

# Interpretations of Excess

In the middle of 2011 John Cromby and Dimitris Papadopoulos (comrades/fellow travelers both) came across a copy of *Moments of Excess*, which had just been published. Taken with the book, they decided they'd like to engage further with it and the themes and questions it raised. (Of course, we were enormously flattered: it's brilliant when people you respect take your ideas seriously enough to want to discuss them.) The result of this collaboration was the interview below. A slightly modified version will be published in the journal *Subjectivity*.

**1. It seems that *Moments of Excess* is a 'movement' text in at least two senses. First, it is composed of essays written for and within the anti-capitalist/climate change movements; second, it offers a process-driven understanding of political movement(s) as verb rather than noun. So the book's genesis lies at least partially outside academia: this is part of its power and charm, and its origins lend it a particular strength. Nevertheless, influences from Deleuze and Guattari run throughout, as do Negri and Hardt, and there are nods to Badiou, Agamben and others. But how would you situate the book within the relevant academic debates?**

Although this is a completely legitimate question to ask, we don't want to answer it directly. That is to say, we are going to refuse some of our taxonomical obligations. We hope this doesn't come across as stumpy but, in terms of 'The Free Association', situating our book within the relevant academic debates is not really our problem. And more than anything else we want to protect our ability to choose our own problems.

We realise some could find that answer a little unsatisfying so perhaps we could situate our project in a different way. As you point out, the genesis of the book lies largely outside of academia. The essays were all initially written as interventions into movement debates and we'd certainly want to defend the validity of that form of intellectual production. That's not to say we're anti-academic – indeed a couple of us work as academics – and collectively we have no time for anti-intellectualism, having been denounced as 'pointy heads' too many times in the past. Ideas, in the widest sense, are a source of constant fascination for us. But ideas are not the sole preserve of the academy. And we need to be clear that immersion in academia and academic debates carries many dangers for movement analysis. There is, for instance, a tendency to neutralise ideas in order to make them a 'legitimate' field of study, which can then secure funding, provide careers and set itself up in competition with other fields of study. Obviously this isn't always done cynically: it's usually argued that such an institutional move allows others to develop more critical theory or engage with subversive practices. But in practice this happens very imperfectly. Often, once colonised, the space becomes politically dead; even when interesting and useful material is produced, it still carries the traces of the disciplining dynamics of academic practice. This has become even more of a problem with the decline of institutions, such as the party, which used to provide an extra-academic locus for intellectual production. These days even more of the ideas that engage with movements, or that movements engage with, pass through the academy and this must surely have an effect.

Of course we accept that academic practice is itself a site of struggle. Indeed one of the most exciting tendencies in recent student struggles has been the focus not just on the changing political economy of higher education but also the conception of education that underlies it. Great examples of this approach can be found in projects such as the Really Open University, the University of Strategic Optimism, the Really Free School, etc. We certainly find lots of resonances with our own project here. In many ways these experiments have gone beyond education struggles and raised wider questions about contemporary political organisation. They are part of a wider search for the kinds of spaces, practices and institutions that can perform some of the analytic and strategic functions that parties fulfilled, however imperfectly and indeed often disastrously, in the past.

We can also point to many other experiences addressing a similar problem. For example, we've been involved with *Turbulence: Ideas for Movement*, a magazine-cum-journal, which has attempted to follow the evental rhythms of the movements rather than the cadence of academic journal publishing. With each issue of *Turbulence* we have tried to identify a key problem around which current movements are revolving, timing production so that each issue is distributed at key movement events. In a similar vein we could point to the rise of theory blogs, which involve a more immediate form of theorising and are starting to develop their own engaged intellectual style. Recently a particular circle of theory blogs has begun to have a wider political and cultural impact in the UK through the new imprint Zero Books. This was set up with fast turn-around times in order to capture the immediacy of blog writing in book form. As a consequence, these bloggers have been turning up on the pages of the *Guardian* newspaper's comments page (or at least its online version, Comment is Free) with increasing frequency. The effect has been the introduction into mainstream discourse of a level of theory that has been absent during the long years of liberal hegemony.

In terms of our work, it's true that we've been influenced by many political thinkers. But it's equally clear that we've never been particularly faithful to any one set of ideas! That concern with 'fidelity' to an author's intention and/or body of work is, we think, peculiar to the academic approach. It's part of the tendency towards demarcation and specialisation. A unique space is carved out within a particular field, and the boundaries of that space are then marked by a relation to other 'legitimate' writers and theorists, rather than an engagement with social struggles. There's an unavoidable logic to this, one that's bound up with competition for scarce resources within the market. The couple of us who work within the academy are acutely aware of those pressures. But collectively, as 'The Free Association', the process is almost entirely the other way round. We've never bothered with purity or consistency, but have been far more interested in using ideas that 'work'. It's a self-consciously magpie approach, one close to Deleuze's notion of the concept as a 'toolbox'.

An interesting example here is the way we've borrowed heavily not only from Deleuze and Guattari, and Negri and Hardt, but also from the 'open Marxism' of John Holloway and Werner Bonefeld. Holloway and Bonefeld are very Hegelian in their approach, whilst Deleuze, Guattari, Negri and Hardt are explicitly anti-Hegelian. But we think there are resonances, or connections, between parts of their thinking which might otherwise seem diametrically opposed. Holloway's powerful stress on anti-identity, for example ('identification is domination', the working class as an 'anti-working anti-class', etc.) seems to us to resonate with Deleuze and Guattari's minoritarian concept. From a strictly academic point of view,

our reading of these theories might be suspect, or we might be trying to pull off some kind of synthesis that isn't sustainable. But perhaps it's the tension itself that makes these ideas productive.<sup>1</sup>

This hybrid (or monstrous) approach also draws on Marx's method of descending from the surface appearance of particular events to the ruling abstractions underneath. As a group, we have always tried to start our analyses from 'where we are', beginning with our own experiences – as immaterial labourers, as proletarians, as anti-capitalist militants active in social movements in Leeds and the UK. We can think of this as a process of constant 'turning outwards', or an unfolding. Again, this is the inverse of the usual academic approach which can tend towards introspection. As we grapple with events in our lives, we turn to ideas that help us make sense of our experiences. They might be from a text by Negri or Bifo; they might be from a radio broadcast; they might be from something someone said in the pub. Their provenance is far less interesting than whether they might help us make sense of any moment in a movement or struggle. In that sense, too, we are a long way from a traditional academic concern with 'truth'. We tell stories rather than impart truth: knowledge, in Foucault's words, 'has the power to make itself true.'<sup>2</sup> Although we'd probably want to add to this Tronti's formulation: 'Knowledge is tied to struggle. Who knows truly hates truly.'<sup>3</sup>

## **2. Where did the title 'Moments of Excess' come from, and what does it signify? Can you describe some of its ideas?**

This is another illustration of our idiosyncratic way of working. The phrase actually originates in a 1973 interview with Deleuze and Guattari, where Guattari refers to a debate the previous year between Foucault and the Maoist leader Benny Levy. In the initial periods of insurrection, Levy argues in favour of looting, acts of retribution and 'excesses'. But this stage would sooner or later have to be replaced by 'the setting up of regulations, of a revolutionary state apparatus.'<sup>4</sup> Not surprisingly Foucault argues against this. But, Guattari wonders, is it enough to merely trust in the spontaneous development of liberated desire? He rejects the idea of an 'end to history', a final revolution that will liberate desire forever. But he goes on to say that, 'the moments of excess, the celebrations are hardly more reassuring.'<sup>5</sup>

Of course, when the phrase cropped up in one of our discussions, most of us had no idea of its actual provenance. It just seemed to fit into something we were tackling at the time. So we wrote a pamphlet and organised a workshop on 'moments of excess' as part of the Life Despite Capitalism fringe event at the European Social Forum in London in 2004. The title and the phrase seemed to resonate with people there, so we carried on using it and developed it some more. Ana Dinerstein, one of the participants in that workshop, whom we'd invited to talk about the *Argentinazo* of December 2001, compared moments of excess to what E.P. Thompson would have called 'moments of becoming' and what she would call 'moments of subjectivity'.<sup>6</sup> And we also found similarities with Aristide Zolberg's 'moments of madness', although that term suggests an aberrative or abnormal moment, which seems to obscure the potential for fundamental change.<sup>7</sup>

Like all our thinking, then, 'moments of excess' is very much a work in progress; its meaning is continually fleshed out as we insert it into the new problematics that present themselves. But there is a tension at its core. On the one hand, we started to work with the

notion of excess from an analysis of our own productive power as wage-labourers (and as human beings). In this sense the difference between moments of excess and everyday life is more one of intensity than one of kind. On the other hand, we have used the term to denote a moment of becoming and a moment of subjectivity – a moment when there is a break or rupture in the linear progression of history. As we write in ‘Event Horizon’ (included in *Moments of Excess*):

history isn’t a straight line. It moves in a series of uncontrolled breaks, jolts and ruptures. Every now and then we get events that seem to have popped out of an alternate dimension. Events that don’t seem to belong to the timeline we were just on. These events carry their own timelines. When they appear, history seems to shift to accommodate them. Funny how we couldn’t see it before, but now we come to look there’s a line of history that seems to have existed just to lead us up to this moment. Such events also seem to carry their own alternate future. Things that seemed impossible a day or two before seem irresistible now.

These moments go down in history under a flattening name. Seattle 1999. May 1968. Kronstadt 1917. They eventually get tamed and forced into the history books but their alternate futures never totally disappear. You read about these events and you can still feel the tug of the future they thought they had. You still feel their potential welling up.

... It’s [in moments of excess] that we feel most alive, most human – by which we mean connected to the rest of humanity. ... Total connection. And, of course, not only do we feel this total connection, but now everything seems possible. Anything could happen. An infinite number of new dimensions open up.<sup>8</sup>

The collective creativity of a moment of excess exceeds that which can be explained and captured by capitalist social relations; and it’s this excess of sociality and of humanity that is the source of a moment of excess’s potential. A moment of excess is its own world in which many worlds are possible. We will return to this later.

**3. You say in the preface that collective writing has become ‘central to who we are and the way we work’. Please say a little more about the strengths and weaknesses of thinking and writing together with others. Is there any link between this and the intensive collective experiences that you focus upon?**

Collective writing requires a lot of trust and we guess this could be seen as a weakness: certainly developing this trust requires time, patience, generosity, mutual commitment, not to mention affinity. We feel we work well together now and writing is relatively – only relatively, mind – painless. But it’s taken us ten years to get to this stage – and we’d been friends and comrades for a further ten years before that. The writing of some of our early-years pieces was fraught as we struggled to find both a voice and a way of working.

One of the strengths of collective writing is that we seem to end with richer, more nuanced texts. There are a couple of obvious reasons for this. First, before a word is written, we spend a long time in group discussions, thinking through a problem from multiple angles. New ideas are thrown up, digested and then put to the test. If they work, they might make it

into a first draft. If they still make sense, they might be tweaked and survive a second or third round of writing. Drafts are then circulated to a wider group, with a fairly fluid membership, who might be invited to a separate discussion meeting where we make a presentation. This process of distillation can be very time-intensive but it usually results in multiple points of entry or reference in our articles: you might not have heard of the concept of ‘the refrain’ but you’re well aware of playing little triangles in midfield on the football pitch. The corollary is that there are also multiple jumping-off points: because we’re not concerned with fidelity to an author or a school, our writings are open to development, exploration and extension in any number of directions. Of course, we hope people will read and use our ideas in exactly the same way as we do to others.

Perhaps there’s a connection here to the way forms of organisation develop on the back of material changes. So the techniques of post-Fordist production are mirrored in the network form. Is there any sort of link here between a collective project like The Free Association and, say, the adoption of a form like consensus decision-making or the increasing role of the ‘immaterial labourer’?

Second, there’s also a qualitative strength to working and writing collectively. It offers a safe space where we can invent, explore and develop ideas. (Our particular need for such a safe space arose from our experience in the broadly anarchist Class War Federation, which boasted an institutional culture which tended to scorn intellectual debate. We doubt this experience is particularly unique.) During our discussions, we are free to follow much wilder trains of thought, safe in the knowledge that others in the group will bring us back to earth or rein us in should we go too far. In *Capitalist Sorcery* Philippe Pignarre and Isabelle Stengers describe this role perfectly:

Sounders of the depths may well stay at the front of a ship, but they do not look into the distance. They cannot announce directions nor choose them. Their concern, their responsibility, the reason for the equipment they use is the rapids where one can be smashed to pieces, the rocks that one can hit, the sandbanks where one can run aground.<sup>9</sup>

This ‘sounder’ – or ‘ideas monitor’ or ‘bullshit detector’ – both ‘captures’ or spots good ideas and brings us back in touch with the problematic when a riff goes too far. Like all roles, it’s rotated and isn’t the preserve of any individual within the group. This is why it’s usually impossible to attribute individual authorship to any idea or paragraph of text. Was it the person who was following their crazy flights of fancy – or who made that throwaway remark? The person who said, ‘hey, that’s not a bad idea, there might be something in that’? Or the person who remembered it and put it down on paper?

A nice example of this in action concerns our name. We weren’t happy with ‘Leeds May Day Group’, which we’d used on some early articles. And no matter how many times one person suggested ‘Rebel Soul Force’, it simply wasn’t appropriate. An alcohol-fuelled brainstorm towards the end of a day-long discussion ensued. Following a lull, while somebody opened another bottle, somebody else exhorted, ‘Come on, comrades, we just need more free association here...’

But collective writing is more than a method. It’s also a political practice. A safe space isn’t just a space where we can discuss ideas free from put-downs and sniping. Let us return to Guattari’s discussion of ‘moments of excess’, where he urges caution. He argues that we can’t

escape the reintroduction of a state apparatus simply by celebrating spontaneity (the standard spontaneist/anarchist line). Guattari continues:

The revolution clearly needs a war-machine, but that's not a State apparatus. It also needs an analytic force, an analyzer of the desires of the masses, absolutely – but not an external mechanism of synthesis... as long as we stick to the alternative between the impotent spontaneity of anarchy and the hierarchical and bureaucratic encoding of a party-organisation, there can be no liberation of desire.<sup>10</sup>

What might these 'immanent analytical war machines' look like? We're still trying to work it out, but there seem to be a couple of key functions. The first, most obviously, is to ward off the state and other forms of capture. But the second, equally important, is to help establish the conditions in which struggles can attain consistency. This latter function might involve the identification and overcoming of blockages in the circulation of struggles. But it might also involve the provision of some safe space for recuperation after intensive experiments in deterritorialisation. Moments of excess, however liberating, can prove excessive for the body on both an individual and a collective level. If collective analysis is to take place, then intensity must be reduced from its peak levels. In this sense there's a direct link between our involvement in The Free Association and our involvement in other intensive collective experiences. Our group discussions don't always happen in a room. During the cycle of European counter-summit mobilisations, for example, we were constantly probing – in convergence centres, in *barrio* meetings, around campfires, on the streets. These spaces offered us a chance to assess and recuperate before sauntering forward on another intensive experiment. And they were themselves experiments in how to build an immanent analyser that could allow subjects moving at different speeds to cohere with each other.

**4. It does seem that the Situationist legacy is a powerful influence upon your book. There are oblique references to Situationist pamphlets (e.g. revolutionary self-theory, bigger cages – longer chains) and slogans (beneath the pavement...); you characterise capitalism as a social relation mediated by commodities, a definition very close to Debord's definition of 'the spectacle'; your promotion of 'compositional' resistance has much in common with the strategy of creating situations; and your definition of lived moments of excess as times/spaces characterised by love and connectedness is deeply reminiscent of Vaneigem, the Hacienda, and other situationist authors, tropes and writings. How would you relate yourselves to Situationist theory, and why was this influence pushed rather to the background?**

Situationist theory isn't an area we've really explored together in any depth. The legacy you detect is probably mediated more through our shared engagement with punk than through any direct and sustained theoretical inheritance. People around the early punk scene, such as Malcolm McLaren, who managed the Sex Pistols, Jamie Reid, who was their graphic designer and Bernie Rhodes, who managed The Clash and Subway Sect, were all familiar with Situationism and recycled many of the slogans and ideas. As a consequence the 1980s UK anarchist scene, with which we were also engaged, was replete with Situationist mottos and catchphrases. They were, if you like, part of the background noise that we grew up with.<sup>11</sup>

This might also explain why we've pushed Situationist theory into the background and have left it relatively unexplored. The problem for us is that by the time we really encountered those ideas politically, they were being used in a way that tended to stifle rather than provoke thought. Take the notion of 'recuperation'. It speaks to a familiar problem, so it should have explanatory power. But actually it seems to rely on an idea of purity that is static and more suited to an ultra-leftist quietism. Similarly, as the concept of 'the spectacle' is developed it appears to become so overwhelming that the Situationists are forced into a faith in spontaneity in order to retain any possibility of critique. The form taken by the Situationists' advocacy of workers' councils is a case in point. They promote workers' councils as a universally applicable solution, yet leave them relatively unexamined and unproblematised. In this way workers' councils function a little like a notional, pure and authentic outside from which Situationists can extract criteria for ethical judgements. Indeed in their 1980s UK reception Situationist ideas were often associated with an un-reflexive celebration of quite marginal acts of pure negativity, separated from any strategic orientation towards wider change.

This characterisation is probably unfair as there is much of worth in the notion of the spectacle. We don't, however, think our characterisation of capitalism as a 'social relation mediated by commodities' is particularly Situationist. Debord begins *Society of the Spectacle* with the words: "In societies where modern conditions of production prevail, all of life presents itself as an immense accumulation of spectacles. Everything that was directly lived has moved away into representation."<sup>12</sup> This is obviously a reference to the opening sentence of *Capital*: "The wealth of societies in which the capitalist mode of production prevails appears as an 'immense collection of commodities'."<sup>13</sup> Debord's removal of the word 'appears' is presumably meant to indicate that we are now lost in the world of appearances. But there are many other ways to get to grips with such problematics: the debate around the real subsumption of labour under capital, for instance, covers quite similar ground.<sup>14</sup> In fact when Hardt and Negri introduce the idea of Empire as a non-place, they do so via the concept of the spectacle. Interestingly the section in which they do so is titled: *There is no more outside*.<sup>15</sup>

If we were to engage with Situationist ideas to rethink some of our concepts, then the starting point, as you suggest, would probably be their notion of constructing situations; a concern that rather drops into the background for them in later years. That literature addresses many of the same problematics as the literature on events but it has a more constructivist tone, which seems much less prone to spontaneism and much more in line with our own current preoccupation – the problem of crafting political forms that can help give expression to the new composition of post-crisis struggles.

**5. At various points you critique the notion that there are or should be political activists: not in the hair-shirt "I must work harder" manner of some Left groups, but in the sense that we need a wider definition of 'the political' that does not confine it merely to politics as traditionally understood. In place of activism you offer a process definition of political movement that permits a far wider vision of politics. Yet surely you, yourselves, are activists, and surely your book is a product of this activism? From the perspective of most notions of subjectivity (and indeed almost every other take on human psychology) the accumulated traces of the various 'moments of excess' which you have all shared must now – at least in a virtual sense – be part of the very fabric of your**

**being. This being so, could you have written the book you did if you were not in some sense activists yourselves? Does your own activism ever actually sabotage your writing?**

‘Activist’ is a problematic term. We use it all the time, but it’s a very slippery notion that has slightly different meanings in different contexts. Some of the discussion of activism in our book relates to a quite specific debate that took place in UK social movements following the J18: Carnival against Capital protest in 1999. The debate was sparked by an influential article called “Give up activism”,<sup>16</sup> which critiqued a particular formulation of activism that had built up during the 1980s and 1990s. Central to this was an activist subjectivity that conceived itself not only as distinct from the wider population but also as somehow exemplary. The implicit conception of social change follows what our friend Rodrigo Nunes has called a linear accumulation model, where politics is something done by activists and where change occurs when enough people adopt the activists’ world view.<sup>17</sup> Strains of this subjectivity still linger, and to escape these connotations we have toyed with the idea of simply saying that we are ‘engaged’, or even perhaps reviving old-fashioned terms like ‘agitator’ or ‘trouble-maker’.

But accepting for the moment that we are ‘activists’ – if, by that, we mean simply that we are engaged in political and social movements – it’s certainly true that we couldn’t have written the book if we were not in this sense activists. For an important form of our activism or engagement is our ongoing attempt to analyse and influence the movements we are part of. Quite simply we write because we are engaged with the world around us. The writing (and the thinking) is part of that engagement with the world. As such we are subject to the dynamics that affect social movements, including the ways in which the expectations created by past experience of movements can obscure what is new in the situation. It’s in this sense that we can understand our activism as potentially sabotaging our thinking and writing. We have tried to open this problem up through the concept of political generations and by discussing how the experience of one generation or cycle of struggles can be inherited by a subsequent one.

More recently, we’ve been trying to work out whether our way of acting as ‘The Free Association’ might have useful lessons for others engaged in social movements. We aspire to being an analytical war machine (half-jokingly). But is there anything in our form or practices that might be worth developing elsewhere? And is there anything replicable or scalable? We’re really not sure, but we’d certainly be wary of falling back into the idea that our own activity is unproblematically translatable or exemplary.

**6. From your broadly autonomist perspective working people always have the ultimate power, and Leftist notions of management ‘attacks’ upon workers miss the point that these so-called attacks are in fact always defensive moves. But does capital never have any dynamism or power of its own? Its re-organisations might always be reactive to the changing powers of a dynamic proletariat, but do its initiatives never also develop their own momentum or impetus? Is this not, in fact, why neoliberalism can now stagger on ‘zombie like’ despite its bankruptcy having been (quite literally) demonstrated in 2008?**

We can think of ‘capital’ in several ways: (i) as a pole in a social relation, specifically as ‘dead labour’; (ii) as a pole in a social relation, but as living, breathing capitalists and their forums, thinktanks and organisations (the IMF, World Economic Forum, etc.), ‘the 1%’ if you like; (iii)

as the social relation itself, in its totality. All these ways are valid and are useful at different times, but all are abstractions. If we think of capital as the social relation itself, in fact we're really referring to the trillions of relationships between human beings whenever humans relate to one another purely as *Homo economicus* and not in some other more ethical or moral or needs-focused or human way.<sup>18</sup> In this sense, capital is a *mode* in which one human might relate to another. (This is why Marx wrote and spoke of the capitalist *mode of production* and almost never of *capitalism*.)

So, with these three complementary understandings of 'capital' let's think about whether it can ever have any dynamism or power of its own. As dead labour, capital can never have any dynamism or power of its own. It is dead and it is wholly dependent upon living labour, i.e. living, breathing human beings, the proletariat.

But if we understand this pole of the relation as the capitalists located there, then these individuals and their organisations *do* think and plot and scheme. So in this sense we can think of capital as having a power of its own. Sometimes, its initiatives are reactive (to working-class struggles), at other times they might be proactive. Mario Tronti, in *Operai e Capitale* described this never-ending struggle between workers and capital in terms of a spiralling 'double helix'.<sup>19</sup> And as George Caffentzis writes:

Workers are worked harder, longer, more dangerously, and more 'productively' in order to make a larger profit. They respond to this work regime by a combination of means, from compliance, to a thousand-and-one ways of passive resistance, to strikes and factory takeovers, while capitalists devise strategies to resist this resistance. This struggle can take a myriad of forms, sometimes involving the most refined application of social and psychological sciences, and sometimes the most brutal forms of assassination and torture, but the ... model is simple: waged workers resist exploitation and capitalists resist their resistance... It is apparently simple, but it can become complex because in struggle, there are many deceptions and tricks each side plays on the other as well as on observers, both present and future.<sup>20</sup>

But even if we accept this apparent dynamism and power of capital, we must keep in mind that this power can never be independent of our own. Capitalists, the 1%, can only retain this Power (their *power-over*, to use John Holloway's terminology)<sup>21</sup> by harnessing workers' *power-to*, the desires, aspirations and creative energies of the global proletariat – understood most broadly. So in this sense it seems irrelevant whether capital as pole of the social relation has a dynamic 'of its own' as it's never on its own. Capital as pole of the social relation can only exist to the extent that capital (the social relation in its totality) exists.

Finally, let's think of capital as the totality of the social relation, or as the trillions of relationships amongst human beings that constitute it. We don't know whether it's possible to say that a relation or set of relationships can ever have its own dynamic or dynamism. It's a difficult question. But we do think it's the case that the capital relation can attain – and has attained, particularly over the recent decades of neoliberalism – a certain momentum. We become trained as neoliberal subjects, as *Homo economicus*, and as we do so capital relationships become more dominant in our lives and thus those alternative ('ethical' or 'moral' or whatever) relationships become less imaginable and less accessible.<sup>22</sup> This is precisely why neoliberalism is able to stagger on zombie-like: collectively we cannot conceive of any

alternative. We develop this argument in our response to the next question and, in our final response, we will return to the question of Tronti's 'double helix' when we mention some present struggles.

**7. You define capital as a social relation mediated by commodities. Capitalism therefore exists both between and within individuals, since it is only through our social relations that we can realise our potentials for being and becoming. But what does this do to our theories of subjectivity or experience? In what ways is capital's presence already within each of us a part, simultaneously, of the 'moments of excess' that you evoke so powerfully?**

It's true that, within each of us, capitalist subjectivities coexist with non-capitalist (or post-capitalist or communist or commonist) subjectivities. We are divided – or perhaps we have 'divided consciousness'. So in this sense capital does have a presence within us. And it's a very powerful presence, instilled at an early age by parents and teachers and reinforced on a daily basis, not only by the 'ideological apparatus', but by the simple fact that, whatever we believe, material 'reality' means that we must use money on a daily and hourly basis, we must sell our labour-power, etc. It might seem banal but we should not underestimate the power of habit. As jazz-musicians and footballers can testify, repetitive behaviour becomes hard-wired. It's what physiologists call muscle memory. We live a lot of our lives on auto-pilot, doing today just what we did yesterday: we get up with the alarm, we go to work and we're forever putting our hands in our pockets to pull out those grubby metal discs, tatty pieces of paper and hologrammed plastic. Indeed as such behaviour becomes always-already presupposed in our ways of thinking and acting, as it folds back upon itself as Deleuze and Guattari would say, then it comes to appear almost natural. 'Each day seems like a natural fact', as English post-punk band Gang of Four sang.<sup>23</sup> In such an environment, post-capitalist or communist politics seem to make little sense, and we end up dismissing those who advance them. In this respect we agree with Deleuze and Guattari when they write that:

The fundamental problem of political philosophy is ... the one that Spinoza saw so clearly, and that Wilhelm Reich rediscovered: 'why do men fight *for* their servitude as stubbornly as though it were their salvation?'<sup>24</sup>

So this is why strikes, say, are powerful: they interrupt the (lifelong) process of learning to labour. Moments of excess are powerful because they throw the unthinking repetition back in our face. Because nothing is normal, everything is confronted and nothing can be taken for granted. In these conditions, new desires burst forth and new practices can take hold very quickly. Events like the Arab Spring remind us how addictive and explosive these ruptures can be. But we're wary of formulations that suggest that there is somehow a pure subjectivity, unsullied by capital, and that our efforts should be directed to its liberation.

**8. You suggest that the question of "What sort of world do we want to live in?" is a touchstone for political action, and throughout you argue for a politics that enacts what it hopes to achieve. But this relies upon a 'we', who are then the subjects of this wanting, this desire for a better world. Given that capitalism is within and between us all such**

**that we are all already its subjects, this looks like a problem. How can we constitute a 'we' capable of enacting revolutionary desires when both those desires and their subjects are already bound into capital? Does this mean that we still need a notion of the 'outside' to make radical change possible? And similarly perhaps for the notions of 'freedom' that you invoke where you touch upon these issues: what can they actually mean, and how can we enact or even meaningfully think about them?**

Moments of excess give us a glimpse of something beyond capitalist social relations. But it's essential to remember that glimpse is from the standpoint of where we are now (i.e. within a capitalist world). In fact we're not sure that it's helpful to think of these moments as standing 'outside' capitalism at all, as if they are pure spaces we can occupy. The question 'What sort of world do we want to live in?' is a vital one, but arriving at a point where that question makes sense is not enough to magically transport us to communism (which is why, like Guattari, we reject spontaneism). Even in a moment of excess, that question takes place mostly within a framework shaped by our daily practices – many of which are capitalist. There is no pure 'we' whose desires are natural or ahistorical, and there are no pure subjectivities at all. Because what we think of as possible or desirable is conditioned by all sorts of historical dynamics, there's never a point when we can stop asking the question 'what sort of world do we want to live in?' So, in this sense, our process understanding of politics is of a process without end.

If these moments of excess aren't an 'outside', what are they? Capitalism isn't a symmetrical relation. At one pole, capital operates via a series of axiomatics. They're not principles or organisational dictates, because they are indifferent to the properties of the elements they organise. But there is a monomania to these axiomatics. Capitalism can accommodate a seemingly limitless number of forms but it still has only one direction which is its own self-expansion. At the other pole, there is an excess to our human capacities which is unknown. Our potential, as humans, is virtually limitless. In Spinoza's famous formula, 'no-one knows what a body can do.'<sup>25</sup> Rather than thinking of an 'outside', perhaps there is a 'more' or a 'beyond'. (It's similar to the physical universe: there is a known universe, but it's dwarfed by the unknown universe. Cosmologists are not certain whether the universe is finite or infinite in its spatial dimensions and so-called dark matter accounts for more than 95% of the universe's mass.) Thus we exist 'in, against and beyond' capital.

Again, we find it hard to stay at this level of abstraction, because we simply don't have an over-arching grand theory. Is there an inside and an outside to capitalism? We can't know. At times, it can be useful to affirm that 'there is no outside'. We said exactly this in the book's first piece, 'Anti-capitalist movements', because we felt it was important in that moment to undermine notions of political purity, and also to show that 'peasant' struggles (like those of the Zapatistas) aren't outside of capitalism but are part of a global class struggle. But recently we've found it more useful to think about an asymmetric social relation and the excess that resides in our doing. You could see that as an outside. But perhaps it's more accurate to think of it as a potential for more, because it's not an outside that exists as a reserve we can draw on. It is a potential, an excess-in-waiting.

So, for example, a social centre or an affinity group might provide a space where people discover and develop talents and capabilities which they had no idea they possessed. It's the context of the social centre or affinity group that allows such latent potentials to be concretely

actualised. We may also witness the emergence of this excess-in-waiting in the wake of natural disasters.<sup>26</sup> We're not in the habit of quoting the Bible, but it's that potential or excess-in-waiting that Jesus unlocked in the parable of the feeding of the five thousand.

Perhaps another way to think about this is that moments of excess are repotentialising. Rather than a static inside/outside distinction, we can think in terms of becoming, of moving, of a repotentialising. Capital's dynamic continually cuts away our potential, although it can't afford to destroy it. It limits it or inflects it in one direction only. (Incidentally, this seems a much richer way to describe what the Situationists would call 'recuperation').

So perhaps we can say that what's really important about a moment of excess is not any 'objective' characteristic, but the shift in perspective – or subjectivity – that it involves. It's a moment of revelation. Not the revelation that so much of the Left, including anarchists, seems keen on, namely revealing the capitalist (corrupt and exploitative) nature of the world. Rather a revelation that we (human beings) already, in our everyday lives practise many non-capitalist ways to relating to one another – and thus revolutionary change no longer seems impossible. And, again as we explain in 'Event Horizon', as with the famous duck/rabbit image, 'once you've shifted perspective [i.e. once you've seen both beasts in the image], it's impossible to revert completely to the view you had before.'

**9. Throughout the book there is a constant concern with affect. Affect characterises moments of excess within which we glimpse the possibility of other worlds by temporarily living aspects of them at high intensity. Affect similarly characterises your writings on social centres and safe spaces, and indeed your take on consensus decision-making in action which itself gets discussed as a way of managing affect by lowering the intensity of the moment. Your politics therefore seems to require an affective dynamism within which some notion of balance – albeit a homeodynamic rather than homeostatic one – is required. Is this right? If so, what are your thoughts on the problem that capitalism already exploits affective dynamics to create its own contingent stabilities?**

It's certainly true that capitalism exploits our affective dynamics. We've sat through too many meetings at work thinking, 'fuck, I could facilitate or chair this meeting better than this fool is doing' or 'if we just had a little more jazz hand-waving here...'. It's also true that this is a problem. But, not to dismiss it, isn't this simply an example of the problem – for us – of capitalism, an important feature that distinguishes the capitalist mode of production from other class societies? Feudalism, say, was essentially static and the lords and masters could only crush struggles. In contrast, capitalism is dynamic: where it can, capital exploits our energy and our creativity (including our struggles against it), and this is how it ensures not only its own reproduction but its reproduction on an expanded scale.

The subsumption of creativity under immaterial labour is a case in point. We could think of the way in which IT entrepreneurs (Bill Gates and Steve Jobs are the best-known examples but there are many other individuals and companies) have harnessed and appropriated the wealth created by hackers (i.e. programmers) whose activities were freely undertaken, whose collaboration was the result of free association and who, for the most part, chose to distribute freely the results of their activities and their collaborations.<sup>27</sup> We could also think of the way

companies such as Levi's have attempted to draw on the imagery and aesthetics of the last decade's protest movements in order to market their clothing.<sup>28</sup>

As such it is obvious that affect and intensity are not by themselves liberatory. Even when moments of affective intensity are disruptive to our current subjectivities, the subsequent effect is not fixed in advance. We can expand this point through reference to the recent riots in London and elsewhere in August 2011. While testimony from participants in the riots carries a familiar tone of excitement, intensity and festival, the events' wider impact has been influenced by their context and reception. It's fair to say that the riots struck large sections of the UK population as a profound shock, not just on an intellectual or moral level but also on an affective one. Many experienced a sensation of fear and even panic, as some old certainties threatened to collapse. This affective shock was mobilised by the rightwing into a prohibition on thought – just think of the widespread injunction to “understand less and condemn more.”

In fact, this experience of shock in the aftermath of the riots underlines the importance of taking affective dynamics into account as we struggle to increase our power. If moments of excess represent, among other things, a disruption in the way our lives are normally lived, then that change can be experienced in a way that inhibits or reduces collective power. Of course, in other circumstances shock can act instead as a provocation or stimulus to thought. It can often take the experience of shock to interrupt our habitual assumptions and to bring our presuppositions back within the realm of what can be thought and thus rethought. The question that presents itself then is what conditions channel shock one way or another. How can we make shock a stimulus to thought and not a prohibition?

This may well be a reformulation of a problematic that we took from our experiences in the counter-globalisation cycle of struggles, namely: How do we establish the conditions within which collective analysis can take place? This question allowed us to see how some movement repertoires, both action and organisational, had an analytical function, even if this wasn't their explicit purpose, as their operation had the effect of lowering the level of intensity to one where analysis can take place and forces can cohere.

Where this level lies is, of course, situational; that is, it can't be determined in advance. So what we find shocking, for example, is very much dependent on what our bodies are habituated to: those cinematic techniques that once produced shock now merely produce boredom. So from this perspective it makes little sense to posit an innate or a-historical point of balance for affective intensities. Our formulation above may be what is meant by the term homeo-dynamic; if so, then fair enough. But what we really want to posit is a certain style of politics based on a rhythm between the disruptive functions of highly intensive collective action and a collective, analytical function that allows us to push further into the unthought elements of social relations.

## **10. Does your focus on affect, experience, subjectivity and moments of excess amount to a psychologisation of politics? And if so, is this necessarily a bad thing?**

We certainly don't want to privilege the psychological. Indeed there is a real danger in separating the 'psychological' from the 'corporeal' or 'real', the 'rational' from the 'irrational', the 'immaterial' from the 'material'. The notion of 'affect' is one way of undermining this sort

of compartmentalisation; another way is to take on the feminist view that ‘the personal is the political’. So although the autonomist concept of class composition is tremendously powerful, the political recomposition of the working class passes through flesh and blood, through our bodies, not as some abstract embodiment of a mythical proletariat with a historical destiny but as real living, breathing humans who live three-score years and ten (if we’re lucky).

**11. Were the Countryside Alliance marches, or the BNP’s anti-paedophile demonstrations, reactionary moments of excess? Were they moments of an excess of capitalism rather than moments that exceed it? In other words, is there perhaps something fundamental about the subjective elements of processes of movement, activism and social change, something that is perhaps not exclusive to left politics (although it might appear to be largely so in a capitalist world)?**

There is a danger of simplifying the notion of moments of excess so that they become a glimpse of some pure liberated zone, a taste of milk and honey. Seen that way, the problem is how to enter those moments with ever greater numbers, more and more frequently, and how to stay there. That’s not how we want to use the notion. (Though, to be fair, we probably did tend towards this view when we first started using the term. Since then our thinking about moments of excess has developed and, we’d claim, become more subtle.) Instead, we’d argue that moments of excess are not pure experiences. We’re not interested in drawing up criteria in advance which determine whether events qualify as moments of excess, or which can categorise them as ‘progressive’ or ‘reactionary’ excess. In fact, we may need to turn the whole question on its head. Rather than thinking about how we get into moments of excess, it’s more important to work out how to get out of them. Just as capital can’t eliminate excess (because it would die), in the same way we can’t simply engineer it. What we can do is develop techniques, practices, repertoires which might enable us to retain some of that expanded potential when we leave those moments. Perhaps this could be one of the functions of an analytical war machine – to develop ongoing thinking and analysis, and to make that practice second nature so they become refrains we can fall back on.

**12. You say that politics for you in the anti-capitalist movement ‘feels different’ to how politics did in the 1980s and early 1990s, and you locate its differences with regard to changes in the mode of production. Yet it also seems that the politics you describe and practice has recent historical-practical antecedents. Examples would include the NVDA tendency within the 1980s peace movement in the UK, and slightly earlier the practices of feminist consciousness raising groups: both of these seem to provide models for your affinity group activity. So can we see the rise of this kind of politics as being about more than just a shift in the dominant mode of production?**

It’s true that, for us, anti-capitalist politics in the late 1990s and 2000s ‘feels different’ – or felt different – to the politics of the 1980s and early ’90s. But we’re not sure how generalisable this is – we’d stress our account is subjective – and we’re probably less confident now about mapping from changes in mode of production to changes in modes of political organising quite as neatly as we suggest in our earlier writing.

If we look at the practices of non-violent direct action, and of the peace movement more generally, it's true that they frequently adopted affinity-group models. We can also trace the consensus decision-making process back to a similar origin in the U.S. anti-nuclear struggles of the 1970s.<sup>29</sup> It could be argued that these forms and practices are closely related to the development of post-Fordism: a line can be traced, for example, from hippy counter-culture through Silicon Valley to some contemporary forms of immaterial labour. But for us it's actually more interesting to think about how attempts at non-hierarchical decision-making are increasingly widespread in current movements: the M15 movement of Spain and the *Indignados* of Greece, for instance, have opened these practices up to millions of people. While small groups can innovate practices by following their group's internal logic, the question of whether the practices will be picked up and developed by others depends on the wider context. So organisational forms and practices with some roots in the 1970s seem to resonate more easily today because neoliberal subjectivities have been thrown into crisis.

**13. You talk of how, in political practice, we can use what you call refrains to manage affect, to stabilise and slow things down, to create temporary spaces of safety and collectivity that remind us of our shared purpose and power and allow us then to take new risks and develop new innovations. You liken this to the refrains in jazz music that enable musicians to undertake the most startling forms of experimentation. But refrains – in jazz and in politics – always develop through repetition, practice, performance, and habit. How do you square this with your continual emphasis on openness, process and possibility? Not only does capitalism have its own refrains, as you acknowledge, but also in your analysis anything that leads to fixity appears as a source of potential problems. Can you address this?**

Well, too much fixity in a political context can certainly be a source of problems but a lack of fixity also carries the danger of political entropy, or an inability to act collectively. To paraphrase Isabelle Stengers: if the coherence that allows collective movement becomes too coherent, then it falls into adherence and prevents further movement. It's within this problematic that we think the refrain is a useful tool.

While refrains do often 'develop through repetition, practice, performance, and habit', we would also suggest that as long as they trigger the required affect, then we might fall back on refrains that we have merely overheard. Let's look at the image which Deleuze and Guattari use to introduce the concept of the refrain in *A Thousand Plateaus*:

A child in the dark, gripped with fear, comforts himself by singing under his breath. He walks and halts to his song. Lost, he takes shelter, or orients himself with his little song as best he can. The song is like a rough sketch of a calming and stabilizing, calm and stable, centre in the heart of chaos.<sup>30</sup>

Is it necessary for that child to have repeated and practised the snippet of song that calms her? Perhaps she just calls up a song she has heard that produces the right affect.

**14. How useful do you find the concept of subjectivity and how do you understand it? Furthermore, is there a contradiction between the idea of subjectivity and the idea of a**

**dispersed multitudinal actor? Do you finally believe that for social change we need the emergence of new political subjectivities, or do you think that social change is rather happening, 'before and below' the formation of subjectivity?**

It feels a little daunting attempting to discuss the concept of subjectivity for the readers of a journal entitled *Subjectivity*, but...

As human beings, our capacity to act is very closely tied to our capacity to first imagine our actions and their likely effects.<sup>31</sup> In the capitalist mode of production, as in all social organisations, we are imprisoned by our near horizons. Yet more than ever, we are experiencing a 'crisis of the future' – today, 'it is easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism.'<sup>32</sup> The neoliberal mantra *there is no alternative* has become more than just dogma: its repeated and extended application through every aspect of our lives means that it has become, if not hard-wired, definitely part of our operating system. Just as work produces the worker, so neoliberalism produces neoliberal subjects – or rather neoliberal subjectivities. Yet we also know that those neoliberal subjectivities sit alongside other, non-capitalist subjectivities: we are 'in and against' capitalism. So we've used the concept of subjectivity as a way to try and crack open this problem of action, to work out how resistance to power can emerge (or be thwarted).

Obviously the actions of individuals, by themselves, are not sufficient to transcend capital – what is of interest to us is *collective* subjectivity and its transformation, or rather, the transformation of a collective of subjectivities. This seems a more productive way of dealing with the problems of agency and change than a traditional 'class consciousness' approach which often suggests that awareness of class exploitation plus the 'correct' class analysis adds up to a revolutionary subject. We also think there are fruitful connections to be made here with class composition analysis – the approach developed by workerists such as Sergio Bologna – and, in particular, the idea of political composition, recomposition and decomposition.<sup>33</sup> Using these tools, we can move far beyond the idea of a unitary working class subject and instead investigate the ways in which a heterogeneous, pluralist proletariat (a multitude) can collectively enact transformations.

From the above it should also be clear that we think social change is absolutely inseparable from the emergence of new political subjectivities: it would be a mistake to decide that one is ontologically or politically prior.

**15. A central thesis of the book is about the autonomous character of social struggles. Capital follows the working classes and constantly reorganises itself in order to be able to appropriate their potentials that tend to overcome the limits of capital. The last cycle of struggles that forced capital to reorganise itself is located in the 1960s and 1970s. Where do you see this happening today and what are the sites that working classes and other social groups are exiting the limits imposed by capital today? How would you describe this new cycle of struggles whose starting point could be probably located in the emergence of new social activism since the end of the 1990s?**

We agree that the cycle of struggles of the 1960s and '70s were enormously important. But we do not think the capitalist crisis engendered by those struggles was ever really resolved: '1968 was an explosion, and the sound of the explosion still echoes.'<sup>34</sup> Some of the most bitter

struggles we are witnessing now, and have witnessed over the past decade or so, can be traced back to the crises of the 1970s. We can identify two responses, in particular, to that ‘crisis of profitability’. First, capital took flight, relocating to South Asia and China (prompted by the economic reforms instituted there in 1978). Second, capital increasingly used cheap credit (and therefore debt) as a stimulus to growth. Both strategies were a way of displacing antagonism, both temporally and geographically. One strategy has rebounded catastrophically with the global financial meltdown. And the other is no more assured. While many of the current debates in political economy focus on the global North (with heated arguments about profit rates and investment, and the power of social movements and trade union struggles), China is a country of more than a billion people where wages have been increasing by 10% or so every year over the last decade. Those struggles themselves are yet further echoes of the explosion of the 1960s and ’70s.

One of the only attempts to locate the class struggles that have produced the present crisis is by ‘Midnight Notes Collective and Friends’. In *Promissory Notes*, they identify six sources of the crisis:

- (1) the failure of neoliberal globalization’s institutional changes;
- (2) the failure to neoliberalize the structure of the oil/energy industry;
- (3) the inability to control wage struggle (especially in China);
- (4) the rise of land and resources reclamation movements (Bolivia, India, Niger Delta);
- (5) the financialization of class struggle though the expanded use of credit in the US to supplement the fallen and stagnant real wage;
- (6) and the inclusion of blacks, latinas, recent immigrants, and women into the “ownership society,” undermining class hierarchy.<sup>35</sup>

Unpacking their analysis of these six underlying causes they further suggest, for example, neoliberal globalisation’s institutional changes have been blocked by a combination of ‘anti-structural adjustment riots and rebellions stretching from Zambia in the mid-1980s, through Caracas in 1989, to the Zapatistas in 1994’; the anti- or alter-globalisation movement of the global North; and, the refusal of many Third World governments to completely surrender their sovereignty to supra-national capitalist institutions such as the IMF, the World Bank and the World Trade Organisation (formerly GATT).<sup>36</sup>

Clearly we (The Free Association) were involved in the counter-globalisation movement (an example of the ‘new social activism’ you refer to in the question) and this movement is the main subject of *Moments of Excess*, but although important, we don’t want to privilege those struggles.<sup>37</sup> All of the sites of struggle identified by Midnight Notes Collective and Friends are important and, we suspect, might become even more so.

However, it’s also true that the analysis offered by *Promissory Notes* can’t simply be extrapolated into the future. Things that seem possible now – from our current vantage point – may well be swept aside by movements whose size, location and origin we cannot predict. The current Occupy movement is a perfect example of this. As we acknowledge in *Moments of Excess* our politics and our analysis have to start where we are. This means we are ill-equipped to offer much on what’s happening in China, Korea or the Niger Delta. Instead, we feel it’s far more useful to play up the emerging potential of current struggles where we are – and, in so doing, to highlight how those struggles are connected, whether they like it or not, with social movements many thousands of miles away.

Capital's expansion is constantly being limited by struggles and resistance. This is perhaps clearest in battles over the 'environment', whether that environment is conceived in global terms (as in climate justice politics) or on a more local scale (as in the struggles in the Niger Delta). But it is effectively true of all struggles. By posing limits to capital, these struggles and moments continually open up new spaces for different, non-capitalist forms of life.

## REFERENCES

- Bologna, S. (1980) 'The Tribe of Moles.' In Lotringer, S. and Marazzi, C., eds, *Italy: Autonomia. Post-political politics*. New York: Semiotext.
- Bonefeld, W. (2005) 'Notes on movement and uncertainty.' In Harvie, D., Milburn, K., Trott, B. and Watts, D., eds, *Shut Them Down! The G8, Gleneagles 2005 and the Movement of Movements*. Leeds: Dissent! and Brooklyn, N.Y.: Autonomedia: 265–272.
- Bonefeld, W., Gunn, R. and Psychopedis, K. (1992a) eds. *Open Marxism*, Volume I, *Dialectics and History*. London: Pluto Press.
- Bonefeld, W., Gunn, R. and Psychopedis, K. (1992b) eds. *Open Marxism*, Volume II, *Theory and Practice*. London: Pluto Press.
- Bonefeld, W., Gunn, R., Holloway, J. and Psychopedis, K. (1995) eds. *Open Marxism*, Volume III, *Emancipating Marx*. London: Pluto Press.
- Caffentzis, G. (2010) 'Notes on the Financial Crisis: From Meltdown to Deep Freeze.' In Team Colors Collective, ed. *Uses of a Whirlwind: Movement, Movements, and Contemporary Radical Currents in the United States* (Edinburgh: AK Press): 273–282.
- Cleaver, H. (1979) *Reading Capital Politically*. Brighton: The Harvester Press
- Cleaver, H. (1989) 'The uses of an earthquake,' *Common Sense*, 8: 17–21. Article is here; complete issue of *Common Sense* is here.
- Deleuze, G. (2004) *Desert Islands and Other Texts: 1953–1974*. New York: Semiotext(e).
- Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F. (1984) *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. London: The Athlone Press.
- Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F. (1988) *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. London: The Athlone Press.
- de Marcellus, O. (2006) 'Biggest victory yet over WFO and "free" trade. Celebrate it!', 17 August.
- Dinerstein, A. (2004) Talk given in Moments of Excess workshop, Life Despite Capitalism series, European Social Forum, London, October. Transcript available here.
- Dyer-Witheford, N. (1999) *Cyber Marx: Cycles and Circuits of Struggle in High Technology Capitalism*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press.
- Foucault, M. (1995) *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. New York: Random House.
- Foucault, M. (1980) *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and other writings 1972–1977*, Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Press.
- Foucault, M. (2008) *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the Collège de France 1978–1979*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Free Association, The (2011) *Moments of Excess: Movements, Protest and Everyday Life*. Oakland, CA.: PM Press.
- Fuller, M. (2003) *Behind the Blip: Essays on the Culture of Software*. New York: Autonomedia.
- Hardt, M. and Negri, A. (2000). *Empire*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Holloway, J. (2002) *Change the World Without Taking Power: The Meaning of Revolution Today*. London: Pluto Press.
- Holloway, J. (2008) '1968 and doors to new worlds,' *Turbulence: Ideas for Movement*, 4.
- Holloway, J., Matamoros, F. and Tischler, S. (2008) eds. *Negativity and Revolution: Adorno and Political Activism*. London: Pluto Press.
- Jameson, F. (1998) 'The Antinomies of Postmodernism,' in *The Cultural Turn: Selected Writings on the Postmodern, 1983–1998*. London: Verso.
- Jameson, F. (2003) 'Future City,' *New Left Review*, 21.
- Klein, N. (2000) *No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies*. London: Flamingo.
- Levy, S. (2001) *Hackers: Heroes of the Computer Revolution*. London: Penguin.
- Marcus, G. (1990) *Lipstick Traces: A Secret History of the 20th Century*. Princeton: Harvard University Press.
- Marx, K. (1992) *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Volume 1. Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- Midnight Notes Collective and Friends (2009) *Promissory Notes: From Crisis to Commons*. Jamaica Plain, MA: Midnight Notes.

- Negri, A. (1992) *The Savage Anomaly: The Power of Spinoza's Metaphysics and Politics*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Nunes, R. (2005) 'Nothing is What Democracy Looks Like: Openness, Horizontality and the Movement of Movements.' In: Harvie, D., Milburn, K., Trott, B. and Watts, D., eds, *Shut Them Down! The G8, Gleneagles 2005 and the Movement of Movements*. Leeds: Dissent! and Brooklyn, N.Y.: Autonomedia: pp. 299–320.
- Pignarre, P. and Stengers, I. (2011) *Capitalist Sorcery: Breaking the Spell*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Savage, J. (1991) *England's Dreaming: Sex Pistols and Punk Rock*. London: Faber & Faber.
- Solnit, R. (2009) *A Paradise Built in Hell: The Extraordinary Communities That Arise in Disaster*. London: Viking.
- Thompson, E.P. (1978) 'The Poverty of Theory'. In *The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays*, London: Merlin Press.
- Tronti, M. (1971) *Operai e capitale*, 2nd edition. Turin: Einaudi.
- Trott, B. (2005) 'Gleneagles, activism and ordinary rebelliousness'. In Harvie, D., Milburn, K., Trott, B. and Watts, D., eds, *Shut Them Down! The G8, Gleneagles 2005 and the Movement of Movements*. Leeds: Dissent! and Brooklyn, N.Y.: Autonomedia: 213–233.
- Wright, S. (2002) *Storming Heaven: Class Composition and Struggle in Italian Autonomist Marxism*. London: Pluto Press
- Zolberg, A.R. (1972) 'Moments of madness', *Politics and Society*, 2(2): 183–207.

## ENDNOTES

- 1 On 'open Marxism' see the three volumes Bonefeld et al. (1992a; 1992b) and Bonefeld et al. (1995) (though, interestingly, the second volume contains contributions by Negri and Harry Cleaver who is also quite Negrian). Other 'representative' examples of Holloway and Bonefeld's Hegelian approach include Bonefeld (2005) and Holloway et al. (2008). Holloway stresses 'anti-identity' in *Change the World Without Taking Power* (Holloway 2002), where he also critiques Negri's 'positivisation of autonomist theory' (p. 167). The formulations 'identification is domination' and 'anti-working, anti-class' are on pages vii and 164, respectively. For Negri's and Hardt's hostility to Hegel see, for example, *The Savage Anomaly* (Negri 1991) and *Empire* (Hardt and Negri 2000). Deleuze and Guattari develop their minoritarian concept in *A Thousand Plateaus* (Deleuze and Guattari 1988).
- 2 Foucault (1995: 27)
- 3 Tronti (1971: 14).
- 4 Foucault (1980: 32).
- 5 The interview with Deleuze and Guattari was published in English as "On Capitalism and Desire", see Deleuze (2004: 266).
- 6 Dinerstein (2004); Thompson (1978: 103).
- 7 Zolberg (1972).
- 8 The Free Association (2011: 44–45)
- 9 Pignarre and Stengers (2011: 8)
- 10 Deleuze (2004: 267).
- 11 On punk and its relationship to Situationism, see Jon Savage's *England's Dreaming* (Savage 1991) or Greil Marcus's *Lipstick Traces* (Marcus 1990).
- 12 Debord's *Society of the Spectacle* (first published in French in 1967) is available in numerous places, including <http://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/debord/society.htm> and, for a slightly different translation, <http://www.bopsecrets.org/SI/debord/>.
- 13 Marx (1992: 125).
- 14 Formal subsumption describes a situation in which capital, by some means or another, is able to appropriate some surplus from human activity (i.e. exploit people) while not much changing the manner in which the activity is carried out. Under real subsumption, capital continues to exploit and to appropriate a surplus but, in addition, transforms the activity and the way it is organised and undertaken.
- 15 Hardt and Negri (2000: xx).
- 16 The article, authored by Andrew X., was first published in a pamphlet of *Reflections on J18*, in the aftermath of the Carnival Against Capital in London on 18 June 1999. It was reprinted in 2001, with a new postscript, in the Earth First! journal *Do or Die*, and can still be found on this website <http://www.eco-action.org/dod/no9/activism.htm>. For a review of the debate sparked by 'Give up activism' and its context see Trott (2005).
- 17 Nunes (2005)
- 18 Each of these terms is problematic. To talk of a *human* way of relating is most powerful, but also suggests an essentialism we don't really endorse.
- 19 Dyer-Witheford (1999: 68)
- 20 Caffentzis (2010: 274)
- 21 Holloway (2002).

- 22 Foucault has some very interesting insights on this in his 1979 lectures at the Collège de France, now published as *The Birth of Biopolitics* (Foucault 2008).
- 23 The lyric is from 'Why Theory?', on the 1981 album *Solid Gold*. Several live versions of the song are available on YouTube.
- 24 Deleuze and Guattari (1984: 29)
- 25 This is, in fact, a rendering of the quotation that Deleuze and Guattari were fond of. Spinoza (1996: 71) reads: "no one has yet determined what the body can do".
- 26 See, for example, Harry Cleaver's 'The uses of an earthquake' (Cleaver 1989) and Rebecca Solnit's *A Paradise Built in Hell* (Solnit 1989).
- 27 See, for example, Steven Levy's *Hackers: Heroes of the Computer Revolution* (Levy 2001) or Matthew Fuller's *Behind the Blip: Essays on the Culture of Software* (Fuller 2003).
- 28 An obvious reference here is Naomi Klein's *No Logo* (Klein 2000). Levi's recently had to withdraw a 'Levi's Legacy/Go Forth' advertisement, which was 'about embodying the energy and events of our time'. See <http://www.guardian.co.uk/media/2011/aug/11/levis-riot-ad-uk-violence>.
- 29 The most influential of these was the Clamshell Alliance which was founded in 1976 to take nonviolent direct action against the construction of the Seabrook nuclear reactors in New Hampshire.
- 30 Deleuze and Guattari (1988: 311).
- 31 '[W]hat distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is that the architect builds the cell in his mind before he constructs it in wax. At the end of every labour process, a result emerges which had already been conceived by the worker at the beginning, hence already existed ideally.' (Marx 1992: 284)
- 32 The quotation is Frederic Jameson's although it has also been attributed to Slavoj Žižek. In a 2003 *NLR* article, Jameson writes: 'Someone once said that it is easier to imagine the end of the world than to imagine the end of capitalism. We can now revise that and witness the attempt to imagine capitalism by way of imagining the end of the world.' (Jameson 2003: np). That 'someone' turns out to be himself. In an earlier essay 'The antinomies of postmodernism', he wrote: 'It seems easier for us today to imagine the thoroughgoing deterioration of the earth and of nature than the breakdown of late capitalism; and perhaps that is due to some weakness in our imagination' (Jameson 1998: 50). What's more interesting and attests to the quotation's appositeness is that it has been so widely replicated while its provenance has been almost lost.
- 33 See, for example, Bologna (1980), Wright (2002) and Cleaver (1979).
- 34 Holloway (2008).
- 35 Midnight Notes Collective and Friends (2009: 6).
- 36 Midnight Notes Collective and Friends (2009: 7).
- 37 We also don't want to underestimate their importance. As Olivier de Marcellus (2006) writes of the collapse in 2006 of the Doha round of WTO trade negotiations, quoted in *Moments of Excess*: '[I]t's a strange but frequent phenomenon ... when movements finally win [real victories], they often go unnoticed.'