Can a Knife of Shadows Cut Real Flesh From a Living Tree? The Organisation of Imaginal Commons

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Abstract

This thesis is situated upon a terrain of global crisis that can be approached not only as an economic crisis but also as a crisis of the imagination. I take as my starting point the inability of either capitalism or the movements against capitalism to move beyond a failing neoliberalism. From here I investigate the imaginal processes involved in producing doubt regarding the necessity and permanence of existing forms of social organisation and in visualising and creating new ones.

Approached through a genealogy of the imagination and the imaginary I develop a concept of the imaginal that corresponds neither to the individual faculty implication of the former nor to the unreality association of the latter. I draw on poetic methodologies such as the *production of eeriness, negative capability,* and *the surrealist game*, in order to understand how the imagination decomposes ossified concepts and social structures. I link these to arguments about the structure of time developed in the field of quantum physics to make a case that such processes correspond to a swelling of the real along *spatial* and *temporal imaginal axes*.

Through a symptomatological analysis of a series of interviews with participants in newly formed radical anti-capitalist organisations, I identify and discuss a number of organisational practices and experiments aimed at the shifting of social relations whilst at the same time avoiding the formation of static and inadaptable structures.

I bring a further theoretical angle to bear on these findings by engaging with the ideas of *autonomised institution* and *the refrain*. Lastly I reformulate the question as one of *commons* and *enclosure*, discussing commoning as a practice in antagonism with capital. I develop a set of ideas around the notion of the *imaginal commons* and the technologies of commoning that provide the possibility of its nurture and expansion.

Acknowledgements

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Introduction

Everyone's heard of the raft of the Medusa

And could if it came down to it conceive of an equivalent of that raft in the sky

André Breton – from 'There is No Other Way Out of Here' (Breton 2004)

If 2016, the year in which I write this introduction, has demonstrated anything, it is that the normal rules of political engagement no longer apply. Last years' general election in the UK, this years' EU referendum and the presidential election in the US all demonstrated the logic-defying gulf between polling and the end results. Furthermore, although the electorate's trust in politicians has eroded over the long term (and was likely not in rude health to begin with), even the most cynical amongst us would have been unlikely to have predicted a time when those in power would feel so little need to cover their tracks or provide even phony evidence to support their lies (a situation which, picking up on an idea developed by Roberts [2010] sections of the media have referred to as post-truth politics). Yet it could hardly be claimed that 2016 erupted upon what was previously a terrain of clarity and calm like some mad, scarred beluga breaching through a crack in the ice plains of the frozen arctic sea. Instead we can think of 2016 as a cluster of moments within an ongoing larger assemblage of crises. Starting as a 'financial crisis' (and the phrase has stuck) 2008's economic collapse quickly revealed itself to be also a crisis of representation, a crisis of social reproduction, a deepening ecological crisis, and a crisis of the future. Added to this we might follow others (Haiven 2014, LeBrun 2008, Castoriadis 2007) in positing the existence of a longer-term crisis of the imagination and suggesting that this is bought into relief by the coinciding of the other crises, or rather by our inability, so far, to organise our way out of them. Social inequality is increasing, climate change is worsening, the possibility of nuclear war between

nation states has reared its head anew. It seems absolutely clear that organisational innovations are required to find, urgently, the means to reverse these trends. We can assume however that this is not as simple as having a new idea, persuading people of its merits, and then putting it into practice. Organised social movement (the moving of social relations) requires not only methods of imagining, negotiating, and instituting the new but also methods for the often-monumental task disentangling from the imaginaries and institutional logics of the current.

This thesis is not primarily concerned with what these organisational innovations are or in what they might be. Neither is it concerned with the question of why such processes of innovating may have stalled (other than as a background context). What I am concerned with here are the processes by which collective bodies end the reproduction of one institutional form and begin the reproduction of another and, relatedly, whether some forms of organisation (or some aspects of organisational forms) can better facilitate this movement and prevent institutional ossification than others. This process of deinstituting and reinstituting rests on the operation of the collective imagination. This thesis explores this idea, which I have referred to as the Organisation of Imaginal Commons.

The empirical element of the research focuses on three recently formed radical political organisations. Groups of this type have been selected because their relationship to the dominant form of social organisation (neoliberal capitalism) is a pro-transformative one rather than a pro-adaptive one. Whilst a small business, for example, may change its organisational structure in order to better adapt or to better benefit from the current hegemony, a radical political organisation looks to move beyond it, into something completely different. This added level of complexity provides us with a richer terrain on which to grapple with the problem of trying to imagine alternatives to and ways out from a system of social organisation that relies upon the erection of a fortress of limitations around what it is possible to imagine. The organisations that were chosen are (or were at the time of the research) new ones in order to increase the possibility of my being able to observe imaginal commoning in action rather than encountering respondents who had already absorbed the more settled or ossified imaginaries of their organisation and were thus oriented towards their reproduction rather than creation.

In this introduction, I provide both a personal context for the development of this research and a political one (although, as will be obvious, the two are not fully

separated). In doing the latter, I elaborate further upon the multiple crises that structure (or destructure) the terrain upon which social life currently unfolds. In particular, I look at the notion of a crisis of the imagination and suggest that in addition to its manifestations upon the terrains of technology (Graeber 2014), science (Stengers 2012), and philosophy (Castoriadis 2007), we can perhaps observe its dark shadow unfurling across the terrain of political organisation. The introduction goes on to suggest that for this reason, research into the relationship between collective imaginal processes and radical organisation is not merely pertinent but urgent. Following from this, I provide a brief synopsis of some of the key contributions made by the thesis, of its overall structure, and of that of the individual chapters.

The personal context of the research – Surrealism and the left

The research presented over the next 250 pages emerges from a set of questions and problems which, for me, long predate the four year period in which they were subjected to academic discipline and conventions. They are the product of my involvement in the struggles and milieus constituting the alter-globalisation movement of the late 1990s and early 2000s as well as those political experiments that exploded like firecrackers to confront the new terrain of Austerity Capitalism in the post 2008 world.

Foremost amongst these, at least in terms of the time and work devoted to it, has been the organisation Plan C, a group that began to address a particular set of problematics relating to the crisis and notably the failure of the left to respond effectively to it. In fact, we did not so much see this at the time as a *new* situation for the left as much as we understood it as *exposing,* through entry onto a new terrain of urgency and opportunity, how the political imaginary of the left in the UK had stalled since the 1970s. In effect, the impotence of collective struggle in the face of a new situation – chaotic and frightening on the one hand, but fertile and open on the other – that corresponded for us to a crisis of the imagination; we felt that the imagination had been beaten down by dogma, gang rivalries, and rigid moralities and bound by rigidly held narratives about the world that no longer related closely to the experience of living in it. Plan C will crop up later in the context of the set of interviews with members of newly formed radical groups that to some extent have identified the same problematics, even if they respond differently to them.

My additional personal context arises from involvement over the last decade in activities of the International Surrealist Movement. The contiguity between these movements and groupings and the issues I raise in my own practice is not coincidental. They are deeply linked. I shall save discussion of the theory and practices of Surrealism until later (mainly in chapters 1 and 4). However, some degree of explanation of this link will assist in the elaboration of the main research questions.

The contemporary reception of Surrealism tends to differ from place to place, dependent upon cultural norms and the impact of historical surrealism upon the political landscape. My initial encounter with it was exactly that which one would expect in the UK. That is, I understood it to be an art movement, which had been based in Paris from the 1920s until the Second World War at which point its leaders and celebrities were exiled to New York and the world moved on. Had I been brought up in France, I might have been more likely to encounter it as a poetic movement, may have been slightly more aware of its political aspects, and may have indulged an extension of its life up until the death of André Breton in 1966. In the Czech Republic, where organised surrealism has continued since 1934, having had to endure not one but three periods of clandestinity (1938-45; 1948-67; 1969-89), I would have encountered a different surrealism again, much more integrated into a national culture and more readily connected to everyday experiences of the banal and the marvellous. However, it was as an art movement that I came into contact with it and my affinity for it was first nurtured through poring over books devoted to Magritte and Ernst that my parents (both former art students) had in the house while recognising some sort of red thread running between them and the Lewis Carroll books that also fascinated me. At that time the affinity was instinctive and affective rather than born of intellectual enquiry. The pictorial presentation of objects that were one thing and at the same time another chimed with my experience of the world just as the ability of these painters to convey nameless dread, primal allure, and straight-up hilarity through images of the everyday by simple juxtaposition seemed to give voice to situations I knew well but could never have articulated through words. I perhaps took from it also some manner of ethical 'life-lesson' regarding the importance of chance occurrences in creative development.

I first encountered the political dimension of Surrealism through the Chicago Surrealist Group's collaboration with the journal *Race Traitor* who firstly published

an issue handed over to the group to edit (Rosemont 1998) and subsequently published the entirety of a suppressed issue of the (American) *Socialist Review* that had also been edited by the group but never saw the light of day (Sakolsky 2001). The flurry of enthusiastic investigation this set off for me quickly made me realise how much the contemporary surrealist milieu crossed over into the anti-capitalist one in which I had made my own home. It also introduced me to the innumerable revolutionary, anti-capitalist, anti-colonialist, and anti-fascist writings of the early surrealists (early adopters of anti-Stalinist position too – see Acker et al. [2001] for example). The point of no return came from an encounter with members of the Leeds Surrealist Group during the period of unrest and excitation around the 2003 war in Iraq – firstly distributing an amusing anti-war flyer entitled 'The American People Deserve to be Freed of Tyranny' (International Surrealist Movement 2003) and secondly when members came to a court hearing in order to show solidarity with those on trial regarding a road blockade in which I had been involved.

It would be incredibly misleading, however, to suggest that the political dimension of surrealism is derived solely or even mostly from the fact that there is a long historical association between Surrealism and liberation struggles. As Franklin Rosemont has argued (1998), the fundamental approach of Surrealism is not one of poetry derived from politics but of politics derived from poetry. One could describe Surrealism as having established a rebel epistemology wherein poetry (and it is important to use the word in such a way as not to reduce it to the writing of poems) stands as the fundamental way of experiencing the world. Its revolutionary call is for an unfettering of that experience. In effect, for *more* reality. It is a call that is inevitably in conflict with the oppressive mechanisms of the state and the miserable economistic reductions of free market capitalism.

The activity of the Leeds Surrealist Group, with which I became involved in 2005, sits somewhere between play and research (and the publication of that research). I talk in more detail about these processes in later chapters. Of relevance here, though, is that I increasingly found that each time I would emerge from one of these periods of collective surrealist experimentation and game-play and plunge back into organising against austerity in Plan C or its predecessors, I would find myself following up clues, leads, and responding to questions relating to how the Left might work its way free of the marshland of repetition in which it was hopelessly ensquelched. It caused me to ask myself whether surrealist activities centred on

chance and inter-subjectivity provided possibilities for forms of organising that were dynamic, historical, and rooted in experience and productive difference?

A paired set of questions then arose. Firstly, what *exactly* are my comrades and I *doing* when we are doing Surrealism? And secondly what exactly is the radical left doing when it is either moving out of received understandings of the possible and into new collectively formulated versions of it – or failing to do so? And the further, bigger, question: What does this tell us about how the radical imagination works?

The political context of the research – multiple crises

The processes by which collective imaginaries are organised are relevant subjects of research at any historical moment and it is to be hoped that the research presented in the pages that follow would continue to be useful in a variety of different political and historical contexts. I want to suggest, however, that the present moment makes such research particularly pertinent.

That the present period (variously defined) can be characterised as one in which there is a great intensification of the crisis of the imagination is an idea that has been expressed and developed by several critics of capitalism. See Le Brun (2008) for one example, or Haiven (2014) who concentrates on contemporary processes of financialisation as being the driving force. Haiven argues that the reduction of everything to economic value has had catastrophic effects for the collectivity upon which the creative imagination is dependent - 'we are all increasingly imagined to be lonely, isolated risk-takers competing tooth and nail against one another in an austere and uncaring economy' - and that this new imaginary of the self is the mechanism by which 'debt, austerity and speculation are normalized' (p.128). Correspondingly, Haiven goes on to suggest, this transforms our relationship with the future by framing it as purely a question of financial speculation, risk, and investment.

We could also adopt Jameson's (1990) idea of cognitive mapping, which we will revisit in Chapter 1, to suggest that the absence of the U.S.S.R, post cold war, removed from our political imaginaries a significant landmark which previously drew the eye away from the otherwise monolithic (though certainly not singular) presence of Free Market Capitalism. Even if the Soviet version of socialism seemed

undesirable, its presence effected a stretching of imaginal space that at least provided enough breathing room for nascent possibilities to flourish.

For specific examples of the casualties of the economic binding of the imaginal in the contemporary world we can turn, amongst other places, to Stengers' work on the scientific research environment and on Graeber's writing on technological innovation. In 'Another Science is Possible' Stengers points to the problems inherent in research that is driven and constrained by its funders' desire for the accumulation of profit, as well as the proprietal guarding of ideas for which scientists, as along with everyone else, are now socialised. For Stengers neither is conducive to discovery; indeed they are deeply complicit in the stagnation of scientific innovation over recent decades (Stengers 2014). One of the most hyped of scientific promises during this period has been the association of genes with behavioural traits. This project – which confidently assured us we would soon be unlocking the genetic basis not only of sexuality but also of laziness, gambling addiction and success – has been described by the geneticist Oliver James as one of the greatest red herrings in scientific history, generating almost no sustainable evidence of any link between genes and any complex aspect of human behaviour (James 2016). It is extremely telling that a project that has been such a major focus for investment under global neoliberalism should be one that attempts to ground human action in nature and inevitability, representing the Thatcher's idea that 'there is no alternative' played out on the strands of the double helix.

Graeber's argument follows a similar path with regard to the stagnation of technological innovation since the 1970s. He points to the techno-utopian hopes of the generation growing up after the Second World War – the flying cars, the fully-automated kitchens, the colonisation of other planets – as well as the truly world-changing new creations in medical, industrial, and social reproductive spheres in and before the early 20th century, arguing that recent decades have neither realised those hopes nor produced technologies of the same magnitude. The Internet, forever leading the charge of those vocal objectors to this stagnation thesis, is for Graeber merely a streamlining of library, postal, and cataloguing services (Graeber 2012). We need to be cautious, as Graeber himself is, not to treat this argument about technology as an unproblematic example of the poverty of imagination, though. It is also caught up in the complexities of a nascent paradigm shift wherein the idea of 'progress' linked to technological production, accumulation, and the domination of

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nature is by necessity having to give way to sustainability or even disaccumulation (or in dangerously esoteric terms 'harmony').

Of course, the impact of this move away from 20th century models of progress is yet to be seen at the level of common sense. It has, however, been a growing perception within scientific communities as well as amongst those economists who take climate change seriously. The overall affect of this is that having been irreversibly changed by capitalism's unprecedented reliance upon fossil fuels, and its other voracious drives that have destroyed habitats and polluted water, soil and air, the planet is no longer one in which many of the radical alternatives embraced by anti-capitalists during the last 100 years, themselves equally reliant on the idea of unlimited technological progress and accumulation, are plausible. Frederick Jameson's famous claim that 'It is easier to imagine the end of the world than it is to imagine the end of Capitalism' (Jameson 2003 p.76) is neither a chastisement nor an endorsement of those gloomy souls who would wallow in an end-times passive nihilism but points to the fact that all the existing alternatives that have been given pride of place in the unkempt galleries of the left imagination are themselves as much an invitation to the end of the world as capitalism itself.

This is an after-effect, or a second wave of attack, in the assault being made on the imagination but it also presents an important challenge: to move collectively beyond the horror of contemporary existence it is necessary to imagine something truly new rather than merely to be content to dust off the imaginal paraphernalia of previous historical moments and suggest that they be tried again.

In 'Imaginary and Imagination at the Crossroads', Castoriadis (2007), writing in 1997, considered technology, contra Graeber, to be a rare exception to an otherwise stalling process of human creation. Castoriadis' employment of the term however has a meaning that is quite distinct from the way in which Graeber uses it. In the latter's case we might posit that technology (at least in the specific article in question) is a question of machinic invention. Conversely, for Castoriadis, it is an aspect of technoscience that in the contemporary world has become 'autonomised'. The object of his critique is functionality separated from the imagination. He takes his readers though philosophy, science, art, and music in turn in order to argue that in every case, the dominance of this autonomised functionality has produced an impassable concrete wall of conformity and heteronomy. He as argues that 'society, under capitalism: […] the irrationality that consists in positing everything within

"rational mastery," […] obviously leads to unmitigated absurdities' (Castoriadis 2007 p.147). Whilst acknowledging that the date is necessarily imprecise, Castoriadis begins the epoch of imagination in crisis in 1950. Although the basis of his critique is certainly to be found in the earlier work of the Surrealists and other thinkers on the margins of the same intellectual communities (Bataille for example), the fact that he situates the imagination as having reached a crossroads at that particular time is testament to his belief that the sidelining and diminution of imaginal poesis against which those milieus struggled had, by then, reached a new stage; something resembling completion. He lists a number of important discoveries and experiments from the earlier half of the 20th century as evidence of this. From our perspective today, it is both temping and somewhat upsetting to note how Castoriadis was unable to foresee that there were yet deeper levels of imaginal erosion to come. Haiven's financialisation thesis can be regarded as a more advanced stage of this degradation, one in which not only has the imagination been usurped by autonomised functionality but *that* functionality has itself been stripped down and chipped away until only a single function remains – the ability to generate capital. Perhaps it is only now that the imagination stands at a crossroads or perhaps not even now: the road into crisis may be longer still.

Others though have found themselves walking much further upstream in the hunt for the origins of the crisis of the imagination. Harpur, in his sometimes confused and erratic but nevertheless richly fascinating *The Philosophers' Secret Fire: A History of the Imagination*, finds the source in the triumph of literalism brought about by Enlightenment thinking and the new humanisms. He traces the gradual erosion of analogical and symbolic thought from Francis Bacon onwards, arguing that propositions such as Bacon's early empiricism are foundational to our contemporary era, in which the imagination is much degraded. This not only accounts for our inability to think our way towards radically different arrangements of society but also, perversely, lies at the root of modern religious fundamentalisms (Harpur 2002). Harpur's argument relies at times on the magpie-like collection of occasionally somewhat arbitrary elements of philosophy, depth psychology, mythology, and folklore and does not always amount to a coherent thread – there is a recurring conflation of literalism with materialism. As a criticism of scientific method, it suffers somewhat from being in reality a criticism of *bad* science rather than of science *per se*; of science that fails to question its presuppositions or

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recognise the values that structure it. Excepting its flaws, however, as a critique it does sit neatly further back in time on the continuum that in the past century has stretched from the Surrealists to Castoriadis and to Haiven. Indeed, if we accept that all interpretation of sense perception is social in nature (which is what Harpur thinks), it is easy to think of what is here called literalism as a kind of proto-functionalism, the function being the faithful reproduction of a specific ideological hegemony. We could also think of it as an example of what Castoriadis talks about as the autonomisation of the imaginary component of the institution (1987), an idea I will discuss in depth in Chapter 6. There is no analysis of power or social struggle in Harpur's book, so we are left with an impression that human beings once dwelt in a predominantly imaginal world constructed around analogy and desire and that now, for no other reason than that someone came up a more fashionable idea, we do not.

In this era in which the failings of neoliberal capitalism seem clearer than ever (as I shall suggest below) can we also read this crisis of the imagination as being manifested in political organisation for social change?

In 2008, the idea that 'we' were experiencing a global state of crisis started to seep into commonplace conversation. This remains the case, although not without the idea having passed through a rapid series of instars. First it was merely a 'crunch'. By the end of 2008 the crunch had become a 'crash'. By 2010, that crash, if that was still a useful descriptor, had acquired a perpetual resonance, like a gigantic hidden bell that, far from tolling out the old and chiming in the new, provided instead a permanent, dizzying throb.

The nuts and bolts of the genesis of this financial crisis are not particularly controversial. In August 2007 BNP Paribas withdrew from a number of hedge funds specialising in US mortgage debt and in doing so exposed dubious financial derivatives worth trillions and trillions of dollars. Banks quickly began to cease or wind down business with one another as the risks became unpalatable and trust rapidly diminished. In September of 2008, US investment giants Lehman Brothers went bankrupt when the expected government bailout failed to materialise, producing a knock-on effect that sent the global economy sluicing towards meltdown. Governments sprang into action, using public funds to bail out the banks, and briefly pursued internationally coordinated policies of fiscal expansion, before peeling off to implement a variety of different more nation-bound policies for economic growth. For the majority of European countries, several in Latin America,

and (slightly later) the US this meant Austerity and with it a new set of arguments designed to capture the shift from private to sovereign debt affected by the bank bailouts within ethical or pseudo-pragmatic frameworks. (Mason 2009, Elliot 2011b)

The larger story of how this situation came about, the context for this moment of rupture, is far more contested and seemingly more fluid. It demands that we expand the world of economic transaction and boardroom scandal into the sphere of instituted ideologies and political imaginaries.

In the early days there was almost a begrudging consensus that the crisis was secular or catastrophic rather than cyclical, that something had ended never to return – even important figures within the banking sector were conceding flaws (although not until enough time had passed for it to be safe to do so).[1] Mason articulates the mood in his *Meltdown: The End of the Age of Greed*, hastily (although certainly not without justification) published in 2009. 'Basically, neoliberalism is over: as an ideology, as an economic model. Get used to it and move on. The task of working out what comes next is urgent' (Mason 2009 p. x)

For a while the world was united in condemnation of 'greedy bankers'. When private debt morphed into sovereign debt across the Eurozone though, it effected not merely a change in the present circumstances and their possibilities but also a new history, a new story about the past. All of a sudden, the problem became one of public overspending. Society – particularly those parts of it that depended most on the social wage – had been greedy; reliance on the state had been what plunged the global economy into crisis. The heinous mistakes of social democracy had produced subjects that, through no fault of their own, were incapable of looking after themselves, incapable of contributing to the betterment of society.

The shift from banking to benefits, from private to public debt, brought with it an easy response to Mason's urgent task from those in whose interests it was to hold the line: the heaping up of further neoliberal adjustments. The previous order would be restored to its glory by a period of austerity – an unpleasantness, we were told, in which we would all share. 'We're all in this together' claimed the soon-to-be Prime Minister David Cameron at the Tory Party's 2009 conference when announcing the first brutal round of cuts very shortly after Mason's book was

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[1] See for example former Bank of England governor Mervyn King's 2011 admission that deregulation was to blame. This was, in fact, a clear passing of the buck that tried to put the New Labour government of the time rather than the Banks in the line of fire, but it does so only be deploying a somewhat unconvincing 'you should have stopped us' argument. (Elliot 2011a: pp)

published (Cameron 2009), cynically exploiting the *almost* common experience of lack in order to mask a serious (and increasing) level of social inequality. Whilst secular crisis demands the development of something new, cyclical crisis demands the steadfast command of the old until the storm is weathered.

Whilst the global upward redistribution of wealth has been a steady trend since the new neoliberal regime exploded onto the scene following the Chilean coup in 1973 (Harvey 2007), it took a near-death experience for neoliberalism's fight or flight mode to kick in. Clearly, at the moment, the concentration is on the former. The shock measures supposedly demanded by the crisis situation in which we find ourselves can unsurprisingly be shown to be a continuation and intensification of the adjustment processes in play during the previous four decades: The shrinkage of the state as the private sector grew, the corresponding massive decrease in the social wage, the stagnation of lower-level wages, whilst the wealth of upper-level earners went into hyper drive (let's not forget that the annual income of the top 1% not only didn't fall when the crisis hit; it greatly increased, - see Dorling 2014 p. 3), it also brought the corresponding increase of flexibility for employers and precariousness for employees, the further militarisation of policing, deepening levels of surveillance and the marketisation of education and health.

There is no lack of economic and political commentary highlighting the poverty of austerity as the basis of reinvigorating the economy (for examples see Mirowski, 2014; Blythe, 2013 or the open letter signed by 100 leading economists in 2011, Chang et al. 2011 as well as a regular stream of blog post and op-ed pieces by luminaries such as Paul Krugman). Conversely there has been a conspicuous lack of scholarly pro-austerity arguments.[2] We might therefore see the austerity narrative as completely disingenuous. To focus on the supposed irrationality of neoliberalism's austerity phase though is to miss the point that austerity is working perfectly well because, according to Mirowski (2014), re-invigorating economic growth was never the primary intention. Economic growth may or may not come later, but if it does, it will involve a different set of plans and a different set of contexts. If and when the focus returns once again to growth, it will do so upon a terrain where all the structures of common support and collective organising have been chipped away to almost nothing. The strategy is not to return to a pre-crisis status quo but to

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[2] Krugman refers to (and demolishes) two rare examples of academic articles in favour of austerity in an article for *The New York Review of Books* (2013)

accelerate through an attack on collectivity that which, without the crisis, might have taken considerably longer. Austerity has not failed, it has functioned near-perfectly. It just hasn't fulfilled the purpose for which it was pitched: it was not about economic growth but about power, which it to say control over possibility.

In the last year, though, Mason's premature declaration of the death of neoliberalism from 2009 seems finally to be bearing down upon its mark. What appears to be replacing it is a renewal of (and variation on) nationalist and isolationist forms of capitalism in the shape of the rise of the populist right. It is notable that it is this political form, characterised amongst other things by its exchanging of focus on policy to one on mood and affect, that has taken root in the popular imagination rather than various policies and ideas offered up as alternatives to austerity when it first reared it head.[3] From Trump in the US, to Brexit in the UK to the Marine Le Pen and the Front National in France, these share the quality of offering a way out of the current impasse not by providing the possibility of something new but by appealing to something old, an idea of a simpler time occupied by a fixed people with a fixed culture before globalisation threw the grenade of multi-culturalism at (white) identity.

There is also, perhaps slower in its emergence, something of sea-change in the political left. Of particular note here is the rapid and sudden growth of the UK Labour Party, bucking the trend wherein participation in political institutions, such as political parties and unions, had been in serious long-term decline (Keen & Audickas 2016) (Although it ought to be acknowledged that the Green Party, which leapt in membership in the run up to the 2015 general election constituted something of a trial run from new electoral turn prior to the Labour Party acquiring a new leader and with him a much more overt and coherent opposition to austerity). Whilst many of the new members are returning old members who left during Tony Blair's leadership, many are younger and/or veterans of social movements more commonly

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[3] When austerity was introduced in the UK (contemporaneously with several other nations), and doubts were raised about the likelihood of it working, both the chancellor, George Osborne, and the Prime Minister assured citizens that there was no need for a Plan B as the plan the government had in place was perfectly good (Mulholland 2010) – a less self-confident younger sibling to Thatcher's 'There is no alternative' scenario, perhaps. Of course, a whole host of Plan Bs very quickly piped up from the back including, but not limited to, a Green New Deal, Regulation of finance, a financial transactions tax (the so-called 'Robin Hood Tax'), a shorter working week, the raising of benefit levels, workers' councils for large firms, the encouragement of employee-owned cooperatives, a £300 spending voucher for all of Britain's 50 million adults, and the reduction of national insurance contributions.

associated with non-centralised and non-electorally-focussed models of political organising. This is suggestive of an interesting new pragmatism in terms of the relationship between social movements and institutional electoral politics. This huge jump in interest in joining the Labour Party has not, if there is any reason left to place confidence in polling, yet been reflected in a surge of interest in voting for it (Wells, 2016a, 2016b, 2016c). It would be foolish however to look at this electoral turn as if it were a moving back in with the parents of a temporarily lost and skint left. Although plans were all too soon abandoned (Elgot 2016) (though perhaps not permanently), new leader Jeremy Corbyn's suggestion that the decision-making structure of the organisation could be altered in order to better democratise the creation of policy by giving the broader membership more power is perhaps something that resonated with Podemos' more radical left democratic project in Spain where experiments in crowd-sourcing policy have proven successful. Corbyn had already developed a practice of crowd-sourcing questions to pose to the Prime Minister in parliament so his proposed democratic changes seem plausible as an extension of that more modest experiment. It seems reasonable to speculate that this change may have exerted an appeal at least as strong if not stronger than that of the party's new policies. It is for this reason that criticisms of Labour's new direction as simply corresponding to a return to a pre-neoliberal social democratic model (but this time without the organised working class to ensure its implementation) miss the mark. Questions of the specific solutions being proposed by the Labour Party (or by any other organisation for that matter) aside, it is important to consider these proposed or actualised innovations of both the right and the left in terms of the processes of imaginal commoning that they promise to limit or to facilitate.

The Commoners' Imagination(s)

This research, then, is timely. Capitalist restructuring at the level of the subject has created a society of atomised individuals who, if they can imagine anything radically different at all, struggle to do so collectively, making it very difficult to develop what imaginings there are into instituting forces capable of projecting and then actually *effecting* change. The mounting claustrophobia of this isolated and immobilised character unfolds on a terrain of increasing material scarcity, and harder, more

precarious work, for most people in the world. There is no plausible end to this in sight other perhaps than ecological apocalypse (envisaged as sweet release to those who have not considered what this would entail). Another world would seem desirable but, contrary to the slogans of the turn of the century alter-globalisation movement, another world, to many, does not seem possible.[4]

As mentioned earlier, this is not a thesis about the crisis of the imagination but about what is happening in its context. Whilst the chapters that follow will explore the limitations placed upon the radical imagination, they are more concerned with the means of its locomotion. Occasionally I shall be able to point to conscious methodologies drawn from poetic practices. Surrealism is particularly important here but so too are choice insights drawn from the poet Keats and from Lewis Carroll. Outside of poetry it is rare to find deliberately developed methods for the collective imagining of difference. Instead it is necessary to pick apart and deconstruct the processes of collective projection that we can watch unfurling in radical projects of social change.

I find in these processes something akin to *commoning* in terms of the means via which a commons can be collectively tended, managed and reproduced as well as in the means via which it can be enclosed and exploited. At the moment this research project began, the radical imagination as a process of commoning was to be my original contribution to the field. It was with an uneasy mixture of joy and horror, then, that I read Max Haiven's book *Crises of Imagination, Crises of Power* when it was published in 2014. It was truly a joy to find someone who agreed with what I wanted to argue, and not just anyone but someone involved in social movements like myself – a potential comrade, a conspirator in any attempt to develop the idea in order to have an impact. At the same time it was with horror that I was forced to confront the fact that the very basis upon which I had been allowed through the door, so to speak, had gone out of the window. Thankfully, the points of overlap between my own research and Haiven's are relatively few. Where there are similarities they are helpful ones and are discussed in particular in Chapters 2 and 6 with regards to memory. Needless to say, there is much to be said about the inner-machinery of this

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[4] 'Another World Is Possible' was a frequently employed slogan appearing on banners and other forms of propaganda during the global cycle of struggles beginning with the Zapatista Encuentro in 1996 and ending with the 2007 crisis.

special form of commoning that Haiven doesn't cover, just as there are many important arguments in his book that are not covered here.

It is here, after grubbing amongst the pre-existing mysterious and compelling objects of the imaginal commoners' toolbox with my soft, immaterial labourer's hands, that I hope I *have* provided a cluster of original and important contributions; tools for future use. These take the form of (or are magnetised to) five concepts.

One of these has been to treat as distinct, the means of imagining *through time* (projecting the future, remembering the past) and the means of imagining *through space* (producing network associations between objects, affects, and concepts through analogy). I talk about these as the ***Temporal* and *Spatial-Imaginal-Axes*** and they each come replete with their own specific methodologies.

It is however my concentration on decomposition, on imagination as a process of unlearning or loosening, that I enter largely virgin terrain. Whilst much has been written on the imagination as a creative, constitutive force, very little has been produced on the imagination as productively destructive. This appears as a contradiction in terms until one considers the imaginal in the context of power and social struggle. In particular, it is necessary to understand this aspect of the imaginal in order to appreciate the tensions inherent in the imaginal *commons*. Whilst theorists of the commons who are not antagonistic to Capitalism, such as Elinor Ostrom, have posed the possibility of a peaceful and sustainable relationship between the two (see Ostrom 2011), Marxist scholars have highlighted the necessity of the commons both to capital and to the struggle against and beyond it, as well as the conflict this tension entails. Stepping onto this battlefield of anti-enclosure and recommoning means considering the decompositional character of the imagination. My approach in the exploration of these ideas begins from the notion of **the Production of Eeriness**.

The third new contribution made by this thesis is to develop the notion (taken from physicist Julian Barbour, 1999) that the experience of being *in time* is reliant upon being *just after* a point of minimum entropy in the arrangement of matter. Finding parallels between this idea and the way in which we imagine ourselves in relation to particular events and memories, and drawing also upon Haiven's (2014) use of the notion of the radical event, as well as The Free Association's idea of the Moment of Excess (2011), I argue for the significance of an **Imaginal Point of Minimum Entropy**, which similarly lies perpetually in the immediate past.

Related to both of these notions is my particular take on **Symptomatology**, in regard to which I situate my arguments on a road whose broad parameters were charted by Deleuze (1997) when he demonstrated the seepage of this clinical methodology into the critical realm and in so doing began to suggest a methodology of the everyday. Milburn further mapped this route by exploring the application of symptomatology to social movments (Milburn 2010). I complement and build on Milburn's work by arguing that symptomatology operates as a methodological elaboration of processes of imaginal institution that is a useful companion to those found in Castoriadis' seminal work on the radical imagination (1987).

Lastly, the thesis deals with the crucial question of how to create imaginal commons that are dynamic, that can defend against enclosure by resisting calcification at the boundaries. Once again I turn to Deleuze (2004, this time with Guattari) as a starting point, adapting from their work a concept of a **laterally evolving refrain** and exploring organisational forms, both actual and potential, that demonstrate or *could* demonstrate, a real-world implementation of this idea.

The organisation of the thesis

The Thesis is divided into three phases. The first phase (the first two chapters) might be thought of as one in which the central research question is elaborated, largely through a critical interrogation of the literature, into a series of propositions and sub-questions. The second phase (the middle three chapters) is devoted to exploration and research of those propositions and sub-questions through a series of interviews – consolidating, confirming, and answering some whilst further problematising others. The third phase (the final substantive chapter) takes new leads and findings drawn in part from the fieldwork and returns with them to the literature for further examination and elaboration. These should not be thought of as corresponding to a standard literature review - methodology - analysis format but it is certainly the case that there is a methodological concentration towards the middle.

In addition to this there is a narrative structure that mimics the propulsive movements of the jellyfish (also squid and some species of bi-valve), being comprised of an expansion followed by a contraction. Whilst to a certain extent this observation is vulnerable to accusations of mundanity (being descriptive of the

structure of almost all academic research projects) it applies more specifically here in that it is analogous to a focus in the first half on the processes of movement *out from* ossified social structures and in the second half on the processes of movement *into* newly instituted social structures.

The first two chapters deal with the processes of imagining, both individually and collectively. There are two rather than one in part because the subject is a sizable and unwieldy one and in part because I've found it useful to think of the collective imagination in terms, on the one hand, of a spatial projection, and, on the other hand, as a temporal one and this is the division around which the chapters are structured.

Chapter 1 deals with the genealogies of three different but connected terms: The imagination, the imaginary, and the imaginal. Building on some of the ideas of Islamologist Henri Corbin (1964) and Chiara Bottici, (2011a, 2011b) whose work on the imaginal is heavily influenced by Corbin, I argue for the importance of the latter concept as a means of articulating the inter-subjective nature of the collective imagination. A large part of this chapter is concerned with poetic methodology, not as it relates to literature (although literary examples are drawn upon) but as a collective political practice. A central component then, is the array of tools and research provided by the Surrealist Movement. Crucial too are the closely parallel ideas of Negative Capability and Eeriness introduced, but never developed as theory, in the works of John Keats (1968) and Lewis Carroll (1987) respectively. In this chapter I discuss at length critical legal theorist Roberto Mangabeira Unger's development of Negative Capability as an aspect of political struggle (2001) – a notion that plays a recurring role in subsequent chapters. I find in all of these methodologies vital instruction about processes of deinstitution that enable a breaking away from ossified structures and constipated imaginaries.

In **Chapter 2**, I concentrate on the means via which we imagine the past and the future. I draw upon the growing literature on models of 'timelessness' being produced by theoretical physicists to help articulate an imaginal temporality that is quite separate from any objective measure of the passage of time but is permanently situated within the Now. I argue that these models have much in common with the operation of the utopian imagination and explore the connections between these

forwardly oriented speculative and desiring imaginaries and the construction of memory and the imaginal construction of points of minimum social entropy.

Chapter 3 introduces Symptomatology, developed from a number of sources but building most directly upon Deleuze. This chapter serves a dual function. Firstly, it describes the methodology of reading and analysis that underpins the thesis itself, mobilised in particular in the analysis of the interviews in Chapter 5. Secondly it suggests that symptomatology sits so closely with processes of imagining that it might be regarded as their methodological articulation. Both of these cases, so the chapter argues, are dependent upon a sensitivity to interference (which we might think of as 'noise' or 'silence' within a particular discourse) via which hidden Problematics are uncovered and developed.

Chapter 4 is similarly one that deals with methodology, although this one is specific to the empirical element of the thesis. It begins from a critical evaluation of Wendy Hollway and Tom Jefferson's Free Associative Narrative Interview technique (FANI) (Hollway & Jefferson 2013), specifically designed to encourage tangents and flights of fancy, and adapts it to forge a methodology close enough to be considered a variation but different in a number of important regards. The chapter also introduces and discusses a complementary secondary methodology developed from the tradition of Surrealist analogical enquiry. The latter part of the chapter is devoted to the organisational nitty-gritty of the interview process including setting, respondents, and approaches to the analysis and the arrangement of the data.

Chapter 5 is dedicated to discussion of the fieldwork data gathered from interviews with members of recently formed radical political organisations. Such groups have been chosen because their participants consider themselves to be directly engaged in the process of collectively breaking apart existing institutions and creating new ones. Newly formed rather than well established organisations were approached in order to increase the likelihood of catching respondents at a point at which the range of possible imaginal projections is at its broadest, the problematics around which their organisations formed at their most relevant, and the processes of negotiating how to become articulate as a collective body the most fluid and dynamic. When reviewing the interview transcripts it became clear that each of the respondents had incorporated into their narratives stories relating to a point of rupture, stories of their world before that point, and stories of their world after it. The chapter is therefore structured around the story of the Great Deluge, present in many

different mythologies but of which the story of Noah and his ark is a well-known example. The Great Deluge myth shares these three elements and acts, it is to be hoped, as a clear and engaging aid in making sense of the data. The chapter concludes by elaborating on the interview data in relation to the propositions carried over from the first phase of the thesis and uses it to introduce the central theme of the third phase: The interpermeability of deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation.

Chapter 6 begins by exploring the idea of institution. Drawing first on Castoriadis (1987, 1997) and subsequently on Deleuze and Guattari (2004), it problematises both the notion that the imaginal is a thing in opposition to institution and that decomposition and recomposition (or deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation) can be thought of as opposing forces. It uses the model of the refrain to explore the ways in which institutions can be both mobile and modifiable. The second part of the chapter centres on the Commons or, more specifically, on processes of commoning. It begins form Marxist literature on Commons and Enclosures, drawing particularly on models in which Commoning and Enclosing are constructed as perpetual or cyclical processes with ongoing crucial importance to Capitalism rather than as referring to a discreet historical period at the point of its birth wherein common resources were enclosed by act of parliament. The chapter builds on commoning models carried over from the material to the immaterial realm such as, on the one hand, post-autonomist Marxist theories on immaterial and affective labour and, on the other, the work on the Knowledge Commons carried out by Catherine Hess and Elinor Ostrom (2007) From these foundations, a theory of imaginal commoning is constructed. I use the notion of values (as one type of expression of the imaginal) as a means of exploring processes of enclosure-for-commons and enclosure-against-commons. In turn this provides the basis both for a deeper articulation of some of the organisational processes shared by the interview respondents and for an argument in favour of their generalisability upon the terrain of the social imaginary.

Chapter 1.

In Iron Light: The Magnetic Movement of the Decomposing Imaginal

The purpose of this chapter is two-fold. First, it charts a genealogy that begins with the twin strands of the *Imagination* and the *Imaginary*, and tries to draw from them the fibres that are of the most use in weaving together an assemblage that we might consider political: *The Imaginal* begins in earnest with Plato (1888,1921) (although Arendt [1992] has also argued for Parmenides as its progenitor) tracing the development of his moral configuration of the imagination as *Eikasia* into Aristotle's concept of *Phantasia* (1907), which places a greater stress on process. The genealogy then takes a leap to Kant's schemata wherein we find an important elaboration of the distinction between the *productive* and *reproductive* imaginations. Kant also lays the groundwork for a problematic desocialisation of the imagination by promoting the liberal figure of the genius (with its counterpart, the lunatic) (1987, 1998). Branching off when we reach this individualist turn in the philosophy of the imagination, we return to consider the imaginary. Its genealogy, like that of the imagination, is a story that involves the gradual loss of the social as the concept shifts towards being a means of describing an objective (or pseudo-objective) realm outside of the self. I trace this journey from its nuanced treatment in the pre-enlightenment era to the emergence of the age of conflict when rival literalisms emerge, whose assumptions and conflicts continue to underpin the discourse about the imaginary today. Stepping back to some degree I then complicate the issue with a focus upon the *re-socialisation* of the imagination under the banner of *The Imaginal*. To do this I look at Henry Corbin's (1964) remarkable reading of the Islamic Imagination along with

Chiara Bottici's recent attempts to consider the compatibility of models such Corbin's with Castoriadis' Social Instituting Imaginary (Bottici 2011a, 2011b).

Having established this basis, I will then go on to criticise some of these models of the radical imagination for their neglect of its destructive character and suggest that it is not possible to build a theory of the imaginal without paying at least as much attention to decompositional processes as to those of creation and institution. Put differently, we cannot consider how the possible collapses into the actual without also considering how the actual shatters to reveal the possible. To do this I draw on the philosophy and social theory of Castoriadis (1987, 1997, 2007), Unger (2001), and Deleuze (2010) on the one hand, and the poetic methodologies inherent to the works of Lewis Carroll (1987), Keats (1968), and various thinkers associated with the Surrealist Movement, allowing the concept of Negative Capability (taken from Keats and developed by Unger) to represent the red thread that links them.

The second purpose of this chapter, which will not be raised until the postlude, is to introduce and elaborate upon the imaginal expansion of the real (Realswell) along what I term the Spatial Imaginal Axis. In this category I cluster together imaginal processes whose bases are analogy (or the creation of network associations of objects), affects, and concepts. These processes correspond to an expansion of the actual in contrast to an expansion of the possible. The chapter introduces the concept of realswell along a Spatial Imaginal Axis in the context of its distinction from realswell along a Temporal Imaginal Axis and lays the groundwork for an elaboration of this latter category in the chapter that will follow. I introduce these concepts in an extended postlude using the two imaginal cities *Na-Koja-Abad* and Utopia (which I charecterise as respectively belonging to each axis) as a device.

The Road to the Imaginal

In his 'Imaginary and Imagination at the Crossroads', Castoriadis (2007) delivers an angry critique centred on what he describes as a crisis of the imagination in the contemporary world. Shot through with the palpable disappointment of someone whose gauntlet, in the later years of his life, had been taken up neither by his contemporaries in the field of philosophy nor by his comrades in the struggle for

communism, the article rails against the unexcitable inertia of contemporary social creation. Castoriadis is an important figure both for the present and for later chapters and we will repeatedly look to his work. Here, however, we will confine ourselves to noting the significance of his assertion that the imaginary (for Castoriadis a function of the social) has never been the focus of philosophical and conceptual development as it ought to have been, and that the attention received by the imagination (a faculty of the singular individual) has been almost as sporadic and limited (Castoriadis 2007). In the fourth part of this genealogical section a theory of 'the imaginal' will be elaborated that attempts to bridge the divide between these two distinct categories of 'imaginal' and 'imagination' as used by Castoriadis and others. I do not intend to cover 'the imaginal' with relation to political organisation in this genealogy in an exhaustive way here, as this issue will continue to be explored throughout the thesis.

As we look at the Imagination and the Imaginary we shall see how they have sometimes been constructed as if the one were a bastardised or malfunctioning version of the other, or sometimes how one has been the focus of analysis whilst the other is ignored. For no more complicated reason than the chronology of the writers and thinkers we shall consider, The Imagination is the first port of call.

1. *The Imagination*

We find the germ of the idea of imagination in Plato, which Aristotle subjected to a much more sustained interrogation which would later be developed by Kant. In Plato's constellation of human faculties, imagination lies below the line that one might draw between the body and the soul. He considers it to belong not primarily to the world of ideas but to that of the senses. The morality that enswamps Plato's body/soul duality is carried over into his elaboration of a theory of the imagination through his critique of idolatry. The Greek from which we readers in English are given as 'imagination' is *Eikasia* (Plato 1888, p.86), which relates to *Eikon* meaning at the same time icon, image, and idol. *Eikasia* has two concurrent meanings for Plato. On the one had it is the process of seeing things as images. This is imagination in the simple, popular sense. I think of my desk lamp and in my mind I conjure up a picture of a small, thin, metallic, posable, twig-like thing with an electric bulb in it. The second meaning of *Eikasia* is seeing things as things. This is more complicated and is the basis of the Aristotelian and Kantian explorations. I look at my desk lamp

in front of me as I write. How do I know it is a desk lamp? How do I know it is *my* lamp? How do I know that 'desk lamp' is a species of lamp? How do I know where the lamp ends and the table starts? *Eikasia* here is neither knowledge of the desk lamp nor direct sensing of it, but the process of articulation between the two. We can perhaps see the precursor to this idea in Parmenides' *Nous* – the ability to perceive the *it-is-ness* of an object that is not derived from direct sense perception (as discussed by Arendt 1992). Schelling describes this as Plato's *Urform*, the relationship between the unity and its parts, and seeks to demonstrate that it is (as Bruce Mathews puts it in his book about Schelling) 'the productive structure of objective nature itself' (Matthews 2011 p.131). Plato himself uses the word *Receptacle* to describe this articulation point: 'It is the receptacle, as it were the nurse, of all becoming' (Plato 1888. p.177). In both formulations, what is important is that *Eikasia* is a processual construct. It is a thing that one does, not a thing one has. It is the movement between physical and ideal without ever resting upon one or the other.[5] Plato's *Timaeus* is in part a treatise *against* the idolatrous imagination, against the mistake of thinking that what appears to us is equivalent to what *materially* exists.

When discussing Plato, we should be careful to maintain a distinction between being and *physically* being. Plato himself is not always so cautious but at his most consistent he insists upon the important idea that non-being is a *form* that *exists* in the world (Plato 1921 p.355). It is important to stress the significance of this philosophical discovery, without which a materialist theory of the immaterial would be impossible. It is also the rationale for Plato's placing of the imagination in a closer kinship with body/sense-perception than with soul/ideation.

Aristotle's theory of the imagination is a direct and in many ways subtle development of Plato's. Like Plato, Aristotle refuses to incorporate imagination within the category to which soul belongs (for him *Phusis* incorporates Soul, Thinking, Being – the latter being understood in the same sense as Parmenide's *It-is*). As for Plato, Aristotle's imagination is situated *between* sensation and intellection (Castoriadis 1987) but Aristotle goes further than Plato by attempting to unpack and deepen the relationship between these two things and to explore the *form*

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[5] Segal argues that in Plato, this process is passive (a thing that happens as opposed to a thing one does) and that it is left to Whitehead to develop an active permutation of *Receptacle* in his concept of *Creativity* (Segal 2012)

taken due to the mediation effected by imagination. Instead of *Eikasia* Aristotle uses the word *Phantasia*. Even though this is the derivation of the English word 'fantasy', we should not confuse the two, as for Aristotle it is something very different. As Bottici notes, the word is associated with the root *Phaos* meaning 'light'. '*Phantasia* […] is for Aristotle a light that reverberates in different ambits of our life' (Bottici 2011b p.17). This represents a further mobilisation of Plato's *Eikasia*. Rather than the process of the specific perception of images, it becomes the very means by which we see: 'a movement (*kinesis*) produced by a sensation actively operating' (Aristotle in *Ibid*). Once again, imagination is process, an articulating motion between one thing and another. For Aristotle, imagination is the basis of appetite and therefore of all action (*Ibid*). Castoriadis points to the obvious affinity between this model of the deliberative imagination as the basis of appetite and of the theories of social processes of production elaborated by Marx and others wherein labour is conceived of as pre-existing in the mind of the labourer. Given this clear resonance, he notes, it is no small wonder that scholars of the Aristotelian imagination have with few exceptions reduced it to a pure faculty of psychology (Castoriadis 2007 p.124).

The Aristotelian imagination sits within a complex cosmology of the faculties of the mind. Broadly, we might read Aristotle as employing two major categories (Thought and Sense-perception) and several minor ones (Knowledge, Belief, and Imagination) (Aristotle 1907). The primary character of Knowledge/Intellect is that it is always by definition true. Belief on the other hand may be true or may be false by coincidence, with neither one affecting its status as belief. Its primary character is its conviction. Perception bears no relation to a true/false value, which is to say that whilst sense perceptions are always 'true' in their own terms, there is no inherent necessity for them to reflect an objective truth of the world. Aristotle shows that imagination cannot be knowledge because it is not (necessarily) true; similarly it cannot be belief because it is devoid of conviction. Equally, it cannot be a form of sense perception because images appear to us in the absence of sensation. However, imagination cannot exist fully outside of sense perception. Regardless of whether it is true or false, a construction of the imagination is comprised of the articles of sense perception. It exists then not as a third place but as the passage between the two (sense-perception and thought proper). 'Imagination is "a motion" that cannot exist outside sensation and therefore only exists in sentient beings. By virtue of this motion, such beings can experience many things' (Aristotle *ibid* p.127). We begin to

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see here a certain degree of ambiguity in Aristotle's work. On the one hand he presents imagination as a sub-category of thought (rendering its subsequent reduction to an element of psychology a logical one), and, on the other hand, it is a faculty that bursts the banks of both thought and sensation, providing a through-channel for the two and the necessary 'key' without which neither one would function. It is via this second permutation that we can begin to edge our way cautiously towards a model that situates the imagination as prior to the distinction between real and unreal.

We don't, though, find this development in Kant, in whose work we first encounter the imagination as 'the faculty of representing in *intuition* an object that is not itself present' (Kant 1998 p.256), while later in his *Critique of Judgment* the discourse is shifted to one about Intuition and Conception (Kant 1987). These are the two stems of experience: Intuition 'This' and Concept 'Table' = 'This Table'. Imagination is the faculty whereby these two stems can be synthesised. It does this by creating a schema, an image for a concept. The schema for Kant is the ideal or universal form. Arendt (1992) points out that this schema forms the basis of all communication. Although there is an obvious continuity from the Aristotelian and Platonic imaginations, Kant provides new terrain in his clear distinction between *Re-productive* and *Productive* imaginations. The former is that which re-creates, the latter is genius. Although these provide a useful conceptual framework, Arendt rightly raises the point in her work on Kant that the productive imagination is never fully productive (*ibid*). A corresponding argument might also be put forward that the reproductive imagination is always partially productive; indeed if it were not then the imagination would be capable of providing an exact copy of an objectively conceived universe.

This is worth dwelling on for a moment. Kant's use of these type A and type B imaginations as if they *actually exist* in unadulterated form causes him simultaneously to open the imagination onto a new terrain (creation *ex nihilo*) and at the same time to downplay the centrality of association and articulation that was so important in the models of both Aristotle and Plato. Far more than in those of his precedents, we can hear in this theoretical formulation the faint metallic clang of steel on steel, the distant roar of a desperate struggle that is now going on between classes around property. This figure Kant constructs of the 'genius' is steeped in political interests. It is vessel of the entrepreneurial imagination, the great author, that rare someone whose works are not the product of generations of collective

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labour and whose creations are not born of a process of social institution. We can also see in it a clear reflection of Kant's political philosophy, which is itself largely built around a narrative based on property. This is a double sleight-of-hand for not only does it produce this imagined figure whose existence provides the ethical justification for intellectual private property but it also, at the same time, quietly escorts the imagination out of the terrain of social struggle and into the that of individual psychology.

Castoriadis (partially returning to Aristotle) develops this idea of two distinct types of imagination (productive and reproductive), occasionally using the term *Primary* (or *prime*) Imagination or more frequently *Radical* Imagination to indicate the former (Castoriadis 1997). This differs from the Kantian model in that in Castoriadis the Radical Imagination is prior to all thought. It is that without which perception is impossible. It is also resolutely social, both producing and being produced by a social imaginary. The Castoriadian concept of the imagination is somewhat distanced from the main developmental trends which take us further and further into the realms of the psychology of the individual imagination and away from the more important questions of how we imagine and transform the world. We'll pick this point up again when we turn to the second model of the Imaginary but first, in keeping once again with the useful (for the time being) division of imagination and imaginary, let us trace something of the development of the latter.

2. *The Imaginary (1st Model – Not Real)*

In attempting a genealogy of the imaginary, one immediately encounters problems. It is a concept saturated with misunderstandings. Castoriadis, as we have seen, sets us upon a thought-terrain on which the imagination has been subject to some level of philosophical enquiry whilst the imaginary has languished largely within theology (Castoriadis 2007). What I understand Castoriadis to mean here is not that the concept has been subjected to critical examination within theology but that the study of the concrete effects of collective imaginaries has been played out only through an externalised deist imaginary wherein supernatural beings have agency. Castoriadis is referencing something representative of a post-enlightenment understanding of the imaginary that prevails in both scientific approaches to the world and present-day religious constellations, namely that whilst 'the imagination' is acceptable (and even

celebrated to a limited extent) as a faculty of the human psyche, 'the imaginary' is seen as a childish and erroneous externalisation of this faculty, a product of a previous phase of human development wherein folklore, myth, and superstition were necessary in order to close the gaps that science, or the one true god/creator, had not yet been able to bridge. Indeed, as we shall see below, the imaginary has come to represent little more than the imagination 'gone wrong' in certain branches of clinical psychology.

If we take this popular, contemporary understanding of the term at face value, then we cannot approach a genealogy of the imaginary in the same way as we've have for the imagination because the imagination has always been approached as process, of whose various shifts and interpretations can be documented, the imaginary – as a pseudo-objective realm – is a terrain whose topographies, flora, and fauna are *far* too innumerable to list. However, the *form* taken by the imaginary in the context of how it has been understood to relate to our internal and external worlds *has* shifted and a mapping of that shift ought theoretically to be within our means. The basis of that shift is perhaps counter-intuitive, though. Indeed, the received wisdom that the superstitious minds of our ancestors laboured under the impression that 'the imaginary' was actually present (whereas today we don't) may be the absolute reverse of the truth.

Corbin also argues eloquently that what we now understand as The Imaginary is a relatively contemporary phenomenon and that current usage necessitates the a new word: the 'Imaginal', if we are to make sense of the phenomena to which The Imaginary may once have referred (Corbin 1964). Presently we'll do precisely that - but first it is necessary to delve a little deeper into what The Imaginary means today.

Harpur despairs at the treatment of the imaginary as the opposite of the real and, like Corbin, holds that this is a recent historical development. He links this to what he refers to as Materialism (Harpur 2007). Harpur's understanding of materialism is somewhat archaic (allowing no room for the possibility of a materialist theory of the immaterial), but the *espirit de corps* he describes does withstand further scrutiny. The word 'literalism', which he also occasionally employs, is probably a more accurate descriptor for the object of his critique. For Harpur, what is sometimes presented as a tension between the realm of 'hard science' and that of the spirit is not a tension between the real and the imaginary but one between rival literalisms. Whilst the Baptist minister may have somewhat

different evidential requirements from the biochemistry researcher, the *form* that the real is required to take, and considered to take, is the same. God *is* in the same way that chlorophyll *is*. In neither case is there room for a co-existence of *is* and *is not*. In both discourses then, Imaginary is always other, necessarily 'out there'. 'The Imaginary' exists in the constellation held by the Baptist minister as that which other religious or secular communities erroneously hold to be true. It exists in the constellation held by the biochemistry researcher as what is not scientifically supportable. Of course, I don't mean to imply that a Baptist minister cannot be a biochemistry researcher or vice versa – science and religion have not so far proven to be irreconcilable. I am using the characters archetypally here[6].

Beyond this brutal rendering of The Imaginary as simply 'not real', more nuanced work has been done within contemporary understandings in the field of psychoanalysis. Warren Colman, for example, develops a very specific model centred on the idea of negation (Colman 2006). The Imaginary, for Colman is a 'defensive misuse' (p. 21) of what he calls (after Jung) the Active Imagination that corresponds to the denial of negation. By negation, he means the elements of everyday life that intervene in fantasy by forcing the fantasiser to recognise it as such. Key amongst these is Lack. Colman shares with Lacan a belief in Lack as the driver of the Active Imagination and we can see clear resonances here with the Aristotelian association of Imagination with appetite too. He is critical, though, of Lacan's model that posits the Real, the Imaginary, and the Symbolic as three distinct psychic realms. For Colman lack is an inseparable aspect of the real. One might infer from this that the Imaginary is similarly inseparable from the Real. There is some confusion on this front though because Colman explicitly associates the healthy mind with the ability to recognise what is imagined and what is 'actually present'. What form this relationship could possible take with what is 'actually present' *outside the imagination* is unexplored. It seems likely that this is evidence of a basic assumption that the imagination is a faculty of the individual whilst the 'actually present' can only refer to that which has been previously socially instituted, a position to which it is difficult to subscribe for reasons I will discuss later.

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[6] The biblical Scholar Bart D. Ehrman, himself previously a fundamentalist Christian – now a non-believer, makes similar observations when writing about contemporary approaches to knowledge within Christian Evangelist communities. 'One of the great ironies of modern religion: […] conservative evangelicals, and most especially fundamentalist Christians, are children of the Enlightenment' (Ehrman 2014 p.172)

There is something unsatisfactory about Colman's description of the Imaginary. If, as we are told, it is that which 'attempts to deny […] all those aspects of the world that constitute a check on the omnipotence of fantasy' (p. 21) and if Imaginary and fantasy are synonyms as is shown on the next page ('"the imaginary" – i.e., imaginary fantasies' [p. 22]) then surely this is tantamount to saying that the substance of X is the negation of all things that are not X. Whilst this may be a logical truism it does very little to get to the heart of Xness. What then might better describe the substance of The Imaginary, when understood as unreal?

Colman's focus is on the analysand who dwells within the imaginary and he writes from the perspective of the analyst. Except in a passing mention of the problems inherent in the demands such a person makes on the credulity of others, he largely ignores how alienating encounters with those who dwell within the imaginary can be from a non-clinical, everyday perspective. By not taking it into account he misses one of the key aspects of *why* such experiences are alienating (and correspondingly of why those who are stuck in the imaginary might undergo therapy). This is quite distinct, for example, from reading a novel in which the author has elaborated a fantastical world in which there is no insistence that the reader accept the world as an objective reality. It is a familiar and common position in which to find oneself. I have a neighbour with whom I'm friendly who will frequently talk to me about guardian angels *as if* we have an already established shared belief in such things as objective entities which have agency, despite my never having given the slightest indication that I have any such belief. Since I don't, the conversation often begins to falter as I struggle to bring it back onto ground that we can both occupy. What produces this feeling of alienation in such circumstances is the lack of a common social or collective element to the imaginary world that is being articulated. If, as I contend, the Imagination has suffered from being pushed further and further into an individualised sphere, a channel of communication limited to that between the atomic self and the sensory word, it is at least still a dynamic process to some degree. The Imaginary, in contrast has come to refer to a set of phenomena that skip over the social by prematurely, and with less than impressive results, being instituted as an objective by an *individual* imagination. This tends to suggest that the process of imaginal instituting cannot be an individualised one but is reliant upon the creation of commonalities, an issue we will examine further in the course of the thesis.

Colman's model of the Active Imagination is, in part, developed from Winnicott's theory of Transitional Objects and Transitional Phenomena (see Winnicott 2005). Winnicott's theories emerged in the context of developmental child psychology and sought to shed light on the processes (and causes) of attachment to 'special objects' (a soft toy for example) in early childhood. At their crux is the idea that such objects gain their power from their status as replacements for the Mother's breast and are therefore related to processes around an acknowledgement of lack. Transitional Objects, for Winnicott, rather than simply being *instead of* the central object of earlier affections are simultaneously *both it* and *not it*. We can see this reflected in Colman's Imaginary – a thing posited *instead of* and therefore masking absence, loss, lack – and his Imagination – a thing that acknowledges and builds from that lack, that is *both* what is lacked *and* yet not it. Winnicott uses Catholic transmutation as an illustrative example from adulthood. In contrast to the Protestant version in which the wafer and the wine are *substitutes for* (or reminders of) the body and the blood of Christ, the Catholic ritual holds that they *are* the body and the blood of Christ yet (as Colman points out in his elaboration on Winnicott's work [2006 p.37]) there is no requirement for them to taste like flesh and blood, nor is there any implication that Christ's body and blood would have tasted of wafer and wine at the time. This example provides evidence of a complex imaginal relationship that is not catered for in the simplistic real/imaginary binary relation to which we are limited by the terms as they are currently understood.

More importantly, Winnicott's work brings out a character of the imaginary that is richer than that provided in Colman's definition. For Winnicott, it is a relationship between materially present and imagined/remembered objects or phenomena that has either lost or masked the quality of Transition. In other words, the contextual thread between like and like has been severed, causing the Imaginary to appear as always already separate. This idea will prove important when we consider different forms of Instituting in the final chapter and return to the question posed in the Introduction about dynamic versus ossified organisational forms.

3. *The Imaginary (2nd Model – Real but self-enclosed)*

Chiara Bottici, a leftist political philosopher whose recent work on the politics of the imagination touches on many of the concerns of this thesis but

concentrates on a different genealogical branch in the contemporary understanding of the Imaginary, which she associates with the use of the term 'Social Imaginary' (2011a, 2011b). This idea, she tells us, emerges as a critique of the reduction of the imagination to an individual faculty following from Kant and beloved of philosophers and psychologists alike. Although the project to move beyond the individualised imagination is one in whose necessity Bottici believes, the construction of this new concept, the Social Imaginary, only succeeds, for her, in reversing the problem from one of context recomposed within a metaphysics of the subject to one of the subject recomposed within a metaphysics of the context (2011a p.59). The result of this inversion is the reification of contexts as self-enclosed units between which communication is impossible. The problematic around which these two faltering approaches orbit concerns the balance between them, of how we are constituted as 'imagining beings' (*ibid.* p.58).

Among theories of the Social Imaginary, Bottici sees great potential in those of Arendt and Castoriadis. The latter is particularly important to her because he moves away from the idea of imagination emerging from Lack as we saw in Colman (and Lacan) and that we find also in Kant. In the Castoriadian model, all action, including all thought, necessarily stems *from* the imagination. Imagination is prior to thought and as such must logically stand prior to the acknowledgement of lack. In *The Imaginary Institution of Society* he develops a theory of the *Creative* imagination that is distinct from the *Active* Imagination of psychology on precisely this basis (Castoriadis 1987). One way to frame this might be to say that whilst the Active Imagination in Colman's text is one that *fills absences*, Castoriadis' Creative Imagination *creates spaces*. It is therefore ontologically very different. Following this we could say further that the Active Imagination is a phenomenon that takes place within a Real that is of fixed dimensions even if its contents may change, whereas The Creative Imagination swells, contracts, and stretches the real, dancing around its margins. Despite this crucial insight it might be said, (as Bottici herself argues), that Castoriadis still suffers from certain presuppositions that place limitations on his project. His subjects and their imaginations are both instituting of and instituted by their societies. It is a reciprocal and perpetual communicative process. However, by reifying context, Castoriadis creates a closed loop and maintains a strict separation between society and the individual bridged only by violent processes of socialisation. In contrast, Bottici posits that 'we are not monadic

selves that become dependent on each other through violent socialisation. On the contrary: we are from the very beginning *dependent* beings, notwithstanding our monadic drives' (Bottici 2011a p.62). By making this mistake, Bottici argues that Castoriadis fails to bring the Socially Instituting Imaginary fully to bear on the terrain of politics, which for Castoriadis is the 'explicit putting into question of the established institution of society' (in *ibid*. p.66), so leaving important aspects of his structuring problematic unaddressed.

To begin to work through this problem, Bottici, like Corbin before her, suggests the adoption of Imaginal as a conceptual alternative to both Imagination and Imaginary. Let us examine what she means by this.

4. *The Imaginal*

Bottici's adoption of the Imaginal is motivated by the desire to develop the Imagination as a *political* concept. This continues the red thread that runs through Plato, Aristotle, and Kant and begins to quiver excitedly as it winds through the revolutionary writings of Arendt and Castoriadis. Bottici's strategy is different however, in that rather than simply attempting to reappropriate Imaginary and Imagination, so salvaging them from the depoliticised terrains in which they have been left to languish, she focuses on developing the political potential of a less well-worn related concept. In order to do this she follows two quite distinct lines of enquiry. The one on which she mostly concentrates is that the word Imaginal simply denotes that which is comprised of images and that the image is increasingly prevalent in the contemporary world and in particular on the terrain of politics (Bottici 2011a, 2011b). Whilst this latter observation is almost certainly accurate and has been posited by a wealth of scholars and commentators, it isn't this route I intend to follow in the current investigation. Largely this is because the word 'image' is associated with visual phenomena and despite the obvious etymological connection I can see no grounds to limit the imaginal to this sphere. The imaginal presents itself sometimes in the form of mental visual images but equally we encounter it as sounds that are not present, smells, vague hints of otherness that encroach upon the territory of affect, or in whole chunks of immaterial reality consisting of any of the above in a single moment, or we imagine systems, the interlocking or interaction between all and any of the above, for which there can be no visual image. Whether Bottici means

the word image in this strict sense of relating to visual or optical phenomena is slightly ambiguous but it is certainly from this realm that she chooses her illustrative examples (Political advertising, TV, cinema, the commodification of images through the internet – [2011a]). To reduce the Imaginal to something comprised of images is, contrary to Bottici's intentions, greatly to reduce the surface area at which it rubs up against the political, which, if it is to bring into question the established institution of society, must surely require a more complex set of tools than the ability to produce a picture of a different one. Similarly it is obvious that our relationship to visual phenomena in the material world is irrevocably caught up in a miasma of non-visual phenomena and affects that are either directly imaginal or linked through intermediary or transitional imaginal forms. Castoriadis also writes of the relationship between imagination and image but is much less resolute than Bottici, speaking instead of a 'connection' between the two and stressing that by 'image' he means 'form' (Castoriadis 1997 p.321), which offers us a more flexible way of thinking about their relation.

If this is therefore something of a red herring, Bottici's lesser line of enquiry (lesser at least in terms of the amount of space she devotes to it) has greater possibilities: her contention that a new term is required in order to grasp what is political in the articulation points between the social imaginary and the individual imagination. This problematic is perhaps best approached through Henry Corbin's fascinating work into the imaginal in mystical Islam.

It is largely thanks to Corbin that The Imaginal has seeped into contemporary discourse about the radical Imagination.[7] He considers the Imaginal to correspond to the redrawing of a linkage line between thought and being for which 'Western man […] has consented to the divorce' (Corbin 1964 no pagination.). It is worth looking in some detail at Corbin's vital reconciliation. Not the least reason for this is that in his 'Mundus Imaginalis' he provides a spatial interpretation of the concept, something we will find important as the thesis progresses.

The text in which he performs his key elaboration of the Imaginal is an exploration of *Na-Koja-Abad* or the *Eight Climate*, a central topography in Shiite

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[7] In the English speaking world, gratitude for the facilitation of this connection with radical politics is largely due to Peter Lamborn Wilson, more widely known by the name mostly under which he writes: Hakim Bey. Although Wilson/Bey's ontological anarchy now seems very dated and somewhat facile, he ought to be credited for his seminal attempts to tactically develop ideas *probably* derived from Corbin's work in an anti-capitalist context (for example in Bey 1991).

mysticism. Found first of all in the work of the poet/mystic Sohravadi, *Na-Koja-Abad* means the 'land of nowhere'. Upon reading this, the link with Utopia (No-place) will not be lost on the reader. Corbin is insistent that the two are very different though. Whilst *Na-Koja-Abad* is resolutely real (whilst also being imaginal), Corbin situates Utopia as 'outside of being and existence' (*ibid.*) and therefore more properly associated with the current usage of the Imaginary. This is a short sighted representation of Utopia but it is productive in allowing a clear distinction between the two nonetheless and we shall pick up on it again at the end of this chapter and in the one that follows it. Setting aside the Utopian No-where for a while then, what is the character of the No-where of *Na-Koja-Abad*?

In the mystical texts in which it appears, *Na-Koja-Abad* has its own identifiable topography. It is a cluster of mystical cities that lie beyond the mountain of *Qaf* and is the home of the 'Twelfth Imam' (also referred to as the 'Hidden Imam') who, in Shiite lore, after a period of communicating only through four intermediaries (the 'minor occultation') obscured himself entirely from materially present reality (the 'major occultation') and, it is said, will one day return as saviour. It is associated with a number of other mystical locations in Islamic texts some of which, such as 'The Green Island in the White Sea', clearly evoke specific topographies in their names. *Na-Koja-Abad*, though, is quite literally No-where, in that it is supposed to be 'a place outside of place' (*ibid*). It is important to stress that the meaning of this is very specific. It ought not to be understood simply as another realm in a place to which we cannot travel by conventional means such as appears in works of fantasy (like Carroll's *Wonderland*, Baum's *Oz,* Lewis' *Narnia,* Miéville's *Un-Lun-Dun*), but as a construct of non-Euclidian geometry wherein one couldn't cover distance through movement even were one to subscribe to the idea of an externalisable and mobile spirit or soul. Instead, the basis of the transition between points in *Na-Koja-Abad* is a similarity of state. In other words, movement to and within it is through *Analogy*. Analogical knowledge, for Corbin, is 'the cognitive function of the imagination' (Corbin 1964 no pagination). Note, he is not saying that analogy *is* imagination but that it is imagination's 'cognitive function'. 'It is a matter of a world that is hidden in the act itself of sensory perception, and one that we must find under the apparent objective certainty of that kind of perception' (*ibid.*)

Tellingly, our mystical land is said to be situated 'on the convex surface of the Ninth Sphere' (*ibid.*) with the Ninth Sphere being that which in Sohravadi

contains all of existence. Corbin makes much of this inversion, which corresponds, for him, with the notion that the imaginal *envelops* reality. This is an important departure from some of the early models of the functioning of the imagination with which we began this exploration. To a degree it is a reversal of the Kantian position of the imagination as a mediating process between two aspects of thought (Intuition and Conception), but despite certain similarities between the idea of the imaginal as envelop and imaginal as receptacle as it is in Plato, Corbin does not confine the imaginal to the function of mediating between the individual faculties of thought and sense-perception as it appears (in differing ways) in Plato and Aristotle. It is closer to Castoriadis' Radical Imagination. Corbin's Imaginal realm, just like the Radical Imagination, is *prior to* the subject and *prior to* thought. Or, as Castoriadis says it comes 'before the distinction between real and fictitious' (Castoriadis 1997 p.321). The Imaginal is hidden 'in' sensory perception and 'under' the objective certainty (produced by the intuition/conception coupling) that surrounds it (Corbin 1964 no pagination)

How does this help us to pursue further Bottici's important problematising of Castoriadis' Social Imaginary? First of all I don't believe (nor I think does Bottici) that Castoriadis was *wrong* as such. It is rather a case that he failed to make good on his promises or take his own lines of enquiry far enough. Castoriadis presents us with, on the one hand, a Social that is produced *by* and simultaneously *produces* the individual. He has analysed this process extensively and we will examine his Instituting process further in Chapter 6. On the other hand, he presents us with a Politics that is characterised by the calling into question of currently established institutions. What he is never adequately able to do is fill the silence that hangs between these ideas. The socially instituted is (more or less) self-enclosed and almost permeable. There is seemingly no through-flow with neighbouring institutions. Individuals, too, are (almost) incapable of imaginal movement between the singular societies that they have instituted/been instituted by. Castoriadis shows us how to get in, but not how to get out again. As it would seem that this is the very basis of the political, it is a significant omission. Castoriadian society is not completely rigid though. He does allow some movement. We are told, for example, that Social Institutions gradually change over time. Even more optimistically, we are told that 'partially open societies have emerged, together with self-reflective individuals' and that 'the main carriers of this new historical creation were politics as collective

emancipatory movement and philosophy as self-reflecting, uninhibitedly critical thought' (Castoriadis 1997 p.337). This movement, for him, is the project of Autonomy. It is certainly not the case that Castoriadis subsequently ignored this project – along with the Imagination it is centrally present throughout his work – but to make these ideas truly work together would have necessitated the further development of the destructive character of the imagination, the processes of deinstitution and decomposition. The concept of the Imaginal, neither locked to the individual imagination nor to the Social Imaginary (and still less to the 'unreal' imaginary at which we also looked), provides a starting point for that development.

Methodologies of the Imaginal 1: Eeriness and Negative Capability

From here on, our concern will be less with the definition of the Imaginal than with the Imaginal Process. As I suggested above, the Imaginal is both a creative and a destructive force. It is perhaps clearer to say that it is a mode in which creation and destruction no longer appear as opposites. Instead it is either an engine of change in its radical form or an engine of repetition in its reproductive form. With Arendt (1992), it must be insisted that these forms do not actually exist in isolation from one another; rather they are twin aspects, each with a degree of autonomy wherein the dominance of one corresponds to the subordination of the other. It is the radical Imaginal that we are primarily concerned with here. But in considering change, we immediately encounter the problem of difference.

This brings in Deleuze, and not just because Deleuze, as a philosopher of difference, is an obvious port of call. It is also because here and at several other points in the thesis, there will be much to be gained in terms of the development of our central problematics by placing his thought into the arena with ideas with which it is traditionally held to be in conflict; in particular, theories of social change building from dialectical approaches. This is not a project of reconciliation, indeed the points at which these ideas clash are the most productive points, but it is an effective means of bringing out what is common but silent between the ideas. Difference is a key battleground in this regard. In Chapter 3 we'll encounter this method as *symptomatology*.

What at first appears to be a radically different position in Deleuze to that of Castoriadis and Corbin will be shown to be functionally very similar. Deleuze's ontology is built on the idea of univocity of being, the idea that all being is one substance. This notion comes from the writings of Blessed John Duns Scotus, the 13th/14th Century theologian for whom it corresponds to the idea that the aspects and affects we attribute to God are identical with those same aspects and affects when attributed to humans, so that when we say, for example, that God is full of wrath, it is the same *in essence* as that we might ourselves experience. The difference is one of degree. Volcanoes and tsunamis on the one hand, clenched teeth and quietly uttered expletives on the other. Deleuze shifts this slightly out of the ethical track in which Duns Scotus places it and uses it within a more directly ontological framework wherein distinctions between modes of being can and must be seen as based on degree/power/intensity rather than on category/genera. For Deleuze, Univocity *is* Difference. It is pure difference or difference in and of itself. It is prior to category and therefore prior to resemblance, opposition, and analogy all of which are produced by Repetition and imposed upon the 'crucial experience of difference' (Deleuze 2010 p.61). Furthermore, difference is the only thing that corresponds to movement. Resemblance and opposition, being relationships between pre-existing categories, cannot. But difference is also logically pre-conscious, consciousness emerging from it through processes of repetition.

The problem we need to consider is the idea that only difference is movement, in conjunction with the idea that difference is always necessarily pre-conscious. This would seem to render Castoriadis' project of Autonomy, and perhaps politics in general, impossible. Furthermore, whilst allowing for the possibility of a social imaginal, it appears to posit 'thought' before it as a purely individual faculty.

In fact, though, we know that this is not Deleuze's project. His work with Guattari is both deeply political and deeply social (Deleuze & Guattari 2004). The idea of deterritorialisation that plays such a central role in the pair's collaborative texts is actually very close to what Castoriadis calls politics. Both are conceptualisations of the process of decomposition. For Deleuze and Guattari this process can only exist *outside* the ensemblistic-identitarian structures of which analogy is a part, through perpetual becoming whilst for Castoriadis it can only exist *within* those ensemblistic-identitarian structures and is therefore doomed to slow and incremental movement (leaving the question of revolutionary change unanswered).

There may be weaknesses in both of these constructions and by examining them we may find a means of moving this problematic forward. Deleuze makes the mistake of conflating Resemblance/Opposition with Analogy, whilst Castoriadis ignores the latter, constructing decomposition solely (and as a result dissatisfyingly) around the former. One of the few points in Castoriadis' work where he considers decomposition is in an exploration of the idea of co-existence (the 'being together of a manifold') and he tells us that:

> There must be then the possibility of actually decomposing (whether in reality or ideally and abstractly) the system into well defined sub-systems, into parts, and, finally, into elements taken temporarily or definitively as ultimate. These elements, clearly distinct and well defined, must be amenable to univocal definition. They must be connected together by relations of causal determination, linear or cyclical (reciprocal), categorical or probabilist – relations which themselves are amenable to univocal definition; and relations of the same type must hold between parts, sub-systems, and so on, of the global system (Castoriadis 1987 p.176-177)

The basis of this categorical univocation, as, it is probably safe to say, Deleuze would agree, is resemblance/opposition. Whilst Castoriadis considers this situation inescapable, it is for Deleuze an aspect of common sense, transcendable through a new philosophy of being. However, this is not *analogy*, or rather, if it *is* then it is not the only model of analogy we have at our disposal. Whilst Resemblance and Opposition describe aspects of the relationship between things, Analogy is the movement between them. Crucially though, whilst Resemblance and Opposition require a closed circuit with a point A and a point B (and perhaps other specific points), Analogy does not. It merely requires a drawing away from the initial point by the remote engines of points $1 - \infty$. It does not have to move into those pre-defined points because they exert gravitational pulls upon it that affect its line of flight. Rather than being a method of exchange of like for like, genera for genera, as it appears in Deleuze, it is a method of perpetual becoming in which the eye is drawn towards an unreachable horizon.

We can further elaborate this point by looking at the distinction in Deleuze between the possible and the virtual. Deleuze takes the idea of the virtual from Bergson (Bergson 2001, 2005, Deleuze 1991) with whom he pairs it with the actual which together form the two modes of being that underlie his ontology. The actual is distinct from the real in that the real is comprised both of actual entities and of their

multitudinous projections into and from the virtual. The virtual, however, is not for Deleuze the same thing as the possible. Whist the virtual belongs to the order of difference and singularity, the possible instead belongs to the order of repetition. Whilst the possible, on the one hand, might be understood as the cluster of plausible variations of actuals, the virtual instead 'consists of the differential elements and relations along with the singular points which correspond to them. The reality of the virtual is structure' (Deleuze 2010 p. 209). Manuel DeLanda further clarifies Deleuze's construction of the virtual by describing the two-fold nature of its definition. On the one hand it refers to singularities ('unactualised tendencies' – DeLanda 2013 p. 65) and on the other to affects ('unactualised capacities to affect and be affected' – *ibid.*). This distinction between the possible and the virtual thus allows Deleuze to replace a transcendent philosophy of pre-existent states of being (constructed either as the actual or as the possible) with one based on 'pure becomings without being' (*Ibid.* p. 121)[8]. Analogy, for Deleuze, corresponds, along with resemblance, contrast, and identity to a regime of being without becoming, a rigid territoriality. As Delanda points out, we should not understand this as meaning that Deleuze is opposed to thinking in terms of resemblance but that resemblance is contingent on individuation processes and cannot be taken for granted or 'used as fundamental aspects in an ontology, but only as derivative notions' (*ibid.* p. 33). But whilst this may prove satisfactory as a criticism of resemblance (wherein I define an element of the actual because of its similarity to another thing), contrast (wherein I define an element of the actual because of its dissimilarity to another thing), and identity (wherein I define an element of the actual on the basis of its conformity to a pre-decided set of categorical criteria), it simply doesn't work for analogy which is not means of defining an element of the actual at all but a means of exploring precisely the relationships of becoming that Deleuze tells us belong to the virtual.

This model is entirely compatible with Deleuze's *political* project, which we might describe as 'liminalist'. Thought (the experience of difference) lies perpetually outside (in a sense *prior to* though without the implication of a linear monodirectional process) consciousness and is therefore never directly knowable. Radical politics is therefore the pushing at the outer edges where repetition is born

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[8] In resonance with this thesis, DeLanda's consideration of Deleuze's virtual (DeLanda 2013) is split between the virtual in space and the virtual in time so we will return to it again in the following chapter.

and dies, going further and further into this liminal region but with difference as an ever-retreating horizon.

Castoriadis never manages properly to navigate this incredibly important aspect of the political because, whilst his sophisticated theory of institution takes in many aspects of the unconscious and preconscious, his consideration of decomposition (politics/deinstitution) remains within the terrain of conscious activity. However, there are places to which we can now turn in order to examine methodologies of decomposition that operate with and within affect and accident. These methodologies suggest means of overcoming the Castoriadian problem and at the same time, returning the imaginal to the liminal flow of experience and movement from which Deleuze exiles it by insisting on it as an aspect of consciousness and territoriality. Let us begin by considering the terrain of poetry.

Firstly, I want to explore the idea of 'Eeriness' as employed in Lewis Carroll's *Sylvie and Bruno*. The unconventional narrative of this book makes it hard to give a straightforward synopsis. Deleuze has written about *Sylvie and Bruno* as the third in a trilogy about surfaces. Whilst *Alice's Adventures In Wonderland* is a story about depth and *Through The Looking Glass* about flatness, *Sylvie and Bruno* is a story about the co-existence of planes, or really two stories, 'one in a major key, the other in a minor key […] with passages that constantly shift from one to the other, sometimes owing to a fragment of a sentence that is common to both stories, sometimes by means of the couplets of an admirable song that distributes the events proper to each story' (Deleuze 1997 p.21). But the narrative of these two contiguous stories is much more interwoven than Deleuze implies here. The story concerns *at some point* a narrator/protagonist's encounters with the title characters, siblings who *at some point* become, *or* are revealed as, *or* are simply portrayed as, fairies. For most of the book the lives and concerns of these title characters are quite separate from those of the narrator, and it is implied that the long passages concerning their antics and those of fellow denizens of Outland are recounted to us as dreams while he continually drifts off, seemingly whenever seated (much like the dormouse in Wonderland, this character is truly extraordinary in his propensity to fall asleep). Later on, though, these waking and sleeping worlds begin to merge and it is at this point that the shifting that Deleuze refers to finds an outside point (perhaps we could call it a No-where) that is the story neither in the minor key nor in the major key. The

organ that effects this shift is not an aspect of form like those that Deleuze lists, it's an aspect of the narrative proper, the protagonist's meditation on eeriness.

> The first rule is, that it must be a *very* hot day – that we may consider as settled: and you must be just a *little* sleepy – but not too sleepy to keep your eyes open, mind. Well, and you ought to feel a little – what one may call "fairyish" – the Scotch call it "eerie" and perhaps that's a prettier word (Carroll 1987, p. 338).

Despite a certain assonance, *eerie* and *fairy* do not appear to share a root. Whilst the source of the word *fairy* is thought to lie in the Greek furies, *eerie* comes to us through an etymology that passes through a whole host of European languages usually with a meaning relating either to fearfulness, cowardliness, or to a more nondescript 'bad'. The everyday use of the term will suit just fine as a starting point for its deeper elaboration though. We talk of eeriness as a sense of things being weird, fearfully strange, or *not right*. It is a word we associate with being scared, with feeling that we may come to harm in ways that are impossible to articulate. With Carroll, I wish to move away from these negative connotations. Carroll's eerie is about seeing through the act of unseeing. It is about deliberately unsettling an understanding of the whole in order to allow for the discovery of elements of the real not previously incorporated in it. Following from this we might replace *not right* with *not fixed* and posit instead of 'fearfulness' a sort of productive paranoia.

The idea that Carroll wished to convey with the term is certainly not his own invention. The long association of fairy-folk and other forest-dwelling folkloric characters and cryptids with crepuscular shifts, with the iron light of dusk and dawn, is well known. This may in part be to do with the fact that this represents the time of strange encounters with the non-mythical native wildlife of much of western Europe, many of which are either nocturnal or are themselves crepuscular. We diurnal beasts often experience these chance meetings as uncanny or special. Sightings of bats, foxes, owls, and badgers remain moments of note for many of us for the whole of our lives. If these incredible animals come out after we ought to be sleeping, what else stalks the night? In thermodynamics, the point at which matter changes from one state, such as liquid, to another, such as gas, is known as *phase transition*. For humans, these crepuscular moments are perhaps something like the phase transition of the imaginal. The softening of our vision, the lengthening of shadows that wreaks

havoc on the geometries and geographies with which we had felt secure mere hours before, allow for radically different interpretations of our physical environments. Whilst not wishing to invoke the ire of folklorists who caution against the drawing of broad commonalities between stories from radically different parts of the world, it is worth mentioning that other beings that we might think of as fairy equivalents also occupy spaces that are somewhat hostile to humanity and rich in nocturnal life, such as the *djinn* of the Arabian deserts or the *curupira* in the forests of Brazil. It might also be noted that passage to the underworld, or otherworld, is very frequently associated with some sort of loss of self-control, such as through death, love, or lust.

There is an obvious relationship between this term and the way in which the uncanny is used by Freud (1919). Indeed, allowed to roam freely on the tuffetted terrain of popular usage, the two can virtually present as synonyms. However, just as Freud attempted to bring some conceptual specificity to the uncanny, I want to do the same here for the eerie.

Freud's development of the uncanny (*Unheimlich* in the original) transforms its relationship to the canny (*Heimlich*). Rather than allowing a binary to emerge along the more obvious lines of unfamiliar/familiar (or to translate more literally, unhomely/homely) Freud's distinction is between the familiar encountered outside its place and the familiar encountered in its place. The Freudian uncanny is that which we already know but in a place that we do not expect to find it. Rendered in more straightforwardly psychological terms, it is the experience of having an element of our unconscious revealed to us when it is manifested (usually analogically) in an external phenomenon. Freud's initial example in his essay that bears the concept's name is the folk tale of the Sandman wherein an unwitting child is robbed of his eyes. For Freud the audience's encounter with this element of the narrative reacquaints them with a fear of losing their eyes which, he tells us, is a prevalent component in the psychoanalytic experience and, so he goes on to claim, relates to the fear of castration. (*Ibid.* pp.227-231)

The eerie can be opposed to the uncanny, albeit in a very different way to that in which the canny can be opposed. If the uncanny is the inside unexpectedly encountered outside, the eerie is instead the outside unexpectedly encountered inside.

The English romantic poets utilised this same trope frequently, writing of the liberatory nature of the flight into night time. Shelley's *To Night* with its lament 'When I arose and saw the dawn, I sigh'd for thee' (Shelley 2002, p. 524) is

particularly clear as an expression of this. Interestingly Keats even goes as far as to begin to elaborate something approaching a methodology that we can see as being close to eeriness when he writes about the idea of Negative Capability in a letter to his brothers. This, Keats tells them (and us) means being 'capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts' (Keats 1968, pp. 40-41).

Negative Capability is particularly useful as we already have an example of its appropriation and elaboration as a political concept in the work of Roberto Mangabeira Unger. In Unger's work Negative Capability must be understood via its relationship to two other concepts: False Necessity and Formative Context. False Necessity is that which Unger's critical project opposes. It refers to naturalised or deterministic models of human society – the idea, on the one hand, that one form of socialisation is specifically that for which human beings have evolved (such as we find, for example in some forms of neoliberalism and some forms of anarchism) and, on the other hand, that certain forms of society *necessarily* follow from others (such as we find, for example, in certain permutations of Marxism). For Unger, the variety of possible social arrangements tends towards infinity. However, this does not mean that *any* arrangement could follow on from any other arrangement. He is meticulous in arguing that future societies are always built from and within present ones, carrying them within their kernels. Each of these societies is a Formative Context, and these are, for Unger, institutional or imaginative arrangements (very closely echoing Castoriadis' Socially Instituting Imaginary). From this we can conclude that the success of the struggle against False Necessity can be measured in the number of possible future Formative Contexts that can be produced from the present one. Unger agues that the capacity of a particular formative context to produce a multitude of possible future arrangements is connected to its capacity to facilitate Negative Capability (Unger 2001). Negative Capability is for Unger, as it is for Keats, the ability to doubt the fixedness of an encountered situation. Where I (following Castoriadis) have used the term decomposition, Unger uses the term disentrenchment (and sometimes denaturalisation):

> [Disentrenchment] enables us to recognize more fully the conflicting conditions of self-assertion: the need to participate in group life and to avoid the dangers of subjugation and depersonalization that attend such engagement. This more successful reconciliation of the enabling conditions of self-assertion represents another side of empowerment. But the most

straightforward sense in which the disentrenchment of formative contexts empowers people lies in the greater individual and collective mastery it grants them over the shared terms of their activity. Because this range of forms of empowerment is achieved by creating formative contexts that soften the contrast between context-preserving routines and context-transforming challenge, it might be called negative capability (*ibid.* pp. 36-37)

We can see here how close Unger's concept of empowerment is to Castoriadis' project of Autonomy. Similarly too, Unger talks of the need for his Formative Contexts to cohere. He is quite clear that the move towards societies that enable greater levels of negative capability is not the same as that towards ever-greater levels of indeterminacy. Rather, there are 'certain specifiable features' wherein 'some ways of organising […] lie farther along the spectrum of disentrenchment, and succeed better at producing negative capability, than others' (*ibid.* p. 37). Indeed, Unger develops an idea of 'stability' that is opposed both to total indeterminacy and to rigidity, arguing that the unending development of negative capability is a requisite of a stable formative context. Furthermore, Unger suggests that such coherence cannot be sustainably modular in that clusters of institutional arrangements don't easily work together unless they 'embody similar levels of emancipation from false necessity' (*ibid.* p. 164) It is in this idea that the revolutionary (and internationalist) nature of his project is revealed. So too we see here that Negative Capability in Unger's work cannot possibly be reduced to a faculty of the individual or an aspect of genius (the hero-artist) in the way that it would not be unfair to describe our encounter with it in Keats.

One of the criticisms levelled at Unger (for example by Fish [1990]) is that he neglects the all-important question of how one actually *does* Negative Capability. This is neither entirely fair nor entirely unfair. *False Necessity: Anti-Necessitarian Social Theory in the Service of Radical Democracy*, for example, is full of historical illustrations of the movement from one formative context to another through processes that demonstrate the concept. More broadly, Unger calls explicitly for 'political and economic institutions and styles of personal association accelerating experimentalism in every aspect of social life' (Unger 2001 pp. 602-603). It is probably unreasonable to expect Unger to have told his readers which specific collective, political projects are those that nurture Negative Capability and how precisely they might do it, particularly in the context of his argument that such things

must be experimental rather than proscriptive. However, whilst agreeing with this pro-experimentalist position, we may in this thesis be able to go some short way further into exploring the question of how one might enact collective experiments in productive doubt or – to return the previous concept – how the collective production of eeriness might unfold.

Methodologies of the Imaginal 2: Surrealism

In order to address this problem, I want to turn here to Surrealism as a (much misunderstood) set of methodologies that, whilst being grounded in poetry, are resolutely collective and weaponised for the purpose of the revolutionary transformation of society.

Much like describing 'what communists think' or even 'what Marxists think', introducing Surrealism is no easy task not because it is particularly complicated but because it is a system of thought that has developed over what is now almost a century. During this time there have been many innovations, experiments, discoveries, new leads, arguments, dead-ends, new affinities, splits, mergers, major theoretical threads, and minor ones. Even simply describing the contemporary condition of surrealism is an impossible task, incorporating as it does a huge number of individuals spread across many organised groups, across several continents, and involved in a diversity of projects that do not always seem compatible, and do not always seem to represent further transformations of previous Surrealist discoveries[9]. I shall primarily concentrate the discussion on a small handful of key documents through which I can map the changing shape of surrealism as it relates to the present discussion of imaginal decomposition (in full awareness of the fact that I would be likely to find much difference of opinion about whether these are *the* most important documents or not). These are Breton's *Manifesto of Surrealism* and Aragon's *A Wave of Dreams*, both originally published in 1924 and representative of what has been described as the period of trances, Breton's *Second Manifesto of Surrealism* from 1930, which focuses heavily of the affinity between Surrealism and Marxism,

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[9] Both Michael Richardson and Krzysztof Fijalkowski's *Surrealism Against the Current* (2001) and Penelope Rosemont's *Surrealist Women* (1998) are great as anthologies that provide long ranging historical overviews of the development of Surrealist practices and terrains of activity. Developments since the 21st century are perhaps best represented in Her De Vries & Laurens Vancrevel's *What will be / Ce qui sera / Lo que sera* (2014)

and Luca and Trost's *Dialectics of the Dialectics* from 1945 which develops the idea of a non-oedipal dialectics and of *love* as a concrete revolutionary project. In addition to this I shall draw on elements of the 1968 tract *The Platform of Prague,* collectively penned by the Paris and Prague Surrealist Groups.

As a manifesto, Breton's 1924 work unsurprisingly begins with a critique of the intellectual hegemonies of the time and the social context in which they develop. He is contemptuous of the situation of the imagination, which he sees being 'allowed to be exercised only in strict accordance with the laws of an arbitrary utility' (Breton 2007 p.5) relating this to the state of current literature wherein he finds himself 'spared not even one of the character's slightest vacillations' meaning 'the only discretionary power left […] is to close the book' (*ibid.* p.7). Breton gushes about the importance of Freud in having reopened a much-neglected area of investigation. The implication is that he is referring here to the imagination (which, as pointed out by Castoriadis, Freud somehow managed never to write about directly [Castoriadis 1997 p. 319]). Overwhelmingly, the aspect of Freud in which Breton is interested at this point is his work on dreams and the first articulation of the project of surrealism that we find in this document is: 'I believe in the future resolution of these two states, dream and reality, which are seemingly so contradictory, into a kind of absolute reality, a *surreality*, if one may so speak' (Breton 2007 p. 14). It is largely due to the overemphasis on Breton's first manifesto (for a long time one of the only widely available texts of surrealist theory in English translation) that one occasionally encounters Surrealism as a sort of 'psychoanalytic art' or as a project centred on the meagre ambitions of writing or painting the scenes of the unconscious. This would be to mistake a tactic for an aim however.

In Aragon's *Wave of Dreams* from the same period we still see the dream emphasised but the importance of Freud (briefly acknowledged) is downplayed (Aragon 2003). In this work it is clear that neither the dream, *nor* the unconscious, are the focal points of this early stage in Surrealist activity. Rather they are aspects of gameplay (and I will come back to this term) for the purpose of producing fertile ground for chance to intervene. Whilst Breton focuses on realism (a concept prone to producing the misunderstanding that Surrealism is opposed to reality rather than demanding more of it), Aragon usefully introduces the idea of arbitrary utilitarianism as being the form whose surpassing is the aim of surrealist activity. As suggested in the introduction to this thesis, this idea, used in this way, is close to Castoriadis'

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notion of the autonomy of functionality, which, we remember, is subjection of all of reality to the ideology of 'rational mastery' and, I suggested, the precursor to the specifically *economic* functionality that characterises the binding of the imagination under neoliberalism. More broadly, the surrealist interest in the dream is as the source of desires and ideas that seem to have fluid and often oppositional relationships to those of established social institutions. Of course, there is only so far that one can go with this argument and as Trost argued in *Vision dans le Cristal* dreams are very much subject to the values of the waking world (or 'reactionary diurnal remnants' [in Luca & Trost 2001 p.39]).

Breton's secondary focus in the first manifesto is on automatic writing, the importance of which he talks about in the context of a (friendly) critique of the poet Paul Reverdy's claim that 'the image […] cannot be born from a comparison but of a juxtaposition of two more or less distant realities' (in Breton 2007 p. 20). Breton counters this with his suspicion that Reverdy's poetic methodology cannot possibly be the result of conscious premeditation.

> The value of the image depends upon the spark obtained; it is, consequently, a function of the difference of the potential between the two conductors. When the spark exists only slightly, as in comparison, the spark is lacking […] Now, it is not within man's power, so far as I can tell, to effect the juxtaposition of two realities so far apart (*ibid.* p. 37)

This spark might be thought of as synonymous with what Breton also calls 'the marvellous' and it is this latter term that became a mainstay of Surrealist terminology. Crucial here is that this spark/marvellous is *elsewhere*. Whilst it is not incorrect to think of this in terms of a breach (indeed *La Brêche* has currency in surrealist discourse as a term related to the marvellous), it is very different, for example, from the sort of breach in the spectacle (the notable articulation of which is Debord's [1983]) that the Situationist International hoped to effect through the creation of 'Situations'. There is no sense that the surrealist marvellous is the truth behind the façade. It represents instead a permanently distant horizon revealing the limitations of what we might call, along with Unger, the current formative context. It is useful to think of this in relation to Jameson's idea of Cognitive Mapping. Jameson first develops this idea as a means of explaining the relationship between the imagination, space, and power (Jameson 1995). The experience of being in a

particular space, and the knowledge of that space, is based not (merely) on the visual phenomena laid out before us but on an imaginal map that consists also of the various places of significance (to the imaginal cartographer) around it. The relationship between these places is, of course, not just made up of geometric estimates, but of ties of power and affect. Removed further from this physical space into the more fully social space of the political imagination we can see, for example, how transformed that map is in the contemporary world by the absence of the USSR. It is not that Soviet socialism provided an alternative whilst the lack of it leaves us with no alternative; it is that the whole terrain was expanded as a result of its presence. Like massive objects in space, such social imaginal landmarks exert pulls upon the bodies around them. One needs neither to 'side with' Soviet Socialism, nor with Western Capitalism, nor with a synthesis of the two in order for the undulations of one's movement and the contours of one's imaginal environment to be transformed by their presence. We can see a similar process in analogical juxtaposition. Take, for example, Lautréamont's famous phrase (beloved in the early Surrealist movement): 'He is fair […] as the chance meeting on a dissecting-table of a sewing-machine and an umbrella' (Lautréamont 1998 p.193). Lautréamont is describing a particular (human) character in his book. He is also describing a bat, a bat constructed accidentally by an encounter between three different objects that together manifest a certain batness, a batness in which the beauty of Lautréamont's character is manifested. Each of these imaginal landmarks transforms the total terrain upon which they appear. The relationship is not a closed one between human, bat, umbrella, sewing-machine, and operating table, but a total one that effects the movements of all other objects. It is not that, to simplify the particular associative network in play, bat and umbrella are transformed into a third thing, the batumbrella, but that the previously closed categories of bat and of umbrella are now torn open. I am drawn out from bat towards umbrella, out from umbrella towards bat. More importantly though, each has destabilised the substance of the other, exponentially multiplying the number of possible avenues out of bat, the number of possible avenues out of umbrella, and irrevocably installing a sense of undeniable and compelling doubt within each. The whole constellation of the possible has shifted, never to return to its previous shape.

There is a recurring intimation in both Breton's *Manifesto* and in Aragon's *A Wave of Dreams* that surrealist activity cannot be entirely deliberate. Castoriadis, too,

is pessimistic about the idea of active imaginal decomposition, while Unger cautiously tells us that Negative Capability may be developed 'more or less' consciously (Unger 2001 p. 36). This is crucial and the underlying argument (applicable in each case) is obvious. If our conscious experience of the world is produced by what we have socially instituted, then it cannot be logically possible to consciously think outside of it. Thus the paramount importance of chance and accident in this early phase of Surrealist activity, taken up as it was with small group experiments that valorised compulsion, passion, and the circumvention of reason. If the Surrealist project was a social one at this stage it was in its attempt to erode the special position of the artist and to expose the idea of genius as fraud.

> Their indignation mounts as they see how they've been duped by this illusion, by this fraud which suggests that *literature* is the result of a certain method, conceals that method, and then conceals the fact that this method is actually within everybody's reach (Aragon 2003 p.4)

When the Surrealists discovered Marxism and immersed themselves in active social struggle, however, yet still retain this a dedication to *chance*; we can no longer avoid being immersed into a set of problematics around social institutional decomposition. Put simply, the revolutionary project of surrealism is not the replacement of one set of social (and ontological) arrangements with another; it is the creation of the conditions from which further social arrangements might emerge through the destabilising (disentrenching) of current ones. This is a perpetual project, not a temporary one with a fixed Utopian future ushered in by the proletarian seizure of the state (which, to be clear, was something of which Breton and his comrades *were* in favour) at the end of it, 'a horizon that continually flees before the walker' (*ibid.* p. 5).

The *form* taken by this project (and although I proceed with some caution I think I would not be incorrect in attributing this form to *all* surrealist activity) is the game. In *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* Freud describes a game played by his young nephew which he calls 'Fort! Da!' ('Gone! There!'). This game simply consists of allowing a reel, around which a piece of string was tied, to roll away with an exclamation of 'Fort!' and then drawing it back in again with an exclamation of 'Da!' For Freud, this serves to illustrate that the basis of the game is the interplay of anxiety and relief with the most important element being that everything returns to

the way it was before the game began. In short, the game is a form of activity completely without consequence (Freud 1962 pp. 15-17). It is from this notion that we derive the association of game with frivolity, futility, or non-seriousness. The Surrealist game could not be more different from Freud's model. It is instead constructed around the notion that *nothing* is the same afterwards and it is targeted specifically at change. It certainly retains the character of play (and is often both joyful and humorous) but it is a form of play that no longer appears as the opposite of seriousness. The point of the surrealist game is to construct entry points for the intervention of *objective chance* understood in the Hegelian sense of that which disproves determinism and forces open new fields of potential. There are certain areas of surrealist investigation in which the manifestation of this approach is very clear (for example in the interest in found objects, abandoned or ruinous spaces, and the interest in subverting tools traditionally used for divination such as the Tarot). More often than not, the collective and inter-subjective elements of Surrealist practice are derived from the fact that each individual participant regards the other participants as conduits through which objective chance intervenes. An obvious example of this would be the early game 'Exquisite Corpse' wherein a textual clause written on a piece of paper by one player will be followed by another written by the next who is either partly or completely unaware of the previous one.[10] Even the experiments with the unconscious performed by solitary Surrealists can be thought of as attempts at collective games between different parts of a split self. Although perhaps not obvious at first, the presentation of most Surrealist activity as being game-based will place little undue strain on our credulity. But the game is also, for Surrealists, the basis of social struggle.

In Breton's *Second Surrealist Manifesto* he recognises a great affinity with the Surrealist project in Marx's inversion of Hegel's dialectic (Breton 2007) but the Surrealist commitment to an eternal process of unfolding, what we might call a radical anti-institutionalism (not in the sense of a refusal to engage with, or participate in the creation of, institutional forms but in the sense of a commitment to their fluidity) quickly made their relationship with the Third Communist

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[10] *Exquisite Corpse* is a very early Surrealist discovery. Its simplicity means that it serves as an easy aid for the explication of surrealist games in general. However, it is important to note that is it atypical in that to the contemporary mind it seems little more than a parlour game. Although Surrealist games can still be 'quick' in a similar vein to this one, they are frequently far richer and it is not at all unheard of for them to be played over a period of years or even decades.

International a fraught one. Interestingly, by the time of 1968's *Platform of Prague* the two largest and longest constituted groups in the Surrealist movement, those in France and Czechoslovakia, long established as critics of Stalinism, were celebrating the diminishing of the party form and the increasingly unmediated relationship between unions and the working class (Audoin *et al.* 2001). It is significant that Castoriadis, whose project of autonomy has so many parallels with Surrealism, was also at this time arguing in favour of this move towards support for Council Communism (often under the pseudonym Paul Cardan as part of the group *Socialisme ou Barbarie* [For example in Castoriadis 1992]).

In the *Second Manifesto* surrealism's early use of dialectical materialism is full of playful possibility. Critically modifying the explication of the negation of the negation provided by Engels (whom he very much admired) Breton tell us

> There was, for us too, the necessity to put an end to idealism properly speaking, the creation of the word "Surrealism" would testify to this, and to quote Engels' classic example once again, the necessity not to limit ourselves to the childish: "The rose is a rose. The rose is not a rose. And yet the rose is a rose," but, if one will forgive me the parenthesis, to lure "the rose" into a movement pregnant with less benign contradictions, where it is, successively, the rose that comes from the garden, the one that has an unusual place in a dream, the one impossible to move from the "optical bouquet," the one that can completely change its properties by passing into automatic writing, the one that retains only those qualities that the painter has deigned to keep in a Surrealist painting, and, finally, the one, completely different from itself, which returns to the garden (Breton 2007 p. 141)

The key word here is 'lure'. Social movement in Surrealism is neither the transitional movement of orthodox Leninism nor the appeal to the external (or the pure) that underlies Nihilism. Instead it *uses* social imaginary significations and institutions (in which we might include symbols, categories, and existing organisational forms) to lure and push into the unknown. Not transition but magnetism, understood as both an attracting and a repelling force.

By the time Luca and Trost (members of the Romanian Surrealist Group) wrote their important tract *Dialectics of the Dialectic* in 1945, the relationship of Surrealism to dialectical materialism had been further theorised within the movement. In an uncompromising document, they reaffirm the importance of objective chance, whilst arguing for the historical specificity of Surrealist techniques

in order to rail against the transformation of 'objective discoveries into means of artistic production' via which the process of surrealist research is turned into 'a surrealist manner' and its recuperation as an art movement cemented (Luca & Trost 2001). This call for the historical contextuality of surrealist practices can be seen as a recognition that methodologies of decomposition themselves become entrenched, losing their ability to draw the eye towards other space: 'We recognise in this dialectical attitude the most concrete possibility of keeping intact within ourselves the revolutionary mechanism and the means to trample underfoot any discovery that does not immediately oblige us to find another' (*ibid.* p. 36). We would perhaps not go quite as far as to replace 'surrealist practices' here with any method of radical or revolutionary organising. After all, periods of deterritorialisation/decomposition rely for their very definition on flanking periods of reterritorialisation/recomposition and vice versa. However, the application of slightly less frantic formulations of this insistence to forms of social organisation high in negative capability is clear.

Luca and Trost's most significant development, though, is their identification of *love*, which they see as *produced by* objective chance, as the basis of a 'general revolutionary method' (*ibid.* p. 38). This is the foundation of what they describe as a 'revolution against nature' (*ibid.*) that we could very easily translate into Ungerian terms as a revolution against False Necessity. Their expression of distaste is not for trees and beetles but for the notion that potential might be limited. They develop this revolutionary methodology of love through the concept of a *non-Oedipal* dialectic: 'The *qualitative* transformation of love into a general revolutionary method […] [is] prevented by this primordial theoretical defeat maintained within us by the Oedipal position' (*ibid.*). For Luca and Trost, the removal of the Oedipal constraint is not a project of radical psychology (indeed they specifically talk of the need to free it from that terrain). Instead it is the basis of both thought and action aimed at the removal of the symmetrical negation that sees the proletariat producing itself in the bourgeoisie and vice-versa. Crucially, it is a politics developed around desire that not only relates to fundamental needs but is something 'we must labour to invent' (*ibid.* p.36)

It will be immediately obvious to readers familiar with Deleuze and Guattari's work that something of a debt is owed to the Romanian Surrealist Group. Surprisingly, acknowledgment is absent from the major work in which one might most expect to find it: *Anti-Oedipus* (Deleuze & Guattari 2003), although Luca is featured heavily in the pair's *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature* (Deleuze &

Guattari 1986) and elsewhere Deleuze has described Luca as 'among the greatest' poets (Deleuze & Parnet 2007 p. 4). I shall not be tempted to comment on whether it is possible to reconcile a supposedly anti-dialectical politics like Deleuze and Guattari's with an avowedly dialectical one like Luca and Trost's (or whether either claim is in fact appropriate in either case). However, the commonalities, which are evidenced but not fully encapsulated by the desire in both to develop non-oedipal modes of thought, are important to the present discussion. Love in Deleuze and Guattari's thought is adapted from how it appears in Spinoza, that being Joy - by which Spinoza means collective power (in the sense of a capacity to act) – is 'accompanied by the idea of an external cause' (Spinoza 1992 p. 142). We can read Luca and Trost's project to produce a non-Oedipal model of love (unlimited eroticisation, associated with desire that must be *invented*) as being linked with the Spinozan concept of power/capacity to act. The 'external cause' that for Spinoza marks the distinction between Love and Joy (and which for him is God) is for Luca and Trost Objective Chance itself. They thus attempt to move towards a circumvention of the more ossified and entrenched structures and institutions that can diminish (almost to the point of eradication) Negative Capability in conservative and Revolutionary social and political organisations alike (the Party, the Nation, the Leader, the Identity). There is an affinity here with the Deleuzian project in that we can see this proposal of Luca and Trost as representing an emancipation of Love from its subordination to categories (or to ossified social imaginary significations). However there is a difference of method - perhaps one could even say of strategy - when it comes to the *use* (as opposed to the *nature*) of analogy, which for the latter is presented as the engine of movement away from those categories rather than the transference from one of them to another.

We can now see why the objection that Unger fails to show us how to *do* Negative Capability misses the point. What is important is rather the creation of the conditions from which it can emerge. Negative Capability is dependent upon collective experimentation – a Joy whose external cause is objective chance. But let's go back to this point by summarising the arguments and investigations in this chapter that have brought us to this point.

We began by exploring constructions of the Imagination in Plato, Aristotle, and Kant arguing that this represents a journey that spirals ever inwards towards the

individual (and the most creative manifestations of the individual: the genius and the lunatic). We saw how the idea of imagination as a process of articulation between the material and the spiritual developed into one of a process of articulation between aspects of thought (specifically intuition and conception). Searching for a social conception of the imagination we probed two very different notions of the Imaginary. In the first, developed in the field of psychoanalysis, we encountered the Imaginary as falsely objective, a phenomenon that, rather than appearing as an articulating process *appeared* as completely external but *was revealed as* the individual Imagination in a pathological form emerging in order to disguise lack. We moved then to a second construction of the Imaginary: the Social Imaginary, in particular as used by Castoriadis, which specifically problematised the idea of lack as being prior to the Imagination. This conception rejects both the mere articulation function ascribed to the Imagination by Kant and the fully externalised Imaginary that we find in psychoanalysis, instead corresponding to the idea of the imagination as envelope, as being *around* and therefore *prior to* thought or the distinction between real and unreal. But we argued, with Bottici, that there are problems in Castoriadis' model in that it comes very close to rendering societies as self-enclosed and impermeable, damning the individuals within them to endless feedback loops of social-individual mutual reproduction. We suggested that this leaves a chasm between his theory of the Imagination and his political project of autonomy (which requires the ability collectively to move out of institutionalised structures). We suggested, again with Bottici, that we could begin to work our way out of that particular corner by substituting for the concepts of Imagination and Imaginary, that of the Imaginal which, drawing mostly on Corbin, we developed as a concept that, like Castoriadis' Social Imaginary, is *enveloping* and *prior to* thought but is neither merely individual nor merely social but is intersubjective and intersocial. We argued that Castoriadis' failure to deal with or deepen the problems in his model corresponded to a failure properly to deal with the idea of decomposition and that this destructive character of the imaginal is at least as important as its status regarding the instituting process.

Setting to one side Castoriadis' work on the creative function of the radical imagination, we attempted to track down how decomposition might happen or might be made to happen. Using first Carroll's Eerie, and then Keats' Negative Capability we began with the idea that the cultivation of certain affects could foster a sort of

creative doubt or productive paranoia that could partially liquefy institutional forms thus producing a multitude of new social possibilities. Eager not to be drawn back into an individual (artist/genius) construction of the imagination, we made much use of Unger's development of Negative Capability into a theory of socio-political imaginal processes. We wanted to go further than describing this imaginal process by looking at how it could be developed as a working methodology. Confident that to move away from the monadic individual did not necessitate moving away from the poetic, we looked at the attempts of the Surrealist Movement to develop the imagination not just as a tool of social struggle but as the basis of a theory of social movement and radical transformation. We argued that surrealism operates with a particular non-directional model of analogy which, rather than a question of transition between genera or of simplistic synthesis, is weaponised specifically as a magnetic engine of decomposition. We likened this to Deleuze's liminalism in the sense that it can be seen as an attempt to occupy and push at the outer edges of the realm of repetition and institution, the point at which repetition is first encrusted upon the flesh of difference. It aims, therefore, at a swelling of the real.

What links Castoriadian, Ungerian, Surrealist, and Deleuzian approaches to decomposition is the idea that it cannot be (fully) deliberate/conscious. Unger's response is to advocate an experimentalism on all terrains. This too is the response of the surrealists whose experimentalism is articulated through the game form: the production of situations to facilitate the intervention of objective chance in order to change the terrain upon which situations occur. In both cases these are problematics not of mindset but of social organisation. When we begin to consider empirical data in Chapter 5 and then, afterwards, to bring it to bear on theories of commoning and institution, we will maintain a focus on the aspects of radical organisation that facilitate objective chance and those that defend themselves against it and, correspondingly, those that nurture the Negative Capability that is so vital to social transformation and those that don't.

Postlude: A Tale of Two Cities: Na-Koja-Abad, Utopia, and Axes of Realswell

I want to return here, as we near the end of this chapter, to Corbin - specifically to his differentiation between Na-Koja-Abad and Utopia. As I have shown above, the basis

of Corbin's distinction between the two is that Na-Koja-Abad is *real* whilst Utopia is 'outside of being and existence' (Corbin 1964 [no pagination]). He is quite clearly correct in stressing that these two imaginal places are not the same but is it reasonable to posit the basis of their difference as being related to their imminence to being? I will argue that it is not.

Na-Koja-Abad, you will remember, is a place outside of place. It is on the convex surface of the sphere that contains all of reality and is therefore the envelope of reality and, like the imagination in Castoriadis, it is prior to the distinction between real and unreal. It is therefore *spatially* distinct from materially present reality but at the same time is the basis by which that reality is known. We can only experience the world by being (literally) inside the sphere of influence of Na-Koja-Abad. Corbin tells us that the relationship between this imaginal place and movement is resemblance, not a *Euclidean spatiality* but an *analogical spatiality*. Whilst all religious and mythical non-materially present spaces (Heaven, Valhalla, Hades etc.) develop in response to specific problematics, it seems that, perhaps uniquely amongst them, Na-Koja-Abad demands to be read as a narrative developed in order to account for how the collective imagination functions. But there is no reason to suspect, at least from the description given to us by Corbin, that Na-Koja-Abad is *temporally* distinct from materially present reality and it is perhaps due to its association with this other or supplementary axis that he so readily dismisses Utopia as not existing.

When Corbin uses the word Utopia of course, he is not specifically referring to Thomas More's literary work or to the imaginal island society that is its subject (More 1965) but to the imaginal-spatial manifestation of utopian thought. In this respect More's creation was not the first 'Utopia', and is not necessarily one of the more typical ones. We'll look at the idea of Utopia more in the following chapter but for now, the working definition I'm employing is that it refers to a projection, through incorporation into a coherent imaginal system, of elements of *present* social imaginal constructions, in order to explore what they should and should not, could and could not, *become*. This is true irrespective of whether a described Utopia is conceived of as being in the future or simply in another place (and we can further deepen the idea by relating it to that which is, or appears to be, the product of memory). There is no good reason to think of this as any less real than Na-Koja-Abad but they *are* distinct because Na-Koja-Abad is *temporally imminent* but

spatially remote whilst Utopia is *temporally remote* but *spatially imminent.* Na-Koja-Abad is *Here* projected into *There* in such as way that it is here and there *at the same time* (now), whilst Utopia is *Now* projected into *Then* in such a way that it is now and then *in the same place* (here). Both describe the swelling of the real via imaginal processes, but along two distinct axes: a Spatial-Imaginal Axis and a Temporal-Imaginal Axis.

In this chapter our concern has largely been with the former of these two axes of realswell. In the next, we will turn our attentions to Utopian thought, memory, and the temporal-imaginal axis which is equally important for building up our understanding of collective imaginal (de)composition.

Chapter 2.

Calling Time Out: Timelessness and the Imaginal

In the previous chapter I suggested that the imaginal operates along two axes: one that is Spatial-Imaginal and situated within a zone of temporal imminence and the other that is Temporal-Imaginal whose zone of imminence is spatial. I will devote this chapter to the latter.

The Temporal-Imaginal axis, as I present it here, incorporates both imaginings of the future and those of the past. There are both commonalities and differences related to these respectively forward and backward imaginal movements. I will make both explicit. This is a process that involves both the unpicking of existing terminology and the adoption of new terminology as well as attempting to navigate the differing status of knowledge claims about both the past and the future. It is also demands that we try to get to grips with the collective experience of time in order to suggest the means via which we can build and project imaginal worlds out from the Now. Such a project is immensely complicated. Indeed, following every lead thrown up by it, problematising every solution we encounter would be something like the magicians handkerchief trick but with an infinitely deep pocket. Not only is the issue of time and experience a contested one but it is contested on the basis of very little data. It is a question which begs engagement with the so-called 'hard question' of consciousness, the cutting edge of neurology, quantum physics, philosophy, poetry, and politics. Here I narrow the focus to social imaginal processes and begin by considering *practices* of time.

It is no surprise that Marxist theorists, as critics of the quantification of human activity have produced a useful array of work on time. I concentrate in this chapter on E. P. Thompson's exploration of cyclical time (1967), George Caffentzis'

notion of tensed time (2013), and on more recent experiments with the ideas of *Kairòs, Excess* and *Phase Time* conducted by Antonio Negri, The Free Association, and Massimo De Angelis respectively (Negri 2005, Free Association 2011, De Angelis 2007, De Angelis & Deisner 2005).

The situation of the temporal imaginal within a social struggle discourse however, does not mean that I neglect writings on the physics of time. I draw heavily in this chapter on the physicist Julian Barbour's theories of timelessness (1999), as well as the writings of others working within the natural sciences who develop similar theories and hypotheses. It is ironic that one often finds disclaimers in such writings to the effect that their authors are aware that our *experience* of time cannot be untethered from sequence and duration, from time as a phenomenal dimension distinct from space. I contend here, however, that models of a timeless universe are extremely useful tools to use in elaborating the vast swath of our experience of time constituted by imagining the past and the future and that in fact timelessness is a central element of conscious activity.

Building from these notions of timelessness, I propose that constructing the possible - imagining the past and the future – hinges upon ideas of entropy and resonance.

Multiple Temporalities

Many of the more interesting explorations into the social nature of time have emerged through attempts to exploit the internal contradictions of capitalist time. Time has a special place in the capitalist organisation of labour. On the one hand, it has to be reducible to units that operate as the measure of work. On the other hand, it must be precisely commensurable with monetary value. Taylor's scientific management (developed towards the end of the 19th century) was perhaps an inevitable development from this initial condition, in which we can see the equations set out in their crudest form (see Taylor 2014). Here the maximum possible output (within acceptable quality margins) is mapped onto units of time with precision once general standards of human labour capacity are (supposedly) determined through

testing [11]. However, the relationship of contemporary capitalism to time is considerably more complex and nuanced. Ostensibly we have seen a shift wherein whilst the superficial 'time is money' approach is maintained as a front, providing a pseudo-mathematical (and ethical) justification for work, Capital's new frontiers, its new sites of primitive accumulation, appear to exist at least in part on different temporal plains (Berardi 2009, Marazzi 2011). There is much profit to be drawn from areas of life that refuse or resist the discipline of the clock, not because they are sites of conscious rebellion (sometimes they are of course, but not usually) but because they are shaped in such a way that they simply do not fit within time that is conceived as a single dimension, a width-less line. The disparity between idealised time as a component of capitalist production processes, and the experience and practices of time produced in and against capitalism is perhaps why so many innovative treatments of time have emerged from within communities critical of capitalism like Marxism. Marx himself however, despite doing much to shine light on the relationship between time, labour, and money, expends considerably less energy on the former than on the latter two.

A précis of Marx's explication of the relationship of time to labour under capitalism in *Capital Vol.* 1 might run something like this: labourers, owning no means of subsistence, are forced to sell their labour. They do so in time units (usually an hour). The fewer work hours they are forced to sell, the more work hours they can retain and use for the production of value for themselves and their communities. The work-hours sold in this way are used by the capitalist to produce a profit. In order to do this, the capitalist must calculate the amount of economic wealth that can be produced by a labourer in the hour they have sold and then pay the labourer a lesser amount. A whole series of conflicts arise in consequence. The central issue is that for the capitalist the work-hour is an isolated unit. The labour that takes place in it is separate from the labour taking place in other hours. A second hour can be bought and the labour can be repeated but in the *idealised* (or outwardly manifest) operation of the labour market, the other hours, those that have not been sold by the labourer, are none of the capitalist's concern. For the labourers however, the activity in which they engage is part of a whole life-long series of interlocking cycles. Spending their

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[11] As Stewart points out, the empirical data Taylor used to support his thesis in *The Principles of Scientific Management* was often fabricated (Stewart 2009)

body and mind in a sold hour means being unable to produce during the hour they still own. Furthermore, they are required to make use of the hours they still own to maintain their health and social reproductive needs in order to be able to maintain a uniform rate of production during the hours that have been sold. It is therefore in the capitalist's interest, who owns only a labour-hour unit and can simply replace the labourer with another labourer, to fit the maximum possible amount of work into the hour without having to calculate an average over a lifetime of hours (the lifetime is the labourer's, x amount of individual hours are the capitalist's) Conversely it is in the labourer's interest to fit the minimum amount of production (expenditure of energy) possible into the sold hour (Marx 1974 pp. 164-172).

In addition to the conflicts and tensions that Marx highlights, changes in the capitalist organisation of labour in the subsequent century and a half have produced new ones. Of particular relevance to the question of capital and time, for example, is the recent growth of zero-hours contracts. Under such contracts, the labourer potentially exchanges no labour for no wages, whilst at the same time signing the deeds to their time (in the form of potential labour) over to their employer in such a way that is legally binding but for which there is no remuneration.

Venturing further into the inner-workings of capitalism reveals how much greater is its domination and control over the aspects of life that are unwaged and how such control is necessary if it is to reproduce itself. Aspects of this biopolitics unrelated to the construction of time will be considered in Chapter 6. Here however, we focus on the role performed by the suppression and/or disciplining of non-linear temporalities.

Although non-linear time is ever-present in popular discourse, if asked to describe how time works most people would probably respond with elaboration on a linear formulation. The future, in this model of time, lies along a line in one direction and the past along the same line in the opposite direction and we sit in the present which is situated in the middle. The line is measured in intervals of years, weeks, days, hours, minutes, seconds. The clock is the mechanism by which we measure these units. It doesn't take more than a little sustained enquiry however before the gulf between this linear time and our experience of the world begins to become apparent. Furthermore, various investigations in science and social theory, and notably Einstein's theory of relativity have left even sturdy old clock-time on a shaky footing revealing it as being related to a specific and fluid set of contexts (these will

be discussed later in the chapter). In short, time and temporality are not independent of space and spatiality. So if clock time is not locked into universal law, what other similarly contextual temporalities are there via which we might alternatively understand the real?

Linear time underlies the conventions of the sale of labour in capitalism, but the antagonism embedded within it is most obviously seen in different regimes of cyclical or circular time. The cycle of social reproduction (child-rearing, self-care, reproducing ourselves as workers) must remain hidden in the cycle of capitalist accumulation so that it can remain unwaged even though for the worker it is literally a life or death matter, whilst the micro-cyclical tick tock of clock time that forms the building blocks of capitalist linear time jostles for position against the seasonal cycles of ritual and celebration that structure and support communities. When the early workers' movement smashed the clocks (as described in Russel 2003), it was not merely the symbolic vandalism of an artefact representative of 'natural' or universal time, but an act of sabotage, the destruction not of a time-*measuring* machine but of a time-*making* machine. Different regimes of time lead to, or reveal, different ways of organising the possible. A number of these different temporal configurations are worth subjecting to scrutiny. Drawing on E.P. Thompson, we begin with cyclical time.

Cyclical time

Thompson's 'Time, Work Discipline, and Industrial Capitalism' is very much concerned with the clash of time-cycles. He looks at the historical moment wherein clock-time gradually comes to dominate over task-oriented time. By task-oriented time he means an understanding of the division of time based on the length taken to complete particular tasks (Thompson 1967 p. 60). The tasks may fall into a daily, weekly, seasonal, or annual cycle and may themselves be comprised of micro-cycles. This is ostensibly the same as capitalist cycles of accumulation and the clock-based organisation of labour they entail. These latter structures also consist of major and minor concentric and overlapping cycles. However, there are significant differences. For one thing, task-time isn't standardised; one unit doesn't necessarily map onto another and environmental and social factors make huge differences to the time it takes to complete a specific task from one week to the next. It is context-dependent

and necessarily networked into a vast web of task-times and natural processes. Most importantly, though, the relationship between time and change is reversed. Prior to the domination of the clock, activity produced time. Time was an articulation of changes in the world (manifested through tasks). Without change, there was no time. With the new clock-cycles, in contrast, time produces activity or, more accurately, *organises* activity, by producing potential activity, potential change and potential labour. Not only is this new commensurability of one moment with the next essential to the processes of quantification necessary to capital but it also opens a whole new sphere of pro-work ethics that lurks behind many of the political debates and social struggles that continue to the present day. This can be characterised as moving from 'life must be changed' to 'time must be filled'. Harry Cleaver, for instance, argues in *The Labour Debates* that: 'Capitalists seek to impose work, and more work, not just because they are greedy, but because work is the only way they know to organise the totality of society they would continue to command' (Cleaver 2002 p.153)

Cyclical time is a useful way of understanding how we experience the time of the present moment. It does not, in itself, necessitate an engagement with historical time, though, and leaves unanswered questions around antagonism. Pursuing these questions requires the use of different formulations of time in order to look at the tensions and unsteady allegiances between different time-cycles. What we find when we do so is that nothing as simplistic as installing one cycle in place of another by the victors of a period of struggle can be observed. Instead, we find different and often seemingly incommensurable practices of time overlaying and moving in and out of one another. I shall shortly begin to address this important question by making use of *Kairòs*, Excess Time, and Phase Time. But it is necessary first to introduce Enclosed Time.

Enclosed Time

George Caffentzis calls this Tensed time or Beginning-Middle-End time (Caffentzis 2013) Along with Circular and Linear time, it is one of his 'three temporalities of class struggle'. I choose to use the word 'enclosed' here instead, both because it is a less unwieldy term than Beginning-Middle-End and in order not to create confusion with other means of referencing temporality that might also be considered 'tensed' (such as 'past' and 'future') but which bear characteristics that demand their separate

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consideration. Enclosed time is useful to us because it is telescopic. Scaled down, it is a means of reconciling cyclical time with the idea of difference, so whilst life may have a cycle, whilst a cycle may be divided into tasks, *a* life, *a* task has a beginning, middle, and end (at least in the way they are usually constructed). Scaled up, we can think of enclosed time as that of epochs or aeons. For Caffentzis, its significance is in its relationship to notions of the pre-capitalist/capitalist/post-capitalist and its character as a tool of class struggle is produced by its opposition to what he calls Capitalist eternalism but which we might also call ahistoricity, the idea that Capitalism is a 'natural state of things'. We saw this problematic in the work Roberto Unger in the previous chapter as a question of 'false necessity' (Unger 2001).

Caffentzis is critical of Marx's Enclosed time approach to Capitalism, which he characterises as stadial, as supposing that there was a precapitalist world, followed by a capitalist one, followed (it is hoped) by a postcapitalist one. Caffentzis's argument, which we will encounter again in a subsequent chapter in relation to commons and enclosures, is that the preconditions of capitalism are constantly re-emerging and class struggle entails active resistance to these preconditions as well as the transcendence of capitalist conditions once they emerge (Caffentzis 2013).

Enclosed time is important to the construction of imaginals in the way they relate to memory and legacy. Although there may be millenarian and esoteric *divinatory* constructions of the future that directly take this enclosed time form, it is more usual to leave an open end. However, this is not the case with beginnings, wherein an initial condition (however arbitrary), the point at which the past becomes the present, seems to be an indispensible element of the *holding together* of the imaginal, opening the possibility of a recreation of its preconditions. However, this beginning is equally vital as a point that is *other* to subsequent beginnings. This construction of beginnings will be a key component of Chapter 5 where I discuss data from interviews with participants in newly formed radical organisations.

Kairòs

In his *Time for Revolution* (2005), Negri provides two different treatments of time written 20 years apart. The earlier, 'The Constitution of Time', deals with the problem of the changing relationship between time and labour under conditions of real subsumption wherein as all use-value is drawn into exchange-value (p.27). Time

in such circumstances loses its character as an externally constituted measuring device against which exploitation might be tested and understood. In place of time-as-measure, Negri suggests a model of 'ontological' or 'liberated' time which he describes as a 'machine of constitution' (p.114). Although the notion is expanded in Negri's second book with Michael Hardt, *Empire* (2000), it is in the later work included in *Time for Revolution* (this one written between *Empire* and their third book *Multitude*) that the notion is most effectively elaborated. Negri does this through the deployment of the concept of *Kairòs* (2005 p. 143).

Kairòs will prove useful to us here as it provides a means of thinking of time in terms of moments (which, as we shall see below, is important to some of the models of time proposed by quantum physicists). Its bedfellow in Greek is *chronos*. Whilst this latter word refers to time as duration (the passage of time), a concept that provides the precondition for understanding time as measure, *Kairòs* instead indicates 'the time of the instant, the moment of rupture and opening of temporality' (*ibid.* p.143). *Kairòs* is ontological time for Negri as it the moment of naming wherein existence is produced, the point at which new being is expressed ('[it] exposes itself to the void and decides upon it' - *ibid.* p.145). These *Kairòs* are not commensurable with one another. They are not units of time, together amounting to *chronos*. Rather they are monadic. Negri suggests however that the production of the common relies upon the clustering together of these monads in order to facilitate the transformation of the name into the common name (that which expresses the commonality of things). The interplay between expression and imagination is key in Negri's ongoing meditation on time. It is the presence of the imaginal component in *Kairòs* that enables us to understand it not simply as a moment of territorialisation wherein reality becomes fixed through the decision to name but a moment with a corresponding deterritorialisation where the void once again presents itself. We can perhaps liken this to the surrealist model of analogy that I discussed in the previous chapter where the moment of naming is constituted as the immediate facilitator of a new terrain of destabilising uncertainty. More so however, the imaginal is complicit in the production of the *to-come*, which Negri posits as being conceptually different to the Future which he argues (although without offering much in the way of justification) is tied to the notion of repetition. 'The future means that which persists. […] All the forms in which predictions of the future are attempted are in some manner statistical' (*ibid.* p.153). In contrast the *to-come* (with echoes of Bloch's *Not*

Yet which we shall go on to discuss later in the chapter) is the 'expression of the force of invention […] the *vis* of *Kairòs*.' (p.154). For Negri, it is this praxis of the *to-come,* the active proliferation of *Kairòs* that underlies class struggle.

We'll return again to *Kairòs* and its dual nature as both deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation when we look at the Event in the context of the concept of the imaginal point of minimum entropy below. At this point though it's worth looking at the Free Association's related idea the moment of excess, which we might understand as being a further elaboration of one component of *Kairòs,* the component that enables us to relate time most directly to the imaginal.

Excess Time

Movement, rather than time, *per se* is the central concern of (Marxist writing collective) The Free Association's *Moments of Excess*, though the title alone ought to be enough to suggest that we may use it in the exploration of time. The title essay, produced as an intervention in the run-up to the G8 counter-summit at Gleneagles in Scotland, is an attempt to think through the explosive 'moments' of social movements, what they are, and how they function. 'Moments of excess', we are told are those wherein 'everything appears to be up for grabs and time and creativity accelerates' (Free Association 2011 pp. 32-33). The authors draw upon a variety of different examples to illustrate these moments, from previous counter-summits to the anti-poll tax struggles in the late 80s and to punk in the 70s. The common threads, it is argued, being a 'liberating creativity that delights in mixing things up and smashing through barriers' (*ibid.* p. 33). The authors talk through the concept in terms of speed, exploring the fast track way in which one question leads onto another. Beginning with the idea that a 'moment', if it is anything, is an atom of time, we can usefully explore the idea by foregrounding the temporal elements. A moment of excess is a moment-space into which multiple moments seem to be trying to fit. It is time compressed, a long *duration* inside a single instant or chain of instants. The experience of time here is tethered to change; more importantly though, it is a specific *tension* between time as change and only change (a conception we find echoed in innumerable systems of thought from Machian physics to Buddhism) and clock-time. In a sense, it is the product of minds conditioned to associate certain speeds of change with certain durations of linear time. The moment of excess is the

point at which this relationship is revealed to be unsustainable. Change happens too fast, the clocks run out of sync with the real. However, what is important for me in this concept of the moment of excess is less the rapidity with which *a* begets *b* begets *c* but the simultaneity of different worlds and possibilities. There is something happening in these moments that is not simply fast-tracking. Rather it is an *expanding* or *swelling*, a process for which I used the invented noun *realswell* in the previous chapter.

Excess *goes* somewhere. We cannot simply negotiate a fast forwarding of time in order to absorb it, or some sort of system of transformation-exchange wherein the world commits to a situation of absolute conservatism for a number of years deemed more appropriate to the level of change witnessed in the moment of excess. At first it lives as swollen possibility and eventually what cannot be absorbed is expended as waste. We could follow a Bataillian line of thinking and suggest that such expenditure might be observed as an orgy of violence or celebration[12] (Bataille 1985, 1998, 1999, also in Milburn 2010). With a more melancholic inflection we could say that we observe this also in the example of the chaos of drug addiction and suicide that followed the liberatory movements and experiments of Italy's long '68[13]

More generally we could point to the complicity of these moments in the deinstituting processes we explored in the previous chapter, in the sense that after they occurred it became impossible to return to previously entrenched institutions (in the same form at least).

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[12] Through two early pieces, the poetic tract 'The Solar Anus' and the essay 'The Notion of Expenditure' (both in Bataille 1985) and in greater depth in his later three volume *The Accursed Share* (1998, 1999), Bataille elaborates a theory of general economy wherein excess - that which 'cannot be used for a system's growth' (1998 p.20) - operates in equilibrium with waste and expenditure. He begins the latter work with an investigation into primitive gift economies in which the excess (in the form of the gift) must always be returned in the form of the counter-gift, going on to demonstrate the social necessity of traditions such as the potlatch wherein excesses of material wealth might are used up in, for example, great conflagrations. Bataille also shows, however that the role of the vehicle of expenditure can also be filled by war. One of Bataille's most important innovations is to understand contemporary social violence (even in its institutionalised forms) as being related to excess as well as to scarcity.

[13] What is generally thought of as little more than an explosive moment in many parts of Europe – most notably represented by the Parisian student and worker uprisings of May 1968 – were sustained and stretched in Italy so that is has more of the character of a movement. Although different commentators give different accounts of when this movement ended, it is common (and reasonable) to situate the collapse in proximity to the period of suppression following the kidnap and murder in 1978 of Aldo Moro (a politician for the right-wing Christian Democratic Party) by the Red Brigades. See Sylvère Lotringer's 'In the Shadow of the Red Brigades' in Lotringer & Marazzi 2007. For an account of the psychological distress that followed this period, see Torrini 2014.

A clear example from the UK would be the continuing crisis of the Socialist Worker Party (SWP) beginning in 2012. Ostensibly the reason for the party's internal conflagration and subsequent rapid withering was a badly handled allegation of rape made by a party member against one of those on its central committee (Steel 2013). However, without wishing to diminish the significance of those circumstances, we can think of this as a process of facilitation rather than of isolated cause and effect. The SWP is perhaps better thought of as one element of moment of excess constituted by the social explosions of the so-called 'summer of rage'[14] and the student and occupy movements that preceded and flanked it (we will discuss this further via a symptomatological reading in the next chapter). Whilst the organisation was obviously not produced by that moment, it exists within it as an imaginal social institution with its own constellation of the possible. Within that moment, however, it must compete with other, newer forms of organisation with other, perhaps more open, constellations of the possible. For a moment – within the moment of excess - all these forms of organising, forms of movement and forms of interpersonal relationship co-exist. But not all of them can be reabsorbed on the newly constituted terrain of low intensity struggle (the necessary reterritorialisation) by the communities that practice them. Many possibilities (both unactualised and previously actualised – such as the SWP) are consigned to oblivion, expended as waste. This is because there's *too much* possibility, *too much* potential – enough for *many* worlds – that must be squeezed into *one* world.

But *how* does excess exist as swollen possibility? *Where* does it exist? Our first forays into answering these questions, our further elaboration of Excess Time, demand that we alight on Phase Time.

Phase Time

In his *The Beginning of History* (or in fact before, in a short piece, co-authored with Dagmar Diesner, that appeared in the anthology *Shut Them Down!* [De Angelis & Diesner, 2005) Massimo De Angelis introduces the idea of 'Phase Time'. It is, to me, one of the most important and useful insights of the book. It is a shame then that De

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[14] The 'Summer of Rage' is the name given to the series of riots that took place in several major cities in the UK in the second week of August 2011. The adoption of this term might be said to be the successful result of a policing PR strategy rolled out in the early days of the economic recession (Lewis 2009)

Angelis spends precious little time in its elaboration. He begins from an observation about his 20 month old child at play and the mode of existing in time that it seems to imply. 'His attention […is…] enthusiastically taken by new objects to which he points, to new directions to walk the street's walk' (De Angelis 2007 pp. 1-2). De Angelis then looks at the tensions this creates when he encounters the linear time that he and his partner are forced to occupy. 'Phase time is the time of emergence of new dimensions and is part of life, as is linear time and circular time' (*ibid.* p. 2)

There are two ways we can interpret 'phase' here and they are neither incompatible with the anecdote nor with each other. The first comes from treating 'phase' as meaning 'discrete duration'; this is not the same as the way we'd use 'period' to describe a unit in a pattern because in Phase Time the phase may be unique. Rather, it is closer to what we talked about earlier as 'Enclosed Time' with the key difference being that the narrative that forms it, begins it, and ends it, is not the cause and effect of adult rationality but the child's more immanent logic. The difference between these two approaches might be compared to that of the sculptor who sets out, photograph in hand, to create a likeness of a specific figure and, conversely, of the sculptor who sits for days with a piece of stone or wood, feeling for its seams and grains and then proceeds almost automatically to work with it in order to produce something hitherto unimaginable. Like the latter sculptor, the enclosed time of the child is contextual; it depends entirely on the relationship between the child, as the focus of attention, and the possibilities offered by different foci in the proximity; it is a swelling outwards from the precise moment of the present, having no an 'end' that as a logical inevitability from the moment of its 'beginning'. Rather, it may break off abruptly or travel absurdly.

The second way that we can read 'phase' is in the sense of 'phasing through', one thing being able to pass through another. The emergence of new dimensions or new cycles does not, contrary to the claims of nihilists, rely upon the pausing or ending of current dimensions. The new dimensions occupy the same space at the same moment. Looked at from this point of view, Phase Time is a profoundly useful tool. Firstly, we can use it as an extension of the 'Excess Time' discussed above. What happens to excess time between its initial explosion into being and subsequent restabilisation? Does it undergo an instantaneous process of either birthing a new dimension or becoming resubsumed by the linear, cyclical, and enclosed times of the present one? No, it has its own life as Phase Time. It exists simultaneously with the

present dimension as an exploratory sphere, a time bubble that may last for an instant, may replace the current linear, cyclical, or enclosed time, or may enjoy a phasing stability that lasts eternally. *Phase Time, then, is Excess Time given form but not dominance.* As such, it helps to probe the problematic that develops when we try to account for the fact of social struggle, of how different socii can appear to exist in different forms of time. If this were not the case we would be left with only the explosive moments of excess and a becalmed, laminate landscape of social stability all around it.

The relationship between Phase Time and Linear Time can therefore be compared to that between Analogical Space and Euclidean Space which we encountered in the previous chapter. Phase time is time without sequence, just as Analogical space is space without distance.

Phase Time is not simply a philosophical instrument of revolutionary social change, though; it is a central element of contemporary capitalism too, the prime feature of which is not the lengthening of the working day (though to be sure that *is* a feature) but its simultaneity or multi-layering of single labour hours. Phase Time is therefore subject to struggle. In effect, as labourers, we *can* and *do* work multiple hours in the same hour[15]. However, the use of Phase Time provides a less optimistic model corresponding not to a crisis but to an expansion. We cannot necessarily divine in this Capitalist Phase Time the self-sown seeds of capitalism's end. The Capitalist use of Phase Time stems from two preconditions. The first is the partial freeing of labour hours from linear time wherein innovations, both technological and organisational, create the possibility of a multi-layering of production. The second is the development of technologies of primitive accumulation on the plain of the imaginal. By this I don't mean creative labour, nor do I mean immaterial labour in the sense of 'informationalised' labour. Instead I mean the buying, trading, hording and suppressing of potential worlds. This idea will prove central when we analyse the Imaginal as a Commons (and one that is subject to the violence of enclosure) in Chapter 6. Within capitalist cycles of accumulation this requires the attribution of a present-day monetary value to a large number of simultaneously possible futures

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[15] This is a not dissimilar proposition to that which causes Hardt and Negri to conclude that contemporary labour under capitalism is 'outside measure' (Hardt & Negri 2000 p.354). Whilst concurring with the notion that the increased complexity of these labour processes throws up new problematics that demand different forms of struggle, both Caffentzis (2005) and De Angelis (2005) have compellingly criticised the idea that capitalism is undergoing a crisis of measure.

and, at the same time, the devotion of vast resources to the removal of other possible futures from that same present-day. Rather than a defence of linear time, which precludes the possibility of the innovation upon which Capital depends, this is a corseting of time, a tight control exerted over how and when phases can develop; in particular it establishes a mechanism for the prohibition of moments of excess.

The use of Phase and Excess time both in relation to the operation of capitalism and to social movements pushes us ever closer to the realisation that the only way to make sense of time as it relates to the imagination is via space.

To summarise these political readings of time, we might categorise them as belonging to two orders. To first is that of widthless time. In this order we might place the standard model of linear time, the notion of it as sequence with the assumed pre-existence of a start and the permanent ante-horizontality of an end. To this we can add the Enclosed (or beginning-middle-end) time to which Caffentzis introduces us as a modified linear time with graspable ends. Finally, we must include the various genera of cyclical time from the time of season, rhythm, and ritual to the clock time of capitalist discipline. Cyclical time is the ourabouros of Enclosed time, its tail fed back into its mouth.

The second order is that which includes *Kairòs*, Excess Time, and Phase Time. This is an order we might describe as swollen time, a time in which pasts and futures co-exist within the Now. The former two are explosive, unstable, live volcanoes of temporality. The latter too lives out a precarious existence, always on the edge of collapse, yet finding a sustainable habitat in time's peripheral vision, ceasing to exist only when it becomes the object of too much focus.

There are three key points from this section to keep in mind as we move on. The first is that time is a terrain of contestation and collective experience. We know how many seconds make up a minute and how many minutes an hour our sense of the speed with and duration of those time units is a question of the intensity of change comprised in the simultaneity of activity. The acceleration, deceleration, and multi-layering of time relate, in many aspects, to questions of power, autonomy, and collective interest.

The second is the relationship of these models of time to the questions of composition and decomposition opened up in chapter one. In that chapter we focused on decompositional (or deterritorial) processes whilst arguing that we cannot be

content with a model of the imaginal that valorises these processes over the reverse (re)compositional (or reterritorial) processes. Our second order of time: swollen time, provides us with a new way of examining these brink points at which the expansion of possibilities reaches an unsustainable volume and collapses in on itself. This is something to which we will return several times before the end of the thesis

The third is that the human experience of time is perhaps not limited to an amalgamation of sequence and duration, hinged on the feeling of having been in a past and heading towards a future. Maybe it is something more.

Perhaps counter-intuitively it is to Hegelian logisticians and physicists, rather than to revolutionaries and the poets and philosophers of liberation that we now turn in order to coax out further the blooming of the temporal peony.

Timelessness

Time may not exist at all. There is a possibility that when we talk about time, any of these types of time, we are simply mystifying space. This trope has been a mainstay of religious and spiritual practices going back thousands of years. However, recent history has seen efforts to think this through using both philosophical and scientific frameworks.

At the beginning of the 20th century, the Hegelian philosopher John McTaggart Ellis McTaggart (yes, that's one person) produced a still influential essay entitled *The Unreality of Time* (McTaggart 1908). McTaggart's argument is clear but somewhat long-winded. In summary, he begins from the observation that our perception of time is comprised of an *A series* (our notion that something is future, then present, then past), a *B series* (our notion that one thing is earlier and another later) and a *C series* (our notion that these things are sequenced – N falls between M and O, O falls between N and P etc.). His concern is to show firstly that time cannot exist independently of the *A series* and secondly that the *A series* cannot exist at all, thus proving that time also cannot exist. This point relies upon a demonstration that time must be assumed in order for the *A series* to exist (because future, present, and past are devoid of meaning without it) thus creating an unsupportable circular logic. In the course of this argument, McTaggart also shows that the *B series* can only be understood as product of the *A series* and thus cannot itself provide the basis for a

'real' time. At the end of the essay, however, we are left with the possibility that the *C series* may in fact have some sort of objective reality. In other words, that which we clumsily describe as the present is really 'next to' that which we equally clumsily describe as the future. McTaggart suggest this is a non-temporal series, a spatial dimension.

The Unreality of Time nevertheless suffers from a couple of serious flaws. Firstly, McTaggart, assumes that there is only one future. While this future may lie along a spatial line rather than a temporal one, and while different individuals' experiences of it in terms of anticipation (then 'direct perception', then memory) may vary wildly, there is a specific cluster of events that objectively will happen, are happening, have happened. 'Time' is, for the author, a linear construction and fits within the widthless order considered earlier. Secondly, he relies upon a model of 'the event' that treats it as a momentary arrangement of matter. We may all experience an event differently, but this experience, in McTaggart's model, occurs outside the event itself. It is therefore easy for McTaggart to build an argument wherein an event is a concrete content of time. It exists, as it were, where it exists and nowhere else. But events (as I shall go on to argue) are born *in retrospect*, and their relationship to any simultaneous arrangement of matter is at best ambiguous. Events can be removed, replaced, and shifted about in time; they can grow or shrink, sharpen, or become dull in ways that impact upon and rely only upon the arrangement of matter in the present. Any attempt at a similar exercise today would have to deal with notions of probability, and (whether as fact or as provocation) the many worlds hypothesis,[16] in short with a time that is asymmetrical. To deal with this problem we need to look at work on Temporality conducted in the natural sciences.

Temporality, the reality or otherwise of time, is a significant area of often heated contestation in physics. The arguments that form the building blocks of this contestation are in many respects difficult for the layperson to understand. For this

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[16] This is the name given to a particular interpretation of quantum mechanics wherein the point of wave-collapse is not valorised as more 'actual' as any other aspect of the universal wave function. The implication of this interpretation is that in the fullness of materiality (which we might refer to as the multiverse), everything that a) is possible within the laws of physics and b) has had the opportunity to occur, is materially actual. So at the same time as there is a you reading this footnote, there is also a materially actual you who decided not to bother. In fact given that the number of possible choices and chance occurrences within those two categories is astronomically high, there is an astronomically high number of materially real yous reading this footnote (how's that for impact?) and an astronomically high number of yous who skipped it. The idea originates in Hugh Everett's *The Theory of the Universal Wave Function* first published in 1957 (Everett 1973).

reason even the more accessible so-called 'popular science' writing on the subject can often be found full of disclaimers. The authors apologetically tell us that they are aware that because human experience (perhaps as a result of the mechanics of consciousness, perhaps for some other undiscovered reason) only allows for time as sequence, time which falls within the A, B, and C series that McTaggart elaborates, getting one's head around the idea that there may be no time is a near impossible task (We find such disclaimers in Barbour 1999, Yourgrau 2005, Callender 2014, and Davis 2014 for example).

This is a well-established philosophical position that we see reflected again and again in a number of key works on time. Husserl and Heidegger, for example, have in their different works both built upon the idea that intuitive time is distinct from formal time and they each devoted themselves to exploring the former to the exclusion of the latter. Gödel too, whose work on time (which we shall encounter again shortly) bridges the gap between philosophy and science, also shares this assumption. Unlike Heidegger and Husserl, though, his argument is that intuitive time is illusory and has no physical basis. However, he does not call into question the basic understanding of intuitive time as employed by McTaggart. Gödel calls this time 'Kantian' or 'Prerelativistic' time (Gödel 1995 p.238, 247).

What I want to suggest, though, is that the temporal-imaginal axis does not fully conform to this model of intuitive time. Whilst it may well be true that our experience of time is in many ways different from (and seemingly incompatible with) the reality of time, there are several characteristics of it that fit perfectly well with the idea that we live in a timeless universe. In fact, looking at some of the explanatory models drawn from physics helps to shed a great deal of light on the human experience of imagining the future and the past. Correspondingly, it provides a means of getting to grips with the social organisation of the past and the possible in practice.

The conflict around the presence or absence of time in the natural sciences is perhaps routed in the precariousness of the assumption. In *Order Out of Chaos*, Prigogine and Stengers (advocates of the reality of time) show how classical, Newtonian science, by confidently assuming the existence of time, acted as if it were not there, as if all processes were reversible. Asymmetrical change, they argue, where it could not be ignored, was likely to be treated as an aberration and as likely as not the product of an imperfect understanding rather than of the nature of time

(Prigogine & Stengers 1984). Timelessness is here implicit rather than explicit. For the authors, the discovery of the laws of thermodynamics represents a reclamation of time by the natural sciences and, with it, the possibility of change. Key, and most well known amongst these is the second law, introduced by Rudolf Clausius in 1865, which concerns entropy. Emerging from experimentation into energy conservation and engine efficiency, this law was articulated by Clausius is two forms: 'Heat cannot be transferred from one body to another without producing some other effect' and 'the entropy of a closed system increases with time' (Daintith 2009 p. 547). One way of understanding this law is as a description of the tendency of all matter to move from states of order to ones of disorder. The asymmetry of this process is often argued to be proof of the direction in which time flows. It is easy to visualise this if we imagine a mound of powered blue dye in the open palm of a hand. When the dye is blown upon it spreads out in a cloud and eventually settles over a much larger area. The process cannot happen in the opposite direction. If we are confronted with a small cloud of blue powder being blown towards us we cannot hope that, by stretching out an open palm, we might be able to encourage it to form a neat little heap for us. Rather, we will become blue from head to foot.

Our use of this second law in relation to practices of time is helped by looking at Ludwig Boltzmann's introduction of ideas of probability as taken up by Prigogine and Stengers, who elaborate Boltzmann's insights through the example of a box of individually distinguishable particles divided into two equally sized compartments. The overwhelming majority of possible arrangements of these particles correspond to an equal and even distribution between the two compartments. A greatly simplified model of this process might be represented by the shaking of a box of marbles with a divided inside by a ridge along the middle (of course we have to ignore real-world problems such as the biases involved in the shaking of the box). It is *considerably* more likely that when the marbles resettle they will do so in a way that tends towards even distribution within the space than towards a concentration around a single point within the box. The results show 'that irreversible thermodynamic change is a change towards states of increasing probability and that the attractor state is a macroscopic state corresponding to maximum probability' (Prigogine & Stengers 1984 p. 124). This might be thought of a movement from the precise to the general, or from the compacted to the swollen.

Prigogine and Stengers' position holds that the scientific theory of time was previously on shaky terrain but can be firmed up and given deeper articulation by being considered though a lens of change. The converse argument, however, is that time has occupied this precarious position precisely because it is not a scientifically supportable proposition. A serious scientific argument against time first emerges in Einstein's Theories of Relativity (the theory of Special Relativity being published in 1905 and General Relativity developed through a series of papers between 1907 and 1915), although Einstein himself was never fully willing to confront the temporal implications of his work. It was down instead to his good friend Gödel (a mathematician and logician) to pursue the exciting temporal conclusion. Gödel's work showed that Einstein's relativistic space-time was in essence spatial, not temporal. Building from this geometrisation of time, Gödel was able to demonstrate mathematically the theoretical possibility of time travel (even going so far as to calculate the amount of fuel needed to achieve it in a space-going vehicle). He reasoned that if points in time were destinations to and from which one could theoretically travel, then there is no sense in which they can be said to have *passed* and since the concept of time is logically dependent on the notion of passing it cannot be said to exist at all. In short, the element of relativistic equations that appears as *t* is not temporal but is another spatial dimension (Yourgrau 2005) Gödel's development of Einstein's theories never caused the stir one might have expected. This in part was because two physicists (S. Chandrasekhar and J.P. Wright) published a paper shortly afterwards suggesting that he had made miscalculations that rendered his whole model nonsensical. Although the philosopher Howard Stein was later to prove conclusively that the miscalculations were not Gödel's but those of Chandrasekhar and Wright, and that the Gödel universe was indeed scientifically viable, the damage was done and the unwelcome intrusion of an outsider into the physics community seemed to demand no reassessment. (*ibid.*). However, the possibility of timelessness has not only persisted but gathered momentum.

Much of the contemporary scientific literature on timelessness emerges from the grail quest of unified field theory: a still elusive set of ideas that would make the micro world of quantum physics and the macro world of special and general relativity work in concert with one another. At present, although there is a gigantic

trove of evidence to suggest the reality of both quantum physics *and* relativity separately, they do not connect.

Like many in contemporary physics, Julian Barbour is concerned with reconciling these (at present) incompatibilities. More specifically, he belongs to a tendency geared towards the quantisation of relativity. Barbour's contention is that the obstruction point in this reconciliation is *time* and that if time does not, in fact, exist, the macro-universe and the micro-universe tessellate perfectly with one another.

The theory of timelessness elaborated in Barbour's *The End of Time* does not then belong to the classical world without irreversibility to which Prigogine and Stengers bid good riddance. On the contrary, the author, much of whose previous work is on the subject of entropy, is greatly concerned to reconcile the notion of the *experience* of time's arrow with the non-existence of time. In fact, his argument could perhaps be summarized as A) time is only the practice of time and B) the practice of time is *produced by* entropy, not the other way round (Barbour 1999).

Barbour's controversial work provides an interesting counterpoint to Prigogine and Stengers. Both are at least in part driven by an underlying set of values about the reality and possibility of change. For Stengers this is an expression of her political radicalism, for Barbour, his Buddhism. The key difference is that whilst for the former change is produced by time, for the latter time (or the impression of it) is produced by change.

As we dig ever deeper into this scientific terrain, a reminder of the disclaimer offered in the introduction of this chapter might be prudent. I am not here making a supporting case for timelessness from the position of a physicist nor would I be able to do so had I wanted to. However, if we are to use Barbour's timelessness arguments as a tool for understanding the social imaginal practices of time, the theory needs some degree of introduction.

Barbour's theory hinges on, and differs from other timelessness models due to his specific reading of Boltzmann. As we have already seen, Boltzmann's use of theories of probability in his exploration of entropy is of seminal importance to the study of temporality and in particular to the natural phenomena underlying the experience of time's arrow. However, accepting that entropy defines the direction in which time flows does not leave us on a simple temporal continuum as might first seem apparent. Like Newton's temporality, and like that of McTaggart (who was

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writing at exactly the same time), Boltzmann's is linear but goes in either direction. The implications of his work for the arrow of time do not lie in the overall directional flow of time but emerge from the fact that configurations of low entropy precede configurations of high entropy in sequence. Barbour illustrates this peculiarity as follows:

> We should picture the states of the system strung out in a line […], which we could 'walk along' in either direction. Every now and then, with immense stretches in between them, we will come upon regions in which the entropy decreases and order increases. Then the entropy will start to increase again. Someone 'walking' in the opposite direction would have the same experience. Now, such a line of states can represent the entire universe, including human beings. Since we are very complicated and exhibit much order, we can be present only in the exceptional regions of low entropy […]. Boltzmann's suggestion, startling when first encountered, was that human beings on both sides would regard that point as being in their past. Time would seem to increase in both directions from it (*ibid.* p. 27).

From here Barbour develops the idea of the *time capsule* (*ibid.* p.30). This is a particular form of Now that contains a record of previous Nows. In Boltzmann's model, these time capsules would fall on either side of, and in close proximity to, the point of low entropy. Barbour, however, is not working along an imaginary line. Rather, he employs a three dimensional configuration of space that he calls *Platonia* (the space is actually omnidimensional but for the purposes of articulation it is necessary to stick to three). In both of these models the important implication is that time is in the thing, the thing is not in time. 'We think things persist in time because structures persist, and we mistake the structure for substance' (*ibid.* p. 49)

Platonia is how Barbour describes the endless space in which individual Nows exist. Each Now, represented as a single point in this model, is a complete configuration of the universe. All possible configurations exist in Platonia, which is static. The Nows do not move around like the bodies in the solar system. The vast majority of the Nows are not complex. A relatively tiny number, though, are. Barbour characterises this complexity as resonance, which we might again think of in terms of records. A complex Now (like the one you're experiencing at present) is one that contains the records of other Nows, that resonates strongly with other Nows. This is a fairly straightforward proposition when talking about the past; however, it is less obvious when thinking about the future. One way of tackling this might be to

talk about the future by putting oneself in it and considering the present as past. Some futures are plausible, others are not. The level of plausibility is no promise or guarantee that a future will or will not be experienced; rather it is an indicator of the volume of records of the present that it contains in relation to its distance. The cold war, red-scare, and later post-nuclear science fiction of the 20th century, for example, works in its historical context as an image of the future because it is built upon records of the present (their present). For us today, most of these stories no longer look like the future because the records they contain are no longer of the present but of the past.

Barbour invites us to imagine this 'resonance' in terms of different intensities of mist over Platonia. The mist collects in greater intensity where there is the highest resonance and elsewhere is thin. Understanding why the 'mist' collects where it does requires a series of complex applications of mathematics and quantum mechanics that hinges upon the 'time-independent' version of Schrödinger's wave equation. Given that Barbour takes 350 pages to prime his readers to grasp this process, then take them through it, and out again, soothingly allaying their fears afterwards, I must reluctantly concede that it is far beyond the scope of the chapter to do that here. However, it is not necessary to understand the mathematical details of Barbour's argument to engage with *my* argument about its applications in understanding the imaginal. What is important to keep in mind here is the concept of *resonance* and its relationship to *records*.

Let's momentarily break away from Barbour in order to consider the relationship between Platonia and the model of the virtual that we find in Deleuze since there is too close a resemblance between these two fields to allow it to pass without remark. The reader will recall from the previous chapter that Deleuze draws a distinction between the possible and the virtual on the basis of the fact that the virtual corresponds not simply to variant configurations of the actual but to the relationships between them and to the processes of their becoming. DeLanda devotes a chapter of his *Intensive Science and Virtual Philosophy* to the elaboration of the temporal aspects of the virtual in Deleuze. We encountered DeLanda's explication of Deleuze's virtual as being the combination of unactualised tendencies and unactualised capacity to affect (2013 p.65) in the previous chapter. This latter aspect, capacity to affect, is central to the temporal permutations of the virtual. DeLanda uses the short-term biological process of embryogenesis and the long-term process of

evolution to explore this. In both cases, he demonstrates the reliance upon interactions between different scales of time in and out of phase with one another and the capacity for synchronisation between these scales. He further elaborates this by use of the example (borrowed from Arthur Iberall) of certain non-crystaline glasses that although they are classed as solids are better understood as arrested liquids. The solidity of the glass is not so much a property of the glass itself as it is a question of perception dependent upon the relationship between the relaxation time scale of the object and the observational time scale of the human. Were the latter shorter than the former, the glass would be perceived as a liquid (*ibid.* p. 105). This capacity for the actualised material to be affected by the chance synchronicity of the two time scales is an aspect of the virtual.

It is hard to imagine Deleuze's virtual without conjouring up an image similar to Barbour's Platonia but the dissimilarities are important. Barbour's model relies upon the fact that there is a relationship between the complex Nows (resonance) but in contrast to Deleuze's becomings this relationship is subordinated to the nows themselves (it *explains* the nows but does not *produce* them). It is probable that Deleuze would therefore consider Barbour's model to be a transcendental one. However, there is another sense in which both Barbour and Deleuze's models operate similarly. As we saw above, Barbour is critical of the idea that 'things' persist in time, seeing this as a misunderstanding stemming from the observation that structures persist in time. Similarly, for Deleuze (as was shown in the previous chapter) 'the reality of the virtual is structure' (Deleuze 2010 p. 209). For Deleuze whilst the actual relies on sequential processes, the pure becoming that we find in the virtual (in DeLanda's words) 'must be characterised by a *parallelism without any trace of sequence, or even directionality*' (DeLanda 2013 p. 121 – italics in the original). Barbour's employment of resonance operates very well as a tool for understanding this parallelism without sequence or directionality. Indeed, we can inject some dynamism into Barbour's static mist by considering, as Deleuze does (in *Ibid.*), moments of phase transition (where a solid becomes a gas for example, or vice versa), the moment in which matter is neither in one state nor the other but which express the capacity for both.

We can think of the links set up between complex Nows (time capsules) as a sort of path through Platonia although at the same time we mustn't make the mistake of thinking that we are therefore singular 'consciousnesses' that 'walk' along these

paths as if we could somehow situate ourselves outside the Nows. Barbour's argument necessitates an understanding of what we usually think of as individual subjects and sees them as existing simultaneously across a vast quantity of Nows. This idea is once again not incompatible with quantum mechanics and Barbour supports it by introducing an anecdote about his once energetic but now dead cat Lucy, suggesting that 'the cat that leaps' is not 'the cat that lands' (Barbour 1999 p.46)

> Except for the changes in her body shape, we do not notice any difference. However, if we could look closely we might begin to have doubts. The number of atoms in the tiniest thing we can see is huge, and they are in a constant state of flux. […] The fact is, there never was one cat Lucy – there were (or rather are since Lucy is in Platonia for eternity, as we all are) billions upon billions upon billions of Lucys. […] Because we do not and cannot look closely at these Lucys, we think they are one. And all these Lucys are themselves embedded in the vast individual Nows of the universe (*ibid.* pp. 46-48).

The layperson might quite easily work out how to derive 'sequence' without time from the model elaborated here (McTaggart's 'C Series') but direction is more complicated. Barbour cannot and does not deny the experience that is often referred to as 'time's arrow'. We can arrange to meet a friend at a café in one hour and with luck they will be there when we are. At the very least, if they aren't it is unlikely to have been because they have measured their hour backwards in time and arrived before the arrangement was made. Once again, I shall make no attempt to represent Barbour's argument in all of its complexity but we can perhaps take from it an impression that will be of ample use to us in thinking through the temporal-imaginal axis. In essence, the argument relies upon asymmetric (seemingly) temporally-bound moments being translated into asymmetric spatially-bound places. A funnel, or better, a lobster pot, can be used as an analogy. Both operate as objects that guide a contraction of space in one direction to a passing point of ultimate contraction but do not provide the same necessary function in the opposite direction: we observe unidirectionality in the structure of the pot itself. Similarly, in Barbour's writing, the arrow of time is in the physical structure of the multiverse/Platonia. We can translate the lobster pot into the experience of the passage of time by thinking in terms of information or records. The Now (the narrowest point of the funnel, the point of no-return for the unfortunate crustacean) is the convergence point suggested by all the

records it contains of the past. Past is past because is it structured in such a way that it leads necessarily to now. Past and future are absolutely asymmetrical, though. If this were not the case, an hourglass would be a better analogy. The future (the bulk of the pot) contains records that *may* suggest the convergence point that we experience as the present but those records could just as easily be of other similar Nows (and the number of similar Nows tends towards infinity). There is no information contained within the structure of the body of the pot that would cause one to assume that an object moving within it would move towards and through the entrance rather than towards any other point in it. It *might* but there's nothing to suggest it ought to or that it will.

What can we do with all this, though? Barbour, Gödel, McTaggart, Kant, Husserl, and every other thinker we've made use of so far agree that an intuitive version of time is fundamental to conscious experience, and that this intuitive time has certain characteristics that seem phenomenologically consistent across subjects: the sense that moments have a sequential order, that there are things that have passed and others that will happen (that time has both a flow and a direction), and that we occupy a single, shared, temporal point as we move along, like a boat containing all actually existing matter bobbing along a river.

The theoretical physicist Paul Davis, if anything following more closely from McTaggart than from his predecessors in the same field, provides a useful example to show how encoded this intuitive, moving time is within everyday language.

> Although we find it convenient to refer to time's passing in everyday affairs, the notion imparts no new information that cannot be conveyed without it. Consider the following scenario: Alice was hoping for a white Christmas, but when the day came she was disappointed that it only rained: however, she was happy that it snowed the following day. Although this description is replete with tenses and references to time's passage, exactly the same information is conveyed by simply correlating Alice's mental states with dates, in a manner which omits all references to time passing or the world changing. Thus, the following cumbersome and rather dry catalogue of facts suffices: December 24: Alice hopes for a white Christmas, December 25: There is rain, Alice is disappointed, December 26: There is snow, Alice is happy.' (Davis 2014 p.10-11).

It seems as though it would not be possible to rid ourselves of this 'sense' of time even if it were conclusively proven to be an illusion (Barbour even allows himself to

speculate that there may be physiological reasons, based on a yet-to-be-discovered quantum basis for consciousness, that dictate that we *must* experience time this way [Barbour 1999]).[17] Fundamentality does not equate with exclusivity, though. There are temporally inflected social practices for which these ideas of static or absent time, of 'time capsules' and of a universe full of Nows are excellent fits. In the next section, I will apply some of these ideas to practices of imagining the past (through memory and history) and ones of imagining the future (through divination and visioning).

No Time Like The Present

Both the timelessness discussed in the previous section and the varieties of political reading of time we explored effect an audacious liberation of time from its securely moored status as a bald fact of nature. It may well be that, however it actually *works* or in whatever form it exists, there is still an objective thing/dimension for which the descriptor 'time' continues to be suitable. Even if it is actually *space*, it is a special sort of space. What these different approaches enable us to argue however is that time is the *product of* social contexts, rather than being a pre-existent terrain within which social events occur. Of course, it may also be produced in part by the physiological mechanisms of human consciousness, but this remains to be shown. What *can* be shown, however, is the role played by the social imagination and organisation in the construction of time.

There are important commonalities between the processes of imagining the past and those of imagining the future. Equally though, there are important differences. Kant pairs the imagination of the future with the imagination of the past as faculties of association for making the temporally distant present (Kant 2006 pp. 75-82). He considers these faculties to be distinct from imagination (with imagination as the more comprehensive precondition for them) whereas I present them here as specific imaginal processes. Kant adopts the word 'divination' for imagining the future (*ibid.* p.75) Such terminology, however, is a bucket riven with holes from which much nuance has leaked before it reaches the page, and for our

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[17] Similar possibilities are discussed (although ultimately treated as insufficient) by David J. Chalmers in *The Character of Consciousness* (2010).

argument to progress, it is important to distinguish between the forms *divination*, *prediction*, and what I shall call here *visioning*, as aspects of the future-oriented element of the temporal-imaginal axis.

Divination shares some similarities with historicising in that it is a knowledge claim about the objective situation of a non-present time. Whilst history is accepted and respected as both a form of popular discourse and as an academic discipline, divination is more frequently met with incredulity. The reason for this is that divination presupposes the reversal of the entropic processes that both constitute a physical law of the universe, and underlie evidence-based or non-faith-based understandings of the world. A simple form of historicising therefore might be standing in a kitchen, observing fragments of glass strewn along the ground, and using their shape, colour, and scatter-pattern to surmise that they had once belonged to a clear wineglass knocked from a surface at hip height and then to present a story to this affect. To divine is to reverse this process so that the fragments are instead treated as elements of a wineglass yet to form. This is to treat the present as a fragment of a future whole. Because it is not compatible with scientific understandings of the world we tend to attribute magic or supernatural powers to those who make divinatory claims. We cannot simply dismiss it, however. For one thing, despite its claims to material actuality, divination is in reality an aspect of the temporal-imaginal axis and therefore of interest to us here. Secondly, it is ever-present in everyday cultural life as a form of discourse, as I shall argue below.

Prediction is sometimes treated as a synonym for divination. However, here I am using the word to mean an evidence-based assessment of how events are likely to unfold as time goes on – something akin to hypothesising. It is not, therefore, necessary to have magical powers in order to engage in prediction. Everyone can predict but this is not to say that everyone can predict correctly. Those who *do* get it right do so in part because chance occurrences have not unfolded in such a way that would conflict with the prediction. The idea of prediction will not play a key role in the remainder of this chapter, but as it will resurface later in the thesis it seems prescient to rescue it from too close an associate with divination.

There is no satisfying word for what I have called visioning (a word that, outside those communities for whom it has a specific ritualistic association, is now almost the sole preserve of management-speak). I use it here to describe the imaginal processes that begin from the present (as they logically must) and project futures that

are possible. Rather than a mirror of the entropic processes, as divination is, visioning is a continuation of them. It asks neither what whole was that the glass fragments originated, nor from what whole will they collectively return, but instead where each fragment might go next, what each fragment has the potential to become.

To simplify, divination is the imagination of the definite future, prediction is the imagination of the probable future, and visioning is the imagination of the possible future.

There are a whole host of historical figures such as Nostradamus and Mother Shipton[18] who are famous precisely because of supposed abilities to read the future, horoscopes still enjoy mass popularity and many major religious denominations are built upon apocalyptic imaginaries that tell us how the world will end. Indeed, I am writing this on 28th September 2015, less than 12 hours after a 'super blood moon' failed to being about the end times as several Christian groups claimed it would (Gabbatt 2015 no pagination). However, to confine divination to these zany manifestations, which, without exception, fail to satisfy the evidential requirements of an academic thesis, would be to miss the extent to which the divinatory form proliferates in other aspects of life. Unger's deployment of negative capability against false necessity, which we considered in the previous chapter, is precisely a mobilisation against divination. False necessity, you will remember, describes the notion that one form of social organisation necessarily follows from another: a naturalisation of social sequence. Divination is a central tenet of parliamentary political rhetoric (x party's policies *will* bring about y undesirable future, whilst voting for z party *will* avoid it). We can be persuaded by such arguments even though we know that certainty is not logically possible. So too is it the form of knowledge claims espoused in mainstream newspapers where declarations of certainty or cast-iron causality, often demanding that the reader act on them, hold sway over declarations of probability, and (even more so) of possibility, which demand the reader thinks and assesses.[19]

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[18] Mother Shipton will be known to many natives of the North of England as the canny old prognosticator who lived in a cave in the town of Knaresborough in North Yorkshire in the 15th and 16th centuries. Amongst other wonders she is said to have predicted the coming of the motorcar. (Simpson 1920 no pagination)

[19] We could perhaps go further and add cynicism to the list of everyday divinatory forms. The British left-libertarian group The Pleasure Tendency identifies cynicism as emerging from generalised anxiety about the future in their *Theses Against Cynicism*. 'A cynic is someone who does not want to be disturbed by reality and its possibilities and is prepared to be buried alive for fear of being found

It would be reasonable to conclude that a key characteristic of the crisis of the imagination is the way visioning is restricted to a terrain less than a stones-throw from the gatehouse of divination – an ankle monitor on the imaginal that alerts its probation officers the moment it skips over into the zone in which history is in fact still an open process of multiple divergent possibilities. But how does this visioning unfold when not under house arrest?

By introducing Ernst Bloch, and considering him in relation to Barbour, we can develop a particular perspective on his fascinating theories of Utopia, which will be useful to us in exploration of the temporal-imaginal axis. Bloch's Utopia can be understood as operating within a curiously complex 'no time' framework. He argues for a thought that is future oriented and systematises the utopian process as it moves from hunger, to want, to desire, to concrete utopia (Bloch 1986). For him, movement is dependent on the articulation to of the 'Not-Yet', which is to say the About-To-Be. To be a revolutionary is to be perpetually on the cusp of moving into the space just ahead of us and to articulate that which sits on the tip of the tongue of the working class. At the same time though, the utopian imagination is resolutely in the Now and *only* in the Now. The Not Yet, for Bloch is not an image of a material configuration waiting x number of hours/days/years in the future; it is an aspect of being in the present, of the situated instant. There is no requirement for the utopian thought of time A to bear any relation to the utopian thought of time B shortly afterwards. This is not a failure of actualisation but a property of utopian thought's historic situatedness. Utopia, rather than being an imaginal time machine, is a machine for swelling the present, a *reality-bellows*.

Let's look at this in the context of some of the arguments we made about surrealist analogy in the previous chapter. The reader will recall our discussion of the Deleuzian critique of resemblance as constituting a disciplining of difference and therefore as being incapable of producing real movement (Deleuze 2010 p.61). We countered this with a magnetic model of analogy that harnesses resemblance and juxtaposition as a lure, performing a decompositional role without necessarily

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out to be the victim of a pathetic fraud' (Pleasure Tendency 1987 p. 11). Cynicism, then, whilst appearing as a sort of futurelessness is rather a subscription to a very definite future, robbed of all imaginally imbued potential. Just as with other forms of divination, it is a mechanism for reducing the cone of possibility to a widthless line. It is ironic then, that popular culture so frequently presents the worldly wisdom of the cynic (often mistaken for the sceptic) as the opposition to the starry-eyed, new age naivety of the self-declared prognosticators. Instead they stand in cahoots, a closed unit, weaponised against the imaginal.

performing the reverse recompositional action. It is tempting to read Bloch's concrete utopia as operating in a similar way to those processes of analogy which Deleuze criticises. If it is concretised in the social imagination, a specific configuration into which we move, then it is endemic to the social context from which it demands we take flight. Its status as transformative can therefore be reasonably placed in doubt. It is important to stress, though, that when Bloch speaks of concrete utopias he does not mean actualised utopian material and organisational structures and arrangements (still less a utopian infrastructure hewn in concrete). Bloch's concrete utopia is a social imaginal construct, but is also the point at which the future appears with enough graspable clarity that bringing it about becomes primarily a question of practical organisation (Bloch 1986). Bloch is not so naïve as to assume a suspension of the interests that would work against his concrete utopia, or of a withdrawal of objective chance whilst the concrete utopia is brought into being. It remains for him a processual notion, or a methodology of social movement, as opposed to an idea descriptive of an actualised new formative context. It stations itself in the future and exerts a magnetic pull, drawing us out from the Now. However, the new social forms of which it is productive are not the mirror of itself but are instead formed in the context of counter-concrete utopias, alter-utopias, and the cast-iron anchor of conservatism. They are not the imaginal concrete utopia produced in the Now but something new.

This idea is therefore different from what I have referred to as visioning in so far as Bloch argues that his concrete utopia lies at a specific point in social imaginal de/recompositional processes. I have used visioning to correspond to an expansion of possibility, a means of simultaneously nurturing a number of different futures. The concrete utopia, however, is a point immediately 'prior to', or in our spatialised understanding of time 'next to' recomposition.

Barbour's *Platonia*, gives us an interesting model for thinking this through. *Platonia* as we have seen is a simplified configuration space wherein each Now (understood as a static arrangement of all the matter in the universe) is represented as a point, which resides within a great cloud of other Nows. These Nows are what we are used to thinking of as past and future moments, but in fact it makes no difference whether they are past and future moments or 'alternative realities' as the two are indistinct here. The distance between the Nows is dictated by probability. It is important to remember that *Platonia* does not 'exist'. It is not 'real' in any material

sense. It is an imaginal machine. As such, although as a model it is and must be static and eternal, we can imaginally construct it differently from one moment to the next. This ability to imaginally construct it differently creates for us the experience of time. The way in which we think one state into another is not (necessarily) related to mathematical probability, but instead hinges on an *idea of the probable.*
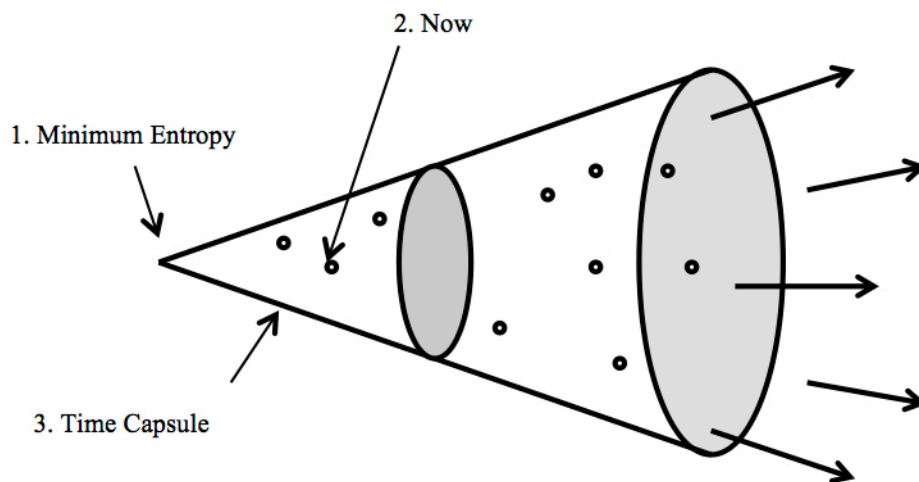
Considering Bloch's utopiology (I shall call it this to differentiate between utopian thought and thought about utopian thought) in relation to timelessness enables us to understand it as operating on a similar configuration of space. Our Now appears to sit in a cloud of other Nows. We think of them as Thens or as Non-Nows or maybe as Alter-Nows. There are, in this cloud, Nows that are very close to ours. We are familiar with those that lie immediately adjacent to ours on one side, just a hair's breadth away in distance, as the place in which we have 'just' been. That which is closest to us, or perhaps a tight cluster of Nows which are closest to us, constitute an imaginal point of minimum entropy, the social configuration that directly produced our Now and of which the records contained in our now seem detailed. Further away, they are far more widely dispersed as their relationship to our Now becomes less certain. We are fairly secure in the reality of these Nows, although we are aware that sometimes others remember them differently, and significant elements of the arrangement of those Nows did not seem significant at the time. There are close Nows too that lie immediately adjacent on the other side. These Nows are not as clear. Our relationship to them is a complicated one. For a start, most of us can discern a far larger number of them than the 'prior' Nows. For some people they appear as a diverse ecology of possible moments, for others they are fewer and more uniform. The Blochian twist, though, is that these are not other Nows at all in any temporally distinct sense. Instead they are aspects of the perspective of our Now. We cannot stand outside of a universe of the possible in order to chart it. We are at all times mired deep within. Bloch's concrete utopia is not descriptive of one of these Nows but of the perspective via which it is possible to focus on those clustered most closely to our Now. Conversely, what I have called visioning is descriptive of the perspective via which Nows can be seen over a vast distance – remembering that 'distance' here means probability.

In the realm of experience, which is also the realm of the present, which is also the realm of the imaginal, we organise time in terms of a sequence of Before-Now, Now, and Not-Yet (corresponding to prediction and concrete utopianism)

and/or After-Now (corresponding to visioning and divination). The configuration of Now is dependent on the configuration of Before-Now, regardless of the specifics of that configuration. Not-Yet, though, is not an inevitability, we can be as specific about the contents of Not-Yet as we wish, but they still operate along lines of the possible and the plausible, never from necessity or inevitability. After-Now could have either a visionary form or a divinatory form. In the latter case it belongs to a different temporal-imaginal regime, a regime to which what Caffentzis terms capitalist eternalism (2013) belongs. It depends upon a linear, teleological practice of time wherein the relationship of present to past is the equivalent of the relationship of present to future: a begets b begets c. In a sense, it belongs to the model of temporality that Prigogine and Stengers criticise. Time is absent by implication. The neat sequence of different moments of order could be followed in either direction

We can use Barbour's time capsules and Boltzmann's entropic flow to make sense of this. As discussed above, for Boltzmann, the experience of time is dependent upon the situating of the present along a sequence in which order is behind and disorder is in front. We 'remember' order. So crucial is this idea of remembering order to Barbour that he suggests that the complexities of human consciousness must demand it as a prerequisite of experience. That is why, for him, what he terms time capsules, rare Nows that contain records of other Nows, are the only Nows it is possible to experience (Barbour 1999). A linear time demands that, although two people may remember the past differently from one another, only one past *actually happened*, and that, although we may have no means of accurately envisaging the future, only one future *will actually happen* so the line theoretically continues on forever. However, in terms of experience it stops at the present. A version of this not reliant upon a linear practice of time might look more like a bowtie. We can imagine our Now in the centre and to the left lies a big cluster of Now-1s and to the right a big cloud of Now+1s. The relationship between Now and both the Now-1s and the Now+1s is through resonance (reverberation and preverberation). So far this is symmetrical. Not only is it symmetrical but also the pattern can be repeated from any point. Any one of the Now-1s is also a Now to the left which are Now-1s and to the right which are Now+1s, so 'our' Now is one of many Now+1s to any of 'our' Now-1s, just as 'our' Now is one of many Now-1s to any of 'our' Now+1s. Correspondingly, the Now-1s are Now-2s to the Now+1s (as indicators of a more distant past). What renders this whole process asymmetrical,

giving it its directional quality is that 'double vision' effect of mapping our *experience of time* onto Boltzmann's model of temporal flow with its occasional moments of low entropy. Perhaps we can draw analogies here with the notion that visual depth perception is dependent upon a scene being viewed from two slightly different angles. The Now of experience is not situated at the point of minimum entropy but slightly to the side of it. This is best illustrated with a diagram.

Point 1 in this diagram represents an imaginal past of maximum possible order, all information related to which is theoretically knowable. The 'time capsule' shown by the cone that stretches from this point to half way along the greater cone is the limit of experience, after which the distance from the point of minimum entropy is too far away to be able to make sense of it. The greater cone is open-ended and should be thought of as stretching on, gradually widening, without ever stopping. Our Now is at a point close enough to Point 1 for us to be able to make sense of it, but far enough away for it to be able to share space with other possible configurations of the present. Phase-Time is the mode of being of these Nows that share space with one another.

The further one goes from Point 1, the greater the number of Nows that can share the space and therefore the greater the resonance between different possibilities, but beyond the time capsule line it is not possible to experience these Nows. Crucially, though, Point 1 can be moved. Initial conditions are at all times arbitrary, If Point 1 is moved, the time capsule moves with it and so does the cone of future possibility, pushing some of the Nows, with which our now previously shared space, out of the future. This process is a key to how we organise the temporally-

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bound imaginal and it also reveals the antagonism between radical and conservative imaginals.

Radical imaginals move. They move into the cone, away from the initial condition. This is a game of brinkmanship. The limit of movement is the end point of the time capsule where it separates from the ever-widening cone. The closer one goes to that line, the greater the number of Nows one can share space with (the greater the possibilities of the real). At a certain point then, it is necessary to set a new initial condition, a new point of order, as a means of opening new terrains of future possibility. We can also draw once again upon quantum mechanics and describe this as the point of wave collapse where possibility sharpens into actuality at the moment of observation. How this new initial condition is set will be the focus of much of the rest of the thesis. Conversely, the operation of the conservative (eternalist) imagination is to preserve the initial condition, thus maintaining the narrowest possible cone, the smallest possible number of co-Nows, while suppressing the possibilities of Phase Time and denying the potential of change.

The brink then, that rarely achieved limit point, is the virgin terrain of the moment of excess. Such a wild and indescribably dangerous landscape at the very edge of the real leads as easily into the abyss as it does into a new point of order. It is significant, and supports my thesis here, that when social movements articulate new problematics (a process that will be the central concern in the next chapter), they anchor them to a certain form of event. These events are those that rupture (opening a *bréche* to employ a surrealist term). As we shall see in the next section, events such as these are only identifiable (or in fact *reproducible*) as such after they have happened; they are to the left of the Now, in the immediate past, imaginal points of minimum entropy.

This, then, returns us to the question of producing the past in the Now. Correspondingly, it brings us back to the question of memory.

In the Shadow of Events

This section needs to do two things. To begin with, we need to consider what it means to remember and for this we will draw on Bergson in particular. Secondly, we need to elaborate on the collective nature of this remembering process. For this we

will begin from the Durkhemian sociologist Maurice Halbwachs but draw also from a number of other writers and theorists of collective memory.

Bergson's principle work on memory is *Matter and Memory* but many of the arguments found therein are initially found in *Time and Free Will*. Memory, for Bergson is distinct from imagination. However, it must pass through imagination en route to actualisation (2005 p.135). Bergson's consideration of memory begins from a similar set of questions to those that I have suggested are side-stepped in much of the scientific work on timelessness but which I have attempted to grapple with in the previous section and continue to grapple with here: namely those relating to the ways in which the experience of time differs from and relates to the scientific model of time. His investigation stems, in *Time a Free Will,* from a focus on duration as the *psychological* experience of transition or of change (2001). Duration does not itself exist externally to that experience except in the form of simultaneity.

> No doubt external things change, but their moments do not *succeed* one another. […] We observe outside us at a given moment a whole system of simultaneous positions. […] to put duration in space is really to contradict oneself and place succession within simultaneity (*Ibid.* p. 227).

Deleuze, in his book on Bergson, describes duration as 'a becoming but a becoming that endures, a change that is substance itself' (1991 p. 37). In *Memory and Matter,* Bergson's focus shifts from duration to memory but the two notions are closely connected, indeed Deleuze notes that they are identical in principle (*Ibid* p. 52). Just as he has done for duration, Bergson develops a theory of memory in which recollection is preserved in itself. Central to this development is the consideration of contemporary research into medical conditions affecting memory and language such as amnesia and aphasia. Bergson demonstrates that such afflictions can be seen to affect only the mechanisms of recollection rather than actual memory. Although such mechanisms can be shown to be bodily and cerebral, memory is not. 'With memory' Bergson tells us 'we are in truth in the domain of the spirit' (2005 p. 240). Far from being situated on one side of a mind/body dualism then, memory is elsewhere, a part of the virtual and a fundamental component (although articulation would be a much better word here) in Bergson's ontology.

In elaborating the processes via which memory is employed in the production of the actual, Bergson presents two arguments in particular that will be of importance as the present thesis progresses. Firstly, he reverses what we might think of as the instinctive order of events as they relate to memory. We do not, according to Bergson, begin by being situated in the present and then collect memory artefacts from the past in order to expand, entrench, or modify that present (a process that finds it most literal manifestation in psychoanalysis). To subscribe to this model would be to greatly downplay the fundamental importance of memory to experience. Instead every moment begins, through the process of memory, in a past that we can see as being simultaneous with the present. In Bergson's words

> Memory does not consist in a regression from the present to the past, but, on the contrary, in a progression from the past to the present. It is in the past that we place ourselves at a stroke. We start from a "virtual state" which we lead onwards, step-by-step, through a series of different *planes of consciousness*, up to the goal where it is materialised in an actual perception; that is to say, up to the point where it becomes a present active state – up to that extreme plane of our consciousness against which out body stands out (Bergson 2005 p. 239-240)

This insight will be further considered when we look at the notion of the radical event below. The second argument in Bergson that is of particular use to us here is the notion that memory exists within a virtual space that cannot be understood as existing at a different sequential point to the present (one is occasionally thrown off this point when reading Bergson due to his use of metaphor to which sequence seems inherent such as 'step-by-step' above). Bergson instead understands the relationship between the past and the present, as they pertain to memory and imagination, as being one based on contraction, different points in a virtual field, being brought into the same point in an actual field[20]. This is fantastically useful to us in further elaborating on the notion of realswell. Actualisation, for Bergson is related to the contraction or bringing together of the virtual. On the one hand, this seems as though it is the opposite notion to swelling but in fact we can think of this process as one of impregnating the present with possibility. The greater the field of possibility represented in the virtual, the greater the size and density of the actual present, the

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[20] I am using actual in the Bergsonian and Deleuzian sense here so the reader should ignore any agricultural connotation in the phrase 'actual field'

greater, too, its potential energy (like that in a compressed spring). Although Bergson situates memory outside the individual subject, clearing the way for a reading of memory as collective, this is not the project of either *Time and Free Will* or *Memory and Matter*. We'll return to Bergson, but first it will be useful to consider some sociological approaches to collective remembering.

Maurice Halbwachs, a Durkheimian sociologist and early pioneer of studies of the collective memory, suggests that the fundamental distinction between history and memory is that the former is a discourse built upon difference rather than resemblance. Unlike memory, history treats events as hypothetically commensurable units of complex time ('history is a record of change' [Halbwachs 2011 p.147]). It is a recording device that necessarily steps out of the community in order to function as universal. Of course, what Halbwachs is actually presenting here is not history as practiced but history as an ideal form. His work emerges at a time (the early 20th century) before Feminist and Postcolonial critiques revealed that written history has many of the characteristics he attributes to collective memory in that the tendency has been for it to be written from the perspective of specific dominant communities (affluent white males in the global north in particular). It does not so much step out of community as render the specificity of its own community invisible in order to present itself as universal. Critical historical discourses in the many decades since Halbwachs have been more likely to situate themselves openly within community as part of a project of rendering visible the many scars and channels over which power strides.

This idealised form of historical discourse has also been called into question by The Popular Memory Group which point to the proliferation of different everyday cultural forms whose habitats are not quite history, not quite memory, not quite imagination, but amalgamations and different intensities of all three. 'There is a common sense of the past which, though it may lack consistency and explanatory force, nonetheless contains elements of good sense […] If this is history, it is a history under extreme pressures and privations. Usually this history is held to the level of private remembrance. It is not only unrecorded, but actually silenced' (Popular Memory Group 2011 p. 256)

These muddyings of the water bring historical discourse that little bit closer to Halbwachs' fascinating construction of collective memory. In Halbwachs, memory operates as a commons. Individual memory is a perspective on common

memory. We might think of these memorial commons as similar to time capsules that are accessible, usable, and modifiable by their communities.

But individuals operate across communities, always belonging to several at once. Where Halbwachs is particularly insightful is in his treatment of individual selves not as enclosed units but as machines of articulation. The recording and storage site of memory is the community, or cluster of communities, not the individual. The more complex or unusual the encounter that produces memory, the smaller its commons. Halbwachs discusses this in terms of *easy* and *difficult* recollection – difficult not in the sense of being related to trauma but in the more usual sense of lacking vividness or being thin on detail:

> The events of our life most immediate to ourself are also engraved in the memory of those groups closest to us. Hence, facts and conceptions we posses with least effort are recalled to us from a common domain (common to at least one of several milieus) […] So we apparently end up in this strange paradox. The rememberences we evoke with most difficulty are our concern alone and constitute our most exclusive possession. […] The difference between rememberences we evoke at will and rememberences we seem to command no longer is merely a matter of degree of complexity. The former are always at hand because they are preserved in groups that we enter at will and collective thoughts to which we remain closely related (Halbwachs 2011 p. 141).

Before moving on to think about common memory as a site of political struggle (through consideration of the work of Max Haiven and Eric Hobsbawm), there are two final things that call for comment about Halbwachs' idea of collective memory.

The first is that there are clear parallels between this construction and the surrealist methodologies of realswell we encountered in the previous chapter. Collective memory similarly appears as a mobilisation of resemblance in conjunction with objective chance (manifested, in the simplest form of the Surrealist game, as other participants in it). The memories produced by this process are not a collection of isolated contributions from atomized selves but a common whole. They both produce and are produced by social milieus. In common with other imaginal forms, the process of memory is one that expands experience beyond the perception of what is materially present but which similarly relies upon collectivity.

The second is that it provides a means of drawing elements of the timelessness theory we've considered in this chapter onto the terrain of social

movement and collective transformation. Halbwachs presents us with the notion of memory as dependent upon a collective resource, which I likened to a time capsule, deliberately echoing the terminology used by Barbour. Barbour tells us that the sense of the passage of time (of sequence) is produced by the fact that the only type of Now that can be experienced is that special type that contains the record of (and resonates with) previous Nows. He does not, however, get to grips with what it means to access that record, where it is kept or who can read it. Although he is aware of the problems of speaking from the position of a god/observer he is rarely able to deploy imagery or examples offering any alternative situation. Halbwachs, in contrast, is clear that his time capsules are social formations. They are milieus and communities. From this perspective it is impossible to confront the experience of time and the imagining of the temporally distant without an analysis of power and social struggle.

The historian Eric Hobsbawm adopts precisely such a focus when discussing memory (Hobsbawm 2011). For Hobsbawm, the process of 'inventing traditions' is a central aspect of oppression and domination. This is a process of creating pasts that provide a historical foundation (and sometimes justification) for present arrangements. More specifically, it is a

> set of practices, normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by repetition which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past… (Hobsbawm 2011 p.271).

This word 'tradition' is significant here as it carries with it an implicit notion of community. Benedict Anderson deals with a very similar set of ideas in his classic work on nationalism, drawing attention to 'The objective modernity of nations to historians' eyes vs. their subjective antiquity in the eyes of nationalists' (Anderson 2006 p.5).

In Halbwachs the processes of recording, recollecting, and memorialising events are complex ones but the fact of the passage of time, of events happening (irrespective of the fact that different communities may have different perspectives on them), is kept more or less intact. Hobsbawm's invented traditions somewhat destabilise this notion and in doing so foreground the practices around memory that
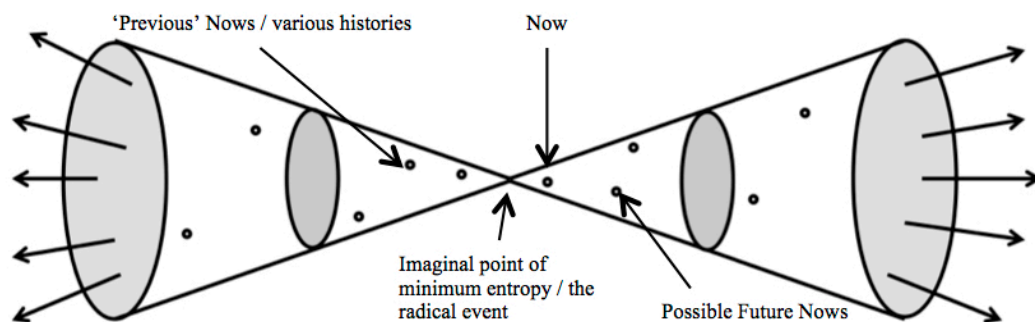
produce past events in the present. They are the exact past-oriented equivalents of the forms of future-oriented divination we earlier identified as being political (in the sense that they are concerned with power and domination and with fixing a temporally remote point).

We can clarify this by applying our cone of possibility configuration model. We have seen that experiencing a Now, according to this model, is dependent upon the ability to imagine a temporally previous point of minimum entropy (so that the impression of moving into the future is produced by our situation within an arrangement of immediate post-composition). How we imagine that point of minimum entropy though, where we situate it, is not set in stone and its positioning has a corresponding effect on the positioning of the cone of possibility that radiates from it. The invented tradition is a machine for the imposition and ossification of an imaginal point of minimum entropy. Along with the definite future of the divinatory form, this constitutes one of the two points that are (geometrically speaking) the minimum precondition for the reduction of reality to a widthless line, or the elimination of all possibility.

Max Haiven (whose work on the crisis of the imagination we have already encountered) provides something of a bridge between Halbwachs (whom he follows in discussing memory as a commons) and Hobsbawm (with whom he shares the perspective of memory as a question of power and struggle). In the context of a discussion of contemporary social movements, Haiven emphasizes the importance of creating spaces for the development and reproduction of memory and talks also of the complexities of contemporary capitalism as both a history-denying and history-reinventing machine (Haiven 2014). Like Halbwachs, he is keen to construct a distinction between memory and history, which for Haiven is encapsulated in the 'doing' of the former as opposed to the 'done' of the latter (*ibid.* p. 171). Halbwachs' distinction is differently formulated but one might question whether either of them actually rings true. Both appear to suggest that there is history outside of the doing of history, which is a peculiarly ahistorical argument in favour of history itself. Haiven in particular is perhaps failing to draw an important differentiation between 'history' and 'the past'. Whilst 'the past' may or may not be a thing that has been done (or has happened), our relationship to it, whether constructed as history or as memory, is only about doing in the present. What Haiven wishes to emphasise above all,

however, is that memory is a commons and a commons only exists through commoning. It is dynamic, active, and ever changing.

In his discussion of memory, Haiven focuses on the radical event, (a notion he borrows primarily from Badiou, 2007) in which we are given a 'glimpse of the unfettered social flow of doing of a life beyond alienation, exploitation, loneliness, and futility' (Haiven 2014 p. 186). By radical event he means something similar (but different in an important aspect to be discussed shortly) both to The Free Association's moment of excess (2011) and to Negri's *Kairòs* (2005) that we encountered earlier in that such events are moments in which temporality operates differently. Elaborating on Badiou's construction of the radical event, he talks of them as points of convergence between 'a whole variety of different histories' (Haiven 2014 p. 178). This immediately brings to mind the dual, mirrored cones of possibility I earlier described as being 'like a bowtie'. The radical event, in this model, clearly also performs the role of the imaginal point of minimum entropy that the invented tradition performs.

The imaginal point of minimum entropy in this diagram can be seen to correspond to a radical event (in Badiouian sense) because the angle of capture for those social and imaginal formulations that both follow and precede it is relatively wide. Whilst something of the meaning of the word 'event' is lost by placing it after the word 'conservative', we can use this idea as a contrast to the radical event.[21] When I use the word 'conservative' in this context I mean less a conservative political tradition

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[21] It is important to acknowledge the tensions in the idea of conservatism in a contemporary world in which often the most extreme, violent, and even radical change comes from the rightwing of the political establishment. As David Harvey notes in his *Brief History of Neoliberalism*, the cosy relationship between contemporary capitalism and traditional conservatism is in some senses counter-intuitive (Harvey 2009). While Friedrich Hayek, one of neoliberalism's most important scholars (and activists) insisted that he was 'not a conservative' (Hayek 2011 p.519)

or heredity but much more literally as serving to re-entrench, defend, and consolidate current hegemonic form(s) of social organisation. Of course, this could be a different imaginal construction of a material configuration *shared* with the radical event. For example, the riots in the UK during the 2011 'summer of rage', whilst dominantly formulated as an event, served for some to confirm a narrative about a working class that had lost the ability to act responsibly due to the mollycoddling of the welfare state. However, this same set of occurrences was narratively reproduced by a (notably small) sub-section of the left as precisely the sort of point of convergence that constitutes a radical event (a meeting of previously divergent histories in a common moment which produced new future possibilities) (Brown et al. 2013). In contrast to the radical event, such conservative events result in much narrower cones tending towards a single line.

This also suggests a particular tension that it is important to highlight. In contrast to the invented tradition, the radical event is one that widens the cone. It enables the decompositional and deterritorial processes we discussed in the previous chapter as being important to the functioning of the imaginal. However, it is itself, in the moment of its being, a *re*territorialisation, or a *re*composition, just as much as the invention of tradition is. The difference is merely that it projects a wider angle of possibility. Following Barbour's construction of timelessness, it can be said that we never exist within this territorialisation but instead are forever *just 'after'* it. This reveals the crucial limitation of the placing of the event as the formative moment in our understanding of the process of memory. We cannot stand outside of the experience of being *just after* the event in order to look at it as a materially present precedent. In a very real sense the event never happened but is built entirely within the process of imagining the past through memory and/or history[22]. We can turn again to Bergson to help to elaborate on the special status of the radical event. In Bergson, perception and articulation of the lived present are dependent upon the contraction into it of the past through the action of memory (2005). Recollecting however, is dependent upon a gradual sense-making which develops through a step-by-step path from the past to the present. This sense-making falters in circumstances

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[22] It is also possible to tackle this through the lens of Lacan's development of Freud's *Nachträglikeit*. This is Freud's notion that memory (specifically with regards to trauma) is retroactive, a thing wearing the cloak of the past constructed in the present in order to modify it. Lacan reintroduced this idea to the psychoanalytic lexicon, further developing it in relation to the retroactive construction of meaning after the linguistic event. (Lacan 2006 p.711)

where the event is without precedent. Conversely, an event may appear to be without precedent as a result of the recollection process having failed. We can think of a moment of excess as being *effectively* without precedent (in fact the case is more that the vast and divergent array of precedents that might be called upon to produce sense are too complicated to be contracted into the moment) and therefore as being largely inaccessible to processes of actualisation through memory. The radical event on the other hand operates as a sort of holdall for the past and future possibilities from which it is constructed. The memory processes through which flesh can be added to its bones are necessarily slow and collective ones, reliant upon a steady, patient subject. In the meantime though the moment of excess is grounded by the radical event with operates as a structure without content.

In this sense the radical event is quite distinct from the moment of excess. Rather than a new point of minimum entropy, subsequently constructed through the commoning of memory, the moment of excess is an experienced Now from which the angle of capture of future possibility is suddenly widened. Moments of excess happen but in the very moment of their articulation (the moment we likened to wave collapse in quantum mechanics), they become events and stabililse. This also serves to clarify an important distinction between on the one hand the moment of excess, and the model of timelessness and possibility that I have constructed above and on the other hand Negri's *Kairòs* (2005). The difference is one of the point of perspective. Negri situates both *experience and knowledge* (p.142) on the near-widthless platform overlooking the void of deterritorialisation at the same moment in time. Here I have contended that the two are temporally separate. Like the event, the bestowing of the name upon the thing that is named is remembered, not experienced. By the time the new being emerges, we are always already slightly beyond it. Whilst the overall geography remains the same, Negri is on an island looking out at the ocean whereas we are in the ocean looking in towards an array of islands.

We can perhaps further explain this by drawing on the notion of the lived present that we find in both Deleuze (2010) and Bergson (2005). This lived present, every bit as unstable as that which we find in different forms in Negri, the Free Association, and Barbour, is dependent upon the contraction into the actual of the past and future elements of the virtual.

There is also a clear parity between the production, through memory, of the radical event and processes of producing the Blochian concrete utopia. Both are

imaginal processes that sit within a close proximity to moments of territorialisation, points of imaginal entropy. The past radical event, as well as the future concrete utopia, are both artefacts of the Now mobilised for the production (and perhaps direction) of movement, rather than places that have been moved to or from.

But all events are not of the same type and it is in this respect that Haiven's model of a commons of memory comes into its own. As with Anderson's 'imagined' communities, speaking of 'invented' traditions risks presenting us with a red herring. Anderson is at pains to point out that *all* communities are imagined (Anderson 2006) and it is obvious that *all* traditions are invented. We are not dealing primarily with questions of façade or spectacle here. The social struggle at the heart of memory is not one based on determining which communities are speaking truths and which falsehoods (although of course that may be an aspect of it). It is about the continual reproduction of events from which we can project a multitude of future possibilities verses the reproduction of events from which only a few or even just one can be projected.

Earlier I proposed that the terminally unstable Excess Time partially stabilises as Phase Time. We could add to this that the Moment of Excess stabilises as the Radical Event but that this point of stabilisation is always and only temporally behind us and is therefore always a question of imagining the past. In the previous chapter we looked at Unger's notion that formative contexts (which we talked about as recompositions or reterritorialisations) could either facilitate or thwart negative capability (Unger 2001 p. 36). We can draw an exact parallel here. The radical event is a formative context that facilitates a greater degree of negative capability. In Unger, a new formative context is the inevitable product of such negative capability. This reterritorialisation is neither desirable nor otherwise, it simply is. What is important is that it is capable of producing a subsequent deterritorialisation. So too with the radical event, which carries within it not only a reverberation of past moments of excess but also a preverberation of future ones.

Producing these specific types of formative context, reproducing the specifically radical event, which is to say producing wide-angled futures and pasts in the present, must carry with it a set of identifiable practices. To this point we have dealt mainly with notions of what the imaginal is and how it unfolds while at the same time allowing the possibility that these processes, which are necessarily collective ones, quietly creep in around and beneath us. At this point it prevails upon

us to perform a 360º panoramic viewing of the terrain in which we find ourselves, noting as we do so that this idea of collectivity now blooms upon each and every tree, bush, and vine within our vicinity. We are face to face, in this biome of the imaginal, with commoning. Commoning will, from this point onwards, form a central pillar of our exploration as we move further into this thesis and begin to discuss more concretely how these collective processes unfold. We will therefore meet with the notion of memory as commoning again later in the thesis.

Let's recap and draw some provisional conclusions. I have argued here that time is a practice, and that as such different regimes of time can co-exist. I have suggested that Phase Time, and its unstable partners, *Kairòs* and Excess Time (which I've related to Enclosed and Cyclical time) are the temporal regimes that allow us best to understand the mechanisms by which we organise our imagining of the possible.

Furthermore I've suggested that these are most effectively explored through notions of timelessness, or by thinking of the possible as 'in space' rather than 'in time'. I have attempted to present some of the arguments against the existence of time (both those originating in philosophy and those originating in science) but have nevertheless been at pains to stress that rather than attempting to persuade the reader of time's material 'unreality' I am employing these models as means for exploring the idea that at the level of the imaginal, both the past and the future are constructions rooted in the present. In this context, certain specific aspects of timelessness (drawn in particular from the arguments offered by Barbour, 1999) have proven to be of particular use. Foremost amongst these is that our temporally imminent experience not only of the past but also of the future is a question of reading records of probability, possibility, and potential. Indeed, following Barbour's stronger formulation of this point, this may not be a question we choose to engage with or otherwise. Rather, we are *only* able to experience ourselves as being *in* time *because* our Now contains these records. Without them, irrespective of whether time exists in nature, it would cease to have meaning socially or imaginally.

The other key aspect taken from this model of timelessness is the notion of the point of minimum entropy as a characteristic not of the present but of the immediate past. Although there is an elasticity in terms of our distance to the point of minimum entropy there is a point beyond which order vanishes and experience

becomes impossible. The space between this point and the point of minimum entropy is what we have referred to (again borrowing from Barbour, *ibid.* p. 30) as a 'time capsule'. This does not, however, mean being anchored to a static point. This imaginal point of minimum entropy can be moved and reset through practices of commoning. The temporally-bound imaginal proceeds through the continuous creation and reproduction of these moments of order, these formative contexts, in the immediate past (through processes such as, but not limited to, remembering) and by positioning itself between these points and the limits of experience where co-existing Nows are at their most diverse.

I have suggested that we can differentiate between a conservative project in which the imaginal is at its most enclosed and a radical project in which it is at its most unfettered by contrasting social modes with lesser elasticity in relation to the point of minimum entropy (devoted to a defence of the initial condition) to those with greater elasticity, embroiled in a perpetual game of brinkmanship with the limits of experience at the opposite side of the time capsule. In practice, this latter project consists on the one hand of the controlled reterritorialisation of moments of excess as radical events and on the other of the continual exploration of the possible futures in its vicinity through utopian (and 'dystopian') experimentation.

Just as we found in our exploration of the analogical imagination in the previous chapter, there is a suggestion here that might sensibly lead us to hypothesise that there is a correlation between the degree to which the temporal imaginal is collectivised and the increased potential for transformation of life through social movement. Some of the scholars whose work on memory we have looked at (Halbwachs 2011, Haiven 2014) provide us with a passage into this realm of practice and organisation by constructing it as an issue of commoning.

In the next chapters we'll look more concretely at what social movements do in order collectively to turn moments of excess into temporary stabilisations, to create these negative capability-facilitating formative contexts. This will be supported by analysis of a series of interviews with participants in recently formed radical political organisations in order to see how (and *if*) they collectively set these imaginal points of minimum entropy in such a way as to open onto the possibility of radical social change. Before looking at this fieldwork and the methodologies associated with it however, I will introduce in the next, shorter chapter, the notion of the development of problematics and their related methodology: symptomatology.

Chapter 3.

Invisible Planets: Symptomatology and Social Movement

In 1846, a group of astronomers in Berlin were the first people to see the planet Neptune through a telescope, in full knowledge that what they were viewing was a planet.[23] This sighting was not a *discovery* but a *confirmation*. Neptune had actually been mathematically predicted decades earlier.

There is controversy over whether the French astronomer Urbain le Verrier or his English counterpart John Couch Adams had been the one to infer the existence of the still invisible planet through long-term observation of swoops and dips in the path of Uranus. Uranus takes slightly longer than 84 (Earth) years to orbit the sun and, since it was only discovered in 1781, a full orbit had not been recorded. However, enough of the circuit had been made to be able clearly to discern anomalies and irregularities in its movements that could only be attributed to the gravitational pull of another massive object, hitherto unseen. The application of Newton's Law of Universal Gravitation to these unusual movements was enough for le Verrier and/or Couch Adams to be able to describe accurately (as it turned out) the existence, position, and mass of the object that influenced them.

Finding the means to see without seeing is essential when dealing with distances across which even the very strongest of telescopes cannot reach stretch the vision. It is therefore a normal aspect of the practice of astrophysics. There are more recent examples of very similar processes to those by which Neptune was detected. For example, as recently as 2010, a new planet was identified in the Kepler system (currently named Kepler 9c). The basis of this detection was the observation of

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[23] At the time this was believed to be the first sighting of all. Subsequently, it became clear that the planet had been seen earlier by Galileo (and others too), who had misidentified it as a star.

redshift, which describes changes in light that are the visual equivalent of the Doppler effect in sound (that curious phenomenon wherein a siren on an ambulance will sound as though it changes pitch as it passes you). Even more recently, scientific media (as well as those who subscribe to the possibility of extra-terrestrial intelligence) has been abuzz about the redshift-based discovery of a supermassive object - again in the Kepler system - that appears to behave in a non-natural-seeming way (Aron, 2016)

The gravitational effect exerted by Neptune, Kepler 9c, and the unidentified alien mega-structure, upon neighbouring bodies is not altered by the ability of humans to notice, measure, and describe it. It is instead a cold fact of an indifferent universe. These planets are of course themselves subject to alterations in their trajectories dependent upon the movements and densities of those objects around them.

As I have discussed elsewhere (Brown 2014), these processes have an analogous relationship to those undergone by movements for social change. Such movements also tend to be caught in the orbits of specific sets of problems, irrespective of whether they are able to be noticed, measured, and described. Oftentimes such problematics surrounding the invisible planets of the imagination can only be articulated in retrospect. Sometimes this leads to a near-interminable repetition of the same social formations until the cluster of problems has been circled enough times to reveal itself.

This motion can be greatly inhibited by the rush to reterritorialise, through the urgent construction of solutions for use as centres gravity with which to massify through drawing in recruits. But as Rodrigo Nunes argues in *Organisation of the Organisationless* (2013), it is crucial to be able to draw a distinction between what movements claim they are trying to do, and what they are *actually* doing.

This chapter explores this notion of seeing without seeing, of detecting through the mapping of interference, of seeing what can be inferred to be there even when its presence cannot be directly detected. In so doing, the attempt will be made to further distil a specific methodology of collective movement from the process that we began by exploring as the production of eeriness.

In the previous two chapters we have concentrated on the imaginal in such a way that only hints at a distinction between individual and collective processes. This

latter we have touched on through our discussion of inter-subjective processes such as those explored in surrealism wherein the other becomes a conduit for objective chance. We have also set up Castoriadian ideas of social imaginal institution, and the notion (found in Halbwachs, 2011, and Haiven, 2014) that memory is a form of commons, and have promised to return to these ideas in a subsequent chapter. Our overall approach has been first of all to discuss the deterritorialising role of the imaginal and then begin to work towards the (re)territorialising role. This chapter is a continuation of that narrative. We began with the taking of flight from one formative context; we will end with the alighting upon another. Here, however, we focus on the mechanics of the flight itself.

In order to do this, I will introduce three ideas into the present discussion. Firstly, I argue that social movements represent the most fertile and industrious terrain of imaginal commoning. Secondly I introduce the concept of *symptomatology* (and relatedly, of *the problematic*), providing its theoretical context and background. Lastly, I apply symptomatology to the reading of the processes of dissolution and regroupment that are significant characteristics of left social movements in the current decade in the UK. In doing this I make a case for symptomatology as not only being a means to read and critique these processes but also as providing a way of understanding the mechanisms via which these processes unfold. Symptomatology, I contend, is not just a methodology for *reading* movement but also for *producing* movement. To this end, I argue that work in this area conducted by Deleuze (and Deleuzian commentators on social movements such as Milburn 2010, Mengue 2008) in particular allows us to expand outward from the more restrictive notions that have surrounded the reading of symptoms as a methodology of critique (such as those we find in Althusser and Žižek and, in a more primitive form, in Bachelard) towards a notion of symptomatic social organising. This is then demonstrated through an elaboration on the symptomatological operations visible in the shifts, undulations and developments of the amorphous body of movements for social change.

Also in this chapter I will introduce the reader to the three social movement organisations (all UK based) which provide the material for the empirical research used in this thesis, providing a sketch of the socio-politico-economic context in which they emerged and, in the case of two of them, disappeared.

Enter the Commoners

Whilst we have begun by now to explore the notion that the organisation of the imaginal may be dependent on processes we have described as commoning, we have largely allowed ourselves to attribute these processes to abstract communities. Here I want to focus on the space that lies between the abstract community and the specific group (before shifting the focus onto this latter category later in the chapter), making a case for social movements as the key facilitators of social transformation and therefore as the central actors in broad-scale imaginal commoning.

We immediately encounter a problem rooted in the ambiguity of the term 'social movement'. The Free Association (whose notion of the 'moment of excess' we encountered in the previous chapter) deal with precisely this ambiguity in their text 'What is the movement?' (Free Association 2011). This discussion, very much embedded within the 1990s/early 2000s alter-globalisation movement, emerges through engagement with an 'open letter to the European movements' published by the magazine *Derive Approdi* in 2002 (Derive Approdi 2002). The Free Association present the comradely critique that this open letter, in treating a movement as a thing rather than a processes, ends up 'privileging those groups which have been identified in advance as 'political formulations' and fail[s] to see the ways in which the majority of world's population – 'activists' and 'non-activists' – exists within and against capital' (Free Association 2011, p. 30). Their alternative is to foreground the doing over the being.

> We found our conception of the 'movement' becoming ever wider, as it also became more fragmented, until it seemed to explode altogether […] We do not think we can conceive of 'the movement' as a thing, as an entity (as noun) which can be defined. Instead, we are thinking of the movement in terms of the *moving* (verb) of social relations (*ibid.* p. 27-28)

Whilst this argument about the movement of social relations is very easy to relate to our previous arguments about imaginal de/recomposition, this processual notion of social movement appears at first to take us back to square one in terms of our attempts momentarily to leave behind commoning in order to look instead at commoners. The authors demonstrate that to reduce 'the movement' to a

preconceived *we* (to an extent to a formulation of identity), is in fact to reduce its power to move. It is a self-defeating or self-cancelling action. This does not however have the effect of erasing the notion that there can be actors in the shifting of social relationships and that those actors may exercise power with differing intensities.

Keir Milburn, who is one part of the Free Association, returns to these problems in his unpublished doctoral thesis (Milburn 2010), which also deals in particular with this alter-globalisation movement. Milburn retains the concept of movement as relating to the verb 'to move' that the earlier text explores but is careful to contrast his model with other processual models found in social sciences literature, such as those centred on crowd theory (or that draw upon notions of panic). These stem, Milburn argues, from a belief that the individual is the only possible rational actor and the base unit of experience (*Ibid. p. 17*) He counters this with a model that reads a great intelligence and creativity in these collective eruptions, seeing them as producers of excesses of possibility that open up new social terrains and transform life.

In line with the story about the discovery of Neptune with which this chapter opened, we can read the distinction between this model and more commonly encountered models of political organisation (those that concentrate on structures more recognisable as institutions) as being based on questions of orbits and gravitational centres. Milburn shows (and I have elsewhere made more explicit use of the orbital analogy [Brown 2014]) that social movement is a process facilitated by the clustering of actors around specific cores.

In contrast to models of social organising that are reliant upon institutional, legalistic, or managerial constructions (such as, for example, political parties) the process Milburn describes does not rely upon the crystallisation of an outer-shell in order to seal in the bodies drawn towards the centre. Consequently it doesn't rely on the ability of its actors to define themselves as an organisational body or community. The outer-shell (constituted by membership, offices, and constitutional responsibilities) performs a logical operation in the political party in that it is a means of facilitating massification.[24] As a rivalrous entity, the political party expands

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[24] When I use the term 'political party' in this chapter, I am using it as shorthand for a specific model that we might think of as the orthodox one. By this I mean a collective political body built according to a logic of *taking state power* (either through electoral or revolutionary means). Whilst seizing the state/acquiring a governmental position may seem like an over-ambitious project for many smaller parties, we can say with John Holloway that the 'form of the party, whether vanguardist or

through the destruction or absorption of other entities. Like the pitcher plants of the carnivorous *Nepenthaceae* and *Sarraceniaceae* families, it is clear that such nourishment requires mechanisms that facilitate easy entry but complicated retreat.

At the same time, this form of organisation is also distinct from that which collects around a *fixed core,* such as a moral system or a set of values freed from history as we sometimes see in religious movements or in certain political and philosophical movements like anarchism or humanism. For Milburn, the principal cores around which movements cluster are *events* and *problematics* and the key common element that sets them aside from moral systems and fixed values is their dynamism. This also offers us at last a way of thinking about social movement in relation to imaginal commoners. In a slight contrast to the understanding of social movement articulated by The Free Association, what we see here is neither a being nor fully a doing but an endless *becoming.* It is an 'is' measured in ever-changing intensities based on the proximity of the actors to the continually shifting and morphing core represented by the problematic. *A* social movement is not *simply* movement. It is real people conducting real experiments that help to articulate and deepen certain shared problems.

There is a danger in declaring that social movements represent the principal engine of broad-scale processes of imaginal de/recomposition in that we may be articulating little more than a tautology. Social movement, in the Free Association model and to a lesser extent in Milburn's too, *is* that process and that process *is* it. This danger can be defused however, when we acknowledge what whilst it is potentially edgeless, a social movement is not a featureless plain extending as far as the eye can see. At different times and in different places, there are thickenings, blisterings, cracks, and ditches affected by the ability of participants to reveal or articulate hidden problematics. In fact, it may make most sense to think of social

parliamentary, presupposes an orientation towards the state and makes little sense without it' (Holloway 2005 p.17). Key to this orthodox model is that it is necessarily rivalrous, and requires 'subordinating the myriad forms of class struggle to the overriding aim of gaining control of state' (*ibid.*) However, it is important to note that there are currently in progress numerous experiments in rethinking the party. This may mean that we find in retrospect either that our understanding of the political party has to change or that we have actually been talking about something new although we continue to use the word 'party' whilst awaiting its full emergence. Much like biological evolution, the point of conceptual phase shift can only be retrofitted much later. We can certainly draw on both Podemos and Barcelona in Common as examples of these new experimental forms and might even point to new innovations in the Labour party (Corbyn's crowd-sourcing of Prime Minister's Questions and the attempts to shift power from the parliamentary body to the wider party membership). The processes that I will go on to describe in the chapter in relation to the radical extra-parliamentary left should not be thought of as separate from these experiments.

movements in terms of waves in so far as they are neither ephemeral and structureless, nor ossified and entrenched. Like the recurrent peaks and troughs of a wavescape, a social movement institutes through repetition and fluidity rather than through enclosure and solidity.[25] Another important characteristic of waves is that they are not isolated objects and the difference between a peak and a trough is a difference of degree and intensity. At certain historical moments, social movements may be very visible, constructive and destructive in a way that reverberates throughout the whole of social life irrespective of where one stands in relationship to them. At other moments, when the proximity from the apex of the wave is greater, social movements may be harder to see. These moments, which we might describe as moments of low-intensity struggle, constitute both a blessing and a curse for the researcher. On the one hand, it is very hard to detect the hidden objects exerting the forces that keep them together. This is a task for which symptomatology is highly suited and it is one that I shall pursue below. On the other hand, it is probably the case that such periods tend to be ones in which the people actively and self-consciously engaged in radical experiments in social change tend to gravitate around collective vessels such as organisations or new group identities. We can perhaps see these as lifeboats launched after moments of excess.

In the introduction, I proposed that one of the most startling indicators that we are undergoing a crisis of the imagination is that despite the rapid worsening of material (and immaterial) conditions for the overwhelming majority of people on the planet we appear to be lodged uncomfortably within just such a period of low-intensity social struggle. Although I situate them within a global context (such as that relating to the economic crisis and the Occupy movement), the particular set of collectives in the UK upon which the analysis here concentrates might be seen as tailor-made for navigation within such periods. This is for two reasons. Firstly, our *primary* concern is not with the specific developments and innovations of social movements but how they employ processes of imaginal de/recomposition in order to move - analysis of this, to be worth anything, would require a dedicated thesis of its own. Secondly, three of these UK-based organisations will be the focus of empirical

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[25] Not to be confused with the notion of protest waves that is an established staple of Social Movement Theory (Tarrow 1998). Whilst the concept of the protest waves is mobilised as a means of explaining the emergence and disappearrance of social movements, I employ the wave model instead as a tool for talking about their structure.

work in the next two chapters. This chapter therefore is a contribution to the building up of the political context surrounding that empirical work.

We explored the production of events as a memorial practice related to the setting of an imaginal point of minimum entropy in the previous chapter, which is somewhat different (although not uncomplimentary) to Milburn's treatment of the concept. However, we'll revisit Milburn's work on the subject in Chapter 6. In the present chapter the notion of problematics is far more important. In the next section (in which we'll relate this idea to symptomatology) and in the two that follow, I will make the argument that the deepening of problematics through experimentation lies at the very heart of imaginal commoning but also that understanding this process is crucial in order to get to grips with contemporary radical collective organisation.

Riding Waves

Like social movements, symptomatology is most easily understood in terms of waves. When Althusser talks about lacunae and silences in his explication of symptomatic reading, the wave is implicit (Althusser and Balibar 2009); when Žižek talks of interference, it is there again (Žižek 2008). Two different things can produce the appearance of wavelessness. The first is a true absence of activity. Thought about in terms of sound, this situation would correspond to a failure of matter to act in such a way that kinetic energy is transformed into sound matter via vibration. It is true silence. However, waves can also be *cancelled* by equal and opposed values. Considering the behaviour of liquids is a good way to get to grips with this. If one is able to resist the trance-like state that a sustained observation of the shoreline can produce and instead focus on assessing the movement of the water, one will observe amongst the peaks and troughs areas of absolute stillness and flatness where the sea resembles glass. This is not a result of the under-surface landscape (although, to be sure, this does have an effect on wave behaviour) but of the trough of one wave attempting to occupy the same space as the peak of another, thus producing a flat-lining, an absence. This happens in sound too. Indeed, the idea is central to the more technologically advanced areas of soundproofing. However, one is less likely to be able to observe the process in everyday life. The symptomatologist's task is

deliberately to bring different wave formations into the same space and to probe that wavelessness, to ask 'is this wavelessness the product of silence or of noise?'

Symptomatology is a methodology of data analysis that concerns the grouping together of clusters of symptoms - we can understand the word symptom in this context as referring to an effect (usually a 'negative' one in medicine but there is no need to infuse it with that value here) that is indicative of a hidden problem that we might describe as systemic. Ostensibly the concept draws upon clinical analysis wherein empirical observation precedes the collation of a symptomatological aggregate[26]. If it fits an existing model, this aggregate may then be interpreted as a specific disease. However, the emphasis is on the symptom *cluster* rather than the disease that encapsulates it. Here I ought also introduce the closely related word *syndrome*, although its elaboration in relation to method comes later in the chapter. A syndrome is a symptomatology in which the symptoms *seem to fit together*. This is not the same as a disease or diagnosis but an observation that there is something underlying a symptomatological aggregate that serves to draw its symptoms towards one another to the extent that we might confidently predict that we would find the same symptomatology *more or less* repeated elsewhere.

In Deleuze's work on Masoch and Sade he seeks to demonstrate that symptomatology, as a methodology, is as native to the critic as it is to the clinician (Deleuze, 1997). The key difference for him (as further elaborated in Deleuze and Guattari, 2004) is that the clinical project must at some stage end its symptomatological digging in order to fulfil its utilitarian functions relating to cause and cure. In the absence of this role, symptomatology is open ended. Whilst clinical symptomatology is a diagnostic tool, critical symptomatology is non-diagnostic, deliberately maintaining diagnosis as a perpetually fleeing ante-horizontal point. In this sense, whilst we can think of symptomatology as a form of critical analysis, we cannot say the same in reverse since critical analysis incorporates both diagnostic and non-diagnostic forms.

The critical creative enactment of symptomatology opens possibilities for a fundamentally different approach to history and to genealogy. By proceeding on the basis of shared problematics (always from the point of view of the present), rather than on the basis of shared solutions, one finds oneself juxtaposing otherwise

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[26] Symptomatology and Symptomology appear interchangeably in both social sciences and medical literature. In this thesis I use the former.

unlikely theory sets leading to what are often fruitful new discoveries. These theory sets are often those between which no conventional genealogical line can be drawn, the products of their encounter (with clear parallels with surrealist games) cannot be planned in advance. In symptomatology, one approaches one's data, therefore, by enquiring into what symptoms it exhibits and the possibilities created by clustering these symptoms together with others uncovered elsewhere.

Though I draw upon a symptomatology that could be described as Deleuzian in this work, his is far from being the only methodology that proceeds on the basis of the elaboration of symptoms. It's worth taking some time then to consider as a point of contrast the symptom-based methods of Žižek, Althusser, and Bachelard (arguably a sort of grandfather figure to symptomatology)

The Bachelardian phenomenological approach to empiricism and his use of the notion of 'problematics' is the common ancestor. The 'problematic' can be seen to perform two conceptual breaks in Bachelard. To begin with, it replaces the position of *the object* as the focal point of enquiry. As Maniglier (a scholar of Bachelard and former student of Althusser's collaborator Balibar) writes:

> There is not, on the one hand, a world divided into large ontic domains (matter, life, etc.), each one characterised by a certain number of properties or laws that the various disciplines (biology, sociology, etc.) would have to learn about, and on the other hand, the mind, which would try to map this reality and fill in any blanks with the right information; there are only singular problems which simultaneously determine the subject to think and the object to be thought (Maniglier 2012, p.22)

Secondly, the problematic is a specific point along a process that runs from the vague to the precise; one of moving from 'a rough theme or question to a precise problem' (Maniglier, 2012 p.21)

In *The Poetics of Space*, Bachelard articulates the difference between his method and that which might be used by a psychoanalyst when writing about poetry:

> [The psychologist and the psychoanalyst], if they take the image as symptomatic, will try to find some reasons and causes for it. A phenomenologist has a different approach. He takes the image just as it is, just as the poet created it, and tries to make it his own, to feed on this rare fruit. He brings the image to the very limit of what he is able to imagine (Bachelard, 1994 p.227).

His analytical action, therefore, is not intended to be one in which a final resting point is found in prognosis but one of endless movement, of problematics that unfold like the travel-case of a door-to-door infinity salesman. His precise problems, like symptoms in clinical analysis, are always contextual and always subject to history's compulsive resculpturing. For Bachelard this corresponds to a process of functionalising (Bachelard, 2012), which he understands less in the more commonly sense of subjecting a thing to the logic of utilitarianism and more in that of investing the object with life, making a thing useable rather than giving it a use. To problematise is to breathe movement into an otherwise static idea.

Deleuze sets up his symptomatological approach in opposition to phenomenology, arguing in *Difference and Repetition* that the latter methodology is irrevocably tethered to Hegelian universalism. 'The whole of phenomenology is an epiphenomenology' he tells us, meaning that it rests upon unquestioned assumptions that entirely undermine the project of reflective enquiry (in the Kantian sense of being opposed to *determinate* enquiry) (Deleuze, 2010 p.63)[27]. However, Deleuze's project is perhaps not so far removed from that of Bachelard as he implies. Indeed, one could easily make the argument that a Hegelian universalism is not so much a property of phenomenology itself than of phenomenology *practised only partially*. Indeed, whilst Deleuze's criticisms are valid, the reason that the underlying assumptions of phenomenology remain unquestioned is precisely because it is not the phenomenologist's intention that there should *be* any. These barriers to the perpetual unfolding of problematics, far from being the deliberately constructed outer-parameters of the phenomenologist's work are there because they have been overlooked.

Certain similarities between Deleuze and Bachelard are revealed when one compares them both to Althusser, whose *symptomatic reading* in *Reading Capital* also develops the Bachelardian problematic (Althusser and Balibar, 2009). *Symptomatic reading* focuses on what is present but does not speak. By exploring these silences, the loci of the author's presuppositions and assumptions, one can begin to articulate the hidden political problems that underlie the text (often beyond

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[27] This relates back to Deleuze's subscription to Duns Scotus' notion of *univocity of being* that we discussed in chapter 1 (Deleuze 2010). Phenomenology, from this perspective, cannot actually be said to deal with phenomena in that the process of elaboration (the feeling and becoming that ought to be at its core) is dependent upon and subordinated to a pre-existent set of categories.

the grasp of the author at the time of writing). This is, like Deleuzian symptomatology, an open ended project that can be perpetually renewed from the point of view of the present. However, it remains a means of interpretation, a method via which we might better be able to grasp the hidden engines of the author's articulation. It is important not to understand this as a question of 'correct readings' though. Like symptomatology, it drags the text into the historical moment of the reader (Milburn 2010 p.38). But, despite the name given to this methodology, the transformation is actually of the *writer*, who is brought back from the dead and unceremoniously interrogated using the imaginal machines and medicines of the reader's *Now*. The creative enactment upon the text is different in Deleuze, whose methodology affects a merger of these separate reader/writer roles. He develops a symptomatology that bursts the banks of the text and becomes a means of analysing lived experience via a deconstruction of the hegemonic categories that underlie the means by which we understand it. So, when he famously states with Guattari, for example, that 'a racehorse is more different from a workhorse than a workhorse is from an Ox' (Deleuze and Guattari, 2004), their intention is not to argue against Linean taxonomy but to show that this too is a symptomatology, emerging from specific problematics rather than a precise interpretation of an objective lifeworld.

Žižek's system, although sharing a distinctly 'interpretive' character with those of both Althusser and Bachelard, corresponds, like Deleuze's to a further-reaching project concerning collective action and social change. The focus of his symptomatic method is the critique of ideology and it is in his key text on this subject, *The Sublime Object of Ideology,* that we find the most useable elaboration of his approach. Here, beginning from a discussion of Marx's theory of the commodity in relation to Freudian dream analysis, he uses a symptomatic approach to move from the commodity 'at face value', first to the hidden content of the commodity (which for Žižek is a somewhat banal revelation just as the latent content of the dream was for Freud), then to the *form* of the process of commodification. This is, for him, the important question, the point at which the functional problematic finds its genesis. Both the manifest and latent contents of the commodity are, in Žižek's writing, symptoms of the process of ideology (Žižek, 2008)

Luckily for us, Žižek applies this symptomatic approach to some resoundingly accessible scenarios. In *Iraq: The Borrowed Kettle* for example, he juices problematics from the US justification for the 2003 war on Iraq by showing

the closed circuit of interference generated by the following propositions:

> (1) Saddam Hussein possesses weapons of mass destruction which pose a "clear and present danger" not only to his neighbours and Israel, but already to all democratic Western states. (2) So what to do when, in September 2003, David Kay, the CIA official in charge of the search for weapons of mass destruction in Iraq, had to concede that no such weapons have so far been found (after more than a thousand US specialists spent months looking for them)? One moves to the next level: even if Saddam does not have any WMD, he was involved with Al-Qaeda in the 9/11 attack, so he should be punished as part of the justified revenge for 9/11 and in order to prevent further such attacks. (3) However, again, in September 2003, even Bush had to concede: "We have no evidence that Saddam Hussein was involved with the 11 September attacks." (Žižek, 2005 p.1-2)

– The 'borrowed kettle' in the title refers to an anecdote related by Freud where a defence against an accusation of having broken the said kettle displays similar internal contradictions: '1) I didn't borrow the kettle, 2) I returned it to you unbroken, 3) The kettle was broken when I borrowed it' (Freud in *ibid* p.1). We can see, in this approach, the usefulness of the wave. Žižek differs from Althusser in that whilst the latter foregrounds the silences in the text (the lacunae), Žižek foregrounds noise. The focus here is not on an absence of explanation but on *too many* explanations. In both cases, however, the object of study is wavelessness[28].

The Symptoms of Regroupment

Major shifts in means of collective organising always seem to occur at a point at which a diagnosis (ideology/set of dogma/system of ethics) no longer seems reflective of the symptoms that underpin it. Occasionally, these struggles for the emergence of new forms of organising resolve in the creation of new diagnoses and occasionally they become struggles that seek, very deliberately, to constitute

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[28] A somewhat similar symptomatological reading of interference is provided in an article in the satirical online publication *The Daily Mash*. The article, entitled 'Man who just got elected, 'definitely unelectable' (Anon. 2015), pokes fun at critics of the Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn from within the party who had bemoaned his landslide victory and popular mandate in the recent leadership election on the grounds that he could not be elected. Of course the piece is intended to be humourous but even so it highlights a genuine point of noise created by the incongruous encounter between the fact of Corbyn's election and the *subsequent* argument that he *could not be* elected. Underneath the surface of this rogue peaking wave one might find a hidden problematic that doesn't relate to electability at all.

themselves at the more temporary, more plastic, level of the syndrome. This relationship between diagnostic and syndromic organising can be read as analogous to the relationship between the enclosed social imaginary (the widthless line of possibility we encountered in the last chapter or the entrenched and false necessitarian formative context we borrowed from Unger [2001] in the previous one) and the imaginal commons. In this section, I'm temporarily leaving the abstract terrain of theories of methodology in order to elaborate symptomatology via a symptomatological reading of the so-called 'regroupment process' taking place within the left. At the same time, I hope to show that this regroupment process is itself inherently symptomatological as I explore the possibilities of organising in a way that is *deliberately* symptomatological. These sections will also set the scene for the chapters that follow, which deal with the empirical element of this thesis.

We have already made use of the rapid erosion of one the UKs largest revolutionary organisations, the SWP, as an example in support of a Bataillian argument that excess must be expended in waste. Like all processes of decay however, this set of events has also produced new life and is in part (but an important part) responsible for whole new left ecologies. The reverberations from the scandal that spelled the end are continuing at the time of writing and it is far from certain that the organisation will survive, except perhaps as a nostalgic sub-culture supported through the rituals of an ever dwindling group of adherents. Analysis of the scandal, which spans an affective continuum that ranges from the gloating to the bereaved, chiefly takes one of two positions. For a number of critics and reformers within the party itself, the scandal revealed a Central Committee that was out of touch, or worse, corrupt (see for example Binh 2013 and Renton 2013). For others, for whom the importance is a structural one, what this reveals is that a whole paradigm of political organising has come to an end as new forms of organising struggle emerge (for example Free Association 2013). The SWP deserves no privileged position in this latter discourse. The collapse is simply a particularly lurid (and therefore media-friendly) symptom of much further reaching changes.

My intention here isn't to investigate these events but what needs to be noted is that the present time is once again one of an intensification of endings and new beginnings on the UK left and of a rethinking around the question of organisation: the gradual disintegration of this once sizable organisation (and the circumstances of its disintegration) has had an important effect on the nature of that rethinking. In the

last couple of years the parameters of the socio-political environment have also been hammered and moulded to the shape not only of the so-called economic crisis but also the riots of 2011, the occupy movement, the informationalisation of labour, the diffusion of mangerialism, and a renewed attack on women. These new parameters provide something of a context for the emergence at the beginning of this decade of groups and affiliations such as The Anti-Capitalist Initiative, The International Socialist Network, and Plan C, which could collectively be characterised as sharing a non-dogmatic and nuanced approach to the question of verticality and horizontality (questions of leadership and centralisation) and renewed interest in feminist critique and practice. The root-points of these bodies are diverse. Some emerge from democratic centralist traditions and others from horizontalist, network-based approaches. However, there is a strong point of convergence between them which doesn't primarily take place at the point of solution. Rather, it is at the point of the problematic that the commonality is to be found. Drawing on symptomatology we can see that this proliferation of new groupings is both necessary and desirable.

The first concern is one of scope. If, in order to read left flux symptomatically we have to overlay different symptomatologies, then how do we choose them? Where do they start and finish and what is internal and external to them? Following Bachelard's method, we start from a rough problem, which is: *The left is undergoing an intensified period of organisational change. These changes bear strong symptomatic commonalities. However, (as we shall see) the diversity of different ways in which these changes have been articulated and understood bear, when clustered, the character of the flat-lining wave clash. With the noise cancelled out, what might we now pick out from the silence?* The analytical focus is what I'll call here the 'organised anti-capitalist left in the UK' (with due acknowledgement that this definition is far from a tidy one but will serve our purposes for now). Each of these bodies, collectives, groupings, tendencies (or whatever related term seems appropriate) has its own unique cluster of symptoms and its own rough problem or problems. Because our rough problem attempts to address the issue of commonalities between all of them, we need to bring these discrete symptomatologies together into a single cluster. There is no reason that any two things cannot be put in symptomatological comparison with one another. However, were we to overlay the symptomatologies of say, the SWP and a bag of onions we might find few common

symptoms of use to us in a critical investigation of organisation[29]. It is necessary to begin from a rough guess or vague feeling that x and y may share symptoms and I make no claims to have done otherwise here.

What can we say about the emergence of new means of organising on the UK left by using symptomatology analytically? We start from the silences. The SWP, as I have said, is in a state of crisis. Ostensibly, this is due to the badly handled rape investigation but, crucially, this crisis has been mirrored in other democratic centralist organisations (both here and overseas). The Socialist Party is undergoing an eerily similar implosion to that of the SWP involving the handling of an allegation of domestic abuse (see Littlechild 2013 for an account), Workers' Power also has a diminished membership after the formation of the Anti-Capitalist Initiative (initially proposed by Ex-Workers Power members), and, perhaps less significantly, another ex Workers' Power group, Permanent Revolution called it quits in March (Permanent Revolution, 2013)[30] These processes exhibit similar symptoms but have been articulated differently. In the stead of these contrasting diagnoses, we might, for the time being, leave silences and explore different symptom clusters.

A very different organisational tradition found its most recent manifestation in the Occupy movement. In the UK this movement can be traced back through the Camp for Climate Action, the summit-hopping alter-globalisation movement, Earth First!-related interventions and projects (such as Reclaim the Streets, the Earth First Summer Action Camps and the anti-road protests), back to the Woman's Peace Camp at Greenham Common (though it is important to note also the influence of the Tahrir Square meme that swept through numerous cities in 2011) (as discussed in Feigenbaum, Frenzel, and McCurdy 2013) Occupy too has withered away and there seems little possibility of a return. Each of the above projects folded for reasons that are differently articulated. Often the interminably unsatisfactory reason 'burn out' will be cited. Quinn Norton, here with specific reference to Occupy Wall Street, articulates this feeling fairly well:

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[29] This, of course, is the basis of poetry and in absolute seriousness I am far from certain that this would be inappropriate as a starting point even in the carrying out of the tasks I have set myself here. However, *for now*, this is not the route I wish to take.

[30] There's almost certainly some sort of lesson to be learned there about the use of the word 'permanent' in the name of your organisation.

Living in parks, having to rub elbows with the people society was set up to shield from each other, began to stress people and make them twitchy from constant culture shock. Grad students trying to reason with smack addicts was torture for both sides. The GA [General Assembly] became the main venue for this torture, and sitting through it was like watching someone sandpaper an open wound' (Norton 2012 No pagination)

There is a third cluster. Let's call it the 'regroupment movement' for the sake of convenience, though it has had far more the character of a series of experiments than constituting a movement. There is a greater commonality of articulation within this cluster but it is the silences and the gaps that are made explicit rather than the means with which to fill them. Organisations that have been situated within this cluster (and we might count the Anti-Capitalist Initiative, the International Socialist Network, Plan C and even perhaps the Left Unity project amongst them – although only the latter two still exist at the time of writing) recognise that *something* isn't working, that the needs of contemporary social struggle are not being met by the organisations of the previous century. The common language within this cluster is one of 'regroupment' (Ramiro 2013, Seymour 2013), 'recomposition' (Davies et al. 2013), 'reconstitution' (Seymour 2015), and 'realignment' (Hardy 2013). These are not necessarily synonyms though. There *are* subtle differences and these differences are an indication of yet more silences, further points of non-sense. For example, 'realignment' contains an implicit notion of discipline absent in the other terms. 'Regroupment' perhaps implies a looseness compared to 'recomposition' and 'reconstitution'. At least four of the five texts cited are attempts to grapple with the same question of the 'coming back together' of a fragmented left (the possible exception is Seymour 2015 which emerges in a slightly different context two years later). But despite the commonalities immediately obvious on a first reading, the differences that can be brought out by a symptomatological overlaying of these can serve to reach deeper into the hidden problematics that summon them forth.

Comparing these clusters reveals a number of common symptoms. There are, for example, shifts away from the extremes of closed and open organisational structures happening in both directions. We might also point to a more pragmatic approach to 'purely' horizontal and 'purely' vertical structures of decision-making (of course neither of these ideal types actually exists and there have been previous attempts to articulate the practice of social movements by employing the terms

'diagonalism', see Mcleish, 2009). We can also identify a slow reversal of the top-down approach to social change beloved of late twentieth century Marxist Leninists. This also corresponds to the emergence of more discerning gate-keeping practices amongst the horizontalist open networks, an end to a way of organising in which anyone entering the room for the first time has the power to direct or derail political processes. There is something akin to a convergence upon a single point visible in all this. So how do we convert these symptoms into a functional problematic? There are a number of emergent threads of discourse that could contribute to this task.

The widespread popular resonance of the Occupy movement, one of the most visible examples of crisis-era protest politics so far, is certainly important, but analysing that resonance is not a task that will be attempted to any depth here. It is worthy of note, though, that one of its effects has been that it has come to the attention of Anglo-American intellectuals in a way that many of its precursors never quite managed. It is to be expected, then, that one of the most frequent misunderstandings of this movement is that it has represented a major rupture with previous modes of organising. No one better exemplifies this tendency than the philosopher Simon Critchley. Seemingly reborn by his experiences taking part in Occupy Wall Street and wide-eyed with enthusiasm for (what he refers to as) anarchism, Critchley has spent the last few years attempting to articulate the shift in the nature of Anglo-American social movements, most recently by organising with others a book and conference entitled *The Anarchist Turn* (Blumenfield et al., 2013) However, he has thus far failed to make a compelling case. In part this appears to be due to ignorance of the genealogy of struggles like the Occupy movement but in part also it might be said to be down to his inability to move beyond an ethical discourse. An ethical engagement with the problematics of the Occupy movement is not, in itself, a bad thing but Critchley's somewhat teleological analysis subordinates all processual concerns. The result is that an organisational element that seems to fit with an ethical commitment to 'real democracy' (such as consensus decision-making) is celebrated as part of the turn, whilst the various weak-points and failings are seen as aberrations relating either to improper practice or to real democracy *about* to emerge but not quite there as yet. Elsewhere I have argued (along with Dowling, Harvie, and Milburn) that this 'ethical' point has been precisely the point of limitation in the occupy movement (Brown et al., 2013). Far from a 'turn', this is a stop (or at least a turn on the spot). It is a point of reterritorialisation (at worst, of

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stagnancy and fetishisation). Moments and spaces of reterritorialisation - as has been argued throughout in this thesis - are necessary for social movement. However, Critchley's model of politics, which he talks about in his book *Infinitely Demanding* as corresponding to the movement from material lack to ethics (Critchley, 2008), is only half-formed. Its positioning of the production of a specific set of values as a fixed and final ideal suggests a truly millenarian understanding of political process. Against this we can posit the Castoriadian model of politics we encountered in Chapter 1: 'politics takes place when the established institution of society is put into question' (Castoriadis 1991 p.160). This instead is a dynamic and unending process consisting in the continual creation of new social relations and '*a new and different articulation* of solidarity' (*ibid.*). The creation (and equally the destruction) of ethical values plays a functional role in the Castoriadian politics but it is not in itself the aim[31].

A different understanding is provided by Rodrigo Nunes who writes of the recent use in social movements of 'distributed leadership', 'the possibility, even for previously "uncharted" individuals and groups, to temporarily take on the role of moving things forward by virtue of coming up with courses of action that provide provisional focal points for activity' (Nunes, 2012 p.6). For him, this is one of the key innovations of the struggles of 2011. This is itself a symptomatological reading, produced through an exploration of the interference between horizontalist, anti-hierarchical ideals that characterise many of those struggles and their actual practice. It is however a much more useful and nuanced understanding of how leadership has operated in these contexts than that found, for example, in Trotskyist critiques of the Anarchist rejection of hierarchy (a representative example of which can be found in Blackledge 2010) which tend to rely upon notions of shadowy, unaccountable cabals (the mirror of democratic centralism but with even less democracy). Nunes' model, in contrast, helps us to address the problems around the contours and gradients visible within social movements without recourse to the notion that hidden power

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[31] In addition to the problems produced by Critchley's political model, the identification of the practices of the Occupy movement with an 'anarchist turn' is belied by the organisational developments and innovations of anarchists themselves which display no evidence whatsoever of a move towards pure assemblyism. The reaction to the Occupy movement within the anarchist milieu has run the gamut from fiercely critical, to cautiously supportive, and then to highly enthusiastic (see respectively, for example, Wild Rose Collective 2012, CrimethInc. 2011 and Graeber 2013). It is clear, though, that anarchists, by and large, whilst recognising the influence of anarchism on Occupy, are rarely so crude as to claim the movement as their own.

structures and secret institutions (that can be addressed through elections) exist within them.

Distributed leadership fits our model of social movement as a wavescape. It is a consistent form, building far out to sea and holding shape until it crashes on the shore, but the brine of which it is made changes consistently throughout its journey - think of the way a 'Mexican wave' at a football match changes as it passes around the stadium for a good example of this. However, whilst Nunes makes no claim to be addressing the question of why (as opposed to how) some forms of action take off and others don't, it is undeniable that a new pool of silence is produced in this area. Leaders may be followed because of their status, especially if one is in a formal hierarchical relationship with them or one in which a process of transference occurs (Harvie & Milburn, forthcoming), but also because their charisma may be such that one is dazzled by them, or because they are able to manipulate or threaten us. However, Nunes' model of distributed leadership relies on the notion that forms of action are replicated because they *work* but this could simply be a tautology: the fact that they are replicated indicates that they work. So there is a circularity to this element of the argument that we are compelled to attempt to push beyond. Nunes' work attempts (and is one of the clearest such attempts) to uncover the main structuring problematics driving social movement post-2011, but its inevitable incompleteness demands that we treat it as a component in our pre-diagnostic aggregate.

The precise problematic that emerges from this concerns the difficulty, when using the organisational structures currently at our disposal, of reconciling the need to move with the need to cohere (a notion to which the interview data will lend further support when we come to consider it in Chapter 5). This problematic suggests a number of new lines of enquiry and different experimental approaches, many of which are deserving of a deep and sustained attention that would unfortunately take us too far away from the main focus of our investigation. However, I wish to turn my attention to the possibilities offered by an approach that draws directly upon symptomatology as an *organisational* model. What might be the effects of putting symptomatology at the heart not just of critique but of forms of organising?

Frequent attendees at gatherings of the socialist left will be familiar with this recurring and near-inevitable scenario: Irrespective of the discussion at hand or the themes of the event itself, someone's contribution will be aggressively shot down on

the grounds of the position taken on North Korea/Hungarian Anti-Fascism/Palestine (insert left issue) by the organisation with which they are affiliated. Such non-sequitur-based denunciations are common enough as to be a running joke. Even when the issue is not one as gravely serious as two Leninists failing to agree a position on North Korea, almost any criticism or disagreement runs the risk of being denounced in certain circles as 'sectarian'. This approach, which necessarily treats a collective body as an impermeable unit, could perhaps be characterised as non-symptomatological. Here the organisation is treated as an embodied solution to or prognosis about the problem of capitalism (regardless of whether that solution is deemed to be desirable, undesirable, or incomplete) and the ways in which it interacts with other collectives depends entirely upon the character of this solution (perhaps manifested in a series of 'position papers'). A symptomatological approach to organising would proceed, in contrast, from commonality of symptoms, milked for shared problematics. Thus, rather than working towards a unity of solution, we might instead enquire into the minimal amount of agreement necessary to mine for new problematics. The noise, the silences, and mutual cancellation of waves would all be considered desirable, a necessary condition for the articulation of the problematics. The question would then not to be 'how can I persuade you that you're wrong?' but 'what is the minimum upon which we have to agree in order to make our separate symptomatologies superimposable, thus engineering a productive (i.e. problem-generating) encounter?' The distinction between these two approaches is illustrated well in an interview with Foucault conducted by Paul Rabinow and published under the title 'Politics, Polemics, and Problemisations'

> The problem is, precisely, to decide if it is actually suitable to place oneself within a "we" in order to assert the principles one recognizes and the values one accepts; or if it is not, rather, necessary to make the future formation of a "we" possible, by elaborating the question. Because it seems to me that the "we" must not be previous to the question; it can only be the result – and the necessarily temporary result – of the question as it is posed in the new terms in which one formulates it (Foucault, 1991)

The most important part of this passage is the idea of the 'we', not only as temporary but also, just like the concept of social movement in Milburn (2010), as a 'we' always becoming. Foucault isn't arguing against the development of collective identity. He's arguing for an *instatic* collective identity. Philippe Mengue makes a

similar point regarding the Deleuze's treatment of the political concept of 'the people'. Deleuze is not opposed to this notion (which, at first glance, may seem antithetical to his political philosophy) as long as the people is always understood as being in a perpetual process of becoming rather than a body that precedes political action as it appears in philosophies such as Bergson's and Heidegger's (Mengue 2008 pp.225-226).

Collective identity grounds, it anchors, it provides a safe place to retreat to and rethink, enabling further explorations to be launched. When experiments in organisation fail to yield new problematics, we can return to a 'we' to regenerate and take stock before setting off in a different direction. However, the development of a new problematic, the elaboration of a new question, provides the basis for a new temporary 'we'. This 'we' might be embodied by an organisation, a social centre, a leader, a mythical or fictional character, a system of ethics, or an aesthetic; the important thing being that it is capable of producing a new and further we (and here we are reminded of Unger's argument that the point is not to avoid the creation of new formative contexts but to create formative contexts from which it is possible to move, see Unger 2001). This temporary us is the point of *syndromic* constitution. It's the point at which a symptomatology becomes a critical vehicle, capable of moving forward a few steps without collapsing, but equally capable of rapid adaptation and rearrangement (Deleuze and Guattari articulate just such a process through the concept of the refrain [2004] which will be of high importance in our consideration of commoning and instituting in the final chapter)

This position, then, in foregrounding the potentials of mass *organising* as opposed to a mass *organisation* demands a different relationship to the idea of 'unity' as being a precondition for the existence of an effective left wing movement. Outside of specific large-scale operations in which a degree of unity may be necessary (although full unity is presumably impossible), the perpetual movement both out from as well as in towards the collective we is an essential elements of the movement of social relations and crucial to the creation of dynamic political institutions. At the same time, that symbiote of unity 'sectarianism' that so haunts the monorganisationist left is to some extent neutralised in this approach. The phenomenon described by this word sectarianism (even when it is not being used cynically to mean 'the practice of doing something other than the thing my organisation believes you ought to be doing') is not in itself a problem. In fact, it's

very much to be encouraged. The problem lies in the attempt to corral the multitudinous approaches into a single, rigorously policed pen. Left 'kettling' perhaps, to employ an *à la mode* analogy[32].

Rather than looking to position papers, platforms, or aims and principles, for the basis of coordination and articulation, it is necessary, from the point of view of symptomatology, to develop new means of enquiry, new means of elaborating questions in such a way that it is the question itself that transforms the political landscape. For Foucault (1991) these are the questions that make the temporary future 'we' possible. By absorbing the basic methods of symptomatology into our organising, we create a means of systematising what the Zapatistas described as 'walking by asking questions' (Conant 2010 p. 163). These watchwords provided the alter-globalisation movement with the loose ethic that reached the end of the road with the Occupy movement. It is perhaps only now, with the erosion of what we might consider the opposite approach, one that prioritises defence of the party, organisation, or solution irrespective of context, that the job of developing a method from that poetic phrase can be entered into with dedication. Ultimately, symptomatology represents the possibility of moving from ideology to methodology as the basis of political affinity and affiliation.

When Marx and Engels began their *Communist Manifesto* with the image of a 'spectre […] haunting Europe' (1998 p.2), they meant to suggest that the power constituted by the communist movement was already so great that its opponents could not help but see it where it did not exist as well as where it did. Their imagery is of a bourgeoisie continually harassed and oppressed by imaginary spooks, of an enemy so fearful and certain of defeat that every breeze amongst the grasses, every creek of a floorboard, was presumed to herald a communist uprising. The invisible planet of the problematic haunts differently. We know it has been here because the room has been rearranged, because we know we closed the door but now it is open, because our radio keeps switching itself on whenever we leave the kitchen,

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[32] 'Kettling' is the term used to describe a specific policing tactic developed as a means of dealing with football hooliganism but used more frequently for the control of mass political protests. It involves the (usually open air) confinement of protesters within a specific area through the creation of a wall of police officers in conjunction with the barriers constituted by buildings and other structures. The process has been subject to legal challenges on the grounds that it amounts to wrongful imprisonment. It has often been deployed for long periods of time, in which those kettled are deprived of basic human needs such as toilets, food and water (Lewis 2009)

broadcasting a granulated message we can't quite discern. Far from seeing it everywhere and wishing to exorcise it, we see it nowhere yet long to encounter it. We face not the outright horror of imminent death but the unsettling eeriness of possibilities not quite articulable.

In this chapter we have used the concept of symptomatology to try to get to grips with how the bodies that constitute social movements can produce an encounter with the invisible objects around which they orbit. I began by introducing symptomatological method and discussing some of its main proponents, finding its roots as a mechanism of critical enactment in Bachelardian phenomenology. Following this we used it in two ways. Firstly, through a symptomatological reading of intra-crisis radical politics in the UK, we suggested that that there was perhaps a hidden problematic at work that corresponds to the question of achieving coherence without sacrificing dynamism, or of developing the means to create collective institutions without retreating into ossified political structures. Secondly, I suggested that symptomatology can be used not just as a means to *read* social movement but also as a means of *producing* it. I argued this on the basis that coordination between radical political bodies, separated from the impetus to dominate or massify, can serve as a means, through the interference of encounter, of tracing the outline of the common (but hidden) problematics that drive them.

We can, then, draw a thread of continuity from our discussion of symptomatology back to an idea that has been crucial to the previous chapters. Symptomatology can be thought of as a mechanism for the facilitation of negative capability. It produces movement not through the clear identification of a point B somewhere in the future but through the nurturing of doubt at the point A, the construction of the feeling or suspicion that *there is something other* (the sense of eeriness). It is an approach to social movement that foregrounds the journey rather than the destination (Furthermore, our discussion on symptomatology enables us to address once again, and this time more concretely, Stanley Fish's objection to Unger's failure to tell us *how to do* negative capability [Fish 1990]). Here we encounter negative capability as a specific set of questions of organisation. These are ones of decision-making, of democratic processes, of communication (both internal and external), they relate to the breaking of dogma and the loosening (and awareness of) ideological constraints, to the development of practices of listening and to adapting through the incorporation of outside or unexpected experiences.

Transforming this into a practice of commoning on the terrain of radical political organising hinges on the creation of collective bodies that, rather than constructing themselves as vessels of prognosis (as with the traditional party form), can instead consciously construct themselves as a clusters of symptoms in syndromic congress with other clusters.

In Žižek's symptomatic reading of the US justification for war in Iraq (2005), we are fortunate to have a self-cancelling official narrative. But of course most narratives are not this clumsy. Where would we be, for example, if the US government had held fast to the argument that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction, going to the point of fabricating the evidence in order to 'prove' it? Žižek's task would then have been more complicated. He would not have been able to limit himself to the official narrative in order to draw out the noise. This is more difficult with certain forms of official narrative than with others. Despite occasional appearances to the contrary, it makes sense to assume that statements made by the US government are carefully written and checked. Not only are they designed to be devoid of both the silences and the cacophony that the symptomatologist seeks (or, when this is impossible, to hide it well) but they also to seep uninvited into unofficial narratives, to operate at an affective if not an unconscious level.

Limiting oneself to official narratives greatly reduces the possibility of productive symptomatology then. A more spontaneous means of generating data, via, say, face-to-face interviews may be able to carry us into more productive waters but only if numerous means are used to enable the interviewer to get beneath the surface and ride the undercurrents of the subject's responses. The next chapter and the one that follows continue to make use of what I have referred to as the regroupment cluster as an observable contemporary example of a collective project (or really an aggregate of collective projects) to reopen the question of the future and expand possibilities for the transformation of society. In the first of these chapters we delve deeper into methodology in order to get to grips with the question of how one might be able to access the imaginal commons through interviews with commoners when significant elements of it elude direct articulation.

Chapter 4.

Forbidden Planets: Gestalts and Narratives

This chapter is intended to be read in conjunction with the one that follows in which I will present and analyse data collected over the course of a series of individual and group interviews with participants in recently formed radical political organisations. The present chapter, being concerned with the methodologies that underlay the interviews, might be thought of as the back-of-shop component to them.

However, what follows is more than simply a technical account of interview methodology. It involves a critical adaptation of the set of techniques taken as its base material. These modifications are made with reference to and relation to understandings of the imaginal built up over the previous three chapters. What results ultimately is a method that, whilst acknowledging its predecessors, is a thing of its own.

We begin, in the first section, with two questions. Firstly, why conduct interviews? Secondly, why do so with this particular set of respondents? I make the argument for the former as both a means of escaping official narratives and with reference to some of the commoning practices we've begun to uncover as the thesis has progressed. The latter question is addressed largely with reference to the discussion in the previous chapter in which I made a case for radical political 'left' organisations as key drivers of collective imaginal transformation during historical periods of low-intensity struggle.

From here we proceed to a critical evaluation of Hollway and Jefferson's Free Association Narrative Interview technique (FANI) (Hollway and Jefferson 2013). This involves a discussion (and explanation) of the idea of *gestalt* around which this technique is built, the relationship of this idea to the imaginal, and its

relationship to symptomatology. I make the case for a re-orientation of Hollway and Jefferson's methodology from one that ultimately subordinates the *gestalt* to the sort of rational discursive constructions more familiar to the interviewer to one that foregrounds the *gestalt* as its main quarry.

We return, in the section after that, to the notion of the surrealist game and, relatedly, to the tradition of surrealist enquiry. After looking at the history and some examples of this approach, I argue that whilst both FANI and surrealist enquiry have limitations as methodologies for accessing the imaginal through interview, they have much potential when used in concert with one another. Following this I show how one might use symptomatology to analyse data produced through these methods.

Finally, before concluding, the reader is talked through the nuts and bolts of the interview process and the questions themselves. I also introduce the collective bodies and individual respondents who took part in the interviews.

Why this and why them?

The interview provides the possibility of a different sort of access to the imaginal. Less polished than the written text it nevertheless provides the opportunity to access the thought (both careful and careless) and perspectives (both informed and otherwise) of its participants. Less chaotic than a full immersion in the moment of excess, it nevertheless (if conducted well) provides the space for the direct and indirect articulation of the unwieldy mess of possibility and desire. In making this claim, I am not articulating a position about interviews that treats them as an uninterrupted conduit through which experience is given voice. Interviews involve narratives constructed (and analysed) under certain conditions. These are set up by the researcher and to some degree by the subject, but more importantly they are produced by (as well as productive of) the social context in which both find themselves (Gubrium & Holstein 2008 pp. xv-xvi). It is precisely this social context that interests us. However, the improvisatory nature of the interview has the potential to produce a narrative that is differently constructed in relation to other forms of text. Specifically, it is a narrative in a state of movement wherein meaning is produced in a continuous wave rather than being presented as a packaged whole. A discussion of

the imaginal that hinges upon the notion that it is processual and dynamic will therefore be enhanced by the facilitation of its observation *in progress*.

Because we're interested here in the collective organising of the imaginal (the comoning processes on which it depends), I've made use of both individual and group interviews, with the former providing to some extent the groundwork for the latter. The tensions between the narratives produced through this process and the conditions that structure them will be explored further as this chapter progresses and in the discussion of data analysis at the beginning of the next chapter where we'll look at the relationship between the different concentric clusterings (the individuals, the small groups, the total community of respondents) to the production of meaning.

The place of the interview in the context of this overall thesis is one of an alternative terrain of investigation used as a contribution to the broader ongoing research rather than that of a central well of empirical data from which the research reaches out like a trapped and desperate octopus. As well as our investigation of the imaginal at the level of theory, we have drawn on (and will continue to draw on) analysis and commentary of many specific examples of the de/recompositional processes at the heart of our discussion. These elements are not of secondary importance to the present foray into the field for the collection of empirical data. Nor are the interviews of secondary importance to them.

In the previous chapter I made the argument that social movements occupy a special place in the constellation of imaginal commoning, I argued that because they collect and orbit around specific problematics, which I characterised as being a key underlying mechanism of negative capability, they constitute themselves in such a way as to allow both the decompositional aspects of the imaginal we discussed in the first chapter and the recompositional aspects (to which our exploration moves ever closer) to be brought to the fore. Whilst this is in part an argument for the centrality of such movements to projects of imagining and producing wide-ranging social change, it is also in part an argument as to why they provide fertile ground for research such as this.

Social movements in general, then, have a unique relationship to the imaginal. They do not, of course, have an exclusive relationship to it. All organisational forms incorporate and build around an imaginal commons. What is of a rare quality here is the encounter with the imaginal in raw form (perhaps we could say *pre-articulated* form, which, as we shall see in the final chapter, is certainly not

the same thing as pre-instituted). In contrast we could perhaps consider other projects such as a community gardens, a rock band, or a global financial services firm. In all three of these examples, the region of the cone of possibility into which the organisation reaches is likely to be narrower. Of course, we can do incredibly innovative things with our community garden; we can make it our own by drawing upon our unique cluster of past experiences in ways that are supremely inventive. We may genuinely be able to push the boundaries of what a community garden is and *can be* so that the imaginals that help to structure future community gardens are irreversibly transformed. The same may be true of our rock band to a lesser extent although there are perhaps tighter limits imposed should we wish to remain within the genre: if that is rock it doesn't stop us from being creative to a 'game-changing' degree or from shifting those limits along a little. Similarly, it doesn't prevent a mode of operating that proceeds through experimentation, albeit within certain parameters[33].

In the previous chapter we also introduced a particular cluster of organisations in the UK whose involvement we considered important in their attempts to articulate, through experimentation, contemporary structuring problematics about movement and cohesion. This same cluster of organisations, represented in this research by the Anti-Capitalist Initiative, the International Socialist Network, and Plan C, will provide the focus for the interviews discussed in this chapter and the next. An introduction to the respondents and their organisations will be given later. Before this, though, there is something more to be said about why these organisations are so well suited to be subjects of fieldwork in this present investigation.

All of the groups concerned might be characterised as engaged in 'revolutionary' or 'radical' projects of social change. By this we might understand that they wish to produce or at least contribute to a level of social transformation that is systemic, fundamental, involving a global rearrangement of both the basis and the mechanisms of social organisation. By the very nature of such projects, a degree of negative capability is already present. However, whilst this description could also be

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[33] It is also important to note that there are many examples of organisations that fit within (or in close proximity to) both these forms that can be considered to be *part of* social movements (both consciously and, in keeping with the problematics raised by the Free Association about the scope and breadth of social movement [Free Association 2011], unconsciously). We will return the question of culture and social movement in the chapter 6.

applied to an orthodox Leninist organisation, an anarchist organisation, and various religious fundamentalisms and primitivisms, the groups we are looking at are perhaps distinct on account of their conscious attempt to move into a space yet to be articulated rather than appealing to either past models of organisation or to idealised models that remain untroubled by context.

In the case of the three groups at the centre of this part of our research, both the organisation *and* the constructions of the possible *and* the formative contexts are new. We are therefore in the privileged position of being able to observe them in development and perhaps provide a few snapshots from a dynamic and nascent triangulation between the three.

These groups also have a particular relationship to collectivity that lends itself well to our research area. They are organised without centralised command mechanisms and with an emphasis on a horizontally organised co-production of knowledge and practice. It would be naive to assume that this means that individual participants might describe their experience and understanding of the organisation without deference to the positions of comrades they might consider to be more experienced or articulate. There is, however, something to be gained in an interview setting from the absence of any formal censure or expectation of toeing a party line (indeed this is a theme that will come up a lot in the interview data looked at in the next chapter). In addition to this, they are all groups situated within collectivist traditions that seek (from a variety of perspectives and positions) to maximise the diffusion of power to act (as well as the redistribution of material resources upon which such a project is reliant). As such, quite apart from our argument that the imaginal is reliant upon commoning, we can think of these groups to some extent as explicitly aiming at the facilitation of a commoning process.

It is this cluster, therefore, from which the individuals and small groups were drawn for the purpose of being interviewed. Of course, it is not sufficient simply to declare that one is going to interview somebody and leave it at that. We need a form of interviewing, an interview methodology, that allows us some insight into the process of imaginal commoning. This entails devising a means to read what is unsaid, to be alert to partially obscured poetic interventions, to follow implied analogical threads, and to draw out points of non-sense. In the following two sections I explore the possibilities offered by the combining of two such approaches, with their respective own strengths and limitations.

Electrifying the *gestalt*.

The 1957 science fiction film *Forbidden Planet* smuggles a sophisticated narrative in beneath the trench coat of its B-movie aesthetic. Under siege over successive nights by some sort of creature or entity they cannot see, the almost uninhabited planet's most recent human arrivals are forced to watch in horror as machinery twists itself impossibly and launches itself (as well as their crewmates) across the landing site of the spaceship C-57D, while great craterous footprints deboss themselves into the dust of the barren surface. In a climactic scene, the protagonists set up an electrified perimeter fence to keep the beast away. On attempting to cross this barrier, the huge and ferocious form is suddenly visible in illuminated and spark-vomiting outline as it becomes an unwitting conductor[34]. The revelation in one of the film's final scenes is that the entity is a manifestation of the uncontrollable unconscious of a human survivor from a previous intergalactic mission that became stranded: the shadowy and complex patriarch, Dr Morbius.

The film is actually loosely based on Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1991). But whilst Shakespeare explores the collective anxieties of 16th century Europe's middle classes in the figure of Caliban (regarded in complex multifarious ways in various discourses as a noble savage, anti-colonial other, or even proletarian rebel), director Fred M. Wilcox in *The Forbidden Planet* consciously exploits the popular interest in Freudian and Jungian analysis to knit together what, to some degree, could be read as a feminist deconstruction of male subjectivity (even if it is still Leslie Nielsen's square-jawed hero that is the ultimate saviour)

Like Dr Morbius' projection, the imaginal is primarily readable through its affects. We can extend this analogy by comparing this Id monster with Morbius' other creation, Robbie the robot. In Robbie, we see Morbius' imagination externalised through a presumably more deliberate productive processes of planning and crafting (in line with the other scientific and engineering work of which we see evidence in his home). The Id monster however is inarticulate (in fact we might

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[34] This means of revelation also brings to mind the 35,000 year old cave paintings found in Borneo that use a stenciling technique whereby blowing red dye onto a hand pressed against the cave wall leaves an image behind not of the hand itself but of the empty space it would have occupied could it still be seen (Sample 2014).

suggest that its vengeful murderousness exists in a proportional relationship to its originator's failure to perceive, articulate, and effectively sublimate it). Morbius must instead rely upon the intervention of others and their innovative use of electricity as an agent of interference to reveal its shape.

But Wilcox is operating on the terrain of psychology and is exploring the complexes of a cinematic (semi-) villain, albeit with the intention of telling a story that contains generalisable elements that speak to the human condition. What happens if we use these plot elements and imagery to look instead at the problems of observing processes of social imaginal composition as they happen? On this terrain we find a whole host of Robbie the robots: texts, official and personal narratives that consciously articulate plans and critiques, hopes and fears. Where we before encountered the Id beast, though, we encounter instead the invisible, clawed titan of shared potential and doubt. This is no longer a question of revealing the masked drives of the unconscious but of attempting to articulate problematics that collectively repel us from our current point of territorialisation and the possible futures that draw us towards another one. How does one set up an electrified perimeter fence that will illuminate this giant when we beckon it to come across?

A useful starting point is provided by Free Association Narrative Interview (FANI), a technique elaborated by Hollway and Jefferson (2013) as part of their investigation into psychosocial methodology. The central element of this approach to the interview is to allow the interviewees to create their own paths of desire through their narratives so that rather than repeatedly reaffirming a fixed line of enquiry and hauling the subject back when they drift off topic, the interviewer attempts to facilitate the flights of fancy that affect discourse as participants pursue their own chains of meaning.

Hollway and Jefferson's psychosocial approach is elaborated through their own research into fear of crime, wherein they attempt to deconstruct coarse statistics of the 'women are x% more likely to fear crime than are men' type by exploring conceptions of crime and fear, and the multitude of different social and political contexts that lead people to respond in certain ways. They begin from the astute observation that whilst in normal everyday conversation we very rarely take anything at face value, it has become almost an ethical requirement to do so in academic interviewing techniques. This is clearly an approach born of good intentions wherein the interviewer attempts to minimise both their own presence and the tendencies of

academic structures of knowledge to colonise narratives and understandings whilst in the field. Although the authors concede that the fact that it is impossible to remove the researcher from the interview relationship doesn't mean it is a waste of time to try to reduce the interviewer's presence (*Ibid.*), doing this is inadequate.

Hollway and Jefferson's methodology is built on an understanding of how interviewees and interviewers (analysands and analysts) act as 'defended subjects', as creators of narratives that serve to protect them against certain anxieties, an approach derived from the work of psychoanalyst Melanie Klein. They also acknowledge a strong debt to the tradition of life-story research in German sociology. It will be useful look at the differences between these two approaches before elaborating the equally significant differences between their research and my own.

Important in German life-story research is the idea of the *gestalt* (see Rosenthal 1993 for example). The *gestalt* is the whole frame of meaning. Part of the researcher's job is to draw this *gestalt* out from the answers given by their research subjects. In Rosenthal's research into the lives of those who had served as prison camp guards during WWII the invitation, 'tell me your life story' is the interviewer's only intervention (Rosenthal in Hollway & Jefferson 2013 p.33). The main work is carried out in analysing the data. The acquired narrative at face-value is at this point meshed with the gestalt in order to give a more complex understanding of the anxieties, desires, and 'facts' of the lives of those researched. In Hollway and Jefferson's research there is a more overt triangulation inherent in the process of analysis: The gestalt, the defended research subject, and the defended researcher.

Clearly there is a kinship between this approach and the symptomatology we discussed in the previous chapter. Similarly, this probing of the gestalt lying behind the narratives given by the interview subject is a method reliant upon reading interferences (things that are present but unspoken or are revealed through mutually cancelling elements in the narrative). We could easily have made use of Wilcox's Id monster in *Fantastic Planet* in our elaboration of that concept. Had we done so we would have drawn an analogy between the beast itself and the problematic. So too between the erection of the electrified fence and the symptomatological process. It's important to be clear about where the concepts meet and where they diverge. Gestalt means *form.* In gestalt psychology, where it finds its principal application, it corresponds to the notion that the mind is comprised of a whole that is *other to* its

parts, i.e. not greater than the sum of its parts but independent of it. This can be illustrated by the well-known example of a drawing of two faces seen in profile, the space between them forming a vase; these two images form the whole, but in viewing it our perception only allows us to see the parts: we either see two faces or we see a vase: we cannot see both at the same time. Contrast this to a tangram puzzle where pieces of various sizes and shapes are placed in perfect tessellation with one another to form a square. In this case the whole that is the sum of its parts. The first image, like the gestalt, is not revealed through a process of addition but through the context and arrangement of the parts. For gestalt psychologists such as Koffka (2014) and Wertheimer (King & Wertheimer 2007), whose work centres on the study of perception, the gestalt also has the quality of being the base element of the perceptual process, i.e., the way in which we perceive an object (for example) is dependent upon the much larger network of objects with which we associate it.

This is in keeping with our notion of the problematic from the last chapter where it was seen as structuring (and therefore prior to) the organisational experiments and innovations taking place within social movements. We could therefore perhaps talk of the problematic as an aspect of the gestalt of social movement. Indeed, there is no reason not to treat it as a term to describe both all that is pre-instituted but nevertheless resides in the social imagination and also the imaginal content to that which is instituted.

Whilst there is no divergence from the *meaning* of the word here, there *is* a divergence from its use in the tradition of gestalt psychology (which is concerned not with the imagination but with unconscious drives) and in the specific way in which it appears in relation to FANI in Hollway and Jefferson (2013 pp. 34-38). Early on in their book, Hollway and Jefferson talk about the ability of their psychosocial approach to erode the binary opposition between the social and the individual and between the objective and the subjective (*Ibid.* p. xiii). There remains, however, an uneasy (and perhaps under-theorised) relationship to authenticity in the research they present in order to elaborate their method. Whilst we can accept that there is some diminishing of the extent to which we can see objective and subjective as opposed to one another, the analytical flow from the latter to the former remains absolutely clear. For them, the tracing of the *gestalt* appears to be a tool for digging out truth from individual narratives. In effect, it acts as a decoding mechanism that enables the researcher to read what their subjects *really* meant. This is perhaps an inevitable

consequence of the Kleinian language of 'defence' when approaching what is hidden in the silences and noise of the spoken narrative as if that which is defended must be of higher value than that which is given freely, and that the basis of that higher value must be in its ability to produce the alchemical gold of truth when added to the spoken narrative.

The focus of my research is different. Indeed, it is almost the reverse. Without rejecting Hollway and Jefferson's contention that in spoken narratives something is hidden, I am not particularly concerned about whether (and how) this hidden element is *defended*. My approach instead is to treat this hidden element as reachable through the symptomatological overlaying of different narratives. On the one hand this means that although I am more interested in the silent than the spoken elements of the interviews, I don't confer a different value upon these things in respect of their relationship to truth. Rather than using a gestalt as a means of understanding the spoken narrative, I use the spoken narrative as a means of understanding the *gestalt*. My interest is not in the relationship of gestalt to reality but in the mechanisms via which it is created. Furthermore, because my focus is on processes of imaginal *commoning* I am less concerned than Hollway and Jefferson or their precursors with finding the gestalt in the dialogue between my respondents' unconscious and conscious and more in seeking for it in the empty spaces *between* our respondents' respective narratives or contributions to the collective narrative.

We've pointed to the affinity between the notion of gestalt and the notion of the imaginal. Having spent several chapters building an understanding of the latter, we should not neglect it now. Turning from the gestalt back to the imaginal provides a neat segue to the dissident methodologies of some of the theorists I've already discussed, namely Bachelard and Bloch. Both Bloch in *The Principle of Hope* (1986) and Bachelard in *The Poetics of Reverie* (1992) begin from the daydream as the raw material of their research. Bloch's investigation of Utopia, which explicitly attempts to move away from the idea of utopia as an *ideal state*, pursues the idea of concretising the daydream, of pushing it to the point at which it collides with what is realisable. Bachelard also attempts to push the daydream to its limits. Here, though, the task is to draw out its functional problematics. Whilst the concrete utopia and the functional problematic are two different things (as discussed over the previous two chapters), there are strong similarities in these two methodologies and between them

and the potential uses to which we might put FANI. Underlying Bachelard, Bloch, and FANI is the amplification of silence.

The free-association facilitated by the interviewer in FANI though is clearly very different from the free-association represented by the daydream or reverie in Bloch or Bachelard (or for that matter the dream in Freud). For a start it is considerably narrower. In Hollway and Jefferson (2013), the subject has at least one or two guiding questions to which they might be expected to maintain at least a rough proximity. In addition, regardless of the subject's familiarity with the structures or conventions of academic knowledge-production there are certain widely held cultural conventions about the appropriate and/or logical linking of ideas that one might reasonably assume would affect any freedom in their association. Certainly, it is difficult to see, within the framework of Hollway and Jefferson's interviews into fear of crime, how a flight of fancy could truly take to the skies because it has been firmly roped to its perch. The whole first part of volume one of Bloch's *The Principle of Hope* is an anthology of daydreams of people of various ages, from childhood to old age. Bloch is far from clear about how these daydreams have been collected. At several points in the text we are told that 'a man relates…' or 'a woman relates…' (Bloch 1983 p.22, 23 etc.), with the clear implication that some sort of interview had taken place. At other times one is left unsure as to whether what we are reading are Bloch's own daydreams. Bachelard (1992) is a little clearer, naming his sources (which are mostly from literature). However, what Bloch and Bachelard have in common is that both use sources that have no explicit link to their research questions or even of knowing what they are. The result of this is a far greater poetic richness. The field of silences is larger than that used in Hollway and Jefferson. In some senses, Bloch and Bachelard's research concerns are closer to my own, being the imaginal itself rather than the biographic or the event. The downside of this lack of attention to biography, however, is that it is impossible to determine what sort of prejudices, assumptions, and contexts might be at work that affect the data.

How can one exploit the strengths of Hollway and Jefferson's approach whilst at the same time producing further-reaching flights of fancy that facilitate access to the poetic, utopian, and mythic elements of the imaginal? How can one get at the impact on organisation of the marvellous, the monstrous, the what-has-been (the imaginal points of minimum entropy and their precursors), and the what-can-be?

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One possibility might be to supplement the Free Associative Narrative Interview with some form of directed analogical association. For this we return once again to surrealism.

When is a door not a door?

In chapter 1 we looked at surrealism in some depth. Much of that discussion focused on the surrealist game. Before proceeding, it is worth recapping on some of those arguments.

We contrasted, in particular, the model of the game we find in Freud with that which we find in surrealism. In the former, elaborated through his ruminations on the childhood game 'Fort! Da!' in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (Freud 1962), we encounter the fundamental basis of the game as being its total lack of consequence. A game, in Freud, is a form of play that ensures that the social and material configurations in place at its beginning are precisely those returned to at its end. As such the psychosocial function of the game (in this model) is both relief from anxiety and reaffirmation through ritual of social institutions. The surrealist game, we argued, is almost the polar opposite. It is deliberately constructed to break with any form of institution via processes of harnessing the analogical imagination to draw out from established imaginal structures and categories. It is a form of play aimed not at returning to the initial context but of making such a return impossible, rooted not in defence against the new but in its production.

We did not, in that chapter, consider separately the tradition of surrealist enquiry. By this I refer to the practice (ongoing since the very first years of surrealism's long history) of asking the movement's participants and fellow travellers questions through documents that are internally circulated (in the sense that they will be posted or more recently emailed to groups and individual surrealists rather than open to all via a publicly accessible place). The tradition of surrealist enquiry cannot properly be considered to fall *within* the category of the surrealist game. It is something other but related to it and often overlapping with it. Depending upon what is being asked, though, a surrealist enquiry may be both enquiry and game at the same time.

There are exceptions to the movement-internal character of these enquiries. For example, one of the earliest instances of such an enquiry (and to this day perhaps still the most ambitious) was the Bureau of Surrealist Research's general investigation into the activities of the unconscious. This was a literal, physical office on Rue de Granelle in Paris that existed between October 1924 and April 1925, collectively run by the surrealist group in that city but with a series of directors, the longest serving of which was Antonin Artaud. It constituted itself as something like a drop-in centre for Parisians to come and give accounts of their dreams[35]. One of André Breton's biographers, Mark Polizzotti, quotes from an unspecified flyer produced by the bureau: 'The Bureau … is devoted to collecting by every means communications relating to the various forms that the mind's unconscious activity is liable to take' (Polizzotti 1995 p.220). The bureau offered no individual psychoanalysis or interpretation but instead used the collected narratives in order to build on their research into the transformative potential of the imagination in general and specifically of the unconscious (their work, at that time, was still very much influenced by Freud). As well as the collection of non-specific data about the unconscious, the bureau also published more specific enquiries. One such was 'le suicide est-il une solution?' ('Is suicide a solution?'), the responses to which were published in the second issue of *La Révolution Surréaliste*, published in January 1925 (Jammes et al. 1925). This early enquiry can be placed with other examples within the tradition that do not necessarily exhibit the features of a game, as for instance more recent examples like Alain Joubert's *Cards on the Table*, which ends with a series of enquiries including 'subversion and positive recuperation. Is such a combination thinkable?' and 'is psychoanalysis violent?' as well as more ambiguous questions such as 'passion of love or love of passion?' (Joubert 2015 pp. 16-19). To this category we could also add the series of questions on love (such as 'do you think love, as an idea or in practice, has a subversive power?') circulated by the Paris Group of the Surrealist Movement in 2014 (p.1).

Here however, those surrealist enquiries which *do* fall somewhere within the category of the surrealist game are more crucial. In this group of ludic enquiries, we could place examples such as that published by the Leeds Surrealist Group which asked respondents to react to series of questions about the owner of an abandoned

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[35] Polizzotti notes that it also operated as an office/workshop for more general surrealist activity as well as a point of contact for those interested in the movement (Polizzotti 1995 p. 220).

pair of shoes photographed at the base of a tree and about the circumstances by which they came to be there (Leeds Surrealist Group 2009). We could include also *Au Bon Endroit*, an enquiry posed by Guy Girard and Marie-Dominique Massoni in 2006 concerning a variety of analogical interpretations of a photograph of an ambiguous fabric-covered structure (some of the responses to which can be found in Leeds Surrealist Group 2007). These two examples are similar in that they ask their respondents to produce poetic analogy related to their subject. The rationale for this is in order both to reveal something (or some things) otherwise hidden about the subject, and to reveal something of the unique relationship to the subject by the participants.

Although it is usual for the responses, rather than their analysis, to take centre stage, there are many examples where the group or individual from whom the enquiry originated have offered commentary drawing together interesting resonances and commonalities in the responses (although relating to a process that was more of a game than, strictly speaking, an enquiry, Bill Howe's *Into the Desert of Mirrors and Magnifiers* [2015] is a good example of such a participant analysis).

Clearly there is a similarity between the more analogically focused approach to the surrealist enquiry and FANI: both rely on some degree of free association. There are, however, differences in the extent to which we can properly consider the association to be free.

In FANI, at least in the way in which it is practiced by Hollway and Jefferson (2013), the free association is not an openly invited one. It is rather a key to meaning withheld from the respondent by the interviewer. Free associative narrative flows are *hoped for* here. They can perhaps be encouraged through the affectation of certain bodily postures and facial expressions. Largely though, the concern of the interviewer is to take measures to ensure that they do not block or stem expression. As such, given that this element of the interview is effectively hidden, it seems reasonable to assume that even those respondents who have never been interviewed before have a certain set of assumptions about what it means to be interviewed, what sort of thing their interviewer is likely to be interested in and, more importantly, how to construct chains of meaning that would make sense in such a context. Hollway and Jefferson are careful to consider their own role as interviewers and to analyse their processes reflexively. However, this is largely based on a series of considerations around the power dynamic involved, such as the self-censoring

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produced by perceived differences of class, education, gender etc. (*ibid.*). What they do not incorporate into their reflexive analysis is that, although there will be (often revelatory) slips and flaws in their respondents' attempts to deliver a meaningful and sense-making narrative, these narratives are deeply entrenched within a set of conventions based on rational discourse (which of course are further fortified by the educational and class status of the interviewers). In other words, like prisoners in a room where, at some stage during their long incarceration, the door is quietly unlocked from the other side, they may be free to leave but are, on the balance of probability, unlikely to do so.

The surrealist enquiry presents a different limitation. There are no such requirements for respondents to remain within the narrow conventions of rational chains of meaning. Furthermore, because the relinquishing of that requirement is *overt,* the flights of fancy that take to the air in its stead are much more likely to be actively and consciously embarked upon. On the other hand, this freedom of association is a directional one. The banks of the river of analogy are deliberately narrowed in order to facilitate faster and further-reaching movement. So for example, to enquire 'what would [the structure] […] be if it was a mental state?' (Girard & Massoni in Leeds Surrealist Group 2007 p.1), does not quite allow for an unfettered blossoming of the imagination because it carries with it an insistence that the respondent remains in sight of both the structure (the fabric-covered object referred to above) and the category: mental state.

I have found no satisfactory means of overcoming the limitation identified in FANI or that identified in the surrealist enquiry. At the same time, there seems to be no reason to assume that either limitation might be exacerbated by combining the two approaches. Not only does this seem unlikely to compound their limitations but it also seems likely to provide us with data that enables us to generate a richer picture of the subject of this study by increasing the number of jarring or unlikely juxtapositions we can overlay symptomatologically in order to produce points of noise.

In the section that follows I give an account of the practical elements of the interview process and the questions themselves. Before moving on there is one more thing to consider in relation to the use of surrealist enquiry as an aspect of methodology. Like the respondents in Hollway and Jefferson's work on crime, these interviews occupy a space governed by specific sets of conventions and expectations

around meaning. As a result, I have needed to ensure that the parameters of the directed analogical enquiry have been quite clear in order to encourage the respondents to enter a terrain that might otherwise have appeared out of bounds to them. This has necessitated designing a list of analogical questions situated in part at what we might think of as the most proscriptive (and therefore most restrictive in terms of freedom of association) end of surrealist enquiry. By way of an example, the invitation 'describe the organisation as a physical environment' requires that the response be anchored both to the specific relevant organisation and to the notion of 'physical environment'. Whilst it would have been satisfying to have been able to facilitate a free flow of analogical association, this is the result of a pragmatic decision concerning my speculations regarding the kind of discursive environments my respondents would be likely to feel comfortable entering.[36]

Practicalities of the Interviews, and the questions asked

I had initially intended to conduct nine individual interviews with participants in three different organisations (three from each), following those with three group-interviews, each one corresponding to one of the organisations and made up of the three participants involved in that organisation. One of the organisations, however, was in a situation of crisis (it ultimately disbanded in the period between the individual and group interviews), which made attracting and then keeping respondents difficult. In the end, it was necessary to accept that this organisation would be represented in my research by only two respondents. Altogether then, there are eight respondents drawn from three organisations.

The participants in each of the three groups were drawn from different geographic locations (with one exception in which two respondents from the same group were based in different parts of a single southern city). This was in order to minimise the risk of the participants frequently covering the same ground in their conversations that we would be intending to focus on in the group interviews, thus allowing me to witness an element of raw negotiation between the three.

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[36] This ultimately proved over-cautious. By and large the respondents threw themselves into this element of the enquiry very enthusiastically.

All individual interviews took place in a face-to-face setting in the cities in which the respondents are (or were at the time) based. The venues in five cases were cafés, in two cases the respondents' homes, and in one case the respondent's place of work. Two of the group interviews took place in the home cities of one of the respondents, with the others given travel expenses. After a long struggle to find a date and place suitable for all, the other group interview took place via an online group video call.

As well as endeavouring to create an easy and friendly atmosphere, I was clear with the participants about my own investments and history in relation to the research. Indeed, it was precisely because of this investment that both acquiring access to the respondents and fostering a sense of mutual respect between us was uncomplicated. I explained in the individual interviews that I was not looking for an accurate account of the formation or the internal organisation of the groups in which the respondents were involved but was more interested in the way they told their stories. When interviewing in groups I stressed that it wasn't necessary for the groups to negotiate conclusive collective responses to my questions but at the same time I encouraged them to pursue any points of disagreement and differences in the accounts to see if and how they could be reconciled.

In the individual interviews, I asked two primary questions and on a handful of occasions also asked questions for clarity about things that had been said. The first question (or invitation in this case) was 'please tell me the story of how you came to be involved in [named organization]' and the second was 'how do you imagine this project impacting on your life as time goes by?' These questions were designed to do three things. First of all, my hope was to encourage the respondents to think about their own subjective relationship to the organisation and to tell me a story that was unique to them rather than to be drawn towards presenting an image of their organisation they would like the outside world to see. Secondly, the framing of the questions was intended to facilitate a degree of daydreaming about both past and future respectively, thus generating data that I might bring to bear upon the discussion in chapter 2 on the temporal-imaginal axis. Thirdly, the questions were composed in order to be loose enough that the scope and breadth of the answers, and the direction they might take, was primarily in the hands of the respondent rather than in my own.

The group interviews revolved around three questions. The first began life as 'what is the centre of gravity that holds [named organisation] together?' although after finding in the first of the three group interviews that I then had to go on to explain this question, I opted instead to talk in terms of 'glue' rather than a 'centre of gravity' in the subsequent two. The second and third questions were, respectively, 'which of [named organisation]'s predecessors are present in the organisation and how do they show themselves?' and 'Where do you imagine [named organisation] will be in a year's time?' As with the questions corresponding to the individual interviews, these were intended to allow for a wide scope in terms of the responses that could follow. They were similarly chosen in order to draw the respondent's attention to the inter-temporality of their organisation, putting them in a position to consider both its past and its future. In contrast to the individual interviews, the focus in these questions was on the story the participants would tell together about their collective body.

The directed analogical enquiry, aimed at generating individual rather than group responses was conducted via email. I tried to put respondents at ease by stressing that they should feel free to ignore any questions they felt uncomfortable about. I was also careful to stress that this was not intended to be an exercise in rapid-fire word association and that they should not write the first thing that came into their heads but could instead spend time thinking about it in order to find an answer which seemed to them to fit. The enquiry comprised the following six elements:

1) What is present but remains silent in the organisation?
2) Of what material is it made?
3) Describe the organisation as a meal or as a single course or dish
4) What spectre haunts it?
5) Describe it as a physical environment
6) Describe any animals and plants that inhabit it

Whilst the FANI questions could gave an emphasis to the temporal aspects of the imaginal that provided the focal point for chapter 2, the analogical enquiry gave an emphasis to the spatial aspects more central to chapter 1.

The process of analysis

I have taken two methodologies as the base material for a modified, combined methodology. What I am referring to here as directed analogical enquiry (in order to give it some specificity within the boarder arena of surrealist enquiry from which it has been drawn) emerged from a tradition in which analysis is often absent or, if not absent, certainly secondary to the sharing of unedited data and responses. FANI, on the other hand, is a method in which the process of analysis is arguably more important than either the interview or the data itself.

The basis of the analysis is the triangulation between the defended subject, the defended interviewer, and the gestalt (the whole that is other than its parts). As such Hollway and Jefferson are wary of the use of qualitative coding software because of its tendency to draw one away from the 'whole' picture (Hollway & Jefferson 2013 p.63). Instead, in their research on crime, they use a loose system of coding based on the correlations and contrasts between their assessment of their respondents' fear and risk of crime (based on crime rates in their area and whether of not the respondents and their families had been victims of crime in the past). These codes are then used to cluster the respondents based upon commonality. This act of clustering might be thought of as a stage of primary analysis undertaken prior to the main body of analysis. The analysis implicit in the grouping, along with a biographical pen-portrait, and some reflexive work into the relationship between the respondents and the interviewer, provide three objects of juxtaposition which, along with the narrative itself, can be brought into encounter in order to build up a understanding of the gestalt and, from that point, draw generalisable conclusions and arguments relating to fear of crime. (Hollway & Jefferson 2013)

The analytical model I use in the following chapter has the same basic form as Hollway and Jefferson's. However, my research differs from theirs in two important ways that affect how the analysis can be approached. To begin with, I am not taking a Kleinian approach employing the language of defence. I similarly treat an aspect of the data as hidden but without the implication of a tension or conflict that the interview process may resolve (for the researcher if not for the subject). In contrast to Hollway and Jefferson's treatment of their respondents as being engaged in a struggle *against* articulation, I approach the respondents here as being engaged in a

struggle to articulate (this follows from the arguments made in the previous chapter that radical social movements operate by orbiting hidden problematics until they can articulate them). Of course, my analysis does not preclude the possibility of a complementary Kleinian reading of the respondents as defended subjects. The data here, rather than being defended or restricted by myriad layers of the respondents' (or interviewer's) consciousness, is obscured by context. The analytical approach here involves shifting the context, so facilitating an encounter between the different narratives and allowing for the intervention of objective chance through the Directed Analogical Enquiry.

The second important difference between my research and that employed in Hollway and Jefferson's psychosocial approach is the *location* and nature of the gestalt we are attempting to read. Hollway and Jefferson take the gestalt as a given, as preformed. They are interested in how this gestalt impacts upon, and operates so as to form the narratives provided by the respondents. The present investigation into the organisation of the imaginal, however, relies on a much more reciprocal relationship between gestalt and narrative. We are interested in how the imaginal commons (the equivalent of the gestalt for the purposes of this research) impact on the narratives, but also in how it is built through them. As a result, the primary focus of the analysis is a gestalt both produced by and productive of the narratives as they encounter one another (harking back to the Castoriadian notion that the social imagination is both produced by and productive of the individual imagination, Castoriadis 1997).

This means that the clustering process is much more central to the method here than it is to Hollway and Jefferson's. Three concentric aggregates impact upon the analysis that follows. The first is that formed of the individual respondent and the interviewer (myself). The second is that constituted by the small groups (three or two respondents plus the interviewer), and the third by the full community of respondents.

Another difference between the present analytical model and that used by Hollway and Jefferson is that unlike theirs it is framed explicitly as a process of symptomatology. The clustering therefore is syndromic: the respondents (and the data) are brought together due to perceived commonalities that become apparent even in the absence of formal (diagnostic) links. This is in order to find symptoms of something hidden in the silences and noise of their narratives. Although the case was

made in chapter 3 that social movements (and the radical organisations that constitute their conscious facilitators) orbit around problematics yet to emerge, I am not exclusively looking to uncover or define those problematics. The focus is rather on understanding how these collectives render themselves open to problematics, how they feel them out through experimentation, how they construct machinery for digging down into the rough problems that draw their participants towards one another.

Part of getting to grips with this concerns the arrangement (clustering) of the data which, rather than being a stage *prior to* the analysis (perhaps through being organised according to the questions asked as it would have been in many analytical approaches) is a part of the process of analysis itself. Whilst Hollway and Jefferson's thematic clustering, 'Fear' and 'Risk', follows from the aims or their research into the fear of crime and therefore *precedes* the collection of the data, here the themes are produced through an analogical reading of the symptoms apparent in the data *after* it has been produced. As a result, rather than themes directly stemming from the research questions (for example, 'Imagination', 'Organising', 'Social change'), four themes relating to the myth of the Great Deluge are used for the purposes of analysis and explication in the next chapter.

Introducing the respondents

The Organisations

Given the small size and specificity of the terrain from which these organisations have been drawn, coupled with the necessity of making that specificity explicit to support the argument, I have not sought to protect the anonymity of the organisations involved (in contrast to the individuals themselves – see below)

Quite deliberately, no attempt has been made to assemble anything approaching an objective account or history of the three organisations. As new entities, which in two cases were relatively short-lived, and in all cases were rather chaotically and more or less horizontally organised, with neither central committees nor official historians, such an attempt would be likely to fail anyway, or to be so beset by detractors as to be quickly rendered irrelevant. The methodology employed

(as I have outlined above) is intended to stimulate the articulation of subjective experiences in the first two stages and negotiation of an inter-subjective or collective account of a shared project in the latter. It is to be assumed that other members of these organisations who were not interviewed would tell different stories. However, there are key elements of background, form, or context that it seems useful to flag up. In some cases, for example, there are contexts of which the respondents may have assumed my prior awareness (either because of my own investment in those contexts or because they had already cropped up in informal conversations as we arranged the interviews). Where there are specific cultural or political references in the interview data that are not elaborated upon or that have an importance to the respondent of which I am aware but which is not articulated by them, I have attempted to explain them as they have come up. Other, broader contexts are outlined here.

Plan C – Plan C is a UK-based left-wing organisation with groups in a number of cities. The name refers to a perceived need amongst its members to develop a means of moving beyond the current situation of global crisis that is neither Plan A (an intensification of neoliberalism through austerity measures), nor Plan B (a return of some variation of Keynesianism). Members occasionally state that the C stands for Communism or, more frequently, for Commons, although this is deliberately left open to interpretation. It emerged in 2011 and could perhaps be described as having developed out of an encounter between Autonomist Marxist and Marxist-Feminist influenced participants in the Alter-globalisation movement and others in the student movements of 2010.

ACI - The Anti-Capitalist Initiative (ACI) became defunct during the period for which the interviews were taking place. At its peak (some time before the interviews) it was a UK-wide organisation with groups in several cities. At the time of writing there has still been no 'official' disbanding or dissolution. However, by the time of the group interview, the ACI respondents seemed to agree with one another that it no longer existed. Although many of the initial architects of the organisation had a background in Trotskyist groups (Workers Power specifically), the nature of the project was such that it was able to attract radicals from a range of political backgrounds. Its genesis can also be situated in the student movements of 2010. At the time of the first interviews, ACI was involved in a series of

'regroupment talks' with a number of socialist organisations, including the I.S. Network

I.S. Network – The International Socialist Network (which I occasionally refer to as ISN in line with the preferred form used by one of my respondents) formerly disbanded in April 2015, five months after we conducted the group interview (James et al. 2015). Whilst still in operation, the organisation similarly has branches in a number of UK cities. It emerged directly from the major split in the Socialist Workers Party in 2012 for reasons discussed earlier. The majority of the I.S. Network's membership was made up of former members of the S.W.P. (many of whom had left much earlier) but it was by no means limited to them, nor to radicals situated within the Trotskyist tradition. Unlike the other two organisations, I.S. Network used a steering committee and therefore might be thought of as slightly more centralist in nature (although in a quite distinct way from their predecessors). At the time of the interviews, the organisation was involved in 'regroupment talks' with a number of other socialist organisations including ACI.

The Individuals

The need to preserve anonymity within a relatively small milieu means that it is necessary to be cautious about biographical details. However, for the most part participants did not mind giving biographical details to provide important contextual information and this played an important part in the interview content. Nevertheless, I have given the respondents first name pseudonyms and have grouped them in alphabetical sequence along with the other members of the organisation. So those who spoke about their experiences of ACI have names beginning A and B, those of ISN are given names C, D, and E, and those with Plan C and referred to as F, G, and H.

The following short biographical portraits provide some context for the stories told to me by the respondents. As well as the pseudonyms, small inconsequential changes have been made to a handful of details that would otherwise have immediately identified the participants. These portraits were made at the time of the interviews and as such may no longer accurately reflect the life-circumstances of their subjects.

Anne is an academic in her thirties. At the time of the first interview she was living on the South Coast but had relocated to an inland Southeastern city by the time of the group interview. She was introduced to me by Benjamin. Unlike many in ACI, Anne does not have a background in Trotskyist organisations. She describes herself as having had 'anarchist principles built into […her…] from a young age' and has largely been involved in campaign work independently of other political organisations.

Benjamin is a Masters student in his twenties whom I had corresponded with previously in the context of an article I had co-written for a magazine of which he was an editor. He lives in a Northern city. He hadn't been involved in ACI when it first started but Anne credited him with being fundamental to the operation of the group in his city. Much like a number of the initial architects of the organisation he had been a member of the Trotskyist group Workers' Power but had left them some years previously. We met in a café in his city. Some months later, the same café was the venue for the ACI group interview.

Chris is in his thirties, a parent, a musician, and administrative worker in a higher education institution in the Midlands. Prior to helping to create the I.S. Network, he had been a long-standing member of the Socialist Workers Party and left at the same time as many others in the wake of the recent scandal. I became aware of Chris when, a year or so earlier, he had corresponded with participants in The Education Commission, a project that members of Plan C had facilitated (including one of the below respondents). The interview, which took place in an empty office in his place of work, was the first time we had met.

Donna works in secondary school education in the North of England and has grown-up offspring. She was the eldest of my respondents and this became a bit of a theme in her interview ('sometimes I feel like I'm their mum!'). Although she too has a history of involvement in the SWP, she left it in the 90s. Donna is also an active participant in Left Unity and, due to a lack of other I.S. Network members in her city, feels this is where her political activity is concentrated. She was introduced to me by Chris. We met for the interview in a deserted café in her home city.

Elliot is the only respondent who lives in the same northern English city as I do and as a result was known to me as a figure on the political left. Although we had previously attended the same meetings and other events on occasion I had never had a one-on-one conversation with him until the day of the interview. He is in his late

twenties and had previously been very active in the Socialist Workers Party, at one point occupying a role in it as paid organiser. His departure from the SWP was via expulsion not long before the larger exodus of which Chris was a part. The interview I conducted with Elliot took place in the (somewhat noisy) café of a theatre not far away from my home.

Fred is in his late thirties and has a long history of political organising. He was involved in the creation of Plan C and is a member of one of the groups in the south of England. He works in I.T. and is a parent. I met with him in the flat rented by his partner (who was also kind enough to put me up for the night). As with some of the other respondents I already had a good relationship with Fred, having met him many years previously and worked with him on projects in the past.

Gavin is in his twenties, also involved in the creation of Plan C, but is a member of one of the groups in the North of England. He works in educational support and met with me for the purposes of the interview in a café in the city in which he lives and works (A series of cafés in fact as we were hounded by noise). Again, I already knew Gavin as a friend although he is a more recent acquaintance than Fred.

Heather is in her thirties, an immigrant from another English speaking country, a PhD student, and a mother of two. She is involved in the same Plan C group as Fred and had similarly been involved in the organisation from its beginning. Like Fred, she has a long history of political organising, although, this having taken place in the country of her birth, the form was somewhat different. As with the other Plan C respondents, she is a close friend whom I met at more or less the same time as Gavin. The interview took place at her home. Some months later, this was also the location for the group interview.

A further note on my involvement in Plan C

As mentioned in the introduction, I am myself involved in one of these organisations: Plan C. This undeniably had an effect on the interview process, something that had both advantages and disadvantages and it is important to draw out how it might have modified the terrain.

One aspect of this is that certain elements of the intersubjective relationship between the interviewer and the respondent were *pre-activated* because we had prior knowledge of one another to varying degrees, from strongly bonded relationships to ones based only on passing acquaintance or even due to the reputation of the person. We'll also find more generalised assumptions based on what is known (or suspected) about roles, identity and associations. This group of pre-activated, intersubjective elements is something with which any and all interviewers have to deal. For example, mentioned briefly above, Tony Jefferson was acutely aware of the way in which the respondent in his research into crime might perceive him as being differently educated and/or of a different class and the ways in which this might affect responses. He took *some* (although not very many) measures to minimise this difference but doesn't pretend that he is able to erase it (Hollway & Jefferson 2013). Whilst there is no discussion about this in their joint book, it is to be assumed that Jefferson was also moulded by a set of preconceptions in his interaction with the respondent (we might further infer, by looking at Jefferson's response symptomatologically, that his own preconceptions were based on class since this is the only one of many potential areas of power imbalance about which he reflects, with education largely considered as a class signifier).

I will return to my relationships with the Plan C respondents shortly. Among the other two groupings, however, the pre-activated intersubjectivities were likely to have been in this latter 'type-based' rather than 'individual-based' category. Unlike the concerns Jefferson raises, though, these elements are those more likely to have engendered a perception of commonality than of difference. Indeed, I am almost certainly guilty of deliberately fostering such assumptions as part of the process of gaining access. All of the respondents were aware of my involvement in radical organising and all were aware that it was largely from within an organisation that, like their own, wished to work towards non-competing forms of organising that are distinct from those which had held hegemony over the previous few decades. To an extent this situation has created a very useful culture characterised by people practically falling over themselves to listen to one another and respect difference, and this has doubtless implications for the degree of mutual trust between the respondents and myself. It must also be noted, however, that many of the respondents had recently emerged from a very different politically sectarian culture where interaction between political organisations was often motivated by the

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imperative either to absorb or destroy the others. The degree to which this culture may have been internalised by the respondents is hard to determine and whilst the interview data suggests (without exception, actually) a very conscious rejection of that culture, the possibility of a sense of competitiveness or suspicion must be borne in mind.

Ultimately, the fact that my own organisation is among those used is of little relevance to these pre-activations. They depend, rather, on my stated investment in the field of research and, more specifically, in my presentation of it as similar to that of my respondents.

Amongst the Plan C respondents the situation is perhaps different. All three know me personally. A sense of trust has been built up over time. Our investment in one another is deeper. While it can be assumed that these relationships are also shaped, to some degree, by presuppositions and unconscious prejudices, the effect on the interviews are more likely to come from things known than from things suspected. Did my respondents present their narratives in a way that was dependent on my prior knowledge of elements of their life stories? Was there any element of self-censoring due to a conscious or subconscious desire to make their stories commensurable with my own? Was our interaction governed by a desire to please each other in a way that was unlike the other interviews? Conversely, was it governed by a sense that we did not *need* to please each other in a way that other interviewees might have?[37]

My response to these concerns, like that of Hollway and Jefferson (2013) is to situate myself at the point of production of the data rather than in a position of god-like objectivity (impossible on *any* research project, but even more so in one in which the researcher has an active interest). For those authors, as previously mentioned, this requires a process of triangulation between the gestalt, the defended subject, and the defended interviewer. This is certainly not an equilateral triangulation since the gestalt is overwhelmingly sought in the respondent's narrative. However, it takes account of the modifications made to it both at the points of interview and analysis. The analytical method that will be brought to bear in this research is somewhat different from that of Hollway and Jefferson (not least because we are looking for our gestalt in a different place). Because, in both of our

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[37] For a sustained examination of the ethical issues involved in researching friends see Brewis 2014.

approaches, the analysis and the production of the data are merged and overlapping, I will deal further with my proximity to the production of the narratives in the next chapter.

In this chapter I've put forward an argument for the usefulness of the interview as a means of gathering data that might be used to support and complement the theoretical exploration of the organisation of the imaginal that I've been developing throughout the thesis. The argument has hinged on the ability of the interviewer to draw out subjective narratives that might be considered too unpolished to be transmitted via other media (or at all). The likelihood of gaining access to a mess of silence and interference gave good reason to believe that individual and group interviews would provide fertile ground upon which to observe the unfolding of collectively constructed imaginals.

Continuing to make a case that I began to make in the previous chapter, I have justified and supported the decision about the terrain from which I've drawn our respondents too, who I went on to introduce with towards the end of the chapter.

Most importantly, this chapter has been concerned with a critical investigation of Free Associative Narrative Interview methodology (including discussion of some of its precursors) and of the tradition of surrealist enquiry. I demonstrated that there are a number of strengths associated with both these approaches as well as explaining their affinity to concepts that we have encountered in earlier chapters (symptomatology, the problematic, negative capability, and the surrealist game). I also identified a number of limitations however, which I suggested could be dealt with in part by combining the two methodologies into a two-pronged process of empirical research. Following this I explained the process of analysis by showing how one might provide a symptomatological reading of data produced through FANI and directed analogical enquiry.

In the next chapter I will provide a justification for the way in which the interview data is presented and then, most importantly, engage in detailed analysis and discussion of the data itself.

Chapter 5.

Arks, Arcs, and Analogons: Interview Analysis

The main concern of this chapter is to take the reader through some of the narratives produced by my respondents (alone and together) during the interview process. I begin by explaining the presentation of the data, which is woven around the archetypal myth of the Great Deluge, a story that has four key elements: an old world destroyed by flood or by fire, a boat or shelter, a group of survivors, and the new world they build. I make the case that this myth helps to bring out something in the subjects' narratives that is easy to relate to some of the arguments and propositions made about the imaginal in the first and second chapters.

From there we step into the churning waters of the interview data itself, discussing the ideas that silently stalk the accounts and shared stories and others that may be vying for space in noise-producing opposition to one another. We will see much in this data supports my earlier arguments and also much that opens up a new terrain centred on the composition of new formative contexts.

The final section offers more general comments on how the process has affected the earlier arguments on the spatial and temporal-imaginal axes, and how it links to the subsequent and final chapter.

Presentation of the data (the Great Deluge)

Westerners are probably most likely to encounter the myth of The Great Deluge through its Judeo-Christian permutation, the story of Noah and his Ark. In this tale God takes exception to the sinful ways in which humans have decided to implement

their free will and decides to wipe the slate clean with a global flood that destroys almost all human and animal life. Rather than beginning the creation process afresh with new clay, God trusts in the sexual reproduction processes already in motion and tasks the one good man, Noah, with building a vast boat into which he can take two of every animal (there are a few variations on that aspect of the story) and keep himself and his family safe, becoming the paternal bottle-neck in a new era of the human species and facilitating similar new eras in all other animals too. This is in fact one of the oldest and most common cycles in mythology, a variation of what structuralist mythologists have called the culture hero myth (Rank 2013, Henderson 1978, Levi-Strauss 1995) which tells the story of either a fire-thief, a deluge survivor, or someone who is halfway between the two (Freund 2003). Indeed one of the oldest cuneiform tablets held by the British Museum (belonging to the Sumerian civilisation) appears to tell the same story (Finkel 2014). There are equivalent stories from cultures that branch off earlier from the various middle-eastern cultures that eventually gave birth to the Abrahamic religions. From the Burmese hero who survives a flood of fire in a giant gourd, to the Voguls of the Urals and their story of a raft of survivors in a burning landscape, to the Bolivian tale of the one remaining man who survives the rain of fire sent by a demon to wipe out all of humanity by hiding in a cave (Freund 2003).

What is important about the story of Noah's Ark, and all the stories with which it shares its evolution, is that they have two key elements: a clear rupture with the previous era, and something that survives to be brought through to the next.[38] These elements recur continually in the interviews and provide a useful model for understanding the connections between the themes and way the respondents' narratives fit together. As such the elements of the interview narratives are grouped in clusters relating to these themes.

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[38] Interestingly, many contemporary models of the 'big bang' also correspond to a *Great Deluge* form of genesis narrative. Whilst the previous Einsteinian understanding relied upon a notion of galaxies expanding outwards from one another from a point zero situated in the finite past, some new models that take quantum effects into account posit the existence of a *prebangian* universe (stemming from an argument that matter must already have been spread over a certain minimum distance at the time of the big bang). In these new models, big bangs are infinite in number, with the acceleration and deceleration of matter (and therefore time itself) reversing direction after each bang and each crunch (when that matter reaches maximum level of diffusion) (Veneziano 2014) This is similar to the great deluge story, but dissimilar to other creation myths such as that told at the beginning of the old testament; this new theory posits a universe in which something has been carried over from a previous universe.

Such grouping serves two functions, an analytical and an explicatory one. To begin with it is a part of the symptomatological process. Whilst the clustering of the respondents according to organisation is a *pre-analytical* one, this thematic aggregation is a part of the analysis itself. It is not governed by the questions the respondents were asked but by the commonalities that can be drawn from the stories they tell.

To be absolutely clear, I am not making a structuralist claim about the *pre-existence* of the story in the words of the respondents. The basis of the analytical function of the aggregation is not to show that this story is what *underlies* the interview narratives. Rather, it is a *moment* in a symptomatological process that begins from the recognition of a set of symptoms that are shared between the respondents' narratives (already in their pre-analytic clusters) and the Great Deluge myth and that *overlays* them and so brings into relief the unspoken content of the narratives by attention given to the points at which they do and do not fit together.

Furthermore, this clustering addresses questions of reader accessibility. It is to be hoped that its incorporation into a narrative arc brings a degree of clarity to the interviews, carrying their contents through the turbulent chaos of free association and flights of fancy and into the necessarily more orderly world of analysis and critique. It enables the data to be more easily related back to the arguments made in previous chapters, as well as providing a less erratic terrain from which to draw some conclusions and suggestions for further enquiry.

I have therefore attempted to test the community of meaning found in the respondents' stories against the myth of the Great Deluge. This must be seen as a pragmatic move adopted to reveal something about the gestalt operating upon the responses and about how we make stories to describe the movement of history. It must be remembered, however, that ours is not a diagnostic process. We are looking for what moves and deepens, rather than for what explains and fixes. Put differently, the Great Deluge story performs a role much more closely related to the ark itself than to the world upon which the waters fell.

The data is clustered around five themes. These all correspond to the two axes of realswell that I defined and explored in the first two chapters. The first four themes relate to the temporal-imaginal axis and are comprised of *Rupture* (the moment of deluge)*, Antediluvia* (that which has been given or has taken refuge on the 'ark')*, Legacy* (the inversion of Antediluvia)*,* and *The Not Yet* (future rupture, the next

deluge). The final theme, *The Common,* corresponds to the spatial-imaginal axis. Each of these themes is separately expanded upon in turn prior to exploring its manifestation in the interview content.

Along the temporal-imaginal axis, then, there is an obvious sequence that runs from Antediluvia, to Rupture, to The Not Yet, to Legacy, in which each of the themes is situated at a point on a time line at which its content actually occurs. However, to insist on the themes running in this order would be to return us to a model of the imagination that acts in accordance with chronological sequence. This is a model we were at pains to abandon in Chapter 2. The four aspects of The Now can instead be placed in a different order based on imminence or in order of concentricity like ripples moving away from the mouth of a surface-feeding fish. Here, whilst Rupture still appears as what has happened and The Not Yet still occupies space after the now, both Antediluvia and Legacy (counter-intuitively in both cases) concern the actual organisational practices of the present moment rather than those which lead to or from them. I arrange the themes in this order: Rupture, Antediluvia, Legacy, and The Not Yet. These are dealt with in sequence in the section below.

Narrative Arcs, Narrative Arks

Rupture

Under the fifth theme, *The Common*, I look at where the respondents have discussed (directly, through intimation, or through analogy) the boundaries or parameters of their respective organisations, the places where, on the one side, sits the Organisation and, on the other side, sits Not the Organisation. Using the idea of Rupture serves as a mechanism with which to set a boundary that operates at a *temporal* rather than *spatial* level. In all of these interviews it appears as a moment of crisis that demanded a radically new approach in order for a new way forward to be revealed and, a break with previous modes of organisation made.

We can relate this idea back to a couple of different concepts that have been discussed earlier. One is the imaginal point of minimum entropy. When we talk about rupture, we mean the breech-point in this moment: the point at which a

previous state of order, no longer capable of sustaining its integrity, explodes outwards to reveal a whole new set of possibilities. With this new set of possibilities comes a new set of problems, which brings us to our other point of reference. In our dynamic model of problematising in which the articulation of one problematic immediately begets a new ecology of problems we can see how the point of articulation of the *now obsolete problematic* is kin to this point of rupture. Remember: the case we are building here is not one in which social movements articulate a functional problematic and then launch off in search of its solution, but is one in which social movements are drawn into motion by the presence of problems to do with the functional problematic as a future-situated point of momentary reterritorialisation.

Rupture was approached in two different ways by the Plan C respondents. In all three narratives, it is centred on the global financial crisis of 2007. Gavin's answers were very much focused on imagery around blockage. In particular he envisioned these blockages as repetition loops in which organisations and actors become trapped within a net from which they cannot break out. He specifically mentions 'Trotskyists', 'unionists', and 'activists' as having become stuck in set-pieces and rituals instead of seeking to 'find a way through' or, he intimated, develop new practices to fit the new context;

> The crisis happened in 2008, we ended up just falling into this cycle of things like UK Uncut, that round of Anti-austerity groups which were formed from community activists and Trots and unionists that all kind of collapsed in their own way very quickly (Gavin)

This came to a head for Gavin in a two-day national gathering called Network X that took place in Manchester in 2011. All three of the Plan C respondents refer to this gathering as having played an important part in Plan C's genesis. Gavin and Fred both present attended it and tell the same story about a number of people there who would later form Plan C, having been involved in a workshop together and been critical of what had seemed like a clumsy attempt to transpose the organisational forms of the alter-globalisation movement into the new context produced by the post-crisis regime of austerity and the militant new student movement. Gavin recounts an exchange with a woman who had innocently wandered into the room (in the students' union building) during the event: 'someone came in halfway through and

was like "Is this the live action role playing society?" Obviously I directed her where she needed to go but I felt like she could have stayed. [Laughter]'

Gavin's concerns about repetition were carried over into the group interview but were more tempered. Whilst all present agreed that the fear of repetition sits very close to the heart of the organisation, they were aware of its pitfalls and in the small group interview, Gavin spoke about 'not throwing the baby out with the bathwater'. Fred agreed and made an insightful comment about an uneasy relationship the organisation has to 'ritual' where it 'almost becomes a signal of things going wrong'.

We can read Gavin's comment as alluding to something more specific as well as to a general anxiety about repetition and the organisation's relationship to repetition. In elaborating this, the reader will have to forgive me for using my own familiarity with Plan C to fill in the blanks. As warned in the previous chapter, there were moments in the interviews with Plan C respondents where my status as an insider meant that certain ideas were not fully explained (my understanding being assumed by those being interviewed). Gavin's earlier allusions to the problems with activism are probably an example of this. This comment from the group interview about babyies and bathwater relates, we might sensibly speculate, to the same critique. Crucial to the milieu from which Plan C emerged was (and still is) a widely circulated article 'Give Up Activism' by Andrew X, which originally appeared in the magazine *Reflections on June 18th* (X 1999). The text, which was heavily influenced by Vaneigem's critique of the militant in *The Revolution of Everyday Life* (Vaneigem 2001), sought to provide a critique of the activist identity, which separates political action from the everyday and in so doing produces a figure every bit as problematic as that of the Leninist vanguardist constituted separately from the wider 'masses'. Relatedly Jacques Camatte and Giani Collu's text *On Organisation* which argues that political organisations (at least in the somewhat narrow sense in which the authors understand them) are essentially 'rackets', always and everywhere adopting the form of the gang was also in wide circulation (Camatte 1995). Gavin is probably here reflecting on ongoing attempts to engage with those critiques (which by this point had been absorbed into the collective imaginary of the milieu) without at the same time giving up either political action or experimentation with organisational forms. Interestingly Nicholas Thoburn, with reference to Camatte and Collu but without reference to Vaneigem, elaborates on the centrality of this same problematic

to Deleuze's political philosophy (Thoburn 2008). This issue will be considered further in the section on the Refrain in the chapter that follows this one.

Both Fred and Heather employed imagery associated more with emptiness than with blockage. Fred repeatedly highlighted the unrealised potential of the milieus and movements from which Plan C emerged, whilst Heather suggested that these movements had failed to move into the new terrain produced by the crisis of 2008. In Fred's words: 'the forms of organisation and the politics of organisation went into crisis' too. In both of these narratives we were introduced to a two-fold process wherein rupture is primarily external (due to neoliberalism having reached *the* or *a* limit). The organisation itself is not characterised as what creates rupture but as what attempts to hold open the breach, to fill it with itself in order that it cannot be returned to its previous state. Fred's turn of phrase is telling: 'there was a space opening up […] that kind of brought people together in these kind of discussions in a fairly […] simultaneous way across the UK'.

In both of these respondents' cases we find this idea further pursued in the analogical enquiry. When asked to describe the material from which Plan C is made, Fred responds 'paper'. Whilst this could reference a perceived fragility or lightness within the organisation, it would be more in keeping with the interview content to see what is significant about this is the blank space constituted by a sheet of paper, a space held open but yet to be marked or filled. 'An unrealised past' in answer to the question 'What spectre haunts it?' is yet another allusion to unfulfilled potential. Perhaps we could even press further and suggest that Fred's imagining of Plan C as 'Fields of wheat' in response to the question 'What flora or fauna inhabit it?' is a continuation of the theme. Wheat, as a commodity situated at an early stage in a process of production, is in many ways an embodiment of unfulfilled potential. This is, of course, a more optimistic analogy in which potential still exists that may still be fulfilled, rather than that which has been wasted. Of course, we should not ignore the fact that these analogies also seem to bespeak a fear of blandness. Heather, in answer to the same question, and in conjunction with the previous one concerning the organisation as a physical terrain, invokes the image of a pond, partially obscured by long grass in a corner of an overgrown garden. Again we might read this as a reference to an undiscovered or unexploited rupture in a chaotic landscape situated within a form (the garden) where we might traditionally expect to find order.

Gavin unfolds the poetry of rupture differently. For him the organisation is the active agent of rupture, perceived as having to break through the calcified barriers erected by activist repetition. At the same time, he talks of the 'founding moment' as having been drawn out and become incremental[39].

Gavin is younger than the two other Plan C respondents and it might be that this is reflected in the fact that he has not been though as many cycles of promise and disappointment as the others,[40] since he emerged as a politically engaged subject more recently than they did, or perhaps that he is more easily able to consider this emergence as a current, continuing process. Although in interviews given by all three, there is a sense of (and indeed active dedication to) the discovering what is new and unknown, Gavin's is notable for its sense of vulnerability and anxiety/excitement. In his analogical interview for example he talked of the 'hidden and ever-changing' flora and fauna of the organisation and the 'subtle dangers and surprising allies' these might represent – Imagery that could scarcely be more at odds with Fred's 'fields of wheat'.

The Plan C respondents paint a picture of a rupture that is born of a combination of frustration, disappointment, and yet of opportunity. This is true also of those in the other organisations (ISN and ACI). The International Socialist Network is perhaps unique, though, for the sense of trauma accompanying these qualities. What came across in all three of the responses from members of this group was a feeling that they had been desperately restricted when they were members of the Socialist Workers Party. Although the 'Comrade Delta Affair' (Comrade Delta is the pseudonym of the central committee member accused of rape) was mentioned by each of them, from which it is clear that the rupture was far more focused on the perception of oppressive or anti-democratic mechanisms in the organisation. Chris was clear that the problems were structural rather than just 'a few bad apples at the top'. He argued that the party leadership was acting 'contrary to […] quite fundamental principles' but pointed to specific structures (or their absence) that meant not only that the self-preservation of that leadership was inevitably protected at the expense of democracy but also that provided no 'checks and balances to hold

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[39] It is easy to be reminded here of Foucault's insistence discussed in chapter 3 that 'the "we" must not be previous to the question' (Foucault & Rabinow 1991 p.385)

[40] Fred and Heather had both been involved in many political projects and movements prior to Plan C, over a period of 15–20 years.

the leadership to account'. Chris provides a rich and emotive account of the 'long build up' during which it gradually became clear that it was not possible within the existing democratic structures to effect significant internal change.

> Before the second conference there was still a bit of optimism that we could win this but we'd kind of underestimated the lengths that the leadership and the apparatus would go to protect their position, protect themselves, kind of thing (Chris).

The 'second conference' refers to a special conference called by the party in addition to its normal annual conference specifically for the purpose of dealing with the fallout from the rape allegation. We can think of this event as occupying a similar point of minimum entropy in the I.S. Network narratives as 'Network X' does in two of the Plan C ones. It would be simplistic to characterise these as Damascene moments, conversions out of nowhere, but both events played a role in the stories as points of no return at which it became impossible to deny that something needed fundamentally to change. They can perhaps be thought of as moments of revelation of public secrets, the first articulation of an unspoken consensus, such as when the innocent voice pipes up from the crowd 'the emperor has no clothes!' and suddenly what was already known by all present is rendered undeniable. They can also be likened to those moments of boarding the boat as the clouds burst in The Great Deluge story.

The attempt to rethink or redesign democratic structures in order to prevent such a thing happening again appears in these narratives as a central component of the I.S. Network. Donna spoke positively about not having to 'toe the line' and both Chris and Donna referred to an internal debate about whether or not the organisation ought to acquire a paid worker. 'There was a big debate – it was quite acrimonious – about getting a full time worker for the network last year. A lot of people were very hostile to the idea even though it's basically someone to do admin'. Chris's highlighting here of the tension between the feelings of the members – 'very hostile' - and the magnitude of the changes being proposed – 'basically someone to do admin' - touches on the affective significance of the split from the SWP. Elliot whose departure from the party came somewhat earlier ruminated further about this:

There's very much the mind set when you're in there, and the party's big enough (I still call it 'the party') - the SWP's just about big enough that you can exist in an SWP bubble in a way that in the I.S. Network you can't do. So there are some people whose whole lives revolve around the SWP. There's their social life, there's their family life, their whole political activity was geared around maintaining the SWP. And for some people this is what later became a problem in the split […] My attitude was you make them expel you and you stay until they expel you all. Make them expel two hundred, three hundred of you. I didn't argue that too strongly because some people had had a really tough time that I hadn't had to go through because I was sat at home so I didn't have to sit in all these horrible meetings getting shouted at and all that so I understand why people didn't (Elliot)

Whilst the existence of a structure in which democracy could easily be withdrawn and decisions manipulated created the premise in the ISN narratives in which rupture appears as inevitable and unavoidable, it is worth noting that *honesty* recurs as a related theme. This is implicated in democratic shortfalls (the investigation of Comrade Delta by his close peers and friends, for example, or as Chris highlights, by the use of 'paper members' – people who pay subs but do not participate – to manipulate votes). For the two respondents most recently involved in the SWP, dishonesty about membership and capacity is a key issue. Chris talked about this in terms of the building of a Potemkin village, quipping

There might be a couple of full-timers on a demo and a few branches might have organised coaches and distributed placards and so on but if all of those people on the demo were SWP members we'd have had a revolution years ago (Chris).

Elliot, who had at one point held the position of membership list administrator for his branch of the SWP, was full of anecdotes about this, telling me (with an exasperation that was presented in a comical way but with an underlying frustration) about finding not only the names of people who had left the country or joined other organisations many years previously cropping up from time to time on it, but also historical figures such as Adam Smith (with the long dead economist's actual date of birth audaciously being supplied amongst the details). He tells me how he would often spend weeks trying to get these names removed from the official lists only to find that when they were finally removed they were simply shifted to the list of another branch.

Interestingly, the crisis in the Socialist Workers Party was something Benjamin, one of the Anti-Capitalist Initiative respondents, was keen to talk about

too. The ACI had already been formed at this point and it seems more accurate to think about its rupture point in terms of the Student Movement. Benjamin, though, was a somewhat later adopter and it is easy to see how the organisational flash-point represented by the exodus of those who went on to form the I.S. Network impacted on his imaginary of how the ACI could operate and what it had to offer.

> At the same time the SWP was imploding, all the arguments that had come up in the kind of forming of the ACI about the role of organisation about the changing nature of, like, work and the working class, of learning from feminism and not having it as just – you know, all of that came into the fore (Benjamin).

Anne, on the other hand, who had been involved in ACI at its inception, situates the genesis very much as a response to 'the failures of 2010'. She clarified for me that what she meant by this was how the 2010 student movement (initially a wave of protests against the introduction of tuition fees) had failed to go beyond itself and become a more generalised movement. Anne had been a PhD student at one of the more active universities at the time and told the story with a palpable sense of disappointment. It is interesting to compare this moment of rupture with that presented in the Plan C narratives, since the two are almost exactly contemporaneous. Although to attempt to place a date on the establishment on either organisation (there are contradictions both *within* and *between* individual stories about this) would likely be doomed, the slight differences in the narratives imply that Plan C emerged ever so slightly earlier than ACI (probably to the order of weeks or a couple of months) in the context of a period of high-intensity struggle most visibly represented by ongoing demonstrations and occupations instigated by students. Rather than the failure of these student movements, the focus for Plan C is on the failure of the movements and radical organisations already established at that time to understand or to connect with them. According to Anne's account, the ACI emerged in a new, recently entered period of low-intensity struggle where the student movement had begun to wane and looked to be at great risk of coming to nothing.

In order to show what all of these accounts share, we might consider them to be responses to moments of imaginal scarcity, which we might posit as a concept that is the opposite of the idea of a moment of excess developed by the Free Association (2011), of which we have made recurring use. Whilst the moment of excess is one in

which new possibilities and potential are encountered like white-water rapids that cannot be avoided and must instead be ridden, moments of imaginal scarcity are ones in which new possibilities and potentials cannot be perceived at all, or if they are then there is a disconnection between the potential and the actual, wherein the future horizon no longer bears a relation to the lived everyday. In each case we see radicals trying to deal with the fact that their previous milieus or organisations have been unable to adapt to a new external terrain that presents new possibilities. In the Plan C and ACI narratives this was predominantly presented as a case of having failed to recognise the new terrain. In the I.S. Network narratives there was a greater level of ambiguity that allowed for the possibility of a new terrain having been recognised, but that movement into it has been deliberately suppressed in order to protect the interests of a bureaucratic elite. Each set, however, shares the character of being less about the movement from an old programme into a new one and more about being experimentally drawn towards *another* space that is productively vague, a process we could understand as relating to the developing of negative capability.

Antediluvia

Returning once again to the Ark analogy, this theme concerns what has been *brought aboard*. This word 'Antediluvia' is adapted from 'Antediluvian' (the time before the deluge) in the same sense that 'Victoriana' is adapted from 'Victorian'. It is intended to imply a collection of elements drawn from and influenced by the Antediluvian period. I've clustered together here data concerning precursors and influences that are both consciously chosen or unconscious and uncovered though a process of collective reflection. These precursors and influences are both positive and negative in the sense that they relate both to deliberate repetition and to the careful avoidance of repetition; occasionally they relate to ingrained practices and logics with which the respondents were comfortable, occasionally to ingrained practices and logics that the respondents thought they were struggling to discard. More often than not, the precursors are manifested as a complex amalgamation of all of the above. I am not attempting to piece together an objective description of the terrain before the organisation formed. These are story-elements constructed along the temporal-imaginal axis but they are always lines cast from the present (the choice made by the

respondents to include these elements is in itself evidence of this). This, to reiterate, is why *Antediluvia* actually sits after *Rupture*.

There are a number of things that need to be taken into account when assessing these antediluvia. Whilst awareness of (or sensitivity to) precursors does not necessitate direct experience of them, it might be supposed that there is some correlation between direct experience and the confidence with which one talks about precursors in an interview setting. There is a degree to which these precursors lie in concentric rings around the individual subjects in a way that serves the same function as the rings within a tree. Whilst all the respondents were very able to give accounts of their personal journeys, there was understandably a link between their ages and the distance with which they were able to cast a line into the past. The average age (about 25) of the ACI respondents, for example, is significantly lower than that of the other two groups and for this reason Antediluvia does not fall far from the point of Rupture. Another aspect that begs consideration is the respondents' familiarity with my own background. As might be expected, there was a certain readiness to go into detail in the responses of those that believed themselves to share common experience with me, whilst others might – perhaps consciously, perhaps unconsciously – have wished to save me from drowning in the minutia. Conversely there are moments when ideas are conveyed through inference that may have been articulated more clearly in the absence of the perception of a pre-existent level of affinity.

Beginning with the outer-rings therefore means concentrating on the I.S. Network and Plan C respondents. There was a strong consensus amongst those involved in the I.S. Network about the tradition or sphere from which they emerged. All three respondents referred frequently to Socialism with both Leninism and Trotskyism also appearing as recurring tropes. They were keen to set down certain buoys or markers to situate those pasts within their sight lines. For example, Donna discussed a recently published statement from the Spanish popular leftist party Podemos, expressing disappointment at the absence of words such as 'Socialism' and 'Class':

> It's about retaining some key words […] they're tools for understanding reality so it's about keeping those words and not throwing them out – for me anyway (Donna).

Similarly Elliot takes this cautious approach

> I don't think there's such a thing as Leninism. I don't like the idea of Trotskyism. But I am a communist. Lenin was a good guy, we still need a revolutionary party, we still need a dictatorship of the proletariat and all that kind of stuff (Elliot).

Chris specifically formulates the network's precursors as 'traditions', referring in his individual response to the idea of a 'British Trotskyist tradition' and in the group interview to an 'I. S. tradition'. The word is a significant one and full of silent meaning because it begs us to steer away from a simplistic interpretation of these things as ideologies. There is an ideological element incorporated into it, of course, but Chris' turn of phrase opens onto something that is *cultural* at the same time. This is crucial to understanding a number of aspects of the shape and genesis of the ISN. In fact it is of note that differences at the level of theory or models of revolutionary change between the new network and its most obvious precursor, the SWP, where they crop up, appear as secondary to, or even by-products of, differences at the level of everyday practices. These changes, in particular couched in terms of the negative influence of everyday practices within the SWP, are often plainly stated. Some could be classified as interpersonal or affective practices. Donna recalls:

> It would be said that such and such doesn't come to meetings anymore and there would be reasons given 'oh that's because they're demoralised' or the phrases would be things like 'that's because they don't understand this aspect of our politics' or 'they're a permanent oppositionist', things like that. But I always felt uncomfortable about that (Donna).

Similarly, in describing the prohibitions placed on horizontal communication between branches, Elliot told me that:

> I think there's an idea that the SWP was always an oppressive environment. It's not as long as you don't disagree, do you know what I mean? So most of the time you tick over and carry on and you feel like you're doing stuff. Obviously the longer you're out of the SWP, the more I look back in and I think 'God I put up with…' Even as I disagreed with some stuff, I tolerated some other stuff that I look back and think 'God'' (Elliot)

This negative influence is very apparent too in some of the new practices they describe to me. Chris, in particular, seems delighted by the various reading and discussion groups that have emerged from the organisation, describing to me with

mock disapproval (that does little to hide genuine enthusiasm) the 'anarcho-curious' and 'slightly ultra-leftist' elements of the ISN. He tells me about Autonomist Marxist and Feminist study groups taking place that would have been unthinkable in the SWP, adding – 'we should be able to accommodate freedom of criticism and action whilst still being able to work together against the class enemy'. Perhaps a better testament to this enthusiasm for the openness to experiment comes from his analogical response to being asked to describe the ISN as a meal or food: 'improvising a meal from some of the good bits left over, with some random sauces and forgotten spices you find at the back of the cupboard. Against the odds, it tastes quite nice'

That Feminism should constitute an important element in the stories constructed by Chris, Donna, and Elliot is no surprise given the nature of the crisis in the SWP due to the Comrade Delta affair. All three incorporated the theme. Chris told me about how the SWP thinking on women's' liberation was 'sorely in need of updating', given that it was built upon 'arguing with non-existent separatist Feminists from the past and […] was always framed as "do men benefit from women's oppression? No! So, onto the other business"' Using very similar words, suggesting that either the SWP 'line' or the ISN critique are well and frequently aired, Donna says 'I'd never felt happy with the "men don't benefit from women's oppression" argument'. Although Elliot is the only respondent who directly articulated the implied criticism of the SWP as sexist, he is cautious about this being the root cause of the split:

> I don't think the major issue was sexism. Even though I think SWPs politics is about 20 years behind […] It was really about a very undemocratic, bureaucratic grouping which just looks after one of their own. That was the root of it (Elliot)

The centrality of Feminism in the wake of the ISN's split from the SWP is also referenced by Benjamin in relation to the ACI in the previously quoted passage in the 'rupture' section ('the arguments that had come up in the […] forming of the ACI about […] learning from feminism […] came into the fore again')

In the group interview with the ISN respondents, Donna linked this to a specific approach that she construed as being about 'the politics of oppression but within a Socialist framework' and Chris also lists 'anti-oppression politics' as an influence.

This provides a useful means of tying together many of the negative influences that their former organisation held over them. It's clear that the problematic around which the ISN collects is one of power and that this is why many of its differences with the SWP, be they framed as centred on democracy, honesty, or women's oppression, manifest themselves at the level of practice. To strengthen this argument yet further we might point to Chris' description of the rethinking of Leninism that was taking place within the I.S. Network, which in his account centred not on the macro level of Lenin's conception of the State or his reading of Marx's *Capital*, but on the failures of anti-Stalinist Marxist-Leninists to manage to move truly beyond Stalinist organisational structures:

> So, we started to look at the Leninist party and how what came to be understood as the Leninist party was more of a Stalinist construct which anti-Stalinists in the 30s and 40s upheld (Chris)[41]

Feminist thinking was also a strongly recurring theme in the Plan C interviews but the role it played in the narratives had a different set of complexities. On the one hand it appears as a direct inheritance or positive influence. Heather in particular referred to the importance of Silvia Federici's work on Social Reproduction both to her own story and to that of Plan C - both she and Federici, along with other Plan C founders, had been involved in several international 'conviviums' centred on Massimo De Angelis' *Commoner* journal (Fred also talked about the importance of this set of ideas in relation to some of his hopes about legacy that we shall consider later). Irrespective of Heather's direct identification of this body of work, we can also read how central it is to her in the latent content of her responses, which were saturated with reproductive imagery. She frequently referred to the organisation as though it were an organic body, speaking of 'adding flesh' to its bones as time goes by. I shall return to her corporeal imaginary in the 'common' section of this chapter as it reveals much about the way in which she sees the organisation cohering as a unit. It is this area of feminist thought, the work around reproduction, rather than around anti-oppressive practices, that gets its major airing in these responses.

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[41] Chris is probably referring here to the argument made by Lars T. Lihn (2011) amongst others that as part of a strategy to combat Stalinism, Trostkyist organisations in the 30s and 40s ended up replicating and reproducing Stalinist forms of organisation, which were subsequently embedded as components of more contemporary Marxist-Leninist organising.

At the same time, it might be inferred that if, as Fred at one point suggested, Plan C's break with its most obvious previous aggregate (the alter-globalisation movement) was on the basis of a repositioning of social reproduction at the heart of struggle, then it stands to reason that, similar to the ISN respondents' relationship to anti-oppressive practice, a social reproductive focus must have been something of which there was (or was felt to be) an absence. We can therefore also see the reverse type, negative influence on display here.

Interestingly, some of the symptomatological work around this area has, subsequent to these interviews being conducted, taken place in the organisation as a collective process of which both myself, Heather, and Fred were a part (and of course, it must be borne of mind that in drawing on this process, I am reliant upon the face that my level of access to this organisation is different from that of the other two). At a Plan C congress late in 2014 a pair of workshops took place that sought in the first instance to look for the common threads that ran through the ideas and practices that had been central to the organisation over the previous three years, and in the second instance to introduce and discuss Social Reproduction and the Social Strike. Building from these sessions, the editorial collective of the Plan C-related magazine *bamn* put together a special issue that attempted to articulate an underlying problematic raised by the disparate ideas that came up within the sessions. They concentrated on the notion of the Social Strike constructed as a question of leverage, arguing that traditional strike tactics are increasingly ineffective. The social strike, we are told, has three main functions: 'making the new conditions [of work] visible, disrupting the circulation of capital, and directly socialising (or communising) society' (*bamn* Editorial Group 2015). The idea of 'socialising' the struggle appeared several times in Fred's story (and in his contribution to the collective discussion). He considered it to be the common aspect of a number of clusterings and conversations happening around the UK that eventually helped to produce Plan C:

> The friendship groups that existed then, were the basis for these kind of assemblies that were
> organised to try to bring a more social character to these public sector strikes (Fred)

The *bamn* group's articulation enables us to see Fred's concerns with socialisation and Heather's concerns with social reproduction as different orbits around the same problem, which neither alone reveals clearly.

As with ISN, openness to experimentation is central to the stories told by the Plan C participants. Heather used imagery suggesting that this can be coupled with the idea of 'stumbling' and 'mess' in such a way that her words implied not that this was intended to be self-deprecating but that the embrace of failure was central to the form of the organisation. Again, openness to experimentation as an antediluvian artefact seems to occupy a different place in the Plan C narrative than it does for the ISN. Plan C emerged from struggles formed around loose, temporary, and horizontally configured networks. It takes flight from a tradition of openness that that might appear to suggest ephemerality and (in Fred's words) 'unrealised potential' in order to alight on a terrain where the new question is about coherence. The ISN on the other hand takes flight from a tradition in which coherence might appear to verge on dogma and anti-democratic systems of control in order to alight on a terrain in which the new question is about openness and dynamism. So, for the Plan C respondents this is an element consciously carried over from the previous cycle of struggle, a welcome inheritance (although not an unproblematic one), whilst for those in ISN it is an absence that must be filled.

It is perhaps unsurprising that the ACI respondents approach this issue of 'openness' in a way that more closely resembles that of the ISN than that of Plan C given the backgrounds in centralist Marxist-Leninist organisations of many of the group's early adopters and instigators. The actual organisational practices and limitations experienced by these two respondents in this regard will be looked at in greater detail later, but it is important here to highlight the more specific context of the 2010 student movement. As previously mentioned, Anne considered 'the failures of 2010' to have provided a crucial impetus for the formation of the ACI. Elsewhere she recalled the desire to move away from the sort of organising that had been 'beleaguered by […] ideology and identity'. Benjamin, who had not himself been a participant in that movement, talked about its presence in the practices of the ACI as a sort of 'cultural memory' rather than a struggle in which the group was actively participating. In both accounts the nature of these failings and the shape of the cultural memory are conveyed by and large through implication. I suspect this may partly be an example of a situation born of the (entirely reasonable) perception of an element of kinship between us that produced unspoken understandings. In Anne's account it is clear that the movement occupies a dual role as, on the one hand, a propulsive swelling of potential, unrealised but inspirational nonetheless, and on the

other hand a process that revealed serious organisational shortfalls. Key amongst these is the failure to become something that spilled over from academic space and the tendency to stratify along lines of ideology and identity. Anne's understanding of the ACI situates it as a reaction to these shortfalls. The same inference can't be drawn quite as confidently from Benjamin's narrative but irrespective of whether or not he sees what he refers to critically as the 'sect model' as being manifested in 2010's education struggles, it is clear that it is an underlying problematic of paramount importance.

In Benjamin's narrative, the relationship of open political space to previous political experiences is more complex than simply being an attempt to move away from dogma. He provides a number of interesting meditations on memory that are worth considering. When asked the question 'What spectre haunts the ACI?' he gave the following moving and somewhat melancholic answer:

> The spectre of the old, pre-neoliberalism left and its basis. Not just the organisations and how they work but also the whole changed picture: the destruction of communities, the breaking of solidarity and the means for it, the killing off of much of the welfare state. It's a haunting presence that sits in discussions and is terrifying when you see it. In some ways the ACI was about exorcising this presence through different practices but it also functioned as a kind of space for mourning (Benjamin)

This almost therapeutic construction of political space presents us with a new, third way, of approaching the antediluvian elements in the organisation. Whilst he recognises a process of exorcism at play – one we might link with the idea of developing practices that reverse the negatively influencing past limitations – he introduces the idea that there are elements of organisation prior to the point of rupture that, despite being viewed positively, *cannot* be brought through, *cannot* flourish on the new political terrain. Benjamin articulates the presence of these elements as objects of mourning within the new organisation. We will revisit this very interesting 'memory space' construction when we look again at memory commoning in the next chapter.

Whilst members of every group mentioned the negative influence of the SWP at some point in their interviews, only the Plan C respondents named specific organisational precursors whose spectral presences are welcome ones. Heather

referred to ACT UP (an organisation formed in 1987 to take direct action around the issue of the aids crisis) as being influential, in particular in terms of its structure (she makes specific reference to its 'commissions'), whilst Fred brought up Big Flame (a libertarian socialist feminist group that existed between 1970 and 1984.), implying that the basis of this feeling of affinity is that Plan C, just as Big Flame was, is in a relationship of antagonism with a dominant mode of left organising – 'There'll be a dominant tendency that monopolises ideas, or strategy, or aspirations and people are antagonistic towards that and start developing ideas outside of it' (Fred)

So far the emphasis in this section has been on commonalities, but as has been demonstrated (and will continue to be demonstrated as we progress) key amongst these commonalities is the determination to organise productively and democratically around difference. It's worth considering at this point some of the individual respondents' examples of antediluvia drawn from what they reveal of their personal political histories. To begin with this provides a further indication of some of the differences that these organisational spaces have incorporated as they have evolved (and evolved *by incorporating*). In addition to this, though, it is necessary to be sensitive to the fact that the respondents may have underplayed (or simply been unaware of) the unique influence that their personal stories have had upon the collective one.

It is perhaps worthy of note that, with the exception of the ISN's relationship to the SWP, there is not a strong correlation between the past political organising histories of the respondents and the organisations with which they were affiliated at the time of the interviews. All ISN members had pasts in democratic centralist organising whilst all Plan C respondents had pasts in more libertarian forms of organising (although not exclusively in Heather's case). Beyond these broad trends there are a few recurring political terrains. Chris (ISN) and Heather (Plan C) refer to pasts in union organising. Donna (ISN), Elliot (ISN), Heather (Plan C), Gavin (Plan C), Benjamin (ACI), and Anne (ACI) all speak of backgrounds in student organising. Donna (ISN), Heather (Plan C), and Fred (Plan C), refer to having done work on police brutality. In addition there were also single mentions of strike support (Donna [ISN]), anti-war activism (Elliot [ISN]), climate change activism (Gavin [Plan C]), sex worker rights activism (Heather [Plan C]), anti-racism/anti-fascism (Fred [Plan C]), and migrant solidarity work (Gavin [Plan C]).

As well as this, several of the participants made reference to previous commitments to certain ideological positions, with Chris (ISN) specifically referring to Trotskyism, Elliot (ISN) talking about becoming a communist, Gavin (Plan C) talking about discovering Marxism, and both Fred (Plan C) and Anne (ACI) describing a past as anarchists (which Fred situated within a description of past organisational activity whereas Anne talked instead of the influence of anarchist principles).

These are certainly not to be taken as exhaustive lists of the previous areas of the respondents' activity. Indeed, I know from my personal relationship with a number of them that they have previously been involved in other forms of political organising which they did not mention in their narratives, while other respondents did. However, what is important, from the point of view of this analysis, are the things that were *chosen* by the respondents for inclusion in their narratives.

Legacy

This cluster requires little in the way of explanation. I have aggregated here those parts of the interview data that correspond to the elements of the organisational practices (or discourse) of the three groups that the participants fear, hope, or suspect will be carried over into future political forms. One of the questions directly asked of the participants in the small group interviews concerned those predecessors who were now part of the current form of the organisation. This cluster can be seen to speak to a future-oriented variation of the questions this raised. The issue of legacy impinged differently on one of the organisations than it did upon the other two. In the case of the ACI, which had ceased to exist by the time we gathered for a group interview, it is more straightforwardly a question of how the political terrain has changed because the ACI existed. For the other two organisations this enquiry concerns the future perfect tense. *How will the terrain have changed after Plan C / the I.S. Network has gone? What will these organisations have left in their wake?* Even though the question was itself unspoken, there is plenty in the data that serves to answer it.

As the past in the future, *Legacy* in these latter two cases is the mirror of *Antediluvia*. We could also think of it in terms of that which will be carried beyond

the next rupture. In exactly the same way as *Antediluvia*, these are lines cast from the present; they are questions of The Now projected along the temporal-imaginal axis.

That the respondents from I.S. Network and Plan C both approached the question of legacy as one of the past in the future does not, however, mean that it occupied the same imaginal space for all concerned. There is an understanding amongst the I.S. Network participants that their organisation is in some sense transitional and that the transition is imminent. Elliot, for example, explained in the group interview that he doesn't expect its current form to last for another year. 'I always saw us as a temporary organisation that would be a step towards a new organisation'. Although they differed on timescale ('I don't think it's going to happen overnight' [Chris]), Chris also talked about a metamorphic future pole of attraction that takes the form of merger with other organisations. Because of her relative isolation in her home city, Donna accepted that she might have to make an earlier transition at an individual level, feeling that developing practice with others, 'doing things', is of more importance than operating within an organisation that is ideal for her. For the I.S. Network, then, legacy is an almost graspable, near-future concern that seeps fairly effortlessly into the next theme *The Not-Yet*, and will be given a more detailed focus in the next section. In contrast, each of the Plan C respondents, at some point in their interviews, expressed the view that their project is a long-term one; the question of legacy, therefore, constituting a more temporally distant concern with most of the participants' imaginals of the future, would be incorporated into the continuing existence of the organisation in some way.

When legacy is addressed, anxiety is as prevalent an aspect of the narratives as hope. Among the respondents, Fred (Plan C) exhibited the greatest optimism, casting the organisation as being in part about the development of projects that 'aim to free people from wage to some degree, by enabling other sort of collective responses to material needs'. Fred also expressed a belief that much of the work of creating and maintaining an organisation couldn't easily be carried over into subsequent bodies: 'it's a very difficult, complex thing to do. It does help in understanding the amount of work needed mentally and emotionally […] it would almost be like starting from scratch in a lot of ways'.

Both Anne and Benjamin expressed a degree of anxiety about the possibility that the ACI may leave no lasting legacy at all. This anxiety appears to be rooted in two

things. To begin with both were aware that the disbanding of the group has not been followed up with any process of reflection. Its successes and failures, strengths and limitations have been subjected to no collective analysis. 'We've never written anything on it. We just kind of - everything dropped off just all of a sudden' (Benjamin). Secondly, there is a feeling for both of them that the group ultimately failed to achieve a rupture with the habitus that they had specifically come together to attempt to move beyond.

> There was a little bit of going back towards a very left-centric approach to how we were going to do things – Benjamin

> We had this discussion with other members talking about the ones who were from Workers Power, you know, the core, and saying "it's not even their fault", they've been in Workers Power or Revolution so long that it's just in their reflexes – Anne

Benjamin sees the return of previous forms of leftist organising as most clearly manifested in the formal regrouping (or, as he puts it, 'merging') process they were involved in with several other groups, although he didn't elaborate on the precise nature of this manifestation.

Anne also spoke of a creeping sense that a core of organisers were determined to keep it alive 'no matter what happens', which we might interpret as an allusion to the idea of defending *the being* of the organisation at the expense of any development in *the doing* of the organisation.

Both Benjamin and Anne, however, speculated that perhaps some of what they regarded as the positive aspects of the ACI's practice may have been brought into Left Unity, a recently formed but more electorally-focused UK socialist organisation, which a number of ACI's former participants joined when its activity began to dry up. Neither respondent expressed much faith in Left Unity, but it is clear that the speculation holds an element of consolation for them.

The Not Yet

In this cluster, I've collected elements of the narrative that speak to that towards which the organisation is perceived as working, or as moving into. This includes

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expressions of awareness of the limitations of the organisation (the suspicion of problems it will be unable to address) but also any indications of further instars (staged between metamorphosis) through which the organisation may pass. The question of future plans will be considered, but we can also think of this cluster as addressing that of future rupture, of the next great deluge. As argued earlier, the Ark myth is a particular type of origin story, one that starts not from point alpha but from the idea of something carried over from a previous era. The Not Yet belongs to the mirror of this, an apocalyptic variant that imagines a new narrowing through which something may survive and pass whilst all else crumbles rather than an omega point. This, we might argue, is the common form of apocalyptic myth, from the beginning-end-beginning of the *Ragnarok* story in Norse mythology (Crossley-Holland 1987), to the ultimate victory of the armies of heaven in the biblical *Revelations*, as well as being a common trope in contemporary popular science-fiction (*2012* 2009, *Interstellar* 2014). The complicity of this story as a structuring narrative in various political forms is well studied. Both Vaneigem (1998) and Cohn (2004) have situated the (often *Revelations*-influenced) millenarian movements of the Middle Ages as precursors to twentieth-century formulations, with the latter in particular making a case that the legacy of these movements is to be found in Nazism and Stalinism.

We considered the problematic nature of a millenarian understanding of political movements when looking critically at the work of Simon Critchley in chapter 3, and I am not here making an argument that any of the organisations interviewed are millenarian in approach (indeed, the opposite is implied by virtue of the fact that they have been represented as consciously attempting to adapt to historically specific social contexts). However, the perception or prediction of a future point of rupture, beyond which lies something new, if made within the specific and narrow context of the possibilities and limitations of a particular organisation or organisational form, is not something we need to shy away from here.

Couched in terms more familiar from earlier parts of this thesis, what we are discussing here is the inevitable point of reterritorialisation, a point at which movement takes a break in order to collect itself and reformulate – a process on which we'll bring further theoretical arguments to bear in the final chapter.

Having disbanded at the time of the group interview and therefore having no basis to talk about how the organisation might develop, the ACI are absent from this cluster.

Amongst the ISN respondents, the question of the future development and limit point of the organisation is one irrevocably tied to the idea of it being a transitional body. More directly, at the time of the interviews, it was connected to the regroupment talks in which they were involved with the ACI as well as with other small Marxist-Leninist groups, such as Workers Power and RS21. This process saw a series of changes during the course of the period in which the interviews took place. In Chris' individual interview (the first of all the interviews conducted) he expressed caution (though he was not without optimism) about the possibility of finding common ground with some of the more orthodox groups involved.

> I suppose most of the other groups are quite cynical about Workers' Power because they're the most boilerplate orthodox Trotskyist "The programme comrades! The programme!" about it. But they have engaged up to this point and were pretty serious with it. They've been upfront about their politics and were willing to listen – although they do seem to be the most rigid of the others. The others are prepared to bend a bit (Chris).

By the time of the group interview, however (by which time at least one of the groups – the ACI – no longer existed) the only other group being talked about in terms of merger is RS21 (another group that split from the SWP slightly later than ISN) 'This time next year, we might be talking to RS21 a bit more seriously and a bit more talking about a united organisation' (Chris).

Elliot, however, wasn't so sure. 'I think it's different in different areas. We'd probably make more overtures to Plan C in […*home city*…], and the old Anarchist Federation group than we would to RS21'.

Donna focused less on merger and more on her own involvement in the city she lives in. Having told me in her individual interview that by necessity (due to the lack of an ISN group in her locale) she expected to focus on Left Unity for the foreseeable future, she had, by the time of the group interview changed tack: 'I don't think Left Unity's going to carry on much past Christmas in […*home city*…] so I'll probably end up being pulled to RS21'. Donna had been quite critical of RS21 in our initial interview, considering them to be over-intellectual and overly concerned with competing with the SWP on the basis of 'who's got the best analysis'. The implication from the group interview, however, was less that this was down to a change of heart on her part and more that there was a perception amongst the ISN respondents that RS21, having reached the limits of its previous approach, had

changed somewhat. Chris articulated this most directly: 'we're probably close politically to RS21 and they're looking a bit less snippy about us. I think they're realizing that it's quite difficult to sustain a tiny organisation and its better to be in a bigger one even if you catch ultra-left from some of the members' (his comic reference to 'catching ultra-left' wasn't elaborated on but I assumed this to be a reference to the basis of RS21's previous criticisms of ISN)

Little is offered in the ISN interviews in terms of a direct rationale for this merger, although there were places in the narratives where this rationale might have been implicit, such as in Chris's contention in the quote above that a small organisation is difficult to sustain. The reader will recall that, in describing the things that had remained with him from his period in the SWP, Elliot had said 'we still need a dictatorship of the proletariat' and it is possible that the logic of seizing state power that underlies this statement is also the structuring logic of the regroupment process. The information that can be gleaned from the interviews limits us to fairly precarious speculation in this regard, however.

There are two elements of the Plan C interviews worth considering in the present category. First is the discussion of experimentation as a means of overcoming limitations. A significant proportion of the group interview was taken up with discussion of this topic:

> Heather: 'it's hard to fault experimentation in a funny kind of way because you can always say: "that was just an experiment that didn't work, but we can always start another experiment" so at the heart of it is a commitment to experimentation I think. Which is some of the glue that has developed around people, which is different to having a platform or a policy or a particular inherited leftist tradition like a Trotskyist, or a Stalinist, or an Anarchist tradition'

> Gavin: 'Committing to experimentation gives it a resilience. There have been times where it has looked like it's almost been close to dying I think but someone's found a new way of opening up the questions up again, right? So rather than when you have these given aims and stuff and it fails and "well, that whole thing's over"…'

The notion that experimentation provides a form of resilience is perhaps indicative of why the questions of what will come after the organisation has gone, and how the organisation might change over time are not central to the imaginals of the Plan C respondents. They do however make some more modest predictions. All three

respondents talked about their expectation of gaining members over the coming year (with Fred wondering, inconclusively, about what a sizable influx might do to organisation's structure). There was also some discussion about a festival the group was organising in the summer.

Secondly there was evidently an element of anxiety amongst these participants about creating a structure that would cause them to *overlook* the point of rupture. This was evident in particular in Gavin's interview, much of which, as noted earlier, concentrated on the notion of political groups and struggles becoming trapped in loops of repetition. It is worth noting here that although all three were veterans of a number of struggles and organisations, none had previously been involved in a collective body designed and expected to develop slowly over a long time period (in contrast to the long-standing socialist organisations to which all three of the ISN respondents and one of the ACI respondents had belonged). Overlaying this biographical detail onto the narratives of long-term commitment they deliver brings a different element to some of what is said. For example, the following, from Gavin clearly speaks to a concern about the downsides of organisational investment and attachment:

> You talk to people from socialist groups that have been in them for 50 years and the thought of losing that is just like a complete chasm but I think that's probably just one of the dangers when you try to build things (Gavin)

At base this seems to be the same situation that Anne had spoken about in the context of ACI – defending the organisation at any cost. There is an interesting contrast to be drawn here between Gavin's fear and Anne's analysis on the one hand, which relate to an entrenchment produced by over-identification with the organisation, and on the other hand Chris and Elliot's descriptions of the efforts of the central committee of the SWP to hold on to power, which they describe in terms of its being produced by its organisational / bureaucratic structure.

The Common

This last cluster corresponds less to the temporal-imaginal axis and more to the spatial one. The data presented in this section relates to the participants' perceptions

of the shape, size, and texture of the organisations and the mechanisms by which these are maintained, changed, and broken. In particular we look at the point at which the respondents have talked about the social and political space that their organisations inhabit. Occasionally these take the form of physical-spatial analogies (prompted by me in the analogical enquiry and unprompted in the free narratives); occasionally they are centred instead on discussion of the external social spaces that are contemporary with the organisation. I also collect data concerning some of the ways in which the organisation reproduces itself. These are the shapes and practices that are common to the organisation but alien to that which occupies the space outside of it. At the same time, the edges, contours, and surfaces of the organisation can be productively envisioned as *a commons*. Returning to the Great Flood analogy, we can perhaps think of this in terms of the shape and inner-mechanics of the ark.

As has already been argued, the stories provided enable us to understand the organisations as orbiting around specific hidden (or semi-obscured) problematics. All of the respondents struggled with the direct articulation of this point of attraction. In fact, in many cases it was only approachable by being conceived negatively, as a situation of being repelled from the outside rather than drawn towards an inside. For example, in the group Plan C interview we get –

> Heather: I don't think anyone has anywhere else to go. That's one of the…

> Gavin: Yeah

> Fred: I'd agree with that 100%.

Donna expressed a strikingly similar position with regards to the I.S. Network (which met with approval from both Chris and Elliot):

> I think it's kind of held together from the outside rather than from what's on the inside. I think its kind of - for me its – there's nothing better than this but what it is is not great. That's how I feel about it. If I don't do this, what the hell am I going to do?' (Donna)

Donna, Elliot (ISN), Heather, and Fred (Plan C) all expressed awareness (and concern) at various points during the interviews that they were better able to

articulate what held their organisations together in negative rather than positive terms. However, it would be a mistake to conclude that the positive attractor is absent.

In both interviews one or more of the participants also pointed to the importance of the shared experience as being an important element of cohesion. Elliot covered two key elements of this when he said 'I think shared experience in the SWP and the shared experience of the past two years holds people together in terms of personal ties and that'. In the first instance, shared experience within a precursor organization (which in this case gelled them together because of the shared trauma) and in the second instance that of creating a new organisation. Fred also noted these two aspects, concentrating in his individual interview on the common experience of the alter-globalisation movement that united many of Plan C's early members, and in the group interview on the work of making and maintaining Plan C – 'It reinforces that it's a very difficult, complex thing to do. It does help in understanding the amount of work needed mentally and emotionally'. Heather also recognized the importance of this shared labour, framing it in terms of the investment of social and political capital. She remarks that this investment, as the years roll by, makes leaving the organisation less conscionable.

The next ten minutes of the Plan C group interview returned again and again to the importance of experimentation. Heather linked this with an 'ambiguity at the centre', arguing that the fact that nobody attempted to 'drive it' in a specific pre-conceived direction has enabled 'more people to sit around the table'. What begins to emerge from the discussion on experimentation is the possibility that the problematic around which the group orbits is manifested not primarily as theory but as methodology, as a set of collective technologies for facilitating co-ordination without domination. Heather's table analogy spoke to the desire to maintain a channel open to other experiences of life under capital. Having developed this reading, we can overlay it upon many elements of the I.S. Network respondents' stories; it also reveals that here too we might speak of an orbital centre primarily manifested as methodological. Along with the various conceptual landmarks that might be thought of as pre-existent community signifiers, such as internationalism, the dictatorship of the working class and revolutionary unity, what we can actually see in terms of the practices about which Chris, Donna, and Elliot spoke to me are tools for allowing outside input, the creation of two-way channels.

This is clearer still when it comes to the ACI participants' narratives. For Benjamin in particular this methodology is clearly the very basis of the organisation, almost to the extent that it is *the whole point* of it. In both of his interviews he employs the word 'space' frequently –

> It was kind of an attempt to make a space in which you could develop somewhere where anarchists and more traditional socialists could be in the same political project and stuff

> At its best the emphasis on having a space for the development of ideas is something that which I think is quite – It's something I'm still trying to learn from

> It was a space to assess Neoliberalism and its impact on the left at all levels.

> In […*home city*…] we were just trying to see ourselves as making a space and that being the thing that bound us together (Benjamin)

And when asked to make a landscape analogy –

> It's a small park in a city. The traffic is quieter and the sky isn't as blocked by buildings. It's an escape from the environment but is still very much part of it. It's there as a place to pass through to make a journey more pleasant and also a place for contemplation or play (Benjamin)

Not only does this suggest a key element of the underlying common project of the three organisations, but also that what happened in the case of ACI, at least as told by Benjamin, constitutes a cautionary tale that usefully exposes some of the limitations of such a strong focus on openness. In his words –

> I think the reluctance, an over-emphasis on just having the space partly as a reaction against orthodox Trotskyism, the reluctance to come out with any propaganda or lines that were vertical – I think that made it a lot easier for things to just come apart' (Benjamin)

And this feeling is echoed in statements made by Benjamin elsewhere. Although tempered by ready acknowledgements of the positive aspects of an organisational looseness, Elliot made a very similar remark concerning some of the hurdles the I.S. Network were facing at the time of the group interview:

I think we've gone too far and sometimes I think you need a bit of centralism to get things done and I think sometimes you go too far to the point that at times we don't always function like a democratic organisation […] There's a real fear of kind of imposing it on people, which sometimes I think is a problem (Elliot)

But to associate the space-focus that is an important part of Benjamin's narrative too strongly with an inability to act would be to ignore his characterisation of it as the space of mourning that we considered earlier in the chapter. Although he was the only respondent to articulate this directly, we can see this mourning function dwelling in some of the gaps in the other narratives too. Elliot again, for example, talked with empathy about those whose whole lives revolved around the Socialist Workers Party 'There's their social life, there's their family life, their whole political activity was geared around maintaining the SWP. And for some people this is what later became a problem in the split'. As mentioned previously, there is a sense (in Elliot and Chris's narratives in particular) of the ISN functioning as a space of trauma recovery. Whilst we should not treat this as directly synonymous with a space of mourning there are clear parallels in the sense of the creation of a mechanism for processing psychological distress. This came up somewhat less often in the interviews with Plan C respondents. However, it is worth noting that, subsequent to the period of interviewing, a number of Plan C groups began organising 'consciousness raising groups', influenced by the innovations of second-wave feminism but also specifically as an experiment developed after collective discussion of The Institute for Precarious Consciousness' *We Are All Very Anxious* (2014) which makes the case that different regimes of capitalism carry with them dominant reactive affects, Neoliberalism's being anxiety.

In addition to the notion that the 'space' at the heart of these organisations is partly constituted as a lab for these experiments in affect is the notion that they are spaces for the development of thought (an idea voiced both by Benjamin [ACI] and Gavin [Plan C]). Relatedly, but in terms that appeal less to the notion of *development,* Donna (ISN) tells us that:

We're not going to see the revolution in our lifetime, but if we don't hold together, the alternative hegemony – that's the main battle isn't it? (Donna)

Whilst the nature of this alternative hegemony is not explicitly stated, we might recall that Donna had earlier expressed disappointment at the absence of words such as 'class' and 'socialism' in a statement by Podemos and might infer from this that these are two important elements of the alternative hegemony of which she speaks. The explanation of group's function (from her individual interview) as being to create and hold this alternative hegemony contrasts with the worry she expressed in the group interview that it is negatively constituted (held together from the outside by things it is not). We are also drawn away from understanding this to be a call for entrenchment under a state of siege due to the explicit expression of desire for dynamism and development she made elsewhere:

> I think at the moment there's different attitudes on the Left. I think some people think, 'oh we need to protect our body of knowledge and our theoretical understanding and what's most important is that that doesn't get contaminated by reformism' But what I see it as is - No, the thing is if we don't do things with other people we'll whither, we'll whither away. And you'll just become an atrophied little sect if you don't participate with others (Donna).

The entrenchment/dynamism dichotomy is reconciled to some extent in Donna's pleasing description of the material from which the ISN is made in response to the analogical enquiry: 'An elastic sponge filled with a viscous, transparent yet distorting liquid'. This imagery of a body that can modify and swell supports the argument introduced in Chapter 3 suggesting that the central problematic of the section of the left from which our respondents are drawn is centred on reconciling the ability to move with the ability to cohere. In an obvious bridge to the spatial imaginary that Donna shares with most other respondents, the content of the body is transparent, but it is a liquid and therefore has mass and substance, as opposed to simply being an absence.

Another set of images that contrast with the overwhelming emphasis on space are Heather's organic analogies, made not only in response to the directed analogical enquiry (where the notion of the organic is built into at least one of the questions), but also in the free narrative. Heather tells us that 'I imagine it as something that's growing, like a body. It's a skeleton that then has to have muscles, then skin, then hair, then accessories, then a style'. This fits with the feeling shared by the other Plan C respondents that their organisation is something in long-term development (as

opposed to transitional in the case of ISN and defunct in the case of ACI). It will be noted however, that this is not actually how a body grows (skeleton first, then muscles etc.) and it is to be wondered whether there is something revealing in this slip.

Within this same category of organic analogies, it is impossible to ignore the curious persistence of grass in the directed analogical enquiry responses of the three Plan C respondents. When asked to describe the material of which that organisation is made, Gavin responds: 'Slowly growing supple bamboo', whilst Fred's response to the enquiry about the flora and fauna that occupy the organisation imagined as a landscape is 'a field of wheat'. Heather provided a longer description of the organisation as a corner of an overgrown garden (although this description also brings in flowers of 'jarring' colours, an unkempt pond, a variety of old plants, and new shoots attempting to establish themselves with varying degrees of success). Clearly the implicit grass of Heather's analogy and the two specific genii of the grass family evoked by Gavin and Fred are being used as ways of approaching different aspects of the organisation. Gavin's intentions are very clear from the wording of his analogy, Fred's less so. We have already speculated that it alludes to the blank-slate/empty space character of the organisation but, wheat being a cereal crop, there is the possibility that it alludes also to Fred's desire that Plan C should have an impact upon the social reproductive elements of its member's lives. Heather in contrast seems to be alluding to the chaotic nature of the organisation, to its experimentalism, and to its relationship to its precursors.

There is perhaps nothing more to be drawn from the odd coincidence of the independent appearance of these closely related plants except that there is something non-rivalrous implicit in their nature. Grasses grow in close proximity to one another, in great abundance, and with great resilience because their structure is such that they do not compete strongly with one another for sunlight.

Further connections and implications

In this chapter, I've conducted a symptomatological analysis of data gathered through a process of interviewing individuals and small groups involved in three historically young radical left groups (ACI, ISN, Plan C). This process involved the

use of a narrative taken from mythology (which I called 'The Great Deluge') in order to draw out hidden meaning from the interview texts. What has emerged from this, I have contended, is a functional problematic (or something approaching it) concerning how to organise a collective body that will be cohesive and yet retain its ability to move, change, and adapt. I've have read this problematic as being manifested through a series of experiments with issues of democracy, difference, and space. This problematic is also, of course, analogous to the one underlying the thesis as a whole: how does (or can) the organisation of the imaginal facilitate both the making and the same time the *unmaking* of the institutions that together constitute society?

We're now in a position to draw some conclusions and comments on how this interview data may necessitate modifications and expansions of the theories and concepts of the organisation of the imaginal developed over the previous chapters. Furthermore, we can assemble, a set of implications that will be considered further in the final chapter.

Eeriness – I've spoken about eeriness as a sense that something is not quite right, a sense that there is something *other* just outside the field of vision. This is an ever-present phenomenon in these narratives. However, these organisations appear less as facilitators of a sense of eeriness than the *product* of it. Whilst never taking the form of a precisely articulated problematic, certain questions and concepts continually re-appear as attractors in these accounts. For example, the need to create both an intellectual and an affective space that will function as a component in radical organising, the desire for honesty, the need to approach co-ordination in new ways, and a renewed interest in feminist thought and practice. There is a sense that these are questions that are emerging elsewhere as well and that these few pockets wherein formal (and semi-formal) organisations have crystalised are part of what Fred refers to as a 'zeitgeist'.

Negative Capability – But if these organisations perform this almost passive function of points of temporary pooling around a wider fluid that washes towards places out of focus, they also play a more active role in influencing and facilitating that movement. The nurturing of negative capability that can be seen in these organisations is centred strongly upon an understanding of making space. This

making of space serves a democratic function (welcoming difference, encouraging critique, working with others), an affective one (a space for memory, mourning, trauma), and a creative one (free experimentation). At the same time, it is indicative of a desire not merely to contribute to social transformation as its agent but also to be the subject of that transformation.

The point of minimum entropy – Direct links to this idea have been traced earlier in the chapter but it is worth mentioning that the most obvious manifestation of the point of minimum entropy lies in the discourse of rupture (breaking with the SWP, breaking with activist culture, breaking with the narrow ambitions of the student movement) and that this discourse brings out some interesting specific characteristics that help to illustrate this point. In particular, it supports our earlier contention that this point of territorialisation is always and only a construction made in retrospect, a point permanently just behind us. Furthermore, the suspicion begins to build that this point of minimum entropy, infinitesimally close to the point of rupture where possibility once again begins to expand, is the occurrence of a moment, like a bouncing rubber ball at the point of rebound. Not a period, but an instant.

From these provisional conclusions and notes emerge several things that we must carry with us into the next chapter where the focus will be on the recomposing imaginal. We will approach the topic in such a way that any false binary opposition between decomposition and recomposition, between deterritorialisation, and reterritorialisation, and between commoning and enclosure, is erased. Anything less would be to ignore the simultaneity and inter-permutation of the processes we have encountered in this chapter.

Armed with suggestions, suspicions, and clues produced through the analysis of these interviews, we will in the next chapter directly tackle the question of recomposition we have been moving towards from the outset. We have looked at the action of the decomposing imaginal as it takes flight from the formative context. We have explored the form of that flight when applied to social movements. We have conducted empirical work in order to investigate its manifestation in organisational structure and approaches. To complete the process, we need to explore how and under what conditions it comes once more to rest. We'll do this by looking at the notion of Institution (specifically in relation to Castoriadis' social instituting

imaginary, 1987 and 1997) along with the notion, drawn from Deleuze and Guattari (2004), of *the refrain,* and the character and operation of the commons (material and immaterial).

Chapter 6.

Commons of the Possible: The Recomposing Imaginal

The previous chapter employed the story of the Great Deluge as an aid in thinking about the imaginal content of three radical political organisations. In common with all myths, the sequential nature of this narrative (the old world, the vessel, the rupture, the new world), lends itself in particular to an elaboration of those aspects of the imaginal that are temporally infused. The story enabled us to think in terms of origin tales, horizons, constructions of the past and constructions of the future. At the same time, this temporal framework informed our understanding of the organisations as social bodies in the now, as groupings produced and reproduced through present day spatial assemblages that hum and resonate to certain temporal frequencies whilst displaying a cloth-like indifference to others.

This chapter shifts the axis. Instead of employing a temporal configuration to draw out the imaginal content of the organisations (and, more generally, of social movements) I make use of a spatial configuration: the commons. Similar in approach to the previous chapter, this is not treated exclusively as a means of illuminating the spatial dimensions of the imaginal content. Indeed, one of the main concerns in what follows is to take a critical position towards static models of institution and commons, opening them upon a processual (and therefore temporally infused) terrain by use of the notion (taken from Deleuze and Guattari, 2004) of *the refrain*, and by a focus on commo*ning* (a term invented by Peter Linebaugh, 2008). As the previous chapter used a temporal lens to look at imaginal swelling along both the temporal and spatial axes, so this chapter uses a spatial lens for the same purpose.

In conjunction with the previous chapter it represents the final phase in the promised overall arc that has taken us from the processes of decomposition that

provided the focus for Chapters 1 and 2, to a recompositional emphasis. However, since from the outset I have been concerned to muddy the waters with regards to the opposition between these two terms, that is no less the case here.

Reterritorialisation/recomposition is necessary, desirable, and inevitable. Furthermore, it is continuous and confluent with deterritorialisation and decomposition. Neither one stops and starts but each passes through different intensities. Not wanting to valorise either process over the other, wishing instead to look to processes of decomposition that facilitate recomposition and processes of recomposition that facilitate decomposition, I approach the question as one that relates not to what happens to social movements when they fail or are defeated but what they must do as part of the process of movement.

In this Chapter, then, I deal with two related approaches to the notion of composition. Firstly I consider institution. Begining from the neoinstitutionalist turn in Organisation studies (Mayer & Rowan, 1991; DiMaggio & Powell, 1991; Keohane, 1988), we move to the complementary model of institution employed by Castoriadis (1987, 1997). Although I find use in all of these, it is the Castoriadian model, being directly concerned with the imaginal, that provides the greatest assistance in dealing with the central questions of the research. Castoriadis' theory of *autonomised* institutions (wherein the imaginal and functional components become separated from one another) provides a useful tool for understanding how forms of social and political organisation can ossify but it also leaves open the question of institutional forms that incorporate some degree of in-built resistance to such autonomisation. I explore this by moving from the institution to Deleuze and Guattari's (2004) concept of the refrain, which offers a possible approach to thinking of organisational assemblages, such as social movements that do not lend themselves so easily to institutional analysis. In addition, this presents the possibility of the creations of institution-like structures that are both mobile and aimed at (rather than are defended against) continual evolution. I end this section by suggesting that the question of how one nurtures and develops a refrain, and how the refrain itself operates upon a field of the possible, can be framed as one of commoning.

The section that follows looks at the history of commons and enclosure, drawing in particular on contemporary Marxist models, to argue both that the commons, rather than relating to a historically discrete pre-capitalist period, are an essential element of ongoing capitalist cycles of accumulation, and that, following

from this, that it is impossible to approach commoning except as a question of political struggle. In the final section, I deal specifically with the notion of an imaginal commons. I draw together the threads from the previous section in order to argue that commoning and enclosure processes on this terrain are actually better thought of as processes of *enclosure-for-commons* and *enclosure-against-commons*. As a laboratory for the exploration of imaginal commoning I discuss the ways in which *values* can be mobilised as mechanisms both for expanding and for narrowing the field of possibility.

Institution(s)

Our reading of institution in this chapter has two main points of reference. The second, which we'll deal with in the section that follows, is the work of Castoriadis (other aspects of which will by now be familiar to readers of this thesis). The point of reference we will look at first, however, is the neoinstitutionalist (also called the 'new institutionalist') turn in Organisation Studies.

Neoinstitutionalism emerged with the publication of John Meyer and Brian Rowan's 'Institutionalized organisations: formal structure as myth and ceremony' in the *American Journal of Sociology* in 1977 (Mayer & Rowan 1991), although it was only later that the discussion that followed from this article came to be considered as having created a new field and it was given its own moniker. The new sociological movement sought to develop a position critical of the behaviourist views of (what was at the time) orthodox institutional analysis, which operated on an understanding of the institution as an aggregate of individual actors (DiMaggio & Powell 1991). In particular, the neoinstitutionalists moved away from the approaches that had foregrounded the legislative aspects of institutional structure towards a focus on the informal aspects. At the same time, there was a shift away from the study of institutions as things towards a study of institution as a process.

DiMaggio and Powell argue that this shift can be seen as rooted in several contemporaneous innovations in sociological research. A sudden surge of interest in ethnomethodology, for example, produced vast swaths of empirical data in which the rational-actor thesis of previous institutionalism (the notion that institution has its origins in the meeting of needs and the pursuit of self interest) could be seen to be

extremely precarious (*ibid.* pp.19-22). Instead there emerged a model of institutions in which they 'do not merely reflect the preferences and power of the units that constituted them; the institutions themselves shape those preferences and that power' (Keohane 1988 p.382), a 'process-oriented view [in which] institutions constituted actors as well as constrain them, and interests emerge within particular normative and historical contexts' (DiMaggio & Powell 1991 p.7).

The adoption of this new model has a number of effects that are of use to us in our research into the organisation of the imaginal. The notion that institution does not simply reflect preference (and we might treat preference here as the articulation of desire or interest) but also sets criteria and structures, means that the contexts in which those preferences can become known shifts us from the more orthodox institutional focus on norms and instead draws our attention to the limits of the imaginal. This has a significant impact on how we can approach ideas such as social movement and social change. A model of institution that hinges on social-norms (or conventions) brings with it a strategy of change (or stasis) that hinges on notions of transgression and conformity. This implies the possibility of situating oneself externally to the institution where one's practices are partly shaped through awareness of alternative and prohibited practices that can be adopted, adapted, or avoided. Not only the construction of institutions but also their destruction may be consciously driven and work towards the embodiment of certain specific and indeed pre-specified outcomes. The neoinstitutionalist model, however, is one to which it is not possible deliberately to situate oneself externally. The limits of the institution tend towards the limits of what can be imagined, giving rise not to norms but to infallible rules. In this model, the primary locus of the institution is society, whereas in the former model, it is the group or organisation.[42]

This is in keeping with the understanding of the imaginal process, and, more specifically, of social movements, that has developed over the preceding chapters. In both of these cases we have attempted to construct a model of motion that doesn't rely upon the definition of a future context (an external point B) into which one might chose to move. Rather it relies upon the development of mechanisms for

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[42] DiMaggio and Powell point out that whilst old intuitionalism had produced an (empirically unsupportable) impression that organisational forms are diversifying, new intuitionalism, in which the limits of the organisation are set by the social imaginary in which it operates, point to the gradual narrowing of those forms (1991)

drawing one outward from the present context in processes of expansion that will transform it.

The concept of the imaginal (or the imaginary or the imagination) has played no central theoretical or analytical role in neoinstitutionalist organisation theory. The anthropologist Mary Douglas (who is not necessarily a denizen of this field but forms a bond of reciprocal influence with it) comes close to our concerns when she describes what she considers to be the analogical basis of the instituting process (see Douglas 1986). Douglas suggests that the basis of the institution of gender follows a long process of analogical extrapolation beginning from the practical concerns of organising social groupings in which a significant proportion or participants are unable to gestate children. In common with many other institutionalists (old and new) Douglas sees the basic operation of instituting as the perpetual repetition of systems of symbols embodied by means of practice and ritual. It might be argued that her model veers closer to the rational-actor model than the neoinstitutionalist treatments referred to above in that it is clearly grounded in the notion of the meeting of needs. It is useful to us in that she opens up the question of analogical movement even if her explication of the analogical process, whilst we have no reason to disagree with it, foregrounds certain elements to the exclusion of others. Her concern is to show that one institution grows from another on the grounds of its resemblance to it. Although she does not use the term, we might point out that she is primarily referring to a resemblance of imaginary significations and is specifically setting out to show that it is resemblance on this basis, rather than the a resemblance on the basis of need, that effects the transformation (*ibid.* pp.45-53) Douglas is less concerned however, with an exploration of *why* the institution is drawn out of its initial form. As such, whilst her discussion offers much to assist in our understanding of the gradual development and modification of institutional forms, there is less that can be used to explain radical or revolutionary social change.

To deepen the question of the imaginal in relation to the institution and, at the same time, further our exploration into the possibilities for social imaginal movement, we need to turn once again to Castoriadis.

Castoriadis is absent from the work emerging from within this sociological tradition and appears not to be recognised as a precursor of it. This is despite his major work on institution, *The Imaginary Institution of Society* (1987) first appearing

in French in 1972, the larger part of a decade before the neoinstitutionalist turn, and sharing many of its concerns.

Castoriadis, like the neoinstitutionalists, is keen to situate his own model of the institution in opposition to the functional-rational-economic model which, he similarly contends, is not supported by empirical evidence. His position is not that the institution performs *no* function but that it has no functional-rational *basis*, that it is not reducible to its function. In constructing his opposition to this notion, Castoriadis provides a number of examples of institutions that don't 'work' (in the functional-rational sense that they do not fulfil the needs they appear designed to accomplish and often, in fact, frustrates and multiplies them) yet continue to thrive. He also points to institutions (Roman Law is his key example) whose functional-rational component gradually emerged over time rather than being already present when they were conceived (Castoriadis 1987).

Castoriadis uses this argument against the functional-rational-economic model of institution to further develop his insider-critique of Marxism. He is critical both of the Marxist perspective that sees institution as superstructural (produced *by* base) *and* the neo-Kantian counter position that ascribes form primacy over content by insisting that it is not possible to accept 'the anteriority of one with respect to the other. It is a question of *moments* in a structure' (*ibid.* p.125)

What do these institutional structural *moments* look like in Castoriadis' thought, and how do they come about? In the context of a discussion on institution and the imaginary, we are provided with a useful, one-paragraph description of the character of the institution that also (through the use of the concept of alienation taken mainly from Marx) assists us in relating it to processes of social change and social stagnation.

> The institution is a socially sanctioned, symbolic network in which a functional component and an imaginary component are combined in variable proportions and relations. Alienation occurs when the imaginary moment in the institution becomes autonomous and predominates, which leads to the institution becoming autonomous and predominating with respect to society. This becoming autonomous, or autonomization, of the institution is expressed and embodied in the material nature of social life, but it always presupposes at the same time that society lives its relations with its institutions in the mode of the imaginary, in other words that is does not recognize in the imaginary of institutions something that is its own product (Castoriadis 1987 p.132)

So the institution is a network of symbols. Castoriadis talks of this network as having an imaginary component and a functional component but it might be easier to understand if instead we think of the network as being formed of symbols joined by bonds that are both imaginary and functional. We can read 'functional component' as relating to the *effect* that the institution has upon the world. This is distinct from the *purpose* of the institution, which is rather an aspect of its imaginal component. It is also important not to mistake this differentiation as being that between a practical and a cognitive component. The institution is embodied through practice irrespective of its proportions of functional and imaginary bonds. In a non-autonomised institutional context these two types of bond modify each other, effecting the arrangement of symbols (which, as the sole basis of the expression of the imaginary shift position as if caught in the gravitational fields of hidden objects). The new symbolic arrangement further modifies the functional and imaginary bonds. The relationship is one of perpetual yet constrained flux.

Castoriadis argues that when the imaginally bonded sections of the symbolic network are separated from the functionally bonded sections, they dominate, producing the sense that although the institution can be seen to be productive of society, it can no longer seen as *produced by* society. It is important to understand here that this does not mean that such an institution does not have a function, but that the function is obscured by imaginally constructed notions such as purpose (to which it may have only a limited relationship) becoming naturalised or ideologised.

Elsewhere (2007 p.132), Castoriadis looks at the autonomisation of the functional components. Similarly this produces an institutional ossification, in this case because of the stagnation to which the institution is subject when its function cannot be pushed beyond itself through imaginal processes.

Castoriadis does not mean for us to understand this alienation-producing process of autonomisation as a deliberately engineered one (it potentially *could be* but it is neither necessarily nor usually the case). To understand this we can look at the example of the general assemblies (G.A.s) that were central to the Occupy movement. The case has already been made (in Chapter 3) that the Occupy movement inherited and developed many of its practices and conventions from the tradition of the protest camp. In the UK, this had previously most recently been manifested in the Camp for Climate Action but the influence of the Indignados in

Spain and, in particular, the occupation of Cairo's Tahrir Square cannot be underestimated. Central to the repertoire of practices is the assembly, a (potentially) huge meeting usually held at least once a day to which all are welcome.

In the context of the specific *events* such as the Camp for Climate Action (and the camps at counter-summits that preceded them), sometimes lasting a week or more but nevertheless temporary and *organised to be* temporary, the general assembly functions as a decision-making body produced by a particular set of perceived problematics about democracy. The aim is to find a consensus on a large-scale and it emerges as the praxis element of a critique of forms of representative and centralised democracy, both in terms of a perceived inability of those forms to address problems around power and inclusivity and, crucially, their tendency to diminish the possibility of organisational innovation (see Seeds For Change 2010).

These questions around democracy and inclusion remained intact as an articulated problematic when the assembly made its transition to much longer-term, temporally open-ended occupations such as those on Wall Street and outside St. Paul's Cathedral. As we saw in Chapter 3 how some considered the Occupy movement to be a laboratory for the project of real democracy, a showcase for techniques of consensus decision-making (Blumenfield, Bottici, & Critchley 2013). Quinn Norton, who was a participant in Occupy Wall St. and whose 'Eulogy for Occupy' article we made use of previously, puts a more negative slant on it: 'The idea of the GA — its process, its form, inclusiveness — failed. It had all the best chances to evolve, imprinted on the consciousness of thousands of occupiers like a second language. No idea gets a better chance than that, and it still failed' (Norton 2012 no pagination). Norton's critique hinges on an acceptance that the general assembly was a (failed) machine for making decisions.

Milburn, however, takes a different approach, arguing that such a total rejection ignores the fact that whilst the general assembly may not have fulfilled the function it was conceived as having, this is not the same as having no function at all (Milburn 2014). He uses Marx's theory of fetishisation along with the Freudian idea of transference, to try to uncover the *actual* function of the general assembly:

> It was often what we might call the 'affect of democracy' within the General Assemblies that people found most appealing. Being listened to and taken seriously by others while

taking collective control over an important political moment really can be life changing. This radically participatory element, along with taking collective action, did most to increase people's collective capacities. There seems to have been an emphasis on allowing people to express themselves, at the expense of efficient decision-making. We might call this an emphasis on testimony, and it is a good indication of the role the assemblies were really fulfilling (Milburn 2014 p.208)

Milburn further supports speculation about the centrality of testimony by looking at the debtors assemblies organised by the group Strike Debt in the wake of Occupy which are specifically designed to combat the shame of debt by giving participants the opportunity to speak out about it (thus clarifying the social and widespread nature of something that we are encouraged to approach as an individual failing) (*ibid.*)

Milburn uses the word 'assemblyism' to emphasise the shift into this fetishised organisational form. Applying a Castoriadian critique, we can observe the movement from earlier permutations of the assembly, wherein its functional and imaginal components were bonded, to the later permutations in which they had become autonomised. In line with our earlier discussion of symptomatology and problematics, we can see this severance as having been produced by the transportation of the institution into a different social context which produced a point of interference (of non-sense), which in turn reveals a previously hidden problematic.

The innovation introduced by Strike Debt was to *re*functionalise the imaginal component of the assembly, not by returning to its original function but by revealing and further embedding a new/latent/hidden function within its overall form. In this respect, we can perhaps consider the organisational innovations of the three groups that have constituted the empirical heart of the thesis as a *re*imagining of the functional component of the assembly, in that they are addressing similar problematics around democracy and creativity through experimentation with new forms.

Castoriadis' model of radical change is based on the struggle against the alienation produced by the autonomisation of institutional forms. In the introduction I made use of the notion of a 'crisis of the imagination'. Reformulated in Castoriadian terms we might think of this crisis as corresponding to a wide-ranging processes of unfettered institutional autonomisation. This is also closely related to the concept, from Unger (2001), of 'naturalised' formative contexts of which we

made use in Chapter 1.[43] Radical politics appears on this terrain as a process of uncovering the literal '*insignificance*' (Castoriadis, 1987 p.155) of the imaginal content of the institution in the sense that it has lost its *denotational* component in the sense of being *produced by* social action and become instead purely *connotational* in that it is *productive of* social action. Prior to autonomisation, both of these components were present. This project corresponds to the re-establishing of the 'articulated unity between elucidation and action' (p.164).

The Castoriadian problematic however, is centred on how this can be possible given that it is self-evidently *not* possible to criticise society and the institutions of which it is comprised from a position external to it, outside of history. There is, as we saw in Chapter 1, a certain degree of pessimism apparent in Castoriadis' discussion of whether it is possible *deliberately* to decompose these instituted imaginaries (although he certainly doesn't give up on this possibility entirely) (1997 p. 337). The greater part of this thesis up to this point has been concerned with a perhaps more optimistic exploration of how and it what ways this *might* be possible. Here I want to spool the twine of the other line of flight that Castoriadis leaves open for us.

Radical politics in Castoriadis is not a struggle against institution; it is a struggle against *autonomised* institution - In case there is still any confusion, this use of autonomy (in contrast to other appearances of the term in his work) doesn't correspond to the devolution of power but to the severance of the imaginal from the social. His argument allows, though, for the possibility of the construction of institutions that cannot be, or are mobilised against, this form of autonomisation.

In the discussion of Occupy's general assemblies, we encountered a great example of a moment of territorialisation that instantaneously opens upon a deterritorialisaiton. The imaginal and functional components of this example become autonomised as a result of the institution having been brought into a new social and historical context in which the two no longer make sense in relation to one another. Like a derailed train it can no longer move; like a detrained rail it succumbs to redundancy. However, because history cannot be reversed, in order to remobilise this institution, the point of interference the new context reveals is at the same time a vital one in the process of the transformation, modification, and repurposing of the

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[43] Mary Douglas also talks of naturalisation as a form of institutional defence (Douglas 1986 p.52)

institution. In short it is a point of territorialisation from which we take leave immediately upon articulating it as such – the point of imaginal minimum entropy we are never *at* but only just after.

Castoriadis largely discusses autonomisation as something to which institutions tend towards, not because of their specific content but due to their fundamental structure. To express the imaginal through a network of symbols is after all already to draw it back towards categorical logic. Furthermore, the shifting historical, social and natural contexts external to the institution are uninvited (but undeniable) guests who cannot stop themselves from cuckolding either the functional or the imaginal. We might therefore add a rejoinder to the earlier statement that in Castoriadis the struggle is not against institution but against the autonomised institution so that when we talk about struggle, we're not referring to the one to be avoided, but the one to undergo and so pass beyond. The crucial question here is how to institute in such a way that the point of territoriality is always just behind us – close enough to enable us to produce sense but not so close that it is encompassing, providing a barrier to movement.

In exploring this question we can only go so far with Castoriadis. However, much potential is offered by Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the Refrain (2004), which enables us to conceive of a form of mobile institution that can be recalled and dismissed, and continually modified and transformed through immersion in new socio-historical contexts.

Refrain

In *A Thousand Plateaus,* Deleuze and Guattari introduce the notion of the Refrain as a way to understand the interplay between territoriality and deterritoriality. They begin with a description of a child singing a familiar song who is gripped with a sense of fear in the dark. 'The song is like a rough sketch of a calming and stabilizing, calm and stable, centre in the heart of chaos. […] it jumps from chaos to the beginning of order in chaos and is in danger of breaking apart at any moment' (Deleuze and Guattari 2004 p.343). This mumbled tune, emerging, we imagine, from a face with eyes darting left and right, checking the shadows for things unknown, is a defence against anxiety. It is more than that, though; it is a *brave* defence, an armour

that allows and facilitates the immersion of the child into the darkness. An alternative defence might be never going out in the first place. Safer perhaps (although the majority of non-car-related fatal accidents happen in the home), but without the promise and mystery of the deep blue wilderness of the nighttime streets.

The word finds its most common usage in music where it refers to a repeated phrase. It is perhaps unsurprising, then, that it is on a discussion on music that Deleuze and Guattari concentrate their elaboration. It is also clear however, that what is being discussed here relates to the concept of institution. The refrain, like the institution, 'is a territorial assemblage' (2004 p.344) in that it marks out a specific social space (the authors talk at some length about bird song, in which the relationship of the refrain to territoriality is obvious). Its relationship to territoriality is a complex one however. We are told later that the refrain '*moves in the direction* of the territorial assemblage and lodges itself there or leaves' (*ibid.* p.356) (my italics). In order to reconcile these two apparently inconsistent statements, it's important to note, firstly, that the refrain is temporally fleeting but is then repeated. As soon as it has begun, it is on its way to ending. If it exists permanently, it is as a *potential* territorial assemblage waiting to be performed. Secondly we must note that in Deleuze and Guattari, there are a number of different types of refrain:

> (1) territorial refrains that seek, mark, assemble a territory; (2) territorialized function refrains that assume a special function in the assemblage (the Lullaby that territorializes the child's slumber, the Lover's Refrain that territorializes the sexuality of the loved one, the Professional Refrain that territorialized trades and occupations, the Merchant Refrain that territorializes distribution and products); (3) the same, when they mark new assemblages, pass into new assemblages by means of deterritorialisation-reterritorialisation (nursery rhymes are a very complicated example: they are territorial refrains that are sung differently from neighbourhood to neighbourhood, sometimes from one street to the next; they distribute game roles and functions within the territorial assemblage but they also cause territory to pass into the game assemblage, which tends to become autonomous); (4) refrains that collect or gather forces, either at the heart of the territory, or in order to go outside it. (Deleuze & Guattari 2004 p.360)

Although some of these types of refrain appear as more mobile than others, this mobility (the fact that they 'are portable' as Milburn, 2010 p.157, puts it) is key to why the idea is so useful. Milburn uses the refrain to elaborate on his model of social movement, which we encountered in Chapter 3. Social movement for Milburn, it will

be recalled, is not a specific thing in which one is either clearly a participant or not. Neither though is it quite fully a doing (the moving of social relations) It is rather a becoming, a *doing* magnetically drawn by a *being* that is beyond the horizon. In a sense Milburn is grappling with a question very similar to what we are considering here. The alter-globalisation movement (the main focus of his research) is a force that produces a transformation, yet in some ways it clearly behaves like an institution. Milburn's concern is to reconcile this deterritorialising function of the alter-globalisation movement with the territorial aspects without which it would be impossible to understand it. Milburn does this by looking at the movement's refrains. He points to a whole array of movement practices to which the word could be applied (social centres, particular mechanisms for making decisions, concepts that fall into common usage) but is particularly interested in the idea of the event and its relationship to the moment of excess (Milburn 2010). The alter-globalisation movement (like any other) has a repertoire of events but is perhaps most recognisable for its 'summit-hopping' (the organisation of protest camps around the meetings of world leaders such as in the G8 summits)[44]. So, whilst in some political formulations, membership of a party might constitute something like the refrain, that with which one is grounded and (more or less) temporarily territorialised, for the alter-globalisation movement, the summit-hopping event and the social forum fulfil the same function. It is distinct from the party though by virtue of the fact that it is inconstant. If it is a form of institution, then it is one that breaks apart and re-forms, spanning the divide between the two as an imaginal construction only.

Mengue, who we also encountered in Chapter 3, makes similar use of the refrain whilst considering notions of fabulation and myth-making in relation to the concept of the people (Mengue 2008). At first glance such territorialising concepts might seem hard to reconcile with Deleuze's political project, and certainly this is the case in the way in which they are used in Bergson (from whom Deleuze, and Mengue after him, borrow them). However, Deleuze effects an inversion of the political status of the people from the pre-existing category upon which the garlands and baubles of the right are hung, to a permanently ante-horizontal notion in a never ending state of becoming (*ibid.* p. 226). Fabulation in this Deleuzian model, is not employed in the defence and entrenchment of an already-present institution but as a

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[44] Although it must be noted that this is principally as aspect of the repertoire of the alter-globalisation movement in the global North, its globally southern manifestations had quite different repertoires.

mobile territoriality (a refrain) capable of staying afloat upon the undulating rapids of collective (or rather becoming-collective) identity.

These applications of the refrain are also useful in that they challenge certain readings of Deleuze and Guattari's work (and that of Deleuze more broadly) that present it as indicating the impossibility of political action. Isabelle Garo, for example, has provided such a critique (Garo 2008), arguing that Deleuze's focus on desire, the molecular revolt of the minority, and corresponding criticism of totalising institutions (not just those of capital but also of revolutionary political parties and unions) 'chimes implicitly with the rejection of any participation in the institutional game of parliamentary democracy as well as […] indifference to any possibility of the unification of social struggles' (*Ibid.* p. 64)[45]. DeLanda argues that critiques such as this are based on the notion that the molecular and the molar are binary structures (conceding at the same time that Deleuze occasionally makes this mistake himself), rather than a continuum of scale that operates both without and within specific social organisational structures and institutions (DeLanda 2008). Following Delanda's argument, we can see that this mistake simply replicates the problematic separation of the militant from the people (as demonstrated by Thoburn 2008). Garo fails to consider the political and organisational implications of the refrain and in doing so imagines a political choice between a strategy of pure difference (which she quite rightly suggests makes political action impossible) and one of unity as if coordination is a question of having attained the level of homogeneity necessary to create the conditions for centralised control without dictatorship rather than of having developed a common means of articulation between heterogenous bodies such that the necessity of centralised control is diminished or eradicated.

To refer back to the great deluge narrative of the previous chapter, it is clear that the ark and its contents take the form of the refrain. Everything that we considered in the section entitled Antediluvia we could posit here as examples of the refrain. To take just one, it will be recalled that Donna, talking of the conspicuous absence of the words 'socialism' and 'class' in an early (although recent at the time of the interview) statement from Podemos, told me: 'It's about retaining some key words […] they're tools for understanding reality'. Whether one agrees or not with

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[45] This inability to imagine the possibility of radical anti-capitalist transformation outside of the category of unification and the institutions of unification is also a flaw in the work of writers emerging from Leninist traditions but trying to engage seriously with the new network-based movements (for example Cooper and Hardy 2012 and Dean 2012).

Donna about the function of such words, it's very clear that for her they serve as refrains. The inclusion of these words in the Podemos statement would have provided a means of travelling from what we might think of (using Chris' phrase) as a British Trotskyist tradition, to the post-15M tradition from which Podemos emerged. It should be pointed out also that it is to be assumed that this was a topic of conversation precisely because the lack of this shared refrain is brought into relief by the presence of other refrains. One cannot imagine Donna having the same reservations about the lack of the word socialism on a *L'Oreal* billboard.

The mobility of the refrain then is not based on whether it can be brought intact from place to place like a physical object (the refrain may of course be partly embodied by a physical object) but on its repetition, its ability to be remade, recomposed over and again. Of central importance to our current investigation is what Deleuze and Guattari identify as the fourth type of refrain in the passage quoted above: The refrain that passes 'into new assemblages by means of deterritorialisation-reterritorialisation' (Deleuze & Guattari 2004 p.360). The refrain, in this permutation at least, is not only mobile but also modifiable.

Let's go back to music. At a certain point in jazz history, when listeners and musicians alike were first becoming acquainted with the sonic experiments that would go on to be called 'new thing', something approaching a transitional structural formula began for those who were pushing the boundaries most actively. You can hear it in the work of pioneers like Charlie Parker and Miles Davis but it's perhaps best exemplified in John Coltrane's work (around 1961 when the *Africa/Brass* studio sessions [Coltrane 1995] were released whilst even bolder experiments were evident in the live Village Vanguard recordings [Coltrane 1997]). Like a number of his contemporaries, he developed an approach wherein a theme or refrain would be developed, followed by a short period of freer improvisation, followed by a return to the refrain, followed by a much longer period of free improvisation until the end of the track. Whilst not wishing to speculate on the role that this refrain plays with relation to Coltrane's sense of anxiety, it performs, for the listener, a similar regrounding function to the child's song in the dark. The result is that we are provided with an initial territory, depart into a (not wholly but largely) deterritorialised sonic world, *re*territorialised by the refrain, and newly emboldened and, reassured by our re-encounter with the refrain, brought into a new deterritorialised zone and left there.

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One of the most significant points about this structural approach is that it was, as I have said, a transitional one (certainly not for all jazz musicians but it was for Coltrane). The experiments that Coltrane would go on to be involved in a couple of years later until his death in 1967 would not have made any sense to listeners had this period not happened first. Not only, therefore, are these pieces of music landscapes upon which we can observe the refrain but they are also, as a total community of musical landscapes, a refrain in the process of evolving.

The refrain within the pieces can also be heard to evolve. On the edges between the refrain and the free improvisation, where one works its way into the other and vice versa, Coltrane takes us through a multitude of different permutations, variations, and fragments of the refrain. It is still recognisable, but it has been modified. This is a conscious modification born of a level of skill that few if any have equalled. However, refrains also go through chance modification as a direct result of their mobility. The example Deleuze and Guattari use themselves (the shifting content of Nursery Rhymes from city to city, street to street, 2004 p.360) is indicative of this. The words of the rhyme don't change because the children signing them decide that a word ought to be different (well, they might, but we can safely assume that this is not usually the reason), but because forgotten words have to be replaced, misheard words become part of the ritual, words differently translated from the grandmother's native tongue fill the same position in the stanza. Similarly, a number of the innovations of the alter-globalisation movement in the UK stemmed not from careful strategising but from the new context created by importing practices, developed by anti-roads protesters into an urban (relatively treeless) environment.

In Chapter 3 we looked at Nunes' notion of distributed leadership (Nunes 2012, 2013) and the idea of social movement spreading and developing not through command but through the taking up (and taking off) and the replication of forms of action that seemed to work. Milburn and Harvie have looked at this process elsewhere in terms of virality (Harvie & Milburn, Forthcoming).

For all these authors one of the interesting things about virality is that it spreads rapidly and rhizomatically. However, an aspect of the virus that is perhaps of more importance to the present discussion is the way it evolves. In addition to random genetic mutation contributing to generational evolution, as with most living

things[46], viruses also transform over time as they copy errors causing a process of retroviral replication that results in the accidental reproduction of an element of the host DNA within the virus itself (and that is subsequently reproduced as part of the virus over generations). However, this form of lateral evolution is not confined to the virus itself but contributes to the virally facilitated lateral evolutions of the host organisms (Barras 2007, Pace II et al. 2008). This happens when a virus into which an element of (for example) viper DNA has been assimilated is passed onto another species – perhaps the viper attacks a tapir which survives the bite but catches the virus. Not only might the virus go on to become part-tapir as well as part-viper but it also leaves remains of itself in the form of endogenous retroviruses ('benign' and non-pathogenic) which are subsequently reproduced as part of the host organism (up to 8% of the human genome is thought to be comprised of endogenous retroviruses, as discussed in Belshaw et al. 2004 p.4895). So if the tapir is lucky enough to have survived not only the viper attack but also the virus, both he and his progeny will be part-snake and part-virus. Endogenous retroviruses are sometimes referred to as 'junk DNA' but recent studies have suggested that they have played a palpable role in evolutionary change. For example, the ability of primates to resist certain forms of cancer that are far more common in other mammals is thought to have been laterally acquired through viral transfer in our common ancestor (Anon 2007).

There are fascinating parallels between this process and the idea of the production of forms of institution into which dis-institution is already in-built, a continually shifting refrain that transforms not primarily through design but because it is constructed in such a way as to be perpetually open to transformative chance encounters through structures that encourage something akin to these viral copying errors rather than hardening under dogma's calciferous sealant. We can perhaps think of this as a form of institution that exists in a continual state of becoming (neither a thing that *is*, nor a thing that *does*, but a thing that *was* and is *about to be*) This again supports the suggestion that took form at the end of Chapter 2: that we are always *just after* the point of territorialisation which has the imaginal character of a previous point of minimum entropy.

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[46] Virus's inclusion in the category of 'alive' is subject to scientific disagreement. Their inability to reproduce without being embedded in a host cell puts them outside the generally accepted definition of a living thing.

In moving from the more all-encompassing model of the institution that we find in Castoriadis to the refrain, we potentially open up something of a conceptual space. Refrains are phasic in that they operate inside, around, and overlapping with one another. Indeed, given that language, and the symbolic in general, take the form of a network of phasing refrains of various lengths and intensity, the whole of expression appears to us as a writhing bait-ball of translucent fish of meaning. But the whole of expression is not the whole of the real and a key element of the argument of this thesis has been that the imaginal is often beyond articulation and readable only through its effects.

What then is the terrain upon which the refrain moves and evolves? *Where* do we bring one refrain into contact with another in order to facilitate transmutation? In what sea does the bait-ball writhe? Clearly it is not made up of pre-existing ideas waiting to be chosen. Rather it is a terrain comprised of the possible and the potential. This terrain is a commons, not analogically but literally. It is both used and created (which together we might think of as nurtured) by imaginal commoners for whom the refrain is a *commoning technology*. Like other forms of commons though, it is a site of perpetual struggle against enclosure and many of the imaginal spaces in which our refrains can be fertilized and cross-pollinated are fenced off. Treating the refrain as the basis of active organisation for social change (as a way to navigate quickly through the points of alienation and ossification wrought by institutional autonomisation) requires an exploration of the bases of opening up and closing off space on this commons of the possible. For this we turn to those in the Marxist tradition who have theorised (and lived) the commons as current sites of class struggle and capitalist accumulation rather than by being limited to a historically discrete pre-capitalist period. This will provide a battle-scarred bridge towards a discussion in the final section about the specifically *imaginal* commons.

Common(s)

It has long been beyond dispute that the period of land enclosures that heralded the birth of capitalism in the 18th century was an era of major historical significance. It is much more recently, however, that theories of the commons as a *current* concern, of enclosures as an ongoing, contemporary process have begun to breach the inner wall

of the political imagination. Within this debate there are several poles of attraction. In particular the focus for this section is, on the one hand, the work of the Midnight Notes Collective and a number of scholars who have been influenced by them and on the other hand, the work of the International Association for the Study of the Commons (IASC) and especially that of Elinor Ostrom (I will use the term neo-Hardinian, coined by Caffentzis [2010c], for this current). Other significant participants in this debate are Hardt and Negri, whom we briefly consider as a contrast to the Midnight Notes school of commons, and David Harvey, whose commons-related concept of 'accumulation by dispossession' (Harvey 2005), although perhaps better known than the rest of the above, is not of sufficient direct relevance to the main thrust of this research be worth consideration in this chapter. Before we consider what is distinct in these approaches, it is necessary to look at what the common means and so we need to begin with the historical enclosures in order to make the argument for their continuity.

As Marx does in *Capital Volume 1*, we begin in the English countryside where the class antagonisms at the centre of the historic period of enclosures are laid plain. 1801 is useful as a starting point for an examination of these enclosures that provided the pre-conditions for industrial capitalism. In that the year the English parliament passed the General Enclosures Act. This was, in a sense, an umbrella law that brought together a large number of earlier, smaller enclosures acts and perhaps, in Britain, the beginning of a systemic attack on the commons (and, more importantly, commoners) explicitly legitimised by legislation (Thompson 1972). However, we must exercise a certain caution when talking about the enclosures, which are too often analysed as if they were a historical event peculiar to a moment in time. In fact, from 1801 it is possible to set a course both backwards and forwards in chronological terms.

As a prelude to the legislative period that culminated in the General Enclosures Act, Marx cites the rise of the Flemish wool industry (1974a p.672). The corresponding rise in the price of wool in England provided a huge impetus for the clearing of the commons (both in terms of the destruction of woodlands and the forcible eviction of the commoners themselves) in order to make way for the creation of pastureland on a massive scale, thus creating a newly competitive and profitable wool industry.

The rationale behind the enclosures is given theoretical expression by Marx as *primitive accumulation*. Put simply, primitive accumulation refers to the acquisition (the 'making private') of resources that is a necessary precondition for the labour processes that would valorise those resources and produce surplus value. It is worth stressing the dual nature of the 'accumulative' elements in this theory. On the one hand, the process is one of privatising resources in order to generate profit. The example of the drive to create pastureland in order to compete with the Flemish wool-trade is one in which this element is immediately clear. At least as important, on the other hand, is the creation of a proletariat and a labour market via the separation of workers from their means of subsistence. 'Freed' from the land, the commoners find themselves in a situation in which they must sell their labour-power (the only commodity over which they have ownership) in order to survive. This process of separation, which greatly reduces the power of the labourers, is of key importance (Marx 1974a).

For Marx, though, primitive accumulation *precedes* capitalism. It provides a bridge between the feudalism of the middle ages and the capitalism of the late 18th century. On a global level, of course, this is a broad period, extending well into recent history, but everywhere it has this bridging character. Primitive accumulation readies the field and in it capitalism flourishes.[47]

Peter Linebaugh's work on the Magna Carta does much to problematise this single historical moment conception of enclosures (Linebaugh 2008). He uses the Magna Carta, the legal document (or more properly documents) guaranteeing liberty and commons for all as a point from which to investigate a long (and continuing) history of struggle around the commons. Though he ostensibly finds a focal point in these juridical documents, his intention is only in part to focus on the formal organisation of the commons as enshrined in law. Of equal importance is the process he refers to as 'commoning' (*ibid*. p. xiii). In commoning, we are provided with a concept that not only incorporates the management of the commons but also that of the struggle to create, defend, and nurture commons, which (in the sense in which Linebaugh employs it) also means creating, defending, and nurturing commoners.

Silvia Federici's *Caliban and The Witch* (2009) also deals with historical enclosures as a means of making a case for their continuity. Her work on the

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[47] It ought to be pointed out that in his later writings, such as *The Ethnological Notebooks* (1974b), he had begun to reassess this position.

European witch-hunts is extremely useful in helping us to understand how enclosure operates not only on the material level of the seizure of land but also on both on the level of the physical body and on the imaginal level. The witch-hunts (like the enclosures usually localised to the 17th century but in fact beginning in pre-modern times and continuing into the present day both within and outside Europe), for Federici, constituted (and constitute) an enclosure aimed at the level of social reproduction. The theory of social reproduction, Marxian in origin but developed much more by Marxist feminists, requires some explanation.

Social Reproduction is two things; or rather it is one thing with a dual nature. On the one hand, it is the activity that reproduces humans as humans and, on the other, it is all those activities that replenish labour power. Both these natures have a physical and an affective/imaginal component. In the immediate-term we have to feed ourselves and maintain our physical health both in order to be able live, grow, and perform what we need to do for ourselves, our friends, families and communities, and in order to be able to do the labour that we have sold for a wage to our employer. Abstract labour must also be replenished generationally. As we get older, we need to be replaced with younger workers. Social Reproduction therefore includes those activities connected to having and raising children.

In addition to this though, we need to fall within a certain continuum of dispositions in order to be productive which on the one hand involve all sorts of benevolent processes that we associate with friendship and the desire to cooperate with one another but also a number of less benevolent processes that we might associate with the repressive mechanisms of the state (we must be obedient, afraid of prison etc.). This imaginal component of Social Reproduction corresponds to how society replicates and repeats itself within the specific imaginal parameters of the possible.

There is a tension within this imaginal component that revolves around the *re* in reproduction. For capital, it is reproduction proper; a figure in an equation that it is hoped will tend towards the invariable. For proletarians (the de-commoned), it is production, movement.[48] What Federici shows us in *Caliban and The Witch* is the

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[48] To talk of *re*production though is not to dismiss the idea of these processes as being productive of value. On the contrary, as was argued in the 'Domestic Labour Debates' amongst Marxist Feminists in the 1970s (an account of which is recounted by Weeks, 2007), this is the process by which labour is produced and is the only thing capable of creating value. See also Harvie (2005) 'All labour is productive and we all struggle against value', *The Commoner*.

necessity for capital to 'enclose' women's bodies (i.e. subject them to control and external ownership) as a process analogous to the enclosure of land and natural resources. Capital thus hopes to create in woman a worker who is distinct from her male counterpart. Her primary task is to replenish and maintain abstract labour power. Vitally, this task must remain unwaged and its status as a labour *for* capital obscured. 'Housework is an exchange between women and capital mediated by men' (Fortunati 1989 p.36).[49]

Whilst this act of enclosure is bodily and is written physically upon the bodies of both women and men, it has a specifically imaginal component that relates to what it is possible for women and men to be and to do. In this case the vehicle of enclosure is the construction of a new imaginal space around the notion of the witch and how the transgressive character she represents relates to dominant values. As argued in relation to assemblyism in the first section of this chapter, we can see that the defence of this particular capitalist institution relies upon the autonomisation of this imaginal aspect (what women can be and do) from its functional components (the shifting of social, political, and economic power). This autonomised imaginal is what we might understand as a naturalised, biologically determinist, approach to gender. This institution of gender appears to produce aspects of capitalist organisation (or capitalist organisation must *adapt* to it) but the degree to which it is a *product of* capitalist organisation is successfully obscured.

Both Federici and Linebaugh are members or associates of the Midnight Notes collective whose work on the commons and primitive accumulation as a contemporary concern has been of seminal importance. Their approach is distinct from that of Ostrom (who we shall consider shortly) not only due to its foregrounding common*ing* over commons but also to its recognition of the inherent tension between commons and capital.

The Midnight Notes Collective's *New Enclosures* document introduced the possibility of enclosure as a recurring or cyclical element of capitalist growth (Midnight Notes 1990). This *New Enclosures* project made a significant contribution

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[49] Despite challenges to the sexual division of labour fought on many fronts with a number of significant gains, it remains very much the case that women's involvement in 'reproductive labour' is grossly disproportionate to men's. Furthermore, it becomes clear that this is no mere case of a 'lag' between labour markets and contemporary sensibilities when one analyses the focal points of current austerity measures in (for example) the U.K. Overwhelmingly these constitute an attack on women and an attempt to return reproductive labour to an unwaged condition.

to the anti-capitalist critiques being developed by those elements of the left that were able to reconstitute themselves around late twentieth century neo-liberalism (like the Alter-globalisation Movement for example). Born from the experiences of members of the collective who had been organising with workers in Nigeria, the critique began by asking questions about the very different nature of class struggle in communities that still had access to common land. George Caffentzis relates it in this way:

> It took a while after my arrival for me to recover and begin to ask, where is the class struggle here? The answer that eventually came was a surprise to me: the commons still existed in Nigeria and made it possible for many who are outside of the waged labour market to have collective access to land and for many waged workers with ties to the village common land to subsist when on strike (Caffentzis 2010b p.28).

This discovery resulted in a retheorising of enclosures as a cyclical and ongoing element of capital. The importance of this move, and its transformative effect on theories of liberation cannot be underestimated. De Angelis and Harvie articulate it well.

> If we understand capital not as a totalized *system* but rather as a *social force* with totalizing drives coexisting with other drives which limit it, then we can argue that enclosures are not a one-off occurrence but instead a continuous characteristic of 'capital logic'. In fact, primitive accumulation plays a central role in the world we live in; we can understand it as a *value practice* clashing with other value practices. One drive is capital's, to make and remake the world through commodification and enclosures; another drive is that of 'commoners' or 'humanity' to make and remake the world through counter-enclosures and commons (De Angelis & Harvie 2014 p.282).

This analysis suddenly brings us face-to-face with the actuality of class struggle. Not as a future for which to prepare, nor as a historical pre-capitalist moment, but in the here and now.

The common(s) current to which Linebaugh, Federici, Caffentzis, De Angelis, and Harvie belong is distinct from that we find in the work of Hardt and Negri (2000, 2006, 2009), although there are certainly points of complementarity. The former group of authors explores commons (plural) as a particular ecology of social relationships, practices and resources. By contrast, Hardt and Negri write of *the* common (singular).

As Negri elaborates in conversation with Casarino (Casarino and Negri 2008), he and Hardt's common owes much to Deleuze's work in *Difference and Repetition* (2010). They oppose common to community (Negri uses the German *Gemeinschaft* [in Casarino and Negri 2008 p.82]), the latter for Negri constituting an 'absolutely reactionary and unredeemable concept' (*Ibid.*) constituted through identity and difference of type and therefore emerging as a zone of repetition. In contrast, the common is a zone of difference. 'Common is that which enriches the productivity of singularities' (p. 83) he tells us, later clarifying that 'The common is that which takes place when singular modalities reassemble into a specifically discursive and proliferating being' (p. 127). It therefore makes little sense to talk of a specific commons from the perspective of Hardt and Negri's work since as soon as *a* commons is presented as distinct from other commons (or non-commons) it cannot help but take the form of *gemeinschaft* (I will discuss the problem of the isolated commons further below)

There is something of a shift in focus in Hardt and Negri's later work together however where the manifestation of the common through particular modes of being such as institutional and organisational forms constitutes a central beam in their analysis (2009). This idea is something not dissimilar to the refrain, a specific shared structure (a social centre, an ethos, a set of practices) with which to navigate a social terrain. This later approach allows a more direct dialogue with the Midnight Notes current in that both lines of argument facilitate a processual focus (a focus on the act of commoning) whilst allowing for the existence of vehicles or technologies for that process. We might *pragmatically* refer to these vehicles as commons without ditching Hardt and Negri's critique. In *Commonwealth* (2009) we encounter manifestations of the common both as that which has been produced through the common and that which facilitates the common. It is important to clarify at this point that when I talk about the imaginal commons, as I shall later, I am referring not to the former (aggregates of collective imaginal artefacts) but to the latter, a commons of the possible.

Before looking at the alternative Neo-Hardinian approach to commons it's worth recapping on the key elements of the Midnight Notes current. Firstly, commons are neither confined to a historically discrete period nor to its vestigial remnants. Rather they are ongoing. Secondly, contemporary commons are not separated from or supplementary to capitalist social relations. They are both

productive of and destructive of capital and therefore exist in a perpetually antagonistic relationship with it. Thirdly, material commons are not separated from their imaginal component. Enclosure necessarily operates upon terrains such as affect, values and subjectivity at the same time as it operates upon physical space. Fourthly, and relatedly, a commons (material or immaterial) exists within a social and imaginal ecology with both other commons and other enclosures. The commons is therefore neither spatially nor temporally discrete.

The neo-Hardinian current agrees with the first of the above elements (that commons are a contemporary, as well as a historical, phenomenon) and this commonality makes it a useful point of comparison. However, on the three other points, this approach is very different. Although I largely incorporate this current into the discussion in order to highlight its limitations, it is an important counter-position to consider as the apparent lack of animosity between commons and capital in this model means that (as Caffentzis, 2010c no pagination, has pointed out) it represents a possible contender as the capitalist successor to neoliberalism.

This current begins with Hardin's hugely influential *Tragedy of the Commons* in 1968. Hardin's critique concerns the 'inevitability' of the destruction of commons through over-exploitation. It is a simple case built on a now-familiar imaginal construction of human nature. Human beings, naturally greedy, naturally individualistic and self-maximising, cannot possibly be stopped from 'over-grazing' a field to which they have free and open access.

> As a rational human being, each herdsman seeks to maximize his gain. Explicitly or implicitly, more or less consciously, he asks, 'What is the utility *to me* of adding one more animal to my herd?' This utility has one negative and one positive component.
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> 1) The positive component is a function of the increment of one animal. Since the herdsman receives all the proceeds from the sale of the additional animal, the positive is + 1
>
> 2) The negative component is a function of the additional overgrazing created by one more animal. Since, however, the effects of overgrazing are shared by all the herdsmen, the negative utility for any particular decision-making herdsman is only a fraction of -1
>
> Adding together the component partial utilities, the rational herdsman concludes that the only sensible course for him to pursue is to add another animal to the herd. And another, and another…But this is the conclusion reached by each and every rational herdsman sharing a commons. Therein is the tragedy. Each man is locked into a system that compels him to increase his herd without limit – in a world that is limited. Ruin is the desertification to which

all men rush, each pursuing his own best interest in a society that believes in the freedom of the commons. Freedom in a commons brings ruin to all' (Hardin 1968 p.1244)

This herdsman, of course, conforms to a specifically capitalist *Homo economicus* subjectivity. Indeed, we might make a case for Hardin's tragedy being not of the commons but of capitalism. However, the neo-Hardinian scholars around the International Association for the Study of Commons (IASC) have to an extent attempted to rehabilitate this capitalist subject via their critique of Hardin and research into capital's ongoing relationship to the commons.

For these scholars (notably Nobel prize winner Elinor Ostrom), the underlying assumptions about human nature, the universality of *homo economicus,* may not in itself constitute a problem. However, Hardin's analysis of self-interest is, for them, shortsighted, fitting within the 'old institutionalist' concept of the institution as an aggregate of individuals as I have discussed above. His herders are atomised units; they form no community and allow for no collective negotiation. In short, they are not 'commoners'. Ostrom (2011) tackles these problems in her *Governing the Commons* by looking at common resources as an issue of organisation and management. She draws a distinction that is now commonplace amongst IASC scholars between 'public goods' and 'common pool resources'. The former are non-rivalrous (my use of them does not limit yours) and the exclusion of potential beneficiaries is difficult (in other words they are difficult to fence off or to charge an admission price for). The latter, in contrast are *rivalrous* goods from which it is also difficult to exclude. She draws on these to examine differing strategies for commons sustainability (*ibid.*)[50]. Hardin's pastureland clearly fits the latter. However, his herders, greatly socially debilitated by their crippling levels of individualism, are unable to organise collectively and must therefore approach their pastureland as a public good. Although never using the Marxist term *primitive accumulation,* Ostrom makes an argument about the ability of commons to 'top-up' and rejuvenate capitalism in a cyclical and symbiotic relationship.

The relationship between commons and capital in Ostrom's work is one in which the former is supplementary to the latter and in which both are hypothetically independent from one another except when in a relationship of exchange. It is

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[50] Along with these categories are also 'toll goods' (non-rivalrous goods from which it is easy to exclude) and 'private goods' (rivalrous goods from which it is easy to exclude).

therefore due to the relationship that capital is symbiotic with, rather than parasitic upon, commons. This erasure of class struggle at the heart of the encounter is possible only because commons are treated here a discrete resource. Unlike the commons of the Midnight Notes current, these commons are governed by and through organisational practices that are internal to them. They have no relationship to other commons except those specifically facilitated by their commoners. Furthermore, the commoners in Ostrom are much-reduced beasts. They are members of a user community whose practice is limited to the use and reproduction of the commons. Efficient governance of the commons is therefore constituted as a question of sustainability. Commoners produce *in* or *on* these discrete commons but they do not produce the commons itself.

We can get a clearer picture of the limitations of the approach that sees commons as a discrete resource by looking at Ostrom's work with Charlotte Hess (2007) on the knowledge commons. Doing so also offers the opportunity to explore the point in Ostrom's work at which she comes closest to considering an imaginal commons.

For Hess and Ostrom,

> Knowledge…refers to all intelligible ideas, information, and data in whatever form in which it is expressed or obtained…with data being raw bits of information, information being organized data in context, and knowledge being the assimilation of the information and understanding of how to use it. Knowledge as employed in this book refers to all types of understanding gained through experience or study, whether indigenous, scientific, scholarly, or otherwise nonacademic (Hess & Ostrom 2007 pp.7-8)

Despite the implication that they are to do otherwise, Hess and Ostrom overwhelmingly approach knowledge as data, as something hypothetically quantifiable. This immediately points to an incommensurability between knowledge (as treated here) and the imaginal. In keeping with the approach to other sorts of commons taken by the IASC and other neo-Hardinians, Hess and Ostrom draw a distinction between public goods and common-pool resources. In this later work on knowledge commons, Ostrom does much to attempt to move her analysis beyond an exclusive focus on commons as resource by introducing the use of an Institutional Analysis and Development (IAD) framework. For she and Hess, this provides a

means of analysing user communities (Hess & Ostrom 2007). However, these user communities remain tethered on a short rope to commons-as-resource as *reproducers of* and *producers on* commons but not as *producers of* commons. Their exploration of new knowledge commons that rely on recent digital technologies is limited therefore to the virtual communities that exploit them (which they liken to the use of 'traditional village commons' [*Ibid.* p.50]) It ignores, for example, the lives and communities woven around and against the mining of 'conflict minerals' in the Congo that provide a vital material basis for information technology. But the technologies of capture that operate upon this knowledge commons are certainly not ignored by Hess and Ostrom. Indeed they are pivotal.

> New technologies can enable the capture of what were once free and open public goods. This has been the case with the development of most 'global commons,' such as the deep seas, the atmosphere, the electromagnetic spectrum, and space, for example. This ability to capture the previously uncapturable creates a fundamental change in the nature of the resource, with the resource being converted from a nonrivalrous, nonexclusionary public good into a common-pool resource that needs to be managed, monitored and protected, to ensure sustainability and preservation (Hess & Ostrom 2007 p.10)

What is obscured however is the extent to which these technologies of capture are themselves subject to regimes of capitalist production and governance. This problem can also be observed in Yochai Benkler's championing of peer production as the spearhead of contemporary commoning (Benkler 2011). Ultimately, the (self-directed) activity of Benkler's commoners represents only a tiny fraction of the total work necessary for the production of their commons. This commons is, in effect, parasitic on forced (because not self-directed) wage-labour. (De Angelis & Harvie 2012).

As the basis for a discussion about the imaginal commons, this limited neo-Hardinian model of the commons seems insufficient compared with the one developed through the Midnight Notes current. What, then, can we carry across from the latter? To begin with, the imaginal commons is already present in this work but is not framed as such. Federici's exploration of social reproductive enclosure, for example, has a significant emphasis on the commoning and enclosure of meaning and possibility (2009). Relatedly, we see in De Angelis' work (2007) (and also in Harvie, 2014) the importance of values, that other vehicle of imaginal expression. We can take these ideas and re-infuse them with some of the ideas already explored

and developed in our earlier consideration of the imaginal. What we also need to carry across, however, is that the imaginal commons is a battle ground wherein processes of opening possibility and producing social transformation continually clash with the narrowing and enclosing of possibility in order to protect institutions *against* social transformation and the shifts in power that both produce and are produced by it.

The Imaginal Commons

An imaginal commons is not a physical terrain, but this does not mean that physical terrain commons do not provide a useful point of comparison. Many different physical terrains are commons: the polar icecaps for example, the oceans, the Earth's atmosphere, and innumerable urban parks. All of these terrains technically fit within Ostrom's category of 'common pool resources' (Ostrom 2011) in that they are materially limited (rivalrous) but it is very difficult to exclude people from them. We cannot all take home bits of polar icecap; we cannot all fit into a park. This is complicated of course once one looks at the fullness of possibility in these terrains and the uses to which they might be put. Exclusion from the polar icecaps only seems difficult if one treats them as separate not only from the environment around them but from the social, political, and imaginal contexts that structure their 'use'. This is tantamount to imagining the supposed community of commoners forever waiting at the icecaps' edge when not directly interacting with them. I am not excluded from this common good by an unconscionably large fence and a series of staffed tollbooths; I am excluded by the lack of resources that denies me the possibility of getting to them in the first place. Conversely, although I may feel confident in hazarding my chances of gaining access to my local urban park, the breadth of possibility in terms of how I might use it is narrowed by rules set and enforced by the entity that controls the space, which is not that of the commoners but of the state[51] (even if, as in many cases, a community or non-profit organisation is responsible for its upkeep). Furthermore, like all but the tiniest fraction of the park's

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[51] There are many ways of repurposing an urban park of course (relating to sex or to the use of drugs for example) but these subversions cannot be entered into freely and openly without the risk of censure or punishment.

commoners, I have no claim whatsoever on its most economically valuable resource, the rent from the properties that overlook and surround it.

We can think of an imaginal commons as a field of possibility. Perhaps less like an urban park and more like the oceans. Like the oceans there are parts that require active nurture and cultivation in order to be 'used' sustainably, there are parts very actively commoned, there are parts (those that incorporate the intellectually copyrightable) that are formally enclosed, and there are many more parts that are subject to surreptitious and informal enclosure. Like the oceans there are parts that are shallow and predicable, there are parts that are turbulent, that are treacherous but which nevertheless contain great energy (or enormous quantities of information) and there are parts, like the corral reefs, that are wondrous. There are abyssal regions that can be explored only with skill and courage (or weighted boots and a self-destructive impulse). Just like our relationship with the ocean, though, that with the imaginal commons has to be thought of from an ecological perspective. The imaginal cannot be separated from the actual any more than the ocean can from the climate and just as the removal of one ocean species through overfishing necessarily diminishes its predators and leads to over abundance of its prey (and so on), so processes of social imaginal transformation through commoning have knock on effects for social and political organisation far beyond the point of their origin. Unlike the oceans though, which although vast, are still materially finite and therefore belong with those commons listed above in Ostrom's Common Pool Resources category, the imaginal commons is fully non rivalrous, meaning that its limitations arise through enclosure rather than poor governance like Hardin's tragic commons.

We can think of imaginal commoning as being, broadly speaking, the opposite of imaginal enclosure. But we need to approach this in a similar way to how we have approached the opposition of territoriality to deterritoriality or composition to decomposition. One is not possible without the other. A field of possibility in which literally anything can happen is not a field one could hope to navigate; it is too dangerous and unknowable. Put differently, any *organised* commoning (governance of the commons to couch it in Ostrom's terms) is *also* an act of enclosure. It is an act of enclosure specifically targeted at the production of the common, an *enclosure-for-commons*. We are reminded here (as we have been before) of Unger's insistence that the point is not to avoid the development of formative contexts but specifically to develop those that can go on to produce new ones (Unger 2001 p.36). Since we know

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that the imaginal cannot appear without borrowing the flesh of social organisation (even if that flesh is nothing but language), we can go further and suggest that commoning without enclosure is impossible. It exists exclusively as an ideal form. Instead, at the level of the expression and embodiment of the imaginal in practice, we only have the option of *enclosure-for-commons* and *enclosure-against-commons*.

De Angelis and Harvie introduced the term 'counter-enclosure' in the passage quoted above, which they use in the context of an understanding of commoning and enclosure as a clash of values (De Angelis & Harvie 2014 p.282). The prefix 'counter' doesn't perhaps fully capture the *enclosure-for-commons* we're trying to get at here as it implies only the reactive element of the process (enclosure after re-appropriation). Instead we might think of *enclosure-for-commons* on the terrain of the imaginal as being comprised of a counter-enclosure element and a navigational element, with its sibling, *commons-against-enclosure* being comprised instead of a swelling/expanding element and an exploratory element. However, thinking about values is of use to us in terms of how we think about the relationship of the imaginal to enclosure and it serves as fertile terrain on which to put a number of these ideas to the test.

Values can be thought of as constituting a technology of capture (or an expression) of aspects of a particular shared social imaginary. They are a substance produced by a chemical reaction when the possible, the desirable and practical are brought into contact with the notion of collective identity. The expression of a set of values (through words or practice) is always, to some degree an act of enclosure, but it can take the form either of an enclosure-for-commons or of an enclosure-against-commons. Constituted as an enclosure-for-commons, a set of values appears as a launch pad, as a new point of minimum entropy from which to emerge into a newly constituted field of possibility or (to return to the model from Chapter 2) a repositioned cone of possibility. In this sense it can be understood as performing a navigational function because it reveals, though articulation (and therefore temporarily territorialising) existing but hidden connections and commonalities between communities. Elsewhere Harvie (along with Milburn) has pointed to the Zapatistas' reinvigoration and radicalisation of the concept of 'dignity' (Harvie & Milburn 2010, p.633, drawing on Holloway 1998). The words 'reinvigoration' and 'radicalisation' are important here. They are distinct from 'rediscovery' in that they relate to the notion of the idea being reinvested with life. Dignity, as used by the

Zapatistas, was not an attempt to limit the living of life to a certain set of practices, behaviours and norms but to *reframe* it in such a way that new political and ethical perspectives emerged from it and produced new experiments in organisation. This reinvigoration is also distinct from *redefinition* in that these imaginal commoners are not saying '*dignity* now means this, it does not mean that'; they are overlaying and emphasising another meaning, a new meaning perhaps, which doesn't obliterate any old meanings or connotations, swelling the imaginal terrain on which the meaning unfolds whilst at the same time protecting against its re-enclosure. In constructing dignity in this way, it is expanded from a static value into a dynamic political concept. The we can understand this as a commoning-against-enclosure.

For a perhaps more straight forward example of enclosure-against-commons we can look to the currently popular (but problematic) critique of cultural appropriation (see Young & Brunk 2012). This discourse centres on an analysis of the disparities of power in play in the spread and development of culture. So, for example, the active assimilation (rather than forced assimilation) of elements of white American culture into Native American culture is politically different from the active assimilation of elements of Native American culture into white American culture. The criticism of cultural appropriation, and the practices in which it is embodied, aim to enclose the artefacts of the oppressed culture *against* enclosure by the oppressor (and in this case De Angelis and Harvie's, 2014 p.282, 'counter-enclosure' is entirely appropriate). This is not (or not necessarily) a project of conservation, but is rather a recognition that these are cultures in development in the context of an ongoing struggle with (in the specific example) European colonialism. For them to be absorbed into the colonial culture is for them to be disarmed, thus diminishing their power as an adaptive refrain that enables commons. Struggles against cultural appropriation (which I will not subject to sustained investigation here) play an important part in the construction of the space of memory, which we ought also to consider as an example of enclosure-for-commons/commoning-against-enclosure

As discussed in Chapter 2, memory as a commons is an idea explored by both Halbwachs (2011) and Haiven (2014). For both of these writers memory is constructed as a common pool to which individuals can contribute and from which individuals can draw. Memory is continually modifiable because, whilst it is ultimately recorded in, by, and on the community (or the collective), individual

actors and other communities on its margins have unique and different perspectives on the same 'events'. Not only is memory subject to this expansion along the spatial-imaginal-axis, it is also subject to expansion along the temporal-imaginal-axis by virtue of the fact that it is not *the past* but a repeated story (or shifting refrain) *about* the past. Remembering is therefore perpetually reproduced in new and different contexts.

The construction and incremental transformation of a collective story is clearly an act of enclosure. The process as described by both the Halbwachs and Haiven is enclosure-for-commons as well as commoning-against-enclosure. Its character as a vital site of struggle and (to employ militaristic terms) as a strategically important space to occupy, is down to the necessity of controlling understandings of the past as a means of naturalising the social processes of the present (autonomising the social institution of the present in Castoriadian terms). It has the power to rupture the 'it was always thus' narratives that serve to sever the imaginal and functional components of the institution by rendering how they have historical specificity.

Haiven (2014, p.197) pays particular attention to the technologies of capture of memory commons (books, radical publishing and distribution networks for example). However, in addition to such media, it is clear from the interviews in the previous Chapter that the effective arrangement of the organisational space in all three cases (but expressed most directly by Benjamin with regards to the ACI), is also something we might consider as a technology of capture with respect to a memory commons.

We can get a better understanding of the memory commoning involved in the construction of this organisational space if we compare it to one of the traditional conceptions of the Leninist party as 'the memory and the brain of the working class' (Molyneux 2008 p.167). Within a milieu of rival party bodies wherein each feels that they alone represent the authentic voice of the working class whilst the others do not, this can amount to a practice of enclosure-against-commons through mantric repetition of specific organisational origin myths and lists of perceived successes assembled as if to constitute a creed. This on the one hand helps to stabilise the organisation and on the other to defend it against transformation. The semi-therapeutic construction of memory spaces within this new set of organisations can, however, be seen in part as a reaction against those processes of overwriting memory

stories onto experience. The emphasis on the space in which the memory can be given shape (and in which the community can develop), rather than the story through which the memory will be expressed (and in which the community is pre-figured), allows for the possibility of such stories developing and transforming over time as new external contexts (or the participation of those with different perspectives on the same historical events) bring different elements into relief.

Values, to return to our initial example, can also be a form of *enclosure-against-commons*. Actually, they can take two forms. The first is when a value is constituted not as a common launch-pad but as a point of limitation. Rather than a new perspectival position, this approach to values really constitutes a fencing-in. It is the ultimate expression of a collective siege mentality that seeks not only to set an imaginal point of minimum entropy in the immediate past but also in the future too. As it impacts not at the level of what can be imagined but of what can be instituted through practice, it constitutes an enclosure of the commoners rather than an enclosure of the commons. This form of enclosure is exemplified by both religious movements and those political movements that constitute themselves around fixed systems of morality. It is also the form that values take when expressed through the enactment of law. Of course, such ring fencing is never perfect. Enclosure, just like commoning, is an ideal form.

The other form that values as enclosure-against-commons can take is what corresponds to the Castoriadian notion of the autonomised institution. We might characterise this as a naturalisation of values. The link between the imaginal and functional components of this form of value-institution, which in the Zapatista notion of dignity is so strong and flexible, is severed entirely so that the value does not appear to be modifiable through social action. Capitalism not only thrives but also relies on such enclosures. They are what underpin our social reproduction as *homo economicus* - that rational actor naturally driven to individual self-interest measured as and through the acquisition of material wealth (represented by money, itself an autonomised institution). This enclosure-against-commons taking place upon the terrain of values can be linked to similar processes on the terrain of meaning. Take for example the de facto prohibition of the word 'communism' to denote anything other than system in place in the old Soviet bloc or China. This enclosure is an aspect of Capitalism's self-defence that seeks to erase a whole ecology of the possible by narrowing it to a single line commonly felt to be an evolutionary dead-end.

Let's return, at this point, to the three organisations that provided the focus for the previous chapter in order to look back at some of the findings but this time explicitly with relation to commoning practices as they have been framed here.

In the ISN interviews we can see enclosure-for-commons manifested in the deployment of both shared traditions and shared experienced. The former is expressed by Chris as the international socialist tradition and by Elliot more specifically as the continuing need for a revolutionary party and for a dictatorship of the proletariat. Whilst these are points of territoriality, they are also deliberate envaguenings of more specifically dogmatic or programmatic means of defining a common ground. These stripped down constructions perform a navigational role in that they enable a line of communication to be kept open (an overlapping commons) with their previous milieu in and around the SWP and at the same time create new through-ways with other communities also emerging from a period of greater organisational rivalrousness. We can think of this as a device for opening the field of vision (analogous the process I have described as the production of eeriness) and as such consider it as simultaneously a commoning-against-enclosure in its exploratory mode. It is worth pointing also at this point once again to Donna's disappointment with regards to the absence of the word 'class' in the Podemos documentation which we can understand as born of a frustration that her sense that the ISN and Podemos occupy a merged commons cannot be fully articulated in the absence of a navigational device (which she thinks ought to be the concept of class)

In a more low-key way, we could point to the foregrounding of the notion of 'honesty' in the ISN interviews as functioning in a similar way to the 'dignity' of the Zapatistas. Similarly its affect is on new organisational experiments, and as an imaginal place at which one might stand in order to see the organisation's structuring problematics from a different perspective. The 'dignity' of the Zapatistas and the 'honesty' of the ISN are both commoning mechanisms that reposition those bodies in such a way that they facilitate, but at the same time guide, new encounters with other bodies (and with them other imaginals subject to their own to processes of lateral evolution). The interview data would lead one to treat this as an enclosure-for-commons rather than as having the dual nature, along with commons-against-enclosure, that the Zapatista's dignity has as is not clear whether the same element of strategic mobilisation or politicisation of this value is at play.

Related more directly to commoning-against-enclosure than to enclosure-against-commons, we should also point to Chris' insistence that the organisation should be able to accommodate criticism and, implicit in his praise of another organisation for doing the same, being 'prepared to bend'.

The Plan C respondents too provide responses that attempt draw certain previous traditions into a shared boarder land. Of particular relevance are Heather and Fred's assertions that the organisation takes influence from ACT UP and Big Flame respectively. This plays a different role to the ISN's deployment of traditions in that it is far less about maintaining imaginal connections with bodies with whom the organisation has, or has had, a direct relationship. As a commoning device it holds more in similarity with the surrealist model of analogy (and, for that matter, Jameson's cognitive mapping). It expands through the identification of a more distant object, swelling the overall terrain and opening the possibility of a multitude of different articulations between the two.

The emphasis on experimentation in the Plan C interviews is also a commoning device. More than anything, we see in this approach, a refusal to be the custodians of the solution to the problem of capital and in so doing opening to the possibility of building a common with experiences of life under capital yet to be articulated (or at least yet to heard).

Lastly, we can turn to the ACI, and in particular to Josh's concentration on the idea of space. The relationship between the opening up of a free-space for ideas (structured around a shared piece of reading or discussion topic) to the expanding mode of commoning-against-enlcosures should by now be obvious, but Josh's cautionary-tale framing of this discussion provides an excellent example to illustrate the argument made at the beginning of this section that a pure commons of the imagination would be impossible to navigate and that some degree of enclosure is therefore necessary. Josh's narrative perhaps suggests that there is a threshold in this tension and that the ACI's relatively short life can be put down to being built on the wrong side of it. However, to look at this as a failure or as some sort of collapse of an improperly tended commons would be to mistake the continuation of the organisation for the continuations of the milieus, ideas, and practices developed in its context.

The chapter has sought to 'land' the imaginal. Having looked in previous chapters into imaginal mechanisms of disentrenchment, we have concentrated here on imaginal processes of recomposition. In order to do this, we explored three different related approaches to thinking through this recomposing imaginal: the imaginal institution, the refrain, and the imaginal commons.

From the notion of the imaginal institution we drew in particular on Castoriadis' treatment of alienation and autonomisation and used this as the basis of our understanding of the imaginal enclosure. We also carried over the idea, taken from Castoriadis and other sociological and anthropological models, that the basis of institution is repetition.

Armed with this we then considered the Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the refrain, which enabled us to develop a model of a different form of institution, one that is mobile and, rather than repeated continuously, is repeated *when required*, existing only as possibility in the meantime. This also helped us to think about how institutions can morph and transform. We looked at both deliberated varied refrains (using the improvised music as a model) and accidentally varied refrains (using retroviral lateral evolution as a model).

Noting that an imaginal refrain, in order to be mobile and modifiable (and therefore in direct conflict with the project of imaginal enclosure), required *organisation*, we moved to consider the commons. Specifically, we used contemporary Marxist theories of the commons to develop an understanding to which struggle, manifested through commoning, enclosing, counter-enclosing, and recommoning, is central. We contrasted this with neo-Hardinian work on the commons that treats it as a discrete resource in a situation of potential harmony with capitalist enclosure.

Lastly, we took some of the concepts about commons and applied them to a specifically imaginal commons, returning to the notion of imaginal enclosure and looking at its relationship to commoning, arguing that both of these notions represent ideal forms and that, in practice, at the level of social organisation, what we actually see are processes of *enclosure-for-commons* and *enclosure-against-commons*.

The present investigation into the organisation of the imaginal commons is almost done. Overleaf the threads that have wound through the thesis are drawn together, a series of modest conclusions offered, and a few loose proposals for further areas of investigation made.

Conclusion

Can a knife of shadows cut real flesh from a living tree?

The question that lends this thesis its title is taken (slightly paraphrased) from Angela Carter's 1972 novel *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman* (2010). The protagonist of Carter's magical realist novel, Desiderio, lives in a city that is under siege from the eponymous character through the production of phantoms, hallucinations, and illusions that play havoc with the inhabitants' conceptions of time, space, and reality, leading to a transformation of the civic character from one of order and obedience to one of lust, transgression, and rebellion. Sometimes these phantoms are barely distinguishable from real people. The beggars in this city for example have a particular propensity for vanishing into thin air when fired upon with radar blasts from the city's governing body, 'The Ministry for Determination'. Occasionally when these phantoms are vanquished, they leave behind them wooden talismans that they had previously been offering for sale to unwitting passers-by. The continuing existence of these talismans after the phantoms have gone causes Desiderio to reassess the 'official' strategy of simply treating the phantoms as unreal and attempting to ignore them. He asks: 'how could a knife of shadows cut real flesh from a living tree?' (Carter 2010 p.13) This question, a foundational one in terms of Desiderio's narrative arc, begs us to consider the relationship between the imaginal and its effects. Writing about Carter's book, Nicola Pitchford frames this as 'the reality effects of imaginary constructs – the ties between symbols and material conditions' (Pitchford 2002 p.120).

Desiderio's question, though, is not the research question that this thesis set out to answer. Rather, it is indicative of the suspicion (the sense of eeriness) from which the main research questions first crystallised. We could express this suspicion

as being that the transformation of life, the pushing beyond present systems of social relationships into something wholly new, requires the active development of new methodologies of collective imagining, not instead of but as well as organising around material needs and resources.

But what of the problems we set out to explore. Some were present from the beginning, whilst new ones emerged of necessity as the thesis progressed. All were developed and modified during the process of the research. In order to sum up the turns and undulations of the arguments, we can perhaps use a composite of two of the directed analogical enquiry questions listed in Chapter 4 as a stimulatory device. In the spirit of that methodology I shall first of all provide an analogical response such that the reader may gain access to something of the hidden architecture of this project, slightly beyond the principle cone of vision, at the very edge of the field. Of course, convention dictates that this alone cannot suffice and so a more prosaic response follows hot on the heels of the first.

How might one describe this thesis as a physical environment inhabited by plants and animals?

When you first materialised you found yourself at the end of a pier, tilted towards the turbulent brine with the soles of your feet pivoting on the edge at 45° angles to the horizontal and vertical surfaces of that gull-shit-flecked final crossbeam. I held onto you by the collar. Not, admittedly, in order to save you from drowning but because I wanted you to look back at the seafront before you went over. With my free arm I gestured to an endless row of pawnshops, the siren song of their window displays silenced sporadically by the bored and the desperate, strewn along the pavement like broken sentries. You smiled politely in acknowledgement and I let go of you, joining you in the cold water only after removing my shoes.

We swam out. You were reluctant at first but did not consider the stagnant parade behind us to be a compelling alternative. So we swam out until the pier was no more than a black hyphen resting on the horizon. Seeing no land for which we might aim we let ourselves drift, reasoning that the current would be strong enough to exhaust us if we attempted to do otherwise.

After what seemed like hours we found ourselves drawn towards a community of vast wicker coracles, some holding small houses, others topped with tiny meadows upon which goats grazed; one even appeared to support a medium sized organ with pipes hewn from bamboo. We pulled ourselves onto one of the great floating discs and rested.

When we awoke the community was full of life. A red-cheeked old fellow pounded away at the organ keys, rhythmically pumping each foot in turn upon the bellows beneath. Kids, dogs, (and you swore you saw a horse – I thought it was just a big dog), climbed in and out of the sea, sometimes in play, sometimes coming back up with baskets full of seaweed and plunder taken from the multitude of shipwrecks on the sea floor. Amazing contraptions that seemed to be made out of lines of sea belt connected by porcupine fish quills and with dried starfish used as cogs enabled transport of resources from one side of the community to the other, a woman with a mask made out of oyster shells and cowries was gliding around just below the clouds on fish-scale wings.

I began this thesis by situating it in the context of an ecology of crises. Most visible amongst these was the so-called economic crisis, which, despite having passed through different intensities, is now almost a decade old and has become normalised as an aspect of everyday reality. Taking the reader through the unfolding of this economic crisis as well as a number of its effects, I drew attention to the fact that the failure of both capital and its opponents and its discontents to produce new forms of organisation capable of moving beyond the interminable undead phase of neoliberalism pointed to another crisis: a crisis of the imagination. Having situated myself within a milieu critical of capital, I located the problem of the failure of the radical imagination as one that is intimately caught up with the question of social movement, of the collective development of structures, practices, and methodologies that could facilitate the shifting of social relations. I explained therefore that, rather than exploring the crisis (or the current limitations) of the imagination, I was more concerned with the means of its locomotion.

Chapter 1 began with a genealogy of the imagination and the imaginary and worked towards the adoption of the concept of the imaginal, favoured because it helped us to move away from the notion of the imagination as a faculty of the individual and from the imaginary as something unreal. Through a discussion of

Castoriadis' model of the imagination (see 1987, 1997, 2007) the research problem was modified. From this point forward we understood the problem of organising the radical imaginal in such a way as to be structured partly by the question of how one decomposes an ossified system of social organisation *without being able to imagine from a position external to it*. To this end, the chapter explored three different possibilities. To begin with I introduced the idea of the production of eeriness (borrowed from Lewis Carroll, 1987) as a means of working at the level of collective affect to produce a susceptibility to being drawn outwards towards inarticulable and unactualised new social configurations. I related this to another poetic methodology originating in Keats but developed as political theory by Unger: Negative Capability (Keats 1968, Unger 2001). A further means of approach to imaginal decomposition was found in this chapter in surrealist methodology and the specifically surrealist approach to analogy. The chapter ended by proposing that these imaginal processes can be looked at as means of swelling the real along spatial and temporal imaginal axes.

Chapter 2 built on this notion by concentrating specifically on the temporal axis. It used arguments drawn from philosophy and physics concerning timelessness (the unreality of time) in order to develop an understanding of how the past and the future are imagined as extensions of the present. The chapter argued that aspects of this process rely upon the construction of an imaginal point of minimum entropy that is always in the immediate past as the point from which we have just recently come. The mechanisms for the repositioning of this point through social movement, I argued, correspond to the shifting of something like a cone of possibility, the angle of capture of which can be effected by practices of commoning and enclosure.

Chapter 3 contributed three key ideas to the discussion. Firstly, it argued that social movements represent the most fertile and industrious terrain of imaginal commoning. Secondly it introduced the concepts of *symptomatology* and *the problematic* (giving the theoretical context and background to these notions). Lastly, it applied symptomatology to the reading of the processes of dissolution and regroupment observable within left social movements in the current decade in the UK. In doing this it made a case for symptomatology as not only being a means to read and critique these processes but also as providing a way of understanding the mechanisms via which the processes unfold. The chapter also laid some groundwork

for the analysis of interview data in Chapter 5 and introduced the field from which the three organisations who participated in those interviews were drawn

Chapter 4 was concerned primarily with a critical elaboration of methodologies of interview and analysis employed in the fieldwork component of the research. It introduced the respondents and justified why they had been chosen as the subjects of fieldwork. The greater part of the chapter was devoted to discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of Free Association Narrative Interview technique (FANI) and the idea of gestalt to which it is indebted. The chapter also looked further into the notion of the surrealist game and made the case for the benefits of coupling FANI with a surrealist-derived directed analogical enquiry approach. The Chapter then took the reader through aspects of the interview process (such as setting) and provided brief biographies of the respondents. Lastly, the chapter drew again on symptomatology in order to explicate the process of analysis of the interview data that was to follow.

Chapter 5 began by dealing with the presentation of the data, which was woven around the myth of the Great Deluge, a story that has four key elements: an old world destroyed by flood or by fire, a boat or shelter, a group of survivors, and the new world they build. I made the case that this myth helped to bring out something in the subjects' narratives that is easy to relate to some of the arguments and propositions made about the imaginal in the first and second chapters. Following this, I moved into a discussion of the interview data itself, interrogating the narratives for their points of silence and noise. I drew from this something approaching a functional problematic concerning how to organise a collective body that will be cohesive and yet retain its ability to move, change, and adapt that I showed as being manifested through experiments around democracy, difference, and space.

Chapter 6, the final chapter, dealt with two related approaches to the notion of composition in order to pursue the problematic drawn from the interview data. It began by considering institution and employed Castoriadis' theory of the autonomisation of institutions (1987) as a means of understanding how forms of social and political organisation can stagnate. It proposed that the question of the composition of organisations that have some degree of in-built resistance to autonomisation could be productively approached through the use of Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the refrain (2004). It used this idea to explore the possibility of

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the creation of institution-like structures that are both mobile and capable of rapid evolution, from which it argued that such structures could be rendered as technologies of commoning. Following this, the chapter looked at Marxist models of commons as a contemporary concern, using these models as the basis of the elaboration of the concept of the imaginal commons, shaped by processes that I argued were best understood as *enclosure-for-commons* and *enclosure-against-commons*.

There is a final question to be answered though and I will borrow once again from the directed analogical enquiry in order to frame it.

What spectres haunt this thesis?

Like Ebenezer Scrooge but (one would hope) more generous, this thesis is haunted by the spectre of time. In the second chapter I explored the relationship between the temporal and the imaginal at some length and it is to be hoped that this discussion sits comfortably within the overall narrative, bringing something new to the table that is of assistance to us in understanding processes of imagining and producing different worlds. There is considerably more to say on this topic. I only just touched on some of the literature being produced in Memory Studies, for instance, possibly relevant work on consciousness put in an even more fleeting appearance, and several significant philosophical treatments of time were not dealt with. Pursuing any of these compelling lines of investigation would have taken me away from the central theme of the thesis but they do offer avenues of investigation towards which the present work potentially leads. Despite the innumerable perspectives that have been brought to bear on the social and imaginal nature of time it remains a wilderness of mystery and possibility. The idea of time and the imaginal as an avenue of further research is therefore tantalising.

The second spectre is that of revolutionary organisation or, to frame it in terms less grandiose, the urgency of social change on a fundamental level. The thesis has set out to explore and elaborate a question about the production of social change through the idea of organising imaginal commons. It does not offer a solution to the problem of organising radical movements since, by the very logic of the arguments

made, this is not a question to which there *can* be a solution. Rather it is a question that must be continually re-asked as social and historical contexts change around it. This thesis sets down a marker and provides a platform, having done some important work that now will not have to be redone. As such it makes a meaningful contribution to a gigantic and productively irresolvable problematic.

Further to this, though, the problem is not one that can be elaborated through social theory alone. It is rather one that requires practical experimentation. If I present the problematic of revolutionary organisation as an avenue that leads towards further research, therefore, I do so in the realisation of how much work needs to be done in terms of field-testing the ideas elaborated in the thesis and re-elaborating them through different means of communication in order to facilitate further encounters outside of the academic sphere as well as within it.

Appendix

What follows is the full complement of the responses to the directed analogical enquiry discussed in chapters 4 and 5.

1) *What is present but remains silent in the organisation?*

Anne: Participants' desires for what the organisation could achieve.

Benjamin: An argument. There was a lot of effort spent on ensuring a positive environment for people and the avoidance of dogma or defining the project too early. The project was based around the increasing irrelevance of the existing left and its inability to be effective in challenging capitalism and there were general points I think most people would agree on - opposition to the Leninist sect model, the need to look at how capitalism has changed under neoliberalism, an emphasis on the importance of social oppressions - but the emphasis on creating a pluralistic political space meant that we didn't really (in my experience at least) use our points of disagreement as that much of a source to explore and develop a politics.

One of the things I liked about the ACI was the amount of different angles and traditions people came at it from. Now that it's finished people have moves in equally diverse directions: towards autonomism, Left Unity, individual projects, more 'old left' type organisations, the SWP successor groups etc. I wonder how much the experience of the ACI has gone into what everyone is doing now and how much it was a fleeting moment.

So, there was an argument that was present but silent. It was a bit like what a family meal might be like: we were brought together, talked and shared experience but to maintain a positive atmosphere we kept quiet on negative comments, apprehensions and resentments.

Chris: Half the membership!

Donna: Many questions.

Elliot: Apprehension of the future.

Fred: Joy.

Gavin: Some of our voices and some of our hands.

Heather: Courage.

2) *Of what material is it made?*

Anne: People.

Benjamin: Sequins. Bright and eye-catching and looks different from every angle but if you get closer you see your own reflection.

Chris: I think it's quite fragile really. We have no permanent bricks and mortar presence and quite a loose membership. We're made of flashing neurones, zeroes and ones.

Donna: An elastic sponge filled with a viscous, transparent yet distorting liquid.

Elliot: Different coloured play-dough.

Fred: Paper.

Gavin: Slowly growing supple bamboo.

Heather: Rope, strong fibre that is woven together, into thick plaits that bind and support the various limbs, organs, tentacles of Plan C - so that they can be flexible but stay together under weight, under pressure, essentially so that they can withstand whatever is necessary - at present the rope remains out of reach, it may even be buried.

3) *Describe the organisation as a meal or as a single course or dish.*

Anne: Buffet.

Benjamin: Hummus. It's widely liked, made to share and goes with lots of different things. Some people who are stuck in the 1970s sneer at it as middle class but it's what you make when you've got no money and the naysayers probably want you to eat dripping sandwiches anyway.

Chris: It's the end of the month and you've no money left for food. You look in the fridge and there is a bag of veg at the bottom, some of which has gone rotten so you go through it and chuck those bits in the compost, improvising a meal from some of the good bits left over, with some random sauces and forgotten spices you find at the back of the cupboard. Against the odds, it tastes quite nice.

Donna: A build your own burger.

Elliot: Ice-cream sundae, with all the sprinkles.

Fred: Blanched broccoli with no oil, salt or pepper.

Gavin: A table set in a busy but strangely sterile room with some shady characters outside. A series of complicated dishes, arriving in the wrong order and requiring large amounts of work to comprehend. Thankfully the company is enjoyable even if the service isn't.

Heather: At present there is nothing particularly passionate, free style or 'just something I quipped up' about plan c - it's not really an evening meal made with time and love. Nor is it breakfast that gets you up and going in the morning. I don't want it to be some pre-bought sandwich that is consumed on one's limited lunch break. At present it seems to me to be a baked good - like a cake. Measured and assembled with a little too much planning on the form. Though it still requires numerous ingredients - and they go well together, in that they make a cake. The result is a bit predictable - it makes a cake. It would be great to get to the stage when Plan C was a feast... a banquet of all the most delicious food. That could feed and nourish ever more expanding networks of bodies - I think I like the idea of not being compelled to eat as well as being able to sit at the table and smoke cigarettes and drink. I think my idea of revolution has been reduced to the dinner-party formation.... a true sign of decomposition of the left. It happened in Melbourne in circa 2003. It was horrid and claustrophobic. So potentially I don't really want plan c to be a feast.

4) What spectre haunts it?

Anne: Early twentieth century debates between Leninism, Trotskyism, and whatever other Marxist-socialist debate that is taken out of context just to give young critical thinkers a sense of continuity and legitimation.

Benjamin: The spectre of the old, pre-neoliberalism left and its basis. Not just the organisations and how they work but also the whole changed picture: the destruction of communities, the breaking of solidarity and the means for it, the killing off of much of the welfare state. It's a haunting presence that sits in discussions and is terrifying when you see it. In some ways the ACI was about exorcising this presence through different practices but it also functioned as a kind of space for mourning.

Chris: We are, and will remain for some time, haunted by our experience in our main parent organisation. This spectre manifests in occasional rudeness, bullshitting and arguing in bad faith. There's also organised distrust of the leadership – which can have negative or positive consequences for the organisation. But there's an ongoing

collective exorcism under way. We are always trying to recognise what's bad and do better.

Donna: A political hack.

Elliot: The spectre of organisation!

Fred: An unrealisable past.

Gavin: Two – the weight of history and the lightness of organising. Weight**:** One of the major fears of Plan C is that we might repeat historical mistakes seen in previous rounds or different traditions of the radical left. Whilst this fear often helps us to move forward it can lead to an over-emphasis on novelty and a certain perfectionism which can make us more hesitant. Lightness**:** The fear that one day we wake up and the organisation has evaporated, that the groups have crumbled, and our members have disappeared.

Heather: As a meal? Or what spectre haunts plan c generally? As a meal - as a cake, it is contained and haunted by the presumptions, desires, past failures and ultimately it is haunted by the limits of the cake tin - the environment that both produces it and structures it; an inability to exist outside the limiting formation of the environment that produces us. What spectre haunts plan c generally - The lack of courage. It is as I said before, present but silent. But courage can't be silent. It has to be expressed, acted upon, enacted to become courage. Otherwise we all remain alienated and alone. Fear without courage is so containing, it is the worse definition of discipline. The intersection with alienation and individuation produces a self that needs more meat on her bones. Weak and lacking in the resources / sustenance to fight.

5) *Describe it as a physical environment*

Anne: What is a physical environment? Do you mean an environment that is strictly determined by physical laws? Maybe a train station, people crossing, coming and

going, all want to go somewhere but not the same place. Clearly influenced by the fact I'm arriving at one, but maybe that's how the exercise works.

Benjamin: It's a small park in a city. The traffic is quieter and the sky isn't as blocked by buildings. It's an escape from the environment but is still very much part of it. It's there as a place to pass through to make a journey more pleasant and also a place for contemplation or play.

Chris: A pub where the chairs are laid out in a circle.

Donna: A split-level hive, big cells, little cells like in *Antz.*

Elliot: A jungle, but one where all the animals get on. Loud, colourful, occasionally claustrophobic but also at times exciting.

Fred: An empty space, shiny surfaces, like an empty white walled gallery.

Gavin: A rugged mountain criss-crossed with difficult paths. Some of them lead to dead ends; others cross at unusual locations whilst others provide routes further up the mountain and good views behind us. Yet all are hard to follow with the eye.

Heather: At present plan c is a small corner in the garden. There is a pond that someone built years ago. That is now overgrown but still has some life swimming in it. You can barely see the pond as the plants have overgrown it. It's pretty small spot in the garden. But a nice place to be considering the rest of the landscape.

6) Describe any animals and plants that inhabit it

Anne: [No response]

Benjamin: Maybe the best thing is to carry on the park analogy here in that both the people and the ideas in the ACI represented a bit of life in a grey urban environment,

that there's surprising diversity but that the life inside is contained in a small environment.

Chris: A herd of cats.

Donna: Ants or bees at different stages in the life cycle and with different types of activity, different roles.

Elliot: Big colourful tropical plants, monkeys, sloughs, budgies, oxen, couple of tigers. Thankfully no parrots.

Fred: Fields of wheat.

Gavin: Hidden and ever changing ones. Subtle dangers and surprising allies.

Heather: There are a few older more established plants - and the earth has been loosened recently. There are new shoots - some of which survive, some of which don't. The birds come during the day to see if there are any more worms. People stand on the sideline and talk a lot about the water, about the bees, about needing more space. They don't sit down very often. The colour of the flowers is a little jarring. Some of them seem to have been transplanted from somewhere else. Plans to build a fence around the garden are rejected.

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