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(anti-)globalisation protest**

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‘Viva Nihilism!’ On militancy and machismo in (anti-)globalisation protest¹

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Abstract

This paper is a further reflection on the incidence of violence in (anti-)globalisation protest (also see *CSGR Working Papers* 123/03 and 133/04). Previously I have argued that biopolitical militancy in protest emerges as a legitimate, predictable and human anger at the multiplicitous biopolitical violences that maintain and distribute a modern status quo of alienation and structural inequality. Questions remain, however, regarding the possibilities for violent protest to open up and dismantle the violating categories, assumptions and practices targeted by protestors. Drawing on the violences that occurred during protests against the EU summit in Thessaloniki, June 2003, in this piece I consider some relationships between a contemporary nihilist orientation to protest in some quarters and two superficially contradictory lines of thought associated with the modern era. These are, 1. assertions of what it means to be ‘a revolutionary’ as captured in the ‘catechism’ of the 19th century Russian nihilist Sergei Nechayev, and 2. the 18th century liberal discourse by Adam Smith on the traits accompanying desirable bourgeois masculinity. Both of these discourses elevate a masculinity which is bounded, restrained, unconcerned with the openness and softness of relationship, and built on the disciplined repression of physical needs and desires. This is a conservative ‘hardcore *habitus*’ that is reproduced rather than shattered in the militancy and machismo accompanying some orientations to protest in contemporary (anti-)globalisation movements. Such orientations participate in a logic of more violence: in the increasingly transnational policing practices that both creates and responds to militant protest, and in support for a romantic, self-sacrificing (but also self-serving) machismo in both violent protest and policing. Drawing on feminist theorists from de Beauvoir to Irigaray, I thus wonder at the potential for violent protest to engender radical departures from contemporary circumstances experienced as violating by many. At the same time, given the structural violence producing these violating circumstances, I conclude that violence, in protest as elsewhere, is likely to intensify rather than diminish in the foreseeable future.

Key words: violence; violation; nihilism; militancy; machismo; protest; (anti-)globalisation movement(s); Sergei Nechayev; Adam Smith; feminism; Simone de Beauvoir; Luce Irigaray

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¹ Forthcoming in Hughes, C. and Devetak, R. (eds.) *The Globalisation of Political Violence*, London: Routledge. Formatting follows the guidelines for this publication.

Introduction

‘[Violence] is *there*. It’s not going away soon. It’s not that I like it. I want to see why so many other people like it. I want to see how it works’

Atwood 1994: 21

The vast majority of (anti-)globalisation actions and activists embody a nonviolent approach to protest and activism: either in the mass marches that form the visible edge of *altermondialisation*; or in the disobediences and direct actions of the myriad microresistances enacted by groups and individuals protesting the character of contemporary globalisation processes. Nevertheless, the quoted words ‘Viva Nihilism!’ in the title of this chapter distil an ethos to protest by some activists and in some contexts. This quote comes from graffiti scrawled on the walls of Thessaloniki’s Aristotle University, squatted by militant activists while protesting the EU summit which took place in Thessaloniki, Greece, in June 2003. As shown in Plate 1, the running black paint of the words and the symbolic encircled reverse ‘N’ capture a mood tangible amongst some militant activists: a mood fetishising the destruction of existing structures, emphasises the display of anger in protest, and manifesting as violence towards the physical symbols of capitalism and as a preparedness for violent confrontation with police.

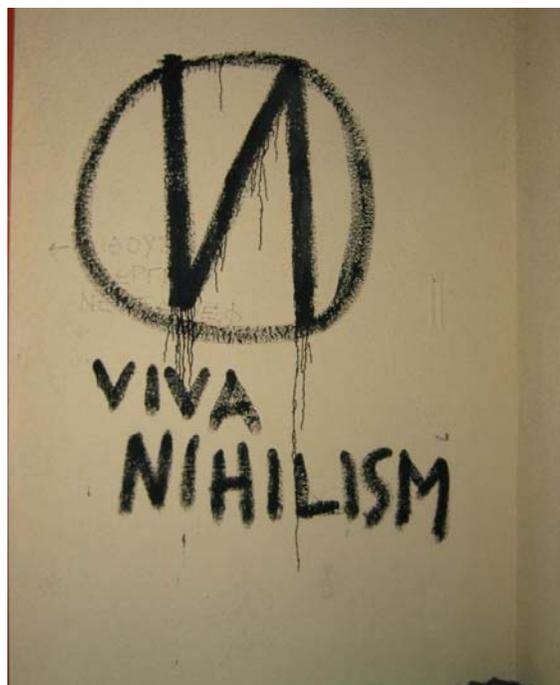


Plate 1. ‘Viva nihilism!’ – graffiti on the walls of the Philosophy Department at Thessaloniki’s Aristotle University during the EU ‘counter-summit’, June 2003 (personal archive).

This paper is intended as an exploratory comment on the militancy and violence accompanying the enacting of (anti-)globalisation protest by some protestors and in some contexts. It emerges from an anthropological approach to activist research – from observation and experience of violent protests or riots in the significant ‘plateaux’ (Chesters 2003 after Deleuze and Guattari 1988(1980)) of the key mobilisations forming the most visible part of (anti-)globalisation protest over the past few years. Since as ‘an activist’ I participate in protest, the piece also arises as an attempt to understand the dynamics of violence in these contexts. In particular, I wish to consider its relevance and helpfulness in contesting a status quo that is permeated by violence and inequalities, and in engendering social relations that somehow go beyond these circumstances. I draw on the protests against the EU summit meeting in Thessaloniki, June 2003, as something of a case example, making extensive use of images to provide something of a feel for the various aspects of this event. These protests culminated in a planned riot by antiauthoritarian activists, effecting substantial violence against property and towards police, and which was met by the police with violent attack and the brutalisation of those arrested. This event can be considered somewhat extreme in terms of the preparedness for violent action amongst militant protestors in the ‘global north’ – in this case both Greek and ‘international’ (I encountered Swede, French, German, Italian, North American, British and Libyan protestors). Nevertheless, it also constitutes only one event among many forming the itinerary of international summit meetings and ‘people-summits’ that have constituted (anti-)globalisation protest politics in recent years, and that frequently have been accompanied by violence (see Table 1).

I highlight two issues in reflecting on and interpreting violent militant practice in the context of (anti-)globalisation protest. First, in thinking through the political intentionality infusing discourses and practices of violence in (anti-)globalisation protest I observe its links with a particular revolutionary lineage and strategic orientation: that of the tradition of nihilism associated primarily with the 19th century Russian nihilist Sergei Nechayev.² This explains nihilism as a coherent, if problematic, political tradition and discourse. Coherence notwithstanding, two strategic problems become apparent here. The first is the extent to which propaganda by deed – the advertisement of a cause through symbolic insurrectionary acts including violence (as framed by the 19th century Italian anarchist Malatesta, e.g. Anon

² I am grateful to Rodrigo Nunes for drawing my attention to Nechayev’s ‘Catechism of a revolutionary’ (see Nunes 2004a).

Table 1. Prominent (anti-)globalisation mobilisations (1996-2001).

Note: this Table provides an indication of the proliferation of the more spectacular events coinciding with the meetings of major financial and governance institutions between the late 1990s and late 2001. It should be noted, however, that this in no way reflects the full range of global and everyday protest and resistance that can loosely be categorised as against the effects of neoliberalism (e.g. see the timeline from 1994 in Notes From Nowhere (2003), and data collected by organisations such as the World Development Movement (e.g. 2004) and the Bretton Woods Project (www.brettonwoodsproject.org). Something of a lull in major ‘northern’ protest events occurred in 2002, as activists collected their thoughts following the use of live ammunition against protestors in Gothenburg and Genoa in 2001, and came to terms with the *event* that was 9/11, and that signalled the emerging global war on terror, and the subsequent attack by ‘the west’ on Afghanistan. The spectacular protests of late 2002 and 2003 – the massive and global protests against war in Iraq, and the mobilisations against the G8 in Evian, and the EU in Thessaloniki and again in Rome – suggest, however, that it is somewhat premature to speak of the obituary of the movement as some commentators proceeded to do following 9/11/01.

Acronyms: ADB Asian Development Bank; APEC Asia-Pacific Economic Co-operation (Forum); ASEAN Association of South-East Asian Nations; ATTAC the international movement for democratic control of financial markets and their institutions; DSEi Defence Systems and Equipment International; EU European Union; FTAA Free Trade Association of the Americas; GATT General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade; GDA Global Day of Action; G8 The Group of the world’s Eight most industrialised economies; G20 Group of Twenty (the Joint Forum of Industrial and Emerging Countries to Foster Stability and Growth of the World Economy; IMF International Monetary Fund; PGA Peoples’ Global Action; WB World Bank; WEF World Economic Forum; WTO World Trade Organisation.

| Date | Meeting Location | Institution | Comments |
|---------------------|---------------------|---|--|
| November, 1996 | Manila, Philippines | APEC free trade meeting | 130,000 protest in Manila |
| 15-17 May 1998 | Birmingham | G8 | 50,000 protest in Birmingham. Protests focus on third world debt. Churches play large role in organisation. First ‘Global Street Party’ occurs in at least 40 locations. |
| 18-20 May 1998 | Geneva, Switzerland | WTO meeting in Geneva and 50 th anniversary of GATT, forerunner of WTO | 200,000 people take to the streets in Hyderabad India. PGA provide an organising umbrella for demonstrations in 17 cities. Geneva sees ‘the most significant instance of public disorder in Switzerland’s post-war history, including mass protests, clashes with riot police and property damage to the retail outlets of multinational corporations’ (Chesters 2003: 11-12). |
| September 1998 | New Delhi, India | WTO | At least 100,000 protest in New Delhi. |
| 18 June 1999 (J18') | Cologne, Germany | G8 | GDA in which 50 stock exchanges world wide targeted. Protests in 43 countries including Zimbabwe, Bangladesh and Columbia. At London’s ‘Carnival Against Capitalism’ 43 protesters are arrested following clashes with police. |

| | | | |
|---------------------------|------------------------|--------|--|
| 30 November 1999 | Seattle, USA | WTO | Protests in almost 90 countries. The infamous 'The Battle of Seattle' takes place, where approx. 70,000 protestors close down the WTO Ministerial meeting. Tear-gas is used by police to break up the demonstration. Hundreds of arrests made. The bill for policing is approx. US\$9 million. |
| November, 1999 | Manila, Philippines | ASEAN | Thousands break through security cordon. |
| January 2000 | Davos, Switzerland | WEF | Thousands of protestors. |
| 16-17 April, 2000 | Washington, USA | WB/IMF | 20,000-30,000 protestors, 1,000 arrested. |
| May Day 2000 | London, England | | Some 10,000 protestors converge on London. 'Guerrilla Gardening' at a number of locations is intended as the main action, but when police constrain participants to Parliament Square protestors begin digging up the square and planting seeds and seedlings. The Reclaim the Streets website describes guerrilla gardening symbolising 'an urge to be self-reliant rather than dependent on capitalism', and to celebrate 'the possibility of a world that encourages cooperation and sharing rather than one which rewards greed, individualism and competition'. |
| May 2000 | Chang Mai, Thailand | ADB | |
| July 2000 | Okinawa, Japan | WB/IMF | 5,000 protestors. |
| 11 September 2000 | Melbourne, Australia | WEF | Tens of thousands of protestors; successful blockade and disruption of the meeting; some 2,000 police; several hundred non-violent protestors injured by police; only 12 arrests. |
| 26 September 2000 ('S26') | Prague, Czech Republic | WB/IMF | Actions occur in some 44 countries and 123 cities. In Prague some 20,000 protestors converge. The IMF/WB meeting ends a day early; 500 protestors end up in jail; 600 are stopped from entering Czechoslovakia at its borders. |
| 20 October 2000 | Seoul, South Korea | ASEAN | 20,000 Workers and students protest. |
| December 2000 | Nice, France | EU | 90,000-100,000 march, including trade unionists. |
| January 2001 | Davos, Switzerland | WEF | Thousands of protestors. |
| 20-22 April 2001 | Quebec City, Canada | FTAA | 20,000 protestors from across the Americas. Teargas, water cannon and rubber bullets used indiscriminately against protestors. |

| | | | |
|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|---|
| May Day 2001 | London | | Cost roughly £20 million in lost business. Police invoke special powers under Section 60 of the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act (1995) to detain thousands of protesters for up to 7 hours in Oxford Circus to prevent a ‘breach of the peace’. |
| 15-18 June 2001 | Gothenberg, Sweden | EU | Approx. 20,000 protesters. Live ammunition is used against protesters without warning; 3 people are shot and wounded. 43 people admitted to hospital. Of 539 arrested, 61 are deported and 20 are sentenced to jail At a Reclaim the City party on 15 th June police fire 15 live rounds at demonstrators. On 16 th , 12,000 people join the demonstration ‘For Another Europe’. On 17 th June police carrying semi-automatic rifles with laser sights force 200-300 unarmed people, including a breast-feeding mother, to lie down outside the convergence centre (Shillerska School) for over an hour. A protester is sentenced with one-year imprisonment for violence even though video-footage and the statements of other officers contradict the charges. |
| End of June 2001 | Salzburg, Austria | WEF | Over 100 road blocks erected by thousands of police; several hundred people attend a counter-conference held by ATTAC; all marches and rallies declared illegal bar one allowed outside the train station on Saturday – around 2000 protesters gather surrounded by large numbers of military police from Vienna – a section 60 containment occurs for 5½ hours and people are batted by police. |
| July 2001 | Genoa, Italy | G8 | Hundreds of thousands of protesters. 310 arrests were made, 560 protesters were injured, two ended up in a coma, one was killed. On the evening of 21 st July <i>carabinieri</i> police attacked protesters staying at a school organised as sleeping space by the Genoa Social Forum. Sixty-two people were injured, of which 25% required continual medical observation for up to 5 days, 36% for 6-10 days, 11% for 18 days, 18% for 21-40 days and 5% over the long-term. Prime Minister Berlusconi had instructed police to ‘use whatever force necessary’ to control protesters (data from Indymedia 2002). |
| 16-27 July 2001 | Bonn, Germany | UN Climate negotiations | Blockade of the conference. Actions to inform and motivate the public, particularly re: the relationship between the Bush administration and companies such as Esso and the unlikelihood of the Bush administration ratifying the Kyoto protocol. 12 principles demanded for reducing emissions. Reclaim the streets/ Rising Tide Network party/blockade. |
| 20 August 2001 | GDA | | One month anniversary of Carlo Giuliani’s death at the G8 protests in Genoa. An estimated 250 actions take place in cities around the world, including Dublin, Washington, New York, Rome, Genoa, Zurich, Vienna and Stuttgart. |
| 11 September 2001 | London | DSEi | Thousands of protesters contest Europe’s largest arms trade fair in London’s Docklands. |

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| 30 September, 2001 (S30') | Washington, USA | WB/IMF | Cancelled due to 11 th September attacks |
| 9 November, 2001 ('N9') | Doha, Qatar | WTO | Agreement in advance not to make any arrests. US delegation shrunk from 300 to 50. 100 NGO delegates demonstrated. 111 protest events recorded with some 97 cities protesting. |
| 10 November, 2001 | New Delhi, India | WTO | 25,000 protestors. |
| 16-17 November, 2001 ('N16' and 'N17') | Ottawa, Canada | IMF/WB/G20 | 2,000 demonstrate at War Memorial. Police attacks on demonstrators. |
| 13-15 December, 2001 ('D13', 'D14' and 'D15') | Brussels, Belgium | EU | 80,000-100,000 on 'D13' trade union march; 25,000 on 'D14' march; 4,000 on 'D15' march. Legal Team members and 150 demonstrators arrested; demonstrators attacked by police using water cannons, tear gas and plastic bullets. 3,000 police on German-Belgian border. |

Sources: derived from various 'anti-globalisation' and independent media websites and webcast news reports (e.g. www.indymedia.org; www.protest.net; www.flora.org; <http://bak.spc.org/j18/site/>; <http://rts.gn.apc.org/>). Also, Tully 2000; Offline 2001; Indymedia 2002; Yeates 2002: 128-129; Peoples' Global Action 2004; Wood 2004; Wikipedia 2004.

1998) – can constitute a genuinely radical politics, by which I mean a political praxis that unravels, subverts and reconstitutes rather than enhances the status quo. The second relates to the part played by multifaceted and unreflexive affective desires on the part of individual protestors for the psychosomatic experience of violence and its correlate, violation (i.e. ‘physical and emotional distress’ (Bourgois 2001: 7)). In this reading, violent protest provides a place for the conscious or unconscious enacting of somewhat masochistic desires: desires that feed on the affective pain experienced by activists given their understanding of the structural violence pervading contemporary globalisation phenomena (theorised in Sullivan 2004, in press a); and that are fuelled further by a conservative collective ‘hardcore *habitus*’ that plays on activist guilt – the sense of never doing enough to ‘change the world’ - in encouraging participation in confrontations that can escalate into violence and/or in intending violence as a tactic of protest.

The second issue I problematise relates to the consolidated machismo valorised by Nechayev and noticeable amongst both protesters and police in the context of violent protest. While acknowledging the problems associated with essentialising gender categories and associated normative behaviours (e.g. de Beauvoir 1953 (1949)), a feminist analysis might concede that such constructions of machismo (and masculinity) have significant implications regarding the distribution of both power and silence. In part, it is curious to notice the strange allegiance that this revolutionary ethos has with liberal constructions of bourgeois masculinity (the referent of *Homo oeconomicus*), as stated clearly in Adam Smith’s work (e.g. 1759/89, 1776) summarised in Habermann 2004). The romantic machismo embodied in a nihilist orientation to protest thus becomes a collusion with, rather than a subversion of, the target of its actions: namely the phallogocentric *habitus* of bourgeois liberalism (de Beauvoir 1955 (1949); Cixous and Clément 1996 (1975); Irigaray 2002). More simply, by privileging conventionally masculinised dimensions of physical strength, as well as iterating dominant discursive masculinised metaphors of war and sport in ‘the fight’ to overthrow exclusionary structures, such approaches to protest collaborate with global contexts whereby ‘women [and conventionally feminised domains] are disproportionately disadvantaged by the globalizing forces associated with neoliberal international economy’ (Tickner 2004: 15). Again, there is not much that is subversive or transgressive in these dynamics.

I concur, therefore, with anthropologists Philippe Bourgois (2001) and Pierre Bourdieu (1990 (1980), 1998, 2001) that the *habitus* – the structuring socialities - accompanying violent protest can contribute to a bleeding of the structural and political violence underscoring the modern global capitalist and statist enterprise into the banal everyday gender and other violences effected by patriarchal social organisation. I conclude that I find it hard to conceptualise any context where the experience of violence as *violation* can contribute to substantive and emancipatory social change beyond the immediately and personally empowering moment of release and closure effected by the violent act. Nevertheless, given the context of structural and symbolic violence characteristic of late-capitalism, of the bio-politics of *Empire* (Hardt and Negri 2000), of US military imperialism and a sometimes violently macho Islamist vanguard³, I also find it hard to avoid the corresponding conclusion that the period of social change in which we find ourselves will be associated with escalating levels of violence, in (anti-)globalisation protests as elsewhere.

**‘You simply must smash capitalism!’⁴: contesting the EU summit in
Thessaloniki, June 2003**

Anti-capitalist rioters and Greek police were in an uneasy stand-off last night in Thessaloniki after a day of street battles that marred the end of the European Union summit.
Howden 2003

In June 2003 I was present at the EU ‘counter-summit’ in Thessaloniki. Like the metropolitan meetings of the G8, the WTO and other international governance and financial institutions, the EU summits in recent years have seen vociferous and multifaceted protests by participants of the amorphous but burgeoning global ‘(anti-)globalisation movement(s)’.⁵ A campaign against the June 2003 EU summit meetings in

³ I am referring here to Islamism as a militant and sometimes violent orientation to Islam, that holds Islam as ‘not only a religion, but also a political system that governs the legal, economic and social imperatives of the state’ (Wikipedia 2005).

⁴ Banner heading Thessaloniki’s Indymedia website (IMC Thessaloniki 2003).

⁵ As I have noted elsewhere (Sullivan 2004), the term ‘anti-globalisation’ is problematic for several reasons. For example, ‘the movement’ draws on and is potentiated by the same processes and technologies that have made contemporary globalisation phenomena possible (Sullivan forthcoming). This, together with the movements’ support for ‘the effacement of borders and the free movement of people, possessions and ideas’ suggest that we should talk more accurately of the ‘globalisation movement’ (Graeber 2002: 63), hence my bracketing of ‘anti-’. Mueller (2002) describes ‘the movement’ more accurately as the ‘globalisation-critical

Thessaloniki had been planned for over a year, to register popular protest against ‘the anti-peoples’ orientation of the European Union during the Greek presidency of the EU’, and to organise a ‘counter-summit’ to coincide with the EU meeting (e.g. Yechury 2003: 1; PAME 2002). The protests were staged as a manifestation of the ‘democratic deficit’ of the EU (Habermas 2001: 14), i.e. whereby citizens do not feel represented by, or able to participate in, decisions made by those comprising the decision-making structures of the Union. Particular concerns revolved around: spending on security and the participation of Europe in US-supported wars outside EU borders (Yechury 2003: 2); the increase of citizen surveillance and perceived detrimental effects on civil liberties; the use of the Schengen agreement⁶ to restrict trans-border movement by immigrants and protesters, thereby contributing to ‘fortress Europe’; the favourable stance of the EU towards the production and trade of genetically modified products that is vehemently opposed by a citizen majority⁷; and a general perception that the EU is oriented towards economic

movement’, while Chesters (2003) refers to the ‘alternative globalization movement’. Further, an emphasising of ‘the movement’ as merely reactionary (i.e. ‘anti’) (e.g. Williamson 2003) masks and (conveniently) diminishes what protagonists actually may be campaigning and motivating *for*, such that much corporate media and other analysis becomes dislocated from the discourses and practices emerging within, and constructing, ‘the movements’. I pluralise movements to reflect the realities of diversity and difference among the collectives that are contesting the status quo worldwide, and the equally diverse and situated imaginings and practices for socio-political change that they embody (as captured in the title of Paul Kingsnorth’s (2003) recent book *One No, Many Yeses*). This also is intended as a conscious rhetorical and conceptually pluralist shift away from modernity’s constant drive towards the singular - towards the root or deep structure of things (Deleuze and Guattari 1988(1980): 3-25).

⁶ The Schengen agreement (named after the village on the borders of Luxembourg, France and Germany where the original agreement was signed in 1985) refers to a common European zone of security and justice through which people can move without customs or passport checks and in which countries cooperate on judicial and policing matters (Auswärtiges-Amt 2003). By mid-2003 the country signatories included Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Finland, Germany, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Spain and Sweden (Auswärtiges-Amt 2003). The Treaty has a safeguard clause enabling states to continue border controls for internal security reasons (Europa 2003). Concerns regarding the creation of a European ‘fortress’ zone relate to the strengthening of external border controls and the policing of third country nationals entering the zone, and particularly to the establishment of the Schengen Information System. This is a computerised service with some 10 million files that gives ‘police and immigration officials a multinational data base, of undesirables and people suspected of having committed crime ...’ (Europa 2003). Critics thus perceive an intent ‘towards creating [a] Single European Army, tighter, more co-ordinated immigration controls, a more effective ‘security/repression’ apparatus: Europe for the rich’ (Uio 2003).

⁷ For example, the recent ‘GM Nation?’ public debate in Britain found that 86% of people are unhappy with the idea of eating genetically modified foods and 84% perceived that GM crops would harm the wider environment. Further, 93% of respondents believe that GM technology and associated policy is driven by profit rather than public interest. Given that in 2003 the head of the BioScience Unit for the UK’s largest biotech company (Bayer CropScience) held two government advisory positions regarding biotechnology in Britain (Chair of the Agricultural Biotechnology Council and member of the Agriculture and Environment Biotechnology Council), these perceptions are unsurprising. These issues nestle within a European context in which the European Commission has ruled that no country or region can govern itself as GM free; a ruling that in turn is set within a context of the US taking the EU to the WTO courts on the basis that its earlier moratorium on GM crops, and even the labelling of foods containing GM products, are barriers to

efficiency and comparative advantage for business and finance rather than the democratic and welfare concerns of its citizenry (e.g. Habermas 2001; Action Thessaloniki 2003; Antiauthoritarian Movement Salonika 2003; Greek Social Forum 2003; PAME 2003; Thessaloniki Prisoner Support 2003a; Thessaloniki Resistance 2003).

Protest actions took place throughout the summit (20-22 June). These included demonstrations within Thessaloniki on the 19th to highlight the treatment of immigrants and asylum seekers to the EU⁸, a blockade and demonstration on the 20th in Chaldiki where the meeting was actually situated, and a large popular protest march within Thessaloniki on the 21st (IMC-Thessaloniki 2003). Prior to the main protests on 21st June, the final day of the summit, I spent several hours in Thessaloniki's Aristotle University campus, where squatting militant activists were taking advantage of the legal asylum granted to university premises. Here, in a philosophy department strewn with somewhat nihilistic graffiti – *'PEACE, LOVE AND PETROL BOMBS!'* *'FROM PIGS TO BACON!'* *'MIDDLE CLASS WAR!'* *'FUCK THE WORLD, DESTROY EVERYTHING!'* *'ANGER IS A GIFT!'* *'VIVA NIHILISM!'* (Plates 1, 2) - glass bottles were being transformed into molotovs, gas masks were being tried on, and 'anti-authoritarians' were calmly anticipating one of 'the biggest riots Thessaloniki has ever seen'. Overwhelmed by a swaggering machismo and a palpable hatred of the police - matched by an intention to do physical injury - I left the campus before the protest was due to begin, feeling confused and alienated by the calculated preparedness for violence amongst protestors, and an obvious antipathy to intellectual reflection. Several hours later, after the militants met with the main marches of the Greek Social Forum and the Communist Party of Greece (Plate 3) and, of course, the Greek riot police, the streets of Thessaloniki were thick with tear gas, several businesses were gutted and blackened with the soot from petrol bombs, and pools of blood were noticeable on the tarmac (Plates 4a and b).⁹

trade (facts and figures reported in Schnews 2003a; also see www.gmpublicdebate.org.uk and www.corporatewatch.org.uk/genetics/genetics.htm).

⁸ The treatment of some 120,000 Roma exiles who had been forcibly exiled/ethnically 'cleansed' from Kosovo was highlighted in particular: at the time of the EU summit, some 700 Kosovo Roma were being detained at the Macedonian-Greek border, denied access to the EU via Greece for the purpose of seeking asylum. Roma now are scattered as asylum seekers across Europe, many held in detention centres such as Yarl's Wood in the UK, where in 2002, inmates staged a protest against the conditions of their detention that culminated in a fire affecting a large part of the centre. Several of the former inmates are now in prison (Trans-European Roma Federation 2003).

⁹ Estimates of the numbers participating in the protests on Saturday 21st range from 25,000 to 100,000, with from 200 to 4,000-5,000 'antiauthoritarians' comprising the militant action (figures from Kambas and Pangalos (Reuters) 2003 and Christina 2003 respectively). My perception is that the total number of people

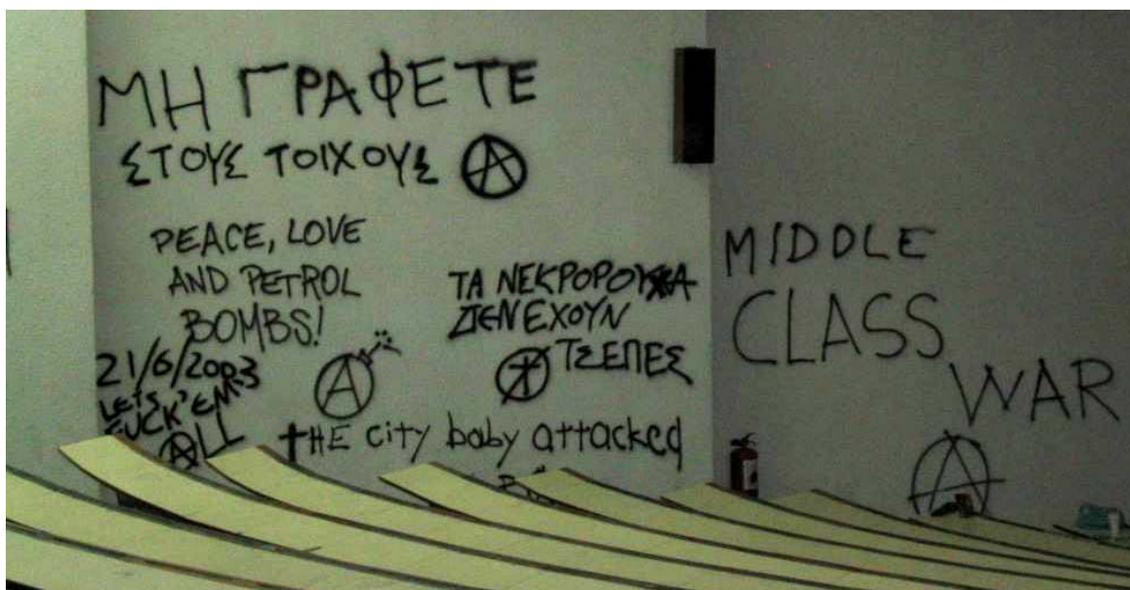


Plate 2. Graffiti on the walls of the Philosophy Department at Thessaloniki's Aristotle University during the EU 'counter-summit', June 2003 (personal archive).



on the march was fewer than 100,000 but greater than 25,000, and that the numbers participating in the antiauthoritarian action were definitely upwards of a thousand (the Open Assembly of Anarchists and Anti-Authoritarians (2003) estimates numbers to have been around 4,000).

Plate 3. March on Tsimiski Street, Thessaloniki, organised by the Communist Party of Greece as part of the National Day of demonstrations on 21 June 2003 against the EU summit. Source: LaHaine 2003.



a.



b.

Plate 4. a. Protester throwing a Molotov cocktail, and b. Greek police against a burning building, on Egnatia

Street, Thessaloniki, during the anti-authoritarian action against the EU summit on 21 June 2003. Source: La Haine 2003.

In the antiauthoritarian action a McDonald's and a Vodafone store were targeted with petrol bombs and completely gutted (Plate 5), and around 30 shops as well as three Greek banks were damaged (Kambas and Pangalos 2003; pers. obs.). Greece deployed some 16,000 troops and police in the city and region to protect the summit from protesters, and, on the 21st, riot police used baton charges and large amounts of teargas to clear the central area of the city of protesters (Kambas and Pangalos 2003). Over one hundred people were arrested and, although most were released without charge, 20 were held for up to three days before being released on bail (Thessaloniki Prisoners Support 2003b; Thessaloniki Prisoners Support 2003c). Eight demonstrators (2 Spaniards, 1 Syrian, 1 Briton, 1 American, and 3 Greeks) were imprisoned having been refused bail. They faced sentences of between 7 to 25 years in prison for serious charges including rebellion against the state, possession and use of explosives and arson. Good photographic and video material suggests that 'evidence' was planted on them by police to support their conviction (Thessaloniki Prisoners Support 2003d). For example, ET3, a Greek TV-station, showed footage of Greek police planting molotov cocktails and other incriminating items on UK activist Simon Chapman (Plates 6a and b), one of the 8 key prisoners (footage available for viewing at IMC-Italy 2003a). Simon's experience of the action and his arrest is detailed in a public letter from him reproduced in Inset 1.



Plate 5. Petrol bombed Vodafone store on Ermou Street, Thessaloniki (personal archive). Although a number of small, independent businesses were affected by the antiauthoritarian action in Thessaloniki on

21st June 2003, international corporate targets – perceived as both symbolic and direct representations of a world political-economic system of injustices and constraints – were subject to the greatest damage.



a.



b.

Plate 6. UK activist Simon Chapman being beaten by Greek police Egnatia Street, Thessaloniki, during the anti-authoritarian action against the EU summit, 21 June 2003. 6a. shows Simon wearing his blue rucksack; 6b. taken later, shows that his blue rucksack discarded behind him while three black rucksacks, containing molotovs as well as an axe and hammer as evidence, have been positioned next to him. Source: La Haine 2003, Associated Press 2003.

Inset 1. Public letter from Simon Chapman detailing arrest and subsequent treatment at the Thessaloniki riot against the EU summit, June 2003

I'm not sure if people know what happened before/after my arrest so I'll quickly outline it here. The march set off in militant style and soon the air was filled with the sound of breaking glass. The first gas came in and in the crowd surge I lost sight of X. Me, A and B continued on to a square where the gas started raining down - so far my goggles and half-face gas mask were working fine. The crowd surged again and I lost A and B, so I headed over to the rest of my affinity group. We ended up all squashed together with maybe 600 people, with clouds of gas coming from front and back, and my skin was starting to burn, my eyes were streaming. The crowd was all crushed together, people wailing for water for their eyes, pushing this way and that. Though I knew the safest place in that type of situation was in the middle of the crowd, I decided to go to the edge to see if I could see X, A & B. Then a huge cloud of gas enveloped me and I couldn't see a thing. So I'm at the edge choking, blind, on the edge of panic - a voice inside me is saying "be cool, be cool" and I kept it together. And then CRUNCH - everything went black and sparks of light shone in the darkness. At first I thought a badly aimed brick had hit me, but only a second later there was another bone-crunching blow to my head and I knew it was cops. I go to run but I'm already falling, scrabbling along the wall through broken glass, still blinded by gas; as I move the batons are raining down, sometimes 3 or 4 hitting simultaneously across my body. I feel boots kicking me as well. I thought I could crawl back to the crowd, but when I look up all I see is an empty smoky street and cop boots coming towards my face. BANG goes my goggles and glasses, and I realise I am in deep, deep shit. I try to get up but at that moment a hand comes down and pulls my cap and gas mask off and a final blow smacks me where my hair meets my forehead; I feel a splash of blood run down my face and everything goes black. I was only unconscious for a few seconds I think. I'm dragged to my feet, and boots and batons are still coming, mainly at my shoulders and legs. 5 cops have hold of me, dragging my rucksack off my back. They hold me and search it, then take me to the side of the road and sit me down. A cop comes up behind me and smacks me across the back with his baton, then kicks me at the base of the spine. This STILL hurts! My face is a sea of blood - I can feel it leaking from several places, running down my neck. C and D would have seen what happens next, the cops bringing the bags of molotovs to me. I can feel a fit-up coming on!

The next 2 hours are truly terrifying - I am cuffed with 2 bags of molotovs strapped to me. Some are leaking. The cops lead me into the road where rocks and molotovs are landing among us and present me to the rioters like I am a trophy. If one of these molotovs lands too close to me I would be a ball of flames faster than you could say "human rights". Over the next 2 hours I am beaten with batons, fists, a hammer; wacked (*sic*) across the head twice with a length of wood, headbutted, kicked, slapped and constantly exposed to teargas. I could hardly walk or breathe. The whole left side of my back was purple, yellow, black, blue and I was covered in cuts, bruises and lumps. So it was quite rough! I never thought I would be so glad to finally get stuffed - well kicked - in a cell where 10 other demonstrators were languishing!

Source: Support Simon Chapman 2003a.

The protests at Thessaloniki lingered on in the form of prisoner solidarity for those awaiting charge, who, judging by the evidence suggesting that they were 'fitted up' were

scapegoated for actions that involved somewhere in the region of 1,000-4,000 people¹⁰. Prisoner solidarity actions took place in a number of countries, including Britain, Greece, Spain, Germany, Denmark, Italy and Australia, on the principle among protesters that '[t]hey're inside for us. We're outside for them' (WOMBLES¹¹ 2003a; Support Simon Chapman 2003b). Early in July 2003 the bank account that had been opened in Greece to receive funds in support of prisoner solidarity was frozen by the Greek government (Thessaloniki Prisoners Support 2003e). By September their situation was looking so precarious that five of the prisoners went on hunger strike. After considerable prisoner solidarity efforts, and with the prisoner hunger strike reaching between 49 and 66 days, Simon and the other prisoners eventually were released on 26 November 2003, on condition that they remain in Greece until their trial (IMC-UK 2003). All charges against them have since been dropped.

¹⁰ Of course, it is not unusual for a public and institutional desire for convictions to result in the intentional framing of individuals consider to fit the required criminal profile. This seems particularly true where challenges to state authority and terrorism acts are concerned (to take one famous example for the UK, the 'Guildford Four' were wrongfully imprisoned for fifteen years under The Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act 1974, to be released in 1989 to the words from the lord chief justice that '[t]he officers must have lied' (Pallister 1999). In today's climate of moral panic regarding terrorism, together with the emergence of special policing powers under anti-terrorism legislation (e.g. UK's Terrorism Act 2000), there is increasing slippage between Public Order and anti-Terrorist situations. A case in point is the recent use of the Terrorism Act (2000) during policing of DSEi (Defence Systems and Equipment International), Europe's largest arms trade fair, that took place in London's Excel Centre, Docklands, in September 2003. Here, police used 'stop and search' powers under Section 44 of the Terrorism Act (2000) to search numerous peaceful protesters, a move for which the civil rights group Liberty were granted a judicial review in the Royal Courts of Justice. Refusing an anti-terror 'stop and search' can effect a prison term of up to 6 months, and/or a fine of up to £5,000 (www.liberty-human-rights.org.uk). There is an argument to be made that this slippage (between Public Order and Terrorist threats) is justifying draconian policing measures and sentences and giving rise to a need for definable culprits as palpable 'results' of policing and security strategies. This, of course, is nothing new, particularly where people are questioning or contesting the power or legitimacy of state authority, whether this is legitimised by votes or maintained by force. Currently, however, the scapegoating of individuals for actions participated in by larger collectives is a feature of (anti-)globalisation protest politics. Following the G8 meeting in Genoa, July 2001, for example, some protesters who had been arrested and subjected to beatings while detained at Bolzaneto Barracks, a temporary detention centre, were brought a pre-written statement to sign which stated that they 'had used batons, molotovs, cobblestones ...' (Indymedia 2002). When one protester stated that she had not done anything of the sort, the response from her captors was that 'it doesn't matter ... for us you are all the same' (Indymedia 2002). Similarly, at protests during the EU summit in Gothenburg, Sweden, in June 2001, numerous arrests and charges were made based on fabricated and manipulated evidence, and with collective sentences in some cases discounting individual evidence and actions (Imcista IMC-UK 2002). And following protests against the G8 summit in Evian, June 2003, a spokesperson for the Lemanic Social Forum was accused by 'a Genevan judge for the "crime" of inciting to civil disobedience', for actions that involved thousands of activists, acting independently in Lausanne, Geneva and Annemasse (Javier 2003).

¹¹ The UK-based (White Overalls Movement) Building Libertarian Effective Struggles (www.wombles.org.uk).

‘Viva nihilism!’ Destruction and (anti-)globalisation protest¹²

Violence as a tactic of protest is as old as there has been contested authority. But if it is possible to talk of the emergence of a new global social movement (or ‘movement of movements’) that is challenging the systemic status quo of global inequalities, then I think it is also possible to perceive a globalisation of proactively violent and militant discourse and practice – at least in some quarters of the protest politics associated with the (anti-)globalisation movements. Most protestors and most protests can be described as nonviolent, with NonViolent Direct Action (NVDA) the preferred civil disobedience (Thoreau 1993 (1849)) orientation for many (anti-)globalisation activists¹³. Nevertheless, with the property damage and the violent clashes that have occurred between police and ‘anti-capitalist’ protesters at significant recent protest events in the post-industrial north, violence accompanied by bloodshed now is expected in these contexts.

The following three events, together with the case material presented above, illustrate this broad dynamic (also see Table 1 and Wood 2004):

1. on the weekend of 18th January 2003, anniversary of the start of War in Iraq in 1991 and thus chosen as a global weekend of action against the pending war on Iraq of 2003, 2,000 masked American protesters attacked San Francisco’s British Consulate premises and then proceeded to smash the offices of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (McGreevy 2003);
2. the 4th October 2003, saw the start of multilateral negotiations regarding the content of the EU’s constitution marked by clashes in Rome between several hundred masked protesters and police, the smashing of retail outlets, and the petrol bombing of a temporary employment agency (to highlight *precarity* of employment and income as a systemic legacy of neoliberalism) (Black 2003);
3. and in Miami, November 2003, at protests against the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), Miami police spent \$8.5 million earmarked for Iraq on “non-lethal” weapons to

¹² Some of points made here also appear in Sullivan (2004, in press a).

¹³ Eschle (forthcoming) provides a useful review of the shifting arenas and differences between orientations of non-violence, violence and pacifism in protest activities, particularly direct action. Non-violence is seen as denoting a negative state, i.e. without violence, while nonviolence, denotes a more positive consistent orientation towards practices of living, including protest, that strive to minimise violence. Pacifism is a complete rejection and renunciation of violence. In all, the definitions of what constitute violence are problematic and dependent on contexts. I would suggest that violence is the conscious experience of *violation*, although I note further that this also is affected by psychosomatic processes of denial and the normalisation of experiences of trauma (discussed in Sullivan 2004, in press).

aid their policing effort. The following statement indicates the ferocity and style with which these protests were policed and suppressed:

Thousands of militarised police, in full riot gear, armed with everything from tear gas, rubber bullets and bean bags, electrified shields, tanks, water cannons, automatic and semi-automatic weapons, were busy violently arresting peaceful demonstrators, in some cases with tasers¹⁴, in others at gunpoint. Busses filled with union members were prevented from joining permitted marches; human rights activists had guns pointed at their heads in military-style checkpoints. Embedded journalists similar to those used in Iraq meant that any independent ones were attacked, arrested and had cameras stolen... Those in prison reported sexual assaults and beatings with two men locked in small dog-kennel size cages and sprayed with freezing water and pepper spray. 125 were injured, and a Centre looking after those injured was itself attacked by the robocops. One doctor remarked, "I've worked in emergency rooms, but this is really some of the worst onslaught of injuries I have ever seen."

Schnews 2003b emphasis added; also Scahill 2003; Starhawk 2003.¹⁵

The financial costs of policing protest events, as well as the costs of damage to property and of lost business, provide a conventional measure of the significance of confrontational practices in these contexts. For example, the policing costs of the protests that closed the WTO meeting in Seattle, 1999, were somewhere in the region of \$9 million (Barber 2000), and in September 2003 the costs of policing the Defence Systems and Equipment International (DSEi) arms trade fair in London's Docklands were upwards of £1 million (Press Association 2003) (even though only around 1500 arms trade protesters were present in the area at any one time). The estimated value of lost business alone in London on Mayday 2001 was £20 million (Benham and Sykes 2001).

Review of the published and unpublished expressions of intent made by antiauthoritarian protesters, further confirms a transnational discursive orientation towards the necessity of destroying existing government, military and commercial institutions as a legitimate political response to the destructive tendencies and practices that in turn are identified with these institutions. While representing the hope embodied by *desire* for something different, this also is an orientation that *has given up* on a contemporary global political

¹⁴ Tasers' are gunpowder-launched metal darts that trail wires carrying an electric charge which stuns the person targeted (Mulholland 1999). Currently, this weapon is 'being tested and deployed by a large number of law enforcement agencies and armed forces globally' (Toje 2002: 2).

¹⁵ In the 'global south' protests against colonialism and neoliberalism clearly have been associated with high levels of violence for long periods of time (patterns of resistance which themselves are redolent with protest in Europe against land enclosure and colonial settlement). Currently, it is not unusual for the death of protesters at the hands of police to occur during protests in the 'global south' (e.g. Bretton Woods Update 2003). It is in part due to outrage and empathy regarding these incidents and trends that people in the post-industrial north are contesting and critiquing current globalisation processes, particularly the state-securitisation of the inequities and injustices required by global corporate capitalism.

economy perceived as thriving on inequalities, violations and dramatic environmental transformation. Participation in existing institutions thus becomes participating in ‘the problem’; and desire to *destroy* – to ‘wipe the slate clean’ - becomes a coherent (if problematic) ethos guiding activist praxis. Take, for example, the following statements from various zines, pamphlets and websites of antiauthoritarian activists in the post-industrial ‘north’ (emphasis added in all cases):

We want to destroy government and rich peoples’ privileges. We want to get rid of the control that police, government and bosses have over our everyday lives. We want workers to control their own workplaces and see ordinary people run the world together without money, hierarchies or authority. This is what we call ‘Anarchy’.... Their power must be taken from them by force.... they have the police to beat us up, the prisons to lock us up, the military to shoot us, the schools and the corporate media to fool us.... changing our ideas is not enough. Capitalism must be fought in the streets.

Anarchist Youth Network: Britain and Ireland 2003a¹⁶

[T]he technological system that we know is itself part of the structures of domination. It was created to more efficiently control those exploited by capital. Like the state, like capital itself, *this technological system will need to be destroyed* in order for us to take back our lives.

Willful Disobedience n.d. a

[W]hile the industrial system is sick *we must destroy it*. If we compromise with it and let it recover from its sickness, it will eventually wipe out all of our freedom.

Kaczynski 2002 (1995): 37¹⁷

May the barbarians break loose. May they sharpen their swords, may they brandish their battleaxes, may they strike their enemies without pity. May hatred take the place of tolerance, may fury take the place of resignation, may outrage take the place of respect. May the barbarian hordes go to the assault, autonomously, in the way that they determine. And may no parliament, no credit institution, no supermarket, no barracks, no factory ever grow again after their passage.

Crisso and Odoteo 2003: 6

[I]t is precisely when people know that they no longer have anything to say to their rulers, that they may learn how to talk with each other. It is precisely when people know that the possibilities of this world can offer them nothing that they may learn how to dream the impossible. The network of institutions that dominate our life, this civilization, has turned our world into a toxic prison. *There is so much to be destroyed* so that a free existence may be created. The time of the barbarians is at hand.

¹⁶ The Anarchist Youth Network have affiliated local groups who meet regularly in London, Swindon, Manchester, Hereford, the North East of England, Stroud Valleys, Surrey, Worthing, the West Midlands and Essex, as well as university groups at Bristol and at the London colleges of Goldsmiths, SOAS, LSE, UCL and Royal Holloway (Anarchist Youth Network 2003b).

¹⁷ Ted Kaczynski is the infamous ‘Unabomber’ who between the late 1970s and early 1990s embarked on a politically-motivated bombing campaign in the USA in protest at his sense of the ‘techno-nightmare’ of modern capitalist society. I trust that readers will accept that in referencing his ‘manifesto’ I am *not* endorsing his use of physical violence against people as a tactic of protest, or even his reactionary political philosophy.

Wildfire 2003a

One of the world's biggest ever trade fairs for guns, bombs, military planes & ships, small arms, mines and tanks is scheduled to take place in London from 9 - 12 September 2003.... *You are invited to help destroy this market of death ...*

Destroy DSEi 2003

[W]e, as insurrectionists *must wage war on terror*: the terror of the state, the terror of hierarchy, the terror of war and most importantly the terror of civilization.

Wildfire 2003b

This then is an honest and open discourse of destruction. It clearly positions antiauthoritarian and anti-capitalist activists of many flavours – anarcho-primitivists, insurrectionists, CrimethInc. dropout culturists, to name a few represented by the sources of the texts – as separated by a qualitative abyss from the ‘pathological passivity’ (Roszak 1971(1968): 22; Churchill *et al.* 1998) of agendas that, while critical of the status quo, seek to reform existing institutions and structures rather than imagine some sort of destruction of, or rupture from, them. In the major (anti-)globalisation protest events of the last few years this orientation has manifested largely as two trans-nationally understood and practised tactics: symbolic violence to property (epitomised by the black bloc, see Inset 2) and preparedness for direct confrontation with police (as in the Italian Disobedienti, formerly Tute Bianche). As indicated by the case material from Thessaloniki, where there was a clear intent and desire for police to sustain possibly fatal injury (flippantly embodied by the graffiti-ed statement ‘from pigs to bacon’, see above), an orientation of attack towards police also is noticeable.

Inset 2. Black bloc – a tactics

It is as inappropriate to use a box to talk about ‘the black bloc’ as it is to imply that there is such a thing as ‘the’ black bloc in the sense of a defined ‘group’ with a defined ‘membership’. For this same reason, I eschew the use of title-case when speaking of the Black Bloc, as it seems to me that this also implies fixity and reification of what in ideal terms appears conceived as a fluid and contextual tactics, non-hierarchically and de-centrally organised, and accessible to any who choose to these terms of engagement.

The name ‘black bloc’ comes from the term ‘Schwarze Bloc’ used by German police in the 1980s to describe squatters and Autonomi who employed militant tactics in their efforts to retain occupied properties (Indymedia 2002; Infoshop 2003). Although generally perceived as ‘anarchists’, in continental Europe, where a strong centrally-organised left tradition remains a political *tour de force*, a black bloc on a protest might incorporate militant members of worker-oriented parties as well as anti-imperialist nationalists (cf. Anon in press). In America, a black bloc first occurred during the Gulf War protests in 1991 (Infoshop 2003), and there is a sense in which a black bloc tactics here has taken on a coherence of its own that makes sense in a context with a limited left politics. Thus, ‘[a] Black Bloc is a collection of anarchists and anarchist affinity

groups that organize together for a particular protest action. The flavor of the Black Bloc changes from action to action, but the main goals are to provide solidarity in the face of a repressive police state and to convey an anarchist critique of whatever is being protested that day ... Black is worn as the colour that symbolises anarchism, to indicate solidarity and to provide anonymity' (Infoshop 2003). Masking up is both a nod towards the Zapatista practice of masking so as to avoid the reification of individuals and leaders, and as a means of exploiting the possibilities of clandestinity in a system perceived as based on protecting clandestine, behind-closed-doors, decision-making processes by the few on behalf of the many, and on eroding individual liberty (e.g. Notes From Nowhere 2003: 303-315).

This black bloc socio-political critique takes the form of drawing attention to capital's omnipresent symbols by targeting them with destructive actions. After an action, these frequently are communicated and explained via Indymedia (see www.indymedia.org) and other websites where the tactics are debated and also are subject to critique. The following communiqué, for example, describes some black bloc actions that occurred during the protests that closed the WTO summit in Seattle, November 1999:

On November 30, several groups of individuals in black bloc attacked various corporate targets in downtown Seattle. Among them were (to name just a few):

Fidelity Investment (major investor in Occidental Petroleum, the bane of the U'wa tribe in Columbia)

Bank of America, US Bancorp, Key Bank and Washington Mutual Bank (financial institutions key in the expansion of corporate repression)

Old Navy, Banana Republic and the GAP (as Fisher family businesses, rapers of Northwest forest lands and sweatshop laborers)

NikeTown and Levi's (whose overpriced products are made in sweatshops)

McDonald's (slave-wage fast-food peddlers responsible for destruction of tropical rainforests for grazing land and slaughter of animals)

Starbucks (peddlers of an addictive substance whose products are harvested at below-poverty wages by farmers who are forced to destroy their own forests in the process)

Warner Bros. (media monopolists)

Planet Hollywood (for being Planet Hollywood)

This activity lasted for over 5 hours and involved the breaking of storefront windows and doors and defacing of facades. Slingshots, newspaper boxes, sledge hammers, mallets, crowbars and nail-pullers were used to strategically destroy corporate property and gain access (one of the three targeted Starbucks and Niketown were looted). Eggs filled with glass etching solution, paint-balls and spray-paint were also used (ACME Collective 1999).

It has been common to trivialise the violence in (anti-)globalisation protest as merely a reactive outpouring of male teenage angst and disaffection: a displacing of Oedipal rage onto 'papa state' by an ageset unconsciously yearning for a 'rite of passage' by which to enter and affirm a meaningful collective identity. Thus, '[s]mashing things comes off as a little kid whining in the streets about how much he doesn't like his little situation' (Frank 2003); or, '... you did a great job of acting like children on a tantrum while eroding (*sic*) the credibility of the peace rally' (Shot By You 2003). These militancies, however, are clearly and consciously articulated as an instrumental bio-politics (cf. Foucault 1998 (1976)): as a means of physically confronting the repression of the state and its support

for ‘... a social system [capitalism] that condemns the vast majority of people to stunted and unfulfilled lives despite our best efforts’ (Jazz 2001: 87 in Graeber 2002: 4). Foucault identifies the body (and psyche) as the locale(s) of power’s micro-physics. In these bio-political protest tactics, the body thus is consciously and unconsciously constituted as the locale of rebellion (e.g. Cuevas 2000). The now defunct-Disobedienti, for example, would go into police lines not to attack, but prepared for a *defensive confrontation*, intent on exposing the tendency towards violence of the police and even inviting this (for example, through the mock salute of a fist with the little finger raised, waved at the police to mean ‘Come on, break it!’ (Anon. 2001a: 3). As Mittelman (2004: 28, following Foucault) describes, ‘[r]esistance manifests at the site where power and counterpower meet head-on. If the capillaries of power are the spaces where power acts on a body to discipline it, these are the loci where resistance emerges to contest power. Individual bodies are the sites of contestation’.

In terms of tactics, such actions partly constitute a legitimate and targeted expression of rage in reaction to circumstances experienced and perceived by many as alienating, violating and unjust. As such, the physical and even ecstatic expression of anger in a riot situation effects a positive appropriation of *the right to be angry* (e.g. Jensen 2000) that can be momentarily cathartic and self-empowering.¹⁸ And partly they are a conscious enacting of ‘propaganda by deed’. Acts symbolic of insurrection by a militant vanguard thus are constructed as effective and efficacious in terms of advertising the existence and intent of a revolutionary culture and consciousness. At the same time, through exciting and responding to police violence, such acts are intended to expose the violence located in both national and transnational governance of the status quo.

This then is captured spectacle as both revolutionary threat and advert. It is *not* terrorism - an orientation of indiscriminate violence to civilians/non-combatants to create submission by generating fear (e.g. Lentini forthcoming). An ‘anti-capitalist’ political orientation in and of itself, however, clearly also is not an essentialist nonviolent or even non-terrorist orientation. Some groups and individuals with similar political analyses and desires have resorted to a threatening tactics of violence to persons in the past (e.g. Baader-Meinhof in Germany, the ‘Unabomber’ in North America), and it is difficult to imagine a more

¹⁸ The roles of affect and of psychosomatic experience in influencing activist practice, and particularly engagement with physical violence, are discussed further in Sullivan (2004, in press).

spectacular anti-capitalist symbolic target than that of the World Trade Center, albeit attacked in the course of a very different agenda in 2001.

It is instructive, however, to take a step back and notice that a fetishising of nihilism in militant discourse and practise also is nothing new. It could even be seen as the proverbial tip of the iceberg in signifying broader social malaise, distress and disaffection; potentially indicative of a brewing socio-political force for systemic social change. The statements above, for example, are a clear echo of an earlier political tradition of nihilism, emerging in particular in mid-nineteenth century Russia where ‘the forces of state repression coupled with the longevity of the problem had already created such an intolerable situation that fixing the system though reform was essentially impossible. The only reasonable answer to this kind of situation is that of nihilism, *the only way to live was to destroy*’ (Anon, n.d.). This tradition is most clearly articulated in Sergei Nechayev’s 1869 ‘Catechism of a revolutionist’. The statements recorded above and epitomised in the graffiti dominating the antiauthoritarians’ protest at Thessaloniki bear striking resemblance to the ethos of this tradition, as distilled in the following lines that:

In the very depths of his (*sic*) being, not only in words but also in deeds, ... [the revolutionary] has broken every tie with the civil order and the entire cultivated world, with all its laws, proprieties, social conventions and its ethical rules. He is an implacable enemy of the world, and if he continues to live in it, that is only to destroy it more effectively. ... His sole and constant object is the immediate destruction of this vile order ...

Nechayev 1869 in Anon. n.d.: 5

But I also am interested in unpacking the ‘utility’ of such an orientation for engendering ‘radical’, i.e. beneath-the-surface, socio-political change. As feminist, I notice two things. First, and following feminist philosopher Luce Irigaray, it seems that the logos – the *culture* -of modernity indeed is infused with the essence of ‘[t]he father as a kind of meta-man’; whose locale ‘on high’ (as in God in monotheistic religions) permits and predisposes relationships of exteriority and domination of ‘all he surveys’. The distance thereby created ‘prevents any approach because of an appropriating mastery of all that which could enter into a relation of closeness’ (Irigaray 2002: 20-21). In this reading, a reacting against and contesting of the patriarchal character of the socio-political-economic institutions made possible by the logos of modernity – the modern state, and capitalism and communism as techno-military-industrial systems of mass production and consumption – indeed constitutes a correct locating of ‘the enemy’. The enemy here is modern patriarchal socio-political organisation: what Helene Cixous (1996 (1975): 83)

names more blatantly as phallogocentrism, and what Irigaray (1977) calls phallogocentrism. It is an infusing and institutionalised source of ways of being that, in their normalised structuring – and their *habitus* - effect the alienation and violation of all that is other to, and othered by, this logos. I am not essentialising here. To clarify, and as Cixous and Clément (1996 (1975): 83) write:

There is ‘destiny’ no more than there is ‘nature’ and ‘essence’ as such. Rather, there are living structures that are caught and sometimes rigidly set within historicocultural limits so mixed up with the scene of History that for a long time it has been impossible (and it is still very difficult) to think or even imagine an ‘elsewhere.’

Projecting an Oedipal anger towards ‘papa-state’ and other patriarchal institutions – reacting against and fighting the logos of modernity as ‘meta-man’ - thus becomes an appropriate conceptualising and performing of struggle. It constitutes a ‘correct’ targeting of institutions whose very structure and ethos embody and effect the psychosomatic – the biopolitical – disciplining and exclusions required to sustain the qualitative character of their functioning (also Foucault, e.g. 1977 (1975)).

Second, however, and following de Beauvoir (1953 (1949)), a feminist reading of the intent towards *destruction* might introduce an awareness of the tendency, noticeable in modern patriarchal and capitalist culture, for desire (of an object, a thing outside oneself) to equate with or translate into use/exploitation, and through use into destruction. In de Beauvoir’s (1953 (1949): 186) words, ‘one of the ends sought by all desire is the using up of the desired object, which implies its destruction’. What is desired is that which is constituted and variously objectified as ‘other’: woman, nature, indigenes, the body etc. And it is ‘the other’ that *under* modern patriarchal culture is systematically used, mined, appropriated, owned, exploited, denigrated, defiled, raped, violated, *destroyed* in the institutions and bio-politics that flow from patriarchal/western modernity’s distilled desire for transcendence over (Zinn 2001; Jensen 2000). An ‘anti-capitalist/(anti-)globalisation’ political orientation notices, feels, and contests this destruction: hence the significant coalescence of peace, environment, women’s and indigenous peoples’ movements in contemporary (anti-)globalisation movements. Hence also, a Deleuzian post-structuralist orientation towards contesting the status quo through ‘becoming other’ (Deleuze and Guattari 1988 (1980); also Irigaray 1997 (1996)). In this analysis, however, nihilism’s acceptance of the necessity of answering systemic destruction with destruction actually is part and parcel of the ontology of that which it is contesting. In other words, it contests

the status quo but only *within* the terms of reference dictated and normalised by the status quo.

To summarise. The first theoretical point is affirming of a thorough reacting against the institutional structures that flow from the (patriarchal) logos of modernity, since these are built on and infused with multiplicitous violences towards all that is othered in the logos of these institutions. The second point, however, indicates that there is little that is radical, subversive or transgressive about responding to destruction with destruction. In the following section I review further some gendered identities and dynamics infusing a celebrating of violent confrontation in contemporary (anti-)globalisation protest politics.

‘The revolutionary is a dedicated man ...’

“They’re all alike.” All. Except Bobby, who was a female. *Afterwards*, they always talked about smashing someone’s face ... He paused, malevolent and swollen with pride, sheltering now behind his deed of glory. He looked like an insect.

Sartre 1966 (1945): 263

I recall also a young Trotskyite standing on a platform at a boisterous meeting and getting ready to use her fists, in spite of her evident fragility. She was denying her feminine weakness; but it was for love of a militant male whose equal she wished to be.

De Beauvoir 1953 (1949): 14

I am a rock, I am an island. And a rock feels no pain. And an island never cries.

Simon and Garfunkel (2003 (1966))

The phrase forming the heading for this section is that which begins the ‘catechism of a revolutionary’ (1869) by the Russian nihilist Sergei Nechayev. It is accompanied by the somewhat phallic demand that ‘[t]he revolutionary must penetrate everywhere’ (*in* Anon. n.d.: 5, 7). The Russian nihilists of the mid 19th century also counted amongst them a number of committed young women, e.g. Vera Zasulich, Vera Figner and Sophia Perovskaia. Both men and women advocated the strategic use of violence against top-level authorities (*not* the general public), including the tsar. Some of these actions were enacted by women. For example, ‘in 1878 Vera Zasulich shot and wounded the military governor of St. Petersburg, General Theodore Trepov, who had ordered a political prisoner to be flogged’ (Anon. n.d.: 3). In other words, I am cognisant of the problems of essentialising gender categories. And I am not blind to the participation in violence and

brutality of women: from the Celtic women warriors of Britain at the time of Roman imperial expansion (e.g. Lothene Experimental Archaeology n.d.); to unmarried or widowed women in France in the Middle Ages who, like Joan of Arc, could ‘play a military role, commanding troops and joining combat’ (de Beauvoir 1953 (1949): 132); to women pirates worldwide in recent centuries (Klausmann *et al.* 1997); to the women Russian nihilists noted above. Bio-political violence clearly is *not* an exclusively male domain (also Ruins 2003; LeBrun n.d.). As Wolf (1993: xviii) affirms, ‘it is no longer possible to pretend that the impulses to dominate, aggress, or sexually exploit others are “male” urges’.

Indeed a transgressing of the boundaries of ‘polite bourgeois, feminine behaviour’, for example, through participating in confrontational and possibly violent protest, arguably in itself might effect a liberating reconfiguration of the pacified female gender identity that is part and parcel of bourgeois patriarchal social organisation. The symbolic image from Thessaloniki in Plate 7 captures a sense of this going beyond of conventional bourgeois female identities amongst antiauthoritarian protestors.



Plate 7. Female anarchist devil – graffiti-ed on the walls of Thessaloniki’s Aristotle University squatted by activists during protests against the EU summit in June 2003. Source: personal archive.

On the other hand, however, a discursive emphasis on ‘violence to the violence of the state’¹⁹ and the *fight* for the downfall of capitalism, buttresses conventional and problematic ‘hegemonic masculinities’ by valorising physical strength, machismo, emotional passivity and the necessity of competing to win (also Cross 2003: 14-15; Viejo 2003) As Tickner (2004, after Sassen 1998) argues, these tend to draw on gendered terms and metaphors embodied by patriarchal social organisation.

Take, for example, Nechayev’s prescriptive description of the revolutionary character:

Hard towards himself, he must be hard towards others also. All the tender and effeminate emotions of kinship, friendship, love, gratitude and even honor must be stifled in him by a cold and single-minded passion for the revolutionary cause. There exists for him only one delight, one consolation, one reward and gratification – the success of the revolution. Night and day he must have but one thought, one aim, he must be prepared to die himself and to destroy with his own hands everything that stands in the way of its achievement. ... The nature of the true revolutionary has no place for any romanticism, any sentimentality, rapture or enthusiasm ... He is not a revolutionary if he feels pity for anything in this world. If he is able to, he must face the annihilation of a situation, of a relationship or any person who is part of this world – everything and everyone must be equally odious to him. All the worse if he has family, friends and loved ones in this world; he is no revolutionary if he can stay his hand.

Nechayev 1869 *in* Anon. n.d.: 6-7

Such machismo, whether embodied by men or women, can be problematic for *both* men and women participating in (anti-)globalisation protest. Analytically and in action, it does little to contest the patriarchal assumptions and strategies infusing the organisational contexts that such protest attempts to contest, the sharp end of which manifests as a male-dominated and excessively macho riot police (e.g. Plate 8). Indeed, it becomes a strange echo of the 18th century liberal discourse by economist Adam Smith on the traits accompanying desirable bourgeois masculinity (Habermann 2004). For Smith, ‘[t]he man of real constancy and firmness, the wise and just man who has been thoroughly bred in the school of self-command ... maintains this control of his passive feelings upon all occasions’ (Smith 1759/89: 177 *in* Habermann 2004: 8). Further, ‘love is always laughed at’: - ‘[h]e himself is sensible to this; and as long as he continues in his sober senses endeavours to treat his own passion with raillery and ridicule’ (Smith 1759/89: 53 *in* Habermann 2004: 8-9). Both of these superficially conflicting discourses – the revolutionary and the bourgeois liberal - thereby elevate a masculinity which is bounded,

¹⁹ Anarchist Intervention leaflet distributed at EU ‘counter-summit’, Thessaloniki, June 2003.

restrained, unconcerned with the openness and softness of relationship, and built on the disciplined repression of physical needs and desires. This again is reiterated in the particular masculinities of a conventional, humourless and Leninist Left perspective that emphasises the violent necessity of proletarian revolution (e.g. Negri 1984: 73 *in* Callinicos 2001: 4).



Plate 8. Policeman at the EU summit, Thessaloniki, June 2003. Sources: La Haine 2003.

In reproducing such self-sacrificing machismo, a nihilist orientation to (anti-)globalisation politics - a politics that frames itself as antiestablishment and subversive – thus in fact becomes conventional rather than radical. In translating into a normalising pressure to demonstrate membership to the group as gang through willingness to participate in acts of violence it can become a structuring *habitus* of hardcore or ‘spikey’ (as opposed to ‘fluffy’) militancy. And given numerous reports of sexual harassment made by women at the antiauthoritarian encampment at Thessaloniki’s Aristotle University in June 2003, as well as the noticeable ‘alpha males’ – the authoritarian antiauthoritarians – that pop-up at such gatherings, it is tempting to see an emerging dynamic in militant factions whereby ‘worthy’ political violence is transmuted and normalised ‘back’ into the banal and disempowering violence of everyday sexism and sexual expectation (also see Bourgois 2001). As Mittelman (2004: 26, after Foucault) notes, ‘[n]ot only is there power to resist, but power within resistance may suppress subgroups and dissent’.

It might indeed be that '[t]he violence of the revolutionary does not aim to transform the oppressed into a new oppressor, nor to restore the economic and social relations of exploitation, but to build a society without classes, without alienation, and thus without violence' (Perlman 1992: 19). But such noble intent thus might also be overshadowed by the long-term psychological and physical *damage* effected by violating praxis, i.e. that manifests as Bourdieu's (1998, 2001) 'law of the conservation of violence', whereby the experience of violation in one domain of organisation is likely to manifest as the perpetration of violence in another domain. As Bourgois (2001: 12) notes, the political repression and 'worthy' resistance in wartime El Salvador during the 1980s now 'reverberate in a dynamic of everyday violence akin to that produced by the fusing of structural and symbolic violence during peacetime'. Here, the per capita homicide rate was almost twice as high *after* the (US-sponsored) Civil War as during it (Bourgois 2001: 19). It is not difficult to see how easily the 'meaningful' violent political act can become quickly twisted into the boring violence of the everyday: *viz* reported incidents at Thessaloniki of molotovs being thrown into buildings whilst antiauthoritarian 'comrades' were inside, and the potentially disastrous impacts on 'ordinary people' inhabiting apartments immediately above burning commercial outlets (also Marcellus 2003). Although by the same reasoning if people are left wounded and abused by 'the system', harming their own bodies and selves in sacrificial offerings of blood, pain and bodily control for release from existential pain (see Sullivan 2004, in press a; after Milia 1999), then acting in such a way that threatens the psychosomatic integrity of others is a perhaps unsurprising outcome (Judith 1996: 237).

Thus the profoundly macho, self-sacrificing and anti-life framing of the revolutionary persona as epitomised by Nechayev's catechism and bubbling up in some (anti-)globalisation activist contexts surely generates a stunning home goal. By revelling in masochism, it perpetuates a (conscious or unconscious) pleasurable dynamic of violence to self. By valorising the frontlines of violent confrontation with the police - notching up numbers of arrests, times beaten up etc., it both feeds the affective biopolitical wounds of the activist, and nurtures an unhelpful circular and escalating dynamic of violence between police and protestors. By being driven in part by an individualistic assuaging of activist guilt, it can contribute to a competitive and conservative *habitus* oriented towards visibly 'doing something' and attracting attention for this. And in retreating from social relationships and community other than those oriented towards the fetishised protest or

action, it misses the radical potential embodied by reaching out and communicating beyond activist enclaves: making resistance irresistible (and accessible) to broader publics.

Discussion

As I have argued elsewhere (Sullivan 2004, in press a), violence in (anti-)globalisation protest politics bears a legitimate and logical relationship to the globalisation of distress that is and has been effected under conditions of neoliberalism (= increasing wealth inequalities and reduced local control over production possibilities), US pretensions towards imperialism²⁰ and a violent Islamism (= increasingly indiscriminate violence), and hyper-capitalism and consumerism (= systemic alienation of being into the profit motive and mass consumption). This is the *structural violence* infusing the contemporary world (dis)order, such that macro-level structures impose ‘conditions of physical and emotional distress’ (i.e. violation) that pervade to the level of the individual and the everyday; structures which when pushed are maintained and protected via the *political violence* effected by the military, policing and legislative institutions of the state (see Inset 3), and increasingly via the transnationalisation of policing effort (Bourgeois (2001: 7) following Galtung (1969)).

Inset 3. The militarisation of protest policing and the implications of ‘non-lethal’ weapons for crowd control

Policing strategies and the corporate media both reflect *and create* expectations and actualities of violent protest. For example, in the weeks prior to the global day of action which succeeded in closing down the meeting of the governors of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank in Prague in September 2000, fear was carefully instilled in the public via declarations by the media and government authorities to the effect that protesters might kill if necessary and that the city’s inhabitants should stockpile food and medicines. All public schools in the city were closed for a week, and families were asked to declare in writing that students would stay outside the city and away from the protests (ostensibly for their own protection) (reported in Notes From Nowhere 2003: 307). In the lead up to Mayday in London 2001, a veritable moral panic was created by the police and media regarding the supposedly violent intentions of the UK’s WOMBLES (White Overalls Movement for Building Libertarian Effective Struggles, www.wombles.org.uk). Similarly, after a long period of using the media to create an atmosphere of tension around the gathering of social movements in the first European Social Forum, the Italian Prime Minister attempted to cancel the forum two weeks before the event was to take place

²⁰ For a chilling analysis of the tight construction of America’s current global ‘hyperpower’, which clearly displays the links between the interests of powerful individuals in oil, military and government institutions, see Rilling (2003).

(in November 2002) on the basis that violence was expected (Berlusconi's ownership of some 95% of the Italian corporate media no doubt came in handy in this campaign).

Techniques for crowd control now comprise a major focus for military and police, as well as an economic boom industry for the manufacturers of a whole new wave of crowd control weaponry, with significant implications for civil liberties and the practice of protest.

Thus, weapons are shifting from those that impact on 'the target' with something material – bullets, mines, foam impregnated with tear-gas, etc. – to those which use non-visible directed energy-waves such as lasers, soundwaves and microwaves. The mid-1990s state-of-the-art crowd control included weapons such as the following (from DefenseLink 1995: 2-5, 7):

Stinger/stun grenades. A grenade containing rubber pellets that cause stinging and bruising when thrown into a crowd. Can cause much more serious injuries at close range (as occurred when journalist photographer Guy Smallman was hit in the calf whilst covering the protests against the G8 in Evian, 2003 (BBC 2003)).

Projectiles. Including rubber pellets and wooden batons. Designed to be fired down at the ground by grenade launchers or shotguns, such that the projectiles ricochet off the ground and into the legs of people in a crowd. Also 'bean bags' filled with lead munitions (Toje 2002: 3). Fatal if fired at close range.

Foam barriers laced with tear gas. Launched from a large water and foam dispensing tank to cover an area around 200 by 20 feet.

Sticky foam. Dispensed from a small high-pressure gun system and designed to restrict peoples' movement. Difficult to remove, as indicated by US Department of Defense (DoD) spokesman in the following statement: '... it's a very lengthy process to get it off yourself but what the heck, they've got lots of time you know (laughter)'.

Today's existing and emerging 'non-lethal', directed-energy, 'Playstation' weapons have been envisioned and developed in a collaborative relationship between science fiction writers, futurologists and high-profile CIA and military personnel (as named in Wright 1999: 2). Since 9/11/01, the US has been urged by senior army personnel to speed up their development 'to stay ahead of potential enemies' (in Book 2002: 2), as well as to respond to the increasing incidents of military operations in urban terrain, including protests (Lackey 2002). The range of weapons include:

Lasers. Small chemical lasers can semi-blind the target/person and/or induce electrical shocks that paralyse muscles to the extent that they can kill by causing the heart to stop beating (Mulholland 1999: 1). The Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) uses a laser gun to temporarily semi-blind human targets (Toje 2002). At a different scale, the advantage to the military of lasers for uses varying from ground combat to destroying intercontinental ballistic missiles lies in their 'low cost per kill' (Erwin 2001: 2).

Acoustic bio-effect weapons. As described by a US military expert in Wright (1999: 4), these can be 'merely annoying', causing 'disorientation, pain and nausea' (Ottawa Citizen 2001: 2), or 'can be tuned to produce 170 decibels and rupture organs, create cavities in human tissue and cause potentially lethal blastwave trauma'.

Electro-magnetic energy weapons. otherwise known as microwave weapons or 'the people zapper'. These are the *pièce de resistance* of new-wave 'crowd-control' technologies. When launched as part of a Vehicle-Mounted Active Denial System (VMADS) they fire directed energy at human targets to a range upwards of 750m (Sirak 2001; Brinkley 2001; Renn 2001; Castellon and Brinkley 2003). Wright (1999: 4) reports that video footage was shown at the 1998 Jane's Defence conference in London of medical staff treating the comatose victims of microwave weapons. They have been described as 'uniquely intrusive', with the potential to disorientate and upset mental stability as well as affect the body's normal regulatory functions. At high levels they simply cook flesh, in the same way as a microwave oven cooks chicken: '[t]he amount of time the weapon must be trained on an individual to cause permanent damage or death is classified' (Brinkley 2001; 1). Prior to the 2003 war on Iraq, numerous periodicals and newspapers reported the expected use of these weapons in an attack on Iraq (e.g. Fulghum 2002).

The development and use of these weapons raises a range of issues for those engaging in (anti-)globalisation protest politics, given both the provocation to violence effected by police (from pushing and photographing protestors, to baton charges and other attacks) and the preparedness for violent confrontation amongst some protestors as outlined above. Protestors need to be informed regarding the technologies that can be used against them, and the tactics that might invite this use, and then decide whether or not such tactics constitute genuinely radical praxis or actually enhance the situation by creating a further demand for such technologies and for the militarisation of policing. But since research into the health impacts of directed energy weapons is being done by the those developing the weapons (Anon. 2001b: 2), and since all information related to this weaponry is highly classified, it seems unlikely that good information will find its way into the public domain so that citizens can both inform and protect themselves.

Non-lethal? The term 'non-lethal' is misleading. As described by a senior US military official, 'it's really a less lethal way because these weapons if improperly used could be lethal' (DefenseLink 1995: 1). The 'new generation' of energy-wave weapons generally are designed as dual-use weapons (Toje 2002), such that they become explicitly lethal at the flick of a switch. And, by immobilising people *in situ*, they create vulnerable sitting ducks of recipients (cf. Wright 1999: 5).

Are 'the weapon-makers ... shaping US foreign policy' (Wright 1999: 1)? In 1999, the total US military budget was \$260bn, i.e. 'already twice as large as the combined budgets of every conceivable US adversary' (William Hartmung, Senior Research Fellow, US Policy Institute, quoted in Wright 1999: 1). As Wright (1999: 1) asserts, this excessive spending only makes sense with the consideration that 'the weapon-makers are shaping US foreign policy', conveniently assisted since 2001 by the amorphous US-led global 'war on terror'. And who are the weapon-makers? They are private companies contracted to the military and the police (cf. DefenseLink 1995: 6; Brinkley 2001: 4). Thus, despite the highly classified nature of most 'new-wave' non-lethal weapons, these have spawned a range of highly lucrative commercial contracts whose interests clearly are linked to enhancing and servicing demand, possibly discounting where this demand comes from (cf. Wright 1999: 3, 5).

(II)legality: Many of these new-wave weapons are not covered by international law (Toje 2002: 1). Plus some developments of crowd 'calmatives' are now known to be a resurrected or continued US programme for developing incapacitating chemicals called ARCAD (Advanced Riot Control Agent Device) which was supposedly discontinued in 1992 because it contravened the Chemical Weapons Convention of that year (Sunshine Project 2004). Following the lead taken by the International Red Cross the European parliament called for a ban on blinding laser weapons in January 1999 (Wright 1999: 4), but international ratification of this treaty has been slow (Toje 2002: 4).

This understanding – that global patterns of inequality and injustice are established and perpetuated by systemically coercive and violent relationships that percolate to, and permeate through, the realms of the social and the subjective, and therefore that political violence is not limited to the frontline of military conflict (Sullivan 2003) – is articulated in precise terms by militant protesters engaging in 'anti-capitalist' practice. Take, for example, the following quotes:

Violence is not only present when human beings do physical harm to each other. Violence is there, albeit in a subtler form, whenever they use force upon each other in their interactions. It is violence that is at the root of capitalism. Under the capitalist system, all the economic laws governing human life come down to coercion...

CrimethInc. Workers' Collective 2001: 70

The ASBB [Anti-Statist Black Bloc] advocates the building of an organized movement against corporate and state tyranny in America. We recognize that poor and working class people have lost control of their communities and individual lives. The Democratic and Republican parties clearly support social relations in which this is furthered. By supporting the death penalty, militarism, corporate welfare, and the cutting of social spending, ... they have proven to be political parties of profit over people as all parties have. By organizing black blocs and using direct action, we confront this intolerable and unacceptable system.

ASBB 2000

Private property--and capitalism, by extension--is intrinsically (*sic*) violent and repressive and cannot be reformed or mitigated. Whether the power of everyone is concentrated into the hands of a few corporate heads or diverted into a regulatory apparatus charged with mitigating the disasters of the latter, no one can be as free or as powerful as they could be in a non-hierarchical society

ACME Collective 1999

We could never match the violence of society. The bottom line is, we live in a society where you have to fuck people over to achieve security for yourself

'Joe' *in* Thompson 2003

Following Keenan (forthcoming), (anti-)globalisation activists thus are 'enlightened' in the Kantian sense of being conceptually awake to their constrained location in society's broader and frequently violating structures. For this reason, in this paper as elsewhere I do not dismiss summarily militancies in protest politics that encourage riot, incorporate symbolic violence to property and are oriented towards violent confrontation with the police. As the quote that opens the piece indicates, I am interested in *why* these tactics emerge in the protest politics constituting part and parcel of a supranational (anti-)globalisation uprising. Indeed, given the perennial and counter-productive conflict between socialist hierarchical and anarchist positions towards socio-political change – or between the 'verticals' and 'horizontal' as these orientations have come to be known due to the organisational politics that plagued the recent London-based European Social Forum (reviewed in Nunes 2004b) – I am desirous *not* to slip into the easy and unhelpful dismissals and rejections of the past. I am thinking here, for example, of Lenin's (1993 (1920)) accusation of infantilism towards an emerging anarcho-syndicalism in the early part of last century in favour of Bolshevik discipline, organised revolutionary force and administrative centralisation. And of Nietzsche's dismissal of the militant practice associated with 19th century anarchism as a reactive politics of *ressentiment* – as 'the spiteful politics of the weak and pitiful, the morality of the slave' and the 'vengeful *will to power* of the powerless over the powerful' (Newman 2000: 1-2).

Nevertheless, it seems to me that a globalising politics of destruction and despair, as in evidence in some domains of (anti-)globalisation protest politics, can do little to systemically contest and reconfigure the structural violence pervading the contemporary global political economy. In other words, as both tactic and strategy, is a violent militancy as ‘revolutionary’ – as transgressive - as it claims and aspires to be?

In particular, from both analytical and activist perspectives it is important to disentangle the conceptual and strategic differences between two tactics: that of ‘propaganda by deed’ – whereby spectacular acts by a vanguard which might or might not include violence are intended to awake a broader revolutionary consciousness; and that of a prefigurative, proleptic politics that emphasises imagining and bringing a desired future into the present – ‘being the change that one wishes to see in the world’ (e.g. Habermas, Ghandi). As noted for the violence enacted against top-level Russian authorities by the Russian nihilists in the mid-19th century, for example, an emphasis on propaganda by deed might compromise ‘strategic sustainability’ due to the lack of a ‘cohesive social program’ (Anon. n.d. 4). And whilst the ‘semiotic war against capitalist globalization’ between Seattle 1999 and Genoa 2001 effected something of a spectacular victory with regard to news coverage etc. (Mueller 2004a; Nunes 2004a and b: 3), questions now are being raised regarding the sustainability and transformative potential of this strategy, focusing particularly on its weak relationship to everyday realities. It should also be noted, however, that these spectacular protests emerged in part *because* of the pernicious erosion of local and informal everyday economies and commons under neoliberalism, conservatism and global corporate capitalism.²¹

Of further strategic relevance is a realistic consideration of the helpfulness of mirroring and exciting the violence of the state, and then becoming locked into a dynamic whereby activist politics is alienated into a fetishised, masochistic and circular confrontation with police. For one thing, it is by no means clear that demonstrations of systemic violence and repression on the part of authority are enough to invite movement support by wider publics (e.g. chapter by Keenan forthcoming). Exposing the tendency towards violence of the state – violences that increasingly are effected by a trans-nationally coordinated policing and surveillance effort - does not necessarily lead linearly to action by wider

²¹ Bender (1998), for example, describes the violent demolition of emerging ‘New Age traveller’ economies in the UK under Thatcher in 1985.

society, even when accompanied by sympathetic coverage in the corporate media. This is particularly true if the protest tactics used and the activist images portrayed are in and of themselves alienating to a broader audience. Further, given the fetishising of violence in the spectacle of the daily news, it is difficult to see how a politics of contestation that locks in to the desire for capturing the spectacle can or would wish to compete with the terrorist symbolic spectaculars of recent years - of 9/11/01, Breslan, and the horror of videoed beheadings; of the symbolic brilliance of the attacks on the World Trade Center, signifier of a hyper-capitalism that privileges the 'mad money' of speculation and deregulated flows of finance capital (Strange 1998). If fought on these terms then the diverse struggles loosely framed as (anti-)globalisation logically can only descend into the violence associated with terrorist practice, which surely is deeply antithetical to the celebration of life and the politics of possibility (Sullivan forthcoming) that otherwise infuse 'the movements'. Perhaps more to the point, this is a violent battle which cannot be won by (anti-)globalisation protestors: not least because of the growing militarisation with which civil society protest is being policed and attacked worldwide (plate 9), the trans-national coordination of policing effort, and an emerging 'non-lethal' crowd control weaponry that is increasingly distributed in its effects (see Inset 3).



Plate 9. A small percentage of the visible police presence that marked constitutional discussions at the EU 'Intergovernmental Conference on the Future of the Union', Rome, 6 October 2003. Source: IMC-Italy 2003b.

At the same time, however, if (anti-)globalisation politics also is about *resistance* to existing structures and authority, then confrontation with the forces policing that authority remains a logical tactic. This is particularly true given that for many of those disenfranchised by ‘the system’ – immigrants, *sans papiers*, squatters, the unemployed, asylum seekers, ‘ravens’: those at the frontlines of the economic and political precariousness fostered by neoliberalism or criminalised by their consumptive and other practices – their encounters with ‘the system’ frequently are mediated violently by police as well as private security guards: in evictions, at borders, in detention centres, on the streets, in arrest. Again, violation breeds militancy, and violated militant protestors seek the closure seemingly offered by confrontation with police. More prosaically, and as I have witnessed and experienced, police actions and policing tactics – from pushing to enclosing protestors – generate and escalate circumstances in which reactive (as opposed to premeditated) violences occur.

I have sought in this chapter to highlight and problematise a particular strand within militant (anti-)globalisation protest that embraces an affective and tactical orientation of nihilism. Nihilism is without hope. It is a politics of depression, which, given a current global pandemic of depression and suicide (e.g. figures in Sullivan 2004, in press a), makes it completely predictable as an orientation towards the world and within activist politics. But if the logic of violent protest and nihilist politics is pursued further, then I see nothing to distinguish it conceptually or ontologically from constituting a third panel in an ugly contemporary triptych of violent nihilisms: complementing a nihilist American neoconservative politics that assumes the need for an evil other in order effect American solidarity; and a self-sacrificing fundamentalist Islamism whose nihilist manifestation we see only too clearly and regularly in the daily news. An embracing of nihilist politics thus plays into, rather than contests or transforms, the apparent and globalising death machines of fundamentalist hyper-capitalism, neoliberalism, militarism and Islamism. It participates in, rather than subverts, a reciprocal relationship that has violence/violation as its fetishised key signifier – the lens, the mirror, through which all action is filtered. It thus becomes more of the same, rather than constituting a ‘pro-living’ and monstrous subversion of the ontological and subjective heresies bequeathed by modernity (e.g. as theorised by Deleuze and Guattari 1988 (1980) and Irigaray (2002) amongst others). Activisms that embody militant *agency* in relation to biopolitical production and resistance practices (e.g. Hardt and Negri 2000: 411) arise from a more rigorous and

sustained effort to embrace the task of understanding and deconstructing how we come to be as we are, whilst opening and building alternative subjective, social, economic and communicative places, spaces and commons (e.g. Bey 1991 (1985); de Angelis 2003; Sullivan 2001, in press b; Mueller 2004b). The risks otherwise are of sustaining in protest a simple response and mirror to the violations of a contested (and nihilistic) status quo, while dancing to the violent tune set by a greedy spectacle-desiring media machine.

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