own labour is presented to them as a social relation, existing not between themselves, but between the products of their labour. This is the reason why the products of labour become commodities, social things whose qualities are at the same time perceptible and imperceptible by the senses. ¹¹⁰

The term reification is coined by Georg Lukacs to further specify Marx's observation that human social relations under capitalism take on the appearance of thing-like relations. Because of this situation, a human's own activities, his or her labour becomes something objective and independent of he or her. The market and the exchange of the commodities within it has been reified in the sense that it takes on the appearance of being something outside of human control and the fact that we have forgotten is a product of the way that humans themselves have organised production. Thus, human activity has become estranged from itself, we have turned the human social process of meeting human needs into the circulation of objects exterior to us.

110. Georg Lukacs, *History and Class Consciousness*, trans. Rodney Livingstone (MA: MIT Press, 1972), 86.

As Marx put it in *Capital*:

There is a definite social relation between men, that assumes, in their own eyes, the fantastic form of a relation between things.¹¹¹

Workers are confronted with the products of their labour as alien objects because of the mechanisation of commodity production, and this mechanisation extends right into the worker's soul. In the act of selling one's labour power, the way that a worker is forced to sell his or her labour power means that labour power has itself become a commodity to be bought and sold, to be exchanged in the system of commodity production.

Marx argues there is both useful labour, involving the skilled production of a particular commodity for a specific use, which is therefore the basis of use-value, and abstract general labour, which is the amount of time used in order to carry out the production of any commodity. The essence of abstract general labour is, exactly like exchange value, the degree to which it can be measured, quantified and abstracted, and therefore bought and sold. Capitalism, argues Marx, is characterised by the tendency to continually demand the increasing mobility, malleability and flexibility of its workforce, its adaptability to different kinds of work. While the worker sells his or her wage labour to the owners of the means of production and receives in return a specific amount of commodities, just enough to subsist and reproduce, the conditions of modern manufacturing permit every worker to produce far more than is necessary for his own subsistence. Whatever the worker produces over and above his needs of subsistence is then surplus value, value that is immediately absorbed for the accumulation of profit by the capitalist. Abstract labour, or rather the

¹¹¹ Marx, *Capital: a critique of political economy*, Chapter 1, Section 4.

abstraction of labour is the starting point of modern capitalism; the condition of the alienation of the workforce and the systematic expropriation of surplus to someone other than the producer.

From the commodity as an expression of the social and economic relations involved in their production, Marx shows what precisely is at the root of the injustice of capitalism, in essence, the imposition of work by the capitalist class; work that serves to reify, separate, divide, and alienate people from themselves, from others, and from the products of their labour.

The Paris Commune, 1871

Napoléon Gaillard, a Parisian shoemaker, abandons shoemaking to create barricades in the Paris commune. As a shoemaker Gaillard's position in society is fixed according to the social organisation of labour. His production is limited to a specific commodity that is bought and sold subject to the laws of market supply and demand. Further, no matter the invention power that Gaillard may invest in the production of shoes, his labour is always fixed, limited and commodified. In the commune Gaillard steps concretely into a flight from the social organisation of reified labour. For two contemporary historians of the commune, what is significant is not Gaillard's decision to stop making shoes nor to start building barricades.¹¹² It is rather a photograph which Gaillard has taken of himself posing in front of his barricade. For the historians, Gaillard's photograph resonates with a Marxist critique, in so far as it launches an attack on the reification of labour; Gaillard is demanding and

¹¹² Adrian Rifkin, "Cultural Movement and the Commune," *Art History*, no. 2 (June, 1979): 201-20; Kristin Ross, *The Emergence of Social Space: Rimbaud and the Paris Commune* (Chicago: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 17-21.

appropriating for himself the status of author of the barricade that was denied him as a shoemaker.

Gaillard does not choose to celebrate his status as worker. Instead he transgresses what is perhaps the most time honoured and inflexible of barriers: the one separating those who carry out useful labor from those who ponder aesthetics. ¹¹³

During the Paris Commune, Gaillard has left his 'proper place' in society and steps into an entirely unexplored territory. The photograph, in this sense is not simply the launch of an attack upon the division of labour in capitalist society, it marks the launch of an exploration into the unknown, as part of the revolutionary commune.

So, 'What is the Commune?' Marx, who very rarely speculates about the nature of post-capitalist society and who always looks to the actions of workers to determine the direction of emancipatory struggles, turns toward the working existence of the commune for an answer. He says, 'No one expected miracles from the commune...there were no ready-made utopias to introduce *par décret du peuple*.'¹¹⁴ The commune lived for only 73 days, during the spring of 1871, barely affording time to make even the briefest sketches for its future. After the Prussian siege and defeat in Paris of Louis Bonaparte, the Republican army is stripped of weapons and replaced by armed citizens, and the bourgeois government flees Paris to Versailles. The people of Paris¹¹⁵ then take

113. Ross, *The Emergence of Social Space: Rimbaud and the Paris Commune*, 18.

114. Here, Marx addresses members of the International Working Mens' Association in Europe and the United States. He is arming an existing international struggle of workers with knowledge of the inspirational events of the Commune. More specifically, Marx discusses the Communards' essential aims to dismantle and replace the State machine with new commune-like organisations. Karl Marx, "The Civil War in France," in *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels Selected Works (MESW)*, Marxists Internet Archive (1968), 277, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1871/civil-war-france/index.htm>.

115. For more information on the backgrounds and social composition of the Communards, see Castells, *The city and the grassroots : a cross-cultural theory of urban social movements*, 15-26, and Prosper Lissagaray, *History of the Paris Commune of 1871*, trans. Eleanor Marx, Marxists Internet Archive (1876), <http://www.marxists.org/history/france/archive/lissagaray/index.htm>.

unprecedented actions to dismantle the centralised organs of the State, to abolish any constitution separate from the interests of the people themselves. Police are stripped of political power; the central government bureaucracy is dismantled and replaced by commissions. The day-to-day executive powers of the commissions are made 'elective, responsible and revocable'; Commissions are established for education, the education of women, public safety, barricade building and the arts. All commune officials agree to take salary's no higher than a 'workmen's wage'. Night shifts are abolished for bakers. Debts are eliminated, rents postponed and pawn shops are forced to return people's possessions.

The commune, Marx says was, 'the direct anti-thesis to the Empire.' The Second Empire had, in the interests of expanding its imperialist order, injected the market-economy across Europe, Russia, Asia and Africa. The explorations of the Paris commune were altogether different, according to Marx. During its 'working existence' human labour unhinges itself from capital and began co-extensively to invent emancipatory political forms. This leads to Marx's observation that, "The working class cannot simply lay hold of the ready-made State machinery and wield it for its own purposes."¹¹⁶ The State had developed at the same pace as modern industry; it had changed its political character in accordance with economic changes, and had thereby historically served to extend the power of capital over labour, organising labour's social enslavement and fuelling class despotism. In this sense Marx acknowledges that the Commune acted as a 'lever'¹¹⁷ severing labour from its economic foundations

116. Marx, "The Civil War in France."

117. Ibid.

and rendering class based social divisions of labour obsolete. 'With labour emancipated, every man becomes a working man, and productive labour ceases to be a class attribute' ¹¹⁸

We can discern as much from what Marx did not say about the Commune, as from what he did. The Communards attempted to bring about fundamental change by developing new forms of political organisation outside of and beyond the State, but without defining them beforehand. Marx did not say what should or could happen after the breakdown of State power by the Commune. He did not reify the Communards into a particular model of organisation because this was precisely the nature of their struggle; the struggle towards the creation of new forms of organisation which could not be determined in advance.

118. Ibid.

October 1917

We all stand on the shoulders of the commune. ¹¹⁹

It is still fashionable, after a whole year of the Soviet Government, to speak of the Bolshevik insurrection as an 'adventure'. Adventure it was, and one of the most marvellous mankind ever embarked upon, sweeping into history at the head of the toiling masses, and staking everything on their vast and simple desires...Just as historians search the records for the minutest details of the story of the Paris Commune, so they will want to know what happened in Petrograd in November, 1917. ¹²⁰

Marxist-Leninism

Vladimir Lenin built on and elaborated the ideas of Marxism. His Marxist-Leninist philosophy of political action, in a word maintains that revolution is the only means of overthrowing capitalism. To install and secure in its place a dictatorship of the proletariat, it was essential to forge and rouse the revolutionary consciousness of the proletariat.¹²¹ Lenin's political philosophy, following Marx, contends that human thought is shaped by material conditions. Thus the transition from capitalism to communism, via a dictatorship of the proletariat, crucially involves a change in consciousness. Given that the social and political conditions in Russia were shaped by an autocratic bourgeoisie, proletarian revolutionary-consciousness was crucial; its dictatorship must be revolutionary so as to filter out the social and political remnants of the old world, to prove itself the harbinger of a new world. According to Lenin, revolution would not only change the social and political

¹¹⁹ V.I. Lenin, *Plan of a Lecture on the Commune*, Marxists Internet Archive (1905), <http://www.marx.org/archive/lenin/works/1905/mar/00b.htm>.

¹²⁰ John Reed, *Ten Days that Shook the World*, Marxists Internet Archive (1919), <http://www.marxists.org/archive/reed/1919/10days/10days/>.

¹²¹ V.I. Lenin, "The State and Revolution: The Marxist Theory of the State & The Tasks of the Proletariat in the Revolution," in *Lenin Collected Works (LCW)*, vol. 25, Marxists Internet Archive (1917), <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/staterev/index.htm>.

structures, it would reconstruct how human consciousness related to reality. Revolution would create a new world, which could not be described or evaluated by the values of a former world.

Lenin sought to disentangle autocratic, bourgeois forms of organisation from the social and political life of the Russian proletariat. Today, it is claimed, he attempted to reconcile the antithetical political forms of State and revolution. Tragically, by setting the goal of seizing the political power of the State *in the first instance*, Lenin's revolutionary Bolshevik Party became the political power that it sought to overcome. Lenin objectified the revolutionary desires of the Soviets. He outlined in the April thesis a call for immediate peace, the redistribution of land and control of industry, as the objects or goals of revolution were instantly deferrable to party political programs deemed essential to guarantee success.¹²²

Lenin deemed that it was obvious how, 'the working class *spontaneously* [his italics] gravitates towards socialism...in the sense that socialist theory reveals the causes of the misery of the working class more profoundly and more correctly than any other theory, and for that reason the workers are able to assimilate it so easily.'¹²³ However he also understood that equally spontaneous bourgeois ideology caused revolutionary tendencies in society to bend towards reconciliations with the existing political and social order. Lenin felt the proletariat needed the leadership of a highly disciplined organisation of

122. V.I. Lenin, "The Tasks of the Proletariat in the Revolution (a.k.a The April Thesis)," in *Lenin Collected Works (LCW)*, vol. 24, Marxists Internet Archive (1917), <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1917/apr/04.htm>.

123. V.I. Lenin, "What is to be Done: Burning Questions of our Movement," in *Lenin Collected Works (LCW)*, vol. 1, Marxists Internet Archive (1901), Chapter 2 f16, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1901/witbd>.

professional revolutionaries that would be, 'capable of lending energy, stability, and continuity to the political struggle.'¹²⁴ As he conceived it, the dictatorship of the proletariat consisted of the Bolshevik Party Central Committee and outside of it, though subject to the committee's executive power, the autonomous, and spontaneous actions of the revolutionary proletariat organised in local councils, known as the Soviets.

Spontaneity versus Democratic Centralism

Rosa Luxemburg believed the people of Russia had found themselves a precarious constitution in street disorders. The revolution in Russia stands as the first in history 'which reckons, in all its phases and through its entire course, on the organisation and the direct, independent action of the masses'.¹²⁵ In open opposition to Lenin she found revolutionary political potential in the solidarities of local, atomised, and isolated Soviets workers' committees and clubs. Clearly the purpose of a political organisation was to unite these forces, but she argued Lenin's democratic centralism erected 'an air-tight partition' between revolutionary masses and the development of class unity amongst them.¹²⁶

Luxemburg contends that historically, the use of an elite corps as a form of political organisation (she sites the example of Blanquism) was adopted for the purpose of a revolutionary conspiracy, a coup d'etat, in which the masses were not expected to play a part in the revolution. This form of centralism required

124. Ibid., Chapter 4.

125. Rosa Luxemburg, *Organisational Questions of the Russian Social Democracy (a.k.a. Leninism or Marxism?)*, Marxists Internet Archive (1904), Part 1, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/luxemburg/1904/questions-rsd/index.htm>.

126. Ibid., Part 1.

the blind submission of its parts to the centre in order for the planned conspiracy, drawn up in advance, to be effectively executed. However, in Russia the drawing up of revolutionary goals and the political struggle of the working class were not two different things that could be separated in time and determined in advance. If the political purpose of a central committee is to elaborate a uniform plan of action that, 'assumes the initiative of a vast revolutionary act'¹²⁷ then this, Luxemburg argues, has never before been the experience of the workers' movements in Russia. Working class politics had not developed by way of the inventions of a central organisation, nor were they guided by a centre. 'They have always been the spontaneous product of the movement in ferment'.¹²⁸ This, she concedes was true of the General Strike in 1896, the student-led street demonstrations in St. Petersburg in 1901 and the general strike in 1903, 'All by itself ... the strike expanded into political demonstrations, street agitation, great outdoor meetings, which the most optimistic revolutionist would not have dreamed of several years before.'¹²⁹

It is telling that Lenin, who concedes that the street remains a locus of spontaneous political action, equates all such actions, mass demonstrations in particular, to armed insurrection. An armed insurrection was for Lenin the precondition of revolutionary-consciousness. When the masses take to the streets to revolt against the existing status quo which, it is a given, will attempt to quash the action by violent means, they demonstrate the degree to which they are willing to fight for their desires and demands. Further, he admits that

127. Ibid.

128. Ibid.

129. Ibid.

street level actions may serve to propagate revolutionary–consciousness. In the course of political struggles such events, involving peaceful demonstrators who are violently assaulted by the State police or army, cannot but transform politically inert bystanders into class–conscious supporters. Even so, the general strikes and mass demonstrations that eventually over–turned the Tsar did not, according to Lenin, install a proletarian revolution in his place. These actions did not rid the society of false consciousness, opportunistic bourgeois ideologies, or reconciliatory tendencies. As such, spontaneous street level interventions did not, for Lenin, make a revolution. The spontaneous, necessarily (for Lenin) armed insurrections of working masses amounted to the first blow against an existing regime. A sustained second blow was required to get rid of the old mindset.

Lenin considered the spontaneity of the masses to be susceptible to reformism. The more moderate forms of socialism that operated in support of workers' strikes were, for Lenin, dilutions of Marxism. Lenin did not believe that politics necessarily follows economics, as many economists were asserting in support of the Trade Union movements. Furthermore he did not believe a distinctly working class politics had already developed from the spontaneous acts of striking and luddite labour. He believed on both counts this was bourgeois reformism, an opportunistic turning away from revolutionary advance.¹³⁰ As Lenin saw it, Marx was himself a bourgeois intellectual who had developed a mode of scientific thought beyond and outside of the actions of the revolutionary proletariat. According to Marxist–Leninist principles, a

130. Lenin, "What is to be Done: Burning Questions of our Movement."

revolutionary politics could not be achieved by spontaneous eruptions of workers' demands and desires. As such, the Bolshevik Party as Lenin conceived it would act as intellectual vanguard, which, although answerable to the needs of the majority, was plucked from its ranks in order to be trained in the art of political struggle.

Rosa Luxemburg foresaw Lenin's Bolshevik Party Central Committee operating as a disciplinary mechanism. While the art of political struggle could only be acquired in the course of the political struggle itself, she argues, it could not be guided by a central force and could not be prepared for in advance by 'training'.

The working class will acquire the sense of the new discipline, the freely assumed self-discipline of the Social Democracy, not as a result of the discipline imposed on it by the capitalist state, but by extirpating, to the last root, its old habits of obedience and servility.¹³¹

The disciplined intervention of an elite corps, turned 'the open control of the working masses over the party organs with the reverse control by the Central Committee over the revolutionary proletariat.'¹³² Luxemburg's opposition to Lenin's democratic centralism draws attention once again to a concept of political organisation as that which, in the course of the political struggle, cannot be set up, or trained for, in advance of situations as they arise.

Art in the Revolution and the Revolution in Art¹³³

By the bequest of Leon Trotsky, an archive was established to govern coherent historical narrations of the events of the October revolution and the rise to

131. Rosa Luxemburg, *Organisational Questions of the Russian Social Democracy (a.k.a. Leninism or Marxism?)*, Part 2.

132. Ibid.

133. Sergei Tret'iakov, "Our Cinema," *October*, no. 118 (Fall, 2006): 27-44.

power of the Bolshevik Party. To be associated with the most progressive elements of Russian and world history, the Bolshevik Party created a hierarchy of events with the October Revolution at its summit. History was a highly political issue. Telling the story of October as the heir of progressive history was to legitimize Bolshevik power. As the foundational event of a new regime, the telling of October as such served to reinforce the position of the State in that regime.¹³⁴ October was the script of revolution created by the Bolshevik Party and the story of October depended, for its success, on drawing as many people into its telling as possible. As Frederick Corney reminds us, when a tale is told through personal experience, the event becomes visceral, the listener becomes the storyteller and the constructed nature of history is forgotten. However, foundational tales do not erase divisions between the leaders and the led, nor do they automatically turn every listener into a storyteller. Telling stories involves the recollection of events and recollection involves interpretation. As Corney argues, October was not a description of events, it was an argument towards a particular representation of them. So the party provided people with reifications of the October Revolution, as ‘prerequisites both for the process of its subsequent institutionalization and for its passage into popular experience as an event with meaning for individual lives.’¹³⁵

The active promotion of October extended through print media, speeches on street corners and in factories, as well as the organisation of October’s physical documentation in libraries, archives and museums. Propaganda–units were

134. Frederick C. Corney, *Telling October: memory and the making of the Bolshevik Revolution* (Ithaca, NY ; London: Cornell University Press, 2004).

135. *Ibid.*, 8.

sent in five agit-trains across five Russian territories to deliver October's revolutionary message to the rural, peripheral populations.¹³⁶ October was performed in mass festive celebrations; in 1920, a theatrical re-enactment of the storming of the Winter Palace, in which tens of thousands of people participated, saw 'the Bolsheviks join the tradition of fledgling regimes using festivals to propagate legitimizing genealogies.'¹³⁷

James von Geldern argues that if the mass festivals served to legitimate Bolshevik power, which is not at all clear, they did so because the artists involved worked according to their own rules; politicians did not make the festivals even if they provided the script. However, it was 'the sponsor's' assumption that festive art was a realistic, transparent depicter of ideas. When the Bolsheviks hired artists to arrange festivals, they assumed that the medium would match the message.'¹³⁸ October's theatrical enactment in the form of a mass improvisation was deemed a democratic medium for its expression. Festive time and space also marked a temporary reprieve from the reality of poverty, hunger and civil war. Moreover, as Geldern argues, in festivals the past could be commemorated in ways that legitimated, elevated and inspired connections to the present. However the question of whether art in the service of revolution should represent workers in power or workers' struggles towards their own expression was not a question Bolshevik politicians resolved. Art was a mechanism through which history could be retold and the stability and

136. The organisation of the trains were, 'as corporate as the crew of a ship,' according to Arthur Ransome, *The Crisis in Russia*, Marxists Internet Archive (2000), <http://www.marxists.org/history/archive/ransome/works/crisis/>.

137. James von Geldern, *Bolshevik Festivals 1917-20*, (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1993), 13.

138. Ibid.

durability of historic forms of art gave the story a veneer of eternal truth. So, for example, city monuments representing heroes of the old Tsarist regime were retained and substituted with great revolutionaries. Art that serviced the October Revolution provided a delivery device for recollection, persuasion and instruction of the majority illiterate population. From the Bolshevik party's practical point of view this meant opening as many established art forms as possible to the working masses. Artists meanwhile were opening debates about the function of art in revolutionary society. The question of whether art should draw from the past, or devise new and distinct forms of expression specific to the proletariat, played a determining role in Soviet Russia's revolutionary art and politics.

The Proletkul't' (Proletarian cultural-educational organisations) situated artists studios in factories in order to support worker initiated literacy and artistic programs. With a membership in excess of 500,000, the Proletkul't' organisations were sponsored by the State and for a time after October, they remained autonomous from it.¹³⁹ In the Proletkul't' journal, Sergei Tret'iakov criticised the Bolshevik Party's notion of 'Art for all' 'Art into the masses' 'Art into the Streets', as 'mere democratizations' of established art forms.¹⁴⁰ Filling art forms that were developed by the bourgeoisie with representations of working masses changed the content of art but it retained the set of aesthetic values carried by the form. Bourgeois art had developed as a function of escape and diversion from the conditions of everyday life, such that aesthetic

139. For an incisive account of the relationship between the Bolshevik Party and the Proletkul't' organisation see Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Commissariat of Enlightenment: Soviet organization of education and the arts under Lunacharsky, October 1917-1921, Soviet and East European Studies* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1970), 89-109.

140. Tret'iakov, "Our Cinema," 15.

production was rendered the work of a solitary artistic genius who conjured a fantasy world for passive consumption by the audience. This, Tret'iakov argued, severed art from life and life from the joy of creative labour, which 'whether one is speaking, sanding wood ... convincing an audience, commanding an army ... or sewing a dress,' should not be severed from art.¹⁴¹

Tret'iakov worked with the director Sergei Eisenstein to develop a worker's theatre in the Moscow Proletkul't' that began by interrogating the event of theatre in terms of its affects. In the final instance, it was in the minds of spectators that the individual components of a performance were affective. Theatrical attractions,¹⁴² advancing Mayakosky's then well-known physiological criticism, sought to turn all aesthetic actions on stage towards the 'organism of the spectator'¹⁴³. The spectators' responses, in turn, organise and are thus drawn into the performance. The theatre of attractions was Tret'iakov's attempt to do away with aesthetic illusionism and the contemplative mode of aesthetic consumption altogether. Whereas in conventional theatre the audience is addressed as a universal and abstract entity, in the theatre of attractions the spectator is made aware that it is not the spectacle on stage, but the spectator's body that is the object of the performance. Tret'iakov likens it 'to a surgical theatre operating on the spectator as its object, but without the haze of aesthetic semblance or the prophylaxis of representation.'¹⁴⁴ The play's score was punctured by audience

141. It is worth pointing out that this definition of labour as part of everyday life conflicted with Lenin's definition of labour, which restrictively refers to labour within the economic base, i.e. to workers taking over the industrial means of production. Sergei Tret'iakov, "Art in the Revolution and the Revolution in Art (Aesthetic consumption and production)," *October*, no. 118 (Fall, 2006): 17.

142. Sergei Tret'iakov, "The Theatre of Attractions," *October*, no. 118 (Fall, 2006): 19-26.

143. *Ibid.*, 20.

144. *Ibid.*

feedback mechanisms, discussions and seminars relevant to the narrative. Tret'iakov built these into the text of the play, melting the integrity of aesthetic autonomy in the process. The theatre of attractions developed a critical theory of spectator positioning that deconstructed the constructed nature of 'theatrical attractions'. It is taken up by the playwright and theatre director Bertolt Brecht and later, though in a different way, in circuits of cultural production that in May '68 sought to oppose the culture of the spectacle.

In *The Writer and the Socialist Village*, Tret'iakov's recalls his experience between 1928 and 1930, first as a reporter and then as a standing member in the collective labour of a communal farm in the Caucasus.¹⁴⁵ He argued that the revolution had changed human relations, forces of production and consciousness itself without a concomitant change in the relations between art, representation and reality. In this sense, he argued, the primitives were not the peasant farmers but an urban intelligentsia still using outmoded genres, techniques and methods when all other facets of life had changed. Of note is the particular impact of this presentation on Walter Benjamin, who wrote a response three years later in his influential essay *The Author as Producer*.¹⁴⁶ Benjamin's central theses echo Tret'iakov's argument, that the new reality must be brought into art and literature using aesthetic forms adequate to the changed conditions of experience. Benjamin's primary point here was that works of art are social productions first, rather than isolated aesthetic objects. Benjamin argues that once inserted into 'the living social

145. Sergei Tret'iakov, "The Writer and the Socialist Village," *October* 118, no. (Fall 2006): 63-70. This is the text of a presentation delivered by Tret'iakov in German, at Berlin's Society for the Friends of the New Russia on 21st January 1931.

146. Walter Benjamin, "The Author as Producer," in *The Essential Frankfurt School Reader*, ed. Andrew Arato and Eike Gebhardt (New York: Continuum, 2002), 254-269.

context,¹⁴⁷ it is not enough to ask whether, in form or content, a work in the relations of production is reactionary or revolutionary; rather we should ask, “What is its position in them?”¹⁴⁸ He supplants the question of form and content with the tendency and quality of techniques of production. Tret'iakov's observes that the newspaper has overtaken the novel as literary form, resulting in a 'deprofessionalisation' of writing.¹⁴⁹ Benjamin follows with the observation that newspapers have transformed generic distinctions between scholarly and popular, writer and poet, and even author and reader, (given that newspapers prompted readers to write) in ways that force writers to rethink the techniques of literary form. Finally, and following Tret'iakov's search for a mode of writing that actively participates and intervenes in the collective labour of the communal farm, Benjamin's crucial thesis contends that the task of revolutionary artists is not to push revolutionary messages through existing media, but to revolutionise the media themselves.

Critical Theory: Theodor Adorno

Theodor Adorno worked within an intellectual circle with whom, in 1923, he established the Institute of Social Research at the University of Frankfurt.¹⁵⁰ The Frankfurt School, as it is more informally known, was established to explain why the Enlightenment had failed. Why had scientific and technological productivity, unsurpassed in human history, led democracies into fascism? Why had working class revolutions led to highly centralised

147. Ibid., 256.

148. Ibid., 257.

149. Tret'iakov, “The Writer and the Socialist Village,” 68.

150. Other Founding members of the Institute for Social Research include, Max Horkheimer, Walter Benjamin, Herbert Marcuse, Leo Lowental, Friedrich Pollock, Erich Fromm.

autocratic governments, driven by dictatorial leaders such as Josef Stalin in Russia and Adolf Hitler in Germany? ‘The fallen nature of modern man cannot be separated from social progress.’¹⁵¹ Hence The Frankfurt School aimed to combat and explain domination, through the production of research that would detect its forms by updating Marxism in accordance with the scientific, technological and political advances that Marx had not witnessed.

Adorno’s principle focus on culture derives two basic premises from Georg Lukács: aesthetic form and technique are the specific social and historical conditions of culture in general and in works of art in particular. Following from this, cultural production and consumption cannot be treated as trans-historical or natural – both are also to be considered in their social and historical specificity. It is worth pointing out that while Adorno and Benjamin share the observation that cultural production is a social practice, Adorno is concerned with the condition of culture as domination; Benjamin with the conditions necessary for transforming culture. For Adorno, culture had become an instrumental form of domination that secured the status-quo. Moreover, the masses were subject to the production and reception of forms of culture that dulled the senses, curbed desires and worked against the possibility of imagining or thinking beyond the present. Culture, Adorno argues, ‘impresses the same stamp on everything; films, radio, and magazines make up a system which is uniform as a whole and in every part’.¹⁵² Culture has become reified; a series of mass-produced commodities, distributed to

151. Theodore Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (London and New York: Verso, 1997), xiv.

152. Theodore Adorno and Max Horkheimer, “The Culture Industry: Enlightenment as Mass Deception,” in *The Dialectic of Enlightenment* (London and New York: Verso, 1997), 120.

millions and producing only uniformity and conformity.

Adorno argues that the culture industry conceals the labour involved in producing and consuming its products. Following Marx he observes that like all commodities, a film, a piece of recorded music, a radio program, TV soap opera, or magazine, no longer has a use-value. In modern society the utility of a commodity, its use-value, is entirely subordinate to its exchange-value. The exchange-value of a commodity refers to the meaning or significance it has, not in itself, but in relationship to all other commodities in the marketplace. A commodity's physical qualities, how useful it is or how it was produced in a specific way, is subordinate to the significance it has in relationship to other commodities on the market. Adorno suggests that the culture industry produces commodities whereby use-value is replaced by exchange-value as the primary source of value. Judgements about the value of cultural products are not based on the qualities of the products in themselves. The principle source of value is dependent upon the way they are distributed, how they are marketed, and their ratings in the list of the top-ten of their type. Essentially, Adorno's point is that when the value of cultural commodities is based on exchange-value, the commodities may have no qualities at all. All products of the culture industry, whether Hollywood films, popular music, soap operas or magazines are characterised by homogeneity which, in accordance with what sells, results in the crystallisation of standards in society.

Adorno suggests that, subject to the formulaic, essentially bland and conformist nature of culture produced by the culture industry, individuals have become depoliticised, pseudo-individuals within an oppressive and

essentially exploitative framework of capitalist society. He suggests that the culture industry is the non-productive correlate to life in the office, or on the factory floor. As an extension of industry, culture is at the mercy of and in essence reflects the standardized and repetitive hum-drum rhythms that drive the processes of industrial capitalism. Hollywood Studios are at the mercy of big business, for example, the banks who support their productions, who pay for their cameras and who own their machines. Similarly, television and radio stations are at the mercy of heavy industry, the electricity companies, and the advertisers who finance the production of programs. The culture industry is an extension of the capitalist system, a monolithic ideology that infuses the most general and particular features of culture. Adorno calls these products broken-promises; they dull the senses, curb any real desires into a pseudo-individual consumer choice, they are mere distractions from things that really matter, tools that teach people to resign themselves to the state of things, without question.

May '68

Althusser, Ideology and Structuralism

Later Marxists accused Adorno of essentialism. They critique the idea that the totality of society can be understood through the process of production, that is, through commodity production, arguing that this ignores the complexity of social life. In this section we turn to these objections in more detail through the work of the French Marxist intellectual Louis Althusser, whose work on ideology formed the backbone of media and cultural studies in the 1970s West in the. By incorporating aspects of structuralism, Althusser moved Marxist thinking of ideology away from the strands of Marxism outlined in the previous sections.

Althusser, who taught philosophy for many years at the *École Normale Supérieure* in Paris, was a leading intellectual in the French Communist Party. Indeed he admits to joining the Communist Party in order to recruit young intellectuals at a time when the Party was itself collapsing as a result of the Second World War.¹⁵³ The aim here is threefold: Firstly to clarify the difference of the classical Marxist tradition as theorised by Lukács, and to some extent Adorno, with the tradition of Althusser. Secondly to introduce Althusser's utilisation of structuralism in his analysis of the working of ideology, and thirdly to propose questions and problems raised by Althusser's work before moving on to discuss the events of May '68.

Althusser argues that the type of Marxism proposed by Lukács and the classical Marxists suffers from the assumptions of humanism. Humanism is the

153. Louis Althusser, *The Future Lasts Forever: A Memoir* (New York: The New Press, 1995).

philosophical tradition that conceptualises human consciousness as the motivating force of history. However, according to classical Marxism, human consciousness is reified. The working class has a distorted view of reality and of their role in the social totality. It is only when the working class acts as agents of change that they will be able to break through the reification, the false consciousness determined by capitalism, and come to a true understanding of the world and their ability as a class to change it for the better.

Althusser thinks this conception is mistaken for a number of reasons. The first and main reason is, as he argues, that the theory of reification presupposes some sort of original human essence which has then undergone estrangement and alienation from its own nature through the commodification of its own labour. Althusser argues that there is no essential humanity. He refuses the idea that there is a fundamental human nature, which has simply been distorted by capitalism. For Althusser there is no fundamental human nature, there are only concepts of human nature and practices that shape what we understand as our natural selves. These practices are historically and socially specific and operate in the service of ideology.

What is crucial for Althusser is that knowledge of the world is not gained directly through experience. Experience then, on its own and in itself, cannot provide an adequate condition for the production of knowledge. Direct experience of the particulars of the capitalist social order is not an adequate basis for analysing and dismantling this social order. This is because ideology relies on the validation of direct experience for its existence; it isolates direct

experiences from each other, and then elevates these experiences to the status of the only truth about the world. Experience, according to Althusser, merely generates a kind of 'common sense'. Ideology, for Althusser amounts to a common sense experience of the world which simply denotes a lack of analysis of the systematic relations that make our experiences of particulars possible in the first instance.

Althusser also finds the simple division of the social order into base and superstructure problematic. In his two books *For Marx* first published in France in 1968, and *Reading Capital* co-written with Etienne Balibar and published in 1970, he redefines the social formation as consisting in a series of material practices which are mutually interdependent. Instead of seeing each practice as determined by the economic base of society, he argues that each practice is relatively autonomous. By this he means that each practice has both a determining function and is determined by the rest of the social formation. He argues that the economic base has a determining influence only in the last instance, and that this never arrives. So the economic base has a determining effect only in the sense that it determines which practices in the social formation will be dominant. But those practices operate according to their own rules, independently of the economic base. Here, Althusser is breaking away from the Classical Marxist view that the economic base is the material level of society and that the superstructure is where the corresponding ideas are. He argues that all levels of society are constituted by practices, including ideology, and that all practices are material. These material practices are relatively autonomous from each other. They are differentiated by their functions and their different effects in the social formation.

This is very important. Althusser is redefining ideology. Instead of seeing it as a system of false beliefs, he argues that it is a series of material practices which produce real and tangible effects. In doing so he redefines the Classical Marxist oppositions between the material base and the cultural superstructure, the real and the ideological.

In For Marx, Althusser defines four fundamental practices, or what are sometimes called 'levels' in the capitalist social formation. These are: 1 – the economic, 2 – the political, 3 – the ideological and 4 – the theoretical. Each of these levels have their own function and effectivity in the social formation. They are relatively autonomous from each other. Sometimes one level plays a more determining role in the structure of society and at other times it will be a different level at play.

For the purpose of elucidation it is worth comparing Althusser with Theodor Adorno. Adorno thinking about ideology, argues that the products of the culture industry were direct results of the economic basis of commodity production. The culture industry, from this point of view, produces commodities and these commodities determine not only how audiences receive their messages, but also how they come to view themselves in relation to the commodities' message. Thus for Adorno, ideology is a product of commodity fetishism. On the contrary, Althusser argues that to reduce the workings of ideology to the economic structure of society is over simplistic. It is what he terms economic determinism or economic reductionism.

In summary then, Althusser argues that knowledge of the world cannot be taken directly from experience. He argues that ideology is not simply a false

set of beliefs, but is a product of material practices. That so-called truths of ideology come out of our experiences within those material practices, and therefore experience of particulars cannot give us knowledge of the world. Finally he suggests that different material practices which make up the social formation are relatively autonomous from each other and from the economic base. The economic base only has a determining effect in the last instance, which according to Althusser, never arrives.

The first thing to note about Althusser's theory of ideology is that he makes a distinction between particular ideologies and ideology in general. Particular ideologies are historically developed instruments of class rule; they have historical and social specificity. Because Althusser argues that ideologies are practices rather than false systems of belief (located in individual consciousness), he locates ideology within particular institutions. The main ideological institutions of 20th century capitalism are, according to Althusser, the family, education, the church and the mass media. He refers to these as ideological state apparatuses. He does this to distinguish them from what he calls repressive state apparatuses which he defines as institutions like the police or army that can exert physical control over the population. Althusser argues that we 'live' ideology through our daily practices within the institutions of the family, education, mass media and so on.

For Althusser, the main difference between particular ideologies and ideology in general is this: particular ideologies have historical specificity, they change in particular moments in history. The tendency to produce ideology in general is universal. Althusser argues that even in a fully socialist society there would

still be ideology in general. No one can ever escape ideology in general, it is a universal form which is inescapable. The reason that ideology in general is universal and inescapable has to do with its function. Althusser argues that the role of ideology in general is to constitute individual human beings as subjects. What he means by this is that it is only through ideology in general that we come to understand ourselves as individuals with a specific position and agency in the world.

The concept of the subject is central to Althusser's thinking of ideology in general. This was seen as a great step forward in understanding how ideology works, because it was the first attempt by a Marxist to think about how ideology works on concrete human beings rather than generalised groups or classes. The attempt which Althusser initiated and which was later taken up by thinkers like Michel Foucault was to map out the ways in which concrete human beings are turned into individuals; individuals being only one possible form of subjectivity and one extremely central to the capitalist system of social relations.

It is in his theory of the subject that Althusser draws most heavily on concepts from a structuralist analysis of language and meaning production. Structuralism poses language as a self sufficient system of meaning that each individual is born into. We each inherit the structure of language which produces meaning because of its internal rules rather than any individual act of speech. Meaning in language comes from *langue* rather than *parole*; it is the structure of language which makes speech possible and not the other way around. Ferdinand de Saussure argued that meaning in language comes not

from its relation to external reality, but again because of its integral rules. Thus, a newspaper could use either the phrase terrorist or freedom fighter without any changes corresponding to reality. Saussure argues that language therefore does not simply reflect an already existing reality. In fact language functions to organise and construct our access to reality, and therefore our interpretation of experience.

Althusser takes on these concepts from structuralism in his analysis of the subject in ideology. He argues therefore that the individual is not the constituting subject who creates language, the world, history or even the self. Instead he or she is a product of socio-linguistic processes beyond his or her individual control. We are born into a structure of language and institutional practices which shape us and from which we cannot escape. The subject does not constitute language and the self, instead the subject is constituted through language. Furthermore, Althusser argues that ideology in general exists only in and through the subject. Ideology is a lived relation, it is the way that men and women live and experience themselves in relation to their conditions of existence. Ideology functions by constituting individuals as subjects. By giving us a sense of ourselves as individuals, as opposed to as members of a collectivity.

How does this work? In order to analyse how this process works, Althusser borrows from the structuralist psychoanalytic thinker Jaques Lacan. Lacan is very important to Althusser's theory of how the subject is constituted in ideology. However what follows is an oversimplified version of one aspect of Lacanian theory. Lacan argues that the self experiences itself as unified, whole

and in control. But this is misrecognition. He bases this idea on a process in the development of the ego which he calls the mirror phase. According to Lacan, every child goes through the process when it first sees itself in a mirror, when it first comes to recognise itself. But at this stage the child's mental capabilities outstrip their motor capabilities. So the image of an autonomous self that is reflected back to the child is better than the child is in actuality. Thus the child's first moment of recognition is actually a moment of misrecognition. Althusser draws on this model to argue that ideology is misrecognition. Ideology presents the subject with mirrors of the self, presenting consistent and autonomous images in which the subject misrecognises him or herself. Unlike the Classical Marxist position which holds that through ideology the individual misrecognises the world, Althusser argues that through ideology the subjects misrecognises the self. Ideology causes us to view the world as naturally oriented to ourselves, as if it was natural and spontaneously given to the subject. The subject feels a natural part of that reality.

Althusser argues that through ideology in general, society 'interpellates' us. It appears to single us out as uniquely valuable and addresses us as autonomous individuals. He argues that ideology identifies us, it beckons us personally and in this way brings us into being as individual subjects. How does the subject recognise the hailing that makes it a subject? Because, Althusser argues, we are always already subjects constituted in and through language. Our coming into the world has already been prepared for. As subjects we occupy a position within the structure of the social totality and particular types of consciousness are automatically assigned to that location. To occupy a position is to

automatically assume the kind of subjectivity appropriate to it.

Althusser argues that this process of interpellation provides us with an illusion. Ideology provides us with a subjectivity of autonomy, consistent and unified. But, Althusser argues, just as society has no centre and is just an assemblage of structures, so too the human subject is centreless. The human subject is not centred and unified and autonomous, but is in fact the bearer of the structures of society. These truths must be hidden so that human identity feels centred and complete. As he says, 'the category of the subject is only constitutive of all ideology in so far as all ideology has the function (which defines it) of constituting concrete individuals as concrete subjects.'¹⁵⁴ What he means is that we freely subscribe to ideologies. We do not experience the world as subjects or agents of a mode of production, carrying out functions within it that are devoid of choice. Instead we see ourselves as free-thinking, self-determining individuals. If we did not see ourselves in this way, we wouldn't be able to carry out our assigned role in society. This is because ideology interpellates individuals personally, seeming to address people personally, as if all ideology recognises that the specific individual, or is destined for *that* individual. Thus individual subjects recognise society not as an objective structure, but through themselves as subjects, and thus they operate on the assumption of individual choice.

The Marxist literary critic, Terry Eagleton asks pertinent questions to challenge this rather monolithic view of ideology. The first rather obvious point is that if ideology is the inescapable mechanism that binds men and

¹⁵⁴ Louis Althusser, *Ideology and Ideological State Apparatus: Notes towards an investigation* (London: Verso, 1984), 29.

women to their allocated social position, then how can we account for resistance and social change? We may have to be constituted as some sort of subject, but why do we have to accept a definition of ourselves as a particular sort of subject? When ideology hailed women in the women's movement or blacks in the black liberation movement, wasn't the reply not to accept the interpellation but to challenge it? Eagleton writes, 'There are after all, many different ways in which we can be hailed and some may strike us as more appealing than others.'¹⁵⁵

Althusser argues that in the majority of cases, with the exemption of the bad cases, interpellation works. Eagleton points out that Althusser was penning this theory less than a year after 10 million bad subjects revolted in France in May 1968 which remains after all, Althusser's home country.

However, despite these fundamental criticisms Eagleton also wants to hold onto the advances made by Althusser. Firstly, he argues that it is very useful to see ideology not just as a distortion of the real or a false reflection of the real nor even a simple effect of commodity production. Rather, ideology is a medium for the production of human subjects, even if Eagleton wants to argue that the process of subject production that Althusser describes is too rigid. Secondly, he argues that it is useful not to see ideology primarily as a matter of ideas, but as a structure through which we live. It consists in a range of material practices embedded in material institutions, like schools, families and so on. Concentrating on ideology as carried out through particular material practices, Althusser gives thought and ideas real analytical weight, and does

¹⁵⁵. Terry Eagleton, *Literary Theory: An Introduction* (Oxford and Cambridge: Blackwell, 1983), 171-173.

not designate cultural production as a by product of the economic base.

Other Marxist thinkers have criticised Althusser for his privileging of science as the only means to analyse the world. For example, Terry Eagleton argues that there are many scientific theories which Marxists would consider to be ideological. For example, there were scientific theories of the 19th century and early 20th century that linked intelligence to brain size. Scientists proceeded to argue that white males were more intelligent than white women as well as black men and women on the basis of supposed differences in the shape and size of the brain. This pseudo-science was no science at all, but rather provided ideological justification for the dominance of that particular social group.

Terry Eagleton also argues that Althusser breaks with the fundamental unity of theory and practice outlined by Marx. Indeed he argues that Marx was only able to develop the scientific methods found in his later work because of his experience of workers struggles and in particular the experience of the French revolution in 1848 and the Paris Commune in 1871. So it was experience rather than theory alone that allowed Marx's thinking to develop.

However, Althusser did not argue that experience is irrelevant. Rather, he was saying that if experience in itself is not an adequate basis for knowledge, then practice is not marginalised. Rather it becomes, as it does in Marx's later writings, one of the components of knowledge. Furthermore, if following Althusser we concentrate on the material practices that facilitate certain interpretations of experience then we have a theoretical system that explains the process whereby certain experiences are marginalised and certain others,

convenient for the reinforcement of the current social order, are continually reinforced to the point that they become common sense and natural.

Political Subjectivization

The mindlessness of power sometimes creates a memory from what was meant to be amnesia. ¹⁵⁶

The question of how subjects can resist or defy dominant ideology is not thoroughly explored by Althusser. Partly in response to Althusser's notable hostility towards the events of May '68, Jacques Rancière develops the notion of political subjectivization. Rancière explains that the revolution of May '68 hinged on the formation of a new political subjectivity. This political subjectivity resides in an experience of disidentification, as opposed to interpellation, with dominant ideological policy, and at the same time an impossible identification with 'the cause of the other.'¹⁵⁷

To take a personal example, for my generation politics in France relied on an impossible identification - an identification with the bodies of the Algerians beaten to death and thrown into the Seine by the French police, in the name of the French people, in October 1961. We could not identify with those Algerians, but we *could* question our identification with the "French people" in whose name they had been murdered. We could act as political subjects in the interval or the gap between two identities, neither of which we could assume. ¹⁵⁸

The inability to speak on behalf of the colonial 'other' as well as the inability to speak within dominant ideological policy led to the first durable political currents within the student milieu in France.

156. Chris Marker, *Inner Time of Television* (London: Otolith Group, 2007).

157. Jacques Rancière, "The cause of the other," trans. David Macey, *Parallax* 7, (April-June, 1998): 25-34.

158. Jacques Rancière, "Politics, Identification, Subjectivization," *October* 61, (Summer, 1992): 61.

Through the struggle against the war, in demonstrations, draft resistance, secret organising, aiding the Algerians, discussions about their revolution, a minority of students became conscious of what they opposed in their own society...Algeria was the occasion, the catalyst for an opposition in search of itself, becoming more and more conscious of itself. ¹⁵⁹

It was not in defence of student interests, which is how de Gaulle's government classified actions, but as part of a legacy of anti-fascist, pro-liberation movements that demonstrations and university occupations were organised by students. The repressive response of the state apparatus and the subsequent brutal treatment of political actions that followed, in particular the beatings students received from police, activated solidarities across social divisions. The student threat to which the government was responding in early May, the historian Kristin Ross explains, was an 'inconsistent maelstrom which, thanks to the excessive use of violence by police, succeeded in attaching its wagon of insurgency to a mass strike, the largest in French history.'¹⁶⁰

For Rancière a political demonstration has nothing to do with asserting identity. A demonstration is an enactment of the equality of people who are between groups, classes or identities, who are a 'not-being or not-yet-being'.¹⁶¹ To demonstrate is to right a wrong, not in any straight forward way, but by way of political subjectivization, by way of a subject which is not yet recognised as being a subject. On 13th May in cities all across France, the largest demonstration of forces aligned across social groups, classes and identities. The banner, 'Students, Teachers and Workers together', fronted the ranks

159. Cornelius Castoriadis, cited in Ross, *May '68 and its Afterlives*, 39.

160. *Ibid.*, 68.

161. Rancière, "Politics, Identification, Subjectivization," 61.

operating in solidarity in what was to be a turning point against the de Gaulle government.¹⁶² By the 24th May, a general strike of ten million people had brought the country and one of the most stable governments in Europe to its knees. In the first weeks of May the constant stream of massive demonstrations across France saw street fighting between demonstrators and riot police, attempts of students in Paris to enter the Latin Quarter, where the Universities are located, the subsequent building of barricades, and on the evening of the 24th May an attempted attack on the Stock Exchange.

When, on 24th May, a demonstration marched in Paris from Gare de Lyon to the Bastille, students again addressed workers with the tract, 'Your struggle is ours', in an attempt to define why they, workers and students were there together. On the same demonstration, as on many that followed, police sequestered students, this time inside the Latin Quarter, revealing to demonstrators the government strategy of separation and containment; of the workers' occupations within the factory walls and students' occupations within the Latin Quarter. Further, the government and mainstream media consistently downplayed the presence of workers at street level by referring to 'non-students' at protests. The bias of mainstream media, the mismatch between what was reported and what was actually happening across the country, in workplaces, universities, streets and factories forced the ORTF journalists to join the strike at a relatively late stage, on the 25th May. However, the film theorist Sylvia Harvey contends that journalists were not arguing that mainstream media should support the revolution; the debate was levelled at the inflexible methods of control of public news, which rendered

162. Sylvia Harvey, *May '68 and Film Culture* (London: British Film Institute, 1978), 6.

objectivity and impartiality impossible.¹⁶³ This debate was successfully played out by striking journalists collaborating with students at the Atelier Populaire (Popular Workshop at the School of Fine Arts). Wall posters were printed depicting riot police speaking into an ORTF microphone on a television screen with barbed wire across it. The caption read, ‘The police speaking.’¹⁶⁴

The most effective actions and organisations sustaining May ‘68 developed across those social divisions between workers and students that were reinforced within the horizons established by the State, the French labour confederations, and leftist parties, especially the Communist Party. The struggle of workers and students involved the promotion of dialogue, meetings, relays, alliances and solidarities. The street provided a common space conducive to the transmission of information necessary to sustain and continue this struggle. In Nantes, Rennes, Clermont–Ferrand, Grenoble, Toulouse, and across the provinces, workers and students occupied the streets for far longer than they managed to in Paris.

Yet, Ross has observed that from the far left to the far right of the political spectrum, various forms of cover up have since amounted to the story that nothing happened in May 1968. Ross’ majestic recovery of the events of May explains the false binary choices around which the memory of May revolves: De Gaulle or the students? Reform or Revolution? Event or non–event? Revolution or festival? Ludic or serious? Words or actions? Seizing speech or seizing power? Imaginary or real? On the left, lamentations that the uprisings failed to seize power from the government are, Ross argues, simply playing

163. Ibid., 9.

164. Ibid., 9.

into a mythology generated by that same government; a necessary dialectical opposition that it requires to complete itself. In so far as the seizure of state power was never an objective of the political struggle these laments have served to bury collective forms of political self-organisation that were created, and the desires that were invested in them and activated by them, beyond any established political channels. She sites as an example the comite d'actions, some 460 of which were established in the region of Paris during May, in schools, universities, factories and neighbourhoods, on the basis of profession or interest. As one committee member states:

When you think we kept an 'Action Committee' alive for four years, with at least thirty people present at the weekly meeting, without a secretary, without an office, without regular obligatory dues, without a reliable meeting place – only the meeting day was set! In that we had a prodigious libertarian experience. ¹⁶⁵

The Spectacle and the Avant-garde

The desire for an other life is that life already. ¹⁶⁶

Wall posters, slogans, graffiti, newspapers, leaflets and fliers propagated a politics in May '68 that linked the political struggle directly to cultural production. The question that was posed repeatedly by cultural producers, as a poster that appeared in May puts it was: Who Creates? For Whom? Ultimately the question of who profits from the extraction of surplus value from cultural productions sat alongside questions of how the cultural production of ideologies work to support existing social relations in ways that enforce the domination of one group or class over another. In essence, a recognition of the centrality of culture as a crucial determinant of social power, as a machine

165. Denise, action committee member, cited in: Ross, *May '68 and its Afterlives*, 76

166. Hans Ulrich Obrist, "Hans Ulrich Obrist In Conversation with Raoul Vaneigem." *e-flux*, no. 6 (May, 2009), <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/view/62>.

through which ideologies are produced and as a crucial source of capitalist surplus value, led to a belief that a revolution in cultural production would extend to the rest of society.

Ten years later, Sylvia Harvey plots how this line of questioning within the film industry led to oppositional organisations that were set up to follow it through.¹⁶⁷ These organisations notably include the *Estates General of the Cinema*, numerous independent film groups, amongst them *Dziga Vertov*, *Société pour le Lancement des oeuvres nouvelles* (SOLN), *Groupe Medvedkine*, *Dynadia* and *Cinéaste révolutionnaire*, as well as the film journals *Cahiers du Cinéma* and *Cinéthique*.¹⁶⁸ The numerous proposals to counteract both the profit-motive of the existing film industry apparatus and the production of ideas supportive of the status quo were made possible by and channelled through these alternative production and distribution circuits.

Yet the work of oppositional cultural production was fraught with difficulties. As Harvey observes, when on May 19th the Film Technicians Union joined the general strike, the EGC announced that it was important for filmmakers to continue to make films despite the strike, not in opposition to it, but about the worker's and student's struggles that composed it.¹⁶⁹ Filmmaking that is of value when oriented toward the production of a commodity should be opposed by withdrawing labour – at the same time it was recognised that filmmaking was also of value when inserted into alternative circuits of production and distribution. The central tenets of progressive politics feeding the arena of

167. Harvey, *May '68 and Film Culture*.

168. *Ibid.*, 27-40.

169. *Ibid.*, 19.

cultural production in May '68 drew directly from the Russian avant-gardes the necessity of exploring and making apparent the techniques of production used. Thus an avant-garde of filmmakers not only sought to question their own practice at the level of production and distribution but also, and more importantly, it was felt that only within this circuitry was it possible for film practice to develop an aesthetics in opposition to ideology that did so by calling attention to the ideological function specific to film.

An article in the film journal *Cinéthique*, in 1969, outlines this relationship between film and politics, developing a modernist aesthetics by way of Althusser's notion of ideology. The cinema, it was argued, falls within the arena of ideological practice rather than political practice because the cinema reproduces existing ideologies as well as producing its own specific ideologies. The illusion-generating power of the cinema, the impression of reality it generates is regarded as cinema's central ideological function. The only possible escape from these realms of ideology is via the production of a materialist cinema that does not give illusory reflections of reality and which is able to produce knowledge about the world only on the condition that it first produces knowledge about cinema, thus breaking the cinema's illusion-generating mechanisms. The materialist cinema is then promoted from the category of ideological practice to the category of theoretical practice (according to Althusser's four material practices in society noted above). As Sylvia Harvey puts it, 'The only way in which the cinema can circle back into an adequate, productive relationship with politics is thus through the transformation of itself into a theoretical practice'.¹⁷⁰ A cinema able to produce

170. *Ibid.*, 38.

knowledge about itself, and which can thus be promoted up the Althusserian 'league table' from ideological to theoretical practice is closely bound up with the political defence of modernist aesthetics. A theoretical practice of filmmaking must consciously explore ways in which to make its audience aware of the devices it has used in its own construction, in attempting to call attention to *the illusory nature of the film image* and thus holding the audience back from an unproblematic identification with the events and characters portrayed on screen.

However, as Harvey argues, the anti-illusionism of avant-garde film in '68 draws attention to the fact of representation, whereas a desire to move beyond representation is expressed in the works that adhere to modernist aesthetics. Harvey takes the example of Bertolt Brecht. As previously mentioned Brecht draws directly from Sergei Tret'iakov, a concern to move art beyond representation, not for its own sake, but because aesthetic illusionism or the naturalistic description of events in art does not adequately integrate the spectator. Brecht did not seek to call attention to the lie of theatrical representation. Brechtian drama sought to explore a social reality beyond theatre and to invite spectators in the theatre to take part in transforming that social reality. For filmmakers in '68 a critique of illusionism seems to get stuck in musings over the nature of illusion. As the filmmaker Jean-Luc Godard remarks, 'A photograph is not the reflection of reality, but the reality of that reflection.'¹⁷¹ Within the arena of culture in May '68, the avant-gardes and the masses inhere as two different relationships to the image or the text; the masses are delighted and enslaved by the spectacle, while the avant-gardes

171. Godard, cited in *Ibid.*, 71.

work towards revealing its presence. The Situationist Guy Debord develops what is perhaps the most comprehensive theory of this relationship to the image in his book, *The Society of the Spectacle*.¹⁷² For Guy Debord, reality itself is mediated to the point where everything, all groups, classes, avant-gardes and masses included, are representations. The only vestige of progressive art, in such a situation, is a form of communication that contains its own critique. The Situationists theorised this as *détournement*.¹⁷³

172. Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith (Cambridge: Zone Books, 1995).

173. *Ibid.*, 204-209.

New Times

Gramsci, hegemony and class struggle:

Antonio Gramsci, an Italian Marxist, died as a result of nine years incarceration in Mussolini's jails. Gramsci's work was been very influential in the development of British cultural studies in the late 1970s and 1980s. Below I explain the two main concepts of Gramscian theory that were taken up by British cultural studies before moving on to discuss the *interpretations* that were made of these concepts by cultural theorists, especially through the journal *Marxism Today* as well as some of the criticisms of these interpretations. I refer specifically to Gramsci's writings in his Prison Notebooks (1925-1935)."¹⁷⁴

Tony Bennett's article *The Turn to Gramsci*¹⁷⁵ gives a very good account of the reasons why Gramsci's work was taken up by British cultural studies. Bennett argues that Gramsci was embraced by academics working within the field of cultural studies because his work was seen as offering a way out of the deadlock between the culturalist and structuralist accounts of society. Gramsci was seen as offering a Marxist account of social relations which wasn't dogmatic or overly deterministic about the role of the economy. That is, Gramsci's writing concentrated on how the superstructure rather than the economic base helped maintain capitalism. In this his work is similar to Althusser but as Martin Barker points out, Gramsci moved away from the Althusserian 'moment' in cultural studies according to which ideology is

¹⁷⁴ Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, trans. Quintin Hoare and Goffrey Nowell Smith (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971).

¹⁷⁵ Tony Bennett, "Popular Culture and the Turn to Gramsci," in *Popular Culture and Social Relations* (Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1986), xi-21.

always effective in defining subjectivity.

There are three concepts from Gramsci's work which were taken up enthusiastically by these academics in the 1970s and 1980s. They are the concept of *hegemony*, and the concepts of '*war of manoeuvre* and *war of position*'.

Hegemony.

Gramsci did not invent the term 'hegemony'. The term was derived from the Russian socialist movement and was first used by Plekhanov and Axelrod to discuss the future leadership of the working class on the revolutionary movement. So hegemony, in their formulation, was the ability to provide politically efficient intellectual leadership. Gramsci adopted this term and transformed it. He developed it as a tool to theorise the *political* basis of capitalist power.

Hegemony was the concept Gramsci used to explain and describe the strength and complexity of class rule in Western Europe. His work is an attempt to explain why capitalism persists even though it is a system of blatant social inequality. More than this, he was concerned to investigate why, even though most European states have experienced insurrections against the capitalist system, it was only in Russia that this insurrection developed into a full blown revolution in 1917.

His reply to this was that western Europe was different from Russia in terms of the power and complexity of the *superstructure* of the Western European nations. More specifically, Gramsci argued that it was the existence of strong *bourgeois civil societies* in Western Europe that could explain the longevity of

the capitalist nation states. What did he mean by this term 'civil society'? Civil society is the term used in political theory to describe the institutions that make up the public sphere, institutions like education, the media, civil organisations like trade unions, and so on. These institutions are not immediately bound to the state, are not part of the state, and they do not operate in a policing manner. It is the institutions of civil society, according to Gramsci, that function in such a way as to produce the *hegemony* of some particular ideas, ways of life, politics and policies.

How do these particular politics become hegemonic? Gramsci argues that they become hegemonic through the winning of *consent* from the population which they rule. So hegemony secures systems of capitalist rule through winning the consent of the very population that these systems of rule exploit and disadvantage. Gramsci argued that the mechanisms of control for securing this consent lay in a network of cultural institutions which inculcated subordination in the exploited and oppressed. So rather than ruling by force, Western democracies rule by winning consent, but this consent is won through appealing to *genuine* popular sentiments and needs. I will return later to the way that genuine popular sentiments and needs are mobilised in the construction of hegemony when I talk about Stuart Hall's analysis of Thatcherism. Before that however, I will explain Gramsci's argument about the role of intellectuals in establishing hegemony.

The role of the Intellectual.

Because Gramsci lays stress on the notion that institutions and ideologies are functional in winning consent for the status quo, he spends considerable time

discussing the role of the intellectual in this process.¹⁷⁶ He argues that ideologies and the winning of consent takes place in the institutions of civil society. These institutions are populated by intellectual groups, auxiliary to the dominant classes because they are necessary for building and transmitting ideologies and views that support the rule of the dominant classes. Although he notes that educational institutions do not do so monolithically, they have other functions as well, i.e. to educate, and that there are cracks within these institutions too.¹⁷⁷

Gramsci argues that intellectuals are incorporated in the production of hegemony in two ways: They can either be 'traditional intellectuals,' incorporated by the ruling class from earlier modes of production, or a dominant class can generate intellectuals from within their own ranks as a new category. These he labels organic intellectuals, because they are an organic part of that the established system of social relations. This is an important point which I will develop further when I go on to discuss the notion of counter-hegemony developed by theorists in Britain in the 1980s.

Hegemony, Gramsci argues, is flexible and dynamic. This means that in the establishment of political power nothing is determined in advance. The specific interests of the ruling classes change, and the ways that these interests gain the consent of the rest of the population also change, appealing to different sentiments at different times and for different ends. The groups who most enthusiastically took up Gramsci's concept of hegemony in this country were the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies in Birmingham and parts

176. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 3-14.

177. *Ibid.*, 24-43.

of the British New Left, who published the periodical *Marxism Today*. Gramsci was seen as useful to the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies and the British New Left for it allowed them to foreground culture in the process of politics and political struggle. This stems from Gramsci's idea that hegemony is never won once and for all, but constantly has to be struggled over to be maintained and adapted to new circumstances. The struggle to establish hegemony always has to take place also through culture – it can never be won simply at the level of the economic base. Hegemony was also seen as useful because of its stress on the effectivity of the superstructure without the monolithic over determination offered by Althusser. This was seen as further proof of the need to rid theory of the over determination traditional Marxism expressed in terms of economic analysis.

War of manoeuvre and war of position

The concept of hegemony is in Gramsci's work very closely linked to another theoretical proposition, that of a war of manoeuvre as opposed to a war of position. Gramsci expounds these ideas in the *Prison Notebooks*.¹⁷⁸ The War of Manoeuvre is a full frontal attack on capitalism. This involves rapid movement by rival armies, which thrust forward and backward as each one tries to outflank the other. The concept of the War of Position refers to a kind of opposition that is less confrontational and more tactical and ideological. This involves a long drawn-out struggle of two sides deadlocked in battle, hardly able to move, rather like trench warfare.

Gramsci argued that the last successful war of manoeuvre for the working class was the October revolution in 1917. There, the working class directly

¹⁷⁸. Ibid., 238.

confronted the old state and ruling class, ending their political, social and economic regime and replacing it with a working class control of society, the economy and new political institutions. Gramsci was an enthusiastic supporter of this revolutionary change. Yet, he argued that unfortunately, all that was possible for the working classes of Western Europe at the time was a War of Position. Again, this was due to the difference he perceived between the political conditions in Russia and those in Western European capitalist states.

Birmingham Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) and Marxism Today

The concept of hegemony and the concept of war of position are the two key Gramscian concepts taken up most enthusiastically in British cultural studies. Here I will explain the reasons that led theorists like Stuart Hall to take up these concepts in their work. I will also expose some of the criticisms that this work has attracted from other British Marxists.

The concept of hegemony was taken up enthusiastically in some of the work produced within the CCCS because it seemed to offer a way of explaining the effectivity of culture in supporting the capitalist system of social relations without being either economically reductionist or monolithic. Unlike the fixed societal grip implied by the concept of domination, hegemony is won in the to-and-fro of negotiation between competing social, political and ideological forces through which power is contested, shifted or reformed. The arena of cultural representation is a key site in such a struggle, since the power of definition is a major source of hegemony.

One of the ways this concept of hegemony has been applied in Britain is to be

found in the analysis of Thatcherism produced by Stuart Hall and others, both from the CCCS and from the journal *Marxism Today*.¹⁷⁹ Stuart Hall set out to explain the success of the right wing Thatcher government through a theory of hegemony. The question that motivated these works of the New Left was; ‘Why was Thatcher such a popular leader even amongst the working classes even though the economic policies of her government are destructive for those working class?’ They argued that the success of the Thatcher government was due to the fact that they had managed to win the consent of a crucial part of the working class population for their policies. Now, rather than take the Althusserian path and explain this consent through ideological subordination, they tried to identify the ways in which consent was constantly negotiated through the media and other such institutions and how these policies were presented in a way that appealed to genuine popular needs. This would explain why the working class was voting for a government that was, for example, committed to shrinking council housing, a policy that would clearly materially affect, in the first instance, the working class. The same policy would give them the chance to buy their own council house and would be hegemonically presented to them as a chance to be autonomous of inefficient council bureaucracies. So the political power of the Thatcher governments could not be explicable just through the economic base, it needed cultural hegemony in order to establish itself. Likewise, the campaigns of law and order, campaigns whose aim is to establish a more authoritarian control of the population, appeal to us through the media because they are always presented as having

179. Stuart Hall, *The Hard Road to Renewal: Thatcherism and the Crisis of the Left* (London: Verso, 1988); Stuart Hall et al., *Policing the Crisis: Mugging, the State and Law & Order* (London: Macmillan, 1978).

our safety in mind.

Now, if capitalism indeed established itself primarily through hegemonic prevalence in the field of culture, the task of the left was, according to these sections of the New Left, to provide the conditions for a working class cultural counter hegemony. The production of this counter hegemony would wage what Gramsci termed a war of position and *not* a war of manoeuvre against the ruling class. So the political programme of the British New Left which took up Gramsci became a war of position, a gradual opposition or resistance to the right wing hegemony as opposed to revolutionary insurrection against it. This shift away from revolution as the immediate aim of the left towards counter hegemony demonstrated through a war of position is clearly expressed in an early essay on Gramsci, written by Hall and others at the CCCS. They note that Gramsci's notion of civil society and hegemony led him to reconceptualise a strategy for the revolutionary party based on winning political hegemony *prior* to the seizure of power.¹⁸⁰ This position rests on both Gramsci's emphasis on ideology and also on one oft quoted passage:

A social group can, and indeed must, already exercise 'leadership' before winning governmental power (this is indeed one of the principal conditions for the winning of such power); it subsequently becomes dominant when it exercises power, but even if it holds it firmly in its grasp, it must continue to 'lead' as well. ¹⁸¹

The way Gramsci was taken up by the British New Left led to an emphasis on hegemony always being established through culture. If culture is, and has been crucial in gaining political power, then consequently a war of position is waged through culture.

¹⁸⁰. Stuart Hall, B Lumley, and G McLennan, "Politics and Ideology: Gramsci," *Working Papers in Cultural Studies* 10 (1977).

¹⁸¹. Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, 57.

These decisions have attracted some criticism. Other Marxist intellectuals felt that the way the concept of hegemony and the concept of the war of position had been taken up by the New Left were misinterpretations of Gramsci's original formulations. It was argued that the academics who interpreted Gramsci presented ideologies as more autonomous than Gramsci had actually intended. Gramsci continually stresses the links between ideology, hegemony and their roots in material practice.

Relatedly, the interpretation of Gramsci's war of position was also criticized, as suggesting that working class interests could only be fulfilled after the establishment of a working class counter hegemony. Gramsci's analysis of the primacy of the war of position before revolutionary change explains how the bourgeoisie became a hegemonic class. Gramsci's formulation of the primacy of the war of position comes from his writings concerning the struggles of the Italian bourgeoisie and their attempts to unify the country in the Risorgimento of the 1860's. It can be found in his *Notes on Italian History*¹⁸² where he explains both why bourgeois nationalism came to dominate Italy and why unification failed to solve the social and economic problems in Italy.

The criticisms argue that the British New Left transposed Gramsci's writing on one period in history and one class to another period of history and a different class. What they overlooked is that the bourgeoisie and the proletariat remain different classes with different relationships to the means of production. Workers under capitalism, according to Marx, own nothing but their own power of labour power; they are atomised and exploited. but as a class, the bourgeoisie developed differently. With economic power under feudalism, the

182. Ibid., 52-120.

bourgeoisie were allowed to establish cultural institutions like universities and newspapers long before it took state power. Through these cultural means, the bourgeoisie had hundreds of years to develop power under feudalism. The modern working class has no such option, because as a class it does not have the capital to set up rival institutions on the same scale. Thus, the belief that the working class can acquire power through a war of position underplays real inequalities in power and wealth between workers and the capitalist class. Perry Anderson goes as far as to suggest that Gramsci's work has been completely misinterpreted within British academia. Indeed he argues that academics' posthumous canonisation of Gramsci have sterilised the vitality of Gramsci's bequest to Marxism.¹⁸³

Despite these criticisms, the turn to Gramsci in cultural studies and the British New Left resulted in a wealth of interesting work which attempted to explain the reasons that made authoritarian populism and right wing politics hegemonic through the acquisition of consent. They thus tried to explain the prevalence of capitalism without resort to either economic determinism or an always already successful ideology. They instead investigated how hegemony makes use of people's real needs and aspirations in order to establish politics that are not in their objective interest, and how an oppositional left wing politics has to take stock at the level of the cultural in order to appeal to the same real needs and aspirations.

183. Perry Anderson, "The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci," *New Left Review* 1, (November-December, 1976).

Methodologies

For the writing to continue to belong in the humanities, it must take into account and put into use already established concepts drawn for one or another humanities discipline, or better, from many all at once (philosophy, psychology, semiotics, communications, literary theory, political economy, anthropology, cultural studies). The important thing, once again, is that these found concepts not simply be applied. This can be done by extracting them from their usual connections to other concepts in their home system, and confronting them with the example or a detail from it. The activity of the example will transmit to the concept, more or less violently. The concept will start to deviate under the force. Let it. Then reconnect it to other concepts, drawn from other systems, until a whole new system of connection starts to form. Then ... take another example. See what happens. Follow the new growth. You end up with many buds. Incipient systems. Leave them that way. You have made a system-like composition prolonging the active power of the example. You have left your readers with a very special gift: a headache. By which I mean a problem: what in the world to do with it all. That's their problem. That's where their experimentation begins. ¹⁸⁴

The following sub-sections introduce particular concepts, outlining their functionality in so far as each contributes to an understanding of how the political and the aesthetic are inextricably intertwined in the event, namely J18. Each concept is taken from a particular author or a set of authors, reflecting only how I came to the concept; this should not be taken as an objective origin, nor preclude that each concept has a history. However an archaeological analysis of the history of each concept falls outside the primary interests of this thesis. I begin by outlining the insights into the concept of power developed by Michel Foucault. This leads into a discussion of the multitude, virtuosity and immaterial labour taken from the political philosophy of Paolo Virno. I move on to the concepts of movement, affect and the field of potential drawn, by way of Henri Bergson from the work of Brian

¹⁸⁴. Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual*, (Durham: Duke UP, 2002), 19.

Massumi. The chapter concludes with the indispensable ethico-aesthetic paradigm developed by Felix Guattari.

Biopolitics and biopower

So what I've said does not mean that we are always trapped, but that we are always free – well, anyway, that there is always the possibility of changing.¹⁸⁵

In this subsection a set of methodological commitments allow the analysis of J18 to develop beyond an understanding of the event as simply a negation or transgression of power. The aim is to shift the analysis away from conventional interpretations of power as constraint and resistance, toward an understanding of resistance as a creative process, without losing sight of the productivity of existing power/knowledges. Accompanying this new conception of resistance in the field of power, the decision to scale the analysis of political actions at the level of the event will also be clarified.

The moment living bodies become the new object of an art of governing, Michel Foucault terms the biopolitical. His emphasis on subjectivation and technologies of the self in the latter two volumes of the *History of Sexuality* and on governmentality in two courses given at the College de France develop insights into a new dispositif of power.¹⁸⁶ Power that takes life as its object can no longer be said to operate in accordance with the way power is invariably interpreted, in purely negative terms, as a refusal, obstruction, limitation, or censorship. This wholly inadequate conception has served to reduce power to

185. Michel Foucault, cited in Maurizio Lazzarato, "From Biopower to Biopolitics," *Pli: The Warwick Journal of Philosophy* 13 (2002): 112–25.

186. Michel Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure: The History of Sexuality Vol. 2*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1992); Michel Foucault, *The Care of the Self: The History of Sexuality Vol. 3*, (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1990); Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the College de France 1977 – 1978* trans. David Burchell, (Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007); Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the College De France, 1978-1979*. (Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007).

the Law, to a juridical operation, and this has lent power a substantive existence, as a power attached to a source, that it does not possess historically. The model of power that Foucault works up suggests that neither power nor the Law enjoy an independent existence or ontology outside of concrete, historical instances in which they are exercised. Moreover the exercise of power when reduced to the Law and the Law to prohibition, treats resistance as a mere transgression by the Subject of Law, when on the contrary, as Foucault argues:

There are no relations of power without resistances; the latter are all the more real and effective because they are formed right at the point where relations of power are exercised; resistance to power does not have to come from elsewhere to be real, nor is it inexorably frustrated through being the compatriot of power. It exists all the more by being in the same place as power; hence, like power, resistance is multiple and can be integrated into global strategies. ¹⁸⁷

The problematic of resistance that threads through Foucault's insights into the emergence of biopolitics suggests that where life becomes the new object of power, resistance comes first. Power operates in the first instance in recognition of life and a subject's capacity for action which it then seeks to manage, negotiate, coordinate, direct and regulate, as opposed to simply dominate and suppress. Power may effectively and determinately guide and regulate the way people behave and conduct themselves, but as the exercise of power is never absolute, we do not need a theory of resistance to explain or support social movements that contest, undermine or renegotiate existing power relations. Accordingly, a monolithic power of absolute control and regulation is neither possible nor necessary because there are no practices,

187. Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. by Colin Gordon (London: Harvester, 1980), 142.

tools, techniques or experiences that are a-priori oppositional to or compliant with existing macro-structures of power. This would be to understand resistance as an essence, as inherent in lived experience rather than in relations between things. In his analysis of everyday life Michel De Certeau never managed to escape what he calls the scriptural economy because he conceives lived experience or practice to be inherently resistant; he sees all pedestrians like pens, writing resistance as they wander the streets.¹⁸⁸

If there is no stepping outside the exercise of power, it is 'always already there.' Power thus conceived is not a unilateral relation, as in the domination of one group or class over another.¹⁸⁹ Foucault contends that power is a matter of intelligence, a strategic relation that is co-extensive with the social body and intertwined with all kinds of other social relations - of production, family, education and sexuality. As Maurizio Lazzarato explains;

Every force in society exercises power and that power passes through the body, not because power is 'omnipotent and omniscient' but because every force is a power of the body. Power comes from below; the forces that constitute it are multiple and heterogeneous. What we call power is an integration, coordination and determination of the relations between a multiplicity of forces.¹⁹⁰

Above all, Foucault insists upon speaking in terms of power relations rather than power alone, because the emphasis should fall upon the relation not the terms of that relation, as the terms are the effect of power and not the cause. A highly reductive understanding of power relations would limit the analysis of J18 to a war or battle between terms, between say police and protestors, as

188. Michel DeCerteau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*.

189. Foucault, *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, 141.

190. Michel Foucault, cited in Lazzarato, "Biopower and Biopolitics." The preceding quotation is taken from this article.

mainstream media depictions tend to do. On the contrary, power is not a possession of either term, nor a dynamic of two opposing, agonistic macro-political forces. Power is not a mechanism emanating from a central location and attached to a conscious intention or decision at the level of an individual or collective. Following Foucault, power is not simply the capacity of each term, whether police or protestor, state or citizen, to structure the field of action of the other, but rather, 'to intervene in the domain of the other's possible actions.'¹⁹¹ Not action upon action, but action into the domain of possible actions. The police try to control the conduct of protestors and the protestors in turn try to avoid allowing their conduct to be controlled, each movement is crucially dependent upon the capacity for action that every exercise of power presupposes. Foucault's account of the function of power as structuring a field of possible action in which a subject must act, does not imply external coercion by power itself – the functioning of power to guide the actions of a fundamentally *free* subject always presupposes the possibility that the subject can traverse the field in new and creative ways. Resistance to power should not only be understood in terms of agonistic force relations, but as a creative traversing of the field of possible action.

Resistance was conceptualised only in terms of negation. Nevertheless, as you see it, resistance is not solely a negation but a creative process. To create and recreate, to transform the situation, to participate actively in the process, that is to resist.

Yes, that is the way I would put it.¹⁹²

191. Michel Foucault. "The Subject and Power," in Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (Chicago: U Chicago Press, 1983), 221.

192. Ibid.

Every action in J18 is an affirmation of the freedom that every exercise of power presupposes. To move beyond resistance, the analysis lodges action in a technique, an instrument or a means of intervention, installed in an object, target or field of application as a rupture, an opening up of power to the contingency of the event.

The Multitude, Virtuosity and Immaterial Labour

Paolo Virno reconciles this capacity for action with the political category of the multitude. As Virno defines it, the multitude ‘is the form of social and political existence of the many, seen as being many; a plurality which does not evaporate into a centripetal form of motion and which does not converge into a synthetic unity’.¹⁹³ The multitude picks up on the creation of a ‘unity in diversity’ in J18, making it possible to think of this ‘unity’ as a political formation. The call to forge a unity in diversity appeared in the calls to action that circulated through the Peoples Global Action networks as follows:

In building a global movement of resistance we can assert our will to struggle as peoples against all forms of oppression. But we do not only fight the wrongs imposed on us (and our planet). We are also committed to building a new world. We come together as human beings and communities, our unity deeply rooted in diversity. ¹⁹⁴

Virno opposes the multitude to the notion of the unity of ‘the people’ that has prevailed since the establishment in the seventeenth century of centralised modern States. In order to understand the politics of contemporary social phenomenon and behaviour, of ‘linguistic games, forms of life, ethical inclinations, salient characteristics of production’¹⁹⁵ the unified category of ‘the

193. Paolo Virno, *Grammar of the Multitude*, (New York: Semiotext(e), 2004), 21-22.

194. Peoples Global Action, “Archive of Global Protests (AGP).”

195. Virno, *Grammar of the Multitude*, 22.

people' is insufficient, Virno contends. It is only possible to understand the world as it is today from the mode of being of the many.

Virno traces the concept of multitude through the work of the philosophers Thomas Hobbes and Baruch Spinoza. Hobbes detested the multitude because of its recourse to a state of nature that precedes, to a repressed experience that corrupts the formation of the political unity of civil society. The multitude for Hobbes is that which 'did not make itself fit to become people, in as much as it virtually contradicts the state monopoly of political decision making.'¹⁹⁶ Thus Virno allies the multitude with the liberal and highly contested category of the private individual as opposed to the public domain, in that the contemporary multitude, the mode of being of the many, is far removed from the sphere of public affairs and is deprived of a public presence, or a public voice. The multitude then, falls in between the individual–collective pairing of socialist traditions of political thought. Whereas the people are collective, the individual 'is the irrelevant remainder of divisions and multiplications which are carried out somewhere far from the individual.'¹⁹⁷

The multitude is a mode of being of the many that traverses traditional subdivisions along public–private or collective–individual lines, as these have been employed in political thought to understand 'a people' converging under the unity of the State. Virno argues that it is no longer possible to speak of such a unity, which is not to suggest that the contemporary multitude do not need a sense of being 'One' – of unity – rather this unity is no longer the State. Virno proffers that, on the contrary, the forms of life of the many–as–many

¹⁹⁶. Ibid., 23.

¹⁹⁷. Ibid., 24.

are finding unity in and through 'language, intellect, and the communal faculties of the human race' and consequently, it is difficult to separate public from private experience or to know where collective experience ends and private experience begins.

The mode of being-one, the experience of unity is no longer a promise as it was for sovereign subjects converging as the people towards the State. The forging of this unity is now the premise of a politics. The unity in diversity of the contemporary multitude does not converge in order to forge a unity of 'the people' in an attempt to enter the realm of political representation and decision-making. Virno concedes that the multitude marks an exodus from the unity of the State in search of a unity marked by a plurality and diversity of experiences which exceed 'the people'.

Paolo Virno reconciles the contemporary multitude's capacity for action within a Marxian, albeit radically updated, concept of labour power.¹⁹⁸ He begins, following Marx, by distinguishing labour-power from its product; the subject of production (the worker, the act of production) from the object of production (the commodity). He does this to emphasise labour power as a generic, undetermined potential, as the 'capacity for producing as such'.¹⁹⁹ In this sense labour power exceeds the valorisation of any specific attributes of labour within the capitalist system, for example remuneration or a specific job description. Labour is not equivalent to a job. Virno argues that, as distinct from previous models of capitalist development, the qualities of labour valorised within contemporary capitalism are in fact the non-remunerated

¹⁹⁸. The concept of labour as outlined by Marx is outlined in Chapter 3 of this thesis.

¹⁹⁹. *Ibid.*, 82.

aspects of *life*, attributes which are not calculated as productive forces.

Labour power increases the value of capital only because it never loses its qualities of non-labour (that is, its inherent connection to a productive cooperation richer than the one implicit in the labour process in the strictest sense of the term).²⁰⁰

Labour–power as a ‘generic, undetermined potential ... incorporates all human capacities: language, memory, motility, sociability, ethical and aesthetic inclinations, and the capacity for abstraction and learning.’²⁰¹ Within contemporary capitalism it is labour power as the capacity for producing as such, which is bought and sold. This capacity for producing exists as a potential and can be related to only as potential. Virno cites Karl Marx in respect of this notion of labour power as dynamic potential: ‘The purchaser of labour-power consumes it by setting the seller of it to work. By working, the latter becomes in actuality what previously he only was potentially.’²⁰² Once actualised, once applied, once sold, labour power is no longer potential as such. As a capacity for production, as *dynamis*, it is inseparable from the living person, the living body of the worker. Every act is then political in so far as it engages this capacity for producing, the capacity that the contemporary capitalist mode of production relies upon.

Where historically labour (*poiesis*) and political action (*praxis*) were considered distinct terrains, within contemporary capitalism they are indistinguishable. Labour has subsumed within itself many of the historical features of political action. This, Virno suggests, might be a reason why political action is thought of so negatively, as either an undesirable presence

200. Ibid., 103.

201. Ibid., 81.

202. Karl Marx, cited in Ibid., 82.

subject to control, surveillance, prohibition and constraint or an altogether pointless exercise. Political action subsumed by labour does not then 'enjoy an autonomous dignity'.²⁰³ To outline features of political action that are absorbed by contemporary labour, Virno employs the concept of virtuosity. The important point here, Virno suggests, is that virtuosity has a long history in political thought. Aristotle used virtuosity to distinguish labour (*poiesis*) as object oriented action, from action (*praxis*) whose purpose and fulfilment is rooted in the action itself. Hannah Arendt suggested there is a strong affinity between virtuoso performance and politics.

Performing artists, dancers, musicians, and the like need an audience to show their virtuosity, just as acting men need the presence of others before whom they can appear; both need a publicly organised space for their work, and both depend upon others for their performance itself. ²⁰⁴

By virtuosity, Virno is likewise referring to the capacities specific to performing artists, 'the pianist who offers us a memorable performance ... a skilled dancer, or a persuasive orator, or a teacher who is never boring, or a priest who delivers a fascinating sermon.'²⁰⁵ Virtuosity has three principle characteristics: The virtuoso requires the presence of others; their performance only makes sense if it is seen or heard by an audience. Finally, the virtuosic process is the product; it is an activity that finds its own fulfilment in itself. Its purpose is not elsewhere; there is no end product or objective beyond the performance itself. Thus Virno is arguing that within the multitude, politics has changed; labour, politics and intellect are interchangeable. They are all political in so far as they are virtuosic, which is to

203. Ibid., 51.

204. Hannah Arendt, cited in Ibid., 82.

205. Ibid., p52.

say performative, requiring an audience and finding in themselves, and not in any end-product, their own fulfilment.

Virtuality, Movement, Affect

Brian Massumi offers a way of engaging with this capacity for producing, this potential as it exists in the event. He also suggests a way of articulating the ephemeral nature of J18's virtuosic political actions. J18, because it encompasses this potential and virtuosity, demands the kind of philosophical participation that can engage with change directly. The work of Massumi is exemplary in this respect.²⁰⁶ I abduct from him the concepts of movement, sensation, affect, virtuality and field of potential. Before briefly outlining these concepts, the importance of his exemplary method is outlined.

The main feature of this method, as adopted to develop an understanding of J18 in this thesis, is the equality in status of both concept and example. Massumi, citing Giorgio Agamben says, 'Logically, the example is an odd beast. It holds for all cases of the same type ... and, at the same time, is included in these. It is one singularity among others, which, however stands for each of them and serves for all ... (one for all and all in itself).'²⁰⁷ The example, in this case J18, in actuality belongs only to itself, (its self-relation) but also to what it might be connected with (its extendibility). As a method of writing about J18, exemplification activates details of the example's self-

206. Brian Massumi is known for his translation from French into English of Gilles Deleuze's and Felix Guattari's *Mille Plateaux (A Thousand Plateaus)*, 1987). He has also translated from French to English the poststructuralist works of, Michel de Certeau (*Heterologies: Discourse on the Other*, 1986), Jean-François Lyotard (*The Postmodern Condition*, 1984), and Shoshana Felman (*Writing and Madness*, 1985). His own subsequent books and articles are included in the bibliography. A complete bibliography of his work including hyperlinks to the articles can be accessed via his website: <http://www.brianmassumi.com/>

207. Giorgio Agamben, cited in Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*, 18.

relation; the details both engage in and characterise it as singularity.

The success of the example hinges on the details. Every little one matters. At each new detail, the example runs the risk of falling apart, its unity of self-relation becoming a jumble. Every detail is essential to the case. This means that the details making up the example partake of its singularity. Each detail is like another example embedded in it. A micro-example. An incipient example. ²⁰⁸

Massumi introduces change as a first principle by thinking in and of the body, which is a sensing body in movement. In this way, he gives ontological priority to movement, passage and processual indeterminacy, over position, signification and social determination. He situates the body in qualitative change, moving and sensing change as it is happening in situations, even if a change is the potential change that one registers affectively. For this Massumi uses the concept of duration following the philosophy of Henri Bergson, which counters the customary way of thinking of movement. Bergson uses the example of a body in motion to demonstrate this. He says, if a body moves from point A to B, the line AB, can trace its path. However, no point on the line will correspond to a position of the body in motion. Although this is how we tend to think of movement, as a passage or line through space that is infinitely divisible, no amount of consecutive static positions can constitute movement.

How could the moving object *be* in a point of its trajectory passage? It *passes* through, or in other terms, *it could be there*. It would be there if it stopped; but if it should stop there, it would no longer by the same movement we were dealing with. ²⁰⁹

A moving body is never *at* a position, as a body at rest is, it is always rather in the process of moving towards or away from a position. Hence, movement

208. Ibid.

209. Henri Bergson, *Henri Bergson: Key Writings*, trans. Keith Ansell Pearson and John Mullarkey (New York and London: Continuum, 2002), 254.

cannot be reduced to the object that is mobile.²¹⁰ Thinking of movement as the linear translation of an object through space misses the virtuality of duration; the qualitative change that every movement brings not only to that which moves, but also to the space that it moves in and to the whole into which that space necessarily opens up. To use Bergson's elucidation of the indivisibility of movement and with it of qualitative change;

Let us listen to a melody, allowing ourselves to be lulled by it: do we not have the clear perception of a movement which is not attached to a mobile, of a change without anything changing? This change is self-sufficient, it is reality itself. And even if it takes time, it is still indivisible; if a melody stopped sooner it would no longer be the same mass of sounds, it would be another, equally indivisible ... pure change remains sufficient to itself, in no way divided, in no way attached to a 'thing' that changes. ²¹¹

The moving, sensing body inhabits this durational expanse, registering qualitative change *affectively*.²¹² Affect, as discussed by Massumi, and as I choose to understand it here, is not a feeling or emotion, it is pre-personal and pre-conscious. It is indeterminate, sensed potential. Where Virno, following a Marxist epistemology, talks about potential in relation to labour, Massumi attaches affect to the body's capacity to act from one moment to the next. This follows Spinoza who defines what a body is, by what it can do as it goes along.²¹³ The body, sensing from one moment to the next, from one experiential state to the next, undergoes a qualitative change in capacity to affect and be affected. Affects are not in a body; affects are resonating

210. Ibid., 81-163.

211. Ibid., 259.

212. Recent work that concurs with Brian Massumi's use of this concept, include Jordan Crandall, "Ready for Action" (Lecture presented at the Projections exhibition, Kunsthaus Graz, 2006), <http://www.noemalab.org/sections/ideas.php>; Nigel Thrift, "Intensities of Feeling: Towards a Spatial Politics of Affect," *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography*, 86, no. 1 (March, 2004): 57-78.

213. For a wonderful account of Spinoza's work see the transcribed lectures of Gilles Deleuze, "Transcripts on Spinoza's concept of Affect," (presented at Cours Vincennes, January 24, 1978), www.webdeleuze.com/php/sommaire.html.

transmissions across and between a mixing of bodies in sensation. Just as meanings are communicated between people, sensations are transmitted between people and their environments, transforming the relations between them.²¹⁴

In affect, we are never alone. That's because affects in Spinoza's definition are basically ways of connecting, to others and to other situations. They are our angle of participation in processes larger than ourselves. With intensified affect comes a stronger sense of embeddedness in a larger field of life — a heightened sense of belonging, with other people and to other places. ²¹⁵

Massumi argues that affects are registered by the body before being stored as habit, reflex, emotion, memory and conscious thought. The skin, he says, is faster than the word.²¹⁶ Between action and thought, affects mark an opening, 'a margin of manoeuvrability in any present situation'.²¹⁷ This is because our affective perception of on-going transitions in any given moment picks-up only a fraction of our capacity for affecting and being affected, such that we can take little steps to access more fully our capacities, which are always there, virtually, as potential.

In what we think of as possible, we also open up another space for the productions and inventions of the allegedly impossible or improbable. The possible is the real or the actual, the impossible the virtual. Massumi describes the possible, 'as a field of normative variation; transformations that can be expected of a thing by definition, transformations it can undergo without warranting a new name.' The virtual, the always allegedly improbable, 'is the

214. This point is explored by Crandall, in "Ready for Action."

215. Massumi, "Navigating Movements," 2.

216. Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*, 23-45.

217. Massumi, "Navigating Movements," 3.

immanence of a thing to its still indeterminate variation.’ Variations we can predict only with the benefit of hindsight.²¹⁸

A paradigmatic piece of writing in which we glimpse affective perception in action, is Massumi’s analysis of a game of football.²¹⁹ From the grassy field between two goal posts and a ‘win or lose’ situation, I transplant many of his concepts to the City of London streets, J18 and a game of protest. Even so, it would not be far-fetched to liken J18 to a game of football. London police forces develop many of their crowd control techniques from policing football matches. Furthermore, seasoned protestors talk about protest as a game, for example in relation to the invention of playful tactics, which are used to defy the capacities of police to contain them. This is the ‘field of play’ of protest, ‘the in-between of charged movement more fundamentally a field of potential than a substantial thing or object.’²²⁰ Many protestors recognise that, in this sense, protest is conditioned by variation and that only after a protest do these variations force a modification of the rules of the game, to capture the variations and contain the play. The important point is that the foundation or conditions of existence of any collective formation, whether a protest or a sport, are not the rules of the game. In a collective formation the rules codify variation retrospectively. Rules are applied to and are derived from an unformalized field of potential in which there is a wide range of variation.²²¹ The rules are not the foundation of the game, they are derived from it as a

218. Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*, 9.

219. Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*, 71-80.

220. *Ibid.*, 72.

221. It occurred to me whilst watching children play football in Brazil, that many of the players were not wearing trainers. I mentioned this to my partner, who is Brazilian, to which he replied, slightly astonished, ‘In Brazil we don’t need trainers to play football, we don’t even need a pitch or for that matter, a ball.’

framing device to capture the game and formalise its varieties.

A game unfolds from the charged collective movements on the field. In play, the field of potential is populated by actual things and objects which induce play (the grassy field, the players, the goal posts) and which act to catalyse the play (the ball). The subject of the play are not the players or the ball, but the continual modifications of the field of potential by the charged movements of the collective. Catalysed by the ball, the players, look past the ball to play the field of potential directly. The movements are collective in so far as they modify, potentialise and depotentialise all other movements of other players on the field.

The ethico-aesthetic paradigm

The concepts outlined thus far have developed a critical framework through which an understanding of J18 is bound up with the sensing body in movement. Félix Guattari's ethico-aesthetic paradigm is bound up with the production of subjectivity, which he prospectively traces in his book *Chaosmosis*. Here he attempts to conceptualize the creation of new collective subjectivities. Guattari seeks to enquire into *being-together*, in opposition to the concept of *being against* and as such much of his research is derived from his own psychiatric practice at La Borde Clinic and his affiliations with political groups such as Italian Autonomous Marxism. Guattari raises a set of questions that are picked up in the conclusions of this thesis as possibilities for future research. However, closing the methods section with Guattari is not simply a preemptive move toward his appearance in the conclusions of this thesis as a point of departure for future development. Guattari's work has

infused the research process to such an extent that it is difficult to say precisely and selectively how and in what way he has influenced the choice of concepts that are herein used to analyse J18. Other writers have however already picked up on the confluence of J18 with Guattari's work.²²²

Félix Guattari's work, as a political activist, practicing psychoanalyst and philosopher turns toward the question of how we remain open to singular events that carry the potential to change our way of thinking and modes of being in the world. In the first instance, he says, this requires shifting from scientific paradigms to ethico-aesthetic paradigms. Guattari's writing is scattered with references to painting, film, literature, and poetry, but he is using art in an expanded sense, such that the bird-song of a certain species of bird is also considered to be 'art' and the bird 'an artist'. He is using art to refer to the creation of a territory primarily determined by the force of sensations. Guattari assigns aesthetics a crucial experimental function that, he says, is necessary for ethical practice in any field.

What is one to do, in a particular context, with a particular person or group, in order to have the most creative relation possible with the situation that one is experiencing — like a musician with his music, or a painter with his painting? A cure would be like constructing a work of art, with the difference that each time it would be necessary to reinvent the form of art that one uses. ²²³

Now this would not be too different from the reinventions of the interventionists as introduced in the literature review, were it not for

222. Félix Guattari, *The Three Ecologies*, trans. Ian Pindar and Paul Sutton, (London, New Jersey: Athlone Press, 2000), 19f17. In the translators preface J18 is mentioned in a footnote as an articulation of the book's thesis. Further, the art writer and activist Brian Holmes, after attending J18, says about the event that, 'A new cartography of ethical-aesthetic practice had been invented, embodied and expressed all across the world.' Brian Holmes, "Do-it-Yourself Geopolitics: Cartographies of Art in the World," *Continental Drift: the other side of neoliberal globalization* (2004), <http://brianholmes.wordpress.com/2007/04/27/do-it-yourself-geopolitics/>.

223. Félix Guattari and Suely Rolnik, *Molecular revolution in Brazil* (Los Angeles; CA Cambridge, MA: Semiotext(e); Distributed by MIT Press, 2008), 329.

Guattari's understanding of what he terms Integrated World Capitalism (IWC). The term is used to stress different politico-economic, social and cultural aspects of contemporary capitalism that have emerged since the oil crisis in the early 1970s.²²⁴ Guattari suggests that we have entered, through markedly techno-scientific transformations, namely biotechnology and telecommunications, a new phase of capitalism. Historically oriented through the production of products and services, from primary (agricultural), secondary (manufacturing) and tertiary (services), capitalism is now oriented to the management and instrumentalisation of the forces of desire, knowledge, invention and action *in conformity with global market forces* to create surplus-value (i.e. profitability). The term IWC is used by Guattari to stress the all-encompassing and deleterious force of capitalist power precisely to disperse, deterritorialize and delocalise production and power making it impossible to distinguish culture from economy or flows of capital from other forms of life.

224. Also variously entitled as follows: neo-liberalism, neo-liberal globalization, post-fordism, economic globalization, global capitalism, late-capitalism, post-industrialization, post-industrial capitalism, advanced capitalism, disorganized capitalism, deregulatory capitalism, actually existing world capitalism.

Researching J18

On June 18th 1999, a protest was staged in the City of London. Backstage, the tools and equipment that everyone put together, the posters, stickers, phone calls, mappings, background meetings and the flow of messages through different networks were each suffused with the goal, idea, belief and skills, that discontinuously and differently, as phases of the event in the making, fed through a physical assembly in various locations around the world. This technical assemblage generated by J18 provided a processual site for participation to take place, through text and verbal dialogues, audiovisual productions and the development of tactics and movements. All of these participations evolved into and across urban settings, festivals and institutions, interactive internet environments and regional social centres.

The organising in J18 took the form of a structured improvisation. Initial conditions were set up for the event to take place, in the form of calls to action and encouragements to participate. These were the necessary catalysts, 'enabling constraints'²²⁵ that opened a territory of thought and action without determining outcomes. Proposals to stage actions on the day of the G8 meeting in Cologne, to target financial districts around the world, to open the morning to planned autonomous actions, to meet at midday in Liverpool Street station and to occupy the London Financial Futures Exchange (LIFFE), were all designed to be generative in effect and not prescriptive.

225. Erin Manning, "Prosthetics Making Sense: Dancing the Technogenetic Body," *Fibreculture: Multitudes, Creative Organisations and the Precarious Condition of New Media Labour*, no. 9 (2006), <http://journal.fibreculture.org>, 3.

Data Gathering

In the first instance of this analysis, it was essential to confine the data gathering and pin the research specifically to J18, utilizing internet based research to identify key players. The entry-points were web pages devoted to J18, especially the J18 website created specifically for the event.²²⁶ This website contains all the initial calls to action and contact details for J18 nodes around the world. Each node served as a regional contact point for participation in actions.²²⁷ Hence through website postings the distributed networks of participation in J18 could be observed, while hyperlinks from the J18 website extended the research throughout other websites and further documentation of actions and groups. In certain cases, an email address and name were given in reference to an action and/or the group or subgroup that was established specifically for the purpose of J18. In this case, for example, a letter was sent to 'Fanclubbers', the name of the action/subgroup planning for J18, by Tyneside Action for People and Planet, who were also sent a letter.

Letters were sent to every named contact in the UK that I came across. The letter (sample below) was sent to the following contacts: London Animal Action; Ashton Court Festival; Ashton Court Quarry Campaign; Bindman and Partners (legal representatives for protestors); Brighton Social Centre; Campaign Against the Arms Trade; Class War; Critical Mass; an anonymous J18 regional contact at an address in Edinburgh; Fanclubbers; Future

226. "June 18 1999," <http://bak.spc.org/j18/>.

227. The initial calls for action for J18 were translated into 7 languages and sent by email and post to over 2000 groups. Peoples Global Action, "Archive of Global Protests (AGP)," <http://www.nadir.org/nadir/initiativ/agp/>.

Manchester; Genetic Engineering Network; Graham Chesters; Globalise Resistance; Greenpeace London; Haringey Solidarity Group; an anonymous J18 regional contact at an address in Hull; Indifference Radio Productions; Indymedia London; Intensive Care; International Solidarity with Workers in Russia (ISWoR); John Barker; an anonymous regional contact at an email address in Lancaster J18; Five different Jubilee 2000 Drop the Debt Campaign contacts; Kebele Kulture Projekt; Legal Defense and Monitoring Group; London Action Resource Centre; Leeds EarthFirst!; Manchester EarthFirst!; McLibel; Mexico Support Group; Movement for a Socialist Future; Nick Cobbing; Norfolk EarthFirst!; Planet Sound; Radio4a; London Punks; Rhythms of Resistance; Sheffield Samba; Sumac Nottingham; Workers Solidarity and Vincent Bethell.

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26 May 2004

Association of Autonomous Astronauts
Box 15, 138 Kingsland High Street
London, E8 2NS

Dear AAA,

I'm writing to ask whether anyone who went to J18 - the Carnival against Capital in 1999 - have the time (and inclination) to chat about their experience. For my PhD, concerned with the creative aspects of protest, I'm focusing on the influence and affect of J18. The thoughts, actions and involvements of people who made this event possible are therefore crucial.

I would wish to ask what's important to you about this event, and what influence or affect it has had on your work, life, etc. - even if it is no longer either important or relevant for you - (it would be exciting to discuss how your work has developed since then).

Please do get in touch if you have any further questions about my research, or if you would like to chat to me before you make a decision.

The discussion can be at a place that is convenient for you, in a group or individually - I buy the drinks of course. Alternatively I can perhaps make a dinner at my place (see address below) so that I might offer something, in return for your help.

Also, just to say the discussion will be an anonymous contribution to the research (unless you say otherwise). The focus is J18 - the event - and not the identities of those who made it possible. I should also mention that my PhD is registered with the department of fine art at Central St. Martins College of Art and Design. Should you wish to check this please do get in touch with the research office on 0207 514 7144.

I'd be really happy to hear from you and am truly grateful in advance for your time.

Yours sincerely

Nicola Kirkham

In reference to the staging of the event in the City of London, letters (sample below) were sent to the city municipal authority the Corporation of London Public Relations and Environmental Services Departments; the Lord Mayor of

the City of London; the Commissioner for the City of London Police, Dr James M Hart, QPM; Snow Hill and Wood Street police stations in the City of London and London Transport Police. I also wrote to the Royal Parks Police and the London Metropolitan Police, Scotland Yard.

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25th May 2004

Dr James M Hart, QPM
Commissioner for the City of London Police
City of London Police
PO Box 36451
London EC2M 4WN

Dear Sir or Madam

I am researching, for my PhD, the 'Carnival against Capital' held in the City of London on June 18th 1999. I am registered in the department of Fine Art at Central St. Martins College of Art and Design and my PhD is an art history of public expressions in the city streets. The focus is the recent introduction of carnival forms of protest, specifically as they emerged within this event in the City of London.

I am writing to ask whether it is possible to discuss this matter with the relevant department/s likely to have worked on the event.

The first chapter of my PhD is a history of J18, extending to all that was carried out for the event, taking into account those who were involved including, the media, participants, corporations, municipal authorities, transport authorities and the relevant London police forces, including the MET Public Order Branch (with whom I have already spoken), the Royal Parks Police, London Transport Police and crucially the City of London Police.

A public demonstration requires a lot of work from many different parties and it is the nature of this work that I am interested to make a detailed account of. I would wish to enquire how it is the City of London police approached the event in terms of the nature and order of work involved; how it was planned, coordinated and organised. I would be interested in the personal or public opinions of officers involved in the policing of the protest, or a statement regarding how it is officers would like their role to be seen and the problems they encounter policing this kind of event.

Please do feel free to contact me with any further questions.

I look forward to your response and thank-you for your time in advance.

Yours sincerely

Nicola Kirkham

The initial contacts, listed above, often resulted in email or telephone based discussions about J18 with many people offering to pass on my contact details in the case that they personally were not involved or in the case that they knew of someone else who was.

Meetings in person would assume a semi-structured interview format, leaving enough space for the person to talk freely about J18 and the features of the event they deemed to be significant. In many cases, where time was not an issue, this evolved into an extended discussion about the wider context of the protest. Oral histories of the smallest details, incidents and anecdotal recollections, along with the generosity of people making connections to other people and ideas to help continue the research, proved to be in infinite supply. Once again many people offered to pass on my contact details where the meeting had triggered a connection with someone else who they felt it might be worth talking to. For example, an initial letter sent to the Commissioner of the City of London Police was forwarded to Eddie Botham, a retired policeman and Security Advisor for the Corporation of London. After an initial interview with Mr. Botham, he kindly volunteered to set up a meeting with a police officer from the Forward Intelligence Team (FIT) in the City of London. Furthermore meetings in person often led to new empirical materials which were introduced in conversation or simply offered as gifts; the police reports and police video footage of J18, the carnival masks, fliers, and agit-props were all acquired in this way. Objectively, there was no other way of acquiring this material.

In every meeting I would ask to tape-record the interview, so that I might listen to it again. This also enabled me to transcribe the discussion, then send the manuscript to interviewees to clarify, correct, elaborate and agree to the content of our discussion for use in the research. Below is a sample email and letter attached to the transcribed interview I returned to Kabele Social Centre in Bristol and the London Transport Police respectively.²²⁸

...(????) incomprehensible bits...feel free to fill them in.
...(hello...????) unclear words and statements which you should feel free to correct.

Do elaborate on any points you made during the interview, but also amend or delete as necessary. Also, I should pre-warn you, transcribing speech to text reveals '...like, you know...it's...er...like... all because...you know....er...', all of which I've tried to leave out but despite this, at first glance you might be shocked to *read* what you said because it seems altogether less articulate and interesting than it actually felt at the time. Of course I've made myself appear the model of clarity...

It was a great discussion, and thanks again for a lovely afternoon.

Email to Kabele.

228. Chris Knight, an activist and anthropologist at the University of East London liked the transcription so much he asked if he could post it onto his website, as the only record of how he felt at the time of J18. I haven't checked, but of course I agreed and was delighted that someone wanted to use this material differently.

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10 September 2004

Frank Placzek
British Transport Police
16-24 Whitfield Street
London W1T 2RA

Dear Frank

Please find enclosed a transcript of our meeting on 8th July 2004.

Do feel free to correct anything that you wouldn't want me to use in my research. Should it be easier I can send a copy to you by email; just let me know your email address.

Thank-you for your time Frank, it was a pleasure to meet you and to discuss the difficulties and highlights of policing events in London.

Yours sincerely

Nicola Kirkham

A further rich source of material was provided by the eco anarchist journal DoorDie which, available online and in print, devoted an issue specifically to J18.²²⁹ The concerns, interests and activities narrated in this journal as well as many others like it, served as background information, which lent the ephemeral actions in J18 a degree of consistency.

The activities, interests and concerns of virtual social movements narrated in print media, also filter through the alternative electronic media networks of

229. DoorDie, "Friday June 18th 1999," *Do or Die: Voices from the Ecological Resistance* 8 (1999), <http://www.eco-action.org/dod/no8/index.html>. (DoorDie, 1999 #335).

Indymedia and Urban75. The Indymedia network now hosts 120 websites on 5 continents and is run by autonomous collectives; it was not established at the time of J18. Indymedia operates as an open publishing system for information and newswires that can be uploaded to the site in the form of text, images, audio and video and live streaming. The software, which is the backbone of the Indymedia facility and its burgeoning network, was developed specifically for J18 before being taken up and used in Seattle protests five months later. As well as allowing people to post details of activities and concerns in their localities, mailing lists are resources that couple the circulation of information with the circulation of interpretation and evaluation of movement activities. By following and engaging in the flow of mailing list discussions I evaluated and developed my own research concerns. The J18 mailing list was no longer in existence when I began the research, nor was a backup made of postings to it. During the course of the research the principal mailing list I followed was Nettime.²³⁰

Against this continuous engagement in the circulation of alternative print and digital media, I abstracted all mainstream news media reports of J18. The mainstream news media first reported on J18, in May 1999, after City of London police were alerted through social movement media of the event. The final reports from mainstream news media followed the report issued by the Corporation of London examining the policing operation on the day.

Finally, it was suggested in an interview with Tony Halmos, Director of Public

230. "Nettime mailing list," <http://www.nettime.org/>; See also the published collection of postings in Nettime, *README! ascii culture and the revenge of knowledge* (New York: Autonomedia, 1999).

Relations for the Corporation of London that in order to know how the City of London dealt with the event, I should consult the Corporation of London archive. The archive housed City of London police reports commissioned by the Corporation of London and notes from committee meetings between the City residents, police and the Corporation. I requested, through the Town Clerks department, the minutes of the Police Committee and Policy and Resources Committee meeting as well as the police reports. However, no access to public documentation via the archive was possible due to the combination of public and non-public documentation in the same file and a 30 year closure on the files of non-public documentation of committee reports and minutes. However, access was granted to the publication, 'Court of the Common council Minutes & Reports 1999', in which two entries were made in reference to J18. The first on 22nd July, 1999 reads:

Mr. Mooney²³¹ asked a question of the Chairman of the Police Committee regarding the Forces' response to the disturbances in the City on 18 June 1999, and the Chairman replied to the question.

And again on the 9th September:

Mr. Mooney asked a question of the Chairman of the Police Committee regarding the events in the City of London on 18th June 1999, and the Chairman replied to the question.

231. Brian Desmond Francis Mooney. listed as 'commoner' in the Port and City of London Health and Social Services Committee.

Part 2

4. Inhabiting the Archive

In this section, a multi-centred account of the actions which were staged in the City of London are introduced as micro-examples of J18. Details of the actions were drawn from key players backstage and from material gathered during the research process. What is written here is taken from various sources: the website <http://rts.gn.apc.org> and the email list-serv www.agp.org provided activists with the means to post details of actions in the run up to and during the event itself. A summary of these postings were edited for an article in the eco-anarchist journal *Do or Die* (DoorDie, 1999 #335), and the EarthFirst! Action update <http://www.eco-action.org>. Numerous personal blogs and accounts of the day incorporating text, photographic images, and films were also important sources. The conversational recollections of the event with UK activists, Metropolitan and City of London police, and The Corporation of London, were also incredibly important, as were the retrospective reflections on events in the City of London published by the J18-Editorial-Collective (1999 #334), the full-text of which is available on-line at http://www.infoshop.org/octo/j18_rts4.html. Lastly, two reports were sourced that retrospectively analyse the policing of events in the City of London, written by the commissioner of the Metropolitan police, as well as a similar though less in-depth analysis instigated by The Corporation of London and City of London police.

A pamphlet, *Squaring up to the Square Mile* is published to provide basic information about the types of financial and trading exchanges that take place in the City, a dictionary of finance jargon, hints and tips for further research and actions, as well as a colour map zoned according to ten categories of financial institutions.²³²

—★—

At midnight a young couple annul the dragons guarding the City of London with an offering of flowers.

—★—

Only one of the five groups of out-of-town activists, under police surveillance at the squats in which they were staying, manage as planned to paint-bomb a site in the City of London at precisely one minute past midnight. The London Metal Exchange is blasted with pink.

—★—

A banner reading, 'Life before Profit' is strung into the path of vehicles crossing into the City of London by two climbers who abseil from one of the Tower Bridge towers. They are removed by police climbers, arrested, then hours later released into the City with a caution.²³³

—★—

Early morning editions of the mainstream press began to speculate about the scale of the event; what the motives were; who the organizers were; what actions were to be expected. All journalists adopt the term anti-capitalism to

232. Corporate-Watch and Reclaim-the-Streets, *Squaring up to the Square Mile: A rough guide to the City of London* (GB: J18 publications, 1999). Also available in Appendix 1.3 and online: <http://www.corporatewatch.org.uk/publications/squaringup/intro.html>.

233. Steve Sheffield interview 2 (Reclaim the Streets), in discussion with the author, June 2004. Appendix 3.1.5, pp 6-9.

The symbiosis of the skilled body of climbing and protest has emerged to prolong events within recent environmental movements. Camps to protect woodland or existing communities from impending constructions such as roads and airport runways are created by directly situating the body in prominent hard-to-get-to places such as in trees or on the roof-tops of buildings.

characterise the event, in each case highlighting different motives – animal rights, environmental devastation, third world debt, anti-corporations.

—★—

It was decided at the first meeting in March 1999 that to best prepare for June 18th the large Brighton congregation would break into smaller task-oriented affinity groups. Brighton's 'action' affinity group emerged along with tasks relating to fundraising, transportation, internet, publicity, prop-making and legal support. Initially, to support and strengthen affinity groups, two training days were organised where screenings of video-activists work and the J18 movie-trailer were followed by playful exercises in self-organising group theory and practice; self-defence techniques and the legalities involved in the actions that all were preparing to encounter in London. Benefit gigs were organised and with the proceeds Brighton-oriented leaflets, stickers, posters and press coverage were printed. Props were created for street theatre performances planned for the day. However, the action groups were involved in most other affinity group tasks whose concerns they felt were impinging upon their weekly, then a week before the event, and daily meetings.

The Brighton group left at 5am. Two days before, everyone involved had been briefed with details of the action with the exception of the target. Details of the target were withheld throughout the planning stages for fear police infiltration would overhear and consequently move to prevent the action from going ahead. At around 7am, between forty to fifty people were wearing masks and waiting conspicuously at the foot of Southwark Cathedral steps, anticipating the spotter's signal. Three beaten-up old cars, driven from Brighton would, at the signal, cross London Bridge and park-up, effectively blockading each of

three northbound carriageways into the City of London. The masked group raced from the Cathedral steps onto the bridge where three cars were planned to have barricaded traffic. On the day only two cars made it. This left a single lane free for traffic to pass – abusively – as the affinity group hurried to complete the tasks of slashing the tyres and chaining the two cars together. Where the plan had been to chain a colourful ‘Stop the City’ banner across the southbound lane of traffic, there was instead an approaching presence of police officers. The police officers were moving across the bridge towards the action along what had been the planned escape route. The escape route would allow the affinity group to disband from the bridge safely once the action was over. Despite their training the affinity group collapsed, scattering its subjects in all directions. However, while many arrests were expected only three were made on the day.²³⁴



To counter-act the predictably reductive coverage of events by mainstream media, an Independent Media Centre (IMC) is created, hosting a live-stream of actions on the day. An elaborate distribution system is created, using people with digital cameras dispersed throughout the event, each passing their footage to bicycle couriers who race back to the IMC. The IMC received film footage of the critical mass, animal rights march and the human chain around the Treasury. By the time the carnival reaches the LIFFE building and the video footage of these events reaches the IMC, CNN have contacted the IMC to ask how they are operating and what they are doing. The Financial Times website has the live-stream of events on its main web page. I-Contact and

234. Kabele (Social Centre Bristol), in discussion with the author, June 2004, Appendix 3.1.3, pp 8-9.

It seems that Brighton, specifically the ‘action’ affinity group over-planned for all eventualities on the day, leaving little room for the fact that however planned, actions never happen quite as they are imagined.

Undercurrents video production teams splice this and subsequent footage of events of the day sent to them by protestors to create a short film that they distribute through their website, screen at Glastonbury music festival and add to their archive of alternative news.

J18, the initial proposal, propagated through face-to-face meetings, cut and paste texts, grapevine communication and early experiments in electronic media and communications. J18 became a pirate radio station, pirate TV project, website, webmail list, on-line activist resource centre, electronic chat-room, editorial collective, a movie trailer ominously suggesting J18 was "Coming to a financial centre near you," and in 35 regions and localities a focal point of contact for people eager to plan actions. Tens of thousands of posters, leaflets, stickers, fliers and articles were pinned, pasted and published nationally and internationally. Reclaim the Streets printed, stamped, addressed and enveloped their red, green and black leaflets to 1000 groups around the world. 50,000 metallic gold fliers urged people to call in sick on June 18th quoting Situationist Raoul Veneigem; 'To work for delight and authentic festivity is barely indistinguishable from preparing for a general insurrection.' At 7:45am at West Smithfield's, near City Thameslink and Farringdon rail stations, a bike ride through the City of London installed five to six hundred cyclists amidst the loitering pace of rush hour traffic. The bike-crowd's agility resided in the creation of a critical mass which then spontaneously navigates its own route, at its own leisurely pace along main roads through the City to effect an 'instant rolling bottleneck'. The critical mass ended at midday, at Liverpool Street Station.

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A banner hung by steel cables d–locked on either side of Moorgate temporarily declares the ‘City Closed’.

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Companies resident in the City sustained a ‘business as usual’ stance in the media albeit with contingent security measures taken principally in the form of advice to employees. Lloyds List, a London–based shipping magazine reported that staff at The International Chamber of Shipping and several City insurance companies were advised where possible to work from home. Staff at the Baltic Exchange were advised to arrive early to work for which the company would provide a complimentary breakfast. Executives were advised not to drive company cars and to avoid inviting guests into the City. Most companies planned to either recruit additional security staff or step up their front of house security with a requisite reminder that staff remember their identity cards on the day. Most companies also suggested that staff make alternative arrangements for lunch as going for a sandwich or to a restaurant could be difficult. The Corporation of London made specific recommendations that tenants provide alternative arrangements for smokers, lock windows and doors and be on the alert for bogus phone calls and visitors. The universal form of security adopted in the City that was picked up most frequently by the media was a recommendation that employees dress-down to blend with the crowds of protestors; wearing a suit, it was rumoured, could make city workers into potential targets.

Meeting at Blackfriars tube station shortly after rush hour, the Lancaster contingent, who had all agreed to dress smartly for the occasion, moved off towards Fleet Street for breakfast together. The Greek café owner bemused by so many clients was also intrigued to hear they would, after breakfast, be staging an occupation at Freshfield's law firm whose patronising and arrogant staff, he told the group, he did not hold in very high regard. Freshfield's law firm fronts on to Fleet Street. The entrance to Freshfield's offices, to the east side of the building, is a large iron gate guarded by three security guards that opens onto an atrium. To enter the building you pass through the gate (and the security), across the atrium and through revolving smoked glass doors.²³⁵

In the run-up to the day, the Lancaster University chaplaincy provided space to corrupt, with painted angels and scythes, the Freshfield law firms' solitary 'Angel of Justice' logo with Lancaster's own 'Deathfields' and 'Not So Freshfields' interpretations. These buntings and banners, created using leftover seventies fabrics and strung between the trees to dry, were transported from Lancaster to London where they were flung between those locked inside Freshfield's atrium (one person quite literally handcuffed to the railings), and those locked outside the gates. The messages were strewn around the atrium fountain for the benefit of police and office spectators, others along the gate and walls for the attention of passers-by. 'Why target Freshfield's?' leaflet's were distributed and slogans chalked onto the street to amplify motives. Little flags stuck in samples of muddy water and positioned around the outside of the building explained, 'This is the River Lune'. The

235. Mary and Graham (The Chaplaincy, Lancaster University) in discussion with the author, July 2004, Appendix 3.1.7, pp 2-3.

River Lune is fired through water-pistols at lawyers passing through the atrium and who, recognisable from their photographs on the Freshfield's website, are harangued for having defended Acrodin Acetates. These little encounters between protestors and lawyers were largely ignored by the security staff, appeased perhaps by the presence in the atrium of eight police officers.

The police, concerned with how temporary, exactly, the temporary occupation would be, were reassured by protestors they would leave the premises at midday. This agreement released the pressure of eviction. Through dancing, drums, music and whistles energies intensified, generating a celebratory sense of occasion. The security staff did however, forcibly attempt to prevent the drumming which they felt to be an unnecessarily disruptive presence. No one attempted to physically enter Freshfield's offices via the revolving smoked glass door because this would have meant losing visibility generated by remaining in the atrium. The atrium was surrounded by crowds of workers peering down from both Freshfield's and all neighbouring office windows; the action makes sense only if it is seen or heard by an audience so the fact workers had stopped working to see and hear the actions was considered a triumph. Entering the building and risking arrest was also felt to incur the unnecessary risk of exclusion from what was yet to come that day. Furthermore, a concerted effort had been made to stall Freshfield's email server by subscribing company directors to approximately forty thousand mailing lists. This would have already effectively blockaded Freshfield's office with email traffic.²³⁶

236. This was to be the only aspect of the action Freshfield's pursued; tracing the source back to Lancaster University although managing unsuccessfully to track down the identity of the hackers.

The exhilaration spilling out from immediate events in the atrium filtered through conversations by mobile phone, connecting to similar actions emerging simultaneously in Lancaster, elsewhere in London and via the Independent Media Centre, in other financial centres across the globe.²³⁷

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In Buenos Aires a multi-religious assembly joined by popular artists and musicians demanded an end to Argentina's debt on the doorstep of its debtors, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and Central Bank. In Adelaide, Australia, 'Everyone for a Nuclear Free Future' targeted Westpac, a bank with unscrupulous investment practices. On the streets of Perth, to a soundtrack of bells, Jubilee 2000 staged a 'wake-up-crawl' to Third World debt. Perth's Clough Engineering was targeted by an alliance of environmental groups for their planned installation of a nuclear waste dump in the outback of Western Australia. In Melbourne the opposition leader Kim Beazley was cream-pied for speaking at a Global Trade meeting sponsored by the oil company Shell. Protests blockaded the Melbourne Stock Exchange and the leisurely movements of Critical Mass cyclists brought city centre traffic to a standstill. In Belarus, toilet paper was handed to customers leaving McDonalds restaurants. In Dhaka, Bangladesh, the 1.5 million strong National Garment Workers Federation stood steadfast for better working conditions outside the headquarters of the World Bank and IMF. In Brazil, in the city of Desterro, a twelve metre clock celebrating 500 years of discovery, a donation to every major city by the only media network in Brazil, Globo Media, was stained with red paint symbolising the bloodshed caused by the discovery of Brazil by

237. Mary and Graham (The Chaplaincy, Lancaster University) in discussion with the author, July 2004, Appendix 3.1.7, pp 12-15.

European colonisers. Street theatre in Santiago, Chile, performed in defiance of the ban on street performance. In Columbia, a potlatch bazaar, puppets and acrobats, videos, poetry and local bands staged a carnival against multi-national corporations which targeted the Banco Santander. In Canada, senior activists, 'The Raging Grannies' guided a parade in song from Ottawa's Confederation Park to the headquarters of the arms manufacturer Raytheon. In addition, the headquarters of Shell, Chevron Canada, Anderson Consultants and Monsanto were occupied and 'auditors' sent into the Bank of Nova Scotia to conduct a 'moral audit' of the institution. Similarly in Vancouver, the Stock Exchange and headquarters of the timber giant Macmillan Bloedel were 'quarantined'. In Toronto, presided over by a giant goddess and the burning of 'asshole' effigies, the streets were claimed by thousands of cyclists, dancers and protestors. In France, a tour of twenty banks in the city of Bordeaux effectively invited the managers to fax-blockade the French Minister of Finance with denouncements of neo-liberal economic policy. In Köln, Germany, a laugh parade, stalled by police was followed the next day by a ten thousand strong demonstration in solidarity with the Intercontinental Caravan²³⁸. In Greece, thousands of people marched through the streets of Athens. In Israel, in the financial district of Tel Aviv, a 'goodbye to the mall' street party was held. In Italy, street parties were staged in Bologna, Milan, Sienna, Florence and Ancona. Malta's Movement Graffiti staged a rock concert entitled, 'Malta not for Sale'. In Mexico, the Zapatistas and the Electronic

238. The Intercontinental Caravan, *The IC in London*, Appendix 1.2.2.

The Intercontinental Caravan travelled for one month in a convoy of buses to conduct 85 public meetings, visit 38 farms and stage 63 protest actions through nine countries from the Netherlands, to its finale on June 18th in Köln, Germany. The ICC was composed of 450-500 activists from Southern grassroots movements including Indian Farmers from the Southern state of Karnataka, Movimento Sem Terra (Landless Movement) from Brazil and representatives of peasant movements from Chile, Columbia, Bangladesh, Nepal and Mexico, amongst others. All oppose the free-trade, agri-business and inter-state mediations of their lands and livelihoods by the World Bank and World Trade Organisation.

Disturbance Theatre launched a program to blockade the internet browser of the Mexican Embassy in London using multiple reload commands. In the Netherlands, the Amsterdam Stock Exchange was invaded. A 'Carnival of the Oppressed,' including the Ogoni, Ijaw, and other tribes in Nigeria, converged to close down the country's oil capital, Port Harcourt. In Pakistan, Trade Union Association leaders wanted for arrest came out from hiding wearing masks and veils to join an anti-nuclear procession. During a street party in Lisbon, Portugal, a simulated demolition of a bank was enacted. In Senegal, a street theatre of children condemned the impositions of debt and structural adjustments to the economy which forced them out of education and into work. In Seoul, South Korea a street theatre staged a debate about free trade between protestors dressed as financial speculator George Soros and the Mexican revolutionary, Subcommandante Marcos. In the Spanish city of Madrid, beneath now illegal lines of laundry strung across the street, a party ended seven days of protests during which the Stock Exchange was invaded. In Barcelona, street parties transformed two main city streets into a beach. Critical Mass cyclists closed a peripheral motorway and a large plot of land ear-marked for re-development was transformed into a garden with medicinal herbs, vegetables and a lake. A carnival of four hundred drums spilled through the streets of Valencia to target the city's financial district. Before Geneva's street-painting party blockaded roads, serving juice to drivers caught in the evening traffic, the city's major banks were washed down, using ladders, brooms, packing-cloths, water and soap. A live concert, a film screening of previous street party protests and an all night rave occupied the construction site of a major commercial redevelopment in the city of Zurich. In Uruguay, Montevideo, a spoof trade-fair and recycling parade invited garbage workers

to deposit their waste in local banks. In the US, street parties, Critical Mass cyclists, occupations of banks and 'art attacks' of multi-national corporations extended through Asheville, North Carolina; Eugene, Oregon; Austin, Texas; Boston, Los Angeles, Minneapolis, New York, San Francisco and Washington DC. In the UK, street parties emerged in the centres of Aberdeen, Cardiff, Edinburgh, Essex, Glasgow, Lancaster, Lincoln and along the construction of the Newbury bypass.



J18 first emerged in the UK mainstream press in mid-May 1999 via the Corporation of London communiqués from police to City of London residents. The speculative process of what to expect and how the City should respond in preparation for J18 was modulated by mainstream media headlines which describe the City poised in aggressive defense; 'Defiant', 'Alert', 'Braced', 'Under threat'.²³⁹ Indeed in the run-up to J18, its importance as newsworthy event was played out as a matter of the level or degree to which City of London residents adopted the crime prevention techniques, resident security measures and security upgrades recommended by police as indications that the City was taking the threat seriously. Simply put, according to mainstream media, J18 was important if the City of London considered it to be a threat – while the City of London was making semi-serious attempts to 'batten down the hatches' since the threat J18 posed was the subject of pure speculation. The media quite literally played off the security measures residents in the City of London were planning against the planned actions, intentions and motivations of activist campaigns known to be involved.

239. Terry Murden, "Bank of Scotland fears wrath of Pat Protestors," *The Sunday Times*, June 13, 1999. The Sunday Times report a posting by a city resident via the Corporation of London's internal email stating, "Sceptics may dismiss this as just wishful thinking by the usual ragbag of malcontents. But there is ample evidence of serious intent."

Many firms are telling their staff to dress down so as not to be easily identified as City workers. But to complicate matters protestors are reported to be buying suits in charity shops in order to more easily infiltrate offices. ²⁴⁰



Dressed in suits, striding in immaculate line formations through the City, umbrellas twirling, briefcases balanced on their heads, Brighton's 'More to Life Project' sang in straight-faced harmony, 'Money Makes the World go 'Round'. Rehearsals had extended from prop-making, acting with over-sized mobile phones fashioned from polystyrene to improvisations in the City of London bars, streets, and on the tube in the week preceding J18. During this week, the group experimented exhaustively with what they deemed possible actions, discovering in the process which theatrical antics in which spaces best challenged and amused the attentions of fleeting city audiences.²⁴¹



Tyneside Action for People and Planet travelled to London together at their own expense to respond to Eddie George, the then Governor of the Bank of England, and his statement that unemployment in the North East of England was a price worth paying for low inflation in the South. The morning however was low-key, slow-paced and remarkably good humoured, and despite the hazards of London's public transport all arrived at the meeting point, if late, for an 8am as opposed to a 7am start. TAPP's sense they are a solitary presence in the City of London was quickly dispelled by the sight on Tower Bridge of two climbers being pursued by police as they hang a banner that reads, 'Life before Profit'. Tyneside cheer the climbers as they are grounded,

240. Janet Porter, "London: City tightened security ahead of Third World debt demonstration," *Lloyd's List International*, June 17, 1999.

241. Anonymous, "Carnival Against Capital!", *Do or Die*, no. 8, <http://www.eco-action.org/dod/no8/carnival.html>, Appendix 2.7.1, 15.

arrested and driven off into the City.

TAPP were to perform on the Bank of England's doorstep towards which, after cheering the climbers, all move off following Tony Blair, many dressed in suits, dancing with briefcases, inviting passing city workers to take the day off. Not all TAPP members are involved in or aware of all the actions taking place en-route to the Bank of England. Many members target the Petroleum Exchange where leaflets are distributed to pedestrians and the street and building chalked with slogans about the consequences of oil exploitation. Others visit branches of Barclay's and Lloyd's Bank where an occupation is underway. Press and police who pick up TAPP's trail demand to know what actions are to take place where.

Arriving at the Bank of England to an audience of police officers, six police vans and police digi-video cameras, an improvised song opens the performance of angry north-easterners:

Eddie George, Eddie George
Eddie Eddie Eddie George
He's big, he's fat, he wears a hat
Eddie Eddie George

They challenge Eddie George to explain to redundant workers (reciting a list) that their jobs were, as the banner now strung across the building maintains, 'A Price Worth Paying?' Tony Blair gives a ministerial sermon on the evils of capitalism supported by a chorus of people dressed as currencies all hobbling together, enslaved and oppressed by the free market. While yet another Tony Blair, handing out free monopoly money, stops to pose for the press cameras with a group of three contemptuous suits observing events from the doorstep of their workplace. The camera shy, police shy, and police camera shy members of TAPP reclaim a little piece of grass to sit down and strike up

conversations with puzzled, amused, and occasionally abusive city workers.

TAPP's audience reaches critical mass when cyclists, clearing traffic in the wake of their meandering pace appear in front of the Bank of England. To a cacophony of bells, whistles, horns and pedal-powered music TAPP's resolve strengthens. It's just after 10am. They continue to leaflet as many spectators as possible, enjoying the additional attention. Tony Blair ceremoniously delivers a letter to Eddie George:

Dear Eddie George,

We are here to help you contemplate the price that is being paid by Tyneside workers and other oppressed people by your headlong pursuit of suicidal capitalist policies.

On Tyneside the price we pay is high unemployment. In other parts of the world landlessness, debt, exploitation, homelessness, hunger, war, pollution, poverty and death are all suffered in the name of profit and progress.

Please think again and reverse your policies of global oppression.

By 11am the group retires to Finsbury Square to eat lunch on the grass; a pack cools down in their costumes in the shade; anticipating the afternoon to come.

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Around 25 to 30 people from the Northern Anarchist Network, the Anarchist Communist Federation and other anarchists and communists from the North of England conducted an unauthorised tour of the Trade Union Congress headquarters (TUC). The action was intended to draw attention to the obsolescence of the Trade Union movement whose leadership, now in cohort with corporate interests, are entirely separated from worker resistance in the workplace. While passing through the TUC's deserted complex of bland offices, Union staff sitting behind desks and in the office canteen are handed leaflets entitled, 'Why Target the TUC?' Several vexed members of TUC staff

demand the anarchists leave the building immediately, whilst others scurry off down corridors. One woman when handed a leaflet says, 'Oh, it's that day isn't it,' replying to her own silent question about what this was all about. The building fire alarms sound, the remaining leaflets are flung into the air and all proceed to exit the building to a chorus of, 'You won't get me, I'm part of the Union, until the day I die'. Once at the entrance all head towards Liverpool Street station; moving off just as two police vans approach the TUC building.

The hesitancy to communicate by email or phone about this action, for fear of infiltration by police had stymied, in retrospect, what could have involved many more militants from many more regions of the country than it did. It was also felt to have been a missed opportunity not to have used the TUC phones to contact the press whilst inside the building.

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The telephone system of the Gap clothing store on Oxford Street was bombarded by calls from International Solidarity with Workers in Russia. Keen not to detract any attentions away from the City of London, though having mentioned a Gap store occupation in a press release, they decided to organise an action at the last minute. Once the Oxford Street store opened, the group proceeded to insert labels into clothes succinctly describing the Gap's exploitation of Russian seamstresses' labour working in sweatshop conditions for 11US cents an hour. Leaflets handed to sympathetic staff and customers, courteously opened the possibility for conversations about the issue of worker exploitation.



The occupation lasts two hours at the offices of the auditors KPMG. One of the group 'People from the South West' was forcibly evicted by security guards almost immediately while seven others dispersed themselves through the offices in two groups. One group barricaded themselves inside an office. They spent a quiet forty minutes before being evicted. The other group dispensed the paper from a filing cabinet out of the window. They used the office phone to contact friends and to make a long distance call of solidarity to the National Garment Workers Federation in Bangladesh who were picketing outside the World Bank and IMF offices in Dhaka.



The picket closed Reed Employment Agency in Moorgate after just one hour of leafleting people going in, coming out and walking past the branch. The leaflets produced and distributed by Haringey Solidarity Group explain that the government's New Deal, forcing unemployed people on state benefits into unpaid jobs, is implemented in London by Reed Agencies.

After the unexpectedly short picket, the group move off to position themselves outside Britannic House, the London headquarters of BP (British Petroleum, PLC). At the entrance, a collective refrain names aloud the Columbian trade unionists and workers who have been tortured, who are missing and murdered by an oligarchy with whom BP collaborates as the country's largest exporter of crude oil.²⁴²

242. Corporate Watch, *BP Plc: Corporate Crimes*, <http://www.corporatewatch.org/?lid=290#violations>.

Haringey Solidarity Group vocalize accusations leveled against BP in the European Parliament after BP are alleged to have passed photographs and videos of local protesters to the army, leading to violations of 'human rights'. The political economy of collusions between oligarchic states and multi-national corporations extends, in the particular case of BP and Columbia, to the financing and training of right-wing State paramilitaries in the early 1990's.



A human chain around the Treasury in Whitehall, orchestrated by the national student network 'People and Planet', solidifies their continued support of the 'Drop the Debt' campaign orchestrated by Jubilee 2000 against the poverty, suffering and death compounded by Third World debt.



A banner, strung at a party of 200 people outside McDonalds at Liverpool Street Station affirms that 'McDonalds are guilty of exploiting workers, destroying the environment and murdering animals.' Nine years prior to this event, McDonalds issued a writ demanding an apology from five London Greenpeace anti-McDonalds protestors for distributing leaflets outside their fast food stores; two of the protestors decided they would prefer not to apologize. The leaflets entitled, "What's Wrong with McDonalds?" commented upon the corporation's business practices in relation to employment and working conditions, advertising, waste recycling and litter, health and nutrition, animal welfare, deforestation and Third World poverty. The "McLibel" trial that ensued (the longest in English legal history) was followed by a court of Appeal ruling in March 1999, ordering that the two protestors, Helen Steel and David Powers pay libel damages to McDonalds. The protestors decided they would prefer not to. ²⁴³

During the party outside McDonalds Liverpool Street, the "What's Wrong with McDonalds?" leaflets now incorporate references to expert witnesses who had supported the claims Helen and David defended during the trial. Comments

243. On 20th September, 2000, Helen Steel & Dave Morris launched legal proceedings against the UK government arguing the 'McLibel trial' and UK libel laws, breached the European Convention on Human Rights Article 6 (right to a fair trial) and Article 10 (right to freedom of expression). On 15th February, 2005, the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg declared the McLibel case, in breach of the right to a fair trial and the right to freedom of expression. The court ruled that UK libel laws had failed to protect the public's right to comment upon the business activities of large corporations.

acceded to by the judge were those now painted across the banner. All were celebrating outside McDonalds the possibility of preferring not to accede to large corporations. All were celebrating by continuing to freely comment upon the business practices of McDonalds.²⁴⁴ Later in the afternoon a small group branch off from the party to picket the Bishopsgate branch of the Aroma café chain, bought earlier in the year by McDonalds. They arrive to find the café is closed.

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The banner 'Animal Abuse is as Trans-national as Capital' escorts the crowd and the predictably heavy police presence from the morning meeting point at Smithfield's Meat Market to the British Poultry Breeders & Hatcheries Association, past the British Chicken Association to the headquarters of the Imperial Cancer Research Fund before marching into the City of London toward the afternoon meeting point at Liverpool Street Station.

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Several protestors travelled down to London from Newcastle with TAPP the day before, to join the Campaign Against the Arms Trade (CAAT). They arrive on Thursday in time to help prepare vegetarian food to be offered at Liverpool Street station as part of a 'Food Not Bombs' campaign. Since it was assumed the offices where the visitors would be sleeping had been bugged by police intelligence, CAAT's final briefing about the actions was held at dusk in a park, where the direct action and support affinity groups were established. On a 7am tube journey the affinities, disguised as city workers, made their final run through the actions and contingencies whilst holding back conspicuous grins.

244. McLibel, e-mail message to author, 27 July 2005, Appendix 3.2.4.

All reach St. Paul's tube station and walk in small groups toward the offices of Friends' Provident. In the entrance, whilst wrestling with security inside a revolving glass door, two manage to enter the building while another two scale the facade to suspend 'Capitalising on Misery' from the roof of the building. Leaflets dispensed to staff inside and passers-by outside describe CAAT, the campaign to dispense with the arms trade, and the financial corporations like Friends' Provident who invest in them. At 9:30am the Direct Action Affinity meander away from the Friends' Provident entrance, away from congregating plain clothes police officers, towards Lloyd's Bank, Cheapside, just around the corner. Retaining the attentions of police, those who stayed behind whilst leafleting begin to move down the street towards a branch of HSBC now under occupation. HSBC customers and staff are being loudly informed how their bank invests in the arms' trade. The occupation lasts for twenty minutes before the trail of police officers notice the occupation, enter the bank and forcibly evict the informants. Further down the street five of the Direct Action Affinity Group have locked and chained themselves inside the branch of Lloyd's Bank, Cheapside. The police, unable to evict them, join the grim reaper, a corpulent capitalist and CAAT's support affinity group from the HSBC occupation who are now leafleting customers and passers-by outside Lloyd's bank. One of the support group, noticing a security-free branch of Natwest proceeds, with a few others, to enter the bank, announce they are part of CAAT, take a few pictures and hand out a few leaflets before police manage to remove all but one of them. This agile remainder is locked onto the service counter. Natwest and Lloyd's bank Cheapside are closed for the day. It's now lunchtime; the group splits. Some remain outside the closed banks in Cheapside to wait for their locked-on affinities inside while the others walk to Liverpool Street Station,

leafleting banks along the way and with their own little security force of police officers trailing behind.

At first, people are hesitant to take up CAAT's campaigning gift of free 'Food Not Bombs' at Liverpool Street Station, but slowly by perfecting their scripts the gift economy prospers. CAAT collides with the sound of drums coming from the station entrance which they follow, now as part of a crowd, into the station and out the other side. Moving South along Bishopsgate, towards the Bank of England along Threadneedle Street, past riot police stationed by the bank and onto Bank Station they reach Canon Street where, just around the corner, they find a little park to sit and rest. A punk band is playing in the park. TAPP arrive to relay stories of their morning outside the Bank of England.²⁴⁵

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While leafleting, 'Naked Protest' banner raised, someone stubs out a cigarette on Vincent's backside. He turns enraged to confront a man waltzing very quickly back to his group of friends. Vincent follows, stands isolating the man from the pack with a menacing stare, then recoils; the coward has outnumbered him. Vincent finds the attention he receives intolerable. Public nakedness isn't a problem for him; feeling no less vulnerable naked in public than when fully clothed, but for a 'body-insecure', 'bodily-hysterical' society it is a problem. If public nakedness were permissible, considered other than within confined categories of streaking, naturism or art, Vincent would receive far less painful reactions and his naked public body far less attention. Since this isn't the case, there's a need to campaign openly, in public. The 'Freedom

²⁴⁵. Hilary, Hackney (Campaign Against the Arms Trade), in discussion with the author, July 2004. Appendix 3.1.2, pp 1-4.

to be Yourself' is a campaign to propagate public nakedness. Vincent took the train to London on June 18th to take the opportunity to connect with groups with whom he figured there would be a crossover of interests. Indeed, a man involved in the environmental group EarthFirst!, had heard about the 'Freedom to be Yourself' and wanting to get involved, contacted Vincent. They would meet up in the City of London, disrobe and hand out leaflets.²⁴⁶

Shielding from the sun beneath a bridge, just next to where a fire hydrant had burst open, a man dressed as a woman approaches Vincent says, 'Oh Hello, I'm X,' kisses him on the cheek and disappears before he has time to respond. He recognised the woman. His friends, who were artists in Sheffield introduced them once. His friends used to get naked in public too. One, a filmmaker who creates his own props, would be there today inside a papier-mâché carnival head he'd created to carry around the City with a group of people from Sheffield.

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The Association of Autonomous Astronauts set out to destroy the present monopoly of governments, corporations and military interests maintaining a marketable and patentable version of 'final frontier' space exploration. Meeting at 13:30 at Green Park tube the AAA delegation, dressed in space suits, headed towards Lockheed Martin, the world's leading corporate contractors of high-tech weaponry. The banner, 'Stop Star Wars, Military Out of Space' and leaflets defiant of the militarization of space, publicize the AAA's appearance in the reception area of Lockheed Martin. They approach the receptionists entrusting them with a letter that demands the cessation of all contracted weapons constructions and the hand-over of all Lockheed's

246. Vincent Bethell, (Naked Protest), in discussion with the author, June 2004. Appendix 3.1.6, pp 2-4.

resources to the AAA. The AAA reported to the press that, 'All in all, a good day out, and positive proof that community-based space exploration is on the up.'²⁴⁷

The AAA's community-based space exploration programmes are investing in and experimenting with the possibility of zero gravity communities. Indeed the Jungle Association of Autonomous Astronauts (JAAA) or 'Junglenauts' are already creating appropriate gravity-defying music that 'drags the body out of catatonia and puts it into the hyper-kinetic, ultra-physic, audio-strata of autonomous astronautism.'²⁴⁸ The JAAA's experimentations in which, 'every man and every woman is an autonomous astronaut' are defying the avant-garde space explorations of NASA, such that space is, as the AAA puts it;

... a tactic to become more 'human' in the constant perplexification of an environment with allows the junglenaut to experience a whole new range of feelings and movements ... humans once they are up there will evolve into unimaginable shapes and adaptations to strange surroundings. Earthly phenomenon like dancing, shopping and getting drunk will have to change or they will be rendered obsolete. Together with the rave in space and sex in space programs of other AAA groups, Jungle AAA is certain that break dancing in space will not only be better, but will also be more progressive and more fun. ²⁴⁹

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In his examination of police operations in the City of London on June 18th 1999, Former Assistant Commissioner of London's Metropolitan police Anthony Speed writes:

247. Association of Autonomous Astronauts, *Earthfirst! Action Update*, 60 (July, 1999), <https://www.earthfirst.org.uk/efau/EFAU060-jul99.pdf>.

248. Association of Autonomous Astronauts, *Space 1999*, <http://www.deepdisc.com/space1999/>.

249. Ibid.

Wisdom after the event is an occupational hazard for judges and armchair critics. Policemen are men of action: their duty requires them to assess a situation quickly, to make up their minds, and then to act before the situation slips out of control. They are not to be criticised if hindsight invalidates a decision properly arrived at on the information available at the time.²⁵⁰

J18's joint policing operation spanned The City of London Police (CLP) within the boundaries of the Corporation of London²⁵¹, the Metropolitan Police Service (MPS) across the rest of central London and the British Transport Police (BTP) on the tube and railways. Only after J18, in debriefing sessions, did police make sense of the unfathomable and unpredictable dynamics of disorder, described by Lord Levene as 'Nothing short of a war zone,' into which pan-London policing operations were drawn on June 18th 1999.²⁵² Debriefing sessions are part of a preemptive choreography of intelligence-led policing, whereby police intensify their knowledge and expertise about an event in order to predictively prevent disorder the next time around. Through this retrospective engagement with J18, a new order of policing technique at 'major incidents' in the UK was actualised. However, regardless of police risk assessments of J18's potential for disorder, regardless of police attempts to minimize and manage these risks in partnership with resident businesses in the City of London, the situation as it developed into disorder, on the day took police entirely by surprise.²⁵³

250. Lord Justice Scarman, "Public Enquiry into Red Lion Square disorders 1974," unpublished, quoted in Anthony Speed, *Carnival Against Global Capitalism: Internal examination of police operation*, 23rd July 1999 (unpublished), Appendix 2.11.2, p3.

251. The Corporation of London is ostensibly a private corporation whose history extends before the establishment of the national Parliament to medieval land-owning elites or Aldersmen whose settlements along the Thames estuary now compose the 25 wards of the City of London. The Corporation of London is a geo-political formation whose governance is embedded in its ownership of land in what happens to be the oldest and wealthiest quarter of London.

252. Lord Levene, interview by John Humphrys, *The Today Programme*, BBC Radio 4, June 19, 1999.

253. Anthony Speed, Corporation of London Police Committee, *Carnival Against Global Capitalism: Internal examination of police operation*, 23rd July 1999 (unpublished), Appendix 2.11.2, p3; Jonathan Batt, Home Office e-mail message to author, February 2005, Appendix 3.2.4.

In the first instance, J18 had not sought the proper permissions. The date, time, duration, route, meeting and end–point of any public procession staged within the jurisdiction of the Corporation of London would have had to be choreographed and agreed upon by City of London police.²⁵⁴ Since no such approval had been sought for J18 and thus no official marshaling or stewarding provided for the event’s movements within the City of London, had police deemed it necessary to prevent serious public disorder, serious criminal damage or serious disruption to the life of the community they could have sought permission to ban J18. Indeed police intelligence about J18’s organization, actions and participants had left them entirely uncertain about the scale of the event. Thus, attentive to the degree to which J18 posed an entirely unpredictable and unknown quantity, and perhaps vastly underestimating the turn-out on the day, the police translated the likelihood of disorder and criminal damage police as risks. A risk assessment, devised by Senior police officers in the City of London drew attention to certain factors known to encourage criminal damage and public disorder in order to mitigate and manage these risks in the form of specific security and crime prevention

Anthony Speed points to the fact that policing operations strategically grounded in judgements of police as to the best tactics to deal with the situation as it developed on the day can be deemed ‘inadequate’ or indeed ‘wrong’ only after event. This policing strategy was confirmed in an e-mail from the Home Office, Appendix, 2.12.2.

254. Police powers to regulate demonstrations stipulate conditions on those who attend. Ethically, police work to ensure the democratic rights of all citizens to assemble or march and (less pronounced in the UK than in the US) the right to the freedom of speech against the rights of citizens potentially affected by a procession. Police distinguish between participants in a march or procession as marchers, and those affected by the march or procession as the public. Thus, from the point of view of police, although The National Front can march, they would not officially be permitted to march through streets or areas of a city populated primarily by ethnic minorities (or indeed majorities). Police regulations conditioning a march break down spatially and temporally the act of moving through the city into a series of discrete operational protocols. The protocols allow police to manage and mitigate possible points of conflict, violence, disorder, intimidation, offence, disturbance, disruption and inconvenience; possibilities which form the basis of public order policing and the condition for all regulatory policing powers over events. Police then, can distinguish good from bad events purely on the basis of whether their series of discrete operational protocols are followed (i.e. The National Front can have a good march). A bad march is one that did not seek the proper approvals and did not follow the sequence of policing operations that are necessary to mitigate potential disorder. Such events are by default undemocratic according to police because they are not functioning to ensure the democratic rights of all citizens to march as choreographed by the police.

measures devised in partnership with and as recommendations to City of London residents.²⁵⁵ This preemptive choreography filtered through the Corporation of London press office, internal email system and, in several presentations to 500 City residents at a time, major financial institutions, small businesses and the retail sector.

Police intelligence, however, included groups and campaigns whose activities they had policed in the past. Indeed the police were familiar with many groups involved in J18, specifically those involved in the early planning stages, as well as the actions these groups tactically employ in their work. However information about J18 actions and targets, about the campaigns and individuals planning for the event could not have been attained other than through the emerging networks involved in J18 itself. Thus, whether for protestors, media, police, police intelligence or multi-national corporations, the source of information about J18 was the same – the on-line and face-to-face meetings that emerged from J18 networks in the run-up to the event.

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<Liverpool Street Station. City of London. Noon.> Let's replace the roar of profit and plunder with the sounds and rhythms of party, carnival and pleasure.²⁵⁶

Eight thousand black, red, green and gold masks (the colours of anarchism, communism, ecology and for the occasion, high finance) are passed hand-to-hand through the crowd converging in Liverpool Street station. The masks are used to split the crowd into four colour-coordinated routes from the station towards the, on-a-need-to-know-basis and thus in effect, secret target –

255. Kevin Sapsford (Chief Superintendent, City of London Police), in discussion with the author, September 2005, Appendix 3.1.12, p3.

256. Reclaim-the-Streets, 'Game over', a golden agit-prop leaflet for J18, Appendix 1.5.3.

London's International Finance, Futures and Options Exchange or LIFFE.²⁵⁷ Each route, colours blending imperfectly to the rhythms of the samba band, stride through winding streets while a cluster of protestors run ahead to ensure a novelty car blockade has inexplicably installed itself at an intersection on Lower Thames Street, to create a clearing in the largest open space closest to LIFFE. A truck carrying a sound-system, which had been submerged for the night in an underground car park in the City, surfaces. Eight carnival puppet heads are hoisted above the four converging routes, all but one of which successfully tracks their way to LIFFE. Unfurled above the street, banners of woven words infer, "OUR RESISTANCE IS AS GLOBAL AS CAPITAL," demand, "GLOBAL ECOLOGY NOT GLOBAL ECONOMY," insist, "THE EARTH IS A COMMON TREASURY FOR ALL" and advise we "REFUSE, RESIST, RECLAIM, REVOLT". Posters and graffiti are splayed on the windows and walls of banks, corporations and parked police vehicles. On Walbrook Street a fire hydrant is opened, spraying water high above the party congregating beneath it. Across the street the LIFFE building is invaded, the trading floor closed and the traders and staff evacuate. Breeze blocks are passed hand-to-hand through the crowd to construct a wall, cemented in the LIFFE building entrance.

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By late afternoon J18 emerges minimally on national television and in the late editions of international press in which it is descriptively denounced as having escalated into a fight between police and a violent contingent of what were essentially peaceful protests. The media's preemptive descriptions of J18 as a threat threads through the afternoon 'escalation of violence' narrative,

257. LIFFE is the largest derivatives market in Europe.

reporting on the number of injuries, hospitalizations and arrests. This coverage continues through June 19th in which the press search for and conflate the identity of organizers and trouble-makers who instigated the violence on the day. The policing of J18 is subject to question by the media in response to which the Corporation of London initiates a 'public enquiry' into police conduct, releasing this to the press two months later.²⁵⁸ In response to which, post-event media coverage turns to how the event was organized (by a sinister bunch over the internet) and in turn follows police failure to cordon the violence and police attempts to track the 'perpetrators' of the violence using the very same media (the internet) and CCTV videotapes.

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In a narrow passageway in the City of London, a violent clash ensues between protestors and riot police. India 99, an airborne police surveillance and spotting device hovers above. The onboard cameraman, a police evidence gatherer is feeding real-time images of the clash to the Metropolitan Police control centre. The pilot suggests descending over the clash to scare off the protestors, disperse the fighting and free up the riot police. The onboard cameraman will lose, he says, the live stream by moving closer to the action.²⁵⁹ The images are police intelligence; information they need to inform their operational command and control of the unfolding situation. As such, the Metropolitan Police control centre reject the pilot's suggestion to descend over the fight on account of the momentary gap in the image-stream this would incur. Fighting prevails, police continue to be fed information they need to

258. Perry Nove, Commissioner of the City of London police, *Carnival Against Global Capitalism 18th June 1999* (unpublished), Appendix 2.11.1; Anthony Speed, Corporation of London Police Committee, *Carnival Against Global Capitalism: Internal examination of police operation*, 23rd July 1999, (unpublished), Appendix 2.11.2, p3.

259. City of London Police, *J18*, VHS Video, Appendix 2.11.3, Chapter 11.

send reinforcements, but by the time reinforcements arrive the fighting has moved on.

The strategic vantage point of India 99 provides police with an image-stream they require to act upon unfolding events. Yet this will to knowledge ultimately prevents action. The image-stream from the vantage point of India 99 prevents India 99 belonging to and becoming, as the pilot suggested, a part of the action below.

In the City of London, territorial insecurity was once actualised through a fixed technological diagram; the fortified residences of private landlords formed labyrinthine streets, passages and alleyways. The built remains of medieval geo-politics in the City of London, on June 18th 1999, acted as effective conductors for the non-linear circulations and avoidance strategies in and through which a carnival crowd was able to 'reclaim the streets', stalling the city's operations for a day. Power no longer has effective control of a territory, is unhinged from fixed spatial and temporal coordinates but is replaced by a situation in which territorial insecurity is activated through pervasive CCTV surveillance, knowledge production and information flows.

It would be a mistake to conceive the clash between police and protestors as separate domains of interest colliding and attracting one another in predictable ways, rather than as an entirely contingent event. As event it carries an affective charge with the capacity to activate bodies, institutions and processes generating complex interference or resonance patterns across situations. Within this event, India 99's perspective of the fight below is an anti-event-space. A term coined by Brian Massumi, anti-event-space marks precisely where 'belonging-becoming' as part of events is arrested and a space

opened for their 'codifying-capture'.²⁶⁰ Codifying-captures are disciplinary in the Foucauldian sense of controlling and regulating behaviour. India 99's codifying-capture (as image) of the event exemplifies the disciplinary, which is to say regulatory power of State-formations, the will of police to interrupt the fight. Regulation is always an attempt to interrupt. The tendency of cultural analysis however, is to think of disciplinary power formations as operating only in one direction, surveillance as negative and power as constraint, to think of India 99 as wanting to stop the fight rather than for the ways in which it remains, as such, a productive element in the fight. Indeed, how India 99, as interruptive operation perpetuates the fight. To think of India 99 as anti-event-space is to think of it as no less a part of the action, but as only retrospectively a part of the event. India 99's perspective affords transcendence over events and with an on-board cameraman it is able to relay events in the form of an image-stream to the police control centres. India 99 can only ever follow that which it wants to regulate; it is in this sense retrospective. Disciplinary power-formations *follow*, in the sense of always running after belonging-becoming events and in the sense of coming afterwards in time. Anti-event spaces are reactions to events and as such change only in response to an outside, are always perceived as a disruption. Anti-event spaces can only ever construe change negatively.

It is for this reason Michel Foucault, as he discussed with Gilles Deleuze, attempted to evacuate his concept of power without evacuating the productivity of power/knowledge in society; because Foucault was interested in change, and power only ever misconstrues change as negative.²⁶¹ Power

260. Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*, 79.

261. Donald Bouchard, ed. "Intellectuals & Power: A conversation between Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze." In *Language, Counter-memory, Practice*. (New York: Cornell University Press), 205-217.

operations cannot discern the difference between new belonging–becomings, for example, new forms of subjectivity or new forms of cultural production and a violation of its own rules and regulatory operations. It will always seek to intervene so as to make them into ‘state–friendly designs,’ in this case into a ‘lawful’ protest.

The specialised bureaucracy of the state police of which India 99 is a part, as with all power formations, is above all static in the sense of preferring stasis to change, as construing events as ‘outside’ of itself, which are only ever perceived to be disruptions. This point is exemplified by linear, quantitative systems of analysis in which events are the noise polluting data with continual fluctuations and instabilities. Events cannot be tracked, for example, using conventional linear equations. Classical linear equations are, ‘set like clockwork in advance and continue to run out their program according to conditions held only ideally at the moment the initial programming took place. Linear equations cannot, and do not, receive additional input regarding changing conditions, they cannot even be reliably updated by input they themselves generate or gather up.’²⁶² So too with the specialised bureaucracies of disciplinary state-formations such as the police. On June 18th 1999, the police were taken by surprise by the non-linear, self-organising collective convergence intent on transforming the City of London into a carnival. Amidst fluctuating dynamics and unpredictable conditions that were created, police, rather like linear equations and despite high-tech video streaming, radio communications and intel feeds, could action only linear motions along predetermined paths. Their intelligence served only to distance them farther

262. Sanford Swinter, *Architectures of Time: Towards a theory of the event in Modernist Culture*. (Cambridge, MA: MIT, 2001), 22.

from events, events in pursuit of which the only way they knew how to move was in line formations. Indeed the famous phrase 'In the line of duty' is used only when the lines which compose the linear course of an officer's life are disrupted, attacked or terminated.

After events on June 18th, a police training video was spliced together using footage from India 99, CCTV, mainstream media and Special Branch cameras. The film, approximately 3 hours long, depicts police under attack in their attempts to control and contain the 'siege' on the City of London.²⁶³

Surveillance footage spliced together to create a linear narrative and depicting action–hero police tragedy was not created for the purpose of telling the story, but for the stories that could be extracted from it, namely further public order policing expertise and knowledge and the intensification of its own specialised bureaucracy. It is tempting to think of this update in police training in terms of a change in the culture of policing. Indeed, the construction of a 'Riot City,' a regional training facility for public order policing was deemed to mark a shift in the culture of policing from incident response to intelligence-led police or policing with intelligence. Rather than representing a change in culture (culture rarely coincides with the regulatory territories of the State) these positive feedback loops of disciplinary power-formations are initiating the socius in new forms of regulation and control. Positively, this initiates new policing in state friendly forms and negatively state friendly policing operate as regulatory interventions. Regardless, these are changes initiated in response to what is perceived to be an outside threat. Police power, as with all power formations, cannot tell the difference between new belonging–becomings and

263. City of London Police, *J18*, VHS Video, Appendix 2.11.3.

infractions of its own rules and regulatory operations. The perspective of India 99 is the sign of a separation from change, an anti-event-space, while fighting continues working ‘in dynamic amidst,’ at the level of the unpredictable singularity of the event.



The Walbrook is one of twelve River Thames tributaries submerged beneath London.²⁶⁴ The artist's group Platform create guided tours along the river's tarmac tombs. Works entitled *Still Waters* encompass *Listening to the Fleet*, *Walking on the Walbrook* and *Unearthing the Effra*, each following a river's path of least resistance from hilltop to Thames valley by way of walks, discussions, performances, actions, installations and ‘water-dowsing’.²⁶⁵ “The rivers will win; one day the rivers will win,” one of the artists explains to the tour group I joined. On this eight hour exploration to unearth the River Fleet, we walked from its source in the Vale of Health on Hampstead Heath, through Golders Green, Camden, Kentish Town, Farringdon and along Fleet Street to its mouth in the Thames at Blackfriars.

Through the urban backwaters of Kings Cross, the industrial no-man's land affirms the Fleet's invisible presence. We make an effort, Bergson says, ‘...to turn away from what [we have] a material interest in not seeing’²⁶⁶. The Fleet's once crowded banks and cholera-contaminated waters are now buried far beneath the city of industry; the city of industry is the effect of this sudden disassociation from the Fleet.

264. The Peck, Neckinger, Effra, Falcon, Hackney Brook, Fleet, Tyburn, Westbourne, Counter's Creek, Parr's Ditch, Stamford Brook are of the other eleven turbulent foundations of urbanized settlement.

265. Platform, *Still Waters: Re-imagining London's rivers*, <http://www.Platformlondon.org/otherprojects.asp#stillwater>.

266. Henri Bergson, *Henri Bergson: Key Writings*, trans. Keith Ansell Pearson and John Mullarkey, 252.

Platform ask, 'What gets buried in the City?'²⁶⁷ Of course they are referring to the rivers. Platform however, are not conceptual artists, they aren't communicating concepts about invisible rivers, they are interested in experiencing the buried rivers as a concept, using it to push the limits of our perception to ask, 'What else have we buried in the city?' It is essential we move with them through the city to know what, besides the rivers, we have lost. What we have lost will only become apparent by moving through the performance of its unearthing. Platform's work is performative. What gets buried does not pre-exist its physical expression in their tour.

Unearthing submerged River Thames tributaries is our invitation to the improbable, the unlikely and the inventive. In *Still Waters*, Platform opens up a virtual city of rivers. The virtual and the actual are co-present modes of approaching the same reality. They are not opposed to one another. Platform's virtual city of rivers is not opposed to the real city without rivers, besides the Thames. The rivers are there, the artists in-form us, they're just submerged beneath the city streets; out of sight, out of mind. The artists will help us to perceive them by walking tours laced with stories in parallel precision to a river's buried trajectory through the city. It is this burial as a biophysical and sociocultural process that Platform opens up through a walk, story, performance, installation and discussion; through their actions we are invited to join them, to perceive without seeing.

The premise of *Still Waters* is precisely our capacity to unearth from beneath the city we can see, rivers that we cannot. When Platform invite our mind and eyes to see what they cannot see, they affirm Bergson's argument that our

267. Jane Trowell, "The Snowflake in Hell and The Baked Alaska: Improbability, Intimacy and Change in the Public Realm," in *Locality, Regeneration and Divers[c]ities: Advances in Art and Urban Futures 1* (Bristol: Intellect Press, 2000), 104.

perceptions are cut from a wider canvas, against a metaphysics which would argue that we cannot perceive what is not there. The capacity to perceive without seeing, Bergson also suggests, is widely misread from an idealist position as a privilege of artists only, who, unlike the rest of us are not preoccupied with the practical concerns of life. Therefore artists such as Platform who have extended, as part of their art practice this perceptive privilege to audiences of art, have created a new set of problematics vis-à-vis the status of the artist in relation to the social knowledge produced through socially engaged art practice.

How does the virtuality of another world perceived in the work of Platform work? Let's take a walk. We sense the city. As we move through it, we perceive only a fraction of what we sense; we *make* sense. This is essential. In order to act upon things and allow things to act upon us, it is necessary to make sense of the world. Our knowledge of the world is the effect of this narrowing of perception, our essentially subtractive faculties of perception.

From the vast field of our virtual knowledge, we select, in order to make it into actual knowledge, everything which concerns our action upon things; we neglect the rest.²⁶⁸

A walk with Platform expands our perceptions of the city. Platform's performance connects—up our perception with what we have, of necessity lost; it is an additive exploration. For them London's submerged rivers expose the potential of our having actively forgotten. They reveal this latent potential of our creative destruction in order to activate the new. This is the positive feedback of the virtual into the actual, of the allegedly improbable into the allegedly possible. Following their stories, we begin to perceive a road as it follows the contours of a river submerged beneath it, and in the present

268. Bergson, *Henri Bergson: Key Writings*, 252-3.

architectural fabric we glimpse the history of human and non-human settlement. We see a river captured in the present as semiotic sign(post); *Fleet Street, Walbrook Street, Stanford Brook*.

The *Still Waters* performance affirms the often overlooked capacity of art to blur the virtual and the actual. As Platform puts it:

In 1996, we received a call from the Planning Department of the Corporation of the City of London, who had heard a PLATFORM presentation about the democratic meaning of the unearthing of the river Fleet (London Rivers Association, 1995). This resulted in a meeting where a carefully prepared financial and transport argument was put before us, with an estimate, in writing, from the City Engineer that the costs of tunnelling out the Fleet and re-organising the transport would be in the order of £500 million. ²⁶⁹

From their base on Walbrook Street, the London Rivers' Association officers, part of the Corporation of London's team of city environmental engineers and ecologists, present Platform with the improbability of unearthing the River Fleet; they actualise the Fleet as an impossible proposition. The actual-impossible is not equivalent to the virtual. The *actual* impossibility or the actualisation of the impossibility of unearthing the River Fleet, the charge brought against the work of Platform, is in this context, an affirmation of eco-managerial limits within the organisation of the Corporation of London. City ecologists and Environmental Engineers are here simply re-affirming the scope of their authority.

On June 18th 1999, temperatures in the City of London reached 27 degrees. Below black hot pavements, the long-since buried Walbrook River maintained its turbulent flow through brick-work storm drains that were engineered to contain it. All systems however, leak. On Walbrook Street a water-hydrant is kicked open, releasing the virtual river:

²⁶⁹ Jane Trowell, *The Snowflake in Hell and The Baked Alaska*, 105.

Glistening. Silver and white. The river escaped over the shadows of the narrow city street. Released from centuries of subterranean captivity, the Walbrook rose and fell in billowing arcs, sending clouds of spray onto the growing crowd below. Laughing, people danced under the cool fountain. Shrieks of delight mixing with the sound of falling water. Between their toes, the water slipped down the dark tarmac retracing an ancient course to the Thames below. Looking upwards. Breathing the moist air. I grinned to myself. We'd done it. The roar of profit and plunder in the world's largest financial centre had been replaced with the sounds of party and protest. ²⁷⁰

... a cobbled street running along the building and down to the Thames River has been blocked off and a hydrant opened to free a 40-foot waterspout. The drums beat against the alien buildings, we're dancing and singing in the rain, and under the cover of the sound and fury anonymous hands brick up some LIFFE entrances and smash others. We block up the drains, flood Dowgate Hill and take a rest among the joyous faces on a tiny bit of beach on the Thames, the Thames that is everywhere enclosed by private capital. We sit there in the sun and smoke a spliff. ²⁷¹

After a good while walking through the City, the four different groups converged on Upper Thames Street, in front of the London International Financial Futures Exchange (LIFFE) building. The soundsystems pulled up, a punk band was playing, a smashed fire hydrant sprayed water four stories high, and the party started ... ²⁷²

Conveniently a huge shower was laid on for revellers to cool down from the baking sun... ²⁷³

The Daily Telegraph describes how city workers jeered at protestors from their offices above: 'One pointed at his wristwatch and shouted, 'See that? It's a Rolex.' Another tore up five pound notes and threw them at the protestors below, who retaliated by squirting him with a fire-extinguisher. Dealers at another firm crowded round their office windows, taunting the mob by waving their gold American Express cards. A fire hydrant was set off in the street and traders shouted, 'That's the first wash you've had in fifteen years. ²⁷⁴

270. Wat Tyler, "Dancing on the Edge of Chaos," in *We Are Everywhere* (London: Verso, 2003), 188. Appendix 3.3.3, p1.

271. John Barker, "Carnival Against Capitalism," *Vanguard Online*, <http://www.vgpolitics.f9.co.uk/1103.htm>. Appendix 3.4.7, p1.

272. Anonymous, "Carnival Against Capital!," *Do or Die*, no. 8, <http://www.eco-action.org/dod/no8/carnival.html>. Appendix 2.7.1, p20.

273. "June 18th 1999: Carnival of Resistant: International Day of Protest," *urban75*, no. 6, <http://www.urban75.org/j18/>, Appendix 2.3.5.

274. *Ibid.*, 14.

At the side of Cannon Street station ... I could see lots of banners and a huge fountain at Upper Thames Street, so I headed down there, past some women who were dancing to some rock and roll music, past a very small entrance which seemed to be attracting a lot of people's attention for some reason and on to Upper Thames street. This seemed to be where the carnival was: there was a van with a soundsystem, people with kids, people with dogs, fire jugglers, jugglers of skittle-type things, frisbee throwers, people in costumes, the Nude Protestor man, a group playing music which reminded me of punk, but I'm not sure it's called something else these days. ²⁷⁵

275. Gary Holden. "June 18th 1999: Carnival of Resistance: International day of protest." *urban75*, no. 6, <http://www.urban75.org/j18/>. Appendix 2.8.6.

5. Conclusion – Towards an ethico-aesthetic paradigm

Yes, I believe that there is a multiple people, a people of mutants, a people of potentialities that appears and disappears, that is embodied in social events, literary events, and musical events. I'm often accused of being exaggeratedly, stupidly, stubbornly optimistic, and of not seeing people's wretchedness. I can see it, but ... I don't know, perhaps I'm raving, but I think that we're in a period of productivity, proliferation, creation, utterly fabulous revolutions from the viewpoint of this emergence of a people. That's molecular revolution: it isn't a slogan or a program, it's something I feel, that I live, in meetings, in institutions, in affects, and also through some reflections.²⁷⁶

This thesis represents the development of an understanding of J18. The development of a critical framework, in the first instance demanded a multi-disciplinary review of literature that in each case set forth different questions relevant to a broad understanding of J18. The literature review engaged briefly with the sociologies of crowds and new social movements, the cultural politics of space and place provided by geography, the public interventions of art practice and performance, the retreats from the street by digital media theorists and the contemporary renderings of anti-capitalism that include reflections on particular features of J18 by protestors. In the theory and methods chapter key shifts in the ideas of political action are narrated through an attendant Marxist materialist epistemology. The act of drawing together material from the event is outlined by way of the data gathering process and the reciprocal development of an ethico-aesthetic framework (a toolbox of concepts) used as an exemplary method to understand the event. The empirical chapter presents a multi-centred account of J18 narrated in micro-examples; the actions and confrontations in the City of London between key

²⁷⁶ Felix Guattari and Rolnik, S., *Molecular revolution in Brazil*, 9.

players that include the protestors, corporations, police and media.

Writing in 2006 John Jordan asserts, 'J18 is slowly slipping into the quagmire of forgetting that this city is so good at generating.'²⁷⁷ He is quite right, forgetting has to be worked at. When the historian Kristin Ross worked to retrieve what happened during May '68, she first of all had to sift through the quagmire of official stories, which narrated the events by consistently working up the idea that nothing actually happened. This served to 'erase those memories of past alternatives that sought or envisioned other outcomes than the one that came to pass.'²⁷⁸ She says the great refusal in May '68 of thousands of people has been buried by the acts of remembrance and by the testimonies of self-proclaimed authorities and experts.

The suspended moments of the general strike, the vast expanse of possibility that opened up when the strike disrupted and transformed everyday life – only a small number of the texts and documents about May convey, or choose to convey, something about the nature of that experience. ²⁷⁹

Walking through the City of London in 2006, John Jordan tried to imagine recreating J18 and ends up affected by sadness.²⁸⁰ He passes in front of the LIFFE building security gates, installed shortly after J18, recalling on the day the construction of a brick wall in the entrance by protestors, photocopied £50 notes dropping from the balcony onto the crowd below and the punks he saw climb up and disappear into the building's ventilation shaft.

²⁷⁷. John Jordan, "Notes whilst Walking on 'How to Break the Heart of Empire'," in *Spectacle, Pleasure Principle and the Carnavalesque*, ed. Sonja Brunzels and Marcelo Exposito (Berlin: b_books Verlag, 2008), 247.

²⁷⁸. Ross, *May '68 and its Afterlives*, 6.

²⁷⁹. *Ibid.*, 6.

²⁸⁰. John takes a walk through the city in an effort to recall the event, in order to write a response to the film, 'Radical Imagination Marcelo Exposito, *Radical Imagination (Carnivals of Resistance)* (2004), <http://www.hamacaonline.net/obra.php?id=224&mode=1>.

He remembers clearly certain moments from the day but concludes;

Today a call for Carnival against Capital in London would almost certainly fall on deaf ears, few people would dedicate another year of their life to organising it, only a handful of people would turn up and this time the police would be all over us before the ink on the leaflets had dried.²⁸¹

The fundamental feature of J18, which John is forgetting to remember, is the singularity of the event. As singular event, J18 is by definition unrepeatable and unreproducible; it cannot be recreated. This thesis has sought above all to remember this characteristic feature of J18, and in so doing the contribution to knowledge has involved two principle trajectories, which I outline below.

Due to the ephemeral nature of J18, it was necessary to engage in a process of 'drawing things together' from the event. The empirical documentation that spilled out of this process is in itself verifiable as a contribution to knowledge in that currently no account of J18, from the multiple perspectives of key players engaged in the event currently exists. As such this documentation is added as a digital appendage to the main body of the thesis, with its own organisation. The status of this documentation is questionable. It has not been created to transmit a coherent image of a past performance, rather it forms a bricolage of texts, images, agit-props and audio/visual documentation. The multi-centred perceptions of the event do not add up to a definitive account, nor was the purpose in attaining them ever to provide a secure objectivity. The documentation is separate from the main body of the thesis, so that it might serve as an extension of the event, propagating into other projects, by way of an archive of dissent.²⁸²

281. Jordan, "Notes whilst Walking on 'How to Break the Heart of Empire'," 246.

282. I will hand over the original copies of this material to the Live Art Development Agency, for use in their Study Room, in an event they are staging to mark the 10 year anniversary of J18.

In the second trajectory, the process of developing an analytic framework adequate to a materialist understanding of J18 resided in the creation of a toolbox of concepts through which J18 can be understood as singular event, moving the protest and the interpretation of it beyond critique and toward an ethico-aesthetic paradigm.

Beyond Critique

Critique is a rather limited mode of engaging with the potential that exists in situations in which we find ourselves; serving on occasion to make more of precisely what about situations that, by means of critique, we are seeking to change. This is not to suggest it isn't important to question every situation. On the contrary it seems essential in the contemporary context to develop precisely such a micro-politics. However as a means of questioning situations critique is not simply limited, the productivity of critique stalls the development of what Félix Guattari terms a micro-politics of desire, which is to say it cuts short our engagements and qualities needed to engage in situations in order to change them. 'Making situations' is a crucial term, underlining why this is perhaps the case. Critique is a means of making through a process of distancing. Much of the energy required to engage conditions in order to change them is spent on processes of distancing from situations quite literally for its own sake, to escape perhaps, or else to forge the necessary gap for commentary and judgement to take place. The freedom to change existing conditions is deferred/referred to the necessary freedom or distance required to critique conditions. However this still doesn't explain the limits of critique, nor why a process of distancing can serve on occasion to make a situation worse.

Critique is a form of making a situation, which as we have said involves distance, which is to say an externality from the conditions it refers to. Critique creates a whole other set of conditions, an–other situation in the process of constructing itself. In the ‘here and now,’ critique is a whole new situation in the making. It is *in addition* to conditions it seeks to change. As Brian Massumi says, critique adds to the world in however small a way, and it is usually a rather self–seriousness addition. However, in forging a necessary distance from conditions we set out to change, the tendency is *to forget what we bring with us in the process*. For example, although counter-cultural critics sought a pure position from which to attack situations from outside, they nevertheless remain productive subjects in society. They were inextricably intertwined in the production of new social identities, forms of cultural production and consumption, as well as the reproduction of political structures, institutions and mechanisms of regulatory control, such as policing and policy processes. This productivity has figured in cultural analyses concerned with identifying the determinants of social power, but this productivity of existing power/knowledges is not necessarily the same thing. The capacity to change situations when approached using the concept of power always entails explaining where the social relations onto which power inscribes itself comes from. Power, as Michel Foucault professed, presupposes the necessary freedom of individuals to act; it presupposes a productivity.

This essential post-structuralist insight that individuals, suffused with complex social relations always remain a productive force within those relations, is taken up and developed by Félix Guattari. Since, he says, individuals do not pre-exist the web of social relations into which they are

born and through which they constitute themselves, nor then should this productivity, what he calls freedom, be conceptualised independently of our rooted-ness and embedded-ness in situations and their complexity. Freedom, in this sense, is not an essential attribute of individuals, nor is it a transcendent realm governed by universal laws into which subjects are interpolated. It does not pre-exist the way we are connecting with others. If it is a question of changing situations we find ourselves in, this is tantamount, Guattari suggests, to extending our collective connected-ness to explore different ways of being, speaking, seeing and doing. Change then is tantamount²⁸³ to what Guattari describes as, 'Implementing effective practices of experimentation.'²⁸⁴

... literally reconstructing the modalities of 'group-being', not only through 'communicational' interventions but through existential mutations driven by the motor of subjectivity.²⁸⁵

The tendency however is to conflate and confuse the production of difference with externality, a process of distancing, or a position outside situations. However difference and being outside, or for that matter in the margins, are not the same thing. Instantiating difference, whether in an opinion, idea, perspective or an identity, is not necessarily productive in terms of extending capacities to explore differently. We cannot assume that qualities necessary for or generated by instantiating difference enable us to realize the potential which always exists in any present situation.

283. The word tantamount here is used to stress that this is not necessarily a pleasant experience, a point I return to below.

284. Guattari, *The Three Ecologies*, 34-35.

285. Ibid.

Suely Rolnik, following Guattari, suggests that to work out ways of connecting with life, to effect new ways of being, speaking, seeing and doing, creation is essential.²⁸⁶ However, creation involves the passing of what is no longer required, an inherent cruelty that amounts to a sensation of the intolerable in the present.²⁸⁷ Therefore, resistance is required to affirm and defend this movement of creation toward the new. New forms of life, new ways of being, new sensations and new connections are forged in resistance. Resistance, following Rolnik's definition amounts to the *affirmation and defence* of life in the face of those things which would shut it down.

This was Guattari's point in developing an ethico-aesthetic way of thinking centred around subjectivity. He reminds us that the production of subjectivity or subjectivation is the single most important raw material we have; it is more important than oil or energy, although it is produced, manufactured, modelled, received and consumed in exactly the same way. Guattari has devoted considerable attention in his work to the processes of subjectivation characteristic of IWC.²⁸⁸ He specifies two kinds of capitalist subjectivity, serial subjectivity; 'the same ideal standards of living, the same fashions and types of rock music,' and elitist subjectivity.²⁸⁹ The production of subjectivity, or

286. Suely Rolnik is a professor at the Catholic University of São Paulo and head of the Centre for Research on Subjectivity. As a practicing psychoanalyst she worked with Guattari at the La Borde clinic in France, as well as organising and writing a book about her travels in Brazil with Guattari. Guattari and Rolnik, *Molecular revolution in Brazil*; Suely Rolnik. A selection of her work on subjectivity and art available in English includes; "Molding a Contemporary Soul: The Empty-Full of Lydia Clark," in *The Experimental Exercise of Freedom* (Los Angeles: MOCA, 1999), 57-110; Suely Rolnik, "The Twilight of the Victim: Creation Quits It's Pimp, to Rejoin Resistance," *Zehar*, no. 51 (2003); Suely Rolnik, "The Body's Contagious Memory: Lygia Clark's Return to the Museum," *European institute for Progressive Cultural Policies* (January 2007), <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0507/rolnik/en>.

287. Antonin Artaud, *The Theatre and its Double*, New Pris Editions 1 (London: Calder Publications, 1993). It was Artaud's belief that the power of theatre is to engage experience in this harsh reality.

288. The culmination of this work is Félix Guattari, *Chaosmosis: An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm*, trans. Paul Bains and Julian Pefanis, (Indianapolis/Sydney: Indian UP/Power Publications, 1995).

289. Guattari, *The Three Ecologies* (translated by Ian Pindar and Paul Sutton), 30. Suely Rolnik similarly speaks of the glamour of luxury subjectivity and the misery of trash subjectivity. Suely Rolnik, "The Twilight of the Victim: Creation Quits It's Pimp, to Rejoin Resistance," *Zehar*, no. 51 (2003).

processes of subjectivation are inscribed with resistance, which Guattari calls processes of subjective singularization:

The trait that the various processes of singularization have in common is that their differential becoming rejects capitalistic subjectivation. It can be felt in a warmth of relations, in a certain way of desiring, in a positive affirmation of creativity, in a willingness to love, in a willingness simply to live or survive, in the multiplicity of these willingnesses. It is necessary to open up space for this to happen. Desire can only be lived in vectors of singularity.²⁹⁰

The best cartographies of singularity, those which help the most in and through processes of subjective singularization are not to be found in natural science or psychoanalyses. Guattari argues they are to be found in art; in literature, painting, performance and music. 'We should prescribe poetry,' Guattari says, 'in the same way that vitamins are prescribed. Hey Buddy, at your age, if you don't take poetry you won't find things easy.'

290. Guattari and Rolnik, *Molecular revolution in Brazil*, 63-64.

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