Many Struggles, One Fight: Deleuze|Guattari, Lacan, and the US Anti-Fracking Movement

A thesis submitted to The University of Manchester for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Humanities

2019

Kai Heron

School of Social Sciences
Contents

Maps & Figures.................................................................4

Abstract...............................................................................7

Declaration & Copyright Statement......................................8

Acknowledgements...............................................................9

Introduction........................................................................12

We’re Talking About A (Shale) Revolution...............................16

Deleuze|Guattari & Resistance.............................................20

One, Two, Many Deleuze|Guattari’s....................................35

Fieldwork: Ethics & Methods...............................................45

Thesis Structure....................................................................48

Chapter I: “Ours Is Becoming the Age of Minorities”............51

Why Minorities?..................................................................56

Minoration...........................................................................70

Extending Deleuze|Guattari’s Minorization Thesis..................81

Conclusion...........................................................................82

Chapter II: Cramped Space in the Marcellus Shale Fields ......90

Cramped Space....................................................................93

Dimock, Pennsylvania: Confronting the Democratic Illusion....104

Conclusion..........................................................................112
Maps & Figures

Figure One: Map of the Marcellus Shale Region……………………………………5

Figure Two: Map of upstate New York and Pennsylvania…………………………5

Figure Three: Map of Pennsylvania’s unconventional oil wells as of March 2019……6

Figure Four: Map of the Finger Lakes Region of New York……………………6

Figure Five: Deleuze|Guattari’s diagram of majorities and minorities………………133

Figure Six: The places in Lacan’s four discourses…………………………………..135

Figure Seven: The terms of Lacan’s four discourses…………………………………135

Figure Eight: Lacan’s Discourse of the Master………………………………………..136
Figure One: The Marcellus Shale Region (Source: John G. Van Hoesen, 2019)

Figure Two: Thesis Fieldsite (Source: Google Maps, 2019)
Figure Three: A map of the 11,935 unconventional wells drilled so far in Pennsylvania as of 30 March 2019 (Source: Fractracker.org)

Figure Four: The Finger Lakes Region of New York (Source: Google Maps, 2019)
Abstract:

In an interview conducted in 1972 Deleuze describes his “Capitalism and Schizophrenia” project, written with Félix Guattari, as an effort to give psychoanalysis “some schizophrenic help.” What if it is now time to return the favour? What if it is Deleuze|Guattari who are today in need of some psychoanalytic help? This thesis develops a re-reading of Deleuze|Guattari’s figure of the minority as it appears in A Thousand Plateaus that is compatible with advances in psychoanalytic and Marxist theory and puts it to work in an analysis of the US anti-fracking movement. The thesis argues that there are in fact two theories of minorities to be found in A Thousand Plateaus. The first is anti-dialectical and vitalist, the second is dialectical and formalist. Though the vitalist account is more consistent with Deleuze|Guattari’s philosophy and its reception in political theory and resistance studies it reduces politics to a substantialized ontology of becoming and to the level of life as such. In this way it cannot think the role that a historically bounded subject plays in the construction of a politics. The second theory of minorities leans heavily on mathematical set theory and comparisons with Lacanian psychoanalysis to present a formalist and historically specific theory of post-Fordist capitalism and its attendant forms of struggle and subjectivity. Here, Deleuze|Guattari present the minority in dialectical terms as the displaced form of appearance of class struggle under post-Fordist conditions and in so doing suggest an auto-critique of their more vitalist and anti-formalist proclivities. This second account, however, remains underdeveloped and is flawed in its use of set theoretical categories. Departing from Deleuze|Guattari’s slips, mistakes, inconsistencies, and contradictions, this thesis reconstructs their second theory of minorities and gives it some psychoanalytic help. Working with, through, and alongside the US anti-fracking movement the thesis proposes that a formalist, Lacanian indebted, account of minorities is well-suited to theorizing the strengths and limitations of contemporary struggles against fracking and related infrastructure. In the process the thesis moves beyond Deleuze|Guattari to make broader contributions to political theory, political ecology, and post-colonial studies. In particular, it defends the role of universality in emancipatory struggle.
Declaration and Copywrite Statement

No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institute of learning.

i. The author of this thesis (including any appendices and/or schedules to this thesis) owns certain copywrite or related rights in it (the “Copyright”) and s/he has given The University of Manchester certain rights to use such Copyright, including for administrative purposes.

ii. Copies of this thesis, either in full or in extracts and whether in hard or electronic copy, may be made only in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 (as amended) and regulations issued under it or, where appropriate, in accordance with licensing agreements which the University has from time to time. This page must form part of any such copies made.

iii. The ownership of certain Copyright, patents, designs, trademarks and other intellectual property (the “Intellectual Property”) and any reproductions of copyright works in the thesis, for example graphs and tables (“Reproductions”), which may be described in this thesis, may not be owned by the author and may be owned by third parties. Such Intellectual Property and Reproductions cannot and must not be made available for us without the prior written permission of the owner(s) of the relevant Intellectual Property and/or Reproductions.

iv. Further information on the conditions under which disclosure, publication and commercialization of this thesis, the Copyright and any Intellectual Property and/or Reproductions described in it may take place is available in the University IP Policy (see http://documents.manchester.ac.uk/DocuInfo.aspx?DocID=24420), in any relevant Thesis restriction declarations deposited in the University Library, the University Library’s regulations (see http://www.library.manchester.ac.uk/about/regulations/) and in The University’s policy of Presentation of Theses.
Acknowledgements

I would like to begin by thanking my advisors, Carl Death and Andreja Zevnik. When I arrived at the University of Manchester I had plans to write a theoretically informed ethnographic study of the US anti-fracking movement that would stand in a broadly Foucauldian tradition. Instead, I have written an empirically informed piece of political theory that is steeped in Deleuze|Guattari’s philosophy, Lacanian psychoanalysis, and Marxist theory and practice. It is the sign of an excellent supervisory team that Carl and Andreja gave me the space and the confidence to pursue my curiosity in this direction while keeping me on track to complete the thesis on time.

I would also like to thank Manchester University’s administrative staff: Ann Cronley, Kimberley Hulme, Val Lenferna, and Anusarin Lowe for their support and the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council for funding the project.

This thesis would not exist without the participation and encouragement of anti-fracking organizers across the United States. My eternal gratitude to the members of We Are Seneca Lake, Lancaster Against Pipelines, and the residents of Dimock, Pennsylvania, in particular. It is rare to experience the levels kindness, friendship, and solidarity that I found waiting for me in these communities. The landscape, wildlife, and people of upstate New York and Eastern Pennsylvania have an indelible place in my heart. Thank you.

In 2017 I was awarded the 2017-2018 Pre-Doctoral Fellowship at the Fisher Center for the Study of Gender and Justice at Hobart William Smith Colleges, New York. This gave me the chance to spend a year living in my PhD’s fieldsite while writing, teaching, and participating in research and discussion on the Fisher Center’s theme for the year: “The Futures of Revolution.” This was without question the most intellectually formative year of my life and I would like to thank the Fisher Center’s committee members for the opportunity. I would particularly like to thank its director, Jodi Dean. Jodi’s intellectual curiosity, generosity, mentorship, and force of conviction remain an inspiration. Thanks also to my cohort of Fisher Center Fellows: Meghan Brown, Matt Crow, Alla Ivanchikova, Rob Maclean, and Marcella Romero Rivera for teaching me the true meaning of interdisciplinary research. I would also like to acknowledge my debt to those I was privileged enough to discuss my work with while I was at the Fisher Center: Carole
Elizabeth Boyce Davis, Artemy Magun, Anna Kornbluh, Ada Ferrer, Sarah Raymundo, Chris Harris, and Bruno Bosteels. A very special thanks must go to Hannah Dickenson and Laura Salamandra for their constant support and encouragement and to the members of PSL Geneva and the Geneva Women’s Assembly for their infectious revolutionary optimism.

As Deleuze|Guattari might say, this thesis is the work of an individual but an individual is already a crowd. I would like to thank my mum and grandad for inspiring me to pursue a career in writing and education, my step mum and her partner for their support, and my in-laws for their endless confidence in the project. While I cannot possibly thank the many colleagues, friends and comrades that I am indebted to, here, some deserve a special mention. In no particular order: Amy Clancy, Bertie Russel, Sabrina Villenave, Greg Slater, Ana Gabriela Santana, Jenn Hobbs, Maria Aristodemou, Jack Philipps, Paul Apostolidis, Andreas Kalyvas, Lester Spence, Louiza Odysseos, Lara Montesinos Coleman, Sara Gheb, Leonie Ansems DeVries, Jan Selby, Christian Sorace, Martin Coward, Wendy Lynn Lee, Katie Joyce, Tom Joyce, Mike Douglas, Luke Bhatia, Jenny Spicer, Jess Patterson, and Tom Scriven. I would also like to thank the organizers of the Gregynog Ideas Lab, the Radical Critical Theory Circle, and the People’s Congress of Resistance. These conferences were essential to my intellectual development.

Last but not least, I would like to thank my wife, Sara, for her love, encouragement, enthusiasm, and inestimable patience. It turns out that when one half of a couple embarks on a PhD, the other is taken along for the ride. Sara turned what could have been a lonely and at times dispiriting endeavour into something shared and truly special. In the time that it has taken me to complete this thesis – from beginning my MSc at the University of Sussex to submission – we have married, moved one or the other of us overseas a total of four times, moved cities five times, and twice defended our marriage from the UK’s “inhospitable environment” immigration policy. It has, to say the least, been an adventure. Here’s to many more to come.

I dedicate this thesis to the above and to all of those who fight for a freer, greener, post-capitalist future wherever they are.
“How else can one write but of those things which one doesn’t know, or knows badly? It is precisely there that we imagine having something to say. We write only on the frontiers of our knowledge, at the border which separates our knowledge from our ignorance and transforms the one into the other.” – Gilles Deleuze, Difference and Repetition, xx
Introduction
I spent the morning of April 26 2016 being shown the cancerous growths, skin burns, and rashes of a one-time frack-truck driver and industry whistle-blower. I listened to his stories of industry misconduct – from corner-cutting to outright illegality – and to his experiences of worker exploitation and degradation. I was shown the stacks of legal documents that he had accrued in his struggle for justice. I saw his medical notes and the scientific studies confirming that his well-water, like that of his neighbours, was undrinkable; contaminated by a heady mix of carcinogens and teratogens including arsenic, lithium and 4-chlorophenyl phenyl ether. I also saw the documents that tried to argue that all of this had nothing to do with the oil and gas extraction method known as hydraulic fracturing, or fracking for short. It was, the industry’s lawyers and scientists argued, a mere coincidence that the street’s water supply become contaminated shortly after Cabot Oil & Gas Corporation began to drill for natural gas only a few hundred feet away from their front doors. It was not their fault that this man’s well-water could be set on fire straight from the tap.

Only a few hours later I was on a tour of the region with another community member and anti-fracking activist who had at one time been banned from a total of 312.5 square miles of Pennsylvania. The ban – which forbade her from accessing her local hospital, supermarket, and pharmacy – was eventually deemed excessive and overturned. Now, under a new legal order, she was prohibited from entering land owned by Cabot as well as a 100 foot “buffer zone” surrounding well-pads and a 25-foot buffer zone surrounding access roads. Should she be on a public right of way – as indeed we were as we drove through the rural township of Dimock, Pennsylvania, and its surrounding countryside – she was prohibited from stopping or parking a vehicle “within 100 feet of the entrance to a Cabot access road.” Should she be on foot she was banned from coming within 25 feet of an access road. She could, however, “be present on foot on the opposite side of the road to which the access road joins, even if it is less than 25 feet from the entrance to the access road, provided she is not physically on the public road.” These properly Foucauldian, microphysical, and disciplinary legal provisions also applied to

2 Jacobs, ‘New Dimock Study Does Not Link Water Issues to Fracking’.
3 Goldenberg, ‘Anti-Fracking Activist Barred from 312.5 Square Miles of Pennsylvania’.
4 Cabot Oil & Gas Corporation V. Vera Scroggins: Permanent Order May 1 2015, 2–3.
those she bought with her into the fracking fields. Failure to comply would result in “fines, assessment of attorney fees, and/or incarceration.”

And so it was that in the anti-fracking movement’s equivalent to work-to-rule we were reduced to walking and driving comically slowly past fracking wells, drill rigs, exploded water-wells, abandoned homes, and compressor stations. Fossil capital could legislate against my guide’s capacity to stand still but it could not, apparently, dictate the speed at which she travelled: We laughed about it as we moved at a snail’s-pace past a 150-foot drill-rig and as she waved to the cameras watching over the site’s access road.

Resistance to fracking is full of jarring juxtapositions like this. It is in turns tragic and comedic, joyful and enraging, empowering and enervating. Whether the struggle takes the form of whistle-blowing, direct action, civil disobedience, or signing petitions, at its heart the movement is not just about whether a particular pipeline or fracking pad will be built but about how the world will respond to our fossil capital induced slow-motion environmental catastrophe. For those in the struggle – and indeed for all of us – the stakes could not be higher.

***

This is a thesis about those who take a stand against fracking. As a work of political theory, it puts this ongoing struggle into productive tension with the political philosophy of Deleuze|Guattari and in particular with their concept of minorities. I say productive tension, here, because a theory does not explain a practice without remainder, just as a practice can never exhaust a theory. It is always in the gap between them (a gap that is never closed but that, on the contrary, is made all the more visible by travelling back and forth between theory and practice) that there is something new to be said about political

---

5 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish.*
6 Cabot Oil & Gas Corporation v. Vera Scroggins: Permanent Order May 1 2015, 3.
7 By fossil capital I have in mind our existing regime of capital accumulation and governance for which fossil fuels are the material precondition. For more on the concept of fossil capital, see: Andreas Malm, *Fossil Capital: The Rise of Steam-Power and the Roots of Global Warming* (London; New York: Verso Books, 2015).
8 Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor.*
9 Throughout this thesis I follow Jan Jagodziński’s practice of referring to Deleuze and Guattari’s collaborative work as the work of “Deleuze|Guattari.” I do this for two reasons. First, to push back against the tendency to remove Guattari’s name from discussions of their collaborative work. Second, to underscore Deleuze|Guattari’s intent to break with the liberal logic of assigning authorship to individuals or collections of individuals. See: Jan Jagodziński, *Introduction: Worrying about Deleuze|Guattari’s Reception*; “The two of us wrote Anti-Oedipus together. Since each of us was several, there was already quite a crowd.” Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia,* 3.
theory and about concrete political struggles. Deleuze | Guattari call this procedure a “disjunctive synthesis.”

But why choose the concept of minorities for this? Because, as I will demonstrate in this thesis, the minority is Deleuze | Guattari’s often misunderstood contribution to ongoing debates in political theory about who, if anyone, is the revolutionary subject of our time and how, if at all, it is possible to move beyond capitalism. And because, as I will also demonstrate, the US anti-fracking movement epitomizes what Deleuze | Guattari mean by minorities, by capital’s properly universal tendency to “minorize” new individuals and communities through its ever-expanding processes of self-valorization, and by the practice of political struggle that they call “becoming-minoritarian.”

The disjunctive synthesis of Deleuze | Guattari and anti-fracking struggles gives rise to the guiding questions of this thesis:

1: What is at stake in Deleuze | Guattari’s concept of minorities?
2: How does the concept help us to think with and through US anti-fracking struggles?

In answering these questions the thesis makes contributions to contemporary political theory and to the burgeoning field known as “resistance studies.” These contributions will be spelled out in detail shortly. First, however, it is important to introduce the context of the US anti-fracking movement.

Deleuze and Guattari, Anti-Oedipus, 75–76.
Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 292.

By Resistance studies I have in mind a broad interdisciplinary literature that, as the Journal of Resistance Studies puts it, focuses “on critical understandings of resistance strategies, discourses, tactics, effects, causes contexts and experiences.” Resistance studies raises questions about how we think struggle and revolution, and indeed whether we can still think revolution, in light of the impasses reached by the New Left, the limited success of de-colonial struggles, and the defeat of the Russian and Chinese revolutions. Though there is considerable crossover between what I am calling Resistance Studies and similar fields like Social Movement Studies, generally speaking, the former tends to eschew positivism to place a greater emphasis on post-rationalist and critical theorizations of resistance as such. Or, in Lara Montesinos Coleman’s words, it “theorizes through attention to” resistance. Coleman, ‘The Making of Docile Dissent’, 170; To quote from the Journal of Resistance Studies again, the aim “is to advance an understanding of how resistance might undermine repression, injustices and domination of any kind as well as how resistance might nurture autonomous subjectivities, e.g. constructive work, alternative communities, and oppositional ways of thinking.”

‘Journal of Resistance Studies’ See Also; Hardt and Negri, Empire; Drainville and Sassen, Contesting Globalization; Amoore, The Global Resistance Reader; Coleman and Tucker, Situating Global Resistance; Caygill, On Resistance; Gilman-Opalsky, Specters of Revolt.
We’re Talking About A (Shale) Revolution

In his prescient 1989 essay, *Three Ecologies*, Félix Guattari laments:

“Wherever we turn, there is the same nagging paradox: on the one hand, the continuous development of new techno-scientific means to potentially resolve the dominant ecological issues and reinstate socially useful activities on the surface of the planet, and, on the other hand, the inability of organized social forces and constituted subjective formations to take hold of these resources in order to make them work.”

This paradox is perhaps nowhere more evident today than in the field of global energy production. So-called “conventional” sources of fossil fuels are increasingly displaced in the global energy mix by a growing array of “unconventional” and deeply risky extraction methods. In the past few decades, besides fracking for oil and gas, fossil capital has doubled down on mountain top removal mining, tar sand oil extraction, and coal bed methane gasification. However, fracking for oil and gas has had the greatest global economic impact. When commercially viable fracking began in the United States in the mid-2000s it was described as a “revolution” in fossil fuel extraction. In many ways this is an apt description. The revolutionary “techno-scientific” credentials of the process, as Guattari puts it, are beyond question. Fracking involves drilling up to three miles underground before turning the drill a full 90 degrees to drill up to a further three miles horizontally from the well site. Pumps are then used to inject a mix of water, sand, and chemicals into the well under high pressure, blasting shale formations apart and releasing previously inaccessible fossil fuel reserves. Meanwhile, satellites spin overhead producing seismic images of the earth’s subsurface with the help of supercomputers in Paris, New York, and Tokyo.

While the actual process of fracking only takes a few hours, the term has become synonymous with the much lengthier and invasive operations before and after the

---

15 Foster, ‘The Fossil Fuels War’.
17 Rao, *Shale Gas*.
18 Reed, ‘The Stealth Oil Giant’; Wylie and Albright, ‘WellWatch’.
fracking process. As ex-industry geologist and now out-spoken activist, Anthony Ingraffea, explains “the most significant element of shale gas development that seems to just not be understood by many is its spatial intensity.” Ingraffea argues that whilst most industrial processes are confined to an industrial yard or factory, fracking requires an intensive and extensive process of rural industrialisation: “we’re asked to participate inside their spaces. They are imposing on us the requirement to locate our homes, hospitals and schools inside their industrial space.” Because well yields decrease precipitously after the first year, thousands of wells must be produced within a comparatively small area to maintain economically viable rates of production. As of March 2019 Pennsylvania alone had 11,885 active fracking wells and over 12,342 recorded faults and regulatory violations. With those wells comes the need for compressor stations, pipelines, gathering lines, gas storage sites, water storage sites, waste storage sites, water trucks, waste trucks, and well-rig trucks. If just one of these pieces is missing fracking becomes an impossibility. And so, like the anti-fracking movement itself, when this thesis refers to fracking it means the complex web of fracking wells and related infrastructure that weaves its way through mostly rural – but sometimes urban – parts of the United States.

The industrialization of the “hinterlands,” as Phil Neel calls them, has allowed the US to exploit its vast shale rock formations to become the world’s leading producer of crude oil, refined oil products, and gas, garnering it the nickname in some circles of “Saudi America.” Successive US governments – both Democrat and Republican – have now pursued fracking as a panacea to the country’s economic and energy security woes and as a potential “bridge fuel” towards renewable energy sources. Defending his “all of the above” energy policy in 2012, for instance, Barak Obama boasted about his support for the industry:

"There are politicians who say that if we just drilled more then gas prices would come down right away. What they don’t say is that we have been drilling more. Under my administration America is producing more oil than at any time in the last eight years. We've opened up new areas for exploration. We've quadrupled

19 Ingraffea, ‘Meet Anthony Ingraffea—From Industry Insider to Impalacable Fracking Opponent’.
20 Ingraffea.
21 FracTracker Alliance, ‘PA Shale Viewer’.
22 Neel, Hinterland.
24 McLean, Saudi America.
25 Sovacool, ‘Cornucopia or Curse?’
the number of operating rigs to a record high. We’ve added enough new oil and
gas pipelines to circle the Earth and then some.”

Indeed between the years 2010 and 2012 alone the Obama Administration oversaw the
construction of an additional 29,604 miles of pipeline. The circumference of the Earth is
24,873.6 miles.

Yet in the shale fields of the US, the benefits of fracking are far from certain. In
the Marcellus Shale region – the fieldsite for this thesis and one of the first regions in the
US to extensively develop shale gas extraction – mounting academic and anecdotal
evidence links fracking to a multitude of health, environmental, and cultural impacts: still
births, decreased birth weights, increased cancer rates, neurological disorders, nose
bleeds, damage to mental health, contaminated water, poisoned livestock, and dead
streams to name only a few. Elsewhere, the industry has borne out Naomi Oreskes’s
claim that “humans have become geological agents, changing the most basic physical
processes of the earth” in a very palpable sense. Since underground fracking waste water
injections started in Oklahoma in 2008 the state has seen earthquakes above a 3.0
magnitude increase by 5,000%. To date no one has been killed but a 5.6 magnitude
earthquake in 2011 injured two people and destroyed two homes. Elsewhere, people are
not so lucky. The anti-fracking group Pennsylvania Alliance for Clean Air and Water has
compiled a 22,391 name long “list of the harmed” which includes many reported deaths
from encounters with the industry and its by-products. During my fieldwork I met an
ex-fracking and drill-rig worker whose friend and colleague was killed when a bolt flew
off a rig at high pressure and punctured one of his lungs. Another of his colleagues had
simply been run over by a reversing frac-truck and died instantaneously. The ex-worker
showed me a picture of the rudimentary wooden cross that workers had built to mark the
place where the man had died.

Beyond its local impacts, fracking has been linked to significantly increased
greenhouse gas emissions. In his 2014 state of the union address, President Barack

---

26 Moorhead, ‘Obama Says New Miles of Pipeline Could Stretch around the Earth’.
27 McGraw, The End of Country; Briggé, A Field Philosopher’s Guide to Fracking; Hauer, Frackopoly; Griswold, Amity and
Prosperity.
28 Royte, ‘Fracking Our Food Supply’; Powers et al., ‘Popular Epidemiology and “Fracking”’; Srebotnjak and Rotkin-
Ellman, ‘Fracking Fumes’; Fry, Briggé, and Kincaid, ‘Fracking and Environmental (in)Justice in a Texas City’;
Solotaroff, ‘What’s Killing the Babies of Vernal, Utah?’; Currie, Greenstone, and Meckel, ‘Hydraulic Fracturing and
Infant Health’; Busby and Mangano, ‘There’s a World Going on Underground—Infant Mortality and Fracking in
Pennsylvania’.
29 Oreskes, ‘The Scientific Consensus on Climate Change: How Do We Know We’re Not Wrong?’; 93.
31 Jopson, ‘Fracking’.
Obama claimed that if fracked gas was “extracted safely,” it could become a “‘bridge fuel’ that can power our economy with less of the carbon pollution that causes climate change.” This argument – which repeats tried and tested security rationales for coal and oil extraction – is common among fracking’s proponents. Like many of their claims it is not entirely false. Burning fracked gas does indeed produce less carbon dioxide per unit of heat energy than coal or oil and yet across its production cycle the fracking industry emits significant amounts of methane. Methane is an extremely powerful greenhouse gas; over a 20-year period it absorbs over 86 times more heat than carbon dioxide. Meaning, as a 2015 study of fracked gas emissions found, that “when methane emissions are included, the greenhouse gas footprint of shale gas is significantly larger than that of conventional natural gas, coal, and oil.” Another 2015 study similarly argued that its conclusions lead “unrelentingly to the view that fracking for shale is incompatible with climate change mitigation.” While a study from 2016 found that US power plant transitions from coal-to-gas are offset by increased exports of coal and thus “the shale boom is likely to increase global emissions.”

Local and global impacts combine to make fracking one of the most contentious fossil fuel industries in the US and beyond. One of the most important reasons for its contentiousness is that fracking allows for the extraction of previously inaccessible reserves of oil and gas and therefore opens new frontiers to capital accumulation and with it establishes new spaces of struggle. unsurprisingly, the industry specifically targets communities who have been on the front lines of toxic industry, extractivism, state violence, and environmental racism for centuries: indigenous communities, black and minority communities, rural communities. As industry executive Terry Bossert explained in a moment of candour such communities are promising for the fracking industry because they simply do not have “the money to fight.” But the industry also introduces these techniques and practices into communities who are comparatively better off or who have not encountered the violence of fossil capital before. Anthropologist Anna Willow calls this the USA’s “un/expected landscapes of disempowerment and vulnerability” and suggests that her comparative research of “a semi-remote Canadian

33 Plumer, ‘Obama Says Fracking Can Be a “Bridge” to a Clean-Energy Future. It’s Not That Simple.’
34 Shulman, Coal and Empire.
36 Staddon and Depledge, ‘Fracking Cannot Be Reconciled with Climate Change Mitigation Policies’.
37 Knittel, Metaxoglou, and Trindade, ‘Are We Fracked?’
38 Hauter, Frackopoly.
39 Guzik, ‘Fracking the Poor’; Castelli, ‘Fracking and the Rural Poor’.
40 Kozik, ‘Fracking Exxe Reportedly Admits Targeting the Poor, Because They Don’t Have “The Money To Fight”’. 
Anishinaabe community” and “Euro-American residence of Ohio” reveals that “ever-increasing segments of the world’s population now contend with environmental challenges that they did not authorize and so not benefit from.” 

Corroborating Willow, Naomi Klein has argued that there is an emerging global tendency for “high-risk extractive industries” to encroach on previously “out of bounds” regions and that in the process new kinds of political subjects are formed. Deleuze|Guattari have a name for this process: minorization. As new communities are minorized, new lines of struggle are drawn, new collective political subjectivities come into being, and new forms of solidarity become possible. Deleuze|Guattari have a name for this, too: becoming-minoritarian.

The central argument of this thesis is that the concept of minorities helps us to think through these processes.

And yet to get the most from the concept it needs to be read against the grain of Deleuze|Guattari’s dominant reception in political theory and resistance studies. This is what this thesis proposes to do through a novel reading of Deleuze|Guattari’s philosophy.

Deleuze | Guattari & Resistance

Deleuze once proposed that a philosopher only writes a book that “deserves to exist:”

“1: If one thinks that the books on the same subject or on a neighboring subject fall foul of a universal error (the polemical function of the book)

2: If one thinks that something essential has been forgotten about the subject (the inventive function of the book)

3: If one considers themselves to be able to create a new concept (the creative function of the book).”

---

b Klein, This Changes Everything, 195.
c Villari, La guêpe et l’orchidée. Essai sur Gilles Deleuze, 56.
“An error, an oversight, a concept.” (“Bien sûr, c’est le minimum quantitatively: une erruer, un oubli, un concept.”)44 The same could be said for a thesis in political theory.45 In this section I would like to set out what I consider to be the “mistake” or “oversight” in dominant receptions of Deleuze|Guattari’s philosophy in political theory and resistance studies. The rest of the thesis can then be dedicated – for the most part – to the “inventive function,” the moment of recovery, or réparer as Deleuze says,46 and to the creation of a new concept: a formalist and dialectical re-conceptualization of minorities aided by the proposed method of reading Deleuze|Guattari that I develop in the next section of this introduction.47

So what is the error or oversight that approaches to the same subject fall foul of? On one level we could say that the error is simply that of overlooking the political significance of Deleuze|Guattari’s figure of the minority as it appears in the 13th plateau of A Thousand Plateaus. With the significant exceptions of Nicholas Thoburn and Guillaume Sibertin-Blanc, both of whose work is engaged with extensively in this thesis, the minority as an element of capitalist social relations is often passed over in Deleuzio-Guattarian literatures.48 Perhaps the clearest example of this tendency is Jason Read’s otherwise outstanding study The Micro-Politics of Capital: Marx and the Pre-History of the Present.49 One of Read’s aims in this text is to theorize how capitalism relies upon and produces specific forms of subjectivity. Though he draws at length from Deleuze|Guattari’s analysis of capitalism, he fails to mention their own answer to this question – minorities – at all. Elsewhere, when the minority is discussed in the secondary literature it is more commonly via the concept of “the minor,” which first appears in Kafka: Toward A Minor Literature50 but that also appears in various sections of A Thousand Plateaus.51 Or else it is subsumed under the concepts of “becoming-woman” in Feminist

44 Villani, 56.
45 Andrew Culp similarly departs from this idea: Culp, Dark Deleuze.
46 Villani, La guêpe et l’orchidée. Essai sur Gilles Deleuze, 56.
47 By formalist I mean a mode of analysis that hinges on the study of a set of structured relational terms and their inherent antagonisms, deadlocks, and inconsistencies. Livingston, The Politics of Logic; Chesa, The Not-Two; Hallward and Peden, Concept and Form, Volume 1; Hallward and Peden, Concept and Form, Volume 2; For an alternative formalist reading of Deleuze with Lacan see: Livingston, ‘Lacan, Deleuze and the Consequences of Formalism’ Unlike the present study, Livingston focuses on the early Deleuze of Logic of Sense.
50 Deleuze and Guattari, Kafka Toward a Minor Literature.
51 Bogue, Deleuze on Literature; Sibertin-Blanc, ‘Politicising Deleuzian Thought, or, Minority’s Position within Marxism’; Holland, ‘Deleuze and Guattari and Minor Marxism’; Zamberlin, Rhizosphere; Manning, The Minor Gesture.
“becoming-black” in critical race theory, or “Becoming-Democratic” in liberal political theory. The problem is that these applications of Deleuze|Guattari’s theory overlook the way the concept of minorities changes over time. Its referent shifts significantly in the 13th plateau from its prior use in *Kafka* or even from elsewhere in *A Thousand Plateaus*. In the 13th plateau, the minority is fused to Deleuze|Guattari’s concept of “becoming” as well as the conceptual architecture of axiomatic set theory and then put to work in a class-based, formalist, and Marxist analysis of post-Fordist capitalism. The first error, then, is to pass over the political valences of this transformation in relative silence. By undertaking a thesis-long engagement with the concept and applying it to concrete struggles this thesis makes an important contribution to political theory and resistance studies.

There is, however, a more fundamental error that this thesis aims to confront: the pervasive tendency in applications of Deleuze|Guattari’s philosophy to reduce politics to a substantialized ontology of anti-dialectical immanence. In contrast, by focusing exclusively on the dialectics of becoming and set theoretical structures that drive the 13th and parts of the 5th plateau, this thesis presents a dialectical and formalist reading of minorities that can account for the points of impasse and contradiction that compose post-Fordist social relations and that facilitate radical transformations in social organization, subjectivity, or both. My claim here is that when it comes to Deleuze|Guattari’s concept of minorities (but not their entire philosophical output) there are two possible interpretations. The first is anti-dialectical, vitalist, and reduces politics to an ontology of becoming. The second is dialectical, formalist, and holds that a politics is invented by the interventions of a collective political subject and not by the philosopher. The theoretical development and practical application of this second reading is where this thesis makes its major contributions to political theory and resistance studies. This second reading also allows me to make much broader contributions to ongoing debates in political theory, political ecology, and post-colonial studies about the relevance or otherwise of notions of universality, pluriversality, and particularity in political struggle. Specifically, the thesis defends a model of universality, derived from the struggles of the US anti-fracking movement, against a turn in political ecology and post-

colonial studies away from universalism *tout court.* Thus, while the thesis might begin with Deleuze|Guattari and the US ant-fracking movement it sets its sights well beyond “Deleuze Studies” and aims to weigh in on some of the most urgent and contested political and theoretical questions of our time.

Such a reading, however, runs sharply against the grain of much of Deleuze|Guattari’s philosophy and its reception. In its philosophical and political commitments my reading has more in common with notable critics of Deleuze|Guattari – Jacques Lacan, Alain Badiou, Alenka Zupančič, Slavoj Žižek, Bruno Bosteels, Peter Hallward – than it does the main thrust of Deleuze|Guattari’s philosophy and its followers. I will explain how such a reading is possible in the following section but first we need to see why such a re-reading is a necessary response to the existing literature’s pervasive tendency to reduce politics to an anti-structuralist ontology of becoming.

***

Can it be a coincidence that interest in Deleuze|Guattari’s political theory exploded around the time of 1999’s Battle of Seattle and the rise of the “alter-globalization” movement? *Anti-Oedipus* had been available in English since 1977, *A Thousand Plateaus* since 1987, *Logic of Sense* since 1990, and 1994 saw the publication of *Difference and Repetition* and *What is Philosophy?* By the mid-1990’s all of the essential works were there for a politically motivated engagement with their work. And yet with a few significant exceptions it is only at the turn of the new millennium that we see a swell of interest in Deleuze|Guattari’s politics in the English-speaking academy.56 Paul Patton’s landmark text *Deleuze and the Political* and Hardt and Negri’s massively influential and Deleuzio-Guattarian indebted *Empire* were published in 2000.57 Nicholas Thoburn’s *Deleuze, Marx and Politics* followed in 2003.58 Hardt and Negri’s follow-up, *Multitude,* followed in 2004.59 Then, around the 2008 financial crash, the Arab Spring, and Occupy Movement, a flood of books were published on Deleuze|Guattari and politics.60 Deleuze|Guattari’s anti-authoritarian, anti-representational, and rhizomatic philosophy had captured the zeitgeist. It appealed to political theorists of this period because it appeared to have theorized in

57 Patton, *Deleuze and the Political;* Hardt and Negri, *Empire.*
58 Thoburn, *Deleuze, Marx and Politics.*
advance the “spontaneous,” “networked,” and “horizontalist” struggle they were wrestling with. At the same time Foucault’s long-awaited lectures, *The Birth of Biopolitics* and *Security, Territory, Population* were published in English leading to increased interest in Foucault’s reflections on resistance or what in the latter of these lectures he called “counter-conduct.” Deleuze|Guattari and Foucault began to be read, interpreted, and applied in tandem. The various books, notes and reviews each wrote about the other as well are their correspondences and discussions lent textual and theoretical weight to such a reading. The result was a Deleuze|Guattari that in many respects filled in the gaps in Foucauldian political theory and vice versa. Together and alone they began to be used to challenge the theorization of resistance and power that had underwritten Marxist and neo-Gramsian theories of resistance in the social sciences.

One of the most important aspects of Deleuze’s thought in this context was his commitment to the idea that “resistance comes first.” In his notes on Foucault entitled “Desire and Pleasure,” Deleuze argued that this was what most clearly set him apart from his friend and colleague. For Deleuze, Foucault’s theory of power oscillated between the idea that resistance comes first and an immanence of power and resistance that resulted in their reversibility and ultimately their indecipherability. In contrast, as Daniel Smith explains, resistance was “in a sense, built into Deleuze’s ontology” and clearly demarcated from power. Deleuze|Guattari’s ability to provide an ontological guarantee of resistance, combined with the apparent closeness of their philosophy to prevalent forms social struggle, attracted political theorists and scholars of resistance studies at a time when the traditional organized left was in decline. To see how and why it is important to pass briefly though the strengths and limitations of Foucault’s theory of power and those who apply it in the study of resistance since it is in contrast to this that I develop Deleuze|Guattari’s notion of minorities.

---

61 For a critique of ‘network thinking’ see: Coward, ‘Against Network Thinking’.
65 Coleman and Tucker, *Situating Global Resistance*.
66 Deleuze, *Foucault*, 74.
67 Deleuze, ‘Desire and Pleasure’.
69 For an important exception to this tendency and a different interpretation of Deleuze|Guattari than I provide in this thesis see: Zourabichvili and Lambert, *Deleuze*.
Famously, for Foucault, power is not something that one possesses or exercises. Rather it:

“traverses and produces things, it induces pleasure, forms of knowledge, produces discourse. It needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than a negative instance whose function is repression.”

Power is thereby reconceived as an immanent and relational force through which social entities – the state apparatus, the law, discursive practices, the subject and its desires – are produced via a series of heterogenous but interrelated and historically assignable flows and blockages, or in Foucault’s words, in an “economy” of “micro-physical” power relations. These relations are said to be micro-physical because Foucault’s nominalism pulls focus away from concepts like “the State,” “the Law,” or “the Party,” – abstract entities that are the effect of power – and onto the local and specific, actually existing, mechanisms and techniques of power and subjectivisation.

But as Deleuze saw it, Foucault’s remarkable retheorization of power was constrained by a deep ambiguity. His genealogical studies emphasized the importance of micro-physical relations but Foucault also had recourse to larger and more stable power configurations or what Deleuze calls “macro” relations. In *History of Sexuality Vol.1*, for instance, Foucault draws a distinction between “power” and “Power.” The former is defined as:

“the moving substrate of force relations which, by virtue of their inequality, constantly engender states of power, but the latter are always local and unstable.”

---
71 Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 139.
73 Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 93.
While the latter:

“insofar as it is permanent, repetitious, inert and self-reproducing, is simply the overall effect that emerges from all these mobilities, the concatenation that rests on each of them and seeks in turn to arrest their movement.”

Deleuze notes that this distinction is inconsistently maintained by Foucault but that it seems to intend a difference in kind between “micro” relations of “power” with its “tactics” of intervention and the “macro” relations of “Power” with its “strategies” of operation. In the English edition of *The History of Sexuality Vol.1* this conceptual distinction is maintained by the use of a lower-case “power” and an upper-case “Power.” In the French, the ambiguity is much more apparent and Foucault fluctuates between writing the latter as “Le Pouvoir” and “Le” pouvoir.” Working within the logic of Foucault’s philosophy Deleuze notes that the difference clearly cannot be one of size “where micro-arrangements would be concerned with small groups,” and macro with larger groups since something like “the family” cuts across such divisions. Neither, he says, can there be an extrinsic relation between them, given that Foucault argues entities like the state are composed by strictly immanent micro- and macro- power relations. Deleuze therefore proposes that the two must be thought of as different in nature and yet immanent. Which leads him to ask his central question: “Does this difference in nature allow us to keep talking about power arrangements?”

This is Deleuze’s way of broaching an often-repeated criticism of Foucault’s theory of power: if power is immanent, relational, and productive, then how is it that resistance is possible? Without a sufficient answer to this question Foucault’s theory of power risks casting us into a world where cause and effect are indiscernible. Acts of resistance would be both the cause and the effect of relations of power and relations of power would be both the cause and the effect of resistance.

There are two common responses to this criticism from Foucauldian theorists. The first is to say that Foucault’s account of power presupposes a minimally “free”

---

74 Foucault, 93.
75 Foucault, 144.
76 Foucault, 93.
77 Foucault, *Histoire de La Sexualité, Tome 1 : La Volonté de Savoir*, 121.
78 Foucault, 122.
79 Deleuze, ‘Desire and Pleasure’, 123.
80 Deleuze, 124.
subject whose “field of possible action,” in Foucault’s terms, is directed or incited by relations of power but that is in some sense prior to power. The second is to say that the power is not homogenous and that differential relations of power act upon and produce subjects granting them a minimal degree of freedom.

We find an example of the first position in Nicholas Kiersey, Jason Weidner, and Doethre Rosenow’s defence of Foucauldian methodologies. Quoting an interview with Foucault conducted in 1984 they argue that Foucault’s theory of power presumes a minimally free subject and hence “a certain freedom, a capacity for resistance, or the potential for a doing otherwise than power might intend, “comes first.”” Here is how Foucault explains this idea in the interview:

> “if there was no resistance, there would be no relations of power. Because it would simply be a matter of obedience. You have to use power relations to refer to the situation where you’re not doing what you want. So resistance comes first, and resistance remains superior to the forces of the process; power relations are obliged to change with resistance. So I think that resistance is the main word, the key word, in this dynamic.”

And yet from a strictly Foucauldian perspective the status of this minimally free subject is uncertain. Either, as this passage seems to suggest, the subject precedes relations of power, in which case the subject is a space within the social field that is not fully determined by the social field. That is, it is a moment of transcendence within immanence and thus refutes Foucault’s entire theory of immanent social relations. Or, it is itself the effect of a differential network of power relations, in which case it is not clear what it would mean to say that it “comes first” or that it is “superior” and it remains impossible to disarticulate power from resistance. The ambiguity of this remark and its relative inconsistency with the rest of Foucault’s thought is not broached by Kiersey, Weidner, and Rosenow. Rather, Foucault’s pronouncement that “resistance comes first” is axiomatically taken as evidence that resistance is possible within a Foucauldian framework. Though this is incorrect from a Foucauldian perspective, the idea that there

---

82 Foucault, ‘The Subject and Power’, 343.
84 Foucault, ‘Sex, Power and the Politics of Identity’, 167.
is something in the social field that is constitutive of the field and yet stands excess of its determinations is precisely the approach taken by this thesis.

The second defence – that power differentially acts upon and produces subjects and thereby grants them a minimal freedom – is the more common position and is arguably more in line with Foucault’s thought. Louiza Odysseos, for example, follows Foucault in arguing that the subject’s “agency” is indeed entirely circumscribed by immanent power relations. The agency that it does have must therefore be spoken of with a “degree of caution.” For Odysseos, agency is derived from the fact that power exists only relationally. It structures the field of possible action and incites behaviours without totally foreclosing alternatives. These alternatives, however, are themselves in turn the effect of relations of power and so resistance is introduced only insofar as the subject acts in ways that are counter to those incited by a given configuration of power. Similarly, in Carl Death’s analysis of the Foucauldian concept of “counter-conduct,” power and resistance are conceived of as “mutually constitutive” and thus “forms of resistance have the potential to reinforce and bolster, as well as and at the same time as, challenging and undermining dominant forms of global governance.” In both cases the possibility of resistance is grounded in the multiplicity of discourses and relations of power that produce an immanent set of social relations. And yet the problem here, as Joan Copjec argues, is that Foucault’s theory of power presupposes that “knowledge and power are conceived as the overall effect of the relations among various conflicting positions and discourses.” Hence, in an example of the dialectical unity of opposites power becomes totalized in and through its supposed dispersal. Or as Copjec puts it: “differences do not threaten panoptic power: they feed it.” What appears to be a moment of transgression is at the same time and without remainder a moment of power’s reproduction.

In his notes on Foucault, Deleuze claims to find a way out of this predicament that does not break with the commitment to immanence shared by the two philosophers. It is this supposed way out that political theorists and scholars of resistance have found most promising in Deleuze|Guattari’s philosophy. As Deleuze explains, while Foucault struggles to disarticulate micro from macro power relations and resistance from power, Deleuze|Guattari’s philosophy clearly holds them clearly apart: “I myself don’t wonder about the status of resistance, since lines of flight are primary determinations, since desire

86 Odysseos, ‘Governing Dissent in the Central Kalahari Game Reserve’, 446.
87 Death, ‘Counter-Conducts’, 236.
88 Copjec, Read My Desire, 18.
assembles the social field, arrangements of power are both the products of these assemblages and that which stamps them out or seals them up.” 90 Resistance comes first because resistance is reduced to the creative ontological excess that Deleuze|Guattari propose composes a social order. 90 Cause and effect are thereby disarticulated. Power remains repressive but all structurations of power “leak” or are overcome by an ontological excess that they cannot contain. In *A Thousand Plateaus* they put the issue this way:

“It is wrongly said (in Marxism in particular) that a society is defined by its contradictions. That is true only at the larger scale of things. From the viewpoint of micropolitics, a society is defined by its lines of flight, which are molecular. There is always something that flows or flees, that escapes the binary organizations.” 91

In his book on Foucault, Deleuze makes the same point in slightly different terms. Abandoning the combination of *Anti-Oedipus*’ notion of desire and *A Thousand Plateaus*’ theory of assemblages, Deleuze writes that that:

“the final word on power is that resistance comes first, to the extent that power operations operate completely within the diagram, while resistance necessarily operates in a direct relation with the outside from which the diagrams emerge. This means that a social field offers more resistance than strategies, and the thought of the outside is a thought of resistance.” 92

The terms have changed but the idea remains the same: power and resistance might be immanent and reciprocal but there is an ontological difference in kind between them. Resistance touches on the “outside,” conceived of here in Deleuzian metaphysical terms as a zone of pure potentiality and becoming, while power is a more-or-less coherent and unproductive configuration of existing social relations. As Marco Checci puts it in his close reading of Deleuze’s lectures on Foucault, this distinction allows Deleuze to “combine a qualitative distinction between power and resistance with a model of power

90 Translation modified: Deleuze, ‘Desire and Pleasure’, 129.
90 Noys, *The Persistence of the Negative*, 68.
92 Deleuze, *Foucault*, 74.
as a field of forces, in which power and resistance replace each other according to the outcome of their struggle.”

Bruno Bosteels calls this a position of “politico-ontological optimism.” For the young Alain Badiou it is tantamount to a kind of ultra-left deviation of Marxism. By positing an anti-dialectical excess without reference to the determining effects of the structure it cannot think the antagonisms that at one and the same time compose the social field and make social transformations possible. In contrast to Deleuze, Badiou holds that contradictions do not remain at the “larger scale of things” but suffuse every part of the social field. Following Lacan and Mao, he theorizes resistance not as something that is immanent and yet distinct from power (as Deleuze does) but as what internally undermines and dialectically splits every social relation. This thesis shares Badiou’s view but disagrees with the suggestion that Deleuze|Guattari can only be read as providing us with an anti-dialectical ontology of pure becoming.

Despite the perhaps all-too convenient nature of Deleuze’s anti-dialectical politico-ontological optimism it was precisely this optimism that seemed to draw scholars of political theory and resistance to him. In positing an ontological excess to any social formation Deleuze|Guattari provided an ontological guarantee of the possibility of resistance and perhaps even the political effectiveness of the scholar, the activist, or the social movement, at a time in world history when the traditional organized left was relatively weak but when so-called spontaneous or horizontalist mass movements were on the rise. Perhaps, it was thought, these movements were the ungraspable, ungovernable, “flows” that Deleuze|Guattari’s “political ontology” was already working on in the 1970s and 1980s? Perhaps these unrepresentable lines of flight were already undermining power in imperceptible ways? Andrew Conio, for example, proposes that the Occupy Movement can be fruitfully compared to Deleuze|Guattari’s concept of the war machine. Quoting from Deleuze|Guattari he writes: “The war machine is irrepressible, autopoietic and endlessly resourceful; a perpetual continuous act, it is the creative driving force behind capital that capital seeks to control through its axioms…This aspect of Deleuze’s political ontology is entirely in step with Occupy’s modus operandi.”

While Deleuze’s theory overcame the ambiguities that plagued Foucault’s model of resistance, it replaced them with another set of difficulties. As Christian Thorne...
argues, the problem with reducing resistance to the level of ontology is that it incorrectly extrapolates politics from ontology. Rather than a politics emerging in response to what the Marxist tradition calls “a concrete analysis of a concrete situation,” or the relations that compose a given mode of production, it is reduced to participation in – or a coming into alignment with – an ontological presupposition. In Deleuze|Guattari’s case, this is that being is becoming and that becoming is resistance. This tendency in Deleuzian literature is part of the broader “ontological turn” in social theory and the political sciences that has raised similar concerns and problems. The danger with extricating a politics from Deleuze’s ontology of anti-dialectical becoming in particular is that it risks turning Deleuze’s philosophy into an inversion of the worst kind of Hegelianisms. In place of the “cunning of reason,” or a universal Spirit working itself out through the actions of particular individuals, we are presented with the virtual and differential flux of becoming which by necessarily escaping all stratifications of power becomes Subject.

It is along these lines that Alain Badiou and Peter Hallward critique Deleuze for being a philosopher of the One. Resistance takes place not so much as the negation of a social order but as the creative affirmation of the substance of being as creative becoming. As Hallward writes, for Deleuze, “what is primary is always the creating rather than the created…the more creative the activity, the more intensely or inventively expressive of being it becomes.” It is for this reason that Alexander Galloway has called Deleuze|Guattari’s “nomad” the “transcendental actor par excellence.” The problem, however, runs much deeper than the nomad and risks contaminating every one of Deleuze’s “inventive” or “creative” poles in his famous dualisms: becoming, rhizomes, deterritorialization, the minor, lines of flight, the molecular, desire, the war machine and so on. Whatever name is given to it, the idea that “resistance comes first,” risks installing what could be called the Law of Resistance, or a non-lacking Big Other, that functions as the transcendental guarantee of revolutionary transformation and which has little to no need for the interventions of a subject as such because Being is Subject. Our role as individuals would be reduced to putting ourselves into closer contact with the pure

98 Thorne, ‘The Political Ontologists’.
99 Lenin, ‘KOMMUNISMUS’.
100 Braidotti, ‘Posthuman, All Too Human’; Connolly, A Leftist Ontology; Bennett, Vibrant Matter; Bryant, The Democracy of Objects; Barad, Meeting the Universe Halfway; Morton, Hyperobjects; Harman, Object-Oriented Ontology; For an outstanding critical engagement with this turn see Bosteels, The Actuality of Communism.
101 Badiou, Deleuze; Hallward, Out Of This World.
102 Hallward, 1.
103 Galloway, ‘Becoming’.
creative flow of the virtual by deterritorializing from our actualized or stratified modes of being.\textsuperscript{104}

In William Connolly’s book *The World of Becoming*, for instance, it is proposed that many actualized beings are committed to a world of “transcendence – either in the shape of a personal God or as the timeless magnetic power of being itself – as a mode of being beyond time” and resist the fact that they “belong to a world of becoming.”\textsuperscript{105} For Connolly, these “existential sources of resistance must be encountered as we pursue that reflective equilibrium” with the becoming of the world.\textsuperscript{106} In other words, we must surrender all commitments to the contrary and become what we already are: mediums for the One great Subject of Becoming. Similarly, Erinn Gilson, argues that “by emphasising the ontological elements” of Deleuze and Foucault’s work, “we can see how the unique significance of their ethics lies in how it is rooted in a particular conception of ontological mobility and how this shifting ontological ground demands a particular kind of ethics.”\textsuperscript{107}

Ethics is here only secondarily concerned with actual social relations and ethical dilemmas insofar as they must come to reflect the nature of a pre-personal field of “movement, change, and flux.”\textsuperscript{108} Along more political lines, Craig Lundy proposes that Deleuze’s “political ontology” determines “what kind of person Deleuze believes is capable of bringing about genuine and practical transformation.” For Lundy, the lesson of Deleuze’s philosophy is that *everyone* – seemingly regardless of their class or status – can become a revolutionary since what it means to be a revolutionary is not determined by one’s position within a concrete set of social relations. Rather: “to be a real nomad or revolutionary in the Deleuzian sense, one must be attuned to the different lines that we are composed of, maintain an appropriate respect for them…and pursue any engagement and experimentation between them with a healthy dose of ‘prudence’ and ‘precaution’.”\textsuperscript{109} To be revolutionary on this account is not to overthrow the existing order but to come into respectful alignment with being. These are examples of what Peter Hallward calls a politics that is “out of this world.”\textsuperscript{110} It is a danger that must be avoided at all costs if Deleuze|Guattari are to be of any use whatsoever to the concrete political questions of our time.

\textsuperscript{104} Hallward, *Out Of This World*, 163.  
\textsuperscript{105} Connolly, *A World of Becoming*, 10.  
\textsuperscript{106} Connolly, 10.  
\textsuperscript{107} Gilson, ‘Ethics and the Ontology of Freedom’, 77–78.  
\textsuperscript{108} Gilson, 80.  
\textsuperscript{109} Lundy, ‘Who Are Our Nomads Today?’, 246.  
\textsuperscript{110} Hallward, *Out Of This World*.  

32
In a rather different and yet equally problematic matter, post-Autonomist Marxist theorists have also drawn on Deleuze’s ontology of becoming in conjunction with Spinoza. Hardt and Negri, for example, propose that Deleuze|Guattari’s great advantage over Foucault is precisely that they take us from “a sociological to [an] ontological enquiry.”111 Whereas the latter’s historicism prohibits ontological lines of questioning, the former “focus our attention clearly on the ontological substance of social production.”112 According to Hardt and Negri’s “nondialectical...absolutely immanent”113 and “ontological perspective...The multitude is the real productive force of our social world whereas Empire is a mere apparatus of capture that lives only off the vitality of the multitude”114 In this model, the influence of Spinozist/Deleuzian ontological excess and the role of power in repressing it is clear. Power is not itself internally divided or self-undermining (this would be too dialectical) but rather it is outmanoeuvred by the creative elan vital of the multitude. Following Hardt and Negri, Cesare Casarino draws again from Deleuze and Spinoza to propose that an “ontology for which being is always already itself and its own surplus” leads to the conclusion “that the problem with the production of surplus value, namely, exploitation, does not lie in the production of surplus per se but lies instead specifically in its production in and as value.” According to this anti-dialectical diagnosis of capitalism surplus-value is not the product of class contradictions as Marx described it but of capital’s capacity to capture an ontological surplus. Thus, what is needed is a politics of the common that can wrest this surplus from capitalism and place it in the hands of workers as a “surplus common.”115

In contrast to this tradition, this thesis remains faithful to the formalist commitments of Marx and re-reads them through the formalist tradition that emerged with Althusser and Lacan.116 For this tradition, surplus emerges exclusively in and as the effect of a historically determined structure and yet it is not completely determined by the structure. This shared position led Lacan to credit Marx with the discovery of the symptom, or that “paradoxical element” – as Žižek puts it – within a formal structure that is both an essential part of the structure and yet stands in excess of it and thwarts its totalization or closure.117 For Marx, this paradoxical element is the proletariat. As the bearer of labour-power the proletariat is essential to the capitalist mode of production.

111 Henninger and Negri, ‘From Sociological to Ontological Inquiry’, 158.
112 Hardt and Negri, Empire, 28.
113 Hardt and Negri, 47.
114 Hardt and Negri, 62.
116 Hallward and Peden, Concept and Form, Volume 1; Hallward and Peden, Concept and Form, Volume 2.
and yet its objective interests lie in its self-abolition. For Lacan, the paradoxical element is *objet petite a*, the object cause of desire, the unplaceable *something more* – or that *je ne sais quoi* – in what we desire that sustains our desire. For Deleuze|Guattari, as I will demonstrate in this thesis, the paradoxical element is the minority split between its place as a “subset” of the capitalist axiomatic and a becoming-minoritarian that exceeds it. In all three instances what is at stake is the interplay between a formal differential structure and an historically determined subject.

Setting aside autonomist Marxism’s misallocation of the origins of surplus, however, the great merit of the tradition is to have put Deleuze|Guattari’s philosophy to work in a concrete analysis of post-Fordist capitalism. Deleuze|Guattari are held to be valuable because they help us to think through the contemporary composition of capital and the modes of subjectivity and struggle that we find before us today. Or as Nicholas Thoburn puts it, “Deleuze’s project is precisely concerned to develop a politics of invention that is adequate to capital.” On this point, I am in complete agreement with Thoburn and the tradition that he draws from. But as Hallward explains to Éric Aliez in a roundtable discussion on Deleuzian politics, to say that politics demands creativity does not get us very far. What matters – and this is where this thesis differs again from the Autonomist tradition – is the explanation of how and why these processes of invention take place. For post-Autonomists new and creative modes of subjectivity are derived from a non-dialectical interaction with the creative flux of becoming, labour, or life as Thoburn sometimes puts it in his more vitalist moments. By contrast, I hold that new modes of subjectivity and struggle are produced as an effect of the *impasses, deadlocks and contradictions* that arise within the strictly formal relations that characterize Deleuze|Guattari’s presentation of post-Fordist capitalism and that are constitutive of the subject as such. The major contribution of this thesis lies in developing this interpretation of minorities with and through the struggles of the US anti-fracking movement.

---

120 Alliez et al., ‘Deleuzian Politics?’, 183.
121 Thoburn, *Deleuze, Marx and Politics*, 6.
But on what basis can this thesis claim to break so radically with past interpretations of Deleuze|Guattari and even, seemingly, with the letter of Deleuze|Guattari’s philosophy? The answer is by reading the letter of Deleuze|Guattari against itself. In this section I present my proposed method of reading Deleuze|Guattari.

***

Deleuze|Guattari’s “rhizomatic,” open, and experimental philosophy would seem to invite an infinite number of interpretations. The sheer breadth of subject matter, oscillating and frequently vertiginous writing styles, near-continuous conceptual overhauls, and often ambiguous sounding political proposals mean that there are as many ways to read the two philosophers as there are concepts in their copious individual and collective writings. Where does one start? Presumably at the beginning? And yet for Deleuze|Guattari beginnings are themselves something to be suspicious of. As they write at the “beginning” of A Thousand Plateaus, whenever we try to take our selves to the beginning we find that we are inextricably already “in the middle” of things. We are always “proceeding from the middle, through the middle, coming and going rather than starting and finishing.”

Nevertheless, to start thinking in the language of sets and subsets that is central to this thesis, I want to suggest that the infinite possible interpretations of Deleuze|Guattari can be held within just three sets: Deleuze-as-system, Deleuze-as-bricolage, and Deleuze-as-ruptured. To these I wish to add a fourth: Deleuze-as-inconsistent. All four sets of interpretation can all be supported by numerous passages from Deleuze|Guattari’s books, lectures, interviews, and presentations, which means that at least exegetically none is more correct than the others. Since there can be no appeal to the Master for the correctness of one’s position what tends to make the difference is a pre-philosophical normative or political decision guided by questions such as: Is Deleuze’s system the most coherent in contemporary philosophy? Does it best explain the fabric of reality? What is at stake in discovering a break in his thinking? Does Deleuze provide us with a salient politics? Is it even his responsibility to do so? It is with an eye

122 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 25.
to politics in particular that I introduce my fourth set with the aim of constructing a new reading of Deleuze | Guattari that is able to think with, through, and alongside the US anti-fracking movements. To see what I mean by this we need to pass through the other three interpretive sets.

As the name implies, Deleuze-as-system theorists claim to uncover a common thread running through Deleuze’s work from his early monographs on the history of philosophy, to his first philosophical works “in his own name” as Deleuze put it – Difference and Repetition and The Logics of Sense – and on to his later work with and without Felix Guattari and Clare Parnet. Joe Hughes, for instance, argues that Deleuze’s entire philosophy is underpinned by a phenomenologically inspired exploration of the genesis of representation. For Hughes, Deleuze’s work is “systematic, but incoherent.” It is incoherent insofar as new concepts are introduced from text to text while others return with subtly or sometimes drastically new meanings. Yet it is systematic because “in spite of the changes of sense and changing names, there is still a relatively stable structure at work.” Similarly, Todd May argues that despite the many changes in concepts, tone and style, Deleuze’s work is driven by the Spinozist ethical question: How might one live? “Although his thought is among the most esoteric, and even obscure, of recent thinkers, it is, rightly seen, nothing other than an engagement with that question.”

Critics of Deleuze similarly suggest that his work is best thought of as a system. For Alain Badiou, despite Deleuze’s conception of philosophy as “the art of forming, inventing, and fabricating concepts” and the appearance of considerable conceptual shifts between works, his entire philosophy has a singular focus. As Badiou sees it, Deleuze’s proliferation of concepts is the philosophical equivalent of a repetition compulsion: “Deleuze arrives at conceptual productions that I [Badiou] would unhesitatingly qualify as monotonous, composing a very particular regime of emphasis or almost infinite repetition of a limited repertoire of concepts, as well as a virtuosic variation of names, under which what is thought remains virtually identical.” Deleuze’s preoccupation with “event, surprise, creation” is but a “misleading surface,” a reflection of a “renewed concept of the One,” the political consequences of which are that Deleuze cannot properly think the radically new or the Event in the sense that interests Badiou. Badiou’s reading of

124 Hughes, Deleuze and the Genesis of Representation, 155.
125 Hughes, 156.
126 May, Gilles Deleuze, 3.
127 Badiou, Deleuze, 2.
128 Badiou, 14.
129 Badiou, 8–9.
Deleuze has been roundly refuted by Deleuzian scholars but what is not called into question in this important debate is the fact that Deleuze’s philosophy presents us with a coherent system that one either embraces or rejects.  

These systematic readings of Deleuze are supported by ample textual evidence from his individual and collective writings. In the introduction to the English language edition of *Difference and Repetition*, Deleuze suggests that the third chapter, which challenges ways of thinking predicated on representation and recognition, is the “most necessary and most concrete” and “serves to introduce subsequent books up to and including the research undertaken with Guattari where we invoked a vegetal mode of thought: the rhizome in opposition to the tree.” Even more clearly, in a letter to Jean-Clet Martin, Deleuze defends his own idea of philosophical systematicity:

> “I believe in philosophy as system. The notion of system which I find unpleasant is one whose coordinates are the Identical, the Similar, and the Analogous. Leibniz was the first, I think, to identify philosophy as system. In the sense that he gives the term, I am all in favour of it…For me, the system must not only be in perpetual heterogeneity, it must be a *heterogenesis*, which as far as I can tell, has never been tried.”

Deleuze is a systematic thinker, then, providing that what it means to be systematic is reconceived as an open process of self-differentiation. The approach I outline below does not deny that there are common threads running throughout Deleuze’s philosophy. It simply begins from elsewhere: from the slips, contradictions, and inconsistencies that present themselves in this otherwise systematic philosophy.

The second way to read Deleuze is as bricolage. Operating in a more Spinozist than Leibnizian key what matters here is not whether Deleuze’s thought amounts to a system but what a given concept can do. In *Anti-Oedipus*, for instance, Deleuze and Guattari describe their logic of desiring-production in terms of Levi-Strauss’ theory of bricolage, which, they say, involves “the ability to rearrange fragments continually in new and different patterns or configurations; and as a consequence, an indifference toward the act of producing and toward the product, toward the set of instruments to be used and

---

130 Roffe, *Badiou’s Deleuze*; Crockett, *Deleuze Beyond Badiou*.
131 Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, xv.
toward the over-all result to be achieved.”133 Meanwhile, in a discussion with Foucault, Deleuze describes political theory as a tool box: a theory “has to be used, it has to work. And not for itself. If there is no one to use it, beginning with the theorist himself who, as soon as he uses it ceases to be a theorist, then the theory is worthless, or its time has not yet arrived. You don’t go back to a theory, you make new ones, you have others to make.”134 And in *A Thousand Plateaus*, we are encouraged to think of their book, indeed of their philosophy, as a rhizome extending off in a multiplicity of directions. In the introduction to the book Brian Massumi explains that “the reader is invited to lift a dynamism out of the book entirely, and incarnate it in a foreign medium, whether it be a painting or politics.”135 Borrowing Deleuze’s “tool box” metaphor, Massumi argues against Deleuze-as-system theorists. For Massumi, the goal of Deleuze|Guattari’s philosophy “is the invention of concepts that do not add up to a system of belief or an architecture of propositions that you either enter or you don’t, but instead pack a potential in the way a crowbar in a willing hand envelops an energy of prying.”136 Or as Massumi puts elsewhere, their concepts are not “meant to add up to a system or universally applicable model. In fact, they are specifically designed to make that impossible.” Instead, they “are logical operators or heuristic devices to be adapted as the situation requires.”137

The enthusiastic embrace of Deleuze-as-bricolage in the academy has given rise to a veritable academic industry of “Deleuzian theory.” Driven, no doubt, by the “publish or perish” imperatives of contemporary academia, Deleuze-as-bricolage has become the primary way that Deleuze|Guattari’s philosophy is engaged with in the social sciences. Hundreds of books, papers, and conferences have applied their concepts to fields as varied as architecture, social science methodology, development studies, science and technology studies, media studies, environmental studies, law, pedagogy, and critical race and gender studies. The “Deleuze and…” series, or “Deleuze Connections” series as it is known, now has 30 published editions covering topics from activism to anarchism, Marxism to post-colonialism, children to “the social,” and “the contemporary world.”138 Meanwhile, in International Relations alone, Deleuze’s concepts of the state, the war machine, assemblages, becoming, fascism, desiring-machines, and life – to name only a

136 Deleuze and Guattari, xv.
few – have been used to shed new light on IR’s objects of study. In most of these cases, Deleuze’s concepts are taken as ready-made, reified, categories and simply applied to new fields of socio-political and cultural activity.

This approach is undeniably given licence by Deleuze|Guattari’s philosophy and has made valuable contributions to the social sciences. Strictly speaking, however, it is not political theory in Deleuze|Guattari’s sense and in the sense that I want to explore in this thesis. For Deleuze a theory must undergo transformations as it encounters new problems, practices and struggles. As he explains in his discussion with Foucault, “a theory cannot be developed without encountering a wall, and praxis is needed to break through.” We will see this in practice later when we discuss the transformation the Deleuze|Guattari’s concept of the “minor” undergoes when it is fused to their concept of “becoming” to give us “becoming-minoritarian” in an effort to shift the concept from a theorization of literature to a theorization of post-Fordist social relations. If we take this point seriously then much of what passes for “Deleuzian theory” today is more properly described as an exposition and application of Deleuze|Guattari’s prefabricated concepts. This means that if we want to pursue what draws many of us to Deleuze|Guattari’s philosophy in the first place – the sheer creativity and originality of their thought and its power to force us to think for ourselves – then we must, as Elanor Kaufman says, learn to betray them well. We must allow their philosophy to undergo certain transformations in relation to new problems. Hence, rather than merely apply Deleuze|Guattari’s concepts to struggles against fracking this thesis follows Eric Alliez in thinking “with and from” Deleuze|Guattari to put them into contact with the problems and experiences of anti-fracking movements as well as several ongoing debates in contemporary political theory.

The third and final way that Deleuze has been read is Deleuze-as-rupture. Here, it is proposed that Deleuze’s philosophy is marked by definite stages of development. Alexander Galloway, for example, argues that “there are two Deleuze’s, the Deleuze of 1972 and the Deleuze of 1990. The ’72 Deleuze is the thinker of machinic subjectivity and differential systemicity. The ’90 Deleuze is the thinker of control and historical

141 Kaufman, ‘Betraying Well’.
142 Alliez et al., ‘Deleuzian Politics?’, 150.
transformation.” Galloway enjoins us to “forget” the early Deleuze for whom “everything is a desiring machine driven by an endless reserve of polymorphous perversity” in favour of the more sober late-Deleuze. Thomas Nail, meanwhile, argues for a break beginning with the publication of *A Thousand Plateaus* that marks a turn away from ontological questions and towards politics.

The most commonly argued point of rupture, however, lies between Deleuze’s individually authored works and his thinking with Guattari and Clare Parnet. This reading is again supported by Deleuze himself. In a 1972 interview Deleuze describes a shift in his thinking following the events of 1968 and culminating in the publication of *Anti-Oedipus* in 1972. Comparing *Anti-Oedipus* to his 1969 monologue, *Logic of Sense*, he says: “I’ve undergone a change. The surface-depth opposition no longer concerns me. What interests me now is the relationship between a full body, a body without organs, and flows that migrate.” Elsewhere, he emphasizes the political importance of 1968: “For my part, I made a sort of move into politics around May 68, as I came into contact with specific problems, through Guattari, through Foucault, through Elie Sambar. *Anti-Oedipus* was from beginning to end a book of political philosophy.” There will be much more to say about the status of this “move into politics” in later chapters. For now, what matters is that such declarations provide clear textual support to the Deleuze-as-rupture position that claims to find a Deleuzian equivalent of the Althusserian “epistemological break” in Deleuze’s thought between his individually authored and co-authored work.

But how should we understand this break? Is it a rupture or are there perhaps traces of the older Deleuze to be uncovered in *Capitalism and Schizophrenia*? For the psychoanalytic commentators that I will refer to throughout this thesis the break is decisive, irreversible, and has its origins not so much in the struggles of 68 as in Deleuze’s introduction to Guattari. According to this interpretation, under Guattari’s malign influence Deleuze would be led to reject the properly Lacanian operations of the Symbolic and the Imaginary and retreat into a naïve materialism which is in fact nothing other than a highly refined sort of idealism. Undoubtedly the most well-known proponent of this thesis is Slavo Žižek. According to Žižek, “one can only regret that the Anglo-Saxon reception of Deleuze (and, also, the political impact of Deleuze) is that of the

---

143 Berry and Galloway, ‘A Network Is a Network Is a Network’, 158.
144 Berry and Galloway, 158.
145 Nail, ‘Deleuze, Occupy, and the Actuality of Revolution’.
146 Deleuze, ‘Nomadic Thought’, 261.
147 Althusser, *For Marx*.
“guattarized” Deleuze.” For Žižek, Deleuze was tempted by Guattari because he “presented an alibi” against an “impasse” in Deleuze’s philosophy. By Žižek’s telling, Deleuze’s earlier works, *Difference and Repetition* and *The Logic of Sense* fluctuate between two incompatible ontological positions. First there is the “Good” Deleuze for whom becoming is a pure immaterial sense-event, an *effect* of bodily causes. As Guillaume Collett has shown, this is a Deleuze for whom the Lacanian interplay of the Symbolic, Imaginary, and Real remain significant. But then there is the “Bad” Deleuze for whom becoming *is being itself* reconceived as a non-dialectical productive flux devoid of reference to the Symbolic. Here, Deleuze breaks with his Lacanian influences by naïvely claiming immediate access to the Real despite Lacan’s teaching that “we do not access the so-called Real except in and through this impossible that alone defines the Symbolic.” According to Žižek once Deleuze meets Guattari the oscillation between these positions disappears in favour of the Bad Deleuze’s idealism.

As we have seen above I do not disagree with Žižek’s assessment that the Deleuze for whom becoming is conceived as self-differentiating being is idealist and therefore of little use to contemporary political theory. Neither do I disagree with his observation that *Anti-Oedipus* is a kind of metaphysical rumination on the Real as if it were directly accessible to thought and not, on the contrary, the immanent impasse of the Symbolic, the place where thought itself stumbles. This would be hard to deny considering that Deleuze|Guattari themselves write that “the true difference in nature is not between the Symbolic and the Imaginary, but between the real machinic element (*machinique*), which constitutes desiring-production, and the structural whole of the Imaginary and Symbolic, which merely forms a myth and its variants.” As Tom Eyer’s explains, Deleuze|Guattari seem to suggest here that they conceive of the Symbolic and Imaginary as totalized transcendent objects obfuscating the real productive element, the Real reconceived as production. While in the paragraph previous to this, Deleuze|Guattari also write that they are not convinced by “Lacanisms” (not Lacan, note) who refer to a

---

149 Žižek, *Organs without Bodies*, 18. From a psychoanalytic perspective it is particularly interesting to note that Žižek uses the lower-case pronoun here to depreciate Guattari and thus exclude him from the canon of proper political philosophy. What is this if not the wish that Guattari should suffer a properly Lacanian symbolic death? In the secondary literature on Deleuze|Guattari, the same result is more frequently achieved by simply omitting Guattari’s name in discussions of co-authored works and ideas. As, for example, in the “Deleuze and…” series.

150 Žižek, 18. Again, note the mistrustful and conspiratorial language.


152 Žižek, *Organs without Bodies*, 18–19.


154 For a Deleuzian rebuttal of this position see: Smith, ‘The Inverse Side of the Structure Žižek on Deleuze on Lacan’.

155 Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, 83.

“gap in the symbolic” as if it were anything other than a ruse to keep us locked within a “pious” structure (this is, incidentally, a pre-emptive critique of Žižek’s increasingly theological reading of Hegelio-Lacanian negativity).157 For the Deleuze | Guattari of *Anti-Oedipus*, then, we either begin with desiring-production as what Daniel Smith calls the “inverse of structure” or we remain caught in the structure ad-infinitem.158 Politically speaking, this means that we either commit to the metaphysics of revolutionary desire as the ontological motor of social transformation or to capitalism from here until the rapidly approaching and inevitable climate-breakdown and perhaps beyond.

But while I think Žižek is right to say that *Anti-Oedipus* marks an epistemological break, I want to suggest that he is right for the wrong reasons. Taking Deleuze at his word, it is not Guattari who leads Deleuze along the path to idealism and a rejection of the Lacanian unconscious. It is Deleuze who wrests Guattari away from Lacan:

“Félix had talked to me about what he was already calling “desiring machines”: he had a whole theoretical and practical conception of the unconscious as a machine, of the schizophrenic unconscious. So I myself thought he’d gone further than I had. But for all his unconscious machinery, he was still talking in terms of structures, signifiers, the phallus, and so on. That was hardly surprising as he owed so much to Lacan (just as I did). But I felt it would all work even better if one found the right concepts, instead of using notions that didn’t even come from Lacan’s creative side but from an orthodoxy built up around him.”159

Deleuze is referring here to Guattari’s remarkable 1969 essay “Machine and Structure,” where already one can see the conceptual outlines of the properly dialectical distinction that I will deploy throughout this thesis between the minority as a subset of capital and becoming-minoritarian as a movement beyond the structure.160 In this essay Guattari posits the structure as that which distributes differential elements and the machine as that which stands in excess of the structure and yet is contained within it as its internally presupposed impasse and impediment. At this point in his thinking, then, by Guattari’s own admission, he was “still stuck in a kind of dialectics.” To break out, he turned to Deleuze.161

160 Guattari et al., ‘Machine and Structure’.
Why is this important? Firstly, because getting this story right may lead to a better understanding of Deleuze|Guattari and a greater appreciation of Guattari as a militant, analyst, and philosopher in his own right. But more importantly for the purposes of this thesis, it matters because it suggests that while there is undeniably a break in Deleuze’s thinking around 1968, it cannot be claimed that there is a Good pre-Guattari Deleuze and a Bad post-Guattari Deleuze. Instead, it is Deleuze who from the beginning remains split between two metaphysical positions. And it is Deleuze who from 1968 onwards looks – with Guattari’s assistance – to distance himself from Lacanian formalism, structuralism, and the dialectical tradition he was trained in and critically explored in works such as Coldness and Cruelty, Logic of Sense, and the essay How Do We Recognize Structuralism. This opens up a way of reading Deleuze|Guattari that attends to those moments in their writings when such concerns reappear in their discourse.

It is precisely these reappearances that my reading of Deleuze|Guattari relies upon. I am interested in exploring the consequences of productive mistakes, slips, and inconsistencies in Deleuze|Guattari’s writings. As I will show throughout this thesis, in the work of Deleuze-as-system theorists these are often passed over without comment or are forced to be reconciled with what Deleuze|Guattari must have really meant. This thesis takes the opposite approach by emphasizing these mistakes and slippages to explore their theoretical and political consequences through the struggles of the US anti-fracking movement.

For some, this approach might be reminiscent of Althusser’s “symptomatic reading” of Marx. But while Althusser aimed to emphasize Marx’s silences and oversights “to identify the lacunae in the fullness of this discourse, the blanks in the crowded text,” I want to take the slips, contradictions, and mistakes that are present in Deleuze|Guattari’s writings as the point of departure to think with, alongside, and through their work. It is therefore more accurate to say that my approach is even the opposite of Althusser’s. What results from my reading is decidedly not Deleuzian, Guattarian, or Deleuzio-Guattarian and makes no claim to be. Where they are anti-dialectical I am dialectical, where they move progressively away from formalism I remain formalist, where they are increasingly critical of psychoanalysis I remain steadfastly psychoanalytic, where they favour the singular over the universal/particular I maintain that the universal is essential.

162 For excellent introductions to Guattari see: Genosko, Félix Guattari; Watson, Guattari’s Diagrammatic Thought; Alliez and Goffey, The Guattari Effect.
164 Balibar et al., Reading Capital, 26.
to an emancipatory politics. And yet however “un-Deleuzian” these inversions might appear on the surface, they nevertheless derive from Deleuze|Guattari’s own discourse. They say all of it. The novelty of my reading – the moment of betraying well in Kaufman’s words – lies in the exploration of these slips and mistakes.

This is of course an approach that is deeply indebted to the psychoanalytic emphasis on what is said in analysis rather than what is not said or what was meant. As Bruce Fink explains, “by privileging what patients actually say over what they mean, by stressing the ambiguities and slips that appear in their speech, Lacan, like Freud, gave priority to the unconscious over the ego.” For the psychoanalyst, there is no use saying “Oh, I didn’t mean that. What I really meant was…” after the fact. Similarly, for my reading of Deleuze|Guattari, it is of little interest that the passages I emphasize are incompatible with other parts of their work. As I have already demonstrated, despite the inherently contradictory nature of the other three readings of Deleuze|Guattari I have developed here they can all find textual support in Deleuze|Guattari’s books, essays and interviews.

What matters for my reading, picking up once more on Deleuze|Guattari’s Spinozism, is what a given reading can do. The value of its contribution to political theory and resistance studies does not lie in whether it is true to Deleuze|Guattari but whether or not it can say something important about anti-fracking struggles in the United States. This, after all, was Deleuze|Guattari’s criteria of success:

“Philosophy does not consist in knowing and is not inspired by truth. Rather, it is categories like Interesting, Remarkable, or Important that determine success or failure. Now, this cannot be known before being constructed. We will not say of many books of philosophy that they are false, for that is to say nothing, but rather that they lack importance or interest, precisely because they do not create any concept or contribute an image of thought or beget a persona worth the effort.”

In an interview conducted in 1972 Deleuze describes Deleuze|Guattari’s “Capitalism and Schizophrenia” project as an effort to give psychoanalysis “some schizophrenic help.” The wager of this thesis is that it is now time to return the favour. By reading Deleuze|Guattari with Lacan and Marx it re-works the figure of the minority in a way

---

that is congruent with advances in psychoanalytic and Marxist theory and then puts it to work in an analysis of the US anti-fracking movement. In so doing it develops a theory of political struggle that contributes to theorizations of resistance in political theory and resistance studies.

Fieldwork: Ethics & Methods

Having set out the theoretical stakes and contributions of this thesis it remains to say something about its empirical methodology and ethical commitments.

This thesis is based on over four years of weekly conversations with anti-fracking organizers in the Marcellus shale region of the US and 12 months of ethnographic research. Of those 12 months, six weeks were spent travelling around Pennsylvania and New York conducting semi-formal interviews and participating in various direct-action campaigns. This research was divided into three stages. The first stage took place between 17 March 2016 and 28 March 2016, the second between 8 March 2017 and 24 March 2017, and the third between 9 August 2017 and 26 August 2017. During that time, I conducted and recorded 45 informal interviews and discussions with organizers, community members, government representatives, and industry workers. Where interviews were not possible, I took extensive notes of proceedings and conversations. The remaining 10 months were spent living and working in Geneva, New York. Geneva sits on the northern shore of Seneca Lake, which was the location for one of the most enduring civil disobedience campaigns in US history: We Are Seneca Lake’s struggle against a natural gas storage site for fracked gas from Pennsylvania. This struggle is the focus of the fifth and final chapter of this thesis.

While living in Geneva I continued to conduct interviews and discussions with environmental activists across the region and participated in various anti-fracking actions, talks, rallies and other forms of organizing with current and former members of anti-fracking groups in the area. Over time one-time “research participants” – as we are taught to refer to them in our MSc’s in Social Research Methods – became friends, comrades, and colleagues. It should therefore go without saying that this thesis is ethically and politically partisan. The theory that it develops is unapologetically anti-capitalist and anti-fracking and sides with those who oppose the environmental destructiveness of both.
On these matters I take my lead from Louis Althusser’s Leninist understanding of philosophy and Alain Badiou’s early ethical discussions in The Theory of the Subject. For both philosophers political theory is an unavoidably active and politically-charged endeavour. As researchers or political theorists we do not step outside of politics when we conduct our research but actively participate in it. As Althusser puts it: “philosophy represents the class struggle in theory,” or, “philosophy is a struggle…and basically a political struggle: a class struggle.” As a one-time pupil of Althusser’s, Badiou extends this idea in an ethical direction. As Bruno Bosteels explains, for Badiou ethics is what sustains “the rational and partisan calculations of a politics.” From this perspective, to give way on one’s politics – say in an effort towards objectivity – is to act unethically. It is, as Badiou says, to reflect the world rather than work towards its transformation. Put differently, it is to break with Marx’s famous 11th thesis on Feuerbach and the guiding principle of a Marxist politics: “Philosophers have hitherto only interpreted the world in various ways, the point is to change it.”

What does this mean in concrete methodological terms? It certainly does not mean forcing the messy and often ethically complex character of struggles to conform to the pre-established ideological notions of the researcher. Rather, the point is to craft conditions that support both the research and the political struggles that are its subject as two parts of the same political and intellectual project. Far from collapsing the distinction between political organizing and political theory this approach demands that the gap between them is made all the more pronounced by drawing them together in what I earlier referred to as a “disjunctive synthesis.” This has been one of the most rewarding parts of conducting the empirical research that grounds this thesis. Organizers across the Marcellus Shale region have shown a profound interest in my efforts to theorize their struggles and have regularly provided feedback and support when and where it was needed. In turn, I have tried my best to participate in their struggles whether that was by connecting previously unconnected movements across the region, by giving talks, or participating in and organizing actions. Thus, whether or not this thesis is directly quoting from anti-fracking organizers, it should be read and interpreted as always drawing from them, thinking with them, and working for them. In this respect I follow Bertie Russell.

169 Althusser, Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays; Badiou, Theory of the Subject.
171 Badiou, Theory of the Subject, xix.
172 Badiou, 209.
174 For a similar theorization of the productive ‘gap’ between organizing and academia see: Coleman, ‘Critique and Commitment: Departing From Activist Scholarship’.
Pusey Andre, and Paul Chatterton in holding that it is the prerogative of critical scholars to “co-produce theory that is committed to a collective anti-capitalist transformation, as well as the free and open circulation of knowledge.”

To make this kind of research possible involves what Paul Routledge calls a “constant interrogation of the positionality of the critical intellectual in relation to the sites of academia and resistance, including the nature of contributions made by academics to social movements as requested by the latter, and the role that social movement actors may have in the production and communication of research findings.” In particular this involves an awareness of the researcher’s place as a knowledge producer within a very specific institutional context: the university. For Stefano Harney and Fred Moten the university is both a place of refuge for critical thought and where critical thought goes to die. It is both a machine for the stratification of classes, races, and genders and where the “subversive intellectual,” as they call it, can operate in small ways to overthrow those stratifications: “To abuse its hospitality, to spite its mission…to be in but not of – this is the path of the subversive intellectual in the modern university.” While for Linda Tuhiwai Smith, speaking from “the vantage point of the colonized,” the university and its research agendas are at root imperial and colonial projects. As Smith explains, even the word “research” is “inextricably linked to European colonialism and imperialism.”

It means classification, measurement, extraction, assimilation, and violence.

Smith, Harney and Moten’s observations are of vital importance. They demand of the critical scholar that they remain cognizant of the deeply contradictory nature of conducting politically engaged research in and perhaps against an institution whose very function is to channel, professionalize, and police such criticisms in the reproduction of classed, racialized, gendered and anti-ecological forms of exploitation. To inhabit this contradiction requires prudent political practice, critical self-reflection of one’s status as a product and reproducer of the university, clear communication with organizers about the limits of one’s research and capacities, and when requested an active engagement in the struggles and tribulations of those that one encounters in the field. Such conversations with organizers necessarily bring us to the limits of what is sayable in the generalizing and professionalized space of a PhD’s ethics of methods section. What can be said however is that the often fraught social and legal contexts that organizers operate in have required

177 Harney and Moten, The Undercommons, 26.
178 Smith, Decolonizing Methodologies, 1.
the anonymization of all of my “research participants” and some research locations with the exception of individuals that are well-known public figures or general regional descriptors.

Thesis Structure

This introduction has focused on what Deleuze described as the “polemical function,” “error,” or “mistake” that I claim other readings of Deleuze|Guattari in the disciplines of political theory and resistance studies fall foul of. Namely, reducing politics to an ontology of pure becoming without thinking becoming in dialectical relation to the structuring effects of structure. This reading of Deleuze|Guattari is understandable given that it is the prevailing tendency in their philosophy. And yet in their theory of minorities a very different image of thought emerges. Here, adopting the language of axiomatic set theory, Deleuze|Guattari take seriously the effects of the structure on the potential for transformations in subjectivity or the social field at large. The remainder of this thesis is given over to developing this alternative reading in and through an engagement with the US anti-fracking movement.

The thesis is divided into five chapters. Chapter’s one and two explore two sides of the process that I have followed Deleuze and Sibertin-Blanc in calling “minorization.” Chapter one emphasizes the “objective” side of this process: capitalism’s objective tendency to cast increasing numbers of the world’s population into marginal, exploited, and oppressed positions. Drawing from Deleuze|Guattari’s theorization of capitalism in A Thousand Plateaus and Anti-Oedipus and the work of Sibertin-Blanc the chapter shows how minorization takes place in the Marcellus shale fields and draws structural comparisons between Deleuze|Guattari’s minority, Marx’s proletariat, and the Lacanian objet a. The chapter concludes with an example from the shale fields of how class struggle suffuses and sets limits to capital’s tendency to minorize. Chapter Two, meanwhile, emphasizes the “subjective” side of minorization. Here, I draw from Nicholas Thoburn’s exploration of the concept of “cramped space” from Deleuze|Guattari’s Kafka to show how individuals and communities in the Marcellus shale fields experience the processes of minorization. Through a close reading of the

179 Deleuze, Essays Critical and Clinical, 109; Sibertin-Blanc and Hodges, State and Politics.
original French edition of *Kafka*, I conclude against Thoburn that the experience of cramped space is not *inherently* political but rather that it serves a similar conceptual function to Lacan’s concept of anxiety and suggests similar political possibilities.

Chapter Three consolidates the arguments of the previous chapters and serves as a pivot point for the thesis. The chapter presents an in-depth analysis of the formal structuring role that Deleuze|Guattari give to the interplay of the “Majority” as “Nobody” and minorities as “subsets” in what they call the “capitalist axiomatic.” Although the language of axioms was present in *Anti-Oedipus*, the 13th plateau is the only place where Deleuze|Guattari deploy this concept alongside other set-theoretical concepts like subsets, the nondenumerable, and the numerable. This is interesting for at least three reasons. First, because the 13th plateau is given over to a Marxist analysis and critique of post-Fordist capitalism and is therefore one of the most important chapters in *A Thousand Plateaus* for political theory and resistance studies. Second, because it becomes clear in this chapter that Deleuze|Guattari are working with not one, but two, theories of minorities. The first is the “minor” as a tendency in an assemblage opposed to the “major.” This is the anti-dialectical, idealist, reading. The second is the minority as a subset of the majority that is dialectically split between its placement within the capitalist axiomatic and its tendency to exceed the axiomatic. This is the properly materialist reading that I develop and apply in this thesis. And third, because as Jon Roffe has shown, Deleuze|Guattari misunderstand and misappropriate set theoretical concepts. Taking these ambiguities and mistakes as a point of departure, this chapter re-builds a dialectical account of minorities with the help of Deleuze|Guattari’s highly suggestive comparison of their concept of the “Majority” and the Lacanian notion of the “phallus” and Lacan’s discourse analysis.

Like chapters one and two, chapters four and five are complimentary. Chapter four asks what kind of a politics follows from Deleuze|Guattari’s theory of minorities and answers simply: none whatsoever. Instead, I propose that their philosophy should be thought of as the recording of a politics in philosophy and in particular a recording of a “crisis” in Marxist political theory spanning from Khrushchev’s secret speech in 1956 to May 68 and beyond. By resituating their thought in this way, it is possible to see Deleuze|Guattari’s figure of the minority as providing a strategic orientation for minority struggles that does not go so far as to provide a positive “minor politics.” The chapter then moves on to develop two tendencies that Deleuze|Guattari suggest are

---

characteristic of minority struggles. First, the rejection of a politics of recognition or integration into state and capital. Second, the production of new forms of subjectivity, solidarity and revolutionary universality to rival the universalism of global capitalism. The chapter concludes by proposing that these can serve as a criterion for us to measure the successes and limitations of the US anti-fracking movement. In the final extended chapter of the thesis these criteria are put to work in an analysis of We Are Seneca Lake’s struggle against a gas storage site on the shores of Seneca Lake. The theory of minorities developed throughout the thesis helps to show how We Are Seneca Lake’s struggle produces a collective becoming-minoritarian among its participants but the theory also reveals how at key moments in their struggle the movement fell back into a politics of recognition and thus inadvertently – and sometimes advertently – reproduced a series of settler-colonial and anti-black social structures that held the movement back from producing a properly revolutionary universality capable of confronting the universalism of global capitalism. The thesis concludes by outlining how it has answered the questions posed in this introduction and summarizing the three contributions it has made to political theory and resistance studies: 1) An extensive theoretical and practical engagement with minorities as a political category in and through an analysis of the US anti-fracking movement; 2) The recovery and elaboration of a formalist and dialectical theory of minorities; 3) A contribution to debates about the importance or otherwise of universality to emancipatory struggle.
Ours Is Becoming The Age of Minorities

Chapter I
The signifier “minorities” cannot avoid taking on a certain hue for contemporary readers. From the plight of African and Middle Eastern refugees in Calais to Myanmar’s Rohingya, from the nationalist minority struggles of the Kurds, Catalans, and Palestinians to the racial minority struggles of Black Lives Matter and Fees Must Fall, since Hannah Arendt first posed the question of the “right to have rights,” and with it exposed the exclusionary function of state citizenship, a great deal has been written about the struggles of minority groups — or what Arendt herself called “organized minorities” — for the rights and recognitions ostensibly afforded to them by liberal social democracy.

Deleuze|Guattari would agree with Arendt that the struggles of minorities are the defining political question of our time but beyond this point it would not be going too far to say that the Deleuzio-Guattarian minority functions as a strident critique of liberal political theory and politics.

Liberal common sense has it that minorities are those mentioned above. They are identities, cultures or interest groups that are, as Achille Mbembe, Patrick Wolfe, Elizabeth Povinelli, and others have shown, either aggressively assimilated into the majority or are just as aggressively segregated, killed, or left to die. Liberalism’s solution to the struggles of minorities is to include them in state and market institutions. The familiar watchwords for such a politics are “democracy,” “participation,” “recognition,” “rights,” and “representation.” The minority, it is said, simply needs to be recognized and respected as such within existing social, political, and economic coordinates. Paradoxically, the point of reference for this politics is the very system that has historically asserted itself through the exploitation, exclusion, and oppression of these same minorities. The universal nature of the Rights of Man, for instance, are said to provide a space for those who are excluded to performatively enact that which they do not have, to rupture the “distribution of the sensible,” to re-shuffle the coordinates of inside and outside, of the recognized and unrecognized. To give another example, it is always possible for minorities to be recognized and even celebrated as such providing they make

181 Arendt, The Origins of Totalitarianism.
182 Arendt, The Origins of Totalitarianism.
184 Mbembe and Meintjes, ‘Necropolitics’; Povinelli, Economies of Abandonment; Wolfe, Traces of History.
185 Taylor, Multiculturalism and The Politics of Recognition.
187 Zivi, Making Rights Claims.
sufficient social, economic, and cultural contributions to a society that has been shaped
in the majority’s image. That is, providing minorities are willing to help reproduce a socio-
economic system predicated on classed, racialized, and gendered oppression. Such
“good” minorities cease to be marginalized and become celebrated as part of a fully-
functioning multicultural capitalist order. In both cases, as liberal political theorist Will
Kymlicka explains, the role of the state is to extend “minority rights” and other forms of
recognition when necessary to ensure that “principles such as neutrality of treatment and
equal recognition comply with liberal egalitarian conceptions of distributive justice.”

This is precisely the notion of minorities that with Deleuze|Guattari this chapter
hopes to reject. Deleuze|Guattari ground their theory of minorities in Marx’s analysis of
capital as self-valorizing value and Samir Amin’s theory of accumulation on a world scale.
In so doing, they depart from liberal political theory in two ways that will be returned to
and approached from various angles throughout this thesis.

First, they call into question the supposed universalism of liberal political theory
and in the process refuse a strategy of inclusion for minorities. The problems of
minorities, they argue, will not be solved by the dolling out of the rights, recognitions,
and remunerations so commonly extended (when pushed) by liberal social democracy.
The authors of *A Thousand Plateaus* are all too aware that global capitalism can
accommodate – and even thrives on – the existence of an infinite number of minority
groups, each with their own rights, desires, interests, and consumer habits. Or as Badiou
writes, “Deleuze put it perfectly: capitalist deterritorialization requires constant
reterritorialization. Capital demands a permanent creation of subjective and territorial
identities in order for its principle of movement to homogenize its space of action;
identities, moreover that never demand anything but the right to be exposed in the same
way as others to the uniform prerogatives of the market.”

Since, for Deleuze|Guattari, incorporation into capital’s circuits cannot solve the
problems faced by minorities the only solution left is a revolutionary one. “Generally
speaking,” they write, “minorities do not receive a better solution of their problem by
integration…Their tactics necessarily go that route. But if they are revolutionary, it is
because they carry within them a deeper movement that challenges the worldwide
axiomatic.” This deeper movement is a practice that Deleuze|Guattari call becoming-

190 Shukla, *The Good Immigrant*.
minoritarian. This is a form of political struggle that does not aim at recognition but at dismantling the very structures in which such recognition could take place.

Second, Deleuze|Guattari take the remarkable step of pushing the category of the minority to its point of dialectical inversion: they announce a tendential *universalization* of the minority or what they call the “figure of a universal minoritarian consciousness” provoked by capital’s self-undermining dynamics. The wager here is that if, at the limit, *everyone* can become a minority then it is tenable to interpret any number of contemporary struggles, including environmental struggles in the Global North, as properly minor in character. In this way, without ignoring the specificity of the violence imposed on conventional minorities or the particularities of their struggles, Deleuze|Guattari remove the prospect of making hard-and-fast distinctions between “minorities” and “the rest of us.” In the process they open space for new ways to think and practice solidarity and political struggle that will be the focus of later chapters.

When these points are brought together the role of the minority in Deleuze|Guattari’s thinking starts to come into view. Minorities are produced by capital’s expanding circuits of accumulation and are then integrated into these circuits as tolerated marginal positions, or they are excluded, expelled, or left to die. But precisely because of their role in the reproduction of capitalist social relations, they are also a privileged space of struggle against capital. The Deleuzio-Guattarian minority is therefore both a facilitator of capital accumulation on an ever-expanding scale and a threat to it. They are both a part of capital and in excess of it. This is what I will describe throughout this thesis as their double – or dialectically split – nature. As I will show in detail in later chapters, it is a position that the minority shares with Marx’s proletariat and Lacan’s *objet petite a*.

But why do Deleuze|Guattari reinvent the concept of the minority in this way? What does it add to political theory? And what could it add to our understanding of contemporary struggles in general and to the US anti-fracking movement in particular?

Satisfactory answers to these questions will slowly come into focus as this thesis develops. In this chapter, I would like to establish the groundwork for the arguments that follow by developing in greater detail the line of argumentation that I have just presented in a condensed form.

The chapter is broken into three sections. In the first, I introduce the concept of minorities in greater detail and explain why it appears in Deleuze|Guattari’s philosophy.

---

195 Deleuze and Guattari, 106.
196 Sassen, *Expulsions*.
at the end of the 1970’s. My main contention is that the minority is Deleuze|Guattari’s attempt to name and wrestle with the politically ambiguous effects of a global transition from Fordism to post-Fordism and a concurrent shift in sites of world-significant struggle. Primarily, they have in mind a shift away from the unified figure of the proletariat to a dispersed set of struggles ranging from national liberation struggles to what are now known as “new social movements.”

The Deleuzio-Guattarian minority is an effort to record these concrete changes in theory without departing from Marxism’s focus on class struggle and the self-expanding dynamics of capital accumulation.

The second section of the chapter turns to Deleuze|Guattari’s claim that capital’s processes of self-expansion give rise to new sites of struggle and new minority subsets or “minoritarian aggregates.” Following Deleuze and Sibertin-Blanc I call this objective tendency of capital a process of “minorization.” This is the often subtle but sometimes dramatic uprooting or “deteriorialization” of previously supported ways of life and forms of enjoyment that must take place for capital to self-valorize. The section shows that Deleuze|Guattari’s discussion of minorization explicitly has struggles over natural resources in mind and is thus a useful concept through which to theorize the introduction of fracking to the US.

In the third and final section I give Deleuze|Guattari’s theory of minorization a much-needed twist. While I find their account of minorization to be largely persuasive, I want to suggest that due to a lack of clarity between their two theories of minorities their account of minorization does not pay enough attention to the fact that not everyone is exposed to minorization in equal measure. In this respect, at least, Deleuze|Guattari are at risk of forgetting the significance of class struggle in contemporary politics. I therefore build on Deleuze|Guattari to propose that in the same way as we can observe countervailing tendencies to the falling rate of profit, we can observe countervailing tendencies to minorization. I show just such a tendency at work in former Secretary of State and former EXXON CEO, Rex Tillerson’s own struggle with the fracking industry.

These arguments lay the groundwork for the chapters to follow, each of which deals with the effects of minorization on subjects who have in one way or another failed

---

199 Sibertin-Blanc, ‘Politicising Deleuzian Thought, or, Minority’s Position within Marxism’.
200 Whilst the language of ‘objective’ and ‘subjective’ is inimical to Deleuze|Guattari’s thought I use it as a familiar short-hand. Deleuze|Guattari were themselves not above the practice. See Guattari’s *The Proliferation of Margins* for an example.
201 Kliman et al., ‘The Unmaking of Marx’s Capital’. 
to be reintegrated into capitalist social relations or what Deleuze|Guattari call the capitalist axiomatic.

Why Minorities?

In Sibertin-Blanc’s words, the importance of minorities to Deleuze|Guattari’s philosophy from the mid-1970’s onwards is both “overly visible and cryptic.”202 The concept first appears in their short 1975 book, *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature*.203 At this point in its development the concept has a narrowly literary and linguistic function. The minor is a process within a “major” language or literary tradition that transforms it from within, producing new literary traditions and linguistic forms of expression. This gives the minor a minimally political function; a minor literature can speak to and for minority communities such as immigrants and speakers of regional dialects, creating a sense of collective subjectivity. However, it is not until the publication of *A Thousand Plateaus* in 1980 that the full political implications of the concept become clear. Here, applications of the minor proliferate. We are told that “the notion of the minority [italic’s in original] is very complex, with musical, literary, linguistic as well as juridical and political, references.”204 At the same time, as this passage demonstrates, various conjugations and declensions of “the minor” begin to circulate. There is the minor itself but now we also find; minorities, minoritarian, becoming-minoritarian, minority subsets, and in later works, minorization. In total, there are 166 references to some version of the minor to be found in *A Thousand Plateaus* alone and the concept becomes a frequent point of reference in Deleuze and Guattari’s individually authored works and interviews from the late 70’s on. This is the overly visible character of minorities that Sibertin-Blanc refers to.

What makes the concept cryptic is that the more it is appealed to, the more its remit expands, the less clear its function becomes. From *A Thousand Plateaus* on the minor begins to be used as both a force internal to the major and as a political figure and form that is indexed to historical transformations in the composition of global capitalism. As will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 3, this is an antinomy in the strict sense. Both positions are cogent in themselves but it is impossible for them to be equally valid in the

203 Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka Toward a Minor Literature*.
same philosophical system. Either the minority is an historically derived effect of capitalist production or it is an a-historical and vital force within the major that leads to its transformation. This antinomy is what drives the central idea of this thesis: that there are not one but two distinct but complexly overlapping theories of minorities in Deleuze|Guattari’s philosophy. One is vitalist and ontological the other is formalist and historical. The former is consistent with Deleuze|Guattari’s general philosophical position while the latter functions as a kind of auto-critique and is compatible with Lacanian psychoanalysis and Marxist political economy.

The ambiguities and inconsistencies surrounding these theories will be a constant point of reference for this thesis. The aim of this chapter, however, is to strip the layers of conceptual responsibility back and focus on the minority solely as a historically contingent effect of capitalist accumulation. This theory is developed across at least five essential passages of Deleuze, Guattari, and Parnet’s individually and collectively authored texts. The first passage comes at the end of the 13th plateau of A Thousand Plateaus, entitled “7000 B.C: The Apparatus of Capture,” the second is the closing paragraphs of Deleuze|Guattari’s piece Many Politics in their collection entitled Negotiations, the third is Guattari’s short essay The Proliferation of Margins, the fourth is Deleuze’s comments in an interview with Antonio Negri published in Dialogues under the title of “Control and Becoming,” and the fifth is Guattari’s discussion of minorities entitled “Minorities: The Becoming of Society” in the book Molecular Revolution in Brazil. Because of the oblique way that Deleuze|Guattari|Parnet approach their concepts it is only by bringing these passages together that something like a comprehensive appraisal of their turn to minorities as a political figure becomes possible. In what follows I will quote liberally from these texts with the aim of showing that when they are read together they provide us with what Sibertin-Blanc calls Deleuze|Guattari|Parnet’s “political diagnostic of the actual situation.”

That is, their most tangibly political work outside of Deleuze’s texts on Palestine and Guattari’s various individually authored militant interventions. Close attention to these passages reveals a significant contribution to three questions that have plagued Marxist and post-Marxist political theory and to a not insignificant extent ensured their continued existence: 1) Who, if anyone, is the carrier of revolution today?; 2) What is the role of political theory in political struggle?; 3) What

kind of politics is called for today? Answering these questions is what I take to be the primary function of minorities in Deleuze | Guattari’s discourse.

***

Perhaps the clearest indication that Deleuze | Guattari are aiming to rethink political theory and struggle in the wake of a global restructuring of capital and its sites of struggle comes at the beginning of their discussion of minorities in the 13th plateau. Here, they hazard an uncharacteristic periodization by beginning with simply: “Ours is becoming the age of minorities.” The “becoming” here has two functions that will guide us through the remainder of the chapter. Its first is historical; it proclaims the gradual disappearance of one sequence of struggle and the coming into being of the next. Its second is predictive; it anticipates the formation of new minorities as capital continues to expand and intensify its processes of accumulation. This latter process is what I call minorization. The causes and repercussions of minorization will be bracketed for the time being and discussed in the following section since it is first important to situate the historical claim that the end of the 1970’s marked a world-significant transformation in the composition of capital.

Deleuze | Guattari develop the concept of minorities in the midst of what they correctly predicted will be a globally significant reorganization of global capital. Today, this reorganization goes by various names including globalization, post-Fordism, and neoliberalism. Without access to these terms and working at a considerably higher level of abstraction Deleuze | Guattari are interested in the fact that structural transformations in class relations and global divisions of labour are breaking down commonly held ideas about capitalism and class struggle.

When Marx and Engels wrote The Communist Manifesto in 1848 it was possible to argue that the great merit of capitalism was that it had “simplified the class antagonism.” Society, they wrote, “is more and more splitting into two great hostile camps, into two great classes facing each other – Bourgeoisie and Proletariat.” From Deleuze | Guattari’s historical perspective it was hard to defend this claim. As they argued in their evaluation of May 1968, the near-revolution had not looked the way that traditional Marxists had

208 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 469.
210 Amin, Post-Fordism; Bonefeld and Holloway, Post-Fordism and Social Form.
211 Foucault, The Birth of Biopolitics; Harvey, A Brief History of Neoliberalism; Brown, Undoing the Demos.
213 Sibertin-Blanc, ‘D’une conjoncture l’autre’.
thought a revolution would. Instead of a mass workers movement guided by a vanguard party, ’68 took the form of a student rebellion and a general strike that took place against the wishes of the Parti Communiste Français. Five short years later the 1973 financial crash caused a dramatic fall in the rate of profit and flooded the global market with a surplus of labour and capital that failed to find each other. This situation gave rise to a previously unimaginable economic condition: stagflation. Without economic growth the post-war Keynesianism that had maintained a precarious social compromise in the First World by exploiting the Third buckled. With global capital in crisis and the Cold War rumbling on the objective conditions were there for working class revolt and yet, once again, the forms of struggle that took place did not conform to the image predicted by Marx and Engels. Rather than a simplification of class antagonisms there was what Guattari called a “proliferation of margins.” Labour struggles continued but now they took place alongside and often in conflict with anti-colonial struggles, student rebellions, anti-imperialist struggles, feminist movements, the environmental movement, the civil rights movement, and so on.

Much has been written about this period and its consequences for political struggle and the Left. Only two years after the publication of A Thousand Plateaus, André Gorz’s Farewell to the Working Class: An Essay on Post-Industrial Socialism provocatively announced the disappearance of the working class as a world-significant political force. More recently Alain Badiou has described the mid-1970’s as the end of the “red decade’s” revolutionary fervour and the beginning of a descent into the “capitalo-parliamentarian” belief that “to want something better is to want something worse.” Norbert Trenkle calls the period a time of “declassing” through which the “commodity subject” supplants the class-conscious worker. The Endnotes collective describe it as the beginning of the “unity-in-separation of the market society.” While for Ellen Meiksins-Wood, the period is best defined not by the disappearance of the working class but by the European left’s loss of faith in class politics.

For their part, the authors of A Thousand Plateaus do not abandon the idea of

---

214 Deleuze, ‘May ’68 Did Not Take Place’.
215 Ross, May ’68 and Its Afterlives; Vinen, The Long ’68.
216 Brenner, The Boom and the Bubble, 7.
217 Guattari, ‘The Proliferation of Margins’.
218 Gorz, Farewell to the Working Class.
219 Badiou, The Communist Hypothesis, 1.
220 Trenkle, ‘Struggle without Classes: Why There Is No Resurgence of the Proletariat in the Currently Unfolding Capitalist Crisis’.
221 Endnotes, Endnotes 4.
222 Wood, The Retreat from Class.
working class struggle. They do, however, remark on its ideological absence:

“What’s so shameful is that we’ve no sure way of maintaining becomings, or still more of arousing them, even within ourselves. How any group will turn out, how it will fall back into history, presents a constant “concern.” There’s no longer any image of proletarians around which it’s just a matter of becoming conscious.”

In the absence of a proletariat to guarantee the path of history Deleuze|Guattari turn their attention to national liberation struggles, new social movements, and the emergence of what we would today call the precariat. In *A Thousand Plateaus* they praise Antonio Negri for theorizing the emergence of an *emarginati*, an “internal margin” in the developed world that are increasingly “abandoned to erratic work (subcontracting, temporary work, or work in the underground economy)” and whose “official subsistence is assured only by State allocations of wages subject to interruption.” Writing alone, Guattari similarly emphasizes that the new phase of production is demanding a “flexibility in relationships of production and in social relations, and a minimal capacity to adapt to new forms of sensibility and to the new types of human relationships” which decisively put an end to the image of a unified working class the basis for political struggle.

For Deleuze|Guattari, as for many others of their generation, the situation called for a radical rethinking of global capitalism, the forms of struggle that it made available, and of critical political theory. The minority is their conceptual keystone for this project. In their conception, the minority is intentionally much broader and less distinct than more familiar alternatives such as the New Left, new social movements, national liberation struggles, or the precariat. Its imprecision, though, is precisely the point. As Deleuze|Guattari might put it, the minority is an “anexact and yet rigorous” concept, a “fuzzy aggregate,” that grasps the “vague essence” of a phenomena as opposed to “fixed, metric and formal, essences” and thus seeks to capture in its totality the entirety of movements, groups, and struggles that are produced by the transitions taking place in global capitalism. For Deleuze|Guattari, while the struggles of the precariat, the environmental movement, and the women’s movement might be different in content, they nevertheless share the same form and can therefore be theorized under the same,

---

223 Deleuze and Negri, ‘Control and Becoming’, 172–73.
224 Standing, *The Precariat*.
anexact, concept.

The broad, generalizing, and yet rigorous aspirations of the concept are clearly on display in the closing passages of the essay *Many Politics* written by Deleuze|Parnet. These paragraphs are worth quoting at some length since a close read of them shows how the minority helps Deleuze|Guattari|Parnet to theorize what they discern are ongoing transformations in global capitalism and its sites of struggle:

“What characterizes our situation is both beyond and on this side of the State. *Beyond* national States, the development of a world market, the power of multinational companies, the outline of a ‘planetary’ organization, the extension of capitalism to the whole social body, clearly forms a great abstract machine which overcodes the monetary, industrial and technological fluxes. At the same time the means of exploitation, control and surveillance become more and more subtle and diffuse, in a certain sense molecular (the workers of the rich countries necessarily take part in the plundering of the Third World, men take part in the over exploitation of women, etc.). But the abstract machine, with its dysfunctions, is no more infallible than the national States which are not able to regulate them on their own territory and from one territory to another. The State no longer has at its disposal the political, institutional or even financial means which would enable it to fend off the social repercussions of the machine; it is doubtful whether it can eternally rely on the old forms of the police, armies, bureaucracies, even trade union bureaucracies, collective installations, schools, families.

Enormous landslides are [also] happening *on this side of* the state, following lines of gradient or flight…All this constitutes what can be called a right to desire. It is not surprising that all kinds of minority questions – linguistic, regional, about sex, or youth – resurge not only as archaisms, but in up-to-date revolutionary forms which call once more into question in an entirely immanent manner both the global economy of the machine and the assemblages of nation States. Instead of gambling on the eternal impossibility of the revolution and on the fascist return of a war-machine in general, why not think that *a new type of revolution is in the course of becoming possible*, and that all kinds of mutating, living machines conduct wars, are combined and trace out a plane of consistence, which undermines the plane of organization of the World and the States?”

228 Deleuze and Parnet, *Dialogues*, 146–47. Emphasis in original.
There are three ideas to extract from this dense passage. The first is how Deleuze|Parnet begin to rethink the role that states play in global capitalism. More and more, they say, the state functions as a fulcrum between a globalized and profoundly unstable process of capital valorization that exceeds it – both in scale and in the state’s capacity to control it – and situated minority struggles. In *A Thousand Plateaus* Deleuze|Guattari elaborate on this positioning. As early examiners of what Guattari called “Integrated Worldwide Capitalism” and what would later become known as globalization, Deleuze|Guattari detect a transition in the role of the state under advanced capitalism.229 Echoing Antonio Negri’s “social factory” thesis and the thought of his fellow Autonomists,230 Deleuze|Guattari argue that the infiltration of capital into the most molecular – Hardt and Negri would later say biopolitical231 – aspects of society undermines the states function as the primary organizer of social life. In the global restructuring states “change form and take on a new meaning: models of realization for a worldwide axiomatic that exceeds them.”232 Yet to exceed is not the same as to do without. States are now given the task of providing the minimum “regulation of the decoded, deterritorialized flows, so as to prevent the decoded flows from breaking at all the edges of the social axiomatic.”233

The vexing evocation of set theory to explain the operations of the capitalist state will be discussed in more detail in later chapters and will prove to have profound political consequences. For the moment, it is sufficient to say that Deleuze|Guattari treat global capitalism in a way that is not dissimilar from that suggested more recently by Paul Livingston. In his *Politics of Logic*, Livingston proposes that capitalism should not be treated “as a single object (ideological or otherwise) with a simple “outside”” – such as the vital force of becoming posed by vitalist Deleuzians or Hardt and Negri’s bio-political productivity of the multitude, but – “quite the contrary, as an infinitely diversified and varied structure that nevertheless presupposes and tends towards what is in many ways a universal structural logic.”234 Livingston therefore proposes that global capitalism can be understood in strictly formal grounds on the basis of the operations that it presupposes, permits, and prohibits. This is precisely what Deleuze|Guattari have in mind when they turn to the language of formalized set theory to interrogate the structures and operations

229 Guattari, *The Three Ecologies*.
231 Hardt and Negri, *Empire*.
233 Sibertin-blanc and Hodges, *State and Politics*, 258.
234 Livingston, *The Politics of Logic*. 

62
of the state in global capitalism including the creation of “minority subsets.” It is a move that is in many respects faithful to Marx’s analysis of capital in *Capital Vol. I*, which begins with the commodity *form*, the value-*form* and so on (rather than the content that come to fill these forms) and the relations that are established and presumed by such forms.

Deleuze|Guattari’s highly formalized theory of global capitalism also follows Marx and Engels in arguing that the state’s role, “in spite of their motley diversity of form,” irrespective of the “model” it takes (social democratic, centrally planned, totalitarian, fascist), is to maintain a zero-level of subjectivity and livability for its citizens, to avoid civil unrest, to provide the necessary regulatory frameworks to facilitate the valorization of capital and to organize an internal division of labour. The establishment of “minority subsets” is precisely such a process. Minorities are created as a means to incorporate movements and struggles that pose a threat to the capitalist axiomatic. Writing about the struggles of national minority struggles, for example, they explain: “The response of the States, or of the axiomatic, may obviously be to accord the minorities regional or federal or statutory autonomy, in short, to add axioms.” The same, they write, “applies for women, young people, erratic workers, etc.” In each case, forms of recognition or integration are extended to keep the struggles of these groups “from breaking at the edges of the social axiomatic,” or from posing a threat to accumulation at a world scale. This, of course, is precisely the function of minority rights that is defended by liberal political theorists such as Will Kymlicka and Alan Patten. Here is Kymlicka: “indigenous decolonization, federal partnership, and multicultural immigrant integration are all crafted to remedy the chronic risks that modern nation states grounded in popular sovereignty pose to each of these minorities.” The paternalistic tone of this passage is deeply revealing. The axioms of minority rights and recognitions are not just extended to remedy the “chronic risks” that nation states pose to minorities. As Deleuze|Guattari and anti-colonial thinkers and radicals like Samir Amin, Aimé Césaire, and Franz Fanon knew, the risks also run the other way: without the paternalistic “crafting” and gifting of rights, recognitions and renumerations from the capitalist core to its peripheries, the struggles of minorities pose a “chronic risk” to the global system of capital accumulation itself.

237 Deleuze and Guattari, 470.
238 Sibertin-blanc and Hodges, *State and Politics*, 258.
240 Kymlicka, 88.
241 Samir, *Class and Nation; Césaire and Kelley, Discourse on Colonialism*; Fanon and Sartre, *The Wretched of the Earth*. 
States are thus described as “not at all transcendent paradigms of an overcoding but immanent models of realization for an axiomatic of decoded flows,” by which is meant primarily the flows of labour-power, capital, and subjective desire. Instead, in Lenin’s words, they continue to function as moderators in “the collision between the classes.” Deleuze|Guattari|Parnet’s point here, in contrast to Hardt and Negri’s Empire thesis, is that rather than this role diminishing with the rise of globalized production and free market, small state ideology, state interventions proliferate. Žižek has called this “perhaps...the fundamental ‘contradiction’ of today’s ‘postmodern’ capitalism.” As David Harvey shows in his history of neoliberalism, the logic of contemporary capital appears to be one of globalized determinization, deregulation, flux and fluidity but in reality the state’s regulatory function has become ever more molecular and pervasive.

The US fracking industry is a clear demonstration of this paradox. According to many of its supporters fracking is the product of the invisible hand of the free market guiding investment towards previously inaccessible fossil fuel reserves. In reality, as Daniel Yergin shows, fracking was from the beginning funded by state investment eager to support the fossil fuel industry. Its spread across the US was dependent on carefully devised regulations and regulatory loopholes and its survival, despite regular downturns in profitability, has been insured by tax incentives. This is a clear example of what economist Mariana Mazzucato calls “the entrepreneurial state.” Beyond economic and regulatory incentives, fracking has also relied on consistent state interventions against activists including counterinsurgency operations, anti-protest laws, and frequent off-the-books exchanges of information between law enforcement and industry. In Deleuze|Guattari’s words, then, the US state functions as a “model of realization” for the fracking industry and therefore plays an essential role in the valorization of value on a global scale.

242 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 455.
243 Lenin, 'State and Revolution', 274.
244 Hardt and Negri, Empire; See also: Passavant and Dean, 'Representing the International: Sovereignty after Modernity?'; Walker, 'On the Immanence/Imminence of Empire'.
245 Žižek, First as Tragedy, Then as Farce, 145.
246 Harvey, A Brief History of Neoliberalism.
247 In his book Fracking: America’s Alternative Energy Revolution, for example, John Graves argues on multiple occasions that fracking is the work of the invisible hand which “meets demands as they arise, almost anticipating them.” While in his book Groundswell: The Case for Fracking, Ezra Levant argues that fracking got its start thanks to the entrepreneurial spirit of Stanolind Oil and Gas Corporation and Halliburton. Graves, Fracking: America’s Alternative Energy Revolution, 223; Levant, Groundswell, 23,169.
248 Yergin, The Quest.
249 Mazzucato, The Entrepreneurial State.
250 Ross, 'Dismantling Counterinsurgency with Earth First!'
251 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 434.
The second thing to notice from this extended quote is that this reorganization in the role of the state comes at the price of producing “landslides” within the state. New sites of political struggle are formed and give rise to struggles of the most varied nature: “immigrant workers, skilled workers unhappy with the kind of work imposed on them, the unemployed, hyper-exploited women, ecologists, nationalists, mental patients, homosexuals, the elderly, the young, etc.”\(^{252}\) As Guattari explains in his essay *The Proliferation of Margins*, each in its own way is said to contain the potential to transition from something that can be recuperated within the capitalist axiomatic to something “much more dangerous to the extent that they threaten the essential relationships on which the system is based (respect for work, hierarchy, for State power, for the religion of consumption).”\(^{253}\) Guattari explains that the boundary between these two kinds of struggle are necessarily “blurred and unstable”\(^ {254}\) and so as Deleuze|Guattari say elsewhere “it would be absurd to think that the insertion of popular movements is condemned in advance throughout this field of immanence.”\(^ {255}\) Struggles “at the most diverse levels” are thus said to indicate the potential for a “coexistent combat” that escapes the narrow-parameters of social-democratic inclusion precisely because they take place at the axis of capital and the state, which is to say at the point where inclusion within the axiomatic is to be decided.\(^ {256}\)

Guattari’s point here is that we cannot give up hope of a radical social transformation. There is a refusal on his part to accept that with the collapse of the worker as the stand-in for proletariat class interest we can only remediate the most exploitative of capitalist practices by redistributing rights, recognitions and remunerations as democratically as we are able. On the contrary, for Deleuze|Guattari it is a question of ascribing to all manner of struggles their proper place within the revolutionary potential of the situation and being unafraid to use such language when it becomes appropriate.\(^ {257}\) As Guattari says, “the promise of minorities” is that “they represent not only poles of resistance, but also potentials of processes of transformation that contain the possibility of being taken up again, at some time or other, by entire sectors of the masses.”\(^ {258}\)

The political and strategic significance of this will be discussed in Chapter 4. What matters for the moment is that Deleuze|Guattari find in the struggles of minorities, which

\(^{253}\) Guattari, 109.
\(^{254}\) Guattari, 109.
\(^{255}\) Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 466.
\(^{256}\) Guattari, ‘The Proliferation of Margins’.
\(^{257}\) Guattari and Løvring, ‘Molecular Revolutions’.
\(^{258}\) Guattari and Rolnik, *Molecular Revolution in Brazil*, 104.

65
necessarily take place at the nexus of state and capital, the potential (and only the potential) to cleave open a properly political gap within the capitalist structure and with it to construct new principals of ordering, collectivity, and subjectivity. As they say, minorities “promote compositions that do not pass by way of the capitalist economy any more than they do by the State-form.” They therefore propose paying attention to how struggles have dispersed themselves across the social field and how the potential for unrest might emerge from unlikely locations. Such a theorization of minorities pushes against the tendency in some class reductionist analyses to reduce struggles that take place outside of the workplace or the sociological category of the worker to “identity politics” or as Judith Butler says to the “merely cultural.” At the same time, however, Deleuze|Guattari continue to ground their investigation of such struggles in a class-based analysis of global capitalism. The struggles of minorities and the desires they produce must be interrogated for their potential to break from established modes of subjectivity, capital, and the state.

This leads us to the third point to notice from this extended quote. Deleuze|Parnet wager on a new kind of revolutionary struggle. As Thomas Nail observes, unlike many of their contemporaries, Deleuze|Guattari|Parnet never shy away from the language of revolution. Rather than lamenting the course of the Soviet Union or the collapse of the proletariat as the guarantor of revolutionary action, they gamble on the emergence of, and begin to theorize, a new kind of revolutionary practice that might call into question both the state and capital in innovative and revolutionary ways. This is one of the defining contributions of their political theory. Whilst thinkers such as Badiou and Žižek turn to the heroics of the Act and the Event, shunning “micro-political” or “molecular” politics as at best inconsequential and at worst as ideological aberrations, Deleuze|Guattari provide a way interrogate these aspects of political struggle. Deleuze:

“It’s fashionable these days to condemn the horrors of revolution. It’s nothing new…But they’re constantly confusing two different things, the way revolutions turn out historically and people’s revolutionary becoming…Men’s [sic] only hope

261 For a critique of this tendency see: Haider, *Mistaken Identity: Race and Class in the Age of Trump*.
262 Butler, ‘Merely Cultural’.
263 Guattari, ‘The Proliferation of Margins’.
264 Nail, *Returning to Revolution*.
265 Johnston, *Badiou, Žižek, and Political Transformations*.
lies in a revolutionary becoming: the only way of casting off their shame or responding to what is intolerable.” 266

With the category of the minority, Deleuze|Guattari therefore push beyond the limits of the previous sequence of struggle and begin to think and act politically anew in the world that has been left in its wake. What they propose, not unproblematically it must be said, is to emphasize the micro-political practice of becoming-revolutionary as distinct from the outcome of the Revolution itself. 267 This project was already at work in Anti-Oedipus where they made the claim that if revolutions turn out badly it is perhaps because they contain within them their own counter-revolutionary forces or “micro-fascisms” that will be their undoing. Given this possibility, there is a need to attend to the “molecular” components of struggles and how they reproduce their internal social dynamics. On this score one need only think of their quip about the Russian Revolution, which without repudiating the endeavour underlines the difficulty of locating the precise point at which it “started going bad.” 268 This is so because the cause of its undoing must at least in part be located within the revolutionary project itself. 269 It is this, after all, that makes the revolution’s collapse a properly tragic event and not merely the result of capital’s ingenuity. In an anti-Spinozist gesture, then, Deleuze|Guattari declare that the death of a struggle does not necessarily come from the outside. 270 This point will be essential to my analysis of the anti-fracking groups, We Are Seneca Lake, in Chapter 5.

The idea of the becoming of a revolution has two important political consequences. First, by setting aside politically paralyzing and retroactive rebuttals of revolution (“revolutions always eat their young!”), Deleuze|Guattari hope to account for collective productions of subjectivity or new structurations of desire that take place within the act of becoming-revolutionary that do not fall back into recorded history. 271 The status of these becomings must remain undecided even after the apparent failure of the revolution itself. 272 This move, taken primarily in A Thousand Plateaus and in their short text May’68 Did Not Take Place, has Deleuze|Guattari reject transcendent or retroactive positions of judgement or critique of revolutionary activity. Instead, they outline what

266 Deleuze and Negri, ‘Control and Becoming’, 171.
267 Sibertin-Blanc, ‘D’une conjoncture l’autre’.
268 “Psychoanalysis is like the Russian Revolution; we don’t know when it started going bad. We have to keep going back further.”, Deleuze and Guattari, Anti-Oedipus, 55.
269 Deleuze and Guattari, 256.
270 Schuster, The Trouble with Pleasure, 70.
271 Sibertin-Blanc, ‘D’une conjoncture l’autre’.
272 Deleuze, ‘May ’68 Did Not Take Place’.
Sibertin-Blanc calls a sophisticated “criterion of evaluation” that is *immanent* to the struggles themselves.273 With the same gesture Deleuze|Guattari carve out a space between the ruptural Revolution and everyday practices of political struggle where becomings take place. It is at this level that they believe theoretical and empirical interrogations of these struggles can and should occur with renewed urgency.274 Such struggles might not necessarily take “The Revolution” as their aim but they nevertheless have the potential to set in motion events that will reverberate well beyond their situated milieu. Becomings of this kind always hold the potential to affect collective subjectivities in unpredictable breaks, they are in Sibertin-Blanc’s words, “always singular in their emergence, sometimes connectable and generalizable in their effects, never reducible however to the historical linearities that would allow them to be inscribed in a universal discourse of power and counter-power.”275 This is one of the essential qualities of Deleuze|Guattari’s thought that I carry into my analysis of anti-fracking movements in the following chapters.

In summary, then, what is the function of the minority in Deleuze|Guattari’s discourse? It is to deliver a new grammar of struggle for a new period of struggle: minorization, becoming-minoritarian, becoming-revolutionary, axiomatics, sets and subsets, cramped space, and so on which together help to give a “political diagnostic of the actual situation” faced by Deleuze|Guattari in the late 1970’s and by us today.276 These concepts will be developed further in the following chapters but it should already be clear that their function is to name and contend with a *double displacement* in the kinds of struggles that were previously considered the prerogative of the proletariat. First, a displacement from the site of production to the social field at large (production, circulation, consumption) and in particular to the nexus of state and capital. Second, from the identity of the “worker” – usually reduced to the white, male, factory worker – which takes as its political horizon the Revolution, to struggles that have their origins in the struggles over the environment, gender, youth, race, colonialism and so on. The minority therefore names the now familiar dispersal of struggles across the social field, or the proliferation of margins, that arose with the collapse of the worker as the stand-in for the universal interests of the proletariat. At the same time, the discourse of minorities names a theoretical and political project of attentiveness to new forms of subjectivity, practice

275 Sibertin-Blanc and Hodges, *State and Politics*, 228.
276 Sibertin-Blanc, “Politicising Deleuzian Thought, or, Minority’s Position within Marxism.”
and solidarity that emerge out of these sites of struggle.

Two points of clarification need to be added to this description. First, Deleuze|Guattari’s focus on molecular revolutions and the struggles of minorities are not a declaration of their superiority over macro-political Revolutionary Events. Instead, Deleuze|Guattari aim to turn our attention to a field of theory and practice that is often overlooked but that is in all respects essential to a revolutionary politics and arguably all the more so when the Event of the Revolution appears nowhere on the political horizon.277 Beginning from this position, Deleuze|Guattari’s question is how to compose the necessary social forces for a radical transformation of the present. Second, it must be stressed that the minority does not name a new revolutionary subject. Instead, it draws attention to capital’s self-undermining dynamics and holds open the space to ask the question of how an atomized working class, who share only the fact of their exploitation, can be bought together in and through struggle. The role of the minority is to force us to pose the question of how to invent a new collective struggle or social force against capitalist exploitation under conditions where a revolution does not seem forthcoming and in which the subject whose historical destiny it was to bring it into being is missing.278 Deleuze|Guattari are here at their furthest from their most famous adherents, Hardt and Negri or their vitalist followers such as William Connolly. Rather than glossing over the problem of constituting a revolutionary force by providing the ontological guarantee of the “multitude” or “becoming” they locate and hold open the uncomfortable question of the absence of a revolutionary agent, index this absence to a period of extensive restructuring in global class relations, and begin the work of theorizing how new modes of struggle might have their effects.279

Minorization

Minorization names capital’s two-part objective tendency to throw itself into crisis by undermining – or deterritorializing – previously supported ways of life and forms of enjoyment before seeking to resolve these crises in subjectivity and valorization with what

277 For an alternative approach to this problem see: Dean, The Communist Horizon.
278 Thoburn, ‘The People Are Missing’.
279 Hardt and Negri, Empire.
280 I borrow the concept of minorization in my discussion of A Thousand Plateaus from Sibertin-Blanc. Although the concept appears in Deleuze’s late essays on literature it is curiously absent from A Thousand Plateaus. Nevertheless, the idea, if not the concept itself, is essential to the arguments that are developed in the 13th plateau. See: Sibertin-blanc and Hodges, State and Politics.
Deleuze and Guattari call “compensatory reterritorializations.” These reterritorializations are achieved by integrating individuals and collectives into capitalist social and productive relations as marginal or minority subsets within capitalist institutional arrangements and ideologies. It might, for example, involve employment opportunities, new social welfare programmes, new rights, recognitions, citizenships, and so on. 

Deleuze and Guattari follow Marx in maintaining that this process of de/re-territorialization is constitutive of capitalism as such and are therefore convinced that capital will create new and unexpected minorities in the future. It is this conviction that drives the predictive function of their claim that “ours is becoming the age of minorities.” Thus, Deleuze and Guattari claim that:

“It can be predicted that the impending problems of the economy, which will consist in reforming capital in relation to new resources (undersea oil, metallic nodules, food stuffs), will require not only a redistribution of the world that will mobilize the worldwide war machine and train its parts on the new objectives; we will also probably see the formation or re-formation of minoritarian aggregates, in relation to affected regions.”

These lines, which clearly have a critique of capital’s ever-escalating exploitation of nature and labour at their core, should serve as an invitation to thought for the contemporary reader. What new resources have we seen rise in global significance? And where are these new or re-formed minorities today? We might want to think of the global demand for Congolese coltan, a “metallic nodule” that is now an essential part of nearly every smart device, at the expense of a great many Congolese workers and children. Or of the global process of land grabbing for foodstuffs and biofuels that has forced local people to “either endure the enclosure or move to more isolated, marginal locations.” Both procedures have, in their own way, seen to the “formation or re-formation of minoritarian aggregates, in relation to affected regions.” They have given rise to new sites of struggle and new “problems” for capital accumulation that it seeks to integrate into its system by providing them with rights, development aid, employment possibilities, and so on. What

---

281 Deleuze and Guattari, _A Thousand Plateaus_, 455.
282 Deleuze and Guattari, 469.
283 Deleuze and Guattari, 548.
284 Montague, ‘Stolen Goods’.
286 Deleuze and Guattari, _A Thousand Plateaus_, 548.
I want to suggest is that fracking must also be thought of in these terms. I take the above prediction as encouragement to make use of the figure of the minority and its associated politics in an ostensibly unlikely location. With Deleuze|Guattari, I claim that we have indeed seen the formation of new minoritarian aggregates in response to the introduction of fracking in the United States and that the industry has minorized new communities producing situated, though globally significant, sites of struggle and the possibility for new collective forms of subjectivity. As we saw in the introduction, Anna Willow, an ethnographer of fracked communities in the Marcellus Shale fields, glosses this argument when she describes fracking fields as “un/expected landscapes of disempowerment and vulnerability” and suggests that attending to them might “reveal new economic and political patterns” or indicate “significant systemic changes” in local and global politics.287 Seen in its light, it becomes possible to view anti-fracking movements as minorized “subsets” in a global capitalist axiomatic.

But why, according to Deleuze|Guattari, does minorization occur? And how can it be said to have occurred in the Marcellus Shale field? To answer these questions, we must turn to two theoretical touchstones of their argument. The first is Marx’s critique of political economy and specifically the theory of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall. The second is a re-worked account of Samir Amin’s thesis of uneven and combined development. While there has been a considerable amount written about the connections between Marx and Deleuze|Guattari,288 relatively little has been written on the centrality of Amin’s thesis to Deleuze|Guattari’s analysis of capitalism in A Thousand Plateaus or their theory of minorities in particular.289 This is not the place to give a detailed account of these engagements, however, a brief discussion will draw out what is at stake in the process of minorization, demonstrate the term’s applicability in the context of US anti-fracking struggles, and reveal the problematic political implications of Deleuze|Guattari’s claim that the minority is a “universal figure”290 or that there is a “becoming-minoritarian of everybody/everything.”291

288 Lecercle, ‘Deleuze, Guattari and Marxism’; Jain, Deleuze and Marx; Holland, ‘Deleuze and Guattari and Minor Marxism’; Thoburn, Deleuze, Marx and Politics; Sibertin-blanc and Hodges, State and Politics.
289 Weeks, ‘A Politics of Peripheries’.
290 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 470.
291 Deleuze and Guattari, 473.
Marx’s theory of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall has a fundamental place in Deleuze|Guattari’s analysis of capitalism and in the formation of minority groups. As Deleuze explains:

“What we find most interesting in Marx is his analysis of capitalism as an immanent system that’s constantly overcoming its own limitations, and then coming up against them once more in a broader form, because its fundamental limit is capital itself.”

This is an almost word-for-word paraphrase of Marx’s description of the process in *Capital Vol.3*, which Deleuze|Guattari refer to several times in their *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* project:

“Capitalist production seeks to continually overcome these immanent barriers, but overcomes them only by means which again place these barriers in its way on a more formidable scale.

The real barrier of capitalist production is capital itself. It is that capital and its self-expansion appear as the starting and closing point, the motive and purpose of production.”

For Marx, the tendency of the rate of profit to fall drives capitalism to constantly overcome previously self-imposed limits in the search for new land, resources, and people from which to realize value. Capitalism is therefore the social system that insists on the impossible: infinite expansion, a “production for the sake of production” whose limits are of its own devising. It was from this that Deleuze|Guattari get the idea, central to *Anti-Oedipus*, that capitalism is structurally schizophrenic. In a passage that is remarkable for its similarities to the above, Deleuze|Guattari gloss this logic in their own language:

---

292 Deleuze and Negri, ‘Control and Becoming’, 171.
“Concerning capitalism, we maintain that it both does and does not have an exterior limit: it has an exterior limit that is schizophrenia, that is, the absolute decoding of flows, but it functions only by pushing back and exorcising this limit. And it also has, yet does not have, interior limits: it has interior limits under the specific conditions of capitalist production and circulation, that is, in capital itself, but it functions only by reproducing and widening these limits on an always vaster scale. The strength of capitalism indeed resides in the fact that its axiomatic is never saturated, that it is always capable of adding a new axiom to the previous ones. Capitalism defines a field of immanence and never ceases to fully occupy this field.”

It is precisely this logic of overcoming and re-establishing limits that Deleuze|Guattari maintain will contribute to the formation of new minority subsets. As soon as capitalism faces a crisis it must set its processes of accumulation back into motion by “decoding” and deterritorializing previously codified norms and ways of life in what Deleuze|Guattari call a “delirious process” propelled by a constant crisis in reproduction. This is why Deleuze|Guattari will say that capitalism is a machine that only works by breaking down or by putting itself “in alarming situations with respect to its own production, its social life, its demographics, its borders with the third world, internal regions, etc.” But what capital deterritorializes on the one hand, it must reterritorialize on the other and if necessary by “violent and artificial” means: “Capitalism institutes or restores all sorts of residual or artificial, imaginary, or symbolic territorialities, thereby attempting, as best it can, to recode, to rechannel persons who have been defined in terms of abstract quantities.”

The more capital deterritorializes – or uproots – established ways of living to expedite the extraction of surplus-value, the more forcefully its ancillary apparatuses – governmental bodies, the family, the forces of law and order, and so on – work to reterritorialize, or re-establish, subjectivities that are compatible with the self-valorization of value and the more it produces a sense of dislocation among those for whom this reterritorialization does not go smoothly.

Deleuze|Guattari’s point, then, is that as capital overthrows its limits it throws both its objective and subjective conditions of possibility out of joint and must
reterritorialize them. Here it is useful to remember how fracking was introduced to the United States and the amount of work that was needed to persuade communities to support it. Though fracking began in the mid-2000’s it was not until after the 2008 financial crash that the industry took off. Record low interest rates drove investment into the industry300 and it was granted funds from the government’s post-crash investment programme, the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.301 Thus, fracking quickly became touted as a recession buster.302 According to its proponents, the industry’s continued need for investment would reinvigorate the U.S economy, create jobs in areas that are financially strained, serve as a bridge fuel to a renewable energy future and drive down the cost of gas saving households on their monthly bills. In other words, what Daniel Yergin calls the “shale gale” – the abrupt increase in investment in fracking around 2008 – would contribute to overcoming the immanent limit that capital had hit with the great recession.303

One of the reasons that this seemed possible was the peculiar financial requirements of the industry. Because well yields decrease precipitously after the first year of production, thousands of wells must be produced within a comparatively small space of time to maintain economically viable rates of production. In the post-2008 economy fracking industries could purchase loans at extremely low interest rates. This was vital for the industry because producing wells in a cost-effective way is, ironically enough, tremendously expensive. As an indication, in 2016 there were 7,788 active wells in Pennsylvania alone.304 In 2015, it cost $6.1 million to drill a single well.305 Due to cost-saving measures this has fallen significantly from when drilling was at its height in the mid-2000’s. Nevertheless, if all 7,788 wells were drilled at the lower 2015 price, they would cost a total of $47,506,800,000. This is, to say the least, a considerable investment and a boon for banks that are still suffering from the great recession. In the language introduced above, fracking permitted US and global capital to establish new “limits” further down the line. However, now that natural gas prices are at record lows, there is fear that this revolution will itself cause another financial crash. The slump in prices has created what are known as oil and gas “zombies”; companies that can just about afford to pay the interest on their debt but that cannot afford to drill the new wells necessary to stay in

300 McLean, Saudi Arabia.
301 Wickenden, ‘After the 2008 Financial Crisis, the Economy Was Fracked Up’.
302 Christopherson, ‘Fracking Isn’t the Job Creator You Think It Is’.
303 Yergin, The Quest.
304 State Impact, ‘Shale Play’.
business. Many others have filed for bankruptcy leading to some concern among investors and commentators that the next financial crash will start from the risky and failed investments made in the industry immediately following the last. The fracking industry’s pattern of investment and bankruptcy is thus strictly homologous with capital’s broader objective tendency to set its own limits, come up against these limits, and then set them down again further along, only to come up against them once more.

When the initial shale boon is considered alongside the other supposed benefits of fracking it is little surprise that US capital and communities – with many looking for jobs in the post-crash economy – reterritorialized on the shale industry. To help them along, the industry ran a series of pro-extraction television advertisements. One advertisement, funded by America’s Natural Gas Alliance and entitled “America’s Natural Gas,” extols the virtues of fracking. The ad begins with an idyllic picture of a child on his father’s shoulders. They are laughing together as they look at an American flag gently billowing in their yard. The commercial tells us that “we” [meaning the U.S] have big dreams and that one is for “clean domestic energy.” We are told that “our” gas is safe, secure, abundant, and “puts us in control.” We are told that “our” natural gas is “already saving us money,” “putting us to work here in America” and “supporting wind and solar.” The ad admits that although all energy development “comes with some risk,” America’s Natural Gas Alliance is committed to fracking responsibly to put America in control of its future. In another ad, also funded by America’s Natural Gas Alliance and called simply “Farmers,” natural gas is associated with care for the land and credited with allowing farmers who lease their land to be able to pass their way of life onto future generations. In yet another ad funded by the American Petroleum Institute, clearly intended for younger audiences, neon text overlays an energetic montage while a drum and bass track plays in the background. “Gas doesn’t just cook dinner” it begins before cutting to a mountain biker weaving his way through a forest: “natural gas fuels adrenalin.” The commercial cuts to high-tech industrial work: “natural gas pipes in jobs.” A cut to plush green forest and neat rows of farmed vegetables: “natural gas comes cleaner.” A drone delivering parcels: “natural gas condenses time.” Another cut to high-tech undersea investigations: “natural gas sparks invention.” The commercial finishes with: “together we can power past impossible.”

308 ‘America’s Natural Gas Alliance TV Commercial, “America’s Natural Gas”’.
309 ‘America’s Natural Gas Alliance TV Commercial, “Farmers”’.
funded a similar ad for oil which aired during the 2017 Super Bowl. In another ad, this time funded by Exxon Mobil, we are told that natural gas is the gateway to the future. The commercial shows a high-tech city (visibly glowing with prosperity) running on natural gas. Commercials such as these are evidence of a concerted effort to reterritorialize subjectivities on natural gas as a part of America’s future and to integrate these communities back into the capitalist axiomatic, precisely as Deleuze\Guattari explain must happen.

The promises of these commercials sit uneasily against the experiences of many of those that I met in the Marcellus Shale Fields. If fracking helps “us” to “power past the impossible” then what are we to make of those who are not interpellated by this message? What of those who have suffered both physically and psychologically from the introduction of fracking to their towns and communities? In short, what are we to make of those that will appear throughout this thesis? It is clear from their experience that the desired reterritorialization does not run smoothly. In part, this is because the “risks” that America’s Natural Gas Alliance allude to in their advertisements are not distributed evenly. The process of de/re-territorializing in accordance with the exigencies of a global market produces vast areas of inequality, exploitation, and class conflict that its ancillary apparatuses and specifically the State must manage. In Deleuze\Guattari’s words, they must be included as subsets within its axiomatic. But this raises the question of how minority groups are distributed both nationally and internationally: who is minorized, how, and why? Deleuze\Guattari’s answer to this question hinges on their interpretation of Samir Amin.

*Samir Amin and Accumulation on a World Scale*

Samir Amin’s 1971 book *Accumulation on a World Scale* is essential to Deleuze\Guattari’s theory of minorities. Like other theorists of uneven and combined development, Amin proposes a dialectic of unequal exchange and dependency between the “centre” of the world system and the “periphery,” which loosely map onto the global north and global south respectively. For Amin, the periphery is not simply underdeveloped in

---

312 CuteSweetSpots, *Exxon Mobil TV Commercial, ‘Natural Gas’.*
313 Althusser, *On Ideology*.
314 Lerner and Brown, *Sacrifice Zones*.
315 Amin, *Accumulation on a World Scale*.
316 Amin.
comparision to the core but is actively kept in an lower stage of economic development. Whereas the economies of the centre are diversified and have interconnected sectors, those in the periphery are by colonial design over-specialized, disconnected, and subordinated to the needs of a global system of accumulation that is managed in the interests of the centre. For Amin, it follows that it will be impossible for peripheral states to catch up with or surpass the centre without “de-linking” from the global economy that is tilted so strongly in favour of the latter at the expense of the former.\(^{317}\)

In *Accumulation on a World Scale* Amin makes the methodological choice to focus on relations between states.\(^{318}\) Deleuze|Guattari, however, abandon this restriction and expand Amin’s thesis to include centre/periphery relations within states as well as between them. On the one hand, globalized production and unequal exchange leads to the installation of “high industry and highly industrialized agriculture at the periphery.”\(^{319}\) Rather than seek to integrate the “the whole poverty stricken population,” capital generates a “class rupture that will select the integratable elements.”\(^{320}\) That is, capital sets up core regions of investment and infrastructure deep within the periphery. Deleuze|Guattari have in mind areas of huge international investment in the global south: high tech agricultural practices, rare metal and diamond mining in Africa, the phenomena of free trade zones, and so on. On the other hand, since for Deleuze|Guattari “the South is an abstract term designating the Third World or the periphery” there are equally “Souths or Third Worlds inside the Centre.”\(^{321}\) Here, we should think of rust-belt America, for whom the promise of jobs or at least pay-outs from fracking were a considerable factor in obtaining public support or deprived towns.\(^{322}\) We should also think of the global north’s ever increasing “surplus population” that as Endnotes has demonstrated is progressively thrown out of the productive labour market and into precarious minimum wage service sector jobs or unemployment.\(^{323}\) Both are examples of installing “peripheral zones of underdevelopment inside the centre, internal Third Worlds, internal Souths.”\(^{324}\)

\(^{317}\) Amin, *Delinking*.
\(^{319}\) Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 469.
\(^{320}\) Deleuze and Guattari, 468.
\(^{321}\) Deleuze and Guattari, 468.
\(^{322}\) Malin, ‘There’s No Real Choice but to Sign’.
\(^{323}\) Endnotes, Endnotes 3.
\(^{324}\) Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 465; Deleuze|Guattari are far from the only theorists to have extended the ideas of uneven and combined development. My aim here, however, is not to enter into these wide-ranging and complex debates but to provide an exegesis of how Amin’s work influences their concept of the minority. For more on uneven and combined development see: O’Connor, ‘Uneven and Combined Development and Ecological Crisis: A Theoretical Introduction’; Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale*; Callinicos and Rosenberg, ‘Uneven and Combined Development’; Allinson and Anievas, ‘The Uses and Misuses of Uneven and Combined Development’;
In this way, Deleuze|Guattari bring Amin’s thesis about the necessity of unequal exchange to bear on relations within the state: “it is also clear that this destabilization is not accidental but is a (theorematic) consequence of the axioms of capitalism, principally the axiom called unequal exchange.” From this perspective, the false promise to impoverished but resource rich regions of the United States – such as the Marcellus Shale region – that they can revitalize their communities by embracing extractivism is a fantasy in the strict Lacanian sense. The promised development is a way of producing specific, aspirational, forms of capitalist subjectivity. It therefore plays a role in integrating their desire into the circuits of capital by reforming them as a minority subset of its axiomatic. In Deleuze|Guattari’s language, it is a form of “social subjection,” that is, a way of involving subjects in the capitalist “machine.” Yet, as we shall see shortly, like all fantasies it is a “screen that conceals something quite primary, something determinative of repetition,” which in this case will be nothing less than the persistence of the class contradiction.

One must follow Deleuze|Guattari’s point carefully here to avoid a misunderstanding. With Amin, they are in no way making a claim about contingent inequalities among individuals in a global system of accumulation as if all that were needed were to redistribute profits more evenly across the globe and thereby erasing the accidental dialectic of unequal dependency and bringing all peoples into capitalist relations. Neither, pushing the argument in the direction of fracking and related industries, is the claim that there should be a global move towards environmental justice, which would entail the addition of new axioms to ensure that poor or minority communities do not bear the brunt of toxic industries and that they do not become sacrifice zones. Of course the eradication of inequality or sacrifice zones is desirable. Their point, however, is a more fundamental and critical one: that when one considers contemporary capitalism, one should include within it the parts of the world that it is today fashionable to say have been excluded or “expelled” from it. For Deleuze|Guattari, there can be no such thing as a subject who has been cast out of capitalism. Rather, what others call the “abject” or “disposable” are already firmly within...

326 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 468.
327 Finewood and Stroup, ‘Fracking and the Neoliberalization of the Hydro-Social Cycle in Pennsylvania’s Marcellus Shale’.
330 Sassen, ‘Expelled’; Sassen, Expulsions.
capitalist social relations. To put it paradoxically, they are included as excluded and precisely as excluded they are as necessary to the smooth functioning of capitalism as the worker, the consumer, or the capitalist. It is in this specific sense that Deleuze | Guattari speak of internal Souths and internal Third Worlds, to which I would add sacrifice zones and “un/expected places of disempowerment and vulnerability.”

It is at this point that Deleuze | Guattari’s figure of the minority takes a complicated turn that will be discussed in considerably more detail in Chapter 3. Minorization in the sense that it is being developed here is not to be confused with an idea of becoming-minoritarian as a movement beyond the capitalist axiomatic that will be discussed in more detail in later chapters. The easiest way to keep them apart is to think of the latter as subjective and the former as objective. These concepts are nevertheless related. If the political practice of becoming-minoritarian is to occur then the movement of reterritorialization or re-inscription must fail leaving the subject out of place in the social field. This leads to the experience that in the next chapter I follow Deleuze | Guattari and Nicholas Thoburn in calling cramped space. Because minorities are at the same time that which can exceed the recuperative capacities of capital and this self-same excess insofar as capitalism reintegrates it as subsets of its axiomatic they both are and are not within the structure of capital. They are both fully integrated, accorded minority status, rights, recognitions, national autonomy, and so on and absolutely irreducible to capitalism. We could put this paradox this way: minorities are of the social order and as such they are a part of it, but they are not in the social order and as such have no part in it and thus condense within them the potential (but only the potential) to take a line of flight from capitalist social relations. Or, as Deleuze | Guattari put it whilst discussing nationalist minorities:

“The response of the States, or of the axiomatic, may obviously be to accord minorities regional or federal autonomy, in short, to add axioms. But this is not the problem: this operation consists only in translating the minorities into denumerable sets or subsets...What is proper to the minority is to assert the power of the nondenumerable, even if that minority is composed of a single member. That is the formula of multiplicities.”

331 Thoburn, ‘The People Are Missing’.
332 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 470.
Deleuze|Guattari are here extending their use of set theoretical language to make the argument that capital can only operate as a quantitative (denumerable) operation: quantities of labour, commodities, money, time, rights, and so on. Minorities, they say, can always be translated into denumerable sets but what is “proper” to the minority is to express something *in excess* of the countable, a qualitative difference of pure multiplicity, which in my reading of Deleuze|Guattari must be correlated with the Lacanian Real as that which is constitutive of the Symbolic-Imaginary order but impossible to represent within it. We therefore have a tripartite movement: from deterritorialization (as an objective tendency in capital) to reterritorialization as a minority subset (which has a tendency to fail) to the potential for a becoming-minoritarian as a subjective politics, or what Deleuze|Guattari call “creative and created, becoming.”333

This is why the Deleuzio-Guattarian minority is fundamentally in conflict with liberal understandings of minorities as recognized cultures, rights-bearers, and interest groups. From the Deleuzio-Guattarian perspective such theorists have only identified one aspect of minorities: the minority as a quantitative or denumerable subset of capital. When minorities are reduced to their status as subsets of the capitalist axiomatic, however, we remain trapped in the familiar dynamics of permissive liberal democracy.334 In Žižek’s words, this characterized by the belief that: “All positions should be heard, all interests taken into account, the human rights of everyone guaranteed, all ways of life, cultures and practices respected, and so on. The obsession of this democracy is the protection of all kinds of minorities: cultural, religious, sexual, etc.”335 Moreover, we remain trapped in the belief that all positions *can* be heard and that all interests *can* be taken into account within the liberal world order. What such theorists miss (or perhaps better symptomatically disavow in the psychoanalytic sense of pushing out of mind) is the power that minorities have, through becoming-minoritarian, to set in motion transformations in subjectivity and social organization that exceeds every axiomatic or recuperative operation that capital has at its disposal:

“However modest the demand, it always constitutes a point that the axiomatic cannot tolerate: when people demand to formulate their problems themselves, and to determine at least the particular conditions under which they can receive a more general solution…It is always astounding to see the same story repeated:

333 Deleuze and Guattari, 106.
335 Žižek, ‘How to Begin from the Beginning’, 55.
the modesty of the minorities’ initial demands, coupled with the impotence of the axiomatic to resolve the slightest corresponding problem.”

This is why I shall argue repeatedly that the Deleuzio-Guattarian minority has two sides or that it is dialectically split. One side is its possible inclusion within the structures of capitalism. The other is a remainder or an excess of the structure, the “reverse side” of the structure as they say in Anti-Oedipus. That is, the Lacanian Real. The minority is both the undoing of the structure in a line of flight, a becoming-minoritarian, and the key to capital’s perpetuation as a differentially included subset in the capitalist axiomatic. This structural positioning and the role it grants to the subject as a political agent disappears in vitalist readings of Deleuze|Guattari where the minor is said to be opposed to the major in that it affirms the “unruliness, and the obstinacy of life.”

Extending Deleuze|Guattari’s Minorization Thesis

The topological placement of minorities as both within and without the structure of capitalism will be familiar to readers of Marx and Lacan. Like Deleuze|Guattari, both thinkers locate a paradoxical object that is in Lacanian language “extimate” (extimité) to the structure. Estimate is a Lacanian neologism that disrupts the distinction of inside and outside by combining exterieur and intimité, that is, what is exterior and what is intimate to, or inside, to describe something that is paradoxically “included out” of a structure. In Marx, this something is the proletariat. For Lacan, this something is objet petite a. Both produce a surplus that is an effect of the structure and which set the whole thing into motion. I will address the association between objet a, the proletariat, and the minority in the following chapters in greater detail. For the moment, I want only to highlight the connection Deleuze|Guattari make between minorities and the proletariat to push their conclusions somewhat further than they do themselves.

336 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 471.
337 Deleuze and Guattari, Anti-Oedipus, 309.
339 Miller, ‘Extimity’.
At the end of the 13th plateau Deleuze|Guattari are explicit that the minority has an essential relation to the proletariat. Both must bring about their own abolition in capital even as they are conditioned by it:

“The power of minority, of particularity, finds its figure or its universal consciousness in the proletariat. But as long as the working class defines itself by an acquired status or even by a theoretically conquered State, it appears only as ‘capital’, a part of capital (variable capital), and does not leave the plan(e) of capital. At best, the plan(e) becomes bureaucratic. On the other hand, it is by leaving the plan(e) of capital, and never ceasing to leave it, that a mass becomes increasingly revolutionary and destroys the dominant equilibrium of the denumerable set.”

This is an essential passage that will be returned to and interpreted in greater detail in later chapters. For now, it is enough to register that Deleuze|Guattari make an explicit connection between the proletariat and the minority. The minority, as a split between its status as a subset of capital and in excess of capital, receives its universal consciousness in the figure of the proletariat. Indeed, for Sibertin-Blanc, minorities are in such close proximity to the proletariat because they are “nothing other than the “proletarianized masses, but they are masses inasmuch as they are immediately formed within institutional, social, juridical and ideological structures of national States.” While I agree with Sibertin-Blanc, his argument fails to take into consideration the fact that Deleuze|Guattari make claims about minorities that directly contradict his interpretation.

Whereas the above quoted passage explicitly links minorities to the proletariat and thus to class struggle, elsewhere in A Thousand Plateaus they speak about becoming-minoritarian in ways that disregard class struggle, form, and structure, in favour of a vitalist ethics of realizing the power of pure becoming as such. The clearest example of a vitalist disregard for class struggle is found in their claim from the 4th plateau, “Postulates of Linguistics,” that “in erecting the figure of a universal minoritarian consciousness one addresses powers (puissances) of becoming that belong to a different realm from that of Power (Pouvoir) and Domination. Continuous variation constitutes the becoming-minoritarian of everybody.” In this passage universal minoritarian consciousness is

341 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 472.
342 Sibertin-blanc and Hodges, State and Politics, 224.
343 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 106.
clearly not related to the proletariat and its struggle for emancipation but to the virtual flux of becoming. We are therefore working with an entirely different notion of universality. Instead of the universal that pertains to the extimate or *exceptional point* that is included out of the structure – as in Marx’s notion of the proletariat – becoming-minoritarian is universal in the sense that everyone *without exception* has access to the powers of virtual becoming. The former remains formalist, Marxist, and historically contingent. The latter slips into a-political and an-historical vitalism. To my mind this as a clear case of Deleuze|Guattari’s two antinomic theories of minorities entering into an unassailable contradiction.

There is, however, a more ambiguous claim made at the end of the 13th plateau shortly after the predictions that ours is becoming the age of minorities and that we will see new minoritarian aggregates form as capital expands beyond its self-imposed limits. Here, Deleuze|Guattari write that the minority is “a universal figure, or becoming-minoritarian of everybody/everything (*devinir tout le monde*).” This is an intriguing and politically challenging statement. On first sight it appears to repeat the vitalist position of the 4th plateau. However, given its proximity to Deleuze|Guattari’s analysis of Marx’s theory of the tendency for the rate of profit to fall and their historical, formalist, theory of minorities, I would like to provide an interpretation that instead extends and elaborates on the importance of class struggle to their formalist theory of minorities.

To understand what is being claimed by Deleuze|Guattari we need to maintain a conceptual distinction between minorities and becoming-minoritarian. Minorities, as we have seen, are objectively formed. They are differentially included in the capitalist axiomatic and in excess of it. They are the proletarianized masses insofar as they are formed within institutional apparatus of states, ideology, international law, and so on. Becoming-minoritarian, however, is a subjective act of political struggle available only to the proletariat. Given the difference between minorities and becoming-minoritarian a question arises: How does one reconcile the claim that there is a “becoming-minoritarian of everybody” with Deleuze|Guattari’s earlier claim that the minority finds its universal consciousness in the proletariat? Is there not a contradiction between claiming that the minority is associated with the proletariat and arguing that capital can unleash a becoming-minoritarian of everyone? Or, at its most basic: Have we not forgotten class struggle?

344 Žižek, *The Universal Exception*, 125.
Not necessarily. I choose to interpret the claim that in overthrowing its own limits, capital can unleash a becoming-minoritarian of everybody as a statement expressing a *tendentia* logic of capitalism. Capital, as a self-revolutionizing social form, *can* minorize everybody and everything without regard for social standing. This is not at all inconsistent with Marx's theory of proletarianization in *Capital Vol. I* or his famous claim that capital has little concern for individual capitals. They are merely “personifications of economic categories, embodiments of particular class-relations and class-interests” and are only “respectable” insofar as they are part of a “social mechanism, of which he is but one of the wheels.” \(^{346}\) For Marx, capitalism is the social system defined by an anonymous, blind, mechanism of self-expansion. Under capital, human needs and subjective enrichment become negligible and an abstract form of exploitation takes hold: capital’s self-valorization. It is this that Marx had in mind when he spoke of the oft-quoted, oft-derided, “automatic subject” or that Deleuze|Guattari acknowledge when they speak, with reference to Marx, of “a single unqualified and global Subjectivity” which capitalizes on all of the processes of subjectification…this single subject now expresses itself as an Object in general.\(^ {348}\) Deleuze|Guattari are here dancing around the notion of an objective totality which exposes both capitalists and proletariats to its mechanisms of expansion, proletarianization and minorization: “Circulation constitutes capital as a subjectivity commensurate with society in its entirety.”\(^ {349}\) And yet for all that, as Werner Bonefeld argues, capital remains bound to class struggle. Its supposed “self-valorization” is an appearance dialectically dependent upon its personifications.\(^ {350}\) This is what lies behind Marx’s claim that value “lays golden eggs.” Surplus-value is achieved only through a structural antagonism that it at the same time covers up and disavows.\(^ {351}\)

This leads to a fundamental question that Deleuze|Guattari do not pose: given capital’s apparent objective drive to self-valorization, to the overcoming of its immanent limits, can the tendential minorization of everyone/everything reach its absolute limit, or might there exist counter-tendencies akin to those to be found in the falling rate of profit? Or, put differently, no matter the need for capital to self-revolutionize, could class relations intervene to perturb the minorization of some privileged communities?

---

347 Marx and Engels, 588.
349 Deleuze and Guattari, 452.
350 Bonefeld, 'Capital as Subject and the Existence of Labour'.
An answer to this question can be illustrated by way of example: In 2012, the former Secretary of State to Donald Trump and then Exxon CEO, Rex Tillerson was faced a quandary. As Exxon CEO, Tillerson had presided over the expansion of fracking across the United States and had been a vocal critic of regulations and resistance to the industry. In 2012, he blamed the supposedly “dysfunctional regulation” around fracking for “holding back the American economic recovery, growth, and global competitiveness.” Tillerson had also defended fracking as “an old technology just being applied, integrated with some new technologies” and insisted that protests were unnecessary because the “risks” are in fact “very manageable.”

These convictions were put to the test when a permit was submitted by Cross Timbers Water Supply Commission – formerly known as Bartonville Water Supply Corp. (BWSC) – to construct a 160-foot 750,000-gallon capacity water tower next to his $5 million home in Bartonville, Texas. It soon became apparent that the proprietors of the tower might sell its contents to fracking companies working in the area. Since each “frack-job” requires on average 2 to 8 million gallons of water and hundreds of truck trips to complete, towers such as this are a necessary component of any fracking project. The Bartonville water tower, like all such water towers across the United States, would therefore, potentially, need to be frequented by industrial-sized water trucks throughout the day whenever a fracking project was conducted.

Faced with this possibility, Tillerson and his wife joined a lawsuit against BWSC. Another signatory of note was Dick Armey, a former U.S House representative, Tea Party member and friend of Dick Cheney who had a central role to play in the introduction of fracking to the United States. As the lawsuit explains, Bartonville Texas is comprised of “luxury properties worth millions of dollars:”

“Each of the homeowners built or purchased their homes in Bartonville to live in an upscale community free of industrial properties, tall buildings and other structures that might devalue their properties and adversely impact the rural lifestyle that they sought to enjoy. [...] Each of these homeowners selected Bartonville because the Town had adopted zoning and other ordinance calculated to prevent undesirable development not in character with their neighbourhood and the zoning of their properties.”

353 Rosenberg, “‘Stand Back, I’m Going to Try Science’”.
Reasons for the lawsuit also include:

1) The claim that BWSC “will sell water to oil and gas explorers for fracing [sic] shale formations leading to traffic with heavy trucks on FM 407, creating noise and nuisance and traffic hazards.”

2) That BWSC had misled the community by at first promising a lower-impact discrete water tank.

3) That the tower will “create an attractive nesting spot for invasive species of birds and other animals that will “befoul [the] Plaintiffs properties.”

4) That the price of properties in the area will be considerably decreased due both to the above mentioned befoulment and the visual impact of the tower.

5) That BWSC “will lease or sell rights to third parties for the location of antennas and cell towers.”

6) That “The Defendants [BWSC] have commenced construction and have erected a super structure to an alarming height in defiance of the law. They have gambled that once constructed, however illegally, this court will consider it a fait accompli for which the only remedy, if any will be damages.”

Needless to say, there is ample evidence that every one of these practices goes on in other fracking fields with relative impunity. I encountered many of them myself during my fieldwork.

Tillerson claimed that the lawsuit was not against fracking per se but the devaluation of his property. In other words, as homo economicus, as a good capitalist, Tillerson’s defence is to reduce the motivations for the lawsuit down to its purely economic impact. After months of mocking coverage, Tillerson was forced to leave the lawsuit. But in 2015 the case succeeded and BWSC was forced to “dismantle, remove, and demolish” the partially completed water tower.

The glib response to all of this would be to pronounce Tillerson a hypocrite. After all, poorer communities are equally concerned about the character of their

neighbourhoods, the safety of their families and the value of their properties (if they can afford to own one) and yet they must incur the costs of an industry that the millionaire residents of Bartonville, Texas, hire lawyers to contest. Many saw the lawsuit in this light and so, not surprisingly, Tillerson’s resistance was considered a classic case of “not in my back yard” nimbyism. As Philip Bump put it in the *Atlantic*, this is a story of “just two average joes, fighting the system they control.” There is certainly some truth to this but there is more to the story.

It is not so much that Tillerson and Armey control the system. As we have already seen, the structural logic of capital means that it is perhaps more accurate to say that capital controls them; they are merely personifications of individual capitals assisting in the self-expansion of capital. Yet at the same time, they are minimally able to influence the direction that capital accumulation takes. Deleuze|Guattari are not wrong to say that there is a “becoming-minoritarian of everybody/everything” but it is nevertheless only a half truth. Minorization must be considered a *tendential* trait of capital replete with its own counter-tendencies. There are always those who can put a stop to this tendency and so are *not* minorized despite the fact that tendentially speaking they *can* be minorized. This point can be neatly presented as a maxim:

Everyone *can* be minorized.
Not everyone *will* be minorized.

We could therefore say that though it is true that there is a tendential logic in capital that pulls it towards the minorization of everybody and everything, it is also abundantly clear that there are those with the power to ward off this tendency. The benefit of the above maxim is that it extracts from Deleuze|Guattari’s argument a gap across which it is possible to reinstate a properly political antagonism that is not fully developed in their own thought but that is nonetheless suggested in their association of the minority with the proletariat. Rather than it being the case that everyone is in equal measure and without distinction open to the vagaries of capital, there are those who are routinely or newly subjected to these vagaries and there are those who have the power to defend themselves to a larger or smaller degree. Deleuze|Guattari are of course aware of this point. As they argue in the 13th plateau, whilst capital acts as a point of subjectification for the capitalist

---

356 Bump, “The CEO of Exxon Stands Up for Homeowners Against Frackers (When He’s the Homeowner).”
357 I borrow this formulation from Jodi Dean’s 2nd thesis on the comrade ‘Anyone but not everyone can be a comrade.’ Dean, ‘Four Theses on the Comrade’.
and the proletariat alike, some, “the ‘capitalists’, are subjects of enunciation that form the private subjectivity of capital, while others, the ‘proletarians’, are subjects of the statement, subjected to the technical machines in which constant capital is effectuated.”

Whatever else this analogy between the psychoanalytic subject and capital might imply, it at the very least suggests an irreducible gap between these structural positions. Nonetheless, in their discussion of minorities, insufficient attention is paid to the continued relevance of class in contemporary social structures.

One must therefore push their argument on minorities to its logical conclusion and claim that whilst, yes, there is a tendency towards the minorization of everything and everyone, it is a tendency that never reaches its absolute limit. The minority must be situated within the more fundamental structural antagonism of class struggle and yet the minority cannot be reduced to class struggle. There is no class reductionism precisely because, as we saw at the start of the chapter, it is the dynamic of class struggle itself which constitutes the minority. For all that, one cannot reduce minority struggles to class struggle without inaugurating an abbreviated critique of capital and returning Deleuze|Guattari’s thought to a more orthodox Marxist position devoid of both its specificity and admitted inconsistencies. There are important components of the minority that makes its conceptual peculiarity worth maintaining and it is to these that I turn in the next chapter.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has argued for the double significance of Deleuze|Guattari’s periodizing claim, published in 1980, that “Ours is becoming the age of minorities.” I have argued that the first sense of the phrase is to name a global restructuring in global capital and an associated rearrangement of sites of struggle. The function of minorities in Deleuze|Guattari’s discourse is thus to mark: (1) a displacement of struggles from the site of production to the social field at large (production, circulation, consumption, rights and recognitions) and in particular to the nexus of state and capital. (2) From the identity of the worker to struggles that have their origins in matters as varied as the environment, gender, youth, race and colonialism. Hence, the minority names the dispersal of struggle across the social field and the collapse of the worker as the stand-in for the universal

---

interests of the proletariat. Writing during this restructuring, Deleuze | Guattari’s figure of minority provides them with a new grammar of struggle and holds open the space to ask the question of how the atomized working classes can produce meaningful social transformation.

The second sense has immediate consequences for our own era. Deleuze | Guattari suggest a tendential logic of minorization is inherent to capital’s self-revolutionizing dynamics. I take this observation as an invitation to interpret struggles against fracking in the Marcellus Shale Fields as struggles of the newly minorized. As capital deterritorializes its objective and subjective limits it must place them down again (reterritorialize) further along. Yet, crucially, this process does not go off without a hitch. Some will encounter a sense of what Deleuze | Guattari call ‘cramped space’ as a result. The chapter began the work of demonstrating this process in the Marcellus Shale fields.

Finally, I argued that although Deleuze | Guattari claim minorization tends towards the “becoming-minoritarian of everybody/everything,” this limit is in reality never attained. Minority struggles are to be thought of as internal to capitalist class antagonism. Everyone can be minorized but not everyone will be minorized. This formulation reinscribes a properly political dynamic into the concept of minorities that is at risk of being lost in Deleuze | Guattari’s texts.

Overall, then, the chapter has argued that minorization, as an objective tendency of capitalist accumulation, acts as the negative condition of possibility for a minoritarian politics and for the formation of new collective subjectivities that I am interested in tracing in anti-fracking struggles in New York and Pennsylvania. In the next chapter I turn to minorization’s subjective correlate: cramped space.
Cramped Space in the Marcellus Shale Fields

Chapter II
In the previous chapter I argued that minorization is an objective tendency of capitalism’s self-undermining dynamics. Often read as an endorsement of particularism and the identitarian politics of the New Left, I claim that minorities are more properly understood as Deleuze|Guattari’s effort to think the political consequences of post-Fordist, neo-colonial, capitalism. Rather than a rejection of class politics, the minority names and wrestles with the politically ambiguous displacement of struggle from the site of production to the social field at large and the multiplication of identities mobilized in struggle. Far from an endorsement of identity politics the minority is a materialist reckoning with its consequences for proletarian solidarity and for the formation of collective anti-capitalist forms of subjectivity under new conditions.

This interpretation has two important consequences. Firstly, it brings the concept of minorities into conversation with the revolutionary Marxist tradition. This serves as an important corrective to the predominantly liberal, post-structuralist, anarchist, or “critical” Anglo-Saxon receptions of Deleuze|Guattari’s thought. Secondly, it repositions the concept of minorities as the point at which Deleuze|Guattari’s more properly philosophical project coincides with providing what Mao called a “concrete analysis of the concrete conditions” of struggle. Thought of in these terms, minorities can be recovered as a useful way to think about the political struggles of our times.

With this repositioning in mind, I have taken their prediction that “we will also probably see the formation or re-formation of minoritarian aggregates in relation to affected regions” as an invitation to think the figure of the minority in relation to anti-fracking struggles in the United States. Hydraulic fracturing, I argue, has led to the minorization of new populations in ways that could potentially pose a problem to further capital valorization. This chapter makes a shift away from this “objective” side of minorities towards their “subjective” side and thus makes a correlated shift away from Marx as my key interlocutor to Lacan.

As we began to see in the previous chapter, what is so intriguing about the figure of the minority is the way it points to an inconsistency in Deleuze|Guattari’s thought. As their theory of minorities develops Deleuze|Guattari seem to vacillate indecisively between Deleuze’s metaphysics of the virtual/actual, multiplicities, and assemblages and an underdeveloped social critique that draws readily from set-theory and the “structuralist” tradition inaugurated by figures such as Lacan and Althusser. Matters are
complicated by the fact that the two approaches are not rigorously distinct but rather seem to overlap and inform one and other in ways that remain ambiguous and undecided. When the concept of the minor is first introduced in *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature* – as well as in certain sections of *A Thousand Plateaus* – the minor is understood as a force of differentiation *within* a major model: whether that be a language or a set of laws and norms. And yet elsewhere, particularly when the minor is fused to the concept of “becoming,” the minority is thought of as both a “subset” of capital to be managed *and* the potential for “undecidable propositions,” or new forms of subjectivity to throw capitalism itself into crisis. There is thus a tripartite formula: major-minor-becoming-minoritarian. These undecidable propositions, I claim, are a surplus or excess unattributable to the structure and yet nonetheless among its effects. In other words, the minority becomes a site of dialectical contradiction, a site where it becomes possible to act on the structure in a way that is somewhat proximal to the function of the Lacanian Real. The current chapter brackets the consequences of the second formulation to attend to the conceptual developments found in *Kafka*. It is in this book and in Deleuze’s later individually authored work *Cinema II*, that Deleuze|Guattari are most attendant to what I call the subjective experience of being minorized that is so crucial to the account of minorities I wish to develop. The full dialectical consequences of Deleuze|Guattari’s minorities will then be elaborated in the following chapter.

A focus on subjectivity is necessary at this point since from the discussion so far it is not yet clear how minorization can be anything other than the imposition of new kinds of precarity or immiseration in new locations and among new populations. As Sibertin-Blanc writes, when we focus only on the objective tendency of capital to produce minorities, it appears as if the process functions to the “ambiguous benefit of the rise of new powers of capitalist accumulation.” By atomizing communities, by weakening working class consciousness and solidarity, minorization appears to produce the perfect set of conditions for capitalist accumulation at an ever greater, ever intensified, world-scale. In this chapter I argue that the concept of “cramped space” is the means to escape this impasse. Cramped space names and theorizes the subjective experience of being minorized, which for Deleuze|Guattari is the precondition to inventing a politics. It is the sense of cramped space that produces sites of struggle and the chance – but never the guarantee – of creating new collective forms of subjectivity.

361 Sibertin-blanc and Hodges, *State and Politics*, 229.
In the first part of this chapter I introduce the concept of cramped space via a critical engagement with Nicholas Thoburn’s development of what he calls “minor politics” and Kafka’s short story “A Report to the Academy.” Though the phrase “cramped space” only appears once in Deleuze|Guattari’s work, Thoburn correctly identifies its importance and has demonstrated its applicability well beyond the limited literary treatment it receives in Deleuze|Guattari’s philosophy. As Deleuze|Guattari and Thoburn explain, cramped space is characterized by a lack of autonomy from social relations. This lack – or what Deleuze|Guattari describe as a short-circuit between autonomy and heteronomy – is what grounds the possibility of inventing new collective forms of subjectivity and politics. Nevertheless, through a reading of the French edition of Kafka and the essential difference between le politique and la politique I argue that Thoburn goes too far when he proposes that the experience of cramped space leads immediately to the invention of a politics (le politique). Instead, I suggest cramped space names the imposition or encroachment of an established political order (la politique) on the otherwise private affairs of the individual or collective. From here I propose that cramped space functions similarly to Lacan’s theory of anxiety. Both cramped space and anxiety are produced by a “lack of a lack” or the proximity of the Other. In the second section of the chapter I demonstrate the processes of minorization and cramped space at work in Dimock, Pennsylvania and show how my re-worked theory of cramped space helps us to see how the Symbolic Law, or the Other, must re-enter the scene to make sense of the experience of cramped space. This paves the way for a discussion of the Majority’s role in structuring minorities in the following chapter.

Cramped Space

Strictly speaking, cramped space is not a Deleuzio-Guattarian concept. The phase appears only once in their collective works and interviews and is not developed in a systematic way. And yet as Nicholas Thoburn has demonstrated the phrase captures an elemental and often overlooked precept of their philosophy: that the invention of new forms of collective subjectivity, expression, or invention, take place under constrained and constraining social and historical conditions, in “choked passages,”363 and encounters

363 Deleuze, Negotiations 1972-1990, 133.
with “impossibilities.”\footnote{Deleuze and Guattari, \textit{Kafka Toward a Minor Literature}, 16.} An emphasis on materially delimited blockages, restrictions and constraints cannot help but come as surprise to those familiar with a certain reading of Deleuze|Guattari. The two thinkers are often interpreted as exponents of abstract and unbridled flows, fluxes, and desires; as proponents of ontological (and thus political) contingency, an “otherworldly” metaphysics of becomings; or as purveyors of a politics of abstract “escape” or “flight” from a situation. As I demonstrated in the introduction to this thesis, there is no denying that this reading is available in certain passages of their philosophy (and has even become the dominant reading) yet their discussion of minorities and minority expression provides us with a counter-reading that has become a significant point of reference in recent years.\footnote{Piotrowski and Inquiry, ‘Writing in Cramped Spaces’; Lüthi, “‘You Don’t Have to Ride Jim Crow’”; The Free Association, ‘Event Horizon’; Thoburn, ‘The People Are Missing’.}

As Thoburn writes, cramped space aims to “conceptualize the way that minorities experience the interplay between the individual and the social, the personal and the political – or better, how the minority experience is characterized by the breakdown of these boundaries – and the ramifications of this breakdown across a range of linguistic, aesthetic, and political phenomena.”\footnote{Thoburn, 368.} Cramped space, then, is the subjective experience of having the “public” or “political” impose itself on one’s day-to-day life in such a way that the social ceases to be a mere background and is felt as a constraint on one’s actions. This constraint is then taken up as the condition of possibility for what Deleuze|Guattari call “creation” and “invention.”

The key theoretical contributions of cramped space can be summarised in two paradoxical formulas: 1) A short-circuit between autonomy and heteronomy. 2) A short-circuit between the individual and the collective. We shall address each of these in turn before connecting them to the experiences of those in the Marcellus Shale Fields.

\textit{Autonomy/Heteronomy}

In his own analysis of minorities, Sibertin-Blanc briefly draws attention to the first of these short-circuits:

“we find [a] tension characteristic of any thinking on politics as [the] space of practices of emancipation and transformation but pushed to a paradoxical
extreme. Where the republican tradition taught us to distinguish heteronomy and autonomy, and to understand emancipation (leaving the state of minority) as the passage from one to the other in the unifying form of the sovereign people; there again where the Marxist and socialist traditions learned to dialectalize heteronomy and autonomy in a process of emancipation carried by a universal class… the idea of a ‘minor political subject’ seems to come before their coming together, as if their distance was eliminated in a problematic or perhaps untenable short-circuit, which also carries the suspicion of covering over, in an impossible form, the void of the subject.”

Deleuze | Guattari argue that since minorities are those who find themselves marginalized and within an “intolerable” or “impossible” situation, they are forced to work from within a set of conditions that are not of their own devising and re-work them to create something liveable. This idea is expressed in various ways throughout their individual and collective works. In Negotiations Deleuze writes that the creation of collective forms of subjectivity, expression, or struggle involves “tracing a path between impossibilities” and that “creation takes place in bottlenecks… a creator who isn’t grabbed around the throat by a set of impossibilities is no creator.” In May 68 Did Not Take Place, Deleuze | Guattari famously write that the event was defined by the shared demand: “Give me the possible, or else I’ll suffocate.” We perhaps find a precursor to this idea in Marx’s observation that humanity makes “their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances, but under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brains of the living.” What Marx points to here is precisely what Deleuze | Guattari mean by the conditions of “cramped space” that give rise to resistance, struggle, and revolution. We do not act autonomously but in and through a set of constraints and limitations that are determinate of our subjectivity as such. For Thoburn, Deleuze | Guattari’s relating of impossibility and confinement with idea of freedom and invention tackle “liberal humanist notions of freedom and creativity (as a space of individual autonomy and self-expression) head on” since it claims that “it is precisely in cramped situations, in the enforced proximity of peoples, histories, and

367 Sibeertin-blanc and Hodges, State and Politics, 224.
368 Deleuze, Negotiations 1972-1990, 133.
369 Deleuze, 133.
370 Deleuze, ‘May ’68 Did Not Take Place’, 234.
languages that creation occurs.”372 This, then, is the paradoxical short-circuit between heteronomy and autonomy that strikes a blow against Kantian ethics and what Rosi Braidotti calls the ‘liberal individualistic view of the subject, which defined perfectibility in terms of autonomy and self-determination.”373

The paradox receives its most extensive treatment in Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature in the process of distinguishing minorities and “minor literature” from majorities and “majority literature.”374 Deleuze|Guattari’s intention in Kafka is to explain both the force and novelty of Kafka’s writings and minor literature in general without resorting to what Deleuze|Guattari believe to be a naïve Oedipal explanation of returning everything to the question of a transcendent Law (the well-known idea that the whole of Kafka can be explained by his fraught relationship with his father). Bracketing this path of analysis, Deleuze|Guattari explain Kafka, minor literatures, and the minor condition by indexing them to the constraining or oppressive social context from which they spring. For Deleuze|Guattari, a minor literature must work from within these parameters and re-work them into a novel means of expression: “a minor literature doesn’t come from a minor language; it is rather that which a minority constructs within a major language”.375

This is easily demonstrated with Kafka. Writing from Prague as a Czech Jewish minority at the collapse of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Kafka found himself constrained by the limitations of his own language. His parents had raised him speaking German so he could integrate into Prague’s bourgeoisie, yet Kafka found this language to be a considerable burden. As he confesses in his journal:

‘Yesterday it occurred to me that I did not always love my mother as she deserved and as I could, only because the German language prevented it. The Jewish mother is no ‘Mutter’, to call her ‘Mutter’ makes her a little comic (not to herself, because we are in Germany), we give a Jewish woman the name of a German mother, but forget the contradiction that sinks into the emotions so much the more heavily, ‘Mutter’ is peculiarly German for the Jew, it unconsciously contains, together with the Christian splendour Christian coldness also, the Jewish woman who is called ‘Mutter’ therefore becomes not only comic but strange.’376

372 Thoburn, Deleuze, Marx and Politics, 19.
373 Braidotti, The Posthuman, 23.
374 Deleuze and Guattari, Kafka Toward a Minor Literature.
375 Deleuze and Guattari, 16.
376 Kafka, The Diaries of Franz Kafka, 156.
Kafka thus finds himself operating within a series of impossibilities that Deleuze|Guattari describe as “the impossibility of not writing, the impossibility of writing in German, the impossibility of writing otherwise.” According to Deleuze|Guattari, when Kafka writes he traverses these impossibilities and turns them into the conditions of possibility to create the new and politically charged body of literature that we know today. In Deleuze|Guattari’s terms, Kafka “deterritorializes” the German major language from the inside and creates a minor mode of expression. Or, as the Free Association say in their own treatment of cramped space: “sometimes we need things to get a little compacted to enable us to go spinning off again to another time and place; sometimes it’s only by being in cramped situations that we can make that leap and burst through those boundaries.”

The emphasis Deleuze|Guattari place on impossibility here is immensely important. Thoburn and Braidotti are correct to say that it provides an implicit critique of liberal humanist understandings of freedom and yet it is important to be a little more precise about what is at stake. It is not Deleuze|Guattari’s intention to critique liberal humanism’s support of individualistic autonomy. Their point is rather that for minorities the question of freedom becomes irrelevant because it is impractical. An emphasis on practicality and pragmatics is a defining feature of Deleuze’s work. It should come as no surprise, then, that when they develop the idea of cramped space, the abstract notion of freedom is set aside in favour of describing how cramped conditions call for a rigorous strategic engagement with the conditions that minorities find themselves within: “it isn’t a question of liberty as against submission, but only a question of a line of escape or, rather, of a simply way out.” To this, the abstracted liberal notion of freedom can add nothing.

This issue is approached in multiple ways throughout their texts but in Kafka they turn to the short story “A Report to the Academy.” The story is told from the perspective of an ape retelling his experience of being held captive in a cage on a ship. Describing his cage, the ape describes the cramped space he found himself within: “the whole construction was too low for me to stand up in and too narrow to sit down in.”

377 Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka Toward a Minor Literature*, 16.
381 Deleuze is particularly fond of paraphrasing George Jackson to the effect that “I may be running, but I’m looking for a gun as I go”. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 204; See: Koerner, ‘Line of Escape’.
382 Kafka and Updike, *Franz Kafka*.
383 Kafka and Updike, 252.
In despair, the ape turns to an appraisal of its situation: “I had no way out but I had to devise one, for without it I could not live.” Eventually, with no other reasonable course of action available, the ape opts to imitate the humans holding it captive, to enter into “a becoming-man of the ape,” as Deleuze and Guattari say, in the hope of being released from captivity: “[T]here was no attraction for me in imitating humans; I imitated them because I needed a way out, and for no other reason.”

The phrase “a way out” is crucial to understanding the short-circuit that is established between heteronomy and autonomy and the idea of cramped space in general. For the ape, freedom and liberty are not the same as a way out: “No, freedom was not what I wanted. Only a way out; right, or left, in any direction; I made no other demand.” Here, the idea of “a way out” or what Deleuze and Guattari call a “line of flight” is not an abstract notion but a position of responsiveness to one’s concrete surroundings. As the ape explains:

“I fear that perhaps you do not quite understand what I mean by “way out.” I use the expression in its fullest and most popular sense. I deliberately do not use the word “freedom.” I do not mean the spacious feeling of freedom on all sides…What a mockery of holy Mother Nature!”

A way out, then, is a strategic analysis with the predicament the minority finds itself in. It is the act of tracing a path between impossibilities so that the very terms of the situation might be challenged. In this case, the impossibility of remaining in the cage and the impossibility of unconstrained freedom lead to a becoming-man of the ape that ruptures the organization of the terms human/animal. From within the binary terms of human/animal the ape works to make itself an undecidable proposition. It aims to make itself unrecognizable as either one or the other. Looking back on his escape, the ape provides one of the clearest definitions of cramped space I can imagine:

384 Kafka and Updike, 253.
385 A Report to An Academy quoted in Deleuze and Guattari, Kafka Toward a Minor Literature, 14.
386 A Report to an Academy quoted in: Deleuze and Guattari, 13.
387 “Lines of flight, for their part, never consist in running away from the world but rather in causing runoffs” Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 204.
388 Kafka and Updike, Franz Kafka, 253.
“There is an excellent idiom: to fight one’s way through the thick of things; that is what I have done, I have fought through the thick of things. There was nothing else for me to do, provided always that freedom was not to be my choice.”

Nicholas Tampio, a liberal “Deleuzian,” could thus not be more wrong when he claims that “the concept of minoritarian…revitalizes the concept of liberty” and “radicalizes Mill’s thought…by emphasising that liberty means transforming our desires as well as being unconstrained and empowered to achieve our present desires.” If there is an account of freedom in Deleuze|Guattari it is a freedom that arises in and amongst constraints and not in the absence of them. It is a freedom that is better thought of as “a way out,” an immanent engagement, and not as an abstract ideal. For Deleuze|Guattari, as for Marx, heteronomy collapses in on autonomy as the grounds for the creative act.

Individual/Collective

The second short-circuit Deleuze|Guattari establish is between the individual and the collective. Deleuze’s entire philosophical project contests the possibility of an individual on metaphysical grounds but once again the approach taken in relation to minorities has a more practical focus. For Deleuze|Guattari cramped conditions force individual creative acts to take on a collective significance. Whilst majorities and majority literatures are those for whom “the individual concern (familial, marital, and so on) joins with other no less individual concerns, the social milieu serving as a mere environment or background,” the minority and minority literatures are those for whom “cramped space forces each individual intrigue to connect immediately to politics. The individual concern thus becomes all the more necessary, indispensable, magnified, because a whole other story is vibrating within it. In this way, the family triangle connects to other triangles – commercial, economic, bureaucratic, juridical – to determine its values.” This point is clearly apparent in the above passage from Kafka’s diary where it is evident that the class politics of the time encroaches on Kafka’s relationship with his mother. A “whole other story” – that of European migratory flows and class dynamics – “is vibrating” within what appears to be an individual, even Oedipal, familial concern.

389 Kafka and Updike, 238.
391 Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka Toward a Minor Literature*, 17.
Thus, Deleuze|Guattari argue, under cramped conditions the individual concern cannot remain individual but acquires a collective significance. Since “the political domain has contaminated every statement,” there is no longer an individual subject at work but what they call a “collective enunciation.” Statements, actions, literatures and films that might otherwise be considered the effect of an individual have collective ramifications and are taken up as the effect of collective experiences. In an argument that is narrowly focused on literature but that is later extended in *Cinema II* to encompass a broader range of minority expression, Deleuze|Guattari write that because a collective consciousness may be underdeveloped or under attack in cramped conditions, minor “literature finds itself positively charged with the role and function of the collective, and even revolutionary, enunciation.” It becomes the role of literature to develop “an active solidarity in spite of scepticism” and “express another consciousness and another sensibility.” This, they add, is “not at all for ideological reasons but because the literary machine alone is determined to fill the conditions of a collective enunciation that is lacking elsewhere in this milieu: *literature is the people's concern.*” Cramped space thereby sutures the individual or the particular to the collective or even – as we shall see in Chapter 4 – to the universal.

We must, however, be careful about how we interpret Deleuze|Guattari’s claims that that “everything is political” or that the “political domain has contaminated every statement” since it is all too easy to read a non-existent politics into Deleuze|Guattari’s discussion of minorities. In his own discussion of minorities, Nicholas Thoburn regularly speaks of “Deleuze’s minor politics.” I believe this must be interpreted as an act of modesty on Thoburn’s part for although Deleuze|Guattari claim that “cramped space forces each individual intrigue to connect immediately to politics,” or that “the second characteristic of minor literatures is that everything is political,” there is no such thing as a minor politics to be found in *Kafka* or to my knowledge anywhere else in their works. Despite Thoburn’s careful explanation that his elaboration of a minor politics “is not a set of programmatic rules of a correct “Deleuzian politics”,” but a mode of engagement that always begins “‘in the middle’ of any situation or event, and is specific to the contours of the event,” the idea of “minor politics” nevertheless gives the impression

---

392 Deleuze and Guattari, 17.
393 Deleuze and Guattari, 19.
394 Thoburn, *Deleuze, Marx and Politics*, 12,13,90,143,145.
395 Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka Toward a Minor Literature*, 17.
396 Deleuze and Guattari, 17.
that this comportment to a state of affairs is itself a politics. The fact that cramped space and minorities do not have a politics is why I believe Deleuze|Guattari stick to the more ambiguous and a-political terms of “creation” and “invention” in their own texts. Today these terms have unfortunate resonances with marketing and business speak but they must nevertheless be maintained if we are to understand the extent and limitations of Deleuze|Guattari’s philosophy.

The need for caution is already apparent in the English translation. To say that cramped space “forces each individual intrigue to connect immediately to politics” is not the same as saying an individual intrigue has a politics. Yet it is clearer still in the original French edition, which reads: “son espace exigu fait que chaque affaire individuelle est immédiatement branchée sur la politique.” In passing this sentence it is important to bear in mind the French-philosophical distinction between le politique (the political) and la politique (politics). The former names the process of ordering or the becoming of a political order, the latter names an established order. Insofar as Deleuze|Guattari opt for la politique, it is clear that we should not read the sentence as meaning that cramped space produces its own le politique – a minor politics or process of ordering – but that cramped space forces the individual intrigue to be connected immediately to an established political state of affairs – la politique. Thus, cramped space is the imposition or encroachment of an established political order on the erstwhile private affairs of the individual. It is for this reason that a minor literature, even one that is tirelessly committed to the intimate and the familial, can be said to become “all the more necessary, magnified, because a whole other story is vibrating within it” without necessarily leading to a definite politics. Similarly, when Deleuze|Guattari write that “the political domain has contaminated every statement,” the French, “le champ politique a contaminé tout énoncé” is best understood as the field of established political order. Ultimately, then, what are we to make of Deleuze|Guattari’s claim that under cramped conditions the individual concern connects immediately to politics? Simply that what the minority does under these conditions is not itself a politics, minor or otherwise, but that it nonetheless opens the space for a politics. The political consequences of this reading, sketched only in brief here, will be the focus of Chapter 4.

Similar caution is needed to understand what is at stake for the subject or collective who experiences cramped space. Thoburn argues that what is essential about the notion of cramped space is that unlike other theoretical approaches where “the source

397 Thoburn, Deleuze, Marx and Politics, 13.
398 Deleuze and Guattari, Kafka. Pour une littérature mineure, 30.
399 Deleuze and Guattari, 31.
of political practice is a collective identity – the identity of a people, nation, class, or minority – as it comes to articulate its grievances, in the social realm,” the idea of cramped space, as we have seen, turns this on its head by contending that “politics arises among those who lack or refuse [a] coherent identity, in their encounter with the impasses, limits, or impossibilities of individual and collective subjectivity.”\(^{400}\) This, Thoburn goes on to say, is a situation where “the people are missing.” Without wanting to disagree entirely with this summary of cramped space, I want to reject the idea that the minorized subject is a subject who lacks what Thoburn calls here a “coherent identity” or elsewhere a “coherent or autonomous identity”\(^{401}\) or a “self-coherent centre of identity.”\(^{402}\) The problem with these formulations is that they suggest such a thing as a “coherent identity” is possible. Yet it would not be going too far to say that Deleuze’s entire philosophical project, starting with his overturning of Plato in *Difference and Repetition*, is to reject this possibility.\(^{403}\) Whilst Thoburn does acknowledge that “there is no identity that it is not ‘impossible’ to inhabit unproblematically,” this admission seems to undermine the soundness of his distinction between the minor’s “incoherent identity” and the major’s “coherent identity” rather than reinforce it.\(^{404}\) How are we to discern between the incoherent identity of a minor subject and the (in)coherent identity of a major subject? The concepts of a “coherent identity” or “self-coherent centre of identity” do not appear in *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature* or in discussions of minorities elsewhere and while they no doubt function for Thoburn as a convenient short-hand they nevertheless muddy the water. How, then, can we speak of the experience of cramped space? Rather than resorting to the language of identity I propose that the experience be defined as a situation in which the subject’s enjoyment becomes an issue to itself. This self-reflective move is what I believe Kafka is expressing when he writes in the above quoted passage that: “Yesterday it occurred to me that I did not always love my mother as she deserved and as I could, only because the German language prevented it.”\(^{405}\)

Understood in these terms, certain productive similarities begin to emerge between Deleuze|Guattari’s discussion of cramped space and Lacan’s account of anxiety. While for Deleuze|Guattari, cramped space is defined by a lack of autonomy from social relations, for Lacan, anxiety is similarly produced by what he calls a “lack of a lack” or

\(^{400}\) Thoburn, ‘The People Are Missing’, 367.
\(^{401}\) Thoburn, 369.
\(^{402}\) Thoburn, 370.
\(^{403}\) Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*; For an excellent introduction Deleuze’s reversal of Platonism see: Smith, ‘Platonism: The Concept of the Simulacrum: Deleuze and the Overturning of Platonism’.
\(^{405}\) Kafka, *The Diaries of Franz Kafka*, 156.
“as the sensation of the proximity of the Other.” By this Lacan means a lack of the necessary distance from the Other – the Symbolic Order, the realm of language, and social norms, the locus of authority and judgement – that makes it possible for the subject to sustain its desire. In this way both Deleuze|Guattari and Lacan explore how a sense of over-proximity of the social can have its effects on the subject. The former would of course reject the latter’s reading on the grounds that it reintroduces transcendence where they find only immanence. As they say of Kafka’s *The Trial*, there is: “An unlimited field of immanence instead of an infinite transcendence…The transcendence of the law was an abstract machine, but the law exists only in the immanence of the machinic assemblage of justice.” 406 And yet as Dolar asks: “Do we have to decide between the two, join one camp or the other? Are the two accounts irreconcilable?” 407 Dolar himself finds Deleuze|Guattari’s reading of Kafka to be “far more useful” than the naïve Oedipal readings that precede it but for him it nevertheless “avoids a paradox: the paradox of the emergence of a transcendence in the very heart of immanence, or, rather, of the way immanence always doubles itself and intersects with itself.” 408 In other words, one must pay close attention to the possibility that the Symbolic Law, the Other, must re-enter the scene as the paradoxical effect of Deleuze|Guattari’s adherence to immanence, to the possibility that all along what cramped space named was the sense of anxiety introduced by the Other at the level of the subject’s unconscious. 409 In the next chapter this Other will acquire a name: the Majority.

We have seen that cramped space brings to our attention to two short-circuits. One between heteronomy and autonomy and another between the individual and the collective. But did Lacan not discover the same when he said that desire is the desire of the Other? By which he meant, among other things, that the desire of the “individual” subject is already caught up in the social field at large and therefore already heteronomous and autonomous, individual and collective. If, as I propose, cramped space is defined by the condition that the subject’s enjoyment becomes an issue for itself then it seems we need to reintroduce the fundamental psychoanalytic question: “Che Vuoi?” – “Who am I for the Other? What does the Other want from me?” – and with it explore how cramped space, like Lacanian anxiety, can be a cause of subjective change at the level of the

406 Deleuze and Guattari, *Kafka Toward a Minor Literature*, 51.
408 Dolar, 165.
unconscious. This, at least, accounts for the experience of those I met in the cramped conditions of the Marcellus Shale fields.

Dimock, Pennsylvania: Confronting the Democratic Illusion

On April 27, 2016, I took a walk with a couple of residents of Dimock Township, P.A. to investigate the construction of a new gas compressor station on the hills overlooking their township. As we made our way up a narrow country road that wound itself towards the construction site, we could see Susquehanna County’s patchwork of dairy farms spanning off into the distance in the valleys below us. Distributed every quarter of a mile or so we could also see dozens of fracking pads, compressor stations, and waste storage sites, all interconnected by a subterranean network of pipes and gathering lines. Convoys of trucks streamed past as we walked and kicked dust up into our eyes and mouths as they hauled equipment and dirt to and from the site. One of the organizers with me, a resident of the road, estimated the number of trucks passing by his house in recent days to be in the region of 100 per-hour, every hour, from morning until night. He was having difficulty sleeping.

These walks have become routine for those concerned about the development of fracking in and around Susquehanna County. Since fracking began in Dimock in 2007, many have taken it upon themselves to ensure that gas extraction is conducted without breaching environmental and safety regulations. There is an understanding among residents that if they cannot stop fracking in the short-term, they can “bear witness,” making sure that it is done as safely as possible, reporting violations, and sharing the damage done to the community and the environment online. Organizers are well-aware that this low-level struggle might amount to serious costs the industry. Indeed, in response, and in a move that has only served to heighten the suspicions of organizers and community members, the industry has constructed giant sandbanks to obscure the view of the work sites from the road. While the industry claims that these are in place to stop on-site chemical spills from running onto near-by land or near-by streams, organizers claim that the banks do not need to be at the height they are to serve this particular

412 Della Porta and Diani, Social Movements, 176–78.
purpose. Even with the banks in place, however, violations are frequently spotted. Since 2007 there have been a total of 226 reported violations within Dimock’s borders alone and a total of 4,006 in P.A.\textsuperscript{413} It is safe to presume that many others go unreported.

As we neared the construction site, we discussed fracking regulations, what it is like to live with the industry, and how it arrived in the township. One of the residents explains to me that because they live in what the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) classifies as an area with “Class 1” population density,\textsuperscript{414} there is no legal requirement to regulate or maintain gathering lines once they have been constructed: “they can be anywhere. We’re dispensable. FERC Class 1, that’s us,” the resident opined.\textsuperscript{415} FERC Class 1 status is granted to “any location with 10 or fewer buildings intended for human occupancy within 220 yards of the centreline of the pipeline.”\textsuperscript{416} It is claimed that under these conditions, usually only met in rural areas, the risk of harm to residents is low enough to exempt pipelines from regulation by the Department of Transport (DOT), the Pipeline and Hazardous Materials Safety Administration (PHMSA), or state entities that might otherwise deter investment.

In 2012, the United States Government Accountability Office (GOA) conducted a study which found that state pipeline safety agencies cited “construction quality, maintenance practices, unknown or uncertain locations, and limited or no information on pipeline integrity as among the highest risks for federally unregulated pipelines.” The most remarkable admission here is that safety agencies may not know where pipelines carrying highly pressurized, flammable, materials are, let alone the condition that they are in. The GOA report explains that “incidents” with PHMSA regulated pipelines have “resulted in millions of dollars of property damage in recent years” but that comparable statistics in Class 1 areas do not exist.\textsuperscript{417} Whilst the GOA’s investigation recommends that the DOT should collect similar data on unregulated pipelines so that the economic cost of “incidents” can be accounted for, communities such as Dimock in Class 1 areas feel that property damage is the least of their concerns.

Two days earlier I had been shown the site of a recently exploded gas pipeline not far from Dimock. Nobody had been hurt but the explosion left a considerable crater in the ground and the fire – which had apparently burned for hours – had scorched the

\textsuperscript{413} State Impact, ‘Dimock Township | Shale Play’.
\textsuperscript{415} Dimock Resident Two, Interview with Dimock Resident Two.
\textsuperscript{417} United States Government Accountability Office, 1.
surrounding forests. Such explosions are not as uncommon as might be expected. The day following our walk a resident of Salem, P.A was severely burned and left in critical condition after a pipeline explosion destroyed his home. In 2009, the well of another Dimock resident exploded sending a concrete slab weighing thousands of pounds flying across the yard. A chemical composition test of well-water came back after the incident declaring that the water was in fact 25% methane and contaminated with several known carcinogens. These are the kinds of stories that give fracking a bad name.

Of course, the dangers of unregulated pipelines and fracking are not always so dramatic or manifestly violent. As Rob Nixon has argued, a different, stranger, kind of violence also pertains to environmental degradation; a “slow violence” that “is neither spectacular, nor instantaneous, but rather incremental and accretive, its calamitous repercussions playing out across a range of temporal scales.”418 Research now shows that “fugitive emissions” from pipelines and compressor stations can have detrimental effects on the long-term health of local communities and wildlife. Gas emissions associated with the industry, fugitive or otherwise, are known to cause cancer and harm respiratory, nervous, cardiovascular and immune systems in humans.419 Recent research and anecdotal evidence has also linked gas emissions, especially when they enter a water supply, with impaired foetal and child development in humans and cattle.420 Because mercaptan – the gas that gives the fuel we use in our homes its distinctive smell – is not added to the mix before it is ready for consumption these fugitive emissions are not easily detected by the communities of the shale fields. One resident of Dimock explained to me that the tell-tale signs of gas leaks are melted snow in the winter or dead vegetation and wildlife in the summer.

As we diverged from the road to track a path through some woods with the hope of coming out above the construction site, I asked whether the people of Dimock were consulted about the arrival of fracking, reasoning that the damaging effects of the industry were perhaps only discovered after the township had given its consent for drilling. The response was unequivocal:

418 Nixon, Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor, 2.
“Hell no. They came in in the dark of night and only a handful of people knew about it. Some people knew about it, obviously. The powerful, you know. But from our perspective, it was like you were in a fucking Stephen King novel, you’re just watching all this shit happen and nobody’s saying anything. You’re just standing there.”

“I didn’t know about it. From my standpoint, around about 2013 I saw these peculiar trucks, these barrel like trucks. And they were water carriers [bringing in water is one of the last stages before fracking begins]. It just kind of sneaks up on you, and then all of a sudden, it’s here and it’s too late, and it’s all according to regulation, nothing is illegal, everything is voted upon. People are walking around with ‘Drill Baby Drill’.”

Little wonder then that residents refer to themselves as “dispensable” or as the mother of the Salem victim put it, feel as if their “life doesn’t matter” because what matters above all else is the “almighty dollar.”

This kind of sentiment and governmental practice is frequently framed within the discourses of “sacrifice zones,” “disposability,” “expulsion,” “states of exception,” “necrocapitalism,” or as the intrinsic thanatopolitical underside of biopolitical governance. Regardless of the terminology, what is deemed significant is the capacity for the market, serving as a “site of veridiction” for good governance and underpinned by a “metaphysics of substance,” to neglect the wellbeing of those who are deemed unprofitable.

The importance of this critique is unmistakeable in the Marcellus Shale fields. After all, the rationality behind FERC’s Class 1 categorization is clear: the financial costs of regulation are simply too great to regulate fracking in areas of low population without deterring industrial development in these regions. Lower regulations incentivize development by limiting up-front costs and promising a greater return on investment in

---

421 Dimock Resident One, Interview with Dimock Resident One.
422 Dimock Resident Two, Interview with Dimock Resident Two.
423 William Huston, Helen Baker Interview -- Salem PA Pipeline Explosion.
424 Lerner and Brown, Sacrifice Zones.
425 Evans and Giroux, Disposable Futures.
426 Sassen, Expulsions.
427 Agamben, State of Exception.
429 Esposito, Bios.
430 Foucault, ‘Two Lectures’.
431 Povinelli, Economies of Abandonment.
the long run. Hence, so the argument goes, development goes ahead, jobs are made, U.S. energy security is safeguarded, a “bridge” to a fossil free future is secured, and the consumer enjoys cheaper energy bills. A cost/benefit analysis has been made and the risk has been deemed worth taking. The people in low-density rural regions are, in this instance at least, regarded as “ineligible for personhood” and thus not necessary to consult.

As interesting as this direction of research would be, and indeed has been in different contexts, Deleuze|Guattari’s account of minorities, minorization, and cramped space equips us with a different set of concepts, questions and problems. From the perspective I am advancing here, what is most interesting about the accounts of the Dimock resistance is not that their lives have become an object of biopolitical governmentality but their subjective experience of the objective tendency of capitalism to minorize new portions of the global proletariat. Perhaps what most forcefully demonstrates their minorization and the condition of cramped space is the fact that they do not appeal to democracy as the basis of their struggle. The complaint is not that fracking in Dimock is undemocratic, that a corrupt set of businesses have tarnished due democratic process and that what is needed is a means to overcome a supposed “democratic deficit.” On the contrary, their point is that democracy was intrinsic to making fracking possible in Dimock in a way that was unbeknownst to the newly minorized sub-sets of the community: “it’s all according to regulation, nothing is illegal, everything is voted upon. People are walking around with ‘Drill Baby Drill’.” Or, as another resident put it, “all these elected officials, they’re not protecting us, they’re not holding them accountable. And we’ve told them that and it’s on record.”

These sentiments are not unique to Dimock. I was repeatedly told during my fieldwork that direct action and related forms of struggle were being adopted because every other avenue – including legally acceptable democratic options – had been exhausted. No amount of writing to one’s representative had made a difference. According to those I spoke to it was not that capitalism or corruption were killing

---

433 Levant, Groundswell.
434 Beck, Risk Society.
435 Cacho, Social Death, 6.
437 Brecher, Against Doom.
438 Dimock Resident Two, Interview with Dimock Resident Two.
439 Dimock Resident Three, Interview with Dimock Resident Three.
democracy; democracy was part of the problem. 154 miles northwest of Dimock I was
told by an organizer in Geneseo, N.Y: “When the legitimate avenues of appeal have been
exhausted, what can one do?”440 The answer: direct action and social organizing. 170 due
south of Dimock in Conestoga, P.A, I was similarly told the significance of mass social
organizing and direct action: “government and industry work together to make sure this
happens. We have to stop it.”441 In terms of the practice of anti-fracking activists, then, it
is not necessarily a question of bolstering the processes of formal democratic decision.
Rather, at their most radical and interesting, anti-fracking movements acknowledge that
their problems will not be resolved at the procedural level and can only find a true
resolution in the development of new extra-State, extra-procedural, social relations and
forms of collectivity. In other words, they recognize the cramped conditions that they
find themselves in and are working collectively to create a way out.

The condition of cramped space is also apparent in the language that residents
use to describe living alongside the fracking industry. The sheer presence of the industry
is one of the most frequent complaints in the shale fields. In areas that are intensively
drilled, well-pads are distributed at the legal minimum of a quarter of a mile apart. Trucks
in convoys of four or five dominate the roads. It is estimated that between 625 to 1,148
one-way trips are needed in the construction of a single well in Pennsylvania. It is
therefore no surprise that several residents I spoke to in areas with active drilling likened
the arrival of fracking in their community to an invasion. One resident described it as a
“toxic takeover” adding that “the army just appeared…I call it an army, a toxic army.”442
Similarly, anthropologist Simona Perry describes a conversation with one individual in
Pennsylvania who remarked that: “If these trucks were all painted green, you would think
we were being invaded!” before going on to describe his own county as “occupied” by
the natural gas industry.443 James William Gibson also reports that some residents in
North Dakota have the feeling that “the situation is totally out of their control” and that
rather than being invited to drill, fracking companies have “just invaded.”444 Beyond the
number of trucks needed in the construction and maintenance of fracking wells, many
fracking companies employ private security firms to protect their wells. This leads to a
heightened security presence in surrounding areas that begins to have the sense of an
occupation. Several organizers reported that they had been followed to and from work

440 Anti-Fracking Organizer 3, Interview with Anti-Fracking Organizer 3, Geneseo, N.Y.
441 Anti-Fracking Organizer 8, Interview with Anti-Fracking Organizer 8, Lancaster, P.A.
442 Dimock Resident Three, Interview with Dimock Resident Three.
444 Gibson William, ‘How the North Dakota Fracking Boom Shook a Family’.
or home by these security firms or intimidated when they tried to approach sites of active drilling. My own experience in the shale fields, as well as that of the communities and organizers I spoke to, therefore lends itself well to Deleuze|Guattari’s language of confinement, choked passages, and impossibility. Not because of the very material encroachment of the industry, although that is certainly the case, too. But because of the subjective experience of being minorized by the objective tendency of fossil capital to expand into new industries, communities and geographies. Indeed, for many organizers, it is this sense of confinement and the impossibility of freedom that leads them to fight. As one organizer answered when I asked whether they had ever considered moving away:

“I have thought about moving, but I have my whole family here. But yes, sometimes I do feel like moving, I’d like to move at some point, but I don’t know where the hell to go because this industry has taken over basically the whole country and the government is afraid of this monstrosity, so where do we go? There will be something there. They’re already fracking 30 states out of 50 so what do we do? Then there’s other industry that’s polluting, so where do we go?”

Constrained by a set of impossibilities – the impossibility of moving, the impossibility of getting the government to intervene, the impossibility of doing nothing – I was told that the way out is “to expose, to reveal, to put a light on it…to show the world… see what’s happening here because the industry is not going to show you…so the world can say no.” At the same time this organizer explained that she has needed to take up relaxation strategies to alleviate the stress that the struggle has caused her: “I have to keep reminding myself. This does not depend on me. This does not depend on me.” The impossible becomes the condition for struggle and the individual becomes the collective. The personal connects immediately to the political as the political imposes itself on the personal. “Minor intrigues,” such as one woman’s fight against the oil and gas industry begins to take on a collective significance and by reaching out to the world she and others begin a process of becoming-minoritarian.

These experiences of cramped space readily lend themselves to a Lacanian interpretation. What they suggest is an anxiety inducing encounter with the desire of the

---

445 Dimock Resident Three, Interview with Dimock Resident Three.
446 Dimock Resident Three.
Other. The Other, understood in this case as the sovereign power of democratic decision, has failed to recognize the newly minorized as anything other than a marginal sub-set to be managed. The phantasmatic image of American Democracy as the non-lacking Other capable of telling the subject how to enjoy is disrupted, the Other too is seen to be lacking and therefore desiring. As Salecl writes, “what provokes this anxiety is the fact that the desire of the Other does not recognize me, and even if I have the impression that the Other does recognize me, it will not recognize me sufficiently.”447 As far as the Big Other is concerned, everything has played out as it is supposed to. The decision has been voted on, agreed upon, legitimized. And yet for my participants this has been done without the presence of the people. It is this that provokes the sense of cramped space. Lacan will similarly use the language of over-proximity when he comes to describe anxiety. What promotes anxiety is the “lack of a lack,” the over-proximity of the Other which has the effect of putting an end to the lack that sustains the subjects desire. Putting this back into Deleuze|Guattari’s language: while the “majority” is able to enjoy since the Other or what Deleuze|Guattari call “the social milieu” acts as “a mere environment or background” structuring their enjoyment, minorities are those who suffer cramped conditions, or the lack of a lack. While these two conceptual planes are in no way equivalent, their striking resemblance invites the reintroduction of the unconscious where Deleuze|Guattari hope to find only immanence. For Lacan, it is by traversing the affect of anxiety that the subject can have a new understanding of its place in the symbolic and establish a new structure of enjoyment. As I’ll begin to show in the next chapter, Deleuze|Guattari aim at something remarkably similar with their notion of “becoming-minoritarian.” These kinds of connections between Lacan and Deleuze are powerful analytic tools; they can help us to theorize and work through how the imposition of fracking is felt by community members. They are overlooked, however, in readings of Deleuze that do not open themselves up to the points of communication between Deleuze’s otherwise immanent ontology and Lacanian psychoanalysis.

447 Salecl, On Anxiety, 15.
Conclusion

This chapter has argued that a reinterpretation of Deleuze|Guattari’s notion of cramped space can help us to theorize the subjective experience of being “minorized” that is shared by those living in the Marcellus shale fields of the United States. Through a critical reading of Thoburn’s explanation of cramped space and Kafka’s short story “A Report to the Academy,” I argued that cramped space does not necessarily lead to the invention of a politics but rather creates the essential conditions for collective struggle and for the process that, in A Thousand Plateaus, Deleuze|Guattari will come to call “becoming-minoritarian.” Taking issue with Thoburn’s comparison of cramped space to the loss of a so-called “coherent identity,” the chapter reinterprets cramped space as a “lack of a lack” or a sense of the over-proximity of the Other and in this way brings Deleuze|Guattari’s thought into discussion with Lacan’s understanding of anxiety. These conceptual developments were then put to work to analyze the experience of those living in Pennsylvania’s fracking fields to show how the sensation of cramped space pervades their interactions with the industry and drives their desire to struggle against it.

In terms of the overall argument of the thesis, this chapter brings to a close my theorization of minorization as both an objective and subjective process and paves the way for a discussion of the “Majority” as a formal structuring principle in the following chapter.
One Divides Into Two: The Majority as Nobody

Chapter III
On the nights of the 26th and 27th of April 2016, I slept with an oxygen tank and gas mask by the side of my bed. The reason, my host explained, was the very real possibility that high levels of hydrogen sulphide and methane would be emitted from a faulty shale gas well situated less than 300 feet from the front door of his house or from one of the four wells situated at the back of the property. Increased levels of methane can cause a loss of consciousness, seizures and asphyxiation. In high enough quantities hydrogen sulphide is lethal to most animals including humans. The house was fitted with an air quality alarm that would sound in the event that hazardous gas quantities rose above acceptable levels, at which point, I was to put on my oxygen mask. I was staying on Carter Road, Dimock, Pennsylvania, a street that in many respects has served as the epicentre of disputes over the health and environmental effects of fracking since 2007.448

In the winter of 2008, many of the houses on Carter Road began to report issues with their water. The once fresh water provided to their properties by private wells tapping straight into the Susquehanna river basin was now foggy, light brown to green in colour, viscous, and rancid smelling. Most troubling of all, in several houses the water could be set on fire straight from the faucet with a match or a lighter. After numerous complaints, the EPA conducted a study (released in 2012 which was, incidentally, an election year) which concluded that the water in the area “did not indicate levels of contaminants that would give the EPA reason to take further action.”449 Cabot Energy, the company drilling in the area, issued a statement saying that the “levels of contaminants found do not possess a threat to human health and environment. The EPA data is consistent with literally thousands of pages of water quality data accumulated by state and local authorities and by Cabot.” 450 The fossil energy front-group Energy in Depth told PoliticoPro that the results were:

“obviously very good news for the folks who actually live there and pretty squarely in line with what we’ve known up there for a while now. It’s not very good news for the out-of-state folks who have sought to use Dimock as a talking point in their efforts to prevent development elsewhere, but I’m sure they’ll be

449 ‘More Data from Dimock’.
450 ‘More Data from Dimock’.
working hard over the weekend to spin it differently, notwithstanding the pretty clear statement made by the EPA today.” 451

Nevertheless, EPA officials and Cabot employees visiting the area refused on several occasions to drink the water that they had said was good enough for the people of Dimock. In June 2016, the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) concluded from the same set of data used by the EPA that the water was in fact undrinkable. The study found over 10 chemicals of immediate concern to human health including known carcinogens and teratogens such as arsenic, lithium and 4-chlorophenyl phenyl ether as well as significant quantities of dissolved methane. 27 private wells were contaminated enough to “affect health”, 17 wells to “pose physical hazard…or affect general water quality so that it may be unsuitable for drinking”, and five homes were at “immediate risk of fire or explosion.” 452 It was later discovered by a Tribune/LA Times Washington Bureau investigation that many within the local Philadelphia EPA office knew that the water in Dimock was undrinkable from as early as 2012 but that the national office in Washington applied pressure to close the case. The investigation also revealed that Philadelphia EPA employees believed the contamination to be the direct result of fracking in the area – a point questioned in the final EPA study and consistently disputed by Cabot Energy. 453

During my time on Carter Road, I followed the rules that were set out by my host. We drank bottled water, bathed infrequently, and washed up in water sourced from a large water tank known as a “water buffalo” grudgingly issued to the property by Cabot Energy under court order. Despite the EPA’s findings no one in the area drank from, or bathed in, their well-water. Many residents had signed “nondisclosure agreements,” better known as gagging orders, with Cabot Energy and in return they had been issued with an undisclosed sum of money and fresh water delivered weekly by Parish – a company subcontracted by Cabot. 454 My host, however, had refused to sign a gagging order and so was not issued with water. It took us four hours to refill the house water supply from a public water access point in the neighbouring town.

451 ‘More Data from Dimock’.
453 Banerjee, ‘Message Is Mixed on Fracking’; For more on the EPA’s role in facilitating environmental degradation and damage to public health see: Vallianatos and Jenkins, Poison Spring.
454 Ludwig, ‘Silencing Communities’.
My host was an ex-industry worker and whistle-blower. He had quit his job as a truck driver for Cabot Energy after he was ordered to put clean, potable water, in a truck that had been used to transport what the industry calls “processed” water – water that has previously been used in the fracking process and that is therefore contaminated, toxic, and often radioactive. This was just one violation of industry regulation among many that he had witnessed in his time as a truck driver but as he describes it, this was the last straw.

His time working for the industry and living in Dimock has taken its toll. My host sleeps for less than three hours a night. He has frequent nosebleeds, migraines, anxiety attacks and shortness of breath. Many of these symptoms were not uncommon among those I spoke to living near fracking pads. My host also has acid burns on his skin, complains of persistent hot flashes, and has seven tumours distributed across his arms, neck, stomach and groin. These symptoms were also not uncommon among other ex-industry workers I encountered.

In many ways, my host explained, the “battle” was already lost in Pennsylvania. As he sees it the task for those like him is to use their experience to speak out against the industry and make sure that others do not suffer the harms that they have. A brash, one-time-republican-voting, ex-military, leather-jacket-wearing biker, my host does not fit neatly into our expectations of what it is to be an environmental activist. Nevertheless, he has become a prominent member of various anti-fracking groups in P.A and New York, he has been featured in over six documentaries about fracking, has been consulted by politicians from across the world including the British MP Kevin Hollinrake (who later went on to give fracking a full endorsement in the UK), he has spent time campaigning alongside Mark Ruffalo and Yoko Ono, and in December 2015 he was flown to Paris to speak at COP 21. Since leaving his job at Cabot Energy he has been unable to find full-time employment in the area and due to the house’s contaminated water supply and the structural damage caused by ground-tremors caused by fracking, he is unable to sell his property. He suffers bouts of depression and over-work from his ongoing legal struggle against Cabot and his work in activist circles. All in all, he is a clear example of what Jessica Smartt Gullion calls a “reluctant activist.”

455 Dimock Resident Four, Interview with Dimock Resident Four.
456 Dimock Resident Four.
457 Hollinrake, ‘Why I’m Supporting Fracking in Yorkshire’.
458 Gullion, Fracking the Neighborhood.
Only “reluctant activist” does not quite grasp what is at stake here. My host, and the others like him that we meet in this thesis, may not have chosen to become activists out of their unconstrained free will, they are not “willing activists” (whatever that might mean), but they have nevertheless chosen to become organizers in response to conditions that were forced upon them. In this thesis, I have been thinking about such people in terms of Deleuze|Guattari’s concept of minorities. Just like the organizers and residents discussed in the previous chapter, my host has been “minorized” by the introduction of fracking into his community. In Deleuze|Guattari’s words, the “social milieu,” once “a mere environment or background,” now impinges on him and is felt as a kind of constraint that I have followed Deleuze|Guattari and Thoburn in calling “cramped space.”459

In this chapter I want to build on this idea by exploring how being minorized leads some people (but not others) to engage in a process that Deleuze|Guattari call “becoming-minoritarian.” In chapters one and two I argued that minorization is a consequence of capital’s tendency towards what Marx and Engels call capital’s “self-expansion” on an ever greater scale.460 This chapter develops this argument further by returning to the problematic of “major-minor-minoritarian” to show that subjects who become minorities and who are thus minorized by capital’s movement of self-valorization do not necessarily pose a problem for further capital accumulation. Minorities, as what Deleuze|Guattari call a “subset” of a “majority” can in fact be one way of enjoying one’s place within capitalism. If, for example, we take “environmentalist” as a minority, there is nothing dangerous about ethical consumption, anti-plastic bag campaigns, veganism, eco-tourism, government lobbying, petitions, and so forth. In Deleuze|Guattari’s words, this is environmentalism as a “subset” of a majority. As I argued in chapter one, the minority as a subset of capital is a part of capital, they are the proletariat insofar as they are differentially included into the state as a “model of realization” for capital accumulation. The environmental minority as subset is simply one interest group among others to be considered in the passing of environmental regulations, the allocation of fracking permits, the passing of moratoriums, and so on. There must, therefore, be something else to environmentalism to lead figures such as one-time Trump advisor Myron Ebell to call them the “greatest threat to freedom and prosperity in the modern world.”461 This, I will claim, is environmentalism as “becoming-minoritarian.”

459 Deleuze and Guattari, Kafka Toward a Minor Literature, 17.
460 Marx and Engels, Karl Marx Frederick Engels, 239–58.
To see why this is the case we need to pass through the complex web of interactions that Deleuze|Guattari establish between the majority, the minority, and becoming-minoritarian that are frequently overlooked in the literature on these concepts. In part, this oversight is due the inconsistency of Deleuze|Guattari’s presentation. There are, I will argue, not one but two concepts of the minority to be found in A Thousand Plateaus. Yet as I argued in the introduction to this thesis, this oversight in the existing literature is also due to the principal way that Deleuze|Guattari’s more political writings have been received in the secondary literature. The two philosophers are routinely read as exclusively anti-dialectical, post-structural, affirmationist and vitalist theorists of becoming, horizontalism and the network-form. But while this account fits nicely with one of the two conceptualizations of minorities available to us it cannot explain the second. Hence, in this thesis I have been arguing for and developing a second dialectical and formalist Deleuze|Guattari through the second overlooked theory of minorities. In this chapter, once more calling on Lacanian psychoanalysis, I continue this project via a close reading of their claim that the majority is “Nobody.” My main contention is that only when this Nobody is interpreted as that most un-Deleuzian of things, a space of pure negativity that structures a “subsystem” of minorities, can we begin to approach the notion of becoming-minoritarian on the right footing. What is presented here is for the most part a theoretical exposition, leaving the more directly political and empirical analyses for Chapter 5.

Major/Minor or Majority/Minority/Minoritarian?

It common to say that Deleuze|Guattari’s A Thousand Plateaus is structured around a series of conceptual dualisms: the nomad and the state, the rhizome and the arborescent, codes and axioms, smooth and striated space, to name only four examples. Whatever the validity of this claim, it is not uncommon to include the conceptual paring of major/minor in such a list. Its inclusion would be justified by its first appearance in Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature and indeed by several passages of A Thousand Plateaus where the minor is conceived of as the tendency of major languages to undergo creative transformations. Here, we have a clear dualism. But matters are considerably complicated in the second volume of Capitalism and Schizophrenia by the fact that Deleuze|Guattari

462 Jameson, ‘Marxism and Dualism in Deleuze’; Nunes, ‘Politics in the Middle’. 
present us with not one but two *strictly incompatible* but overlapping theories of the minority. The first – the theory carried over from *Kafka* – is anti-dialectical and vitalist. This is the version of minorities that I worked with in the previous chapter, it is the minor as a tendency internal to the major that causes it to undergo creative transformations. It is *Kafka* as a minor writing machine working away within the major German language. In *A Thousand Plateaus* this theory of the minor is most clearly on display in the 4th plateau, *Postulate of Linguistic*. In their discussion of the tendency for major languages, such as English, to be creatively transformed or “worked upon” by colonized nations, for instance, Deleuze|Guattari write:

> “the more a language has or acquires the characteristics of a major language, the more it is affected by continuous variations that transpose it into a ‘minor’ language”⁴⁶³

This formulation repeats to the letter the one developed in *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature*. The minor is a tendency within the major. The minor is a power of continuous variation within a language: new slang, new accents, new styles of writing and so on. And yet in the very same chapter this model overlaps with an opposing and much more dialectical formulation. To take an essential passage that we will have need to return to from a different angle in a moment:

> “There is a majoritarian “fact”, but it is the analytic fact of Nobody, as opposed to the becoming-minoritarian of everybody. That is why we must distinguish between: the majoritarian as a constant and homogenous system; minorities as subsystems; and the minoritarian as a potential, creative and created, becoming.”⁴⁶⁴

Or elsewhere:

> “It is important not to confuse “minoritarian”, as a becoming or a process, with a “minority”, as an aggregate or a state…One reterritorializes, or allows oneself

⁴⁶⁴ Deleuze and Guattari, 123.
to be reterritorialized, on a minority as a state; but in becoming, one is
deterritorialized”

The fact that there are three terms at work here rather than two is often overlooked. Even Paul Patton, an otherwise perspicacious reader of Deleuze|Guattari, neglects the significance of this formulation when he on occasion continues to place the majority on the site of the quantitative (or the denumerable) and the minority on the side of the qualitative (or non-denumerable) and in so doing reasserts the very dualism that Deleuze|Guattari have just blown apart. In a subtle but significant shift of focus, the quantitative/qualitative split from Kafka has been placed within the minority itself to give us a tripartite formula: majority/minority/becoming-minoritarian. As I have already argued in chapter one, the minority as presented in these passages of *A Thousand Plateaus* must be understood as both part of the capitalist mode of production (or what Deleuze|Guattari call the capitalist socius) and in excess of it. As a subset differentially included within the capitalist state, they are very much a part of capitalism. As a site of potential becoming-minoritarian, or a power of the “non-denumerable,” they are in excess of it. To put this development in dialectical terms: the One of the majority divides into two (the majority as Nobody and the minority as subsets of the majority) before the minority itself divides once more into the minority as a quantitative subset of capital and the minority as the potential for a qualitative, “creative and created,” becoming:

“Minorities, of course, are objectively definable states, states of language, ethnicity, or sex with their own ghetto territorialities, but they must also be thought of as seed, crystals of becoming whose value is to trigger uncontrollable movements and deterritorializations of the mean or majority”

Another way of saying the same thing is to say that (not coincidentally and not unproblematically) the minority shares the same structural position that Marx says is proper to the proletariat: the proletariat and the minority are points where the structure of the social can be directly worked upon. Both are included within and stand in excess

---

465 Deleuze and Guattari, 291.
466 See for example: Silberstein, 'Becoming Israeli/Israeli Becomings'.
467 Patton, *Deleuze and the Political*, 7–8 Elsewhere in the same book, Patton correctly places the split within the minority itself but the repercussions of this position are not sufficiently considered - see pp.47-48.
of the positivity of the social. This is a point that Deleuze|Guattari do not hesitate to make themselves and that we will expand upon in the subsequent chapters.469

The question then becomes: If the minority now condenses within itself Engel’s “law of transformation,” that is, the dialectical movement from quantity to quality, then what is the function of the majority?470 And what does it mean for the minority to be a “subset” or a “subsystem” of this majority? I will argue that the answer ultimately lies in Deleuze|Guattari’s prima facie bizarre description of the majority as the “analytic fact of Nobody,” a description that I wish to both take literally and give a Lacanian twist.471

Before that though, some clarification is required. It should be clear from the dialectical language I adopt to explain these concepts that my interpretation deviates quite considerably from the dominant approach to these passages. As I see it, the fact that Deleuze|Guattari provide two overlapping formulations of the minority both poses a number of hermeneutic difficulties and makes possible new interpretations of their theory, including some that Deleuze|Guattari themselves would disavow but that are nevertheless indicated by their line of argumentation. In the introduction to this thesis I called this approach to Deleuze|Guattari, “Deleuze-as-inconsistent.” Indeed, as Etienne Balibar has also noted, a dialectical reading of minorities is not at all an imposition on the part of the reader but rather a nascent, unexplored, avenue within the concepts of the majority and the minority themselves. As Balibar puts it: “The concept of minority calls for dialectization quite as much as that of the majority.”472 To add to the challenge of such a project, however, Deleuze|Guattari are not always consistent in their terms. They will, for instance, on occasion use “minority” and “minoritarian” interchangeably, whereas I prefer to reserve minority for the minority as a subset of the majority and minoritarian or becoming-minoritarian for the minority as a practice or a torsion upon the placement of terms established by the majority.473 What is most interesting about this inconsistency is the way that the tripartite formula, with its dialectical underpinnings, comes to the fore at the precise point that Deleuze|Guattari begin to advance their analysis of minorities as a political force within post-Fordist capitalism in the closing pages of the 13th plateau, The Apparatus of Capture. As Sibertin-Blanc has also observed, it is almost as if to develop minorities in this more properly political direction, a more

---

469 Deleuze and Guattari, 549.
471 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 123.
472 Balibar and Goshgarian, Violence and Civility, 123.
473 For example: Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 105. Where necessary in the quotations that follow I have clarified my understanding of their terminology in parentheses.
“structuralist,” more “dialectical,” line of thought was called for and yet disavowed in the text.474

These ambiguities, slips, and inconsistencies lead to two possible sites of interpretive divergence. First, there is the problem of the majority as “Nobody” (always capitalized in the English translation to capture the French c’est toujours Personne).475 What is the status of this Nobody? How precisely should we interpret it? In what follows, I take this Nobody literally as a radical space of negativity. It is a structurally significant absence or void. More “Deleuzian” readings of this space of negativity, however, have a tendency to dilute the radicality of this space of negativity so as to bring it in line with Deleuze|Guattari’s anti-dialectical and affirmationist proclivities.476 Paul Patton, for example, argues that the majority is the “group which most closely approximates the standard.”477 While Tamsin Rain directly substantializes the majority when she claims that “the majoritarian standard is thus this ‘average’ European constituted throughout the social field.”478 For me, these do not go far enough. The majority is Nobody. It is neither the group that approximates the majority nor a specific privileged group. Rather, as a space of pure negativity it structures the field of minority subsets. As we shall see, the Majority is the site of an impossible identification.

The second space of possible divergence lies in the degree of significance afforded to the tripartite formula itself. Unfortunately, even when this formula is acknowledged, interpreters have tended to slide back into the more “Deleuzian” dualistic reading underscored by a vitalist commitment to the major and the minor as processes or tendencies within all matter and within all identities. Nicholas Thoburn, for instance, risks precisely such a reading. Although he consistently uses the tripartite formula majority/minority/minoritarian to distinguish minorities as what he calls “identities” and the “minor” (or what I call becoming-minoritarian) as a creative process, Thoburn does not adequately consider the conceptual significance of the majority in distinction from what he calls the “major” or “molar standard.” In a brief passage, Thoburn explains that the majority, as a molar standard, “exists across the plane of life to judge and determine the configurations of life, and in thus it is necessarily ‘nobody’ – it is an abstract type which induced the world to conform to a model, but which in itself cannot fully exist in a

474 Sibertin-Blanc and Hodges, State and Politics, 237.
475 Deleuze and Guattari, Mille Plateaux, 133–34.
476 Noys, The Persistence of the Negative.
477 Patton, Deleuze and the Political, 47 Emphasis added.
concrete form.”479 Beyond this, however, Thoburn tends to conflate the majority with the major and thereby brings it back within the orbit of the major/Minor formula. In other words, what Thoburn finds most important is the interplay within life itself between a static identity and the minor as a tendency towards becoming, flow and creativity. As Thoburn says, the major and the minor operate as “processes and treatments of life.”480 Or elsewhere, the “minor and the molar exist in continuous interrelation as two tendencies in matter.”481 Both of these formulations fall clearly within the vitalist theory of major/minor.

I do not deny that such a reading is supported by extensive textual evidence from elsewhere in Deleuze and Deleuze|Guattari’s thought. Nonetheless, I would suggest that within the confines of their discussion of minorities in A Thousand Plateaus, Deleuze|Guattari are at best ambivalent. They move inconsistently back and forth between two entirely distinct theories of the minority. The problem with anti-structuralist, anti-dialectical, readings is that they cannot explain the curious fact that the majority, as the negativity of “Nobody,” is said to structure a set of related minority subsets. As Deleuze|Guattari say, the majority is not just a tendency of life. It measures and evaluates: “Majority implies a constant of expression or content, serving as a standard of measure by which to evaluate [minorities].”482

As is so often the case, this difference of textual interpretation has considerable political consequences. Once the structuring role of the majority is conflated with the tendency of matter to stratify into more or less stable compositions, the political valences of Deleuze|Guattari’s discussion of minorities change substantially. The choice can be put simply: either we impute the creative potential of life itself with political significance, or we put the emphasis on the operations of a subject in relation to an historically derived structure.483 Either we opt for what Badiou polemically calls a “metaphysics of desire”484 where the vital forces of life are ontologically prior to all structuration, or we historicize the structure itself and look to account for how the processes of structuration play their part in grounding the conditions of politics.485

479 Thoburn, Deleuze, Marx and Politics, 7.
480 Thoburn, 6.
481 Thoburn, 15.
482 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 105.
483 For more on the vitalist tendencies in post-Deleuzian thought see: Toscano, ‘Vital Strategies’.
484 Badiou, Theory of the Subject, 37.
485 An extensive literature looks to tackle precisely where Deleuze should be situated with respect to these two options. For a taste of these debates see: Eleanor Kaufman, ‘Do Dual Structures Exist? Deleuze and Lacan in the Wake of Lévi-Strauss’, Yale French Studies, no. 123 (2013): 83–99; Claire Colebrook, ‘Anti-Vitalism: Kaufman’s Deleuze of Inertia’, Postmodern Culture 23, no. 1 (15 July 2013), https://doi.org/10.1353/pmc.2013.0019; Alain Badiou and Louise Burchill, Deleuze: The Clamor of Being, 1 edition (Minneapolis: Univ Of Minnesota Press, 1999); Roffe,
This thesis pursues the latter and less travelled path. By proposing a formalist interpretation of the formula majority/minority/minoritarian I aim to achieve two things. First, unlike vitalist readings, I aim to keep distinct two kinds of becoming found in Deleuze|Guattari’s philosophy; becoming as the ontological process of substantive multiplicities (major/minor) and the becoming that is the result of a subjective decision, the counter-actualization of an event, or the process of acting back upon the structure (becoming-minoritarian). Secondly and relatedly, I wish to maintain that politics is decided at the level of the subject and not at the level of life itself.

**Redefining Majorities**

Before developing my reading, however, it is important to look at what most readers of Deleuze|Guattari agree on: the new meaning that the two philosophers give to the categories of the minority and the majority.

The problem of minorities has traditionally been thought as a straightforward question of numerical quantity: the minority is quantitatively fewer than the majority. When John Adams describes democracy as the “tyranny of the majority” he speaks from a position firmly within this tradition: the majority as the quantitatively greater decides the outcome of the vote and the minority as the quantitatively fewer is rendered silent, or worse, as legitimators of a choice contrary to their wishes. Similarly, when Marx and Engels write in the *Communist Manifesto* that “all previous movements were of minorities, or in the interest of minorities. The proletarian movement is the self-conscious independent movement of the immense majority, in the interest of the majority,” they too presume an indissoluble link between the quantitatively greater and the majority.486

Deleuze|Guattari’s approach is to turn this idea on its head by announcing that the majority is in fact an artificial and politically motivated abstraction that is only secondarily concerned with quantity:

“The notion of *minority* is very complex, with musical, literary, linguistic; as well as juridical and political, references. The opposition between minority and majority is not simply quantitative. Majority implies a constant, of expression or

---

content, serving as a standard measure by which to evaluate it. Let us suppose that the constant or standard is the average-white-heterosexual-European-male-speaking a standard language (Joyce’s or Ezra Pound’s Ulysses). It is obvious that ‘man’ holds the majority, even if he is less numerous than mosquitoes, children, women, blacks, peasants, homosexuals, etc. That is because he appears twice, once in the constant and again in the variable from which the constant is extracted. Majority assumes a state of power and domination, not the other way around...a determination different from that of the constant will therefore be considered minoritarian [read considered a minority], by nature and regardless of number, in other words, a subsystem or outsystem.”

What matters in this example is not that “man” is in the numerical majority but that “man” comes to represent the “model” around which all other identities must conform or through which they can be measured and assessed. In the United States, for example, only 19% of the population are white men over the age of 35 and yet it is this “majority” that assumes a state of power and domination. The notion of power at work here follows the Spinozist distinction of “power to” (potentia) and ‘power over’ (potestas). For Deleuze|Guattari, the major model assumes the position of a stratified potestas. It is from the perspective of ‘man’ that policies are made, cultural practices regulated, and against which minorities are measured and acquire their structural position. From this perspective it is clear that US far-right fears of a “great replacement” are not about a quantitative replacement – that has already happened – but rather about a loss of white, male, power.

The Occupy movement has prepared contemporary readers well for this logic. The slogan “We Are the 99%” points precisely to the fact that it was not always the quantitatively greater that assumes the position of power. And in an interesting twist, the various electoral upsets since 2016 (in Brazil, the UK, US and so on) have provided us with a crash course introduction to the idea that the majority can begin to feel as if it is a minority with significant political effects. In both instances we are reminded of the dissymmetry pertaining to the majority and the minority in both the traditional and Deleuzio-Guattarian sense.

488 U. S. Census Bureau, ‘Age and Sex Composition in the United States’.
489 Spinoza, Shirley, and Morgan, *Complete Works*.
491 Gest, *The New Minority*. 
Deleuze|Guattari then push the logic of the majority to its absolute and paradoxical limit: the majority is precisely “Nobody.” To quote the lines immediately preceding the passage that started this section:

“For the majority, insofar as it is analytically included in the abstract standard, is never anybody, it is always Nobody—Ulysses—whereas the minority is the becoming of everybody, one’s potential becoming to the extent that one deviates from the model. There is a majoritarian "fact," but it is the analytic fact of Nobody, as opposed to the becoming-minoritarian of everybody.”

The majority is therefore best thought of as a “real abstraction” in the Marxist sense: an abstraction formed by the material practices and conditions of society that has concrete, objective, socio-political effects. Just like Marx’s notions of the value-form and the commodity fetish, the majority is “woven into the very actions…that produce and reproduce contemporary society.” The full political consequences of this theory of the majority and minority subsets will be explored in the following chapters. For the moment what matters is that the majority is presented by Deleuze|Guattari as a decidedly “un-Deleuzian” thing – it is a space of negativity that has structural effects. How can this be the case? How are we to make sense of this negativity at the heart of the majority?

**Sibertin-Blanc’s Foucauldian Reading**

The most insightful anti-vitalist take on the idea of the majority as Nobody is provided by Sibertin-Blanc in his *State and Politics*. Despite a lack of direct textual evidence, Sibertin-Blanc makes creative use of Foucault’s nominalist theory of power in conjunction with a Gramsican-inflected account of hegemony to theorize the majority as a hegemonic “empty universal” that functions to distribute and normalize minorities as subsets of the majority. As Sibertin-Blanc puts it: the majority “formalizes a system of domination based on the majority/minority distinction seen from the perspective of semiological identity assignments, in other words, logical and semiotic operations through which a

---

492 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 123.
normative ensemble regulates the unequal inscription of practices and social-multiplicities in ‘subsets’ (minorities”).

This reading nicely accounts for the structural efficacy of the Nobody: it is an “empty universal” which precisely as empty allows for the most subtle of disciplinary mechanisms. In support of his case Sibertin-Blanc observes the malleability of characteristics that Deleuze\Guattari use to determine what counts as the majority: “today’s average, urban European,”\textsuperscript{496} “the national Worker, qualified, male and over thirty-five,”\textsuperscript{497} “the average adult-white-heterosexual-European-male-speaking a standard language,”\textsuperscript{498} and so on. Though it could be objected that these constructions are not all that different from one another, for Sibertin-Blanc, the flexibility of the list suggests that it “could virtually be continued to the point of ensuring that no one could be completely in conformance.”\textsuperscript{499} We could, for example, easily imagine adding to this set of characteristics the lyrics from Radiohead’s ‘Fitter, Happier’:

“Comfortable, not drinking too much, regular exercise at the gym (3 days a week), getting on better with your associate employee contemporaries, at ease, eating well (no more microwave dinners and saturated fats), a patient better driver, a safer car (baby smiling in the back seat), sleeping well (no bad dreams), no paranoia, careful to all animals (never washing spiders down the plughole), keep in contact with old friends (enjoy a drink now and then).”\textsuperscript{500}

By compiling such a list, we have added to the characteristics that define the morally upright citizen-consumer and we have established an extensive set of criteria for evaluation. But at the same time, we have moved further away from providing a definition of a particular individual; we have picked out precisely Nobody. Hence, for Sibertin-Blanc, the “majoritarian constants are less decreed so that one conforms to them than to measure those who do not conform to them, and to identify and categorize differentially the distances between them.”\textsuperscript{501} This is one reason why Deleuze\Guattari can say that there is a potential “becoming-minoritarian of everybody.”\textsuperscript{502} If the major model is

\textsuperscript{495} Sibertin-blanc and Hodges, \textit{State and Politics}, 230.
\textsuperscript{496} Deleuze and Guattari, \textit{A Thousand Plateaus}, 469.
\textsuperscript{497} Deleuze and Guattari, 469.
\textsuperscript{498} Deleuze and Guattari, 105.
\textsuperscript{499} Sibertin-Blanc and Hodges, \textit{State and Politics}, 232.
\textsuperscript{500} Radiohead, \textit{Fitter Happier - OK Computer}.
\textsuperscript{501} Sibertin-blanc and Hodges, \textit{State and Politics}, 233.
\textsuperscript{502} Deleuze and Guattari, \textit{A Thousand Plateaus}, 105.
Nobody, if it is a universality without a content, then with Foucault it is possible to say that its function is to “identify the different rather than to make it identical, to measure and fixate the ‘deviance’ in a reproducible space of division of the unequal.” According to this reading the majority is a pliable standard of measure that ensures, in Foucault’s language, that “the whole indefinite domain of the non-conforming,” or of minor subsystems of all kinds, are open to strategies of intervention. Minority groups, numerated and divided into subsystems, are open to distribution according to rank, grade or identification. The gaps between subsystems can also be marked and hierarchized in accordance with qualities, skills and aptitudes. A whole process of “setting in order and the ordinal character of judging” is thereby afforded by the majority as a model. This means that insofar as we work against our categorization in line with the majority, we can be said to be entering into a process of becoming-minoritarian.

Close attention needs to be paid to the logic at work in this interpretation: insofar as the major model is strictly nobody and insofar as it varies contextually it is rendered all the more effective as a mode of domination. Like today’s NSA and GCHQ data-mining programs, its inability to point to anyone in particular becomes its greatest asset. The function of a majoritarian constant is not to have individuals conform to its standard (for this is an impossibility) but to classify and catalogue differentially those who deviate from an inconstant model. It is a question of measuring the distance of minority subsets (everyone) from each other and the major model (no one).

The resonances between Foucault and Deleuze|Guattari in this respect are highly illuminating. What Deleuze|Guattari seem to have in mind with their concept of the majority is indeed something like Foucault’s theorization of normalization and the regimes of knowledge associated with governmentality, biopolitics and disciplinary power. Deleuze|Guattari are much more explicitly concerned with the logic of capital than Foucault but like him they argue that from the perspective of the majority minorities appear as subsystems whose deviation from the norm in one way or another is to be administered, permitted within certain parameters, or else rectified via the addition of what they call axioms and what Foucault calls disciplinary technologies of power.

Nevertheless, towards the end of his analysis of minorities, Sibertin-Blanc begins to court a more psychoanalytically inflected reading. Significantly, he describes becoming-

---

503 Sibertin-blanc and Hodges, State and Politics, 233.
504 Foucault, Discipline and Punish, 178–79.
505 Foucault, 181.
506 Sibertin-blanc and Hodges, State and Politics, 232.
507 Foucault, Discipline and Punish; Foucault, Security, Territory, Population; Foucault, The Birth of Biopolitics.
minoritarian as a “forced disidentification” from one’s assigned place within the majority and speaks of the possibility of “identifying with” the majority. I have already begun to explore this “forced disidentification” through the notion of cramped space. Sibertin-Blanc does not expand on this line of thought himself. And yet he claims that it is important enough that Deleuze|Guattari ought to be considered “the first “Lacanian-Marxists” which later ones have so far avoided confronting seriously.” It is precisely this line of thought that I would like to pursue here.

A Formalist Interpretation of the Majority

My proposed reading comes in two parts. The first could be called “structural” and aims to explore the role of the majority as Nobody in constructing a field of minority subsets and the potential for a becoming-minoritarian. The second is libidinal and aims at the role of enjoyment and identification in Deleuze|Guattari’s discussion of minorities. In both instances, I take Lacanian psychoanalysis as my guide. As with elsewhere in this thesis, by bringing Deleuze|Guattari into contact with Lacan here I do not intend to overstate their compatibility – there are indeed important and irresolvable differences. However, I believe that the account of structuralism developed by Lacan in his later seminars – a structuralism that is always from the start “impossible,” incomplete, or lacking – is one of the more refined accounts of structure available to us today and that it can help to tease out the theoretical and political stakes of minorities. As Tom Eyers puts it, from the beginning Lacan “refuses the false choice of form or contingency, structure or flux” and insists that all processes towards formalization or structuration are at the same time implicated in “their own undermining even as they persist and reform.” As Paul Livingston has shown, this is an account of structure that is not at all alien to the early Deleuze. Lacan’s primary conceptual tool for thinking this process is the paradoxical status of objet petite a as both what sustains one’s desire within a given structure and what

---

808 Sibertin-blanc and Hodges, State and Politics, 277.
809 Sibertin-Blanc and Hodges, State and Politics, 232.
809 Sibertin-blanc and Hodges, State and Politics, 277.
810 Sibertin-blanc and Hodges, State and Politics, 232.
813 Eyers, Post-Rationalism, 30.
814 Livingston, 'Lacan, Deleuze and the Consequences of Formalism'.
lies beyond it. Similarly, following Marx, Deleuze|Guattari argue that minority – caught as it is between a subset of capital and becoming-minoritarian – has precisely this structure.

Besides their points of similarity, however, there is a second important reason to draw from Lacan in a discussion of Deleuze|Guattari’s minorities. The Apparatus of Capture plateau of A Thousand Plateaus is one of the few places in Deleuze|Guattari’s thought where they turn to the mathematical set theory. In their analysis of capital and minorities they speak repeatedly of sets, subsets, axioms, the denumerable, the nondenumerable, saturation, and so on. The use of set theory to theorize social relations brings the two philosophers into remarkable proximity with Alain Badiou’s philosophical project. But we must be careful here. As John Roffe has brilliantly shown, unlike Badiou, Deleuze|Guattari make significant errors in their application of set theory.515 It is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore these errors in detail. What matters for our purposes is that as Roffe writes, “what makes this mismatch between set theory and Deleuze and Guattari’s presentation of it particularly troubling is the fact that a substantial reference to set theory forms the lynchpin of their account of capitalism as a social formation.”516 The problem is especially pronounced because Deleuze|Guattari do not use set theory in an analogous or metaphorical manner. For them, capitalism really is set theoretical: “it is the real characteristics of axiomatics that lead us to say that capitalism and present-day politics are an axiomatic in a literal sense.”517 An error in their application of set theory therefore risks becoming an error in their analysis of capitalism. Roffe suggests this can be avoided by acknowledging “the dramatic gap between the account they say they are offering and the one they in fact deploy.”518 Rather than grounding the legitimacy of their analysis of capitalism in its mathematical origins Roffe suggests that we read their application of set theory as a philosophical and conceptual invention. This is a promising way beyond the impasse that Deleuze|Guattari leave for us but I would like to take a different approach. By turning to Lacan, I intend to retain Deleuze|Guattari’s insight that minorities are a formal set of relations between terms by shifting its point of reference from mathematics to Lacan’s theory of discourse. As we will see, this move is not without basis in Deleuze|Guattari’s theory of minorities.

516 Roffe, 132.
517 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 461.
Let us begin, then, with the majority as an example of what Lacan calls a “structuring agent.” Invitations towards a Lacanian reading of the relations between the major, minor and minoritarian are readily apparent in *A Thousand Plateaus*. In a particularly important moment Deleuze|Guattari point to the Lacanian concept of the “phallus” as an example of the operations of the majority in the field of sexuality:

“For example a woman can have a female point alongside a male point, and a man a male point alongside a female one. The constitution of these hybrids, however, does not take us very far in the direction of a true becoming (for example, bisexuality, as the psychoanalysts note, in no way precludes the prevalence of the masculine or the majority of the “phallus”).”

The full complexity of the Lacanian notion of the phallus need not detain us here. What is of interest is the way that this passage suggests a structural correspondence between the phallus and the majority. In Lacanian psychoanalysis, the phallus is not the biological penis but the structural agent of “castration” that intervenes between the child and the mother to assure the child’s entry into the symbolic, thereby structuring the subject’s enjoyment. What is interesting about this idea for a reading of Deleuze|Guattari’s majority that takes literally the idea that the majority is Nobody is the fact that both the Lacanian phallus and the Deleuzio-Guattarian majority are agents of structuration. What does this mean?

In psychoanalysis, the phallus is the “privileged signifier” that anchors the chain of signification. As Lacan says, “The phallus is the signifier of signifiers, the privileged signifier of that mark in which the role of the logos is joined with the advent of desire.” It is a paradoxical signifier without a signified that marks the border between the body and language and as such it stands as the “signifier of the impossible fullness of meaning” within the symbolic. And yet, given that the phallus denotes both this absence or lack

---

519 Lacan, *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*.
520 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 293.
522 It was, of course, precisely the supposedly a-historical structuring role of the phallus that Deleuze|Guattari aimed to contest and historicize in *Anti-Oedipus*. The drive to historicize the structuring agent is retained in their theory of majorities where the majority is always an historically derived and contingent abstraction: “majority assumes a state of power and domination, not the other way around. It assumes the standard measure, not the other way around”. Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 122. Deleuze|Guattari’s critique misses its target, however. As Zupančič demonstrates, the phallus is not an a-historical function in Lacan’s teaching. See: Alenka Zupančič, *Odd One In: On Comedy*, 183–219.
of being (manque à être) and that which grounds the subject’s jouissance (excess enjoyment) it must be understood as the “point of structural coincidence of a lack and a surplus.”

Put differently, it is what separates the body from its own (impossible to attain) enjoyment and introduces it to enjoyment within the symbolic, thus inaugurating the subject into the structural field of the Symbolic.

It is unlikely that Deleuze|Guattari allied this structural function of the phallus to their concept of the majority in ignorance. Guattari trained under Lacan for several years. While in his seminal essay How do We Recognize Structuralism?, Deleuze pinpoints precisely this structural role of the phallus. Deleuze:

“The phallus is neither the real organ, nor the series of associable or associated images: it is the symbolic phallus….the phallus appears not as a sexual given or as the empirical determination of one of the sexes. It appears rather as the symbolic organ that founds sexuality in its entirety as a system or structure, and in relation to which the places occupied variously by men and women are distributed”.

Deleuze goes on to further underline the structural function of the phallus. He calls it an “empty square” whose defining feature is to be “precisely that which does not coincide with its own identity”, and that “has no identity except in order to lack this identity.”

For Deleuze it is this paradoxical status that grants the phallus the function of determining “the relative place of the elements and the variable value of relations.” What I want to suggest, then, is that Deleuze|Guattari’s majority, precisely as “Nobody,” can be similarly interpreted as that part of the structure which by lacking self-identity determines the relative place of the elements (minority subsets) and the relations between them. From this perspective it is not only that the majority functions in a disciplinary manner or as a hegemonic “empty universal” in Sibertin-Blanc’s words. Deleuze|Guattari make quite

525 Zupančič, Odd One In, 192.
526 Deleuze, 'How Do We Recognize Structuralism?', 187.
527 Deleuze, 188.
528 Deleuze, 188.
529 In Brian Massumi's English translation of Mille Plateaux, the word ‘Nobody’ is chosen to translate both “ce n’est jamais personne” and “Il y a un <<fait>> majoritaire, mais c’est le fait analytique de Personne”.
530 Interestingly, in the English translation of Sibertin-Blanc's State and Politics, Ames Hodges opts for a capitalized “Someone” for both passages. This equivocality between “Nobody” and “Someone” (the former understood as a negation with positive effects and the latter a positivized absence of anyone in particular) is I believe in keeping with Deleuze|Guattari’s thinking on the Majority. See: ”Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, Mille Plateaux, Critique edition (Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1998), 133–34; Guillaume Sibertin-Blanc and Ames Hodges, State and Politics: Deleuze and Guattari on Marx, Semiotext(e) Foreign Agents Series (South Pasadena, CA: Semiotext(e), 2016), 230–31.
clear that the majority is much more than this: it is the agent of structuration, a paradoxical self-referencing signifier that distributes places within the structure that it determines. A diagram that Deleuze|Guattari include in the footnotes of *A Thousand Plateaus* shows this function clearly:

![Figure Five: Deleuze|Guattari’s diagram of majorities and minorities (Source: *A Thousand Plateaus*, 544)](image)

Each term issues out from the Majority of “Man,” which structures their terms and relations.\(^{530}\) This comparison, though invited by Deleuze|Guattari themselves, can only take us so far. Unlike the Lacanian phallus, for instance, the majority is clearly not what introduces the subject into the order of language. Nevertheless, the role of the majority as a positivized absence, as the guarantor of the structure, and as a self-referential signifier that as Deleuze|Guattari say appears twice in the series “once in the constant and again in the variable from which the constant is extracted,”\(^{531}\) brings the notion into close proximity with a second Lacanian concept: the master signifier as the *point de capiton*, or quilting point, of a given structure.\(^{532}\) What I therefore want to suggest is that structural logic of Deleuze|Guattari’s account of majorities, minorities, and becoming-minoritarian is in fact better explained with the help of Lacan’s notion of the master’s discourse from *Seminar XVII*.\(^{533}\)

I use Lacan’s theory of discourse as an explicative tool not because I think the majority *is* a master’s discourse but because the master’s discourse describes a particular kind of formalized social link that I believe Deleuze|Guattari’s tripartite formula of minorities shares. Put differently, my claim is not that there is an *identity* between these two projects but a structural homology. By my reading, both the master’s discourse and the formula majority/minority/becoming-minoritarian, are an attempt to theorize the

---

\(^{530}\) Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 544.

\(^{531}\) Deleuze and Guattari, 122.


\(^{533}\) Lacan, *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*. 
radical incompleteness of the social that gives rise to an all-important excess that is potentially uncontainable within the social structure itself. In both Lacan’s thought and Deleuze|Guattari’s theory of minorities, it is this incompleteness and resultant excess that makes social transformation possible. As Badiou puts it, paraphrasing Lacan, both share the conviction that “there is no social relationship,” meaning that there is no possibility of society becoming a reconciled Whole or smoothly functioning Hobbesian social body. It is my commitment to this account of the social that has continually underwritten my association of becoming-minoritarian with objet petite a and Marx’s proletariat and which can now be deepened via a comparison between Lacan’s discourse of the master and Deleuze|Guattari’s majority as Nobody.

The Master’s Discourse and the Majority

Lacan’s theory of the four discourses was principally developed in his most explicitly political seminar, “The Other Side of Psychoanalysis,” which ran from 1969-1970. Throughout the seminar, which immediately follows the events of May ’68, Lacan develops his theory of the four discourses (or four social links as they are also called) and puts them to work as a way to wrestle with the consequences of the summer of unrest.

Lacan’s account of discourse is strictly formal in character and thus differs considerably from the approach developed around the same time by Michel Foucault, or indeed from the Lacanian-inflected approach developed by Laclau and Mouffe. As Bianchi explains, a Lacanian discourse is “abstracted from any specific element” and operates as a “pure system of void places.” For Lacan, a discourse is not what is said but what structures what can be said within the structural limits of language. In Lacan’s own words, a discourse intervenes “well beyond speech, which is always more or less occasional” and “subsists in certain fundamental relations” found in the structure of language itself.

With such a high level of abstraction, it might be thought that Lacan’s discourses would be unable to explain the concrete power relations that shape our lives. How can such a formalist approach possibly hope to capture the fluidity of our daily social interactions? Paradoxically, Lacan’s answer is that it is only with a move to the strictly

534 Badiou, Theory of the Subject.
535 Foucault, Archaeology of Knowledge.
536 Laclau and Mouffe, Hegemony and Socialist Strategy.
537 Bianchi, ‘From Representation to Class Struggle’, 117.
538 Lacan, The Other Side of Psychoanalysis, 12.
formal relations that structure our experience that we can hope to grasp these interactions. By developing his theory of the four discourses, Lacan aims to “determine institutional frameworks that mediate social antagonism in distinctive ways.” They are “an attempt to identify and analyze the crucial factors through which language exercises power in human affairs.” It is this impetus to provide a politically charged but formal account of structure that makes the master’s discourse a valuable explicative tool for analyzing both the relationships Deleuze|Guattari establish between the majority, the minority, and becoming-minoritarian, and the stakes of political these relations. Deleuze|Guattari’s analysis of the relation between the majority and its minority subsets is similarly formal, the content only decided in specific historical and geographical contexts.

While a full treatment of Lacan’s four discourses lies well beyond the scope of this thesis, a brief explanation of how the discourses work is necessary before we return to the question of the majority as a structuring principle homologous with the master signifier. Lacan builds his theory of the four discourses around a set of four places and a set of four terms.

The places are as follows:

```
agent  →  other

truth  product
```

Figure Six: The places in Lacan’s Four Discourses (Source: Russel Grigg, Jacques Lacan and the Other Side of Psychoanalysis, 3)

The terms are as follows:

```
S₁ Master signifier
S₂ Knowledge, as in le savoir or “knowing that—”
$\$ The divided subject
a both objet a and surplus-pleasure.
```

Figure Seven: The terms in Lacan’s Four Discourses (Source: Russel Grigg, Jacques Lacan and the Other Side of Psychoanalysis, 3)

539 Lacan, Seminar XX, 93.
In the master’s discourse, the terms are placed as such:

\[
\begin{array}{c}
S_1 \\
\rightarrow \\
\$ \\
S_2 \\
\Downarrow \\
a
\end{array}
\]

Figure Eight: Jacques Lacan’s Discourse of the Master (Source: Russel Grigg, *Jacques Lacan and the Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, 3)

Thus, the divided subject is the “truth” of the discourse, the master signifier is the “agent,” knowledge or the battery of signifiers is what is addressed, and objet a, or a “surplus” as Lacan calls it, is the product.\(^{543}\)

The value of this presentation is made clearer by example. One of the aims of the master’s discourse is to present the fundamental structure of the Lacanian subject. The master signifier (S1), is what represents the subject for another signifier (S2) but since the symbolic is constitutively incomplete, a remainder is produced in the form of enjoyment or objet petite a. Lastly, the barred subject occupies the position of truth because the Lacanian subject is split by their introduction into the symbolic order. All of this was already quite familiar to those following Lacan’s teaching before *Seminar XVII*. However, another of the aims of the master’s discourse was to present a specific social link between subjects. It is here that the master’s discourse acquires a more overtly political function and where I want to base its homology with my structural account of minorities.

As Boucher explains, the master’s discourse considered as a social link “is the discourse of self-identity and the control of others, which institutes the dominance of a master signifier, S1, thereby organizing the field of knowledge, S2, into the values promoted by the master signifier.”\(^{544}\) This goes a long way towards explaining the upper half of the matheme: S1 intervenes in S2 and structures its terms. We can perhaps already see the similarities between this relationship and that of the majority and the minority in Deleuze|Guattari’s thought. Much like the master signifier, it is by intervening into a field of relations that the majority distributes a set of subsets or subsystems in relation to itself. But what about the bottom half of the matheme? The barred subject in the position of “truth” is intended to show how the master always conceals their own lacking character, the fact that they themselves are a castrated desiring subject. We might, for example, think

\(^{543}\text{Lacan, *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, 20.}\)

of the symbolic function of a monarch. As the symbolic head of state, they are in the position of the master (S1) and structure the relations between all members of their kingdom (S2). And yet, beneath their symbolic mandate, their “divine right,” the monarch is still just a human being. They are still a castrated, lacking, desiring subject like the rest of us. This point of “weakness” must be disavowed, pushed below the bar, if the monarch is to act as an authentic master. Finally, the position of objet petite a as the product of the discourse points to the fact that in the master’s impossible attempt to dominate the field, something is produced. Lacan represents this something as objet a. This object, the product of the master’s discourse, is especially important for my reading of minorities and thus worth expanding on a little further.

In Lacan’s elaboration of the master’s discourse, he turns to Hegel’s famous master/slave dialectic to explore the function of objet petite a. Briefly, Hegel describes this dialectic as a struggle – potentially to the death – between two subjects. Eventually, one subject gives way to the desire of the other and is placed in the subordinate position of the slave while the other is raised to the stance of the master. Lacan associates the master with S1 and the slave with S2. Lacan’s next move is to argue that the master, as a split subject, does not know what he desires. He therefore puts the slave to work (as the subject whose duty it is to know what the master wants and who Lacan associates with savoir faire or know-how, S2) to provide for him. But, as Boucher explains, in the process the slave produces not only what was desired by the master but “also the cultural universality that cannot be signified within the master’s discourse and the alienated subjectivity of the slave,” an excess, objet petite a, from which is derived the possibility of revolt.

Though we have only scratched the surface of Lacan’s theory of the four discourses, we are now in a position to map Deleuze|Guattari’s terms majority/minority/becoming-minoritarian onto Lacan’s master’s discourse. The majority, as that which “appears twice, once in the constant and again in the variable from which the constant is extracted” is the master signifier. It is, in Lacan’s language, “the privileged signifier” that structures the relations between the battery of signifiers (S2), which I associate with the various minority subsets. Just as the battery of signifiers is put to work by the master signifier and attains their meaning in relation to it, so too do minorities attain their position and meaning in accordance with the majority. Thus, as we have seen, with “Man” in the majority, women, children, animals and so forth are situated

547 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 122.
as minorities or subsets. And yet the structuration of terms produced by S1 does not achieve total closure. Something escapes. That something is objet petite a, which throughout the thesis I have been associating with becoming-minoritarian as an operation upon the structure or a line of flight from one’s position as placed within the structure. This leaves us with the barred subject in the position of truth. What is its correlate in Deleuze|Guattari’s theory of minorities? As we have seen, Lacan explains that the barred subject is in the position of truth in the master’s discourse because the truth of any master is that they themselves are lacking, incomplete, desiring. But if the master is to act as an authentic master, then this kernel of lack or negativity must be disavowed in their discourse. It is therefore pushed below the bar and into the position of truth. My proposal is that this is precisely what we should understand by Deleuze|Guattari’s claim that the majority is the “analytic fact of Nobody.” 548 There is no individual that could occupy the position of the master since every subject is a lacking subject, a desiring subject. The truth of “Man” as the Majority is that the majority is Nobody.

To recapitulate. My claim is that Deleuze|Guattari’s majority functions in a homologous fashion to Lacan’s master signifier. For Lacan, a master signifier is what fixes an order of meaning for a subject by concealing the inherent lack in the Other. The Other is lacking for Lacan because the meaning of any given signifier is strictly differential and dependent on its relation to other signifiers. As Lacan says, “the signifier, as such, signifies nothing.” 549 Hence, if meaning is to be secured at all, a master signifier is needed to put a halt to the slippage inherent in the structure. Once a master signifier is installed: “everything radiates out from and is organized around this signifier…It’s the point of convergence that enables everything that happens in this discourse to be situated.” 550 Similarly, as we have seen, for Deleuze|Guattari the majority is the “standard of measure” that gives meaning and structure to minorities, organizing them around its terms. 551 It is the constant that measures the variables and against which they are evaluated and attain their status. This constant, however, is nothing other than a space of structuring negativity.

This interpretation has two important consequences. Firstly, if the majority is what determines its subsets, then the majority must be understood to retroactively structure the field of immanent social relations, imbuing them with a determinate form

548 Deleuze and Guattari, 123.
551 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 291.
and content. It is a retroactive structuring since, as Deleuze|Guattari say, the “majority assumes a state of power and domination, not the other way around. It assumes the standard measure, not the other way around,” which is to say the majority is a consequence of a field of historically determined immanent power relations and not what determines them in the first instance. Nevertheless, though they do not say as much explicitly, it is clear that once the majority is extracted from the multiplicity of relations and raised to a constant that it must double back on the field and designate the content of the minority “subsets” or “subsystems” of the majority if such relations are to exist. This reading must be taken to its logical conclusion: it is precisely because of the structuring role of the majority that becoming-minoritarian exists. That this must be the case is evinced by the fact that it is logically impossible for there to be a “pre-majority-becoming-minoritarian.” That is, there is no process of becoming-minoritarian that is not set against a pre-established majority. Thus, at least within the logic of minorities as it is presented in A Thousand Plateaus, it is not the case that “resistance comes first” as we saw Foucault and Deleuze argue in the introduction. Rather, as Thoburn says, we must recognize that “in a sense, the molar identarian form comes first, since one always finds oneself in a stratified, identified molar configuration.” But while Thoburn argues that the standard is “abstract,” unable to “fully exist in a concrete form,” and thus ontologically inferior to the minor as “concrete moments of deviation from the model” or as “the process of deviation or detrerritorialization of life,” I wish to grant both the same ontological status. As an abstract standard, the majority determines what form becoming-minoritarian takes and in fact grounds its very possibility at the impasse of the structure.

According to this interpretation the idea of a pure, unstructured, anti-Oedipal, process of creative becoming, desire or flux that is apparent elsewhere in Deleuze|Guattari’s work must be set aside. From the reading I am developing here the mistake this theory makes is the same as the one that Žižek accuses Marx of making. According to Žižek, Marx’s major political error was to presume that communism, as the “highest stage” of social organization, will release human productivity from the

852 Deleuze and Guattari, 122.
853 Deleuze and Guattari, 122.
855 Checchi, ‘Spotting the Primacy of Resistance in the Virtual Encounter of Foucault and Deleuze’.
856 Thoburn, Deleuze, Marx and Politics, 7.
857 Thoburn, 7.
858 Deleuze|Guattari were no strangers to the idea that an abstract entity might have concrete effects. Consider, for example, their concept of an ‘abstract machine’. Though we do not encounter this strictly virtual object ‘in the flesh’ it is nonetheless realized in different spatio-temporal dynamisms. For more on the critical purchase of vitalism on the real abstractions of capitalism see: Toscano, ‘Vital Strategies’, 88.
exploitative fetters of capitalism and thus make it *all the more productive*. From Žižek’s Lacanian perspective, however, this is nothing less than a capitalist fantasy: “If we abolish the obstacle, we do not get the fully unleashed drive to productivity, but lose precisely this productivity itself – remove the obstacle and the very potential it thwarted dissipates.” 559 In other words, we are productive at work because of class antagonisms and not despite of them. Capital ceaselessly overthrows its own immanent barriers because of the competition between individual capitals. Value is produced because “there is no social relationship” and not despite of this. We find the same structure in Lacanian psychoanalysis: we desire because of the intervention of the signifier and not despite of it. 560 Similarly, then, the appearance of a pure creative flow or multiplicity, of a “creative and created, becoming,” hindered only by the structure of the majority must be chalked up as a Deleuzian fantasy. 561 What makes becoming-minoritarian possible is precisely the impasse within the structure that is established by the major model operating as a standard of measure and quantification. In other words, the internal logic of Deleuze|Guattari’s minorities – though not their own presentation of them – presumes the covert operation of an inconsistent One, of a Master Signifier, or what Deleuze|Guattari call an arborescent “despotic signifier” 562 that sets into motion the possibility of becoming-minoritarian as its product, as its structural equivalent of objet petite a.

The second consequence of this formalist reading is a re-interpretation of how the majority as ‘Nobody’ operates libidinally. We have seen that for Sibertin-Blanc the majority is a variable set of norms that, precisely as variable, operates all the more effectively as a disciplinary technology of power. Once the majority is reimagined as a master signifier, however, things change considerably. It is no longer the case that (in a nominalist key) no one is identical with the majority because the list of characteristics that determine it can be potentially extended to infinity (as we saw with the Radiohead example above). From the perspective I have been developing here, even if the major model were simply “Man” it would still be impossible for men to identify with it absolutely. This is because of the necessarily lacking nature of signification that is constitutive of the symbolic order. 563 As Lacan explains, because the structure of signification is strictly differential, because “every signifier is, as such, a signifier that

560 Žižek’s critique is levelled at what has been called the ‘Promethean’ or productivist Marx. For workerist a critique of productivism see Weeks, *The Problem with Work*; For an ecological critique see: Saito, *Karl Marx’s Ecosocialism*.
561 Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 123.
562 Deleuze and Guattari, 117.
signifies nothing” and because they gain their meaning only in relation to other signifiers, all signifiers are already fissured, they are already non-identical to themselves. 564 Or as Lorenzo Chiesa explains, “no signifier fully signifies the subject, even though there are “privileged” signifiers”.565

What this suggests is that the majority, reimagined as a master signifier, is an impossible identification – which is not to say that people do not identify with it but rather that it is impossible for it to represent the subject without remainder. There will always be a part of the subject that does not fit the model, a part of them that could be engaged through the process that Deleuze|Guattari call becoming-minoritarian. They put the point this way: “In a way, the subject in becoming is always ‘man’, but only when he enters a becoming-minoritarian that rends him from his major identity.”566 For Deleuze|Guattari, then, insofar as one identifies with the majority then one does not escape one’s assigned place within the structure established by the majority. There is, they say, “no becoming-majoritarian; majority is never becoming. All becoming is minoritarian.”567 A becoming-majoritarian would simply be a reaffirmation of one’s place within the structure of capital, a doubling down on those parts of one’s identity that are affirmed by the existing social order. We might, for instance, think of those who readily support the introduction of fracking into their communities on the grounds that it promises to bring wealth, prosperity, and jobs; the very things that capitalism routinely promises its minorities but rarely delivers.

In a similar vein, as we have seen, we must distinguish minorities from becoming-minoritarian. Minorities are subsets within the majority while becoming-minoritarian is an ethico-political decision on the part of the subject. Hence, there is no such thing as “becoming-minority” for Deleuze|Guattari since an identification with one’s place as a minority is similarly an identification with one’s assigned place within the structure of contemporary capitalism. As Deleuze|Guattari put it: “Women, regardless of their numbers, are a minority, definable as a subset; but they create only by making possible a becoming over which they do not have ownership, into which they themselves must enter.”568 Here, we might want to think of forms of environmental campaigning that operate all-too-smoothly within the existing social order: individual consumer habits, non-profit organizations, voting, and so on.

565 Chiesa, Subjectivity and Otherness, 50.
566 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 291.
567 Deleuze and Guattari, 106.
568 Deleuze and Guattari, 106.
In other words, with Lacan at Deleuze|Guattari’s side, it becomes possible to recognize that subsystems of a majority are not only ways to evaluate minorities in relation to an abstract standard but ways of allocating positions of enjoyment. Minority groups are permitted ways to transgress or enjoy that are not in any sense progressive and that in fact serve to reproduce the very system they claim to reject. Deleuze makes this point clear in an addendum he inserts into his essay Many Politics written with Claire Parnet. Deleuze|Parnet begin: “Marginals have always inspired fear in us, and a slight horror. They are not clandestine enough” before Deleuze adds:

“(Note: In any case, they scare me. There is a molecular speech of madness, or of the drug addict or the delinquent in vivo which is no more valid than the great discourses of a psychiatrist in vitro. There is as much self-assurance on the former’s part as certainty on the latter’s part. It is not the marginals who create the lines; they install themselves on these lines and make them their property, and this is fine when they have that strange modesty of men of the line, the prudence of the experimenter, but it is a disaster when they slip into a black hole from which they no longer utter anything but the micro-fascist speech of their dependency and their giddiness: ‘We are the avant-garde’, ‘We are the marginals’. G.D.)”

Here, Deleuze recognizes the tendency for individuals to install themselves thoroughly, or nowadays with a knowing postmodern and ironic distance, on a “marginal” identity which they enjoy precisely because it is marginal, because it is minority subset of the majority. The problem here, as Žižek has shown repeatedly, is that capitalism is a social formation that is predicated on permissiveness, on a plurality of desires, interests and identities.570 Or as Deleuze|Guattari say, under capitalism the individual becomes truly “private,” one’s personal proclivities irrelevant, providing that your labour-power or your capital can be put to work:

“It is these quantities that are marked, no longer the persons themselves: your capital or your labour capacity, the rest is not important, we’ll always find a place for you within the expanded limits of the system, even if an axiom has to be created just for you.”

569 Deleuze and Parnet, Dialogues, 139.
570 Žižek, The Sublime Object of Ideology.
An identification with one’s position as a minority, then, whatever form it may take, is simply a way of enjoying oneself within the capitalist mode of production. Moreover, it is a mode of enjoyment that is directly supported by the majority as a standard of measure and without which it would not attain its marginal or “fringe” status. Thus, in an incredibly Lacanian vein, the major model sustains the minorities desire even if it transgresses its limits. Žižek calls this phenomenon an “inherent transgression”: an act of resistance or counter-conduct that precisely as such “serves as a point of ideological identification” with the social structure.572 In Deleuze|Guattari’s language, by taking a conscious distance from the majority, by doubling down on one’s status as a minority, one can enjoy their place within capitalism all the better. The horrors of capitalism are much easier to endure, for instance, if one proclaims their radical anti-capitalist credentials. The ongoing climate crisis is much less troublesome, as Žižek says, if you put all of your recycling in the right boxes.573

All of this suggests that if minorities have the potential to invent new forms of subjectivity, to constitute new social forces, to “smash capitalism” as Deleuze|Guattari say channeling Lenin’s call in State and Revolution to “smash the capitalist state,” it will not be as minorities as such.574 It will be by becoming-minoritarian. By “leaving the plan(e) of capital and never ceasing to leave it.”575 Similarly, insofar as anti-fracking activists have the potential to produce new forms of subjectivity, or to pose real problems to business as usual for the fracking industry, it will not be by taking up a position as one “interest group” or subset of minorities among others. Rather, as I will show in the following chapters, it will be by becoming-minoritarian, by refusing their allocated place of enjoyment, with all the risks, upsets, and uncertainties that such a process entails.

Conclusion

This chapter has re-read Deleuze|Guattari’s claim that the majority is Nobody in formalist terms. Putting aside the political consequences of this reading for the moment, it has argued that there are not one, but two, theories of the minority at work in A

---

572 Žižek, ‘The Inherent Transgression’.
573 Žižek, ‘Slavoj Zizek’.
574 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 472.
575 Deleuze and Guattari, 472.
Thousand Plateaus. The first is vitalist and dualistic. It considers all social formations, identities, and subjects to be somewhere on a continuum between a major tendency towards quantitative stasis and a minor tendency towards creative, qualitative, deterritorialization. The second, I have argued, is more dialectical and formalist in character and mobilizes three terms rather than two: the quantitative majority as Nobody, the minority as a quantitative subset, and becoming-minoritarian as a qualitative process. I have argued that consequences of this latter account, including the placement of the quantitative/qualitative split within the minority and the hollowing out the majority to the status of Nobody have not been properly considered in the existing literature. Thus, taking cues from Deleuze|Guattari’s association of the majority with the Lacanian phallus, I have developed the repercussions of this second formulation. In so doing, the chapter has further advanced my claim in chapter 1 that becoming-minoritarian ought to be associated with Lacan’s objet petite a and Marx’s proletariat, whilst also contributing to the theses overall aim of providing a renewed, politically salient, interpretation of Deleuze|Guattari’s theory of minorities that can be put to work in the analysis of contemporary social struggles.
It’s Political Philosophy…but where’s the politics?

Chapter IV
So far in this thesis I have elaborated, critiqued, and expanded upon Deleuze|Guattari’s figure of the minority and concepts in a number of important ways. In Chapter One I argued that minorization names capitalism’s objective tendency to cast increasing numbers of the world’s population into marginal, exploited, and oppressed positions. In Chapter Two I argued that cramped space names the everyday subjective experience of being minorized. And in Chapter Three I argued that minorities occupy a structurally ambiguous place within global capitalism. They are split between their status as a subset of the capitalist axiomatic and a movement beyond it, or a process of becoming-minoritarian. Along the way I have shown how these concepts map onto and illuminate the experiences of communities who have been forced to play reluctant host to fracking in the Marcellus Shale region and beyond.

In this chapter I turn to the implications of this analysis for contemporary struggles by asking what kind of politics follows from Deleuze|Guattari’s theory of minorities. My answer is a simple one: none whatsoever. Despite innumerable suggestions to the contrary from “Deleuzians” and Deleuze|Guattari’s critics alike, I claim that there is no such thing as a “Deleuzian politics” or for that matter a “minor politics” to be found in Deleuze|Guattari’s philosophy.\footnote{cf. Pellejero, ‘Minor Marxism’; Holland, ‘Deleuze and Guattari and Minor Marxism’; Thoburn, \textit{Deleuze, Marx and Politics}.} However, rather than considering this a weakness of their thought, I argue that the non-existence of a Deleuzio-Guattarian politics is precisely why their philosophy can help us to think with and through our current sequence of struggles, of which environmentalism and anti-fracking movements are an integral part.

This argument is made in two parts. First, I defend the idea that Deleuze|Guattari’s philosophy in general and their theory of minorities in particular does not have a politics. By putting their work in its proper historical context, I show that Deleuze|Guattari’s philosophy is better thought of as the recording of politics \textit{in} philosophy. In Althusser’s words, like any other philosophy Deleuze|Guattari’s “represents the class struggle in theory.”\footnote{Althusser, ‘Philosophy as a Revolutionary Weapon’, 1968.} This means that it records the consequences of world historical struggles within its concepts.\footnote{Hamza, ‘The Function of Philosophy and the Crisis of Marxism’.
}

\hspace{1cm} In Chapter One I established the groundwork for this argument. There, I presented how the minority captures in philosophy a global shift in capital’s technical and social composition from Fordism to post-Fordism. Here, I add that it captures a concurrent “crisis” in Marxist thought and
practice. By recording these events in philosophy without going so far as to suggest an immediate political response, Deleuze|Guattari’s theory of minorities is able to speak to the political questions of its time whilst simultaneously reaching through time to provoke us into thinking and doing politics differently today. This out of joint quality, this untimeliness, is what Deleuze|Guattari say is the aim of political philosophy. Political philosophy should, they write, “connect up with what is real here and now in the struggle against capitalism” while also contributing to “relaunching new struggles whenever the earlier one is betrayed.”

But while this remit clearly imbues political philosophy with an anti-capitalist agenda, it does not go as far as to provide us with an anti-capitalist politics, preferring to leave this to those who are involved in struggle. Instead, Deleuze|Guattari call abstractly for what they call a “creative solution” to the current political impasse. To borrow Eric Alliez’s structuralist metaphor (itself borrowed from Deleuze’s reading of Lacan) this absence of a determinate politics in Deleuze|Guattari functions as an “empty square” that allows us to move around freely in their philosophy, putting it to use for political ends that are not inherent to their philosophy.

The absence of an affirmative politics in Deleuze|Guattari’s philosophy does not mean that it has nothing to say that is of political value, however. Far from it. As Jeremy Gilbert says, and as I have been arguing throughout this thesis, Deleuze|Guattari’s work offers “a way of understanding the mutations of contemporary capitalism, and of the things which limit the possibilities for effective struggle.”

Neither does this absence mean that Deleuze|Guattari are easily reconciled to all political positions. On the contrary, their philosophy provides substantial critiques of liberalism, capitalism, fascism, and late-stage Soviet Socialism that while never amounting to an affirmative politics outlines in negative a general strategic orientation for minority struggles. It is this that forms the second part of the chapter. Here, I develop two tendencies of minority struggles, which are really two ways to approach the same problem: How to produce lines of flight that are capable of “leaving the plan(e) of capital, and never ceasing to leave it”? Or put differently, how can a movement sustain its process of becoming-minoritarian? The first of these is the rejection of a politics of recognition or integration into the state and capital. The second is the production, in and through struggle, of new

579 Deleuze and Guattari, What Is Philosophy?, 100.
580 Deleuze and Guattari, 100.
581 Deleuze, ‘May '68 Did Not Take Place’, 236.
582 Alliez, ‘Questionnaire on Deleuze’.
583 Alliez et al., ‘Deleuzian Politics?’, 167.
584 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 472.
collective forms of subjectivity, solidarity and universality to rival the universalism of global capitalism. Finally, I conclude the chapter by proposing that these tendencies can serve as a set of criteria for us to measure the successes and limitations of contemporary political struggles. This lays the groundwork for just such an analysis of We Are Seneca Lake’s struggle against a gas storage facility on the shores of Seneca Lake in the following chapter.

Why Deleuze|Guattari’s Political Philosophy Does Not Have a Politics

In 1990 Antonio Negri interviewed Deleuze about the political consequences of his philosophy. It is an exchange worth quoting at some length since it forcefully demonstrates one of the central arguments of this thesis: that from the mid-1970’s on, the minority is Deleuze’s preferred point of entry into questions of resistance, revolution and politics and that it remains his most significant contribution to these questions today. In terms of this chapter, it also demonstrates his sensitivity to the point where philosophy passes over into politics and thus where Deleuze, the philosopher, must fall silent. The exchange begins with Negri asking Deleuze a question that foreshadows much of his own later work with Michael Hardt:

“How can minority becoming be powerful? How can resistance become an insurrection? Reading you, I’m never sure how to answer such questions, even though I always find in your works in impetus that forces me to reformulate the questions theoretically and practically. And yet, when I read what you’ve written about the imagination, or common notions in Spinoza, or when I follow your description in The Time-Image of the rise of revolutionary cinema in third-world countries, and with you grasp the passage from image into fabulation, into political praxis, I almost feel I’ve found an answer…Or am I mistaken? Is there then, some way for the resistance of the oppressed to become effective, and for what’s intolerable to be definitively removed? Is there some way for the mass of singularities and atoms that we all are to come forward as a constitutive power,
or must we rather accept the juridical paradox that constitutive power can be
defined only by constituted power?”

To which Deleuze begins his response:

“The difference between minorities and majorities isn’t their size. A minority may
be bigger than a majority. What defines the majority is a model you have to
conform to: the average European adult male city-dweller, for example…A
minority on the other hand, has no model, it’s a becoming, a process. One might
say that majority is nobody. Everybody’s caught, one way or another, in a minority
becoming that would lead them into unknown paths if they opted to follow it
through. When a minority creates models for itself, it’s because it wants to
become a majority, and probably has to, to survive or prosper (to have a state, to
be recognized, establish its rights, for example). But its power comes from what
it’s managed to create, which to some extent goes into the model, but doesn’t
depend on it. A people is always a creative minority, and remains one even when
it acquires a majority: it can be both at once because the two things aren’t lived
out on the same plane…”

Deleuze’s answer continues along this narrowly philosophical path and in so doing
sidesteps the crux of Negri’s question. It is clear enough that Negri’s comments are
underwritten by his long held militant concern with “What is to be done?” As a frequent
interlocutor of Negri’s, Deleuze will have been well aware of this. And yet in his response
he assiduously avoids this line of thought. In fact, abstracted from the general flow of the
interview, the exchange looks to be made of two entirely different conversations. In the
first, we see a request for a prescriptive politics informed by the insights of
Deleuze|Guattari’s philosophy: How does a minority act? How does resistance become
revolution? In the second, we see a restatement of this philosophy at the precise point
that it touches upon politics without ever going so far as to be a politics or make a political
intervention. Instead, as we saw in the previous chapter, we learn that Deleuze considers
the power of minorities to lie in their capacity to create new ways of being and new forms
of subjectivity beyond the existing major models or subsets they enter into. But despite

585 Deleuze and Negri, ‘Control and Becoming’, 173.
586 Deleuze and Negri, 173–74.
587 Negri and Bove, Factory of Strategy.
the importance of creation in making effective political interventions, this alone hardly amounts to a politics or an indication of how a minority ought to act.

In a later reflection on this interview Negri explains that this was not the first time that he had broached this militant line of questioning with Deleuze. According to Negri, Deleuze always acknowledged the problems that he raised and the lack of an answer to them in his philosophy “without nonetheless having any desire whatsoever to find a solution.”588 Negri considers this the fundamental weakness of Deleuze’s thought. In his Empire trilogy, written with Michael Hardt, he will work hard to import a post-autonomist politics into a Deleuzio-Guattarian and Foucauldian inflected analysis of post-Fordist capitalism.589 What I want to argue here, however, is that while Negri is correct to say that he is provoked by Deleuze|Guattari’s philosophy to reformulate political questions both practically and theoretically, he errs when he asks Deleuze, or indeed philosophy more generally, to provide him with more than this. More specifically, his mistake is to ask Deleuze to step outside of philosophy and into politics. Or, in Badiou’s language, to make philosophy the condition of politics instead of politics a condition of philosophy.590 From this perspective Deleuze’s evasion of the question is not only the correct response from a philosopher in his position but, paradoxically, the very reason why his philosophy maintains the power to force us to think politics today. The absence of a politics in Deleuze|Guattari’s philosophy both leaves the work of creating a politics to those involved in struggle and functions as a kind of objet petite a in the Deleuzian literature; its conspicuous absence acting as the object cause of numerous engagements with their work.

This approach to Deleuze|Guattari’s thought runs somewhat against the grain of the contemporary literature. Debates surrounding Deleuze|Guattari’s politics are not usually about whether their philosophy has a politics but about what kind of a politics it has or facilitates.591 The intricacies of these wide-ranging and ongoing debates fall well-beyond the scope of this thesis.592 In many respects, my aim is logically prior to them; it is to “get behind them” and suggest that it is more accurate – and indeed more politically useful – to approach Deleuze|Guattari’s philosophy as the recording of a concrete sequence of struggle rather than as offering an a-historical politics of any kind. Rather than a politics, Deleuze|Guattari give us a number of concepts that were created through

588 Casarino and Negri, In Praise of the Common, 139.
589 Hardt and Negri, Empire; Hardt and Negri, Multitude; Hardt and Negri, Commonwealth.
590 Badiou, Conditions.
591 Thiele, “‘To Believe In This World, As It Is’”.
592 For an excellent summary of these debates see: Alliez et al., ‘Deleuzian Politics?’
a philosophical engagement with the kinds of struggles that have thus far characterized our post-Fordist, post-colonial, system of capital accumulation and which can provoke us into thinking politics differently today.

It must be stressed at this point that to say Deleuze|Guattari’s philosophy does not have a politics is not to say that they themselves were not involved in politics (they very much were),593 that their philosophy was not conditioned by a particular political sequence (I am arguing that it very much was), or that they were not doing political philosophy (I agree with Deleuze that “Anti-Oedipus was from beginning to end a book of political philosophy”).594 Rather, to understand what is at stake in Deleuze|Guattari, we must draw a clear line of demarcation between politics and political philosophy. A failure to do this leads to the kind of idealism that Deleuze|Guattari were always careful to avoid. Iain MacKenzie and Robert Porter, for example, begin their book on Deleuze|Guattari’s philosophy by arguing that Deleuze|Guattari are underappreciated “political theorists” and “political thinkers”:

“If political thought can be broadly defined as thinking about the nature of the political domain, Deleuze and Guattari provide a new image of thought that changes what we think we are doing as we try to access this domain.”595

And yet thinking about the nature of “the political domain” is not the same as doing politics or having a politics. Using similar language, Paul Patton explains that although Deleuze|Guattari were “heavily influenced by Marxist approaches to politics,” they are in fact “neither Marxist nor liberal.” According to Patton, unlike Marxist thinkers, Deleuze|Guattari “were less interested in the capture of state power than in the qualitative changes in collective and individual identities that occur alongside or beneath the public political domain.”596 Setting aside the numerous debates within Marxism about the necessity or otherwise of seizing the state, Patton’s use of the term “political domain” here perhaps belies his own political commitments. As Patton correctly notes elsewhere, Deleuze|Guattari do not hold to the idea that there is a separation between the “public political domain” and its presumed opposite, the “private domain.” In fact, their concepts of the molar and molecular, the micro-political and the macro-political, were a concerted

593 DOSSE, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari.
594 Deleuze and Negri, ‘Control and Becoming’, 170.
595 Porter and MacKertzie, Dramatizing the Political, 14.
effort to break from this theorization of “the political domain” and to address what an analysis of social transformations on the basis of the macropolitical alone overlook.\textsuperscript{597} It is no coincidence that MacKenzie, Porter, and Patton share in a philosophical project to bring Deleuze|Guattari into the orbit of the liberal communitarian tradition. But as Badiou has argued, liberalism’s notion of a “political domain” constructs an unchanging space called “the political” and grants the philosopher the task of thinking it and judging it\textsuperscript{598} and the politician the task of representing the predetermined interests of various “closed identities” and interests.\textsuperscript{599} Deleuze|Guattari would agree with Badiou on this. As they write in \textit{What Is Philosophy?} liberalism’s faith in the power of public communication and representation leads to “exhausted…search for a universal liberal opinion as consensus, in which we find the cynical perceptions and affections of the capitalist himself.”\textsuperscript{600} In the language of this thesis, liberalism’s goal is to reduce all struggles for genuine political emancipation into manageable subsets of the capitalist axiomatic.

This is not at all how Deleuze|Guattari proceed. For the two philosophers, \textit{a} politics – in the singular – is invented in and through an ongoing and iterative process of collective struggle across the entirety of the social field.\textsuperscript{601} To be involved in political work is to be involved in the molecular work of inventing new kinds of subjectivity, new organizational forms, and new strategies of struggle from within a set of concrete conditions and in encounters with what is deemed to be “intolerable.”\textsuperscript{602} At the same time, through this molecular or micro-political engagement with a situation, molar or macropolitical partisan lines are drawn, programmes are clarified, and prescriptions are made. As they write, “everything is political, but every politics is simultaneously a macropolitics and a micropolitics.”\textsuperscript{603} A change might begin at the micropolitical level but these “molecular escapes and movements would be nothing if they did not return to the molar organizations to reshuffle their segments, their binary distributions of sexes, classes, and parties.”\textsuperscript{604} Equally, a change at the macropolitical level will have its micropolitical effects.

Two things are of importance here. First, that by announcing “everything is political,” Deleuze|Guattari push back against the liberal idea that there is a bounded

\textsuperscript{597} Patton, \textit{Deleuze and the Political}, 43.
\textsuperscript{598} Badiou, \textit{Metapolitics}, 10.
\textsuperscript{600} Deleuze and Guattari, \textit{What Is Philosophy?}, 146.
\textsuperscript{601} Thoburn, \textit{Deleuze, Marx and Politics}, 5.
\textsuperscript{602} Deleuze and Negri, ‘Control and Becoming’; Deleuze, ‘May ’68 Did Not Take Place’.
\textsuperscript{603} Deleuze and Guattari, \textit{A Thousand Plateaus}, 213.
\textsuperscript{604} Deleuze and Guattari, 216–17.
domain called “the political.” On this matter they are properly Marxist: there is no autonomous domain called the political that can be abstracted from the merely private.605 Second, the use of the phrase “every politics” – or as it is said elsewhere “many politics” – indicates that politics is multiple and singular. A politics is a process or a “line” that is constructed in and through an “active experimentation” in a singular state of affairs or with the cramped space one finds themselves within.606

As Buchanan and Thoburn explain, this understanding of what it means to do politics led Deleuze | Guattari to take “great pains to craft [their philosophy] in such a way that it could not easily be reconfigured as a political programme, or policy model.”607 In their philosophy this kind of work is always left to those involved in struggle. In Anti-Oedipus and A Thousand Plateaus, for example, Deleuze | Guattari provide a self-assessment that could be expanded to their entirety of their philosophical output. While schizoanalysis, they say, “is immediately practical and political, whether it is a question of an individual, group, or society,”608 “schizoanalysis as such has no political program to propose…It does not take itself for a party or a group, and it does not claim to be speaking for the masses.”609 In other words, although schizoanalysis, like any other practice, “actively participates in the drawing of lines,” it is careful to do so in a way that avoids drawing up a political program or speaking for the masses.610 The masses can speak for themselves, they can invent their own politics, and they can, if they so choose, put schizoanalysis to work.611 On this point we perhaps find another unexpected site of convergence between Deleuze | Guattari and Badiou. In Badiou’s succinct formulation, “only political militants think political novelty effectively.”612 Philosophy, meanwhile, as Deleuze | Guattari explain, is “the art of forming, inventing, [and] fabricating concepts,”613 that record the consequences of politics and that “connect up with what is real here and now in the struggle against capitalism.”614

This is why Deleuze | Guattari say that they provide us with a “pragmatics,”615 a “diagrammatics,”616 or a “metamodel”617 which aims “not to represent, interpret, or

---

605 Thoburn, ‘The People Are Missing’.
606 Deleuze and Parnet, ‘Many Politics’, 137.
608 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 203.
609 Deleuze and Guattari, Anti-Oedipus, 380.
610 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 201.
611 Deleuze and Guattari, Anti-Oedipus, 380–81.
612 Badiou, Metapolitics, 62.
614 Deleuze and Guattari, 100.
615 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 227.
616 Watson, Guattari’s Diagrammatic Thought.
617 Genosko, Félix Guattari.
symbolize, but only to make maps and draw lines, marking their mixtures as well as their distinctions.” To help in this task, Deleuze and Guattari create what they call a conceptual “tool box” rather than a politics as such, which would by definition aim to represent, interpret or symbolize. Arguably, it is because Deleuze and Guattari give us an a-political conceptual tool box that their thought has been put to use by political positions from the left, the centre, and the right. Todd May and Saul Newman discover an anarchist Deleuze, Nicholas Thoburn, Jason Read and Andrew Culp, a communist Deleuze, Paul Patton and Nicholas Tampio, a liberal Deleuze, Rosi Braidotti, a post-humanist Deleuze, Brad Evans, a vitalist Deleuze, William Connolly, a radical democratic Deleuze. Beyond these usual readings we should not forget Nicholas Land’s far-rightist neo-reactionary interpretation, or the fact the Israeli Defence Force found Deleuze and Guattari’s discussion of smooth and striated space of use in developing their urban warfare strategies and thus their settler colonial project more generally. The fact that Deleuze and Guattari’s concepts can be put to use for such varied political perspectives is indicative of the fact that their philosophy lacks a clear politics of its own. Instead, as Negri remarks above, their philosophy helps us to make sense of the world around us. It “forces us to think” to use a Deleuzian phrase but it does so despite – or rather because of – the fact that it does not prescribe a positive politics of any kind.

Marxist But Not Communist

Deleuze and Guattari’s philosophy is nevertheless grounded in a tradition that does have a clear political agenda: Marxism. Several commentators have cast doubt over the centrality of Marx to Deleuze and Guattari’s project but to take one notable example, Manuel De Landa has somewhat patronizingly argued that Marxism is nothing more than “Deleuze and Guattari’s little Oedipus, the small piece of territory they must keep to come back to at night after a wild day of deterritorializing.” As commentators such as Nicholas

618 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 227.
619 Deleuze and Foucault, ‘Intellectuals and Power’.
620 May, The Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism; Newman, ‘War on the State’.
621 Thoburn, Deleuze, Marx and Politics; Read, The Micro-Politics of Capital; Culp, ‘Philosophy, Science, and Virtual Communism’.
622 Patton, Deleuze and the Political; Tampio, ‘Assemblages and the Multitude’.
623 Braidotti, The Posthuman.
624 Evans, ‘Life Resistance’.
625 Connolly, The Fragility of Things.
626 Land, Mackay, and Brassier, Fanged Noumena.
Thoburn, Jason Read, Guillaume Sibertin-Blanc and Aidan Tynan have shown, this grossly misrepresents Deleuze|Guattari’s commitment to Marxism.\textsuperscript{629} Even a cursory read of Deleuze, Guattari, and Deleuze|Guattari’s work leaves little doubt that Marx remained a central interlocutor for Deleuze from as early as \textit{Difference and Repetition}, to his unfinished book, \textit{The Grandeur of Marx}. In \textit{Difference and Repetition}, it is to Marx that Deleuze turns to defend his “philosophy of difference” from the charge of being the “discourse of beautiful souls: differences, nothing but differences, in a peaceful coexistence in the Idea of social places and functions.” For Deleuze, “the name of Marx is sufficient to save it from this danger.”\textsuperscript{630} Guattari, meanwhile, was at various times a committed Trotskyist militant, interlocutor with \textit{post-autonomia} currents in Italy and beyond, and Green Party electoral candidate.\textsuperscript{631} Their combined work is equally indebted to Marx at least insofar as it remains grounded in a materialist critique of historically specific compositions of capital and subjectivity. Yet what Deleuze|Guattari’s philosophy takes from Marx is not a \textit{politics} per se but what they take to be the proper object of political philosophy. As Deleuze explains to Negri in their 1990 interview:

“All Felix Guattari and I have remained Marxist, in our two different ways perhaps, but both of us. You see, we think any political philosophy must turn on the analysis of capitalism and the ways it has developed. What we find most interesting in Marx is his analysis of capitalism as an immanent system that’s constantly overcoming its own limitations, and then coming up against them once more in a broader form, because its fundamental limit is capital itself.”\textsuperscript{632}

For Deleuze, then, Marx and Marxism are of fundamental importance not because they are the theoretical underpinning of a politics but because they specify the privileged object of analysis and critique: the historically determined development of global capitalism. It is therefore perhaps possible to reverse Bruno Bosteel’s quip about Badiou. If in Badiou we find a philosophy that is communist before being – or even without being – Marxist, then in Deleuze|Guattari it could be said that we find a philosophy that is Marxist without being communist.\textsuperscript{633} An “analysis of capitalism and the ways it has developed” gives us

\textsuperscript{630} Deleuze, \textit{Difference and Repetition}, 259.
\textsuperscript{631} Dosse, \textit{Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari}.
\textsuperscript{632} Deleuze and Negri, ‘Control and Becoming’, 171.
\textsuperscript{633} Bosteels, \textit{Badiou and Politics}, xix.
the concept of the minority, not as a politics but as the conceptual recording of a political problem in philosophy. It is this that Deleuze|Guattari were aiming at when they wrote that theirs was “becoming the age of minorities.”

Theirs was a time in which the “bipolar organization, property-labour, bourgeoisie-proletariat” was giving way to a more “splintered” social composition in which the “opposition” (or more properly the contradiction) between capital’s means self-expansion – what Deleuze|Guattari call its “axiomatic” – and “the flows it does not succeed in mastering becomes all the more accentuated.”

Deleuze|Guattari observe that under these conditions capital’s control appears to be all the more total, all the more complete, even as its conditions of reproduction become all the more precarious.

For Deleuze|Guattari this situation calls for a radical re-thinking of several political questions: how do we think struggle and revolution, can we still think revolution, in light of these developments, the limits reached by the Russian and Chinese revolutions, the limited successes of de-colonial struggles, the events of 1968, and the tendential disappearance of the organized working class as the guarantor of revolution? Or, as Deleuze puts it, what are we to do, how are we to think, now that “we’ve no sure way of maintaining becomings, or still more of arousing them, even within ourselves,” now that “there’s no longer any image of proletarians of which it’s just a matter of becoming conscious”? As I shall discuss in more detail below, Deleuze is not turning his back on the proletariat with these remarks. His point is that it is no longer possible to imagine that the proletariat harbours a teleological guarantee of revolution. Instead, in his time and ours, “how any group will turn out, how it will fall back into history, presents a constant concern.”

The figure of the minority does not try to resolve these problems; it merely marks them for our attention. Its function is to make us think about politics differently, to clarify what is at stake in contemporary struggles, to anticipate the limits that they might encounter, and to suggest the pitfalls that they must avoid. The minority is not a subject of politics in the same way as the bourgeoisie, the proletariat, the multitude, the precariat, the abject, or the lumpenproletariat. It is a placeholder. It indicates the possibility of radical social transformation, “the becoming-minority of everybody/everything” but it is a

635 Deleuze and Guattari, 469.
636 Deleuze, ‘Postscript on Control Societies’.
637 Deleuze and Negri, ‘Control and Becoming’, 173.
639 Deleuze and Negri, ‘Control and Becoming’, 173.
possibility that can only be actualized by overcoming a set of historically determined theoretical, organizational, and political problems to which Deleuze|Guattari neither wished to nor could (as historically circumscribed subjects) provide a solution. This becomes particularly clear in one of Deleuze|Parnet’s discussions of revolution in *Many Politics*:

“The question of revolution has never been utopian spontaneity versus State organization. When we challenge the model of the State apparatus or of the party organization which is modelled on the conquest of that apparatus, we do not, however, fall into the grotesque alternatives: either that of appealing to a state of nature, to a spontaneous dynamic, or that of becoming the self-styled lucid thinker of an impossible revolution, whose very impossibility is such a source of pleasure. The question has always been organizational, not at all ideological: is an organization possible which is not modelled on the apparatus of the State, even to prefigure the State to come? Perhaps a war-machine with its lines of flight?”

Notice how this passage becomes increasingly abstract as it progresses. Deleuze|Parnet begin by pushing past the ongoing debate about organization vs. spontaneity. For them, the real question lies elsewhere. Then, confronted with the concrete examples of the Soviet Union and the People’s Republic of China, they raise concerns about the contemporary applicability of Marx’s influential claim that “[e]very class which is aiming at domination, even when its domination, as is the case with the proletariat, leads to the abolition of the old form of society in its entirety and of all domination, must first conquer political power.” They then pre-empt the criticism that this places them in either a utopian leftist position or that of a disavowed petite bourgeoisie intellectualism. All of this is clear enough. And yet when it comes to providing a possible alternative to the party-form and the seizure of the state they retreat into the highest levels of abstraction: “perhaps a war-machine with its lines of flight.” It is this propensity that led the early Badiou, despite Deleuze’s protestations, to accuse him of ultra-leftism. While for Peter Hallward, it reveals a deep disinterest in the concrete realities of struggle. But what if

641 Deleuze and Parnet, ‘Many Politics’, 145.
642 Magun, ‘Spontaneity and Revolution’.
644 Badiou, ‘Fascism of the Potato’; Badiou, *Theory of the Subject*.
645 Hallward, *Out Of This World*. 

this level of abstraction is itself doing some political work? What if Deleuze|Parnet’s comments are instead read as a provocation? In this case, they would be challenging us to imagine and enact new models of revolutionary action before they have been tested in the crucible of concrete struggles. They would be isolating and giving name to a set of problems without presuming to have a ready solution. They would be trying to “connect up with what is real here and now in the struggle against capitalism.”

They would be forcing us to think.

This is why it is so important to put the concept of the minority into its proper historical context. What was the figure of the minority a response to? What was it concretely proposing? Two events in particular seem to have shaped the concept and its associated analysis of capitalism. Both are important to keep in mind when we put Deleuze|Guattari’s conceptual apparatus to work in our own time. First, as I argued in Chapter One, the minority is a reckoning with the global restructuring of capital that is often referred to as the transition from Fordism to post-Fordism. As organizers and theorists as varied as James Boggs, Mario Tronti, and Endnotes have shown, this change in the technical composition of capital bought with it a concurrent shift in social relations, forms of subjectivity, and possible paths of action. This is the condition that Endnotes call our “unity in separation” – a situation in which all that we have in common is our differentiated experience of exploitation and oppression.

Secondly, running parallel to this restructuring but in no way reducible to it, was what has been referred to as a general “crisis” in Marxist thought and practice. Here, Ralph Miliband’s summary of the period helps to put Deleuze|Guattari’s work into its proper world historical context:

“The experience of ‘actually existing socialism’, Czechoslovakia, and Afghanistan, the collapse of Maoist illusions, Cambodia and the sour aftermath of victory in Vietnam, the withering of Eurocommunist hopes, the emergence of ‘new social movements’ born of dissatisfaction with the limitations of traditional labour and socialist movements and parities, a growing disbelief in the capacity of the

---

646 Deleuze and Guattari, What Is Philosophy?, 100.
647 Bonefeld and Tischier, What Is to Be Done?
648 Boggs, Racism and the Class Struggle; Tronti, Workers and Capital; Endnotes, Endnotes 1: Preliminary Materials for a Balance Sheet of the 20th Century.
649 Endnotes, Endnotes 4.
working class to be the agent of radical social change, and a consequent ‘crisis of Marxism’.  

And yet as Althusser wrote in 1977, while Marxism was undeniably in crisis at the time that Deleuze|Guattari were writing *A Thousand Plateaus*, it was hardly the first crisis that it had faced. For Althusser, this most recent crisis at least had the immeasurable benefit of being an “open crisis” offering Marxists and fellow travelers the opportunity to re-think Marxist theory and global political struggle under new conditions. The consequences of this re-thinking are mixed at best. Across Europe it would lead many to “retreat from class” and adopt a “post-Marxist” perspective.

As Peter Starr explains, in France the crisis took on its own peculiar shape, in many ways finalizing “the French intelligentsia’s long process of disengagement from the ideals of Marxism-Leninism”. The consequence of this disengagement was the development of what Starr calls “logics of failed revolt”. These are philosophies underwritten in one way or another by a kind of disavowed left melancholia prompted by the apparent loss of any meaningful revolutionary horizon. For Starr, in these works a Marxist emphasis on class struggle and revolutionary rupture is replaced by an interest in acts of moral transgression, ethical self-invention, and the logic of difference. Unsurprisingly, then, Deleuze|Guattari’s focus on difference and multiplicity makes them a central target:

“The order of the day included ecologism, consumerism, and regionalism; the defence of the rights of minorities and gays; anti-psychiatry and the liberation of “desire”. “Difference” was the password and the right to difference the fundamental stake in political struggles. Or more precisely, the celebration of difference stood athwart the political, eschewing politics proper while claiming real political effects.”

Similarly, Isabelle Garo argues that Deleuze|Guattari’s philosophy “is deeply implicated in a historical moment in which militant practices are on the wane, which sometimes

---

651 Althusser, ‘The Crisis of Marxism (1977)’.
652 Wood, *The Retreat from Class*.
seems to point to their multiplication and diversification” and in which there existed a “widely shared feeling of feeling of failure, in the wake of ’68.”656 Meanwhile, in a far-reaching polemic written contemporaneously with Deleuze|Guattari, Alain Badiou argues that they are guilty of transforming “the organic weakness of the situation…into so many strengths…the storm of the Multiple against the pretensions of the One. Down with the centres, whatever they are! Long live dispersion as such!”657

Starr, Garo, and Badiou are no doubt broadly correct in their diagnosis. Nevertheless, when it comes to Deleuze|Guattari’s concept of the minority, I would suggest that matters are somewhat more complicated. As Deleuze explains, the events of ’68 did indeed have an immense influence on his thought and precipitated what he calls his “turn towards politics.”658 But the effects of this turn are much less certain than Deleuze|Guattari’s critics suggest. On the one hand, in typical philosophical fashion, what interested Deleuze was not the victory or defeat of ’68 but the fact that it “was a demonstration, an irruption, a becoming in its pure state.”659 It was a new kind of political struggle whose composition, twists and turns, were unlike those that had come before it. As Deleuze|Guattari write of ’68 in Anti-Oedipus:

“those who evaluated things in macropolitical terms understood nothing of the event because something unaccountable was escaping. The politicians, the parties, the unions, many leftists, were utterly vexed; they kept repeating that the “conditions” were not ripe.”660

Insofar as Deleuze|Guattari welcomed these developments, they could indeed be accused of “celebrating difference” and relegating class struggle to a tributary position. This is a Deleuze for whom the dissolution of the previous revolutionary sequence was more grist for the philosophical mill. His concepts of becoming-revolutionary, the minority, the distinction between becoming and history, and his later theorizations of the event would all record its consequences as concepts and thus make valuable contributions to political philosophy, if not necessarily to political practice. And yet this account fails to notice that the “proliferation of margins” Deleuze|Guattari describe, the dispersal of class struggles from the site of production to the interval of the state and capital, is itself a

656 Garo, ‘Molecular Revolutions’, 63.
657 Badiou, ‘Fascism of the Potato’, 192.
658 Deleuze and Negri, ‘Control and Becoming’, 170.
659 Deleuze and Negri, 170.
660 Deleuze and Guattari, Anti-Oedipus, 206.
consequence of class struggle under post-Fordist conditions. As I discuss in more detail below, what is often missed is that Deleuze|Guattari remain class reductionists without becoming class essentialists. Their concepts are not so much a retreat from class as a radical questioning of what it means to do politics under new material conditions and it is this that makes them useful for us today. Rather than outlining a new politics, Deleuze|Guattari locate the fundamental political problem of our time and call for a “creative solution”, the invention of a “new earth”, and the fabrication of a “missing people” – phrases that, unlike Nicholas Thoburn, I would suggest are more suggestive for their absence of content than they are for their specific political proposals or commitments. It is through this absence that Deleuze|Guattari’s philosophy at simultaneously records a crisis in Marxist theory and retains the power to chart the direction and stakes of contemporary political struggles. In the process, Deleuze|Guattari pass down a series of tentative and reversible characteristics that they imply all minority struggles must have if they are to effectively combat the existing composition of global capitalism.

Two Tendencies of Minority Struggles

Despite their refusal to make political prescriptions, Deleuze|Guattari’s discussions of minorities are peppered with indications of the kind of political activity that they consider to be characteristic of minority struggles. In almost every instance, however, Deleuze|Guattari qualify these characteristics in a manoeuvre that I would suggest is intended to make way for the concrete particularities of specific struggles. For example, in the above quoted passage from Deleuze’s interview with Negri he explains:

“When a minority creates models for itself, it’s because it wants to become a majority, and probably has to, to survive or prosper (to have a state, to be recognized, establish its rights, for example). But its power comes from what it’s

661 Guattari, ‘The Proliferation of Margins’.
662 Here I follow J. Moufawad-Paul’s crucial distinction between class reductionism and class essentialism. Class reductionism allows us to grasp the complexity of capitalist social relations without claiming that class alone determines forms of struggle. See: Moufawad-Paul, Continuity and Rupture.
663 Deleuze, ‘May ’68 Did Not Take Place’, 236.
664 Deleuze and Guattari, Anti-Oedipus, 382; Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 423.
665 Deleuze, Cinema II, 222–30; Thoburn, ‘The People Are Missing’.
666 Thoburn, Deleuze, Marx and Politics.
managed to create, which to some extent goes into the model, but doesn’t depend on it. A people is always a creative minority, and remains one even when it acquires a majority: it can be both at once because the two things aren’t lived out on the same plane…”  

It is clear enough from this that minorities cannot find solutions for their problems from within the existing social structures, or the “capitalist axiomatic” as Deleuze | Guattari call it. As I discuss in more detail below, to attempt to do so would be to make themselves into a subset of the axiomatic, a minority as a part of capital. Nevertheless, we can already see in this passage that Deleuze acknowledges minorities may need to struggle for their place within a majority or even become a majority themselves simply to survive. On this point, we might want to think of struggles for national self-determination, the push for greater environmental regulation, the right to unionize, or women’s and LGBTQ+ rights claims. All are essential if the struggle is to be continued and yet the power of the minorities involved is not derived from the models they construct. Thus, for Deleuze, what defines a minority struggle is not that it consistently pursues its becoming-minoritarian without wavering. What matters is that in the push and pull of its struggle, in the compromises and concessions that it may need to make, it tends in the direction of becoming-minoritarian:

“The power of the minorities is not measured by their capacity to enter and make themselves felt within the majority system, nor even to reverse the necessarily tautological criterion of the majority, but to bring to bear the force of the non-denumerable sets, however small they may be, against the denumerable sets, even if they are infinite, reversed, or changed, even if they imply new axioms or, beyond that, a new axiomatic. The issue is not at all anarchy versus organization, nor even centralism versus decentalization, but a calculus or conception of the problems of nondenumerable sets, against the axiomatic of denumerable sets. Such a calculus may have its own compositions, organizations, even centralizations; nevertheless, it proceeds not via States or the axiomatic process but via a pure becoming minorities.”

---

668 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 471.
As Rodrigo Nunes argues, what matters here is not the organizational form a struggle takes. Under certain conditions Deleuze|Guattari are much less opposed to the political party, for instance, than it is often assumed. The important thing is that a minority struggle tends towards the abolition of its status as a subset of the majority and indeed of the structural context where such a status can make sense.

In what follows I outline two principles or tendencies for the perpetuation of a minor struggle that can be found in Deleuze|Guattari’s discussion of minorities. While there are perhaps others, these are particularly pertinent to the struggle that I will analyze in the following chapter.

1. Against Recognition. Against Integration.

In The Communist Manifesto, Marx and Engels describe capital’s asymptotic propensity to proletarianize ever increasing numbers of the world’s population: “the lower strata of the middle class…all sink gradually into the proletariat, partly because their diminutive capital does not suffice for the scale on which Modern Industry is carried on, and is swamped in the competition with the large capitalists…Thus the proletariat is recruited from all classes of the population.” As Lorenzo Chiesa writes, in the absence of a countervailing tendency this process of “purely economical proletarianization” is potentially universal.

Competition, crashes, and crises of all kinds – including, of course, the consequences of global warming – make it impossible to draw a clear line of separation between the “true” unproletarianizable capitalists and the proletarianizable ones.

It is precisely this problem that I have proposed Deleuze|Guattari extend in their prediction that capitalism is destined to minorize increasingly large parts of the population. Whereas the proletariat is defined by its structural position within the mode of production, minorities “are nothing other than “proletarianized” masses, but they are masses inasmuch as they are immediately formed within institutional, social, juridical, and ideological structures of nation states” or, what Deleuze|Guattari call the capitalist “axiomatic.” Thus, to return to Chiesa’s observation, minorization is a countervailing tendency to proletarianization. It is a means of ensuring – through various forms of

---

671 Chiesa, ‘Christianity or Communism?’
672 Sibertin-Blanc and Hodges, State and Politics, 243.

163
inclusion and recognition – that the proletarianized do in fact have something more to lose than their chains.

It is nevertheless a deeply precarious solution. Minorities, precisely as the displaced form of capitalism’s primary contradiction between the proletariat and capitalist classes, contain within themselves the power to break apart the capitalist axiomatic. This is why Deleuze|Guattari are at pains to emphasize the frequent but futile efforts of the global system to recognize minorities. For instance, in a passage clearly intended to echo Marx and Engels avowal that “The working men have no country,”673 Deleuze|Guattari write that, “It is hard to see what an Amazon-State would be, a women’s State, or a State of erratic workers, a State of the ‘refusal’ of work.”674 To which, we should add, a State of environmentalists. If such solutions are not possible it is because capitalism is simply not equipped to respond to the concerns of minorities. Their problems push up against and even beyond the limits of the possible. Thus Deleuze|Guattari explain that “the minorities issue is instead that of smashing capitalism, of redefining socialism, of constituting a war machine capable of countering the world war machine by other means.”675 This is Deleuze|Guattari’s classic dynamic of deterritorialization and reterritorialization. The axiomatic looks to depotentiate minorities by extending forms of recognition and yet the problems of minorities are always moving beyond the limits of the axiomatic:

“It matters little that minorities are incapable of constituting viable states from the point of view of the axiomatic and the market, since in the long run they promote compositions that do not pass by way of the capitalist economy any more than they do the State-form. The response of the States, or of the axiomatic, may obviously be to accord the minorities regional or federal or statutory autonomy, in short, to add axioms. But this is not the problem: this operation consists only in translating the minorities into denumerable sets or subsets, which would enter into elements of the majority. The same applies for the status accorded to women, young people, erratic workers, etc…What is proper to the minority is to assert the power of the nondenumerable, even if that minority is composed of a single member. That is the formula for multiplicities. Minority as a universal figure, or becoming-everybody/everything (devinir tout le monde).

674 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 472.
675 Deleuze and Guattari, 472.
Woman: we all have to become that, whether male or female. Non-white: we all have to become that, whether we are white, yellow, or black.”676

For Deleuze|Guattari, then, the capitalist axiomatic operates on a logic of “capture”: for everyone a proper place, for everyone the recognition of their identity, for everyone the facilitation of their mode of enjoyment. If a new becoming-minoritarian is produced as an effect of capital accumulation – say, a new wave of environmental movements – then capitalism simply adds axioms to account for them. This is the minority as a subset of the majority, as we saw in the previous chapter.

And yet, for Deleuze|Guattari, “there is no social system that does not leak from all directions.”677 Minorities can always escape the axiomatic, they can create demands, movements, or desires that cannot be captured or reterritorialized by the capitalist axiomatic. This is what Deleuze|Guattari mean when they say that minorities can “promote compositions that do not pass by way of the capitalist economy any more than they do the State-form,” a “non-denumerable set,” or becoming-minoritarian.678 A version of this argument first appeared in Anti-Oedipus: “no society can tolerate a position of real desire without its structures of exploitation, servitude, and hierarchy being compromised.”679 But in the context of Deleuze|Guattari’s discussion of minorities in A Thousand Plateaus it reappears in a revised and rather more measured form. There, they write that capitalism is caught in an irresolvable contradiction. The drive for capital accumulation produces minorities (it even depends on them) and yet it cannot fully integrate their desires into its axiomatic:

“If the two solutions of extermination and integration [of minorities] hardly seem possible, it is due to the deepest law of capitalism: it continually sets and then repels its own limits, but in doing so it gives rise to numerous flows in all directions that escape its axiomatic. At the same time as capitalism is effectuated in the denumerable sets serving as its models, it necessarily constitutes non-denumerable sets that cut across and disrupt those models.”680

676 Deleuze and Guattari, 470.
677 Deleuze and Guattari, 204.
678 Deleuze and Guattari, 470.
679 Deleuze and Guattari, Anti-Oedipus, 120.
680 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 472.
This is the properly dialectical quality of minorities that we saw in the previous chapter. The minority is at one and the same time an effect of capitalism and in excess of it, a quantitative subset of capital and a potential qualitative force moving beyond it.

What does this mean for the struggles of minorities? First, it means that the problems of minorities necessarily contain the power to “disrupt” the capitalist axiomatic but only insofar as minorities tend towards their qualitative aspect, their becoming-minoritarian. This is only possible on the condition that they reject what Povinelli calls the “cunning of recognition” or the tendency of liberal forms of governance to set “the hopes and passions of subaltern groups to work for its own development,” 681 which as Bignal argues through Deleuze|Guattari, does little more than produce governable subjects in a “minor position” relative to the majority.682

Secondly, however, Deleuze|Guattari are quick to acknowledge that the conditions minorities face may mean that they are required to fight for recognition, for axioms, as a fundamental part of their larger struggle to become-minoritarian:

“Generally speaking, minorities do not receive a better solution of their problem by integration, even with axioms, statutes, autonomies, independencies. Their tactics necessarily go that route. But if they are revolutionary, it is because they carry within them a deeper movement that challenges the worldwide axiomatic.” 683

In these passages, Deleuze|Guattari establish a refined dialectic between the potential need to struggle for recognition within the capitalist axiomatic and the need to realize the “true” power of minorities, or their “deeper movement” of becoming-minoritarian. Deleuze|Guattari are far from the first theorists to comment upon the ambivalence of a politics of integration and recognition.684 Nevertheless, their discussion nicely captures the essential ambiguity of political struggles. Groups are frequently forced to work “in and against” capitalism and the state, as the London Edinburgh Return Group put it, even when they know that their problems will not be resolved by them.685 Such a position cuts across the old debate about “reform or revolution?” and proposes that sometimes

682 Bignal, Postcolonial Agency, 68.
683 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 472.
684 There is a vast literature on recognition, to give only three examples: Taylor, Multiculturalism and The Politics of Recognition; Fanon, Black Skin, White Masks; Coulthard, Red Skin, White Masks.
685 London & Edinburgh Weekend Group, In and Against the State.
struggles at the level of axioms, or at the level of various kinds recognition, may be fundamental to the perpetuation of struggles whose general trajectory suggests a destination well-beyond mere recognition or integration. Interestingly, it similarly suggests that struggles that might not have revolutionary intentions can – almost inadvertently – bring about lines of flight that have revolutionary consequences. What at the molar level appears as a struggle for rights, the rejection of a drilling proposal, or a series of rallies or marches, may precipitate events that cannot be captured by the capitalist axiomatic. What appears to be a modest demand may in fact precipitate revolutionary events:

“This is not to say that struggle on the level of axioms is without importance; on the contrary, it is determining (at the most diverse levels: women’s struggle for the vote, for abortion, for jobs; the struggle for regions of autonomy; the struggle of the third world; the struggle of the oppressed masses and minorities in the East and West…). But there is also always a sign to indicate that these struggles are the index of a another, coexistent combat. However modest the demand, it always constitutes a demand that the axiomatic cannot tolerate: when people demand to formulate their problems themselves, and to determine at least the particular conditions under which they can receive a more general solution (hold to the Particular as an innovative form). It is always astounding to see the same story repeated: the modesty of the minorities’ initial demands, coupled with the impotence of the axiomatic to resolve the slightest corresponding problem. In short, the struggle around axioms is most important when it manifests, itself opens, the gap between two types of propositions, propositions of flow and propositions of axioms.”

This is the first tendency of minority struggles. A struggle is tending in the direction of becoming-minoritarian if it is able to bring about situations, desires, and practices that are not easily captured by the capitalist axiomatic and its system of rights, recognitions, and remunerations. Deleuze|Guattari’s work therefore suggests that when we evaluate the effectiveness of political struggles, we should be on the lookout for “lines of flight,” for the appearance of new practices and desires, that suggest the movement is heading

686 Luxemburg, Reform or Revolution and Other Writings.
687 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 171.
beyond its allocated place as a subset of the capitalist axiomatic. Even in the most modest of struggles, we should be looking for the presence of a coexistent combat that points towards the fact that radical transformations in subjectivity are taking place and hence a change in the structural position of participants themselves. What matters is the forcing open of a gap between “propositions of flow,” or becoming-minoritarian, and “propositions of axioms,” or the structure of capitalism itself underwritten by the Majority.  

2. *Solidarity and Revolutionary Universality.*

For Deleuze|Guattari, this insight applies not only to the examples they provide above – ethnic minorities, women, the young, struggles for regional autonomy – but to the working class itself. In one of his early and individually authored essays, Guattari explains the contradiction faced by minorities in more classically Marxist language:

> “The working class will never be able to modify capitalist relationships of production spontaneously and transform state power while respecting bourgeois legality. The internal contradictions come from the fact that the working class does not currently have the means to develop its struggles in a framework other than the one predetermined by the relationships of capitalist exploitation and nation states.”

In the language of *A Thousand Plateaus*, the working classes cannot find solutions for their problems within the capitalist axiomatic or by defending their position as a subset of the axiomatic. They are therefore forced to find a way beyond it – in this case, Guattari suggests, by organizing illegally. In their discussion of minorities in *A Thousand Plateaus*, this idea appears again in a form that is at once more refined and more obtuse:

> ‘The power of minority, of particularity, finds its universal consciousness in the proletariat. But as long as the working class defines itself by an acquired status, or even a theoretically conquered State, it appears only as ‘capital’, a part of capital (variable capital), and does not leave the plan(e) of capital. At best, the plan(e) becomes bureaucratic. On the other hand, it is by leaving the plan(e) of capital,

_68 Deleuze and Guattari, 171._

_69 Guattari, ‘Nine Theses of the Left Opposition’, 165._
and never ceasing to leave it, that the mass becomes increasingly revolutionary
and destroys the dominant equilibrium.”

As Nicholas Thoburn observes, this dense passage “has received scant critical attention”
in the secondary literature and yet it is indispensable to a proper understanding of how
Deleuze|Guattari conceive of minorities and their relation to Marxism. It also contains
the crux of the second tendency of minority struggles: the need to constitute new
collective forms of subjectivity, solidarity, and universality, which, by refusing recognition
within the capitalist axiomatic, unravel the relations of capitalist exploitation. As we have
seen previously, Deleuze|Guattari’s principal name for this active work upon the self is
becoming-minoritarian. Here, however, they add two things. First, that even the working
class must become-minoritarian. In their Cold War context this is achieved by rejecting
their position as a subset of either self-identifying capitalist states or the late “state
capitalist” Soviet Union. Second, in an extraordinarily significant move, they add that the
particularity of minorities is tethered to the composition of a new universality though the
figure of the proletariat. This unity of the universal and the particular in the figure of the
proletariat is of a straightforwardly Hegelian extraction that runs sharply against
Deleuze|Guattari’s often repeated emphasis on singularity. As with elsewhere in this
thesis, I shall take this unusual passage as an opportunity to consider alternative paths
through Deleuze|Guattari’s philosophy.

My central claim will be that these passages propose – albeit in an overly
condensed form – that a particular kind of solidarity pertains to minority struggles. To
pre-empt the argument somewhat, the passage indicates that for Deleuze|Guattari,
minority struggles are nothing less than the forms of appearance of capitalism’s primary
contradiction: that between the proletariat and the capitalist classes. They are a symptom –
in the strict psychoanalytic sense – of post-Fordist capitalism. The struggles of minorities
should therefore tend towards the composition of a properly Marxist universalism that
Deleuze|Guattari describe as a “universal consciousness in the proletariat” and that I
shall call a “revolutionary universalism” in opposition to the universality of the global
capitalist axiomatic. A revolutionary universalism will be one that does not sublate the
“power of the minority, of particularity” but that on the contrary “hold[s] to the Particular
as an innovative form” and puts it to work in order to abolish the structural place of

690 Deleuze and Guattari, 472.
691 Thoburn, Deleuze, Marx and Politics, 49.
692 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 471.
the proletariat and thus the capitalist mode of production, or “the plan(e) of capital”, tout court.

By reading Deleuze|Guattari in this way it is possible to provide a “Deleuzian” response to ongoing debates in post-Marxist theory, political ecology, and decolonial literatures surrounding the apparently Eurocentric or outmoded nature of class struggle and universality. Against post-Marxists my claim will be that class remains the insurmountable primary contradiction of capitalism, or the Real of capitalism, around which minority struggles are structured. Against post-colonial thinkers of pluriversality my argument will be twofold. First, that as Deleuze|Guattari suggest, following Samir Amin, class struggle is not a European epistemological category but rather an objective global phenomenon. Second, that it is possible to conceive of a form of universalism that neither eradicates particularities nor remains at the level of the particular but rather comes into being through the shared struggle of particulars. This reimagining of solidarity and universalism has a great deal in common with those proposed by anti-colonial thinkers such as Franz Fanon, Samir Amin, and Aimé Césaire. Far from rejecting the aim of constructing a universal project of emancipation, these thinkers reconceive of universality in such a way as to retain a role of the particular within the construction of the universal. Here is Césaire:

“I’m not going to entomb myself in some strait particularism. But I don’t intend either to become lost in a fleshless universalism…I have a different idea of the universal. It is of universal rich with all that is particular, rich with all the particulars there are, the deepening of each particular, the coexistence of them all.”

As George Ciccariello-Maher writes, this is a universalism that can only be arrived at “through a struggle with particulars.” It is the universal not as a Eurocentric fleshless or static thing but as something that is created in common by those who participate in a struggle through the transformation of those who fight for it. Or, in Cesare Casarino’s wonderful phrase, it is “a universalism of common potentials and common projects.” I will use these passages as my guide to develop a three-step argument.

---

693 Laclau and Mouffe, Hegemony and Socialist Strategy.
694 Escobar, Designs for the Pluriverse; Reiter, Constructing the Pluriverse.
696 Ciccariello-Maher, Decolonizing Dialectics, 195.
697 Casarino, ‘Universalism of the Common’, 472.
To begin, we should approach the first sentence of the passage: “The power of minority, of particularity, finds its universal consciousness in the proletariat.” As a bare minimum we can take from this that minorities cannot remain at the level of the particular, the individual, the local, or the quotidian. They must, in some way, connect themselves to a universal project: the “Minority as a universal figure, or becoming-everybody/everything.” For Deleuze|Guattari this is achieved via meaningful acts of solidarity:

“It is certainly not by using a minor language as a dialect, by regionalizing or ghettoizing, that one becomes revolutionary; rather, by using a number of minority elements, by connecting, conjugating them, one invents a specific, unforeseen, autonomous becoming.”

It is only by “conjugating” a series of particular struggles that minorities can hope to construct a new revolutionary kind of universalism to oppose to the “fleshless” universalism of liberal capitalism. As Sibertin-Blanc says, this provides us with a “strategic line and a criterion of evaluation.” Minority struggles must “conjugate” with other struggles at both the national and international level whilst nevertheless maintaining their particularities and differences. Environmentalists must learn to connect their struggles with struggles around the issues of gender, race, class, and national liberation. Gender struggles must bring their own struggles into connection with those for environmental, racial, and economic justice. The working class must cease to be thought of as “the national Worker, qualified, male, and over thirty-five.” Each minority must enter into a mutual becoming with struggles of different kinds. In Deleuze|Guattari’s words: “Woman: we all have to become that, whether we are male or female. Non-white: we all have to become that, whether we are white, yellow, or black.” A struggle that falls back on a secure identity, on the recognition of its place as a specific subset of capital, falls back into the capitalist axiomatic and fails to become-minoritarian. This is the difference between “not in my back yard” – with its emphasis on regionalism, property and individualism – and “not here not anywhere,” which is always a statement of universal refusal and solidarity spoken from the place of a particular. This, then, is the first point.

---

699 Deleuze and Guattari, 106.
702 Deleuze and Guattari, 472.
On to the second step in the argument. We must be careful not to confuse Deleuze|Guattari’s position with those who might advocate for a pluriversal “inter-cultural dialogue amongst multiple people(s),”\textsuperscript{[703]} an “ecology of movements,”\textsuperscript{[704]} a “movement of movements”\textsuperscript{[705]} or the convergence of struggles along a “chain of equivalences.”\textsuperscript{[706]} Deleuze|Guattari are categorically not proposing that a series of more or less equivalent interests and identities ought to come together in collective struggle. There are two important differences to note. The first is that for Deleuze|Guattari this would amount to a “quantitative” operation of adding together “denumerable” subsets of the majority. Its underlying assumption is that social changes can be won when sufficient numbers come together in a collective struggle, achieve hegemony, or come to recognize each other’s differences. But such a procedure never relinquishes its place within the capitalist axiomatic nor its status as a particularity and therefore remains subordinated to the Majority as Nobody. Here, we might want to think of the Women’s March in January 2016 or the Anti-Iraq War Marches in 2003. For Deleuze|Guattari, “this operation consists only in translating the minorities into denumerable sets or subsets, which would enter as elements into the majority, which could be counted among the majority.”\textsuperscript{[707]} In the case of the Women’s March and anti-Iraq war protest these subsets would be something like, “Liberal Feminism” and “Anti-War coalitions.” We might also want to think of the recent news that nearly 70% of the UK population believe the government is not acting fast enough on climate change.\textsuperscript{[708]} What is this if not a quantitative minority? A hegemony without power? In contrast, what Deleuze|Guattari have in mind is a practical “qualitative” and “nondenumerable” process of transformation, a becoming-minoritarian, that mutually affects everyone involved in the struggle and which tears them away from their assigned place as a minority within the major model:

“What characterizes the nondenumerable is neither the set nor its elements; rather, it is the connection, the “and” produced between elements, between sets, and which belongs to neither, which eludes them and constitutes a line of flight. The axiomatic manipulates only denumerable sets, even infinite ones, whereas

\textsuperscript{[703]} Dunford, ‘Toward a Decolonial Global Ethics’.
\textsuperscript{[704]} Notes from Nowhere, ‘Networks: The Ecology of Movements’.
\textsuperscript{[705]} Mertes, \textit{The Movement of Movements}.
\textsuperscript{[706]} Laclau and Mouffe, \textit{Hegemony and Socialist Strategy}.
\textsuperscript{[707]} Deleuze and Guattari, \textit{A Thousand Plateaus}, 470.
\textsuperscript{[708]} Laville, ‘Two-Thirds of Britons Want Faster Action on Climate, Poll Finds’.
minorities constitute ‘fuzzy’, nondenumerable, nonaxiomatizable sets, in short, ‘masses’, multiplicities of escape and flux.”

This “and” is Deleuze|Guattari’s name for what would more conventionally be called solidarity. What is meant by solidarity in this sense is a practice of bringing about and sustaining irreversible changes in the subjectivities of those who participate in a shared struggle. It is about producing the power of collective action, a line of flight, that supports new kinds of practice, new desires, new demands, and therefore a revolutionary universality that pushes beyond the limits of the capitalist axiomatic and what it deems to be possible. It is, then, a struggle against one’s place within a subset of the capitalist axiomatic.

We can see what is at stake here by comparing Deleuze|Guattari’s proposal to what Walter Mignolo calls “border thinking.” For Mignolo, border thinking means approaching the world “not as independent units (cultural relativism) but a world entangled through and by the colonial matrix of power.” This calls for dwelling in the borders between ways of thinking and being and thus creating “a world in which many world[s] would coexist.” Such a perspective intends to overcome the “power differential” established by “the logic of coloniality [and] covered up by the rhetorical narrative of modernity” in favour of a world of multiple epistemologies and ways of being. But for Deleuze|Guattari this is to remain firmly within the logic of denumerable sets and is therefore it is all too easily appropriated by global capitalism. As they put it, global capitalism “tolerates, in fact it requires” heterogenous epistemologies, cultures, identities and social formations. Providing, that is, that they do not disrupt the global division of labour and the pursuit of surplus-value.

This difference leads directly to the second reason why Deleuze|Guattari’s call for the “conjunction” or “connection” of “minority elements” is not the same as the demand for a “chain of equivalences” or a pluriversal politics: Deleuze|Guattari remain committed to the idea that the proletariat is still the privileged agent of revolutionary universality. For Deleuze|Guattari, as the claim that the “the power of minority, of particularity” finds its “universal consciousness in the proletariat” makes clear, the proletariat remains the carrier of the qualitative “and” or “connection” formed between subsets. Thus, unlike Chantal Mouffe, Ernesto Laclau, Walter Mignolo, Arturo Escobar

710 Mignolo, ‘On Pluriversality’.
and so on, Deleuze|Guattari are still in some sense “class reductionists.” But in what sense exactly? The answer lies in making a properly dialectical distinction between concepts of the proletariat and the working class. To be clear, Deleuze|Guattari do not explicitly develop this distinction in their texts but by paying attention to the appreciable conceptual shift from “the proletariat” in the above passage’s first sentence to the “working class” in its second it is nevertheless possible to extract such a distinction from their philosophy.

What I would like to propose is that the proletariat designates a structural place and anchor point for revolutionary universalism, while the working class names a particular sociological category or a subset in the capitalist axiomatic that, through its own process of becoming-minoritarian, must come to coincide with the structural place of the proletariat as the gap or point of inconsistency in the structure. Such a reading is supported by the fact that on the only other occasions that the “working class” appears in A Thousand Plateaus it is similarly referred to as a subset of the capitalist axiomatic. In a discussion of the Russian Revolution they explain that 1917 “forced capitalism to multiply its axioms to invent new ones dealing with the working class, employment, union organization, social institutions[…].” While in a brief footnote on the proletariat they write: “The very notion of the proletarian class hinges on the question, Does the proletariat already exist at a given moment, and if so as a body?[...]It is evident that Marxists use it in an anticipatory sense, as for example, when they speak of an ‘embryonic proletariat.’” From these brief remarks and the central passage that began this section we can reconstruct a Deleuzio-Guattarian dialectic between the working class and the proletariat. The working class would be a subset of the capitalist axiomatic like any other. The proletariat, meanwhile, would be something that must be the reverse side of every minority subset, it would be a becoming-minoritarian that must be composed or that must be bought into existence in distinction from the working class as a mere subset of capital.

Hence, like all minorities, the working class is internally split. Insofar as it “defines itself by an acquired status” it “appears” (and this Hegelian/ Marxist dialectical language is significant since it suggests the dialectic of essences and appearances) as only a part of capital and cannot be otherwise. But, by “leaving the plan(e) of capital, and never ceasing to leave it” the working class “becomes increasingly revolutionary and destroys the dominant equilibrium.” Or, put differently, by becoming-minoritarian, it abolishes the

712 Laclau and Mouffe, Hegemony and Socialist Strategy.
713 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 462.
714 Deleuze and Guattari, 525.
structural place of the proletariat and thus capitalism itself. What we have here is Marx
and Engel’s classic thesis from *The Holy Family* that the goal of the proletariat is its self-
abandonment. In fact, even the semantic structure of Deleuze|Guattari’s argument echoes the
key section from Marx and Engels:

“The proletariat executes the sentence that private property pronounces on itself
by producing the proletariat, just as it executes the sentence that wage-labour
pronounces on itself by producing wealth for others and poverty for itself. When
the proletariat is victorious, it by no means becomes the absolute side of society,
for it is victorious only by abolishing itself and its opposite. Then the proletariat
disappears as well as the opposite which determines it, private property.”

This is the classically Marxist revolutionary universalism that pertains to the minority and
which it “finds” in the proletariat. By becoming-minoritarian it tends towards the
destruction of the capitalist mode of production itself. But this does not only hold for the
subset of the working class. If, as Sibertin Blanc says, minorities “are nothing other than
‘proletarianized’ masses, but they are masses inasmuch as they are immediately formed
within institutional, social, juridical, and ideological structures of nation states,” then all
minorities are the displaced form of appearance of the more fundamental class
contradiction. On this matter, Žižek and the early Badiou’s Lacanian inflected
interpretations of Marxism are valuable fellow travelers.

Žižek follows the early Badiou in arguing that the class contradiction between the
proletariat and bourgeoisie is a “permanent structural fact” of capitalism which cleaves
the capitalist social structure into two opposing and irreducible parts. In Lacanian
terms, the class contradiction is the Real of the capitalist mode of production. It is
capitalism’s “traumatic core,” the impasse around which it is structured. Hence,
paraphrasing Lacan’s thesis on the impossibility of a sexual relationship, Badiou will say
that that “there are no such things as class relations.” The idea that a harmonious whole
can be achieved by reconciling the interests of the proletariat and the bourgeoisie or that
there are a pluriverse of epistemologies and ontologies that are not shot through with the
Real of class antagonism are Imaginary in the strict Lacanian sense.

---

Because the class contradiction is the Real of the capitalist mode of production it is by definition unrepresentable and cannot appear as such. Instead, what we encounter is class struggle within the Symbolic and the Imaginary, which are particular manifestations of the more fundamental contradiction between the classes.\textsuperscript{720} To confuse the class contradiction with class struggle leads to one of three scenarios: to a workerist over-emphasis on the struggles of workers as a sociological category (strikes, union activity, and so forth), to the kind of economistic Marxism that Badiou impishly says is proper to the “somniferous Marxism of the lecture hall,” \textsuperscript{721} or to the assertion that a Marxist analysis of class contradictions are inherently European notions rather than something that has come to be constitutive of global capitalism as such.\textsuperscript{722} In all three cases there is a conceptual blindness to how the class contradiction plays out beyond the limited confines of the site of production and on a properly global scale.

Deleuze\textsc{\textendash}Guattari’s theory of minorities clearly avoids this pitfall. As I read them, their way out is to say that minority struggles of all kinds – ecological, anti-fascist, struggles for national liberation, gender equality, union activity, anti-racism, etc. – are the mediated, distorted, form of appearance of a more primary contradiction. The “the power of minority, of particularity” that these struggles possess find their “universal consciousness in the proletariat,” without which they remain at the level of Césaire’s “strait particularism” or their own “regionalized” and “ghettoized” status within the capitalist axiomatic. The proletariat as Real designates the principal structural impasse around which all particular minority struggles are formed and thus acts as the basis for their solidarity and the composition of a properly revolutionary universalism. The minority is therefore a symptom, which, as Zupančič says in a different context is a, “material embodiment of a fundamental deadlock (of a given whole), a deadlock which does not exist somewhere outside and independently of this embodiment, yet is not directly identical to it either.”\textsuperscript{723}

On to the third and final point of the argument. What remains to be explained is how this form of universality is opposed to the empty, “fleshless,” universality of global capitalism and of which Deleuze\textsc{\textendash}Guattari are such strident opponents. It is often argued that Deleuze\textsc{\textendash}Guattari are fundamentally opposed to universality and especially to the Hegelian movement from the particular to the universal. Indeed, in the preface to

\textsuperscript{720} Badiou, 24.
\textsuperscript{721} Badiou, 24.
\textsuperscript{722} Mignolo, The Darker Side of Western Modernity; Compare with: Amin, Eurocentrism, 102; Biel, Eurocentrism and the Communist Movement.
\textsuperscript{723} Zupančič, What IS Sex?, 131.
**Difference and Repetition** we find Deleuze writing that “The task of modern philosophy is to overcome the alternatives temporal/non-temporal, historical/eternal and particular/universal...Neither empirical particularities nor abstract universals: a Cogito for a dissolved self. We believe in a world in which individuations are impersonal, and singularities are pre-individual: the splendour of the pronoun ‘one’. ”

How, then, can this be squared with the appeals to particularity and universality that are a constant in Deleuze|Guattari’s discussion of minorities? And how in particular can it be squared with the clearly Marxist/Hegelian assertion that “the power of minority, of particularity, finds its figure or its universal consciousness in the proletariat”?  

In Cesare Casarino’s all-too-brief reading of minorities, universality is said to be predicated on the fact that the minority is a “strictly qualitative rather than a quantitative category.” In Chapter Three I demonstrated that this is not the case. Though this non-dialectical reading of minorities is more in keeping with the general thrust of Deleuze’s project it nevertheless misses the properly dialectical logic that is essential to the tripartite formula majority/minority/becoming-minoritarian. Minorites are internally split between their placement by the majority as a quantitative subset of the capitalist axiomatic and their qualitative movement beyond the majority, their becoming-minoritarian. It is therefore not sufficient to claim, as Cesarino does, that “the particular is revolutionary to the extent to which it challenges the worldwide axiomatic...and that it is precisely in its ability to pose such a challenge that the universal aspect of the particular resides.” What this cannot answer is why Deleuze|Guattari conceive of the proletariat specifically as the carrier of the minorities’ revolutionary consciousness and not merely all particularities as such or indeed why the particular can become universal.

Meanwhile, in his own reading of Deleuze|Guattari’s claim that “the power of minority, of particularity, finds its figure or its universal consciousness in the proletariat,” Thoburn correctly observes that “the proletariat is not a fully present class that ‘faces’ the bourgeoisie” but he then proceeds to argue that it is “the totality of minor problematizations and inventions immanent to the capitalist socius.” In this interpretation the proletariat becomes “a mode of composition which calls forth processes of minor difference and creativity without or against determined

---

724 Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition*, xix.
727 Casarino, ‘Universalism of the Common’.
728 Thoburn, ‘The Hobo Anomalous’, 64.
subjectivity.” The proletariat is thus the sum total of empirically existing “minor” contestations and struggles. The problem with this account is that it relies on a conceptual slippage between universality and totality. The sum total of particulars cannot attain universality just as the sum of all natural numbers cannot become the infinite. By reducing universality to totality, Thoburn leaves unexplained why it is the proletariat that should function as “the totality of minor problematizations” and not, say, the citizen, the people, the abject, surplus populations, and so on.

Thus, both Cesarino and Thoburn shrink away from the properly dialectical logic that underpins the revolutionary capacity of minorities. In contrast, a Marxist-Lacanian reading returns us to the universal proper. In Žižek’s reading of the proletariat he argues for a distinction between two opposed logics of the universal. First, there is the universalism of liberal capitalism, which, following Hegel’s Philosophy of Right, he associates with “the state bureaucracy as the universal class of a society” and in practical terms with the US as “the universal enforcer and guarantor of human rights and democracy.” In a similar fashion, in What Is Philosophy? Deleuze | Guattari take aim at the empty universalism of human rights: “Human rights say nothing about the immanent modes of existence of people provided with rights.” Indeed, they say that “human rights are axioms” that “coexist on the market with many other axioms, notably those concerning security of property, which are unaware of or suspend them even more than they contradict them.” Though this universalism may be lauded by social democracies, Deleuze | Guattari are quick to point to its hypocrisy: “What social democracy has not given the order to fire when the poor come out of their territory or ghetto?” Here, Deleuze | Guattari point to the fact that this universalism is not a true universalism at all but rather functions in the interests of a hidden particular. Its goal is to assist in the accumulation of value, the maintenance of the existing order, and so on.

As Samir Amin, Arturo Escobar, Walter Mignolo and others have shown this Eurocentric conception universality is not the only understanding of universality to have existed in human history. But as Amin argues, it is the only one to have “succeeded in imposing itself and its values on a worldwide scale.” For Marxist thinkers like Amin

729 Thoburn, Deleuze, Marx and Politics, 60.
732 Deleuze and Guattari, 107.
733 Badiou, Theory of the Subject, 24.
734 Amin, Eurocentrism; Mignolo, ‘Foreword. On Pluriversal and Multipolarity’; Escobar, ‘Thinking-Feeling with the Earth’.
735 Amin, Eurocentrism, 152.
and Deleuze|Guattari capitalism’s universalism – liberal human rights, the “free and equal” of exchange commodities – contains within itself the means of its own abolition by another logic of universality. Žižek calls this second universalism a “supernumerary universality,” I call it a revolutionary universality. This is a “universality embodied in the element which sticks out of the existing Order, which, while internal to it, has no proper place within it.” Unlike the universalism of human rights which hides its support for a particular in claims to universality, this is a universalism that is explicitly embodied in a particular element. As we have seen, under capitalism this element is the proletariat as an irrepressible point of antagonism, or as the Real. This is because the proletariat is of the social order but it is not in the social order. Rather, it is the unpresentable Real around which the capitalist mode of production is structured and that cannot appear within its Symbolic coordinates. As such, it is the particular whose representation would change all particulars. It is this peculiar status that gives the proletariat its universal character.

When Deleuze|Guattari say that “the power of minority, of particularity, finds its figure or its universal consciousness in the proletariat,” they are proposing that under post-Fordism sites of proletarian struggle have proliferated well-beyond the site of production. It is no longer just the “working class” (if it ever was) that is divided between its position as a sociological category within capitalism – a Deleuzio-Guattarian subset of the majority – and a movement in excess of the axiomatic, or what Deleuze|Guattari call becoming-minoritarian. Rather, since each and every minority is internally split between its status as a subset of the majority and a becoming-minoritarian they find their “universal consciousness in the proletariat.” They are the proletariat under differing forms of appearance. Each minority struggle articulates, lives, and expresses this central contradiction in different ways. Only in this way do we arrive at a notion of universality that simultaneously retains the particular as an innovative form and that retains the possibility of true universality as opposed to the idea that a series of particularities can add up to a universal.

This, then, is the second tendency of minority struggles. By acting in solidarity with one and other minority struggles must compose a new universalism, a “becoming-minoritarian of everybody/everything,” to rival the empty universalism of global capitalism. Against the universal right to sell one’s labour power and against the universalism of human rights, minorities must construct a “nondenumable,”

---

736 Žižek, In Defense of Lost Causes, 285.
737 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 473.
“nonaxiomatizable,” universalism that brings the struggles of minorities together, connecting them in a mutual becoming-minoritarian beyond the capitalist axiomatic. This would be a universality “rich with all that is particular, rich with all the particulars there are, the deepening of each particular, the coexistence of them all.” What this looks like concretely and what it looks like when it fails will be central to the following chapter.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that it is more accurate and more politically useful to say that Deleuze|Guattari’s philosophy – and their theory of minorities in particular – does not have a politics. It approached this argument from two directions. First, it revealed Deleuze|Guattari’s hesitancy to make political prescriptions or interventions in their philosophy. Second, by situating their thought in its proper historical context the chapter argued that its conceptual developments are better understood as the recording of a global sequence of struggle within philosophy. Specifically, it records the effects of a change in the composition of global capitalism from Fordism to post-Fordism and a concurrent crisis in European Marxist thought and practice. Thus, the power of their thought lies in its capacity to point to a series of impasses and deadlocks that confront today’s social struggles.

The second half of the chapter claimed that while Deleuze|Guattari’s philosophy does not develop a politics of minorities, it nevertheless outlines a set of tendencies and characteristics that pertain to minority struggles. The chapter focused on two in particular: first, a tendency to elude recognition or integration into the capitalist axiomatic; and second, a tendency to produce novel forms of solidarity and universality in contrast to empty universality of global capitalism. As I show in the next chapter, these can serve as a means to appraise the strengths and limitations of contemporary struggles.
We Are Seneca Lake: Becoming-Minoritarian?

Chapter V
4:45 am, April 21 2016. My alarm wakes me from a fitful sleep – the kind one gets when they go to bed too late knowing that they need to be up too early. I rouse my friend and fellow We Are Seneca Lake (WASL) media team member. We check over our audio and camera equipment, we check and double check the equipment’s batteries, and we get in the car. As we pull away, the street is silent except for the pre-dawn song of Blue Jays.

It’s a forty-minute drive from where I am staying in Bath, N.Y, to Watkins Glenn, N.Y, where we are to meet with other members of We Are Seneca Lake. Our route takes us along the bottom of Keuka Lake – a wishbone shaped Finger Lake whose name in the Seneca language means “lake with an elbow” – through the small town of Hammondsport, then across the rolling agricultural fields that populate the deforested southernmost parts of the Finger Lakes, and finally into Watkins Glenn, a beautiful small town lying at the base of Seneca Lake. At a little under 40 miles long, this vast body of water is the largest of the Finger Lakes. It takes its name from the Seneca Nation who were violently removed from their land by a wave of settler colonial expansion following the American Revolution.

We park at the predetermined meeting place: the back of a Walmart car park. This perhaps unlikely location was chosen for its proximity to the gas storage site that is the target of WASL’s struggle. Because cars cannot park directly in front of the storage site without incurring criminal charges, WASL uses Walmart’s carpark as a sort of pre-blockade staging ground. They have met here dozens of times before with only minor disagreements from Walmart management. Many living in and around Watkins Glenn are so opposed to the storage site that it would be bad for this capitalist behemoth’s business to remove protestors from its property, and while pro-fracking community members have on occasion started confrontations with the group, these have been few and far between. Much more common are car and truck horn blasts of solidarity from the nearby road.

By the time we arrive at the meeting point there are already 20 or 30 members of WASL gathered around in the cold. Besides the usual catching up, people are chatting excitedly about the day’s plan, about the theme for the day’s action, about who is going to be arrested, and about how many arrests each of today’s blockaders will have when we’re done. It is determined that no one getting arrested today will beat the record of seven shared by three members of WASL but at least two or three people will be getting their third or fourth while several others will be earning their first. WASL affectionately refers to those getting arrested as “The A Team.”
As we wait for more people to arrive, a pickup truck parks alongside us. In the back is a giant papier-mâché ball, around 5 feet in diameter, painted as a perfect representation of planet earth. This will be the centrepiece of today’s action. For we are here on this day, rather than any other day, because this day is Earth Day.

***

In this final and extended chapter I want to put the two tendencies of minority struggles discussed in the previous chapters to work in an analysis of We Are Seneca Lake, one of the most prominent and successful anti-fracking movements to have emerged in the Marcellus Shale Region and one of the longest running civil disobedience campaigns in the US history.\textsuperscript{739} The chapter begins by providing an introduction to the context of We Are Seneca Lake’s struggle. Next, it explores how the movement sustained a process of becoming-minoritarian among its participants, among a great deal of the local community, and even among an international community. Finally, the chapter closes with some critical remarks. Specifically, it considers an example of WASL retreating back into its position as a minority subset of capital when a steering committee member chose to silence parts of the movement who had organized in solidarity with Black Lives Matter. I will argue that this capitulation to the movement’s detractors put a halt to We Are Seneca Lake’s becoming-minoritarian and was nothing less a retreat into a white settler colonial understanding of American environmentalism.

The aim of the chapter is not to provide an exhaustive analysis of We Are Seneca Lake. While a great deal of interest could be learned from just such a project, the ambition of this thesis has always been to think through Deleuze|Guattari’s theory of minorities from the perspective of anti-fracking struggles across New York and Pennsylvania. It has, however, been a thesis of political theory in the sense described by Jameson and as such it is committed to the “perpetual and impossible attempt to dereify the language of thought, and to pre-empt all the systems and ideologies which inevitably result from the establishment of this or that fixed terminology.”\textsuperscript{740} This means that rather than seeking to apply a ready-made “Deleuzian” methodology or philosophical system to concrete struggles, the thesis has aimed to re-think Deleuze|Guattari’s thought, to “dereify it,” in light of advances in psychoanalytic and Marxist theory, in the wake of our escalating

\textsuperscript{739} Kusnetz, ‘N.Y. Gas Project Abandoned in Victory for Long-Running Seneca Lake Protests’.
climate crisis, and of course, following the fracking industry’s proliferation across the United States. As the young Marx wrote, “theory must be made clear and developed within the concrete conditions and on the basis of the existing state of things.”741 This chapter therefore aims to show how the theory that has been developed so far can be used to provide an immanent critique of the movements that have helped to construct it. As such, it brings to a close the line of questioning that has run through this thesis: What is at stake in Deleuze | Guattari’s concept of minorities? And how does the concept help us to think with and through anti-fracking struggles in the United States?

The Origins of We Are Seneca Lake

In 2009 the energy company Inergy Midstream – which was bought and merged into Crestwood Midstream in 2013 – filed a request to convert a depleted salt cavern on the western shore of Seneca Lake into a methane and liquid petroleum gas (LPG) storage site for billions of barrels of fracked gas from across the Marcellus Shale region. Under Inergy’s plans the rural wine-producing and tourist-attracting shores of Seneca Lake would also become an industrial node in an ever-expanding and complex network of carbon-intensive fracking infrastructure that weaves its way through the United States.

Such storage sites are essential to the industry and while it prefers to use depleted coal mines or oil and gas reservoirs the use of salt caverns is not uncommon.742 Salt caverns are usually achieved by a process called solution-mining, which involves repeatedly injecting and extracting water from a suitable salt formation to hollow out artificial caverns that the industry inaccurately calls “impermeable,” “self-healing,” and “waterproof.”743 Gas is then injected into these caverns and stored under high pressure. Solution mining can be a time consuming and capital-intensive endeavour and so it was that Inergy had sought the cheaper option of applying to use the pre-existing salt caverns around Seneca Lake that had been left behind by the regions longstanding commercial salt industry.

Concern about Inergy’s intentions quickly grew around the Finger Lakes. Salt mining on the lake’s shores had already given Seneca Lake a level of salinity that was

notably higher than its neighbouring lakes.\textsuperscript{744} For many, this suggested that these particular caverns may not be as “impermeable” as Inergy promised. A further leak of salt and methane – or what the industry euphemistically calls a “migration” – could have disastrous consequences for the lake’s ecosystem and for the people who depend on it. Despite its comparatively high levels of salinity, roughly 100,000 people in the region rely on Seneca Lake for their drinking water. The lake is also commonly used for recreational purposes by those who inhabit its shores from Watkins Glen at the south to the college town of Geneva at the lake’s northernmost point. Inergy’s plans would also threaten the economy of the region. The Finger Lakes are home to a thriving tourism trade worth roughly $2.9 billion a year while Seneca Lake itself is surrounded on both sides by a multi-million dollar wine industry and so it was feared that even if there were no industrial accidents or leaks into the lake, the increased rail and road traffic needed by the facility would threaten the region’s bucolic appeal.\textsuperscript{745} In short, to borrow from Rob Nixon, Inergy’s proposals threatened the “vernacular landscape” of the region that had been “shaped by the affective, historically textured maps that communities have devised over generations” and which are “alive to the significant ecological and surface geological features.”\textsuperscript{746} It would endanger the water, lifestyle, and environment that those who live in the region are so proud of and on which many depend for their living in the interests of an “official landscape” that does not work in their interests and that is “pitilessly instrumental” in its approach. These are the conditions that I described as leading to a sense of “cramped space” in Chapter Two.\textsuperscript{747} But for a number of the community, these rather provincial concerns were inseparable from wider objections about the project’s role in the climate destroying fossil fuel industry. For many, there was simply no good reason to support the build-out of further fossil fuel infrastructure in the Finger Lakes when the world needed a rapid transition towards renewable energy sources.

Community members were right to be worried. A 2015 study of Inergy’s proposals confirmed what many intuitively knew to be true in 2009: Inergy had greatly downplayed the potential impact of their activity on the region’s environment and community. The study explained that “the probability of serious or extremely serious salt cavern storage events is more than 40% over 25 years, including both baseline and

\textsuperscript{744} Wing et al., ‘Intrusion of Saline Groundwater into Seneca and Cayuga Lakes, New York’.
\textsuperscript{745} Tourism Economics, ‘The Economic Impact of Tourism in New York: Finger Lakes Focus’, 34.
\textsuperscript{746} Nixon, \textit{Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor}, 17.
\textsuperscript{747} Nixon, 17.
incremental risks.” But it didn’t take 25 years. In May 2018, Crestwood admitted that there was a leak — or what the company called a “communication” — between one of its storage caverns and an adjacent cavity neighbouring the lake. Other significant risks listed in the study included the danger of major truck and rail accidents while transporting pressurized materials to and from the site, the potential for pipeline failure, and the risk of explosions ranging from the “trivial” to the catastrophic. In the worst-case scenario, towns around the lake would need to be evacuated while fires raging from the caverns were bought under control. Here again, at the time of its application in 2009, Inergy Midstream had already gained experience with such disasters. In 2008 a drilling rig hired to perform work on another of its New York salt caverns released gas which ignited at the surface and injured four workers. Despite this track record and the community’s concerns, the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) began their consideration of Inergy’s proposals.

Stymied by an over-inflated bureaucracy and multiple legal challenges from citizen groups, FERC was slow to process Inergy’s permit. By 2011, a “coalition of concerned citizens, local business owners and regional environmental groups” had come together under the name of Gas Free Seneca with the goal of using all legal means available to stop Inergy’s development. By this time resistance to fracking and related infrastructure was growing across upstate New York. Though there had been some early fracking industry activity in the state in the mid-2000’s, few had taken much notice. As one organizer and trial lawyer for We Are Seneca Lake and Standing Rock explained to me:

“None of us had heard of [fracking]. The only thing that bothered me was that my brother in law had asked me about a gas lease in ’04 or something like that, the conventional wisdom in upstate New York was that gas leases were free money and that nothing ever happened, because nobody had heard of fracking. And so, I didn’t know enough to tell him to be careful.”

However, it is a relatively short drive from the Finger Lakes to North-Eastern Pennsylvania, where fracking had been producing devastating environmental, personal,

749 Platsky, ‘Crestwood Seneca Lake Gas Storage Hits Snag Because of Possible Leak’.
750 Toxics Targeting Inc., ‘Toxics Targeting Evaluation Map, Eagle Valley Road, Bath, NY’.
751 Gas Free Seneca, ‘About Us/Contact’.
752 Anti-Fracking Organizer 2, Interview with Anti-Fracking Organizer 2, Syracuse, N.Y.
and social impacts since the mid-2000s and so by 2011 news of the industry’s effects were well-known across both sides of the border.

As news spread, some from New York involved themselves in early struggles against fracking in their own state and in Pennsylvania. Most, however, only began to take notice when the industry arrived on their doorsteps. This was understandably the source of some resentment from environmentalists across the border and of regret for many of those I spoke to in New York. But geology and capital do not respect state boundaries and Pennsylvania’s problems were rapidly becoming New York’s. Buoyed by the low interest rates of a post-Great Recession world economy and the “successes” of fracking in Pennsylvania, regions of New York that were previously considered out of bounds for energy extraction were beginning to experience what Pennsylvanians had only a few years before. In Jeanne Simonelli’s words, New Yorkers were quickly becoming aware of “the way the penetration efforts of mature capital markets now involutes into rural United States “backwaters”.” The industry’s landmen were in the Southern Tier and its infrastructure was creeping across the border. Efforts began in earnest to ban the industry from the Empire State.

As Naomi Klein argues, the industry’s decision to enter upstate New York was perhaps one of its “biggest strategic mistakes.” As a vast body of literature testifies, regions with a history of coal, oil, and gas extraction are spoiled by their presence both politically and environmentally; political systems are corrupted, ecosystems are destroyed, lives cut short, farm lands are made less productive. And yet as Klein observes, in such regions “rather than spark popular backlash, this slow poisoning can end up strengthening the power of the fossil fuel companies because they end up being virtually the only game in town.” This nicely describes the situation in Pennsylvania where, as we saw in previous chapters, much of the community was caught off-guard by an industry that had secured the full support of the commonwealth’s officials well in advance of drilling the first borehole. Things were different in New York.

In 2011, upstate New York struck a series of blows against the industry. First, the small town of Dryden was sued by billionaire oligarch Philip Anschutz’s privately-held shale gas prospecting company, Anschutz Exploration Corporation, in an effort to force

---

754 Klein, This Changes Everything, 273.
755 I am thinking here of the vast literature on the so-called ‘resource curse’ and environmental justice: Gaventa, Power and Powerlessness; Bullard, Unequal Protection; Bullard, Dumping In Dixie; Ross, The Oil Curse; Taylor, Toxic Communities; Petras and Veltmeyer, Extractive Imperialism in the Americas; Burgis, The Looting Machine; Murshed, The Resource Curse.
756 Klein, This Changes Everything, 273.
the town to allow fracking within its borders. Back in 2009, residents of Dryden had begun procedures to pass a local ordinance law to prohibit heavy industry – including fracking – from working within its borders. The “local fracking ban,” as it came to be called, was passed in 2010 and now it seemed to be working. As Town Supervisor Mary Ann Summer explained:

“The people of Dryden want to preserve the special character of our town and make sure it continues to be a healthy community for generations to come. The oil and gas industry may wish it were otherwise, but municipalities have the right to determine what types of development are appropriate within their borders. We are firmly committed to defending that right.”

The optics of a prospecting company owned by an individual with a net worth of over $7.5 billion suing a poor provincial township in rural New York was not good for the fracking industry. For America’s liberals and libertarians alike, it was a stark demonstration of how little the industry cared about the people and environments it operated in. Work quickly began on hundreds of similar fracking bans across the state.

Then, Dr Anthony Ingraffea, Professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering at Cornell University, co-wrote a study with fellow Cornell professor Robert Howarth and student Renee Santoro which found that the carbon footprint of fracked gas “is greater than that for conventional gas or oil when viewed on any time horizon, but particularly so over 20 years. Compared to coal, the footprint of shale gas is at least 20% greater and perhaps more than twice as great on the 20-year horizon and is comparable when compared over 100 years.” The study was a devastating blow to the global fracking industry, which has since committed no small amount of time and money to an effort to destroy Ingraffea’s reputation and to undermine the findings of the paper. It was, however, a boon to the anti-fracking movement which made regular use of the paper’s findings in presentations to communities and legislatures up and down the country.

These two events – combined with the release of Josh Fox’s hugely successful anti-fracking documentary Gasland in 2010 – were the catalysts for a surge of resistance across the state. As one organizer put it to me, by 2011 “you couldn’t throw a rock

without hitting another grassroots group fighting fracking, because every town had one,” communities across the state had started “building the networks of friendships, of relationships, of common interest.” By 2014, local bans had made sure that an amazing 63% of New York’s Marcellus Shale fields were off limits to the industry.

It was into this context that the Finger Lakes had placed Inergy’s gas storage plans by the end of 2011. Signs appeared against the development in shops and house windows from Syracuse to Rochester, from Ithaca to Geneva. Yard signs, like those more commonly found in election periods, were pitched in front of houses from Watkins Glen to Geneva, from Trumansburg to Penn Yan.

Finally, in late September 2014, FERC approved Inergy’s (now Crestwood’s) plans. For many, this was no surprise. Environmentalists know that FERC is little more than a rubber-stamping exercise for fossil capital. In 2017, EcoWatch reported that of the 400 natural gas pipelines the regulator had reviewed for approval since 1999, only two had been rejected. And in July 2018 the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals disallowed a case bought by environmentalists that would require a reassessment of FERC’s ability to fund itself by collecting operating expenses from its regulated parties. In light FERC’s approval, Crestwood announced that it would begin work on the facilities expansion on 24 October 2014. For a significant part of the Finger Lakes, it was now clear that all legal means of opposing Crestwood had been exhausted. Maybe New York was not all that different to Pennsylvania, after all…

On a cold October morning the day before construction was due to start, 12 residents of the Finger Lakes blockaded Crestwood’s gates. The site was forced to shut down from 10am to 5pm. The next day a rally of over 200 people – dressed in blue to represent their connection with the lakes – protested at the gates and once again shut down the facility. Then, on October 30th, 10 community members blockaded the gates and this time, in a move that would become the model for WASL, they stopped an Amex Chemical Truck from entering the storage facility. The 10 were arrested by Schuyler County’s police force. As a blockader involved in all three actions explained:

759 Anti-Fracking Organizer 4, Interview with Anti-Fracking Organizer 4, Syracuse, N.Y.
760 Kaplan, ‘Citing Health Risks, Cuomo Bans Fracking in New York State’.
762 Heidorn Jr., ‘Appellate Court Rejects Challenge to FERC Funding’.
“Crestwood is threatening our water, our local economy and our families. We’ve tried everything to stop this disastrous project, and now peaceful civil disobedience is our last resort.”\textsuperscript{763}

And another:

“Our federal government and our state officials are not here to protect us. I am here to protect the drinking water, and to get in the way of the fracking infrastructure build out coming in and around New York State.”\textsuperscript{764}

These events mark the beginning of We Are Seneca Lake’s civil disobedience campaign. Between October 2014 and the time that Crestwood announced that it would be withdrawing its plans to expand the storage facility in May 2017 over 500 people would participate in direct action at Crestwood’s gates and Schuyler County’s police force would make a total of 657 arrests.

As an early member of the group recounts it, We Are Seneca Lake had its origins in hushed conversations and notes passed between friends and community leaders at town hall meetings and fracking documentary film screenings across the Finger Lakes.\textsuperscript{765} Its founders were inspired by a deeply contradictory set of ideas: the civil rights movement, the suffragette movement, Quakerism, populism, conscientious objection, revolutionary communism and past environmental struggles including, significantly, that of Love Canal, N.Y. These differences aside, the nascent steering committee were in agreement that Gas Free Seneca’s purely legal and business-focused campaign against Crestwood had failed. Gas Free Seneca were working with a model of campaigning that Jane McAlevey calls “Advocacy.” In McAlvey’s experience, the problem with such a strategy is that it:

“doesn’t involve ordinary people in any real way; lawyers, pollsters, researchers, and communications firms are engaged to wage the battle…this strategy severely limits challenges to elite power. Advocacy fails to use the only concrete advantage ordinary people have over elites: numbers.”\textsuperscript{766}
It was, for example, Gas Free Seneca who had commissioned the independent study into the effects of Crestwood’s plans that I quoted from earlier. In the language introduced throughout this thesis, Gas Free Seneca were relying on their quantitative position as a subset of the majority. They were working firmly within the structure of capital and the lines of action that it permits.

In contrast, knowingly and unknowingly, WASL’s founders would draw from America’s radical traditions. As they saw it, what the Finger Lakes needed was mass civil disobedience and the construction of a new common sense. In the language that I have introduced in this thesis, they would need to undergo a collective process of becoming-minoritarian, they would need to forego their allotted place of enjoyment as a subset of the majority and construct a new collective subjectivity. For many, this would be the first time that they had been involved in civil disobedience. For others, it would be the first time that they had protested anything in their lives. And for the great majority it would be the first time they had been arrested. If the movement was to succeed it was vital that people were introduced to the idea that the only rational response to an irrational system is an illegal one. They needed to see that those willing to get arrested were just like them. They were teachers, waiters and waitresses, nurses, builders, farmers, and journalists. They were unemployed, precariously employed, and retired. They were your neighbours and they were your friends. This is what McAlevey calls “deep organizing.” Deep organizing:

“places the agency for success with a continually expanding base of ordinary people, who don’t consider themselves activists at all – that’s the point of organizing. In the organizing approach, specific injustice and outrage are the immediate motivation, but the primary goal is to transfer power from the elite to the majority, from the 1 percent to the 99 percent.”

For WASL, civil disobedience would be the method and a collective culture of defiance – a becoming-minoritarian – the aim. The movement would hurt Crestwood’s reputation amongst the community and its shareholders. Their blockades would slow down or stop work at the facility. And with luck, they would gain regional, national, and international media coverage and support.

\[67\] McAlevey, 10.
Among WASL’s founders were military veterans, retired teachers, academics, service workers, and the well-known biologist, poet, and author Sandra Steingraber. A compelling public speaker, expert on the links between cancer and environmental contamination, and a cancer survivor herself, Steingraber’s skills, experience, and status as a public figure propelled her to the forefront of the movement. She began to give expert testimony at hearings, she held popular speaking tours across the state, and she committed herself – with the rest of WASL’s steering committee – to building a mass environmental movement in the Finger Lakes. In Steingraber’s words, WASL was about “climate disobedience…not just civil disobedience for larger civil rights purposes but rather for the human rights that are being violated because of the climate crisis.”

Then, on the 17th of December, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo announced a precedent-setting state-wide moratorium on fracking. Prior to Cuomo’s decision there had been years of debate about the potential costs and benefits of fracking for the state. Predictably, the industry lobbied hard for the go-ahead, launching various front-group ‘civil society’ organizations including the Marcellus Shale Coalition, Energy in Depth, and Landowner Advocates of New York. Equally predictably, notable green organizations and liberals backed the industry. As one organizer explained: “At that time, we were confronted with liberal environmentalists who were on the wrong side of this. Bobby Kennedy Junior was an advocate in the beginning. Sierra Club took $26,000,000 from Chesapeake in secret at the national level.” It was up to community organizers to bombard Cuomo with demands to ban fracking. And bombard him they did. During Cuomo’s 2014 re-election campaign his tour bus was greeted at practically every stop by crowds of anti-fracking organizers. Recalling that period of the struggle, an organizer told me that:

“One of his [Cuomo’s] daughters commented after he was re-elected, that in every place he went for a campaign stop there were frack resisters confronting him. In fact, she mentioned that at one point they went to a place in Westchester County and there were no protestors and she said, ‘this must not be the right place dad!’”

768 Steingraber, ‘Earth Week Speaker: Sandra Steingraber’.
770 Anti-Fracking Organizer 2, Interview with Anti-Fracking Organizer 2, Syracuse, N.Y.
771 Anti-Fracking Organizer 4, Interview with Anti-Fracking Organizer 4, Syracuse, N.Y.
When the moratorium was announced, organizers jokingly held a “thank you” demonstration for the Governor. But while many celebrated the news and Cuomo took a boost in the polls, environmentalists advised caution. Cuomo’s moratorium was only on the process of hydraulic fracturing itself. It did not cover its associated infrastructures and waste products, many of which were equally if not more damaging to human health and the environment. Organizers in upstate New York began to call this the “infrackstructure attack:” “pipelines, compressor stations and storage because they have to load the fracked gas to market and that’s what’s coming at us.” The ban was not going to put an end to Crestwood’s plans for Seneca Lake. It did, however, show WASL something important: mass struggle could win.

We Are Seneca Lake thus became part of the global network of anti-fossil capital blockades that Naomi Klein would later follow parts of the movement in calling Blockadia. Klein:

> “Blockadia is not a specific location on a map but rather a roving transnational conflict zone that is cropping up with increasing frequency and intensity wherever extractive projects are attempting to dig and drill, whether for open-pit mines, or gas fracking, or tar sands oil pipelines.”

For Klein, Blockadia is united in a negative and a positive sense. In the negative sense it is united by the experience that I have been calling minorization, or by what Klein describes as the “sheer ambition of the mining and fossil fuel companies: the fact that in their quest for high-priced commodities and higher-risk ‘unconventional’ fuels, they are pushing relentlessly into countless new territories, regardless of the impact on the local ecology.” Klein’s Blockadia is therefore situated on what I have followed Deleuze|Guattari in calling the “cutting edges” of capital, the points where capital accumulation either moves into previously untouched vistas – a rarity in today’s globalized system of capital valorization – or more commonly where extraction is intensified.

In a more positive sense, Blockadia is united by the fact that those “packing local council meetings, marching in capital cities, being hauled off in police vans, even putting their bodies between the earth-movers and the earth – do not look much like your typical

---

772 Anti-Fracking Organizer 4.
773 Klein, *This Changes Everything*, 254.
774 Klein, 254.
activist, nor do the people in one Blockadia site resemble those in another.”

We shall return to this last clause later. For now, what matters is that it is under these precise conditions, where various minorized subsets of the capitalist axiomatic are forced together that the collective practice of becoming-minoritarian becomes possible.

The Becoming-Minority of Everybody/Everything

6am, April 21 2016, Watkins Glen, N.Y. As the last few organizers arrive, we gather around for a pre-blockade briefing. New members of WASL are introduced with a round of cheers. The plan for the day is explained with military-like precision: the media team will be driven up to the Crestwood site. Once there, they will set up their equipment, take some establishing shots, and await the rest of the group. Then, the A Team will arrive with their banners and the papier-mâché earth and blockade the facility’s gates. Finally, the support team and other protestors will be driven up to the site. Observations of the facility over the past week had suggested that a gas transportation truck would be arriving around 7am. Finding itself unable to enter the site, the police would be called, and arrests would be made. While the A Team’s arrests were processed at the Schuyler Sherriff’s Department, the rest of us would make our way down to greet them upon their release. Finally, while the media team works on video and image editing and a press release, the rest of WASL will go for a celebratory breakfast at a local café. The briefing ends without questions and so without further ado we get in our cars and head up to the gates for WASL’s 62nd action.

In this section of the chapter I want to present occasions when WASL exhibited the two tendencies of minority struggles that were discussed in the previous chapter: first, the rejection of a politics recognition or integration into the state and capital and second acts of solidarity that construct new forms of collective political subjectivity and a revolutionary universality that can rival the empty universalism of global capitalism. As I explained in the previous chapter, these are tendencies of struggles. This means that they are always present in uneven, uncertain, contradictory, and reversible ways. Practices that evade recognition as a subset of capital coexist with appeals to human rights. Calls for social revolution interrupt principally liberal spaces. Transformative acts of universal

775 Klein, 255.
solidarity intermix with the most parochial of concerns. Appeals to bourgeoisie individualism re-capture desires, drives, and affects that move beyond it. One of the benefits of Deleuze|Guattari’s understanding of universalism as a practice and a tendency is that it allows for these contradictions to exist without calling into question the emancipatory potential of movements as a whole. In what follows, rather than focusing on the contradictions of WASL I present instances where the movement most clearly demonstrates the two tendencies of minority struggles that I have developed. I do this for two reasons. The first is simply a matter of presentation: these tendencies are best presented when they are at their purest and most self-evident. The second is more political in nature: I want to hold up and give voice to the moments when WASL were reaching towards the invention of what Deleuze|Guattari call the invention of a “missing people” and a “new earth.”776 That is, when WASL enters into a becoming, when it composes new kinds of collective political subjectivity and forms of organization. This, after all, was what interested Deleuze|Guattari about minorities. For Deleuze|Guattari, the success of a struggle or a revolution does not lie in how it is recorded in history but rather:

“The victory of a revolution is immanent and consists in the new bonds it installs between people, even if these bonds last no longer than the revolution’s fused material and quickly give way to division and betrayal.”777

My aim, then, is to trace these “new bonds” at work in WASL’s struggle and to show their importance to our ongoing struggles against fossil capitalism.

Against Recognition

From the beginning WASL was an extremely carefully orchestrated campaign. To even join the protest on Earth Day 2016, I had to attend a training session where I was introduced to the principles of civil disobedience, given elementary “know your rights” training, taught about Crestwood’s aims for the Finger Lakes, and informed about WASL’s goals. I was also required to uphold the rules and expectations of the movement both at Crestwood’s gates and among the community. Once the training is complete, you

776 Thoburn, ‘The People Are Missing’.
are officially recognized as a member of WASL. A follow up email thanks you for training and gives you extensive links to further information about the struggle. Every one of the 500 people who attended a WASL protest – even those who did not risk arrest – had to undergo this training before they could participate in an action.

In the early days the steering committee also kept close control over who could and could not be involved in the movement. Blockaders were chosen by recommendation, they were vetted, and their Facebook profiles checked before they could attend training. This degree of secrecy was lessened only slightly as the movement opened itself up to the community. There were understandable concerns among the steering committee that the oil and gas industry would want to infiltrate the movement. The industry makes no secret of the fact that it recruits heavily from veterans of the Iraq and Afghanistan war who are returning home to poverty-stricken rustbelt and Appalachian communities with little to no job prospects outside of the extractive industry. What they are less willing to divulge is that many of those hired are employed because of the skills they acquired as counterinsurgency operatives among the Taliban. In an exemplary instance of what Patricia Owen’s follows Hannah Arendt in calling the “boomerang effect,” that is, the unintended consequences of imperial expansion, the shale industry eagerly recruits among these veterans.778 Indeed, at an energy industry conference in Houston 2011, Anadarko Petroleum spokesperson Matt Carmichael gave his audience the following advice: “Download the U.S Army/Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Manual, because we are dealing with an insurgency.”779 Carmichael himself is ex-military. During my time in Pennsylvania I heard first-hand stories of phones being tapped and of prominent activists waking up in the night to find either state or industry employees in their houses. It was perhaps no surprise, then, that WASL took their security seriously. It was a decision that created a constant tension between those who are “in the know” and those who were not that frustrated some in the movement. For others, though, the secrecy was all a part of the excitement.

WASL was also careful to make sure that it appeals to a broad base among the Finger Lakes. In Pennsylvania, groups like Marcellus Shale Earth First! had cultivated a reputation as the vanguard of direct action against fracking. Rooted in anarchism and deep ecology, Earth First! adopted the tactics of “propaganda of the deed” including lock-ons, blockades, sabotage, and tree sittings conducted by small groups of organizers.780

778 Owens, Between War and Politics, 52–71.
779 Ross, 'Dismantling Counterinsurgency with Earth First!', 211.
780 Marcellus Shale Earth First!, ‘Marcellus Shale Earth First!’
This adventurism all but ensured that they would never find a broad base of support among the communities that they operated in. When similar strategies were suggested in the Finger Lakes, WASL’s founding members were quick to reject them. If the campaign’s strategy of direct action radicalized too quickly, it would leave the community it depended on behind and make a collective becoming-minoritarian impossible. The “becoming-minoritarian of everybody/everything,”781 as WASL understands it is an effect of collective mass struggle and so, as one founding member explained to me, “when they [community members] look at a picture we want them to see someone who looks just like themselves.”782 In other words, WASL were aiming for a mass-mobilization that would construct a new kind of collective political subjectivity, or a becoming-minoritarian, through mass community participation.

It was this aspiration that made WASL settle on the strategy of blockading. Crucially, the blockades would avoid trespassing charges by making sure blockades did not take place on Crestwood’s property. This was important because it was feared that trespassing charges would discourage community members from participating. Instead, the blockaders would occupy public land in front of the facility and thereby ensure that they could only face charges that could be dismissed by paying a fine or serving 10 days in jail. As it turned out, this latter option was quickly disallowed. As one blockader explained to me, the county “didn’t want to feed us and take care of us for 10 days. It was getting expensive for the county. So now to frighten the young people they put a lean on property if they don’t pay so if you’re a young person, you’re thinking about buying a home, your credit worthiness and all of that sort of thing… Personally, though, I wouldn’t mind going to jail for two or three days!”783 By the time that I attended the Earth Day action in 2016, everyone arrested paid a fine that was covered by WASL’s legal defence fund.

These early decisions – a carefully structured and security-conscious organization and a “low cost of entry” for community members – could perhaps be considered WASL’s answer to Deleuze|Guattari’s question discussed in the previous chapter: “is an organization possible which is not modelled on the apparatus of the State, even to prefigure the State to come? Perhaps a war-machine with its lines of flight?”784 It was this organizational form and not some faux-rhizomatic horizontalism or prefigurative

782 Anti-Fracking Organizer 12, Interview with Anti-Fracking Organizer 12, Trumansburg, N.Y, 12.
783 Anti-Fracking Organizer 6, Interview with Anti-Fracking Organizer 6, Watkins Glen.
784 Deleuze and Parnet, ‘Many Politics’, 145.
formation that gave WASL its politics and allowed those involved with WASL to track a path beyond their recognition as a subset of capital.

This particular organizational form was critical for WASL because neither the politics of an adventurist eco-activism, nor that of an advocacy group like Gas Free Seneca was desirable. Though different in content, from the perspective I have been advancing here, both the eco-radical and advocate share the form of being a subset of the majority. While one may be defined as “eco-terrorists” or “extremists” and the other as a “stakeholders” or “civil society groups,” and though one may be arrested and even jailed while the other may be welcomed into townhall meetings and voting booths, both are easily recognizable as subsets of the majority. Neither operates from within the paradoxical place of becoming-minorititarian that I discussed in Chapter Three but are rather ways to enjoy their place in relation to the majority. For Earth First! it is as the “marginals” that Deleuze rails against in his essay Many Politics.785 For Gas Free Seneca, it is as a quantitative subset of liberal capitalism, a mere “interest group.” Conversely, at its best, WASL operated under the assumption that acts of mass civil disobedience could function as a means of rejecting one’s place as a subset of the axiomatic. Though WASL was composed of a variety of classes, genders, races, and ages, through collective struggle and solidarity they pushed themselves towards new forms of being and struggling together, a becoming-minorititarian. Or as one organizer put it, for WASL, “the practice of being there and acting is key. Not deliberation but actually practices of struggle and pushing up against what people thought was possible, what was possible.”786

A good demonstration that this was one of WASL’s aims can be found in a conversation that took place on the way up to Crestwood’s facility on Earth Day 2016. I was being driven to the storage site alongside two WASL media team members. At the time, there was mounting evidence of electoral fraud in New York’s primaries. Reports were coming from Brooklyn that thousands of people had been turned away from the polls and similar stories were now emerging from Ithaca. In light of these events, we were discussing the limitations of electoral politics for tackling climate change. As one member of the media team saw it:

“People need to stop talking like we have any control over this thing because they have it planned and figured out, everyone is bought and paid for, and the pieces

785 Deleuze and Parnet, ‘Many Polities’.
786 Anti-Fracking Organizer 14, Interview with Anti-Fracking Organizer 14, Geneva, N.Y.
are going to fall right where they want them to unless the American people stop being so passive. I hate to say it, man, but we’re in a fight for the survival of everything on this earth. The time for being passive is over. A revolution is what we need, and not a fucking political revolution ‘cause that ain’t gonna happen. They’re gonna keep telling us: “Oh it’s so close, it’s so close… ooooh and then bummer, we lost. No, it’s bullshit, dude.”

To which another responded:

“Yeah, you see, you’re there but there’s a lot of people who are not there so when these things happen, it opens even more people’s eyes… sooner or later people are gonna say: “Now wait a minute, this is really bad… The people have to step up.”

Though brief, this exchange perfectly captures the one of the driving motivations of WASL’s struggle. On the one hand, there is a more radical – and even revolutionary – position that impatiently demands the kinds of immediate social transformation that environmentalists know are needed. On the other, there is a more restrained position which, without disagreeing with the need for radical change, knows that people need to be met where they are and bought around to a new way of understanding themselves and the world they inhabit. In the language of this thesis, there is a constant awareness within WASL that only when people begin to feel the cramped space of our current climate predicament and only when they start to question their place as subsets of the capitalist axiomatic will they be able to enter into a becoming-minoritarian. At its best, WASL was a vehicle for realizing this transition.

Evidence of this in practice was not hard to find on the day that I attended a blockade. As we waited for the truck that we were blockading to arrive I asked four WASL members who had been arrested in the past whether they were nervous. These were their responses:

“I was nervous the first time because when you get arrested by the LAPD or the NYPD it’s not at all fun. But this little community, it’s a different story. I mean

787 Anti-Fracking Organizer 10, Interview with Anti-Fracking Organizer 10, Watkins Glen.
788 Anti-Fracking Organizer 15, Interview with Anti-Fracking Organizer 15, Watkins Glen.
the fact is that the people who are arresting us are suffering from the same impacts of the situation, you know, they live here too, they’re in the blast zone, right?"  

“Oh, not at all! I was 75 years old the first time I was arrested. It was on my birthday.”

“No! No, no, no…It’s fun! The first time I was thinking “I’ve never done this…am I doing the right thing?” because, you know, I was raised to be a law-abiding person. But after a while, you hear it often enough: yes, the persecution of Jews in Germany was legal, slavery was legal… and you come to realize that there are some laws that you have to break.”

“When all the legitimate avenues have been exhausted, what can one do? I’m a nurse so I have a concern for public health. Everything that’s happened with extreme energy extraction in the United States and across the world is a violation of basic human rights. We have a right to exist in the place without having to contend with toxic things in our environment or toxic processes that are being done solely for the purposes of extracting profit at the expense of everyone who lives in a place. We don’t need these energy sources. I mean this is a 19th century energy source, we’re way beyond this. It’s time to move on. It’s time to drag ourselves kicking and screaming into the 20th century and start using renewable energy. So, that made my decision to employ non-violent direct action easier. You know, what I’ve been arrested for has been violations; it’s not like it’s a misdemeanour or a felony. And curiously – or not – five of my six charges have been dropped because the court system is incompetent and the arresting officers don’t know what they’re doing and the things they’re arresting me for have no basis in fact. So, I’m really only facing one charge and that makes me feel I’m willing to get arrested 20 times, 30 times, 40 times, 50 times, if need be to stop this thing. We’re not about delaying it. We want to stop this thing. Because it’s killing the planet and it’s killing us.”

789 Anti-Fracking Organizer 6, Interview with Anti-Fracking Organizer 6, Watkins Glen.
790 Anti-Fracking Organizer 7, Interview with Anti-Fracking Organizer 7, Watkins Glen.
791 Anti-Fracking Organizer 16, Interview with Anti-Fracking Organizer 16, Watkins Glen.
792 Anti-Fracking Organizer 3, Interview with Anti-Fracking Organizer 3, Geneseo, N.Y.
What one is immediately struck by in these responses is the casual way that they speak about the process of being arrested and the pleasure that they appear derive from it. Blockaders are unanimously proud to have taken a stand and to have put their bodies on the line for a cause that is larger than themselves. Thanks to the solidarity and support of the movement, the process of being arrested has been transformed from something to fear to something that is enjoyable and even, in some cases, mundane. The fourth quoted organizer went on to describe the experience of being arrested as being about as stressful and as routine as going through a drive-thru.

In what way, though, are these remarks suggestive of a process of becoming-minoritarian? The key lies in what exactly is being enjoyed by WASL’s participants. If their enjoyment is derived from the transgression of the law then – as psychoanalysis teaches us – the subject’s enjoyment would still be dependent on the law. This, for instance, is the position taken by Earth First! The strongest evidence that at least some members of WASL have moved beyond this lies in the claim that being arrested is akin to going through a drive-thru. Does this not suggest that the act of being arrested has in fact lost all of its libidinal appeal? If so, it is not so much the breaking of the law that sustains the organizer’s enjoyment as what WASL is collectively composing in and through struggle. The subject has entered into a becoming, they have “broken out” of their “assigned identity” as Andreja Zevnik puts it, and have called into question “what ‘the self’ is supposed to stand for.” It is, therefore, this kind of remark that suggests a line of flight from the capitalist axiomatic is taking place.

In Deleuze|Guattari’s words, even though WASL is a struggle at the level of axioms – it is, after all, a fight against a gas storage site and a transition away from fossil capital, not an anti-capitalist struggle as such – it nevertheless “promote[s] compositions that do not pass by way of the capitalist economy any more than they do the State-from.” For however fleeting of a moment, WASL’s participants have begun to construct “non-denumerable sets,” or processes of becoming-minoritarian that exceed their placement as subsets of the majority. It is in this sense that we should read the above quoted claim from one organizer that they were “raised to be a law-abiding person” but “you come to realize that there are some laws that you have to break.” The organizer was raised to accept their place as a quantitative subset of the majority but

793 Lacan, ‘Kant with Sade’.
795 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 470.
796 Deleuze and Guattari, 470.
797 Anti-Fracking Organizer 16, Interview with Anti-Fracking Organizer 16, Watkins Glen.
through the process of becoming-minoritarian, and because they have begun the collective process of becoming-minoritarian, they come to see that these laws are mutable, breakable, and at their limit that they are not laws at all. To use the hybrid phrase I introduced in Chapter Three, the subject comes to see that the Majority doesn’t exist.

These, then, are just a couple of indications of how a struggle against an infrastructure project can also be the site of a “coexistent combat,” a molecular process, in which people begin to call into question the very structures that underpin the capitalist axiomatic. As Deleuze|Guattari write, in such moments people fight to “formulate their problems for themselves, and to determine at least the particular conditions under which they can receive a more general solution.”\footnote{Deleuze and Guattari, \textit{A Thousand Plateaus}, 471.} We find exactly this sentiment expressed by WASL members themselves: “We fight for our right to determine what’s best for our people, as we do not accept that corporations are people or that corporations have the right to determine what’s best for our communities.”\footnote{We Are Seneca Lake, ‘300+ People Voice Opposition to LPG Storage at Seneca Lake’.}

\textit{Revolutionary Universalism and Solidarity}

On 19 March 2016, a month before my visit, the New York Times (NYT) reported on a visit from Bill McKibben to a WASL blockade. In the article, the NYT situates WASL in the context of a global struggle against fossil capital’s infrastructural build-out and describes them as combining “traditional not-in-my-back-yard protests against fossil-fuel projects with an overarching concern about climate change.”\footnote{Schwartz, ‘Environmental Activists Take to Local Protests for Global Results’.} At the risk of over-extrapolating from something rather trivial, I want to suggest that the NYT’s wholly inaccurate description is an excellent way into how the theory that I have been developing in this thesis helps us to understand WASL’s way of composing what I have been calling a revolutionary universalism.

The problem with NYT’s description is not simply that the concept of NIMBYism has negative connotations but something much more fundamental and philosophically interesting: it misses precisely what Deleuze|Guattari aim for when they say that minorities must “hold to the \textit{Particular} as an innovative form”\footnote{Deleuze and Guattari, \textit{A Thousand Plateaus}, 471.} in the development of a “becoming-minoritarian of everybody/everything,”\footnote{Deleuze and Guattari, \textit{A Thousand Plateaus}, 473.} or that “the power of minority, of particularity, finds its figure in the universal consciousness of the
proletariat.” That is, by bringing together a static notion of the particular and the universal the NYT’s formulation cannot see the internal dialectic that drives the processes and practices of becoming-minorititarian.

The problem can be put in classically Hegelian terms. If “not-in-my-back-yard” means anything, it means a one-sided struggle at the strict level of particularity. It is a struggle around localist concerns with one’s own environment, way of life, and property values. NIMBYism is not opposed to an infrastructural project, development plan, or environmental harm in principle, it would just prefer that it happens elsewhere; out of sight and out of mind. NIMBYism therefore fails to see the universal (climate change) in the particular (a pipeline protest or a gas storage blockade, for example). It does not see that it has, in a sense, always been about the universal. The Hegelian negation of NIMBYism would foreground precisely this universal aspect and take the form of a struggle against climate change as such. And yet this struggle at the strict level of universality is an equally one-sided proposition. How does one intervene in such a space? How can one strike back against what Timothy Morton calls the “hyperobject” of global climate breakdown? Thus, it becomes clear that without reference to the particular the universal is empty and indeterminate, while without reference to the universal the particular is blind, or in Hegel’s language, it is in-itself without being for-itself. When forced to choose between these two alternatives, the climate movement is lost from the start.

The way beyond this impasse is the much maligned (especially in Deleuzian circles!) negation of the negation. While the NYT’s formulation holds the universal and the particular apart and exposes the structural impossibility of their reconciliation, the negation of the negation directly assumes this failure, that is, the gap between the universal and the particular. Only then is it possible to see that the moment a struggle combines “traditional not-in-my-back-yard protests against fossil-fuel projects with an overarching concern about climate change” it ceases to be a “traditional not-in-my-back-yard” protest and instead inhabits that gap as such, the excess that is neither particular nor universal. Such struggles are the particularization of the universal. They hold to the particular as an innovative form in a struggle for the becoming-minoritarian of everybody/everything and it is this that, with Deleuze|Guattari, I have argued opens up the possibility (but never

803 Deleuze and Guattari, 472.
804 Beuret, ‘Counting Carbon’.
805 Morton, Hyperobjects.
806 Schwartz, ‘Environmental Activists Take to Local Protests for Global Results’.
the guarantee) of becoming-minoritarian as the exploitation of the gap within any given subset of the Majority. Such struggles mobilize their particularity in the interests of a universal project and through their struggle they retroactively transform the particular itself. As Žižek puts it, this movement “does not involve a direct loss of primary identifications [the particularities of a struggle]: what happens is that primary identifications undergo a kind of transubstantiation; they start to function as the form of appearance of the universal secondary identification.”807 In becoming the particular becomes what it was from the start: a site of universal emancipatory significance. It is both a subset of the majority and a place of potential becoming. It is precisely this that I would suggest the phrases “not here, not anywhere” and “many struggles, one fight,” often used by WASL and other environmental groups, aim to capture. The NYT, meanwhile, in the interests of impartial reporting, necessarily misses this becoming and focuses only on disagreements between subsets regarding the costs and benefits of fracking. In this way, the dishonest argument that fracking is a “bridge fuel” to a greener, friendlier, capitalism is given print space – despite being largely disproven by Ingraffea in 2011 – and WASL becomes one opinion among many within the functioning of the capitalist axiomatic rather than a movement beyond it. We remain caught within what Badiou calls a “capitolo-parliamentary” logic governed on the one hand by economic imperatives and on the other by regimes of representation and recognition.808

What does this movement from the particular to the universal look like in WASL’s case? It is clear enough that WASL is a struggle rooted in its particularity. As Naomi Klein remarks in an interview with WASL members, “This fight, We Are Seneca Lake, is part of this global struggle. And to me, one of the things that it really stands for is the power of love of place. Even the slogan, We Are Seneca Lake, is deceptively simple. I think it’s a really profound statement of identification with the natural world. This rejection of apartness, of a dominant place with respect to nature.” But as Klein goes on the say, WASL is equally a struggle that is “intensely local but also global.”809 If this is the case, then we are faced with the question of precisely how this “intensely local” struggle moves towards the global and the universal.

In the previous chapter I argued that it is a matter of constituting new collective forms of subjectivity and solidarity which by refusing recognition within the capitalist axiomatic unravel the relations of capitalist exploitation as such. I argued that this can

807 Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject*, 104.
808 Badiou, ‘The European Constitution’.
809 We Are Seneca Lake, *Naomi Klein Talks about WASL 1.24.16*. 

204
only be achieved via concrete acts of solidarity that “hold to the Particular as an innovative form”\textsuperscript{810} as the basis for a political practice focused on composing a mutual becoming with other subsets of the capitalist axiomatic. In Deleuze\textsc{and} Guattari’s words, “Woman: we all have to become that, whether we are male or female. Non-white: we all have to become that, whether we are white, yellow, or black.”\textsuperscript{811} I want to suggest that WASL achieves this movement in two ways. The first is the way that the movement constructs itself as part of a much larger – indeed universalizable – line of flight from the plan(e) of capital. The second is through their concrete acts of solidarity with other struggles and in particular with other parts of “blockadia.” These will be looked at in turn.

Beginning, then, with how WASL universalizes its own practice to constitute a becoming-minoritarian of everybody/everything. One of the most frequent ways that WASL does this is by starting their blockades with a speech from an organizer or celebrity that situates the struggle within a properly universal context. These speeches are later uploaded to YouTube and shared as a press release which is often picked up by prominent environmental news sites such as EcoWatch. While on one level the speeches are an attempt to gain greater support for their particular struggle, on another they reflect back on the consciousness of those involved in the struggle and ask them to situate themselves within a national and indeed an international movement against fossil capital and governmental inaction on climate change. To borrow a phrase from Lenin, it is just as much a matter of “raising the levels of consciousness” of WASL’s participants as it is of raising awareness for the cause itself.\textsuperscript{812} Our Earth Day 2016 action, for instance, began with a speech invoking the name of John McConnell, the founder of Earth Day, before asking what he would make of:

“today’s desperate measures to unearth fuels by blowing off mountain tops and raping the ground by injecting poisoned water. What of the violence of slashing trees and leaving huge scars across our landscape to make way for pipelines. And of the violence of ocean acidification killing countless species…What of the violence, storms, and massive floods and draughts and fires and heatwaves that have claimed countless lives. The violence to workers who are subjected to unsafe

\textsuperscript{810} Deleuze and Guattari, \textit{A Thousand Plateaus}, 471.
\textsuperscript{811} Deleuze and Guattari, 472.
\textsuperscript{812} Lih and Lenin, \textit{Lenin Rediscovered}. 
conditions to feed this planet’s fossil fuel addiction. And the cancers and heart and lung disease and low birth weights of those who live in sacrifice zones.”813

In this way WASL draws connections between their own struggle and broader struggles for climate justice, social justice, and environmental self-determination and begins to take its particularity as the form of appearance of a universal struggle.

WASL’s decision to give many of their actions a theme also allowed them to underscore the numerous particularities that were involved in their struggle in ways that worked to compose a revolutionary universalism. Themed events emphasized the role of teachers, healthcare professionals, mothers and many more besides. On May 7 2017, for instance, 16 mothers and grandmothers blockaded the gates with banners reading “Mothers Against Crestwood: Because I said so, that’s Why.” WASL’s Press Release emphasized the properly universal character of the struggle by quoting directly from participants:

“I have a 16-month old son and I’m pregnant. If I’m going to create life, it’s my responsibility to protect it too. I’m very concerned about the climate and for my children’s future. The more money we invest in fossil fuel infrastructure, the deeper we dig ourselves in. I want to do what I can to speed the transition towards renewables.”814

In another themed protest on August 4 2016, 13 members of WASL formed a blockade and read from Pope Francis’ recently published encyclical on the environment, “Praised Be: On Care for Our Common Home.” The blockade was formed of WASL members from 10 counties across New York State and included members of Jewish, Catholic, Protestant, and Islamic Faiths. As usual, WASL put their bodies on the line but this time they also bought an 8-foot-tall replica of the encyclical with them. Banners held during the protest included the phrases “The Climate is a Common Good” and “People of Faith Against Crestwood.” Here, particular faiths are mobilized in the interests of a “common good” or a universal cause.

The day Bill McKibben attended, he gave an opening speech that once again emphasized the larger – properly universal – stakes of localized struggle:

813 Anti-Fracking Organizer 17, Interview with Anti-Fracking Organizer 17, Watkins Glen.
814 We Are Seneca Lake, ‘16 Mothers, Grandmothers Arrested Blockading Crestwood’. 
“Today, now, and everyday there are 10, 15, 20 places like this where people are standing up after 100 years of a free ride the fossil fuel industry is now met at every turn by people saying, “It’s a new world! The science is clear, we understand what has to happen.” And when we do this, it’s not like we are some fringe. This is what Pope Francis has told us to do. It’s what the science has told us to do.”

With Deleuze|Guattari it becomes possible to see that the aim of these actions is not simply to emphasize the different subsets or identities that are mobilized in this particular struggle but to produce a qualitative transformation within and between these various subsets, to “assert a power of the nondenumerable” as Deleuze|Guattari say, by drawing these groups together in the composition of a revolutionary universality, or a collective becoming-minoritarian. As Deleuze|Guattari write, what is proper to such struggles is “neither the set nor its elements; rather it is the connection, the “and” produced between elements, between sets, and which belongs to neither, which eludes them and constitutes a line of flight.” Or as they put it elsewhere, “it is certainly not by using a minor language as a dialect, by regionalizing or ghettoizing, that one becomes revolutionary; rather, by using a number of minority elements, be connection, conjugating them, one invents a specific, unforeseen, autonomous becoming.” This is a becoming which, as Sibertin-Blanc notes in his own reflections on this passage, “passes necessarily through transversal connections between various struggles, in a national and international space.” It cannot be stressed enough that what is at stake here is more than the creation of connections between various subsets. We are not talking about an “ecology of movements” or “movement of movements.” The difference lies in the status of the “and” that Deleuze|Guattari say is produced between elements. This “and”, the gap composed between subsets in becoming, is itself the collective political subject. As such and as I have argued throughout this thesis, it is irreducible to either the individuals participating in a struggle or the formal structures of capital. It is where political struggle “touches upon the Real” in Lacan’s language, or where a movement is produced that is in but not of the capitalist axiomatic and thus stands in excess of the axiomatic and the plan(e) of capital.

815 We Are Seneca Lake, ‘Video from Methane Is Madness Blockade’.
816 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 470.
817 Deleuze and Guattari, 470.
818 Deleuze and Guattari, 106.
819 Sibertin-Blanc and Hodges, State and Politics, 261.
820 Notes from Nowhere, ‘Networks: The Ecology of Movements’.
821 Deleuze and Guattari, Anti-Oedipus, 277.
For the formalist reading of Deleuze|Guattari that I have been developing, this “and” is the way that minorities act upon the structure to compose a new collective political subject that breaks from the present state of things or the existing Symbolic Order. What matters here is to come into touch with the Real, the impasse within the Symbolic. Or as Deleuze|Guattari put it on multiple occasions, “what matters is to break through the wall,”\(^{822}\) to “break through the wall of the signifier.”\(^{823}\)

WASL’s efforts to produce this “and” between their struggle and others is not limited to the rhetorical. The movement has engaged in significant acts of concrete solidarity with environmental and indigenous struggles across the United States and the world. One important way to show solidarity was to have representatives of other parts of Blockadaria visit the shores of Seneca Lake. During their time with WASL, the collective work of becoming-minoritarian is reinforced, strategies are learned, and lessons exchanged. To take one example, in July 2016 WASL was visited by organizers from Oakland, California, Woodstock and the Catskills, New York. By making a stand with WASL and speaking about the commonalities of their shared struggles, these representatives built “connections” and “conjugations” between the struggle at Seneca Lake and their own. In his speech in front of Crestwood’s gates a farmer from the Catskills and representative of the Catskills Mountain Keeper’s explained:

“We’re connected to this place in the Catskills…what we’re experiencing here today and across New York is an invasion of the fossil fuel industry…Why am I here? I love where I live. I love the beech trees, the maples, the hemlocks, and the spring where I haul water for my cows in the winter. This place, this place where I live, has now known three generations [of my family]. We keep animals, we’re part of our community. And I love living there. My kids love living there…and that’s what I see when I look out at this crowd here. These people are here because they’re connected to place…It’s those things that shape who we are. That’s what We Are Seneca Lake means. We are this place, we’re not going to let it be destroyed, and we’re going to protect it…We’re standing up against the Exxon’s of the world who foul our water, our community, our air, our government, and then expect us to sit at home while they foul our entire climate and planet. Well guess what brothers Koch? And guess what Bob Phillips CEO

---

822 Deleuze and Guattari, 277.
of Crestwood?...We’re not just going to sit at home and let it happen. We’re going to come out here and we’re standing up with people not just in Seneca Lake, not just in the Catskills, not just in Oakland California, not just from New Jersey, Woodstock, Long Island… we’re standing up with the people of the world not letting this happen. We do not want a fossil fuel future, we’re going to change the course of history and every time we need to we’re going to stand and get arrested and stand with our brothers and sisters at Seneca lake and stand with the people who are fighting, with the black and the brown people who are breathing and getting their lungs poisoned at the other end of this pipeline. We’re going to change history and give a renewable energy future.”

The speech moves seamlessly from the local and the particular to the universal and the collective. As it does so it spans across subsets, geographies, and timescales, across economies, and across notions of justice and power. Seneca Lake and the Catskills are resituated as spaces where minorities are working towards what in the previous chapter I followed Aimé Césaire in describing as a universal “rich with all that is particular, which with all the particulars there are, the deepening of each particular, the coexistence of them all.” Crucially, the speech also makes clear that environmental struggles are class struggles. The fight against Crestwood’s plans for Seneca Lake are the displaced form of appearance of the fundamental impasse of capitalism: the contradiction between the proletariat (WASL, the Catskills Mountain Keepers, and other disposable communities or sacrifice zones) and capitalist classes (the Koch Brothers, Bob Philips). In the previous chapter I argued that this is what lies behind Deleuze|Guattari’s enigmatic sentence: “The power of minority of particularity, finds its universal consciousness in the proletariat.”

It is the fact that these struggles are fundamentally struggles structured around capital’s primary contradiction that draws them into a collective becoming-minoritarian and what Deleuze|Guattari call the possibility (but never the guarantee) of “leav[ing] the plan(e) of capital.” As one of the more militant members of WASL explained, the fact that the struggle at Seneca Lake so clearly linked environmentalism to class struggle was of fundamental importance: “It was there that a few of us learnt that it was possible to do anti-capitalist politics on environmental issues.” Here, members of WASL surpass

---

824 We Are Seneca Lake, Wes Gillingham.
826 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 472.
827 Deleuze and Guattari, 472.
828 Anti-Fracking Organizer 14, Second Interview with Anti-Fracking Organizer 14, Geneva, N.Y.
some political theorists in their understanding of contemporary class struggle. Žižek, for example, has argued that the limit of “new social movements from feminism through ecology to anti-racism” is that “they are not political in the sense of the Universal Singular: they are “single-issue movements” which lack the dimension of the universal, that is, they do not relate to the social totality.” Yet from the perspective that I have been advancing here, this is to fundamentally misunderstand what is at stake in many “single issue” struggles. As the member of WASL suggests, such struggles can become (though are not necessarily) the form of appearance of a politics that does relate to the totality – or the class struggle – but they do this precisely through the particularity of their so-called “single issue.”

This facet of WASL’s activity is equally apparent in their actions outside of the Finger Lakes. In 2015, 6 members of WASL attended COP21 in Paris where they met with indigenous movements from the Pacific Islands and South America and environmental movements from Ireland and Australia among many others. Then, in 2016, others stood in solidarity with a family from New Milford Township, PA, to defend their maple farm. The farm, which stood on the planned route of the Constitution Pipeline, had been claimed by the federal government under eminent domain even before a permit had been granted to build the pipeline and members of WASL were present when, under the watchful gaze of Pennsylvania State Police and Federal Marshalls in bulletproof vests and armed with semi-automatic rifles, pipeline contractors cut down over 500 maple trees in advance of being granted the permit to build the pipeline. In less than a week, 80% of the farm was lost. And in 2017, members of the group held a fundraising campaign and helped to re-build parts of a house in Dimock, PA, that had incurred structural damage from fracking induced micro-tremors.

But perhaps the clearest example of WASL working to invent “a specific, unforeseen, autonomous becoming” or the “and” between itself and other movements can be found in their solidarity with the Standing Rock Sioux’s struggle against the North Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) towards the end of 2016. At Standing Rock, the centuries long struggle of indigenous nations against the settler colonial violence and the struggle against fossil capital converged. DAPL was planned to transport oil from North Dakota’s Bakken oil fields to Patoka, Illinois. In 2014 the pipeline’s planned route was intentionally redirected “from upriver of North Dakota’s white-dominated capital,
Bismark, to upriver of the poorest county in North Dakota, Sioux County – the Standing Rock Reservation.” 831 No mention was made of Standing Rock in the decision, nor of the fact that this route would destroy ancestral burial grounds and threaten the reservation’s water supply. Indigenous Nations and environmentalists from across the United States and the Americas converged in North Dakota. Referring to themselves collectively as “water protectors” – a name chosen to highlight that the struggle was not just about a particular pipeline but about a planet under the attack of fossil capital – they stood their ground against the full force of the US military, militarized police departments, and the now infamous private counterinsurgency firm, TigerSwan. 832

In early November 2016, as #NoDAPL became the cynosure of environmental and indigenous struggles across the world, members of WASL made the 29-hour drive from Geneva, NY, to the Sioux Reservation to stand in solidarity with the Water Protectors. Staying in Red Warrior camp, they witnessed first-hand the structural and all-too-concrete violence that the combined forces of settler colonialism and fossil capital were willing to inflict. One evening they watched as pipeline contractors set fire to the fields surrounding their camp. Once it became clear that no fire department would be coming to put out the flames, the water protectors battled the fires themselves. Another evening, they witnessed the police returning items that they had confiscated from arrestees. After creating a pile of personal belongings including tents, sleeping bags and much-needed winter clothing the police doused the items in gasoline and set them on fire. “The cops were watching with huge flashlights as the people came to discover their own stuff on fire. But they didn’t give no fucks. They just started singing and dancing around the fire.” 833

For the time that WASL were there they helped with daily camp chores and built connections between their own struggle and that of Standing Rock and its supporters from across the Americas. The day WASL left Standing Rock the daily morning prayer circle was dedicated to the struggle on the shores of Seneca Lake. Elders at Oceti Sakowin camp blessed water from the Finger Lake and led a procession accompanied by the beat of drums and Native song down to the Missouri River. Upon reaching the shore Native men formed a staircase with their bodies to help Native and non-Native women get down to the water’s edge. The group offered tobacco and a prayer to the river before the Elders

831 Estes, Our History Is the Future, 41.
832 See the excellent investigative series from the Intercept: Brown, Parrish, and Speri, ‘Oil and Water Investigative Series’.
833 Anti-Fracking Organizer 11, Second Interview with Anti-Fracking Organizer 11, Geneva, N.Y.
added water from Seneca Lake to the Missouri’s flow. Finally, WASL were gifted with ceremonial sage that was later burned on the shores of Seneca Lake in a reciprocal act of solidarity. Those who visited Standing Rock explained to me how the experience changed their understanding of their own struggle and the fight for social and climate justice. As one said, “The battle of Standing Rock is everyone’s battle.” Or another, “It really was a lifechanging experience. The way people were treated inside the camp was just so beautiful compared to the savage treatment of the camp from the outside.”

Writing from the other side of this “conjugating” of struggles, or the Deleuzian-Guattarian and forged between them, Nick Estes similarly explains that:

“Political elites and corporate media have frequently depicted poor whites and poor Natives as irreducible enemies, without common ground competing for scarce resources in economically depressed areas. Yet the defence of Native land, water, and treaties bought us together. Although not perfect, Oceti Sakowin camp was a home to many for many months. And the bonds were long lasting, despite the horrific histories working against them.”

Later, in December 2016, another member of WASL and ex-military veteran made the journey as one of 4,000 veterans who, “braved a whiteout blizzard to march to the barricade where police were mercilessly dousing Water Protectors with chemical weapons and water in freezing temperatures.” Later Veterans held a ceremony asking for forgiveness for “the horrors the US military inflicted on Indigenous peoples that continued with the police and military violence against unarmed protestors.”

Explaining her motivations for going, the WASL member cited the climate crisis, “to me, Standing Rock is the last call for the climate”, her own experience of civil disobedience at Seneca Lake, and her commitment to “fiercely defend our right to clean water and a stable climate.”

Finally, lessons learned from WASL’s legal defence were also put to work by their lawyer and lawyer for New York’s Onondaga Nation, who was sent by the Onondaga to

---

834 Anti-Fracking Organizer 11.
835 For more on Settler/Indigenous solidarity see: Davis, *Alliances*; Land, *Decolonizing Solidarity*; Chazan, ‘Settler Solidarities as Praxis’.
836 Anti-Fracking Organizer 1, Interview with Anti-Fracking Organizer 1, Bath, N.Y.
837 Anti-Fracking Organizer 11, Second Interview with Anti-Fracking Organizer 11, Geneva, N.Y.
839 Estes, 63.
840 Boland, ‘Why I Went to Standing Rock’. 
support Standing Rock in October 2016. There, WASL’s lawyer was involved in supporting Water Protectors who had been arrested and – in a telling echo of Nazi concentration camps – had their arrest number written on their forearms in permanent marker, before being kept overnight in dog kennels. When they were released the next day, it was discovered that many had untreated wounds or were in stages of shock and dehydration. In a final dehumanizing act the Water Protectors discovered that their belongings – including ceremonial items – had been covered in urine.\textsuperscript{841} As WASL’s lawyer said recounting the story to me and with tears in his eyes: “the trauma these people had been through, I'll take to my grave.”\textsuperscript{842} These stories and many more besides made it back to WASL where they strengthened the resolve and solidarity of the Finger Lakes.

This is what it means in concrete terms to produce the “and” of a revolutionary universalism. It is in these moments that WASL can be seen to reach well-beyond the particularities of their own struggle. The fight on the shores of Seneca Lake becomes not just about Crestwood’s gas storage plans but about a much more expansive – indeed universal – struggle for environmental and social justice. What is at stake is the constitution of a collective subject in the gap between supposedly separate struggles. As Deleuze|Guattari explain, this between “does not designate a localizable relation going from one to the other and back again, but a perpendicular direction, a transversal movement that sweeps one \textit{and} the other \textit{away}, a stream without beginning or end that undermines its banks and picks up speed in the middle.”\textsuperscript{843} This is what grounds the radicality of Deleuze|Guattari’s thought and the struggles that reflect it. From this perspective, the fight for social and environmental justice cannot simply mean a focus on the “a range of basic needs, social recognition, and economic and political rights” of excluded and marginalized communities.\textsuperscript{844} Neither can it mean what Donna Orange calls “Recognition Justice” with its interest in “who counts as claiming a voice or as having suffered damage” with the proposed solution of extending the privileges of “civil rights, and of human rights generally, for example, the rights not to have one’s body attacked or invaded without one’s consent.”\textsuperscript{845} It also cannot mean the more equitable “distribution” of the “economic benefits” and “hazards associated with proximity to wells” and infrastructure that is suggested in Emily Clough and Derek Bell’s analysis of fracking in

\textsuperscript{841} Estes, \textit{Our History Is the Future}, 53–54.
\textsuperscript{842} Anti-Fracking Organizer 2, Second Interview with Anti-Fracking Organizer 2, Syracuse, N.Y.
\textsuperscript{843} Deleuze and Guattari, \textit{A Thousand Plateaus}, 25.
\textsuperscript{844} Schlosberg, ‘Theorising Environmental Justice’, 40.
\textsuperscript{845} Orange, \textit{Climate Crisis, Psychoanalysis, and Radical Ethics}, 22.
Pennsylvania. These fundamentally liberal accounts of environmental and social justice are about who gets to count within the capitalist axiomatic. They operate only with what Deleuze | Guattari call “denumerable sets” or what Badiou calls “communitarian particularisms” and so cannot call into question the majority itself. Deleuze | Guattari’s theory of becoming-minoritarian, however, asks us to attend to those moments when struggles act upon the structure itself by calling into question the structure as such in a way that is unthinkable for liberal accounts of social and environmental justice. The aim is to map the tendencies of a given struggle that appear to enter into a “specific, unforeseen, autonomous becoming.” Such movements fight against the proclivity of the capitalist axiomatic to “add more axioms” or to expand the circle of who gets to count within the abstract universalisms of human rights and bourgeois individualism. As Deleuze | Guattari argue, capitalism “is always prepared to add more axioms”, it will add “an axiom for the working class, for unions, and so on...it adds axioms for many other things besides, things that are much smaller, tiny even, absurdly insignificant; it has a peculiar passion for such things that leaves the essential unchallenged.” The problem is that these operations simply give the bourgeois state a larger role to play in the mediation of the class contradiction, “with regard to production and its planning, the economy and its “monetarization,” and surplus value and its absorption,” while for Deleuze | Guattari, the aim “is instead that of smashing capitalism, of redefining socialism, of constituting a war machine capable of counteracting the world wide war machine by other means.”

To become-minoritarian is therefore in a very real sense to struggle – consciously and unconsciously, directly and indirectly – against state and capital. It is to facilitate a “becoming revolutionary of people, at every level, in every place.” The success of becoming-minoritarian is not determined by the realization of goals but by the movement of becoming-minoritarian itself. What matters, as Marx said, is the perpetuation of “the real movement which abolishes the present state of things.” Or as Deleuze | Guattari put it, what matters are the “bonds” that a struggle “installs between people, even if these

---

846 Clough and Bell, ‘Just Fracking’.
847 Badiou, Saint Paul, 6.
848 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 106.
849 Deleuze and Guattari, Anti-Oedipus, 253.
850 Deleuze and Guattari, 253.
851 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 472.
852 Deleuze and Parnet, ‘Many Politics’, 147.
bonds last no longer than the revolution’s fused material and quickly give way to division and betrayal.”

Who is the “We” In We Are Seneca Lake?

In the final section of the chapter I want to turn to an example of WASL failing to sustain its process of becoming-minoritarian. As I argued in the previous chapter all struggles are composed of tendencies towards becoming-minoritarian and tendencies that fall back into their position as a minority subset of capital. We have seen that Deleuze|Guattari describe the former as a “line of flight” and a means to “leave the plan(e) of capital.” I have, however, said much less about what it means for minorities to retreat back into their position as a subset of the majority. In part this is because Deleuze|Guattari themselves are rather quiet on the matter. Their theory of minorities is more concerned with theorizing emergent forms of collective struggle than it is with their possible failure. Nevertheless, Deleuze|Guattari do provide us with some suggestive passages. At one point, drawing on their distinction between “minoritarian as a becoming or process” and “minority as an aggregate or state,” they explain that “one reterritorializes, or allows oneself to be reterritorialized, on a minority as a state; but in becoming, one is deterritorialized.” Elsewhere they say simply that “there is no becoming-majoritarian; majority is never becoming. All becoming is minoritarian.” What Deleuze|Guattari seem to have in mind here are two ways that a struggle to become-minoritarian can betray itself. In the first the struggle falls back into its allotted place of enjoyment within the capitalist axiomatic. In the second the struggle identifies directly with “the majoritarian Fact of Nobody” itself. To take either path would mean cutting a struggle off from its “creative and created, becoming.” It would be to demand recognition within the capitalist axiomatic as a specific subset or interest group and to betray the search for lines of flight beyond the plane of capital. More fundamentally it would be to buttress the structures of capitalist exploitation and oppression. Unfortunately, for all of WASL’s

855 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 291.
856 Deleuze and Guattari, 106.
857 Deleuze and Guattari, 106.
858 Deleuze and Guattari, 106.
good work, there were times when the movement did precisely this. Here, I will explore one particularly illustrative example.

On 18 July 2016, WASL held a demonstration in solidarity with the Syracuse chapter of Black Lives Matter (BLM). BLM and WASL would protest on the same day and would work to draw connections between their struggle and struggles across the Finger Lakes region. As the main organizer of WASL’s action explained:

“Our goal was to use messaging that supported the work of Black Lives Matter, but more importantly, that would expose the fundamental similarities between our movements. I think it should be openly called out that the underlying logic of capitalism is what leads to exploitation of the Earth and communities of colour. We wanted to use an intersectional approach for our action, to raise awareness and build mutuality between our struggles.”

In the language I have been developing throughout this thesis, the aim was very clearly to create a shared becoming-minoritarian between the two struggles with an eye to the underlying (properly universal) operations of exploitation and oppression that both groups suffer under capitalism.

On the day of the protest, WASL gathered at the gates of Crestwood with signs reading “We Stand with Black Lives Matter,” “You Can’t Drink Money,” and “People Not Profit.” As usual, the action began with a speech:

“I am standing today with 59 citizens who are risking arrest in a peaceful act of protest in defence of the climate and this lake that we love. Our work is part of a global movement for climate justice and against the further building out of fossil fuel infrastructure in a time of climate emergency. This buildout is an integral part of our current economic system which trashes people and the planet in favour of profit. Whether they are struggling rural communities or urban communities of colour, treating people and communities as if they are disposable is a hallmark of this approach with locates polluting industries in more vulnerable disenfranchised communities, sometimes called “sacrifice zones”, and which uses militarized police forces to keep people of colour in their place as second class citizens.

859 Taylor, From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation.
860 Anti-Fracking Organizer 18, Interview with Anti-Fracking Organizer 18.
Violence against our black brothers and sisters needs to stop and we thank Black Lives Matter for the brave and necessary campaign that they are waging. [Cheers from the crowd] We express our solidarity with you. When some part of part of our citizenry lives in fear of violence at the hands of the police, they cannot fully participate in public life including within the movement for climate justice[…] We stand with you Black Lives Matter, we are fighting the same economic system and we will not be stopped [Cheers].”861

After chants of “Black Lives Matter!” and “We Are Seneca Lake!” those risking arrest were handcuffed and taken for processing. But WASL had touched a nerve. The group is accustomed to a certain amount of backlash to its actions but on this occasion the response was considerably more hostile than they had expected:

“The national dialogue that week involved major news outlets equating Black Lives Matter with armed terrorists. Recent police killings turned right wing attention on Black Lives Matter and placed blame on the movement. Watkins Glen, the nearest town to the WASL protests is full of conservative white families, many of whom believed that BLM is a movement of cop killing, angry black people. Given this context, which we were not properly prepared to face, there was a huge amount of backlash in the Watkins Glen community. That morning of the action, we had angry racists drive by the blockade yelling at us. That afternoon in the police station when we were being processed after the arrests were made, some of our BLM solidarity posters were still visible. Officers in the police department became angry.”862

Facebook posts began to appear on the walls of prominent Schuyler County police officers. One contained a police photograph of the “We Stand with Black Lives Matter” banner beneath the caption “They’ve changed the rules of the game.” Another officer shared a meme of a police badge overlaid with the text “Blue Lives Matter.” The majority of comments beneath these posts were reactionary and aggressively opposed the aims of WASL and BLM. Both posts were later deleted. In the face of this hostility and following a personal request from the chief of police, an influential member of WASL’s steering

861 We Are Seneca Lake, ‘Black Lives Matter Demo Speech’.
862 Anti-Fracking Organizer 18, Interview with Anti-Fracking Organizer 18.
committee unilaterally chose to remove all mention of the action from the group’s website and Facebook pages. WASL’s organizers were told not to post about the action on their social media page and its videographers were told not to share the footage online. The result was a complete whitewashing of the action.

Other members of WASL’s community base and steering committee were furious with the decision. In the words of one steering committee member:

“It was a decision that should never have been made that [they] made on [their] own terms, despite the wishes of the movement or the people who planned the action. By compromising with the police [they] may have felt like [they were] avoid a dangerous situation, but really what [they] did was reinforce their racist beliefs and reinforce their power as protectors of capitalism and white supremacy. The police officers cheered when we were forced to take the signs down and the whole action felt like a failure. It’s true that it was not my community, but if it had been up to me, I would not have caved in to the officers’ request.” 863

In the opinion of another:

“[they] didn’t make a mistake, they defended the position in a council meeting where the group was furious. [They] also completely demoralized [organizers] who were having the right political line and who were there with their heads down.” 864

Limiting ourselves to critiques that can be levelled from within the theory that I have been developing in this thesis, there are at least three reasons why this unilateral decision was a major strategic and political error.

The first is the impact that the decision had on the movement itself. As the second organizer quoted above indicates, several members of WASL were so frustrated and demoralized by the decision that they began to question their participation in the movement. This particular impact does not fall easily into either of the two kinds of betrayal that Deleuze|Guattari suggest. There is neither a retreat back into a minority subset or an identification with the Majority. Rather, we could borrow from Spinoza and

863 Anti-Fracking Organizer 18.
864 Anti-Fracking Organizer 11, Second Interview with Anti-Fracking Organizer 11, Geneva, N.Y.
say that there was the expression of a “sad affect” within the “body” of WASL and with it a reduction of the group’s capacity for action or the extension of their line of flight.865

Secondly, the decision clearly entailed excluding black communities from the movement’s becoming-minoritarian. In Deleuze|Guattari’s language, WASL failed to “become-black.”866 As should be clear by now, this is not an argument about representation or identity. Though WASL is overwhelmingly white, it does have black and minority members. The problem is more elemental and would not be solved by the addition of more black organizers – though this would indeed be desirable – because this would be to remain within the quantitative and representational logic that Deleuze|Guattari want to move beyond. As they write, “even blacks, as the black panthers said, must become black…if blacks must become black, it is because only a minority is capable of serving as the active medium of becoming, but under such conditions that it ceases to be a definable aggregate in relation to the majority.”867 In other words, it is not enough to become what George Jackson, James Boggs, and Huey Newton called “black capitalists.”868 In Jackson’s wonderful phrase, this is “black against itself” and it is, in his view, “the silliest contradiction in a long train of spineless, mindless contradictions. Another painless, ultimate remedy: be a better fascist than the fascist.”869 Rather, the point is that everyone must become-black. This is what it means when Deleuze|Guattari say that the minority is a “universal figure, or becoming-everybody/everything (devenir le monde). Woman: we all have to become that, whether we are male or female. Non-white: we all have to become that, whether we are white, yellow, or black.”870 Deleuze|Guattari explain what is at stake here with a quote from William Faulkner’s Intruder in the Dust: “speaking of Southern Whites after the Civil War (not only the poor but also the monied families), Faulkner writes, ‘We are in the position of the German after 1933 who had no other alternative but to be a Nazi or a Jew.’”871 Deleuze|Guattari and Jackson’s point is that we face an equally stark choice today. Class struggle and racism do not permit passivity: either we pursue that part of minorities standing in excess of their place within the structures of racialized exploitation, oppression, and accumulation, or we become the oppressor.

865 Spinoza, Curley, and Spinoza, A Spinoza Reader.
866 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 291.
867 Deleuze and Guattari, 291.
868 Boggs, Racism and the Class Struggle, 133–45; Jackson, Blood in My Eye; Newton and Brown, To Die for the People, 99–109.
869 Jackson, Soledad Brother, 237.
870 Deleuze and Guattari, A Thousand Plateaus, 470.
871 Deleuze and Guattari, 544.
By failing to become-black WASL becomes the oppressor. They retreat back into their whiteness. The situation is especially acute in the US, where whiteness is the Majority *par excellence*. Like all Majorities, whiteness is Nobody, it is a social construct with neither symbolic nor biological determination. And yet insofar as its function is to structure a field of racialized subjects in relation to an abstract standard of “Pure Whiteness,” *it nevertheless has its effects*. As Patrick Wolfe puts it, “the well-worn piety that race is a social construct does not get us very far.” Far from a conclusion, the fact that race is a social construction begs the question of how what Wolfe calls “regimes of racialization” are constructed and in whose interests. A social movement that does not fight this regime of racialization therefore reproduces the logics of settler colonialism and chattel slavery. As Guattari explains, the point here is not to emphasize the victimized status of blacks or indigenous or their lack of recognition but to act affirmatively against the structures that place individuals or collectives in a position of inferiority:

“What seems to me to be important in these issues is to get away from a purely defensive character in the struggle of minorities – ‘we are victims, nobody recognizes our rights’ – and on the contrary, to develop an offensive position that, as in the work of Rimbaud, evokes a ‘becoming-black’, a becoming that concerns all races. We can all enter a becoming-black, becoming-Indian…”

If, therefore, a predominantly white settler movement named after a lake that is named after a violently oppressed indigenous people is to become-minoritarian it will at some point need to extend its becoming in the direction of an assault on the structures of US settler colonialism and chattel slavery. Though WASL would begin this work several months later at Standing Rock (its own moment of becoming-Indian, perhaps), its failure to do so on the shores of Seneca Lake in solidarity with a chapter of BLM that was struggling only an hour away in Syracuse is nothing short of disastrous for the direction of the movement and for broader struggles against fossil capital and the structures of racialization it relies on. Instead, WASL’s identification with the White Majority leads the movement to put a halt to its becoming-minoritarian and indeed to participate in a regime

---

873 Wolfe, 3.
874 Garo, ‘Molecular Revolutions’, 107.
of racialization in which blackness is devalued or even – as Fanon argued – given the ontological status of nonbeing.\textsuperscript{875} The “We” in We Are Seneca Lake becomes circumscribed White We. The movement’s line of flight from the plan(e) of capital, aborted. Or, as Wolfe puts it in his own analysis of such decisions on the part of white settlers, “in keeping Blacks in their place, Whites endorsed their own.”\textsuperscript{876}

We can round off our second criticism of the decision with the help of Deleuze|Guattari’s concept of microfascism. This is the repeated impetus, even among progressive groups and individuals, to reinstall fascistic logics. As Deleuze|Guattari explain, “leftist organizations will not be the last to secrete microfascisms. It’s too easy to be anti-fascist on the molar level, and not even see the fascist inside you, the fascist you yourself sustain and nourish and cherish with molecules both personal and collective.”\textsuperscript{877}

For Deleuze|Guattari, it is the existence of microfascist desire that explains and precedes the formation of fascism as a molar form and not the other way around. It is not the case that the masses were somehow “tricked” into fascism by a slight of hand but that “at a certain point, under a certain set of conditions, they wanted fascism, and it is this perversion of the desire of the masses that needs to be accounted for.”\textsuperscript{878} We could therefore say that the eradication of microfascist desire is one of the principal aims of becoming-minoritarian. The appearance of microfascistic practices within WASL would then be evidence of both the deeply racialized structures that the group operates in and – to a not insignificant extent – the movements continued libidinal investment in them. This, then, is how to understand the decision to capitulate to WASL’s racist detractors and the demands of Schuyler County’s police force who are, it should not be forgotten, the local branch of a national institution that is both historically and contemporaneously responsible for brutally upholding the White Majority.\textsuperscript{879} The irony should not be lost that WASL would capitulate to the police on the very day that BLM were taking a stand against the region’s racist police forces. What, then, does this choice to back down rather than become-black tell us? In the language of this thesis, it reveals that there is a desire for whiteness and for the recognition of themselves as white at work in WASL. The solution can only be further deterritorialization from the plan(e) of capital. That is, the continuation of becoming-minoritariant on both the individual and the collective level.

\textsuperscript{875} Fanon, \textit{Black Skin, White Masks}.
\textsuperscript{876} Wolfe, \textit{Traces of History}, 82.
\textsuperscript{877} Deleuze and Guattari, \textit{A Thousand Plateaus}, 215.
\textsuperscript{878} Deleuze and Guattari, \textit{Anti-Oedipus}, 38.
What would it mean for WASL to become-black in this sense? In the deeply racialized settler colonial context of the US, for white rural Euroamericans to become-black means to give up something. It means, in Žižek’s preferred language, undergoing an act of “subjective destitution.” The subject must abandon the symbolic coordinates that tell it – and indeed others – who it is and act without symbolic guarantee or cover. More than this, though, it means being prepared to experience the kind of white supremacist backlash and violence that is routinely suffered by racialized subjects. The negative response to WASL’s action that was described above is only a taste of what this might involve. To return to Deleuze|Guattari’s language, then, this is what it means to leave the plan(e) of capital in the US. It is not simply a joyous affirmation, the coming together of pluralist differences, or the actualization of virtual becomings. As we saw earlier, already in Difference and Repetition, Deleuze warned that to think otherwise is to lapse into the idea that “there are only reconcilable and federative differences, far removed from bloody struggles.” Becoming-minoritarian in the US means becoming a “race traitor” as some of today’s alt-right like to put it, it means abandoning one’s enjoyment of Whiteness whether one is white or black. It means creating antagonisms and splits. It means refusing to give way on the line of flight that one is extending. To fail in this endeavour especially consciously so is to affirm one’s investment in whiteness, one’s identification with the Majority, and the “nonbeing” or even “social death” of blackness upon which it rests.

Although WASL failed to become-black on this occasion it is important to highlight that there were tendencies at work within the movement that provided an immanent critique of its decision. As we saw above, many organizers were outraged at the decision to censor the action. An almost prophetic passage of the blockade’s opening speech also delivers an immanent critique:

“Most of all, we acknowledge the privilege we enjoy has we surpass 650 arrests in our 21-month campaign of peaceful protest. We are able to take action without the fear of deadly response of police force. With that privilege comes responsibility [cheers of agreement]. If you also have that privilege, We Are Seneca Lake invites you to join us and the many others across this country who

---

880 Žižek, The Sublime Object of Ideology, 263.  
881 Deleuze, Difference and Repetition, xviii.  
882 Hartman, Scenes of Subjection.
are fighting to keep fossil fuels in the ground. [...] We have to do this because others cannot.”

In such moments we see clearly how the conceptual architecture that I have been developing throughout this thesis help us to explore the various tendencies at work within a given struggle and that what is at stake is an *immanent* critique of the movement on its own terms. WASL was shot through with tendencies towards becoming-minoritarian and microfascistic desires and investments in the capitalist axiomatic, a becoming-black as becoming-minoritarian and an identification with the White Majority.

The third and final critique that can be developed from this decision revolves around WASL’s understanding of nature and environmentalism. Here I would like to suggest that WASL failed to become-black in a second sense. By choosing to censor those who stood in solidarity with BLM and by silencing those who sought to make connections between the struggle at Seneca Lake and the environmental concerns of black urban communities, WASL circumscribed itself within what I will follow Terry Jones in calling an “apartheid ecology.” Writing in 1975, Jones explained that:

“The popularization of the concept of ecology in American life is potentially one of the most relevant forces imaginable in the ultimate liberation of Black America, and it has become such a force in spite (or perhaps because) of the fact that it blatantly overlooks Black Americans and their environmental interests.”

After the publication of Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* in 1962, US environmentalism become something of a white middle-class affair. The result was the occlusion of the environmental concerns of the working class and minorities and even, for Jones, the furthering of the exploitation of black workers and communities who would now bear the brunt of capital’s pollution producing industries. Jones developed this critique in conversation with Nathan Hare’s concept of “black ecology.” For Hare:

---

883 We Are Seneca Lake, ‘Black Lives Matter Demo Speech’.
885 Jones, 5–6.
886 Carson and Shackleton, *Silent Spring*.
887 Montrie, *Myth of Silent Spring*.
888 Hare, ‘Black Ecology’.
“The legitimacy of the concept of black ecology accrues from the fact that: (1) the black and white environments not only differ in degree but in nature as well; (2) the causes and solutions to ecological problems are fundamentally different in the suburbs and ghetto (both of which human ecologists regard as “natural areas”; and (3) the solutions set forth for the “ecological crisis” are reformist and evasive of the social and political revolution which black environmental correction demands.”

White ecology thus overlooks the manifold environmental and psychosocial harms experienced by black communities under fossil capitalism and what Kimberley Smith calls the “environmental thought” of black subjects. It busies itself with bucolic imaginaries: oceanic vistas, forests mottled with lakes, rivers, and streams, rolling fields, or arctic panoramas, each inhabited by its flagship species of whales, polar bears, tigers, bald eagles, or orangutans. It is an ecology emptied out of people. Black ecology, meanwhile, is the overcrowded “urban ghetto”, replete “rats, roaches, fast-moving cars, and crippling diseases.” While a number of scholars have sought to contest understandings of environmentalism that erase the environmental struggles of the working class, women and minorities, Hare and Jones’ point – already in the mid-1970’s – was that nature itself was at risk of becoming a White category and that nature would therefore have to become-black: “No solution to the ecology crisis can come without a fundamental change in the economics of America particularly with reference to blacks” since white ecology alone cannot think ecology as a means to bring about the needed “social and political revolution.”

Jones and Hare can help us to see that the decision to whitewash the BLM solidarity action was not only an identification with the white majority, a desire to be white, but that it also contributed to the maintenance of a white settler colonial understanding of the environment and environmentalism. The decision implies that extending solidarity to black communities affected by that environmental harms discussed in the event’s opening speech and extending our understanding of the

---

889 Hare, 2.
890 Smith, African American Environmental Thought see also; Glave, Rooted in the Earth; Finney, Black Faces, White Spaces; Miller, This Radical Land, 47–97.
891 Smith, African American Environmental Thought.
892 For more on this see ‘the Wilderness Debate’: Cronon, Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature; Nelson and Callicott, The Wilderness Debate Rages on: Continuing the Great New Wilderness Debate.
895 Hare, 2.
environment to include black ecology are optional extras, something that can be done without if it is going to bring too much negative attention to the struggle at hand. But in doing so, WASL collapses back into its particularism *not* as an innovative form but as a subset of the majority: white environmentalists reproducing white ecology. To paraphrase Deleuze|Guattari, WASL reterritorialized, or allowed itself to be reterritorialized, on a minority as a state. It cut itself off from its becoming. What is lost in the process is an understanding of the environment and environmental struggle that is capable of composing a properly revolutionary universality.

Here again we can find an awareness of this problem among WASL’s organizers. As the action’s opening speech and the speech of the farmer from the Catskills make clear, it is impossible to separate the nature surrounding Seneca Lake from the nature of New York City. Those “who are breathing and getting their lungs poisoned at the other end of this pipeline”⁹⁶ are suffering from and “fighting the same economic system.”⁹⁷ In such moments, WASL provides us with an immanent critique of the catastrophic decision to silence its support for BLM. As the main organizer for the BLM action explained, “what became clear is that WASL was not able to build bridges with other movements because [one member] was afraid of confrontation, risk or courageous action, and sought to be accepted and liked by everyone on both sides, which is not possible.”⁹⁸ We see here an understanding of the fact that becoming-minoritarian is underwritten by the contradiction between classes, “between sides.” It is therefore impossible to be accepted or recognized by the forces of capital if a group is going to build bridges or compose the “and” between struggles.

**Conclusion**

This final and extended chapter has applied the two tendencies of minority struggles discussed in the previous chapter to a concrete struggle against fossil capital infrastructure. It began by introducing the context of WASL’s struggle before using the theory that this thesis has developed to provide an immanent critique of the movement.

What emerges is the story of a struggle caught between its process of becoming-

---

⁹⁶ We Are Seneca Lake, *Wes Gillingham*.
⁹⁷ We Are Seneca Lake, ‘Black Lives Matter Demo Speech’.
⁹⁸ Anti-Fracking Organizer 18, Interview with Anti-Fracking Organizer 18.
minoritarian and its continued identification with its position as a subset within the capitalist axiomatic. As I have argued throughout this thesis, minorities are both a quantitative subset of the capitalist axiomatic and a qualitative force in excess of it. They are both a means of mystifying the structures of class antagonism and its form of appearance. Through an immanent critique of WASL, this chapter has shown how the contradictions of structure and becoming play off against each other in struggles against fracking and related infrastructure. In so doing, it draws together the more abstract and theoretical discussions of the preceding chapters to show how theory meets practice in our collective struggle for social and ecological liberation.
Conclusion
This thesis began by posing two questions fashioned through a disjunctive synthesis of Deleuze|Guattari’s philosophy and the US anti-fracking movement. They were:

1: What is at stake in Deleuze|Guattari’s concept of minorities?
2: How does the concept help us to think with and through US anti-fracking struggles?

In answering these questions I have shown how new theory and new understandings of practice materialize in the gap between Deleuze|Guattari’s philosophy and the struggles of the US anti-fracking movement. This was not an arbitrary pairing of theory and practice. As this thesis has demonstrated, the US anti-fracking movement is a fitting place to begin an appraisal of Deleuze|Guattari’s minorities because they are the minorities that the two philosophers were aiming to theorize. When in 1980 they wrote that “it can be predicted that the impending problems of the economy, which will consist in reforming capital in relation to new resources” will lead to “the formation or re-formation of new minoritarian aggregates, in relation to affected regions”99 they were thinking in advance about the anti-fracking movement and movements like them. Deleuze|Guattari’s wager at the time was that mobilizations against resource extraction of all kinds will become vital spaces of struggle and re-draw global lines of inclusion and exclusion. Today, we can see that this is even more true than it was when Deleuze|Guattari were writing. The outcome of anti-extractivist struggles will help to decide how, if at all, we hope to respond to our ongoing slow-motion climate catastrophe. This means that there is an urgent need to develop conceptual tools to think with and through these movements. That Deleuze|Guattari offer us an overlooked set of concepts for just such an endeavour makes returning to them both theoretically and politically important.

In the introduction I write that by moving back and forth between Deleuze|Guattari’s minorities and struggles against fracking this thesis would make contributions to political theory and resistance studies. There are three such contributions in this thesis. The first is to think the minority as an element of capitalist social relations and to apply this understanding to an analysis of ongoing struggles against fracking in the US. Notwithstanding the predominantly theoretical work of Nicholas Thoburn and the entirely theoretical work of Guillaume Sibertin-Blanc, the fact that the minority theorizes a highly ambivalent position within capital’s processes of accumulation has been passed

over in Deleuzio-Guattarian political theory. In contrast, this thesis has argued that the minority must be thought of as Deleuze|Guattari’s effort to name and wrestle with the consequences of a shift from Fordist to post-Fordist capitalism, the explosion of national liberation struggles in the Global South, and a concurrent “crisis” in global Marxism. As the first study to extensively develop this idea in relation to actually existing struggles and movements this thesis has expanded our understanding of Deleuze|Guattari’s philosophy and provided a new set of conceptual tools for scholars of resistance studies: Major/minor/becoming-minoritarian and revolutionary universality. By putting these concepts to work in analysis of the US anti-fracking movement the thesis has helped us to see where its strengths and limitations lie and what must be done if it is to grow and succeed. Taking We Are Seneca Lake as an example it is clear that, for Deleuze|Guattari, becoming-minoritarian must extend into and include all minorities affected by fracking and climate change. From this perspective, when a movement falls back into its place as a subset of the Majority to achieve its goals, it fails.

In the process of developing these arguments the thesis has challenged popular interpretations of Deleuze|Guattari’s philosophy. By parsing the difference between le politique and la politique, it was shown that cramped space is the subjective experience of having an already existing political order impinge on one’s individual concerns and not the invention of a politics in itself as Thoburn has argued. By emphasizing the fact that the Majority as “Nobody” is a space of negativity rather than the group that most closely resembles an ideal the thesis has reintroduced negativity in Deleuze|Guattari’s philosophy where others have found only positivity. Finally, by situating Deleuze|Guattari’s philosophy in its historical context, it was shown that it is more accurate to say that they record the consequences of politics in theory than it is to say that they have a politics of their own. Together, these contributions stress how important it is for interpreters of Deleuze|Guattari to be clear about the political and conceptual proclivities that they bring with them.

This leads to the second contribution made by the thesis. I have argued throughout that the full conceptual and political stakes of minorities cannot be properly understood if one remains within the anti-dialectical and vitalist horizon that characterizes much of their philosophy. By paying attention to the slips, contradictions, and inconsistencies in their thought I have shown that a very different reading of minorities is available. Minorities are an especially interesting case for this kind of reading since they seem to test the limits of Deleuze|Guattari’s philosophy. They are the point in A Thousand
Plateaus where Deleuze|Guattari most clearly turn their philosophy towards an analysis of global capitalism and the social forces that oppose it. But at this precise point their philosophy – almost symptomatically – splits into two. First, there is the anti-dialectical and vitalist theory of minorities that appears in Kafka. On this account the minor is a tendency within the major that creatively undermines and transforms it. It becomes correlated with the creative and deterritorializing forces of life, while the major becomes correlated with stratified social relations and modes of being. Politics is reduced to a substantialized ontology of becoming and to the politics of life as such. From my perspective, the problem with this vitalist politics is that it cannot think the role that a historical subject plays in the construction of a politics. Instead, politics is reduced to a question of expressing being as creative becoming. Since this theory is ontological rather than historical in derivation it suffers from a second but no less significant shortcoming; it cannot explain the emergence of minorities in Deleuze|Guattari’s philosophy in the mid-1970’s.

The second theory of minorities is formalist and dialectical. Backed by a mistaken reading of mathematical set theory and references to Lacanian psychoanalysis (both profoundly formalist theories, it should be said), it is an account of minorities that thinks the minority as an historically circumscribed agent and leads the invention of a politics to that agent. Instead of a politics Deleuze|Guattari present a highly formalized and abstract analysis of global capitalism and the tendencies that minority struggles must pursue if they are to break with the capitalist axiomatic. Namely, a rejection of inclusion or recognition within the majority as a minority subset and the composition of a revolutionary universality created by becoming-minoritarian. In this way, Deleuze|Guattari eschew providing a normative framework or political ontology in favour of theorizing the formal structure of global capitalism and its points of impasse.

This second account has been entirely overlooked in the existing literature. There are many possible reasons for this, but one very clear reason is that this formalist theory of minorities is never rigorously developed by Deleuze|Guattari. This, of course, is not peculiar to minorities. Deleuze|Guattari prefer to develop their concepts by showing what they can do rather than by giving us clear definitions of their bounds and limitations. But what sets the minority apart is that Deleuze|Guattari bury two concepts within the same signifier. The formalist theory of minorities does not appear in Kafka, where Deleuze|Guattari are more narrowly concerned with transformations in language and literature. In A Thousand Plateaus, however, both accounts appear frequently and often in
the same plateau. They overlap, crosspollinate, and bleed into one and other. It is therefore little wonder that the formalist and profoundly “un-Deleuzian” version has been obscured by the more characteristically “Deleuzian” account that first appeared in Kafka and that goes by the same signifier. The major contribution of this thesis has been to hold these two concepts apart. By paying attention to the places in Deleuze|Guattari’s discourse where the formalist theory of minorities is at its clearest and by extending its consequences with the help of Marx and Lacan this thesis has in essence reconstructed a comprehensive theory of minorities that is compatible with Marxist and psychoanalytic theory. What emerges from this process is an interpretation of minorities that is not strictly speaking “Deleuzian” but that nevertheless has its origins in Deleuze|Guattari’s philosophy.

In the process of developing this new concept of minorities I have drawn repeatedly from Lacan, Žižek, and Badiou with the effect of bringing Deleuze|Guattari into closer proximity with what I consider to be some of the most promising lines of theoretical exploration in contemporary political theory. On this point I agree with Žižek’s response to Daniel Smith regarding the differences between his philosophy and Deleuze’s. Žižek cites Mao’s distinction between contradictions within the people (differences that can be resolved by debate and discussion) and contradictions between the people and their enemies (differences that call for struggle or revolution) to propose that “the differences between Deleuze, Lacan, and Badiou are of the first type, the differences “within the people” – a debate is possible here.” By constructing a formalist, Lacanian inflected, reading of Deleuze|Guattari this thesis contributes to this ongoing debate. To respond directly to the first question this thesis poses, one of the things that is at stake in Deleuze|Guattari’s concept of minorities, then, is precisely this ongoing debate between Lacanian formalism and Deleuzio-Guattarian vitalism. This is a debate that appears not just in these thinkers but in discussions around actor network theory, new materialism, object orientated ontology and the work of Marxist theorists such as Hardt and Negri and Maurizio Lazzarato. In effect, this thesis has bought this debate within Deleuze|Guattari’s analysis of capitalism itself.

Finally, as this last remark demonstrates and as I explained in the introduction, while this thesis begins with Deleuze|Guattari it sets its sights on much broader political and theoretical questions. The third contribution it makes has been to bring

900 Žižek, ‘Notes on a Debate “From Within the People”’, 665.
901 Latour, Reassembling the Social; Barad, Meeting the Universe Halfway; Bennett, Vibrant Matter; Lazzarato, Signs and Machines; Bryant, Onto-Cartography; Hardt and Negri, Assembly; Harman, Object-Oriented Ontology.
Deleuze|Guattari’s philosophy – or rather my interpretation of it – into contact with emerging debates in political theory, political ecology, and postcolonial studies about the status of the universal in emancipatory struggle. The distinction that Deleuze|Guattari make between minorities as a quantitative subset of the capitalist axiomatic and as a qualitative process of becoming-minoritarian allows them to make a distinction between an accumulation of minority subsets and the qualitative process of becoming-minoritarian as an action upon the structure. As I demonstrated in chapters four and five, this creates the conditions for a new theory of universality and solidarity that re-thinks spaces of struggle without giving up on the structural significance of the proletariat. On the contrary, Deleuze|Guattari put the struggles of minorities front and centre because of their attachment to a Marxist analysis of capitalism. They refuse class reductionism (all that matters is class) while remain class essentialists (the struggles of minorities are the mediated form of class struggle, class struggle is the unavoidable political horizon of our times) and thus carve out a space to think the universal that is constructed through shared struggles and acts of solidarity. This is a universal that does not appear within a particular minority (to each minority their own universalism) or across struggles when they come together (this is a quantitative operation) but between them in the ever open and provisional “and” that they construct. This version of the universal is to be thought in radical distinction to Mignolo’s idea of “pluriversal as a universal project” or to Laclau and Mouffe’s chain of equivalences since in the terms I have developed here both are about the quantitative accumulation of particulars. But it is also to be thought in distinction to the kind of universality advanced by thinkers like Alain Badiou, for whom difference and particularity is what there is and what is needed is a politics and an ethics of the Same without reference to the particular. The universalism I have developed here is closer to the model briefly alluded to by Aimé Césaire. It is a universal that rejects both “strait particularism” and “fleshless universalism” in the name of “a universal rich with all that is particular, rich with all the particulars there are, the deepening of each particular, the coexistence of them all.”

These, then, are the three contributions that the thesis makes: 1) An extensive theoretical and practical engagement with the minority as a political category in and through an analysis of the US anti-fracking movement; 2) The recovery and elaboration of a formalist and dialectical theory of minorities; 3) A contribution to politically essential

902 Mignolo, *The Darker Side of Western Modernity*, 71.
debates about the status of the universal in emancipatory struggles. By establishing a disjunctive synthesis between Deleuze|Guattari’s philosophy and the US anti-fracking movement the thesis has assembled new ideas, new concepts, and new analyses that are not strictly speaking “Deleuzian” but that are nevertheless derived from their philosophy. In this respect I have followed Deleuze’s well-known remarks about his own philosophical method:

“I suppose the main way I coped with it at the time was to see the history of philosophy as a sort of buggery or (it comes to the same thing) immaculate conception. I saw myself taking an author from behind and giving him a child that would be his own offspring, yet monstrous. It was really important for it to be his own child, because the author had to actually say all I had him saying. But the child was bound to be monstrous too, because it resulted from all sorts of shifting, slipping, dislocations, and hidden emissions that I really enjoyed.”

There is an clear resonance between this provocative metaphor and the clinical technique of psychoanalysis from which I borrowed my way of reading Deleuze|Guattari. What are shifts, slips, and emissions if not manifestations of the unconscious? What is this “monstrous” child if not, as Lacan says, “that part of concrete discourse qua transindividual that is not at the subject’s disposal in reestablishing the continuity of his discourse?” It could therefore be said that this thesis has turned the above procedure back onto Deleuze. In so doing, I hope to have produced a work that in Kaufman’s words “betrays him well,” or that in Deleuze’s words, “deserves to exist.”

***

A recent analysis of over 1,500 scientific studies and government reports found that "90.3 percent of all original research studies published from 2016-2018 on the health impacts of fracking found a positive association with harm or potential harm." 69% found that fracking was linked to water contamination. 87% found that air quality was significantly impacted by fracking. And 84% linked fracking to human health risks. There is, the report

906 Lacan and Fink, 'The Function and Field of Speech and Language in Psychoanalysis', 214.
907 Kaufman, ‘Betraying Well’.
908 Villani, La guêpe et l’orchidée. Essai sur Gilles Deleuze, 56.
says, “no evidence that fracking can operate without threatening public health directly and without imperilling climate stability upon which public health depends.”

Nevertheless, the mainstream of both US parties remain steadfastly in support of the industry. The struggle against fracking continues.

But having cut their teeth in the anti-fracking movement many of those I interviewed have also moved onto new spaces of struggle. Some now represent international environmental organizations, others have organized a community affected by industrial led poisoning, others are fighting for a police accountability board in their city, others are raising funds to defend migrants and refugees against US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) raids in their communities, others have joined radical left political parties and organizations, and still others are either running for office or are managing campaigns to elect insurgent Democratic candidates in 2020. Tragically, one of my interviewees could not be involved in these struggles. After several years suffering from a condition exacerbated by the proximity of his home to a faulty well-pad he passed away in his sleep in October 2016. My deeply felt sympathies go out to his friends and family who continue to fight in his name. For all of those still struggling the slogan remains the same: Many Struggles, One Fight.

Citations


Callinicos, Alex, and Justin Rosenberg. ‘Uneven and Combined Development: The Social-Relational Substratum of “the International”? An Exchange of Letters’.


https://doi.org/10.1177/1354066117705704.


https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_s80Hbac2b8.


Klein, Naomi. *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate*. Penguin, 2015.


Losurdo, Domenico. Liberalism: A Counter-History. Translated by Gregory Elliot.


Thiele, Kathrin. “‘To Believe In This World, As It Is”: Immanence and the Quest for Political Activism’. *Deleuze Studies* 4, no. Supplement (December 2010). https://doi.org/10.3366/E175022411000111X.


———. *Wees Gillingham: Standing Up to the Fossil Fuel Invasion*, 2016. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i-mhvtKqGEk&index=3&list=PLjhV8mcej7hXXx10T97I6LxDA3OX4sA1BC.


Appendix: Cited Interviews

Anti-Fracking Organizer 1. Interview with Anti-Fracking Organizer 1, Bath, N.Y.
   Interview by Kai Heron, 11 November 2016.
Anti-Fracking Organizer 2. Interview with Anti-Fracking Organizer 2, Syracuse, N.Y.
   Interview by Kai Heron, 18 April 2016.
———. Second Interview with Anti-Fracking Organizer 2, Syracuse, N.Y. Interview by
   Kai Heron, 23 March 2017.
Anti-Fracking Organizer 3. Interview with Anti-Fracking Organizer 3, Geneseo, N.Y.
   Interview by Kai Heron, 21 April 2016.
Anti-Fracking Organizer 4. Interview with Anti-Fracking Organizer 4, Syracuse, N.Y.
   Interview by Kai Heron, 18 April 2016.
Anti-Fracking Organizer 5. Interview with Anti-Fracking Organizer 5, Watkins Glen.
   Interview by Kai Heron, 21 April 2016.
———. Second Interview with Anti-Fracking Organizer 5, Watkins Glen. Interview by
   Kai Heron, 21 April 2016.
Anti-Fracking Organizer 6. Interview with Anti-Fracking Organizer 6, Watkins Glen.
   Interview by Kai Heron, 21 April 2016.
Anti-Fracking Organizer 7. Interview with Anti-Fracking Organizer 7, Watkins Glen.
   Interview by Kai Heron, 21 April 2016.
Anti-Fracking Organizer 8. Interview with Anti-Fracking Organizer 8, Lancaster, P.A.
   Interview by Kai Heron, 9 March 2017.
Anti-Fracking Organizer 9. Interview with Anti-Fracking Organizer 9, Geneva, N.Y.
   Interview by Kai Heron, 26 September 2017.
———. Second Interview with Anti-Fracking Organizer 9, Geneva, N.Y. Interview by
   Kai Heron, 29 January 2018.
Anti-Fracking Organizer 10. Interview with Anti-Fracking Organizer 10, Watkins Glen.
   Interview by Kai Heron, 21 April 2016.
Anti-Fracking Organizer 11. Second Interview with Anti-Fracking Organizer 11,
   Geneva, N.Y. Interview by Kai Heron, 19 March 2019.
Anti-Fracking Organizer 12. Interview with Anti-Fracking Organizer 12, Trumansburg,
   N.Y. Interview by Kai Heron, 18 March 2017.
Anti-Fracking Organizer 13. Interview with Anti-Fracking Organizer 13, Geneva, N.Y.
   Interview by Kai Heron, 26 September 2017.
———. Second Interview with Anti-Fracking Organizer 13, Geneva, N.Y. Interview by
   Kai Heron, 29 January 2018.
   Interview by Kai Heron, 21 April 2016.
Anti-Fracking Organizer 15. Interview with Anti-Fracking Organizer 15, Watkins Glen.
   Interview by Kai Heron, 21 April 2016.
   Interview by Kai Heron, 21 April 2016.
Anti-Fracking Organizer 17. Interview with Anti-Fracking Organizer 17, Watkins Glen.
   Interview by Kai Heron, 21 April 2016.
Anti-Fracking Organizer 18. Interview with Anti-Fracking Organizer 18. Interview by
   Kai Heron, 7 March 2019.
Dimock Resident 1. Interview with Dimock Resident 1. Interview by Kai Heron, 25
   April 2016.
Dimock Resident 2. Interview with Dimock Resident 2. Interview by Kai Heron, 25
   April 2016.
Dimock Resident 3. Interview with Dimock Resident 3. Interview by Kai Heron, 27
   April 2016.
Dimock Resident 4. Interview with Dimock Resident 4. Interview by Kai Heron, 27
   April 2016.