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**Anthropology and the Anarchists:
Culture, Power, and Practice in Militant Anti-Capitalist
Protests**

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"Tens of thousands of anti-globalisation activists are travelling to Barcelona for the meeting of European Union heads of state and government. The summit, on 15-16 March, will be the first such meeting since the summit in Genoa, which saw the worst rioting in western Europe for decades...Spanish police are determined to prevent any breakdown in law and order and have focused on anarchist groups...Since Genoa, anarchist protests have been labelled potentially terrorist activities in the EU... at least 1,000 protesters from 'Black block' groups will be attending the protests...Unlike the vast majority of peaceful protesters, Black block activists use violence to achieve their ends." ("British Protesters Flock to Summit" in **The Observer**, March 10th 2002)

In the early evening of Saturday March 16th, six days after this article was published in a British Sunday newspaper, somewhere between 300 and 600 thousand people gathered in Place de Catalunya, in the commercial centre of Barcelona. This was the culmination of a week of meetings, film showings, debates and demonstrations in the city, called by the Campanya Contra L Europa del Capital e Guerre (Campaign Against Europe of Capital and War). The events had drawn individuals and groups from across Europe whose heterogeneous political priorities and economic visions continue to be amalgamated, sanitised and popularised by mainstream media outlets as 'anti-globalisation'. A communiqué from the Campaign, however, described this final gathering as "the biggest demonstration of the social movements in favour of another type of globalisation" (IMCb 2002).

On the corner of Ronda Universitat and Passeig de Gracia a massed crowd waited for more than an hour to move forwards. In this, one of six sections to the demonstration, banners, flags, and sashes identified people as Spanish trade unionists, Catalan nationalists, anti-war or environmental campaigners. On one section of the pavement demonstrators dressed in an array of black clothes began to converge. Many had covered or now began to cover their faces in scarves or hoods. Several black rectangular flags appeared, held low above heads in this portion of the crowd. A number of placards displayed an circled A, an anarchist symbol. This was the 'Black block', comprising people who advocate a militant anti-capitalist politics. At around 7:00pm the mass of people began to walk, slowly at first, towards Placa Urquinaona.

A variety of activists and academics have recently drawn attention to the characteristics of militant activists within what is popularly, but problematically, described as the 'anti-globalisation movement'. They claim a contemporary resurgence, in motivations and actions, of 'anarchism' as a potent political force. With reference to this eclectic material, my intentions are threefold. Firstly, to engage with the cultural processes that are embedded within the political statements and actions of militant activists; secondly, to use these activists as a lens through which to view the interplay of knowledge and power in political practices; and thirdly, to reconcile this discussion with an ongoing interest in social movements as the bearers of progressive, counter-hegemonic, alternatives to 'development'. The events in Barcelona provide a point of entry and a frame of reference for this paper.

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My role in Barcelona was more than that of demonstrator, which loosely defines anyone who takes part in a demonstration, but less than that of an activist, one who has a policy of vigorous action in a cause. My participation must register me as a protestor, in that my very presence and contribution was that of one who makes a statement of dissent or disapproval. Yet, there was some duplexity to my positioning (1). I also approached this role as an anthropologist. An ethnographic engagement with militant activists requires a deliberate distancing; stepping back from their criminalisation and pathological representation, as well as from their glorification and valorization. This paper is also intended as a tentative step in this uneasy and hesitant task, and I suggest dimensions of enquiry that can add to a 'deeper' understanding of collective political practice.

Globalising Protest

Protests directed at multilateral economic institutions and supra-national governance structures are animated by the human and environmental costs that have accompanied a structural transformation of the global economy; specifically the expansion of deregulating and liberalizing market reforms across three geopolitical worlds (third, second and first). The protests address specific institutions, their structure, decision-making procedures, and the "content of their policies," (O'Brian et al. 2000: p2). In recent history, the metropolitan meetings of the World Trade Organisation, the Group of Eight Industrialised Countries, and the European Union have acted as points of convergence for people of a similar disposition: 'movement' activists. They recognise a definite commonality of interest among disparate protest groups; a commonality that they insist must in some way be seen as a collective contestation of the form (gestalt) in which 'globalisation' has manifested itself; for them, this is a tangible 'movement'. While some people countenance the anti-globalisation epithet, for its communicability, others employ alternatives. Tadzio Mueller (2002), for example, names it the 'globalisation critical movement'.

For many social analysts the character of this contemporary mobilisation can be distinguished as a 'trans-national movement' (cf. Ratner 1997), in recognition of the commonalities and connections between territorially located groups or organizations that were previously seen as separate (2). However, Michael Hardt has recently put grandiloquent claims of international solidarity in their place, recognising that the networks comprising this 'movement' are largely confined to the north Atlantic. He describes the 2002 World Social Forum in Porto-Alegre which took place as the World Economic Forum met in Washington, for example, as a "predominantly white event": "There were relatively few participants from Africa and Asia and the racial differences of the Americas were dramatically underrepresented," (p122).

Actions attributed to a Black block of demonstrators during protests in Prague during the 55th annual meeting of the World Bank Group and the board of Governors of the International Monetary Fund, September 2000; in Gothenburg during the EU summit, June 2001; and in Genoa during the meeting of the G8, July 2001 have drawn particularly wide media attention. During these events the destruction of property did much to agitate politicians, generate popular stereotypes among non-participants about the opponents of globalisation, and spark debate amongst 'movement' activists (3).

The emphasis that an individuals' protest takes is clearly contingent upon their political positioning. Michael Hardt has classified two dominant stances within the 'movement'. The first takes neo-liberalism as the primary analytical category; with unrestricted capitalist activity and weak nation state controls as the enemy (Hardt 2002: p114). The second posits Capital itself as both principal analytical category and nemesis. This position rejects reforms at the level of the nation state and pursues a democratic globalisation (ibid). Here the implications of capitalist penetration are construed as more than modernity's failed promises (Bauman 1995). In this inverted teleology, the power of capital is exercised on subjects in ever more innovative ways. Thereby necessitating contests that Hardt and Negri have characterised as "bio-political struggles, struggles over the form of life," (Hardt and Negri 2001a: p56).

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The claims, demands and actions of activists attracted to the Black block may be incontrovertibly placed within this frame.

"I went to Genoa because I am against capitalism – let's name the beast: capitalism. I went to Genoa because I believe that capitalism hasn't and can't meet our needs and is a social system that condemns the vast majority of people to stunted and unfulfilled lives despite our best efforts..." (Jazz 2001: p80)

These Activists are also predominantly white; a demographic attested too in ironic statements by militant activists themselves: "The anti-capitalist fight has certainly steeped up a notch (concerning Western activist summit hopping)," (S. 2001: p17). And the more militant among them are deemed to come from European countries with a pronounced history of militant Left-wing activity, Germany, Italy and Spain. "The Black Block is primarily a European situation, we don't have one in this country [the UK] for which I am personally glad...[but] I knew that I wanted to physically confront the state and I believed the Black Block was the best tool for that purpose" (Jazz 2001: p87).

Thus, the Black block has different connotations for different groups of people. For external observers and demonstrators, it is a convenient noun that identifies a militant group of people within the broad based 'anti-globalisation movement'. For 'movement' activists, it connotes not an association or organisation but a tactic: an uncoordinated but collective means of confrontational or direct action against property and police, understood respectively as symbols of capital and the state. For individuals who engage in such actions it is also a means of identification, a noun that can be substituted for the collective pronoun 'we'.

Anarchism, Anarchists, and Academics

The narrative histories of people who identify themselves with the Black block trace its emergence to protests that accompanied the meeting of the World Trade Organisation in Seattle, November 1999. Here, people who engaged in direct action against property dressed in black to make their identification by police more difficult. However, the Black block is considered more than an epiphenomenon. It is not simply the by-product of mass gatherings between likeminded protestors but the practice of a historically rooted politics: that of Anarchism. Anarchism can be best understood not as a doctrine but as a practice. The total rejection of hierarchical social organisation, of leadership and of government, as a means of practicing and thus constructing human relationships based on equality and liberty (4).

Activists who identify themselves with the Black block also identify themselves overtly as Anarchists. This identification can be recognised in the semiotic domain of knowledge (in rhetorical statements that are spoken or written; in the black flags or circled As that communicate their position to others) and the embodied (in the practical refusal of hierarchies, and the physical assertion of the freedom of the individual) (5). As one activist, writing after Genoa, has put it:

"What the NGOs and Marxist Leninist / Maoist Groups don't understand is that we want freedom from all forms of domination and oppression, including organisations that want to think and act on our behalf," (Starhawk 2001: p128)

Two recent papers are helpful in outlining this contemporary manifestation of Anarchism, and understanding how its analysis fits within a wider academic debate on 'social movements'(6).

In an enquiry into the 'anti-globalisation movement' Barbara Epstein (2001) has described the political emphases prevalent among militant activists. "The intellectual/philosophical perspective that holds sway in these circles might be better described as an anarchist sensibility rather than anarchism per se," (Epstein 2001: p8). This is not, she is at pains to explain, an ideological

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commitment to classical Anarchism as a blueprint for change. Rather, this is a resurgence of principles that emerge from a particular tradition and are orientated towards certain goals. Epstein identifies core four components: an insistence on equality and democracy; an insistence that radical politics need not be dreary; an insistence on principle rather than political expediency; and the practical implementation of these values in group creation and organization (ibid).

The anthropologist David Graeber (2002) has begun to document the practical implementation of these values by Anarchist activists. In terms of organisational characteristics and confrontational tactics he is clear that contemporary practices have a distinct political heritage:

"It is about creating and enacting horizontal networks instead of top-down structures like states, parties, or corporations, networks based on principles of decentralised, non-hierarchical consensus democracy," (Graeber 2002: p70).

"The very notion of direct action, with its rejection of politics which appeals to government to modify their behaviour, in favour of physical intervention against state power in a form that itself prefigures an alternative - all this emerges directly from the libertarian tradition," (ibid: p62).

Both Epstein and Graeber address the 'movement' and 'anarchism', but their perspectives are underlain by different academic approaches. I take their positions as somewhat representative of recurrent orientations within a corpus of literature that concerns itself with the 'social movement' as a form of Gramscian counter-hegemonic mobilisation. Here, a movement is unequivocally associated with civil society, the analytical realm that exists in contradistinction to the state: civil society. As John Borneman (1998) reminds us, however, there is nothing assuredly civil about civil society (7). Borneman's truism is important when reflecting on authors who privilege the 'social movement' as a progressive force. In unpacking what I take to be two dominant trends within this body of writing I ask what they ignore, to what end, and with what ramifications.

The first may be characterised by a preoccupation with 'roots and fates', or historical process, and theoreticians who have sought to confront the challenges that contemporary forms present to classical Marxism. The result, as Mark Crossley (2002) has explained in a recent synthesis, "is the abandonment of that model of politics developed within Marxism where-in it necessarily centered upon parties, revolutions and states, and has sought to explore the broader territories of movements and politics," (Crossley 2002: p152). In particular, theorists have focused on the ways in which 'social movements' seek to achieve change in the sub-political domain of culture (See: for example, Mellucci 1998). A central theme has been to analyse the pursuit of cultural objectives (broadly conceived as sexual, ecological or ethnic), rather than purely economic or political goals, as post-modern phenomena. Epstein's comments hint at this, and she references a "sharper appreciation of social and cultural equality" in the politics of activists after the 1960s.

While a broadening of the political domain to embrace the cultural is a core feature of this approach, analyses often suffer from a preoccupation with overly deterministic historical process (8). The importance of state and non-state actors in the dynamics of social transformation need not be underestimated. But the dominant perspectives in the political and social sciences are often locked into a teleological search for structures and patterns (9). The result is that the historical and materialistic concerns of much writing on 'social movements' often appear ambivalent to actual social and cultural practices. Epstein's reaction to 'Anarchist' sensibilities' (the phrase itself is used sceptically), for example, is one that treats such 'ideological creativity' (p11) as a distracting theoretical contradiction (10). Yet, where anarchist principals co-exist with Marxist historical materialism and anti-capitalist rhetoric in the sentiments of activists they highlight the complex combination of cultural and historical influences in constructing political statements.

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In contrast, the second more recent trend addresses these influences directly and may be characterised by its concern with voice and meaning. Anthropologists have made a central contribution here, urging that people engaged in political activity be recognised as creative agents. This is more than a plea that human voices and meanings colour studies orientated by political economy. Predominant is a concept of 'culture' that has been recaptured and re-invigorated, following Bourdieu, as 'practice' (Ortner 1984; Fox 1991). 'Culture as practice' is neither anchored nor homogenous but constitutive and transformative: the grounds of agency and intentionality (Ortner 1999: p11). The work of Arturo Escobar (Escobar 1992) as an early advocate of anthropological engagement with 'social movements' has utilised this concept to understand them as 'collective political practice': "[P]eople continue to shape their worlds through types of political activism that include the fashioning of symbols and alternative meanings as much as concrete forms of mobilisation and organising." (ibid: p421). Thus, cultural agents do not simply reproduce meanings, of hierarchy or justice for example, but transform them in an act of appropriation (ibid: p413). In this manner, Graeber draws attention to the reinvention of internal group dynamics among Anarchist activists in their search for consensus rather than majority decision-making processes. He stresses that the process appropriates methods of facilitation and organizational tools that "lie outside the Western tradition" (Graeber 2002: p70). And underlines how forms of direct action, like the mock army of pink fairies who tickle police, subvert existing paradigms of civil disobedience (ibid: p66).

Both Epstein and Graeber are indicative of major concerns in such debate and also limitations. Where Epstein relegates the domain of the cultural to an instrumental role (11), assessed only in terms of its contribution to counter-hegemonic politics, Graeber unquestioningly celebrates its emancipatory potential (12).

Fat Theory, Thin Movements

Escobar takes a similar position. In part due to his work (Escobar 1984, 1995), the 'social movement' has begun to exert a conceptual domination over arenas of anthropological enquiry. In particular, his anthropology of 'development' privileges the 'social movement' as a locus of political practices and alternatives to hegemonic models of progress. In Latin America, for example, the indigenous social movement' is deemed especially important in reconfiguring democratic spaces and asserting civil rights (Escobar 2000a). Escobar's profuse application of Foucaudian theory is a key to this rendering. His post-structuralist exposure of power in the modern discourse of development has led him to posit 'social movements' more generally as "symbols of resistance to the dominant politics of knowledge and organization of the world" (Escobar 1992: p421).

Escobar's attention to collective political practice has been spurred by the desire to unblock a disciplinary hiatus over political engagement, one consequence of anthropologists' increased sensitivity to the power of representation (Escobar 1992: p395). To this end his 'post-development' move towards 'social movements' is both urgent and expectant. He has more recently described it as, "a journey of the imagination, a dream about the utopian possibility of re-conceiving and reconstructing the world from the perspective of, and along with, those subaltern groups," (Escobar 2000b: p3). Such self-conscious vanguardism is especially problematic. John Gledhill's comment on his work vividly highlights the danger: "What we should avoid doing is transforming social movements into unitary 'actors' devoid of internal contradictions and contradictory tendencies, and isolating them from the larger social, cultural and political fields within which they experience their ebbs and flows," (Gledhill 1994: p190).

Sherry Ortner (1995) has powerfully identified this precise tendency in studies of 'resistance' as an ethnographic refusal. That is, an avoidable absence of richness, texture and detail (what Clifford Geertz had called 'thickness') in descriptions of the cultural dimensions of politics.

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"[S]tudies are thin because they are ethnographically thin: thin on the internal politics of dominated groups, thin on the cultural richness of these groups, thin on the subjectivity - the intentions, desires, fears, projects - of the actors engaged in these dramas," (ibid).

Ortner's point is made in relation to studies of dominated, or subaltern, groups, but her central critique is far more widely applicable; her key protagonists (13) are tainted not simply for ignoring cultural detail but for willfully refusing it. She cites unanswered questions concerning the internal complexity of groups - the glossing over of gender politics, exclusivity and internal conflicts - as evidence of a failure of nerve. At the core of her argument lies the accusation that a fear of undermining group solidarity in political projects results in an absence of 'thick' description and a sanitisation of politics. It is an impulse that she dismisses as "fundamentally romantic" (ibid: p179) and ultimately misguided. On the contrary, Ortner asserts, an appreciation of the "multiplicity of projects in which social beings are always engaged, and the multiplicity of ways in which those projects feed on or collide with one another" (ibid: p191) can help us to better understand the limitations and the possibilities of political projects.

Central to thinking on 'social movements', then, must be an insistence on the indivisibility of culture from political and economic processes (14). As Fox and Starn appropriately comment:

"[D]issent and direct action depend on the explosive interaction of an array of constituencies, institutions, and ideologies. Social forces not just from below but also from above and across come into play in social movements," (Fox and Starn 1997: p11)

The recognition of multiple forces acting in a 'social movement' directs the trajectory of this paper towards dimensions of power, which operate in both knowledge and practice. In the following sections, I apply a more thorough reading of Foucault's work to explore issues in the configuration of social movements as resistance to power (15). And use the theoretical tools proffered by Bourdieu more rigorously to underscore the power in actions and emotions.

Event, Ethnography

The scene shifts: at around 7:00pm the mass of people began to walk, slowly at first, towards Placa Urquinaona.

The crowd reached Passeig de Colom, on Barcelona's waterfront. The wide boulevard was overrun with people. On the opposite side of the road from me masked figures broke the windows of La Casa, a Spanish bank, with a signpost. As I walked the mass of demonstrators broke up. On several occasions they ran frantically, dispersed by warnings of oncoming police. Otherwise large groups of people, both demonstrators and non-demonstrators, stood and watched as masked figures threw an assortment of bottles and bricks at buildings; kicked the glass from telephone booths; or tore paving stones from the pavement. I walked along Passeig de Colom for about 45 minutes to the Plaza de Colon, where columns of police fired tear gas and exchanged rubber bullets with eclectic missiles from masked figures in what was left of the crowd. From here I moved deliberately away from the scene.

At 5:38am on March 17th a legal team working for the Campaña Contra L'Europe del Capital e Guerre reported that 80 people had been arrested during the course of the previous night (IMCa 2002). This riotous event went largely unreported in the mainstream British media. A lone article on March 18th recorded that the EU demonstration had taken place largely free of violence (Financial Times 2002). For a large number of the demonstrators this was the story: the Barcelona demonstrations had passed off in relative calm compared to similar gatherings in the past.

Disapproval of such militant behaviour as 'violent', however, is one extreme in a range of responses. To understand their actions as violent requires them to be seen as somehow

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illegitimate. Hence, the minority of activists who constitute the perpetrators are distanced from a majority not only by the nature of their actions but also by their ethical reasoning. Property destruction is a form of protest embedded in anarchism as a political discourse, and hence militant activists understand such events differently:

"We think violence is too strong a word, it's a word that should be reserved for our enemies. Our violence is a drop in the ocean when compared to their violence. We prefer to call it a confrontational approach. A confrontational approach means that we are prepared to confront the violence of the police and the violence of the system," (Anon. 2001: p5).

Power in the People 1: Chains

Clearly, the overt intention of anarchic anti-capitalist activists is the defiance, disruption, and destruction of a way of organizing and seeing the world that is deemed to be hegemonic. Hence, their practices are also aimed at resisting forms of power. Yet, there are a number of ways in which resistance to power may be analysed.

Lila Abu-Lughod (1990) has offered a succinct reminder of Foucault's analytical contribution to the concept of 'power', most pertinently his insistence that "where there is resistance, there is power" (p42). As she further elaborates, rather than taking sites of resistance as "signs of human freedom" we can use them diagnostically and strategically: "to tell us more about forms of power and how people are caught up in them" (ibid). This is to recognise that Foucault's analytic, a field or web of power relations to which there is no exterior, is intent on demonstrating that power cannot be understood as inherently repressive or as an imposition from above. Rather, power must be conceptualised as relational, productive, and responsive (See: Foucault 1978 [1976]: p92-102).

A Foucauldian approach to the Black Block might, then, be to ask: how, and under what circumstances, did the possibility for the destruction of property as a confrontation with capital arise? Within this frame, the act of resistance is theorised as a discursive product of power. So, implicit in the construction of counter-hegemony are objects of knowledge whose very existence is the product of hegemonic discourses. Therefore, the history of anarchism must also be the history of the production of knowledge about authority. The anarchic rejection of authority thus entails the rejection of a particular notion of authority; and the act of refutation, necessarily alters and refines the operation of power.

Foucault binds this power to a European post-enlightenment modernity. It is an inexorable societal infusion of rationalism and order, entwined with a capitalist mode of production, within which particular ways of thinking and being are reproduced. Escobar's reading of Foucault understands power to be univocally of the modern and of the West. For this reason he is able to celebrate the collective political practices of 'un-modernised' 'non-Westerners' for tactically exploiting the 'cracks' and 'fissures' in the network of power (16). Yet, in his application of such abstractions Escobar essentialises subaltern movements as somehow untouched by processes that produce knowledge. When 'social movements' generally are projected in the same way, as both counter hegemonic and essentially beyond power, these claims appear theoretically naive and ethnographically emaciated.

Sweeping statements about 'trans-national social movements' offer an obvious challenge to anyone wary of totalising narratives of resistance. There is some cause for such concern (17). Graeber describes the trans-national influences in the construction of contemporary forms of protest, and the 'movement' as a whole, as its most crucial element: "Many, perhaps most of, the movement's signature techniques - including mass non-violent civil disobedience itself - were first developed in the global south. In the long run this may well prove the single most radical thing about it," (ibid: p65-66) (18). However he fails to enquire into the complex political dynamics of this trans-cultural diffusion.

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As Fox (1997) has shown, for example, the transmission of Ghandian methods of protest from India to the United States was never a clear-cut transfer. Instead it was subject to dislocation and relocation: Orientalised as pre-eminently ascetic or spiritual and later assimilated into a Christian tradition of non-violent pacifism. Although the accompanying shifts in meaning and interpretation proved important to the mobilisation of activists in movements for peace and racial equality, they also alert us to the politics of trans-cultural relations. This is to acknowledge that the 'structures of discourse on the social world are often politically charged social pre-constructions', (Wacquant 1992: p47). The 'Orientalist' (Said 1994) depictions of non-Western 'others', and Occidentalists (Carrier 1995) depictions of the West are intimately bound to self-knowledge and power.

In this vein, invocations of radical politics among militant activists are revealing:

"This is one important thing to remember about Genoa – because it was a G8 summit, all the world's media were there, and the news and the images of the rioting will have been carried back to almost every country in the world. The value of this, especially in much of the Third World is inestimable. Many people in other countries in the world imagine that everyone in the West lives a life of indolent luxury... It is very valuable for them to be able to see images of things they are familiar with – poor people fighting the police – taking place in the 'rich' West, leading them to see that the image they have been fed of the Western lifestyle is not all it's cracked up to be and that there are people like them in the West fighting for the same things they are fighting for," (Anon. 2001a: p50).

These assertions of solidarity and singularisation of interests are presupposed by a notion of 'victimhood'. As I have drawn attention to elsewhere (Cross 2002) this concept is immersed in a dominant pattern of modern representations; where invocations of victim and saviour reproduce myriad associative connotations and perpetuate a 'positional superiority'. In rigorous expositions of 'victim-hood', it is the West that saves the non-West from the ravages of exploitative social practices. As Harvey and Gow (1994) have provocatively noted:

"Western people, often uneasy about the domination intrinsic to their modes of action, are happiest when domination is done to empower the dominated...The image of the other is a call to action" (ibid: p4-5).

However, to consider the motivations of militant activists solely the product of discursive conjunctures which act as modernity's dialectical counterweight to capitalism, or of structures of power that are insurmountable, is also to obscure the subject as agent (19). This is an untenable position for some (20). For the anthropologist who advocates an anti-essentialist, non-totalising, politics, and demands a non-reductive respect for social actors, Bourdieu's 'logic of practice' offers a more satisfying device for understanding collective political activity as both improvisatory and regulated (21).

Power in the People 2: Balls

In describing their motivations for engaging in confrontational actions, in subjecting their own experience to rigorous analysis, or in recording their reactions to a riotous demonstration, militant protestors do not reference their political beliefs only in the realm of ideology. Their anarchic anti-capitalism is also stated with recourse to the realm of emotions. I suggest that there is an element of 'logocentrism' in much literature on social movements. Discussions of ideology, group organization, and meaning, privilege semiotic categories of knowledge over the embodied, (22) with the result that multiple forms of power are ignored and the liberating potential of some emancipatory gestures exaggerated.

Bourdieu's theoretical contributions offer tools for a political economy of society. In particular, to further an understanding of how structures of domination take cultural or symbolic forms in

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social relations. Here, the body and the emotions are both repository and vehicle for a social unconscious; where symbolic power may be lodged and structurally reproduced (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992). One important means of unmasking its operations is an attention to the gendering of actions and emotions.

Influenced by Bourdieu's work, Andrea Cornwall and Nancy Lindisfarne (1994) have outlined multiple methods for asking: "how, in any particular setting, attributions of masculinity are assumed or imposed," (p21). They take dominant or hegemonic constructions of masculinity to be the normalized standards against which masculinities are defined. It is useful to note three aspects of their enquiry. Firstly, that multiple hegemonic masculinities may overlap in any one context. Secondly, that hegemonic masculinities may be imposed by emphasising key attributes, like physical prowess or emotionality, over others. And thirdly, that men and women alike may refer to 'official transcripts of masculinity' to legitimate control over others (ibid: p24) (23).

The act of property destruction, 'propaganda of the deed' (24), is the public practice of a political belief, yet its enactment requires an activist to break a legal code and flout a social convention. Thus, the powering up of protesters, what might also be described as the incitement to riot, is not simply asserted by appealing to convictions or principals. In meetings, in narrative accounts of protest, and in the midst of demonstrations, hegemonic masculinities are employed. Militant activists invoke the characteristics of culturally dominant idioms of maleness: brute force and guile, determination and sang foid, bravado and brotherhood. Correspondingly, ideological assertions are made synonymous with idioms of male strength and soldiering: the injustice of capitalism and the inequality of the 'Third World' are angrily evoked as mobilisers in the fight or battle against capitalism.

These tools are used by activists to empower themselves towards gradually more illicit and risky acts and to generate a sense of natural moral superiority. All are at play in the physical confrontation between police who must defend what is not theirs and activists who attack on behalf of the masses.

The experiences of militant activists who have engaged in direct actions contribute to a history of Black Block activities. These operate in an arena of contested truth claims and contrast with alternative ideological accounts (for example, those of the police, politicians, and non-militant activists). Yet, as the experience of an event that is specific to an individual is shared; it also contributes to what others understand took place. As individual accounts are absorbed and interpreted by social agents as the producers and consumers of information, they contribute to the construction of a militant activist 'habitus'. An 'epistemic community' within which particular understandings are shared is twinned with a 'community of sentiment' (Appadurai 1990) within which certain emotions are shared.

The 'habitus' has a cohesive effect (25). It also serves to reproduce particular habits or dispositions; for example, the dominant masculine traits and characteristics that militant activists employ. In this way a group of like-minded activists may be internally unsettled, as members are constantly forced to compare or measure how they act against seemingly established norms. For sympathetic male activists who do not partake in militant demonstrations of radical beliefs, a sense of lacking courage is enough to attest to the dominance of key masculine attributes entrenched in this form of collective political practice.

It is tempting to suggest that the contemporary protests of militant anti-capitalists are not, on reflection, quite as anarchic as they first appear.

Street Fighting Gymnastics

The ambitious trajectory of this paper has aimed to draw attention to the constitutive power at play in the construction of militant subjectivities. For, while activist-academics, like Graeber or

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Escobar, urge the creative and emancipatory potential of collective political practice the embodied dispositions that affect social agents are rarely remarked upon. The challenge of anthropological engagement requires more than the identification of potent sites of struggle within which to work. A more rigorous and reflexive alertness to common sensical thoughts, actions and emotions is also a necessary political act (26). As Bourdieu, in uncharacteristically simple terms, has put it:

"The work of emancipation is a very difficult work..."

It's gymnastics, as much as consciousness raising...

As intellectuals we are not used to that, I call this the scholastic bias...

We think that the problems can be solved only through consciousness,"

(Pierre Bourdieu in conversation with Terry Eagleton, 1999) (27).

By taking seriously the anthropological contention that 'the political is cultural', a nuanced ethnographic engagement with collective political practice can be used to offer a balanced recognition of agentive creativity in acts of 'contention' and structural pluralism in forms of 'power'. In this way, academic debates can constructively channel deconstructionist tendencies into a deeper questioning of apparently emancipatory practices.

In short: flexing exercises in the academy should be accompanied by acts of reflexive gymnastics on the street.

Notes

1. See the work of Peter Pels (1999, 2000) for a discussion of dual roles and duplicitous ethics in anthropological field practices.

2. Thus, the anti-globalisation epithet contains a paradoxical message, since this is clearly a mobilisation that embraces rather than opposes networks and border-crossings (the spatial metaphors for 'globalisation').

3. Vibrant discussions about this form of direct action associated with the Black block are common among activists, these can be found in material published in the UK and on the Internet. There are two recurring orientations to these discussions. The first is a debate about the instrumentality of violence in furthering a struggle against capitalism. Here, questions about what a riot does, what the event communicates to different groups of people, and what this message achieves are deemed particularly important. These go further than asking if the destruction of property is violence to ask: under what conditions is property destruction strategic? Does the tactic have a positive or negative affect on moderate political reform? This is a rational debate that aims for a degree of empirical rigor in its calculations. A second orientation that discussions surrounding direct action take revolves around what actually happened during a particular demonstration, and the accounts of those who were present are of paramount importance. In doing so militant activists intimately analyse specific details. The extent of support from demonstrators, the relations between different segments of the crowd, the numbers involved, the chronological order of incidents, the actions of different types of activist, the nature of the force used by police, and the degree of police infiltration in the crowd are all subject to interrogation.

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4. From its disputed origins in the nineteenth century Anarchism is associated in the history of political philosophy with the writings of P.A. Kropotkin (Miller 1970); in a history of revolutionary uprisings with that of syndicalist Trade Unionists in Barcelona, 1909, or that of French Students in Paris, 1968 (Kedward 1971); and in a history of European literature with the consummation of radicalism by the poet Arthur Rimbaud (Robb 2001).

5. Here, I follow Jon Mitchell's (1997) distinction between domains of knowledge in the analysis of religious belief.

6. A 'social movement' may be distinguished from other social organisations in that its constituents actively pursue broad social transformations, at odds with those of existing order. Richard Fox and Orin Starn (1997) have positioned forms of organised public protest and political mobilisation in-between resistance and revolution. 'Social movements' lie in this intermediate zone of dissent and direct action, between "small, often surreptitious acts, of resistance" and the "drama of revolutionary war" in a topography of protest (ibid: p2-3).

7. "It is just plain wrong to claim that the organizations of civil society that are independent of the state are somehow more civil and friendly to society than those influenced or controlled by the state," (Borneman 1998: p13). Borneman's comments are made in relation to the activities of nationalistic civil society associations in 1930s Germany, and in the East Germany of the late 1980s.

8. For example, Alain Touraine's work has debated the historical efficacy of the 'social movement' in civil society both as a means of cultural production and a channel for democratic challenges to the state (Touraine 1995 [1992]). However, this complex act which society comes to perform on itself is identified as a decidedly post industrial one. It differs from those struggles over the distribution of economic resources or decision-making processes, or defensive opposition to exploitative or oppressive conditions, which are associated with an earlier stage of societal development and 'other' regions of the world (Gledhill 1994: p181). This quintessentially modern and often Euro-centric approach continues to reverberate distractingly through sociological analyses of collective political practice.

9. See, for example, David Meyer and Sidney Tarrow's (1998) investigation of cycles of collective action; Mark Traugott (1995) and Charles Tilly's (1995) insights into repertoires of political action

10. Her instrumentalism is most apparent when she asks what the convergence of influences can contribute to a "new paradigm of the left" (ibid: p14).

11. Another good example is W.K. Carrol and R.S Ratner's (1996) comparative study of Canadian social movements. Here, the only meanings conferred on the frames of political discourse within which activists understand injustice and imagine futures are their potential for constructing cross-movement alliances.

12. Graeber writes here "as an Anarchist" and proclaims, prosaically: "Most of the creative energy for radical politics is now coming from anarchism. [...] Anarchism is the heart of the movement, it's soul; the source of most of what's new and hopeful about it," (Graeber 2002: p61-2).

13. Eric Wolf, James Scott, and Ranajit Guha.

14. The work of Fox and Starn (1997) is particular forthright on this stance: "We assert the inextricability of the culture of politics and the politics of culture in mobilisation" (Fox and Starn 1997: p3).

15. I am indebted to seminar discussions on the theme of Power, Knowledge and Resistance, facilitated by James Fairhead, at the University of Sussex for drawing my attention to this critique of Escobar's work.

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16. Escobar derives this notion of tactics from Foucault's theoretical counterweight Michel de Certeau (1984). Indeed, de Certeau (1984) describes his own questions as being "at once analogous and contrary" (pxiv) to those dealt with by Foucault; and his techniques of appropriation, consumption, and tactical manoeuvring postulated as "the network of an anti-discipline" (ibid: pxv).

17. In their study of interactions between northern and southern-based movements, a quartet of scholars (O'Brian et al. 2000) has identified two common assumptions about 'trans-national social movements'. First, that characteristics of Northern social movements are shared by those in other parts of the world; and second, that an identity of interests between Northern social movements and those in other parts of the world does actually exist (ibid: p14). Such assumptions can be taken as the subsumption of alterity: the removal of difference. A quintessentially post-modern perspective might recognise in these a latent positional superiority – the relic of a post-enlightenment Ethno-centric humanism - rather than an infusion of international solidarity. This particular critique has been particularly important for 'Third World' feminist scholars and activists (Peterson and Runyan 1993).

18. For contemporary 'movement' activists, the interconnections between north and south are taken to be a distinctive feature of an oppositional force that is visible on a global scale. Recent theorists argue that the shifts in the possibilities for human mobility and the transfer of information, which are taken to be indicative of an era of globalisation¹, does in fact offer tools for challenging its more contentious elements. Thus, the plural and decentralized nature of collective political practices in the late 20th century is taken to be a potent means of bringing about radical transformation (See: Hardt and Negri 2000; 2001a).

19. At one extreme, deconstructionists obliterate the subject altogether. Take the theorising of Ernesto Laclau, for example, who elaborates on Foucauldian theory to posit all social identities as discursive constructions. "Social subjects and their practices are constructed through discourses, on ethnicity, gender, and, indeed, politics. [Therefore] common interests only exist in the form of discursively constructed ideas about them," (Gledhill 1994: p185-6). See, also Joel Kahn's (2001) anthropology of modernity.

20. See: (Brown 1998) on the hegemony of power/resistance dichotomies in the academy.

21. Arjun Appadurai has drawn attention to this phrasing of Bourdieu's cyclical analytic (Appadurai 1990: p92).

22. Cf. Mitchell (1997) for a discussion of logocentrism.

23. Bonnie McElhinny (1994) elucidates these points in a study of male and female police officers at work in New York. She outlines how officers alter and reproduce a masculinised environment by utilizing hegemonic masculinities while on duty. Officers protect themselves from the stresses of work by striving for neutral emotions when confronted with violent crime, or objectivity when dealing with members of the public. These experiences, embedded in a 'masculinised passivity', contribute to the construction of a male dominated professional workplace (or to use Bourdieu's conceptual framework, their 'habitus'). The negative effect that this often has on citizens, in their encounters with police officers, serves to perpetuate the utility of similar attributes. Curiously, McElhinny's account signposts a similar process operating amongst militant anti-capitalist activists whose direct actions actually confront the police.

24. In late 19th century Europe, the action or practice of Anarchist revolt was known as 'propaganda of the deed' (Kedward 1971: p35).

25. One, now passé, line of anthropological enquiry into direct action as a 'violent' behaviour or 'violent' event would be to emphasize its functional role in binding people together through the invocation of shared norms (Spencer 1996: p559). An alternative, and less functionalist approach, might be to elaborate on the evolution of a group identity through the construction of a shared history.

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26. Bourdieu's notion of reflexivity is particular. He posits rationalism and the science of sociology as fundamentally emancipatory; in that they may be committed to deepening an awareness of the assumptions – the elements of symbolic domination – that all individuals, academics and activists alike, embody.

27. In my reading, Boudieu's project also has its antecedents in a history of Anarchy. In May 1871 after a visit to Paris which took in the Commune, the 18 year old doyen of French symbolist poetry and über-anarchist, Arthur Rimbaud, wrote: "the idea is to reach the unknown by the rational derangement of all the senses" (Rimbaud in Robb 2001: p80).

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