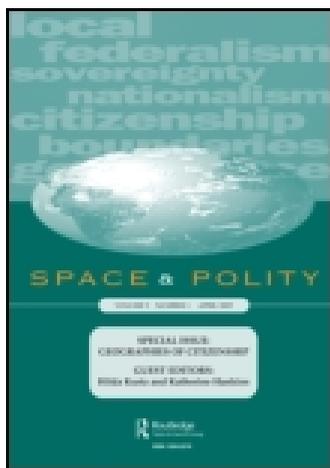


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Rancière and revolution

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This paper explores what role Rancière's work can play in the struggle for a more democratic world. It highlights the strength of Rancière's conception of democracy, which clearly identifies democracy as a popular disruption of the prevailing police order. This order claims to have assigned a proper role to all parts of society. Democracy for Rancière is when an element emerges that has not been taken account of and demonstrates the police order's claim to be false. Among the many benefits of this way of understanding democracy, it upsets any easy association between hegemony and democracy – as in Laclau & Mouffe – and it refuses utterly the ideological fusing of democracy, capitalism, and the state offered by the liberal-democratic-capitalist consensus. However, Rancière's approach also introduces significant limits on democracy because it denies that democracy can ever do more than disrupt the prevailing order. It does not allow for the possibility that democracy can grow and spread to the point that it becomes pervasive in the polity. This paper uses the case of the Egyptian uprising to show how this limitation closes off important political possibilities. The paper argues that Deleuze & Guattari's theorisation of revolution, when used carefully, is a necessary corrective to Rancière's too-restricted concept of democracy

Keywords: Rancière; Deleuze; Guattari; revolution; democracy

Introduction

Rancière is in. More and more people are finding his work a productive source of ideas for political thought and action in the current era. It seems to me that everyone who draws on Rancière is doing so in the hopes of enlisting him into some project. In my case, I am interested in how Rancière can help us think about democracy. My project seeks something other than the democracy of the liberal-democratic state, with its elections, parties, and oligarchic institutions; it seeks instead what I consider as real democracy, democracy conceived of as a perpetual collective struggle by people to take up the project of managing the conditions of their own existence. That sort of democracy insists on autonomy rather than heteronomy, on a politics of self-management whereby people make decisions for themselves rather than give their power to another entity to make decisions for them. That kind of democracy requires people to reject the passivity that comes with being ruled in an oligarchy and embrace the activity required to rule themselves democratically.

Thus, democracy, as I conceive it, struggles against the oligarchy of the modern state, in which a few representatives (both elected and not) govern the many; it rejects the oligarchy of capitalist economic relations, in which the few who own the means of production rule the

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many who produce economic value. In the urban context, democracy struggles against the neo-liberal city, a commodified and privatised city in which property rights and economic growth are the main logic of the urban spatial order. It seeks instead to democratise the city such that the needs, perspectives, and values of urban inhabitants become primary. Drawing on Lefebvre, this paper explores how such democratisation would be involved in a radical political awakening among inhabitants through which they resolve to manage for themselves spatial and social relations in the city.

So that is a snapshot of who I am as I encounter Rancière. I am not a Rancière scholar *per se*, and so my goal is not to understand his work for its own sake. Rather I examine his thought rigorously in order to draw out a specific set of ideas that I can put to use in my own project. What follows is my attempt to ascertain what value Rancière has for a project of radical democracy beyond the state and capitalism. It is based on a close reading of a selected – but nevertheless very large – part of Rancière’s corpus, primarily Rancière, 1991, 1995, 1999, 2000, 2001, 2003a, 2003b, 2009. The paper reads Rancière’s work together with other scholars working in a similar vein, especially Laclau & Mouffe and Deleuze & Guattari. The conclusion I draw from my engagement with Rancière is that his theorisation of politics and democracy is both inspiring and useful, but it is incomplete. It is incomplete, I argue, because it lacks an imagination of revolution. It refuses to allow for a radical breakthrough, a revolutionary politics that can overwhelm the current order, break it down, and create another way to live. Revolution can be imagined in different ways, and I certainly do not imagine it in the traditional way: as a workers party seizing the state in order to abolish private property and cause the state to wither away. I do not evoke revolution in order to privilege large-scale social change over smaller, more local political acts. Rather I use the term, as Deleuze & Guattari do, as a way to imagine a situation in which a sufficient number of elements have been liberated from the prevailing order and have grown strong enough in their escape, have connected with others like them and produced an exodus large enough that the prevailing order collapses. What exists in the ruins is not a new order, but a world – ‘a new land’, as Deleuze & Guattari call it – in which the formation of new orders is continually warded off by a generalised condition of collective escape, one that pervades the new land and works tirelessly to remain free.

I argue that we should not resign ourselves, as Rancière does, to producing only periodic and limited disturbances in the established order. We should not abandon the possibility of revolution, assuming it must be like Russia in 1917 or China in 1949. We should instead creatively rethink what a revolutionary politics might mean. Rancière’s limitation is his refusal to imagine revolution anew, and I think that limitation is one that Deleuze & Guattari can help overcome.

Laclau, Mouffe, and counter-hegemony

Before I turn to my argument about Deleuze & Guattari’s revolutionary politics, I want to situate Rancière in the context of Laclau & Mouffe’s work, which closely parallels Rancière’s in many ways.¹ I do this in order to establish some of the many strengths of Rancière’s conception of democracy, strengths that both parallel and go beyond those of Laclau & Mouffe. In addition, Laclau & Mouffe offer an imagination of revolutionary change that Rancière does not, and thus begin to help us see the limits of Rancière’s thought, even if, as I will argue, their idea of revolution is less desirable than that of Deleuze & Guattari.

Rancière’s idea of democracy, for example, is very close to Mouffe’s. Both imagine democracy as a way of being together politically that involves irresolvable difference and conflict. However, they argue that conflict must not be carried out as a war of existence. It should instead be a contest between adversaries, an agonistic struggle in which there are always winners and losers,² but the struggle does not eliminate either from the contest (e.g. Mouffe,

1999; Rancière, 1995, pp. 32–33, 43, 95, 97). Both Rancière and Laclau & Mouffe write passionately against the idea of a purported ‘end of politics’, the idea that conflict can be resolved and a stable, consensual, and total ‘post-politics’ can be established (Mouffe, 1993; Laclau & Mouffe, 2000). This consensus is what Rancière means when he speaks of the *shore* of politics, the firm ground promised by Plato’s ordered and harmonious ideal polity (Rancière, 1995, pp. 4, 22, 98; 2001, pp. 1, 11; see also Panagia, 2001, p. 1). Rancière agrees with Laclau & Mouffe that even when order seems to have been achieved, there is always the potential for conflictual political relations to reemerge. Mouffe calls this potential ‘the political’ and Rancière uses the term ‘politics’ or ‘democracy’;³ but both are saying that political friction is always poised to bubble up to disrupt every stable political order (Rancière, 1995, p. 23). Laclau & Mouffe write that the polity can never be ‘sutured’ into a seamless and unified whole (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p. 88). In Rancière’s terms (1999, pp. 65–70), it is impossible to achieve Plato’s archipolitics, a condition in which the official account of what the social order is mirrors people’s lived experience. Rancière calls this official order ‘the police’, and states that there will always be a gap, a lack, an overflow between the police and the lived reality of society (cf. the concept of ‘contaminated hegemony’ in Laclau, 2000). Their focus on lacks and overflows aligns both Rancière and Laclau & Mouffe with a Lacanian approach to politics (Rancière, 2001, p. 7; see also Dikec, 2005, p. 185). And their shared view of politics also gives rise to a very similar political ethics. Rancière and Laclau & Mouffe agree that we should *welcome* political instability, disagreement, and disruption. They believe the agonistic struggle among irreducibly different political positions is the very substance of democratic politics. They agree that when the *agon* is missing, when consensus overcomes meaningful political difference, democracy is lost.

In addition, Rancière shares with Laclau & Mouffe a constructivist approach to politics. Both insist that political subjects are not given *a priori* but are instead constituted through the act of political struggle (Rancière, 2001, p. 2, 4; Rancière, 2003b, p. 197; Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). Political interests and agendas cannot be read off a presumed position one holds in a set of social relations. Rather one’s interests emerge in the course of political contestation as actors establish common cause with allies and come into conflict with adversaries.

Despite this significant agreement between Rancière and Laclau & Mouffe, there are also differences. Gramsci’s influence on Laclau & Mouffe inspires them to offer quite a lot more in the way of a positive political agenda than does Rancière. They call for a return to the ‘hegemonic struggle’ (Laclau & Mouffe, 2000, p. xix), which for them is an agonistic contest for broad authority over the whole political community. Each group must make creative alliances in order to forge a political bloc large enough to achieve hegemonic control. Laclau & Mouffe see hegemonic struggle (as does Gramsci) as the very substance of political action. For Laclau & Mouffe, movements for radical democracy can achieve a thoroughgoing transformation of the political community only by gaining hegemonic control of society as a whole.

Rancière cannot embrace this approach. For him, democracy (or politics) can never take the form of hegemonic control. That is because he understands democracy to be precisely the moment when the established order is *disrupted* by the mobilisation of a new group that has not been accounted for within that order. Gramsci and Laclau & Mouffe’s new hegemony, even if it is won in the service of radical democracy, is, for Rancière, simply the instantiation of a new police order (Rancière, 1995, p. 34). The Greek root of the term hegemony refers to an idea of ‘leadership’; a person or group directing or guiding others. It is quite close to the Italian term *dirigente* that Gramsci often uses when speaking of the proletariat as a ‘leading’ class in a counter-hegemonic alliance. Such leadership, such placing of one group at the head of a line of others, is a form of rule. There cannot be, for Rancière, any form of democratic rule (2000, p. 19; 2003b, p. 199). It is an oxymoron. For Rancière the very purpose of democracy is to disrupt the system of rule inscribed in the police order, and so for him the notion of a hegemony of

radical democracy, so central to Laclau & Mouffe's agenda, is a stark contradiction (Rancière, 2001, p. 6). For Rancière democracy can only ever emerge as a disruption, and always a temporary one at that. Rancière's democracy can never be solidified into a stable regime or order because by definition that order would mean democracy's dissolution (1995, pp. 90–91; 1999, p. 84; see also Panagia, 2001, p. 2). Rancière thinks this was precisely the error of the utopian socialists of the 19th century, to imagine that democracy could actually *become* the social order rather than being something that could only perpetually disrupt that order (1995, p. 85). As a result of this conviction, Rancière argues that 'the people' can never rule as sovereign; they can only ever be insurgent and disrupt rule (2001, p. 6).

So for Rancière democracy can never constitute a new police, a new ruling order.⁴ Moreover, he does not think we can hope to eliminate the existence of a ruling order altogether. For Rancière, the only thing democracy can do is to interrupt and perhaps modify the existing ruling order. As an example of this interruption, he offers the experience of workers in early capitalism. He emphasises the moment when workers ceased to see themselves as a multitude of individuals, each of whom contracted separately with an employer, and began to imagine themselves instead as a coherent class. In Rancière's terms, workers achieved a 'subjectification' that created a new 'part' of society, a class called 'the proletariat'. The police order as it existed before this 'subjectification' defined workers as an aggregate of individuals; it did not count the proletariat as a recognised class in society. The police thus defined confrontational actions by workers as riots and as criminal behaviour by individuals. Rancière stresses that the struggle of workers was a struggle to *invent the subject of the proletariat* as a viable interlocutor, as a partner that could 'take part' in discussions on an equal footing with capital-management (1995, p. 49; 2001, pp. 1, 9). That 'taking part', by those who have no history of taking part, nor any recognised qualifications to do so, interrupted the old order of rule (2001, pp. 4–5, 10). It called into question the legitimacy of the system, because it showed the system's claim to have taken account of everything to be false (2000, pp. 20–21; 2001, p. 5). Consequently the subjectification of the proletariat, for Rancière, is an archetypical example of democracy. However, despite the interruption workers achieved, a new order of rule was eventually established. New laws were passed to govern the relations between capital and the newly minted working class.⁵ Rancière states that the new order that arises after democracy will be different from the old one. Most significantly, it will include a new part that was previously excluded. Moreover, it will be an order that has been established in the wake of a disrupted order, an order whose claims to have taken everything into account were exposed as false. Therefore, any such new claims by the new order will be received with much more skepticism than before.

This new skepticism, about the claims an order makes, is important to Rancière's hopes for what the political community can be. Although Rancière says there will always be a police order, there are better and worse police. The better police are less settled; they rule in a context where democracy more frequently disrupts the existing order (1999, pp. 30–31). That way, even though the police order exists (it must exist), its claims are more provisional and subject to question. Such looser police orders are preferable to what Rancière calls a consensual community, 'the One', in which people are more inclined to believe the claims that the police have accounted for everything and cannot imagine anything outside the established order. Rancière worries this One is precisely what neoliberalism was fast becoming, at least before the crash of 2008. Looser police orders, on the other hand, create a kind of conflictual being-together, a community relatively more marked by agonism, a community that is simultaneously in-common and divided (1995, pp. 49–50; 2000, p. 14; 2001, p. 8; 2003b, p. 199). It is what he calls a 'community of sharing' (1995, p. 86). For Rancière this community of sharing is the best we can hope for. It staves off 'the One', consensus, and the shore of politics, and it presents instead a 'democratic division' that continually reminds us that 'the One' is always many (Rancière, 1995, p. 31).

This is what Rancière sees as the democratic contribution of his idea of the ‘part of those who have no part’.⁶ That part does not create a new democratic order; rather, by its continual reemergence, it prevents the worst kind of community, the nativist, hateful, totalitarian ‘One’, and it creates instead a best-we-can political community marked by frequent disruptions and a conflictual being-together (1995, pp. 56–58, 63–92, 104; 2003b, p. 204).

I think Rancière’s democracy is valuable for many reasons. Chief among them are: 1) he disrupts unequivocally the end of history thesis and recaptures democracy as an idea from the impoverished consensus of liberal-democracy-and-capitalism;⁷ and 2) he unsettles Laclau & Mouffe’s too-easy pairing of hegemony and radical democracy. Both of these strengths are borne of Rancière’s placing strict limits on democracy: he greatly circumscribes the conventional idea of what democracy is. For Rancière democracy can only ever temporarily interrupt and unsettle the prevailing order. It cannot be institutionalised and become the ruling order (1995, p. 94; 1999, p. 34). That occasional, temporary kind of politics is what the Communists of the 19th Century that Rancière discusses wanted to go beyond. They sought to make democratic equality total, or at least pervasive, normal, or usual (1995, p. 88; 2003a, p. 4). For Rancière the fact that Marxist revolutions got stuck in a state-socialist phase was not accidental, but inevitable (Rancière, 1995, p. 89). This is an important line in the sand for Rancière (2003a): he is explicitly rejecting Marx’s vision for a transition to communism, for the possibility that we might achieve a kind of crossing over from a world in which a police order pervades to a world in which democratic politics pervade.⁸ We can see this circumscription clearly in *The Nights of Labor* (Rancière, 1991). Drawing closely on Aristotle, Rancière delights in the workers carving out time after work to study, to demonstrate their capacity for *scholē*. He says they were showing themselves to be capable of fully taking part as citizens, showing they were capable of being more than just men who provide the labour necessary for society to function (see Rancière, 2003b, p. 203).⁹ While this achievement is significant and should be acknowledged, it is also a much more limited achievement than the proletarian revolution others imagined workers to be capable of.¹⁰

In one interview Rancière (2003b, p. 200) is asked, essentially, what is to be done? He is evasive. He talks about ‘specific scenes of contradiction’ as preferable to wholesale movements of, for example, ‘Multitude against Empire’ in Hardt and Negri’s sense (Rancière, 2003b, p. 201). Elsewhere Rancière argues that all politics is merely local and temporary, never global and complete (1999, p. 139; 2001, p. 6). Foucault (1980, p. 130) called these specific scenes ‘local, specific struggles’, and says occasionally that they are a better option than attempting to bring about a more generalised transformation that may end in totalitarian disaster. Rancière shares Foucault’s conviction that society as a whole can never be emancipated (1995, p. 19, p. 84). As a consequence, Rancière reaffirms that the primary purpose of democratic politics is only ever to keep alive its own essence: the occasional, temporary interruption of the order of the police (1995, p. 91; 2001, p. 6; see also Panagia, 2001, p. 1). In the end we are left with little more than politics for politics’ sake: disruptions that make it easier to carry out such disruptions in the future (1995, pp. 34, 84, 91; 2001, p. 6; 2003b, p. 201).

Of course there is a debate to be had here, whether such ‘specific scenes’ are preferable to generalised uprising, to some form of revolution. I do not mean to dismiss the danger of a revolutionary approach. It is real. All I want to do at this point is to establish that Rancière clearly closes off the option of any sort of more generalised, far-reaching change. By definition, he sees democratic politics as *refusing* a ruling order. Laclau & Mouffe *do* allow for more generalised change, for some notion of revolution. They call for a hegemonic movement through which a bloc for radical democracy comes to control the wider society. My own position is critical of both these views. I argue that we need to go beyond Rancière, that we need to think in terms of revolution. However, I do not think that this means we need to accept a Laclau & Mouffe’s hegemonic understanding of revolution. In the next section I develop how I think Deleuze & Guattari can

help us imagine a more revolutionary democracy without embracing Laclau and Mouffe's counter-hegemonic approach to revolution.

Deleuze, Guattari, and a new 'Land'

Rancière does not mention Deleuze & Guattari very often, certainly much less than he refers to Foucault (Rancière, 2000; Rancière, 2003b).¹¹ Obviously he is familiar with Deleuze & Guattari, but one gets the sense he does not find much use for them, at least in the texts I am focusing on. Nevertheless, he makes many oblique allusions to Deleuze & Guattari, most of which run against the grain of Deleuze & Guattari's argument. For example, Rancière writes about 'subjectification' as a positive, insurgent instantiation of democratic politics, in which the portion of those who have no part claim their rightful place (1999, pp. 35, 99; 2000, p. 11; 2001, pp. 9, 11; 2003b, p. 198). For Deleuze & Guattari, subjectification is an instance of capture, of disciplining desire into a confining framework (e.g. 1987, p. 134). Another instance is when Rancière talks about the negative, nativist return to the community of 'the One', he refers to the 'baying of the wolf pack' (1995, p. 24). The 'wolf pack', for Deleuze & Guattari, is instead a site of autonomy and creative multiplicity (1987, p. 33). When Rancière talks about neoliberalism, he says it is in 'headlong flight' from the nativism of 'the One', and he laments the 'schizophrenic' individual that consumer society produces (1995, p. 26, 42). Both these terms are central to Deleuze & Guattari's work, but of course they cast them in a more positive (though not unproblematic) light. Nevertheless, there is also some potential for agreement in Rancière's extended metaphor whereby politics is mobile on the sea while the police is grounded on the shore (Rancière, 1995). Such an image resonates with Deleuze & Guattari's discussion of the smooth space of the nomad (often attached to the idea of the sea (1987, pp. 363, 387)) and the striated space of the State (1987, pp. 474–500). Similarly, Rancière's politics always exist 'in between' two forms of the police (1999, p. 91); this is much the same way for Deleuze & Guattari, flight and deterritorialised elements exist on the line, in between two points of capture (1987, pp. 208–231).

My purpose in documenting these intertwining threads is simply to suggest that even if Rancière does not say so explicitly, he is clearly working with Deleuze & Guattari's ideas in mind, either consciously or unconsciously. And generally he seems to want to run counter to Deleuze & Guattari, to dig at them obliquely. At the same time, however, there are important ways in which we might interpret their arguments to be in phase.

Suffocation

In reading them in light of Rancière, I want to highlight two different tendencies in Deleuze & Guattari's work. The first positions Deleuze & Guattari closer to Rancière's tendency to circumscribe democracy, and this is more prevalent in their second book, *A Thousand Plateaus* (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987 [1980]). In this tendency they suggest that when a line of flight comes into being, when a captured element of the social order is able to escape, two possibilities are most likely. The line can be recaptured, often into an even more repressive apparatus, or it can careen off into oblivion, or death (1987, pp. 208–231). In other words, in this tendency of Deleuze & Guattari, when an insurgent politics arises, it will likely either be tamed and reintegrated into the ruling order, or it will be obliterated, usually by its own desire to remain free. Rancière would concur that this is how democracy is. He argues that democracy 'works on the verge of its radical demise, which is embodiment as the police ... the embodiment of a society carved up into functional organs ...' (Rancière, 1999, p. 91). Rancière does not mention the possibility of oblivion and death, but as he discusses this embodiment (this 'recapture' as Deleuze & Guattari

would say) he makes another oblique reference to Deleuze & Guattari in the phrase about the functional ‘organs’ of a society.

Deleuze & Guattari’s concept of ‘becoming’ can also be interpreted to be part of this tendency to think in terms of either recapture or death. They argue, in phase with Rancière and directly against a neo-Gramscian approach, that ‘the problem is never to acquire the majority, even in order to install a new constant. There is no becoming-majoritarian; majority is never becoming. All becoming is minoritarian’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 106). Deleuze & Guattari’s ‘becoming’ involves refusing to live according to the dominant norms in society. It works to create something other than the ruling order, something beyond it. It does not try to establish a new order. Deleuze & Guattari refuse the idea that ‘becoming’ could ever *be* the ruling order, the norm, the constant. Becoming is always minoritarian. Becoming is by definition a *fleeing* from rule, a variation from the constant, free action that can never constitute a hegemony. Deleuze & Guattari’s becoming thus departs from Laclau & Mouffe’s Gramscian hope for a hegemonic movement for radical democracy. It proposes instead that the project should be to continually flee authority and domination, but always with the expectation that such flights will probably be recaptured.

This vision is similar to Rancière’s in that it is quite limiting. It argues that every instance of insurgent politics must be temporary and always ‘on the verge of its radical demise’. I think we need to move beyond this limiting instinct; we should refuse this feeling of being suffocated when we inhabit both Rancière’s political world and this first tendency of Deleuze & Guattari’s. Moreover, this vision of politics becomes more problematic still when we consider Deleuze & Guattari’s own analysis of capitalism. In *Anti-Oedipus* (Deleuze & Guattari, 1977), they argue that capitalism is itself a powerful disruptive force, that it works by freeing elements from the established order and setting them in motion. This point is absolutely central to Deleuze & Guattari’s analysis. The archetype of this process whereby capitalism disrupts and ‘deterritorializes’ elements of the existing order is the experience of peasants at the end of feudalism, who were uprooted from estates in the countryside and repurposed as the industrial proletariat in the capitalist city (Hardt, n.d.; Deleuze & Guattari, 1994, p. 97). Because it is itself so disruptive, the capitalist order is unlike other orders: it does not need to *suppress* every instance of instability. It is, rather, *built to handle* liberated elements. It lives and breathes in an environment where, as Marx put it, ‘all that is solid melts into air’. Deleuze & Guattari call this order ‘the capitalist axiomatic’, by which they mean a system in which the taken-for-granted assumptions are capable of being continually reworked and expanded in order to respond to new conditions (1977, p. 184). It is a ruling order whose logic is plastic, in motion, continually absorbing elements of resistance, disruption, and struggle (Deleuze & Guattari, 1977, pp. 238, 250, 253, 256). When an element escapes, the capitalist axiomatic can expand and reconfigure itself to reincorporate the flight. Moreover, the axiomatic becomes more effective and more resilient as a result. So in the context of the capitalist axiomatic’s ability to manage upheaval, when Rancière’s politics disrupts the police, it is not really doing anything capitalism cannot handle. In both of Rancière’s favourite examples – the plebeians on the Aventine Hill and the organised workers at the dawn of the labour movement – the insurgent element ends up being incorporated into the discussion, taking up a part in the new regime (Rancière, 1995, p. 85; Rancière, 1999, p. 51). The democratic disruption may have altered the order, to be sure, but only in a way that ensures that order will endure in the long term. Rancière’s democratic politics exists in order to interrupt the police, but according to Deleuze & Guattari, the axiomatic-as-police *thrives* on being interrupted. The cycle of disturbance and reconstitution is how it remakes itself into a more effective, sophisticated, and oppressive system of rule. In that context, Rancière’s limits, as well as those of this first tendency in Deleuze & Guattari, become much more problematic.

Revolution

So much suffocation and doom. However, in Deleuze & Guattari there is another tendency, another note that is struck. In both *Anti-Oedipus* (1977) and *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987) there is what is probably best referred to as a theory of revolution. Or it is at least a glimpse of a way out, of a revolutionary politics that takes us *beyond* the police, the state, and the capitalist axiomatic. Deleuze & Guattari argue that there is a third option for lines of flight, for deterritorialised flows, beyond recapture and death. There is a sense in which escaped elements can become ‘dangerous for capitalist production and charged with a revolutionary potential’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 1977, p. 245). They can develop a potential for achieving a breakthrough, a breaking through the wall that marks the limit of the capitalist axiomatic (Deleuze & Guattari, 1977, p. 255). Any one instance of this kind of breakthrough is exciting enough, but Deleuze & Guattari go farther. They suggest that there is the potential for multiple lines of flight, multiple deterritorialised flows, to *link up* together and begin to create relations of mutual support. Deleuze & Guattari offer an extended glimpse of how lines of flight could join with each other, flee together, weave themselves into a flow, and perhaps gain enough volume and momentum that they might overwhelm the ability of the capitalist axiomatic to reabsorb them. They might, as a mass, exit the system, compromise the integrity of its foundation, and cause it to collapse. Deleuze & Guattari introduce this idea early in *Anti-Oedipus*:

Either the artistic machine, the analytical machine, and the revolutionary machine will remain in extrinsic relationships that make them function in the deadening framework of the system of social and psychic repression, or they will become parts and cogs of one another in the flow that feeds one and the same desiring-machine, so many local fires patiently kindled for a generalized explosion. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1977, p. 137)

This generalised explosion, when enough lines of flight create enough connections among themselves, causes the axiomatic (or police order) itself to:

take flight through the multiplicity of holes that eat away at it and penetrate it, always coupled directly to it, everywhere setting the molecular charges that will explode what must explode, make fall what must fall, make escape what must escape, at each point ensuring the conversion of schizophrenia as a process into an effectively revolutionary force. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1977, p. 341)

In what I believe is perhaps the crux of their entire project, Deleuze & Guattari speculate about what this ‘revolutionary force’ might produce. It ‘is capable of creating – what exactly? – a new land’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 1977, p. 318). That new land is never a new police, a new ‘apparatus of capture’ as they call it. It is not merely an expanded capitalist axiomatic. The new land is instead *made up* of lines of flight, its terrain consists of deterritorialised flows.¹² The new land is constituted by elements that have escaped, that are on lines in-between points, in motion, minoritarian, becoming. They cannot constitute a new system of rule, since becoming and flight by definition cannot rule. They cannot dominate, or establish a hegemony, or constitute an apparatus of capture. They are an association of ‘becomings’, a plane, a land traced out by flows in motion, a rhizome without a ruling order.

For Deleuze & Guattari everything depends on associations, on what they call ‘revolutionary connections’ (1987, p. 473). Establishing connections with other lines of flight increases the vitality of each line and helps it avoid recapture. “Connection” indicates the way in which decoded and deterritorialised flows boost one another, accelerate their shared escape, and augment or stoke their quanta’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 220). For a given line of flight, ‘connecting with other lines’ is the way to ‘augment its valence’ (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 229). Deleuze & Guattari

theorise many different kinds of connections, a full discussion of which is beyond the scope of this paper, but they give a fuller idea of the kinds of connections they mean in this passage:

The narrator [of *In Search of Lost Time*] continues his own affair, until he reaches the unknown country, his own, the unknown land, which alone is created by his own work in progress ... he goes toward these new regions where the connections are always partial and nonpersonal, the conjunctions nomadic and polyvocal, the disjunctions included, where homosexuality and heterosexuality cannot be distinguished any longer: the world of transverse communications ... a new earth where desire functions according to its molecular elements and flows ... an intensive voyage that undoes all the lands for the benefit of the one it is creating. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1977, p. 319)

In *A Thousand Plateaus* (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987), the new land being created is imagined through the image of the rhizome. The process of schizophrenia, of deterritorialising the apparatuses of capture,

'dismantles the strata in its wake, breaks through the walls of significance, pours out of the holes of subjectivity, fells trees in favor of veritable rhizomes, and steers the flows down lines of positive deterritorialization or creative flight ... each freed faciality trait forms a rhizome with'

other freed traits to form 'a 'living block', a connecting of stems' that can grow and spread. 'Make rhizome everywhere', they urge us (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, pp. 190–191). These rhizomatic connections are multiple, contingent, shifting, and superficial. They are opposed to more traditional familial or arborescent connections, which are few, necessary, stable, and hierarchical. In a rhizome we connect promiscuously to many others, each one an equal, a peer. Each one of these connections is relatively insignificant to our well being because there are so many. In a family, or tree, on the other hand, we connect more or less permanently to one or two hierarchical superiors, and each connection is absolutely vital to our well being.

Deleuze & Guattari conceive of this new land in contradistinction not only to capital, but also to the state. The rhizome is sometimes called a 'war machine' that operates in smooth space, and it is set against the striated space of the state:

All decoded flows, of whatever kind, are capable of forming a war machine directed against the state. But everything changes depending on whether these flows connect up with a war machine or, on the contrary, enter into conjunctions or a general conjugation that appropriates them for the state. (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, p. 459)

This distinction between connection and conjugation is key. Connections are peer-to-peer relations between lines of flight. The lines augment each other's power by their connection. Conjugations are different. They involve the state apparatus recapturing a line of flight, subordinating it to a ruling logic. If deterritorialised flows can enter 'into connections that delineate a new Land', if they can constitute 'a war machine whose aim is ... revolutionary movement (the connection of flows, the composition of nondenumerable aggregates, the becoming minoritarian of everybody/everything)', then they have the potential to escape 'both the axiomatic that conjugates them and the models that reterritorialize them' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, pp. 472–473). They can create a new land beyond both capitalism and the state.

The new land is not at all Laclau & Mouffe's hegemony of radical democracy, and it stands far beyond what Rancière allows himself to imagine. The new land does not recall Rancière's idea of democracy, but that of Douglas Lummis, who envisions:

the people gathered in the public space, with neither the great paternal Leviathan nor the great maternal society standing over them, but only the empty sky – the people making the power of Leviathan their own again, free to speak, to choose, to act. (Lummis, 1997, p. 27)

It is a land in which we seek not Rancière's politics for politics' sake, or Laclau & Mouffe's alternative hegemony, but the 'becoming minoritarian of everybody and everything' (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987). We seek millions of different lines of flight woven together into a fabric made up only of revolutionary connections among flows and connections that together constitute a new land in which rulers and ruled, hierarchy, and domination no longer pervade.

Rancière often uses the Greek word *arkhē*, by which he means a sense of leadership or rule, of walking at the head of a line with followers trailing behind. He stresses Aristotle's obsession with the question of *arkhē*, with how to structure the relation between rulers and ruled in the *polis*, (Rancière, 2001, p. 3). Deleuze & Guattari's new land is a kind of *polis* – a community or a world – in flight from *arkhē*. It is not properly *an-arkhē*, which denotes the total absence of rule. For Deleuze & Guattari the new land is not an end point or a final resting place. It is not a stable state beyond politics, not the end of history. It is not communism in the way I think Marx and Engels meant it: which is to say a society that has resolved the class conflict that drives historical change. The new land is instead a *polis* in which flight and becoming *pervade*. Even though they call it a 'land', it is much more like the sea than the shore. It is always fluid, always in motion. Once lines of flight have achieved a breakthrough, they cannot consider themselves to have achieved a final victory, to have arrived at a destination. That is because coming to rest would mean recapture, reterritorialisation, the forming of a new police order. Instead they must move, always in flight, and as they move, as whole multitudes of fleeing and streamed-together elements travel restlessly, they will come to trace out a new land.

However, even though they have broken through, escaped elements in the new land will always be persecuted. Deleuze & Guattari accept, with Rancière and Laclau & Mouffe, that the forces of domination and rule can never be finally eradicated. They will always re-emerge and reassert themselves.¹³ Their key for Deleuze & Guattari is that, in the new land, liberated elements do not suppress domination, fixity, and being. Instead they try relentlessly to avoid any relation with it at all. They do not conquer or subjugate it, but continually ward it off, flee from it, disengage from it. They remain free by escaping, never by confronting or dominating. In the new land freedom and becoming *pervade*, but their pervasiveness is never total or final. It is an explicitly revolutionary political vision, one that insists on thoroughgoing change but rejects any new imposition of hegemonic order.

Conclusion

And so I think Deleuze and Guattari offer us something that Rancière does not: a theory of a revolutionary breakthrough. But still, that does not mean we can do without Rancière. I do not mean to argue that we should embrace Deleuze and Guattari's vision instead of Rancière's. Rancière remains vital. We need him because theorizing the breakthrough is dangerous. Deleuze and Guattari's vision of revolution can tempt us to imagine a new land in which domination and hierarchy have been eradicated. Theorizing breakthroughs can seduce us into desiring the end of history, and into thinking we have achieved it. Deleuze and Guattari are clear they do not see the new land that way, but their thought could be easily taken in that direction. And so we need Rancière because his project is to think democracy in a way that refuses such total and final conceptions. His politics is one of irreducible multiplicity, conflict, and struggle. It is a commitment we cannot do without. We need it to prevent the totalizing temptations evoked by Deleuze and Guattari's revolutionary vision from growing too strong.

At the same time, it is important to remember how Rancière limits us as well. Deleuze and Guattari's theory of the breakthrough offers us something that is lacking in Rancière, something we cannot do without. Deleuze and Guattari's is a vision of revolution, of a generalized upheaval that constitutes a breakthrough, an escape to a new land, a new *polis* in pervasive flight from *arkhē*, a political community that continually wards off all forms of rule. Deleuze and Guattari refuse to accept the *polis* as Rancière understands it: a political community in which domination, control, and rule must pervade. Unlike Rancière and Foucault, they want to retain some notion of how it might be possible for society to be emancipated. Or, more properly, they want to retain the idea of a new land in which emancipation pervades, even though that emancipation can never be total or final.

Take, for example, the Egyptian uprising of 2011. When we read it with Rancière's eyes, we see it merely as a moment in the ongoing cycle he theorizes: police-democracy-police-democracy.... It is clear that the crowds in Tahrir were an instance, and a particularly intense one, of Rancière's democracy (see Rose, 2011). Before the uprising, Egypt had been, relatively speaking, millions of individual Egyptians, each of whom was too cowed to challenge the regime. But in Tahrir they gathered together, discovered each other, and articulated themselves as a body of the Egyptian people who could speak, feel, and act. Simply by forming themselves into a body and articulating a clear message ('We want an Egypt without Mubarak!'), they upended the prevailing police order, in which the state and army dominated a fearful and differentiated multitude. They came into an awareness of their collective self, a sense that it was proper for them to take up the role of actors on the Egyptian political stage, to come to life, to exert a power they were not aware they had.

But then in Rancière's vision, a new police order will inevitably form. A new crystallisation of power that absorbs or takes account of this new presence in Egyptian politics, and then goes on to portray itself as having taken account of everything. Egyptians are currently going through a process of re-forming a police order. A new constitution has been written, there are struggles over the form of the new government, and people are electing representatives to staff the government. There are certainly very real stakes in this process. Currently the most important stake is whether the new government will be a secular military junta or a fairly typical liberal democracy controlled by a moderate Islamist party. This question is extremely important to the everyday lives of Egyptians, and I do not wish to minimise it. But I do want to recall Rancière's analysis here, the reason why he is so valuable. For Rancière, democracy was *the uprising*. It was the people gathered together in Tahrir to disrupt the prevailing order. Whatever kind of stable government emerges, Rancière reminds us, it will not be democracy. It may *call* itself democracy, but it will instead be a new form of police (Rancière, 1995, p. 84). That is Rancière's power, he demands that we see clearly what is democracy and what it is not. The scene in Tahrir, for Rancière, is not a cacophony that must be channeled into 'an orderly transition to democracy', as the US government has been so fond of saying throughout 2011–12 (see for example Naiman, 2011).¹⁴ An orderly transition to democracy is nonsensical for Rancière. Democracy for Rancière is the free action of the crowds in the square. An orderly transition can only transform democracy into a new police.

However, having accurately alerted us to what democracy is, Rancière then quickly puts a bridle on it. For him, the police order will *inevitably* reconstitute itself and tame democracy. By his way of thinking, there is no way for the crowds in the square to achieve a breakthrough, to revolutionise the conditions of their existence, to create a new land in which real democracy pervades. In the case of Egypt this might have involved something similar to the growth and spread of the people's committees in the square, who governed themselves throughout the weeks of the uprising, through the neighbourhoods of Cairo and other cities (and perhaps in modified form to the countryside); such that people came to realise they were able to govern themselves, that the state is not necessary, or – more likely – that it is a quite leaden political form that is only useful for a very

narrow set of functions. This same growth and spread could have occurred with the neighbourhood committees in Cairo who helped organise the marches, or in the many workers' organisations throughout Egypt, who were extremely active in the years leading up to 2011 (Beinin, 2012). Certainly such outcomes as these are less likely than the reconstitution of a new state. I grant that Rancière's vision is a better predictor of what is *likely* to happen, and so it may be more useful for questions of pragmatic policy analysis. But what I want to argue is that Rancière's political vision assumes that those other political possibilities are impossible. What it does is to underestimate what democracy can do. In Tahrir and also in Tunis, Madrid, Athens, New York, Bahrain, Syria, and Yemen in 2011: in Iran in 2009, Bolivia in 2005, Buenos Aires in 2001, Tiananmen in 1989, Hungary in 1956, and all over Spain in 1936, in Turin and Milan in 1919–20, in Petersburg in February 1917, in Paris in 1871 – in all these places democracy *did* pervade, even if it was only for a limited time in a limited space. Rancière tells us we must assume categorically that democracy must be temporary, that it cannot last or spread, that it must fall back and let the police reemerge. But in all the cases listed above, even if a police did eventually reemerge, democracy nevertheless did manage to pervade. And in almost every case, it did so against enormous odds, and counter to every assumption people held dear at the time about what was possible and impossible. So we should not let Rancière limit our imagination and close off what is possible. We need Deleuze & Guattari to sound the note of revolutionary breakthrough. Their imagination of a new land is vital for political theory and action.

My argument is that we should use Deleuze & Guattari to inject an element of revolutionary force into Rancière's thought, to expand his limits, to urge him to desire *more* than just a the occasional emergence of politics that can only interrupt and partly modify the police. Deleuze & Guattari offer a way to escape the cycle in which Rancière is caught. With Deleuze & Guattari, politics can do more than just *emerge* occasionally and minorly, it can bring about a revolution that can collapse the existing order rather than just temporarily interrupt it.

It may not be as hard to push Rancière toward revolution as it might seem. There are glimmers in his work, places where he seems to see the need for something he is not offering, where he aims at something beyond the limits of those 'specific scenes of contradiction' (Rancière, 2003b, p. 200). Such glimmers are far outnumbered in his work by the more reserved and limited imaginations of politics, but they are there. For example he says that a strike, as an instance of democratic interruption, can 'transform an alignment of forces into a logical confrontation ... transforming a power relationship by means of a practice of logical demonstration [of equality]', and that transformation 'has the force to engender a different social reality, one founded on equality' (Rancière, 1995, pp. 47–48). If we so desire, we might infer a resonance between engendering 'a different social reality' and creating 'a new land'. When he presents the Aventine encounter between patricians and plebeians, Rancière says that it 'induces a different economy of the presupposition of equality' (1995, p. 85). There are intimations of revolution, if we choose to perceive them as such, in the idea of 'a different economy', even if in Rancière's account this economy merely means that some of the invisible have become visible and have joined the police order. Lastly, and most promisingly, in one interview Rancière says that there exist 'degrees of subjectification'. Beyond the specific scenes of contradiction, beyond the instances of limited political subjectification (like the Aventine Hill or the workers' movement), the *fullest* degree of political subjectification, of those who have no part in rising to interrupt the police order, occurs when emerging subjects become 'capable of tracing a *connection between all instances* of subjectification and attaching them to the great signifiers of collective life' (Rancière, 2000, p. 20, emphasis added). This is just one line in an interview, but one can't help but think of Deleuze & Guattari's deterritorialised lines of flight connecting with each other to trace out a new land. It is almost as though Rancière, on occasion, wants to let himself dream. He wants to end the suffocation, to think in terms of revolution. He should be encouraged, and I have tried to show how Deleuze & Guattari can help.

Notes

1. My focus here is on Laclau & Mouffe's joint work (1985, 2000), and on Mouffe's solo work, especially (1993, 1999).
2. The Greek root *agon* means contest, as Nietzsche was keen to emphasize (see 'Homer's Contest' in Nietzsche, 1954).
3. The two terms are not identical in Rancière, but they overlap enormously. Democracy, he says, is 'the way for politics to be ... [It] is, in general, politics' mode of subjectification' (1999, p. 99).
4. Here we might recall Gramsci's close involvement in the newspaper *L'Ordine Nuovo* (new order).
5. For example, the full name of the US Taft-Hartley Act of 1947 is *The Labor-Management Relations Act*.
6. In French this is 'le compte des incomptés' (Rancière, 2001, p. 13), the count of those who are uncounted.
7. What Alain Badiou calls 'capitalo-parliamentarianism' (2008, p. 31).
8. As I discuss below, that vision of democracy pervading society is one Deleuze and Guattari very much want to keep alive, albeit in a form modified by the context of their thought.
9. Here Rancière is using Aristotle's distinction between: 1) *citizens* of the polis, men of *scholē* who had the time to gain the wisdom necessary to be politically capable, and 2) the *necessary conditions* of the polis, those people who performed the physical labour needed to ensure material subsistence (Aristotle, 1998, pp. 1278a, 1328a-b, 1329a).
10. To be clear, and to reiterate, I am not advocating this sort of proletarian revolution.
11. Certainly this is partly because he frequently is asked about Foucault.
12. They use a variety of terms for the idea: a new earth, an unknown country, a new region, a nomad war machine, a smooth space, a living block, a rhizome.
13. For Deleuze & Guattari it is less a question of the old ruling forces reasserting themselves (as when the bourgeoisie effects a counter-revolution), and more a question of the desire to dominate and be dominated re-emerging within the bodies of the escaped elements themselves (1977, p. 346).
14. That story is instructive because it is from the progressive organ *Truthout*, and it still uncritically reproduces the idea that a US-style elected government is the same thing as democracy.

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