

Theorizing the Emergence of the Rabble: A Genealogy of Redemptive Violence in Late
Capitalism

by

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BA, McMaster University, 2011

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Supervisory Committee

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Abstract

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Seizing upon G.W.F. Hegel's unresolved problem of poverty, and more generally, of politics, in his *Philosophy of Right*, I theorize the emergence of Hegel's "irrational" rabble in ostensibly incomprehensible violent riots. Specifically, I argue that such violence functions redemptively by latently symbolizing a Hegelian demand for recognition and, via Alain Badiou and Slavoj Žižek, as a catalyst in a lineation of riots that gestures towards transformative possibilities. Violence compels self-reflective thought to interrogate the hegemony of immaterial labour that excludes the rabble under late capitalism, a speculative game with winners and losers: financial capitalists and society's underclass. I conclude by explicating an implicit connection between Hegel's political theory and Walter Benjamin's philosophy and argue that this connection responds to Hegel's own political impasse. In the context of contemporary politics, I contend that the rabble's emergence in a Benjaminian light illuminates new means for critique against the system of late capitalism.

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Introduction

The Argument

In this essay I present a theoretical delineation of contemporary understandings of riotous violence within the context of late capitalism, using the rabble, a marginal figure of poverty in G.W.F. Hegel's *Outlines of the Philosophy of Right*, as an entry point. Specifically, I contest that the rabble, which aggravated Hegel, still aggravates us today, and that Hegel's dismissal of it as loutish mirrors society's contemporary dismissal of violent and seemingly irrational rioters. Likewise, I suggest that late capitalism parallels Hegel's conception of civil society, which is characterized by individualistic economic and political relationships and lacks the organic merger of subjectivity and objectivity to develop absolute ethics. I seize upon Hegel's condemnation of the rabble's ostensible irrationality as the barrier to transcending late capitalism as civil society and argue that the rabble, as inassimilable into late capitalism because of its perceived irrationality, symbolizes a latent figure of subversion. I trace the rabble's contemporary emergence in instances of riotous violence and through Walter Benjamin's theory of divine violence to gesture towards new means of articulating this subversion.

Following the work of Alain Badiou and Slavoj Žižek, I hypothesize that late capitalism today, in the early 21st century, arguably functions as a regression to 19th-century capitalism, as evident by its production of an incomprehensible underclass. Yet it exploits this underclass not through labour, as with the proletariat in much of the 20th century, but by rendering it as seemingly irrational, outside of even the realm of labour.¹

This underclass results from late capitalism's fatalism (which defines its regression to

¹ I do not mean to suggest that the proletariat-working class no longer exists and is no longer exploited through its labour; rather I hypothesize the structure of late capitalism in such a way that we are witnessing the emergence of a produced class that exists even below the proletariat, that of the rabble.

such direct forms of exclusion)—financial capital today functions like a casino that produces winners, the speculative capitalists, and losers, the rabble. By fatalism, I mean the features of late capitalism that *necessarily* produce the rabble as an irrational underclass for late capitalism’s continued existence; as I will explain in Chapter Two, late capitalism now operates as a speculative game, and a game by definition needs losers. Furthermore, I trace the rabble’s emergence through events of riotous violence that explode outside of any conceptual frameworks that might comprehend it within late capitalism. The rabble, subject to an exclusion symbolized by society’s denial of their right to even be acknowledged as participating members of the social and economic spheres, are rendered invisible, and a violent “blind acting out” in “the form of a meaningless outburst” becomes their only “opposition to the system” that excludes them (Žižek *The Year of Dreaming Dangerously* 54). This “blind acting out” constitutes their fight for recognition, the struggle to “render [their] presence palpable to the general public” (*Violence* 77).² By distinguishing between illegitimate physical violence and redemptive violence, and by seizing upon the ostensible incomprehensibility of particular violent riots as an opportunity for analysis, I aim to conceptualize the rabble’s emergence as a kind of divine violence that expresses a voice of struggle. From this perspective of redemption, whereby the violence of riots is seen as symbolically striking beyond late capitalism, the rabble’s violence is not simply a reactive, irrational outburst but motions towards an active, autonomous political gesture.

² In Chapter Three, I further explain “recognition” in an explicitly Hegelian context, that is, recognition as the reciprocity of subjectivity (Ruda 44). Specifically, I do not mean recognition in the context of identity politics (as I will first indicate in Chapter One), which formally acknowledges the rabble’s existence as members of society in that—in principle—they merely “have the right to work and vote” (Badiou 52). Rather, I will elucidate recognition in a more subjective sense, whereby the rabble are denied a sense of meaningful participation in their own communities.

I focus on riotous violence because I read ostensibly irrational acts of violence as a nodal point for the rabble's emergence. Given late capitalism's regression to forms of 19th-century disenfranchisement that produce the rabble as incomprehensible, society has returned to "a *time of riots*," to borrow Badiou's characterization, when riotous violence symbolizes "the first stirrings of a global popular uprising against this very regression" (5). I follow Badiou's lead in understanding late capitalism as a "*regression*" insofar as it has returned to assuming "the unlimited power of a financial and imperial oligarchy [...]" as opposed to the pure and simple repetition of the worst [of 20th-century capitalism]" (4-5, emphasis added).³ As such, Badiou reads late capitalism as a "rebirth of History"—the rebirth of 19th-century disenfranchisement—which "must also be a rebirth of the Idea," that is, the spirit of subversion against this regression (6). Because late capitalism renders the rabble incomprehensible, outside of the realm of labour, the Idea can only "take the form of an *exclusion*" (52). This exclusion I identify, through a comparison of Benjamin's and Hegel's philosophies, as the rabble emerging in "a *time of riots*" (5); its very inassimilability signals its possibility for revolt. The rabble emerges because it "erupts" (Ruda 122) *from* something—that is, from its subject production, and it emerges only subjectively and spontaneously, in moments of ostensibly irrational violence.⁴

With the 2011 England riots, for instance, Badiou reads the rioters as the "dangerous class" of Queen Victoria's time and the London elites as the "good citizens"

³ I further explain this observation in the Chapter Two section "Late Capitalism: Speculative and Immaterial," in which I will also delineate my use of the term "late capitalism."

⁴ This emergence distinguishes the rabble from the *presence* of the multitude, "the living alternative" to late capitalism "that grows within" it (Hardt and Negri xiii), which I will elaborate in Chapter Two. In Chapter Three, I reframe this emergence as an explosion in the Benjaminian sense; that is, it is presence that the rabble does not possess because it is that something "[f]rom and in the historical movement [that] erupts which cannot be understood" (Ruda 122). Specifically, it is universal "presence" that the rabble seeks (74) and which it is trying to "render [...] palpable" (Žižek *Violence* 77).

of the bourgeoisie (16). From the latter's *privileged perspective*, the violence appeared as "a zero-level protest, a violent act which demands nothing" (Žižek *The Year of Dreaming Dangerously* 54), creating a "struggle to articulate the 2011 riots" (Frost et al. 5). This latter point is observed by Diane Frost, Richard Phillips, and Alex Singleton in their investigation on these riots, as the violence "increasingly turned from anti-police demonstrations into violent unrest involving looting and vandalism" to indicate a *lack* of sense (3), in "contrast with the stock of descriptions and explanations" for earlier riots (5). With the 2005 France riots, philosopher Étienne Balibar notes that a defining element was the rioters attacking their own neighbourhoods (48), signifying a "revolt of the excluded" (49). By attacking their own communities from which they were denied representation, that is, rendered "as eternally *displaced (out of place)* persons" (57), the rioters' violence became "*self-destructive*" (50). In short, the rioters vandalized the part of their own society from which they were "contradictorily *excluded* as 'non-citizens'" (51); their violence thus symbolizes a demand for "recognized existence" in the Hegelian sense (52). Therefore the rioters' ostensibly irrational actions themselves are the means for their "expression" of subjectivity (51). Rendered voiceless, the destruction itself embodies (even mimics) the constitutive forces of late capitalism that segregate rioters into an illegitimate class of incomprehensible rioters (65-66); therefore, such riots can be read as "catalysts for change" (Frost et al. 8) by "lay[ing] bare and confront[ing] [society's] *contradictions*" that produce the rioters as rabble (Balibar 66).

This mimetic effect of "lay[ing] bare" represents the rabble's political potential, gesturing towards Badiou's insight that "a *change of the world* is real when an inexistent of the world starts to exist in this same world with maximum intensity" (56). Badiou

identifies this intensity within a lineage of riots that is *generative of meaning* without being meaningful in itself. It is this generative notion which I am interested in expanding towards a theory of redemptive violence—redemptive because the violence transcends any assimilation into late capitalism—and why it is not my intention to privilege or valorize any particular contemporary riot, but instead to retain the focus on the rabble.

I connect the value of such an endeavour to my research problem, which is a problem in Hegel’s political philosophy, exemplified in his *Philosophy of Right*. I will outline how Hegel hinders his own philosophical project of theorizing an “absolute ethical life” (Rose 60) through his dismissal—and as Gillian Rose has even argued, his ahistorical exclusion (85)—of the “subjective disposition” (97), by which Rose means the perspective of “the spectator,” the other, and Hegel’s political theory becomes an “autonomous prescription” independent of a subjective experience of civil society (54). Put differently, his philosophy is haunted by a political problem that Hegel was never able to untangle, which Frank Ruda identifies as the rabble, late capitalism’s irrational and produced underclass. *The rabble, and by extension, the political—non-prescriptive—transition from civil society to the state, remained irresolvable and impossible for Hegel, because he never accounted for the rabble’s subjective disposition.*⁵ Ruda, for his part, attempts to resolve this deadlock by theorizing the rabble as a necessary transitional figure towards the subversive proletariat by demonstrating how its incomprehensible alienation is its own condition of emergence (5), since it abstractly “empties the essence of man of all determinations”—determinations of and inscribed by late capitalism (172).

⁵ As with all of the Hegelian scholars whom I reference in this paper, I refrain from capitalizing the term “state” in the context of Hegel’s political theory both because “Hegel’s usage of the concept ‘state’ differs so much from its customary connotation as to be responsible for many of the misunderstandings surrounding Hegel’s political philosophy” and “the selective capitalization of the State is as arbitrary and intellectually scandalous as any other willful misrepresentation” (Avineri viii-ix).

Building upon Ruda's work, I intervene to illuminate the rabble's emergence in contemporary outbursts of riotous violence to explicate an otherwise implicit relationship between Hegel's political theory and Benjamin's literary theology, one that remains only latent in the analyses of Hegel's problem by Rose, Ruda, and Žižek. To this purpose, I will taxonomize theories of violence and delineate the structure of late capitalism in and against which this violence occurs to hypothesize such violence as a specific index of the rabble's emergence, and therefore demonstrate that the emergence's "evental appearing" represents the "inauguration of a process" to rethink late capitalism (Ruda 173). I will suggest that this "evental appearing" operates at a wholly subjective level, transcending the objective framework of our current civil society, and thus functions redemptively, portending the possible coming of an alternative universal to capitalism, independent of the purely physical and otherwise condemnable elements of riotous violence. I will therefore link the rabble's emergence to Benjamin's concept of divine violence, an exclusively subjective violence that is "not visible to men" ("Critique of Violence" 300).⁶

I hope the value of such a comparison, itself rooted in Hegel's problem of the rabble, is that it can unveil a new theoretical framework through which to situate the redemptive aspects of riots in the beginning of the 21st century alongside each other. In other words, I hope what follows will initiate a "transversality" (Balibar 65) of riotous violence so as to not privilege or trivialize any particular riot but to instead focus on the

⁶ I value the complexity of invoking Benjamin's divine violence in that it is violence with no reference to law and therefore exists only to articulate its own existence. As such, it functions in a zone of "absolute indeterminacy" (Huysmans 173) and thus risks inadvertently serving the interests of states of exception, political authorities "effectively placed beyond the law" (Stockdale 9). However, such an absolute indeterminacy operates as a necessary predicate towards subversive potentiality. As I will further demonstrate throughout my argument, and summarize particularly in conclusion, this notion of negativity creates the conditions for a generative trajectory towards subversion; cementing such subversion contra the establishment of a state of exception relies upon an ongoing process of struggle.

overarching structure of late capitalism itself against which such redemptive violence strikes—to herald “the inauguration of a process” (Ruda 173) to *think* about a new transition from rabble to proletariat, and to think this transition in new ways.

Balibar’s idea of “transversality” is perhaps what Žižek had in mind in his discussion, for example, of recent violence in Brazil, Egypt, and Turkey. Especially when thought alongside the events in England and France, because of all of their differences, it is easy to segregate such contemporary riots through their particular circumstances. “The most remarkable thing about [these] eruptions,” however, “is that they are taking place not only, or even primarily, at the weak points in the [late-capitalist] system,” notes Žižek (“Trouble in Paradise” 11). Here, a common denominator is that the violence speaks to a void in late capitalism—even in supposedly successful capitalist countries there is an unidentifiable sense of inequality, a structural yet necessary lack that the violence exposes. Thus the key is not to isolate these eruptions, but to conceptually “transversali[ze]” them together to spark critical, self-reflective thought (Balibar 65). It is difficult because they pose problems both epistemologically (how to understand them) and ontologically (what issues do they really target), so it is tempting to separate them into their own localized contexts. However, to not suture them together dilutes the larger issue at which they strike, namely, late capitalism as a whole, i.e., as a system, not just its particular and unique localized manifestations (Žižek “Trouble in Paradise” 11-12).⁷ I cautiously expect that my theorization of redemptive violence, by connecting Benjamin’s and Hegel’s thought, can position itself in such a way to contribute to this process.

⁷ In this spirit, I retain the focus of my analysis on my theoretical framework and not on the particular circumstances of riots. I rely upon riots only as a historical provocation and as an occasion for developing a theoretical perspective that realizes their disruptive potential. Rather than valorizing riots, I ask what does ostensibly irrational violence in a late-capitalist setting uncover of my theoretical framework.

Hegel's Problem

Hegel's major work on political society, his *Philosophy of Right*, attempts to trace dialectically the historical transition from the realms of family to civil society and, finally, to the state. In civil society, individuals merely interrelate with each other as particularities through the economic and political spheres; ethics here can only be relative, what Hegel calls morality. It is not until the final stage, the state, that individuals not only merge with each other, but they recognize each other's existence—their subjective essences—in each other *through* the state, whereby the state is another individual with whom to organically unite subjectivities. Only when this happens can ethics become absolute, and the stage of ethical life be achieved.

Hegel faced a problem in that ethical life, as he theorized it, did not yet exist in the modern world. His insufficient solution was to merely delineate and emphasize its (potential) presence and not the task of actually achieving it. Ironically, therefore, the *Philosophy of Right* has been read as “the justification of a *status quo*, instead of the attempt in speculative (dis)guise to commend the unity of theory and practice” (Rose 54). Hegel does not consider the subjective disposition to overcome the lack of true identity—of recognized subjectivity—in the realm of civil society.

As such, Rose argues, the *Philosophy of Right* aims for true representation of the object (in this instance, political society) but without concern for the subject, in contrast to the preservation of the object's integrity insofar as the object's representation harmonizes with subjective meaning (54-55). The key element here is the *recognition* of subjectivity *vis-à-vis* *misrecognition*. Hegel explicitly situates his understanding of civil society in the context of “the system of the political economy in bourgeois property

relations,” which separates ourselves, as presented in this system, with actual, subjective social life (Rose 59). This separation produces misrecognition, and Hegel is wise enough to understand that this gap creates “a lack of identity” (Rose 61), but this “lack of identity” needs to be accounted for historically to create “a different property structure [so] that absolute ethical life can be conceived” (62).

Hegel, however, never presents this “lack of identity [...] as the experience of a natural consciousness which gradually comes to appropriate and recognize a political relation and unity which is different from that of relative ethical life,” i.e., a different political relation than that of bourgeois property in civil society. He therefore only offers “a non-phenomenological structure” of the state (Rose 63) because he never accounts for overcoming misrecognition—the denial of meaningful, subjective identity—*beyond the political-economic context of civil society*.⁸ Simply put, meaningful recognition *vis-à-vis* misrecognition only arises out of bourgeois private property’s contradictions, and Hegel only explains these contradictions philosophically without confronting them politically. I suggest that there as such exists an impasse in Hegel’s political thought in that he cannot move *beyond* the context of civil society philosophically because he does not engage *with* civil society’s contradictions politically.⁹ Rose herself concludes that “Hegel’s presentation of the [...] transformation of bourgeois subjectivity, of bourgeois property

⁸ The master-slave dialectic, Hegel’s primordial scene of recognition, does not, as Rose reminds us, resolve the problem by offering a new philosophical framework for absolute ethical life with “a different property and work relation” than that of relative ethical life—it only presupposes it without actually explaining it. Just as in the *Philosophy of Right*, the master-slave dialectic leads to recognition only insofar as this recognition also becomes “a new form of misrecognition and remains so as long as it occurs within bourgeois property relations” (77). The difference is that such a deadlock is less problematic with the master-slave dialectic than it is with the *Philosophy of Right* because it is more removed from the former’s more philosophical and less political scope.

⁹ For Rose’s part, she reframes this impasse as a paradox between, on the one hand, the fact that Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right* is a critique of abstract prescriptions of reality while itself being, on the other hand, its own abstract prescription of reality (84).

relations into concrete universality[,] is incomplete, for it excludes reference to [...] disposition” (96). The institutions Hegel outlines to resolve civil society’s contradictions philosophically do so only “in isolation to subjective disposition” stemming from the “contradictions of a society based on bourgeois private property relations” (97).

I premise my argument—that delineating redemptive violence via the rabble’s contemporary and latent emergence in a Benjaminian framework contributes to a process of challenging late capitalism’s contradictions—on this problem that Hegel faced. Specifically, Hegel never philosophically cemented the state and absolute ethical life because he was confronted by a political problem in civil society, the rabble. *Who, precisely, is the rabble?* The rabble, an element of civil society, is for Hegel not simply poor, but has a certain subjective disposition; it is poor *and* loutish—in a word, irrational.

Poverty in itself does not turn people into a rabble; a rabble is created only when there is joined to poverty a disposition of mind, an inner indignation against the rich, against society, against the government, etc. [...] In this way there is born in the rabble the evil of lacking sufficient honour to secure subsistence by its own labour and yet at the same time of claiming the right to receive subsistence (§244).

This “disposition of mind” explains why Hegel views the rabble as irrational. Labour, for Hegel, functions as the principle activity through which individuals integrate themselves into society and obtain recognition, as I will further demonstrate in Chapter Three. Hegel, however, never accounts for this “disposition” *subjectively*, a point that Rose articulates from a more general perspective—he therefore never considers how the rabble could constitute “the experience of a natural consciousness” (Rose 63). Hegel’s failure here partly leads Shlomo Avineri to conclude that poverty is “the only time in his system [when] Hegel raises a problem—and leaves it open” (154).

Ruda, following Rose, delineates Hegel's failure as an inability to distinguish between poor and rich rabble, whereby late capitalism produces exceptions to labour at both ends of the class system. It is the rich rabble who truly falls under Hegel's dismissive judgement, while the poor rabble instead represents the possibility to become "the experience of a natural consciousness which gradually comes to appropriate and recognize a political relation and unity which is different" (Rose 63) than "a society based on bourgeois property relations" (97). I will argue that while Hegel identified the rabble with loutishness, I identify the rabble's contemporary emergence with seemingly irrational riotous violence; Hegel's inability to reconcile the rabble into his philosophy mirrors the rabble's current relationship with incomprehensible violence.

Ruda explains that the transition from Hegel to Karl Marx is thought of as a purely philosophical transition, insofar as Marx, seemingly, simply flips Hegel's dialectic on its head (2-3). But Hegel's impasse troubles this transition, highlighting that a transition from a philosophy to a philosophy (in this case, Hegel's to Marx's) "presuppose[s]" an "objective" politics (2). Without considering the subjective disposition of bourgeois property relations—i.e., without confronting politics—Hegel's philosophy, and the very transition to Marx, is ungraspable. Ruda surmises that politics, in the form of the rabble, is the singularity that makes the philosophical position even possible (3). Just as Rose demonstrates that we must engage with the subjective disposition to even comprehend Hegel's state philosophically, we need to seize the rabble's emergence to confront late capitalism. Even critiquing late capitalism theoretically requires us to recognize the political existence of the rabble.

The rabble is impossible, as it destroys not just the bourgeoisie, but everything (Mann 46, Žižek *In Defence of Lost Causes* 264-266). By impossible I mean simply not possible by the rules of late capitalism; it is the produced underclass in society that aggravates late capitalism's existence because it defies all facets of bourgeois property relations (Mann 46-47). *Necessarily* excluded from the realm of labour, the rabble is *unfree* will because it blocks, so to speak, the elevation of truly free will to a Hegelian ethical life. As unfree will, it is impossible free will, and its emergence is only a latent demand for a "different politics"—an injection of politics *into* philosophy—one premised on equality and not freedom, because its founding principle is the free will, its demand for recognition (Ruda 167). As Ruda summarizes, the rabble's demand for recognition is an impossible demand for sublating bourgeois property relations (166), igniting "an interruption of a different thinkability of politics into philosophy" (168).

However, this demand represents civil society's subjective disposition, wholly challenging late capitalism's logic to motivate my comparison of the rabble's emergence to Benjamin's philosophy. I intend to pinpoint a theoretical application for Ruda's thought by proposing that the rabble's purely subjectivized call mirrors an act of divine violence. Through this comparison, I hope to demonstrate how the rabble's "evental" emergence transforms the previous objective history of society (Ruda 174), fulfilling the necessity that Rose articulates to tackle and overcome bourgeois property relations. I hope that just as politics, for Ruda, breaks into philosophy as a subjective event to transform the transition to Marx, by approaching the rabble through Benjamin we can imagine the transition from the rabble to the proletariat and to resistant politics in today's society—to contribute to a process of catalyzing the *thinkability* of a resistant politics.

Outline and Preview of the Subarguments

Such a project for change results from the “recast[ing]” (Frost et al. 8) of the rabble’s emergence in violent acts through these acts’ “transversality”—that is, conceptualizing violent riots alongside each other in a matrix to create the effect of laying bare the underlying practice of exclusion at society’s core, so that society can critically self-reflect upon this practice, recognizing itself for what it really is (Balibar 65). My aim is to theorize contemporary violence in this vein of “transversality,” but through a specific theoretical lens that locates a unique means for such critical self-reflection that, as I argue, the rabble’s redemptive violence ignites.

I grasp this question as the starting point for my thesis: In what ways does violence participate in generating the conditions for an active, autonomous political gesture, and how is this gesture significant? I will argue, following Žižek’s reading of contemporary riots deemed seemingly irrational from a privileged, bourgeois perspective, that they expose “the central antagonism of contemporary capitalism” (*The Year of Dreaming Dangerously* 1) “between [its] forces and relations”—in other words, the “structural imbalance” (8) that produces the gulf between the capitalist society in which the rabble lives and their exclusion from this society. The rabble’s violence redemptively symbolizes a latent universalism outside of late capitalism’s structural framework that excludes the rabble from the political and social space proper. Through its produced exclusion, the rabble’s incomprehensibility itself is the inverse form of this “structural imbalance.” Their latency is marked by what Balibar terms the “*becoming political* of the revolt”—its “problem of possibility or impossibility” that relies upon the process of self-interpretation for its possibility of realization (65). In short, the rabble’s demand for

recognition is in itself impossible, or, latent, and therefore only negatively, as a void, does it function as the possibility of a catalyst for subversion.

However, I will theorize beyond Žižek, who despite identifying that such “riots contain a moment of genuine protest,” nevertheless concludes that they are “not truly self-assertive” because of the “void” at the heart of their politics (*The Year of Dreaming Dangerously* 60). This void, for Žižek, is the rioters’ failure to advance a positive political program. My argument asserts that this very void is the generative space of the rabble’s autonomous political gesture. I will posit that this void of meaning provides, in Badiou’s words, “the thrilling sense of an abrupt alteration in the relation between the possible and the impossible,” sparking, however impotently, an idea of resistance (94). My contribution to the critical literature theorizes such an idea by explicating an otherwise implicit connection between Benjamin and Hegel. The rabble, who in Hegel’s view is unredeemable because of its loutish disposition and its (lack of a) relationship to labour, latently emerges through acts of riotous violence, and I will focus on Ruda’s and Žižek’s readings of the rabble as my guide. However, I will argue that both Ruda’s and Žižek’s Hegelianism is coloured by Benjamin’s theological version of historical materialism. Drawing out the resonances between Benjamin’s and Hegel’s thought, I conclude this newfound relationship between the two offers a theoretical perspective through which to engage in the critical self-reflection that the rabble’s violence impotently demands. This relationship both results from and in turn mimetically unmasks late capitalism as a “mythological” system of gambling: late capitalism metaphorically mythologizes itself because of its reliance on fate, constituting itself as a game of winners and losers. The rabble as “loser” reflects a contingent precarity that is paradoxically the

grounds of the universality of poverty. I introduce this latter analysis in Chapter Two and extend it into Chapter Three.

In short, the rabble's violence *symbolizes* an impossible demand for recognition, outside of the conceptual framework of late capitalism that denies them such recognition. *This* is their articulation of “the Idea” of democracy (Badiou 6)—the immaterial emancipatory spirit of such a demand. In this process, I will theorize the rabble as a figure of conceptual negativity in how it is produced *through* its exclusion. This negativity represents a latent universalism beyond late capitalism's actual universalism. Such is the rabble's potential that connects it to Benjamin's theological philosophy. Through a broad investigation of both Benjamin's view that capitalism functions as a mythological force structured on fate and gambling (*The Arcades Project* O3,6, O4,1, O4a, O13,5) and his philosophy of historical materialism, I will align divine violence—conceptual crises of history that strike beyond the mythological framework of society—with my understanding of redemptive violence. This delineation of Benjamin's thought, I argue, parallels the conceptual negative space of the rabble's potentiality—Benjamin and Hegel therefore share a negative dialectics because *vis-à-vis* its latent universalism the rabble is, in Terry Eagleton's words, the excluded, “deleted layer [of history that must be] thrust to light [...] rather than repressed to unruptured narrative” (59).

More simply, as Ruda reveals of Hegel's philosophy, the rabble is a dual figure with two poles, rich and poor, and both are irrationally excepted from late capitalism by not engaging in labour. The poor rabble is “structurally unemployable” (Žižek *The Year of Dreaming Dangerously* 10) and the rich rabble “subsists without work” (Ruda 64). However, as Balibar notes in his argument that the 2005 France riots were unique

because the poor rabble attacked the rich rabble's *banlieue* that was also the poor rabble's *banlieue*, a conflict of "*banlieues* and *banlieues*" (48), the poor rabble, the incomprehensible rioters, are excluded, unlike their rich counterpart, *involuntarily* (63). This framework is evident in the 2011 England riots as well, as the rioters' violence represents "*a conflict between non-society and society*," whereby the rioters are excluded, produced involuntarily, and thus rendered invisible (Žižek *The Year of Dreaming Dangerously* 60). This irrationality "strikes," in a Benjaminian sense, beyond late capitalism's otherwise "rational" comprehension framework. Theorizing a latent universalism that strikes beyond this mythology is, I maintain, a *redemptive* demand for recognition that constitutes the rabble's articulation of their exclusion. Therefore, my theorization of redemptive violence establishes this link between Benjamin's and Hegel's thought, and it is this link that can propel "the thinkability of politics" (Ruda 168).

The rabble's demand for recognition is hidden because its emergence through violence is indicative of what I referred to earlier as an incomprehensible "zero-level protest, a violent act which demands nothing" (Žižek *The Year of Dreaming Dangerously* 54). The rabble's violence does not mould with any narrative for comprehension because it does not appear to fit into any rational, "predictable" framework. However, such incomprehension serves as a catalyst for my analysis: How can we theorize the rabble's emergence without either trivializing the rabble's experiences or objectifying them, and without inadvertently condoning the directly physical destruction of riots? Specifically, what (theologically) redemptive potentialities exist with the rabble? Commentators complicate the issue with swift condemnations of the physical destruction, which however understandable, blur the objective violence underlying riots: the violence of

exclusion enacted on the rabble as rioters that demonstrates how late capitalism produces them as subjects. More specifically, this objective violence is the terrain of late capitalism—the conditions of society’s economic-political system—that, due to this system’s internal logic of accumulated and concentrated wealth, *necessarily* produces subjects “excluded from the political and social space proper” (Žižek *Violence* 77). Instead, it is important to consider the rabble’s emergence as a challenge to the violence of late capitalism, as they are contesting for spaces of recognition as subjects produced *through* their exclusion.

This complex framework relies on a careful delineation of redemptive violence, how late capitalism excludes the rabble, and the rabble’s subsequent struggle for recognition. Žižek demarcates clearly between the directly physical acts of subjective violence and the objective, exclusionary, and systematic violence of late capitalism. This objective violence sustains the “zero-level standard” of normalcy in our economic and political systems (*Violence* 2); thus by inserting it into an analysis of the rabble, I hypothesize that they struggle for recognition *because* of their ostensible incomprehension. I articulate “redemptive violence” as the kind of violence implied by rupture or breakage that occurs between one action and another, such as challenging social conditions—the creation of the possibility for recognition. In other words, it is a violence that *symbolizes* redemptive potentiality, opening self-reflective social-political change as a symbolic possibility because, through its incomprehension, it functions at a purely subjective level, conceptually autonomous of society’s comprehension framework. By recognition I do not mean political recognition *vis-à-vis* the state but rather recognition in the Hegelian sense as the object of the redemptive, impotent demand of the

rabble's violence that exists as a latent universality for itself. More specifically, it is the articulation of the exclusion constituted by not being recognized as what they already are, members of society, as evidenced in how the rabble attacks *their own neighbourhoods*. This notion of recognition is important, for instance, in my first chapter in which I will challenge Badiou's strictly ontological schema of riots using Žižek to, in the process, uncover inconsistencies in Žižek's own theories in my attempt to demonstrate beyond Žižek that ostensibly irrational riots are more than a mere "genuine protest" (*The Year of Dreaming Dangerously* 60). More to the point, this finessing of Badiou's schema places such riots in a *generative* trajectory towards active and autonomous self-reflection—with this lineation, I argue that, although not meaningful in themselves, riots latently engender meaning through the rioters' demand for recognition.

I will consider the rabble's exclusion from society as the necessary characteristic of their production as subjects. Specifically, Ruda reveals that the poor rabble, as involuntarily excluded, latently reflects, because everyone is latently poor in that poverty is objectively necessary, the gap between it and the rich rabble, revealing *everyone* to be always potentially rabble; retroactively, everyone becomes *[n]othing but rabble*" (73). Therefore, following Ruda, as I will argue in Chapter Three, this logic of latency means that the poor rabble possesses a universal dimension that reveals this gap between a system of formal democracy that technically acknowledges citizens and an economic-political reality that excludes and does not recognize them. As I will later elucidate, it is from within this gap that redemptive violence opens up the possibility for forms of recognition that are currently impossible to actualize within existing late capitalism.

However, what is late capitalism? My argument posits late capitalism as a revival of more direct forms of exploitation. To put it simply, late capitalism is arguably but a “regression” (Badiou 4) to “mid-nineteenth-century [...] imperialism” and to the whims of “the unlimited power of a financial [...] oligarchy” (5). This is not a new, globalist post-industrial capitalism, so to speak, with its own sets of rules conceptually distinct from the capitalism of early-mid modernity, but rather a system that remains true to its classic core principle of “production for profit” (Harvey 121). What has changed, according to David Harvey, is nothing structural, but an ostensible shift in accumulation and the modes of accumulation. In other words, high finance, this reborn “financial oligarchy,” has now become what Harvey calls a “*regime of accumulation*” (121), which necessarily produces—and fatalistically dooms to social incomprehensibility—an underclass of the “structurally unemployable” (Žižek *The Year of Dreaming Dangerously* 10), what I identify as the contemporary correlate of Hegel’s rabble. This regime marks a return to direct exploitation: “products are no longer material objects, but new social (interpersonal) relations themselves.” Late capitalism, as it were, no longer exploits through the labour market, but through “the production of social life” (9)—the rabble is exploited not through labour but through its very rejection into the labour market.¹⁰

¹⁰ Here I should clarify that, without arguing against Michel Foucault, his framework of sovereignty is not what I have in mind when articulating the rabble’s exclusion. Foucault theorizes exploitation as it occurs via engagement with the “apparatus of security.” For Foucault, this “apparatus is installed” as the sovereign’s discursive base of power (*Security, Territory, Population* 37), and security denotes the regulatory and disciplinary regimes of day-to-day life that ensure the “circulation of both people and things” (49). Basically, power consists of “techniques of normalization” (56) that conduct and function through “physical processes, which [...] we could also call elements of reality” (65-66): factories, hospitals, schools, prisons, etc. These “elements of reality” exclude and exploit *internally*, i.e., “the sovereign” is no longer external, “no longer someone who exercises his power over a territory on the basis of a geographical localization of his political sovereignty[;] the sovereign will be someone who will have to exercise power at that point of connection” with the people (23).

The rabble, however, is excluded even from these internal mechanisms of exploitation—it resists governmentality through its loutishness and irrationality—which is why the rabble is a void as such: it

My thesis begins by tracing a taxonomy of riots in sociological, theoretical, and phenomenological contexts to argue for the significance of irrational violence as indicative of a demand for recognition. I transition into outlining a framework for articulating a means of transformative subversion via crowd theory that challenges an inclusive mode of resistance, i.e., resistance from within the hegemonic coordinates of late capitalism, because late capitalism regresses to direct forms of exclusion that bar the rabble from such inclusive acts of subversion. I conclude by delineating this mode of exclusion by arguing that the rabble represents a conceptual void, symbolized by their violence's irrationality. This void latently strikes outside of society's comprehension framework, a purely subjective and therefore autonomous gesture which I introduce as a gateway for the critical self-reflection that Frost et al. and Balibar insist is necessary if the rabble is to generate a challenge to late capitalism against which it impotently strikes.

I transition into the role of immaterial production in the former half of my second chapter when discussing Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's *Multitude*. Hardt and Negri theorize subversive social gatherings, what they call multitudes, as those groups produced from *within* the hegemony of immaterial labour. According to Hardt and Negri, power operates today immaterially, through "communication, collaboration, and cooperation" (vx), and this "model [of] 'biopolitical production'" (xvi) is hegemonic because of its

marks a latent universality (which I will elaborate in Chapter Three) by negating its differentiation of being excluded from *within* the hegemony of labour. It is no longer distinguishable from other participants subject to governmentality in the labour market as the working poor. When Foucault poetically wrote "[g]o get slaughtered and we promise you a long and pleasant life" ("The Political Technology of Individuals" 405), Stuart J. Murray observed that "'You' are at once included in the 'we' [...] and yet distinguished from it in the same way that the 'life' that you sacrifice is distinguished from the 'life' that you are promised." What the rabble represents, however, is an "underclass," excluded even from "the term 'class' [that] designate[s] a categorization [of being] *integrated* into the economic-political system" (Balibar 63); in short, the rabble are not even granted the right to "[g]o get slaughtered." Therefore, I do not intend to theorize the rabble as an example of Foucault's subversive "counter-conduct," which "is the sense of struggle against the processes implemented for conducting others" (*Security, Territory, Population* 201), i.e., resistance that strikes from *within* and as *a part of* the hegemonic system (204).

constituent place in society, i.e., its power to transform all other models of labour and social life (107). As hegemonic, it destroys the possibility of there being an “outside” to capitalism (102). Resistance is possible only from within the system through the multitude, an immanent and creative force of “social relationships” (207) that subversively alters prevailing attitudes and behaviours.

I contrast the multitude and the rabble in order to articulate, contra Hardt and Negri, how crowds, the multitude’s mediated, irrational, and seemingly passive double, actually resolves Hardt and Negri’s impasse that the multitude is simultaneously “immaculately self-constituting *and* conditioned by capital” (Mazzarella 711). As social anthropologist William Mazzarella notes, crowds and multitudes share, against Hardt and Negri’s claims, a “negative intimacy” (698) whereby irrational, sometimes violent crowds, excluded from the inclusive, hegemonic framework of society, become a necessary mediating figure (716). As I will demonstrate in Chapter Two, the crowd, as a seemingly irrational mass, both generates “transformative” possibilities for self-reflective subject determination (726) and reveals Hardt and Negri’s underestimation of the extent to which late capitalism creates a “superfluous” underclass via its return to direct forms of exploitation (Žižek *The Year of Dreaming Dangerously* 10).

This framework provides the basis for my understanding of late capitalism as a speculative and theological structure, to which I turn my attention in the latter half of Chapter Two. The society in which today’s rabble lives produces them as an incomprehensible underclass because late capitalism operates on fate and speculation. As Jean and John L. Comaroff articulate, the gambling house of the stock market now determines values, identity, production, and wealth (205). Late capitalism is essentially a

game “that presents itself as a gospel of salvation” (292), and a game necessarily produces losers (295-296). This is how, according to Žižek, late capitalism returns to basic principles of profit: speculative capitalism “*re-functionalize[s]*” the old bourgeoisie (*The Year of Dreaming Dangerously* 10, emphasis added) to keep capitalism self-expanding—i.e., by always “escaping into the future” via the stock market (8)—and the future, as unknowable, is speculative.

This articulation of late capitalism is how I intend to theorize its comprehension framework, the very frames of social intelligibility beyond which the rabble’s violence redemptively strikes. Jacques Rancière argues that society operates on a “consensus system” that dictates what is comprehensible and acceptable in its universality, thus establishing a gap between the whole and its dialectical opposite, the “nothing” of society (*Disagreement* 124). True political autonomy therefore can only occur when those from the “nothing”—“the part of those who have no part”—disturb and stand in for the universal (123). Žižek delineates his understanding of an “effective universality” within this framework: this symbolic, effective universality produces those “without a proper place” in late capitalism. Produced as the particular without a part and faced by the void between their exclusion and the effective universalism of formal democracy, universality can only become “for-itself” by these particulars—the produced underclass, the rabble—who are excluded from it (*Violence* 150). An active, autonomous political gesture is only therefore possible when an excluded particular “*explodes*” from within the universal that produces it to claim itself as universal. Simply put, the rabble’s violence symbolically articulates the potentiality of a universal dimension within the gap between them and the comprehension framework of late capitalism, claiming a right for

recognition in this universality that they do not actually possess to rearticulate “actual social-economic relations” (*Violence* 151).

I will illuminate this potentiality in the destructive mayhem that characterizes riotous violence, which in and of itself is important not to redeem. Indeed, significant to my argument is a redemptive potentiality in the rabble’s violence that contests both the illegitimate physical violence *they enact* and the illegitimate exclusionary violence *enacted on them*. This denunciation of physical violence is complicated by its necessity for my theorization of redemptive violence. As Žižek explains, such physical violence is to a certain extent “necessary” because it signals the rabble’s symbolic demand for recognition (77). Therefore, physical violence exists as a kind of aporia: it is both condemnable *and* necessary, condemnable for the subjective harm that it causes and necessary for providing the springboard for articulating the redemptive violence that underscores the rabble’s sense of exclusion.

This exclusion emanates from the rabble’s production as those necessarily rendered as the incomprehensible and irreconcilable excess of modern society. The rabble’s redemptive violence is a fight for meaningful recognition in a world that lacks the objective logic to understand them and therefore effectively denies them representation. Their incomprehensibility is a fact itself to interpret: it opens us to the possibility of critical self-reflection in Benjamin’s idea of divine violence—a violence of means without end. It is the source of autonomous redemption because this violence is *outside* the framework of understanding in late capitalism, a violence of autonomous divinity for Benjamin because it stands “outside the law” (“Critique of Violence” 281).

The *specific* nature of the rabble's exclusion is not a formal, outright disenfranchisement. As social theorist Zygmunt Bauman observes of the 2011 England riots, they were not "hunger or bread riots" but were rather "riots of [the] defective and disqualified" (33). Indeed, that the rioters were "not on the edge of starvation" or in the worst of "material straits" (Žižek "Shoplifters of the World Unite") makes the physical violence seem illegitimate. Importantly, pinpointing the rioters' specific motivations actually "miss[es] the point"; the incomprehension demonstrates that the rioters were not fighting for an identity or a right under threat, but that they were abstractly asserting a general sense of exclusion from their own society (*Violence* 77). That the rioters are otherwise formal members of their communities only augments this point.

In *Chapter One*, I will juxtapose subjective and objective violence, illustrate the inexplicability of ostensibly irrational violence, and utilize sociological literature to demonstrate that violent crowds are not mere irrational gatherings, to conjecture that the rabble struggles for recognition. Through preliminary analyses of the 2011 England riots and the 2005 France riots, and an overview of the conflict between Badiou's and Žižek's theories of riotous violence, I hypothesize the rabble's emergence as an autonomous act that propels an "Idea," to use Badiou's term, to alter our understandings of how to *think* politics within and against late capitalism. This approach leads into a sociological reading of riots that emphasizes the importance of neither subjectivizing nor objectifying seemingly irrational riots, but to instead conceptualize them phenomenologically. Essentially, I propose to identify the rabble's autonomous moment not in violence itself, but instead in what the violence symbolizes, as part of a "lineage," which I map through Badiou's schema of riots, towards a phenomenological sense of self-determination. This

gesture speaks to the transgressive potential that Badiou identifies in riots—the crowd’s mediation, its sense of non-recognition, is its very condition of possibility for an autonomous immediacy (Mazzarella 718).

Therefore, crowds have the potential to redemptively strike beyond the effective universal of late capitalism, but this theorization requires a delineation of both this idea of the crowd’s mediation and how I conceptualize late capitalism, and these topics are the object of *Chapter Two*. I begin by outlining Hardt and Negri’s theory of multitudes and contend that multitudes possess an unacknowledged impasse between immediacy and mediation that irrational and possibly violent crowds can resolve. Therefore, the mediation inherent to crowds actually operates as a generator, similar to the catalyzing lineage of riots that I theorize in Chapter One, striking beyond and thus challenging late capitalism. I map late capitalism as a regression to classic models of exploitation and profit accumulation. In understanding human relations and immaterial labour as means of exploitation, I will theorize riotous crowds as symbolizing a self-empowering and divine potential to strike beyond the fatalistic structure that produces them. I articulate this structure by explaining how late capitalism effectively functions as a system of gambling that operates on fate—fatalistically creating a poor rabble as “structurally unemployable” (Žižek *The Year of Dreaming Dangerously* 10). I conclude by transitioning into my understanding of late capitalism’s comprehension framework through Žižek’s “effective universal” and Rancière’s “consensus system” to demonstrate how it distributes understandings of what is rational and what is disposable, leading to an understanding of how the rabble strikes against this system.

This analysis leads me into *Chapter Three* on Hegel's rabble and Benjamin's theological divine violence. I begin by revisiting Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* to demonstrate how today's late capitalism betrays Hegel's articulation of the state. Trapped instead in a system that necessarily produces a fatalistic, incomprehensible underclass, I theorize the relevance of the rabble's conceptual negativity to demonstrate the importance of negative dialectics in Hegel's thought. As Žižek states, "in order to arrive at something, *one has to subtract from nothing its nothing(ness) itself*, i.e., one has to posit the primordial pre-ontological Abyss 'as such,' AS NOTHING, so that, in contrast to (or against the background of) nothing, something can appear" ("The Politics of Negativity" xi). Following Ruda's study, the poor rabble's negativity and ostensible irrationality are actually the conditions for the rabble's latent universality. Simply put, because late capitalism produces the rabble through gambling and fate, the rabble is not even granted the right to be exploited through labour—everyone is latently rabble, so the rabble possesses a latent universal dimension (Ruda 46).

I then discuss Benjamin's philosophy and demonstrate three main features. First, I show how his understanding of capitalism as mythology complements late capitalism as a fatalistic structure that creates the poor rabble. Secondly, through a reading of Eagleton's analysis of Benjamin's relevance, I will explicate how Benjamin's philosophy parallels Hegel's negative dialectics, therefore establishing a link between Benjamin and Hegel. Lastly, expanding upon this link, I will reveal how the rabble, as modern society's discarded "excess," is a violence, specifically, the violence of excess itself transgressing beyond the sovereign logic of late capitalism—manifesting what Benjamin calls divine violence. Articulating the rabble's violence through this lens of theological redemption, it

is possible to therefore denounce the purely physical, destructive, yet necessary violence of riots while engaging in the autonomous self-reflection that divine violence compels. Therefore, redemptive violence transgresses the dialectic of sovereign violence, the very framework of late capitalism that produces the rabble.

Ultimately, I hope to uncover redemptive possibilities of riotous violence by hypothesizing the rabble's emergence in response to Hegel's problem of politics, which, as I earlier explained, impedes the philosophical transition to Hegel's state and subsequently to a contemporary proletariat politics founded on equality. Specifically, I will theorize the rabble's condition of lack and negativity as the very condition of possibility for redemptive violence, in turn synthesizing Hegel's negative dialectics with Benjamin's theological philosophy. Žižek is a useful figure for my theoretical framework not least because of his helpful articulation of objective and subjective violence, but also because of his and, for example, Balibar's, explicit discussions of contemporary rioters as a correlate of the rabble. I will seize and expand upon such comparisons, first analyzing riotous violence as a struggle for recognition and then navigating through Ruda's and Žižek's rearticulations of the rabble to express its struggle as redemptive violence within a latent universal framework. Most importantly, this latent universality is excess itself, a divine call for an alternate universality beyond the rabble's exclusion. Therein lies the redemptive potentiality of this violence: in light of Benjamin's idea of divine violence, it symbolizes an active, autonomous political act beyond the exclusionary economic-political structure of late-capitalist sovereignty.

Chapter One: Riots

“[W]e live in a social space which is progressively experienced as ‘worldless.’ In such a space, the only form protest can take is ‘meaningless’ violence” (Žižek *Violence* 79).

My first chapter will explain my theory that redemptive violence can be read within ostensibly irrational acts of violent outbursts that constitute a latent demand for recognition. This demand is not to be recognized as formal members of society, but to autonomously assert a sense of exclusion from meaningful political and social engagement. This assertion presents itself through the senselessness of the rabble’s violence, as it strikes outside of society’s objective comprehension framework. I will outline theories of violence that challenge perceptions that either objectify or trivialize the rabble, compelling an articulation of the rabble’s subjectivity as purposive and autonomous, whereby their violence is not meaningful in and of itself but instead *generates* meaning. These theories include sociological and phenomenological readings which understand senseless violence as a transcendental demand for “new forms of self-determination” (Staudigl 250), symbolizing what Badiou calls a Truth-Event. This chapter, methodologically, will then be both introductory and explanatory, and its focus, broadly, is on the taxonomizing of violence and riots. I will intervene in the relationship between Badiou and Žižek to place seemingly senseless riots in a lineation of subversion and reveal how such violence functions as a generative element in this lineation, augmented by my reading of phenomenological violence that argues “‘senseless’ [...] violent action radically transforms” subjectivity (Staudigl 250).

I will begin by identifying the incomprehensibility of the rabble’s violence as its most significant characteristic. Referring to Žižek’s study on violence and remarks on the

2011 England riots and 2005 France riots, I will explain how ostensibly irrational violent riots, in a certain sense, are a symptom of the exclusionary relations of late capitalism; as such this violence is “a call for the construction of a new universal framework” (*Violence* 78). Next, I will draw upon Badiou’s idea of a Truth-Event and his theoretical matrix of riots to argue that violent riots are *more* than such a symptom of society; more radically, they *generate* the possibility of an autonomous politics by latently constituting and mimetically exposing the very structure of exclusion in late capitalism.¹¹ This structure paradoxically arises from the violence’s political impotency, or, negativity, which itself is the “positive and productive” moment (Žižek *The Ticklish Subject* 165), and a lineage of riots, which Badiou maps, that latently engenders political effects of autonomous self-determination. Lastly, I will trace these effects through an in-depth sociological and phenomenological reading of senseless violence in riots by locating autonomy in “the *in-between* of subjective sense and objective being” (Staudigl 236). Therefore, the rabble’s actions speak to a purposive motivation to control their subjective perspective relative to society’s objective structure (McPhail). Thus, we can *interrogate* the objective *through* the subjective, as our subjective experience of senseless violence shocks us, creating the possibility for challenging the objective framework of society (Staudigl 236). Senseless violence then symbolizes a transcendent action through its break from our frameworks of comprehension and, by embracing this resulting gap, constitutes itself as a Truth-Event in Badiou’s understanding, as a demand for recognition by those with no official place in society: society’s underclass, “manufactured [as] inexistent” (Badiou 71).

¹¹ I only broach this point in this chapter with my discussion of phenomenological violence; I unpack it further in later chapters, via a discussion of crowd theory in Chapter Two and through my comparison of Benjamin and Hegel in Chapter Three.

A Struggle for Recognition: Subjective and Objective Violence

It is important to distinguish between subjective and objective violence to not risk a strict analysis of physical subjective violence, which masks the objective, exclusionary violence of late capitalism. Faced with the incomprehensibility of “‘irrational’ violence” (Žižek *The Year of Dreaming Dangerously* 53), we must avoid reducing such violence to either a meaningless irrationality or an oversimplistic symptom of neglected social services. Both views foreclose the possibility of grasping the redemptiveness of violence by trying to fill the gap of comprehensibility. The lack of a narrative of comprehension demonstrates that the violence operates outside of society’s preexisting framework, indicating a struggle for recognition for socially excluded rioters.

To theorize ostensibly “‘irrational’ violence” as a struggle for recognition, my analysis must move beyond the directly physical destruction that the rabble, as rioters, cause. This kind of violence is what Žižek refers to as subjective violence, “violence performed with a clearly identifiable agent” (*Violence* 1). Contra subjective violence is objective violence, which includes the exclusionary, systematic violence of late-capitalist political economy and which “is invisible since it sustains the very zero-level standard against which we perceive something as subjectively violent.” This structural, objective violence “has to be taken into account if one is to make sense of what otherwise seem to be ‘irrational’ explosions of subjective violence” (2). With the 2011 England riots, for instance, the violence broke from a normatively constructed, day-to-day *perception* of “standard” acts of political revolt. For example, Nick James proposes that there was no narrative to prepare Londoners because it had been more than a generation since they had experienced such violence in a direct, “unmediated” context. James concludes that the

experience dislodged the city from a “rational” frame of mind because people felt “transfixed” and victim to an unmediated “illusion.” It suddenly became convenient to label the violence as irrational, complementing Frost et al.’s observation that a “struggle to articulate the 2011 riots” permeated the public’s general reaction (5). This kind of “illusion” is the lure of subjective violence that veils underlying systematic violence.

To Žižek, when the media, big business, politicians, sociologists, and the like, are confronted with the seeming irrationality of violent outbursts, what they often misunderstand is “that in the guise of this irrational subjective violence, they [are] getting back the message they themselves sent out in its inverted true form” (*Violence* 10); in turn, in the case of the England riots, for example, society “only succeeded in obfuscating the key enigma the riots presented” (*The Year of Dreaming Dangerously* 54). In other words, this “inverted message” is the anonymous, systematic violence of late capitalism. Instead of overlooking objective violence, we must embrace incomprehensibility as an opportunity to analyze the rabble’s exclusion. Again, this exclusion is marked by the rabble’s disenfranchisement from meaningful participation in their society; rendered incomprehensible by the speculative system of late capitalism, which I will delineate in Chapter Two, society does not grant the rabble recognition as individuals mediated into the social fabric, a point that I will demonstrate more concretely in Chapter Three. Recognizing the significance of seemingly irrational violence involves a theorization of the rabble’s violence that neither objectifies nor trivializes the situation. As Žižek states, the rabble lives in a meaningless world because late capitalism’s ultimate ideology is that it “represents truth without meaning” (“Shoplifters of the World Unite”). The significant conclusion is therefore that in ascribing incomprehensibility to the rabble’s violence,

commentators foreclose an analysis of objective violence, as well as the redemptive violence in which the rabble engages in a struggle for recognition.

Firstly, it is important to point out that commentary on violence that finds fault with conservative social policy is ultimately inadequate as it ignores the rabble's latent demand for recognition by only addressing surface-level symptoms of structural violence. As one journalist articulated on the 2011 England riots, "Some have blamed the unrest on unemployment [...] and frustration across Britain over the government's austerity budget, which will bring deep cuts to social services and welfare payments" ("Riot-Shocked Britain Faces Fresh Violence"). "The problem with this account" however, Žižek asserts, "is that it merely lists the objective conditions for the riots, ignoring the subjective dimension: to riot is to make a subjective statement, implicitly to declare how one relates to one's objective conditions, how one subjectivizes them" (*The Year of Dreaming Dangerously* 58). It objectively explains the violence and seals the comprehension gap. Consequently, while it appropriately identifies the rabble's state of exclusion as problematic, it implies that the simple expansion of social services in impoverished areas—*within* the existing, exclusionary economic-political structure—will definitively resolve this problem. Instead, it is the very gap of content that "function[s] as a test of the system itself" (Žižek *Violence* 79)—in other words, it contains the redemptive, subjective struggle for recognition that unveils the objective violence in play.

Responses that reduce the rabble's violence to irrational outbursts are equally problematic because they both blur objective, systematic violence and bar the rabble from having any subjectivity. Therefore, by reducing violence to irrationality, this kind of response prevents a theorization of redemptive violence as generative of autonomous

political effects of critical self-reflection. As Jamil Salmi asserts in *Violence and Democratic Society*, modern Western society often trivializes violent acts as “mere [...] disturbances” (7), thereby “systematically dismiss[ing]” (8) the “desperate social situation pushing young people to violent outbursts” (Žižek “Shoplifters of the World Unite”) and how subjective violence is often also an illumination of the objective violence of capitalism (Salmi 8).

Importantly, these sentiments mirror sociological theories from the former half of the 20th century on “irrational” riot crowds that sociologists have generally disproven in recent decades. As James B. Rule summarizes, the dominant theory of that time, the irrationalist doctrine, found violent crowds act on “unconscious” “impulses” (93) that break with the “‘rational’ action [of] ‘normal’ social life” (92-93); therefore rioters act irrationally and are unable to express—even implicitly or symbolically—an authentic voice of recognition (95). This doctrine soon morphed into collective behaviour theory, which viewed crowd behaviour as the result of the emotional, irrational impulse of a group mentality. Like the irrationalist doctrine, its overarching principle is that the “crowd process [is] discontinuous with [the] ‘normal’” (98). However, major flaws mark these doctrines, forcing many contemporary sociologists to discredit them. As Rule concludes, in establishing such a sharp distinction between irrational and rational, the irrationalist doctrine and collective behaviour theory neglect the fluctuations within such a spectrum (100-101) and also conceal the abstract, objective reality of society that exists beyond the crowd’s supposed ephemeral moment (116). In Chapter Two, I will engage in a philosophical analysis of crowd theory, as it directly contrasts with Hardt and Negri’s

multitude, to demonstrate how the concept of seemingly irrational, mediated crowds is theoretically necessary for a lineation of subversive, collective behaviour.

These theories view rioters as “primitive [...] ‘beast[s]’” (Rule 93-94), but as Žižek reminds us, “what we [see is] not men reduced to ‘beasts,’ but the stripped-down form of the ‘beast’ produced by capitalist ideology” (“Shoplifters of the World Unite”). We can recall here Žižek’s point that the rabble’s message in its “inverted true form” (*Violence* 10) demonstrates why such sociological responses are, at the very least, inadequate: they attempt to explain the rabble’s violence within a pre-given conceptual framework, obliterating objective, systematic violence from view and impeding the struggle for recognition in the violence’s redemptive gesture.

This point stresses the importance of incomprehensibility in riots: it presents the very possibility for redemptive violence. Žižek articulates this argument clearly in analyses of the 2011 England riots and the 2005 France riots, which he explicitly compares because the rioters in both cases “had no message to deliver” (*The Year of Dreaming Dangerously* 53). This observation demonstrates that the rioters, technically citizens of their respective nations, saw themselves as effectively “excluded from the political and social space proper” (*Violence* 77). In both London and Paris, rioters were attacking their own communities, instead of financial districts and upper-middle-class neighborhoods (Balibar 48, Rogers “England Riots,” Žižek *The Year of Dreaming Dangerously* 60), precisely because “they were not included in [them],” which is why “[t]he riots were simply a direct effort to gain *visibility*” (Žižek *Violence* 77). Therefore, such riots are, from this particular perspective and “at [their] most radical, *a conflict between non-society and society*, between those without a stake in their community and

those whose stakes are the greatest.” In short, such riots unveil a dichotomy between “those who still succeed in functioning within the system and those too frustrated to go on doing so”: struggling but perseverant lower-middle-class residents and small-business owners, for instance, and the structurally unemployable, disenfranchised members of their neighbourhoods (*The Year of Dreaming Dangerously* 60).¹²

Here, as Žižek articulates, we find the violence’s redemptive, self-transformative component: the rioters’ incomprehensible attack on their own communities signals both society’s “failure to integrate” them and the internal “crisis” of society’s very economic-political structure. Therefore the “demand to be recognised [*sic*] also implies a rejection of the very framework through which recognition takes place.” Of significance, therefore, redemptive violence challenges objective, systematic violence by symbolizing a struggle for recognition as “a call for the construction of a new universal framework” (*Violence* 78) in what is otherwise condemnable, destructive subjective violence.

However, how are we to understand the rabble as “the historically specific ‘natural beast’ produced by capitalist ideology itself, the zero-level of the capitalist subject” (Žižek *The Year of Dreaming Dangerously* 56)? More importantly, how can we more thoroughly demonstrate how late capitalism conditions a struggle for recognition during apparently irrational riots? Again, of importance, both the 2011 England rioters and the 2005 France rioters attacked *their own* communities, but it would be problematic to suggest that either riots occurred in a “suburb,” as the term “evokes wealth or at least prosperity.” The impoverished “*inner cities*” and “*banlieue-ghetto[s]*,” however, are

¹² This idea of being “too frustrated” is an important qualifier in identifying rioters as rabble in times of ostensibly irrational violence, which I will expand in Chapter Three. Such rioters are not simply impoverished but are also indignant, and it is this attitude which marks the rioters as excluded in a much more radical sense than simply being structurally alienated from society while also still trying to “succeed in functioning within the system” (Žižek *The Year of Dreaming Dangerously* 60).

peculiar for an almost contradictory makeup: composed of “*banlieues* and *banlieues* [...] separated by a social abyss and a permanent antagonism” (Balibar 48), they comprise both “those without a stake in their community and those whose stakes are the greatest” (Žižek *The Year of Dreaming Dangerously* 60). Therefore, Balibar concludes violence in such settings is “*self-destructive*” (50)—these communities of exclusion are the “object of destruction” themselves (51).

Violence in this context then constitutes the rabble’s means of expression: with the inner cities as the target of violence, the object is elusive. The rioters’ demand for recognition “escape[s]” from their grip over the ambivalence of their “*internal exclusion*.” In both England and France, for example, there were few deaths, with looting and destruction of consumer items and property assuming primacy among the rioters’ actions over attacks on physical persons or against brigades of riot police.¹³ The violence then adopted a “*highly spectacular*” attribute (51): a kind of ““virtual violence”” that is not fully tangible because of the rioters’ impotent political demands, which “*transforms* real, endemic social violence, to which it responds, *into spectacle*, thereby at once making it *visible* in its intensity and *invisible* in its everydayness.” Here the rioters’ actions strike with a two-in-one punch: 1) they symbolize a weak demand for recognition because this spectacle “affirm[s] not so much a ‘cause’ or a ‘project’ as an *existence* that is constantly [...] denied by the surrounding society,” and 2) this demand, as a virtual violence that “*transforms* real” relations, catalyzes the *possibility* for such a

¹³ I will return to the significance of looting later in this chapter, where I will briefly explain how it latently represents the first stirrings of autonomous anti-capitalist subversion by an incomprehensible underclass. This subargument will also transition me into an analysis of the rabble itself, in later chapters, and how I further identify the rabble’s emergence in acts of “meaningless” violence, an argument towards which I gesture in this chapter with my examination of the significance of rioters attacking their own communities and how they are “manufactured [as] inexistent” (Badiou 71).

transformation by the rioters “using [the only] means” available to them, those “proper to the experience of reality,” the means of consumerism (52). Recall from my introduction where I cited Bauman’s observation that riotous looting symbolizes consumerism as society’s defining characteristic, because it marks the rabble as disqualified citizens in their inability to consume (33). So instead, rioters reframe the consumerist imperative, effectively exposing the structures of late-capitalist society as really the mimetic and truly irrational aspect of themselves—an inverted claim for identity within the universalism of late capitalism. Therefore, as Balibar summarizes, violence’s irrationality marks and reconfigures the limit of late-capitalist society to provide a meaningful citizenship to all its members (58-59). This inversion, a mimetic exposure, compels the imperative to “recast [riots] as catalysts for change” (Frost et al. 8).

Balibar identifies senseless violence as an act of “*becoming political*”—a meaningless demand in itself that generates meaning in its claim *towards* inclusion. It is therefore a “performative declaration” that is not objectively visible but is instead purely subjective (61). This notion of subjectivity is significant as it presents the grounding basis for the self-reflective change that riots, as part of a “transversality” with other violent movements, embody (Balibar 65); I will recontextualize this perspective more theoretically in Chapter Three via my discussion of Benjamin’s divine violence. The “becoming political” of the violence rests on its capacity, or better yet, its promise, to transform the very system. In a few words, this transformation “emerge[s] from the very conditions of its *impossibility*”—its void, the lack of an explicitly political voice, i.e., redemptive violence’s purely subjective character (62). Therefore I must problematize a

strictly ontological lineation of riots, and I will pursue this problematization by juxtaposing Badiou's and Žižek's theories of riot violence.

Badiou, however, remains important for my study because, as a fervent taxonomist, he provides a useful model for explaining how exactly society's exclusionary framework functions. "The state is an extraordinary machine for manufacturing the inexistent" (71), he explains, those who Žižek calls the "structurally unemployable" (*The Year of Dreaming Dangerously* 10). The state produces the existence of an imaginary object to embody an identitarian "average." In Badiou's example, the state generates an average "French person" to denote the "French" and thus an idea of a "being-French" which in turn necessarily excludes the non-French. This "imaginary," average French person is premised on "inconsistent predicates" that label this average person, for instance, as "secular, a feminist, civilized, a worker, [...] white, [...] of Christian civilization, a tax evader, undisciplined," and so on, all "brandished by national propaganda as and when required by the circumstances" (73). More important than the arbitrary specifics of such hypothetical predicates, Badiou emphasizes, "is that one can make reference to this purely rhetorical [...] 'person' *as if he or she existed*" (73-74), granting "the state and those who obey it [...] a means of assessing what is normal and what is not" (74). Furthermore, those beyond this constructed normality become a manufactured "excess," whose being is "a pure and simple inexistence" (72).

Importantly, we can highlight a connection here between Badiou's understanding of society's excess and Žižek's notion of "inexistent" rioters (Badiou 71) as those "excluded from the political and social space proper" (Žižek *Violence* 77). Formally members of their own society, Badiou notes, echoing Žižek, they exist only insofar as

they “have the right to work and vote in silence” (52). Here Badiou more clearly explicates how this process of manufacturing the “excess” of society, in contradistinction to a “fictional” identitarian normal person (76), functions. The state relies upon the tool of “*separating names*” as labels to pinpoint the incomprehensible excess, including, for example, “youth from the *banlieues*” (77). However, incomprehensible violence by the in-existent signals, in Žižek’s words, “the construction of a new universal framework” (*Violence* 78). The “violent [acts] of the in-existent” operate as a “‘disengagement’ from [...] the state” precisely because they are irrational within the state’s framework of comprehension from a bourgeois perspective. This “‘disengagement’” therefore symbolizes, Badiou argues, the rabble’s implicit demand “to attain genuine existence,” i.e., it is disengagement by the excess, from the very system unable to recognize them as other than an excess, *in order to* “render *itself* visible” (68). Therefore, as Žižek concludes, senseless riots “contain a moment of genuine protest” by “displaying in a painfully palpable way the material force of ideology” that reduces the rioters to rabble. However, Žižek hesitates to grant such riots the status of being “truly self-assertive” because of the conceptual void at the heart of their politics (*The Year of Dreaming Dangerously* 60).¹⁴ I will seize upon this barrier and further elucidate Badiou’s theory to argue that this very void is the conceptual catalyst, or generator, in a lineage of historical riots towards autonomous self-reflection. Specifically, by considering a more subject-centered and phenomenological approach to violence, we create the very possibility to articulate “an Idea [for which] the theme [is] that things as they are must be regarded as unacceptable” (Badiou 21).

¹⁴ As he elaborates elsewhere: “There is no potential in these outbursts for the rise of a properly political agent” without their survival “in some kind of cultural registration” (*Violence* 224).

Riots and Autonomy: From Immediate to Historical

In order to grasp the significance of seemingly irrational riots as an active political gesture and more than a symptomatic and reactive outburst, it is important to taxonomize such riots in relation to sociological and theoretical categories, as a way both to demonstrate that such riots do not fit easily into any previously determined category and to understand how they catalyze the possibility of the emergence of a historical resistance movement. Furthermore, this approach validates a reading of such riots as autonomous in an effort to gain visibility, whereby reading them phenomenologically—i.e., as a bodily and implicit statement in how the rioters relate to the objective conditions of their society—allows us to comprehend such a struggle for recognition as “demands [for] the elaboration of new forms of self-determination” (Staudigl 250).

Clark McPhail argues that sociologists need to dismiss theories of riot motivation and participation that either reduce rioters to mere victims, on the one hand, of objective structural strain (the left-liberal response) or, on the other hand, to psychologically irrational actors (the right-conservative response), to instead posit that seemingly irrational riot phenomena need to be explained by purposive action *vis-à-vis* what he calls perception-control theory. Like Žižek, McPhail stresses the imperative to move beyond the dichotomy that objectifies or trivializes rioters in favour of a more subject-centered approach that reads a purposive motivation in seemingly irrational acts of riot violence. However, McPhail explores this argument in a more formally sociological context, stacking irrational riots up against different sociological categories of violence, which, I argue, leads McPhail via his theory of perception control to assert beyond Žižek that ostensibly irrational riots possess an element of autonomy.

Dismissive yet standard sociological readings of violent urban riots—incidents in which “one or more persons, part of a larger gathering, are engaged in violence against person or property or threaten to so engage and are judged capable of enacting that threat”—problematically categorize such riots under several convenient labels, all of which trivialize and ignore so-called incomprehensible riots. “*Celebration riots*” are “the most frequent” and often include sport riots in which fans riot as a celebratory act; “*protest riots*” are acts of violence in a direct response to a perceived sociopolitical injustice; “*property or commodity riots*” are acts of vandalism “against properties in general” rather than persons or a particular group of people; and finally “*communal riots*” as those violent acts composed of people from a particular identity group whose target is usually people from another particular identity group (2). Significantly, however, the problem with these canonized sociological categories, McPhail emphasizes, is that most riots do not fit neatly into any one category, and *in cases of supposed irrational violence*, all of these categories neglect to consider underlying motivations for riots, especially when such motivations are not easily discernible (3).

More relevantly, with subsequent theories that have attempted to address this failure to identify motivations in incomprehensible violence, McPhail reviews the pertinent statistics and concludes that none of them carry any empirical weight. Theories that endeavour to place the blame on structural strain rely on “precipitating incidents,” the objective socioeconomic conditions of society that push rioters to the point of violence. However, McPhail argues that these “incidents” are always posited “*ex post facto*” and that they do not always result in riots (4). More damaging is the statistical finding that no measure of “precipitating incidents” is necessarily “correlated with the

frequency or severity of rioting” (5). Similarly, in regards to views that simply label actors of irrational violence as just that, *irrational* because of a possible psychological deprivation, “there [is] virtually no empirical correlation between [psychological] deprivation and/or frustration” and actual “individual riot participation” (6). As such, a more subject-centered theory of riot participation is needed to understand ostensibly incomprehensible acts of violence, one that neither objectifies nor trivializes the rioters.

In a sense, however, categorization is important if I am to specify and pin down the rabble’s autonomous moment—indeed, this is my intention in theorizing redemptive violence. If we are to grasp Žižek’s useful claim that irrational riots are a “genuine protest” (*The Year of Dreaming Dangerously* 60) but *also* theorize how they represent a true *potentiality* for an active, autonomous political gesture, it is necessary to delineate this process concretely. Returning to Badiou, I will assert that this autonomous gesture arises from the political gap at the heart of incomprehensible violence. In a way that also speaks to Žižek’s articulation that supposedly irrational riots symbolize a latent “call for the construction of a new universal framework” (*Violence* 78), this latent call is the very deconstructive condition of possibility for autonomous subversion, what Badiou calls “historical riots.” Importantly, and to preemptively clarify, I interpret such a condition as deconstructive because, like Badiou, I do not mean to suggest that immediate riots, as he conceptualizes them, are necessarily an infant form of historical riots. Instead, I want to interrogate Badiou’s strict ontology of riots and argue that immediate riots, as a historical void, are the catalyst in Badiou’s own lineation, symbolizing an aporetic autonomy.

Badiou’s study is important for this purpose as it aims to understand what is perceived as senseless violence not, as Žižek does, as merely a “genuine protest” (*The*

Year of Dreaming Dangerously 60) that ultimately reveals itself to be misguided because it lacks “some kind of cultural registration” (*Violence* 224), but rather more radically, as the autonomous “possibility of [the] possibility” (Badiou 28) of such a “cultural registration.” In this sense, such riots implicitly respond to the problem that Žižek argues they ignore; we can translate the rabble’s violence into a “call for the construction of a new universal framework” (*Violence* 78). I will seize upon Badiou’s move here to analyze irrational riots in a strategic sense, thus gesturing towards how we can conceive them not simply as a manifestation of late-capitalist society but as an actual example of how we can begin to understand their political capacity. By this same token, I will then attempt to hypothesize an internal tension in Žižek’s own writings between the possibilities and downfall of this negativity, which in this case means, specifically, the tension between riots as a hopeful, latent autonomy and as a mere, non-autonomous outburst, further complicating Žižek’s hesitancy towards reading them as more than a mere “genuine protest” (*The Year of Dreaming Dangerously* 60).

Fully explaining all of the nuances of Badiou’s thought is beyond the scope of this project; however, a brief outline of his idea of philosophical truth as it relates to emancipatory politics can adequately lead us into Badiou’s theory of riots and help us to explicate the radical potential that riots possess. Badiou argues that truth is not a positive ontology, political or otherwise, but instead occurs during an event—it *happens*, in what he calls a Truth-Event. As Žižekian theologian Adam Kotsko explains, a Truth-Event reveals itself through a “truth-process” (79), what Žižek calls a “truth-procedure” (*The Parallax View* 325), whereby the “excluded element” of society, those “with no ‘official’ place in the situation,” erupt unpredictably in a seemingly irrational way. Specifically, it

is in the very act of “embrac[ing]” this eruption that a truth-process happens (Kotsko 79), as it “suspends” the very contours of society’s comprehension framework (82), thus reaching beyond this framework and as such being universal and truly subjectivizing in scope (81).¹⁵ Badiou locates this comprehension framework in the realm of Being—which he directly opposes to Event—and he understands Being as the objective state of our political, social existence in its liberal-democratic form. This Being/Event opposition, as Žižek explains, is the key kernel in understanding the Truth-Event’s radical potential. There is a gap in our current conception of democracy in its late-capitalist form, between the ideal of representing all citizens and the excess of the “excluded element” (Kotsko 79) whose “representation in some determinate State of Being [...] can never be adequately represented”; therefore “an Event always occurs at the site of this surplus/remainder which eludes the grasp of the State” (Žižek *The Parallax View* 324).

Importantly, it is within this framework that Badiou identifies seemingly irrational riots as representing the potential for a Truth-Event, and a truth-process is as such a pure process of subjectivization because it occurs in this gap—“a break in which the inexistent appears” (70). Badiou views contemporary Western capitalist democracy as a “lifeless” (5) “*oppressive* [...] ‘dictatorship’” (59) because it rules over and produces the inexistent of society in that, as an excess, they “cannot be accounted for in terms of the political order” (Žižek *The Parallax View* 321). “Democracy” denotes the piecemeal attempt to preserve the status quo, either in the form of late-capitalist representative democracy that reproduces itself off of the labour power—the very existence—of the inexistent (Badiou 56, 59, Žižek *The Parallax View* 319), or *vis-à-vis* flawed attempts of a direct democratic

¹⁵ As I will further explain later in this chapter, a true universal can only be accessed subjectively. With “meaningless” riots, the rioters’ subjective position is the void that catalyzes a latent universality.

movement to incorporate “electoral procedures” to adequately reflect the “general will,” to use Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s term, in its development (Badiou 60). Both, however, lack the self-constituting subjective element of prescribing their own universality, i.e., they lack the Truth-Event of “*the restitution of the inexistent*” (Badiou 56).

Badiou reads such a truth-process into what he calls historical riots. However, in examining the lineage from immediate, to latent, and then to historical riot, I will theorize the subsequent autonomous potential of immediate riots to theorize their subjective element. I therefore hope to articulate immediate riots as an autonomous potentiality that challenges the existing objectivity of the world in which the rabble lives, and in the process problematize Žižek’s hesitancy to grant immediate riots autonomy. This will lead into a phenomenological reading of riots that augments my understanding of redemptive violence as a demand for recognition, that is, in McPhail’s words, an attempt for rioters to “control” their objective surroundings to accord with their phenomenological “perceptions” of their lives (17)—*to be perceived as recognized*.¹⁶

The historical riot, the final kind of riotous struggle that Badiou identifies, after the latent riot which proceeds the immediate riot, projects “a rebirth of History” by according to a rebirth of an Idea, the abstract idea that challenges Capital’s “lifeless version of ‘democracy,’ [...] the idea of Communism” (6). For Badiou, capitalism operates in a historical narrative, by which we currently live in a time of democracy as oppression that produces some subjects as the excess of society. A riot is then historical when it signals the demand for an “alternative to the dominant world” of the current

¹⁶ Recognition here is the perception of recognition in the Hegelian sense of mutually reciprocating—*perceiving* and acknowledging—subjectivity. I will expand on this point in Chapter Three via my discussion of Hegel’s political philosophy.

historical period (38-39). This call for a better world is the Idea that represents the “*emergence of a truth*” (60)—the “historical becoming” of the inexistent. To clarify, the historical riot is *not* an act of political change itself. As a “becoming” it outlines and gestures towards what this change “*is going to be*” (64). Rioters then render themselves “visible” in order to “*appear as existent*” (69). This process stems from a *void*, what Badiou calls an “absence” (41) and “a nothing” (62), because it is a “becoming” of what is already inexistent and not itself an ontological act of protest. It thus creates a gap because in this Event there is an absence of the identitarian object. Recall that this Event represents a “disengagement” from the objective framework of society: *as an absence, a removal, an historical riot designates the rise of a political truth because rioters implicitly present themselves in a pure form—removing themselves from the framework of exclusion as a challenge to their “non-identity”* (94). It is, as Badiou clarifies, the symbolic demand to “replace [...] representation by a kind of pure presentation” (97).

How does Badiou proceed from immediate, to latent, and finally to historical in his schemata of riots? Badiou defines the immediate riot as a transitory violent response to “the primacy of things over existence” (20). Following this logic that the ruling ideology values property over the working class and the poor, immediate riots juxtapose public spaces between the “hopeless” on one side and the violent, repressive authorities on the other side (18). Latent riots, which I read as a transitional riot between immediate and historical, and about which Badiou is most cryptic and abstract in defining, consist of a violent “rupture” that creates “the possibility of the unforeseen historical riot unfolding of some immediate riot” (28). In a sense, they represent the abstract possibility of an immediate riot aligning itself with the Idea “that things as they are must be regarded as

unacceptable” (21). I therefore characterize latent riots as really the “latent” aspect of an immediate riot, gesturing towards the emancipatory spirit of an historical riot. What more tangibly distinguishes historical riots from immediate riots—and the latter, I argue, are the catalyst in a lineation towards the former—are three concrete and strategic criteria: *localization*, the riot’s expansion to a more enduring site of resistance; *intensification*, the establishment of shared demands and values; and *contraction*, the clear representation of a defined group of resistance that speaks on behalf of the repressed (35).

How then do immediate riots generate an autonomous gesture, despite this lack of characteristics that, for Badiou, constitutes a Truth-Event? Despite Badiou’s explicit comment that immediate riots are “ultimately without enduring truth” (21), how are we to then understand them as symbolizing an active and authentic demand for recognition, which Badiou identifies as the successful trait of historical riots? By seizing upon a possible tension in Žižek’s work, that is, between his analysis of Badiou’s philosophy that I will outline in the proceeding paragraphs and his more specific remarks about senseless violence as being “not truly self-assertive” (*The Year of Dreaming Dangerously* 60), we can begin to broach these questions. Specifically, in distinction to Badiou’s reading of a Truth-Event as fulfilling itself in the form of an historical riot—i.e., Badiou identifies a Truth-Event’s authenticity in the positive, or, the sphere of politics (Kotsko 81, Žižek *The Parallax View* 327)—I identify an immediate riot’s productive autonomous moment in its negativity, its very “limitation” (Žižek *The Parallax View* 326), *as part of a lineage* from immediate to historical. In other words, that the immediate riot, in its latency, is a process towards historical riots, it in itself therefore represents an active gesture of subjectivity.”

Žižek hesitates to grant meaningless riots an autonomous gesture because, I argue, he reads them from a moralizing perspective, which means that such riots can never be anything more than a simple manifestation of late capitalism. Within the strict confines of this perspective, Žižek's argument is fully justified; however, I will hypothesize that such an analysis actually *supports* Badiou's more strategic perspective by addressing the shortcomings of Badiou's strict ontology, thus symbolizing an autonomous element in immediate riots. To Žižek, "Badiou's provocative idea that one should reinvent emancipatory terror today is one of his most profound insights"—and Žižek reads "terror" as eruptive violent acts that appear incomprehensible (*The Parallax View* 326). However, in "contrast to the positive rules that Badiou sets" for ascertaining the "truth" in a Truth-Event, i.e., the autonomous gesture of such incomprehensible violent acts (Kotsko 81), Žižek theorizes this gesture in the negative, i.e., *how they fail politically*. We encounter such a gesture in the violence's "ideologico-political *displacement*: as an index of [...] a limitation, of a refusal" to become political. The lack of a political footing is how Badiou distinguishes an immediate from an historical riot, but Žižek maintains that we should understand "recourse to radical 'terror'" more autonomously because such recourse is "a kind of hysterical acting-out bearing witness to [the rabble's] inability to disturb the very fundamentals of economic order" (*The Parallax View* 326). More precisely, in this political failure, signaled by the transitory irrationality of riots, there is simultaneously a successful, subjectivizing moment that suspends the political order (Kotsko 82) and the riots then shift their demand for recognition to the economic sphere.

By shifting outside of the political sphere in their irrationality, the rabble, "in [their] very [political] failure," assert their subjectivity through this shift (Žižek *The*

Parallax View 328), thus acting as the “generator” of the subject’s very core which catalyzes the transition to Badiou’s idea of an historical riot. As such, the immediate riot’s political impotency is its very “positive and productive” force (Žižek *The Ticklish Subject* 165). This notion of a latent generator *towards* an historical riot therefore complements Badiou’s understanding of how historical riots are successful as a “disengagement” from the comprehension framework of the political sphere—this disengagement is made possible through the immediate riot’s latent potentiality, in *its* shift away from the political sphere. Therefore because immediate riots are within the strategic matrix immediate-latent-historical do they represent an autonomous gesture. So in Badiou’s own delineation of this matrix, despite his brief yet explicit dismissal of immediate riots *in and of themselves* (21), he locates this autonomous gesture that they present latently—i.e., by being “the possibility of [the] possibility” of historical riots (28).

Scholars Jasper Bernes and Joshua Clover, in their review of Badiou’s book, suspect that this is the exact position Badiou theorizes without realizing it. Precisely because of the lineage from immediate to historical, and also because Badiou is more strategic in his reading of riots than Žižek is, Bernes and Clover argue that the 2011 England rioters’ looting, for example, is more than a manifestation of consumerism *by Badiou’s own logic*. Through this shift into the economic sphere which latently accords with the political disengagement that Badiou articulates in historical riots, the looting in the 2011 England riots is “not a form of extreme, high-risk consumerism” but “is perhaps the clearest examples [*sic*] we have in the present moment of communist *practice*, without which the communist Idea can mean nothing.” By this Bernes and Clover explain that, within the framework of Badiou’s work, “communism can mean at this point only

the elaboration of practices that remove the things we need and want, the things we make, from behind the cordon of property”—and we saw this elaboration in the England riots in that property was “as often destroyed as [it was] seized for consumption,” signaling a sort of “*hatred* of the commodity form.” Immediate riots as such present the very possibility for the communist Idea to manifest itself in historical riots; indeed, through this specific example, we even see the Idea prevalent *in* the immediate riot. “Perhaps, then, the very immediacy of the immediate riot might have more to teach us than it appears” even to Badiou himself, Bernes and Clover conclude. In Badiou’s own words, immediate riots provide “the thrilling sense of an abrupt alteration in the relationship between the possible and the impossible” (94), but Badiou falters for supposing that the inexistent rise and demand recognition *after* or *beyond* this alteration, this gap, instead of *through* it.

This “positive and productive” gap, to summarize, hints back to the tension I outlined in Žižek’s work, which, I emphasize, is not a contradiction but a kind of dialectic that actually augments Žižek’s position relative to Badiou’s theory of riots. By placing the shortcomings of Badiou’s ontology and the tensions in Žižek’s arguments side by side, I tentatively hypothesize that they actually resolve each other. On one hand, Žižek argues that immediate riots are merely a symptomatic “protest” that, unlike historical riots, lack the political endurance to constitute themselves as an autonomous Truth-Event. On the other hand, contra Badiou but in a way that, as Žižek implies and Bernes and Clover explicate actually strengthens Badiou’s larger analysis of the immediate-latent-historical matrix, this political failure, this “limitation,” is simultaneously the immediate riot’s “positive and productive” moment because it is the “generator” of the historical riot (Žižek *The Ticklish Subject* 165). This process of generation radicalizes the

immediate riot's latency to such a degree that we can comprehend its autonomous gesture—*the latency is radicalized to the point that in itself it becomes positive.*

Through this lineage Badiou actually understands the latent aspect of immediate riots, which itself symbolizes the possibility of historical riots, as an autonomous, subjective act. After a brief elucidation of this process, I will then return to McPhail's perception-control theory, which I referenced earlier, and explain how this process works in a more formally sociological context, i.e., the rabble's articulation of how they relate to their objective state of being is an autonomous, subjective moment because they are abstractly attempting to "control" their objective surroundings, in what philosopher Michael Staudigl calls an implicit phenomenological act of self-construction.

Phenomenological Violence

Within the immediate-latent-historical matrix, Badiou locates the autonomous moment that immediate riots symbolically gesture in the historical form in the rising act of the inexistent. Specifically, in this very struggle for recognition, "*the restitution of the inexistent [...] is proclaimed [...] in the here and now*" (56-57). With riots, what we witness objectively is "the production of a new site which is nevertheless internal to the general localization that is a world" (57). Importantly, this means that rioters latently demand recognition by striking *outside* of society's comprehension framework, but also do not remove themselves from it entirely due to their political impotency, i.e., not becoming an articulable and ontological protest. Riots "open up new possibilities—contain[ing] an element of *prescriptive universality.*" However, because this universality is only prescriptive, it *signals* ("open[s] up") a new world without fulfilling this latent potential. Therefore it *symbolizes* without actualizing the possibility of "*an authority that*

is legitimate precisely because its truth derives from the fact that it legitimizes itself" (59). This is the key moment in the immediate riot's autonomy. The rabble impotently try to control their subjectivity relative to their objective world through a demand for recognition, and their incomprehensible violence, a way to enact this control, means that this demand can only be recognized—legitimized—*internally*, thus subjectively.

This notion of control, the rabble engaging with the objective framework of society, what Žižek calls an implicit declaration of "how one relates to one's objective conditions, how one subjectivizes them" (*The Year of Dreaming Dangerously* 58), reflects McPhail's perception-control theory. Recall McPhail's dismissal of theories of violence that objectify rioters through an analysis of structural strain or trivialize their experiences as psychological models of deprivation and aggression; this dismissal spoke to the importance McPhail identified for a theory of irrational riot violence that also addresses the subjective standpoint of rioters. As I will soon articulate, this perspective is deeply informed by phenomenological perspectives of riots, gesturing towards how we can understand the rabble's emergence, through violence, as an autonomous demand for "new forms of self-determination" (Staudigl 250).

McPhail's perception-control theory proposes that rioters' irrational behaviour of rioters is an attempt to match their perceptions—i.e., their inner perspective of being excluded from meaningful social and political participation in society, a reflection of how they engage with their society—with society's objective conditions. He builds this proposition off of the shortcomings of rational-calculus theory, a sociological theory of violence that seemingly grants purposive motivation to rioters. Rational-calculus theory works on a cost-benefit principle: rioters' actions are rational if the benefits outweigh the

costs. However, rational-calculus theory cannot “explain a host of [...] riot behaviors [*sic*]” that “carry considerable private risk [...] but generate no immediate private individual gain” (McPhail 14). McPhail’s solution is to account for the subjective as well as the objective viewpoint through perception control, meaning that rioters *can* have goal-oriented actions even when they are not ostensibly comprehensible (15).

This approach seizes upon the standpoint position between subjectivity and objectivity by looking at the subjective *interaction* with the objective, not entrapping rioters’ behaviours exclusively in either sphere. McPhail graphs an outline of such an interaction between inputs and outputs; irrational rioting simply denotes rioters’ attempt to “control” inputs in relation to outputs. By control McPhail “refers to the process by which an organism acts on its environment to make some aspect of that environment conform to an inner image, standard, or reference condition established or selected by the organism.” Inputs are perceptions, an individual’s subjective perspective fed by outputs, which are the objective conditions of society. Significantly, the rabble as rioters are not trying to control outputs, i.e., politically change society; instead, they are making an autonomous gesture by trying to control “for perceptions or inputs [...], not outputs.” Simply put, McPhail’s theory enables a purposive aspect in the rabble’s actions by arguing that, in making a claim to alter inputs *vis-à-vis* their outputs, they are asserting their exclusion from society as the inexistent, a demand which reflects their sense of being-in-the-world and is thus necessarily a “self governing” act (17), a demand for recognition that evokes Badiou’s imperative to open up a new world (59).

This standpoint between the subjective and objective viewpoints is an integral position because, in Staudigl’s analysis, it broaches a phenomenological understanding of

ostensibly senseless violence, creating the possibility of comprehending the senselessness of violence as generative of meaning. To Staudigl, such a phenomenological reading takes into account “invisible” objective violence, which I outlined earlier in this chapter in referencing Žižek. In striking at the in-between space of subjectivity and objectivity, we can *interrogate* the objective *through* the subjective (236).

Staudigl constructs an “integrative theory of violence” (247) that hits at “the *in-between* of subjective sense and objective being.” Such a phenomenological approach encounters the incomprehensible aspect of senseless violence to “offer [...] tools for critically investigating and, potentially, creatively transcending the ways we habitually make sense of the world” (234). Importantly, violence at its core, Staudigl reminds us, not only destroys pre-given sense structures but in doing so also destructs our very “*being-in-the-world*, i.e., our basic capacities for making sense,” opening up the chance to *reconstruct* our subjective selves *in relation to* our objective being (235). More precisely, we experience a bodily vulnerability in the process of embodiment, a kind of violence itself by which the “anonymous” objective structure *embodies* us as subjects. Following this observation, Staudigl argues that senseless violence operates in an in-between space to expose the subject to his pre-embodied self, a “zero-point” self, experiencing himself from within, “absolutely near to oneself” (238). This autonomous gesture, i.e., experiencing oneself from within, philosophically augments McPhail’s sociological argument: as a “zero-point” self, the subject perceives and *controls* subjective perceptions to unveil and potentially alter objective being. Perception here is then understood as a mode of communication between the subjective and the objective, what Staudigl calls a “*world in the making*” (239).

Controlling subjective perspective then is how the rabble creatively transcend and reconstruct objective being. By transcendence Staudigl “refers to those experiences which confront us with a crisis or breakdown of our everyday ways of making sense” (242). Senseless violence in this specific context then allows us, in accordance with Žižek’s perspective, to “make the invisible functioning [of objective, systematic violence] visible and, thus[,] analyzable” (Staudigl 246). Put simply, structural violence affects our sense of being-in-the-world, i.e., our ability to understand ourselves, and it is this violence that denies society’s in-existent excess recognition in the objective framework. Senseless violence that operates outside of this framework, the violence that sparks a “crisis or breakdown,” reconfigures perception by operating in the ambiguous space between the rabble’s subjective, embodied selves and their objective being. In Chapter Two, I will recontextualize this idea via Rancière’s understanding of society’s “consensus system” (*Disagreement* 124), which is the objective system that determines who is sensible and comprehensible in society. I will argue that those who strike outside of the “consensus system” disrupt it and as such latently assume an authentic subjectivity.

However, in theorizing beyond Žižek, this process is an *active* way to make sense of the world subversively *through* its exposure of invisible violence. To Staudigl, this phenomenological approach reveals a “*creative potential*” of human action to reconfigure the very relationship between subjective sense and objective being (248), echoing Badiou’s argument that riots signal a radical, prescriptive universality. To Staudigl, senseless violence represents “an *intended violation of the embodied claims posed by embodied subjects*,” which is to say, an active rejection of the systematically so-called comprehensible, standardized modes of recognition (249), a transcendent process that

gestures towards a ““third dimension”” (239)—a latent new world. Specifically, such violence implies ““symbolic action,’ [...] ‘a source of metaphorical material to symbolize power relations”” (249-250). If we unpack this line of thought, senseless violence now operates “as a de-contextualized [...] kind of symbolically over-determined action”:

By disrupting all pre-given sense-structures, “senseless” or excessive violent action radically transforms the subject’s preconceived patterns of understanding. In other words, it collapses the self’s interpretive integrity, and thus demands the elaboration of new forms of self-determination through the creation of adequate narrative patterns. [W]e should [therefore] analyze these types of experiences [i.e., senseless violence] as suspensions of our taken-for-granted ways of life. Because they force us to step outside the machinery of everyday life and average understanding, they can be used as leading clues to reconsider our traditions of understanding and the categories derived from them. We should thus avoid succumbing to the easily adopted “solution” of simply excluding such actions from the realm of the rational and the human.

Staudigl here encapsulates an active, autonomous gesture in phenomenological violence, which “demand[s] new forms of self-determination” (250) by suspending and transcending the objective comprehension framework that conditions our subjectivity by constituting a “crisis or breakdown” (242), and this process opens the door to new methods of autonomous subject creation, a demand for recognition that also demands a better world. This philosophical perspective finds its sociological counterpart in McPhail’s theory, as rioters, in redemptively transcending this framework, symbolize the possibility to analyze our very *being-in-the-world*. McPhail’s understanding of “control” is here an assertion of having perception, a demand of an inner and autonomous sense of recognition. Therefore, as McPhail concludes, ostensibly ““reactive”” violence covertly contains “purposive [...] goals” (23-24). I articulate this sense of purposiveness, engrained into immediate riots, through the lineage of riots that Badiou maps. It is frankly not contestable that irrational, immediate riots—*in and of themselves*—do not contain the

potential for meaningful political action. From this perspective, Žižek is not incorrect to read such riots as “reactive” if otherwise “genuine” (*The Year of Dreaming Dangerously* 60). More than just a symptom of or reaction to late-capitalist society, however, the rabble’s incomprehensible violence is their latent, autonomous attempt to “control” their subjectivity in relation to their objective being (McPhail), as such “embod[ying] an irreducible and omnipresent *option of social action*” (Staudigl 247). The senselessness in senseless violence is its own “positive and productive” gesture (Žižek *The Ticklish Subject* 165), playing itself out in Badiou’s matrix of riots to “embody” this “*option of social action*”—the authentic “possibility of [the] possibility” (Badiou 28) of recognition.

As Staudigl identifies, the most important factor in this process concerns how “‘senseless’ or excessive violent action[s]” operate “as suspensions of our taken-for-granted ways of life” (250). This suspension is the rabble’s autonomous gesture, their demand for recognition. Explicating this demand, couched in multidisciplinary analyses of violence, has been my major focus in this chapter. I began by arguing, largely through Žižek, for the importance of considering objective, systematic violence, beyond directly subjective violence, to consider ways in which the rabble are barred from recognition. Responses that objectify and trivialize riots are both inadequate because they attempt to close the comprehension gap by arguing irrational violence is indicative of a moral collapse or neglected social programs, respectively. Instead we must consider the rabble’s subjectivity at the risk of masking society’s abstract, objective reality.

It is still important for us to comprehend the rabble’s emergence, in this case, as a symptom of late capitalism’s objective violence—however, this kind of analysis gestures beyond late capitalism’s conceptual framework, embracing the comprehension gap that

exists *within* that framework. The comprehension gap is precisely the gateway to understanding the importance of the rabble's violence as offering a redemptive component to the rabble's actions: the demand for recognition outside of the exclusionary late-capitalist framework. This perspective propels my reading of riots as being more than just a symptom of late capitalism by, more radically, being an autonomous driving force in the articulation of modes of resistance. I mapped this possibility *within* Badiou's matrix of riots, that is, as part of a genesis of riots to understand precisely how we are to more clearly articulate this idea of resistance. I augmented this position through an in-depth reading of sociological and philosophical conceptions of acts of seemingly irrational violence to uncover their autonomous gesture, the conceptual opening up of a space for "new forms of self-determination" (Staudigl 250). Most importantly, it is not riots in and of themselves that produce such "symbolic action" to borrow Staudigl's term (249); rather, we identify the redemptive, autonomous demand for recognition by *embracing* this transcendental space. Just as actively confronting and engaging with the gap, i.e., "embrac[ing]" the eruption of irrational violence, represents the criterion of authenticity in a Truth-Event (Kotsko 79) because this eruption "suspends" the contours of society's comprehension framework (82), Staudigl explicitly identifies the senselessness in seemingly irrational, violent riots as the transcendental act of "suspension" (250). Therefore, this understanding further strengthens my argument that Badiou's "immediate riot" is more authentic, political, and autonomous than it first appears in Badiou's own text. Only by confronting and not suppressing the comprehension gap can we begin to truly confront our objective state of being as subjects of late capitalism.

Chapter Two: Rioted

“[T]he production of state authority, and the law as an expression of its sovereignty, is dependent on the production of an unlawful underside of the state” (Hansen and Stepputat 305).

In my first chapter, I introduced my conception of redemptive violence, whereby violence strikes outside of late capitalism’s comprehension framework. The rabble’s violence, as an impotent and seemingly irrational display of force, arguably symbolizes a latent demand for recognition beyond this framework that systematically and ideologically excludes them from engaging in “the political and social space proper.” The irrational violence is then, in effect, “a direct effort to gain *visibility*” (Žižek *Violence* 77). Importantly, I theorized this demand for recognition as an *autonomous* act; the violence is part of a lineage, which I mapped through Badiou’s schema of riots, from immediate to historical. As part of this lineage, its very senselessness, phenomenologically, gestures towards “new forms of self-determination” (Staudigl 250). However, this understanding of the rabble’s violence requires a sufficient delineation of what I mean by “late-capitalist sovereignty.” How does the objective structure of the rabble’s society—from which they are contradictorily excluded—function in a hegemonic and ideological sense, and how does it produce not only their subjectivities themselves but also the conditions of possibility for the kind of self-determination I theorize in seemingly incoherent acts of violence? Specifically, how does this understanding of late capitalism relate to my reading of such violence as an active, autonomous gesture, given the rabble’s political impotency and lack of any coherent notion of collectivity? The purpose of this chapter will be to address and tentatively answer these questions, leading to a more complete understanding of both a) the ideological hegemony of late capitalism that sustains the

comprehension framework which establishes the conceptual grounds for understanding, or not understanding, acts of violence, and simultaneously breeds the very possibilities for autonomous resistance, and b) how the rabble's violence—within this objective structure—as such signals a “transformative” possibility (Mazzarella 726) *because* of its fragile and regressive political impotency.

I transition from my first chapter by addressing this latter point through a reading of subversive social collectivities to articulate how the rabble's violence symbolizes an autonomous gesture within the context of late-capitalist sovereignty. I can then demarcate specifically how late capitalism arguably functions, as a speculative, immaterial hegemony that fatalistically produces, for example, the rabble as a structurally incomprehensible underclass. Finally, I outline this structure as late capitalism's comprehension framework, which excludes otherwise formal citizens from meaningful social and political life through the cognitive and symbolic construction of subjects. As such, redemptive violence represents a latent demand for recognition—“a call for the construction of a new universal framework” (Žižek *Violence* 78).

I begin, via a discussion of Hardt and Negri's *Multitude*, by discussing how riotous crowds are produced by the late-capitalist hegemony of immaterial labour. Juxtaposed with—and as a potential challenge to—the autonomy of rioters within the lineage of crowds I theorized through Badiou, Hardt and Negri by contrast privilege the more subversive and creative “multitude” over the transient and riotous “crowd.” However, as Mazzarella reveals, crowds and multitudes actually share “an unacknowledged negative intimacy,” and therefore seemingly irrational crowds actually catalyze a possibility for autonomous subjectivity and critical self-reflection (698).

Following these thinkers, I define the crowd as a sometimes violent and *seemingly* “regressive,” irrational collective of individuals. By this I mean that a crowd denotes some kind of unruly mob that is unable to articulate itself within the conceptual confines of contemporary politics; the crowd instead implies a “hotheaded savagery” in how they conduct themselves (697). Today, society uses qualifiers to differentiate from crowds more acceptable and comprehensible, so to speak, political protest collectivities, such as *smart* mobs, the more intentionally political version of flash mobs, which are semi-spontaneous gatherings of people in public places often for artistic purposes.¹⁷ I argue that riotous crowds, necessarily produced by the hegemony of immaterial labour, symbolize a “reconfigur[ation]” of this late-capitalist hegemony (Hansen and Stepputat 307), constituting a latent yet authentic universality. In Chapter Three, I will recontextualize the crowd via the figure of the rabble to extensively delineate how rioters, as rabble, represent such a latent universality.

After outlining this hegemony of immaterial labour and referencing Mazzarella to redeem crowds from Hardt and Negri’s dismissal of them, I will transition into my delineation of late capitalism via social anthropologist Thomas Blom Hansen and cultural sociologist Finn Stepputat. Importantly, I explain Hardt and Negri’s understanding of the hegemony of immaterial labour because it complements Hansen and Stepputat’s theorization of contemporary, Western state sovereignties, in that they manage and control subjects not through traditional, top-down governmental structures but by effectively outsourcing power through processes of biopolitical production. Consequently, the market forces of imperialist, late-capitalist society become a kind of

¹⁷ See Rheingold.

informal sovereignty, which produces incomprehensible, illegal underclasses of people that also constitute the market's own underside. Through the hegemony of immaterial social labour and "an almost religious belief in the self-regulating forces of the market," such produced underclasses mimetically challenge, in their latent assertion of their own authentic universality, "'the market' [as] an evermore powerful sovereign force" (309).

This redemption, so to speak, of riotous crowds speaks to late-capitalist sovereignty as a regression to classical models of capitalist exploitation, as theorized by Badiou, Harvey, Fredric Jameson, and Žižek. This return to old capitalism arguably functions under a new veneer, the hegemony of immaterial labour that Hardt and Negri theorize. Importantly, this hegemony, I argue, is the definitive element in late capitalism as a speculative, "messianic" capitalism (Comaroff and Comaroff 292) that fatalistically produces an incomprehensible underclass and which is the autonomous gesture of riotous crowds *as part* of the network of subversive multitudes, that, in Badiou's words, symbolizes a "popular uprising against this very regression" to classic capitalism (5). I articulate late capitalism as mythological and fatalistic because, as I will explain, it functions on chance, like a game in which there are winners, the finance capitalists, and losers, the incomprehensible underclass, the rabble. This game is mythological because late capitalism, operative via the hegemony of the market, is speculative and thus theological. It asserts itself as sovereign by destining people to their fate, producing and managing subjectivities; I will delineate this concept in more detail in Chapter Three. Finally, I conclude this chapter by parsing through late capitalism's comprehension framework to describe how it renders society's underclass as incomprehensible. This analysis returns me to Žižek's argument that it is only this excluded underclass who can

truly subvert late capitalism because they are “the part of those who have no part” (Rancière *Disagreement* 123) who can therefore impotently disturb the universal of late capitalism. Therefore I will demonstrate the latent potentiality for recognition that the rabble embody in their demand for an “alternative to the dominant world” (Badiou 39).

Crowds and Multitudes: Theorizing the Hegemony of Immaterial Labour

How do the rabble, during their latent emergence via ostensibly incomprehensible acts of riotous violence, represent an autonomous redemptive violence, a demand for recognition that strikes beyond late capitalism’s framework to compel imperatives for critical self-reflection? Previously, I outlined a partial answer to this question through my discussion of Badiou’s schema of riots. In conjunction with a phenomenological reading of irrational violence—which holds that such violence has a “purposive” element (McPhail 24) and operates as a “suspension [...] of our taken-for-granted ways of life” (Staudigl 250)—immediate riots function as a “generator” within Badiou’s matrix; thus they contain a “positive and productive” force (Žižek *The Ticklish Subject* 165). However, this argument in itself remains fragile and therefore insufficient; I have yet to demonstrate how it functions within a framework of more conceptual understandings of social movements, specifically in relation to late capitalism’s hegemony of immaterial social labour. In this section I will articulate how the rabble as an irrational “crowd,” distinguished from the more comprehensible and inclusive “multitude,” provides a “transformative” possibility (Mazzarella 726) that abstractly catalyzes a “gap” from which its political potentiality can realize itself. This argument allows me to delineate my understanding of late capitalism and to demonstrate how the hegemony of immaterial labour produces the rabble and how late capitalism’s comprehension framework operates.

The rise of immaterial labour as a hegemony, by which society's underclass are biopolitically produced and managed, is the springboard off of which Hardt and Negri present their thesis in *Multitude*. Specifically, it is *within*, not outside, late capitalism that Hardt and Negri locate an immanent possibility for emancipation. For them, the multitude represents "the living alternative" to late capitalism "that grows within" it (xiii). Having "moved from the assembly line to the network" (Mazzarella 700), production no longer takes place strictly in some discrete economic realm but instead in the social realm, through "communication, collaboration, and cooperation" (Hardt and Negri xv). Hardt and Negri "call this newly dominant model 'biopolitical production' to highlight that it not only involves the production of material goods but also touches on and produces all facets of social life, economic, cultural, and political" (xvi). This model of immaterial production is hegemonic because of its ubiquitous stature and power to transform all other models of labour and social life (107). As Žižek clarifies, "social (interpersonal) relations themselves" are the products of late capitalism, and this ideology "emerges" [...] 'hegemonic[ally]' in the precise sense [that it] play[s] the key, emblematic[,] and structural role" in producing subjects (*The Year of Dreaming Dangerously* 9).

This omnipresent hegemony destroys any conceptual "outside" to capitalism (102); therefore, resistance must come from within the hegemonic structure. Specifically, this hegemony creates its own conditions for resistance. The system of "communication, collaboration, and cooperation" also designates the creation of a "common," shared forms of knowledge and human relationships that in turn produce new commons where the multitude can ground itself (xv). Importantly, the multitude is therefore such a network: it "is capable of forming society autonomously" (xviii) because it acts as a polymorphous

and multiple whole *based on* what all of its elements share in common. In other words, the “hegemony of immaterial labor [*sic*] creates common relationships and common social forms” (113) which then denote a “becoming common” that breeds the possibility for resistance (114). The multitude is autonomous because it defies traditional bases for sovereignty because its immaterial labour forms together as a network. With labour rendered immaterial, the multitude is necessarily multiple; there is no ruler, no “one,” and no concept of singularity. Instead, “[t]he multitude is composed of a set of *singularities*” instead of being singular in itself (99). Unlike “the crowd,” which is mediated, “incoherent,” “passive,” and “often horribly destructive,” for Hardt and Negri, the multitude’s very immediacy symbolizes its potential for autonomy because there is no sovereign ruler—it by definition “rules itself” through the common (100). As a “*communication* among singularities [that] emerges through [...] production” (204), it “breaks the continuity of modern state sovereignty[,] demystifying its sacred core” (206).

The multitude then “opens up possibilities for alternative social relationships” (207) by autonomously breaking free of the traditional logic of sovereignty (208). In this context, multitudes are necessarily “active and creative” (215) because they are constitutive instead of representative, “refus[ing] mediation through anything outside themselves” (Mazzarella 707). The multitude as such “*depends* on its opposition to the figure of the crowd” (701), its mediated opposite, an irrational mass of individuals that merely “appear[s] as one indifferent aggregate” (Hardt and Negri 100). Crowds, as the incomprehensible “other,” conceptually “threatened power from the outside” of the ruling order (Mazzarella 701), but with the hegemony of immaterial labour, there no longer is an “outside” (Hardt and Negri 102). This perspective ostensibly delegitimizes the

autonomous gesture of the rabble's violence. However, I will further theorize crowds as part of a lineage towards active and autonomous activity and thus as a demand for recognition by delineating the relationship between multitudes and crowds. I will then transition into later sections in this chapter to explore late capitalism's relationship to the hegemony of immaterial labour.

In distinction to the multitude, "crowds," as Mazzarella summarizes, "are [typically] pushed into the past" (698) and thus considered "allochronic" (699). With respect to the ascendancy of immaterial social labour that Hardt and Negri theorize, the rabble as an irrational crowd is divorced even from the realm of labour itself,¹⁸ so mass crowds, who strike in a riotous and physically violent sense, as such escape late capitalism's comprehension framework and are trivialized as the contemporary correlate to the savage in primitive societies (699). However, how does the crowd—both within the context of late capitalism's hegemony of immaterial labour and relative to the multitude—function autonomously to symbolize a demand for recognition?

The most significant feature of the crowd relative to the multitude is that a crowd is necessarily passive in Hardt and Negri's view. Unlike multitudes, which are "internal" and "immanent," the crowd is by contrast "external" and "mediated" (Mazzarella 707). Crowds need a leader-figure, or any abstractly equivalent catalyst or rallying point, to function (705).¹⁹ Multitudes, on the other hand, have a "self-producing autonomy [which]

¹⁸ As I will explain in Chapter Three, it is not that there is no longer any material labour, but the hegemony of immaterial labour denies the rabble even the right to be exploited by labour at all.

¹⁹ This does not mean that crowds exclusively require a literal, physical leader, such as a person, a small group of persons, or any kind of bodily group claiming to represent the interests of the crowd. Mazzarella summarizes that the mediating figure could be something as abstract as any kind of symbolic object that only needs to connect crowd members in some way (716), including, for example, a feeling, a work, or an

is infinitely generative and polymorphously resistant to external management” (708). In other words, the multitude is essentially the creative excess of capital’s immaterial labour; the problem, however, is that it is so focused on engulfing everything, that the multitude meets its conceptual framework and exceeds it. As Mazzarella explains, “the immaculate autonomy of the multitude is fully realized—in a massive world-historical sublation—at the precise point where capital has so entirely subsumed immaterial labor [*sic*] that it can no longer exploit it without, as it were, exploiting itself” (709). Here we find the theoretical kernel to the multitude’s potential for resistance, which Hardt and Negri refuse to extend to irrational crowds. The multitude is (paradoxically) a pure immediacy because it is a force of self-produced subjectivity, but this subjectivity is also conditioned by the totalization of capitalist subsumption, working within the confines of its structure because it no longer has a conceptual outside. The multitude then becomes capital’s “*excessive*” element—it breeds its own potentiality by becoming the surplus of capital that cannot be “expropriated” (712). Therefore, for Hardt and Negri, the multitude, unlike the crowd, is both within and against the processes of capitalist globalization: late capitalism creates its own surplus, which then in turn produces itself as an immediacy to become a collective autonomy that opposes late capitalism.

However, after Mazzarella, I argue that we cannot so easily dismiss the crowd as a passive and essentially “regressive” (697) entity. I will suggest that the logic of Hardt and Negri’s multitude *relies* upon crowds and that crowds spark a “transformative” possibility (726) for the same kind of “self-determination” that Staudigl reads into acts of senseless violence. As I will soon elucidate, the multitude faces a conceptual impasse that

idea (717). Previously, I implied that such a connecting symbolic object for the rabble as rioters is their general sense of exclusion “from the political and social space proper” (Žižek *Violence* 77).

only the irrational crowd can resolve. Therefore, after redeeming the crowd relative to the multitude via Mazzarella, I will theorize how the hegemony of immaterial labour constitutes the ideological basis of late capitalism, which operates like a fatalistic game of chance, necessarily producing an irrational crowd as its underclass. I will then conclude this chapter and devote my whole next chapter to demonstrate how this unique subject position creates the possibility towards subversive critical self-reflection.

If multitudes are produced *within* immaterial labour's conditions that capitalism cannot contain, they begin to acquire the same passive characteristics that Hardt and Negri associate with crowds. Ultimately, multitudes reach an unacknowledged impasse between being "immaculately self-constituting *and* conditioned by capital," a paradox that Hardt and Negri never resolve (Mazzarella 711). In praising Hardt and Negri's contribution to contemporary social theory, Žižek nevertheless reveals a damaging "weak point" (*The Year of Dreaming Dangerously* 9) in their theory in that they "underestimate the extent to which contemporary capitalism successfully [...] privatize[s] 'common knowledge' itself" (10), precisely because the multitude operates within the hegemonic structure of immaterial labour. If the common represents the shared forms of collaboration, communication, and knowledge among Western, capitalist subjects, Žižek warns that it "re-functionalize[s]" the "bourgeoisie [...] as a class of salaried managers" and middle-class technocrats, therefore inadvertently augmenting and contributing to the very hegemony of immaterial labour that the multitude supposedly combats (9, 10). This criticism reveals the problem with the multitude's impasse that Mazzarella uncovers: multitudes, in their desire for immanent autonomy, ultimately have to confront the reality that they are *produced by* and *operate within* the hegemony of immaterial labour.

Indeed, by this logic, the multitude's political potentiality that Hardt and Negri theorize requires the irrational crowd to resolve the multitude's dialectic between self-constitution and external conditioning. Crowds, as Mazzarella argues, "tak[e] up the challenge that multitude theory lays down (how to theorize the work of the common within the structures of capital)" (715) by sharing a "negative intimacy" with multitudes (698). Simply put, Hardt and Negri do not realize, or care to realize, how the immediacy of the multitude, its development of self-identity and subject creation, actually depends on the mediating figure of the crowd, the incomprehensible mass of riotous individuals Hardt and Negri otherwise dismiss (Mazzarella 716). Hardt and Negri describe subjects of the multitude as conditioned and produced by capital, becoming capital's own "chaotic and incoherent" excess (192) through a shared common—and crowds, conceptually, share some of these same qualifiers with multitudes. The rabble's irrational violence becomes a "chaotic and incoherent" excessive element to the hegemonic structure; this element is grounded in the connecting symbolic object of the rabble's feeling of exclusion. I will return to this sense of exclusion in Chapter Three.

Importantly, the mediation of crowds symbolizes the crowd's autonomy because it catalyzes the potentiality of the multitude's desire for immaculate self-constitution. This represents Mazzarella's tentative argument; more succinctly, that an irrational and violent crowd is mediated is also its autonomous condition for "transformative and creative" subject determination (720). To reclarify, crowds are mediated by Hardt and Negri's logic because they lack the immediate self-constitution of the multitude's network, but this characteristic of mediation is actually the condition for its own possibility of self-constitution. Specifically, multitudes and crowds share the same

“impasse” between an “unmediated becoming” and the “social mediations” of external “production” (718). I have already demonstrated this impasse with multitudes. With crowds, on the one hand, they can ostensibly do nothing but copy, that is, succumb to a mimetic impulse for violence; on the other hand, “crowd communication is credited with the capacity to produce the most fantastical and unpredictable concatenations of images” (717). As such, the crowd’s mediation, its connecting symbolic object, is “*also*,” paradoxically but necessarily, “the means by which [...] the individual becomes possible” (718). So Mazzarella reveals a negative dialectic between progressive multitudes and supposedly irrational and passive crowds. The crowd on its own cannot establish a politics or articulate any kind of subversive ontology, but this is precisely the point. Instead, the crowd’s impasse, when placed in the same matrix as the multitude’s impasse, catalyzes an “emergence” (723), just as Žižek argues that crowds in this sense are a “generator” towards subject determination (*The Ticklish Subject* 165). As Mazzarella concludes, passive and regressive crowds conceptually provide the “transformative self-relation” (726) that opens an empty “gap” between immediacy and mediation, only out of which a redemptive and latent demand for recognition becomes possible (727).

Therefore, it is possible to identify an autonomous, productive gesture among seemingly irrational crowds within the hegemony of immaterial labour. This gesture resolves multitude theory’s conceptual impasse, catalyzing a latent gap out of which the rabble’s demand for recognition, its possibility for self-constitution, articulates itself, what Mazzarella calls “the moment of generative possibility” (727). As such, the crowd takes shape as the generator of the subversive “network” that Hardt and Negri theorize. In particular, the crowd’s latent demand for recognition, instead of constituting the

multitude's immanent "biopolitical production," remains impotent and functions as its "positive and productive" moment (Žižek *The Ticklish Subject* 165) in symbolizing a progressive cultural registration within, yet in contradistinction to, the hegemony of immaterial labour. Hansen and Stepputat identify this potentiality "as a tentative and always emergent form of authority grounded in violence" (297), the kind of incomprehensible violence performed by the produced "underside" of late capitalism (305) that exposes "the foundational violence of the current social order" (307). This is the objective violence of late capitalism's hegemony of immaterial labour, which functions as a speculative capitalism, necessarily producing an incomprehensible underclass marked by their "exclusion" from the hegemonic structure and in search of forms of "self-expression" and "representation" (Comaroff and Comaroff 307) who, due to their very irrationality, latently convey an alternative framework for recognition (308).

Hardt and Negri define the "network" as the "dominant form of organization" (113) among the multitude's potential to form "alternative social relationships." Put differently, the multitude, as a produced collectivity, enters into "a spiral, symbiotic relationship" with the common (189), and this "*cycle*" (213) "is [...] filled by biopolitical production" (207), constituting a kind of ontological organization, a network, "on which antagonism is transformed into revolt" (212). But the tension within the network, as I have already demonstrated through Mazzarella, is that while on one hand it resembles an ontological and creative "form of organization," it also takes on characteristics of the crowd. The cycles between produced subjectivity and the common arise from the "monstrous[,] chaotic[,] and incoherent [...] flesh of the multitude [that] is maddeningly elusive" (192). This "monstrous" element then, constitutive of the crowd's generative and

thus autonomous moment, symbolizes demands for recognition. So, after Mazzarella and Žižek, at the risk of this ontological possibility playing into the hands of late capitalism (Žižek *The Year of Dreaming Dangerously* 10), the radical potentiality of this excessive, monstrous flesh needs to emerge autonomously (12).

This latter point is the crux of Mazzarella's intervention, via his argument that crowd theory's impasse resolves multitude theory's impasse, which I have already overviewed. This argument further highlights the notion that seemingly irrational crowds do have the potential for autonomy, contra Hardt and Negri's assertion that "mediation ultimately means death" (Mazzarella 713). Crowds then possess an autonomous moment that propels the progressive potential of what Hardt and Negri deem the multitude. Importantly, as I have demonstrated thus far, this process directly stems from the hegemony of immaterial labour in late-capitalist sovereignty. Next, I will delineate more clearly my understanding of this sovereignty to assert specifically how it fatalistically produces the rabble as an incomprehensible underclass, and therefore how incomprehensible violence, within this framework, is a latent expression for an alternative world and a demand for recognition.

Transitioning with Informal Sovereignities

This autonomous, transformative possibility in incomprehensible crowds, the latent demand for recognition that operates within a lineage relative to the framework of networks that Hardt and Negri theorize, works within the hegemony of immaterial labour only to symbolize its recoordination and therefore abstractly transcend it. Specifically, it unveils this hegemony as functioning via a return to old capitalism, under the name of speculative, or, finance capitalism. This speculative capitalism produces the rabble as an

unintelligible underclass and only from this standpoint can we recognize irrational violence as an impotent demand to engage with and strike beyond this hegemony. I will conclude this chapter with a delineation of this latter concept via Rancière and Žižek.

Firstly, I need to briefly and more explicitly link this autonomous and generative possibility to acts of violence conducted by this produced underclass. I explore Hansen and Stepputat's notion of informal sovereignties to transition into a discussion of late-capitalist sovereignty more generally. Hansen and Stepputat implicitly engage with the latent potentiality of impotent crowds through theories of state sovereignty and how sovereignties necessarily produce an incomprehensible underclass. They link such a latent, transformative possibility to this underclass' acts of "excessive [...] violence" by stipulating that such acts of violence "depict" and thus unveil the objective violence of late capitalism's sovereign gesture, its hegemony of immaterial labour. This violence establishes this produced underclass as an alternative "reconfigur[ation]" of sovereign power, implying an impotent demand to *become* sovereign (307)—another way of thinking about the covert demand "to gain *visibility*" (Žižek *Violence* 77). Hansen and Stepputat's argument here both a) further connects my theoretical overview of the transformative, generative potentiality of crowds with acts of violence by a produced, incomprehensible underclass, and b) unveils further the hegemony of immaterial labour as a regression to classic capitalism, in that sovereignty today is arguably a "return" to the capitalism of "colonial expansion" when "small elites controll[ed] vast tracts of land and vast pools of labor [*sic*]" (308), resembling the "imperial adventures" of more contemporary hegemonic structures (309).²⁰

²⁰ For this latter point, see also Harvey, *The New Imperialism*.

Because of the hegemonic rise of biopolitical production, Hansen and Stepputat “abandon sovereignty as an ontological ground of power” rooted in a singularity, be that of a ruler or a government of the people, in favour of “a tentative and always emergent form of [sovereignty] grounded in violence.” Specifically, such “informal sovereignties” (297), for which the core defining feature is “the use of illegal and [...] violent” acts (306) by a produced, “unlawful underside” [...] “that cannot be understood” by the logic of the prevailing hegemony’s own comprehension framework (305), are the result of speculative markets in late capitalism (305, 308). In other words, biopolitical production, because speculative markets produce and politically manage life, has essentially engendered an “outsourcing [of] sovereignty” (308) to “opaque” relations (305)—opaque because instead of managing themselves as singular and tangible political communities, these relations *express a hidden desire for an alternative sovereignty symbolized in “unpredictably, arbitrarily, and excessively violent” actions* (307, emphasis added).

Within this context of the sovereignty of late capitalism, Hansen and Stepputat demonstrate a hidden mimetic gesture in play—and not with social movements, but movements, networks, and systems on the periphery of social movements proper, limit cases involving spontaneous and irrational violence. More tangibly, although Hansen and Stepputat are “ethnographic” and conceptual instead of “formal” and categorical in their approach, and as such suggest any kind of violent and “illegal network” (297), ranging from youth gangs to illegal protest collectivities to the mafia (305),²¹ could constitute an informal sovereignty, it is the ruling hegemonic power of the market itself that constitutes

²¹ Of importance is that among the few examples Hansen and Stepputat do provide of such limit cases of illegal and violent collectivities, they all have a connecting symbolic object—i.e., mediation—linking them to the figure of the crowd.

the de facto informal sovereignty (309). The speculative market of this hegemony, through its objective violence, necessarily creates an underclass of incomprehensible, illegal, and violent groups. Their violence mimetically subverts the “foundational violence of the current social order” (307) to challenge from within the hegemony of immaterial labour but also latently transcending beyond its comprehension framework.²² This is the aporetic paradox of crowd theory’s generative possibility I identified earlier, linking my discussion of crowd theory here directly to violence and exemplified by Hansen and Stepputat’s view that market capitalism problematically has the same potential to in-source, so to speak, sovereignty from ontological political states (309).

This latter point has become so ubiquitous in our society that the contemporary market no longer takes the role of a latent, alternative sovereignty but constitutes *the* defining (informal) sovereign entity that produces and renders a necessary underclass of citizens as incomprehensible. It is against this sovereignty of a speculative, fatalistic late capitalism that the rabble’s irrational violence impotently strikes. *Next, I will outline my argument that “late capitalism” designates a regression to classic capitalism of previous epochs, but within the context of an immaterial, speculative, and mythical hegemony, to elucidate a) how I utilize the term “late capitalism” as a marker for the comprehension framework and hegemonic structure that denies the rabble as rioters meaningful participation in the political and social space proper; b) how the rabble is specifically and fatalistically produced as an incomprehensible underclass; and c) how this structure creates a potential space for recognition and latent transcendence for this produced underclass* (Comaroff and Comaroff 330).

²² I reframe this transcendence in my next chapter as the assumption of a latent universality.

Late Capitalism: Speculative and Immaterial

In theorizing late capitalism as a return to the capitalism of the 19th century, I will demonstrate that the shift that *has* occurred from the latter to the former *within* this regression is the emergence of the hegemony of immaterial labour, which I have already partially outlined *vis-à-vis* Hardt and Negri. I will then demonstrate the relationship between immateriality and speculative, mythological capitalism that produces an incomprehensible underclass in society via fate. Theorizing speculative capitalism as a game that renders its underclass as a void, which in turn catalyzes the “irrational” element in the rabble’s violence, transitions me into delineating further what I mean by the comprehension framework operating as an effective universality that excludes the rabble, in turn allowing me to better articulate the nature of this “exclusion.” Finally, this analysis also serves as a springboard into my final chapter, where I will demonstrate how the rabble is a figure of negativity produced by *chance*, and it is precisely this fatalistic characteristic, which I will outline in conjunction with Benjamin’s theory of divine violence, that symbolizes the rabble’s latent and redemptive potentiality, contra even Hegel’s dismissal of his own figure as irrational and regressive.

What is late capitalism? Badiou theorized his topology of riots around the idea that riots *specifically*, in the early 21st century in a Western context, are the beginning of an uprising “against [the] very regression” to the capitalism of “a financial and imperial oligarchy” (5). Therefore, my earlier theorization of immediate riots as a necessary generator within this matrix, which itself marks the possibility of an “uprising,” harmonizes with the argument that late capitalism actually realizes a return to old forms of domination. Additionally, Badiou’s idea runs against the grain of Hardt and Negri’s

thought, complementing my previous overview of Mazzarella's redemption of crowd theory relative to multitude theory. In explicit distinction to Hardt and Negri's reading of capitalism, which in Badiou's words "proletarianizes the multitude" so that the capitalist "subject is in a way the same as that of the latent communism which supports its paradoxical existence" (10-11), Badiou sees late capitalism not as something new and distinct but as that of Karl Marx's time, in which our lives are fated and capriciously determined by a financial oligarchy (11). Resistance for Badiou is not an internalized creative destruction through an immanent multitude but rather breeds from the "power of an Idea" symbolized by the matrix of riots (15), which I outlined in Chapter One.

How, specifically, is late capitalism a return to 19-century capitalism? Jameson summarizes that today's finance capitalism is actually the most basic kind of capitalism. It "return[s]" us "to the most fundamental form of class struggle" (136) because, in contradistinction to 20th-century industrial capitalism, "it has become customary to identify political freedom with market freedom [...] and the guiding thread of all contemporary politics [becomes] the rich want[ing] their taxes lowered" (137).²³ Žižek is even more specific in explicating what exactly this "most fundamental form of class struggle" is: a return to direct forms of exploitation. With "the rise of 'immaterial labor' [*sic*] to a hegemonic position[,] products are no longer material objects, but new social (interpersonal) relations themselves—in short, immaterial production is directly biopolitical, it is the production of social life" (*The Year of Dreaming Dangerously* 8-9).

²³ Further, Jameson delineates the term "late capitalism," which itself should not be taken literally so as to inadvertently imply that we are experiencing some "last stage conceivable." Instead, his use of the term pays "homage" to theorist Ernest Mandel's usage of "late capitalism" to denote capitalism as merely resilient, and this resilience Jameson tracks in its return to old capitalism. Hence, "late" more simply refers to "the latest or most recent" (139).

As a result of this hegemony of immaterial labour, “the old bourgeoisie, rendered non-functional [in the industrial era], becomes re-functionalized” (10).

If there has been a shift, then, to immaterial production, does this not constitute a structurally different kind of capitalism than that of Marx’s time? Here is where Hardt and Negri’s analysis is useful, and subsequently why my goal in outlining Mazzarella’s response to their conceptualization of the multitude was not to discredit their intervention but to address its unacknowledged impasses. More broadly, this is the function of the rabble’s riotous violence: it *in and of itself* cannot constitute an active and autonomous gesture, but *within* the matrix of Badiou’s riots, it autonomously “generates,” out of its very conceptual negativity, a lineage which catalyzes a beginning of an “uprising” against the regression to late capitalism. Simply put, what late capitalism designates is an ostensible shift *within* a structural regression. In other words, in the context of Žižek’s summary, this shift itself constitutes the regression: late capitalism’s shift to the hegemony of immaterial labour comprises the return to old capitalism’s forms of direct exploitation. Jameson articulates this idea as a “spiral” because the road to late capitalism has not exactly been on a straight line (139). Late capitalism’s finance markets operate on Marx’s formula of M-C-M, whereby money is transformed into capital that then generates more money (141). Except now, in transitioning into the third stage, “[m]oney becomes [...] abstract” because of finance capitalism’s “feverish search [...] for the new kinds of profits available in financial transactions themselves” (142). As a result, this “spiral” designates M-C-M as the “teleological *content*” within the non-teleological “universal” *form*, symbolized by the return to the basic model of M-C-M, or, more generally, to the return of old capitalism (141, emphasis added).

To drive this point home, Harvey's work is probably the most extensive analysis of this argument. To Harvey, changes in late capitalism that distinguish it from earlier capitalisms "appear more as shifts in surface appearance rather than as signs of the emergence of some entirely new postcapitalist [...] society" (*The Condition of Postmodernity* vii). In his delineation of late capitalism as a cultural shift towards supposed postmodernist tendencies starting in the 1970s, Harvey revisits Marx's *Capital* to demonstrate how contemporary late capitalism exemplifies a return to the capitalism that Marx forewarned. More specifically, Marx's capitalism necessarily "presuppose[s]" the fragmentary effect on urban life in late capitalism (103) because of the hegemony of immaterial labour—what Marx labelled, in Harvey's paraphrasing, as elements of "fantasy, caprice[,] and whim" (106).

Marx already theorized biopolitical production as the core element in 19th-century capitalism: "Objects of utility become commodities only because they are the products of the labour of private individuals," and consequently, "products [are] endowed with a life of their own" and materiality itself "enter[s] into [...] the human race"—*the very biopolitical bodies of capitalist subjects become commodities themselves* ("*Capital*" 233).²⁴ Returning to Harvey, late capitalism then is a return to the notion that production already extends beyond the material (105), inherently "exacerbat[ing] insecurity and instability" (106) and therefore necessarily rendering the "produc[ed] underside of the

²⁴ For a groundbreaking alternative interpretation of this idea, see Derrida. In regards to Marx's famous metaphor of dancing tables, Marx still tries to establish an ontological core to capitalism, a core to fix 19th-century capitalism in place by identifying the precise moment when the fetishistic table appears on stage. Derrida however argues that late capitalism is always haunted by and deconstructively always *already* reverts to old capitalism, because "use-value is in advance promised, promised to exchange and beyond exchange" (203). In other words, relative to the very biopolitical aspect Marx identifies in 19th-century capitalism, the tables are *always* dancing, both before the stage curtains arise and also after the curtains go back down, no matter how much Marx tries to stop them, and late capitalism was always classic capitalism.

state” (Hansen and Stepputat 305) as incomprehensible (Harvey 106). Ultimately, Harvey characterizes the “shifts in surface appearance” (vii) *within* “the basic rules of a capitalist mode of production” as “the *regime of accumulation*,” which he defines as late capitalism’s *modes of production*. The mode of production is the shift to (or in the spirit of Marx’s *Capital*, the *return* to) direct exploitation and immateriality (121). Put differently, finance capital, *vis-à-vis* immaterial labour, has become the dominate hegemony in Western society, creating what Harvey calls an “accumulation of dispossession” (*The New Imperialism* 64), whereby finance capitalism works on a massive mode of displacement and outsourcing. This process of “accumulation of dispossession” is the tangible form and practice of immaterial hegemony. It is the regime of accumulation that works, in a return to the capitalism of Marx’s time, as a mythology, mythological because it controls social life through “speculation”—just like how capital flows into late capitalism—negating “real, positive” control from man’s material, “actual life” (“*The German Ideology*” 112).

Here, with reference to mythology, I transition to a description of late capitalism operating spectrally, “as a gospel of salvation” (Comaroff and Comaroff 292), within the context of the shift to immaterial labour, to address specifically how late capitalism’s comprehension framework operates to fatalistically produce an incomprehensible underclass. These ideas will in turn transition me into my next and final chapter, where I will articulate them further in the context of Benjamin’s philosophy.

The Comaroffs refer to this late capitalism as “millennial capitalism,” to mean both capitalism as it stands in the new millennium and “capitalism in its messianic, salvific, even magical manifestations.” They frame this characterization as millennial

capitalism's "second coming" to refer to late capitalism's conceptual return to older models of capitalism, i.e., the "second coming" of 19th-century capitalism, exemplified by late capitalism's shift from production to consumption, from labour to capital, and from bodily materiality to spirit (293). With this return to old capitalism and the reign of the ideology of immaterial labour, in late, millennial capitalism, this hegemony works as an "invisible hand," evoking "the ghost of crises past"—the spectre of virtual capital (294). The major consequence of this shift to immateriality is the everyday displacement of markers of identity: value, production, and wealth are now all determined by speculation; instead of existing as ontologies, they now are defined arbitrarily by gambling. In late capitalism, as a return to old capitalism that "entrusts the fate of peoples to the financial appetites of a tiny oligarchy" that hegemonically reigns supreme (Badiou 12), gambling has established itself as capitalism's own moral, and by extension, mythological, framework, putting "the adventure into venture capital," as the Comaroffs put it (295). Speculation functions as a spectre and gambling "has changed moral valence and invaded everyday life across the world" (295-296). Late capitalism is now a game, and a game *necessarily needs losers*.

These losers are the fatalistically produced underclass, what Žižek calls the "structurally unemployable" (*The Year of Dreaming Dangerously* 10).²⁵ Because of gambling, millennial capitalism takes on slippery, spectral "mysterious forms" and, as a result, constantly faces its own fallibility (Comaroff and Comaroff 298). Therefore late capitalism has to produce the incomprehensible and structurally unemployable to offset

²⁵ Additionally, for example, Balibar theorizes the 2005 France rioters as an "underclass" because they are excluded even from "the term 'class' [that] designate[s] a categorization [of being] *integrated* into the economic-political system" (63). This exclusion stems from late capitalism as a system of gambling.

its constant state of spectral flux, gesturing towards the idea that such structurally unemployable people no longer have any markers of identity—i.e., no means to be comprehended and recognized as members of society (300). Subject positions no longer retain their essential status due to the hegemony of immaterial labour.

On the former side of the gambling house “winners and losers” dichotomy are, as the Comaroffs call them, a structural and tangible transnational class, the speculative capitalists who also are produced by chance and fate (and who I will delineate in more detail in my next chapter as the “rich rabble”). This class is characterized by a transcendence of borders, a “distantiation of place” and thus a distancing *from* labour (303). This process, built into the essence of late capitalism, separates “labor power [*sic*] from its human context to replace society with the market” which alters “the phenomenology of being in the world” (307). Here we can begin to more fully understand that the phenomenological experience of the rabble, as a produced underclass and therefore as displaced subjects, is not rationally recognizable within the framework of late capitalism because it so dramatically alters their sense of being, they can only seek recognition by impotently and “irrationally” striking outside of this framework, what the Comaroffs call “a riotous return of the oppressed” (309).

How exactly does this framework function? The infusion of the spectral and the magical into the political economy (311) means that finance capitalism accrues wealth from *nothing*. Late capitalism achieves “value without effort” (313-314) and takes on a mythological form: “The ability to deliver in the here and now [...] is offered as the measure of a genuinely global god” (314). It is this idea of nothingness, as creating value from nothing, which posits a void, rendering the losers in this game as immoral, illogical,

and irrational (317) and negating any conceptual terrain on which a *comprehensible* movement of this excluded class can ground itself. As such, this space of negativity, beneath a layer of conjuration, *represents the potential space of recognition for the excluded*. This gap, this “distantiation” from labour (303), means that the structurally unemployable occupy a sort of latent borderlands (308)—their own irrationality is the very hope for transcendence (330). The rabble’s irrational violence impotently demands recognition by striking beyond the framework of late capitalism unable to contain what it has produced yet cannot understand.

Here I can finally return to Žižek’s notion that seemingly irrational violence redemptively “function[s] as a test of the system itself” (*Violence* 79) because now we have a better understanding of exactly what this system is. Fatalistically produced as a void, irrational “riots [are] simply a direct effort to gain *visibility*” (77) because the rabble as rioters have lost the “ability to locate the experience of their situation within a meaningful whole” (76)—i.e., late capitalism, as a speculative, universal system, has destroyed the markers of identity for the produced underclass, altering their phenomenological experience so that they are unable to articulate their own *subjectivity* within this system. Rancière theorizes this comprehension framework as a “consensus system” (*Disagreement* 124): democracy operates through consensus to determine what it can understand and comprehend. In constituting its people, this framework (over)determines through a sort of “contract”: the individual subject, supposedly, emerges from this contract as a result of “individuals and groups com[ing] to agree on the right juridico-political forms to ensure the coexistence of all and the optimal participation of each one in the community’s fortunes.” But this framework encounters the gap that is

its own structural deficiency, or, “self-doubt” (96), the same deficiency I summarized in the Comaroffs’s argument (298). As Rancière suggests, it is the “opposition between democracy on paper and real democracy” (96) that makes the rabble legal “citizens” in theory “but [does] not fully recognise [them] as such [*sic*]” (Žižek *Violence* 77). Therefore, it is this gap, the incomprehensibility in the rabble’s violence, a “blind acting out” (75-76), that challenges the universalism of the consensus system: an impotent “rejection of the framework through which recognition takes place [as] a call for the construction of a new universal framework” (78).

To Rancière, such a “blind acting out” is, radically, the only authentic political act that constitutes subjectivity proper, because it engages with the negativity in the gap—the incomprehensibility of such acts and the exclusionary conditions imposed on the produced underclass. This is why Rancière disavows the (unresolved) “multitude [because] it rejects the negative” (*Dissensus* 84) and conforms wholly to the universal, the exclusionary consensus framework. By “universal” Rancière refers to the abstract notion of this implicit “contract” that society has agreed upon to affirm and recognize subjectivity. In this sense of the universal, it formally recognizes everyone as a “part”—a legal “citizen.” But because the universal, here designated as late capitalism’s comprehension framework, faces its own fatalistic gap, subjectivity cannot *really* be obtained through it, but only impotently, by irrationality striking beyond it—as Rancière says, “disrupt[ing] its statist embodiment [and] disput[ing] the forms of visibility of the common and identities [...] defined by these forms” (85). Only when “society is disturbed by the inscription of a part of those who have no part” (*Disagreement* 123) can the rabble

gesture towards such authentic subjectivity—conceptually standing in for the universal with their own demand for recognition.

Therefore, the rabble’s “violence [is] necessary” (Žižek *Violence* 78) because it strikes against the universal consensus system, generating a lineage towards recognition. Embracing this gap works to resolve the conceptual impasse that impedes Hardt and Negri’s multitude, as explicated by both Mazzarella and, as I have just demonstrated, Rancière as well. Seemingly irrational crowds, as I outlined earlier in this chapter, symbolically function as a “transformative” gesture (Mazzarella 726) striking against the hegemony of immaterial labour. This hegemony stems from late capitalism’s return to classic capitalism, whereby the return itself to more direct forms of exploitation, as Žižek argues, creates a “‘superfluous’ [and] structurally unemployable” underclass (*The Year of Dreaming Dangerously* 10) as a result of late capitalism’s speculative and spectral “mysterious forms” (Comaroff and Comaroff 298). These forms create a gap between the universal comprehension framework and the “irrational” underclass, the necessary losers in the game of financial capitalism. As such, as I have argued, the rabble’s “blind acting out” signifies a gesture for authentic subjectivity, “a direct effort to gain *visibility*.”

However, this visibility is difficult to define precisely because, as Žižek explains, exclusion—or, invisibility—is inherently “vague” and “unarticulated.” This ambiguity owes mostly to the gap that conceives the rabble as both “a part” and a “no part” simultaneously; but this highly theoretical chapter has mostly neglected how seemingly irrational rioters specifically are excluded in this sense. Addressing this issue is how I will briefly open my next and final chapter, transitioning me into a reading of rioters as rabble. The rabble, in implicit reference to the Comaroffs’s reading of millennial

capitalism, is produced by fate as a necessarily incomprehensible member of society, and I will seize upon a reading of Hegel's rabble as a subversive figure to explicate an otherwise implicit relationship between Hegel and Benjamin's idea of divine violence, a redemptive violence of means without end. This relationship, I will argue, is both a) operative in the subtexts of Ruda's and Žižek's theories and b) a newfound theoretical perspective for society to critically self-reflect and "recast [riots] as catalysts for change" (Frost et al. 8).

Chapter Three: Rioters

“As excluded, lacking recognition of its particularity, the rabble is the universal as such” (Žižek *Less Than Nothing* 433).

“‘Poverty disgraces no man.’ Well and good. But *they* disgrace the poor man” (Benjamin “One-Way Street” 452).

Who or what is the rabble? The rabble covertly articulates its subjectivity through ostensibly incomprehensible acts of riotous violence and, in the process, latently strikes beyond the hegemony of late capitalism, representing a true universal inasmuch as its emergence through violence impotently symbolizes “a call for the construction of a new universal framework” (Žižek *Violence* 78). This “call” is the rabble’s demand for recognition, a struggle for autonomous subject formation that late capitalism denies them, reducing them instead to an incomprehensible and irrational underclass. As such, the rabble as rioters burst from and into the historical movement of late capitalism only to interrupt it and thereby, in a Benjaminian sense, autonomously “unmask” the objective structure of late capitalism “as a mere fantasy” (Ruda 119), as a mythology that necessarily produces the rabble. This process fulfills the purpose of Benjamin’s conception of divine violence: a violence of means without end that purifies this law of late capitalism, symbolizing the redemptive aspect in the demand for recognition of the rabble’s violence. In this chapter, I will work to explicate a connection between Benjamin’s and Hegel’s respective philosophies, a connection that up until now has remained only implicit.

Particularly, in this chapter I will outline the core of my theoretical intervention, answering the questions I addressed in my introduction: What do immediate riots, to again borrow Badiou’s term, as a generative moment within a lineation of riots that

catalyze a Truth-Event, unveil about our understanding of late capitalism and the role of labour? More specifically, what do they uncover about ideas of exclusion within a Hegelian framework, and how does such an analysis relate to Benjamin's philosophy? Recall, importantly, in my introduction how I explained that my intention is not to necessarily privilege any case study as a particular historical event but to explore instead how "senseless" riots in general compel us to rethink these theoretical ideas. Following Ruda, I will theorize a distinction between poor and rich rabble to demonstrate how late capitalism produces exceptions to labour at both the top and the bottom of the class hierarchy; however, the poor rabble's unique disposition, its loutishness, marks it as a figure that can express its discontent only in irrational ways. Specifically, this characteristic distinguishes it from the rich rabble and symbolizes the poor rabble's latent universality. I expand upon Ruda by framing this discussion within my delineation of late capitalism and late capitalism's transformation of labour, that is, how it disenfranchises its underclass via a mythological system of gambling. Effectively, I suggest theoretical applications for Ruda's thought via Benjamin.

I theorize such a system of gambling within Benjamin's own reading of the structure of capitalism. This analysis leads me into the crux of my thesis: I will argue that Ruda—and Žižek, with his own Hegelian negative dialectics—colour their interpretations of the rabble with Benjamin's thought. I will show how the poor rabble compels critical self-reflection by emerging within the framework of Benjamin's idea of divine violence. I will subsequently explicate a hidden relationship between Benjamin and Hegel via the respective thinkers' negative dialectics, and this relationship can serve as a theoretical

means to “recast [riots] as catalysts for change” (Frost et al. 8). These are the hypotheses that I will present and further demarcate in my third and final chapter.

They nonetheless require sufficient delineation, particularly as they relate to my arguments in previous chapters. I have thus far argued that *ostensibly irrational* violence, as opposed to the objective violence of late capitalism, arguably operates within a lineage of historical riots theorized by Badiou, generating a “transformative” possibility (Mazzarella 726) that involves “new forms of self-determination” (Staudigl 250). This latent possibility challenges the regression of late capitalism to more direct forms of exploitation (Žižek *The Year of Dreaming Dangerously* 8) that necessarily produces seemingly irrational rioters as the irrational losers in the game of late capitalism (Comaroff and Comaroff 317). Therefore, as late capitalism’s “part of those who have no part” (Rancière *Disagreement* 123), rioters as rabble, that is, rioters deemed irrational by the perspective of privileged agents of late capitalism, a perspective constructed and conditioned by late capitalism’s comprehension framework, gesture towards subjectivity with their violence and covertly constitute their own universality, transcending the comprehension framework that renders them irrational.

However, how *specifically* can I categorize such rioters as rabble, what Ruda “identifie[s] with [...] the part without a part” (13)? My answer is not simply that they are poor, but more precisely, they are poor *and* irrational—reduced to a disposition of mind as a result of their poverty in the context of the speculative game of late capitalism, whereby they can only convey their particular exclusion from society through a “blind acting out” (Žižek *Violence* 75-76). The rabble therefore extends beyond the economic realm—its irrational violence symbolizes their subjective response to their objective

poverty.²⁶ This is how I intend to theorize the rabble in Hegel’s sense of the term, and I will later demonstrate the rabble’s subversive potential as a universalizing figure via Ruda’s groundbreaking intervention to, in turn, address the problem of politics for Hegel, which I outlined in my introduction, and reveal that the rabble’s very universalizing characteristic operates redemptively by the same logic as Benjamin’s divine violence. Gesturing towards new means of critical self-reflection in the face of acts of irrational violence represents the value of theorizing this relationship.

To think concretely about the rabble’s emergence, recall my discussions of the 2011 England riots and the 2005 France riots as tentative examples. As I previously mentioned, both rioters were attacking their own neighbourhoods because they arguably did not feel included in their communities. As Žižek observes in his analysis of the rioters, they were “underprivileged and de facto socially excluded” (“Shoplifters of the World Unite”), a point validated by research on the England riots showing that most rioters “tended to be from [...] deprived circumstances” (Rogers “England Riots”). Evidence collected from court documents demonstrated that the proportion of all rioters unemployed or underemployed was about 23 percentage points higher than that of the U.K.’s national population (“Data Journalism Reading the Riots”). This joblessness, the study argued, augmented tensions with the local authorities and left many of the rioters feeling divorced from their own communities, particularly in Tottenham, the London neighbourhood where the riots originated and where, the study also tellingly notes, there were about 10,000 unemployed residents with only 367 job vacancies when the riots

²⁶ This characteristic of the rabble represents its universalizing gesture. Specifically, its subjective irrationality, contra “rational” behaviour, is conceptually negative; the bursting-out nature of the irrational violence is a negative that responds to the objective negativity of poverty. Therefore we have the logic of double negativity that gestures towards a universal ““presence”” (Ruda 74)—this universality is that of precarity. I will explain this argument more thoroughly later in the section ““Rabble above, rabble below!””

erupted (Lewis). *Most importantly*, despite the fact that a vast majority of the rioters were technically either citizens or permanent residents of the U.K., only 14% of them reported feeling “part of British Society” (Rogers “Data Journalism Reading the Riots”). Cultural theorist Stuart Hall was quoted and paraphrased as such on his remarks on the riots: “‘Thatcherism and Blairism and the [current Conservative-led] coalition,’ [created] three decades of neoliberalism [that] got into people’s consciousness and infected the way young people respond to poverty”; for Hall, therefore, irrational and violent looting in itself became the only “‘political expression’” (Williams) for the rioters in the game of late capitalism. *Here, the defining element is not the rioters’ poverty in and of itself but in how they were subjectively responding to their objective poverty.*

I suggest that such contemporary riots therefore, and in conjunction with Badiou’s argument about riots as symbolizing a site of emergence for a produced underclass perceived as incomprehensible, invite an analysis of Hegel’s rabble, who is economically impoverished *and* internalizes a subjective attitude of indignation. A feeling of exclusion from the rabble’s own community fuels the seeming irrationality of the rabble’s violence, namely, the violence’s lack of an articulated political agenda or motive. Therefore, as Žižek concludes, this lack complicates conceiving the 2011 England rioters, for instance, as Marxist revolutionary subjects; “they fit much better the Hegelian notion of the ‘rabble,’ those outside organised [*sic*] social space, who can express their discontent only through ‘irrational’ outbursts of destructive violence” (“Shoplifters of the World Unite”). I will seize and expand upon Žižek’s *explicit* yet undeveloped reference to the rabble as a catalyst for my own analysis.

To properly contextualize the rabble, I begin by returning to Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*. In particular, I sketch the development Hegel maps from civil society to the state to communicate the core principles of his political thought. For Hegel, "state" is the rational, universalized "ethical spirit" (§257), achieved through the dialectical process of history, of "civil society," the latter defined merely as the irrational market state of economic-political relationships (§182). Importantly, here I can even more clearly articulate what I mean by *recognition* and thus how the rabble is barred such recognition. In Hegel's philosophy of history, the state as universality signals the organic merger of subjectivity and objectivity; universality is as such the quality of being recognized (§§189, 192). Put differently, it is to *be something* by mediating the will's particularity to civil society through, for example, labour (§207), synthesizing the subjective will with the universal (§105) and elevating civil society to the state. As Ruda summarizes, recognition for Hegel is simply the reciprocity of subjectivity, because now all subjectivities are one with each other (44), and this process is essential for Hegel's thought because a person can only truly exist as such through recognition (13).

However, the rabble, Hegel's irrational figure of poverty that exists in civil society, perplexed him because he was unable to synthesize it into his dialectical process. Hegel's failure to remedy the problem of the rabble proves, foreshadowing the Comaroffs's analysis that capitalism today is akin to a mythological casino, that late capitalism defies Hegel's conception of the state and confines itself to civil society by fatalistically producing its own incomprehensible underclass, the rabble. I will introduce Ruda's thought to demonstrate that the rabble resolves Hegel's impasse, latently striking beyond the irrationality of civil society, which stands today as late capitalism.

Subsequently, the rabble redemptively reflects and exposes late capitalism as defying Hegel's ethical state (118), symbolically gesturing towards its own universality that is even "*more universal than the state*" (122), precisely because late capitalism bastardizes the universality of the state via the rabble. Particularly, Ruda identifies two different kinds of rabble, rich and poor, or, the winners and losers of late capitalism. Because late capitalism defies the principles of Hegel's state and produces an incomprehensible poor rabble, it is really the rich rabble that falls under Hegel's judgment of irrationality, whereas the poor rabble contains a latent, universal dimension (47).

Ruda argues that Hegel's own dialectic simply does not go far enough (59); poverty, more generally, for Hegel was "an irritation of philosophy by politics," which Ruda resolves through the rabble. "Politics then be[comes] a condition of philosophy" (3) because the poor rabble "breaks into philosophy" (4)—impotently—to signal the ongoing possibility of the true ethical state, or, "the necessity of a transformation" (5). This generative process, I suggest, conceptually repeats the same lineation I earlier summarized in Badiou's schema of riots, as well as in Mazzarella's redemption of the crowd—in other words, the poor rabble's explosive and latent universality resolves the impasse of Hegel's philosophy and the ethical state to *gesture towards* self-reflexive determination. This gesture is the impotent demand for recognition, in the Hegelian and Rancièrian senses I have previously outlined, and self-reflexive determination is the process of subjectivization that asserts its own universality while rejecting the universality of late capitalism as a mythological civil society. In Žižek's words, it is "a demand to be recognised [*sic*]" that "also implies a rejection of the very framework through which recognition takes place" (*Violence* 78).

Finally, building off these concepts, I will transition into Benjamin's thought and demonstrate how he foresaw the system of late capitalism as articulated by the Comaroffs, as evidenced by his notes in *The Arcades Project* and by Eagleton's study of Benjamin's *oeuvre*. Specifically, I will expand upon the Comaroffs's insights by utilizing Benjamin to illuminate how late capitalism functions as a fatalistic and mythological system of gambling (*The Arcades Project* O3,6, O4,1, O4a, O13,5) that necessarily produces an incomprehensible underclass, the losers of the game of finance capitalism (O3,6, O4,1, O13a,4). In connection to Hegel's rabble, Benjamin's idea of redemption is that of a pure "nothing" (Eagleton 22), of the "impotent" (138) excess of mythological capitalism that erupts "[f]rom and in [late capitalism's] historical movement" (Ruda 122), establishing "a creation of the subject that is at the same time a revelation of objective structures" (Eagleton 117). I argue that the poor rabble's "eruption" (Ruda 121), is doubly 1) a sign of Benjamin's divine violence and subsequently 2) the thread through which I will unite Benjamin and Hegel. Divine violence strikes outside of late capitalism's mythological framework, compelling us to grapple self-reflexively with its inherent incomprehensibility. It signals authentic subject determination because, referring to Rancière's words, "society is disturbed by the inscription of a part of those who have no part" (*Disagreement* 123)—divine violence is a *subjective* challenge that strikes beyond the *objective* "consensus system" of late capitalism (124).

By rethinking this redemptive possibility via Hegel's figure of the rabble, my thesis broaches a Benjaminian-Hegelian reading of seemingly irrational acts of violence, gesturing towards new meanings of what the violence represents. Such representations, however, are "not instantly meaningful" (Eagleton 115) but instead are inexhaustibly

generative of meaning (115, 117-118). Therefore, instead of falling into the trap of filling the violence with comprehensible meaning,²⁷ my thesis injects non-ontological meaning into the violence. Specifically, the rabble's impotent demand for recognition "unmask[s]" (Ruda 119) the exclusionary framework of society and breeds "transformative" possibilities (Mazzarella 726) for autonomous subject determination, generating "the thrilling sense of an abrupt alteration in the relationship between the possible and the impossible" (Badiou 94).

Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*, or, Recognition through Labour

In the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel traces the different stages of subjectivity's emergence, culminating in the state. The state is distinct from its preceding stage, civil society, where individuals merely relate to each other as particularities to fulfill their ends through a universal comprised of the economic and the political. But unlike in civil society where the particular and the universal simply relate to each other as a "relative totality" (§184), in the state they unite as an organic whole, as the individual's self-consciousness recognizes its essence in the state (§257), understanding the state as another individual. This unity manifests rationality, as rationality realizes itself in self-determining action since particular thoughts and actions are now *also* universal thoughts and actions (§258), and each individual's being is now recognized, because particularity and universality have merged together.

In this section, I will summarize the transition from civil society to the state to demonstrate how this process of recognition operates and thus also how late capitalism today conforms to the stage of civil society, as it necessarily denies the rabble

²⁷ Recall here the dichotomous, mainstream reactions to seemingly irrational rioters I summarized in Chapter One, which either trivialize or objectify such rioters.

recognition. Hegel himself had no solution for poverty, a consequence of civil society, and therefore had no way of *philosophically* elevating his dialectic to the state.²⁸ Through Ruda, I will demonstrate that the poor rabble actually contains a latent universality; therefore, the poor rabble expresses an impotent demand for recognition that emerges as a self-reflexive “interruption” of late capitalism (121). In my next section, I will theorize this argument through a juxtaposition of poor and rich rabble, whereby late capitalism creates exceptions to labour both at the bottom and at the top of the social hierarchy. Through these exceptions, late capitalism alters the category of work—exploitation occurs now not through work but through a structural denial to work.²⁹

As I have demonstrated, in civil society individuals merely engage with each other through economic and political relations; to elevate civil society to the state, they mediate to the universal and through this mediation, the subject recognizes his own essence in the ethical order (§§142-147). This is the only way that individuals can subjectively determine themselves: they can now *act* the universal because they *are* the universal (§156). Importantly, the determination of particularity is related to universality but only in such a way that universality is its basic principle. This way, consciousness becomes true consciousness because it releases itself to “*self-subsistent* reality” (§181) through the symbolic act—labour (§164).

²⁸ By this I mean that the political (represented by the problem of poverty) impeded the philosophical (Hegel’s theory of the development of history, from civil society to the state), and no possible political or economic solution to poverty could constitute a philosophical solution. In short, the political-economic reality of civil society stunted Hegel’s philosophical elevation from civil society to the state.

²⁹ Hence, given the importance of labour to Hegel’s philosophy, the necessity to rethink Hegel’s rabble in present times. This necessity is essentially the project that Ruda tackles, and later in this chapter, I will add my voice to that project through a critique of Negri’s reading of Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*, where I will argue that Negri ignores late capitalism’s recategorization of the role of labour.

What is this significance of labour, and how do subjects mediate themselves to the universal? Subjects mediate themselves through “estates,” the structures in civil society through which individuals interrelate. This mediation implies recognition imbued in the universal, and once subjects, engaging in estates through action and labour, self-realize this process, they in turn *recognize* everyone else’s particularity because they self-realize their own particularity in the universal—i.e., they actualize themselves (§207). Activity and labour through estates subsequently endow estates with a political significance (§300 endnote), and Hegel defines such significance as the process of mediation to gain recognition (§303).

However, there is a threat to the development of the ethical state as imagined by Hegel: wrongdoing (§240). Society has the responsibility to provide for its members but also the obligation to ensure they do their part to provide for themselves. But the expansion of civil society necessarily creates economic disparities and the wrongdoing of extravagance. Particularly, excess wealth creates the rabble, Hegel’s figure of poverty (§243). Hegel concedes that he is unable to find a remedy for this wrongdoing (§244): despite an excess of wealth, civil society can never be rich enough to alleviate poverty. More specifically, it is *because* of excess wealth that poverty persists, as it only helps to unnaturally provide charity or more job opportunities that succeed only in creating “an excess of production” in the long-term, ultimately offsetting any alleviation that results in the short-term (§245). Furthermore, as Žižek explains, “it is not enough to provide for the poor through public or private charity—in this way, they are still deprived of the satisfaction of autonomously taking care of their own lives.” Therefore, the rabble is by extension “deprived of social recognition” because it cannot engage in estates, the

process that leads to self-subjectivization *vis-à-vis* the mutual recognition of personality, which is to say, personhood as such (*Less Than Nothing* 433).

Therefore, the rabble does not even meet the “subsistence level [...] necessary [*to be*] a member of [its own] society” (Hegel §244); the rabble is irrational for Hegel and he himself could not find any solution for it. As Avineri explains, Hegel’s analysis of poverty is “the only time in his system [when] Hegel raises a problem—and leaves it open” (154). The contemporary rabble is the result of the return to direct forms of exploitation and a 19th-century model of imperial capitalism: a financial game of necessary yet arbitrary winners and losers that constitutes human relations themselves as its products. This is why the rabble is a distinct group: unlike the multitude, the social category I introduced in Chapter Two who engage politically *within* the confines of late capitalism’s hegemony of immaterial labour, “today’s rabble is denied even the right to be exploited through work,” and this is why they can express their subjectivity only through seemingly irrational violent outbursts (Žižek “The Politics of Negativity” xvii). As such, the rabble emerges through riotous violence, and they are therefore denied recognition in the Hegelian sense because late capitalism, stifling itself to civil society, necessarily produces the rabble as an irrational underclass, barring them from the process of mediation into the universal to gain recognition. But how do the rabble indicate a demand for recognition and gesture towards an autonomous, latent universality? This gesturing results from a distinction between poor rabble and rich rabble, whereby only the latter falls prey to Hegel’s dismissive rejection while the former touches upon a subversive universality.

“[R]abble above, rabble below!”³⁰

The rabble is not exclusively an economic figure; poverty is a necessary feature but not its defining characteristic. As I will soon elucidate, the rabble encompasses a universal vulnerability relative to the possibility that everyone might at any time lose in the fateful game of late capitalism; therefore the rabble represents a latent universality. For Hegel, the rabble exists not because of its impoverishment but its loutishness:

Poverty in itself does not turn people into a rabble; a rabble is created only when there is joined to poverty a disposition of mind, an inner indignation against the rich, against society, against the government, etc. [...] In this way there is born in the rabble the evil of lacking sufficient honour to secure subsistence by its own labour and yet at the same time of claiming the right to receive subsistence (§244).

This loutishness is why Hegel views the rabble as irrational, a political “irritation of [his] philosophy” (Ruda 3). As Ruda explains, the rabble ostensibly defies Hegel’s notion of mediation, lacking even the “disposition” to merge with the universal through labour. Hegel derived this mediating notion from his Lutheranism: Luther himself profaned poverty, and Hegel adopted Luther’s call that modern man can only gain salvation—or, in Hegel’s more political context, modern man can only *become* man—through “the principle of activity or action” (Ruda 8). Just as Badiou remarked that irrational rioters “have [*only*] the right to work and vote in silence” (52), the rabble at best is only “socioeconomically present” and not a ““recognized”” person with existence; therefore it “can easily be identified with what Jacques Rancière calls the *part sans-part*, the part without a part” (Ruda 13). Significantly, however, and against Hegel’s dismissal of the rabble, its very status as a “part without a part” means that it can transcribe itself into and latently underwrite the universality of late capitalism. This marks the rabble’s “place of

³⁰ Nietzsche (219).

transformation” (33, emphasis added): included as a “mere being” (Hegel §34 addition) but “excluded from the mechanisms of representation—[which] are derived from the participation in an estate” (Ruda 33), I argue that the rabble exemplifies, in its particularity, the true universal of the state and gestures towards latent demands of recognition and self-determination.

Therefore, following this logic through its natural dialectic, we actually find that the rabble resolves Hegel’s problem of poverty, the “irritation on philosophy by politics” (and as such, articulates new forms of self-reflection to latently strike against the comprehension framework of late capitalism; this latter point I will further delineate later in this chapter). More precisely, politics itself, here represented by the poor rabble’s emergence, actually reveals itself as the abstract solution to the problem of poverty. As Ruda explains in taking up Avineri’s analysis, poverty in general is indeed *the* problem in Hegel’s philosophy, but if we dig deep enough, poverty also creates, albeit only conceptually, its own remedy via its necessary offshoot of the poor rabble (4).

Here it is appropriate to return to Balibar’s analysis of the 2005 France rioters, as he implicitly frames his theorization of the rioters’ particular kind of exclusion within a comparison of rich and poor rabble. Importantly, the rioters then reveal themselves as a more radical and excluded figure than the traditional body of the proletariat because they are in “an essentially *negative* place, [where they] occupy it as eternally *displaced (out of place)* persons.” This eternal displacement is marked by the rioters’ irrational violence, i.e., their inability to coordinate themselves in any sort of political sense. As such, Balibar argues that this displacement signals that the rioters “find themselves denied, in principle or in fact, the right to have rights” (57), resembling Žižek’s aforementioned point that

“today’s poor rabble is denied even the right to be exploited through work” (“The Politics of Negativity” xvii). Indeed, Balibar identifies the mediation of labour as that which distinguishes the politically comprehensible proletariat from this new figure of exclusion that the France rioters represent. Violent, incomprehensible rioters then foreshadow the emergence of a “*new proletariat*” (58); unlike the proletarianization of the multitude, which Žižek critiques as excluding the “structurally unemployable of society” (*The Year of Dreaming Dangerously* 10), Balibar identifies a “re-proletarianization” in play that distinguishes the rioters from “the *organized*, if not institutionalized, *working class*,” re-proletarianizing for the 21st century, so to speak, the subversive potential of the disenfranchised, 19th-century underclass (69). This underclass is unique from the contemporary proletariat figure who more closely resembles the institutionalized, employed member of today’s “‘anti-capitalist’ protests” (Žižek *The Year of Dreaming Dangerously* 11); these protestors are *really* only protesting to protect their right to be exploited through labour. As Žižek summarizes, such protests “are not proletarian protests, but protests against the threat of being reduced to a proletarian status” (12)—this “*new*” status of rabble (Balibar 58).

Importantly, as Balibar notes, the poor rabble’s contrast with the rich rabble gestures towards the former’s latent universality, which I will soon explain more concretely via Ruda. Such a contrast, as I hypothesized earlier in my argument, is marked by the unique characteristic of ostensibly irrational riots as battles between “*banlieues* and *banlieues*” (Balibar 48), or, “non-society and society” (Žižek *The Year of Dreaming Dangerously* 60). Within this conflict of rich rabble and poor rabble, Balibar briefly yet explicitly references the importance of situating the 2005 France riots within a Hegelian

framework. If political recognition is achieved through mediation via labour, then the poor rabble constitutes those who “subvert or disrupt” this system, and as such, if only impotently, they indicate a redemptive universality, beyond the exclusionary nature of late capitalism. In this sense, such rioters as an underclass conceptually resemble “finance capitalists,” as both remove themselves from this process of mediation. However, how do the poor rabble signify a subversive universality and the rich rabble do not? Balibar rightfully notes the different methods by which the rich and poor rabble remove themselves from the mediation of labour: “if the former are tendentially located *outside* representation, it is *voluntarily*, [w]hereas the latter are *pushed or left outside* representation.” Therefore, Balibar reveals how the France rioters are excluded not by choice from the framework of recognition. Thus they symbolize a true “void” (63) that they designate with their “*spectacular* violence” (64). With the 2005 France riots, there were few deaths and no political demands articulated; instead, the highly destructive, abrupt, unexpected, and ostensibly irrational assault on the urban centre and on symbols of property symbolize this void. Balibar identifies these elements of the violence as the catalyst for a transformative, self-reflective possibility: the rioters, as poor rabble, latently attempt “to replace real actors [...] with fantasmatic actors” to effectively “‘embody’ society’s [own] *fantasm*,” late capitalism’s logic of exclusion (64). When the poor rabble exposes this logic, we as a society are compelled to confront it (66).

However, neither Balibar nor Žižek engage in any in-depth way with the rabble as a philosophical figure and consequently do not demonstrate *precisely why* its necessary status as an underclass excluded—and not by contingency—from the mediation of labour symbolizes a subversive, latent universality. I will explore, via Ruda, the particular

significance of what Balibar and Žižek only discuss without explaining: the poor rabble's necessary exclusion relative to the rich rabble's optional exclusion. The poor rabble operates as a mediating, subversive figure because Hegel fails to take note of the distinction between poor and rich rabble, and consequently, does not elevate his dialectic to its natural conclusion whereby the rabble latently touches upon the universality of Hegel's ethical state, beyond late capitalism.

Ruda identifies the existence of what is only latent in Hegel: the rich rabble, who, like the poor rabble, defies Hegel's logic of mediation through labour, but unlike the poor rabble, does so by conjuring wealth on the stock market like a "gambler" (39). So the loutishness that Hegel attributes to the rabble, which in Hegel is really just the poor rabble, is also applicable, as Ruda explains, to the rich rabble in the form of "luxury": the inherent "concentration of wealth" in civil society "is *always* marked by the greed of the individual" (38). Importantly, the rich rabble's unique form of loutishness breeds a "self-seeking" superiority (39) whereby it considers itself "sovereign" over the ethical state (38). In pursuit of its luxury, the rich rabble necessarily *chooses* to *not* be recognized, i.e., he "becomes a gambler by his own contingent decision [and] does not want to be *something* (recognized)" (40). The rich rabble, in contingently bypassing mediation through labour via luxury, only obtains a "semblance of recognition," based on the "incorrect assumption" that his "winnings of the contingent game [...] even out the deficit of recognition" (41). So the rich rabble defies recognition, which Ruda identifies, via Hegel, as the reciprocity of subjectivity (44), because it removes itself from Hegel's requirement of labour as the constituent means of mediation, and falsely—indignantly, even, in order to fulfill the other defining feature of the rabble, that of attitude—considers

itself “sovereign” to the ethical state (38). But here Ruda identifies the definitive feature that separates the rich rabble from the poor rabble: contingency.

The rich rabble, like the poor rabble, due to Hegel’s logic of civil society, is a necessarily produced figure, in that the abstract role of gambler is inherent in late capitalism as a speculative system based on the finance market. However, to specifically become the gambler—to subjectivize that objective, inherent figure—is a contingent decision. This difference marks the poor rabble’s point of departure that allows it to possess a latent, universal dimension. Ruda elucidates that the poor rabble functions on a “*logic of double latency*” that reduces it to a “singular fate” (46)—that of a non-contingent, produced figure of poverty who claims a “*right without right*,” the demand for subsistence without work, *but* from a standpoint where such subsistence does not exist (65). By contrast, the rich rabble functions on a “*logic of double contingency*” (48): he “declares the right to subsist without work *because* he subsists without work” (64)—he contingently *can* claim this right without right, and *this* logic means that he, and only he, falls purview to Hegel’s dismissal of the rabble as “evil” for “lacking sufficient honour to secure subsistence by its own labour” (§244).

The difference between the logics of double latency and double contingency reveals what specifically makes the poor rabble universal. According to the logic of double latency: 1) “Anyone in civil society,” due to the production of excessive wealth, can “deteriorate into the *unestate* of poverty” (Ruda 46), which “means that anyone in the state is latently poor” which 2) further means “any poor [...] can become rabble” (47). Ruda extends this logic even to a retroactive perspective in that everyone “will have been nothing, or better: *Nothing but rabble*” (73). But with the logic of double contingency,

the rich rabble 1) arbitrarily and subjectively decides to become a gambler, and 2) the rich rabble's success relies on objective contingency, i.e., the rules of the game of late capitalism (48). *Therefore*, unlike the two stages in the logic of double latency, there is an *objective* stage in the logic of double contingency. As such, the rich rabble has an element of externality: "One can say that here the logical sequence '*subjective (arbitrary) operation—contingent winnings—loss*' (rich rabble) is opposed to the sequence '*loss—subjective operation—loss*' (poor rabble)" (50). This differentiation is significant because the poor rabble's emergence—what Hegel ignores—is subject to an extra loss: "the security of subsistence" (65). The rabble then is an emergence *from* negativity, poverty, exemplifying the logic of double negativity. Hence the poor rabble's latent universality: everyone is (and will have retroactively been) latently poor; more precisely, because universality is a void in that something is universal because there is no differentiation, the poor rabble's negation of the *differentiation of poverty* means that it designates a universal "presence" to resolve Hegel's problem of poverty (74). As Žižek summarizes, the poor rabble is then not an "irrational particularity that egoistically opposes its mere particular interests against the existing and rationally organized universality" ("The Politics of Negativity" xvi); instead, its "'right without right' is effectively a meta-right or reflexive right, a universal right to have rights, to be in a position to act as a free autonomous subject" (*Less Than Nothing* 435)—a *demand* to be recognized.

This is why I want to suggest that Negri's brief yet hostile reading of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right* is shortsighted. Negri rightly identifies labour in Hegel's political treatise as its constitutive mediating element, "the foundation of the civil world" as Negri puts it (32). However, his interpretation completely ignores the problem of poverty in

Hegel's text, and as such his reading falls victim to the same conceptual impasse that he and Hardt inadvertently confront in *Multitude*. For Negri, "living labor [*sic*]" is subject to "social control" in contemporary society (31); if capitalism today "is constituted by labor [*sic*]" (32), then it follows that, as a mediating element, labour must become regulative by Hegel's logic and under the control of capitalism. Therefore, for Negri, Hegel's vision of labour presupposes the "hegemony" (34) of immaterial labour that I explained in Chapter Two. In short, the function of labour unmasks, to Negri, "the *Philosophy of Right* as the supreme index of bourgeois ideology and the capitalist practice of the organization of exploitation" (44).

This argument complements Hardt and Negri's reading of the multitude, since the multitude's very purpose *directly* confronts the "organization of exploitation" as the site of exclusion in late capitalism. However, for the same reason I referenced Mazzarella to argue that Hardt and Negri's theory is insufficient for dismissing the multitude's seemingly irrational counterpart, the crowd, Negri's reading here of labour in the *Philosophy of Right* is myopic. In disregarding Hegel's gridlock with poverty, i.e., in the context of Negri's argument, poverty as a barrier to the hegemony of immaterial labour, Negri by extension also overlooks the rabble as a "place of transformation" (Ruda 33). If labour for Hegel presupposes the hegemonic control of exploitation in late capitalism, Negri fails to take note that late capitalism structurally disenfranchises the rabble by *not* exploiting it through labour; indeed, late capitalism necessarily even refuses the poor rabble such exploitation. The poor rabble is then much more of a radical figure than the standard symbol of the proletariat, today the rough equivalent to culturally incorporated, employed, middle-class protestors by Žižek's account (*The Year of Dreaming*

Dangerously 9-12). In particular, as an irrational figure of exclusion who can only act politically through incomprehensible, violent outbursts, the poor rabble stands in as the supplemental excess to late capitalism's *other* excess, the rich rabble (Žižek *Less Than Nothing* 431). This is why I interpret the poor rabble as the necessary, mediating figure in subversive politics today—the crowd to Hardt and Negri's multitude.

Ruda resolves Hegel's philosophy by outlining how late capitalism creates exceptions to labour at both the top and the bottom of its hierarchy. Labour is then restructured under late capitalism as the very site of exception within Hegel's political theory whereby, at one end—the bottom—the poor rabble emerges as a universalizing figure, and at the other end—the top—the rich rabble indignantly constitutes those who defy Hegel's state. I expanded upon Ruda's purely philosophical analysis to more clearly articulate this restructuring of the role of labour under late capitalism through a critique of Negri's reading of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*. Particularly, given the gambling-house characteristics of late capitalism, Negri wrongly ignores labour as a realm of exception. The poor rabble's transformative gesture surfaces from the gap outside of the hegemony of immaterial labour. Further expanding upon Ruda—indeed situating Ruda (and Žižek) within the theoretical frameworks they covertly employ—I will outline how the theorization of this gap relies upon Benjamin's philosophy.

Specifically, how does my argument about the poor rabble more precisely apply to violence and how is the poor rabble linked with Benjamin's divine violence? I have already briefly indicated how the rabble constitutes a produced, seemingly irrational underclass who also *feel* excluded from *their own* society, fuelling Žižek's aforementioned and explicit comparison of contemporary rioters to the rabble. As Ruda

explains, because the rabble's universality is a latent negation of the partitioning of poverty, the poor rabble appears "as *already* dissolved existence"; contra Hegel, the poor rabble does not take the negative as a starting point but *is* the negative as such (116, emphasis added). This point validates the bursting-out nature of riotous violence, because the poor rabble's demand for recognition is only visible subjectively—i.e., not from an objective standpoint that interprets the rabble's violence as a seemingly legitimate political act—so the poor rabble's subjectivity is "something [that] *erupts* which cannot be understood" (122, emphasis added). This "irruption," therefore, "into the consistent structures" of society (117) "exemplif[ies] the category of singular universality (a singular which directly gives body to a universality, by-passing the mediation through the particular)" (Žižek *Less Than Nothing* 431).

As a *pure* negativity, the poor rabble reflects late capitalism's universal proper—everyone is rabble, and when the poor rabble irrationally and violently erupts from society's seams, it exposes the hidden vulgarity of what everyone is. Even etymologically, the German "*Pöbel*" "derives from the French '*pueple*' which refers back to the Latin '*populus*'" (Ruda 118). The rabble is the vulgar core of the late-capitalist populous; as such, *as universal*, it threatens to "unmask [the] fantasy" of late capitalism as a mythology (119), functioning akin to Benjamin's theological philosophy. The rabble's seemingly irrational explosion evokes a Benjaminian redemption, "a creation of the subject that is at the same time a revelation of objective structures" (Eagleton 117). I will argue next that the emergence of "a *rabble-subject*" (Ruda 117) occurs in times of divine violence, a violence that purifies the rabble of the theological law of late

capitalism—i.e., the mythical rules of the game that necessarily create winners and losers, rich and poor rabble—because this emergence is impotent, self-reflective, and *subjective*.

Divine Rabble: Benjamin and Hegel

I will conclude by describing Benjamin's theological philosophy in general, and more specifically, his notion of divine violence, to hypothesize a relationship between the function of divine violence and the redemptive dimension of the poor rabble. The poor rabble's subject-formation, its demand for recognition, is a latent gesture, what Ruda calls "an impossible ethical act" (120), that in its autonomy resists deeper meanings being ascribed to it. Conversely, Benjamin's divine violence is a purely subjective act, one "not visible to men" ("Critique of Violence" 300), because it strikes outside of society's comprehension framework of understanding, or in this case, late capitalism as a mythological game of gambling. Within the scope of my research, the thinker who most closely uncovers this link between Benjamin's and Hegel's philosophies is Žižek, as evidenced by Kotsko's remark—in passing—that Žižek "aligns [Benjamin's] structure [...] with his own understanding of the Hegelian dialectic" (75). Žižek, however, never elevates this comparison beyond a mere alignment, almost exclusively consigning his remarks on the two thinkers to separate arguments and discussions and thus relegating the comparison to implication.

For that matter, as I will soon indicate, Ruda's reading of Hegel is essentially a Benjaminian reading without Ruda acknowledging as much. Both Ruda and Žižek colour their interpretations of Hegel with Benjamin's thought but without explicitly providing adequate markers for their readers. With my theory of redemptive violence, I want to demonstrate what, theoretically, is happening underneath the surface with Žižek's reading

of violence and, even more specifically, because of Žižek's explicit comparison of ostensibly irrational rioters to the rabble, what is also subtextually occurring in Ruda's redemption of the rabble as a subversive figure. I want to demonstrate such a comparison between Benjamin and Hegel *specifically* through Hegel's figure of the poor rabble as an impotent agent of divine violence. In this way, I propose that Benjamin's and Hegel's philosophies complement each other by mutually blasting beyond pure idealism: the poor rabble, as a redemptive figure in Benjamin's sense, "is a materialist figure" because he "*subjectivizes*" his "objective conditions" (Ruda 116).

First, to avoid simply assuming that Benjamin's ideas map onto the framework of late capitalism as I have defined it, I need to establish how his philosophy interprets late capitalism as a mythological power that necessarily produces its own excess in the shape of an incomprehensible underclass. Although Benjamin wrote *The Arcades Project* in stages between 1927 and 1940 (even though it was not published, in full, until 1981), the text beautifully foreshadows what the Comaroffs refer to as capitalism's "second coming" at the turn of the 21st century, capitalism controlled by a financial oligarchy that fatalistically alters "the phenomenology of being in the world" (307), rendering the impoverished excess irrational, conceptually placing them outside of late capitalism's historical narrative.

Benjamin discusses gambling as it pertains to the rising force of finance capitalism; in particular, he notes that capitalism is gradually transforming into a casino because of how it appears to magically and necessarily produce subjectivities, just like fate (O3,6, O4,1, O4a, O13,5). Gambling, for Benjamin, like late capitalism, is a desire for mythological omnipotence (O11a,1), converting capitalist society into a mythology of

power in distinction to a divine-like redemption that could otherwise blast through the continuum of history (O4a, O11a,1, O13a,4), i.e., historicism as a chronological series of events that constructs society's comprehension framework, dictating who is rational and who is not. Therefore late capitalism, as such a system of mythological fate, necessarily produces underclasses, rendering them not only economically marginal but also conceptually incomprehensible—chance is not designed to understand them (O3,6, O4,1, O10,4). As I explained via the Comaroffs, chance, in generating value from nothing, produces a void of irrationality from this nothing, society's produced excess (317). Most importantly, Benjamin concludes that such a produced underclass, because of its incomprehensible subjectivity, functions outside of the conceptual framework that produced it and is therefore epistemologically able to see society not as a gambling table, like the rich rabble, but instead recognize “constants” in the world (O13,5), or put differently, to recognize the universal proper for what it is, a “fantasy” (Ruda 117) in which everyone is always potentially reduced to rabble at the roll of the dice.

Although Benjamin presents his convolutes to the reader cryptically, and *The Arcades Project* remained an unfinished and thus unpolished text during his lifetime, my brief attention to his convolutes on gambling introduced a lot of Benjamin's concepts that nevertheless require clarification, such as the relationship between history and tradition and the idea of mythology. In the process of explaining these concepts, I will articulate how they are significant to my linking of Benjamin's dialectics to Hegel's rabble, culminating in a discussion of Benjamin's theory of divine violence. Specifically, in this culmination, I will focus on how divine violence arguably functions as the poor rabble's mediating and redemptive gesture within the context of Hegel's political theory, as

theorized by Ruda. In other words, relative to the “irritation on philosophy by politics” in Hegel’s *Philosophy of Right*, the poor rabble, after Ruda’s treatment, impotently “breaks into philosophy” (4) and “introduces the necessity of a transformation of philosophy” (5). I argue that this act of impotently “breaking in” is the manifestation of divine violence, and the “transformation of philosophy” is simply, in Benjaminian language, the transformation of history.

What is history? In his sixth thesis in “Theses on the Philosophy of History,” Benjamin explains that “[t]o articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it ‘the way it really was’ [...]. It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger” (255). Here, Benjamin introduces his distinction between history and tradition, which Eagleton views as the most crucial distinction in theorizing a negative dialectics in Benjamin’s thought. History is the explicit universality of the past (“to recognize it ‘the way it really was’”), which in my argument’s context means the smooth linear narration of the history of late capitalism and its comprehension framework, what Rancière calls a “consensus system.” Tradition, on the other hand, is characterized by the “spasms” or “crises” within history (“a memory [that] flashes up at a moment of danger”), the latent universality of history’s excess that erupts from and through history’s seams, impotently demanding recognition. History operates by a “repressive” violence that maintains the status quo—such as the systematic violence in late capitalism I explained in Chapter One—while tradition offers a redemptive, “converse violence” when “constellations,” the elements that constitute tradition, such as society’s incomprehensible excluded excess, shock by an irregular interruption, and only then can

society become traditional by violently violating history to *think* through the contradictions of our subjectivity (Eagleton 48-51).

This rough breakdown of Benjamin's idea of history, and subsequently, of redemptive politics, provides a good framework to articulate how Hegel's redeemed poor rabble aligns with Benjamin's philosophy. As Žižek explains of Benjamin's notion of redemption, "a true [...] historiography is not to describe [...] events as they really were [...]; the task is, rather, to unearth the hidden potentialities [...] which were betrayed in the actuality of [the event] and in its final outcome," i.e., an outcome of failure (*The Parallax View* 78). Here is where one locates the theological gesture in Benjamin's politics, as the unrealized, impotent demands for recognition seek redemption by blasting—incomprehensibly, irrationally, and violently—into the present, rupturing the conceptual fabric of "history." This blasting, so to speak, follows the same logic of double negativity that I outlined in the poor rabble. For Ruda, the poor rabble is *redeemed* by emerging "'after' poverty," a negativity, thus sublating and dissolving it, and by extension revealing itself as the repressed yet true universal, bursting towards materialism away from pure idealism (116). This latent subject formation, as such, "reflects the [process of] dissolving," i.e., how late capitalism renders and produces the poor rabble as an incomprehensible excess (117), and "unmask[s]" late capitalism as a mythological force (119)—metaphorically mythological because the rich rabble, via its luxury, considers itself sovereign and hence superior to the Hegelian state. The poor rabble by contrast, Ruda concludes, is that something "[f]rom and in the historical movement [that] erupts which cannot be understood out of the necessary movement of

history, but is rather an interruption of radical contingency” (122). This “interruption” is the redemptive “flash” of Benjamin’s historical materialism.

The way in which, more precisely, Benjamin’s and Hegel’s philosophies overlap through the logic of double negativity is that the subjectivities of both Benjamin’s redemptive figure and Hegel’s poor rabble must necessarily arise in a “degree zero” of space (Eagleton 15). As Žižek summarizes Ruda’s explanation of double negativity in the poor rabble: “in order to arrive at something, one has to *subtract from nothing its nothing(ness) itself*, i.e., one has to posit the primordial pre-ontological Abyss ‘as such,’ AS NOTHING, so that, in contrast to (or against the background of) nothing, something can appear” (“The Politics of Negativity” xi). This description of double negativity in the poor rabble parallels the process of aporetic subject formation in Benjamin’s theory, as I will demonstrate *vis-à-vis* Eagleton. In his study of Benjamin, Eagleton attempts to correct Theodor W. Adorno’s “positivist” interpretation of Benjamin’s philosophy—i.e., that Benjamin’s idea of redemptive history proffers a Hegelian-like teleological politics—and instead proposes “that, for all its idealism,” his theology “nonetheless marks a kind of ‘negative dialectics’” (21). Therefore, and paradoxically, for the same reason that Eagleton argues Benjamin ultimately reveals himself to be “spontaneously anti-Hegelian” (23), I will align this materialist Benjamin with Ruda’s and Žižek’s Hegel as a figure of negative dialectics via the poor rabble because, of course, Eagleton is appropriating the same teleological Hegel as Negri does, a Hegel whose idealistic state realizes itself as a mythological essence, ignoring the problem of poverty in Hegel and as such the poor rabble as a necessary and mediating figure.

Eagleton reads such a negative dialectics in Benjamin's philosophy through the latter's distinction between history and tradition. Eagleton follows Benjamin's lead in "One-Way Street" in utilizing "tradition" as a method to distinguish "history" from Benjamin's radical historical materialism. As I previously stated in paraphrasing Eagleton's summary of Benjamin, the "converse violence" in which society's irrational excess engages is a "violent suspension of the bland continuum" of late capitalism's history (50). Therefore, with this distinction between history and tradition, late capitalism as a sovereign entity conceptually seeks its privileged authority in the past, while the repressed, irrational excess seeks recognition poetically—or, latently, in the context of Ruda's intervention—from the future (68-69). This recognition is in the future because it is an impossible demand for recognition; as I explained via Žižek in Chapter One, "the demand to be recognised [*sic*] also implies a rejection of the very framework through which recognition takes place" (*Violence* 78)—therefore recognition is always latent, always deferred, always to be realized only in the future. And the future, as undetermined, is a void: all of "this amounts to saying that [the rabble] derives its poetry from absence" (Eagleton 68).

Therefore, Benjamin's subject is a "pure signifier [...] that never comes" (Eagleton 22). Just as the poor rabble aporetically asserts itself in an "impossible ethical act" that "suspends" the comprehension framework of late capitalism (Ruda 120), Benjamin's radical figure of subversion is born in a "degree zero" of space (Eagleton 15), bursting through history as a "violent suspension" (50). Here I can begin to articulate the materialist element of subjectivization: this aporetic subject formation is *generative of meaning but is in itself meaningless* (Eagleton 117). In this way I can demonstrate more

clearly why I placed such a heavy emphasis on Badiou and Žižek in my first chapter. Žižek argues that we must avoid the temptation to find convenient meanings in seemingly irrational riots. Instead, we must acknowledge that the irrationality of such riots is *meaningless in and of itself but meaningful in that it generates meaning*. This generative meaning is the potential for political effects in the lineage of riots that I traced via Badiou, and just as for Badiou, the latent subject formation that results is autonomous in Benjamin's sense. As Eagleton explains, if Benjamin's theology is defined by a dialectics of negativity (recall how Badiou's Truth-Event is meaningless in and of itself), then this lack of objective meaning then presents, necessarily, an autonomous—thus sacred—meaning, sacred because it is autonomous of a single interpretation. The irrational “excesses” that violently demand recognition “catch something of a general idea” of late capitalism (117); just as the poor rabble is the reflection of the universal proper (Ruda 118), the “creation of the subject” in Benjamin's philosophy “is at the same time a revelation of objective structures” (Eagleton 117).

Returning to Žižek's reading of Badiou's Truth-Event from my first chapter, namely that Badiou stipulates a Truth-Event in the positive without acknowledging how a Truth-Event fails politically—i.e., failing in the sense that its participants' demand for recognition, for example, is infinitely deferred into the future, thus latent—Žižek does also concede a minor yet significant amendment Badiou made to his own theory: “there is a Truth-Event only for those who recognize themselves in it: while a Truth is always the truth of a particular historical situation, it *affects* the entire situation” (*Less Than Nothing* 836). Therefore it remains true that a Truth-Event is radically subjective because there are no objective criteria to identify it; from the outside it will insistently appear irrational.

Yet its negativity, this notion of failure, reveals itself in its latent *affect* on the objective system against which it strikes, “unmask[ing]” this structure as mythological (Ruda 119), autonomously generating political meaning by compelling self-reflection and critical thought in regards to the rabble’s impotent demand for recognition—to *think through* their impossible subject formation. To requote Žižek, “one has to posit [nothing] ‘as such,’ AS NOTHING, so that, in contrast to (or against the background of) nothing, something can appear” (“The Politics of Negativity” xi), and this autonomous act of positing, I argue, is the function of Benjamin’s conception of divine violence.

For Benjamin, divine violence challenges the exclusionary sovereign violence of late capitalism, a kind of mythical violence because a sovereign’s legitimating method derives from fate. In short, a sovereign’s power to decide on exception—i.e., the comprehension framework that determines who is and is not articulable *as a subject*—is mythological because it requires an originating act of violence to *make* and subsequently *preserve* laws (and by extension, itself)—a “manifestation” of mythical fate by which the sovereign personifies itself as a sort of Greek god to authenticate its inscrutable force over its subjects (“Critique of Violence” 294). This self-authenticating act is a violence with an end; divine violence, on the other hand, is a means in itself, symbolizing a divine-like “world to come” in transcending and challenging the “dialectical oscillation between violence that posits the law and violence that preserves it” (Agamben 63). It operates outside the law because while

mythical violence is lawmaking, divine violence is law-destroying; [...] if mythical violence brings at once guilt and retribution, divine power only expiates; [...] if the former is bloody, the latter is lethal without spilling blood. [...] For blood is the symbol of mere life. The dissolution of legal violence stems [...] from the guilt of more natural life, which consigns the living, innocent and unhappy, to a retribution that “expiates” the guilt of

mere life—and doubtless also purifies the guilty, not of guilt, however, but of law. For with mere life the rule of law over the living ceases. Mythical violence is bloody power over mere life for its own sake, divine power pure power over all life for the sake of the living. The first demands sacrifice, the second accepts it (Benjamin 297).

With this lengthy but critical passage from Benjamin’s essay “Critique of Violence,” it is evident that divine violence is essential for symbolizing a redemptive struggle for recognition among the excluded members of society, the rabble. As Giorgio Agamben summarizes, divine violence is a redemptive struggle that, unlike sovereign, mythical violence, “neither posits nor preserves law,” but “‘de-poses’ it” (64). More specifically, in explaining divine violence by referring to theological law, Benjamin explains that the law “exists not as a criterion of judgment, but as a guideline for the actions of persons or communities who have to wrestle with it in solitude, and in exceptional cases, to take on themselves the responsibility of ignoring it” (298). It is vital to interpret this statement correctly: divine violence, as a violent, seemingly irrational act that bursts, as the poor rabble does, “[f]rom and in the historical movement [and] which cannot be understood” (Ruda 122), gestures towards a latent universality, and therefore an impotent, impossible subject formation, a purely subjective act that “*affects* the entire” objective structure (Žižek *Less Than Nothing* 836). This subjective revelation of objective structures forces society to confront the irrationality of the violence directly, “to wrestle with it in solitude”—therefore divine violence is a regulative violence, and not a direct, constitutive affirmation of history “as it really is,” e.g., oversimplistically imbuing the rabble’s violence with some “meaning.”

Divine violence therefore transgresses the dialectic of sovereign, systematic violence, the very framework of late capitalism that produces the rabble. In this move

outside law, this call for a universalism outside of the system that produces yet is unable to recognize the rabble, there is a purification by divine violence of law itself. As Žižek explains, “law is limited to the living: it cannot reach beyond life to touch what is in excess of life, what is more than mere life” (*Violence* 198). This purification is the redemptive component of the rabble’s violence. Most significantly, it symbolizes a call for the politically and socially excluded to transcend a system that cannot recognize them precisely because it is “limited to the living.” As the excess of late capitalism, the rabble struggles for recognition as “more than mere life.”

Importantly, divine violence is incomprehensible, never definitively or ontologically folding into a kind of sovereign violence that it opposes; therefore the redemptive, “expiatory power of [divine] violence is not visible to men” (Benjamin “Critique of Violence” 300). *This is why the poor rabble is a subjective figure whose emergence “cannot be understood”* (Ruda 122)—its demand for recognition defies late capitalism’s comprehension framework. As Žižek clarifies, this is why we must avoid “the temptation to provide [the rabble’s violence] with some ‘deeper meaning.’ What this entails is that, to put it in Badiou’s terms, mythic violence belongs to the order of Being,” or history, in Benjamin’s terms, “while divine violence belongs to the order of Event” (*Violence* 200). In short, it is instead *generative* of meaning, in and of itself “neither an expression of personal pathology [...] nor a crime” (198). As a subjective and thus autonomous act, it is generative of self-reflection precisely because it forces systematic agents to recognize their own culpability in the production of excluded subjects through objective violence. Recall Žižek’s elucidation from Chapter One that what these agents receive when confronted with utter incomprehension in irrational acts of violence is the

inverted true form of their objective violence. We can now appreciate that it is pure, divine violence, symbolic of the rabble's struggle for recognition as excluded subjects, outside of the sovereign law of late capitalism that produces them and is structurally unable to recognize them, that is this incomprehensible inverted message.

Conclusion

Ostensibly irrational acts of riotous violence in society constitute a latent point of emergence for the contemporary correlate of Hegel's figure of poverty, the rabble. From this hypothesis, I have attempted to respond to a problem in Hegel's political philosophy. Rose articulates this problem as Hegel's failure to theorize the state philosophically because he never resolved the political contradictions of excess wealth and poverty in civil society; Hegel therefore inadvertently yet ironically presented an abstract prescription of reality in his critique of abstract prescriptions of reality (84). More specifically, Ruda expanded this analysis of Hegel's problem by explaining how we must confront the figure of the poor rabble to philosophically realize Hegel's ethical state. Such a confrontation conceptually allows for the possibility of transitioning from the rabble to the proletariat and therefore catalyzes "an interruption of a different thinkability of politics into philosophy" (168).

My goal has been to theorize a means for this thinkability by arguing that the poor rabble's emergence through riotous violence not only resembles the function of Benjamin's divine violence, but that we can only grasp the transition to Hegel's ethical state via an understanding of Benjamin's theory of historical materialism in general. In short, in explicating this otherwise implicit relationship between Benjamin and Hegel by demonstrating how the two thinkers share a negative dialectics, I have attempted to articulate how the rabble's violence "lay[s] bare and confront[s] [society's] *contradictions*" (Balibar 66). As a "pure signifier [...] that never comes" in the context of Benjamin's philosophy (Eagleton 22), the poor rabble's latent and seemingly incomprehensible emergence mimetically "suspends" (Ruda 120) and therefore

challenges late capitalism's conceptual regression to 19th-century imperialistic and fatalistic exploitation.

Therefore, I have outlined how the rabble's emergence impotently manifests itself in times of ostensibly irrational acts of riots; as Badiou characterizes such riots, they symbolize "the first stirrings of a global popular uprising against [late capitalism's] very regression" (5). Importantly, the *perception* of the rabble's violence as *irrational* indicates a struggle for recognition among socially excluded rioters. Specifically, the irrationality marks a void, characterizing the rabble's inability to organize in any comprehensible, political sense. This void symbolizes a kind of redemptive violence, as it impotently strikes against the mythological framework of late capitalism that renders the rabble to the position of an incomprehensible underclass, whereby their only means of "opposition to the system" that excludes them becomes a "blind acting out" in "the form of a meaningless outburst" (Žižek *The Year of Dreaming Dangerously* 54). This "blind acting out" comprises what Hall calls the rabble's subjectively meaningful "political expression" (qtd. in Williams). As I have indicated throughout my argument and explicated particularly in Chapter Three, the violence is meaningless in itself but is generative of meaning.

Importantly, I have argued that such a latently authentic political expression simultaneously rejects the framework of inclusion in late-capitalist society, and thus the rabble's violence catalyzes a conceptual gap from where they generate the possibility for authentic subjectivity. I theorized this generative function in riots that appear incomprehensible from the privileged, bourgeois perspective of late capitalism as part of a lineage of riot action towards Badiou's concept of historical riots and then considered

such riots as indicative of phenomenological violence's power to create means of "self-determination" because of the violence's very senselessness (Staudigl 250). I expanded upon this argument by explaining how the rabble, in its emergence through riots, exemplifies Mazzarella's notion of a crowd, which is a definitive element in this generative process because it speaks to the multitude's shortcomings by constituting the irrational, produced underclass of late-capitalist society. I theorized this late capitalism as a regression to classic, 19th-century capitalism in how it directly disenfranchises the rabble via direct forms of exploitation—as a theological system of gambling, it exploits by rendering the poor rabble as the necessary losers of late capitalism, the "structurally unemployable" of our society (Žižek *The Year of Dreaming Dangerously* 10). This is why the rabble's violence cannot be so easily dismissed in exclusive favour of Hardt and Negri's multitude; conceptually, society excludes the rabble even from the hegemony of immaterial labour. Finally, I seized upon this delineation of late capitalism to analyze the rabble figure in depth and, contra Hegel's own dismissal of the rabble, I explained, via Ruda, how the rabble actually constitutes a potentially transgressive figure as it touches upon a latent universality. As a mythological system of gambling unable to resolve the problem of the rabble—indeed, it structurally relies upon the rabble—late capitalism defies Hegel's ethical state, and by critically engaging with the emergence of the rabble, instead of trying to suppress it, we can engage in self-reflective critique to understand and restructure the true logic of our society. I connected this philosophical redemption of the rabble to Benjamin's theological philosophy, particularly, his notion of divine violence, to explicate a comparison between Benjamin and Hegel—and this connection, I argue, is a new gateway for critical self-reflection as the Benjaminian-Hegelian framework

exposes the mythological, exclusionary hegemony of the objective structure of late-capitalist society.

As Žižek commented on, for example, the 2011 England riots, “On British streets during the unrest, what we saw was not men reduced to ‘beasts,’ but the stripped-down form of the ‘beast’ produced by capitalist ideology” (Žižek “Shoplifters of the World Unite”). Such pure acts of senseless violence directly unveil the mythological framework of late capitalism that denies its underclass inclusion and recognition in their own society. The violence, obviously condemnable from a purely subjective perspective, therefore suggests that late capitalism is not by any means broken in that rioters are, for instance, *truly* irrational because they have lost their moral compass; instead, late capitalism is functioning perfectly by its own logic.

However, simply counter-proposing the amendment that the rabble’s emergence is simply the result of poverty runs the risk of objectifying the rioters’ experiences. In Chapter One, I outlined the importance of avoiding narratives that either trivialize or objectify the rabble’s violence, as such commentary impedes the important possibility of society reflecting upon the rabble’s latent demand for recognition. It is not just that the rabble are broke, that they experience poverty objectively, but also that they respond to their disposition subjectively through their attitude of indignation and sheer violent attacks. This is the delineation I presented in Chapter Three, where I studied the rabble as a philosophical figure with political, transgressive potential. Of particular importance, as Ruda explains, as a purely negative figure, the rabble negates poverty via its irrational violence, so to speak, thus constituting a universal “presence”—a latent universality (74). Theorizing this negativity as a void from where it becomes possible for such a presence

to generate itself has been my main objective throughout this paper. This generative process exposes the logic of late capitalism as a mythological game, mediating an incomprehensible crowd that, as I argued against Negri in Chapter Three, does not even enjoy the right to be exploited through their labour. This exposure, in turn, creates “transformative” possibilities for self-reflective subject determination (Mazzarella 726).

The fantasmatic irrationality of the rabble’s violence, in a sort of mimetic way, reveals this mythological framework, uncovering the fantasmatic real of society, i.e., its real conditions of exclusion. Balibar identified this characteristic in the 2005 France riots: the rioters, as a produced negativity, constitute a “becoming political” that is simultaneously marked by its impossibility, or latency (65). Moving forward, our goal as a society should therefore be to “transform the power of the negative [...] into a dialectic of convergence and mutual recognition” (66). Here, Balibar means to think critically of this framework of exclusion and consider the rioters’ pure negativity as a space of convergence, that is, placing the riots in a larger matrix of acts of violence against late capitalism—catalyzing the generative process towards recognition for the rioters as structurally excluded rabble. This is what, I suggest, Žižek means when he says: “in order to arrive at something, one has to *subtract from nothing its nothing(ness) itself*, i.e., one has to posit the primordial pre-ontological Abyss ‘as such,’ AS NOTHING, so that, in contrast to (or against the background of) nothing, something can appear” (“The Politics of Negativity” xi).

To think through and work towards this possibility, I have explicated an otherwise implicit relationship between Benjamin and Hegel. By considering the rabble’s autonomous “transformation of philosophy,” which itself remedies the political barrier of

poverty for Hegel's ethical state (Ruda 5), as a Benjaminian transformation of history, I have hypothesized a new theoretical perspective for engaging in such a matrix of acts of violence and political upheaval that is now neither exclusively literary nor political, but both. I therefore hope to inject political potential into the self-reflective demand that Benjamin's divine violence compel on society. As a purely subjective violence, incomprehensible to late capitalism's objective framework, such violence functions as a "violent suspension" of the objective structure of society (Eagleton 50)—both constituting and creating a gap to rethink this objective structure to understand how the rabble are struggling for recognition.

Importantly, Balibar argues that, in regards to the 2005 France riots, the violence's irrationality represents a sort of "return to sender" (65)—which I interpret as similar to Žižek's remark that the rioters' demand for recognition "also implies a rejection of the very framework through which recognition takes place" (*Violence* 78)—therefore marking this demand's impotency. It is a rejection of the very system of late capitalism by violently exploding into a sort of mimetic representation of the core of late-capitalist ideology. *This is the result of gambling with subjectivities: the rabble's violence is also the objective violence of exclusion enacted on them.* To grapple with this reality, it is important to seize upon it at face value to fully honour the imperative articulated by Frost et al. to "recast [such riots] as catalysts for change" (8).

This recasting cannot be done in isolation. Riotous acts of violence representing the rabble's latent emergence share, as I suggested earlier, the common denominator of symbolizing an unidentifiable sense of inequality and injustice with late capitalism. In the spirit, therefore, of Balibar's call to analyze such events through their "transversality,"

that is, their “ability to express or echo other revolts in [their] own code” (65), my aim has been to both delineate what exactly this “code” is and its relationship to late capitalism, within the theoretical context of Hegel’s political theory, instead of focusing on the specific details of any particular case study. By theorizing the rabble’s emergence in this context, i.e., in response to Hegel’s political problem and in conjunction with Benjamin’s theological philosophy, I have aimed to demonstrate how acts of ostensibly irrational violent riots are, in a sense, entirely rational in how they can become *generative* of meaning (without necessarily being inherently meaningful) by latently catalyzing a process towards change. The door is now open; however, if and how we walk through it will depend on this ongoing political process of struggle.

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