

Theorizing Within and Against: Practices of
Postanarchist Theory and the Politics of Knowledge
Production under Neoliberalism

by

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Acknowledgements

It's a bit difficult for me to figure out how to approach acknowledging all the people, places, and events that have contributed to composing this thesis, mostly because its genesis is very closely tied to my personal history. But, I hope in attempting to acknowledge this collective, experiential dimension of influences and friends that contributed to writing this, this section will also serve to situate the authorial "I" that these pages are already producing within a few necessarily insufficient snapshots of life as it is lived: contradictory, perspectival, and knowing nothing of a bludgeon called Truth.

This thesis is, in many ways, a result of being involved, in one way or another, within various parts of the American anarchist scene. That involvement was sparked by my a growing interest in the music and culture of punk rock, especially the 1980s UK anarcho-punk scene while in middle school. During the summer between 7th and 8th grade, I went to my first punk show (with my dad) where I saw the politically-charged bands Resist and Exist, Against All Authority, and Conflict play. I was both confused and intrigued by the anarchist politics espoused in their lyrics, at their merch tables, in their liner notes, and on their tshirts and patches. The day before that summer ended, this nascent fascination led to my borrowing Emma Goldman's *Anarchism and Other Essays* from the public library in my suburban hometown of Evanston, Illinois.

Even at this opening moment, my involvement with anarchism played out in the context of my social location as a privileged white kid with highly educated parents going to private educational institutions where my growing interest in the transformative applications of critical thought was treated more as an opportunity for teaching and learning than a cause for alarm and repression. While my interest in anarchism was no

doubt informed by my general resonance Emma Goldman's take-no-prisoners lambasting of social domination embodied in institutions from religion to capitalism to gender hierarchy and sex-negativity, my feelings of identification with anarchism at that point were made all the stronger because Goldman's words impressed upon me that my adolescent run-ins with authority could lead to something more than an impotent frustrations with parents, teachers, cops, moralizing suburbanites, post-9/11 flag-wavers, etc. *Anarchism and Other Essays* changed my life significantly because it showed that the banal excesses of the authority figures in my life could be meaningfully connected to larger systems of power and oppression in such a way that it was possible and actually desirable to resist them both in the name of an alternative way of living based on valuing freedom above all else.

Needless to say, my perspective has changed a lot since then; indeed, I would be proclaiming myself a dedicated anarchist for a long time before understanding how the very institutions of domination and hierarchy I sought to oppose were also the basis of the extreme privilege that put enough time, resources, and support at my fingertips to pursue what was a rather idiosyncratic passion for someone finishing middle school. Having completed my 8th grade capstone project comparing the ideologies of communism, socialism, and anarchism I went to an elite "progressive" high school in Chicago, excited to have the mobility to plug myself into the anarchist/activist scene there. Graduating from middle school in 2002, this aspect of my political education centered around opposing the rise of hypermilitaristic nationalist jingoism and the intensification of the collective punishment visited by American bombs on the people of the Middle East. Through attending anti-war protests, meetings, anarchist punk shows, etc. I began to build some solid relationships with people involved in the now-defunct

Autonomous Zone, Chicago Food Not Bombs, the Chicago Direct Action Network, and other local expressions of organized resistance to social domination. I also began to realize that the lives and backgrounds of many of the people I was befriending were significantly different from my own and, little by little, began to realize that my being born fairly high up on many of the hierarchies I was opposing informed the ways in which I was thinking and living in challenging and perplexing ways that I wasn't sure how to wrestle with. What I would eventually come to realize was that such wrestling was a process with no end, and that the politics I was espousing had little meaning if not applied to my everyday life.

Realizations like that one, combined with a growing frustration at the internal bureaucracy and ideological dogmatism of many leftist activist groups and the seeming inability of Chicago's anarchist groups to move beyond sectarian bickering, led to a growing interest in critical theory as a way of exploring how power and hierarchies structure life in a more open, self-critical way than that made available by subscribing to one political line or another. This ultimately resulted in my attending the Remaking Society summer program at the Institute for Social Ecology, a small, now-defunct center in Plainfield, VT. The ISE was dedicated to advancing anti-authoritarian scholarship, albeit with a selectivity oriented towards the thought of the institute's founder Murray Bookchin, whose theory of Social Ecology and its philosophical foundation of "dialectical naturalism" was one of the first theoretical interventions to frame ecology as a central field of struggle for revolutionary anti-authoritarian politics. My time there was the first time in my life that I was entirely surrounded by people who shared my interests, 24/7, for a month. During that time, I had the guidance and support to begin engaging with critical theory, both by getting acquainted with complex concepts like

dialectics, unity-in-diversity, and the politics of counter-institutions through the program's curriculum and the day-to-day practice of learning how to live with a dozen or so other people who shared my desire to realize a world where relationships were based on the joy of sharing passions and creating with others rather than objectifying and dominating them. At that point, I lived at the ISE for as long as I'd lived anywhere but my own home, and the experience of doing that with often significantly older, more experienced, and better-read people of anarchistic inclination made me realize the extent to which anarchism is not simply a politics, but a practice of creating spaces of anarchy.

In retrospect, it makes a good deal of sense that this realization coincided with my becoming fascinated and intellectually challenged by the writings of the Situationist International and the Frankfurt School, two groups introduced to me by fellow students at the ISE. The readings I was assigned in high school classes usually came fairly easily when it wasn't too boring to get through, and at that point I had become pretty tired of the dogma and pedantic ideologizing of much of the "activist" political writing I could find. As a result, I started to withdraw from the world of organized activism which, despite being an essential formative aspect of this whole process, began to bear an uncomfortable resemblance, in my eyes, to the institutionalized power politics to which it was supposed to be an alternative. Even the formerly exciting direct action work of the black bloc, etc. started to feel stale and my short time as a member of the Chicago branch of the Industrial Workers of the World made me wary of the potential for radical politics to become a farcical worship of one's own fantasies of ideological correctness, contradicting the "nothing-is-sacred" attitude of constant questioning that made anarchism seem so appealing in the first place.

After concluding that neither the repetitious street drama of demonstrations nor singing old labor songs and going to Utah Phillips concerts with people at least twice my age were really satisfactory, I seriously dedicated myself to studying critical theory, reading whatever I could get my hands on and inheriting books my teachers had read in college. I developed a strong interest in Western Marxism, which dovetailed fairly directly with situationism and, in turn, led to an interest in poststructuralist thinkers. This interest was redoubled by attending the Renewing the Anarchist Tradition conference during my junior year of high school, a theoretically-oriented anarchist conference put on by the Institute for Anarchist Studies, which shared several board members with the ISE. My dad came along for this too, but unlike the punk show years before it was out of personal interest and quality time rather than concern for my health and safety. At that point it was not entirely lost on me that taking a weekend to fly to Vermont with my dad (who was also able to take off work easily), “do anarchy” for a few days, and then fly back in time to be in class at my private high school on Monday was a perplexingly contradictory reality, perhaps a paradigmatic one for my relationship with anarchism and anarchy in general. In any case, it was at that conference that the germ of poststructuralist anarchism was planted in my mind, as several different presentations underscored the importance of then-foreign concepts like anti-essentialism, network organization, and non-hierarchical ontologies to contemporary anarchism, along with the seemingly impenetrable works of bizarre French theorists like Foucault and Deleuze.

It was at that conference that I picked up my copy of Todd May’s *Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism*, and my fascination with the ideas therein ultimately led me to write this thesis. In this context, this writing has been both a challenging intellectual endeavor and an opportunity to reflect on what is in my mind a sort of

culminating document of the past several years of negotiating my interests in anarchist politics and critical theory within the constraints and resources of my being under the purview one educational institution or another. As you may be able to tell, this text is centrally informed by that experience, and especially the challenges involved in coming to terms with the ways in which my background of privilege and entitlement has both enabled me to become so invested in something as esoteric and, to many, perplexing as anarchist politics and radical political theory. This is a challenging project, but one in which I hope to always be actively engaged.

So I suppose there is something fitting to this project taking the form of a senior thesis at the end of my time at an elite east coast liberal arts institution. More than that though, these myriad experiences, the many more that I have left out, and all the people and places that made them what they were have been as essential a contribution to writing this as any book or theorist. My intention in situating myself in this way is to highlight how this thesis is not a product of purified thought, but rather an insufficient distillation of myriad influences, inspirations, contradictions, and challenges, a singular assemblage of circumstances in many ways composed and circumscribed through being born into immense and unjustifiable privilege, benefitting from the violent and homogenizing effects of interlocking social hierarchies by virtue of the education and financial stability of my parents, the color of my skin, my “male” anatomy, “masculine” gender presentation, more-or-less hetero sexual orientation...the list goes on. Without wanting to belabor the point, my experiences with anarchism were central to coming to grips with such accidents of birth and realizing that domination and hierarchy are often reproduced or challenged in the seemingly “normal” interactions of daily life, a realization which has been central to an ongoing project in my life for which this thesis is

named: learning ways to live inside and against a world that is profoundly, though far from totally, ordered around social relations of domination.

Aside from this there are many people I would like to thank without whose support this thesis would never have been written:

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And finally, I want to thank John Petrovato, Institute for Anarchist Studies board member and proprietor of Raven Books, because I would probably never have read *The Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism* if he hadn't warned me that it would be "too hard" when I bought it from him at the RAT conference.

Introduction: Social Theory and Social War in a Neoliberal World

In 1987 anarcho-mystic Hakim Bey first used the term post-anarchism in his essay “Post-Anarchism Anarchy. “Between tragic Past & impossible Future, anarchism seems to lack a Present,¹” he laments. Caught in an ideological mode of thought forever lamenting and re-enacting a “glorious past” of white-bearded nineteenth century theoreticians, anarchist theory has become detached from the concrete specificities of oppression and consigned itself to a world of abstraction and political doxa. “Might it be,” Bey asks, “that anarchISM offers no concrete program whereby the truly deprived might fulfill (or at least struggle realistically to fulfill) real needs & desires?²” Such a situation is especially tragic because in a world of the total commodification of everyday life, a global landscape increasingly dominated by “societies of control³,” a signifier like anarchism, which could be capable of sustaining spaces for the open-ended articulation of revolt and resistance to myriad ways in which domination is exercised in daily life is a promising thing. The creative energy of revolt, the renewing potential of upheaval remains.

The potential exists. Any day now, vast numbers of americans are going to realize they're being force-fed a load of reactionary boring hysterical artificially-flavored *crap*. Vast chorus of groans, puking & retching...angry mobs roam the malls, smashing & looting...etc., etc. The Black Banner could provide a focus for the outrage & channel it into an insurrection of the Imagination.⁴

Though taking a very different path and making distinct use of the term, Bey's essay shares some significant common ground with a group of thinkers who have been

¹ Bey, Hakim. “Post-Anarchism Anarchy” in *The Temporary Autonomous Zone: Ontological Anarchy, Poetic Terrorism* (New York: Autonomedia anti-copyright 1985, 1991), <http://www.t0.or.at/hakimbey/taz/taz2c.htm>

² Ibid

³ Cf. Deleuze, Gilles “Postscript on the Societies of Control”, OCTOBER 59, (Winter 1992) MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, <http://www.n5m.org/n5m2/media/texts/deleuze.htm>

⁴ Bey, Ibid

developing a small but growing field of theory called “postanarchism.” Bey’s use of postanarchism, based on a Situationist-influenced critique of anarchism’s ossification into a reified ideology, cut off from the realities of lived struggle and freedom, is meant to suggest a re-inhabiting of the immediate experience of anarchy not as an ideological struggle but as the reclamation of time and space from constraint and control.

Postanarchism as it has developed as a field of theoretical practice, is concerned with the possible ways in which the historical tradition of anarchism may contain productive resonances with the current of post-1968 French critical theory known as poststructuralism.

Before getting into specifics with this relationship, however, it is important to understand the context, historical as well as conceptual, for how the project of postanarchism came to be seen as worth engaging. To begin with, it is important to consider that, unlike Bey, most of the central postanarchist authors are professional academics. As anarchist anthropologist (and recent Yale dismissee) David Graeber notes, anarchism has had a relationship with the academy that has ranged from rocky to non-existent, especially compared to the more-or-less contemporary European revolutionary tradition of Marxism. “In the United States,” Graeber comments, “there are thousands of academic Marxists of one sort or another, but hardly a dozen scholars willing to openly call themselves anarchists.⁵” While I can’t account for Graeber’s exact numbers, it is certainly true that whereas Marxism has had and continues to have a rich and storied

⁵ Graeber, David. *Fragments of an Anarchist Anthropology*, p. 2. (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2004), www.prickly-paradigm.com/paradigm14.pdf

relationship with the production of academic theory, until recently anarchist thought and praxis “has found almost no reflection in the academy⁶” despite its long history.

This historical imbalance, however, is beginning to shift and postanarchism is a reflection of this change. While it is impossible to pinpoint a specific time, I would venture that the Zapatista uprising on January 1, 1994 constitutes, though only in retrospect, a necessary and by no means sufficient condition for this shift. Planning their uprising to coincide with the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement, this largely indigenous group living in the mountains of Chiapas were and are amongst the poorest of the Western hemisphere’s poor. NAFTA’s passage meant that, in the name of open markets and free movement of goods and capital, a fundamental source of these peoples’ subsistence, autonomy, and community, the communal farmlands protected by Article 27 of the Mexican constitution, would be no more⁷. Faced with the loss of the very soil beneath their feet to larger, more capital-rich landowners and commercial farmers, they fought back as Zapatistas. As 1994 began, they “took control of seven cities, set prisoners free, set fire to police headquarters and expropriated weapons found there, occupied City Halls, secured major highways, and declared war against the Mexican government and the policies they called *neoliberalismo*.⁸”

There are two things important to note here. The first is that despite their dark-green fatigues and black ski masks, the Zapatistas quickly made it clear that their resemblance to the Marxist guerilla groups whom, over the last 40 years or so, have become an iconic symbol of political unrest in Latin America over the last 40 years or so

⁶ Ibid

⁷ E.g. Notes From Nowhere, “Emergence: An Irresistible Global Uprising,” p. 22 in *We Are Everywhere: The Irresistible Rise of Global Anti-Capitalism* ed. Notes from Nowhere Collective (London: Verso, Copyleft 2003).

⁸ Ibid

was solely visual. What they sought was not control of the Mexican state, nor even the government of Chiapas, but control of their own lives and their communities; they demanded not power and control but self-determination and autonomy. The uprising of 1994 caught the world's attention and forced a stunned Mexican government to back off, but it was also the last time the Zapatistas would make an armed offensive. It was clear that "their most powerful weapons were their words. They said they were 'leading by obeying;' that they were invisible people who had 'masked themselves in order to be seen;' that they didn't want to seize power for themselves but to break it into small pieces that everyone could hold."⁹ The Zapatistas sought to ensure, by whatever means were required, that power remain dispersed and multiple, despite the efforts of capitalist and state structures to concentrate all human and natural potential within the structure of ever-increasing economic productivity.

The second thing worth noticing is that the Zapatistas did not claim to represent anybody but themselves. They never claimed to be a class, let alone its vanguard, and also never identified their enemy as a class, but rather a project: neoliberalism. Neoliberalism is dedicated to the efficacy of *lassiez faire* economics, but is much more narrowly concerned with the market than its older relative. Neoliberalism is a multiple phenomenon, occurring on many different registers, and involving the active participation of national governments, supranational institutions like the World Trade Organization, World Economic Forum, G7/8, International Monetary Fund, and World Bank as well as international and transnational firms, investors, and capitalists. Central to the neoliberal project is the development and expansion of a very specific interpretation of "economic globalization" characterized primarily by "the imposition of the 'free'

⁹ Ibid

market into every corner of the globe.¹⁰ This is based on the theory, as David Harvey explains it, that “human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong property rights, free markets, and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices.”¹¹ The consequences of the institutional application of this theory are myriad but often involve the privileging of the “health” of the market over all other social goods such that, as Richard Day notes, “the neoliberal project includes the ongoing globalization of capital, as well as the intensification of the societies of control” which uses every modality of power at its disposal to constitute “a complex web of practices and institutions that have the effects of perpetuating and multiplying various forms of interlocking oppression” in order to “allow ‘populations’ to be divided and managed, and our daily lives to be more intensely immersed in capitalist accumulation and rational-bureaucratic control.”¹² Echoing this polymorphous portrayal of neoliberalism, Wendy Brown writes that neoliberalism cannot be reduced to the modalities of its imposition, whether those be the imposition of “free trade” or the deployment of national or transnational security warfare. Rather, neoliberalism is an organizing logic that marshals the forces of multiple social institutions in the service of “extending and disseminating market values to all institutions and social action, even as the market itself remains a distinctive player.”¹³ Neoliberalism, then, codifies this immanent organizing logic which consists in the coordination between

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Harvey, David. *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), 2.

¹² Day, Richard J.F. *Gramsci is Dead: Anarchist Currents in the Newest Social Movements*, (London: Pluto Press, 2005), 6.

¹³ Brown, Wendy. *Edgework: Critical Essays on Knowledge and Politics*. (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005), 40

various local, national, and transnational institutions and agents in order to organize all aspects of social life around the logic of cost/benefit analysis that runs the market over and against any other social values.

Though it is a global project which centrally involves not just the tacit collusion of states, but often their active deployment of power either in the form of economic weight or military force to quell dissidents and pull along stragglers, neoliberalism is not an empire, nor a form of imperialism as it has been understood. The neoliberal project of capitalist globalization, the organization of life to the greatest extent possible around the logic of the market and the free movement of goods and capital, cannot be reduced to the plans or interest of any one institution or set of institutions, nor can the implications of this often forcible re-organization be reduced to a unitary theory. Rather the agents of neoliberalism are as dispersed and multiple as they are powerfully connected by the technology of instantaneous communication and the shifting requirements of profit and growth. This “involves the formation of explicitly global institutions and processes¹⁴” but would be impossible without active intervention at the national and subnational levels, all the way down to identities, consumption habits, the occupation of spaces, and the movements of people such as immigrant workers and refugees who have been displaced by the prioritization of the needs of the market over the necessities of [their form of] life, or have been forced to take shelter from the political upheaval and material scarcity which often become tools for the imposition of neoliberal order.

¹⁴ Sassen, Saskia “The Many Scales of the Global: Implications for Theory and Politics, 156 in *Critical Globalization Studies* ed. Richard P Appelbaum and William I Robinson. (New York and London: Routledge, 2005)

That a movement as small in number and marginal in position as the Zapatistas was able to spark people's imagination around the globe has everything to do with their innovation in both naming a new kind of enemy and constituting a new kind of resistance. Many radical activists and leftist academic social theorists alike hailed the Zapatista uprising as a clarion call for a new type of resistance more appropriate to the economic and political realities of neoliberalism than the dominant traditions of academic social theory, especially the more orthodox Marxisms. Such a change can be seen through the intertwined institutions and practices of social life, not the least of which is the world of academic social theory. For theorists seeking to provide a critical lens from which to view the world that can "acknowledge the historical specificity of existing social arrangements...and...recognize the centrality to our understanding of the world of social struggles¹⁵" this experienced gap between the tools made available by dominant paradigms of social theory and the innovations of both capitalism and those resisting it deprived many left(ish) intellectuals of the most agreed-upon way of understanding both that specificity and those struggles. This is simply one way in which we can see that it becomes necessary to locate the academy within the broader social field for, as this makes clear, the constraints put on theory by changing social conditions are a key part of the constitution, transformation, and dispersion of theoretical concepts. While this will be an important theme more generally as this thesis develops, here it bears specific importance for elaborating the context in which both poststructuralist and anarchist theories of the social were, in effect, "activated" in certain parts of the academy as a way of critically analyzing the modalities of social power that constitute

¹⁵ Robinson, William I, "What is Critical Globalization Studies?", 11 in *Critical Globalization Studies* ed. Richard P Appelbaum and William I Robinson (New York and London: Routledge, 2005)

neoliberalism. This experienced gap that catalyzed such an effect cannot be explained by means interior to the theories themselves, but only by looking outward to see how specific social conditions call forth certain modes of interpretation, and how they foreclose and invalidate others.

As the neoliberal project encountered success after success in its work of globalizing the logic of capital, it became apparent that neoliberalism's triumph meant it was necessary for theory to engage with a new (or perhaps just newly acknowledged) level of "social complexity" which "arises from the operation of...increasingly nomadic trends as the life-long link between individual/place/country begins to be attenuated," a process that "will significantly transform the social and the political."¹⁶ In our current historical moment, the "nomadic subjectivity" introduced by poststructuralist theorists Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari is as applicable to globalizing capital in the age of neoliberalism as to radical subcultures and collective "lines of flight" taken to escape capitalist rule¹⁷. As barriers to capital's mobility like government regulation, social welfare programs, and labor unions are systematically dismantled in the name of a neoliberal

¹⁶ Chesters, Graeme and Ian Welsh, *Complexity and Social Movements: Multitudes at the Edge of Chaos*, (London and New York: Routledge, 2006), 4-5

¹⁷ Briefly, Deleuze and Guattari designate as "lines of flight" any situated mode of collective escape from the ways in which subjective life and the social world is "stratified, territorialized, organize, signified, attributed, etc." by the dominant order of power (Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari *A Thousand Plateaus* (Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 9). Similarly, Deleuze and Guattari refer to as "nomadic" those subjects and the collectivities in and through which they are produced which are always in the process of charting and travelling along lines of flight, always maintaining a relationship of un-doing with respect to striations and escaping every attempt at enclosure or sedentarization (cf. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 420). In the context of neoliberalism, nomadic subjective formations can be seen in locations as diverse as those engaged in transnational finance capital and global anti-capitalist networks.

“ideology that glorifies the efficiency of markets and privately held firms¹⁸” over all other forms of human social organization, global capitalism and the neoliberal order which supports it are revealed as fluid, multiple, and networked, built as a web rather than a pyramid. As flows of capital and labor are unleashed by inter- and trans-national treaty or by the iron law of necessity brought to bear with unprecedented ferocity on most of the earth’s populations, the resources of states, transnational institutions, and international NGOs are all tapped through global connection and contingent alliance to prevent anything from impeding the smooth flow of nomadic capital.

In this global order, the identities of once-hegemonic social actors such as national governments and transnational governing coalitions become multiple and hard to pin down as the political viability of states is made contingent on their acting as agents in the enforcement of market rationality and door-holders for transnational capital. In this shifting, decentered global landscape,

the potential coalitions of interests multiply as the once firm boundaries constituting social groups and actors are subject to increasing rapid perturbation as ‘all that is solid melts into air.’ Under such conditions the notion of planes of immanence introduced by Deleuze and Guattari assume tangible forms as states and global institutions combine to define globally extensive sets of rule-bound domains establishing the primacy of the prevailing capitalist axiomatic over local customs, traditions, and rules.¹⁹

In this picture, the location of the boundaries between political institutions, identities, becomes an issue of secondary importance to the question of who retains the power to draw and re-draw them. Chesters and Welsh’s invocation of Deleuzian “planes of immanence” is particularly appropriate to this centerless structuring of power whose

¹⁸ Chase-Dunn, Christopher and Barry Gills, “Waves of Globalization and resistance in the Capitalist World-System: Social Movements and Critical Global Studies”, 45 in *Critical Globalization Studies*, ed. Richard P. Appelbaum and William I. Robinson (London and New York: Routledge, 2005)

¹⁹ Chesters and Welsh, 5-6

unity as a network cannot be abstracted from the immediate inter-action of dispersed multiplicities connecting by contingent affinity and alliance to re-fashion the order of the spaces they infiltrate and inhabit at each moment.

We can see here how neoliberalism constitutes an ensemble of forces which produce forms of social organization and power that cannot be localized or assigned stable identity, ultimately hostile to anything that would impede the flexibility and mobility of capital and the dominance of market logic. States both compete for sovereignty with global market forces *and* support the infrastructure which keeps the operation of the same markets beyond the control of any one or several actors²⁰. The result is not a ‘victory’ for either side but a new type of power whose radical dispersion, flexibility, and contingency have rendered it all the harder to capture or even name. Yet as more and more of life is forcibly brought under the logic of capital, whether through threat of economic exclusion or (semi-)permanent violence (either by local intervention, national military, or national/international police action) it is impossible to deny that this mutation of capitalism is unprecedentedly effective. Not as a “class project” but, to borrow from sociologists of complexity Graeme Chesters and Ian Welsh, a mobile axiom, capitalist logic is constantly performed and articulated through multiple institutions and practices, some overlapping, others contradictory, still others complimentary, applied to anything and anyone and to flows and virtual spaces which are nothing and no one. In demonstrating capitalism’s simultaneous immanence to and domination of the social, this same move also deprives those seeking to theorize the world in order to change it a universal revolutionary agent, but instead yields a picture in

²⁰ E.g. Sassen 155-166

which an innumerable multiplicity of local struggles against the determination of life by capital builds the capability to coalesce into contingent yet powerful networks.

It is along these lines that anti-capitalist resistance has morphed, grown, and recombined without need for a homogenizing/universalizing concept such as the proletariat. Along with a radically dispersed, flexible capitalism, the 1990's saw the emergence of a similarly networked resistance, heralded in many ways by the Zapatistas' call for autonomy and self-determination against the subordinating logic of neoliberal capitalism. The Zapatistas sparked the imaginations of people seeking an alternative to a capitalist order which didn't seem to admit one because they were able to pose a radical and direct challenge to capitalist dominance that, according to the radical theorists and activists who compose the Notes From Nowhere collective²¹, "didn't fit into a Marxist model of proletarian revolution...[A]s the embers of the old left faded and capitalism declared itself immutable, inevitable, there were pockets of resistance abroad ready to hear a new story."²²

This excitement proved justified as the 1990's progressed. Proletarian agent or no, masses of people around the globe began using the global communication technologies developed in the service of transnational production, consumption, and marketing to begin building a flexible, networked resistance, united across radically diverse material, geographic, cultural, and subjective positions by a rejection of the increasingly forceful dictum that "there is no alternative" to capitalist domination of the social. While the EZLN²³ [Ejercito Zapatista de Liberacion Nacional] may have been

²¹ E.g. Notes from Nowhere, 512-513

²² Notes from Nowhere, "Emergence", 23 in *We Are Everywhere*

²³ The EZLN stands for the Ejercito Zapatista de Liberacion Nacional or the Zapatista Army of National Liberation and functions as the military arm of the broader Zapatista

instrumental in sparking what seemed to be an unpredictable and fast-burning fire, spokesperson Subcomandante Marcos' made it clear by 1998 that this would have to be a movement as flexible and multiple as capital, composed of networked yet localized pockets of specific resistance, brought together in participatory alliances to defend their autonomy against the axioms of neoliberal capitalism. The EZLN may have been a forerunner in developing this approach to resisting neoliberalism, but when international solidarity with their struggle began to burgeon, Marcos, the public face of the EZLN to most of the world, was explicit in rejecting any role as a vanguard. "Don't give too much weight to the EZLN, it's nothing but a symptom of something more. Years from now, whether or not the EZLN is still around, there is going to be protest and social ferment in many places."²⁴ The EZLN's call for solidarity was not for other people to support their struggle, but for that struggle to be an incitement for the centerless proliferation of interconnected singularities of resistance, each resisting neoliberalism in their own ways and on their own terms to produce a contingent constellation of allied struggles rather than try to turn their own position into a bully pulpit from which to tell others how to become liberated from neoliberal domination.

History has appeared to vindicate Marcos. The mid-to-late 1990's saw radical resistance to the emergent global capitalist order explode not just in the foothills of Chiapas, but in the heart of the most developed nations. While protesters often identified closely with the struggle of the Zapatistas, they did so with the understanding that their struggle mirrored the unvoiced, unheard, or unconceptualized resistant desires

social movement. Since the time of this statement, the EZLN has in many ways ceded center stage to the Zapatista communities as the unlikely success of their initial offensive allowed for a gradual shift in focus from physical defense from military and paramilitary reaction to the work of collective community-building.

²⁴ Notes from Nowhere, 25

of many while explicitly rejecting any role as representatives. Out of the social ferment in large part sparked by the inspiration of the Zapatistas, a desire for a global network to coordinate diverse groups seeking to take direct action against the encroachment of capitalist control began to be articulated. A meeting was held in Geneva in 1998 which was “attended by more than 300 delegates from approximately 71 countries” united in their difference only by the contingent affirmation of the broad “PGA [People’s Global Action] hallmarks drafted and circulated by Professor Nanjundaswamy leader of the Karnataka State Farmers’ Association [KRRS], one of the largest farmers’ associations in India²⁵.” The PGA was created as a space for building ties of solidarity and cooperation, as well as coordinating action, between the multitudes of local and interlocal collectivities engaging in the common work of resisting the grip of neoliberal power on their capacity for collective self-determination in ways situated within their particular positions and singular modes of composition. The hallmarks are worth enumerating in their entirety due to their combination of a clear resistance to capitalism as both an economic order

²⁵ It is important to note that Nanjundaswamy can only be called the ‘leader’ of the KRRS in a way similar to how Marcos might be called the ‘leader’ of the EZLN, that is, exercising power through, as much as is possible, giving voice to the desires and needs of those who associate themselves with the group. The KRRS is an informal network with “no central register of...members” but whose numbers are probably in the millions. Like the Zapatistas “the KRRS’ work goes beyond the specific problems of farmers-it is aimed at social change on all levels. Another important element is that the autonomy and freedom of the village should be based on the autonomy and freedom of its individual members” and yet the KRRS sees itself as nonetheless engaged in the “construction of a new society, which must be driven by people at the local level but must reach the global level” (Notes From Nowhere, 154-155). This is reflected in the structure of the KRRS, whose “basic unit of organization is the village unit, which decides on its own forms of organization and finance, programmes and actions” and is internally “based on direct democracy, on economic and political autonomy, on self-reliance, on the participation of all members of the community in decision-making about the affairs that affect them and on creating ways to ensure that affairs affecting several communities are decided upon through processes of consultation involving all affected” (NFN, 155). Quote in text: Chesters and Welsh, 112

and a social logic while also recognizing that resistance can and must be as flexible, multiple, and open as that which it resists without capitulating oppositionality to liberal pluralism. The hallmarks as “amended at the Third International Conference of PGA in Cochabamba, Bolivia²⁶” are:

1. A very clear rejection of capitalism, imperialism, and feudalism; all trade agreements, institutions and governments that promote destructive globalization.
2. We reject all forms of domination and discrimination including, but not limited to, patriarchy, racism and religious fundamentalism of all creeds. We embrace the full dignity of all human beings.
3. A confrontational attitude, since we do not think that lobbying can have a major impact in such biased and undemocratic organizations, in which transnational capital is the only real policy-maker.
4. A call to direct action and civil disobedience, support for social movements’ struggles, advocating forms of resistance which maximize respect for life and oppressed peoples’ rights, as well as the construction of local alternatives to global capitalism.
5. An organizational philosophy based on decentralization and autonomy.

Based only on a shared affinity with these broad points, the PGA was a particularly dynamic embodiment of the potentiality many saw in the Zapatistas taken to the next level of generalization and rearticulation by resistant subjects of the neoliberal order. In their dispersed structure and defense of autonomy from both neoliberal enclosure and the authoritarianism of leftist revolutionary organization, networks like the PGA have no need for organizational centralization or theoretical unity because, unlike Marxist-inspired resistance, they do not claim nor do they seek to represent a particular collective agent whose identity is defined by its homogenous relation to an equally homogeneous dominant power. Rather, the PGA stands as simply one powerful example of “a global political project defined by notions of diversity, autonomy, ecology, democracy, self-

²⁶ Ibid. Cochabamba is significant as the site of successful popular reclamation of the city’s water supply, sold off in a World Bank-led privatization scheme, through the autonomous declaration and material reclamation of water as a right, rather than a commodity. See Shultz, Jim “The Water is Ours, Dammit!” 264-277 in *We Are Everywhere*

organization, and direct action.²⁷” And, at the same time, PGA helped to show that this new form of resistance was an incitement for people finding new ways to resist neoliberalism’s triumphal capitalist machinery.

This new presence was felt, for instance, on June 18th 1999 when London’s financial district was brought to a standstill by “10,000 revelers wearing carnival masks” who “split into dozens of autonomous groups and invaded the heart of London’s financial district, disrupting trading while dancing to the wild sound of samba music, and causing over a million pounds worth of damage.²⁸” Coinciding with the G8 summit in Koln, Germany, the carnival was a celebration of the autonomous creativity and festivity that is possible when the machinery of capital is stopped by people with no need to submit to a different master-signifier or homogeneous identity. Autonomous affinity groups, independently organized and co-operatively coordinated by cell phones and months of face-to-face and internet-based planning, literally swarmed the financial district, descending upon the London International Financial Futures Exchange (LIFFE) with Critical Mass bicyclists halting traffic²⁹ and protestors shutting down specific targets of opportunity of their choice (e.g. picketing a McDonalds and staging a die-in in front of Lloyds Bank³⁰). As the emergent mass of autonomous groups lurched towards the LIFFE, there was nothing that could be done on the part of the bewildered police to stop them from bricking in the Exchange’s entrances, sneaking inside, and physically disrupting the machinery of international trade and detonating smoke bombs³¹ “Sounds

²⁷ Notes From Nowhere, “Emergence,” 29 in *We Are Everywhere*

²⁸ Tyler, Wat “Dancing at the Edge of Chaos: A Spanner in the Works of Global Capitalism,” 188 in *We Are Everywhere*.

²⁹ Ibid, 190

³⁰ Ibid, 191

³¹ Ibid, 193-194

of breaking glass harmonized with the sounds of celebration” a participant under the pseudonym Wat Tyler wrote. “Passion for change mixed with frustration and anger against the present system. Some are content to dance. Some take it further. Everyone expresses themselves differently. Unplanned and unexpected, carnival finds its own voice.³²”

That voice was powerfully amplified later that year, when a similar carnival of direct action shut down the World Trade Organization’s meeting in Seattle. As Chesters and Welsh note, “Seattle was identified as a potential site of emergence within movement networks from at least 1996³³” and autonomous resistance groups, some independent, others part of wider anticapitalist networks like PGA or the American Direct Action Network, began talking, planning, and coordinating their autonomous actions. “The *modus operandi* advanced at this time” the authors again note, “was substantially realized through nomadic exchanges central to the diasporic spread of repertoires of action through enhanced mobility. Far from being an unexpected event...Seattle...condensed a diverse range of practices, albeit leading to unpredicted and unpredictable emergent outcomes.³⁴” The “emergent outcomes” in this situation led to the decisive impossibility of even the most powerful ignoring the immense strength and novel character of this global anti-capitalist movement emerging as a “movement of movements” organized as a “network of networks” capable of directly challenging neoliberal capitalism because of the immanence of these resistances to its very functioning. The triumphal ideology of neoliberalism was dealt a decisive blow in Seattle because no amount of faith in the market could deny that the sophisticated networks of

³² Ibid, 193

³³ Chesters and Welsh, 69

³⁴ Ibid

autonomous affinity groups which brought the “Carnival Against Capital” from London to Seattle succeeded in preventing one of the most powerful transnational bodies in the neoliberal order, one literally charged with enforcing free trade fundamentalism on the world, from meeting at all. Self-organized affinity groups horizontally coordinated a dense swarm throughout Seattle’s downtown which, like London, had the form of a carnival and the function of a blockage in the smooth flow of commerce and power in a space that was, at that point, reserved for the provisional consolidation and strengthening of neoliberal networks of control.

Coordinated through small groups of friends known as ‘affinity groups’³⁵, with no leaders and a common agenda consisting only in the valorization of their own autonomy and multiplicity against neoliberal control and domination “the spectacle of carnivalesque theatres of popular democracy outside...contras[ed] sharply with the undemocratic and secret negotiations of trade ministers and corporate lobbyists going on behind the police lines.³⁶” The fact that WTO attendees, police, and the mainstream media were unable to “tell if Seattle was a carnival or a riot, where it had come from, or who these people were³⁷” attests to the thousands of hours of organizing and coordination that went into producing Seattle as a symbol and example of “an epic confrontation to decide who would go forth into the new century ascendant-people or

³⁵ The Counter Cartographies Collective (whose work we will look at in more detail in chapter 3) defines an affinity group, an organizational model derived from the organization of anarchist militias during the Spanish Civil War, as “a small group of folks intimately tied by shared notions of political principles and practices, working together on common projects.” (“Who Are We, Really? The Micropolitics of the 3Cs,” <http://countercartographies.org/about-us-mainmenu-28>)

³⁶ NFN, “Emergence,” 26 in *We Are Everywhere*

³⁷ Ibid, 25

corporations³⁸.” Of particular importance is that this organizing was occurring autonomously, on registers and through networks of which the managers of neoliberalism were not aware. That is, until “stilt walkers dressed as butterflies, a giant inflatable whale blockading an intersection, a hip hop crew rhyming through a mobile sound system, a stage being built to double as a road blockade where performances would take place all day long” simultaneously stopped delegates and lobbyists from attending their meeting and turned downtown Seattle into a space for resistant, aggressively de-commodified sociality to manifest.

In exploring Chiapas, London, and Seattle amongst many other sites of neoliberal consolidation being met with this carnivalesque, networked resistance, Chesters and Welsh explain that these moments of organized spontaneity constitute what they call “plateaux,” contingent events in which the ruptural potentialities of the networks of resistance that usually exist only in and as communication and interconnection are partially and recognizably realized through the occupation of neoliberal territory by the embodied intervention of collectivities producing alternative modes of social life inside and against capital. Events like Seattle are “plateaux” precisely because the network consolidation that allows them to happen, though provisional and temporary, creates “ripple effects” that produce a sense of self and agency amongst the members of the network and also produces it as an object recognizable by those outside of it.

We thus engage with social movement plateaux not as single time point events associated with mobilization cycles but as iterative stabilizations of rhizomatic forces in which a fluid, nomadic social force engages with both state forms and global institutions. In terms of engagement with these exterior forces, it is both defensive in the sense of protecting preferred ‘life-worlds,’ and offensive in prioritizing ‘other life-worlds.’³⁹”

³⁸ Ibid

³⁹ Chesters and Welsh, 21

Seattle proved powerful enough to cement global anti-capitalism in the imaginations of people across the world, both in the halls of power and streets that would soon overflow with carnivalesque resistance to the agendas formulated there, because it showed that the autonomy valorized by those in the streets was precisely the means through which they sought to resist and overturn the neoliberal order being foisted upon them.

It is worth noting here that Chesters and Welsh use the term “rhizomatic” to describe the self-organization of global anti-capitalist resistance. The use of the term “rhizome” in this way is borrowed from Deleuze and Guattari, two theorists who are, generally speaking, identified within the tradition of “poststructuralist” theory. While there is no one definition of poststructuralism, we can provisionally circumscribe it as a tradition of thought which arose in France, particularly after the May 1968 uprisings, as a response to structuralism. Structuralism gained popularity in the European academy of the 1950’s and 60’s, starting in linguistics and expanding to anthropology and other social-scientific disciplines. As structuralist anthropologist Claude Levi-Strauss describes the structuralism’s movement from linguistic analysis to a more general approach “First, structural linguistics shifts from the study of *conscious* linguistic phenomena to their *unconscious* infrastructure; second, it does not treat *terms* as independent entities, taking instead as its basis of analysis the *relations* between terms; third, it introduces the concept of *system*...; finally, structural linguistics aims at discovering general laws.”⁴⁰

Structuralism, then, consists in the shift from consciousness and subjectivity constituting the basis of thought *a priori* to the investigation of how such concepts are produced as moments of a larger system which structures them from the outside. This system can be

⁴⁰ Young, Robert “Post-Structuralism: An Introduction,” 2 in *Untying the Text* ed. Robert Young (Boston, London and Henley: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981)

understood as both unitary and productive and can be studied for general laws which can reveal what it is and how it works. The poststructuralists, generally speaking, supported structuralism's anti-humanist emphasis and rejection of the Cartesian *cogito* as a basis from which to theorize the social. However they took issue, in different ways, with the idea that the social could be understood any better through the assumption that structures are unitary and can be read as expressions of certain basic laws or rules on which they are based. Rather, poststructuralists emphasized the contingent and shifting nature of such structures, how they are historically constructed by an irreducible multiplicity of determinants and are sites of revision, contestation, and mutation. Neither the structures nor the subjects they produce can be circumscribed by 'scientific' laws but rather must be analyzed in their specificity, multiplicity, and constant change.

Deleuze and Guattari's development of the concept of the rhizome can be seen in the context of trying to produce images of thought that are capable of portraying this radical ontological contingency. Rhizome, it might be said, provides a way of thinking against unitary entities by identifying in each alleged unity contingent relations of connected multiplicities such that it becomes possible to think in terms of "acentered systems."⁴¹ Rather than conceiving the life of a dynamic system such as a network in terms of an essential unity or the unfolding of a buried logic, the rhizome enables one to view systemic interaction in terms of "finite networks...in which communication runs from any neighbor to any other, the stems or channels do not preexist, and all individuals are interchangeable, defined only by their *state* at a given moment—such that the local operations are coordinated and the final, global result synchronized without a

⁴¹ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 17

central agency.⁴²” Such an image gels remarkably well with the practical emergence of global anti-capitalism as a self-organizing, decentralized system which is capable of producing effects on the “global scale” and yet maintains and actually draws its strength from the irreducible singularity of its components. It is only in the always in-process interaction of each part throughout the network that the rhizome exists; one cannot abstract the practical, discursive, affinal, etc. interconnections that form it through any external table of values or certainties.

Thus a rhizome is not a unity, nor is it even a network strictly speaking, but rather is an organizational formation immanent to the multiple and shifting connections amongst the mobile and interwoven lines that constitute it. We can begin to see the radical implications of this image for theorizing the social in terms of relations between subjects and structures in its deployment in Chesters and Welsh’s project of meaningfully describing and theorizing a movement where “many of the key analytical and conceptual approaches applied to social movement studies are incapable of addressing complex global movement dynamics.⁴³” This brings us back to academic social theory’s need to address the gap left by the emergence of new forms of social power and organization⁴⁴.

In many ways, the ideas of several poststructuralist thinkers appeared able to provide clues as to how this might be achieved by theory. As already mentioned, Deleuze and Guattari’s concepts of rhizome and multiplicity seemed much more well-equipped than dominant schools of social theory to engage these new dynamics on their own

⁴² Ibid

⁴³ Chesters and Welsh, 2

⁴⁴ This is not to say that neoliberalism introduced radically novel or original forms of social life, but can instead be thought of as a new way of codifying forms of social life and ultimately a kind of meta-organizational logic which organizes existing social forms in new combinations to produce different effects than previous forms of meta-organization (e.g. the social democratic welfare state).

terms, both in the case of global anti-capitalist networks and the networked capitalism they oppose. Likewise, philosopher J.F. Lyotard's diagnosis of the 'postmodern condition' as being characterized by a "suspicion towards grand narratives"⁴⁵ such as Marxism and nationalism provides an entry point for conceptualizing how multiple, fluid, and contested narratives are more appropriate to understanding the modalities of power which produce subjects under neoliberalism. Similarly, Lyotard's work in *The Differend* of understanding language in the context of a pragmatic struggle amongst different representative regimes or "genres"⁴⁶ resonates strongly with the global anti-capitalist movement's valorization of local autonomy for its own sake, seeking forms of networked interconnection which respect rather than erase difference.

Michel Foucault, another thinker regarded as central to the development of poststructuralism, provides many conceptual tools helpful in thinking neoliberal power and resistance on its own terms. His conception of power as dispersed, networked and tactically exercised from socially-produced and historically contingent subject-positions resonates with the realities of neoliberalism. Such a conception requires an "analytics of power" rather than a "theory of power" in light of which "one will always be obliged to view it [power] as emerging at a given place and time and hence to deduce it, to reconstruct its genesis"⁴⁷ in order to critically understand the concrete exercise of power in its specificity as an event connected with others. The implication of this conception of power is that macropolitical phenomena like the institutional architecture of neoliberal

⁴⁵ Lyotard, Jean Francois. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, (St. Paul: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 15

⁴⁶ Cf. May, Todd, *The Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism*, (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1994), 85.

⁴⁷ Foucault, Michel "The History of Sexuality," 199 in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and other Writings* ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon, 1977)

capitalism must be understood as “traceable to local practices and must be understood on the basis of them⁴⁸” while being careful not to reduce one to the other such that “when macropolitical entities arise, the local practices that generated them do not become a mere corollary or auxiliary aspect of them⁴⁹.” Such a conception would appear to be particularly well-suited to the world of neoliberalism, where both domination and resistance appear as ‘emergent’ phenomena, resulting from the coordinated-but-contingent interactions and struggles of impersonal flows and logics rather than as the rational elaboration of a class or group interest.

Similarly, Foucault’s rehabilitation of Nietzschean genealogy holds the potential to guide an articulation of history based in this dynamic, diffuse view of power and political struggle, investigating the construction of its objects in the “hazardous play of dominations” which constitute history in micropolitical terms. The result, then, is “a form of history which can account for the constitution of knowledges, discourses, domains of objects, etc. without having to make reference to a subject which is either transcendental in relation to the field of events or runs in its empty sameness throughout the course of history.⁵⁰” Such a conception appears promising when faced with, for example, the unpredictable and dispersed yet undeniably powerful emerging global anticapitalist movement from the “play of dominations” through which the neoliberal order was consolidated throughout the 1980’s and 1990’s. While these insurgents make it extremely difficult (though as the ideology of TINA or “there is no alternative” has shown far from impossible) to deny that the enactment of neoliberal relations of power and control produce the conditions for the development of revolutionary formations of

⁴⁸ May, *The Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism*, 99

⁴⁹ Ibid, 98

⁵⁰ Foucault, *Power/Knowledge*, 117

subjectivity, it can be accounted for in the terms of contingent development, connection, and struggle provided by genealogy much more so than attempting to read it into the logic of an unfolding universal transformation.

Yet while the dynamics to which poststructuralism gives voice seem uniquely suited to providing conceptual tools useful in producing social theory adequate to the innovations of both neoliberal capitalism and anti-capitalism, many social theorists have been hesitant to affirm this open-ended collection of thinkers as fundamental to creating a new picture of power and resistance, new conceptions for how structure and subject interact under the historical conditions of neoliberalism. Professor of politics Stephen K. White puts the problem succinctly: the poststructuralist destabilization of unitary structures and subjects, any sort of rational or progressive history, and the possibility of an unproblematic ethical judgment of any sort of act or practice given the multiple and power-encrusted nature of normalization⁵¹ mirrors the neoliberal order so well that it effectively paralyzes any real possibility of intervention into that order. White critiques this constant de-centering of unities and social positionalities as constituting a “perpetual withholding operation⁵²” of any grounds for legitimate political resistance. This is because, in its constant need to acknowledge all practices as situated in local arrangements of power, the “poststructuralist analysis of power and subjectivity provides us with no real way of drawing distinctions between political ideals and movements that

⁵¹ Normalization is used in many places in Foucault’s writings and can be summarized as a form of power which distinguishes the disciplinary formations detailed in *Discipline and Punish* from previously existing formations because it judges subjects not simply on the basis of their actions, but involves interpreting said actions to inform a judgment on the character of the individual’s success or lack thereof in acceding to socially-constituted rules for “normal” behavior.

⁵² White, Stephen K. “Poststructuralism and Political Reflection,” *Political Theory* 16 (1988): 190

might be more legitimate, freedom-enhancing, rational, and so on than others.⁵³”

Though speaking specifically about Foucault here, White makes a common criticism of poststructuralism’s potential as political theory when he claims that it advances a position which “seems to allow no normative criteria of better or worse; all we can do is trace the differences among discourses and their power effects.⁵⁴” Thus, while poststructuralism may be a more effective way than, for example, Marxism to analyze both the structure of neoliberal capitalism and the possibilities for its radical transformation, not only does it not provide a ground upon which to support one option over the other, it necessarily erases all such grounds. While this point is widely contested--and this contestation will be given more attention in the first chapter--White is but one of many critical social theorists who have brought up this tension encountered by poststructuralism when called to account for itself politically. This challenge is certainly central in any discussion of poststructuralism’s potentialities for providing guiding coordinates for the elaboration of practically-oriented critical social theories of neoliberal capitalism and the possibilities for collective resistance therein.

Poststructuralism is not the only tradition of social theory to which academics have looked in order to analyze the novel relations between structure and subject produced by neoliberal capitalism, its opposition, and at the sites of their encounter and struggle. Anarchism stands out as a largely Western tradition of revolutionary theory and praxis that is especially consonant with the emphasis on self-determination, horizontal/rhizomatic organization, and direct participation in both structure and tactics (direct action) that distinguishes networked global anticapitalism from other movements

⁵³ Ibid

⁵⁴ Ibid

of radical opposition. Over the past several decades there has been a significant growth in academic social theorists' interest in anarchism as a set of insurgent social theories, many after noticing that, like the nameless networks of resistance to global capital, "the successes of this movement; its capacity to concretely intervene on the streets and in boardrooms stems directly from its networked structure, its leaderless cultures and anarchic patterns of organisation and communications⁵⁵" have been a source of strength and renewal for this tradition that has, against great odds, resisted relegation to the dustbin of history.

Admittedly, defining anarchism is as much an exercise in futility as defining poststructuralism as a singular unity. But for the purposes of this thesis, I am speaking of anarchism as a largely Western-developed political tradition that combines a dedication to radical social upheaval with a deep antipathy towards domination and hierarchy in social formations. Practically speaking, this translates to a process of identifying and subverting processes of social domination and hierarchical division while doing so in ways that reflect and prefigure the non-hierarchical, autonomist power relations that those engaged in struggle seek to realize. Like the global anti capitalist networks, for anarchists broadly speaking direct action by those resisting prevailing power formations is valued over representation both in the mode of action against the current order and as a mode of association to be constructed and proliferated as a possible alternative logic of social organization.

⁵⁵ Chesters, Graeme "Shape Shifting: Civil Society, Complexity, and Social Movements" *Anarchist Studies* 11 (?): 42-64 at <http://www.shiftingground.freeuk.com/shapeshifting.htm>

Starting Coordinates: Theorizing from Hegemony to Affinity

Richard Day, comparing the anti-capitalist networks of what he calls the “newest social movements⁵⁶” to previous forms of radical resistance (and most social theories developed to understand them) which subscribed to the logic of hegemony, argues against “the assumption that effective social change can only be achieved simultaneously and *en masse* across an entire national or supra national space⁵⁷” around which hegemonic thinking is organized.⁵⁸ Rather than constituting themselves in this way, the “newest social movements” “operate *non*-hegemonically... They seek radical change, but not through taking or influencing state power, and in so doing they challenge the logic of hegemony at its very core.⁵⁹” This can be seen as a common thread actualized and iterated through the coordinated autonomous actions of global anti-capitalist networks. Their demands for space and autonomy while eschewing the role of vanguard or representative signifies a rejection of the logic of hegemony and its substitution with “an *affinity for affinity*, that is, for non-universalizing, non-hierarchical, non-coercive relationships based on mutual aid and shared ethical commitments.⁶⁰” Such an approach is, by the above definition, one that bears substantial resonances with many historical articulations of anarchism, while at the same time challenging the tradition from within by operating from the basis, acknowledged or unacknowledged, of a radically open and indeterminate ontology similar to that advanced by the poststructuralists previously discussed. Thus, it is “by reading the anarchist tradition critically, that is, in the light of

⁵⁶ Day, 5

⁵⁷ Ibid, 8

⁵⁸ This also includes “counter-hegemonic” groups who organize their challenging of the dominant mode of social organization around making whatever alternative arrangement they are promulgating the new hegemony.

⁵⁹ Ibid

⁶⁰ Ibid, 9

poststructuralist, feminist, postcolonial, queer, and indigenous critiques⁶¹” that Day sees the possibility of developing useful theories which help articulate and proliferate an affinity for affinity.

One result of this interaction between anarchist and poststructuralist traditions in radical social theory has been the emergence of postanarchism, a small but growing constellation of activists, academic theorists, and people who I will be referring to as *anacaademic* theorists who are engaged in theoretical production in both of these networks while “belonging” entirely within neither. Broadly defined, postanarchist authors share the project of trying to find how the traditions of poststructuralism and anarchism which, despite some shared history have up to this point generally been thought quite distinct, might actually be productively hybridized. The desired result, again broadly speaking, is to develop an open-ended body of social theory that combines the radically anti-foundationalist ontological insights of poststructuralist social thinkers with the anarchist elaboration of a critical politics based on the dispersed but also collective identification and direct disruption of hierarchical and dominating social relations while simultaneously embodying alternative ways of living. In this, postanarchist theory seeks to, and in many cases does, address the twin aporias involved in the deployment of poststructuralist and anarchist ideas in order to theorize insurgent developments in the neoliberal social field: on the one hand, the engagement with anarchism puts to rest the allegations that poststructuralism’s radical evacuation of agency throws the insurrectional baby out with the essentialist bathwater. On the other, poststructuralism can be useful in challenging and modifying the often untheorized reliance of many anarchists on hegemonic structures of thought such as conceptualizing the agents of historical

⁶¹ Ibid, 18

transformation as homogenous historical subjects (bourgeois, proletariat) and the “scientific” inevitability of universal revolutionary rupture and the Enlightenment-derived beliefs in a benign human essence repressed by power and history as necessarily rational and progressive.

This thesis, however, is not an intellectual history of postanarchism. Rather, I want to begin, in Chapter 1, with a sustained investigation of the work of a particular postanarchist writer, Todd May, in order to elucidate the particular political issues of knowledge production that come up in the work of an, in this case, an academic theorist melding these traditions from the position of a professional intellectual. My argument is that, while May’s work is incredibly productive in terms of opening up meaningful dialogue and mutual engagement between the traditions of poststructuralism and anarchism, it is paralyzed by the absence of a critical account of May’s own location within the academy and the power relations such writing re/produces. Specifically, May and his colleagues end up producing theoretical texts that call for the radical revision of the role of the intellectual-as-truth-teller based on a critique of the power relations that produce such a positionality in which the ostensive removal of the intellectual gaze from social determination allows her/him to take on a privileged relationship to truth while denying that access to other discourses deemed inadmissible as truth due to their affirming, rather than attempting to cleanse themselves of, their constitution by and as power. As a result, May and the other academics who authored the first batch of postanarchist theory books reproduce the power relations they seek to subvert in the very act of calling for their subversion.

In Chapter 2 I unpack this problem by identifying conditions for postanarchism’s emergence in the politics of knowledge production under neoliberal capitalism. I will do

this, through an analysis of how such production is organized in and through the academy and through the power relations which have come to govern knowledge production more generally in the historical moment of postanarchism's emergence. From this, I will ultimately re-read the location of knowledge production in the landscape of power into a gesture towards possibilities for alternative modalities of knowledge production that, in framing the production of knowledge as a social practice in its own right, produce experimental knowledges that constitute themselves as immanent to the processes of the struggles they study. Chapter 3 explores three groups experimenting with procedures for actualizing this type of knowledge production: Precarias a la Deriva in Spain, UNC Chapel Hill's Counter Cartographies Collective, and Argentina's Colectivo Situaciones. The practices of knowledge production in which these groups are engaged are oriented towards producing bodies of theory that begin from the realities and discursive productions of the struggles in which they are engaged, utilizing critical-theoretical tools in multiple relations to the academy to help understand and broaden connected practices of resistance. Ultimately, I hope that by engaging this possibility, this thesis will ultimately develop the beginnings of some postanarchist theorizing that begins from the dissolution of the distinction between theory and praxis, understanding itself instead as a form of socially-embedded political practice amongst many, capable of producing polymorphous theoretical tools that begin for resisting neoliberal capitalism's encroachment on social life across the globe.

CHAPTER 1: Professor May's Postanarchism Machine: Accounting for *The Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism*

While Hakim Bey was probably the first to use the term “postanarchism” in his 1987 essay “Post-Anarchism Anarchy,” the first person to publish any major work dealing with the possible fusion of poststructuralism and anarchism in social theory was philosophy professor Todd May, whose 1989 essay “Is Post-Structuralist Political Theory Anarchist?” in the *Journal of Philosophy and Social Criticism* was subsequently expanded into his book *The Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism* in 1994. In these works, May distinguishes himself from previous uses of the term “postanarchism” as well as less sustained investigations of the resonances between anarchism and poststructuralism. May exposes and engages what he sees as a previously unthematized connection between the two traditions on the terrain of political philosophy, that is, theoretical reflection that concerns itself with the relationship between what is and what ought to be.¹ Since we are specifically looking at this work in relation to the problem of how structure and subject function in the constitution of and resistance to socially-embedded formations of power, we can narrow this question to the task of figuring out which relationships between structure and subject obtain in our current social formation(s) (“what is”) and from this, developing analyses capable of critiquing those relationships and suggesting alternatives (“what ought to be”).²

While the way in which May makes this claim will be the focus of the first chapter of this thesis, this attention is not meant to imply that May is alone in his insights. Though May was the first writer to publish texts that engage the possibility of a

¹ E.g. May, *The Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism*, 1.

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“postanarchist” political theory, Andrew M. Koch’s “Poststructuralism and the Epistemological Basis of Anarchism” was published in 1993 and stands as another, albeit less noticed, early contribution to the emergence of postanarchism within academic critical theory. In contrast to May’s focus on the resonances between the ethical and political commitments implied in the thought of Foucault, Deleuze, and Lyotard, Koch expands this field to look at how anarcho-egoist and Young Hegelian Max Stirner, and philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, provide a genealogical thread capable of elaborating a connection between poststructuralism’s epistemic anti-foundationalism and anarchist politics. This line was picked up in Saul Newman’s 2001 *From Bakunin to Lacan: Anti-Authoritarianism and the Dislocation of Power*³. Newman focuses many pages on re-writing Stirner as a figure of anti-essentialist politics rather than as an example of capitalistic ultra-individualism. As one might notice in the title, Newman also incorporates the structuralist psychoanalysis of Jacques Lacan, whose notion of radical subjective incompleteness he seeks to re-purpose as a way of thinking a “non-essentialist outside to power” from which resistance could be mounted without recourse to a fixed outside to power (and thus a fixed picture of power’s operation as well) in the form of a benign human essence or historically transcendent revolutionary subject. Finally, Lewis Call’s 2002 *Postmodern Anarchy* stands as another pillar in what has become a sort of open canon of postanarchist thought, further expanding this investigation of resonances between poststructuralism and anarchism by introducing a “postmodern matrix” as his field of investigation, tying together figures as diverse as Emma Goldman, Georges Bataille, and Jacques Derrida.

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I have chosen to limit engagement with these other authors because each of them presents central problematics in their thought that would need to be specifically addressed in order to engage them in an intellectually responsible way. Newman, for instance, would require the complex work of thinking Lacan both as a political theorist and as a poststructuralist (neither of which he claimed to be), while Call's immense eclecticism would require a massive number of pages to untangle and interrogate properly. Rather than attempt a survey of postanarchism, I want to take May's work, which I think is the best example and richest text of this corpus, as a jumping-off point for an investigation of the role of the untheorized power of the academy and the silently efficacious positionality of the professional academic in writing (post)anarchist theory. I argue that such a non-engagement with the specific exclusions and power relationships which structure the "I" from which May writes⁴ is a constitutive aspect of his argumentative strategies and significantly determines the outcome of his writing; in this, although he is my example, he is not alone. Ultimately, the fact that May does not engage the concrete constraints of the social location from which he theorizes creates a rather paradoxical relationship between his iteration of postanarchism in terms of its content and its actual functioning as a social practice which produces theoretical knowledge, a problem relevant to all the above-mentioned postanarchist theorists (and many others besides).

To begin, it is vitally important to get a working understanding of May's arguments in terms of what they *do*, and that will be the focus of this chapter. That is to say, what May is proposing to do is not only to bring poststructuralism (the circumscription of which will be dealt with below) and anarchism into some sort of

⁴ E.g. Butler, Judith, "Critically Queer" GLQ 1 (1993): 17-32

relation, but actually *graft* them into a new object: postanarchism. It is necessary, then, to examine the theoretical machinery by which he hopes to accomplish this in order to determine what it does and does not achieve and what the constitutive assumptions behind this construction are.

Tense Marriages and Odd Couples: Poststructuralism, Anarchism and “Tactical Politics”

May contextualizes both poststructuralism⁵ and anarchism as distinct from the “dominant traditions” of social theory by designating both as constituting a form of political philosophy, of critical reflection on the relations between structure and subject, which he calls “tactical.” Tactical political philosophy is counterposed to formal and strategic types of political thinking. Formal political philosophy, which roughly corresponds to liberal/rationalist political theory (but not exclusively so), “is characterized by cleaving either to the pole of what ought to be or to the pole of what is at the expense of the tension between the two.”⁶ Strategic political philosophy which, again roughly, corresponds to the tradition of Marxism is distinct from formal political philosophy in that it rejects “a reliance on one of the poles of what is and what ought to be” in favor of “an immersion in the tension between the two.”⁷ Strategic political philosophy, then, rests on the question of how to get from what is to what ought to be. The answer constitutes the other distinctive feature of strategic political philosophy: it

⁵ Specifically, when referring to “poststructuralism” as political theory, May has in mind “the works of Foucault, Deleuze and Lyotard” due to the fact that “the political commitments of these thinkers run directly counter to the dominant traditions of political philosophy...and define a possibility for political philosophizing that offers a new, and perhaps better, perspective for political intervention.” May, Todd, “Is Post-Structuralist Political Theory Anarchist?” *Philosophy and Social Criticism* v. 15 No. 2 (1989): 167-182 p. 171

⁶ May, *Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism*, 4

⁷ *Ibid*, 9

“involves a unitary analysis that aims towards a single goal...In strategic thinking, the variety of oppressions and injustices that pervade a society and the possibility of justice are located in a single problematic; if that problematic is properly analyzed and the right conclusions for intervention are drawn, then justice, inasmuch as it can be had, will be had.”⁸ While strategic political philosophy addresses itself to the relationships between structure and subject as a political issue, both its analysis and possibilities for intervention rest on the reduction of the multiplicity of such relationships to a single defining problematic.

Anarchism and poststructuralism, May argues, in large measure share the territory of political philosophy which he terms “tactical.” Tactical political thought, like strategic, is produced in the tension between what is and what ought to be but, unlike strategic thought “there is no center within which power is to be located. Otherwise put, power, and consequently politics, are irreducible...Tactical thought thus performs its analyses within a milieu characterized not only by the tension between what is and what ought to be, but also between irreducible and mutually intersecting practices of power.”⁹ What tactical political thought rejects is not the possibility of radical social change or situated realizations of social justice, but rather the idea that such goals can be achieved through an analysis of power as unitary. Instead, tactical thought holds that such analysis may do as much to conceal as it does to reveal the workings of power that determine the current form of society and upon which any transformational politics must be conditioned. This is due to the fact that it demands the reduction of specific power relationships to the “grand problematic” which allows for them to be systematically

⁸ Ibid, 10

⁹ Ibid, 11

understood as parts of a total unity. While tactical thought is compatible with the understanding that “there are points of concentration of power...where various (and perhaps bolder) lines intersect¹⁰” such conclusions must be the result of concrete analysis of power as it is directly manifested, not of a pre-existing interpretive mechanism.

May argues that “poststructuralism, particularly as it is embodied in the works of Foucault, Deleuze, and Lyotard has defined a tradition of the type of political philosophy we have here called tactical.¹¹” As was discussed briefly in the introduction, these thinkers share the project of developing modes of critically theorizing the social that go beyond the reductionism and universalism of the “dominant traditions” of theory while preserving its commitment to resistance and transformation. Such theorizing, whether in the form of Lyotard’s “differend,” Deleuze and Guattari’s “rhizome,” or Foucault’s “micropolitics,” is distinguished by taking concrete, local power relationships as their starting point. Tactical theory, rather than something which reduces the social in order to understand and intervene in it, consists in sets of practices which allow for the critical analysis of precisely that multiplicity which strategic political philosophy reduces to one key relationship. So, the political perspective which is at least nascent in these thinkers centers around a critique of representation in critical theory and a rejection of the role of the theorist as one who is supposed to represent the “grand picture” of struggle and history to those engaged in praxis. This is a particularly salient point given the perception of poststructuralism as evacuating politics from theory and because “what has come to be called the poststructuralist critique of representation is, at the political level, precisely

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Ibid, 12

a refusal of the vanguard, of the idea that one group or party could effectively represent the interests of the whole.¹²”

This critique of representation and rejection of vanguardism both as a political practice and a broader way of conceptualizing the social and the relations between structure and subject constitutes at least the beginning of a common ground between poststructuralism and anarchism. May even goes so far as to define anarchism as “the struggle against representation in public life¹³” further elaborating that “the theoretical wellspring of anarchism” consists in “the refusal of representation by political or conceptual means in order to achieve self-determination along a variety of registers and at different local levels.¹⁴” Because of this, anarchists have historically stressed decentralized struggles based on the collective self-determination of autonomous communities instead of subordinating local concerns to global theories of revolutionary upheaval. Because “anarchism...focuses upon the oppressed themselves rather than those who claim to speak for them” its mode of struggle is one which “sees oppression not merely in one type of situation, but rather in a variety of irreducible situations¹⁵.” This picture of power as networked, multiple, and manifested through localized effects is precisely why May sees anarchism as “a tradition, though not cited by the poststructuralists, within which their thought can be situated and better understood and evaluated¹⁶” as an open corpus of social theory uniquely suited to help understand contemporary forms of radical resistance to neoliberal capitalism.

¹² Ibid

¹³ May, “Is Poststructuralist Political Theory Anarchist?”, 169

¹⁴ Ibid, 178

¹⁵ Ibid, 170

¹⁶ Ibid, 168

Anarchism, then, provides a historical and theoretical context in which a commitment to “decentralization, local action, discovering power in its various networks rather than in the state alone” which are “hallmark traits of poststructuralist analyses¹⁷” can be decisively understood and evaluated within the context of a tactical politics of radical resistance. Broadly speaking, the fact that poststructuralism and anarchism have a radical critique of representation at their core means that anarchism can be useful in foregrounding the political connotations of the poststructuralist critique of representation, taking it beyond removed criticism by incorporating the anarchist understanding of representation as “as an attempt to wrest from people decisions about their lives.¹⁸”

It is on the basis of this shared understanding of the social as composed of irreducible multiplicities of power relations of which structures and subjects can only be partial crystallizations that May begins to interweave poststructuralism and anarchism. These two schools of thought, as May circumscribes them, share their starting point in “the picture of a network of intersecting power relationships...in which certain points and certain lines may be bolder than others, but none of them functions as a center from which the others emerge or to which they return.¹⁹” What anarchism so powerfully shows is that such an understanding does not foreclose possibilities of resistance but rather multiplies them across the networked multiplicities of local practices and power relationships that constitute the social. This leaves us with a picture of the social, more broadly speaking, which is completely immanent to these power relationships, since, “there is no empty space that gets filled in by political relationships; there are only the

¹⁷ Ibid, 172

¹⁸ May, *The Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism*, 48

¹⁹ Ibid, 53

relationships themselves.²⁰” Significantly, May invokes Deleuze and Guattari’s image of “a rhizome, a stem or root that branches out sideways and connects with other stems or roots without a recognizable source or center” to characterize this vision of the social.

Power Bad, People Good: (Producing and) Critiquing the “a priori” of Anarchism

Though May elucidates significant and important territory where poststructuralism and anarchism seem complimentary and yield a radically de-centered picture of the relations between structure and subject that constitute the social and the possibilities for resistance therein, there are nonetheless significant roadblocks to melding these two traditions. While anarchism seems able to provide a politicized framing for poststructuralist analyses that liberalism and Marxism cannot, May also sees poststructuralism as a way to “update” anarchism, whose historical basis in nineteenth century revolutionary thinking has rendered it “ambivalent regarding its commitment between tactical and strategic thinking” despite its being “a forerunner to current poststructuralist thought.”²¹

As soon as May finishes highlighting the strains of anarchist thought that could be characterized as “forerunners” of thinkers like Foucault, Deleuze, and Lyotard, he reduces anarchist thought to a somewhat naïve, Enlightenment-indebted unity, saying that “almost all anarchists rely on a unitary concept of human essence: the human essence is good; therefore, there is no need for the exercise of power.”²² May describes these “representational elements” most succinctly in what he calls “the *a priori* that haunts anarchist thought.”²³ He holds that because of “their view of power as

²⁰ Ibid, 53

²¹ Ibid, 13

²² Ibid

²³ Ibid, 65

suppressive and their humanist naturalism” anarchist thought rests on a foundation that often serves to “steer the anarchists away from their insights into the reductionism of Marxist analysis.²⁴” In other words, this *a priori* makes anarchism’s status as a tactical political philosophy questionable.

Both these terms merit some further explanation. May argues that “power...constitutes for the anarchists a suppressive force. The image of power with which anarchism operates is that of a weight, pressing down—and at times destroying—the actions, events, and desires with which it comes in contact. This image is common not only to Proudhon, Bakunin, Kropotkin and the nineteenth-century anarchists generally, but to contemporary anarchists as well.²⁵” If power is always suppressive or destructive, then anarchist struggles must reject the core tactical understanding that “the search for a social space independent of the networks of political and social relationships that constitute it is similar to the search for a founding principle; each seeks its object outside what is actually given in order to account for what is given, rather than analyzing the given in its multiplicity and diversity.²⁶” And this is exactly what May argues the suppressive assumption regarding power forces anarchists to do. If the social is understood as being immanent to the multiple power relationships that constitute it, then this assumption requires a location outside of the social in order to ground resistance. Given this assumption, resistance must be grounded on the possibility of transcending power and so liberation is made contingent upon the transcendence of the social itself. This not only puts anarchism in tension with poststructuralism, it is a point at which anarchist theory falls short of its own critique of representation.

²⁴ Ibid

²⁵ Ibid, 61

²⁶ Ibid, 53

This assumption leads directly into the “humanist naturalism” which constitutes the other part of anarchism’s “haunting” *a priori*. Again making use of fairly generalizing language that will be addressed in the next chapter, May asserts that “at the core of much of the anarchist project is the assumption, first, that human beings have a nature or essence; and, second, that essence is good or benign, in the sense that it possesses the characteristics that enable one to live justly with others in society.²⁷” With this we can see the anarchist picture of the relations between structure and subject in the social suddenly becoming much more reductive and simplistic than they seemed when cast as “forerunners” of poststructuralism. The rhizomatic picture of the social field is reduced to the univocal suppressive force of power suppressing an equally univocal human essence which necessarily tends towards sociality and just conduct. The anarchist critique of representation, one of the strongest bases for its connection with poststructuralism, is shown to be subordinate to these reductive formulations. Since power suppresses the natural goodness of humans, the anarchist understanding and critique of representation as a form of power ultimately yields the conclusion that “representation distorts goodness by allowing another or others to tell one who one is and what one wants, rather than allowing these qualities to emerge naturally.²⁸” The difference between this and the more radically anti-essentialist understanding shared by the poststructuralists May discusses, as well as the practical understandings of many contemporary global anti-capitalist networks, is subtle but should not be missed. While the latter do believe that given radical autonomy and self-determination there will be emergent qualities of various collectives that are transformed in and through struggle, these qualities are assumed to be

²⁷ Ibid, 63

²⁸ Ibid, 63

neither good nor natural. Rather they are constructed in and through specific practices and power relations, some of which may appear good and others less so depending on the equally contingent situation of whoever is judging. May's characterization of anarchism's emphasis on decentralization on the other hand rests on the contradictory assumption prefigured above: if people are free from the centralized/centralizing grip of power, they will use their autonomy to manifest an essential set of human qualities, which are "good" qualities, as a necessary expression of their internal nature.

Given this *a priori* which, according to May, "no political philosophy calling itself anarchism has been articulated without,²⁹" we are led to the next logical question: how does he propose to maintain the project of postanarchism to articulate a politics based on the territory shared by anarchism and poststructuralism if in the process of articulating that territory, it would seem that anarchism is based on fundamental ideas that are anathema to the thought of Foucault, Deleuze, and Lyotard? The answer, as May continues, is that poststructuralism can provide a corrective to anarchism's Enlightenment-derived *a priori* and the paralyzing problems it causes while anarchism provides a frame within which to view poststructuralism's theoretical interventions as not only political but anarchistic. Specifically, May sees poststructuralism as "correcting" anarchism's antiquated *a priori* by demonstrating not only that the poststructuralist understanding of power as productive rather than suppressive and that the rejection of humanism still allows for anarchist politics, but that they radically expand anarchism's field of application and give it a new relevance in the 21st Century.

²⁹ Ibid

Poststructuralism as Anarchism's Exorcist

In terms of providing a corrective to the anarchists' suppressive assumptions about how power works, May begins by examining the concern shared especially between Deleuze and Foucault about the mutually implicating structure of power and knowledge. Any critical social theory aimed at radical transformation cannot require, as May argues anarchism as a whole does, some transcendental outside from which to theorize this transformation. This is due to the fact that, if one understands all social life as immanent to networks of power, then it follows that "much of what we say we know is not independent of the power relationships in which we are enmeshed and, in fact, is partially a product of these relationships."³⁰ Given this, the attempt to elaborate transformative, critical social theory which relies on transcendence of the social for its ground is inherently self-defeating since doing so requires obfuscating and thus reproducing aspects of the power relations which allow one to conceive of the dominant arrangement of power as so totalizing that to resist it requires at least the possibility of its transcendence. Since, as we have just seen, the consequence of such a conception is theoretical reductionism and dogmatic paralysis in the present, it makes sense that this symptom calls for an alternative conception of power as positive and productive of both relations of domination as well as those of resistance and situated modes of liberation.

Taking seriously the tactical outlook of the social as being immanent to contingent, dispersed networks of power means always viewing resistance as in some sense the product of power, rather than as a bridge or prelude to the transcendence of the (nonexistent) totality of existing power relations. This might appear to confirm the political paralysis that White critiqued in the introduction: if resistance is a product of the

³⁰ Ibid, 68

power relationships it seeks to resist, how can one take a definitive stand against a given set of power relations if to do so is to immediately be implicated in the functioning of those same relations? May answers in effect that, while such a change does require a radically different conception of transformative resistance, it does not foreclose resistance altogether. Rather, taking up the poststructuralist conception of power as productive means that the dominant order of power relations contain potentially infinite possibilities for reversal and subversion. As May puts it

[I]f power is conceived as operating not upon its objects but within them, not ‘from above’ but ‘from below,’ not outside other relationships but across them, this entails that power is not a suppressive force but a creative one, giving rise not only to that which must be resisted but also, and more insidiously, to the forms resistance itself often takes. That is what makes specific political analysis necessary: if power creates its own resistance, then the liberation from specific forms of power must take account of the kind of resistance that is being engaged in, on the pain of repeating that which one is trying to escape.³¹

The question, then, is not whether poststructuralism’s conception of power forecloses any possibility of resistance, but rather it is a challenge to conceptualize possibilities for resistance that are not based on assumptions that ultimately end up reproducing oppressive power relations.

From this we can perhaps make a bit more sense of the picture of power and knowledge as mutually reinforcing in terms of its implications for transformative critical theories of the social. With the Foucauldian understanding that “much of what passes for crucial areas of knowledge in our culture is inseparable from relations of power which that knowledge reinforces³²,” any theory of the social aimed at its transformation must centrally, if not primarily, account for its own positionality within the networks of power it seeks to resist. That is, it must understand the current forms of power as both

³¹ Ibid, 73

³² Ibid

that which it seeks to overthrow *and* its condition of possibility. Such an understanding forecloses any transcendence since it is impossible to purify oneself of the traces left by power. What's more, this eliminates any perspective from which one might elaborate universal conditions of domination *or* liberation. Rather, since no theory is separable from its specific place of enunciation within contingent power relations, critique must be directed towards the conditions of emergence, and the points of weakness that constitute potentialities for transformation and reversal embodied in the relations of power in which any project of radical resistance is always caught up. This is the sense in which Foucault means that any attempt at transformative critical theories of the social must take the form of an "analytics" rather than a "theory" of power since constructing a theory of power ultimately serves to mask its functioning by universalizing the particular social location of the theorist rather than subjecting that location, as part of a particular ensemble of power relations, to critical analysis. In maintaining its "suppressive assumption about power," May argues that anarchist theory falls into this very trap of ignoring the complex ways in which this subtle but powerful functioning of power both enables radical resistance and fundamentally challenges it from within. The ostensible failure of anarchists across the board to recognize this results in the untenable position of using a mode of analysis "convergent with the nineteenth century's general conception of the nature of power³³" to critically analyze the rapidly mutating struggles of the 21st Century.

May also sees poststructuralist theory as providing a corrective to the other piece of the anarchist *a priori*: humanist naturalism. "If poststructuralist political thought could be summed up in a single prescription," May writes, "it would be that radical political

³³ Ibid, 75

theory, if it is to achieve anything, must abandon humanism in all its forms.³⁴ Common to Deleuze, Foucault, and Lyotard's thought as it relates to questions of structure and subject is the idea, derived directly from structuralism, that "the subject as such is constituted in exteriority."³⁵ Thus any appeal to an interior, essential subject only serves to mask the conditions under which the subject(s) in question is produced. May points to Foucault's famous genealogical work on the prison and the clinic to reinforce this point: if the subject is constituted by the practices of power/knowledge caught up with the functioning of the dominant social institutions, a reliance on an essential subjective autonomy actually abets those institutions' functioning. Where "an autonomy is ascribed to the subject" it becomes "a realm of individual character that offers itself to prison wardens, psychologists, social workers, educators, and others as material to be shaped into socially acceptable patterns. Subjectivity and 'normalization' become corresponding terms with a relationship of direct implication; the wholeness of each depends on the adequacy of the other"³⁶ Similarly, Deleuze and Guattari identify the Oedipus complex in their *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* texts as a central structure whereby subjects are made to desire their own repression in the very act of their constitution as "normal" subjects. Deleuze and Guattari analyze Oedipalization as a process which, if "successful" produces a subject which "is a contributor to the social order rather than a form of resistance to it. To discover the possibility of revolution is to abandon the subject and seek alternative routes"³⁷ found in the collective production of alternative possibilities of subjectivity.

³⁴ Ibid

³⁵ May, "Is Poststructuralist Political Theory Anarchist?", 174

³⁶ Ibid

³⁷ Ibid, 175

There is still an additional challenge to be faced if poststructuralist political theory is to be able to excise the anarchist/essentialist account of power and resistance from anarchist critical theory: the question of structure. That poststructuralism provides an account of subjectivity as it is produced in exteriority means the production and transformation of subjectivity is immediately a question about structure as well, about how to assess and give a critical account of the possibilities for transformation of the modalities of social power that constrain and determine how and which subjectivities get produced at all. Ultimately, this means that for poststructuralist social theory the ability to theorize the relationship between structure and subject means that it is necessary to think these relations without recourse to the dichotomous unit(ie)s of structure/subject. Rather than the determinate relations between two opposed unities, which ultimately results in reifying and obfuscating both those supposed unities and (bi)univocalizing their multiple and contingent relations, poststructuralists have, implicitly or explicitly, substituted the concept of multiple overlapping social “practices’ for the subject/structure dichotomy³⁸.” Poststructuralist thought is distinguished from structuralism by the fact that it takes as the object of its analysis (and, in the case of its radical political application as in postanarchism, possible subversion or transformation) “neither the constituting interiority of the subject nor the constituting exteriority of structures, but instead the interlocking network of contingent practices that produces both ‘subjects’ and ‘structures’.³⁹”

Practices, then, are “a multiple, diverse, and contingent network of events, effects, and influences” that exist both alongside and prior to both subjects and

³⁸ May, *The Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism*, 78

³⁹ Ibid

structures. “We may define a practice loosely as a goal-directed social regularity⁴⁰” whose emergence and transformation requires specific analysis. This, in effect, demonstrates how the poststructuralist thought May highlights provides an ontological dimension for the specific contours of tactical politics. Tactical theory’s orientation towards the localized, multiple, and contingent in conceptualizing the social corresponds to the understanding presented here of the fabric of the social being constituted by “a multiple, diverse, and contingent network of events, effects, and influences” as embodied by the immanence of social life to the effects of concrete, historically and spatially situated practices.

Better, Stronger, Faster: Poststructuralism *as* Anarchism

After looking at poststructuralism as a corrective to anarchism’s *a priori* and ambivalent tactical orientation, May is left with the task of articulating what this new anarchism might look like. Though the focus on contingent networks of social practices as the unit of analysis interfaces with the poststructuralist critique of the distorting and often dominating nature of representation, May notes that in order to engage poststructuralism in transformative political critique, some level of representation is necessary, despite any such representation being qualified by the conditions of its emergence. This is because “there can be no political critique without a value in the name of which one criticizes. One practice or institution must be said in some way to be wrong relative to another. Simply put, evaluation cannot occur without values; and where there are values, there is representation.⁴¹” In this case May argues that, for example, Foucault’s genealogical critiques of the institutions of discipline as well as his

⁴⁰ Ibid, 87

⁴¹ May, “Is Poststructuralist Political Theory Anarchist?”, 177

later work on biopower (though in significantly more complex ways) are guided by the underlying value that, roughly speaking, “one should not constrain others’ action or thought unnecessarily.”⁴² This is of course with the understanding that the conditions under which certain actions are thought of as justified by necessity are always the result of a pre-existing ensemble of social relations and practices specific to the time and place of the action. But this very qualification is an outgrowth of the same value, since central to the work of Foucault, as well as Deleuze and Lyotard, is the critique of how representation constrains people’s action and thought by reifying the specific ways in which certain representational regimes and power arrangements delimit the possible and thus obfuscate possibilities for reversal or escape.

This aporia does not foreclose the possibility of poststructuralist theory being capable of theorizing the social. Rather, the fact that the values underlying poststructuralist thought call for their own constant qualification, analysis, and critique simply reinforces that there is no privileged domain outside of the interstices of the social. That this is so central to poststructuralist thinking attests to the deeply tactical nature of such theorizing since, in its conception of the social as a network of specific effects of power relations and social practices, poststructuralism must necessarily sacrifice not values but rather the justification of such values by their supposed ontological stability. The values are there, but they are in a constant process of contestation and revision. Because of this, they “are not pernicious to the anarchist project of allowing oppressed populations to decide their goals and their means of resistance within the registers of their own oppression.”⁴³ The poststructuralist critique

⁴² Ibid, 178

⁴³ Ibid

of representation and hierarchy is in this sense, May argues, uniquely consonant with the anarchist project. The values that undergird poststructuralist theorizing call for the constant subversion and critique of founding values as the products of specific power relations lend themselves easily to a reading as a simple lack of positive values. May reads these values in light of the anarchist tradition as both substantive and productive of a postanarchist politics which can theorize power and resistance without recourse to the representational schema of a foundation. This is because these values “are consonant with decentralized resistance as with local self-determination” since they “are directed not toward formulating the means and ends of the oppressed considered as a single class; they try to facilitate the struggles of different groups by offering analyses, conceptual strategies, and political and theoretical critique.”⁴⁴ On this basis May views poststructuralism, in light of the anarchist tradition, as offering radically new possibilities for decentralized radical resistance that anarchism’s Enlightenment-derived *a priori* could necessarily not account for due to its uncritical representation of subject, structure, and power as reducible, univocal, and subsumable within a general theory of revolution.

May incorporates this into his account of postanarchism in a very specific way. May’s conclusion about poststructuralism, given the usefulness of its underlying values for a radically new mode of theorizing decentralized resistance, leads him to effectively consider poststructuralism *as* anarchism. While anarchism was necessary to direct our reading of poststructuralist theory towards its especially promising potential for theorizing decentralized struggles against hierarchy and for local self-determination in a manner critical and wary of the pitfalls of representation and reductionism, it conspicuously falls away from May’s description of postanarchism. The ultimate result of

⁴⁴ Ibid

this picture is the conclusion that, since poststructuralism is necessary to rid anarchism of its remaining uncritical essentialist and foundationalist bases, poststructuralism “is in fact more consistently anarchist than traditional anarchist theory has proven to be.”⁴⁵ This is because May characterizes poststructuralism as un-doing the conceptual hierarchy and representational violence upon which May argues “traditional anarchist theory” is fundamentally reliant. In this light, May sees “the theoretical wellspring of anarchism—the refusal of representation by political or conceptual means in order to achieve self-determination along a variety of registers and at different local levels⁴⁶” borne out far more consistently by the work of Deleuze, Foucault, and Lyotard than that of Proudhon, Bakunin, and Kropotkin.

In this sense, May’s fusion of poststructuralism and anarchism ultimately abandons the conception of anarchism as a political tradition which serves both a poststructuralist forebear and a contemporary political tradition that allows for an understanding of poststructuralism’s theoretical commitments as ones consonant with an anarchistic, anti-representational politics. For reasons that will be discussed and critiqued in the next chapter, May’s articulation of postanarchism results in reading the works of Foucault, Deleuze and Lyotard as anarchist political texts, ones whose status as “more consistently anarchist than traditional anarchist theory has proven to be” serves to obviate any need for non-poststructuralist anarchist theory in May’s positive proposals. Instead, he focuses on looking at how various poststructuralist theoretical constructions can be compellingly read as analyses of the social which offer themselves to decentralized struggles for local self-determination and autonomy. Anarchism, here,

⁴⁵ Ibid

⁴⁶ Ibid

becomes a name for an inadequate estimation of the political vision already articulated by poststructuralism.

While in order to elucidate this point, May turns to many theoretical tools proffered by Foucault, Deleuze, and Lyotard: Foucault's genealogy and micropolitics, Deleuze's rhizomatics and nomadology, and Lyotard's critique of domination in linguistic genres and conception of language itself as enacting power. Since May's argument is based on the identification of a common affinity for tactical conceptions of radical political potentiality by Deleuze, Foucault, and Lyotard, a detailed look at one example of these should be sufficient here. For this purpose, then, I want to turn our attention to the Foucauldian concept that May refers to as "the anarchist method *par excellence*⁴⁷": genealogy.

Genealogy can be described as an historical method appropriate to tactical (micro)politics. The tactical approach to politics is one that recognizes power and struggle as immanent to the irreducible relations of power whose contingent encounters and overlappings constitute the social field itself. Such a view is micropolitical in that it conceives of power as operating in an irreducibly multiple, networked manner. Hence, political intervention and transformation must be thought on the level of the contingent interconnection of local struggles and power relations rather than a strategic reduction to a grand problematic or narrative. Correspondingly, genealogy "is a historical account of its object," but is "one that holds history to be contingent, dispersed, shifting, and without a goal."⁴⁸ Genealogy, then, transposes the micropolitical composition of received social aggregates (capitalism, the state, history, progress, etc.) to the contingent power

⁴⁷ May, *The Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism*, 90

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 91

relations that directly constitute them onto the field of history. Against narratives which seek to demonstrate the history of an object as the playing out of some originary structure or its subordination to a teleological path, genealogy traces the concrete relations of force-upon-force that have constituted its object and, correspondingly, the possibilities for further transformation in the ensemble of power relations and practices that presently constitute it.

This process, then, is one of locating objects within the social network viewed as an infinite field of struggles and encounters that is absolutely indeterminate outside of the concrete effects of those encounters and struggles on their own terms. Hence Foucault's description of genealogy as "gray, meticulous, and patiently documentary"⁴⁹ since it is concerned with the "painstaking project of evaluating the object of critique in relation to other objects with which it is entwined, and...of evaluating those other objects."⁵⁰ In order to do this, genealogical investigation proceeds by tracing an object in terms of its "descent" and "emergence." As May describes it descent "operates with the recognition that the unity of an object is the product of a dispersion of singular events"⁵¹ which is to say that it traces the history of its object as a contingent effect of an unending, directionless play of forces. Thus, the historical work of tracing genealogical descent consists in accounting for "the coming together of these events in order to form an object that has come to appear as a unified and complete whole."⁵² Emergence constitutes not descent's dialectical opposite but its analytic complement, taking as its object "the 'hazardous play of dominations' of historical forces, the play of appropriation

⁴⁹ Foucault in Ibid, 90

⁵⁰ Ibid, 91

⁵¹ Ibid

⁵² Ibid

and subversion of some practices, objects, or forces by others, a play that is without any necessary progress or goal.⁵³ Genealogy, then, takes history as the tracing of what specific interactions amongst different power relations and practices both allowed for those objects to be taken up as such in the first place and the naming and analysis of the contingent interactions amongst social practices effected such a production. By implication, genealogy also provides a useful perspective from which to critically investigate the concrete potentialities for the transformation of certain power relationships and ensembles of practices. This is what is behind Foucault's description of genealogy as "a curative science."⁵⁴

Foucault's highlighting of the "curative" properties of genealogy make it clear that its critical function is central, and this is what makes genealogy such a prime example of the anarchistic political potentialities of poststructuralist thought that May foregrounds. Genealogy is a theoretical practice that pushes one to view the social field as constituted by a "hazardous play of dominations," a network of mobile power relationships. Just as these relationships cannot be reduced to one type of functioning or made to speak univocally of a determinate human essence, history is no more than the aggregation of their effects through time. Power relation consists of the bringing into relation of action upon action two discrete (individual or collective) bodies and they do not exist outside of the establishment of this contingent relation through a particular action or practice. While systematic linkages amongst different power relations are no doubt possible, such linkages are *discontinuous*. They are never the result of the unfolding of a particular succession of events, either based on direct causality or the expression of

⁵³ Ibid

⁵⁴ Foucault in Ibid, 91

a buried logic of history, but must be considered in the very contingency of the linkage between various events as a “diverse series, intertwined and often divergent but not autonomous, which enable us to circumscribe the ‘place’ of the event, the margins of its chance variability, and the conditions of its appearance.⁵⁵” Genealogy, then, is concerned with decomposing the received unities of social practices and the historical inevitability of progress into contingent crystallizations of tense power relations as specific dominations and discontinuous series of contingent events leading to the delimitation of social possibility along some lines and not others. In this sense, genealogy “promotes resistance at the diffuse points at which practices occur, intersect, and give rise to oppressive relations. It struggles not only on the economic or state levels, but on the epistemological, psychological, linguistic, sexual, religious, psychoanalytic, ethical, informational (etc.) levels as well.⁵⁶” This is the case precisely because in genealogy no form of power can represent any other, but rather critique must always proceed from the concrete contingency in which all power relations act and ultimately create the social as well as the possibilities for its transformation. As a theoretical practice, then, genealogy maps the way in which social power imposes itself upon us as a received reality as well as the ways we can analyze this reality to realize different formations of social power directly, without recourse to universalizing or representational justification for such action.

In light of May’s poststructuralist critique of anarchism, we can see through this example the outlining of a common territory of radical political theory between the two

⁵⁵ Foucault, Michel, “The Order of Discourse”, 68 in *Untying the Text: A Post-Structuralist Reader* ed. Robert JC Young (London and Boston: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981) 48-79

⁵⁶ May, *The Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism*, 94-95

traditions, or rather the identification of poststructuralist social theory with anarchist politics. This postanarchism is philosophically poststructuralist in terms of its refusing stable, ontological foundations in favor of the contingent interactions and immanent mutations amongst different power relationships. Politically, it is anarchist in terms of being particularly useful from a perspective of radical transformation which centers on a politicized critique of representation and seeks to effect change through decentralized resistance and the valorization of local self-determination against overcoding⁵⁷ and domination. May sees his elaboration of poststructuralism's nascent anarchist politics as drawing out of these central poststructuralist thinkers "a political perspective that emphasizes the local, intersecting, and contingent nature of political relationships."⁵⁸ But what type of possibilities for political intervention might this perspective yield?

A Better Anarchism in Four Easy Steps!: May's Guidelines for Further Postanarchist Construction

According to May, this ensemble of radical theoretical practices can be read, with an eye towards the transformation of the social along the lines of increased local self-determination and autonomy, for a set of "guidelines" that outline a certain open starting point for a "postanarchist" politics. "These guidelines," according to May, "include the call for social, personal, and political experimentation, the expansion of situated freedom, the release of subjected discourses and genres, and the limitation and reorientation of the role of the intellectual."⁵⁹

While slightly more specific than the rest of May's elaboration of postanarchism, this set of guidelines does little more than re-state what has gone before. May substitutes

⁵⁸ May, *The Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism*, 112

⁵⁹ Ibid

experimentation for the idea of absolute liberation or overthrow of the existing order based on the view that it is mistaken to see power as having an outside and that transformation instead consists in the modification of certain power relationships from a necessarily local, limited perspective. “Experimentation is the activity of trying out something else, something that may get one free of the feeling of necessity and ineluctability that attaches to practices one has been brought up on.”⁶⁰ This experimentation consists in the constant unsettling of various power relations, practices, knowledges, etc. according to a multiplicity of needs and desires that cannot be reduced to a single theory or set of theories without engaging in the dominating violence of univocalized representation.

This point connects directly to the “expansion of situated freedom,” which qualifies the concept of freedom with the understanding that “practices that may seem liberating may, because of unexpected interactions with or developments of other practices, have consequences very different from those imagined by their initiators.”⁶¹ Freedom is not an absolute concept but is relative to its position of enunciation in relation to particular struggles over the arrangements of various power relationships and the contingent alliances of resistant subjects and the production alternative local practices. As such, postanarchism’s political goal is not the realization of “total freedom” (as with its “traditional anarchist” cousins) but rather the engagement of theory as a practice within particular struggles that highlights the “weak points” of specific power relations and the possibilities of their reversal or replacement. The results may be “liberating” but only within the context of these specific struggles; engaging in

⁶⁰ Ibid, 113

⁶¹ Ibid, 114

universalization is not only a theoretical misstep but also an invitation to the mutation of practices that are liberating in a particular context into the grounds for domination in others. The expansion of situated freedom, then, involves the struggle for more social spaces for experimentation with different “practices of liberty” against particular dominating power relationships instead of viewing liberation as the univocal expression of human essence untainted by power.

The liberating of subjugated discourses is a further elaboration of the expansion of situated freedom. Discourses are necessary compliments of practices, just as all forms of power require attendant forms of knowledge and vice versa, and the suppression of one is usually coextensive with the disabling of the other. This, in turn, is reflected in May’s final “guideline” of postanarchism: the reorientation of the role of the intellectual. This last guideline, involves a re-figuring of theory itself based on the recognition that academic critical theory is a practice, a certain territory of discourse directly tied to the production and maintenance of the power formations and practices which make it possible. As such, postanarchism requires a major revision of the uncritical view of the intellectual as an outside observer who can provide a greater scope of perspective and guidance to those engaged in the struggle. May gives several reasons that the conditions of theory production necessitate this view:

First, the contingency of the effects of practices rules out the possibility of understanding oppression to arise on the basis of a single—or small set—of principles that it can be the task of anyone to understand. Second, since theory itself is a practice, and thus subject to its own genealogical investigation, the distinction between knowledge and politics that legitimates the role of the intellectual is called into question... Third, the conception of the intellectual as vanguard is grounded in a representationalist picture of political intervention, one that is abandoned with the rejection of essentialism about human nature and the recognition of the effects of representationalism in political theory.⁶²

⁶² Ibid, 118

Ultimately, then, the project of *doing* postanarchist theory requires that the way in which that theory is done be subject to its own genealogical investigation since, as we have seen up to this point, a fundamental premise of postanarchism has been that there is no outside to power, but only multiplicities of tactical positions immanent to it. As a result to “be an intellectual” requires in some way occupying a certain position in regards to the power relations that structure the possibility of such a role at all, and is thus one practice amongst many, including whatever its ostensive object of study may be.

This is essential to postanarchism, and perhaps the most important of the guidelines since it reflexively turns postanarchist critique towards postanarchism itself as a contingent, located theoretical practice with the ability to create liberating or dominating effects regardless of authorial intent. Yet this problem of producing theory is what makes it necessary to produce it at all since, “history is to be understood as a more or less contingent intersection of practices” and so “the effect of a single practice is not reducible to the goal of the actors engaging in that practice.” Hence theoretical reflection is necessary and, itself constitutes a form of intervention since “understanding the effects of practices is a matter for reflection and study, often both historical and philosophical.⁶³” This becomes quite complicated, however, when we add the consideration that if history is the result of the contingent intersection of practices, then the way in which we come to conceive of what practices mean to us in terms of their effects and how we understand those effects relating to ourselves fundamentally structures our possibilities for practical action. In this light it becomes important to consider knowledge in light of power and not simply truth. In other words, since

⁶³ Ibid, 89

knowledge is a regularized way of conceiving of or coming to know something that is socially produced and historically contingent, it is a “goal-directed social regularity,⁶⁴” that is, a practice. It is therefore necessary to subject the practice of knowledge to genealogical analysis that traces the lines of force and struggle that created it, as well as the lines of fissure or decomposition that can give clues to the possibility of its mutation or subversion.

The critical question, then, is whether postanarchism succeeds in constituting itself as the type of theoretical practice for which it so compellingly calls. I turn to a detailed treatment of this question in the next chapter; for now it will be sufficient to point out that after elaborating his four “guidelines,” May moves on to discussing not political action but formal ethics. Rather than locating his postanarchist project in the context of the revised field of anarchist political possibility he lays out, May turns towards the “two questions” that “have stalked poststructuralist discourse from its inception: Is it epistemically coherent? and Can it be ethically grounded?⁶⁵” It is, to say the least, odd that after beginning to elucidate a positive content to postanarchism beyond the revision of anarchist politics in light of poststructuralist social theory May turns to questions of the ethical viability of poststructuralism. In doing this, he effectively evacuates anarchism from any consideration as a valid source of political insight while thoroughly reconsolidating his own subject-position as an intellectual offering up this seemingly neutral philosophical evaluation of “epistemic coherence.” As we will see, this odd tension can be read back into the larger structure of his text as well as texts like those of Koch, Newman, and Call. The results, it turns out, not only

⁶⁴ Ibid, 87

⁶⁵ Ibid, 121

radically destabilize the postanarchist project, by calling into question the effects of the power relations it re/produces, but requires the work of locating that project within the politics of knowledge production under neoliberalism with which we are faced today and to which we can see postanarchism as but one response.

Chapter 2: Power/Knowledge, Post-Fordism and the Politics of Knowledge

Production Under Neoliberal Capitalism

At the end of our account of May's postanarchist theorizing, we are faced with a rather ironic and paradoxical situation: in order to demonstrate the anarchist content of poststructuralism, postanarchism directly contradicts the most productive aspects of the overlap between poststructuralism and anarchism, especially as it regards the politics of knowledge production. Poststructuralist concepts such as radically contingent micropolitics, a conception of the social as a networked field of indeterminate power relations, and a rejection of the edifices of structure and subject in favor of a genealogical analysis of how our world is produced as an irreducible multiplicity of interconnected practices, structured by specific power relations and engaged in a "play of dominations," are centrally important to the elaboration of an anarchist politics appropriate to contemporary social realities. Yet in order to do make this point, postanarchist writers have an odd habit of going directly against, in form, the most promising aspects of poststructuralist theory which they often so eloquently describe in their content.

In these accounts, anarchism is a-historicized and frozen as a reified straw-man of nineteenth century revolutionary politics which can be made relevant only in its supersession by poststructuralist ideas which are equally divorced from their historical context of emergence. In doing this, the text(s) are implicitly lifted out of their embeddedness in contemporary social practice. While postanarchism is supposed to be a project of critically theorizing the world in a way that produces the capacity to challenge or transform aspects of the power-laden social practices which compose it, social change

and contestation is cited as a vague elsewhere, while the (unstated) position of the author is one in which texts are considered in total isolation from any such contingency.

This tension is perhaps most palpable when May puts forth his four “guidelines” for a possible postanarchist politics, one of which includes the radical “limitation and reorientation of the role of the intellectual¹.” It is notable and perplexing that upon introducing this key moment in which the gaze of the postanarchist critic must necessarily, and perhaps primarily, turn in on itself as it discursively embodies practices involved in the production of the social world which is at once the object and location of any critique, May appears unable or unwilling to engage in this reflexive work in his own writing. Instead of doing this work, May proceeds in the next, and final, chapter to address “two questions [that] have stalked poststructuralist discourse from its inception: Is it epistemically coherent? and Can it be ethically grounded²?” While May and his colleagues are perfectly comfortable citing how other thinkers, notably those legitimated in academic discourse, point out that such questions must ultimately be referred to a critical analysis of the power relations which produce particular norms of epistemic coherence or ethical foundation, their own work and the position from which they write never comes under such a reflexive questioning. Thus, we are left with the ambivalent artifact of a body of theory which convincingly argues the necessity of understanding itself *as theoretical practice* within the social and yet simultaneously constitutes itself as a form of theoretical practice which radically evacuates such determinations from its own account of itself. In so doing, postanarchism leaves untouched those very practices

¹ May, *The Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism*, 112

² *Ibid*, 122

which it demands radical social theory must challenge if it is to account for and position itself as something other than a professional academic exercise.

The question for this chapter, then, is one of doing the work which the postanarchism we have been examining both calls for and systematically elides: we must locate postanarchism as a theoretical practice elaborated within the constraints of the contingent power relations which produce the norms for what gets to count as “knowledge” in our society. Specifically, we need to locate postanarchism within the politics of knowledge production as elaborated within neoliberal social organization. In order to do this, I want to propose that we examine this paradox within postanarchism wherein it literally *says* one thing (locate and reorient the role of the intellectual!) and *does* something very different (the production of theory is premised on the position of the intellectual being outside the contingency of the effects of social power it seeks to analyze!) using what May highlights as the “anarchist method *par excellence*”: Foucauldian genealogy. By doing this, I hope to highlight some of the power relations which structure the production of postanarchist theory in this fairly peculiar way. Beforehand, however, it is necessary to go into a bit more detail about how genealogy can be applied as a method here.

Getting to Know Knowledge: Genealogy Revealing Knowledge as Power

As was touched on in Chapter 1, Foucault engages in critical theoretical analysis of the social as a method to reveal power as a network of dispersed strategies, practices, and institutions as polymorphous in their constitution as they are immanent to social life. This radically contingent view of power sustains the possibility of engaging in specific genealogical analyses of how various taken-for-granted practices (or the historical ossification of multiple practices into institutions like the State) are based on contingent

relations of power that are not reducible to any particular narrative or subject. In this way, we can see how a micropolitical conception of the social, in Foucault's work, invites genealogical analysis as a method for revealing the specific ways in which the social both shapes and is shaped by particular, contingent power relations. In our case, we can use this as a conceptual tool to begin to account for those mechanisms and techniques of power that have produced the field of academic knowledge production as both a socially distinct region and a region whose very conditions of distinction always tie it back to the political question of its historical constitution and the possibilities for its transformation which bear no necessary relation to the academy as currently constituted.

Before getting ahead of ourselves, let's turn to how Foucault conceives of the densely interwoven complex of reciprocal relations between particular configurations of power and social practices as they come to constitute both our world and how we conceive ourselves in relation to it. Each and all of these networked practices which constitute the social both rely on certain pre-existing power relations as the conditions of their existence and also modify those power relations and enact new ones. That is to say, all the practices which constitute social life are in some way the expression of particular power relations. At perhaps the most basic level, a power relation is a relation of influence whereby one gets another to do something. In this, it is necessary that "the 'other' (over whom power is exercised) is recognized and maintained to the very end as a subject who acts; and that, faced with a relationship of power, a whole field of responses, reactions, results, and possible inventions open up."³ A power relationship, then, is an essential part of any social practice since, for such a practice to have a positive content at

³ Foucault, Michel "Subject and Power", 340 in *Power (The Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984)* ed. James D. Faubion (New York: The New Press, 2000), 325-349

all, it must to some extent exist at the expense of all other foreclosed possibilities. This does not necessarily entail oppression or domination; without the constraints of social power, life would be so abstract as to be without meaning, a paralyzing array of disembodied possibilities divorced from any possible actualization. In this picture, the power relation always occurs in the figure of “the event⁴” which is not a material thing yet “it is always at the level of materiality that it takes effect, that it is effect: it has its locus and consists in the relation, the coexistence, the dispersion, the overlapping, the accumulation, and the selection of material elements.⁵” A power relation consists merely in the bringing into relation of action upon action two discrete (individual or collective) bodies and it does not exist outside of the establishment of this contingent relation through action.

Genealogy, then, is the methodology of examining how certain events become possible and the contingent conditions of mutual interaction whereby a heterogeneous group of related events can form a discontinuous series in their mutually constraining effects over time. Thus we can see here how for Foucault the exercise of power is never identical with the domain of a particular ruling stratum, since power is not something possessed but something that can only be exercised in the form of a contingent relation and is only as real as it is effective. Genealogy is a way of looking at history that allows the contingency of the construction of spaces and times for the occurrence of certain power-relation events and their narration as part of a series to speak for itself rather than be subsumed within an overarching narrative or some other theoretical apparatus which imposes necessity, the idea that what is or was could not have been otherwise.

⁴ Foucault, “The Order of Discourse”, 68 in *Untying the Text*

⁵ *Ibid*, 69

Genealogy engages in the obverse of this: investigating why what is gets understood as being what it is and *not* something otherwise and, consequently, elucidating the concrete possibilities that get set up to realize something different.

With this in mind, we can now turn to the problem of how to engage in a genealogical critique of postanarchist theorizing in the mode exemplified by May, but common to the first major tomes on the subject. In this case, considering the massive gap between the content of postanarchist theory and its form as a theoretical practice, it is important to work precisely with poststructuralist and anarchist ideas (such as genealogy) in order to engage postanarchism in the work of “problematizing its own discursive contemporaneity: a contemporaneity that it questions as an event⁶.” In other words, we are in the position of reading this gap as an event manifesting the specific power relations at work in producing postanarchist theory as it is presented in May’s work and that of others.

Foucault’s writing is rich with tools to help begin this work. An auspicious starting point is with his work around the question “how have domains of knowledge been formed on the basis of social practices?⁷” In the case of academic postanarchist writings, the implicit value they have comes from bearing some kind of privileged relationship to “truth” or, in the case of social theory, the way things “really are“ in terms of a description of the social field and the possibilities it offers for change. We can see this, for example, in the progressive effacing of anarchist voices and histories from postanarchist texts since, as we’ve discussed earlier in this chapter, poststructuralist

⁶ Foucault, Michel, “The Art of Telling the Truth”, 88 in *Politics, Philosophy, and Culture: Interviews and Other writings 1977-1984* ed. Lawrence Kritzman (New York and London: Routledge, 1988) p. 86-96

⁷ Foucault, Michel, “Truth and Juridical Forms,” 1 in *Power*

analyses are presented as being, in one sense or another “more true” as critical descriptions of social reality than “classical anarchist” texts moored in the fantasies of benign human essences being restricted by repressive power. However, when we consider that it was not long ago that such essentialist discourses were themselves considered to be on the cutting edge of truth, we can begin to see how analyzing the production of “domains of knowledge” must involve tracing out the contingent power relations that give certain discourses some purchase on truth as well as the institutions and practices that distribute, as it were, the power of some discourses to “tell the truth.”

The production of knowledge, the regulated distribution of privileged relations to truth amongst various discourses, is not a supplementary activity of power but is rather its fundamental correlate without which it would be impossible to give a full account of how power relations engender historically contingent formations of subjects and objects through dispersed events where relations of asymmetric influence constrain social possibility. Foucault identifies the centrality of such mechanisms to the overall functioning of power in the practical reality that “what makes power hold good, what makes it accepted, is simply the fact that it doesn’t only weigh on us as a force that says no; it also traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms knowledge, produces discourse⁸.” With this in mind we can understand Foucault’s point clearly when he says that it is necessary for those attempting to provide critical accounts of power to engage the question of “how social practices may engender domains of knowledge that not only bring new objects, new concepts, and new techniques to light, but also give rise to totally new forms of subjects and subjects of knowledge⁹.” Any critical investigation of how the

⁸ Foucault, Michel, “Truth and Power”, 120 in *Power*

⁹ Foucault, “Truth and Juridical Forms”, 2 in *Power*

functioning of specific power relationships structure what we know as social reality--as well as providing a map of the possibilities for changing that reality--must engage with the question of how certain specific orders of power come to produce certain orders of knowledge and truth which, in turn, partially determines the possibilities offered by a given field of historical practices and power relationships, in other words, possibilities for sociality and living.

Central to this, then, is the understanding that, given the history of the establishment and transformation of different regimes of truth which work to constrain the possibilities of social reality, “the subject of knowledge itself has a history; the relation of the subject to the object; or, more clearly, truth itself has a history.¹⁰” It is therefore necessary to investigate both the ensemble of social practices and power relations that come to produce certain orders of truth as well as how such orders constrain and produce possibilities for some kinds of social reality and not others, for certain subjective possibilities and not others. If we reject the essentialist notion that there is a knowable natural order to the world and instead affirm that “there can be no relation of natural continuity between knowledge and the things that knowledge must know” then it is necessary to look at the historical constitution of truthful knowledge as “a violation of the things to be known, not a perception, a recognition, and identification of or with those things.¹¹” It is necessary, in other words, to investigate the way in which particular knowledges establish themselves on particular violations of their objects, the via imposition of constraints on both what they can be considered to be and what norms

¹⁰ Ibid

¹¹ Ibid, 9

must be imposed such that certain techniques of discourse can establish them as being that way against all others.

This is essential because it means that engaging in this genealogy of postanarchist theoretical production requires understanding how the intellectual is produced as a social role of particular function in terms of the production, maintenance, and possible subversion of the “general politics of truth” in which s/he necessarily functions as one who is supposed to be a privileged actor in elaborating discourses socially recognized as true. This ultimately means that, since knowledge is impossible without the imposition of force, “knowledge is always a certain strategic relation in which man is placed. This strategic relation is what will define the effect of knowledge; that’s why it would be completely contradictory to imagine a knowledge that is not by nature partial, oblique, and perspectival.¹²” Thus, clarifying the location of this perspective is our starting point for investigating the general regime of truth and the power relations that produce it as a particular perspective at all and, in the case of our investigation, one with a special relationship to the production of truth in our particular historical period.

In order to identify the operation of these power relationships in the constitution of knowledge, then, it makes sense to begin by asking what is the structure of the subject-position the theorist takes up in order to elucidate this paradoxical theoretical project as a “truthful” one. The way postanarchism as a theoretical practice is elaborated as a form of theoretical knowledge requiring the erasure of anarchism through its abstraction from history and living, affective multiplicities of experience and practice and its ultimate substitution with the more “consistently anarchist” and academically legitimated tradition of poststructuralism constitutes what Argentina’s Colectivo

¹² Ibid, 14

Situaciones refers to as “idealization.” This is a theoretical practice whereby the theorist “offers him/herself as a subject of the synthesizes [sic] of experience .S/he is the one that explains the rationality of what happens¹³” and as such necessarily erases the operation of power whereby, in producing theory *about* a given object, the theorist simultaneously judges his/her object against a set of given values which are not themselves interrogated precisely as a practice of power amongst others. The result is that “the intellectual...’does justice’ regarding matters of *truth*, as regards the administration-or adequateness-of what exists under the present horizon of rationality.¹⁴” In this way “the intellectual” is conceived and performed as exterior to the living contingency of history and thus serves to reify and reinscribe dominant forms of rationality by excepting them from critical investigation in the very construction of his/her object by, in form if not content, identifying his/her procedures of judgment with a “Truth” unmoored from its own historically contingent conditions of production. As a part of this operation, both the intellectual and his/her object are “idealized.” If the intellectual constructs his/her object as a particular image, frozen in one form and cut off from multiplicity and becoming in order to sustain “rational” investigation, s/he performs an idealizing operation which “expels from the constructed *image* everything that could cause its failure as an *ideal* of coherence and completeness.¹⁵”

The fact that such an operation is so central to the functioning of the academic-theoretical postanarchism machine means that this analysis can begin to point us to a symptomatic reading of *why* the way the work of May and others *works* goes so radically

¹³ Colectivo Situaciones “Prologue” in *Hypothesis 891: Mas Alla de Piquetes*, (Buenos Aires: De Mano en Mano, 2002) from page 2 as published on www.countercartographies.org/.../18-colectivo-situaciones-hypothesis-891-prologue

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ Ibid, 3

against its own content: “idealization conceals an operation that is inadvertently conservative” because “behind purity and the vocation for justice that seems to give it origin, is hidden—once again—the root of dominant values.¹⁶” The idealizing theorist places herself outside and above the immediate experiences of struggle and resistance she studies as a condition of re-presenting the discourses and understandings immanent to that struggle in a way that can count as knowledge. In so doing the theorist reproduces the dominant power relations which condition the ability for theoretical discourses to count as true knowledge on the exclusion of the collective understandings that form a necessary aspect of any collectivity resisting the power relations which structure knowledge from being able to speak their own truth. The theorist, at best, assumes as natural the specialized position of re-composing these forms of knowledge that makes them admissible for consideration as perhaps containing a kernel of truth made visible through the theorists’ application of the specialized canons of institutionally-approved thought in which they have been trained. This constitutive exclusion abandons *a priori* the possibility of developing processes of knowledge production as an immanent aspect of resistance, enabling those communities resisting dominant power relations to narrate and critically reflect upon the understandings around which they base their composition with their own voice and on their own terms; in this way idealization forecloses meaningful collective self-determination conceptually despite the fact that it may call for it explicitly.

The governing assumption here is that these immanent formations of knowledge production can only really be made knowledge through the intervention of the theorist who, always at a remove from power and struggle, generously donates their energy to

¹⁶ Ibid

freeze and abstract the immediacy and complexity of collective experience in which these knowledges are formed so as to dissect and evaluate them according to the unquestioned values of dominant forms of rationality developed according to the needs of academic disciplines rather than situated social struggles. Though often framed as working “with” or “for” the insurgent social formations they study, “the idealist does no other than projecting these values onto the idealized (at this moment what was multiple and complex turns into an *object* of an ideal)” while not only insulating those values from critique and presenting them as immediately coextensive with truth itself, but also and perhaps “more importantly, without performing a subjective *experience* that transforms him/her.¹⁷” In this way, idealization simultaneously forecloses from the outset the possibility that resistant collectivities can or should challenge the dominant values that organize knowledge, that these collectivities are capable of producing alternatives to those values based on a critique of the power relations in which they are embedded, and the very idea that those values are the result of anything but the “objective” requirements of making truthful statements. Moreover, it operates on and imposes the assumption that the dominant regime of truth and the processes of knowledge production with which it co-develops constitute both an inherent limit on the validity of theoretical knowledge produced according to different values and a necessary supplement to the discourses produced as an immanent aspect of collective resistance. While we will focus more on Colectivo Situaciones’ positive proposals for developing critical theory as a practice for undoing this mode of theorizing in the next chapter, their critique of theoretical “idealization” can here help us begin to map the operations of power which

¹⁷ Ibid

make this paradoxical mode of postanarchist theoretical elaboration not only possible but seemingly normal or necessary.

Getting back to our genealogy, we see that idealization is itself a cluster of specific power relations through which the establishment of true knowledge is simultaneously a procedure for the closure of social possibility along certain lines. This proceeds through the construction of the subject of knowledge as possessed of a particular “will to know” or a “will to truth.” In the matter of the tensions of the postanarchist theoretical practices with which we are here concerned, this effect of power is most palpable in the historical constitution of certain bodies of knowledge as having a privileged purchase on truth, a purchase we are coming to understand as being based on the theorist taking up an idealizing gaze, unembedded from the subjective experience of social struggle and transformation. This distance from the contingency and unpredictability of the social is supposed to allow the rational evaluation of practices. Thus both the freezing, for example, of the living contingency of multiplicitous clusters of social practices that both structure and are embodied in both anarchism and poststructuralism and the evaluation of such traditions in terms of static values of “epistemic coherence” and ethical foundation are directly tied to the functioning of social institutions that regulate, manage, and distribute discursive efficacy according to specific requirements of power. For Foucault the very fact that the account of “true” discourse in our society, in which the postanarchist theory we’re investigating here directly participates, is supposedly “freed from desire and power by the necessity of its form¹⁸” means that it conceals the fact that not only is the “will to truth¹⁹” ultimately a

¹⁸ Foucault, 56 in *Untying the text*

¹⁹ Ibid

will to uphold the divisions which mark and hierarchize discourses according to their relation to the dominant construction of “truth” but more importantly that “the type of division which governs our will to know...is...a system of exclusion, a historical modifiable, and institutionally constraining system. There is no doubt that this division is historically constituted.²⁰”

When taken in combination, we can see the work of Foucault and what we’ve seen so far of Colectivo Situaciones coalesce into an apparatus able to begin accounting for the difficult tension between what the postanarchist theory we’re looking at *says* and what it *does* as a theoretical practice in terms of a concrete (micro)politics of knowledge production. Foucault helps elucidate the context of the system of discursive divisions and reifications--described by Colectivo Situaciones as “idealization”--in terms of the function of the construction of truth and knowledge within a system of radical exclusion whereby discourses are regulated and accepted or rejected in terms of their relation to truth, that is, their status as admissible knowledge according to their accession to historically specific criteria “reinforced and renewed by whole strata of practices, such as pedagogy...and the system of books, publishing, libraries; learned societies in the past and laboratories now.²¹” This system of producing knowledge by stratifying and excluding discourses that do not fit within the norms dictated by the will to truth is also reinforced, “no doubt more profoundly, by the way in which knowledge is put to work, valorized, distributed, and in a sense attributed, in a society.²²” Thus, in order to analyze

²⁰ Ibid, 54

²¹ Ibid, 55

²² Ibid

the function of this will to truth, it is necessary to analyze the broader system in which knowledge is “put to work” in a particular social formation.²³

With this in mind, it is important to return in more detail to something that has been noted earlier: all of the authors of the first wave of postanarchist theory which we have been discussing are professional academics employed by universities: May is a professor of philosophy at Clemson, Call a professor of modern European history at Cal Polytechnic and Newman teaches in the Politics Department at Goldsmiths University of London. This is of particular importance because the academy is a central institution in the contemporary operation of the “prodigious machinery designed to exclude²⁴” that produces the will to truth enacted through the constitution and elaboration of particular knowledges. We can thus begin to identify the gap between what this group of postanarchist texts *say* and what they *do* as being correlated to the concrete tension involved in theorizing the mutually constituting relationship between power and knowledge as part of challenging the way in which power operates in the social field while engaging in such writing from within the constraints required to have such knowledge count as “true” according to, in this case, the institution of the academy. What we can see here is that such requirements can, in turn, be mapped back on to the authorial performance of academic theorization as somehow removed from the social. In

²³ This is not a question of “good theory” being outside of this relation and “bad theory” being inside it. Rather, it is necessary to orient our investigation to looking at all theoretical production as engaging in practices that are always in relation to this truth conceived as “that prodigious machinery designed to exclude” (Foucault, “The Order of Discourse,” 56). In this light, theoretical practices can be evaluated in terms of what they do, that is how, as theoretical practices, they appropriate, reproduce, or intervene in the social conditions for the production of truth and knowledge which, as we’ve discussed, are always power relations and forms of constraint.

²⁴ Ibid, 56

the case of postanarchism, the theorist's idealizing gaze is cast to the disparate theoretical traditions of poststructuralism and anarchism, and the academic intervention comes in the form of reifying anarchism as a body of texts whose limitations can then be rationally evaluated from the perspective of specific truth criteria imposed by the theorist whose familiarity with the critical application of such criteria comes from academic training and is legitimated through the obtainment of credentials and the professionalization of their theoretical activity.

It is important to remember here that the will to truth is necessarily affirmed/assumed by those whose (literal) business it is to make true statements due to their qualifications to apply the procedures and discourses of knowledge, and thus assume the power given to truth as constructed in a particular time and place. However, in order for power to be effective as truth in terms of making certain ensembles of power relations effective through the dominance of certain socially-embedded forms of practice, truth is portrayed as being separate from power. As Foucault puts it, when we talk about knowledge it is normal to discuss coherence, logic, accuracy, etc. but “we speak of the will to truth no doubt least of all. It is as if, for us, the will to truth and its vicissitudes were masked by truth itself in its necessary unfolding.²⁵” This is because the discourses that have tied truth to knowledge have, at least since the Enlightenment, functioned around the idea of truth inhering to the world. Knowledge is true to the extent that it apprehends the logic that lies behind the unfolding of contingent events. In this way, knowledge's relationship to power is masked through its own operation since the imposition of constraints is not traced back to power but is supposed to come from the disavowal of the desire for power and the affirmation instead of the effective

²⁵ Ibid, 56

application of techniques which are supposed to allow for knowledge of the ever-unfolding truth of the world.

Yet this leaves open the question of “what is at stake in the will to truth, in the will to utter this ‘true’ discourse, if not desire and power?²⁶” If a central strategy by which knowledge both enables and embodies the exercise of power is through the “machinery designed to exclude” embodied in the will to truth, the effectiveness of that strategy is predicated upon the denial of the very power it exercises such that knowledge’s purchase on truth appears innate and natural, thus legitimating its claim to being able to make statements which have precisely the *power* of truth.

A Wildcat Strike in the Knowledge Factory? Power/Knowledge and/as Post-Fordist Labor

With this in mind, we need to apply our understandings of the social production and deployment of power/knowledge to a critical look at how “true knowledge” is produced in neoliberal capitalist society, and how its power is wielded. Central to this account will of course be the academy, a social institution whose complex functions include the distribution and regulation of the ability to utter truthful discourses (a privilege that only comes from years of intensive labor), managing the production of knowledge according to disciplinary requirements, and ensuring the knowledges produced within its purview submit to and reproduce myriad socially embedded hierarchies. As anarchist theorists Sandra Jeppesen and Ashir Latif briefly sketch, the institution of the academy can be seen as the institutional entrenchment of various forms of “machinery designed to exclude” in the production and codification of discourses as true knowledge.:

²⁶ Ibid

Knowledge is admitted to the pantheon by explaining, critiquing, agreeing with, or otherwise referencing existing inductees into the canon. And the touchstones of knowledge, old and new, are building on (and building up) the European tradition of knowledge: the primacy of the written word, the relegation of orality to the position of secondary evidence, the singular authoritative arbiter of truth and resultant marginalization of subjectivity, the strict separation between spheres of learning and doing. The practical acquisition of knowledge is subordinated to abstract mechanics and linear thinking. By placing the intellectual developments and methodology that those developments crystallized (and which in turn framed later thought) as the accepted body of thought, teaching entrenches the primacy of those developments and solidifies those modalities as the canon on which further learning, teaching, and scholarship is carried out²⁷

This short critical passage rapidly encapsulates how the operations of idealization discussed in the previous section are produced by and end up re-producing other hierarchical power relations which structure knowledge. Ultimately, however, since the academy is itself located in a particular social context and genealogy, such an investigation must point beyond the academy to show how it is traversed and structured by power formations and social practices whose very exclusion from the series of objects and practices associated with “the academy” makes both their current formation and that of academia possible at all.

Dave Eden, an Australian anarchist and PhD student, urges us to locate the production of knowledge in relation to capital; that is, how through institutions such as the academy knowledge production comes to be constituted as a form of labor. However, rather than reducing the multiple formations of power/knowledge to mere effects of capital, we can keep Foucault in mind and investigate the complex genealogy of force-upon-force that can account for the effects of mutual constitution between

²⁷ Jeppesen, Sandra and Ashar Latif, “Towards an Anti-Authoritarian Anti-Racist Pedagogy,” 295 in *Constituent Imagination* ed. David Graeber and Stephen Shukaitis (Edinburgh, Oakland: AK Press, 2007) 288-300

capital and the dominant order of knowledge production. As Eden points out, academic knowledge production is immediately caught up and in many ways given its specific form by “creating the boundaries for thought to function in the social machine...Even if study appears to have no direct relationship to later wage-labor it still works to create mass intellectuality; it produces the linguistic-cognitive abilities of the student in a way that is *generally* copacetic with the functions of capital.²⁸” In order to analyze this relation between knowledge production and the organization of labor I want to turn to the autonomists, a group of Marxists theorists whose heterodox interpretation of Marx renders them especially useful for understanding the relation of intellectuality and knowledge production to the process of codifying certain activities as “labor.”

A group of dissident Italian Marxists active in the 1960s and 70s, the autonomists in large measure radicalize Marx’s conception of the general intellect²⁹, moving away from thinking about society as an expression of the forces of economic production and instead focusing on the co-implication of capitalist production and the social itself in the form of Post-Fordist production: that is, the organization of economic production around the increasing centrality of immaterial, communicative, affective, and service-based labor to capitalist production which forms a central pillar in the architecture of neoliberal capitalism. The Autonomist intervention takes as its starting point an historical

²⁸ Eden, Dave “Black Sails in the Corridor: Treasonous Minds and the Desire for Mutiny,” 267 in *Constituent Imagination*, 263-275

²⁹ Cf. Marx, Karl, *The Grundrisse* (New York: Vintage Books, 1973) p. 706. “The development of fixed capital indicates to what degree general social knowledge has become a direct force of production, and to what degree, hence, the conditions of the process of social life itself have come under the control of the general intellect and been transformed in accordance with it. To what degree the powers of social production have been produced, not only in the form of knowledge, but also as immediate organs of social practice, of the real life process.”

fact that troubles Marx's picture of the General Intellect: the reduction of necessary human labor to a minimum has resulted not in a "crisis of work" but rather a dispersion of "production" and its attendant relations of power and extraction across the social.

According to the autonomists, post-Fordism emerged in a sort of "counter-revolution"³⁰ against the Western social upheavals occurring from the late 1960's through the end of the 1970's. "What was '68, after all," ask David Graeber and Stephen Shukaitis, "if not a rebellion against the stifling conformity and engines of bureaucratic control, against the factory system and work in general, in the name of individual freedoms and the liberation of desire"³¹? The result, however, was not the smashing of capitalism as a social system but rather the forcing of capital to adjust in order to incorporate the demands of the rebels into the productive process itself. Rather than fall to the grassroots self-valorization of the affective, creative, and communicative aspects of life against the control of the welfare state and the system of factory production, capitalism incorporated the former into its center, becoming flexible and decentralized to turn these autonomous forms of production into a source of limitless growth for capital (albeit with a significant analogue in the development of new techniques of social control and normalization to make way for this growth and the increasing capitalist codification of life itself). Thus, we can see the development of post-Fordism as a complex strategic reaction across various capitalist networks to the rise of radical resistance to work, bureaucracy, and social conformity that flared up in various

³⁰ Virno specifies this counter-revolution is to be understood as "meaning not the simple restoration of a previous state of affairs, but, literally, a revolution to the contrary, that is, a drastic innovation of the economy and institutions in order to re-launch productivity and political domination." Virno, Paolo. *A Grammar of the Multitude: For An Analysis of Contemporary Forms of Life* (Los Angeles and New York: Semiotext(e), 2004), 99

³¹ Shukaitis, Stephen and David Graeber "Introduction," 27 in *Constituent Imagination* 11-37

locations around the globe from '68 through the 1970's. "The masterpiece of...capitalism," Paolo Virno sums up, "consists of having transformed into a productive resource precisely those modes of behavior which, at first, made their appearance under the semblance of radical conflict."³²

The results of such a transformation are fundamentally ambivalent. On the one hand, since one of capital's central resources is human sociality itself "social time in today's world seems to have come unhinged because there is no longer anything which distinguishes labor from the rest of human activities."³³ Ensuring that the social is well-regulated and managed in order to be conducive to this new form of capitalist production means a virtually limitless field of intervention opens, populated by techniques and practices that function to subordinate these autonomously-generated social processes to capital's need to incorporate them into its models of value and scarcity as "the business firm exploits and neutralizes the dynamics of the event and the process of the constitution of difference and repetition by making them depend on the logic of valorization,"³⁴ that is, of wage labor. The intensive and extensive mechanisms of control and discipline which, with the rise of industrial capitalism, sought to form the bodies of proletarian and proletariat (collective body) according to the needs of production³⁵ open out onto the social field itself as populations, identities, cultural forms, and affects come under new kinds of control appropriate to their diffuse and immanent locatedness in the fabric of social life itself. "In Post-Fordism...since the 'life of the mind' is included fully within the time-space of production, an essential homogeneity

³² Virno, Paolo, *A Grammar of the Multitude*, 99

³³ Ibid, 103

³⁴ Lazzarato, Maurizio "From Capital-Labor to Capital-Life," 198 *Ephemera* 4(2004), 187-208

³⁵ E.g. Foucault, *Discipline and Punish* (London and New York: Vintage Books, 1995)

prevails³⁶” at the level of signification, meaning, and affect rather than the ordering of relations between material bodies.

The obverse of this development is that while the prerogatives of capital are accompanied by a new diffusion of normalizing mechanisms throughout the social, it also gives rise, in part, to a great expansion of the powers of the immanent, common productions of the social (e.g. language, culture, affective relations, identities and subjective positions, etc.), which constitute a force that is autonomous with regards to capital. Information and computer technologies, for example, embody this dual utility, capable of expanding the control of capital but also of giving rise to new networks based on self-determination and resistance to the imposition of capitalist norms and valorization (e.g. the drawing of the hierarchizing line between remunerated and non-remunerated labor). “What has happened,” autonomist theorist Maurizio Lazzarato explains, “is that a new ‘mass intellectuality’ has come into being, created out of a combination of the demands of capitalist production and the forms of ‘self-valorization’ that the struggle against work has produced.”³⁷”

As mentioned above, immaterial labor is central to the architecture of post-Fordist organization of production. Where Fordist factory production separated the worker from her subjectivity in order to be a disciplined part of the ensemble of machine production, the skills demanded by post-Fordist workers “are increasingly skills involving cybernetics and computer control (and horizontal and vertical

³⁶ Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude*, 103

³⁷ Lazzarato Maurizio, “Immaterial Labor,” 133 in *Radical Thought in Italy: A Potential Politics*, ed. Michael Hardt and Paolo Virno (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 133-150

communication).³⁸ In this way, the very subjectivity and sociability of the worker becomes the source of value in remunerated labor whose demands on workers have become increasingly immaterial in nature. Labor can no longer be simply defined as a “power” that is applied to raw materials in order to transform them into consumable commodities, but rather “work” becomes “the capacity to activate and manage productive cooperation...Workers are expected to become ‘active subjects’ in the coordination of the various functions of production, instead of being subjected to it as simple command.”³⁹ The imposition of work, then, can be viewed as a strategic practice which is key to producing the power relations in which capitalist command can subsume ever greater swathes of the social, whether or not those enacting such relations are themselves capitalists in the traditional sense.

This transformation finds its correlate in the fact that production processes demand that workers develop and optimize the immanent intellectual and social capacities they embody into modes of subjectivity and communication prescribed by the shifting needs of production to always incorporate, fix, manage, and commodify this immanent productivity of the social. Hence the institutionalization of workers’ autonomous creative potential at the center of production in the form of “a collective learning process“ which subsequently becomes “the heart of productivity⁴⁰” is coextensive with the development of new, intensive modes of the control and policing of subjectivity itself. For, where in the factory a worker’s attitude towards their work was irrelevant to management if they continued being quantitatively productive, the post-Fordist centrality of immaterial processes of production mean that “the worker’s

³⁸ Ibid, 132

³⁹ Ibid, 134

⁴⁰ Ibid

personality and subjectivity have to be made susceptible to organization and command.⁴¹”

Here we see the intertwining of productivity and political domination is inseparable from this dynamic development of immaterial labor at the heart of the post-Fordist economy. This is visible when, with the incorporation of subjectivity and autonomous cooperation into the heart of the production process, “it becomes necessary for the subject’s competence in the areas of management, communication, and creativity to be made compatible with the conditions of ‘production for production’s sake.’⁴²” In other words, the incorporation of subjectivity and affect into the productive process as central sources of value does not translate to capital’s relinquishing its power over these capacities in favor of their self-determined collective development by those “producers” who live in and through them. The result is, in fact, exactly the opposite as capital comes to manage and control with ever-increasing intensity the vicissitudes of subjective life that it was perfectly happy to ignore (insofar as they did not impede profit in other ways like subversion of the factory chain of command) before they became a direct source of value. In an ironic inversion of the refusal to become a “cog in the machine” that typified the rhetorics of resistance adopted by workers and students alike in the uprisings of 1968 and beyond, “the slogan ‘become subjects,’ far from eliminating the antagonism between hierarchy and cooperation...actually re-poses the antagonism at a higher level because it both mobilizes and clashes with the personality of the individual worker.⁴³” It is key to keep in mind, however, is that this innovation, resulting in a much more polymorphous, dispersed, and powerful capitalism capable of suffusing, rather than

⁴¹ Ibid, 133

⁴² Ibid, 134

⁴³ Ibid

structuring from the outside, social life itself, is the result of the autonomous activity of the insurgents of the 1960s-70s who sought to overthrow capitalism in favor of the autonomous valorization of their own immanent social productions.

Primary here are precisely those processes of the autonomous production of culture, communication, and subjective life which escape and resist the prerogatives of capitalist command. This autonomous productivity exceeds and precedes any mode of production and contains the potential for the autonomous productions which can radically challenge it and force it to take on new forms which then, in turn, react back on formations of immanent social productivity. The idea of class struggle is preserved, but not as the special province of those with a particular relation to the means of production. Rather, production is first and foremost the autonomous production of social life through the self-determined valorization of the collective goods of mass intellectuality. Instead of “the sort of *homogeneity by subtraction* which the concept of ‘proletariat’ usually implies⁴⁴,” the agent of this struggle is always a contingent constellation of social singularities. Not conceived as an entity, this polymorphous agent is visible only as an event or a series of events, as “dynamic moments of composition—in which the working class [sic] creates new structures, alliances, forms of communication and cooperation” which is then met with the countermove of capital as “decomposition, through which capital is forced to turn some of these tools back on it, so as to introduce hierarchies and divisions that destroy working class solidarity.⁴⁵” In this sense, post-Fordist capital is constantly engaged in the paradoxical project of having to simultaneously produce and police its own internal outside. In the proliferation of “mass intellectuality” through the

⁴⁴ Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude*, 110

⁴⁵ Shukaitis and Graeber, “Introduction,” in *Constituent Imagination*, 27

development of the forces of immaterial labor, capital derives its central source of value from the ongoing process of decomposing those autonomous forms of sociality that are not subordinated to capital's machinery of valuation and stratification that captures and encodes immaterial "common goods" as valuable commodities.

Central to this process is the fact that the designation of which forms of productive⁴⁶ activity count as "labor" and what do not count becomes a border that is "arbitrary, changeable, subject to political decisionmaking."⁴⁷ as capital draws value from the unquantifiable productivity of "common goods" immanent to social life itself. As Lazzarato makes clear, "unemployment, poverty, and precariousness are the direct result of the action of companies (and the politics of employment): the capture of social productivity imposes a social hierarchization, a division between what is 'productive' and what is not. The company exploits society above all by exploiting workers."⁴⁸ This means that a central area of immaterial labor is that which "produces the 'cultural content' of the commodity" and "involves a series of activities that are not normally recognized as 'work'—in other words, the kinds of activities involved in defining and fixing cultural and artistic standards, fashions, tastes, consumer norms, and, more strategically, public opinion." Thus, we can see post-Fordist labor as a continuum with employment on one end and unemployment on the other, connected by infinite degrees of variation, embodied in temporary or 'precarious' labor arrangements attenuated to the needs of capital for constant 'innovation' and 'flexibility' in the face of the endless rhizomatic productivity of the social figured as an infinite (that is, immanently self-producing) source of value. As Virno puts it "unemployment is non-remunerated labor and labor, in

⁴⁶ In the sense of the production of common goods immanent to sociality

⁴⁷ Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude*, 104

⁴⁸ Lazzarato, "From Capital-Labor to Capital-Life," 199

turn, is remunerated unemployment.⁴⁹ This immanent social production is harnessed by post-Fordist capital in *both* the form of remunerated labor *and* the techniques to amplify, manage, and capture the non-remunerated labor immanent to social life through means other than tying it to the valorization of a wage and techniques of workplace management and command.

This means that post-Fordist production is dependent upon the incalculable productive reserve of “hidden labor...non-remunerated life, that is to say, the part of human activity which, alike in every respect with the activity of labor [conceived in the post-Fordist mode above], is not, however, calculated as a productive force.⁵⁰” The methods of harnessing, optimizing, and managing the potentialities of this “hidden labor,” then, requires the development of techniques of control and normalization which, like the labor itself, would not typically be associated with the processes of production. However, revising our view of production to one appropriate to the structures of post-Fordism, wherein the immanent productions of human sociality are primary sources of value, we can see how in a much more radical fashion than even Marx was capable of theorizing, the management of the raw materials of production (including “living labor”) and forms of social control and normalization heretofore largely considered “non-economic” (e.g. racism, sexism, homophobia, pathologization of irreducible cultural difference, the prison-police-nonprofit-industrial complex, etc. etc.) become indissociable from the productive process broadly rendered. As Virno points out, “in the post-Fordist era, surplus-value is determined above all by the gap between production time which is not calculated as labor time and labor time in the true sense of

⁴⁹ Virno, *A Grammar of the Multitude*, 103

⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 104

the term,” that is, in the sense of the aggregate of the common goods of human sociality. Thus, in the same movement, capital’s post-Fordist composition both extracts surplus value and generalizes social control.

Here, I think, we can see where the autonomist critique of the post-Fordist organization of production dovetails with Foucault’s analysis of power/knowledge. Foucault, in effect, outlines the social constitution of knowledge as a process coextensive with the strategic effects of power: in order for a particular order of power relations to be effective, it necessarily produces an order of truth, a set of values that designate certain discourses as being able to enunciate the “truth” of the world “as it is” in a given ordering of reality. In this way, the will to truth functions to extend the ability of the dominant power structure to define the terms of what gets to count as knowledge at all. This is the case because the will to truth portrays the particular order of truth imposed as part of the general social ordering of power as identical to truth itself, removed from any power and thus an inherent aspect of “true discourse.” In so doing, truth is made to appear not a phenomenon of power that can be challenged and modified based on its effects, and in so doing the will to truth functions as a “prodigious machinery designed to exclude” precisely because it makes such exclusions appear to be the result of a necessity outside the bounds of power. This should not be mistaken as an epiphenomenon of power, but should instead be seen as a central process whereby power relations are able to circumscribe and normalize the potentially infinite possibilities for subjective life possible in the social production of discourse through the imposition of an “order of truth” as a universally binding value.

Autonomist theory allows us to specify this architecture as it operates in post-Fordist capitalism. As post-Fordist organization brings immaterial, affective, and

subjective labor into the heart of the production, the management of the social production of discourse, immediately intertwined with the production of subjectivity and culture immanent to social life itself, becomes an essential project of capitalist social organization. In this mode, capital produces value in a manner analogous to how the will to truth produces knowledge: it extracts value from the ability, that is, the power, to unilaterally control the hierarchizing border between remunerated and non-remunerated labor, while silently requiring both, just as knowledge functions as an effect of power by imposing a hierarchizing border between discursive ensembles given access to truthful speech and those denied that access, yet true knowledge could not exist without this constitutive exclusion. Hence, in post-Fordist capitalism, the politics of knowledge production, the question of who can enunciate “truthful discourse,” what they must do in order to gain access to such a position of speech, and what power relationships invest that enunciation, is indissociable from overall questions of the organization of social power. In the context of post-Fordism, to critique the power relations structuring knowledge is also to critique the formations that structure economic production, social control, and normalization. By extension, we can begin to see how the practice of theory can become an insurgent intervention, but can just as easily reproduce as a practice the power relations it critiques in its content.

That Meant War: Neoliberalism and The Academy

Here, we can begin to see the passage between post-Fordism and neoliberalism is a slight one indeed. If anything, neoliberalism can be seen as the instantiation of post-Fordist forms on a global scale in that the neoliberal project consists first and foremost in the elimination of those autonomous productions of immanent social intellectuality, cultures, subjectivities, modes of language and life, which pose any obstacle to the

utmost movement and flexibility of global capital. As Lazzarato puts it, “the capitalist appropriation of common goods” is what “constitutes the essence of the neo-liberal strategy,⁵¹” the project of totalizing capital’s control over life. Wendy Brown points out that neoliberalism constitutes an expression⁵² of post-Fordism’s immediate linkage of social control and economic production in the form of a mode of governmentality, that is, “a mode of governance encompassing but not limited to the state, and one that produces subjects, forms of citizenship and behavior, and a new organization of the social.⁵³” Neoliberalism is ultimately a system of governmentality, a forcible imposition of control over the autonomous social production of common goods which proceeds through specific “techniques of governing that exceed [but certainly include] express state action and orchestrate the subject’s conduct toward him or herself.⁵⁴” The specific way in which neoliberalism achieves this is through the imposition of techniques for

⁵¹ Lazzarato, “From Capital-Labor to Capital-Life,” 200

⁵² To be clear, I am not using the term “expression” here in the sense of neoliberalism being an epiphenomenal or superstructural expression of an economic truth. Indeed, the very structure of post-Fordism makes such a relation impossible, since it is premised on the blurring of any line between base and superstructure. In that same sense, neoliberalism is not simply an ideology instrumentally promulgated to realize the prerogatives of the economic base, but a complex and irreducible network of logics and practices. Its emergence has a complex, contingent and mutually constituting relationship with the emergence of post-Fordist production whose equation of economic growth and social control means the drive for the limitless increase of both. Certainly neoliberalism is a key modality by which this double drive is realized throughout the social in the newfound acceptability of justifying even the most unbelievably violent and regressive actions by state and capital alike in terms of economic cost and benefit (cf. Brown, “Neoliberalism and the End of Liberal Democracy” 40-43 in *Edgework* see note 53 for full citation). However, this does not mean that neoliberalism is merely a feature of post-Fordism but on the contrary calls for the detailed genealogy of the contingent conditions of mutual formation between the post-Fordist world of production and neoliberal governmentality. While such a genealogy is well beyond the scope of this thesis, that should not justify the assumption that the absence of the latter constitutes a justification of the former.

⁵³ Brown, Wendy, *Edgework* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005), 37

⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 43

directing behavior and shaping subjectivity according to an economically rational cost-benefit analysis; cost should always be minimized, benefit maximized.

For Brown, the mass imposition of “institutional practices and rewards for enacting this vision” wherein all available resources of social power are directed towards “the production of all human and institutional action as rational entrepreneurial action, conducted according to a calculus of utility, benefit, or satisfaction against a microeconomic grid of scarcity, supply and demand, and moral value-neutrality” means that “not only is the human being configured exhaustively as *homo oeconomicus*, but all dimensions of human life are cast in terms of market rationality.⁵⁵” Neoliberalism is an organizing logic which brings into contingent coordination multiple social institutions, practices, and discourses in order to enact on an irreducible multiplicity of registers “the dissemination of social norms designed to facilitate competition, free trade, and rational economic action on the part of every member and institution of society” such that “the market is *the* organizing principle of the state and society.⁵⁶” It is around this logic that a rhizomatic network of governing techniques have been organized.

Thus we can see that the historic rise of neoliberalism confirms in a very significant way Lazzarato’s assertion that post-Fordism’s unprecedented investment in and growth of the means for the autonomous development of the immanent mass intellectuality of the social would require guidance and regulation in the form of an unprecedented normalization and policing of social life according to the needs of capital. Neoliberalism can be seen, in light of Brown’s critical explication, as a way of describing a whole series of interconnected mechanisms whereby “capitalist production has invaded

⁵⁵ Ibid, 40

⁵⁶ Ibid, 41 My italics

our lives and has broken down all the oppositions among economy, power, and knowledge” to the end that “the process of social communication (and its principal content, the production of subjectivity) becomes here directly productive because in a certain way it ‘produces’ production.⁵⁷ This is because neoliberalism refers precisely to the logic of governance which remakes the social world according to capital’s need for both unimpeded flexibility and growth and the production of subjects who increasingly regulate their own participation in the social production of common goods according to capital’s needs, now understood as the normative underpinnings of citizenship itself. In this way “neoliberalism normatively constructs and interpellates individuals as entrepreneurial actors in every sphere of life” as “the extension of economic rationality to formerly noneconomic domains and institutions reaches individual conduct, or, more precisely, prescribes the citizen-subject of a neoliberal order.⁵⁸” As all aspects of social life are subjected to neoliberal governmentality, so too is the social reworked to be amenable to a formation of capital centrally premised on capturing forms of communication and sociality that are part of the immanent productivity that is the very being of the social world and subjecting them to normalization and quantitative valuation according to the needs of profit-seeking, market-based entities⁵⁹.

Moreover, this form of governmentality entails that the imposition of the border between valorized and non-valorized forms of social productivity carries dramatically increased stakes in terms of the political content of its location. The encouragement of forms of sociality amenable to post-Fordist production, ready and ideally willing to

⁵⁷ Lazzarato, “Immaterial Labor,” 143

⁵⁸ Brown, “Neoliberalism and the End of Liberal Democracy”, 42 in *Edgework*

⁵⁹ A category which neoliberal governmentality seeks to expand to all entities, material or relational.

submit to the terms of capitalist valorization, also entails the flipside of a virtually limitless potential for disciplining or even eradicating forms of social production, cultures, subjective formations, modes of communication and sociality, which affirm any end other than the maximization of profit and minimization of cost. As recent history has shown, such formations risk being subjected to extreme violence precisely because they are figured into the calculus of neoliberalism *as a cost* and thus as something whose domination and/or elimination is equated with the achievement of a social good. Neoliberalism, in this sense, can be seen as a sort of polymorphous militarization of post-Fordism wherein governing logics become dominant which not only justify but demand that a social war be carried out to eliminate, by any means economically sensible, those social formations deemed unproductive in the name of the optimization of production.

Here, then, we can see how under neoliberal conditions of governmentality, knowledge production is increasingly policed in terms of determining whether or not it is “productive” within the institutional setting of the academy. This is of significant importance since the academy is perhaps the social institution par excellence where the Foucauldian critique of power/knowledge and the autonomist analysis of the post-Fordist organization of labor dovetail. What purpose does the academy serve if not to materially instantiate the “prodigious machinery designed to exclude” by making access to the power of enunciating true statements contingent upon submission to institutionally-produced courses of study and the complex status hierarchies of academia? In this way too, power is tied to labor and professionalization, since a significant part of becoming an academic consists in learning how to constitute one’s thought in a manner appropriate to the constraints of one’s academic discipline, the

requirement to “publish or perish,” and the need to climb (or at least assume a comfortable place on) the ladder of the professional hierarchy into which one is placed as an academic. In this sense, the academy can also be seen as a site in which neoliberal rationality dovetails with the “prodigious machinery designed to exclude” that is the will to truth. Applied to this will, the neoliberal norm of obeying market rationality fundamentally modifies the constraints applied to what discourses can be considered true by making obedience to a market rationality a chief criterion of acceptability. To write theory that does not obey but instead resists the power relations reproduced through theoretical practices based on idealization, objectification, and reification is to risk one’s ability to “speak the truth” since in order to retain the legitimation *as* truth conferred through the institutional and symbolic power of the academy one must make one’s work “profitable” to that institution in some respect. In this way the requirements of the academy are activated by neoliberalism as a form of governmentality regulating the production of knowledge. This can be seen in the defunding of the humanities in favor of the more directly profitable research sciences as well as requirement that newer academic professionals “publish or perish,” effectively constitutes a redoubled source of pressure on those newer academics to be conservative and reproduce rather than resist the conventions of academic knowledge production and the power relations that structure it.

At this point as well, we can see the enactment of neoliberal strategy as an offensive against forms of social production that are not valorized by the imposition of the wage and inclusion in the non-hidden world of productive labor. In order to have a purchase on the power of the academy to make true statements in a theoretical context it is necessary to submit to conditions of intellectual/disciplinary acceptability as

professional obligations. To produce theory against these constraints is to not do, or at least challenge doing, “one’s job.” This is because academic knowledge production is structured as a professional task that consists in “doing justice” to one’s objects of study through purifying one’s subject position as an author of every trace of social location in order to realize the will to truth. This operation masks how power relations constrain and determine the production of knowledge and ultimately makes the power relations it enacts that much more pervasive as they become difficult to name and challenge within the realm of what is socially produced as “true” discourse, as theory. In this way, it becomes visible how the material constraints and stratifications placed upon knowledge production by and through the institution of the academy function to both conceal and strengthen the power relations that produce and are produced through writing and disseminating academic theory. Because of this, the site of the academy is of particular importance here because it is in and through that network of institutions that the ordering of knowledge as an operation of power and the post-Fordist organization of knowledge production as a particularly important form of labor are inextricably intertwined in their effects.

This critique can be applied to the problems of knowledge production in advanced sectors of capitalist society fairly generally. However, it is of specific importance here because of its centrality to understanding the otherwise unexplained gap between what postanarchist theory says and what it does. The problematic identified in postanarchist theory consists in the fact that these texts position themselves against the reproduction of these structuring power relations within theory, while dutifully reproducing them in order to make that point with the force of Truth. The analysis of how power relations established by post-Fordist social organization structure and stratify

knowledge production through the institution of the academy, then, allows for an explanation of why postanarchism does this, seemingly against every authorial intention. In this way too, it becomes possible to pose this problem not simply as an example of a bad argument or defective logic, but as an immediately political issue concerning the structures of power that produces the values of what constitutes sound logic or a “good argument” in such a way that they appear self-evident.

This indicates a significant challenge in light of the problems highlighted in postanarchist theory that takes us back to the curious tension between what postanarchist theory says and what it does. Ultimately, the experience of that gap or tension must be accounted for by doing what the theory itself does not: situating its production as a form of social practice produced and constrained by the politics of knowledge production in the context of neoliberalism and the neoliberal academy. The absence of this critical-genealogical situation of postanarchist theory within this political account of knowledge production results in the paradoxical elaboration of a theoretical text which blocks as a practice the very interventions it calls for in its content, a result whose occurrence is what motivated May to name “the limitation and reorientation of the role of the intellectual” as a central project for any postanarchist politics. Because the authors identify knowledge production in general, and the specialized knowledge production structured by the academy specifically, as occurring in the context of the historically-situated power relations that postanarchist politics seeks to challenge, it would appear that the next step would be to apply such a critical understanding to their own practices of producing postanarchist theory. Because such a dimension is absent, however, the “first wave” of postanarchist theory yields a knowledge tacitly but fundamentally predicated upon an authorial subject position whose institutional

legitimation (in the concrete form of professionalization) and ostensive removal from the contingency of social struggle, from the effects of power and its constraints on knowledge production, allow the theorist “to articulate the nature of oppression, its principles, and the routes of escape.⁶⁰” In this way, these texts effectively reproduce the effects of power upon knowledge in the form of an unquestioned will to truth. We are left, then, with an unintentionally ironic body of theory which functions within “a representationalist picture of political intervention⁶¹” while calling for the abandonment and subversion of the same.

This critique, however, is not meant to constitute a rejection of this theoretical production *tout court*—given the scope of the foregoing critique, such a conclusion would necessitate the abandonment of theory as such, which is a problematically universalist prescription to say the least. Rather, the manifestation of the power relations that structure knowledge production in contemporary Western societies as a particularly difficult contradiction in postanarchist theory should function as a signpost pointing to possibilities for developing insurgent practices of knowledge production that go beyond the limitations of postanarchist theory that we have been critiquing up to this point. We are left with the question of what it would mean to develop forms of “knowledge...not above or outside practice” in a way that undoes the conceptual and practical separation between theory and praxis to incorporate the recognition that the formation of any knowledge “is itself a practice that cannot be judged in isolation from its effects.⁶²”

This signpost, in other words, means that it is necessary to situate knowledge production, both that which occurs in the academy and that which does not, within the

⁶⁰ May, *The Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism*, 117

⁶¹ *Ibid*, 118

⁶² *Ibid*, 118

historically contingent power relations that both constitute a condition of its possibility and which it can either reproduce or resist at each moment. Ultimately, this means subsuming theory within the milieu of “the event” discussed above in relation to Foucault. Rather than a static artifact with a univocal relation to an unquestioned value of truth, knowledge both a reflection of the power relations in and through which it is produced and a contingent part of those relations, the basis of its capability to act as a block or challenge to the ordering of power in which it is located. As also noted above, locating knowledge within the event that its production in part constitutes and is constituted by means placing it within this contingent ensemble of power relations, a placing that can enable both the identification of how such knowledge is made useful to power and, by extension, how critically revising practices of knowledge production can become an aspect of resistance to the broader order of power relations and practices in which it is caught up. In the case of knowledge production in capitalist societies, a central part of this location involves interrogating the division between those discourses which can count as knowledge and those which cannot in terms of the place of knowledge production within the network of institutions and practices that shape social life according to the needs of capital, and in the case of the academy this is perhaps most visible in the reservation of the production of true knowledge for a small group of highly-vetted professional specialists. The flip side of this work, though, is to then use this critique of the power relations that circumscribe knowledge production to engage in serious, experimentally-oriented reflection on what it would mean to produce knowledge in other ways, to develop practices of knowledge production inside and against the social order that produces the will to truth.

. Therefore, in the last chapter of this thesis, I hope not to answer this question for others from my own privileged and problematically unquestioned position as a theorist, but rather to survey the concrete challenges and innovations engaged by those who, from multiple locations and in multiple relations to the resources and constraints of the academy, are currently tackling this problem *as* an aspect of the broader struggle against the structuring of social life by the logics of capital. To do that, it is necessary to return to the territory upon which this thesis began: the development of decentered, networked resistance to neoliberalism in the name of local self-determination and autonomy. I began with a general look at how the development of these resistances forced transformatively-oriented social theory to critically question its own underlying assumptions in light of concrete historical developments, a questioning that constitutes a central aspect of the historical context for the emergence of postanarchist theory. Now, then, we can return to this burgeoning field of resistance and autonomous social production with a more specific focus: how has the project of neoliberalism, and the post-Fordist organization of capital (with which it is in a complex relation of mutual reinforcement and dependence) produced a field of power relations in which the need to include the ordering of knowledge production within the field of power and struggle is imperative not just for social theory but as a ‘common sense’ amongst those engaged in the struggle for collective self-determination against neoliberal governmentality? In order to begin answering this question, then, we first need to reconstruct its emergence as a concrete problem in the struggle against neoliberalism and then look to the forms of knowledge produced by singular-yet-interconnected collectivities who, with different levels of explicitness, have been innovating practices of insurgent knowledge production

which challenge the constraints and exclusions that produce knowledge in the context of neoliberalism while creating autonomous spaces for the development of alternatives.

No Investigation, No Right to Speak: Gesturing Towards Possibilities for Insurgent Practices of Knowledge Production

When you have not probed into a problem, into the present facts and its past history, and know nothing of its essentials, whatever you say about it will undoubtedly be nonsense. Talking nonsense solves no problems, as everyone knows...Quite a few comrades always keep their eyes shut and talk nonsense, and for a Communist that is disgraceful. How can a Communist keep her eyes shut and talk nonsense? It won't do! It won't do! You must investigate! You must not talk nonsense!

--Mao Zedong "Oppose Book Worship" 1930

As a ruling¹ logic, neoliberalism involves the dramatic *recomposition* of capitalist social relations. As we saw in our look at the work of the autonomists, the social production of common goods is based on the self-organization of collective singularities. The production of relational goods like language, culture, and subjectivity involves certain forms of sociality and co-operation and it is through these forms that this productive stratum organizes and actualizes itself. Capital would not be able to exist were it not able to draw value from this autonomous productivity and, while in previous forms of capitalism this was true in terms of basic social reproduction², as immaterial labor has become increasingly central to production ever-greater parts of social life become implicated in production, and thus subject to capital's knowledge, investment,

¹ "Ruling" not in the sense of holding a certain stable class position (as in the Marxist critique of ideology as consisting of the "ruling ideas" during a given historical epoch) but of exercising effective power, in the Foucauldian sense of a contingent event-relation, over specific aspects of social life. This is hopefully reinforced by referring to neoliberalism as "a" rather than "the" ruling logic, denoting that it is an effective logic of governmentality, but not to the exclusion of others.

² As we will see when we focus more closely on the Spanish feminist collective Precarias a la Deriva, this often took the form of the gendered, and thus unwaged, labor of women being exploited by capital in the social expectation that women were to provide the material and affective care necessary to sustain the physical and emotional well-being of the (male) worker to continue to be exploitable by capital.

and control.³ If post-Fordist production relies on the enclosure, privatization, and stratification of the autonomous productivity that constitutes social existence as such, then all of social life becomes a possible site of struggle against this dominant/dominating form of social organization through the defense of the collective self-determination of social production. The very fact that this plane of immanent social productivity is such a central source of value to post-Fordist capital flags it as a site where it becomes possible and often immediately necessary to identify, intensify, and defend the autonomously-composed bonds of cooperation and solidarity that constitute these productive social singularity against the flattening norms of neoliberal capitalism.

As we discussed in the previous chapter, the constitution of knowledge is part and parcel of this ongoing struggle between autonomous social composition and capitalist decomposition and capture. This can be seen in terms of the will to truth as a particular effect of historically specific power relations producing a “prodigious machinery designed to exclude” whereby certain discursivities and subject-positions are given a purchase on truth while others are radically excluded based on their non-accession to particular values of truth. It is also operative in terms of the development, control, and exploitation of “mass intellectuality” by capitalist social formations. In each case we are confronted with the constitution of knowledge precisely as a struggle between compositions. Discourses are autonomously formed as an immanent part of

³ This does not necessarily imply that all knowledge and control is carried out by capitalists. Rather, as we saw in Brown’s discussion of neoliberalism as governmentality, vast networks of social power are organized around the logic of the market and work to impose it on everyday life and sociality. Therefore, it is not necessary for capital itself to engage in this normalization of social life; understood as a generic social good, many different institutions and practices exercise force on the composition of the social to organize itself according to the logic of the market. That this happens to be conducive to the rapid growth and movement of capital is itself a legitimation of those governing axioms.

social life as people interact with their world and each other and develop modes of sociality, subjectivity, and culture which allow for and constitute the production of intersubjective life as such. Indeed, the very existence of life requires “knowledge” in this generic sense, that is, the production of socially legible common conceptions of self, world, and relatedness.

If post-Fordist production requires, to an unprecedented degree, the interweaving of the production of subjectivities (through language, culture, etc.) and economic production, “a further essential issue is to follow the production of subjectivity, where the latter assists and develops the possible convergence of labor activity and the construction of the ‘common’.”⁴ This figure of the common is central; the “common” is precisely the possible world of “common goods” whose production is immanent to the cooperative construction of social worlds and also constitutes the “stuff” whose enclosure, quantitative valuation, and control is the basis of post-Fordist capital’s extraction of value. As Massimo De Angelis explains, “commons suggest alternative, non-commodified means to fulfill social needs, e.g. to obtain social wealth and organize social production.”⁵ In other words, commons refer to modes of social organization where forms of immanent social productivity which post-Fordism has developed and managed as a primary source of economic value are appropriated instead for their social value in the collective self-determination of their production and use directly by those that produce them. When we consider the ubiquity and essentiality of “common goods” like language, culture, and the affective relations of intersubjective

⁴ Negri, Antonio, “Logic and Theory of Inquiry: Militant Praxis as Subject and Episteme,” 63 in *Constituent Imagination*, 62-72.

⁵ De Angelis, Massimo, “Reflections on Alternatives, Commons, and Communities or Building a New World from the Bottom Up,” *The Commoner* 6 (2003): 1-14, <http://www.thecommoner.org.uk/deangelis06.pdf>

cooperation, it becomes apparent that such a demand is ultimately nothing less than the radically open-ended capacity for communities to autonomously organize their social existence according to their own desires and values. This, in turn, brings us to the important point that “commons are necessarily sustained by communities, i.e. by social networks of mutual aid, solidarity, and practices of human exchange that are not reduced to the market form.”⁶ This, in turn, can give us deeper insight into the logics at work behind the situated appropriation of modes of organization that can broadly be described as ‘anarchistic’ by many communities around the globe defending their collective self-determination against the logics of neoliberal governmentality. In order to constitute themselves in such a way that enables the collective self-management of social production and not simply the subordination of collective desires to another dominant group “communities cannot be separated from the learning practices of direct democracy, horizontality, participation, and inclusiveness that *are* the power to decide what are the goals and modalities of social production.”⁷ The fact that these anti-hierarchical practices of self-organization immediately constitute the power to collectively control the conditions of social existence in the name of which multiplicities of communities have come to resist neoliberal capitalism should shed some added light on both why so many groups who do not (necessarily) identify with the term ‘anarchist’ have adopted (and adapted) organizational forms pioneered by anarchists and why the study of anarchist theory and history has adopted new, though still limited, currency

⁶ Ibid

⁷ Ibid my italics

amongst social theorists interested in understanding these new forms of insurgent sociality.⁸

Commons, then, are the autonomous forms of recomposition that are developing in the face of the unprecedented power of the techniques of enclosure at the heart of post-Fordist organizations of capital and, perhaps most clearly, neoliberalism whose imposition of market logic as governmentality immediately coincides with the enclosure and commodification of common goods. In this mode, capital has never required commons to such an intense degree nor has it ever developed as advanced a machinery to fracture, enclose, and dominate them. As the experience of “hidden labor” discussed in the previous chapter shows, not only are the commons enclosed, the enclosure occurs as though they never existed. Rather than effects of concrete communal processes, these common goods are (re-)presented as always having been commodified.

The figure of the common and its relation to post-Fordist capital allows us to begin mapping a geography of struggles of different communities⁹ around the globe. Recalling the introduction, this moment of recomposition-as-struggle over common productions and spaces against the control of capital constitutes a sort of aporia.

⁸ And, while this discussion will ultimately have to wait until the conclusion of this thesis for further elucidation, it also seems to point to the possibility that the direct resistance to domination and hierarchy by collectives that embody social relations they find preferable in the organization of that resistance is not and should not be considered the privileged domain of people or texts calling themselves “anarchist.”

⁹ Just to be clear, “the ‘place’ of these networks [communities as networks of common practice and productivity] does not need to be tied to locality, but communities can operate both in local and through trans-local places” (De Angelis, 1). One side-effect of neoliberal restructuring and the unprecedented development of communicative technology called forth by the centrality of communicative and affective labor in post-Fordism has been the increased proliferation of such “trans-local” forms of community and common production.

Summarizing the past three decades of neoliberal development, Ed Emery notes that “relations between capital and labor [conceived in the autonomist-derived sense discussed in the previous chapter] have been radically restructured...in favor of capital. Labor is being recomposed into new circuits, cycles, and patterns of production¹⁰.” This, in turn, means that previously dominant theories of social transformation appear increasingly out of step with the contemporary realities of resistance as the sedimented structures and subject positions which have been the basis of leftist social theory since WWII are dissolved in the movement of decomposition carried out by post-Fordism and neoliberalism. From this period of relative social indeterminacy and recombination, there emerged rhizomatic webs of collective singularities resisting the enclosures of capital and the governmentality of neoliberalism from innumerable points. This resistance draws its power from (relatively) new processes of composition, becoming effective through dense, rhizomatic networks of renegade communicativity, constituting resistance as interconnected, dispersed event-series rather than in the form of a grand social-subject identity.

At this point, we can read this mysterious specter of decentralized, networked resistances to neoliberalism’s triumphal strides across global space into the organization of post-Fordist capitalism and the centrality of the common to this organization. As De Angelis notes, this emergent politics can be seen as based, albeit in a multiplicity of local modalities of knowledge, upon

the identification of the state-market nexus as *the* limit set upon the building of concrete alternatives springing from the grassroots. This nexus that all want to channel, control and discipline in pre-established competitive modes of social interaction expresses the terror of economic, financial, and political elites for

¹⁰ Emery, Ed “No Politics Without Inquiry! A Proposal for a Class Composition Inquiry Project 1996-7,” <http://www.wildcat-www.de/en/material/cs18inqu.htm>

anything alive and free. In front of this barrier to our freedom to interact and develop local and trans-local communities of social production and mutual aid, this movement [networked global anti-capitalism] is developing instead strategic alternatives which extend new types of commons and strengthen communities.¹¹

In this figure of the common and the community, the emergent forms of social resistance and innovation that have come to characterize the networked and multiple resistance to the imposition of capitalist command through neoliberalism are able to link conceptually with the autonomist-derived analysis of capital as both needing the common as a source of value and requiring its control, enclosure, and discursive erasure at the same time. This is not an abstract question of correct analysis but rather a directly practical question of how such resistances can become capable of articulating new forms of composition, capable of producing ruptures within capital's control of the social fabric and populating those spaces with alternative forms of social organization. As Colectivo Situaciones (which we will look at in more depth later in this chapter) argues, the celebration of neoliberalism's inauguration of a postmodern "festival of difference" in liberal multiculturalist discourses leads to a logic of "indifference, or dispersion."¹² This logic obscures the political potentialities that lie in "the potential of articulation among these experiences" which make these localized resistances capable of "elaborating a common plane" wherein social singularities challenging capital and the institutions and practices of neoliberal governmentality in the name of their autonomous self-determination "can, in their dynamic differences, articulate, combine, or interact as occupations of the public sphere by counterpower."¹³ "The common" has the

¹¹ De Angelis, 6

¹² Colectivo Situaciones, "Something More on Research Militancy: Footnotes on Procedures and (In)Decisions," 86 in *Constituent Imagination* 73-93.

¹³ Ibid. The term counterpower is not meant to designate an outside to power, but rather portrays how social formations that resist the dominant order of power are still a part of

potentiality of a common name, a capability to articulate the neoliberal world as constituting a common plane of struggle whose decentered, yet powerfully homogenizing thrust must be resisted by networked defense of local self-determination and autonomy. As Negri points out, “*the common distinguishes...* only the affirmation of the ‘common’ enables us to steer the flows of production from within and to separate the alienating capitalist flows from those that recompose knowledge and freedom. The problem will be solved by a practical rupture capable of reaffirming the centrality of common praxis.¹⁴”

This injunction to construct a common praxis is precisely where it becomes necessary to consider the production of knowledges as immanent to the composition of communities and the commons such composition enables. In order for commons to realize their potentiality as a highly contested, powerful site of social productivity, it is necessary for the communities that seek to defend their autonomy from the encroachments of neoliberalism to constitute *common knowledges*. The possibility of building a common praxis inside and against the neoliberal order requires the autonomous reappropriation of the social power to produce common vocabularies, cartographies, and procedures wherein the immanent subjective/affective experience of autonomous production in common can (however provisionally) name and valorize itself

that order. A good general definition is provided by sociologist of communication Manuel Castells when he refers to counterpower as “the capacity of a social actor to resist and challenge power relations that are institutionalized” (Castells, Manuel “Communication, Power and Counter-power in the Network Society,” *International Journal of Communication* 1 (2007) 238-266). When figured as a generic social capacity in this way, it becomes clear that counterpower refers not to power’s outside but rather to the idea that, since power is a contingent event-relation and not a thing that one can possess social transformation occurs not through ‘seizing power’ but rather through developing alternative social relations inside and against the dominant order of power which both interrupt its functioning and suggest alternative modes of social existence.

¹⁴ Negri, in *Constituent Imagination*, 64

and the modalities of capitalist power and neoliberal governmentality in resistance to which it constitutes and re-constitutes. This struggle over the power to self-determine communal composition and social production on the part of collective singularities is the field of the micro-politics of knowledge production under neoliberalism. With that in mind I want to shift focus to three groups who, in disparate sites in the global localities in and through which neoliberal power is exercised and resisted, have taken up this project in terms of their own concrete encounters with power. While embodying the specific needs of dramatically different social contexts, these projects have found themselves constituting different lines in a common rhizomatically-composed project of developing practices of knowledge production capable of articulating subjective experiences into common knowledges that can enable and proliferate autonomous resistances in the fragmented social landscape of neoliberal capitalism.

In so doing, the groups we will be looking at also elucidate a politics of knowledge production centered around the idea that knowledges are themselves an immanent social good, produced in and through collective singularities in the common work of talking about and trying to understand self and world. Against the will to truth, embodied in the institution of the academy, which stratifies and manages knowledge through the imposition of universalizing values made to seem inherent to the very idea of truth itself, these groups develop practices of knowledge production that enables people to speak the situated truths produced as an aspect of their social existence on their own terms. Thus, while these groups are engaged in different struggles in different localities, they share the parallel project of developing forms of sociality that resist the capitalist stratification and control of social life through its rendering into private quantities of value through developing practices of knowledge production that

themselves highlight and defend the production of knowledge as a common good, and thus a multiple and centerless phenomenon, that can and should be freely and directly appropriated by its producers.

Building a Very Careful Strike: Precarias a la Deriva

The problem of articulating this sort of common praxis directly implicates the problem of knowledge production, though not necessarily in the sense we've been talking about it up until now. The Spanish feminist radical research group Precarias a la Deriva is one of many groups around the world experimenting with the proposition that “by attending to the micro and to everyday life, by speaking in the first person and by capturing mundane conversations...research material can connect directly with people's experiences, allowing for mutual recognition and the discovery of previously unthinkable combinations/possibilities.¹⁵” Precarias began their collective existence with the challenge of locating a particular site in which these “unthinkable possibilities” might manifest themselves in the revolutionary critique of the conditions of everyday life as experienced by those engaged in the sectors of affective or “caring” labor that have become central to the social structuring of post-Fordist capitalism and the maintenance of the communicative networks so essential to the global neoliberal project.

Precarias begins from the proposition that “sex, care, and attention are not pre-existent objects, but rather historically determined social stratifications of affect, traditionally assigned to women.¹⁶” Such stratifications are not new; they can be seen clearly, for example, in the Victorian-era emphasis on the responsibility of maintaining

¹⁵ Producciones Translocales of the Counter-Cartographies Collective, “Transatlantic Translations: a Trilogy of Insurgent Knowledges”

http://www.scribd.com/full/5541875?access_key=key-nddg8ablasks1cibwm3

¹⁶ Precarias a la Deriva, “A Very Careful Strike-Four Hypotheses”, 34 in *The Commoner* 11(2006), 33-45 <http://www.commer.org.uk/11precarias.pdf>

“separate spheres” as essential to the proper reproduction of society: women were responsible for caring for their men (and by extension their children) in order to privately redress the physical and emotional toll of wage labor to reproduce labor power for both this and the next generation of producers¹⁷. Precarias are far from the first to critique the exploitative and oppressive gender relations enforced by this structure. What they argue, however, is that such pre-existing divisions are mobilized and modified by neoliberalism to create new structures of power.

The centrality of immaterial labor to the post-Fordist organization of capital upon which neoliberalism rests means that the figure of “women’s work,” the often unwaged labor of affective connection and relations of interpersonal care takes on an unprecedented importance to capital, ranging from customer service to sex work to the facilitation of international communication networks. As with other forms of immaterial labor, the development of “the attention industry stands as a clear example of the capture, stratification, and commodification of otherwise common goods by capital, and in this specific example the status of gender as a valence of power is particularly strong. “The capacity of listening and empathy, not just as associated with models of femininity but also with the concrete activities historically reserved for women (in the areas of care as much as sex), is isolated as a specific function and put to work.¹⁸” In so doing, such labor is wrested from the interpersonal connections to which it is immanent and re-fashioned through the imposition of market logics into parcels of affective care “exchanged for money in function of a temporal pattern of measure, is separated from incarnated communication, that which produces lasting relations, trust, and cooperation

¹⁷ E.g. Hewitt, Margaret, *Wives and Mothers in Victorian Industry*, (Westport, Ct: Greenwood Press, 1928), 3-4

¹⁸ Precarias a la Deriva, “A Very Careful Strike,” 35

and turns to a functionalized and uninvested exchange of codes.¹⁹” By identifying how the already gendered (and by the same token largely unremunerated) work of affective care is taken up and modified by neoliberal capitalism in the emergence of the “attention industry,” *Precarias* in effect points to a massive, centerless network of asymmetric encounters between the ongoing work of building and maintaining affective relations as an immanent part of social life and the stratifying and commodifying machinery of capital. Yet this capture also points at some avenues for breaking these stratifications to realize new, relatively liberatory modes of social life since “in every case, beneath any stratum, affect flows precariously.²⁰” Identifying the processes of stratification, then, becomes a practice simultaneously of highlighting practices that can produce, or are already producing, liberated zones where affective flows are structured according to the collective desires of those who produce and live in and through them, not the needs of capital.

In this context, *Precarias* identify an important mechanism of capture and control in the phenomenon for which they are in part named: precarity. The group describes precarity as “the junction of conditions, both material and symbolic, which determine an uncertainty with respect to the continued access to the resources necessary for the full development of a person’s life.²¹” Precarity, then, can be seen as an effect of the neoliberal techniques of governmentality discussed by Brown in the previous chapter: just as neoliberal subjects should expect access to any product or service that can be rendered purchasable on the open market, so too should these subjects expect

¹⁹ Ibid

²⁰ Ibid, 39

²¹ *Precarias a la Deriva*, “*Precarias: First Stutterings of Precarias a la Deriva*” <http://www.makeworlds.org/node/61>

nothing they cannot afford, no matter how essential to their continued existence. In this sense, we can see the privatization of resources like water and the post-Fordist stratification and commodification of affect and care as a part of the same process. The production of precarity is a modality of social control, imposing normalizing discipline via radical deprivation on those who are designated as improper subjects according to neoliberal norms. It also imposes a deep sense of insecurity and fear on society in general, for even those with a sense of security at present have no idea when the winds of capital will change and leave them with little or nothing. Hence, Precarias write “Precarity functions as blackmail...because hiring, mortgages, and prices in general go up but our wages don’t, because our social networks are very deteriorated and the construction of community today is a complicated task, because we don’t know who will care for us tomorrow.²²” Precarity, in effect, works through trapping neoliberal subjects in a double-bind: common goods from care to clean air are privatized and the collective structures of sociality which produced them are decimated through the fragmentation imposed through the precarious conditions demanded of “flexible” labor by transnational capital which, at the same time, makes those privatized goods inaccessible to those who otherwise directly produce and share them in common. This, in turn, is dictated by the neoliberal logic of governance in which the needs of capital for profit always trump those of labor to be able to lead a decent life with others as the imposition of precarity makes the forms of collective power upon which labor used to rely in order to form a bulwark against the unilateral power of capital increasingly impotent. Hence, we see an emergent feedback loop in which the ensemble of capitalist actors from employers to banking institutions impose conditions of precarity on the labor they

²² Precarias a la Deriva, “A Very Careful Strike,” 40

exploit which further enables the capture and stratification of immanent social productivity through the social blackmail of its producers sanctioned by the cost/benefit analysis of market calculus.

The project in which Precarias are engaged, then, is one of identifying how precarity is used as a technique of capitalist stratification and governmentality in order to locate the affective flows therein which might be realized as potentials for revolt. Against the neoliberal refashioning of the world according to the logic of a market based on the capture and privatization of the affective commons immanent to social life “our wager consists in recuperating and reformulating the feminist proposal for a logic of care. A care that appears here as a mode of taking charge of bodies opposed to the securitary logic, because, in place of containment, it seeks the sustainability of life and, in place of fear, it bases itself on cooperation, interdependence, the gift, and social ecology.²³” If neoliberalism views care as a scarce good to be privately bought or sold on the one hand and as an ensemble of normalizing techniques to “care” for improper subjects by containing them and forcing them to accede to the privative logic of the market on the other, Precarias sees care itself as precisely the field upon which such stratifications can be challenged. In the autonomist theory we looked at in the previous chapter, the immaterial productivity immanent to social life requires capital to invest and optimize the same pool of autonomously-generated sociality that can constitute the basis for its subversion on innumerable fronts. Here, the capitalist capture and stratification of care, communication, and affect through strategies built around commodification and precarization also create the basis for the revolutionary reappropriation of care as a common social good. This is because, in order for social life to exist at all care

²³ Ibid

always has been and will continue to be, today more than ever, the center. The center in the sense of principle and principal, as an arche of human existence and of social relations. Because care is what makes life possible (care generates life, nourishes it, makes it grow, heals it), care can make life happier (creating relations of interdependence among bodies) and more interesting (generating exchanges of all types of flows, knowledges, contagions), care can give life, definitively, some meaning.²⁴

Not only is neoliberalism a central auspice of the ongoing project for capital to privatize and stratify this entire sector of relationality so central to human existence, it does so while using existing gender hierarchies to ensure that those who become “care workers” are often some of the most precarious, and thus most subject to the prerogatives of capitalist control. That is, when such workers are even recognized as “workers” at all since the gendered nature of ‘caring labor’ often means that it remains in what Virno referred to as “hidden labor”: those areas of immanent social production from which capital draws value without the need for remuneration from areas kept from being socially recognized as legitimate forms of labor at all despite the essentiality of these forms of production to the very existence of social life.

This requires Precarias to help bring into being something which does not yet exist, to begin building forms of sociality and care that are capable of withdrawing from and resisting neoliberal stratification. What is needed are ways for “the caregivers, which all women are and everyone should be,” to “rediscover the fundamental role of the labor (remunerated or not) of care and of the social wealth it produces and we withdraw from the invisibilization, hyperexploitation, infravalorization or social stigma of which care is the object, only then will we be prepared to extract from care its transformative force.”²⁵ What is required in other words, is the collective construction of new knowledges that

²⁴ Ibid, 42

²⁵ Ibid

can allow people to identify for themselves both the remunerated and non-remunerated ways in which their daily lives involve doing the labor of care, what types of social organizations and power relations that labor occurs in, and how to collectively appropriate and valorize care on their own terms, against the logic of capital. In this sense, we can see Precarias as engendering practices of knowledge that go beyond the will to truth and its idealizing drive. Instead, constructing knowledge in common is an essential part of naming and reclaiming other common goods that constitute life itself, a significant challenge in the face of “a precariousness capable of bypassing a clear collective identity through which to simplify and demand itself, but one which demands discussion.”²⁶ The process of developing spaces and vocabularies to enable such discussion is the basis of a process which is simultaneously the composition of knowledges, communities, and commons from the very forms of social organization used by capital as a weapon to ensure constant and easy access to existing modes of social productivity. Against the terroristic imposition of precarity,

we need to communicate the lacks and the excesses of our working and living situations in order to escape from the neoliberal fragmentation which separates and debilitates us, turning us into victims of fear, of exploitation, or of the individualism of “each one for herself.” But above all, we want to make possible the collective construction of our lives through a shared creative of struggle.²⁷

Hence, the collective construction of insurgent knowledges is necessary to identify and affirm the possibilities of affinity and solidarity amongst those whose precarious social position has made such work seem impossible *precisely on the basis* of their common condition of precarity, on the specific micropolitical terms upon which the care

²⁶ Precarias, “First Stutterings”

²⁷ Ibid

immanent to collective life encounters, is stratified by, and breaks the constraints imposed by power.

A central tool in doing this work constitutes the other part of the group's name: "derivas" or "drifts". This is a practice of "militant research"²⁸ inspired by the Situationist "derive" in which participants would wander aimlessly through urban areas, allowing the chance encounters they experienced "to establish a psycho-cartography based on the coincidences and correspondences of physical and subjective flows...to the way in which the urban and social environments influence exchanges and attitudes."²⁹ Precarias take up this method but adapt it to their needs for creating "a cartography of the precarized work of women based on the exchange of experiences" in order to produce the tools for collective practices based on "taking communication seriously not only as a tool for diffusion but also as a new place, a new competence and primary material for the political."³⁰ In order to do this, it is necessary to modify it significantly. In this case, Precarias decided to "exchange the arbitrary wandering of the flaneur, so particular to the bourgeois male subject with nothing pressing to do, for a situated drift which would move us through the daily spaces of each one of us...Thus the drift is converted into a moving interview, crossed through by the collective perception of the

²⁸ While this will be expanded upon in the section on Colectivo Situaciones, the notion of "militant research" is central to this chapter. We can see many important aspects of its character here: militant research consists in the development of knowledge-producing processes immanent to the subjective experience of collective resistance and autonomous forms of communality which seeks to produce spaces and practices of collective reflection designed to strengthen the collective power to resist the imposition of neoliberal governmentality and overcome the fragmentation produced by precarity in order to proliferate connections of solidarity and mutual aid between collective singularities resisting common impositions in locally specific but complimentary ways.

²⁹ Precarias, "A Very Careful Strike," 34

³⁰ Precarias, "First Stutterings," 5

environment.³¹” Methodologically speaking, Precarias organize the drifts around following precarious workers through their everyday lives, engaging in constant dialogue in order to elucidate how under the conditions of capital which draws value from the subordination of all aspects of life to its requirements for profit maximization, everyday life is the field of encounter and struggle between neoliberal governmentality and the vestiges of autonomous sociality which, tacitly or explicitly, resist it. “Experience, in this sense, is not a preanalytic category but a central notion in understanding the warp of daily events, and, what is more, the ways in which we give meaning to our localized and incarnated quotidian.³²” Through experiencing, documenting, and generating spaces for critical dialogue with women engaged in different sectors of the “care industry”, Precarias developed this version of “the drift” precisely as a way to map the quotidian encounters with power where the imposition of precarity can become the site of collective struggles for affective self-determination and knowledge production immanent to this field. Its immediate results are the building blocks of a knowledge that can allow people to envision for themselves the way in which the fundamentally gendered imposition of precarity can be challenged and subverted directly, at the level of everyday life and the relations of affinity and solidarity people create within it, often simply as a means of getting through the day.

The drift, then, is a collective experiment with composing insurgent knowledges and, with them, modes of sociality in the definitively uncertain ground of precarious life. Such composition is based on the un-doing of the idealizing, removed gaze since its object is not “truth” as an abstract set of values imposed upon discourse, but rather the

³¹ Ibid

³² Ibid, 6

incitement of discourse itself precisely from the worlds of marginalized labor and social struggle whose enunciation is constitutively excluded from dominant forms of knowledge production. By taking everyday experience as the starting point, not for the designation of some positivistically “objective” belonging but as a space in which to situate the encounters and struggles between life and power, Precarias seek to develop forms of knowledge capable of overcoming the neoliberal fragmentation of life through precarity in order to realize a collective dream “of substituting, albeit just a little, the weakness of dispersion for the strength of alliances, the potential of networks.”³³

Mapping Knowledge and Power Beyond the Ivory Tower: UNC’s Counter Cartographies Collective

Precarias a la Deriva do not view their project as a universally valid solution whose proper deployment would necessarily allow “the revolutionary potential of care” to “become the logic that governs our lives, replacing not only the securitary logic but also that other logic which underlies it: that of the imperatives of profit³⁴.” Rather it is one amongst an almost infinite potential field of tools to be used directly by those seeking to realize such potential in self-determined ways appropriate to their location in the micropolitical networks of power and resistance. This is necessarily a partial effort whose encounters with obstacles and blockages are not a reason for delegitimation and abandonment, but rather invitations to further experimentation and construction. One group who accepted such an invitation was UNC Chapel Hill’s “Counter Cartography Collective” who were inspired by the work of Precarias to develop methods for mapping how the imposition of precarity structures the polymorphous labors upon which the American academy relies.

³³ Ibid

³⁴ Precarias, “A Very Careful Strike,” 42

The 3Cs' work was born out of frustration with the politically paralyzing assumption that the university is necessarily an "ivory tower" precluding its residents from meaningful political intervention in "the world out there"³⁵. In order to challenge such spatial and conceptual striation, it became clear that it was necessary to identify how such a notion was a strategic effect of power which "obscures the multiple roles of the universities in employment and flexible labor markets, the knowledge economy and corporate research, defense contracts and recruiting, finance capitalism through loans, university endowments and investments, and gentrification."³⁶ In other words, the 3Cs constituted itself as an affinity group, "a small group of folks intimately tied by shared notions of political principles and practices, working together on common projects"³⁷ in order to develop methods capable of forming radically new knowledges about the university. Such knowledges draw direct inspiration from *Precarias a la Deriva* in order

³⁵ It is worth noting that the divide between the "ivory tower" and the "world out there" that the 3Cs specifically target as an important conceptual division to subvert in order to enable those engaged in forms of labor organized in and through the academy to challenge their conditions is the institutional analogue of the conceptual order of idealization critiqued by *Colectivo Situaciones* in the previous chapter. As we saw in CS' critique of idealization, idealizing theory (which is the normative theoretical mode of the will to truth) places the theorist outside and above what s/he is investigating as a condition of producing "true" theory, that is theory that "does justice" to its objects by apprehending them from an external subjective positionality in order to "objectively" evaluate them according to institutionally-approved values, obscuring the ways in which the positionality of the academic theorist participates in the very power relations its supposed to be outside. Similarly, the 3Cs critique the spatial divide between "ivory tower" and "world out there" as foreclosing resistance on the part of those who do the labor of the academy (everything from cleaning toilets to conferring degrees) by representing the academy as somehow removed from the global flows of power and influence without which it would, in actual fact, not exist. In this sense, we can see the 3Cs remapping of the UNC Chapel Hill campus to be discussed in this section as a practice that specifically counters in material and spatial terms what CS' critique of idealization seeks to challenge in terms of theory.

³⁶ Casas-Cortes, Maribel and Sebastian Cobarrubias, "Drifting through the Knowledge Machine," 113 in *Constituent Imagination*, 112-126

³⁷ The Counter-Cartographies Collective, "The Micro-Politics of the Counter-Cartographies Collective" <http://countercartographies.org/about-us-mainmenu-28>

to re-draw the university not as an ivory tower observing society from above but as a central actor in the neoliberal restructuring of the social, both constituting and constituted by flows of precarious labor both physical and intellectual. At the same time, this work directed itself towards opening the university as one of many sites of situated subversion of neoliberal governmentality and the stratification of collective thought and reflection by “the knowledge machine.”

The question immediately confronting the 3Cs is actually quite similar to the one tackled by Precarias, albeit in a radically different geopolitical context: confronted by “such a fragmented population of professors, groundskeepers, adjunct instructors, food service workers, grad students, undergrads, clerical workers, and so many transformations happening simultaneously (privatizations, subcontracting, tuition hikes, neocon policing), how could we figure out how it all related, how to tie existing struggles to others and how to provoke new ones?³⁸” The shared commitment to developing knowledge production as a set of possible practices capable of amplifying situated struggle, the 3Cs looked to groups like Precarias, seeking inspiration from how they sought to tackle their own struggles to build relations of horizontal solidarity and mutual aid in a fragmented neoliberal social landscape, looking to “research projects enacted by social movements themselves” in order to begin collecting “the necessary tools to investigate the material conditions of academic knowledge production³⁹” in the American university.

The procedures for doing this, however, were not readily apparent. It is not hard to see at the macropolitical level how the university is “one of the main actors in the

³⁸ Casas-Cortes and Cobarrubias “Drifting Through the Knowledge Machine”, 114 in *Constituent Imagination*

³⁹ Ibid

current economy.⁴⁰” In the case of the 3Cs location in the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill, there is “Research Triangle Park, one of the main hubs of the worldwide knowledge economy, including many multinational corporations... This is accompanied by a rise in part-time service work under dubious conditions.⁴¹” Even in these preliminary steps, we can see how in light of the work of Precarias outlined above, the 3Cs ultimately demonstrates in practice the possibility of powerful and unlikely connections as, through the development of self-organized spaces of reflection, it becomes possible for American university students to see how they are forced to function in and for the same system of rule-by-precarity that structures the realities of Spanish telemarketing operators, albeit in very different ways. Thus, for the 3Cs, it became clear that it was necessary to go beyond simply looking at the abstract, macro-level connections between the university and other networks of power in order to produce the tools for conceptualizing the micropolitical flows of power that structure the university as a territory, as a space whose embeddedness in neoliberal power networks is strengthened by its disavowal of such embeddedness through a myth of itself as an ivory tower. In order to do this, the 3Cs sought to radically revise the spatial understanding of the university as a bordered space, instead showing how it constitutes “a gridded space crisscrossed by intense relations of power: instead of a privileged, bounded ghetto, we see an interlocking system with multiple power and counterpower networks flowing through it. Both the conditions of current academic knowledge production and the possibilities of resistance within it relay into broader networks.⁴²”

⁴⁰ Producciones Translocales, “Transatlantic Translations”

⁴¹ Casas-Cortes and Cobarrubias, “Drifting Through the Knowledge Machine,” in *Constituent Imagination*, 121

⁴² *Ibid*, 124

Here we can see clearly how this work engages knowledge production *from within the academy* but radically refuses the will to truth, instead using the development of insurgent modalities of knowledge as a way of becoming-immanent to the composition of forms of sociality against the imposed logic of neoliberalism and the stratifying capture of common goods by capital.

In order to make this practico-conceptual leap from objectivizing macropolitical critique to the revolutionizing of practices immanent to the contingent encounters between sociality and power, 3Cs borrowed directly from Precarias, appropriating the technique of the drift to help compose knowledges capable of allowing reflection on the immediate realities of those making their lives under the constant uncertainty of neoliberal (re)structuring. In adapting the feminist drifts of Precarias to the setting of the university, 3Cs do exactly what the dominant will to truth forecloses from the start: it turns to tools of research on the conditions of the university itself, to whose micro- and macro-rhythms the researchers are immanent. This immediate locatedness is taken as the very basis for constructing knowledges since “we, as temporary inhabitants of the university system, find our academic territory to be an incredible source of information on current production modes in the knowledge economy⁴³.” In this way too, it is possible to construct insurgent spatial knowledges from within the circuits of academic knowledge production, mapping peoples’ everyday experiences as clues to how neoliberal formations of power and resistance structure the everyday reality of life for various strata of ‘workers’ in the university. Thus, “our everyday lives as university inhabitants have become our temporary field sites, appropriating our research skills to investigate our own labor/life conditions and explore the possibilities of struggle...Following the itineraries

⁴³ Ibid, 123

or circuits of each of our drifts would allow us to uncover the conditions for the university's production of neoliberal subjects.⁴⁴ Taking their situational differences from Precarias as the basis of complimentary solidarity rather than paralyzing fragmentation, 3Cs adopted and adapted the drift as a technique of allowing the multiple realities that produce and are produced by the university as a flashpoint for the consolidation of various translocal networks of power and resistance. In so doing they themselves open up the possibility of intervening in these networks through, not despite, their location within the university by “overcoming radical occupational differences through common language—the knowledge factory—and hopefully opening a new terrain of struggle⁴⁵” whose composition requires the spaces of collective reflection opened through the collective constitution of knowledges based on the direct experiences of neoliberal power and resistance on the level of everyday life.

In contrast to Precarias, who generally used face-to-face discussions with their co-participants in order to develop their researches into a common practice of producing situated insurgent knowledges, the 3Cs looked instead to elaborate their orientation towards cartography. At the most basic level, such a technique is appropriate to the spatial understanding of the university standing “above” or “outside” of the social as an ivory tower, a relation embodied in both common discourses within the university and instantiated through the authorial subject position demanded by the will to truth, as discussed at length in Chapter 2. To undo this understanding, then, it was necessary for the 3Cs to literally re-map the university *as embedded* in the circuits of neoliberal power and resistance. The decision to engage cartography in this way is not simply the result of

⁴⁴ Ibid, 122-123

⁴⁵ Ibid, 123

a negative reaction to existing discourse, however. Rather, the focus of the 3Cs on their developing *practices* of knowledge production as a form of resistance that generates increased capability for more resistance guides not only how they formulate and situate their practices of knowledge in relation to existing embodiments of power and struggle, but in the techniques they use to communicate that knowledge. According to the 3Cs “mapping, as compared to writing, is non-textual and non-grammatical, so a reader is not forced to follow a linear thought pattern; maps are easier to produce or build on in a participatory and collective manner; maps can also act as excellent tools for teach-ins and workshops; and maps never need to be considered ‘finished,’ that is to say, they are constantly open to interaction and reappropriation by the reader.⁴⁶” Both the process and the product of knowledge production are here configured first and foremost as tools to be used in the cycles of power and resistance in which they are always-already located. In the production of maps, the 3Cs literally invites those whose social position is in a process of constant fragmentation by the authority of the fickle commands of highly mobile capital to reterritorialize themselves in terms of the appropriation of their sociality and productivity by polymorphous formations of power.

Since “the goals are to understand what forms of power we are up against, as well as the counter-powers we may be able to create” re-mapping the university in terms of power and resistance immanent to broader networks that shape and struggle over the shape of the social can be seen as a clear example of people developing practices of knowledge production that immediately constitute themselves as “militant research,” a practice of knowledge production oriented towards opening spaces to non-capitalist sociality that are otherwise closed by power through the construction of a “*process* of

⁴⁶ Producciones Translocales, “Transatlantic Translations”

collective production as a way of advancing and growing practices of radical thinking.⁴⁷”

As we have seen in our discussion of the politics of knowledge production under capitalism in general and neoliberalism specifically, the university is certainly one such space. In order to do this, the 3Cs produced scores of “DisOrientation Guides” at the beginning of the academic year. Distributed to people engaged in multiple forms of labor in and through the university, the guides contained

a large quantity of information about the university that normally would be hard to access and considered unattractive. . . One side of the map displayed a variety of diagrams and maps in order to show the university as: a factory; a functioning body; and a machine producing your view of the world. The other side situated UNC as a historical site of activism, also providing tools, contacts, and concepts to re-inhabit, intervene in or subvert the university.⁴⁸

In this way, the 3Cs both constructs a research practice and its product as tools to literally intervene in the process whereby power takes hold of life through the imposition of neoliberal governmentality and the capitalist capture and striation of discourses according to an exclusionary will to truth that structures the dominant mode of constructing knowledge. Here instead not only do the researchers become agents of resistance in their practical activities, they produce knowledge formations in the form of maps that “can be understood as agents that help to assemble distinct subjects into new joint processes—a form of radical bricolage.⁴⁹” It is of no coincidence that this goal is so similar to that which directs the practices of knowledge production engaged by Precarias; the formation of the 3Cs can itself be seen as an activity immanent to the circuits of struggle these knowledges are designed to reveal. What is the practice of the 3Cs if not finding themselves immanent to and then composing themselves to proliferate and

⁴⁷ The Counter-Cartographies Collective, “Micropolitics of the 3Cs”

⁴⁸ Producciones Translocales, “Transatlantic Translations”

⁴⁹ Ibid

generalize the conditions for contingent, meaningful solidarity across radically fragmented social space on the basis of common, situated experiences of precarity as a form of power suffusing and striating life?

Thus, we can see that while the 3Cs significantly modifies the approach of Precarias and combines it with radically disparate influences, their projects are complimentary in that each stands as an example of an affinity group engaged in militant research at the immediate level of their specific situation in the architecture of neoliberal power. In order to do this work, both groups experiment with methods to produce insurgent knowledges through immersion in and collective reflection upon the conditions imposed upon everyday life increasingly structured to suit the needs of transnational capital and deregulated markets. These methods are evaluated and modified in terms of their usefulness in the project of building immanent sociality capable of resisting the imposition and capture of capital by articulating everyday experiences into common knowledges collectively produced in situated spaces of reflection upon the locatedness of particular communities in the spatial networks of neoliberal power. In this way, the construction of these common knowledges simultaneously works to provide new ways for communities to constitute themselves and connect across and through singular differences to reclaim the autonomous power to direct and appropriate their immanent social productions while itself forming an immanent part of this collective power produced through the composition of collective sociality. In this sense, Precarias and 3Cs are simultaneously examples of groups engaged in this activity and of the ways such activity is always-already occurring in the autonomous constitution of counterpowers within the circuits of post-Fordist production. Our final example takes us to yet another location in the geography of neoliberal power to further articulate how the

knowledges produced through practices of militant research builds the machinery of immanent critique and autonomous social constitution to produce theoretical texts radically different than those constructed according to the will to truth.

COLECTIVO SITUACIONES: Militant Research and/as Situated Knowledge Production in the “Argentine Laboratory”

In late 2001 the Argentine economy collapsed as the multinational investment capital that had flooded the country’s borders following the imposition of neoliberal “austerity” measures on Argentina’s economy and society by the IMF vanished as quickly as it had come.⁵⁰ The result was a series of popular insurrections that not only unseated several successive presidents over a few weeks, but resulted in the massive profusion of experiments in collective composition and the production of relations of autonomous mutual aid as an entire population, across all manner of social divisions, immediately bore the brunt of the social precarity imposed by neoliberalism. As workers collectively reappropriated abandoned factories and neighborhoods proliferated directly democratic assemblies, community kitchens, and barter markets in the face of the collapse of both the State and the economy, Argentina became a laboratory for popular experiments in non-capitalist social formations through which people collectively reclaimed the autonomous social productivity so aggressively captured and striated by neoliberal capital. It is in this context that Colectivo Situaciones, a militant research collective emerging out of the Argentine student movement⁵¹ sought to develop practices of knowledge production as a “response to the need to rebuild the links

⁵⁰ E.g. Dinerstein, Ana C. “Que se Vayan Todos! Popular Insurrection and the Asambleas Barriales in Argentina,” 187 *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 22(2003): 187-200

⁵¹ E.g. Colectivo Situaciones, “Something More on Research Militancy,” *Constituent Imagination*, 74

between thought and the new forms of political involvement that were rapidly becoming part of the Argentinean reality.⁵²” In this sense, the development of Colectivo Situaciones (CS) shares with postanarchism, and academic social theory more generally, the situation of needing to critically evaluate available knowledges in the face of unpredictable new realities brought about by the neoliberal restructuring of global space. Unlike these theoretical edifices, but like Precarias and the 3Cs, CS set out to do so by developing practices of knowledge production as immanent processes of the transformation they sought to research. That is to say, they sought to develop practices that would enable people “to investigate without objectifying⁵³” in order to enable methods of investigation to become procedures for producing forms of sociality capable of resisting the prerogatives of neoliberal capitalism.

A central aspect of this has been the development of workshops where CS researchers engage in sustained interactions with those engaged in the resistant social collectivities that proliferated across Argentina from late 2001 on. The workshops were and are carried out with groups like MTD Solano⁵⁴, one of many collectives of radical unemployed workers who have used tactics ranging from massive highway pickets to the development of collective neighborhood kitchens and other services to create livable lives in a social existence severely unsettled by the precarity of neoliberal restructuring. In conjunction with these groups, CS set out to develop practices of “militant research” which take their root “in the forms of *workshops* and collective reading” which are a

⁵² Ibid

⁵³ Colectivo Situaciones, “Prologue” from *Hypothesis 891: Mas Alla de Piquetes* p 1,2 as published on 2 as published on www.countercartographies.org/.../18-colectivo-situaciones-hypothesis-891-prologue

⁵⁴ MTD stands for Movimiento Trabajadores Desempleados or Unemployed Workers’ Movement.

material practice yielding “the production of the conditions for thinking and disseminating productive texts, in the generation of circuits founded on concrete experiences of struggle and in the nuclei of researcher-militants.⁵⁵” To further proliferate the knowledges co-produced through these workshops and practices of collective reading the collective “created our own publishing house, *De Mano en Mano* and we have published a series of dossiers, drafts, and books that have nourished research with their effects.⁵⁶” The name *De Mano en Mano* (from hand to hand) signifies how the collective does not simply publish texts but puts them to use. Whether in the intensive interactions of the workshops or the more dispersed act of publishing, the texts CS produces and disseminates are supposed to travel along the circuits of counterpower of which it forms a part, but also to strengthen and proliferate such circuits as the texts are taken up and used by people in radically heterogeneous situations to re-make how they understand and act in their reality. In this way the practice of militant research “tries to generate a capacity for struggles to read themselves and, consequently, to recapture and *disseminate* the advances of other social practices.⁵⁷”

In these ways, we can see that CS is engaged in the development of practices of knowledge production that resist the discursive practices of idealization and objectivization explored in chapter 2. Instead, and in opposition to idealization, CS set out to develop modes of research that constitute themselves within the situated realities of resistant social practices, based on the understanding “that thought and politics depended on the capacity for experience, involvement, and encounter; and that the

⁵⁵ Colectivo Situaciones, “On The Researcher-Militant,” p. 2 as published on <http://transform.eipcp.net/transversal/0406/colectivosituaciones/en#redir>

⁵⁶ Ibid

⁵⁷ Ibid

subject of our political action could not be conceived as transcendent with respect to situations, but made itself present for us as a result of those encounters.⁵⁸ Here, they conceive of militant research without reference to objects since the point is not to produce a “true” reading of a social regularity to which one is external but rather as a procedure for strengthening and becoming immanent to the realities of struggle as they are lived on the day-to-day level of the autonomous production of collective mechanisms for coping with and resisting the neoliberal imposition of precarity. It is necessary for militant research to constitute itself as an immanent aspect of the experience of struggle, as a process which enables the collectivities engaged in such experiences to produce within themselves spaces and techniques to reflect on and enhance their ability to self-manage their composition. It is in this light that CS refers to “singular, more or less organized groups, with flexible boundaries, involved in an ongoing emancipatory practice⁵⁹” as “experiencias,” conceptualizing them not as objective entities but the contingent social formations that enable those participating in them to experience alternative forms of life, ways of organizing subjectivity and sociality that innovate within and against the social worlds imposed by capitalism. Such groupings cannot be “known” in the sense of being externally designated as a particular social object or identity. Rather they are known insofar as they are lived as a different way of living in and experiencing the world; the violence of abstraction undoes the very immanent connectedness from which experiencias draw their power and meaning.

This immanent ability for experiencias to form themselves autonomously, within and against the social world of capitalism, is what CS calls “potencia,” referring to the

⁵⁸ Colectivo Situaciones, “Something More on Research Militancy,” *Constituent Imagination*, 82

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 76

autonomous power of collective composition that underlies the very possibility of all immanent social production, all commons. The ability to produce common goods *as common* is itself the expression of potencia. As such “potencia always exists in the here and now; it coincides with the act in which it is effected. This is because potencia is inseparable from our capacity—indeed, our bodies’ capacity—to be affected. This capacity cannot be detached from the moment, place, and concrete social relations in which potencia manifests itself.⁶⁰” The realization of potencia, then, cannot be separated from the production of *experiencias*, a production that would be impossible without what CS refers to as relations of love or friendship.

These terms are understood in terms of “what a certain long philosophical tradition—the materialist one—understands by it: that is to say, not something that happens to one in relation to the other, but a process that as such *takes* two or more. A process that transforms the ‘self’ into the ‘common’.⁶¹” Such a relation is one of composition, of the production of socialities that incorporate the singular desires of those that constitute it, while in so doing producing a collective reality to which such singularities become immanent and in so doing are themselves transformed. Potencia is precisely the capacity to realize such relations, yet is also what is intensified in and through this production. This is the basis of the radically situated character of potencia, a capacity that cannot be said to exist outside of its immanent locatedness in the relations of love or friendship that immanently constitute the very potentiality of realizing *experiencias*, which is also a potentiality for radical resistance to neoliberalism. Hence the need of militant research to radically excise theoretical objectification from its techniques

⁶⁰ Ibid, 75

⁶¹ Colectivo Situaciones “Prologue,” p 4 as published on www.countercartographies.org/.../18-colectivo-situaciones-hypothesis-891-prologue

and instead constitute processes of knowledge production that are themselves *experiencias* while also increasing *potencia* from within through the augmentation of the capacity for relations of love and friendship. Since such a tie “is constituted as a relationship that renders undefined what until that moment was preserved as individuality, composing an integrated figure made of more than one individual body” it is fundamentally necessary for militant research to constitute itself as an immanent part of this body; hence “we...consider love a condition of militant research.”⁶²

CS’ development of militant research in the context of their work with emergent *experiencias* in the midst of Argentina’s neoliberal crisis as articulating, from the specificity of their location, a set of conceptual tools in many ways shared with *Precarios* and the 3Cs as well. In developing concepts like *experiencia* and *potencia* from the lived experiences of struggling alongside the multiplicities of collectivities reappropriating social power from a faltering architecture of neoliberal power, CS provides us with an example of knowledge production that, while perhaps the closest in form to academic social theory of the three groups we’ve been discussing (e.g. its use of theory publication and participatory workshops), is nonetheless based on the goal of collectively developing procedures to increase the power of people to come together and defend their collective self-determination against the seemingly irresistible pressures of neoliberal governmentality and the imposition of precarity. Rather than abstracting from the immediate experience of everyday encounters between power and life, the concepts developed by CS only function insofar as they are tools capable of describing dynamics of sociality that both subtend and resist neoliberal capitalism, not in order to reveal them

⁶² Ibid

as empirical unities but in order to allow them to reflect upon, intensify, and proliferate their resistant connections as an immanent aspect of their struggle for autonomy.

In this way, CS maintains but fundamentally reorients the role of the intellectual, developing practices of knowledge production that move from a practical critique of the power relations reproduced through idealization to the articulation and proliferation of theoretical knowledges that, as Deleuze put it, act as “a relay from one practice to another” in an immanent connection with practices that constitute “a set of relays from one theoretical point to another.”⁶³ It is through the practical challenges of developing knowledge production as an insurgent practice immanent to the processes by which resistant socialities compose themselves in tension with neoliberalism that theory and practice move from dichotomous separation to rhizomatic interconnection capable of unleashing the potencia capable of participating in the interlocal resistances to the imposition of the logic of the market on all social life.

Closing Thoughts on Militant Research

The goal of militant research is the immanent production of forms of knowledge developed through participatory research and the construction of spaces of reflection where that research enters into a perpetual dialogue with the relations of composition being experimented with by the experiencias of which militant research is an aspect. Militant research, then, is a common good produced as an immanent aspect of the construction of modes of sociality which produce themselves and their world according to values produced within and against the world of capitalism.

⁶³ Deleuze, Gilles and Michel Foucault, “Intellectuals and Power,” 74-82 in *Foucault Live* ed. Sylvère Lotringer (New York: Semiotext(e), 1989), 74.

What differentiates militant research from other collective productions of this kind is not its location relative to the academy, nor the specific political goals militant researchers may be furthering in a specific situation, but simply its particular function, its work of “the construction of a new *perception*, a new working style towards tuning up and empowering the elements of a new sociability.⁶⁴” As with Precarias and the 3Cs, this means reappropriating the immanent power of knowledge production from its status as intellectual labor (in the sense of activity that is made to produce value for capital) and creating practices that put it in the service elaborating possible connections of solidarity and affinity between autonomous groups fragmented by the imposition of neoliberal precarity. Militant research also requires a constant stance of reflexivity and critical questioning about the constitution of its own practices of knowledge production, and the ceaseless modification of its procedures in light of the requirements of particular situations of struggle and composition. Such questioning forms an immanent part of militant research since the collective experiments in which it locates itself constitute forms of “‘putting into practice’ that arise from the questions of coming to terms with *differences*. How to build an *us* of thought, albeit a transient one? How to lay out a common plane as a condition, however ephemeral, of joint production?⁶⁵” While militant research is characterized by its development of practices that produce spaces of reflection on these questions within the compositions of which it forms a part, this process is mirrored in militant researchers’ own processes of knowledge production to realize their immanence to these struggles not as yet another frozen position for a theoretical gaze but an ongoing project of engagement and dialogue.

⁶⁴ Colectivo Situaciones, “Something More on Research Militancy,” *Constituent Imagination*, 84

⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 86

This is ultimately the question of how the autonomous resistance to neoliberalism around the globe immanently produces its own capability to become a rhizomatic web of mutually-reinforcing solidarities and affinities rather than a series of disconnected dots on a map. Such a question must remain open, since the very strength and fecundity of these networks comes from their refusal of an ultimate determinant and, against this, the valorization of the immanent creativity of communities constituting themselves against the enforced demands of capital. Through the immanent development of “procedures” appropriate to the contingent situation of various experiencias in the desert of neoliberal social fragmentation, CS seeks to work with different experiencias to construct and enhance this power throughout the network to both build concrete interventions and spark an innumerable multiplicity of radical imaginations to practically envision how radically heterogeneous collectivities resisting neoliberal capitalism “can, in their dynamic differences, articulate, combine, or interact as occupations of the public sphere by counterpower.”⁶⁶ It is no coincidence that this also describes the goals, achieved with significantly different means and in disparate locations, held by both Precarias and the 3Cs, who are developing and employing practices of drifting and mapping to compose “procedures” of knowledge production as processes whereby immanent formations of counterpower can reflect on and strengthen their resistant practices and affinal ties.

Ultimately, then, militant research positions itself as an aspect of these diverse but connected assemblages to produce knowledges immanent to those groupings capable of enumerating and reflecting on their conditions of composition and connection in order to strengthen and proliferate them across diverse situations. For all

⁶⁶ Ibid

the complexity of its constitution, militant research seeks to develop collective methods for addressing the question “the question of immanence...:how to be/with/others” through the cultivation of a common “intelligence” which “springs neither from erudition nor from cleverness, but rather from the capacity for involvement.⁶⁷”

The question that at each moment confronts militant research, then, is “how to articulate points of power and creation without developing a hierarchizing unity in charge of thinking on behalf of everyone, of leading everyone? How to draw lines of resonance within the existing networks without either subordinating or submitting to them?⁶⁸” In this sense, these groups tackle the problem with which we have been concerned throughout this thesis in terms of their own practices of research: how can the production of knowledge be constituted as an immanent part of the practical techniques of resistant social composition in the face of neoliberalism that constitute the often invisible networks of anti-capitalist resistance whose defense of and innovation in the autonomous production of common goods has pushed social theory to revise many of its operating assumptions? This question can be seen as militant research’s counter to the will to truth, which functions to ensure that the production of discourses which are allowed to count as knowledge are both filtered through the normalizing constraints and disciplines of the academy and constitutively based on the exclusion of the commonly constructed knowledges which are the immanent productions of free social cooperation and affective exchange. In terms the will to truth, knowledge produced according to values other than those it promulgates is viewed as defect rather than difference.

⁶⁷ Ibid, 88-89

⁶⁸ Ibid, 83

Against this, all three of the groups we have been looking at in this chapter employ techniques which can be commonly referred to as iterations of militant research. Despite their singular forms of composition, disparate locations and methods of intervention, all three share the common goal of engaging with self-organized groups that have composed themselves as a collective singularities to valorize and defend from neoliberal encroachment their capacity to collectively manage the forms of common life they produce together. Those engaged in practices of militant research work with these groups in order to co-develop forms of knowledge through participatory experimentation and encounter. Such knowledges are immanent to the experienced encounters with power of those who compose the group. Rather than try to codify these experiences according to a set of external values, militant research proceeds by producing spaces and practices of participatory reflection in order to articulate multiple, situated experiences of encounter and struggle with the fragmented and fragmenting governmentality of neoliberalism and the stratification of social life by capital. In this way, militant research works within different resistant communities to engage in the co-development of processes where situationally appropriate modes of participatory reflection are used to develop processes immanent to the particular composition of a given group in order to strengthen the collective capacity to identify and resist power formations which dominate and constrain the possibilities of collective life while enhancing the capacity to defend and enhance their ability to direct their own lives against such encroachments. These knowledges also enable the identification of common struggles across singularity and difference, strengthening autonomous composition against the control of life by the market through developing the capacity to

produce common bonds of contingent solidarity and mutual aid in an increasingly fragmented social landscape.

In this way, militant research is constituted by an open array of practices and stands as a radical alternative to the dominant regime of knowledge production which opposes the techniques of exclusion, normalization, and homogenization through which the will to truth structures knowledge. Against this order, militant research constitutes itself as a centerless, ongoing constellation of projects which develop forms of knowledge production through the collective reflection upon commonly produced knowledges and understandings immanent to the self-organization of resistant singularities. These knowledges can be deemed successful not based on their accession to a standard of truth, but in terms of how useful they are for enhancing the ability of singular collective bodies to both enhance their capacity for autonomous composition and self-management as well developing collective modes of resistance to social control and stratification. In this way, knowledge production is radically re-oriented in militant research as a potential site for the common production of collective power through through development of situated knowledges into procedures of critical reflection capable of enhancing and proliferating formations of counterpower.

Concluding Note: Postanarchism, or Post-anarchism?

We are not autonomists, situationists, or anything ending with '-ist.' -Colectivo Situaciones

As a concluding gesture, I want to address the question of the status of anarchism in light of the investigations carried out in this thesis. This is prompted by the fact that, while this is a work that studies anarchist theory, there is fairly scant mention of the broad tradition of anarchism except in relation to various, more specific iterations of anti-authoritarian politics (e.g. postanarchism, militant research, autonomist Marxism, etc.). While its clear that anarchism is still a rich source of resistance to social relations of hierarchy and domination, it is quite difficult to pin down what the term anarchism actually means beyond general statements about direct resistance to oppression, the ubiquity and liberatory potentiality of collective self-determination and mutual aid, etc.

One reason behind the particular slipperiness of the signifier 'anarchism' is that unlike many Western revolutionary traditions, anarchism has yielded neither a unifying anarchist organization nor a coherent ideology (despite the efforts of the Platformists to do just that in the wake of the Russian Revolution⁶⁹). While Marxism certainly cannot be defined by the politics of Marxist parties and Internationals alone, such groups do provide something of a discursive center of gravity, a clear line that can be accepted, rejected, or modified. Anarchism's strong critique of representation and emphasis on the revolutionary potentiality of situated, self-organized practices of resistance to domination has generally precluded any such consolidation. While I don't think it's a matter of one-

⁶⁹ E.g. "Platformism: An Introduction," no author, at <http://libcom.org/thought/platformism-an-introduction>

to-one causality, I do believe that the tendency of anarchists⁷⁰ to prefigure non-hierarchical social relations in their own organizational practice results in a general antipathy towards homogenizing forms of both social theory and organizational practice. This, in turn, is directly related to the fact that anarchism, from its beginning⁷¹, has been defined by its plurality. But there arises a significant difficulty when it comes to identifying anarchism with any positive content. While particular anarchist groups may seek to ground their approach in the rhetoric of possessing *the* universally correct outlook for liberation, the overall character of the anarchist milieu seems to militate against such presuppositions.

This can be seen in the fact that anarchism has rapidly transformed and become increasingly multiple as the twentieth century's cycles of struggle have produced new

⁷⁰ Deploying the term 'anarchist' or 'anarchists' is a complicated move here, because I am at once trying to evaluate the status of these terms while also unsettling the idea that anarchism can or should be limited to those ideas and practices generally identified as anarchist. While this will be developed through this section, I just want to disclaim here that my use of the term "anarchist" or "anarchists" refers not to an ideology or identity but to the fundamentally undelimitable field of polymorphous practices whereby situated relations of domination and hierarchy are resisted and subverted by formations of counter-power in service of their own collective self-determination. If "an-archy" means "without rulers" then anarchists are simply those who, in a particular time and place, identify and depose ruling social formations to allow for the more unfettered immanent logics of self-organization amongst multiplicities of singular social forms to define themselves in/as immanence.

⁷¹ Even the "great thinkers" of "classical anarchism" are often falsely homogenized. Many of those who are cited as examples of Anarchism proper were in fact partisans of their own particular sub-variants of anarchism about and between which there has been (and continues to be) a great deal of internal debate and rancor. For example, Bakunin considered himself a collectivist, supporting a mode of anarchist revolutionary and post-revolutionary organization distinct from Proudhon, who was a mutualist. Kropotkin advanced what he described as anarchist communism, while Emma Goldman, although she frequently described herself as an anarchist communist as well, was deeply influenced by individualist anarchists like the European "propagandists of the deed" and the revolutionary anarcho-syndicalist unionism of theorists like Rudolph Rocker and groups such as the Industrial Workers of the World. Tolstoy also considered himself an anarchist, despite being both a Christian and a pacifist.

techniques for the identification of and resistance to myriad forms of oppression and domination such as the complex, interlocking hierarchies organized around race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, ability, etc. which are related but not reducible to the functioning of capital and the State. Such a change is reflected in the profusion of often highly specific anarchist subgroups whose radically multiple and frequently contradictory interpretations of what qualifies as ‘anarchism’ decisively unsettles any attempt to predicate anarchism as a whole beyond designating an open, heterogeneous field characterized only by the constant activity of disrupting any attempt to impose a criterion of coherence upon it. In other words, the only definition of anarchism that is capable of capturing the fundamental indeterminacy of its composition is one which foregrounds the impossibility of defining anarchism as anything but a potential politics whose contingent events of actualization exceed any attempt to represent it through stable signification.

This dynamic constitutes a key reason why anarchism is such a unique and often misunderstood political tradition. Ironically, the often intensely ideological positions of various “subgenres” of anarchism have produced an overall milieu that perpetually frustrates ideological designation. Despite the fact that it is composed of many specifically situated groups and group-identities, the milieu as a whole, through an undirected interaction of micro-processes and specific events, organizes itself as an open-ended constellation of singularities that constantly disrupts any attempt to subsume it within an identity. In other words, the political potentiality that has seen the relatively marginal tradition of anarchism taken up as a renewed source of inspiration by those developing the tools and processes to collectively co-create socialities that resist the stratifications of capital and the imposition of neoliberal governmentality has very little to do with the theories and ideologies promulgated by particular anarchists. Rather, the

borderlessness and flexibility that characterize the anarchist tradition is an unpredictable meta-outcome of the complex interactions between heterogeneous participants in the anarchist milieu, without regard to the ideological position or anarchist political identification of any particular individual or group therein.

This phenomenon is, to borrow from Chesters and Welsh, an example of *emergence*. This concept, briefly touched on in the introduction, describes meta-organizational collective practices which are “produced by reflexive actors engaged in complex patterns of interaction and exchange,” and yield “outcomes that are historically determinate and unknowable in advance.”⁷² This characteristic of anarchism, taken as a wide, undelimitable, and contradictory constellation of practices that pit social relations based on logics of solidarity and mutual aid against those of domination and control, cannot be attributed to any particular ideology or practice calling itself anarchist. This is because as an emergent outcome, the overall composition of anarchism as a dynamic collective body of resistant practices is not the result of conscious, rationally directed activity, but a contingent product of innumerable event-relations of action and reaction, of an impersonal, collective power that suffuses but cannot be located in the rhizomatic non-place that is the anarchist milieu.

In light of this, May, Newman, Call, etc’s. identification of a conceptual *a priori* as the basis for a critique of anarchism as such is a problem directly related to, but conceptually distinct from, the constitutive contradiction that results in postanarchism immediately reproducing in its practice as theory the power relations whose subversion it calls for in its content. The problem is that the postanarchist critique of anarchism’s

⁷² Chesters and Welsh, 101

supposedly universal *a priori* focuses on what particular anarchists *believe* rather than what anarchism, as a field of a-subjective practices of an-archy, *does*. Such an assumption causes the theorists of postanarchism miss the complex, systematic dynamics which *ensure* that any critique of anarchism on the basis of a foundational conceptual architecture that can be applied to something called “anarchism as a whole” will fall flat for the simple reason that perhaps the only thing which can be accurately said about anarchism as a whole is that it does not and cannot exist. In retaining *their a priori* assumption that anarchism can and ought to be evaluated as the elaboration of a coherent social theory followed by the rational development of forms of intervention which attempt to realize that theory as ordered praxis, May and his colleagues are rendered unable to see this dynamic and how it shapes the irreducibly multiple, contradictory reality of anarchism as it is lived and practiced in a given situation.

There does, however, appear to be a contradictory line of argument here. I am advancing the position that the emergent self-organization of the contingent formations of struggle and counterpower which compose the ever-changing rhizome that is only improperly called anarchism frustrates any attempt to attribute a positive content to anarchism by reifying and abstracting it as a unitary entity capable of being signified. Yet isn't this argument made by ultimately affirming May's characterization of anarchism as a discrete, nameable political orientation defined by its critique of the dominating power relations imposed through practices of representation? Isn't this just a logical circle in which anarchism is ultimately abstracted from its contradictory multiplicity and reduced to a common political stance in order to demonstrate its constitutive antipathy to such forms of representation? I think the answer is no, or at least not necessarily, because such a diagnosis itself rests on the assumption that the anarchist critique of

representation takes the form of a shared ideological conviction which separates those formations which can be considered anarchist from all others on the basis of the common belief that representation is harmful and should be resisted. This assumption, however, rests on a subtle misunderstanding which, while it may not definitively refute the possibility that I am advancing a contradiction, at least highlights a valid alternative reading of this problem that I see as preferable, at least for the purposes of this thesis.

May describes the anarchist critique of representation as resting on the understanding shared by many anarchists “that in giving people images of who they are and what they desire, one wrests from them the ability to decide those matters for themselves. Representation, in the anarchist tradition, must be understood not merely in its political connotations but more widely as an attempt to wrest from people decisions about their lives.⁷³” It is possible to read this as a fundamental political orientation shared by all those groups and individuals who can be considered anarchists, and doing so would indeed entail the contradictory argument that the anarchist milieu’s emergent self-organization as a rhizomatic collective body which confounds any attempt to ascribe a positive, unifying content or belief to it is itself the product of a common belief held by all anarchists. This reading runs into a problem, however, because the mode of self-organization which precludes the term ‘anarchism’ from signifying anything beyond the specificity of the contingent and a-coherent ensemble of an-archic practices that constitute it is an emergent characteristic of the anarchist milieu. As Chesters and Welsh noted above, the emergent properties of complex systems are not reducible to the intentions or beliefs of any of the actors that compose the system. This is confirmed by

⁷³ May, *The Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism*, 48

the fact that a significant number of individuals and groups whose resistant practices in some way interface with ‘anarchism’ broadly rendered are themselves extremely ideological⁷⁴. But that is just the point: the anarchist critique of representation elucidated by May only makes sense as an emergent property embodied in the rhizomatic collective body that is the anarchist milieu, regardless of the particular orientation of any of the contingent experiments in insurgent sociality which compose it. Reading the anarchist critique of representation as a political position which functions as a, if not the, criterion of what can be called anarchism misunderstands this nuanced but important point because it does not grasp the impersonal and anti-subjective nature of emergence and operates on the assumption that conscious ideological consensus is the only possible way for a political tendency to be organized around a particular critique of power relations.

Beyond this, I think that reading the anarchist critique of representation as an emergent, collective characteristic irreducible to any part(s) of the anarchist milieu enables a productive (re)location of anarchism within the broader structure of this thesis. When viewed as an emergent property of a particular, contingent composition of the collective body of anarchism, the tendency for the anarchist milieu to organize itself in ways that confound attempts at objectifying, classifying, and evaluating anarchism as a

⁷⁴ Many contemporary iterations of anarchism, ranging from contemporary Platformist tendencies such as the North East Federation of Anarcho Communists in the US and the Zablaza anarchist federation in South Africa to the multitudes of anarcho-primitivist groups who seek to realize the mythical benign state of nature articulated by various modernist romanticisms through the insurrectionary overthrow of “civilization” in its totality, are deeply ideological. There is no lack of self-identified anarchist groups whose politics revolve around the common affirmation of incontrovertible political truths, nor of groups who do not identify as anarchists but appropriate and participate in forms of organization and resistance related to one or another strain of anarchism in the context of ideological and at times distinctly authoritarian political formations.

unitary entity is itself the embodiment of a critique of the prevailing power relations that structure dominant practices of knowledge production. The radically rhizomatic organizational structure of the anarchist milieu is one which, intentionally or not, frustrates the idealizing gaze called for by the will to truth that, through the normalizing power of the academy, governs the production of those discourses broadly regarded as reputable social theory. In so doing, it embodies a critique which resonates deeply with those of Precarias a la Deriva, the Counter Cartographies Collective, and Colectivo Situaciones. Without discounting the important differences between these groups, they do share a remarkably common trajectory in elaborating their analyses of the dominating and politically paralyzing effects of the power relations which structure and are enacted by hegemonic practices of knowledge production. In each case, these groups' experiments in insurgent practices of knowledge production were incited by distinct experiences of a gap between the lived realities of the neoliberal fragmentation of forms of social life not based on market logic and the imposed coherence of those modalities of knowledge organized around the supposedly universally valid representations of reality proffered by the will to truth. In this sense, each of these groups' practices of knowledge production are, implicitly or explicitly, centrally informed by what we have been calling the anarchist critique of representation. Moreover, in insisting that this gap calls for the critique and subversion of the ruling order of knowledge to create the space for the immanent collective production of knowledges as a an aspect of the collective-self determination of social singularities, these groups function an-archically.

We can see this, for example, in the way in which Colectivo Situaciones' critique of the dominating power relations enacted through idealizing structures of knowledge dovetails with and compliments the critique embodied in anarchism's a-representational,

a-signifying forms of emergent self-organization. That is to say, the operation of idealization CS critiques is also a representationalist operation. In the name of the will to truth, idealizing knowledges require that their object, “a real, contradictory, rich, and always conflicted experience is placed on the one-dimensional pedestal of the redeeming ideal. Operations are idealized, permitting the experience/experiment to produce an existence. This is, then, transformed into an example to apply anytime and anywhere, a new set of a priori principles. It is then asked to be able to confirm this ideal for everyone.”⁷⁵ In light of this, it is clear that CS’ critique of idealization is inseparable from an analysis of the reification and domination involved in the act of representation. In reducing the rich, contradictory nature of life to the isolated aspects thereof valued by an a-situational ideal of truth prejudged as *the* criterion of validity, idealizing theory functions as a practice which claims and exercises the authority to represent the “true world” over and above the experiences and understandings whose production is immanent to social cooperation. In this sense, anarchism and the practices of militant research share a significant area of overlap in their understandings of the politics of knowledge production. Both anarchism and militant research identify and critique as the ensemble of power relations which structure the dominant practices of knowledge production. These critiques locate domination at work in the construction of ability to represent the world through enunciations given the social currency of truth as a power regulated and distributed by a small set of hierarchical institutions whose continued existence rests on maintaining and reproducing these power relations through the production of a constantly-available pool of highly-trained professional specialists in

⁷⁵ Colectivo Situaciones, “Something More on Research Militancy,” *Constituent Imagination*, 84

thought. The idealizing operations by which these specialists “do justice” to their objects of study function through the attribution of stable identities by substituting purified representations for the contradictory realities of lived experience and in so doing cast as invalid those knowledges produced through collective processes of reflection and discursive elaboration immanent to the heterogeneous experiences of autonomously constituted sociality.

As I have argued, anarchism does have a significant place in this thesis, but it is a place which ensures that its presence is ephemeral and difficult to identify. If anarchism is anything at all, it is the intertwining, situated histories of the contingent, ensemble of events in which the collective composition of forms of sociality capable of constituting themselves in and through the common capacity for autonomous self-organization, resist domination in defense of that very immanent capacity. Anarchism, then, is an always-temporary constellation of events of an-archy, the refusal of self-organized social formations to submit to any logic or norm outside of those immanent to social cooperation. The rhizomatic organization of this field of struggle, an emergent property constituted by, but irreducible to, the innumerable interactions which compose this complex, dynamic system, means that anarchism is always an improper signifier. In this sense, even the most general attempts to define anarchism engage in a certain epistemic violence, circumscribing and naming a borderless, indeterminate territory whose only positive attribute is the constant frustration of attempts to attribute stable qualities to it.

And yet as we have seen throughout this thesis, it is anarchism’s radical immanence to situated processes of resistance to domination which build and actualize capacities to autonomously compose forms of sociality inside and against the capitalist order of

power that has maintained it as a perennial resource, sparking the inspiration and imagination of insurgents across the most disparate times and places. The question I want to close by meditating on, then, is how to respond to the proliferation of indeterminate, an-archic forms of resistance in response to the dispersed yet pervasive imposition of neoliberal governmentality and capitalist stratification upon all forms of social life organized according to logics other than that of the market. Ought we read this as an opportunity to finally abandon the signifier ‘anarchism’ in favor of affirming the a-signifying self-organization of a milieu chafing under a signifier which, regardless of the complex implications of its structure, still carries the baggage of a relation to ideology common to “words ending in –ist?” Or is this a reason to reinvigorate the anarchist tradition with the energy of this new profusion of centerless, situated trajectories of self-managed cooperation composed in resistance to domination and hierarchy? Does the term anarchism’s ability, however ephemeral, to consolidate many disparate genealogies of the autonomous co-production of the common goods which constitute social life outweigh its possibly counter-productive association with ideology and identity?

As mentioned above, I don’t think that I can answer this question once and for all, nor do I want to. It seems only appropriate that such a decision be left open to infinite consideration and revision as necessitated by the collectively-produced understandings and internal debates of the myriad groups whose desire to meaningfully direct the character of their collective life leads them to engage in the work of experimentation and subversion that enables the creation of anarchic spaces: liberated zones within the networked geography of power where dominating power formations are disrupted and their control over the possible forms of social life suspended so that the free, collective appropriation of the common goods immanent to sociality, affective interchange, and

noncommodified exchange between minds and bodies can be communally experimented with according to the collective desires of those involved.

Fittingly enough, this line of thought returns us to where this thesis began: Hakim Bey's use of the term post-anarchism in his 1987 essay "Post-Anarchism Anarchy." While in the introduction, the essay was used to begin discussing postanarchism as a distinct project within anarchism, we can now return to it capable of extracting a new set of meanings and foregrounding new problems to incite critical reflection. At this point, it is clear that Bey's critique of the tendencies within anarchism towards ideologization and ossification into tragic re-hashings of a mythical glorious past closely mirrors the problems identified in the continued use of the term anarchism. "Anarchist," like any "word ending in -ist," carries along with the inspiration of its multiple histories, the specter of ossified ideology which, too obsessed by its identification with antiquated political certainties to be attentive to the contingent and fleeting opportunities to realize situated freedom in the present "stagger[s] around with the corps of a Martyr magically stuck to its shoulders—haunted by the legacy of failure and revolutionary masochism—stagnant backwater of lost history."⁷⁶

This result, however, is not a foregone conclusion in Bey's eyes, nor should it be. Abstractly consigning anarchism to this fate means ignoring the way in which it continues to actively infuse and be infused by new struggles against dominating formations of power and new innovations in the autonomous composition of counterpower in the myriad struggles occurring, in our current historical moment, inside

⁷⁶ Bey, Hakim, "Post-Anarchism Anarchy," in *The Temporary Autonomous Zone*, <http://www.t0.or.at/hakimbey/taz/taz2c.htm#labelPostAnarchismAnarchy>

and against the pernicious architecture of post-Fordist capitalism and neoliberal governmentality. At a time when anarchist theories and histories both enrich and draw upon the vitality of networked resistances to capitalism and the imposition of normalizing social control, Bey's opposite scenario wherein "The Black Banner could provide a focus for the outrage" experienced by those whose lives are put at the precarious mercy of the market "and channel it into an insurrection of the imagination."⁷⁷ This also speaks to the work of militant research which, whether identified as anarchist or not, acts anarchistically in that the practices of knowledge production that it works to develop, in a diversity of iterations, as immanent processes of resistant social formations can be seen as procedures for fomenting situated insurrections of the imagination. Whether in a Madrid call center, a Chapel Hill classroom, or an Argentine highway picket, the power at issue in power/knowledge, a power which militant research is always engaged in developing new procedures to enable social singularities to autonomously appropriate for their own ends, is the power to determine how we see the world, how perception is socially ordered.

The only possible response to this ambivalent status of anarchism in the context of this thesis, however, is silence⁷⁸. Such decisions cannot be made from outside of the subjective experience of the situated struggles in which they are demanded by unpredictable circumstance. Ultimately, this constitutes a fitting, if perhaps a bit unsatisfying conclusion to this thesis, but that feeling of dissatisfaction is, I believe,

⁷⁷ Ibid

⁷⁸ This silence is not from withholding something statements incited by the order of discourse, nor resisting them through withdrawal. It is a positive silence, a gesture towards generative possibility that lies beyond a world imagined to be exhausted by the most complete grammar or logic.

highly appropriate and perhaps even necessary. The point of this sustained reflection on anarchism, poststructuralism, and the politics of knowledge production in the context of pervasive neoliberal restructuring of the social is to produce dissatisfaction, because dissatisfaction is the source of incitement to go beyond what is given and experiment with new ways of being/with/others, of living and creating in common. I feel that this thesis will have been decently successful if it results in enhancing the ability of those who read it to identify and resist the ways in which the polymorphous formations of dominating, hierarchizing, and stratifying power (whose names run like a litany through this text) structure their everyday lives and to imagine and play with procedures of subversion that simultaneously constitute themselves as possibilities for living otherwise. It is meant to hold open the question of how to become an immanent source of rupture in the architecture of power, combining and recombining to find new ways of inhabiting spaces of domination to act inside and against those structures of power whose constraints produce life as we find ourselves living it. Ultimately, much of this can be summed up in Hakim Bey's helpful reminder that "AnarchISM ultimately implies anarchy⁷⁹."

⁷⁹ Ibid

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