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Representation and revolutionary subjectivity in the student-worker protests : to what extent, and in what ways, is Negri and Hardt's concept of "the multitude" useful for understanding the Wits student-worker protests of 2015?

Malindi, Lindiwe

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REPRESENTATION AND REVOLUTIONARY SUBJECTIVITY IN THE STUDENT-WORKER PROTESTS

To what extent, and in what ways, is Negri and Hardt's concept of "the multitude" useful for understanding the Wits student-worker protests of 2015?

Lindiwe Malindi
(Student Number: 0706292H)

Supervisor: Prishani Naidoo

A research report submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Sociology.

Johannesburg, December 2017

Declaration

I declare that this is my own unaided work. It is being submitted for the requirements of the Degree of Masters in Sociology (by coursework and research report), at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.

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Lindiwe Malindi

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Date

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List of acronyms

AIC – African Independent/Initiated/Indigenous Church
Amcu – Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union
ANC – African National Congress
APF – Anti-Privatisation Forum
Azapo – Azanian People's Organisation
BAWU – Black Allied Workers Union
BC – Black Consciousness
BCM – Black Consciousness Movement
BCP – Black Community Projects
BPC – Black Community Projects
Cosatu – Congress of South African Trade Unions
CST – Colonialism of a Special Type
CYL – Congress Youth League
EFF – Economic Freedom Fighters
EFFSC – Economic Freedom Fighters Student Command
EO – End Outsourcing
FMF – Fees Must Fall
Fosatu – Federation of South African Trade Unions
Gear – Growth Employment and Redistribution
ICU – Industrial and Commercial Workers Union
MSA – Muslim Students' Association
NDR – National Democratic Revolution
Nehawu – National Education Health and Allied Workers' Union
NSFAS - National Student Financial Aid Scheme
NUM – National Union of Mineworkers
Numsa – National Union of Mineworkers of South Africa
Nusas – National Union of South African Students
OMF – Outsourcing Fust Fall
PAC – Pan Africanist Congress of South Africa (later Azania)
Pasma – Pan Africanist Student Movement of Azania
PYA – Progressive Youth Alliance
RDP – Reconstruction and Development Plan
RMF – Rhodes Must Fall
SACP – South African Communist Party
SAPS – South African Police Service
SANNC – South African Native National Congress
Sasco – South African Students' Congress Organisation
Saso – South African Students' Organisation
SASM – South African Students' Movement
UDF – United Democratic Front
UF – United Front
WCC – Wits Crisis Committee
Wits – University of the Witwatersrand
WSC – Wits Workers Solidarity Committee
YCL – Young Communists League

PART A

1. INTRODUCTION

The critical historical role of the industrial working class is a thread that runs through orthodox Marxist thought. According to this logic, the proletariat[1] - because of its numerical power, its shared experience of workplace exploitation and its powerful position in the production process - is understood as the natural agent of revolution. Under conditions of large-scale industrial production, this group is able to develop a revolutionary class consciousness, which it then exercises to unite, rise up, seize the means of production and free itself – and society as a whole – from the wage labour relation and the profit imperative.

But the idea that the proletariat is the natural or primary revolutionary subject has not gone uncontested. Historically, and especially outside of "the West" – in contexts characterised by a relatively small industrial sector and generally colonisation by that same West – a number of alternative groups and formations have been theorised as potentially fulfilling the revolutionary role accorded to the proletariat in Marxist theory. Just some of these include "the subaltern", Frantz Fanon's "damnés de la terre" or "wretched of the earth", and a number of formulations based on alliances between the "underdeveloped" proletariat and other groups.

Recent changes in the organisation of work and a recomposition of capital have also forced a re-thinking of the question at hand and spawned a number of new concepts of revolutionary subjectivity which also challenge the primary role accorded to the industrial working class. Because the West has generally been at the epicentre of these changes – and because the conditions of work and life that they have produced are most novel there (though not most harshly felt) – these new concepts have generally emerged out of Europe and the US. Guy Standing's (2010) "precariat" – a class of the world's precarious workers – and Negri and Hardt's "multitude" both fall into this broad category.

Negri and Hardt's analysis of empire, rooted in autonomist Marxist thought, rejects the orthodox Marxist formula of proletarian revolution based on the argument that global economic restructuring and changes in the nature of value production have ushered in a fundamentally different set of material conditions. Value, they argue, is less and less produced on the proverbial factory floor and is now increasingly produced by "immaterial

[1] In this paper "proletariat" and "industrial working class" will be used interchangeably, as per the traditional formulation. This is in contrast with Negri and Hardt's argument that "'proletariat' is the general concept that defines all those whose labour is exploited by capital" (Hardt and Negri, 2001: 393).

labour". The shift towards this kind of labour – which produces services, knowledge, cultural products or communication – can be discerned in the relative decrease in industrial production and the accompanying rise in the service and knowledge economy. In addition, they argue, borrowing from Michel Foucault, production has become "biopolitical". Work and life, production and reproduction, are increasingly indistinct and value is now created by all people, beyond both working hours and the workplace. Under these new, "postmodern" conditions, the industrial working class is displaced from the "privileged position" which it occupied under the hegemony of modern industry and the proletarian becomes just one of many producers in the complex network of biopolitical production.

The multitude is conceived of as a/the group that is able to confront capital and wage revolution on this new terrain. The multitude is a broad concept that includes the unemployed, "precarious" workers, household and other unwaged workers – in sum, all those who labour and thus produce value under capitalist domination. It is a formation of "all those who work under the rule of capital and thus potentially as the class of those who refuse the rule of capital" (Negri & Hardt, 2000: 106). The multitude is thus a reconceptualisation of the idea of the proletariat to include the full array of labouring practices that characterise the regime of biopolitical production.

However, and as the quote above suggests, the multitude is not an already-existing class, but rather a *potential* revolutionary subject. It is a political proposition which currently exists only as "a way of giving a name to… an existing social and political tendency" (Negri & Hardt, 2004: 220). The multitude is thus, according to Negri and Hardt, an emerging political form which we have caught glimpses of but which, like the industrial working class before it, can only be called into being by a political project.

This paper undertakes to analyse this concept of the multitude with relation to the contemporary South African socio-economic context and political milieu – and uses the student-worker protests, which erupted first at the University of the Witwatersrand and then throughout South Africa, as a case study through which to do so.

Beginning in October 2015, South Africa witnessed the coming together of university students and outsourced university workers in what some consider to be the most significant protest actions since the advent of non-racial, liberal democracy in 1994. United under the banners of #FeesMustFall and #EndOutsourcing (later #OutsourcingMustFall), these protests managed to halt scheduled university fee increases in 2015 and secure the commitment of many universities to re-hire workers as university employees. These protests have been notable for a number of reasons, including their size, geographical spread and material achievements – with insourcing standing as a powerful symbol that, as Wits worker Deliwe Mzobe put it, "everything is possible" (Mzobe in Luckett and Mzobe, 2016: 97). The unprecedented levels of media coverage of the protests – by the press but

also and especially by participants themselves – is also notable and has provided the material that has made this inquiry possible. Especially significant for this study is the fact that these protests represented the coming together of students and workers (and indeed many other categories of political- and self-identification) in *common* struggle. This is notable in a current-day South Africa, which has not seen a sustained coming together of this scale since the disintegration of the "new social movements" in the mid 2000s. The act of "coming together" to act "on the basis of what the singularities share in common" (Negri & Hardt, 2004: 100) is central to Negri and Hardt's conception of the multitude. It is this remarkable "coming together" that arouses the impulse to ask the questions at the heart of this paper.

Here we are interested in questioning the usefulness of the concept of the multitude for understanding the student-worker protests, and whether they can be considered an example of the "new kind of proletarian solidarity and militancy" (Negri & Hardt, 2000: 54) identified by Negri and Hardt. Central to this task is understanding the nature of the joint struggle of students and workers and the extent to which it can be said to represent the particular type of "coming together" theorised by Negri and Hardt.

In order to try address some of these questions, I have compiled an archive of the student-worker protests, which I analyse with the goal of understanding something about the nature of the political relationship between students and workers. We begin from the premise that ideas and social relations have material existence (Hall, 1985: 100) – and that the language, symbols, images, tropes and historical references reflected in the posters, statements, pamphlets, tweets, songs and other records produced by students and workers themselves can therefore shine some light on this relationship. By conducting an analysis of some of these records, alongside an analysis of the "material conditions" prevalent in South Africa today, this paper is able to reach some tentative and necessarily limited conclusions about the collective subjectivity of students and workers, as represented by themselves in struggle. Along the way, we will encounter many twists and turns – which throw up new questions that have refused to be brushed aside.

The notion that the multitude may be a or *the* revolutionary subject in South Africa has implications that extend well beyond its university campuses. And to ask the questions put forward here is to weigh into a long-standing, ongoing and often divisive debate in South African politics about the "motive force" of history. Today, with the failure of liberal democracy and the two-stage "National Democratic Revolution"[2] to meaningfully transform

[2] The National Democratic Revolution (NDR) is the two-stage theory of revolution elaborated by the SACP (A struggle for a native republic as a stage towards a socialist South Africa, 1928; The Road to South African Freedom, 1962; The South African Working Class and the NDR, 1988) and adopted by the African National Congress (ANC) and the Congress of South African Trade Unions (Cosatu). At the core of the theory is the idea that apartheid was a "colonialism of a special type" (CST), and that a

the socioeconomic structure of South Africa, the debate continues. For some, the working class continues to be put forward as *the* agent of revolution. Amongst these are those who argue for an expansion of the concept of the working class to include, beyond traditional workers, all of those who have "nothing to sell but their labour". For others, revolution is to be waged by workers in alliance with other classes and groups, while others yet argue for the autonomous revolutionary potential of insurgent communities. The notion of "the poor" calls attention to the uneasy nature of the post-apartheid nation's contract with "the people" – a category equally undercut by the student-worker movement itself, which has been behind a revival of a black consciousness ideology that centres the black, (post)colonial subject and explicitly rejects the "rainbow nation" concept that forms the ideological base of the post-apartheid nation state. It is hoped that this study can make a modest albeit inchoate[3] contribution towards this debate, which has shed light on as well as shaped popular consciousness and political alliances throughout South Africa's history. In our current moment, these questions are as pertinent as ever and the question of whether the multitude is indeed a useful concept has important implication for our understanding of, on the one hand, Negri and Hardt's theoretical framework and, on the other, the student-worker protests and South African protest politics, more broadly, today.

2. LINE OF INQUIRY

This study is interested in the question of whether and, if so, how the concept of the multitude is useful for understanding the student-worker protests of 2015. In particular, it seeks to assess the idea that the joint struggle of students and workers may represent a "coming together" of the multitude. This act of "coming together", as theorised by Negri and Hardt, is characterised by very particular ways of relating and identifying that are specific to the multitude as a political subject, and quite distinct from, for example, the unity of the proletariat. And so, this study tries to analyse how students and workers framed and therefore perhaps understood themselves in struggle, their respective struggles, and the relationship between these. Part of this necessarily entails reading the concept of the multitude against other kinds of collective subjectivities that have found root not only in the student-worker movement but in the country more broadly – and so this paper is also concerned with understanding the history of the "motive force" question in South Africa. The idea that the multitude may be a revolutionary subject is rooted in a theory of value that supposes postmodern economic conditions. This paper therefore also seeks to assess whether such material conditions can be said to exist in South Africa.

"national or bourgeois" revolution is therefore a necessary stage in the linear progression towards socialism.

[3] Fun etymology footnote: The word inchoate is derived from the Latin *inchoatus,* meaning "begin". In Law, with relation to an offence such as incitement or conspiracy, inchoate means "anticipating or preparatory to a further criminal act".

3. CONTEXT

3.1 The question of revolutionary subjectivity

From the perspective of the Western social sciences, the question of revolutionary subjectivity has its conceptual origins in the theorisation of the individual human subject – the "I". The now famous dictum of Rene Descartes, "cogito ergo sum" (I think therefore I am), in particular, represents the emergence of the idea of the autonomous, individual human – defined by his rationality – as the subject of social analysis. This individualistic conception of existence is a product of the displacement of God and the centring of man that characterise "modernity". Individuality, as Stuart Hall reminds us, had always existed, but it came to be experienced, conceptualised and lived differently with "the birth of the 'sovereign individual' between the renaissance humanism of the sixteenth century and the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century" (Hall, 1992: 281-282).

> *The enlightenment subject was based on a conception of the human person as a fully centred, unified individual, endowed with the capacities of reason, consciousness and action, whose 'centre' consisted of an inner core which first emerged when the subject was born, and unfolded within it, while remaining essentially the same – continuous or 'identical' with itself – throughout the individual's existence. The essential centre of the self was the person's identity* (Hall, 1992: 275)

This conceptualisation of the "I" over time, and in response to changing conditions of social existence, underwent many metamorphoses. And while that genealogy is too complex and expansive to engage fully here, it is sufficient for the purposes of this discussion to say that by the end of the 20th century, the idea of the autonomous, self-contained, rational individual had been replaced by that of the "decentred" postmodern subject. The period of "postmodern globalisation" and everything that it implied – structural and institutional change; "space-time compression" (Harvey, 1989); unprecedented interconnectedness and information flows; the breakdown of established forms of social order; the multiplication of differences as well as of systems of meaning and cultural representation (Hall, 1992: 277) – ushered in a new era not only for the world but for the place of the "I" in it. In 1992, Stuart Hall argues that "the subject, previously experienced as having a unified and stable identity, is becoming fragmented; composed, not of a single, but of several, sometimes contradictory or unresolved, identities" resulting in a situation whereby the individual has no permanent, fixed or essential identity (Hall, 1992: 598). Hall's account of the complex nature of individual identity underpins the common philosophical perspective on individual subjectivity today – a perspective which, like "cogito ergo sum" before it, has filtered into the mainstream so as to inform peoples' understandings of themselves.

Ideas of collective subjectivity, then, look at the question of subjectivity as it relates to

groups. Here we begin to ask questions around the agencies, powers, identities and ideologies of collectives. The notion that the collective be understood as a group of individuals is particular (though not necessarily exclusive) to the Western intellectual tradition. This notion – arising out of a historical moment, in a specific place, defined by individualistic, "modern" values and worldviews – is often, despite its particularity, used to analyse all societies, as though Descartes' "I" was indeed a statement of universal humanism[4]. To think beyond "the limits of European thought", argues Dipesh Chakrabarty (2006), then implies an intellectual endeavour to move beyond this "methodological individualism" (ibid. 21) and understand subaltern collective subjectivities in a way that takes the collective as the starting point of analysis, that "think[s] of the collective itself as an agent" (Chakrabarty, 2006: 1).

The concept of collective political subjectivity is, in some ways, a precursor to that of revolutionary subjectivity, as defined here. It refers to consciously political subjects and their thoughts, identities, actions and other expressions within the political domain. Existing and operating in this domain, the political subject may enact a wide range of political, economic and social changes, including perhaps revolutionary changes. But it is distinct from the revolutionary subject in that it is not defined by revolutionary imperative. In contrast, the revolutionary subject is a subject driven by revolutionary intent and ideology (understood as a vision for a fundamental transformation of the organisation of political, economic and social life) and defined by its structural power to enact this vision. The indivisibility of freedom demands of the revolutionary subject an "excessiveness" of thought (Neocosmos, 2016) that seeks to liberate infinitely more than just itself. Thus, all revolutionary subjects are political subjects, but not all political subjects are revolutionary subjects – though it is of course through politics, which may at first manifest as messy, that revolutionary subjectivity can emerge, cohere and articulate itself. The border between political and revolutionary subjectivity eludes identification, if not definition[5] - much like the revolutionary Event which, according to Alain Badiou (1989), can only be reflexively identified.

It is generally, but not universally, agreed that the revolutionary subject comes to occupy its political position as a consequence of its particular place within and in relation to the existing social, political and economic structures. The revolutionary subject's discontent with the status quo, as well as its structural power within it, places it in the position to be able to overthrow it. Within the Marxist tradition, the "material conditions" or economic base of society is accorded a particularly significant (if not primary) role in determining

[4] That the "I" in this formulation refers not to all humans but rather exclusively to the white, European man is now common cause.

[5] Jacque Ranciére (1995) defines politics as the emancipatory project toward equality, and calls the agent of that process the "political subject". I, without necessarily disagreeing with that definition, find the distinction useful for the everyday understanding of the general principle that it allows.

which group or class will emerge as *the* revolutionary subject. While this kind of economic determinism has been almost universally discredited, structuralist thought more broadly maintains the importance of structural considerations in answering questions about political and revolutionary subjectivity.

The contemporary discussion about subjectivity, while in many ways still concerned with structures and objective conditions, shifts away from an exclusive focus on these to embrace and explore another dimension of subjectivity – namely, how people think about, understand, feel, identify and represent themselves as groups and individuals within those groups, and with relation to other groups. How do political agents understand themselves with relation to the system that oppresses them? What kinds of consciousness and relations lay the ground for revolutionary action? What kind of political project may embolden a particular group to recognise and enact its structural power against the system that oppresses it?

The question of subjectivity is thus intimately connected to political practice and action. It is concerned with the ways in which consciousness, identity and relationships inform or lead to collective action and organisation. In the words of Franco Berardi, "in the word 'subject' two different concepts are contained: one is action, the other is consciousness" (Berardi, 2011: 124). A dialectical relationship exists between these two concepts: On the one hand, action is informed by consciousness. On the other, consciousness is something that is developed through action. Revolutionary subjectivity is therefore not something naturally occurring or necessarily arising out of a particular set of structural conditions; it is also formed and developed in struggle.

So, who is this group? Marx's historical-materialist analysis of capitalism led him to conclude that this group was necessarily the proletariat – the class of the world's dispossessed, exploited workers standing in direct opposition to the capital-owning bourgeoisie – the class that would transform itself into a revolutionary subject through its struggle (Lebowitz, 2012). However, the failure of the 20th century to produce the widespread workers' revolutions theorised by Marx, as well as changes in capitalism and capitalist society since then, have led to a resurgence of questions and ideas around revolutionary subjectivity, as well as a renewed urgency around these. At this turn, we ask not only "What is to be done?" but also, as per David Harvey's formulation, "Who is going to do it?" (Harvey, 2011: 215)

3.2 "Proletarians of the world unite!"

In the Communist Manifesto (1848), Marx, while acknowledging the particularity of his time's class structure and conditions of oppression, affirmed that "of all the classes that stand face to face with the bourgeoisie today, the proletariat alone is a *really revolutionary class"*. This, he argues, is because, "the other classes decay and finally disappear in the face

of Modern Industry [while] the proletariat is its special and essential product". That the proletariat is the essential product of modern industry is inextricably linked to the idea that it is the proletariat that has the structural power to overthrow capitalism and destroy the wage relation – not just for itself but for the whole of society. Thus, the proletariat is also a *universal* liberator, endowed with an "excessive" politics. The role of historical, universal, revolutionary subject is attributed to the proletariat by virtue of a number of objective conditions that speak directly to the context of mass industrial production in which they emerge. In such a context, surplus value is realised as profit primarily in the secondary manufacturing sector, which also tends to be the biggest employer. This key position in the industrial economy is what accords the proletariat its particular power. It can collectively withdraw its labour and halt the production of goods – temporarily (to apply pressure to capital) or permanently (if it decides to engage its revolutionary potential to seize the means of production and control the economy itself).

The economic conditions of large-scale industry also create other relational particularities. Spatial dynamics change. Not only are workers and (sometimes) their families[6] more and more concentrated in the cities, but also in the "workplace", which becomes a bigger, more regimented space. Here, in the factory, they share, collectively and in large numbers, the experience of capitalist exploitation and alienation. Here too, they experience, practice and become aware of their own power as *the* producers of surplus value. The economic conditions thus provide fertile ground for the formation of a proletarian class consciousness.

Class consciousness – the subjective aspect of the formation of the proletariat as a class – is very important to the revolutionary formula put forward by Marx. Although he believed that the proletariat was an objectively existing class that would be forced by history to take certain actions "in conformity with its own nature" (Marx, 1845), he also argued that this consciousness was not something that would develop automatically – that the conditions of the industrial economy were necessary but not sufficient for the formation of revolutionary class consciousness or action. This consciousness would have to be actively developed for the proletariat to assume its position as a class proper – as "a class-for-itself": "The working class does not 'exist' as the revolutionary subject until it becomes conscious of itself as the subject-object of history" (Lukács, 1971). Although derived from objective economic conditions, "class consciousness is also the consciousness of the group of people in a class in so far as their understanding of who they are and what must be done develops from its economistic beginnings toward the consciousness that is appropriate to their class situation.

[6] In the case of South Africa, the racist, segregationist imperative led to the enforcement of a Bantustan system that intentionally prevented workers' families from moving to the cities. This had the added benefit of pushing part of the reproductive cost of labour onto the "Homelands", thus allowing capitalists to pay below-subsistence wages to black workers (Wolpe, 1972). Some argue that the causal relationship exists in reverse to the way it is presented here.

This is the subjective aspect of class-consciousness" (Ollman, 1987). The process of working class formation consists in the proletariat, through struggle, reaching a rational, collective, subjective awareness of its position in the production process and the historical implications thereof – namely its capacity for revolution and the abolishment of class society. On this basis, the worker comes to recognise an "identity of interest" with other wage-workers, eventually arriving at the "necessary consciousness and thereby the unity necessary for social revolution" (Slaughter, 1975).

The question of *unity* should be drawn attention to here. "Proletarians of the world unite!" is the end-point of working-class consciousness in Marxist theory and the rallying call of workers' movements the world over. This unity – which implies that the proletariat sees itself as one unit, with the common identity of proletariat and the common ideology of communism – is considered a precondition for revolutionary action on the part of the proletariat.

3.3 Contesting concepts of revolutionary subjectivity

Marx's ideas have found notable adoption and resonance across both time and space. Most of the 20th century's written revolutionary theory has come out of elaborations, adaptations and mutations[7] of Marx's impressive body of thought. But Marx's 19th century, north European notion of proletarian revolution – like all ideas particular to their context (and despite whatever claims to universality they may make) – necessarily travels clumsily into new contexts and new times. The question of the revolutionary subject is at the centre of all the trouble. In the world's relatively non-industrialised countries, the search for a revolutionary subject that is not the industrial working class (for it does not exist here or is at best small and weak), has yielded a collection of what Chakrabarty dismisses as "substitutions" and "stand-ins" (Chakrabarty, 2010: xiv). Indeed, much revolutionary theory is concerned with speculating on who may fulfil the revolutionary role of the proletariat in the absence of one. The driving force behind this project has tended to be those political subjects, not the proletariat, who nonetheless conspire towards revolution – impatient revolutionaries refusing to wait for capitalism to "mature" or "ripen"; colonial subjects refusing occupation, oppression and exploitation under conditions that cannot be reduced to the economic.

In economies where agricultural, rather than industrial, production is dominant, this tension has manifested in a concern around the "agrarian question" – the question of the historical

[7] This reminds one of the mutations that Christianity has undergone in the various places that it was implanted – including rural South Africa – and the way in which these independent African churches have been both subversive of and collaborative with the modernising, civilising Christian project.

role of the peasantry, which Marx did not consider a class proper. In contrast to the proletariat,

> *the small-holding peasants form a vast mass whose members live in similar conditions but without entering into manifold relations with each other. Their mode of production isolates them from one another instead of bringing them into mutual intercourse.... Every single peasant family ... thus acquires its means of life more through exchange with nature than in intercourse with society.... In so far as millions of families live under economic conditions of existence that separate their mode of life, their interests and their culture from those of other classes and place them in opposition to them, they constitute a class. In so far as there is only a local connection between the smallholding peasants, and the identity of their interests begets no community, no national unity and no political organisation, they do not constitute a class.* (Marx, 1852)

Thus, argues Lukacs, building on Marx's reasoning,

> *external upheavals, such as war, revolution in the towns, etc. are needed before these masses can coalesce in a unified movement, and even then they are incapable of organising it and supplying it with slogans and a positive direction corresponding to their own interests… Whether these [peasant] movements will be progressive (as in the French Revolution of 1789 or the Russian Revolution of 1917), or reactionary (as with Napoleon's coup d'état) will depend on the position of the other classes involved in the conflict, and on the level of consciousness of the parties that lead them. For this reason, too, the ideological form taken by the class consciousness of the peasants changes its content more frequently than that of other classes: this is because it is always borrowed from elsewhere. Hence parties that base themselves wholly or in part on this class consciousness always lack really firm and secure support in critical situations (as was true of the Socialist Revolutionaries in 1917 and 1918).* (Lukacs, 1920)

This contemptuous view of the peasantry has been prominent in orthodox Marxist thought. Organised agricultural workers are accorded political agency, but hardly ever regarded as autonomous revolutionary subjects. With the consciousness of the peasantry conceived of as "always borrowed from elsewhere", the revolutionary project becomes concerned with leading the peasantry. This role is to ideally be fulfilled by the proletariat – but given that it itself is necessarily considered "underdeveloped" in agricultural contexts, it becomes a question of which group with adequately "progressive" consciousness will stand in for the proletariat. Resolution to this dilemma is usually found in a formula whereby industrial workers and peasants enter into a political alliance under the revolutionary guidance of a vanguardist group or party.

Mao Tse Tung – Chinese revolutionary theorist and founding (and lifetime) Chairman of the Communist Party of China – represents a deviation from the weariness of the peasantry that characterises orthodox Marxist thought. He famously stated in *Economic Problems of Socialism in the USSR* (1958) that "Stalin's point of view… is almost altogether wrong. The basic error is mistrust of the peasants". Indeed, Mao (1927) held that "without the poor peasants there would be no revolution" – a position that was certainly shaped by the agrarian character of mid-20th Century Chinese society. In order to be able to reconcile Marxist theory with the predominant material conditions of China, Mao (1953) challenged the ultimate hegemony of the economic base. He argued that

> *the productive forces, practice and the economic base generally play the principal and decisive role; whoever denies this is not a materialist. But it must also be admitted that in certain conditions, such aspects as the relations of production, theory and the superstructure in turn manifest themselves in the principal and decisive role. When it is impossible for the productive forces to develop without a change in the relations of production, then the change in the relations of production plays the principal and decisive role.*

Mao's solution to the agrarian question was thus to emphasise the subjective aspect of class formation, putting politics over economy and political analysis over class analysis. This allowed for the agency or consciousness of the Chinese peasantry to override its structural limitations. Despite this, Mao's thinking did not allow him to see the peasants as revolutionary subjects in their own right. To "every revolutionary party and revolutionary comrade" he puts forth this challenge: With regard to the peasantry, each, he says, is faced with three alternatives – "to march at their head and lead them? To trail behind them, gesticulating and criticising? Or to stand in their way and oppose them?" (1927). To be led by the peasants themselves does not feature as an option. And so, it was the party that once again assumed the role of guiding the revolution. Nonetheless, Maoist theory represents the most significant attempt of its time to take the peasants seriously as a revolutionary subject, and his theoretical contribution is to be found in all subsequent attempts to do revolution in agrarian societies – from Nyerere's Tanzania to Peru to India.

In India, Maoism entered the revolutionary canon in the 1960s, at the time of China's Cultural Revolution. Here it was influential in the emergence of the Naxalite movement, but also later, in the 1980s, to the Subaltern School in South Asian studies – a group of historians that both read Mao into India's pre-Maoist past and, through their work, extended a number of his ideas into new times and contexts. It was this group of historians, studying and theorising the anti-colonial resistance movements of the subcontinent, that gave a new life to Antonio Gramsci's concept of the Subaltern. Gramsci, theorising the universal in 1930s Italy, used the term to refer to a revolutionary subject composed of all

subordinated and marginalised groups, all "low rank" groups and persons, including slaves, servants, peasants, women, "different races", and the proletariat (Gramsci 1975, 3:2279–94). Their subordination, which denies them group autonomy, is understood to be symptomatic of a confluence of cultural, social, political and economic factors under the hegemony of the ruling or dominant social group (Green, 2002: 10). Liberation for subaltern groups lies in the transformation of social relations, to be achieved by a coalition of subaltern groups, struggling through the organisation of a subaltern political party that recreates the state and society on the basis of principles of equality, democracy and freedom from subordination and exploitation in all spheres of life (Green, 2002: 22). Taken up in the hands of South Asian intellectuals, the subaltern comes to refer to something quite different. Ranajit Guha, in keeping with Gramsci, defined it as "a name for the general attribute of subordination in South Asian society whether this is expressed in terms of class, caste, age, gender and office or in any other way" (Guha, 1982). For Gayatri Spivak – who was only loosely formally affiliated with the Subaltern School but whose 1988 essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" has been influential in the conception of the subaltern – the subaltern is the person (usually a woman in Spivak's writing) "removed from all lines of social mobility" (Spivak, 2004), the person to whom a path out of poverty and political invisibility are foreclosed not because they cannot articulate their will but because these articulations are not registered within the dominant structures of representation and meaning (Spivak, 1988). The subaltern is not recognised as a legitimate political voice. While Gramsci's use of the term had a sociological basis, it "now became an undetermined figure, defined by nothing else but his/her subalternity vis-a -vis the elite and the dominant" (Banerjee, 2015: 40). As such, "the subaltern in Subaltern Studies has also leaned towards 'being' the peasant now, the poor then, the woman, the tribal or the Dalit sometimes" (Banerjee, 2015: 40). The name "subaltern" is unique in this regard – simply a common noun, neither ideality nor identity, it stands neither as an aspirational nor a descriptive claim to subject-hood (Banerjee, 2015: 42). Indeed, as Prathama Banerjee reminds us, "no political mobilisation ever occurred in the name of the subaltern" (Banerjee, 2015: 40).

When the concept of the subaltern was used to read and write the histories of the anti-colonial peasant rebel, she emerged as a political subject in her own right, neither in need of intellectual guidance nor in some underdeveloped stage of proletarianisation (Chakrabarty, 2010: xii). In contrast to those perspectives that are tied up in linear and developmental notions of revolutionary time and therefore see the peasant as necessarily "pre-political" – the "not yet proletariat" – Subaltern Studies asserted forcefully, that the subaltern had been "always-already" political, since its first encounter with the British Raj (Chakrabarty, 2006: 15).

Walter Mignolo also highlights that

> *when the category of the subaltern moved from Gramsci's Italy to Guha's India, the criteria used to single out a certain kind of people changed from European class distinction to colonial Indian caste and racial classification. Class differential was not ignored, but the situation got complicated when class distinctions had to be adapted to account for caste differentials and the new racial classification engrained in the mind of British officers, merchants, missionaries and agents of the state (Mignolo, 2005: 383).*

Indeed, all concepts of revolutionary subjectivity that have emerged out of colonial contexts and anti-colonial struggles have had to account for racial oppression and the complexities introduced there regarding power, identity, subjectivisation and the question of the nature of revolution itself. In these contexts, class – "a social hierarchy organised on the principles of possession of the means of production, capital, and exploitation of labour" (Mignolo, 2005: 381) cannot fully account for the ways in which people are oppressed. It is for this reason that the concepts of the proletariat, class exploitation and working-class consciousness have often been dismissed by anti-colonial and later decolonial theorists as inadequate to the task of understanding colonial society or waging anti-colonial revolution. Rather, questions of racial oppression and colonial dehumanisation come to the fore. Fanon's work has been important in the ongoing theorisation of that relationship between oppression and exploitation.

One reading of Fanon's work has stressed his contribution to Marxist revolutionary theory, with a particular focus on the argument that he elaborates in "The Pitfalls of National Consciousness", the third chapter of his final book, "The Wretched of the Earth" (1961). Influenced by Trotsky's idea of single-phase revolution, Fanon argues that colonisation systematically enfeebles the "national bourgeoisie" – both in terms of size and economic power. This bourgeoisie can therefore not fulfil the historical role of bourgeoisie – to develop large-scale industry and, in doing so, create the conditions for the emergence of the proletariat as a revolutionary class. In colonial contexts, he therefore argues, the "bourgeois phase" of revolution should be bypassed and bourgeois society should not be allowed to take seed in the transition from colonisation to national liberation. Instead, the nation should pass straight into the hands of "the people", the masses of the nation's oppressed: exploited workers, the urban poor, peasants and the lumpenproletariat. While some have argued that "the wretched of the earth" – the revolutionary subject put forward in this work – consists of all of these groups, in no specific or predefined configuration, others have argued that the wretched of the earth are a specific sub-group within "the people". Wallerstein, in particular, has argued that the semi-proletariat (a term not used by Fanon himself) are the wretched in Fanon's work – which is to say that they are the group that has

the least to lose and the most to gain from revolution[8]. Whatever the case may be, the wretched of the earth are clearly defined by their position as poor and exploited (in the Marxist sense) but also by their status as "lesser humans". The two cannot be separated as the Marxist categories of base and superstructure collapse into each other (Fanon, 1961: 5). Here colonisation is understood as a socio-psychological as well as an economic phenomenon, and the wretched are conceived of as a revolutionary subject [9], struggling against colonisation in its entirety. Decolonisation, he argues, is "the creation of new men", the transformation of the colonised "thing", crushed into a nonessential state, into a historical actor (ibid.). Fanon articulates the revolutionary struggle as the quest for a "new humanity" – an objective broader than national liberation, the overthrow of capital or even a combination of the two.

Another reading of Fanon shifts the focus away from class (the capital-labour dialectic) to the question of the "coloniality of being". And out of this reading emerges a different notion of the damnés: a political subjectivity rooted in "the pain and anger of the colonial wound" (Mignolo, 2005: 400). Mignolo argues that "the modern/colonial world is structured by the colonial matrix of power, and that colonial matrix of power has race (in the sense of racism) and not class (in the sense of classism), as the key concept that enables and justifies oppression and exploitation" (ibid: 383). The damnés, then, is a category that "describes all those whose dignity has been and continues to be stripped away by the logic of coloniality; that is, the de-humanisation and devaluation of human beings, and human lives that do not correspond to the criteria of humanity established by the rhetoric of modernity" (ibid: 388).

Negri and Hardt (2004), echoing, in different terms, Fanon's (1961) warnings about "the pitfalls of national consciousness", call the nation – which was "posed as the one and only active vehicle that could deliver modernity and development" (Negri & Hardt, 2000: 96) – "the poisoned gift of national liberation". While the nation may be used to lay claim to self-determination and build community, the appeal to unity that the latter entails also serves to negate difference and encourage the popular hegemony[10] to which, they argue, nationalism always tends. The concept of the multitude rejects unity – the basis of both national and proletarian identity – and posits, in its place, the notion of the fluid "coming together" of

[8] Rather than the proletariat, Fanon argues that "it is… at the core of the lumpenproletariat, that the rebellion will find its urban spearhead. For the lumpenproletariat, that horde of starving men, uprooted from their tribe and from their clan, constitutes one of the most spontaneous and the most radically revolutionary forces of a colonized people" (1961: 128). This assertion naturally displeased many Marxist theorists.

[9] Pithouse (2003; 126) argues that "Fanon does not, *pace* the influential Third Worldist misreading of his work in the 1970s, see the Third World peasantry and urban poor as a revolutionary agent with a unique ontological priority"

[10] "Popular hegemony" refers to the process through which a hegemonic group comes to represent a whole, internally different population under the label of "the people" (Negri and Hardt, 2004: 104). This tendency is a product of the sovereign basis of the nation state.

differentiated singularities on the basis of commonality. Based on a class analysis of the "postmodern" economy, Negri and Hardt put forward the multitude as the revolutionary subject appropriate to our time. We are understood to be in a new era of capitalism, in which capital has reorganised its methods and apparatus of value creation and labour exploitation. This is accompanied by changes in the class- and other structures of society. As a result, we are confronted not with Marx's "two opposing camps" – the proletariat vs. the bourgeoisie – but rather with a proliferation and fragmentation of political identities that nonetheless come down to a struggle between capital and labour. "Rather than a simplification of class position, one might talk of a multiplication of class actors in society, of society being made up by an increasingly complex fabric of class identifications, rendered even more complex by other sets of identifications, whether gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation or whatever" (Critchley, 2004). Within this context the proletariat is demoted from its "privileged position" within the revolutionary struggle. Out of Negri and Hardt's analysis of the postmodern economy, characterised by the hegemony of immaterial labour and biopolitical production, emerges the multitude – an inclusive concept of revolutionary subjectivity that is open to all those who produce value under capitalism.

3.4 The "motive force" question in South Africa

The concepts of revolutionary subjectivity outlined above have all found some place in South African political thought at various points over the past hundred or so years – some becoming political identities, others serving only as analytical tools, some on the rise, others in decline, all forced to adapt in the South African context. Such concepts have often been placed in antagonistic relation to one another, reflecting a contestation around the question of what "revolution" means and, importantly, who will lead it. In the South African context, perhaps borrowing from Mao[11], this debate has been framed as a question of which group is the "motive force" of history. And how the debate has taken shape has naturally been determined by the particularities of the South African social, political and economic context. Segregation, colonisation, racialised dispossession and apartheid have of course been defining features of the organisation of life in South Africa since the advent of settler colonialism. This has produced two interesting, often overlapping and sometimes contradictory ways of thinking about subjectivity. On the one hand, "race" has become key to people's understandings of themselves as political subjects and ideas of what liberation looks like. Put another way, South African political consciousness has been primarily articulated through the representational system of "race". While this has of course been the case in all colonial contexts, apartheid – systematised, legally enforced racism that is designed to define and discipline the black body at the pettiest level – has surely made it more so in South Africa. On the other hand, the apartheid economy – centred around mining and industry – resulted in the rapid mass urbanisation and proletarianisation of black

[11] Mao (1945: 257) said that "the people, and the people alone, are the motive force in the making of world history."

South Africans in the second half of the century that sets it apart from the rest of Sub-Saharan Africa, which is on average only 38% urbanised today, up from around 22% in 1980 (World Bank, n.d.). Indeed, "the birth of capitalism here was brutal and quick. The industrial proletariat was ripped from its land in the space of a few decades" (Foster, 1982: 16). This made South Africa a hotbed of traditional Marxist analysis, where thinkers were not forced to, in Fanon's terms, "stretch" the theory in the same way that less industrialised contexts demanded. At the same time, communist ideologies and subjectivities were reinforced by the ANC's relationship with both the Communist Party of South Africa (formed in 1921 and later reformed as the South African Communist Party (SACP)) and later the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), which collapsed at precisely the moment that apartheid itself started being dismantled.

It is, in fact, the battle between these two ideological frenemies – communism and ANC nationalism – that stands as the centrepiece of the motive force debate in South Africa[12]. Rapid industrialisation and urbanisation in the 1950s gave rise to a large working-class population in and around the major urban centres. By the 1970s this phenomenon had started to coalesce around an independent trade union movement that, by the 1980s was strong, politically authoritative and assertive of its Marxist project. The 1980s were in many ways defined by the formation of the anti-apartheid United Democratic Front, and it was in this context that the so-called "workerist" position emerged in conflict with the broader "populist" position of the ANC-aligned Front. Workerism can perhaps most usefully be defined as a spectrum of tendencies within the workers' movement to regard its involvement in the popular anti-apartheid struggle with some wariness and ambivalence. In a practical sense, to engage in political activity beyond the workplace posed a risk to the recent gains of the union movement. Many also argued that the splitting of organisational energies would lead to a neglect of workers' issues like wages and working conditions[13]. At a more ideological level, workerists had a distinct conception of revolution. They understood it to mean socialist revolution and were concerned with defending the socialist agenda, which they feared would be "swallowed" by the popular, national democratic struggle. The goal of "build[ing] a just and fair society controlled by workers" (Foster, 1982: 2) led those on the extreme end of the workerist spectrum to advocate for the total independence of the workers' struggle. For those who did believe in collaboration, there was a view of the centrality of the organised working class in the anti-apartheid struggle and an insistence on working class leadership of it (Seekings, 2000: 62). "Local union activists wanted the process to remain labour-driven" and there was a "deep-seated suspicion" of nationalist-orientated civic organisations "deemed to be controlled by 'petty-bourgeois' elements in the townships" (Kenny & Barchiesi, 2008).

[12] I characterise it as such because it was within the context of this battle that the question was most explicitly posed as one of the "motive force".

[13] This was to some extent true, especially for migrant workers who unions ceased to focus on when they eventually joined the popular struggle in the late 1980s (Kenny & Barchiesi, 2008).

The populists, on the other hand, sought to bring down the apartheid regime by organising on inclusive lines as a national, multi-racial, cross-class alliance. They argued that "in South African conditions, the broad strategy of national democratic struggle is the route to the most far-reaching and rapid changes in our country" (Isizwe, 1986a: 9). The populist position was concerned with mass organisation and championed by individuals and leader associated with the ANC and other "charterist" organisations that endorsed the Freedom Charter of 1955. This current ultimately coalesced around the UDF, the broad popular front that was launched in 1983 with the main goal of mobilising and organising "all South Africans committed to non-racial, majority rule in an undivided South Africa" (Isizwe, 1986a: 9)[14]. The Front was initially formed to resist the Tricameral Parliament but, after suffering defeat on this front, reoriented towards the project of ending apartheid altogether. While there was a significant anti-capitalist current within the UDF, socialism was put forward as something that could be pursued once the unifying "minimum demand" of ending apartheid had been achieved. Indeed, the theory of the National Democratic Revolution – which arose out of the SACP in 1928 and gained major (and ongoing) influence in both the ANC and trade union movement – said that a "national democratic" stage was a necessary precondition for a "transition" to socialism. After the UDF was formed in 1983, it invited the Federation of South African Trade Unions (Fosatu) to affiliate, which, after an apparently robust discussion, it decided not to do. It was only after the formation of Cosatu in 1985 that the union movement in its majority joined the mass movement and began collaborating with UDF-aligned "community organisations"[15]. This saw unions participating in the struggle for political rights and community struggles for transport, housing, public services, etc in what was later to be called "social movement unionism" by some. This was an important milestone in the anti-apartheid struggle and played a big part in making apartheid South Africa "ungovernable", thus forcing negotiations.

The workerist-populist dichotomy is a crude simplification of the complex ideological, material and political dynamics that informed the political positions and identities of the time, as well as the interaction between them[16]. But it does nonetheless point towards two dominant perspectives on the "motive force" question.

The Marxist orientation of the labour movement meant that the working class, with its unique relation to the production process, was seen as the "motive force" of a history that tended towards communism. To this end, Fosatu was concerned with building a working-

[14] So, then, although the UDF's ideological position was "non-racialism", it was, in line with the Congress Alliance structure, organised along "multi-racial" lines, as a coalition of distinct race-based organisations.
[15] Cosatu endorses the Freedom Charter in 1987.
[16] For example, some charterist-aligned unions participated in the UDF from the outset and many individuals in the union movement participated as individuals (Kenny & Barchiesi, 2008).

class movement, founded on working class identity, which is to say a "definite social identity of itself as working class" (Foster, 1982: 8). Fosatu, not uncontroversially, suggested that this did not exist in South Africa, despite rapid proletarianisation and unionisation. This perspective coincides with the findings made by Bridget Kenny and Franco Barchiesi (2008) in their study of Johannesburg's industrial East Rand. They found that in the 1980s, under ongoing racial oppression and with "growing precariousness and social vulnerability in wage employment", "newly unionised workers… carried with them a multifarious, stratified conceptual baggage not necessarily congruent with the primacy of class or workplace solidarity" (Kenny & Barchiesi, 2008). These ideological tensions led workers to participate in community struggles and reflect the "inability of working class identities shaped in workplace conflicts to operate as vehicles of social emancipation" in the apartheid context (Kenny & Barchiesi, 2008). Fosatu thus saw its primary political task as the building, through workers' struggles, of working class unity and consciousness – "a clear social and political identity as the working class" (Foster, 1982: 7).

The populist struggle, on the other hand, was centred around the notion of "the people" as articulated in the 1955 Freedom Charter. This "people" was non-racial and transcended economic class, though the UDF did, in rhetoric at least, advocate for working class leadership (see Isizwe, 1986a: 10-11). While the workers' revolution was necessarily socialist, the populists used the concept to speak of the struggle for national liberation – majority rule and liberal democracy in South Africa. Here we begin to see the ideological contestation around the idea of "revolution" that fundamentally underpins the motive force debate. With the ANC understood as the national government in waiting, and the UDF (by most) as a placeholder for the ANC in exile, the proclamation that "the people shall govern" was essentially a future-orientated, nationalistic demand. For a brief period in the mid-1980s, however, in what has been called the "people's power" phase of the UDF, this slogan was prefiguratively put into practice through UDF street committees and other community structures (see Isizwe, 1986b).

But long before there were populists and workerists, before there was a Soviet Union or the notion of a nation called South Africa, there was black resistance against white settler colonialism and its concomitant land dispossession and racist political oppression. This began with early Khoi resistance against Dutch expansion in the Cape, eventually culminating in two Khoi-Dutch Wars that spanned the period between 1659 and the late 1670s, and later manifested as the Basotho Wars (1858-1868), the Anglo-Zulu War of 1879, the Ndzundza Ndebele rebellion of 1882, the Bagananwa rebellion in 1894, the Bhambatha Rebellion of 1906 and many other known and unknown, spectacular and quotidian, acts of resistance. From the early 19th century, this resistance began to cohere around two divergent positions: one, championed by a missionary-educated elite, seeking equal rights,

including voting and property rights, for blacks within the "modernising" colonial project[17] – and another separatist or anti-collaborationist approach, closely linked, at least in its early days, with traditionalist politics. These dichotomies, once again, flatten the actual dynamics of resistance (where for example some ideological separatists represented Africans in colonial governance structures) but they do serve to highlight the origins of a fundamental political disagreement that continues to the current day – one that ultimately comes down to a question of who "the people" of South Africa are.

19th century anti-collaborationist politics, which later manifested under the names "Africanism", "African nationalism" and "Black Consciousness" stressed African ownership and control over the land and rejected participation in colonial institutions and political structures. For them, white settlers were the enemy and the goal was their expulsion, and a return to independent self-rule. This politics found early expression in the African independent churches (AICs) that broke away from the white Methodist and Anglican churches in protest against their racism and segregationist policies. And when, in 1892, Rev. Mangena Mokone established the Ethiopian Church in Pretoria with the slogan "Africa for the Africans", he gave birth to one of the most enduring political slogans in Southern African political history. This slogan was later popularised by Marcus Garvey – a fact that speaks to the way that the AICs, with their links to black churches in the US, were instrumental in the early formation of Pan Africanist ideas.

Vaguer notions of trans-ethnic African unity – as reflected in the formation of Imbumba ya Manyama (Union of Africans) in the 1880s – gave way to the beginnings of a recognisable African nationalism with the establishment of the Union of South Africa in 1910. Union brought Afrikaans and British whites together after their war[18] (Odendaal, 1984: 81) around segregationist principles and the Land Act, which was to be passed in 1913. Once again, two nationalisms were in circulation: one that sought land rights, incorporation, integration and representation in the Union of South Africa and culminated in the formation of the South African Native National Congress formed 1912 (renamed the ANC in 1923), and another that sought expulsion, ownership and self-rule. The latter current found articulation and rapid spread from the mid-1920s when the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union (ICU) – the first black trade union in South Africa – began to organise black people in the countryside. There, in contrast to the towns with their nascent, generally capitalistic labour relations, black people laboured under conditions that "approximated slavery, forced labour or serfdom" (Bradford, 1987: 40). As such, "land hunger was an absolutely central feature of black rural consciousness in this period" (Bradford, 1987: 34) and many a black farm worker

[17] Odendaal (1984) has stressed that this group had begun to see war as futile and that their embracing of the modernising project was as much a product of this sense of defeat as of an impulse towards collaboration.

[18] The "modernists" had supported the British in South African War in the hopes that a British victory would see an expansion of Cape-style reforms throughout the proposed Union of South Africa.

asserted that “we do not want wages, we want ground” (Bradford, 1987: 37). The land they correctly considered their own, and it was around the land question that the “diffuse African nationalism” (Bradford, 1987: 93) of the ICU took shape. “Although ICU officials operated primarily with concepts of a South African state and nation, Garveyism fuelled a Pan-Africanist substrand within their ideology” (Bradford, 1987: 126) that linked oppressed South African blacks to Africans on the continent and in the diaspora, primarily the US.

It was these developments that sowed the seeds for the formation of the Congress Youth League in 1944 to articulate the Africanist current that had developed in the ANC. As such, the “cardinal principles” of its brand of nationalism, as articulated in the CYL’s 1946 policy document, included the ideas that “Africa is a black man's country”, belonging exclusively to blacks, and that it should be led by Africans (Lembede, 1946). While acknowledging the desirability of “cooperation between Africans and other Non-Europeans on common problems and issues”, the League held that “Non-European unity is a fantastic dream which has no foundation in reality”. As for collaboration with white liberals and communists, the League was totally opposed to this, while its motto “Freedom in our lifetime” articulated a sense of urgency that stood as a critique of the ANC’s gradualist, collaborative approaches. Instead, the CYL stressed the need for African unity, and for a homogenous black nation to emerge out of its constituent heterogenous tribes. Central to this national identity was race pride and African culture (Lodge, 1990: 162). Without national freedom, Lembede argued, Africans would continue to suffer the “moral and spiritual degradation [that] manifests itself in such abnormal and pathological phenomena as loss of self confidence, inferiority complex, a feeling of frustration, the worship and idolisation of white men, foreign leaders and ideologies” (Lembede, 1946). This stands as an early articulation of the notion of psychological liberation. National freedom was understood as a precursor to a socialism that was inherent to precolonial African society. “Youth Leaguers adhered to the notion of a pristine communitarian precolonial society whose governing principles could be resurrected in modern state forms” (Lodge, 1990: 167). It was, as Tom Lodge points out, “a vision of the past which outlived the duration of the Youth League’s existence as an active political force”.

African and multi-racial nationalism co-exist uncomfortably in the ANC until 1956, when the ANC endorses the Freedom Charter, adopted by the Congress of the People in 1955. The document, which states that “South Africa belongs to all who live in it, black and white”, “represented a deliberate eschewal of racial, linguistic, or culturally-based nationalism. (Lodge, 1990: 162)[19]. For those who had long criticised the perceived domination of the ANC by white liberals and communists, this was a step too far. Three years later, a small group of Africanists within the ANC breaks away and forms the Pan Africanist Congress of South

[19] Lodge argues that “if nationalism is essentially "the political expression of shared ethnic consciousness" then it becomes questionable whether since then the ANC can be considered a nationalist movement at all” (Lodge, 1990: 162).

Africa (PAC) at the Orlando Community Hall in Soweto. The flag of the PAC shows the African continent, with a star on Ghana, radiating out to the rest of the continent. At the launch of the party "banners written Pan Africanist slogans such as 'Africa for the Africans',' Cape to Cairo, Morocco to Madagascar', 'Izwe lethu iAfrica' (Africa our land) were lined on the walls of the hall' (SAHO, 2011) while the slogan "one settler, one bullet" was to be unofficially adopted by its armed forces after the party was banned, along with the ANC, after the Sharpeville Massacre, a mere two years after its formation[20].

The massacre of PAC aligned anti-pass protesters, the protests that followed and the subsequent mass arrests and bannings marked the beginning of a dramatic reconfiguration of political forces and approaches in South Africa. For the ANC and the PAC, the "silent 60s" were the days of exile and armed struggle. Locally, they were also a time in which the apartheid regime sought to quell unrest by redirecting political energies away from nationalism. And so, while brutally cracking down on political organisations, it was also over this time that the state allowed for the development of cultural organisations and extended recognition to the black trade unions representing the burgeoning urban black proletariat, which is what allowed for their spectacular growth in the 1970s. Along with mass proletarianisation came mass enrolment of black students in high school and the emergence of "bush" university-educated intellectuals. With the ANC and PAC in exile, and against the backdrop of decolonisation in the rest of the continent, these students were to carry and develop the Africanist ideology that informed the Soweto riots of 1976.

Black Consciousness was a philosophy and a movement that emerged out of the particular conditions of South Africa's urban and per-urban townships – but it owes its ideological position to a long history of black subjectivity that has little to do with any traditional notion of working class consciousness. When, in the founding act of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM), young black university students broke away from the multi-racial National Union of South African Students (Nusas) in 1968 to form the independent, black-led South African Students' Organisation (Saso), Biko (in More, 2014: 191) stated that, "against the Charter's insistence that 'South Africa belongs to all who live in it', the SASO Resolution 45 states: 'Therefore we wish explicitly to state that this country belongs to black people and to them alone'. Explaining this resolution, Biko says: 'This country is essentially a country in Africa, a continent which is inhabited always naturally by black people, and that whites – it is conceived that whites are here and that they may live in the country, or they may leave the country, depending on their relationship with blacks'". The ideological and strategic decision to organise independently of white liberals was a foundational principle of all those organisations that were ultimately to come under the umbrella of the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM). These organisations included Saso, the South African Students Movement (SASM), Black Community Projects (BCP), the Black Peoples'

[20] This is in contrast to the armed wing of the ANC, Umkhonto Wesizwe, which committed to sabotage in order to avoid civilian deaths.

Convention (BPC), the Black Allied Workers Union (BAWU) and a number of other allied community organisations and cooperatives that formed from the late 1960s.

The philosophy of the Black Consciousness Movement derived from a plethora of sources, historical and contemporary, local, Pan African and international. In addition to drawing on the Africanist thought and symbols of the Youth League and the PAC, the BCM further developed these ideas by bringing them into conversation with the writings of the leaders of the newly independent African countries, black philosophers of the diaspora and the Black Power movement in the US. The conceptual underpinnings of the movement were influenced by Kamuzu Banda, Jaramogi Oginga Odinga, Nkrumah, Kaunda, Nyerere and Cabral; Senghor and Cesairé; Du Bois, Garvey and Kwame Toure. These intellectual forces coalesced around a non-collaborationist philosophy centred around black self-love and self-reliance – leading to the wide proliferation of concepts and slogans like "black power", "black is beautiful", Azania (which the PAC had adopted in 1968) and what students today have dubbed "Biko blackness". It is perhaps the philosophy of Frantz Fanon that most shaped the movement. Indeed, Fanon's texts "became the Bibles and the guiding lights of the student movement of the late 1960s and 1970s" (More, 2014: 184). In addition to his Marxist-inspired analysis of colonial society, Fanon, through an engagement with the existential philosophy of especially Jean-Paul Sartre, elaborated a radical humanistic philosophy of being that was to fundamentally influence Steve Bantu Biko and thousands of others.

Like the Negritude movement that it drew from, the BCM was concerned with promoting black cultural pride. In re-articulating the association of blackness, and thus disarticulating blackness from its place in the signifying structure, BC battled white racism on the terrain of ideological struggle (Hall, 1985: 112). But the foundational conceptual move of the BCM lay in claiming blackness as an identity whilst simultaneously asserting the humanity of the black person. This move poses a fundamental and irresolvable challenge to European humanism, which claims universality but sees no contradiction in the enslavement, dispossession, genocide, and attempts at erasure of black life. In asserting the humanity of the black person, black consciousness marks the beginning of, in Biko's (1973) words, "the quest for a true humanity". It also marked the emergence of "Black" as a political subject in South Africa. Biko's "true humanity" was understood to be the synthesis of a dialectical movement between white racism and black consciousness. This humanity "could not be truly understood or created from the midst of a racist and capitalist society. A full understanding of it could only come from the midst of a classless and nonracist society. Thus, a true humanity in the Black Consciousness scheme was the revolutionary and dialectical actualisation of a color-blind and classless society" (Fatton, 1987: 77).

To this end, the BCM saw its first and primary task as the nourishing of a black consciousness that would both humanise the black man (and it was a man) in his own eyes

and build black cultural hegemony in South Africa. While the movement believed that this process should necessarily be black-led, Biko elaborated a concept of blackness – "Biko blackness" – that allowed for any racially oppressed person to identify as black, so long as they identify with and oppose the oppression of Black people. In Biko's words:

> *We have in our policy manifesto defined blacks as those who are by law or tradition politically, economically and socially discriminated against as a group in the South African society and identifying themselves as a unit in the struggle towards the realisation of their aspirations.*
> *1. Being black is not a matter of pigmentation -- being black is a reflection of a mental attitude.*
> *2. Merely by describing yourself as black you have started on a road to emancipation, you have committed yourself to fight against all forces that seek to use your blackness as a stamp that marks you out as a subservient being.*
>
> *This definition illustrates to us a number of things: From the above observations therefore, we can see that the term black is not necessarily all-inclusive; i.e. the fact we are all not white does not necessarily mean that we are all black. Non-whites do exist and will continue to exist and will continue to exist for quite a long time. If one's aspiration is whiteness but his pigmentation makes attainment of this impossible, then that person is a non-white. Any man who calls a white man "Baas", any man who serves in the police force or Security Branch is ipso facto a non-white. Black people---real black people---are those who can manage to hold their heads (Biko, 1996)*

This was a conception of blackness that could include "coloured" and "Indian" South Africans who identified as such – a fluid conception of blackness that "centres the possibility for change within the subjectivity of the oppressed person, and not simply within the South African economy or the hierarchy of the system" (Alan & Turner, 1986: 22).

The Black Consciousness dialectic implies that the vision of a true humanity, as well as the kind of just, post-revolutionary society that it would exist in were necessarily vague in content, to be elaborated by the black majority through the process of its own conscientisation (Fatton, 1987: 77). The economic system of this society was to be "a socialist solution that is an authentic expression of black communalism" (Biko in Woods 1987: 122). This idea is elaborated in the BPC's convention of 1976:

> *BPC adopts Black communalism as its economic policy and Black Communalism can be defined as an economic system which is based on the principle of sharing, lays emphasis on community ownership of land and its wealth and riches; and which strikes a healthy balance between what may legitimately be owned by individuals and what ought to be owned by the community as a whole ... Black communalism ... is a*

> *modified version of the traditional African economic life-style which is being geared to meet the demands of a highly industrialized and modern economy. The sharing envisaged will not necessarily be monitored by the State for the benefit of the State itself, but may well be either between groups of individuals or specific communities comprising the State. As in the traditional outlook ... sharing shall imply not only the sharing of property and wealth, but also sharing of services and labour* (in Fatton, 1987: 92)

These notions, coming predominantly out of the student base, came into conflict with the notions of working class consciousness and socialist revolution that were gaining strength in the worker's movement. "Indeed, animosity existed between the black consciousness, Black Allied Workers Union and those unions that were to establish Fosatu. Among the leadership of the Fosatu unions, an alternative vision had emerged: one that was class-based and non-racial and concerned with organisational issues of democracy and worker control'' (Lewis, 1990: 219). For some, BC's lack of a basis in Marxist class analysis, rendered it nothing more than a "diffuse nationalist ideology" (Mafeje, 1978: 22). These critiques were to be somewhat addressed in the 1980s. By this time, the Soweto riots had been squashed, Biko had been tortured to death by the apartheid police and 17 BC organisations had been banned. These events saw, on the one hand, thousands of young BC inspired revolutionaries fleeing the country and joining up with the ANC and PAC guerrilla units outside South Africa, where they were to give new life to the liberation movements in exile. On the other hand, a new BC organisation, the Azanian Peoples Organization (Azapo) was formed in April 1978 in Soweto. In the face of the rising strength of the trade union movement (which was by the mid-1980s being reconciled with the NDR of the charterists in the UDF) Azapo began to integrate Marxist class categories into its ideology (Gibson, 2004: 1). Thus, in this period, the BC philosophy moved away from the idea of African communalism towards "scientific socialism", while a similar process of reconceptualisation took place in the PAC.

By the late 1980s, and under the pressures exerted by the UDF and Cosatu in particular, the apartheid regime began to crack. After years of initially secret negotiations between the apartheid state and ANC leaders – negotiations which Azapo vehemently objected to – South Africa held its first non-racial election on 27 April 1994. The ANC sailed to victory as part of a Tripartite Alliance with the SACP and Cosatu, and entered into power as part of a Government of National Unity, with a "sunset clause" that guaranteed the National Party some representation in the 5 years following the election. This marked the birth of the new nation and the victory of the populist/charterist position over both revolutionary communism and black consciousness. The nation-building project was underpinned by the concept of the "rainbow nation", with the Reconstruction and Development Plan (RDP) – modelled on the Freedom Charter – as a policy base. The ANC's ascent to power also marked the beginning of a period of optimism and political demobilisation. The liberation movement, representing "the people", was to now drive the nation forward. This people is a

multi-racial, cross-class people, but the black majority are considered the motive force: "The main motive forces of the democratic transformation are primarily represented by African workers and the African rural poor. These forces are also represented by black workers in general and the black middle strata. These are the forces which possess the best political and ideological potential to lead and defend the process of transformation" (ANC, 1996). While it was initially conceived that the people themselves would have an important role in this process – in line with the prefigurative "people power" praxis that had emerged through UDF structures in the late 1980s – they soon became framed as recipients within a "service delivery" framework (Sinwell, 2011).

Raymond Suttner observed in 2011 that "the strategy and tactics documents of the ANC adopted at ANC conferences since 1994 has reflected a distinct shift which represents a raising of the status of sections of capital and relative equalisation with the working class as a 'motive force' for change" (Suttner, 2011: 9). Indeed, this makes perfect sense according to the logic of the NDR, which emphasised the need for capitalism to "mature" in the national democratic stage in order to create the conditions necessary for a socialist transition. And indeed by 1996, The RDP had been dropped in favour of the neoliberal Growth Employment and Redistribution plan (Gear). This new macroeconomic policy framework focused on redistribution *through* growth (otherwise known as "trickle down" economics), which was to be achieved by decreasing barriers to trade, liberalising capital flows, privatising social services, cutting social budgets, etc. Despite these attempts to woo international capital, "private investment, job creation and GDP growth indicators were disappointing. Low levels of economic growth and private investment were insufficient to contribute to the reduction in unemployment; and the policy achieved very little success with the distribution of wealth" (SAHO, 2014). The period also marked an intensification of labour reforms which saw, in particular, a move towards non-standard employment contracts which made employment increasingly unstable and precarious for workers (Kenny and Webster, 1999). All of this alongside persistent white wealth, structural racism and parliamentary lavishness.

It was at the close of the 1990s that creeping discontent gave way to remobilisation and the birth of what were dubbed the "new social movements". These were movements primarily rooted in community struggles for the state to fulfil its role of providing services – principally water, electricity, housing and education – and against neoliberal reforms like privatisation and a move towards "cost-recovery" in the provision of social services. These movements included the Anti-Privatisation Forum and Landless People's Movement in Johannesburg, the Anti-Eviction Campaign in Cape Town and the Concerned Citizens' Forum and eThekwini Social Forum in Durban. The formation of a "new UDF" spurred on a debate within the APF about how they should "orientate" towards Cosatu and organised labour more generally. The "orientation debate" speaks to the old "motive force" question in a new context, exhibiting both continuities and innovations around the question of

revolutionary subjectivity. Much of this debate can be traced through a 2005 special edition of the Khanya Journal dedicated to the "new UDF", which I will be referring to extensively here.

On the one hand, there were those who declared the decline of the political dominance of the blue-collar worker (Lehulere, 2005: 22). Not only was it argued that workplace struggles were not sufficient but the ongoing validity of trade unions in their existing form came under question and, for some, "spontaneous struggles being waged by casual workers and the unemployed in the townships offered the most promising basis for building a progressive working-class movement" (Paret, 2013: 35). These perspectives were informed by an analysis of the economic conditions at the time which stressed the changing relationship and dynamics of production. Prishani Naidoo, pointing towards "changes in production/reproduction" (Naidoo, 2005: 46), suggests that a focus on organised labour, the wage and market relation is a barrier to exploring new subjectivities, possibilities and subversive relations (ibid: 48) within a context where life [rather than work] has become "the terrain of struggle for many" (ibid: 47). In the journal, you see other contributors using similar language. Ashwin Desai, for example, referencing Negri and Hardt, speaks of the need to merge unions with social movements so that they "can represent the entire network of singularities that collaboratively produce wealth" (Desai, 2005: 11). He goes on:

> *The political marginalisation of labour reflects a social marginalisation of work as a source of stability, identity and emancipatory vision for an expanding section of the working class. On the other hand, the everyday lives of working class communities are continuously affected by the detrimental impact of neoliberal economic policies on social reproduction* (Desai, 2005: 12)

Under such conditions, according to this logic, the permanent worker, as represented by Cosatu, was displaced from its privileged position at the top of the "food chain of the revolution" (Lehulere, 2005: 22). For Oupa Lehulere, the spontaneous struggles in the township were seen as the "cooking houses in which an activist cadre is produced" (ibid: 38). Thus, the community, as opposed to the workplace, was conceived of as the site from which a radical politics could emerge – in a way that is almost a mirror image of the workerist-populist debate of the 1980s. Here, labour is conceived of as lacking both the power and the consciousness necessary to take the socialist project forward.

Though the concept of the multitude is not used by these activists to describe the subject of the social movements, it is clear – by the lexicon being deployed and, more concretely, by the citing of their texts – that Negri and Hardt's work was being read and theoretically applied by some of them. It is also clear that those on the other side of the "orientation debate" were writing against this new autonomist thinking, which challenges the key tenets of Leninist-Marxism. This side of the debate is represented by those who maintained that

the struggle could not be taken forward without the participation and/or leadership of organised workers, as represented by Cosatu[21]. This Cosatu was to be a Cosatu steered back onto the path of independence and militancy by "shocks from 'without'" administered by the social movements (Ashley, 2005: 6). An alternative idea was to appeal to the rank and file members, who were taken to be distinct from the corrupted Cosatu leadership (Desai, 2005: 10). From this perspective, the workplace, "the foundation of the workers' struggle for socialism for more than a century" (Ngwane, 2005: 54), could not be dismissed. Nor could the new social movements hope to fundamentally challenge neoliberal capitalism without organising workers at the point of production. The "autonomist tendency", which de-emphasised this imperative, was argued to represent a dead end because of its unsound class analysis. Rather, it was argued that there was a need to build a working-class identity and overcome barriers to unity – racial, sexual, language and others (Ashley, 2005: 6).

This point about working class consciousness of course represents a continuity with the objectives and logic of Fosatu, but in doing so it also highlights an interesting discontinuity. When political documents of the 1980s and 1990s spoke of the working class, they were quite explicitly and unambiguously referring to actual workers (See, for example Fosatu 1982, Isizwe 1986a). But by 2005, the concept of the working class is being deployed in a quite different way. Here, unemployed people and poor people more generally are understood to be part of the working class reserve army, as theorised by Marx in Capital Vol 1. This usage is now widespread. In the words of Michael Lebowitz:

> *Who is not-capital today? Who is separated from the means of production and must approach capital as a supplicant in order to survive? Surely, it is not only those who sell their labour power to capital but also those unable to sell their labour power to capital—not only the exploited but the excluded. And surely, it includes those who, in the context of a massive reserve army of the unemployed, work within the sphere of circulation of capital but are compelled to bear the risks themselves—i.e., those who struggle to survive in the informal sector.* (Lebowitz, 2012)

Ultimately, whether the language of the multitude or the working class was being used, Naidoo and Veriava argue that the subject of this movement ultimately "remained a national subject, figured in relation to a historical wrong, and with shifting entitlements that were constantly renegotiated within the power relations that characterise post-apartheid governmentality" (Naidoo & Veriava, 2013: 81). The post-apartheid governmentality to which they refer is the complex of state policies, logics and discourses that seek to fashion "the poor" as a restrained, politically docile and entrepreneurial subject (Naidoo, 2010: 326). In turn, however, "the identity of the poor is mobilised strategically by marginalised people in post-apartheid South Africa who knowingly seek to change their conditions of life

[21] Buhlungu (2004) notes the curious fact that there was seemingly very little effort to bring FEDUSA and NACTU into at least the APF

by challenging the ways in which their status and position in life is defined, determined by and through state policy" (ibid: 17). The "historical wrong" – the failure of the democratic transition and the ANC to provide the promised "better life for all" – underpins the trope of betrayal that begins to emerge in that period, eventually culminating in the now common notion that the poor were "sold out" by the ANC. Indeed, Gillian Hart suggests that "escalating struggles over the material conditions of life and livelihood are simultaneously struggles over the meaning of the nation and liberation, as well as expressions of profound betrayal" (Hart, 2008: 680).

By 2006 the APF was no longer convening, while the mid-2000s mark the more general decline and collapse of the new social movements. The years following this were characterised by the calcification of Cosatu and the increasing fragmentation of community-based struggles from both the labour movement and each other. This can be understood as a period of political downturn at the end of a cycle of struggle. Nonetheless, two phenomena stand out – the formation and growth of Abahlali baseMjondolo and the rapid increase in so-called service delivery protests. Abahlali was officially formed in 2006 as an autonomous movement of shack dwellers fighting primarily for land and housing in the city of Durban. This movement – which has been hailed for its "radically democratic political culture" (Pithouse, 2008: 79) – stands out for the ways in which it represents the [revelation] of a new kind of political subject in South Africa[22]. In the first place, the emergence and growth of Abahlali challenges the idea that shack dwellers cannot be historical agents (as suggested in Davis, 2004) – an idea that has equally been challenged by other movements of shack dwellers around the world. In addition, Abahlali's claim to "a right to the city" (AbM, 2010) situates the movement within a body of theory that sees the city as a site of emancipatory potential (eg. Negri, 2002). Indeed, Abahlali emerges through its own statements as not only a political subject but as a revolutionary subject committed to the project of socialism (AbM, 2011). Their socialism, however, is not a socialism of grand ideological theories and specialist jargon. Rather, they speak of a "homemade politics" – deriving from everyday struggles – and a "politics of the poor" – accessible and understandable to anyone (Pithouse, 2008). They also characterise theirs as a "people's politics" as distinct from party politics, and thus reject absorption into the state and its subsidiary structures[23]. For Neocosmos (2016) and others, the revolutionary character of the movement stems not from its claim to socialism but from its "radical humanism" and egalitarianism. Rather than being an interest group, then, the subjectivity espoused by Abahlali is universal – and is thus imbued with the kind of "excessiveness" that has been accorded by some to the proletariat as a class. The shack dwellers thus come together in struggle as human beings and make claims based on their humanity, claims which are

[22] These characterisations of Abahlali have not gone uncontested. See, for example, Mdlalose (2014) and Bohmke (2013).

[23] The decision of AbM to strategically support the Democratic Alliance in the Western Cape in the 2014 general election represents a deviation from this principle.

intrinsically universal (Neocosmos, 2017). The last thing to note about Abahlali is the way in which they claim "suffering as a source and legitimation of revolt" (Pithouse, 2008: 77). Such affective conceptions of rebellion remind one of the Maoist Cultural Revolution slogan that "to rebel is justified" and the concept of "black pain" that, as we will see, is explicitly centred in today's student politics.

The disruptive tactics of Abahlali (eg. road blockades) are mirrored in the upsurge of so-called service delivery protests that have become a daily occurrence in South Africa. This steady, year on year surge in community protests since the 1990s has been characterised by Peter Alexander (2010) as a "rebellion of the poor". By the end of 2012, there had been 11,969 "crowd incidents" in South Africa, of which 1,811 were characterised by the South African Police Service (SAPS) as "crowd unrest" (Alexander et al, 2015: 23). The year 2012 is politically significant for a number of reasons and is defined by the Marikana Massacre, in which the South African Police Service killed 34 Lonmin mineworkers striking for a living wage of R12,500. The Massacre was followed by a massive strike wave in the platinum sector, and indeed by a wave of self-organised "wildcat" strikes across the country (Gentle, 2012). Just eleven days after the massacre – on 27 August 2012 – a strike was declared by the (predominantly women) workers of the Keurboschkloof Farm in the Cape Winelands District Municipality. The strikes quickly spread to farmworkers across the Western Cape and coalesced around a demand for a daily wage of R150 (SAHO, 2015). Both the mineworkers and the farmworkers strikes are notable for the fact that they represented a militancy exceeding anything happening in the union or alliance movement at the time. They were both also, not coincidentally, initially organised outside of union structures, in self-organised workers committees (Gentle, 2012). It was through these organisational structures that they were able to secure some of the most significant wage gains in post-apartheid South Africa. The massacre and the strike are now often understood as marking the beginning of a new cycle or wave of struggle in South Africa (Naidoo, 2015; Veriava, 2015).

By the end of 2013, the South African political landscape looked very different than before the Marikana Massacre. Not only was the historic National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) crushed and expelled from the platinum sector, replaced by the Association of Mineworkers and Construction Union (Amcu), but a dynamic new political party – the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) – had been launched. In addition, the biggest trade union in South Africa had called on Cosatu to break with the tripartite alliance and had resolved to "lead in the establishment of a United Front that will coordinate struggles in the workplace and in communities, in a way similar to the UDF of the 1980s" (Numsa, 2013). The latter two new formations both had founding "assemblies" at the end of 2014 that invoked the struggle at Marikana and the ANC government's brutal oppression thereof. Indeed, the Marikana massacre can be considered *the* symbolic reference point for struggles today – with both the unfaltering militancy of the striking miners being regularly evoked as inspiration, and the

brutality of the state pointed towards as a motivation to struggle. Both the EFF and the United Front (UF) are explicitly anti-ANC – positions that, in contrast to the early 2000s, were made much easier to rally mass support around after the party displayed its willingness deploy state violence against its most exploited citizens in the defence of capital.

The EFF was formed by the expelled leader of the ANC Youth League, Julius Malema, and represents the first significant parliamentary challenge to the ANC from the left. The EFF managed to secure 6.35% in the national elections of 2014 and just over 8% in the local government elections two years later (IEC), but these somewhat modest numbers betray the political significance of the EFF. It is arguably in the National Assembly that the EFF has made the biggest waves – adopting a directly confrontational stance to the ANC and its President as well as disruptive and spectacular tactics that have brought new relevance and popular attention to parliament as a space. The party characterises itself as a Marxist-Leninist-Fanonian party – also drawing heavily on the ideas and images of black consciousness and anticolonial political figures like Steve Biko and Thomas Sankara. In this way, it has been instrumental in the reinvigoration of political identities centred around blackness and anti-colonial struggle among young people in the South African mainstream, which has also grown tired of the ANCs multi-racial "rainbowism". Tied to this is the way in which the EFF has centred land and mining in its policy positions and rhetoric and, in doing so, reinvigorated energy around the land question – one of the ANC's biggest political failures. Donning red berets and militaristic titles[24], the EFF is "struggle" personified – a party of "fighters" demanding, "economic freedom in our lifetime".

This visual and ideological vocabulary of struggle reflects Malema's roots in the Youth League as well as the absorption of the September National Imbizo – a BC social movement formation – into the EFF (Essop, 2016: 30). But it is perhaps its claim to be "inspired" by the Freedom Charter that best captures the nature of the EFF as, ultimately, a populist organisation[25]. By framing itself as the custodian of the Charter (Veriava, 2015), the EFF frames itself as the "real" representative of the nation's people, who have been "sold out" by the ANC. This idea is reinforced by statements like these, in which the EFF claims to represent the common person:

> *Our people mandated this movement (the EFF) to come and speak on behalf of the homeless, the landless, domestic workers, security guards, farm workers, cleaners, waiters and waitresses, recipients of social grants, construction workers, the unemployed and poverty-stricken masses of our people who are forgotten by the ruling elite which are in bed with the oppressors and the imperialist forces."* (speech in Parliament - on the 2014 State of the Nation Address (Malema in Essop, 2016: 29)

[24] For an analysis of the performative militarism of the EFF see Nieftagodien, 2015: 447.
[25] For a good account of the EFF's populism see Essop, 2016.

Such statements are aesthetically reinforced by, for example, wearing overalls and domestic workers' uniforms in parliament – thus creating an image of the EFF leaders "standing in" for "the people" in parliament. The EFF is the "vanguard of the working class and poor", while "the people" are young, black, poor, precariously employed and unemployed citizens of South Africa. The EFF's "revolutionary" project of radical economic transformation is to be achieved by its being voted into power, whereafter it will represent those interests. Of course, parliamentary transition and revolution aren't the same thing – so they draw on the idea of revolution, in a way similar to the ANC, which always imagined a negotiated transition, even during the armed struggle days. The NDR, which frames socialism as something to be reached through a parliamentary transition, simultaneously asserts the idea that revolution is not an "overthrowing" – a seizing of state power through elections rather than a seizing of the means of production.

The United Front – which has not lived up to the expectations generated by the "Numsa moment" – in contrast, is not a political party but rather an extra-parliamentary front with the goal of coordinating and, as the name suggests, uniting the various fragmented struggles being fought in South Africa[26]. While the founding declaration of the UF points towards various groups – women, rural people, youth, students, workers and communities – the main rationale underpinning the front is to connect organised labour with the burgeoning "service delivery" protests in South Africa's townships. If the EFF invokes the armed struggle, the United Front is formed in the image of the United Democratic Front of the 1980s, even using its logo and colours. On these grounds, it is tempting to characterise the front as populist, but it seems, upon closer inspection to rather be a nostalgic referencing of the populist UDF (with the weak referent of neoliberalism rather than the truly populist referent of nationhood) in a way that signals a regret about the demobilisation of the post-apartheid period. The slogan "a luta continua" also links the UF project to the liberation struggles of the past and, perhaps, to a post-independence narrative about the failure of liberation movements to deliver the freedom promised to their people.

The main difference between the United Front and the UDF is that it was launched by a trade union, rather than by community organisations – and thus represents an inversion of the UDF dynamic. In this way, it is far closer in character to the Marxist-Leninist notion of a united front than to the UDF (which in actual fact bears little relation to that concept) which can be traced back to the 1917 Russian Revolution[27]. The basic idea is that in a situation where communist, revolutionary workers are in the minority, they must join forces with "reformist" workers (those who believe that capitalism can be reformed from within and

[26] Though some did run for elections in defiance of a National Working Committee decision to the contrary

[27] There is almost no reference to the united front tactic in Seekings' definitive "*The UDF: A History of the United Democratic Front in South Africa, 1983-1991" (2000).*

made less brutal) to defend the basic interests of the working class and win immediate reforms within the capitalist system. The goal is to improve the lives of workers "in the here and now" while also building the revolutionary consciousness, confidence and organisational strength of the proletariat. By taking a leading role in these joint struggles, revolutionary workers ultimately sought to win liberals and reformists over to the cause of socialist revolution. Within this framework (which clearly bears little resemblance to any version of the South African political reality), Numsa obviously positions itself as the motive force, here to lead the "leaderless" community protests. Such an approach is evident in the statement of Numsa leaders:

> *Unemployed youth, and indeed the unemployed in general, do not face the same [daily confrontation with capital]. This is why they are a less reliable class force than workers. At times unemployed youth can be mobilised around a political platform that is populist rather than proletarian. Such mobilisation can be dangerous to the interests of workers. That is why as Numsa we follow the Communist Manifesto: 'the proletariat alone is a real revolutionary class'. We can win unemployed youth to our socialist struggle, but they need the leadership of the organised working class* (Numsa 2013 in Paret 2015).

These views have not gone uncontested in the United Front, where community organisations have consistently rejected and criticised the patronising attitude of Numsa towards community organisations[28]. The fact that Numsa continues to subscribe to the NDR also undermines its claimed position as *the* revolutionary leadership. Thus, the UF project reawakens many of the old questions around organisation, revolutionary subjectivity and political identity that characterised the debates around the formation and building of the UDF as well as the "orientation debate" in the new social movements. Due to stagnancy in the UF project, however, these issues have only been dealt with superficially within the front itself.

The founding declaration of the front states that it will "unite the working classes". And so the final thing to say here is that the UF implies "unity" as the basis on which workers, communities and, now, students should come together as a working class subject. Such unity implies a unity of interest and tries to promote coherence around the idea of working-class consciousness.

Less than a year after the EFF and UF assemblies, in October 2015, Fees Must Fall and End Outsourcing break out at Wits then spread to the entire country. Indeed, the protests should rightly be considered as part of the new wave.

[28] My own observations.

4. CONCLUSION

In this part, I have tried to provide an overview of the key concepts that will be used in the rest of this paper and situate Negri and Hardt's multitude within the historical and ongoing debate about revolutionary subjectivity in South Africa and beyond. South Africa's "motive force" debate, in particular gives an idea of what is at stake – both theoretically and politically – in this inquiry. Beyond this, it provides an overview of the contested discursive milieu from which the student-worker protest under question necessarily draws. It is through an intertextual analysis of these discourses that the nature of the protests, and the subject created through them, will begin to reveal itself. The various nominations that have been touched upon here tend to fall into two categories – political identities and analytical concepts, each serving different but interrelated purposes. This becomes relevant as we consider the concept of the multitude and the nature of the political project that it implies. This project, as we will soon understand more clearly, is defined by very particular ways of relating and "coming together" – ways that explicitly reject both unity and common identity, both of which have shown up prominently in this discussion so far. So, then, we ask, can the coming together of students and workers be considered a "coming together" of the multitude? Is the concept of the multitude useful?

PART B

5. ON VALUE AND PRODUCTION IN THE POSTMODERN ECONOMY

An understanding of Negri and Hardt's multitude must begin with an understanding of their analysis of the economy today. It is this economy, which Negri and Hardt characterise as postmodern, that they argue forms the material basis for the emergence of the multitude as a political and, beyond that, revolutionary subject. While the global modern economy was defined by the domination of industry, they characterise postmodernity – along with David Harvey, Fredric Jameson and others – as "a new phase of capitalist accumulation and commodification that accompanies the contemporary realisation of the world market" (Negri & Hardt, 2000: 154). They use the concepts of postmodernisation and informatisation interchangeably, where both refer to a process by which "the creation of wealth tends ever more toward what we will call biopolitical production, the production of social life itself, in which the economic, the political, and the cultural increasingly overlap and invest one another" (Negri & Hardt, 2000: xiii).

The rise of immaterial labour is, according to Negri and Hardt, the primary marker of the transition from an industrial, modern economy to a postmodern economy. Immaterial labour is that labour that produces intangible products like services, knowledge, communication or a cultural product (Negri & Hardt, 2000: 290). These products – "communication, media, transport education, health, social care, finance, advertising,

entertainment, cultural production" – belong to the tertiary economy and are generated by what Marx called "unproductive labour". Negri and Hardt do not consider this labour to be unproductive. On the contrary, it is the productivity of this labour – now the greatest source of wealth in the global economy – that is at the centre of their analysis.

The increasing dominance of immaterial labour in the postmodern economy is mirrored by the corresponding decline of material labour – the rise of the knowledge and service economy by the phenomenon that has come to be known as de-industrialisation. This decline is evident in the diminishing contribution of industry towards global wealth, as measure by indicators such as GDP, as well as the diminishing number of workers employed in industrial labour. These kinds of general trends in the composition of the economy and of labour within it are the quantitative conditions that Negri and Hardt refer to when they talk about postmodernisation. More key to their analysis, however, is the concept of hegemony, which implies a qualitative change in the nature of material production such that value is produced in that sector in ways that more and more mirror the dynamics of immaterial production. This is to say that even the manufacturing sector today is organised in ways that are typical of service and cognitive work. Thus, even in industrial economies that on the surface look quite different from prototypical postmodern economies of the West, industry cannot be said to be the hegemonic form of labour. Rather, they argue that "industrial labour has been displaced from its hegemonic position over other forms of labour by immaterial labour, which now tends to transform all sectors of production and society itself in line with its qualities" (Negri & Hardt, 2004:223). Their claim is thus that immaterial labour is *globally* hegemonic in qualitative rather than quantitative terms.

To illustrate their point, Negri and Hardt point towards the transformative effects that the ascent of industrialisation had on the agricultural sector in countries where large-scale industrialisation has occurred:

> *In the process of modernisation and the passage toward the paradigm of industrial dominance, not only did agricultural production decline quantitatively (both in percentage of workers employed and in proportion of the total value produced), but also, more important, agriculture itself was transformed. When agriculture came under the domination of industry, even when agriculture was still predominant in quantitative terms, it became subject to the social and financial pressures of industry, and moreover agricultural production itself was industrialised. Agriculture, of course, did not disappear; it remained an essential component of modern industrial economies, but it was now a transformed, industrialised agriculture. (Negri & Hardt, 2000: 281)*

So, in the same way that "the farm progressively became a factory" (Negri & Hardt, 2000: 284) under the hegemony of industry, so they argue that the factory is progressively

becoming a call centre. This analogy becomes easier to understand as one comes to better grasp the nature of work that the call centre agent does.

At the core of Negri and Hardt's postmodern economy is service work, while the figure of the service worker stands as its paradigmatic subject. The service worker – the call centre agent, the waitron, the domestic worker, the street vendor, the Uber driver, the security guard, the nurse, the designer, the social media manager – is a worker that produces no tangible commodities, but nonetheless produces value. This value is made through the exercise of emotion, language and thought, what they colloquially call "labour of the head and the heart" (Negri & Hardt, 2009: 132). This kind of work also, importantly, involves interrelation and relationship building – which is what Hochschild (1983) was pointing towards when she coined term "emotional labour". These relations are built between workers and customers/clients and also between workers themselves, whereupon they become instances of cooperative production. It is primarily through these relations – be they momentary or longer-term – that value is realised as surplus in the service economy (Negri & Hardt, 2000: 365).

This – the way in which social interaction and interpersonal engagement become generators of surplus – is, in one sense, what Negri and Hardt mean when they say that "the powers of production are in fact today entirely biopolitical" (Negri & Hardt, 2000: 364). The concept of biopolitical labour, which they borrow from Foucault, describes a condition whereby the line between work and life become blurred. Here, in the postmodern economy, we see the stuff of life – smiles, laughter, intimacy, communication, etc – commodified in the workplace. The other place of biopolitical labour is the home, the community, the nightclub, etc – the reproductive realm. Thus, another sense in which labour is becoming biopolitical is the way in which capital creeps beyond the workplace into daily life – beyond the realm of production into the reproductive realm. We see this in the return to home industries, in the phenomenon of working online from home and in the trend towards work-related communication occurring beyond working hours. We also see it in the ways that immaterial work like, for example, journalism involves drawing on the experiences, knowledges and skills of daily life for production. Here, "the entire context of reproduction is subsumed under capitalist rule, that is, when reproduction and the vital relationships that constitute it themselves become directly productive" (Negri & Hardt, 2000: 364). Negri and Hardt use the idea of the "real subsumption of capital" (Negri & Hardt, 2004: 43) as a synonym for biopolitics in their argument that today, all humanity and all aspects of human life are subsumed by capital. Capital's omnipresence means that "nothing escapes money" (Negri & Hardt, 2000: 32). Thus, the biopoliticisation of labour, which at first seem to represent a crossing of the boundaries between life and work – between production and reproduction – in fact represent a breaking down of that division. Through subsumption, the two domains become inextricably linked and increasingly indistinguishable from each other, as manifested in the inability to clearly draw a line between work and leisure time, workplace

and home. And as that basic division breaks down, so too do a number of other distinctions that modern society had come to take for granted – private vs public, employment vs unemployment, etc. In fact, in the biopolitical regime, the very lines between the political, economic, social and cultural become blurred (Negri & Hardt, 2004 :109).

When Negri and Hardt point toward the blurring of the social division between the employed and the unemployed (Negri & Hardt, 2004 :131), they highlight an array of characteristics of biopolitical existence centred on the experience of precarity. Precarious employment refers to a set of labouring conditions that intensify under the hegemony of immaterial labour – including outsourced, flexible, part time, short term, informal and unregulated and irregular employment. Under these conditions, a person may be employed today and unemployed the next. And neither work nor lack thereof are stable or static conditions, for, as services like Uber show, one must always be available to work, even if one is not always working (Negri & Hardt, 2009: 146).

If these conditions – flexible, on-demand labour; the indistinguishability of work and life – sound neither unfamiliar nor novel to the black women reader, that is because they aren't. The black woman is actually the prototypical "postmodern" labourer, while precarity has long characterised the experience of labour for colonised people. These conditions are now becoming generalised even in the dominant countries of the world (Negri & Hardt, 2009: 133). This process of generalisation is what Negri and Hardt refer to as the "feminisation of labour". Through this process, we see not only more women entering work but also changes in the nature of work in ways that mirror the female experience. The service sector, which dominates in the postmodern economy, is inherently affective and involves relationship tasks which have traditionally been the domain of women. Finally, the process of feminisation implies a rise in unwaged and invisible work that nonetheless produces value for capital. For women, "excluded from wealth but included in its production" (Negri & Hardt: 2009: 53), [this has always meant subsidising the cost of reproducing labour through housework, thus allowing capital to pay lower wages]. The unemployed, the poor and the homeless have also always engaged in production, but this activity is becoming more and more directly productive in the postmodern economy (Negri & Hardt, 2004:131).

> *"in the biopolitical regimes of production and in the processes of postmodernization, the poor is a subjugated, exploited figure, but nonetheless a figure of production. This is where the novelty [in their analysis] lies. Everywhere today, at the basis of the concept and the common name of the poor, there is a relationship of production." (Negri & Hardt, 2000: 157)*

The appropriation of slang by, for example, the advertising industry is a good example of how this works. This slang is often created by poor, young, marginalised people on the outskirts of urban economies. Advertisers then monetise these new words by using them to

sell products, while the people who actually created them are left out of the loop. Similar processes can be seen in the expropriation of cultural products and personal data that are created through interpersonal engagements on social media platforms like Twitter and Facebook. This is just an extension of the logic that commodifies the service worker's smile.

Biopolitical labour, then, to sum up, is labour that cannot be defined as either productive or reproductive, for it is both simultaneously. It is neither restricted to traditional working spaces nor established working hours, and as such it is defined by spatio-temporal dynamics that reduce both geographical and temporal dualisms to nonsense. Value is something that is created by everyone at all times. The biopoliticisation of labour is something that has been made possible by the proliferation of computers and information systems in both the workplace and in daily life – and, indeed, Negri and Hardt often use the concepts of informatisation and postmodernisation interchangeably. The use of information technologies like phones and computers is integral to much service and cognitive work, while it is mostly through these tools that the value produced through organic social interactions is captured and commodified, as in the case of social media. And just as they facilitate the deterritorialisation and coding of social engagement (for example, through memes), so they facilitate value-producing processes that do not necessarily require face to face engagement and develop new, productive common codes of communication.

But information technology and affective, cooperative relations are not just the value-producing tools of the service sector. These are also an integral part of current-day manufacturing processes. We are now better placed to return to the concept of hegemony that was raised at the beginning of this section. The informatisation of material labour is one of the key ways in which immaterial labour is said to be "transform[ing] all sectors of production and society itself in line with its qualities" (Negri & Hardt, 2004:223). One of the ways, then, in which the hegemony of immaterial labour manifests is as the introduction of computers to industry, leading to the decentralisation or deterritorialisation of material production. One of the defining characteristics of modern industry, as we have seen, is the way that it has tended towards centralisation – bringing together masses of workers in the cities and large factories. Now, the introduction of communication technologies into manufacturing has "effectively dispersed the mass factories and evacuated the factory cities" (Negri & Hardt, 2000: 295), giving birth to a production process that looks more like a network than an assembly line. Facilitated by computer technology, the way in which industrial production is geographically organised has undergone a fundamental shift towards decentralised production and supply chains.

The technologically-mediated dynamic underpinning this organisational form is an inversion of the typical relationship between demand and supply. No longer is the mandate "produce as much as possible and leave it to the advertisers to deal with demand". In theory at least, demand-based production means that any product, including its component parts, is only

produced as it is ordered. This implies a communication network that extends to various factories, suppliers, middle-men, contract workers and transport companies around the world, as well as a system that is able to calculate and communicate constantly changing instructions to its various nodes. On the factory floor itself, workers are brought into productive relationships with these technologies and these often-coded information flows. Indeed, the worker needs to master the machine and its language in order to be able to do their job. The postmodernisation of material labour, then, transforms the manual labourer into an information and communication worker, leading Virno to assert that "the tasks of a worker or of a clerk no longer involve the completion of a single particular assignment, but the changing and intensifying of social cooperation" (Virno: 2004: 30). What he means by this is that – in contrast to mechanical, continuous, repetitive, disengaging work of the modern factory – the informatised factory requires of workers cognitive, communicative and cooperative labour. This kind of relational, cooperative work is – as we have seen – intrinsic to immaterial, affective, service work, but it is its new role in material production that underpins Negri and Hardt's claims about postmodern hegemony. Put another way, the new roles of information, communication and cooperation in industry are what allow us to recognise material labour as biopolitical labour, essentially similar, then, to the service work and other unwaged social work that dominate and produce the most value in the postmodern economy. This value – produced everywhere, all the time, and by everyone – they suggest, is best understood as the production of the common.

6. THE MULTITUDE: A POSTMODERN SUBJECT

6.1 Reconceptualising the proletariat

It is the postmodern economy outlined above that, according to Negri and Hardt, provides the material conditions for the emergence of the multitude as a revolutionary subject. In the same way that large-scale industry created the conditions that made possible the formation of the industrial working class, so the concept of the multitude is equally rooted in the conditions generated by the postmodern economy. In this sense, the concept of the multitude is a product of a class analysis of the postmodern economy. The antagonistic relationship between Marx's "two opposing forces" – labour and capital – is maintained, but under new economic conditions the analysis yields new results, with a multiplicity of new class actors and new political implications. The struggle between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie gives way to the struggle between the multitude and empire.

Beginning from the foundational premise that we are currently implicated in a real subsumption of capital (Negri & Hardt, 2004: 43) – that "today nearly all of humanity is to some degree absorbed within or subordinated to the networks of capitalist exploitation" – Negri and Hardt suggest that one initial approach is "to conceive the multitude as all those who work under the rule of capital and thus potentially as the class of those who refuse the

rule of capital" (Negri & Hardt, 2004:106). Under conditions of biopolitical production the idea of work cannot be limited to waged work but must rather refer to "human creative capacities in all their generality" (Negri & Hardt, 2004: 105). We can therefore add to our understanding of the multitude the idea that it is a class of the world's biopolitical workers – including precarious, poor, unemployed, unwaged, homeless, etc, who, as we have seen, all participate in social (biopolitical) production (Negri & Hardt, 2004: 129). The idea of the multitude can thus be further understood as a reconceptualisation of the idea of the proletariat to include the full array of labouring practices that characterise the regime of biopolitical production. It is the indistinction between production and reproduction that "allows us finally to recognise the full generality of the concept of proletariat" (Negri & Hardt, 2000: 402).

They say:

> *"The composition of the proletariat has transformed and thus our understanding of it must too. In conceptual terms we understand proletariat as a broad category that includes all those whose labour is directly or indirectly exploited by and subjected to capitalist norms of production and reproduction. In a previous era the category of the proletariat centred on and was at times effectively subsumed under the industrial working class, whose paradigmatic figure was the male mass factory worker. That industrial working class was often accorded the leading role over other figures of labour (such as peasant labour and reproductive labour) in both economic analyses and political movements. Today that working class has all but disappeared from view. It has not ceased to exist, but it has been displaced from its privileged position in the capitalist economy and its hegemonic position in the class composition of the proletariat. The proletariat is not what it used to be, but that does not mean it has vanished. It means, rather, that we are faced once again with the analytical task of understanding the new composition of the proletariat as a class." (Negri & Hardt, 2000: 52-53)*

Negri and Hardt argue that the traditional working class remains important but today holds "no political privilege with respect to other classes of labour within the multitude" (Negri & Hardt, 2004:107). They also remind us that the proletariat is not a naturally existing class and that Marx's idea of a unified proletariat class is a political rather than a descriptive claim (Negri & Hardt, 2004:104). This idea is echoed by Virno who states that "the labour class is a theoretical concept, not a snap-shot photograph kept as a souvenir: it signifies the subject which produces relative and absolute surplus value" (Virno, 2004: 21).

What this means, at an organisational level, is that the multitude is not a formation that excludes the industrial working class, but one that contains it. In responding to a criticism of the displacement of the working class from their paradigm, Hardt (2003) suggests that "you

should not think of this discussion as an alternative, either working class or multitude. One has to think rather about the possibilities of organisation within this, a strategy of organisation".

6.2 The one and the many

unity |ˈjuːnɪti|
noun (pl.**unities**) *[mass noun]*

1 the state of being united or joined as a whole: *European unity* | *ways of preserving family unity*.

• the state of forming a complete and harmonious whole, especially in an artistic context: *the repeated phrase gives the piece unity and cohesion*.

• *[count noun]* a thing forming a complex whole: *they speak of the three parts as a unity*.

2 *Mathematics* the number one. *the slope of each dotted line is less than unity*.

3 *[count noun]* each of the three dramatic principles requiring limitation of the supposed time of a drama to that occupied in acting it or to a single day (unity of time), use of one scene throughout (unity of place), and concentration on the development of a single plot (unity of action).

ORIGIN
Middle English: from Old French *unite*, from Latin *unitas*, from *unus* **'one'**.

The multitude looks fundamentally different to the proletariat of the industrial era. In contrast to the idealised image of the mass of unified, stable, mechanical, disciplined, male factory workers, the global multitude is "hybrid, fluid, mutant, deterritorialised, just like the immaterial workers of the postmodern world" (Lotringer, 2005: 6). Unity and common identity are the preconditions for the existence of the working class as a class proper. This imperative is discursively captured in the call for the "proletarians of the world [to] unite!" The multitude is distinct as a concept of collective revolutionary subjectivity in that it explicitly rejects unity or common political identity (Negri & Hardt, 2004:100). Creating a common identity, on the one hand, entails setting criteria for being either in or out – which is why it is rejected as exclusionary. The multitude, in contrast, is an open and expansive concept. Perhaps more fundamentally, the concept of the multitude is rooted in an understanding of the postmodern subject as moving between a number of different identities and identifications – rendering the unified collective subject an ontological impossibility. Forging unity entails subverting difference within a group in service of a

"master identity". The process of unification, given the wide range of identities, objectives, priorities, that necessarily exist within any grouping, can only be a superficial exercise in reduction and negation.

Like the proletariat, the idea of "the people" as a political subject is also premised on its unity – of will, action and identity. The people, says Hobbes, "is somewhat that is one, having one will, and to whom one action may be attributed" (in Negri & Hardt, 2000: 103). "The population, of course, is composed of numerous different individuals and classes, but the people synthesises or reduces these social differences into one identity" (Negri & Hardt, 2004: 99). Like the proletariat, "the component parts of the people are indifferent in their unity; they become an identity by negating or setting aside their differences" (Negri & Hardt, 2004: 99). It is this reducibility of the people to one that, according to Hobbes, makes it "political". The people can be represented. And indeed, the people are represented. "Popular hegemony" refers to the process through which a hegemonic group comes to represent a whole population under the label of "the people" (Negri & Hardt, 2000: 104). This hegemonic group can in turn be represented by one person, one *representative*, one president, one king, one big man. It is this representability that allows for "the people" to form "the imaginary basis of the nation state" (Negri & Hardt, 2000: 102) and it is for this reason that "every nation must make the multitude into a people[29]" (Negri & Hardt, 2000: 103).

In absolute contrast to the unity and "oneness" of the proletariat and the people, the multitude is based on the dual ideas of multiplicity and commonality. The multitude does not rest on fixed or shared identities and "the multitude is not and will never be a single social body" (Negri & Hardt, 2001: 243). In the words of Franco Barchiesi: "Rather than converging in the form of *unity*, or of adherence to a coherent system of meanings and forms of consciousness, these singularities seek *commonality* as shared understandings of common elements and root causes of material conditions, and strike at commonly identified targets while retaining their autonomy" (Barchiesi, 2004: 6). The multiplicity of the multitude is thus "irreducible", and it is on this basis that it "comes together".

This implies, at a practical level, that "the singular social differences that constitute the multitude must always be expressed and can never be flattened into sameness, unity, identity or indifference" (Negri & Hardt, 2004:105). "Why", ask Negri and Guattari, "ask a feminist movement to come to a doctrine or programmatic accord with ecological movement groups or with a communitarian experiment by people of colour or with a

[29] Suttner has argued that "characteristic of the unity of the national liberation movement is that it is a hegemonic unity which seeks overall leadership and representation of all forces in all sectors struggling for liberation under specific banners" (Suttner, 2011: 18). At the same time, he argues that "In the face of divide and rule that led to conquest or continued colonial/apartheid rule, the emphasis on unity was an important starting and continued rallying point." (ibid: 16)

workers' movement?" Each attempt at ideological unification, they argue, "is an absurd and indeed reactionary operation" (in Read, 1999). The absurdity of unity is, as outlined earlier, a consequence of the proliferation of fluid and contingent identities. But it is more than that. At the root of this rejection is the premise that antagonism is inherent to political relations and power, and a political commitment to acknowledging and working through that antagonism. The only unity that exists is false unity. "Ideology shatters; it only unifies on the level of appearance" (Read, 1999: 15). Multitude, in contrast, "signifies: plurality – literally: being many – as a lasting form of social and political existence" (Virno, 2004: 37).

The coming together of the multitude is thus fundamentally different from both the unity of the proletariat and the oneness/representability of the people. But it is also distinct from alliance, coalition and solidarity. These political forms do entail cooperation on the basis of some shared interest or project, and they do imply the recognition of difference between the groups that come together in this way. But, argue Negri and Hardt, "alliances and coalitions can never get beyond the fixed identities striving for emancipation that form them" (Negri & Hardt, 2009: 350). Multitude, in contrast, does not imply pairing identities but rather transforming them. This is one of the ways in which Negri and Hardt use the concept of "becoming". They use the example of Mexico's Zapatistas to demonstrate the point. The Zapatistas, a militant revolutionary political formation of indigenous people from the Chiapas region of Mexico, struggle against racism, but not on the basis of a fixed racial identity. Rather than demanding "to be who we are", they demand the right "to become what we want" (Negri & Hardt: 2009: 106).

The concept of solidarity, in the same vein, is distinct from the coming together of the multitude. Although solidarity does not imply the forming of a common identity between groups, the formulation does imply collaboration on the basis of fixed identities, and thus the impossibility of becoming something different through the encounter. In contrast, in rejecting unity, in embracing difference and becoming, the political acts of the multitude create new forms of community and subjectivity.

6.3 Making the multitude, a multitude in the making and a making multitude

And so we are left with a set of negations, a set of ideas about what the multitude is not – not a unity, not a proletariat, not a people, with a common identity and ideology, not a coalition, not an alliance, not solidarity, trapped in existing categories. We are told, in often vague and abstract terms, that it is a coming together of singularities on the basis of commonality: "The multitude is a multiplicity, a plane of singularities, an open set of relations, which is not homogenous or identical with itself and bears an indistinct, inclusive relation to those outside of it" (Negri & Hardt, 2000: 103). And we are told that it must come together if it is to enact its potential power as revolutionary subject.

Much of the confusion – rooted in a constant recourse to negation, but also to terribly exclusionary language – can be attributed to three things: Firstly, the multitude can only be called into being through a political project. Secondly, Negri and Hardt themselves do not even claim to know what that project looks like (beyond drawing on a few examples as "glimpses"). Thirdly, the multitude is in a process of self-production.

Negri and Hardt claim that the multitude is a class concept, while simultaneously speaking of a "not-yet multitude", a multitude that has never existed (Negri & Hardt, 2004:221). The multitude, they argue, "is based not so much on the current empirical existence of the class but rather on its conditions of possibility" (Negri & Hardt, 2004:105). It is thus a *potential* class and a *potential* revolutionary subject, poised to emerge out of the conditions of the postmodern economy.

In this sense, the concept of the multitude is similar to that of the proletariat which, prior to being a concept of revolutionary subjectivity, is a label used to describe a group of people labouring under shared conditions of exploitation under industrial capitalism. It is the recognition of those conditions, the shared interests that that they imply, and organisation around these that would call this group into being as a political subject, as a class. For Negri and Hardt, "a theory of class not only reflects the existing lines of struggle, it also proposes potential future lines. The task of a theory of class in this respect is to identify the existing *conditions* for potential collective struggle and express them as a political proposition" (Negri & Hardt, 2004:104). Indeed, Negri and Hardt argue that the multitude is "a way of giving a name to what is already going on and grasping the existing social and political tendency" emerging in the postmodern economy. Naming such a tendency, continue Negri and Hardt, "is a primary task of political theory and a powerful tool for further developing the emerging political form" (Negri & Hardt, 2004:220).

Thus, the multitude, unlike the more established political forms that it negates, is still in a process of becoming, even at a conceptual level. Nonetheless there are a few examples that Negri and Hardt point towards as examples, glimpses of this emergent political form. Some of these include the Cochabamba water riots of 1999-2000, the Tahrir Square protests of the so-called Arab Spring and Paris protests of 1968. One of the questions that we are asking ourselves here is whether the Wits student-worker protests can be included in this group. What is similar in these eruptions of resistance is that they cannot be reduced to worker's struggles, women's struggles, student struggles, etc. Rather, they represent the dynamic coming together of different groups – groups that maintained their difference – around common struggles. Thus, Hardt (2003) says:

> *We've seen a new model of organising, a model that refuses the contradictory couple of identity and difference, that refuses to say either we all united under the same centralisation or each act individually in our separate parts. What we've seen instead*

is that we have to recognise – we even have difficulty understanding it at a conceptual level, but we have to understand it at a political level – that we can remain different, that we have to remain different, but that we must act in common.

Another thing that is common to the movements identified above is that they are all examples of horizontal organisation. Not only were they made up of different "singularities" but it is also the case that no one group was "leading" or directing the movement. Thus, these struggles of the multitude, "at least potentially", represent a new alignment whereby they are not unified and no one group holds hegemony over others. Instead, they act as singularities, "autonomously march[ing] forward on parallel paths" (Negri & Hardt, 2009: 108). It is this potentiality of the multitude that Negri and Hardt are most concerned with. Having identified a tendency in the spontaneous movements and uprisings of the postmodern moment, they suggest that "what we need to grasp is how the multitude is organised and redefined as a positive, political power" beyond these events (Negri & Hardt, 2000: 398). This is the challenge of making the multitude which, in the end, "is not a spontaneous political subject but a project of political organisation" (Negri & Hardt, 2009: 169). Viewed in this light, "the discussion thus becomes more about *making* the multitude than *being* the multitude" (Negri & Hardt, 2009: 169).

The challenge put forth by the political proposition of the multitude is, then, fundamentally about how to organise the horizontal relationship between multiple, consistently shifting, antagonistic singularities such that it evolves beyond event into, in the words of Virno, "a lasting form of social and political existence" but also, more immediately, a powerful counter-power to capitalism. However, and as will by now be evident, "this organisation or 'linking' – in which molecular struggles come together to form molar and dualistic organisations, in which the "multiple" and the "one" coexist, multiplying and intensifying each other as terrains of struggle – demands the invention of new "social practices" and new types of organisation" (Read, 1999: 15). The horizontal form poses certain obvious challenges, especially related to the question of decision-making. How does such a structure reach decisions and speak with one voice at the decisive moment? Relatedly, how can one organise on the basis of fluidity? This challenge has led many to conclude that, at the end of the day, some sort of central decision-making, some kind of unity, becomes indispensable to a political project.

But Negri and Hardt refuse to concede that unity is a precondition for decision-making (Negri & Hardt, 2009: 166). In order to understand how this is possible, we must briefly return to the notions of communication, interrelation and, especially, collaboration that are so key to Negri and Hardt's analysis of the postmodern economy. While acknowledging that the value produced by workers has always been more than the sum of its parts – that collaboration has always been important to the way that value is realised – they argue that today something new is happening. In biopolitical production, they argue, cooperation is

more productive than ever before - “the true mainspring of the production of wealth” (Virno, 2004: 17). Through its new role in the postmodern economy, it emerges as more than the mere “free gift to capital” (Marx in Lebowitz, 1987: 269) that Marx theorised and becomes part of the biopolitical means of production. In addition, they argue that wealth, and indeed the cooperation that produce it, are increasingly being produced autonomously of capital:

> *Capital – although it may constrict biopolitical labour, expropriate its products, even in some cases provide necessary instruments of production – does not organise productive cooperation. With reference to large-scale industry, Marx recognises that the essential role of the capitalist in the production process, which is clearly linked to the mechanisms of exploitation, is to provide cooperation, that is, bring workers together in the factory, give them the tools to work together, furnish a plan to cooperate, and enforce their cooperation. The capitalist ensures cooperation, Marx imagines, like the general on the battlefield or the conductor of the orchestra. In biopolitical production, however, capital does not determine the cooperative arrangement, or at least not to the same extent. Cognitive and affective labour generally produce cooperation autonomously from capitalist command, even in some of the most constrained and exploited circumstances, such as call centres or food services. Intellectual, communicative, and affective means of cooperation are generally created in the productive encounters themselves and cannot be directed from the outside. In fact, rather than providing cooperation, we could even say that capital expropriates cooperation as a central element of exploiting biopolitical labour power (Negri & Hardt, 2009: 140)*

This wealth, produced beyond the control of capital and made up of all the ideas, knowledges, cultural products, relationships etc produced through work and through life, they call “the commons” – building on the established notion of the commons as the fixed and stable common resources of the earth that are typically expropriated by capital through processes of primitive accumulation, privatisation and enclosure. The notion of an autonomously produced common has a few implications. On the one hand, they argue that it puts capital in the particularly vulnerable position of predatory rentier, living “only off the vitality of the multitude” (Negri & Hardt, 2000: 62). The revolutionary potential of the multitude lies in its capacity for autonomous production – in its capacity to seize the biopolitical means of production that is already its own anyway. On the other hand, and to return to the more immediate question of organisation and decision-making, Negri and Hardt suggest that “just as a wide social multiplicity produces immaterial products and economic value, so too is such a multitude able to produce political decisions” (Negri & Hardt, 2009: 174). In this analogy, the central decision-making body is the dispensable (and indeed undesirable) capitalist of biopolitical production. Through the same communicative and collaborative networks that the multitude autonomously produces the common, so too

shall it develop its capacity to make collective decisions. This is the "immanent" decision-making power of the multitude: "power is not something that lords over us but something that we make" (Negri & Hardt, 2000: 165).

The idea of productivity is central to the idea of immanence, but also to the broader question of what the multitude is – for the multitude is understood to produce not only surplus value and the social wealth of the commons, but also new organisational forms, subjectivity and, ultimately, itself. The multitude's economic productivity is also "a political act of self-making" (Negri & Hardt, 2009: 175). Struggles have long been understood as processes of production. It is through the struggle for better wages that the proletariat produces a collective awareness of its own exploitation, and through the strike that it recognises its power. It is through these struggles that the organisational forms appropriate to the task at hand are experimented with and ultimately consolidated. But struggles based on the concept of unity and common identity tend towards centralisation, hierarchy and exclusion. The multitude, on the other hand, refuses this inward pull, even as it *comes together* in various places and configurations, and, in this way, it produces new political categories and identities. This is why Negri and Hard assert that "the biopolitical event… is always a queer event, a subjective process of subjectivisation that, shattering ruling identities and norms, reveals the link between power and freedom, and thereby inaugurates an alternative production of subjectivity" (Negri & Hardt: 2009: 63). Through work and life and uprising, the multitude produces new subjectivities, and through this process "the multitude is itself author of its perpetual becoming other, an uninterrupted process of collective self-transformation" (Negri & Hardt, 2009: 173).

PART C

7. POSTMODERN SOUTH AFRICA

7.1 The objective and the subjective

An attempt to read the student-worker protests through the concept of the multitude must necessarily begin with an analysis of the South African economy. The multitude, as formulated by Negri and Hardt, is not a new revolutionary subjectivity to be conjured up from pure will but rather a potential product of the conditions and contradictions of the postmodern economy. These conditions and contradictions are the source of the multitude's potential revolutionary power, and it is the subjective experience of biopolitical labour that shapes its capacity to understand and exercise that power. Thus, it is important to establish whether the economic conditions for the emergence of the multitude do in fact exist in South Africa. In doing this, we begin to answer a fundamental question about the extent to which the concept is useful for understanding the student-worker protests. For some Marxist thinkers, the concept has been dismissed as unhelpful for precisely the

reason, they argue, that Negri and Hardt's analysis does not speak to economic realities in much of the world. Generally arguing in defence of the ongoing importance of working class politics, this critique of the multitude stresses the increasing integration of people worldwide, but especially in the "peripheral" countries, into waged labour (physical and cognitive). This is what Samir Amin (2014) calls "generalised proletarianisation". Through this lens, it is in fact a transformed working class, rather than a multitude, that is crystallising today. Postmodernity, then, is, if anything, a uniquely Western phenomenon, and the multitude is at best a Eurocentric concept masquerading as a universal one. For these reasons, Amin dismisses the multitude as "an 'idealist' invention [which] supposes that a reversal has occurred in the world of ideas without a transformation of real social relations" (Amin, 2005). We will have opportunity to reflect on the idea of a *global* multitude later on in this paper. For now, what is pertinent is to consider these critiques and their implications from the perspective of South Africa.

What should be made clear from the outset is that the general approach of this paper does not subscribe to the logic that underpins many orthodox Marxist critiques of the multitude. By this structuralist logic, which supposes "a necessary correspondence between one level of social formation and another" (Hall, 1985: 94), particular relations of production, in this case, necessarily give way to corresponding social relations and subjectivities. Such an approach is wholly unable to account for the diversity of ideologies and political identities that emerge despite shared economic conditions. In contrast to this logic, a social constructionist approach holds that identity – individual and collective – is created by people through processes of articulation. Here, social relations and identity are understood to only acquire meaning through their discursive representation in language (Hall, 1985: 98). But even between social constructionists there is disagreement about the question of contingency. To what extent does the social exist independently of discourse? And to what extent are social formations like groups or classes formed through discursive practice? There is a spectrum of positions here which can be characterised as stretching from Marx, one end, and Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, on the other. For Marx, classes are objective groups to which individuals belong based on their particular relationship to the mode of production, "whether they know it or not" (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002: 33). Working class consciousness, then, serves the function of bringing ideology into alignment with the objective reality of class position. On the other end of the spectrum stand poststructuralist thinkers like Laclau and Mouffe who argue that "there are no objective laws that divide society into particular groups; the groups that exist are always created in political, discursive processes" (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002: 33).

In the space between poststructuralist idealism and structuralist orthodoxy is an approach that recognises structures as productive of certain tendencies, whilst also appreciating, in the words of Stuart Hall, that there is "no law which guarantees that the ideology of a class is already and unequivocally given in or corresponds to the position which that class holds in

the economic relations of capitalist production" (Hall, 1985: 94). By this logic, the multiple structures that shape social existence each present opportunities for the formation of political alliances and identities, but nothing is "guaranteed". How groups come to cohere around certain subject positions is a matter of political choices. It is with this approach that I align myself. This approach is also in line with Negri and Hardt's conception of the multitude which, they argue, exists as a "tendency" but can only be called into being as a political subject through a political project in its name. Theirs is a subject that emerges out of a particular set of economic conditions – those of the postmodern economy – where the relations of production give way to accompanying kinds of potentially revolutionary social relations.

Moving forward, then, a couple of fundamental questions must be posed. Firstly, does South Africa have a postmodern economy in the sense laid out by Negri and Hardt? This is, in essence, to ask whether immaterial labour is hegemonic in South Africa. And, secondly, if so, what kinds of subjective experiences, identities and relations are being formed through the subsumption of groups and individuals into this economy?

7.2 Recomposition of the economy

The question of whether immaterial labour is hegemonic operates at two distinct and interrelated levels – the quantitative and the qualitative. In the first place, the idea of a postmodern economy assumes a quantitative decline in material labour – both in terms of labour force participation and contribution towards GDP. This decline should be accompanied by a rise in the service and knowledge economy, by the same criteria. This aspect of the question can be relatively easily dealt with. The decline of South Africa's manufacturing sector is well documented. The share of manufacturing to national GDP has declined consistently over the past 40 years, and particularly in the past two decades. In 2016, manufacturing value added as share of GDP sat at 13% (Statistics SA, 2017a), down from 21% in 1995 (Kaplan, 2015: 250) and 22% in 1980 (Statistics SA, 2017a). This downturn coincides with a parallel decline in industrial employment. It is estimated that manufacturing accounts only for 13% of formal employment in South Africa today (Kaplan, 2015: 255). Similar trends can be observed in the mining industry[30]. Where mining profits used to make up 21% of South Africa's GDP in 1980, that contribution has since dropped to 8% in 2016 (Statistics SA, 2017a). There has also been a decline in mining employment from 792 742 employees in 1980 (Statistics SA, 2001) to 447,000 employees in the first quarter of 2017 (Statistics SA, 2017b). This means that at the end of 2016, out of every R100 produced by the South African economy, only R21 was made in manufacturing and mining combined. The two industries only employ about 2 million people today, out of an overall population of nearly 56 million.

[30] The mining industry is extractive rather than productive. Despite this, mining is material labour and miners are considered part of the proletariat.

This trend has been accompanied by a rise in the service sector. In the mid-1980s, services accounted for half of South Africa's GDP. Today it accounts for two thirds, with an equal ratio of South Africans now employed in that sector (Kaplan, 2015: 250). This is second only to the state, which is the biggest employer in the country (Statistics SA). These jobs – including, I would argue state jobs, despite their relative stability – are the very immaterial labour that Negri and Hardt talk about. This work is – as the argument goes – intrinsically cognitive, communicative, informational, affective, relational and cooperative. By virtue of these characteristics, service work has been characterised by Negri and Hardt as feminised – which is to say that value is primarily created through the kind of affective and relationship building labour that has traditionally been the domain of women.

And there are other ways in which the feminisation of the South African economy manifests. The rise in outsourced, part-time, casual, short-term and informal labour (Kenny and Webster, 1999; Bezuidenhout et al, 2006; Mosoetsa, 2011) give rise to the kind of labour flexibility that is expected of women in the home, where the indistinguishability of the line between work and life is most glaringly apparent[31]. These kinds of working conditions have also been characterised as precarious and Ben Scully, based on an analysis of nationally representative household survey data, concludes that 42% of South Africa's employed labour force can be characterised as such (Scully, 2016: 8). The concept of precarity speaks to particular kinds of working conditions but also refers to the subjective experience of working under such conditions. The concept arises out of a body of Western scholarship that sought to theorise the processes and effects of the labour restructuring that came to grip North American and European workers from the late 20th century. The social and economic consequences of these changes in the nature of work have been felt across the globe, and most keenly in the so-called developing world. Important scholarly work has drawn attention to the fact that while precarity may be new to a Western workforce emerging out of a post WW2 "golden age" of stable, secure, mass employment, such conditions have never been the norm for the workers of the "global South" (see Munck, 2013; Scully, 2016). Acknowledging this does not undermine how devastating the intensification of these conditions has been for workers and communities in places like South Africa, but does serve as a caution against the wholesale conceptual assimilation of the novelty of precarity and the subjective implications thereof.

Many of these service sector and precarious jobs are filled by women, simply by virtue of the increased labour market participation of women (Department of Labour, 2007). But the increasing participation of women in the productive realm is also – at first glance

[31] If one has any doubt as to the appropriateness of characterising these conditions as feminine, one only has to look to look at the connotation of the word "breadwinning" and recognise how the increasing inability of men to live up to this idea, precisely because of labour market restructuring, are experienced by them "emasculating" (Mosoetsa, 2011)

paradoxically – accompanied by an increase in the importance of women's social, reproductive labour. These are the finding made by Sarah Mosoetsa (2011), Bezuidenhout and Fakier (2006) and Fakier and Cock (2009), amongst others. Bezuidenhout and Fakier explore the ways in which outsourcing impacts the daily lives of workers in their 2006 article "Maria's Burden: Contract Cleaning and the Crisis of Social Reproduction in Post-apartheid South Afric*a"*. Their analysis looks specifically at outsourced workers at Wits but also highlights that theirs is "a story similar to that of thousands of other workers" (Bezuidenhout and Fakier, 2006: 463). Indeed, the mid-1990s marked a shift towards non-standard employment contracts across all sectors of the South African economy (Bezuidenhout and Fakier 2006; Kenny and Webster 1999). The article draws attention to the ways in which outsourcing, combined with the privatisation of public services in South Africa, have added to the economic and social burden borne by workers. This burden, significantly, is not exclusively borne in the workplace, but rather in the home and in the community, in the realm of reproduction. This represents a continuity with apartheid, which intentionally sought to externalise the burden of social reproduction to rural subsistence economies in the Bantustans, thus subsidising business' profits with the household labour of mainly women (Wolpe, 1972: 466). Mosoetsa's (2011) work shows how this has continued, and suggests that the value being created by unpaid women's labour is now more significant than ever.

These findings lead us to an impression of an economy that is "quantitatively postmodern" – an economy where most value is produced in sectors defined as immaterial, and with the majority of the workforce also employed in these sectors. These shifts in the nature of work have manifested as transformations in the ways that workers relate to the idea of labour and workplace politics. Scully's research, for example, shows the extent to which precarious workers – with a median per capita household income of about R900 – are dependent on "subsistence income" from social and kinship networks (Scully, 2016: 11). These networks, as well as other sources of income beyond their own wages, have become fundamentally important to the ways in which precarious workers sustain their livelihoods. With the rise of precarious work has come a shifting of a greater share of the reproductive burden from the labour market to the household (Scully, 2016: 4) and with that, he argues, a centring of the household in the lives and identities of workers. The following excerpt is demonstrative of this and worth quoting at length:

> *In rural Mpumalanga one interview respondent was a man in his 60s who lives in a house with his wife and grandson. The grandson, whose mother lives and works elsewhere, is a successful student in middle school and plans on seeking a scholarship to attend university. In the course of the interview the man was asked if he had a job and he said no. He answered that he took care of his grandchild and that he and his wife produced and sold small crafts like straw hats, ropes and grass mats. After a series of questions about household income, without uncovering any income sources*

beyond the crafts, which produced minimal profit, he was simply asked, where do you get money to live? After having earlier said he did not have a job, he now responded that he worked as a security guard at a local school. When asked how long he had been doing this, he answered 14 years! When I expressed surprise that he had said he didn't have a job despite working in the same place for 14 years, he explained that it was not a real job, just an extra source of income.

On the surface, it is puzzling that this man, who would be identified in the NIDS data as a precarious worker with regular wage employment, puts such a low priority on his long-held wage work that he doesn't even describe it as a job. Instead he identifies primarily as a husband, grandfather, craft maker and household head. However, when the long-term livelihood of the man and his household is considered, this identification makes more sense. If the school-age child he is raising were to grow up and attend university, the remittances he would be able to send would dwarf any increase in wages the man could earn by making demands on the rural school that employs him as a security guard. Raising this child, and maintaining a relationship with his employed mother, is this man and his household's best chance at achieving any level of long-term security. (Although that is not to suggest that he thought of his familial relationships so instrumentally.) (Scully, 2016: 13-14)

This excerpt shows, on the one hand, how priority comes to be given to household identities and, on the other, how "workers' ties to the workplace have been loosened" (Scully, 2016: 4) in a context where the worker's material interests extend far beyond it. In opposition to the idea that may be drawn from these findings – that workplace is no longer a crucial site of politics – Kenny (2017, forthcoming) argues, turning to the subject of the subject of the retail worker, that what we see today is return to the workplace. While arguing for "the continued salience of labour politics today", Kenny also traces evolution of the category of "abasebenzi" as "a concrete articulation of race-class-gender relations rather than reductively as simply, worker identity, structured only through an overbearing binary". What is demonstrated by both these arguments (which are just two texts in a far broader body of literature on the subject) is the existence today of worker subjectivities, transformed through the experience of biopolitical labour, that bear little resemblance to the working class consciousness of traditional Marxist thought. In light of the de-unionisation that has accompanied labour market restructuring, such transformations are hardly surprising.

7.3 Immaterial hegemony?

In contrast to Harman's (2003) argument that globally, "there is no empirical evidence whatsoever for this notion of the disappearing working class, the above analysis does lead us to the impression of a quantitatively postmodern economy in which the figure of the

worker is disappearing along with South Africa's material economy. Nonetheless, hegemony, by Negri and Hardt's measure, is not only demonstrated by the rise of immaterial labour but by the transformation of material labour in line with immaterial labour. This cannot be let slide, in the first place, because material production remains important. Despite major job losses and the trend of de-unionisation, trade unions, including those that represent industrial and mine- workers, represent the most organised sector of labour. "The vast majority of precarious workers", in contrast, "are not organised and do not make collective demands around issues of work" (Scully, 2016: 3). Trade unions consider the proletariat the "motive force" of history. This idea is not uncontested, as the "orientation debate" of the 2000s shows – but, especially given the absence of any significant, parallel cooperative production system in South Africa today, it is difficult to imagine a revolutionary force that does not include the proletariat. This renders an argument based on "quantitative postmodernism" insufficient. In continuing to build an understanding of whether the conditions exist for the emergence of the multitude as a revolutionary subject, it becomes necessary to ask whether material labour – its organisation and the subjective experience thereof – is becoming essentially similar to immaterial labour. This – the locating of the material worker in the immaterial economy – is the true test of hegemony.

The first thing to be noted here is that it is often the permanent workers of old that swell today's ranks of the casually employed. Casualisation, flexibilisation, etc are not things that happen "out there", but it is rather the case that material labour itself is increasingly being organised and exploited in ways more typical of the service and knowledge sectors. These trends have been behind a decline in wages, a haemorrhaging of stable jobs, a decline in benefits and job security and a rendering-surplus of many workers. Alongside de-industrialisation, mechanisation of production processes has been behind many of these changes. The introduction of complex machines into production has resulted in the retention and hiring of skilled and semi-skilled workers along with a shedding of unskilled labour from the production process (Kaplan, 2015: 257).

Research conducted by Mondli Hlatshwayo at ArcelorMittal helps us to gain a fuller understanding of how this informatisation is affecting the organisation of work as well as the experiences of workers on the job. The steel industry in South Africa is apparently considered to be one of the most modern in the world (Hlatshwayo, 2014: 83) and ArcelorMittal is one of the world's largest steel manufacturing corporations, with facilities in the country. In addition to large-scale job losses, Hlatshwayo's research shows how the introduction of complex machines has been experienced by workers as an intensification of work under computer supervision and the replacement of many manual processes with automated and computerised ones (Hlatshwayo, 2014: 86). Within ArcelorMittal, training imperatives state that "production staff should have knowledge and insight in the machines and equipment they operate in order not to damage them and to be able to function as

highly aligned team together with other role players involved' (Hlatshwayo, 2014: 293). This is consistent with Lazzarato's suggestion that, within the postmodern economy, "the skills involved in direct labour are increasingly skills involving cybernetics and computer control" (Lazzarato, 1996: 1). More importantly, it also lends credence to the idea that "manual labour is increasingly coming to involve procedures that could be defined as 'intellectual', and the new communications technologies increasingly require subjectivities that are rich in knowledge" (ibid.). The idea that such intellectuality is in service of the need to work as a "highly aligned team with other role players" also supports the idea that communication and social relations become integral to productivity and value creation in the postmodern economy, where management processes are more defined by teamwork, facilitation and "interface" than the industrial methods of hierarchy and control (Lazzarato, 1996: 3).

According to Negri and Hardt's logic, as we have seen, the intellectuality and informatisation of material labour are those phenomena that elevate cooperation and thus generate the potential for workers to produce autonomously. This is the "social labour power that is independent and able to organise both its own work and its relations with business entities" (Lazzarato, 1996: 5). Unlike the kinds of site-specific mechanical skills associated with modern, assembly line production, these capabilities are applicable in the street or in the home – they "exceed work and spill over into life" (Negri & Hardt, 2009: 152). The case of ArcelorMittal reveals a workforce that conforms to Negri and Hardt's suggestion of what a postmodern factory looks like, supporting the idea that immaterial labour is hegemonic and transforming material labour in its image. At the same time, however, the limitations of this case study must be acknowledged. The nature of the restructuring and recomposition of the workforce that we see at ArcelorMittal can be generalised to other factories and mines undergoing similar processes of computerisation. But it has been beyond the scope of this study to ascertain whether such processes are unfolding evenly across the manufacturing sector. Indeed, it seems likely that certain production processes may be more profitably organised by the continued exploitation of cheap, black labour. This poses the challenge of a section of labour excluded from the multitude – in South Africa and the world. This same challenge – unconfronted here – is posed by the question of agricultural production, in which 869,000 people are employed in South Africa today (this is double the number of people employed in mining).

7.4 Biopolitics in the neoliberal university

In contrast to the South African economy more broadly, the university poses few challenges when read through the concepts of postmodernism and biopolitics. The university produces no material goods and knowledge production is its primary – or in the language of neoliberal restructuring "core" – activity. And despite the clear division of labour in the university – between academics and students, administrative and management staff, and support service "workers" – all can, in both similar and distinct ways, be said to be labouring

under biopolitical conditions. All are involved are involved in the production of wealth in ways that demand the use of information, affect, cooperation and communication; all are involved in the provision of services and thus in "labour in the bodily mode" (Hardt, 1999) but it is of course one group of these biopolitical workers that are also involved in the less abstract notion of manual labour.

The late 1990s and early 2000s marked shift in the way that South African universities are organised – a shift that corresponds with the labour restructuring that was happening throughout the economy at that time, in South Africa and beyond. In line with principles of "efficiency" and imperatives of profitability, "less ''profitable'' departments were rationalised or closed down, whilst support services were outsourced to private sector providers" (Bertelsen 1998 in Bezuidenhout and Fakier, 2006: 469). It was the year 2000 when Wits Council took the decision to outsource "non-core" support services – including cleaning, catering, security, gardening and maintenance. This decision represented a shift in the logic of the university that had implications for all, but had the biggest impact on the daily lives of those who lost their positions as staff. With this decision came – in addition to the retrenchment of hundreds of workers – wage reductions and a loss of benefits for those who remained. This represented the transformation of previously stable, secure, permanent jobs into quintessentially postmodern precarious and casual ones. With wages increasingly unable to cover the basic costs of reproduction, many workers – especially women – were forced to "[engage] in some form of additional income generation and subsistence activities, ranging from the growing of vegetables for their own consumption to renting out rooms" (Bezuidenhout and Fakier, 2006: 477). This, "the shifting of the burden of social reproduction to households and communities in the urban areas" (ibid: 479) represents a blurring of the line between the productive and the reproductive realm in ways that "call into question the very definition of a workplace" (ibid: 479).

The reorganisation of the university also had serious implications for students, who came to be reframed as "clients" and "consumers", and the future "human capital" of the national economy. The period is also characterised by a steady decrease in state funding for the university and a concomitant rise in fees and student indebtedness. These conditions, combined with the realities of household poverty and graduate unemployment meant that for poor students, the experience of study became a precarious one, with the threat of having to drop out always nearby. This educational experience can be understood as the preparation of students for participation in the neoliberal economy. As Stuart Hall highlights,

> *schools, universities, training boards and research centres reproduce the technical competence of the labour required by the advanced systems of capitalist production. But Althusser reminds us that a technically competent but politically insubordinate labour force is no labour force at all for capital. Therefore, the more important task is*

cultivating that kind of labour which is able and willing, morally and politically, to be subordinated to the discipline, the logic the culture and compulsions of the economic mode of production of capitalist development (Hall, 1985: 98).

7.5 Conclusion

So, then, if the university represents the paradigmatic biopolitical space, the broader South African economy represents a tendency towards that paradigm – but a tendency that can neither be said to be all-inclusive nor evenly advancing nor guaranteed to culminate in the kind of postmodern economy on which Negri and Hardt model their theory. Nonetheless, there do seem to broadly exist the conditions for the emergence of the multitude, as theorised by Negri and Hardt – making the economic analysis underpinning the concept useful. In addition to a change in the overall composition of the workforce towards those precarious and feminised jobs that are characteristic of the postmodern economy, we also see within mechanising factories a change in the composition of the workforce in favour of the kinds of intellectual, cooperative and informational tasks that are only distinguishable from service and knowledge work by the products they ultimately produce. The overall tendency towards precarious forms of work has led to an increased importance of reproductive labour and the blurring of the lines between work and life, resulting in the formation of political identities that either elide work altogether or are irreducible to work alone. Having established these basic conclusions about the South African economy and the university specifically (and while acknowledging that this analysis is far from comprehensive), the door is opened to ask further questions about the usefulness of the concept of the multitude. We are now in a position to ask whether the student-worker protests that first broke out at Wits in 2015 can be considered a coming together of the multitude. Here, the question must be approached from the other end, the subjective end.

8. FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS

Positioning myself

As we move towards the archival analysis and, ultimately, the conclusion of this paper, it becomes necessary for me to share some personal information about myself. Objective analysis is not something that I hold to be possible, nor is it something that I aspire towards. Rather, I aim towards a critical appreciation and questioning of my own subjectively formulated assumptions, approaches and conclusions. The imperative to explicitly position myself with relation to the ideas and texts being examined here is made all the more urgent by the fact that I will be making use of discourse analysis methods. “Representing the world, in one way or another, is unavoidable in any production of meaning”, argue Marianne Jorgensen and Louise Phillips. “And such a representation of the world”, they continue, “is always put forward at the expense of other representations that could have been made, and in competition with other representations that have already been made” (Jorgensen &

Phillips, 2002: 203). An acknowledgement of this therefore demands "that the discourse analyst consider and make clear their position in relation to the particular discourses under investigation and that they assess the possible consequences of their contribution to the discursive production of our world" (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002: 22).

So, then, a brief account of that information that I consider to be relevant here:
I was born in 1989 to a Zulu father and a white, South African mother, descended of British colonists. Part of that land stolen by my ancestors remains in my family. During apartheid, my father was a UDF activist and my mother a human rights lawyer. I grew up on ANC ideology, but have never been a member of that party, or any other. I did my primary and secondary schooling at predominantly white, affluent schools, and my undergraduate degree at the University of Cape Town (UCT), where my ongoing relationship with Marxist thought began. It was only shortly after leaving UCT that I began to identify as black, rather than as "mixed-race". I have only ever known economic privilege, and poverty is something that I have only ever witnessed in my extended black family and South African society more broadly. In 2015, not yet a student at Wits, I participated in the protest action of October 6, attended some mass meetings in Solomon Mahlangu House and joined student protesters at the Union Buildings. When I began my MA in the Sociology department at Wits the following year, I immediately sought to involve myself in student-worker politics through the non-partisan October 6 formation, which by then only consisted of a few people meeting infrequently. When protests resurged in October 2016, I was an active participant. Since my undergraduate years, I have been involved in Marxist-orientated activist formations outside the university, and I am currently the co-chairperson of the United Front JHB. It was, in many ways, my early involvement in the United Front that informed my interest in the question of "coming together", as I had hoped to learn something through this project that may be applicable in that space.

My participation in the student-worker protests at Wits was, so to speak, a given – but I had also by then decided that the protests would be the subject of this project. Academia and activism are two arenas of thought and action to which I have dedicated myself on an indefinite basis – and this project is part of my ongoing attempt to navigate the relationship between the two in productive and ethically sound ways. It was in thinking through this relationship that I early on settled on archival analysis as the methodology of this project, in order to circumvent the problems associated with ethnographic activism and the ethical considerations around studying the movement without consent. Archival analysis is thus a provisional response to a set of concerns that I am still in the process of answering for myself.

It is a given that my position, as outlined above, has shaped my approaches, specifically in the ways that I have compiled and analysed the archive under study. To try to elaborate the multiple ways in which this has occurred goes well beyond the scope of this paper. It is

hoped, however, that I have made my relationship to the discourse under study sufficiently clear. I have also found it necessary to make explicit, through footnotes, when I am drawing on my personal experience in my analysis.

This paper has so far outlined some key ideas and debates around the question of revolutionary subjectivity; presented a reading of the motive force question in South Africa; outlined Negri and Hardt's concepts of multitude and postmodernity; and conducted an analysis of the South African economy through those terms. The final part of this study makes use of the concepts explored and ideas elaborated through this process to analyse an archive of the student-worker protests that I have compiled for this purpose. I analyse the archive against two questions: Can the student-worker protests be seen as a coming together of the multitude? And, more broadly, to what extent and in what ways is Negri and Hardt's concept of the multitude useful for understanding the student-worker protests of 2015? I am interested in these questions at the level of subjectivity or consciousness, aspects of the protests, which I consider to be at least partially reflected in the archive. In seeking to answer these questions, I therefore turn primarily to the concepts of representation, framing and naming. This is to say that I look to the archive not only for information about action, but additionally for what is being said about that action and, more specifically, what participants say about themselves and each other with relation to that action.

I use the Wits protests as a case study mainly due to practical limitations and the scope of the project, but the fact that the Fees Must Fall (FMF) protest began at Wits, that the name Fees Must Fall itself comes out of Wits, speaks to the wider value of analysing Wits in particular. Indeed, there can be little doubt that Wits students and workers played a leading role in the discursive formation of the wider Fees Must Fall movement.

The archive that has been created here is primarily made up of statements, posters, pamphlets, tweets, songs, placards, photos, interview transcripts and articles produced by "the movement" at Wits. The student-worker movement is exceptional not only for the unprecedented levels of media coverage that it has received, but also for the plethora of media products that it itself has autonomously produced. It is this productivity, clearly a sign of the postmodern context in which the movement arose, that has provided the material that has made this study possible. The immense number of "records" produced by the movement also mean that the compilation of this archive has been as much a process of exclusion as one of inclusion. The rationale underpinning this process has been concerned with capturing the protests as collective action. For this reason, I have elected not to analyse records that represent individual or political party positions, rather focusing on those that represent collective positions. I have focused, in particular, on records produced under the banners of "October 6" and "Wits Fees Must Fall". The former is the formation

that organised the insourcing protest on October 6, which can be considered the beginning of the 2015 protest cycle, and the latter represents the "non-partisan student-led, worker-aligned movement" that developed out of the 14 October march against the announcement of a 10.5% fee increment for the 2016 academic year. The former represents students, workers, staff and academics, while the latter represents students, and was responsible for the production and proliferation of the majority of records produced during the protests and studied here, especially through social media. In my filtering of Fees Must Fall records, I have selected those that speak to the student-worker relationship, and also those that speak to other events and concepts relevant to the study – for example, the idea of "coming together" and the terms in which this was articulated. I entered into this process with the intention of using only those records produced "in struggle" which is to say, those produced (or rather proliferated) in times of active protest. The motivation here was to avoid retrospective representations and rather to capture these representations of the protests as they emerged. What became clear, however, was that a strict following of this principle would lead to the almost total exclusion of worker voices from the archive. In order to fill this gap, I have elected to also analyse some articles written by Wits workers and some transcripts of interviews with workers. I have limited these to texts either published in activist publications or conducted by student activists. Despite this, student voices remain very much dominant in the archive and it has become apparent that workers collectively and individually produced few of those records that came to define the movement in discursive terms. There can be no doubt that workers represented both themselves and the movement more broadly through mediums that are not captured in this archive – and that a more extensive archive would be able to capture these perspectives better. I have in mind here an archive that includes, for example, Whatsapp communications, but a broader conception of what an archive is would also achieve this. In any case, the domination of students in the production of media products certainly speaks to a particular power dynamic in the movement – the power to represent.

An appreciation of this dynamic, whereby the collective is represented by a smaller group, should be extended to the movement in general. I have a very limited understanding of how, in particular, statements and social media posts were produced during the protests. October 6 statements were presumably written through some kind of collective process and there was a Fees Must Fall media task team, but neither the archive nor my limited personal experience give me much insight into what those processes looked like or to what extent mass "approval" of statements was a norm. It is thus difficult to say who these records "actually" represent. It seems safe to say, however, that the archive does not reflect the perspectives of all participants. Rather, it is more likely to reflect the voices of protest "leaders" and those who assumed official or unofficial spokesperson roles. Who comes to occupy those positions within any movement is at least partially determined by access to resources (including computers, internet access and photographic equipment), command of (the English) language and social and political capital, among other things. While this does

place limitations on the extent to which these records can be said to "actually" represent a collective subjectivity, this does not limit the capacity of the analysis to provide answers at the level of discourse. Through this lens, which understands collective identities as being produced through their representation, we are able to reach some conclusions about the collective subjectivity of students and workers as they were produced. At the same time, we must approach this reading mindful of the gaps that often exist between official ideology and on the ground perspectives. A more thorough study of student-worker subjectivity would seek to engage the perspectives of a wider group of participants and analyse their interaction with the dominant ideologies and symbols of the movement[32].

The question of who produces the representations of the protests leads naturally to a consideration of who consumes them. Here it is helpful to think of a false distinction between outward and inward framing. Through the various communicative tools that the movement employed, it communicated different and often overlapping messages to various groups, including fellow protesters; non-protesting students; workers and staff; university management; the state; other political formations; the South African public (which includes the families of many protesters) and international observers. The distinction between "the narrative" and supposedly neutral processes of internal communication becomes difficult to discern. When directed outwardly, a record can be assumed to be framed in particular ways that either aim to garner passive support or to encourage active participation. An inwardly orientated message, on the other hand, may be intended to bolster morale, clarify a position, discourage dissent, or achieve any number of other objectives. But given the fluid nature of the movement, having no formal membership structures, and that of the protests, where there were massive variations in the number of participants, the distinction between inside and outside becomes impossible to sustain. At the same time, it is almost impossible to ascertain who the intended audience of a particular message is, for a record is almost always saying more than one thing to more than one group. The singing of a particular struggle song, for example, may seek to externally represent the protest (perhaps seeking to align the protests with some past moment of struggle), while also reflecting some truth about how those singing relate to each other in that moment. The same could be true of all the records examined here – from slogans, to statements, to pamphlets, to tweets which, it should be noted, were used both as internal and external communication tools. These characteristics, along with the fact that the structure of the movement makes it difficult to know the exact source of even official communication, speak to the kinds of "blurring" (between inside and outside, producer and consumer, private and public) that Negri and Hardt attribute to biopolitical existence and struggle. The production of these records, then, can also be understood as the production of the common through the general intellect.

In the same way that there may be discrepancies between dominant and on-the-ground

[32] Essop's 2016 study of the EFF highlights the differences between official ideology and on the ground perspectives, and the way that discourse analysis misses something.

discursive framings, there may also be differences between discourse and action. Actions may be framed in a way that does not reflect their actual unfolding. The social constructionist approach that underpins discourse analysis holds that discourse itself is constitutive of reality, which is contingent on its representation – that the world itself is to some extent made through the ways in which we speak about, write about and visually represent it. Discourse, then, is understood to contribute to the construction of social identities, social relations and systems of knowledge and meaning (Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002: 67). The line between action and representation, when understood in this way, becomes blurred. There are, however, and as we have discussed, differences amongst social constructionists regarding the question of contingency. While some believe that reality – and thus both actions and social groups like classes – are created exclusively through their discursive representation, others maintain the existence of social reality outside of discourse. I fall into the latter group, and therefore think that an analysis of the gap between discourse and action may yield some interesting findings about the student-worker protests – though the scope of this paper has not allowed for such a comprehensive study. Another implication of my conceptual approach is that I take an interest in understanding the ways in which consciousness and subjectivity are informed by objective or material conditions. Indeed, this is the reason that this study found an analysis of the South African economy necessary. Thus, I also read the archive against findings made earlier around the questions of postmodernity and biopolitical labour. At the same time, and as I have also already made clear, I do not subscribe to a notion of subjectivity as something directly derivative of economic conditions, or any other type of structural conditions, for that matter. In this I stand with a number of theorists who have criticised the tendency of especially orthodox Marxist structuralism to deny the complexity of human agency and rather use consciousness within a teleological framework as a sort of barometer of political "development" or "maturity". It is my position, then, that to reject "the notion that the economy is a universal and necessary condition underlying and supporting the apparent contingency of political desires and subjectivities" (Read, 2005) is to open up the space for a richer study of subjectivity where the objective and the subjective can be read in dialectical relation to each other. As Hall argues: "Structures exhibit tendencies… but they cannot determine in the harder sense of fix absolutely, guarantee… The question is not the unfolding of some inevitable law but rather the *linkages* which, although they can be made, need not necessarily be" (Hall, 1985: 96). This analysis is interested in the ways in which these ideological linkages are made between and amongst students and workers in the context of the protests and the broader movement.

The multitude is defined by a number of characteristics that distinguish it from other kinds of collective political subjects. Negri and Hardt, note a few commonalities in their reading of those movements and events that they identify as examples of an emergent multitude in action. These include the tendency of these groups to come together in horizontal networks, without leaders and without the privileging of any group in the network over

others. These movements are defined by their cooperative productivity, which produces, amongst other things, new subjectivities, new common languages and new organisational forms. These are some of the defining characteristics of the "coming together" of the multitude, which is based on the relationship between singularity and commonality: "The multitude, designates an active social subject, which acts on the basis of what the singularities share in common" (Negri & Hardt, 2004: 100). The basis of the coming together of the multitude, however, is neither common identity nor an ideal of unity. Rather, the multitude is an "irreducible multiplicity… The singular social differences that constitute the multitude must always be expressed and can never be flattened into sameness, unity, identity or indifference" (ibid: 105). By eschewing the reductive principle of common identity – a concern with "being different" – the multitude leaves open the possibility of "becoming different" (ibid: 356).

It is with these points in mind that I consider whether the student-worker protests can be considered a coming together of the multitude and, more broadly, to what extent and in what ways the concept of the multitude may be useful in understanding the protests. What follows is the necessarily partial story that my reading of the archive tells, as well as an analysis of this story through the concepts and conclusions already put forward so far.

9. INTO THE ARCHIVE

In 1999, the University of the Witwatersrand begins looking into a wide-ranging programme of institutional restructuring that includes the outsourcing of "non-core" support services and a "rationalisation" of academic activity at the university. In response to the corporatisation and neoliberalisation of the university that this augurs, a relatively small number of workers (mainly from the National Education, Health and Allied Workers' Union (Nehawu)), students (mainly from the South African Students' Congress Organisation (Sasco)) and academics begin to mobilise – eventually coming together as the Wits Crisis Committee (WCC) (Veriava, 2013: 139). Despite the efforts of the WCC, the outsourcing decision is ratified by the University Council in February 2000 and in June 623 workers are officially retrenched as part of the Wits 2001 programme (Veriava, 2013: 135). The introduction of outsourcing fundamentally changes the nature of the relationship between the institution, on the one hand, and the cleaners, caterers, maintenance workers, drivers, gardeners and other people that service it, on the other. From the moment that they are outsourced, these people are stripped of the names "employee" and "staff" and are redesignated "workers". For them, this shift is experienced as a demotion to the status of "second class citizen" where they are made to feel like "outsiders"[33] – confined to the use of certain entrances and toilets, prohibited from using university busses, libraries and computers. At the same time, reduced wages and benefits lead to a state of poverty and

[33] See Luckett & Mzobe, 2017: 36 and WSC, 2012

precarity – their income now barely enough to satisfy reproductive needs. The biopolitical mode of labour at the university is intensified. At the same time, the early 2000s mark the beginning of a period that sees consistent annual decreases in government funding for higher education, and a concomitant rise in tuition fees. The increasingly precarious condition of campus workers comes to be mirrored in the experience of learning at the University of the Witwatersrand.

The steadily deteriorating conditions of work brought about by outsourcing lead to a number of protests by workers, often supported by students and staff. One of the earliest among these, the disruption of the Urban Futures conference[34] in 2001, is instrumental in bringing together the various groupings that would ultimately form the Anti-Privatisation Forum (APF). Over the course of the next decade the WCC disappears – many of the academics who had been active in it now absorbed in APF activities beyond campus – but the conditions that led to its formation do not. In 2011, the anti-outsourcing forces at Wits re-converge around the Wits Workers Solidarity Committee (WSC). The committee – still active today – consists of workers, administrative staff, academic staff and students, and is formed with the aim of "rais[ing] awareness about the grievances of outsourced workers, and to struggle against their deteriorating conditions". One of the "active solidarity" campaigns that the committee is involved in is the 2012 Royal Mnandi boycott, where more than 1500 students cancel their meals with the catering company, which had summarily fired 17 workers. The firing is characterised by students and other members of the "university community" as, at turns, a reflection of the "widespread discriminatory and exploitative practices by outsourced companies"[35] and an act that displays "the disposability of black life"[36].

This was before Marikana, before the farmworkers strike, before the EFF was formed, before the "Numsa moment" – a symptom of the decay that has taken hold of the South African labour movement as part of the governing Tripartite Alliance. Outside the campus walls, the "rebellion of the poor" (Alexander, 2010) continues unabated. More and more, frustrated and disregarded community protesters, turn to destructive and sometimes violent methods to make their concerns with an unresponsive government heard. Fire, in particular, long part of South Africa's repertoire of struggle, is increasingly used to blockade roads and burn down local government infrastructure.

Then, in March 2015, less than a year after the Ferguson Riots in the US, one student's decision to desecrate a statue of Cecil John Rhodes at the prestigious, expensive and

[34] The Urban Futures conference was a conference jointly hosted by the City of Johannesburg and Wits University. The goal of the conference was to discuss and "showcase" the Wits 2001 programme and its public sector corollary, eGoli 2002 (Veriava, 2013: 145)
[35] Nieftagodien, 2012
[36] Ndlozi, 2012

predominantly white University of Cape Town sets off a chain of demands, events and relationships that become a movement called Rhodes Must Fall (RMF). The centring of the statue in the upheaval that ensues points towards its symbolic power: the glorification of "a mass-murderer who exploited black labour and stole land from indigenous people"[37]. Its presence, states the RMF Mission Statement, "erases black history and is an act of violence against black students, workers and staff. By "'black", it adds, invoking Biko, "we refer to all people of colour". The Rhodes statue therefore stands as "the perfect embodiment of black alienation and disempowerment at the hands of UCT's institutional culture"[38]. In its call to "decolonise" the university – now nearly 40 years after the Soweto riots, where the Afrikaans language had stood as the symbolic rallying point around which students struggled – the movement reanimates a discursive field centred on concepts like dehumanisation, alienation, black pain and white privilege. Following in the footsteps of the Pan Africanist Congress (which first adopts the name Azania in 1968) and the Black Consciousness Movement (which brings it to prominence in the 1970s), they rename UCT's Bremner Building – which has been occupied in protest – "Azania House".

While drawing heavily on the lexicon of Black Consciousness, the movement does not explicitly define itself as such – perhaps testament to the fundamental ways in which blackness has been reconceptualised over the past four decades. Using a concept elaborated at the dawn of the 1990s by black American feminist scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw, the RMF movement defines itself as "intersectional": an approach that "takes into account that we are not only defined by our blackness, but that some of us are also defined by our gender, our sexuality, our mental health, and our class, among other things"[39]. The word "intersectionality" is reproduced hundreds, if not thousands of times, through popular and, more significantly, social media. The word "violence", too, becomes intertwined with the broad student movement – first rearticulated by the students in ways that force the expansion of its definition to include structural violence, and then later turned back upon them in that crudest sense so firmly cherished by those who narrate accounts of community protests for public consumption.

The RMF protests reverberate across the country and lead to the formation of a number of collectives at various universities around, especially, the problem of institutional racism. In late March, a collective by then name of #TransformWits emerges. In early April, #TransformWits (2015 in Zidepa 2015) releases a six-pillar manifesto:

1. Africanisation of University Symbolism and Institutional Memory;
2. Radical Revision and Africanisation of all University Curricula;

[37] RMF, 2015
[38] Ibid. I only retroactively came to interrogate what that statue had meant for my own time studying at UCT
[39] RMF, 2015

3. Fast-track Africanisation of Academic staff contingency;
4. An end to Worker Discrimination and Outsourcing;
5. An End to Financial Exclusion of Students;
6. Revision of the Departmental Academic Structures that impede output of Black students.

In line with imperative expresses in the fourth pillar of the manifesto, May 2015 sees workers and students, under the banner of the Workers Solidarity Committee, occupy the office of the Wits Vice Chancellor in protests against the firing of workers subcontracted to Wits by the MJL electrical company. The occupation is not the first of its kind. Fifteen years earlier, members of the Wits Crisis Committee had also occupied the 11th floor in protest against the Wits 2001 plan – an action that was, equally familiarly, responded to by the university administration with the obtaining of an interdict against the students that had led it. It is more than a decade after the WCC occupation that the Occupy Wall Street movement in the US brings international fame to that tactic, which has become a leitmotif of the activism of our time.

Since 2011, the WSC had been organising "active solidarity" against outsourcing and the deteriorating working conditions that it forced Wits workers to labour under. Then, towards the end of July 2015, a United Front meeting is held on campus to discuss the question of joint campus struggle through a different notion – that of "linking". The UF name then promptly disappears from the archive – only to be seen again on the T-shirt of a student protester a couple of month later, when the discussion of that meeting finds realisation in the events of the October 6 "day of action"[40]. The days leading up to October 6 are marked by the appearance of evocative slogans graffitied across Wits main campus. "Students and workers unite!", "R12500", they read. Mobilisation pamphlets call on workers, students, staff and academics to "demand insourcing at UJ and Wits by 2016" as a key demand for a "decolonised public African university". #EndOutsourcing and #DecoloniseLabour are the official hashtags of the day, which culminates in a mass gathering on the street outside what is then still called Senate House. The placards read: "Black life is cheap in Afrika", "Black lives matter", "R12500", "Wits exploits workers", "neoliberalism is oppressive", "workers and students unite!", "#HabibMustFall", "We say no to outsourcing", "no more discrimination R2700" and, both amusingly and significantly, "Outsourcing, nah fam". There – in that sea of placards, company uniforms, political t-shirts and struggle songs[41] – university management is handed the Workers' Charter, created in the WSC space, and a

[40] I am grateful to Prishani Naidoo for sharing her knowledge of the link between these two events. I was at this time volunteering in the national office of the UF and did not attend the meeting.

[41] I was not a student at Wits at that time, but had popped out of work to attend the protest. My clearest memory is of a worker turning to a student and exclaiming "You are here!" in a way that suggested that this was not the context in which they usually engaged. "Of course!", she replied. I had already applied to do an MA at Wits in 2016 and looked forward to sharing in that warmth – and learning the songs that I was somewhat awkwardly clapping along to.

statement endorsed by Wits PYA, Wits SRC, Wits WSC, TransformWits, Wits Palestine Solidarity Campaign, AKF Wits, MSA Wits, NASAWU, ASAWU, UJ MSA, UJ Palestine Solidarity Forum, UJ Black Thought, UJ Black Academics Forum, UJ EFF, UJ Persistent Solidarity Forum, UJ SASCO APK (PYA), RhodesMustFall, UCT NEHAWU Joint Shop Stewards' Council (JSSC), UCT Workers Forum, UCT Workers' Solidarity Committee, UCT Left Students' Forum (LSF), UCT Palestine Solidarity Forum (PSF), Black Student Movement ('Rhodes' University), Open Stellenbosch, UFS Socialist Youth Movement, UFS Progressive Student Collective, UFS EFFSC, Education Rights Campaign Nigeria, Democratic Left Front, Right2Know Gauteng, WASP, Activate Wits, MYM Gauteng and MSA Union.

The statement prognostically describes Oct6 as marking "a turning point in the politics of outsourcing on university campuses [and]…. Represent[ing] the coming together of campus-specific struggles into a national campaign for insourcing on campuses"[42]. Oct6, it continues, "is the inauguration of an effort to unite workers, students and academics on all campuses to create principled and progressive universities that stand for principled and progressive change in the society in which they work"[43].

Two days later, the stakes are raised. In what had become an annual ritual, the Wits Council votes for a 10.5% fee increment in 2016, and the decision is immediately condemned by the Progressive Youth Alliance (PYA)-led[44] Student Representative Council (SRC) which had, in February that year launched a "one month one million" campaign to raise funds for the registration fees of those students whose National Students Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) applications had been rejected[45]. Shortly after the vote, the SRC begins mobilising for a "symbolic" shutdown of the university on 14 October. Using language that is at once powerful, performative and pregnant, the SRC calls on students to "#JoinTheMovement" and "Stand up! March against the 2016 fee increment" as part of a "#WitsRevolution". A callous Vice Chancellor Adam Habib is made the object of the students' derision and framed as the primary subject of the counter-revolution in two pamphlets that caricature him. He emerges as a detached and cold-hearted Marie Antoinette suggesting that "poor" students "eat cake". The day before that first shutdown – exactly one week after Oct6, where at least one placard declared that "Habib must fall" – the now world-famous hashtag "#FeesMustFall" is birthed from the SRC twitter account. And from that point onwards, the hashtag explodes and spreads with the rapidity of the fee protests that came to grip universities around the country. At Wits, as with a number of other universities, the Fees Must Fall protests are characterised by the solidarity that they receive from outsourced

[42] Mzobe (in Luckett and Mzobe, 2016: 97) asserts that Oct 6 was "a starting point to ending outsourcing".
[43] Oct6, 2015
[44] The Wits Progressive Youth Alliance is comprised of the ANC Youth League (ANCYL), South African Student Congress Organisation (SASCO), Young communist League (YCL) and Muslim Student Association (MSA).
[45] Chernick, 2015

workers. Looking back on October 14 in an interview with student activist Thembi Luckett, Wits worker Deliwe Mzobe reflects on that reciprocal support:

> *The workers look up to the students. They will do anything for the students. We had recently had the October 6 protest against outsourcing, which was a success due to the students. The students supported us. It was a way of giving back. They give us support, we give them support. In the beginning the students did not include End Outsourcing in their demands, it was just a zero per cent fee increase, so we were giving back. The workers support the students because of the care and the love we get from the students. In some instances the students risked their degrees for us, for example the MJL case where students occupied the Vice Chancellor's office. They put their degrees on the line fighting for the workers. The students do anything and they worry about the consequences later.* (Mzobe in Luckett and Mzobe, 2016: 96)

On 20 October, then Higher Education Minister Blade Nzimande announces that the 2016 fee increment will be capped at 6%, in line with inflation. But the concession is dismissed as "nyoso" and protests continue to escalate and spread. The events that follow invite a quoting of Vladimir Lenin, who stated that "there are decades where nothing happens; and there are weeks where decades happen". On 21 October, a statement issued by Shaeera Kalla, Nompendulo Mkatshwa, Vuyani Pambo, Mcebo Freedom Dlamini – by now established as the "leadership" of the movement – states that "we want a 0% increase as a symbolic commitment to free education now"[46]. This is that same day that Dlamini announced himself as the "new Vice Chancellor" to uproarious cheers and laughter by students and workers[47]. The presence of Pambo at the core of this PYA-initiated protest is just one of many signs of the influence of the EFF Student Command (EFFSC) in the movement. The next day, Wits students link up with their UJ "peers" and "counterparts" on the streets of Braamfontein, and march together, across the Nelson Mandela bridge, to ANC headquarters at Luthuli House. There the same demands for a 0% fee increment and free education are rearticulated, now also with the demand for an end to outsourcing. The following day, students from tertiary education institutions across the province take their demands to the seat of the National Executive, with the expectation of being addressed by President Zuma. That day, on the manicured lawns of the Union Buildings, TV viewers across the country witness – while many Wits students become implicated in – the kinds of scenes that are usually confined to South Africa's peri-urban townships. The smoke of burning portable toilets calls out[48] to Zuma who, in the end, like so many municipal councillors,

[46] Kalla, et al, 2015

[47] on the Great Hall steps, as I remember it.

[48] See - Von Holdt, K., Langa, M., Molapo, S., Mogapi, N., Ngubeni, K., Dlamini, J., & Kirsten, A. (2011). The smoke that calls: insurgent citizenship, collective violence and the struggle for a place in the new South Africa. Johannesburg: Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation and Society, Work and Development Institute (University of the Witwatersrand).

never appears. Protesters heave against the barrier, behind which stands a row of armed police and, further beyond that, the entrance to the Union Buildings. Rocks and stun grenades fly. A water cannon periodically blasts through the crowd, dispersing and drenching people in a powerful jet of water[49]. Protesters are eventually pushed out into the streets with tear gas and rubber bullets, where running battles with police ensue. Police cars are overturned and set ablaze. Wits students, who had articulated the desire for a "peaceful resolution"[50] are called back to their busses, along with UJ students, and return to Johannesburg. At some point in the day, Zuma makes a televised announcement from within the Union Buildings that there will be a 0% fee increase for 2016.

In the wake of the announcement, some rejoice that "#FeesHaveFallen". The SRC celebrates the 0% announcement as a realisation of its objectives and urges students to go "back to class". This message reinforces what was, in reality, already happening under the pressure of the immanent exams; the mass meetings at Solomon House get smaller and smaller. Other activists of the movement, however, condemn the SRC's stance and stress that the demands for free education and insourcing are far from met. The announcement, then, can be understood as forcing a confrontation with the contradictions in the movement, where varying objectives had, until then, managed to co-exist. Central here is the question of the relationship of the student struggle to the worker struggle, and thus the very nature of the movement. "After the big march of Friday", reflects Wits worker Johannes Dhlamini, "things were in a really bad bad space. As the student movement get divided into two parts. As there were others saying they want to go back to class. And other students were saying what about our workers lifes" (Dhlamini, 2017: 17). It is in this context that the events of 26 October occur – explicitly redefining the objectives and indeed the character of the movement. On midnight 25 October, then, a number of students storm a "private meeting" of the ANC-aligned PYA where FMF matters are being discussed. This is characterised in a statement released by the Fees Must Fall Media Committee the following day as a "violation of the public meeting principle" that had been agreed upon to protect the "integrity" of the movement[51]. In addition, the minutes of the meeting, extracted somehow, suggest that the PYA is against continuing the struggle for free education. The statement continues to say that

> *as students, we believe that there has been a bridge of trust and thus have decide to no longer recognise the leadership of the Student Representative Council in this movement and have reaffirmed our commitment to being a non-partisan student-led movement… As a movement we remain committed to protesting for free education*

[49] Amidst the madness, I have an image in my mind of a person draped in a green blanket sitting in a tree.
[50] @WitsFMF 23 October 2015
[51] Wits Fees Must Fall Media Committee, 27 October 2015

and the end of outsourcing… Finally, we wish to reiterate: Asijiki, Forward with free education! Forward with insourcing!

It is, above all, the unmet demand for "insourcing by 2016" that animates the continuation of the protest for that small group of protesters: "Parents, put your tools down! Let us march. We are being selfish as students if we stop now #EndOutsourcing #FreeQualityEducation". But it is not just about reciprocity, the movement holds a "principled belief that you can't resolve the issues of poor and working class black students without resolving the issue of marginalised black workers on campus"[52]; "These issues of #EndOutsourcing are integral to our struggle."[53]. By the end of the month, Fees Must Fall is defining itself as "worker-aligned" in addition to "non-partisan" and "student-led"[54] and on the first of November – after 26 days of more or less uninterrupted protest – FMF announces that Wits management has agreed "in principle" to end outsourcing across all its campuses. The announcement is met with "great elation, dancing and tears from workers and students"[55]. Wits FMF tweets: "We thank everyone who contributed to the movement, each task team which ensured that, we get to where we are today! No leader here but teams"[56].

More than two years have passed since then and, while there have been many significant and relevant developments over that time, now seems a good time to close this chronological account.

10. ANALYSIS

10.1 Coming together in unity and solidarity

The non-partisan, student-led, worker-aligned movement that emerges out of November 2015 is the product of a process of articulation and rearticulation that is neither linear nor fully coherent – if such a thing even exists. The live tweeted discussion in Solomon House on 26 October – straight after the consequential PYA private meeting – reflects a formation grappling with the question of how to organise itself: rotating leadership is suggested; coordination is proposed as an alternative to leadership; a desire for transparency is expressed; the potential pitfalls of representation and centralisation are raised; both consensus and unity are put forward as imperatives. Ultimately, "we must find a way to

[52] Wits Fees Must Fall Media Team, 1 November 2015
[53] @WitsFMF 26 Oct 2015
[54] Wits Fees Must Fall Media Team, 30 October 2015
[55] Wits Fees Must Fall Media Team, 1 November 2015
[56] @WitsFMF 1 Nov 2015

move forward as a WE!" At the core of this discussion is the question of how to relate in the face of difference and antagonism – conceptually and organisationally.

From the outset, two concepts stand out in the archive as both mobilising tools and descriptors of the coming together of students and worker: unity and solidarity. While unity refers to coming together as one, solidarity is used to describe support across distinct but interlinked struggles or causes. Unity implies common cause, while solidarity implies support for a cause outside your own. While the former implies the forming of a common identity, the latter is about maintaining difference and autonomy, and suggests, and is often used in, a politics of distance. Each word also has its own flavour, so to speak: Unity pulls inward; solidarity reaches across. Unity feels aspirational, like reaching towards the impossible; solidarity feels doable. Unity feels enduring, solidarity feels contingent.

Relatedly, each of these words also has its own genealogy, rooted in different but often overlapping kinds of political organising. To speak of "solidarity" is to evoke the kind of support that was shown by people across the world as part of the international solidarity movement against apartheid – the kind of support that saw people unaffected by apartheid pressuring their home governments to impose boycotts and sanctions on the regime, ultimately bringing it to its knees. In the same breath is summoned the spirit of camaraderie that will not rest while apartheid continues to exist in occupied Palestine. This camaraderie – as displayed by the long-term campaign of the Wits Palestine Solidarity Committee – is not governed by a logic that sees the struggle for liberation as divisible. It is rather captured in Nelson Mandela's statement that "our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians"[57]. The long-standing friendship between the South African and Palestinian liberation movements is in many ways mirrored by the political relationship established between students, workers and staff in the aftermath of the outsourcing decision of 2000 – a relationship that first took organisational form in the Wits Crisis Committee and then later in the Wits Workers Solidarity Committee. To speak of solidarity in the context of the struggle against outsourcing then, is to summon up a 15-year history of persistent struggle in the face of a seemingly unwinnable battle. This is what it means for students to "continue to stand in solidarity with the workers"[58], for "workers [to] march in solidarity with students from Jhb Mag Court to Hillbrow Mag Court"[59].

The word "unity" is equally evocative. We can begin by thinking back more than 100 years to the formation of Imbumba ya Manyama (Union of Africans) in the 1880s and the 1910 Union of South Africa, which saw the British and the Boers come together around a segregationist project in the aftermath of the South African War. In the face of white unity

[57] Address at The International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People (4 December 1997)
[58] @WitsFMF 29 October 2015
[59] @WitsSRC 18 October 2016

then, came the drive to match this force with equal force. Thus emerges black nationalism, which cannot be separated from the Pan-Africanism that ultimately found institutional form in the Organisation of African Unity and, later, the African Union. Under the slogan "Apartheid divides. UDF unites" the United Democratic Front of the 1980s brought together all South Africans opposed to apartheid under one roof. This united force shook apartheid to its core and, in tandem with the solidarity shown abroad, forced the negotiations that ultimately brought an end to apartheid. One for one. This same logic underpins the call for the "workers of the world [to] unite" against the exploitative bourgeoisie – a call heeded by the workers of Tsarist Russia 100 years ago, forever changing the face of history. The existence of all trade unions – including the Industrial and Commercial Workers Union of the 1920s and the National Education, Health and Allied Workers Union of today – is derived from this inherently unstable, potentially revolutionary, dialectic between labour and capital. Unsurprisingly, then, student and workers at Wits in many ways understand their combined power through the idea unity – and the fragmentation of that power that crept in after the 0% announcement as a problem of disunity. "Since the beginning we have surpassed our own expectations. This came down to unity, but we are now losing that unity", says one participant in the discussion of 26 October. Another: "Let us not do what apartheid did to us: Let us unite and fight for one goal". Also worth noting here is the fact that feminists in the movement were also, at various points, characterised by some as "divisive", and that it is also only with relation to unity that "divisiveness" can exist. Indeed, the imperative towards oneness makes difference, disagreement and deviation into things that subtract from power.

It is with relation to these kinds of tensions, which often present themselves in political organisation, that Negri and Hardt criticise both unity and solidarity as relational forms and political imperatives. For them, unity is ontologically impossible in the face of difference. Any attempt to build it necessarily becomes a process of reduction, whereby the social actor must negate themselves in service of a particular "master" identity. Inseparable from the creation of this master identity, they argue, is a process of exclusion that limits the boundlessness of the multitude. Unity is that thing that reduced the multitude to a people, to one, allowing them to be represented in the sovereign state, that impossibility that excludes so many producers from the notion of the working class and eats away at the power of the trade union movement. A relationship of solidarity, on the other hand, does allow for difference. But, they argue, such a conception of the relation makes this difference fixed and immutable, foreclosing the possibility of the social actors involved becoming something new through their relation (Negri & Hardt, 2009: 350).

So, then, in the place of both unity and solidarity, Negri and Hardt put forward the concept of "coming together" as a revolutionary (or in their terms liberatory) way for the multitude to relate across difference and find coherence in multiplicity. This "coming together" is based on what "singularities share in common". A singularity, which they distinguish from

"identity", refers to "a social subject whose difference cannot be reduced to sameness, a difference that remains different" (Hardt and Negri, 2004: 99). What this implies is that the multitude can never come together on the basis of unity which, in becoming one, reduces singularities to a common identity, not allowing them to maintain their difference in their relation to each other. A multitude, they explain, "is an irreducible multiplicity; the singular social differences that constitute the multitude must always be expressed and can never be flattened into sameness, unity, identity or indifference" (Negri & Hardt, 2004: 105). Through the concept of singularity, they try to break down the single-plural dichotomy that sees powerlessness in multiplicity. The multitude is a network in which there is no central control or common identity, where each node can and indeed must express itself freely (Negri & Hardt, 2004: 218). "In conceptual terms, the multitude replaces the contradictory couple identity-difference with the complementary couple commonality-singularity. In practice, the multitude provides a model whereby our expressions of singularity are not reduced or diminished in our communication and collaboration with others in struggle, with our forming ever greater common habits, practices, conducts, and desires – with, in short, the global mobilisation and extension of the common" (Negri & Hardt, 2004: 217-218).

The employment of the language of unity and solidarity in the student-worker protests, then, seems to pose a basic conceptual challenge to the idea that the student-worker protests may represent a coming together of the multitude. However, our understanding that ideological discourses "contest one another, often drawing on a common, shared repertoire of concepts, rearticulating and disarticulating them within different systems of difference or equivalence" (Hall, 1985: 104) allows us to recognise that the meanings of these words, indeed all words, are not fixed and immutable. This is especially true of the kinds of politically evocative words to which all political formations inevitably align themselves. One example of this is the way in which the word "solidarity" carries different associations when articulated with regard to the anti-apartheid struggle, and another when it is spoken by the white trade union Solidarity. In fact, when the Marikana Support Campaign was first formed in 2012, it originally did so as a "solidarity" campaign. But that name was rejected by Rustenberg mineworkers, for whom the word spoke more to the union that represented their white, better paid counterparts than it did to the anti-apartheid struggle[60]. Here the terrain of what Stuart Hall (1985) calls "ideological battle" begins to be revealed to us.

It is in this light that it becomes important to recognise that, in contrast to both unity and solidarity, the idea of "coming together" is a concept with a relatively new political character. To speak of coming together does not link one to proud histories, powerful movements and famous emancipatory projects. Despite this, as we have seen, some activists in the APF, appreciating the political value of this new concept of "coming

[60] I was informed of this by Rehad Desai, a founder of the Marikana Support Campaign.

together", did try to analyse the Forum and the new social movements more generally in these terms. But the primary records of the Forum – its statements, banners, etc – show that it was in fact, once again, "unity" and "solidarity" that were used to mobilise and describe the coming together of those diverse forces. This is not to suggest that the words were, in the context of the APF and the movement, not being deployed with fidelity to their actual meanings – but rather that there must be an attempt to understand their use in more nuanced ways, especially as they relate to the wider discursive field in which they are being articulated. Finally, I suggest that the varying uses of these words – "solidarity" now and "unity" then – reflects and reinforces the changing relationship of students and workers to one another, as shaped and reshaped by the unfolding of events. This suggests that the ways of relating in the movement were fluid, rather than stable or fixed. This will prove important as we continue to develop an understanding of the ways in which students and workers understood themselves in struggle and the relationship between their struggles.

10.2 We blacks

"Politics", argues Simon Critchley (2004), "is always about nomination, about naming a political subjectivity" – for it is around a name that "a political subject can aggregate itself from the various social struggles through which we are living". This view is echoed by Judith Butler who asserts that rights and power are made in performance and self-representation. For her, recognition as a political subject entails performance of a recognisable role. In extending the point, I would add that names can be descriptive or aspirational, as is the case with African naming practices. How the subject, in this case students and workers, names itself as a collectivity can tell us a lot about not only how the subject sees itself but also about what it *desires* to be. This is intimately tied up with the question of the political project of the subject and the type of post-revolutionary society that it imagines and/or aims to create. So what, then, is the name that students give themselves when they come together in struggle – be it in unity or solidarity or whatever?

On 29 October 2015, the Wits Fees Must Fall Twitter account quotes a student as saying that "this is a working class struggle". This represents the singular characterisation of the protests in these terms. Beyond this, the concept of the working class only emerges a few more times. Unsurprisingly, it is more often used by workers, who have a history of trade union organising on campus – and it seems likely that it would be more prominent if workers had played a bigger role in creating the records being studied here. In any case, the presence of the "working class" in the archive does suggest a level of contestation in the movement around the "motive force" question and everything that it implies – how to organise society, what revolution looks like, and who will lead it. The far more prominent way in which students and workers represented themselves in the protests, however, is as Black and, secondarily, as poor: "The struggle for the black person is an intersectional one that recognises that race and class are always at the forefront of experience for any black

person in what is *primarily* an anti-black world structure"[61]. South Africa is a society cut across by a plethora of contradictions, including race, class, economic status, gender, sexuality, employment status, geography, etc. What we see here is a discourse of race being privileged, being made dominant in the drawing together of an alliance and a political identity. This identity of the poor Black is doubly articulated, with economic status assuming a secondary position in the formulation. But these two conditions cannot, especially in the South African context, be taken as neatly divided. On the contrary, the widespread adoption of the concept of racial capitalism, as Gibson (1987) highlights, has facilitated a "resolution" of the race-class dialectic through a process of conflation. At the same time, there emerges in the archive an interesting (if not uncommon) distinction between poor and working class students. Poverty, of course, is not a class position. Indeed, one can be a rich capitalist and still be Black. Equally, one can be "petty-bourgeois" and still be "too poor to pay fees, too rich for NSFAS[62]", which is what the idea of the "missing middle" critiques.

This invites the revisiting of two related ideas raised earlier in this paper. On the one hand, the distinction between the poor and the working class is evidence of the failure of those who advocate for an expanded notion of the working class to make this usage hegemonic. That students from poor households may identify as poor rather than working class reflects and, in line with the way this paper understands discourse, reproduces a failure of revolutionary socialist politics to take hold in this "second phase" of the National Democratic Revolution. Implicit in this is the failure of an identity to crystalise that that takes the capital-owning bourgeoisie as its primary enemy. Rather, as we saw argued by Naidoo (2010) and Veriava (2013), the recourse to the idea of poverty suggests a politics that is orientated towards the state. Here we see students and workers, like so many community protesters across the country, adopting the subject position of "the poor" to make rights-based claims of the government on the basis that "#asinamali". The ways in which the state countered the demand for "free education for all" with the supposedly fairer idea of "free education for the poor" demonstrates how the category of the poor is created through state discourses and logics to undermine radical, universal claims through stratification. It also points towards the potential limitations, as suggested by Naidoo (2010: 233), of the use of the category of the poor in radical politics in the face of its "colonisation" by the state.

[61] Wits Fees Must Fall Media Team, 1 November 2015

[62] "The National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) is a statutory body, funded primarily by the South African National Department of Education and Training, which provides study loans to academically able but financially needy students who wish to study at one of South Africa's public higher education institutions" (Unisa). In order to qualify for an NSFAS loan, one has to be able to prove a household income of less than around R160,000 per annum (Patel, 2017).

For workers, in their struggle against outsourcing, this is understood as a struggle against the dehumanisation of black life, which has been "reduced to nothing"[63]. "Black people have been used enough"[64]. Students fighting against financial exclusion are "black bodies… fighting for our future"[65]. Both struggles, then, are to end "the exploitative anti-black structural inequalities of our universities" [66]. In the context of the protests, blackness emerges as a condition shared not only by student and workers, but by all black members of the "university community". The formation of a Black Academics Caucus and the assertion that "all black staff matter" are testament to this phenomenon. The direct employment of the slogan "Black lives matter"[67] also demonstrates the way in which this claim to blackness links the movement to black struggles beyond the university and beyond South Africa, re-asserting those relationships with the black diaspora that extend at least back to the late 19th century, when Rev. Mangena Mokone established the Ethiopian Church with the slogan "Africa for the Africans". This is perhaps the scope of the "total emancipatory project of the black person" to which the movement asserts its commitment[68]. Indeed, it is put forward that "the oppression of Black people is all connected!"[69] Black subjectivity stands in direct opposition to that multi-racial nationalism of the ANC, as articulated in the Freedom Charter which, asserts one worker, has not given South Africa "anything… to be proud of. Because here I am, still seeing the discrimination given to black labour"[70]. This statement, as well as the total absence of any reference to the Freedom Charter beyond it, also interestingly highlight the EFF's uneasy relationship with the Charter, which it claims to be "inspired" by. It is rather the black nationalism that the "decolonised national anthem" so rousingly expresses, then, that the EFF Student Command seems to align itself with. If the prevalence of the uncompromising declaration "asijiki" speaks to the influence of the EFF in the movement, then the use of the denomination "Azania" and the widespread use of the greeting "izwe lethu" speak to the influence of the significantly smaller Pan Africanist Student Movement of Azania (Pasma). Both point towards the significance of the land question in the movement, where the demand for free education was sometimes framed as a precursor to "coming for the land!"[71]. In invoking the land as a foundational struggle, the movement ties itself ideologically to a history of black struggle that reaches from the Khoi resistance of the 1600s to the ICU to the YCL to the PAC to BC. This history has been largely obfuscated by ANC historiography, which has, in the style typical of historical victors, either invisibilised alternative histories or reframed them in its own terms. While the invocation of June 1976 (This year [2016] is the 40th anniversary of the 1976 student uprising! We have

[63] Mzobe, 2017:35
[64] Ndebele in Ntshingila et al, 2016: 92
[65] Kalla., et al, 21 October 2015
[66] Kalla, S. et al, 21 October 2015
[67] Wits Fees Must Fall Media Team, 21 November 2015
[68] Wits Fees Must Fall Media Team, 1 November 2015
[69] @WitsFMF 27 November 2015
[70] Dhlamini, 2017: 16
[71] @WitsFMF 13 Feb 2016

the same spirit! We will fight for #FreeEducationNow! #Asinamali)[72] by the movement is in many ways an obvious choice, it also has other symbolic significances. Not only does it signal a continuity with the anti-apartheid struggle (thus reinforcing the need for such) but it also claims the BC-inspired Soweto riots away from the ANC's all-engulfing historiography, rearticulating their relation with the Black Power movement.

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Negri and Hardt argue that the multitude is "a way of giving a name to what is already going on and grasping the existing social and political tendency" emerging in the postmodern economy. Naming such a tendency, they continue, "is a primary task of political theory and a powerful tool for further developing the emerging political form" (Negri and Hardt, 2004: 220). But the subject of the student-worker protests has named itself quite unambiguously as black and poor. Thus, to the extent that the multitude is the name of an existing or aspired-towards political subject, it is not very useful at all in explaining the protests. This is ultimately because the political project of Negri and Hardt's multitude is distinct from that of the movement. They argue that "we have to recognise that exploitation remains the foundation of this society, that therefore living labour is required to sustain it, and that the multitude has to consent to capitalist authority. This is the sovereign against which indignation arises and revolt must be directed" (Negri & Hardt, 2009: 240). In contrast, the object of indignation in the student-worker protests is the anti-black and neo-colonial university and world structure, and white supremacy rather than class exploitation is understood to be the primary law reproducing oppression and exploitation today. It is in line with this logic that the Fanonian concept of the damnés is put forward by decolonial theorists like Maldonado-Torres and Walter Mignolo as the anti-imperial revolutionary subject of our time. And, they argue, "it is the damnés, rather than the proletarian or, in its updated version, the multitude, that embody the potential and the guidance to catalyse social and historical transformations" (Mignolo, 2005: 396).

But to deny the primacy of class struggle, of the economic axis, is not necessarily to consent to capitalism or to imagine that freedom can be attained without economic transformation. This point has been made by Mignolo in defence the way in which this decolonial reading of Fanon's "Wretched of the Earth" demotes the place of class in the conception of the damnés. In the context of the student-worker protests, the importance accorded to the economic is evident. Indeed, both the demands for free education for all and insourcing, made in the name of "the poor" are economic claims that pose challenges to the economic system as it stands. This postmodern economic system, characterised by "the real subsumption of labour under capital" (Negri & Hardt, 2000: 25), is one in which value is produced on the biopolitical terrain and, from which no one and nothing is exempt. It is in

[72] @WitsFMF 10 Jan 2016

this context that a discourse emerges in the movement that is very critical of commodification. The call to "stop commodifying education"[73] is mirrored by the belief that "It's frustrating to work under people who don't consider you as a fellow human being, but just see labour and profits"[74]. When, in its statement of support for Johannesburg People's Pride, the movement states that "JPP's fight against the commercialisation and blatant trading of struggle is our struggle as well"[75] it is in many ways an affirmation of Negri and Hardt's statement that "nothing escapes money" (Negri & Hardt, 2000: 32). Indeed, the appropriation and commodification of the #MustFall hashtag is confirmation of this phenomenon. So then, despite the near total absence of the concepts of class and capitalism (only sometimes "white monopoly capital") from the archive of the student-worker protests, where the desire for socialism or communism is only expressed in songs like "sizongena no-socialism" and "that's why I'm a communist", we nonetheless see the emergence of a subject that – admittedly in patch and not fully coherent ways – rejects the conditions of life and work dictated by capitalism. This subject, however, names itself, above all, as black – reflecting little interest in identifying itself with the multitude or even its more commonly known predecessor, the working class. It is in this light, then, that I restate my earlier conclusion that Negri and Hardt's multitude, to the extent that it represents an existing or emergent identity in the student-worker protest, is useless. Furthermore, to argue for the desirability of a political project of the multitude, for the "making" of the multitude, represents the kind of "false consciousness" thinking that I am not interested in participating in. There are, nonetheless, aspects of Negri and Hardt's analysis that I believe to be valuable in this ongoing analysis, and I make use of these going forward.

10.3 Decolonisation, community and family

Through the archive, decolonisation emerges not simply as a political project but also as a discursive device that draws together the struggles of students and workers. The concept of decolonisation makes common cause between the demand for "free, decolonised education" and the call to #DecoloniseLabour by ending outsourcing. The latter is put forward by Oct6 as a key demand of a "decolonised public African university"[76]. This

[73] Wits Fees Must Fall Media Team, 1 November 2015
[74] Ndebele in Ntshingila et al, 2016: 92
[75] Wits Fees Must Fall Media Team, 21 November 2015
[76] It is interesting to note how, in the face of an explicit rejection of the discourse of "transformation", which was placed in direct opposition to decolonisation, Wits management tried to integrate the insourcing decision into that logic. While Fees Must Fall announced the insourcing decision of 1 November 2015 as the end of an "inherently exploitative practice" that "perpetuates a form of anti-black racism" (Lwazi Lushaba in FMF statement 1 Nov 2015), Wits Spokesperson Buhle Zuma said this year that "Insourcing now forms part of the university's transformation strategy to bring about an inclusive society" (Buhle Zuma, Wits spokesperson – 13 March 2017 – News24 article).

connection is somewhat strained though, as "free, decolonised education" only becomes concretised as a slogan of the movement in 2016. More ubiquitous from its inception, then, than the abstract notion of decolonisation were the ideas of community and family. The idea of the Wits community emerges strongly in the Wits Workers Charter, which states that "workers are members of the university community" and that "the intrinsic dignity of all members of the Wits community must be respected". The idea is echoed by Mzobe who, looking back on the introduction of outsourcing, says that it "resulted in the destruction of the university as a collective community" (Mzobe in Luckett and Mzobe, 2016: 95).

What is more novel, and indeed more prevalent in the archive, is the notion of family. In May 2015, when "the occupiers of the 11th floor" claim that they "were forced to [occupy] because our mothers and fathers that work at this institution are suffering", this represents the first expression (in this archive) of a parent-child relationship between workers and students. The notion of family is reinforced on October 6 with a placard stating "Outsourcing, nah fam" – making use of a popular slang expression used to express disagreement with friends or other individuals and groups that one shares a family-like closeness with. On 27 October 2015 – in those tense five days between the announcement of the 0% fee increment and the announcement of the insourcing decision – a tweet from the Wits Fees Must Fall Twitter account says "Student: Parents, put your tools down! Let us march. We are being selfish as students if we stop now #EndOutsourcing #FreeQualityEducation". In that same period, Fees Must Fall issued a statement declaring that "we will not desert our mothers and fathers", while the continuation of the shutdown in the name of #EndOutsourcing was framed as an imperative to "#RestoreDignityToOurParents". In 2016, events were closed "by thanking oMama noTata bethu"[77] and tweets frequently contained pictures captioned with statements like "Our mothers and fathers are with us in front of Great Hall #FeesMustFall"[78].

The students "took [elderly workers] as their parents, just as the workers took the students as their children… The unity", recalls one Wits worker, "started with that. Students said, these are our parents [and] you could hear the mamas: 'you know what VC, these are our children'". Mzobe, reflecting on the question of what an ideal or dream university should look like, states that

> *It is a place where we are free. Where all the workers and the students are free. I like what is happening now with all the struggles that have brought us together. It is not like before, when we just used to walk past each other. Now wherever I go, the students say "Mam Deliwe, our parent, how are you?" They are greeting us. It is whereby we know each other as the university community. We communicate. We get together, not only when we are protesting. We should be able to get together in a*

[77] @WitsFMF 13 Feb 2016
[78] @WitsFMF 21 Oct 2016

> *friendly and free way. So I think now we are on the way. We are not fully there yet because there are still those students and staff that are ignorant. (Luckett and Mzobe, 2016: 98)*

The difference, then, between workers and students is not only one of occupation, but also one of age. When black students call black workers Mama or Tata it is in line with cultural norms of inter-generational engagement. This is of course linked to the idea that, as the cliché goes, it takes a village to raise a child. Within the framework of African cultural norms, greeting is as important a sign of respect as is proper address: the isiZulu greeting "sawubona" literally translates to "I see you". Mzobe's identification of greeting, communication and engagement between students and workers suggests the production, through collective struggle, of new ways of relating and being together on campus. The framing of these relations in familial terms suggest the production of a new (or not so new) collective subjectivity – the poor black family.

Negri and Hardt argue that the productivity of the multitude should be understood as also a production of itself – that new subjectivities are produced in the biopolitical struggles of the multitude. Through this lens, the new relationship between student and workers can be understood as a product of their increasingly common experiences in the shared space of the neoliberal, biopolitical university. In this context, despite the division of labour in the university, which cannot be ignored, the experience of the work by the various members of the university community becomes increasingly similar. Like academics, whose productive thinking cannot be limited to working hours or the workplace, the precarious conditions of outsourced workers forces them to also depend on their productivity beyond work to meet their reproductive needs. Political struggles then, as Scully has argued, come to extend beyond work into the realm of daily life. Workers' experiences of precarity are mirrored by those of poor students (perhaps more usefully conceived of as students from poor households) for whom escalating fees mean the permanent threat of financial exclusion. This is not a shared experience of exploitation – in the Marxist sense – but rather one of oppression and impoverishment by the corporatised university. It should be reiterated, however, that despite their critique of commodification, students and workers, understand this oppression to have its roots in the age-old racist structure of an anti-black world.

Respite from this racist world is found in the poor black family, where love is reflected – and indeed produced – through the use of words like "care", "joy", "protection" and "home feeling". The claims that "there is nothing more radical than love"[79] and the desire expressed to be "abantu abamnyama abanothando"[80] signals the emergence of love as a political concept within the movement. Negri and Hardt also argue for political love, which they characterise as "a process of the production of the common and the production of

[79] @WitsFMF 29 Oct 2015
[80] Wits Fees Must Fall Media Team, 21 November 2015

subjectivity" (Negri & Hardt, 2009: 180). But the love expressed in the movement emerges as distinct from what Negri and Hardt consider to be "properly political love". For them, when love is tied to any identity – when it exists to the exclusion of those outside – it becomes "corrupted" and "poisonous". In contrast to "love of the same" (identitarian love) and "love of becoming the same" (love as unification), they put forward "love of the stranger, love of the farthest, and love of alterity" (Negri & Hardt, 2009: 183) as revolutionary forms of love that have the power to constantly expand, rather than limit, the common. "Sameness and unity", they argue, "involve no creation but mere repetition without difference" (Negri & Hardt, 2009: 184). In fact, it is precisely to the institution of the family, which encloses the couple in a unit, that they turn as an exemplar of corrupt love (Negri & Hardt, 2009:183).

When these – blackness, family, black love – are combined with the language of coming together through unity and solidarity, it becomes apparent that the student-worker protests are irreconcilable with Negri and Hardt's thinking in quite fundamental ways.

10.4 Being different, becoming different

The subject of the student-worker protests emerges as a poor black family, where black identity is privileged in the creation of a political alliance against racial colonialism, framed as the primary contradiction in society. But the black of the student-worker protests is not a complete reproduction of the black of the 1970s. One of the most fundamental ways in which the movement has reconceptualised blackness is through the concept of intersectionality. Following in the footsteps of the Rhodes Must Fall movement, Wits Fees Must Fall identified itself as intersectional. Intersectionality is an analytical concept that was elaborated by feminist legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw[81]. At the core of the theory of intersectionality is the assertion that different social hierarchies mutually construct each other and so are inseparable. The implications of this are, firstly, that no oppression can be understood or fought in isolation: gender is inherently raced, just as race is inherently classed, etc. Secondly, intra-group differences and hierarchies have to be acknowledged, and identities have to be understood and dealt with as dynamic and complex social categories. There can be no "single-issue struggles" (Lorde, 1982) under the "white supremacist capitalist patriarchy" (hooks, 1989). In addition, for the individual, certain identities come to the fore in certain moments and in certain spaces – but this can never be to the exclusion or negation of one's other identities. It is in the tendency towards negation that oppressions are reproduced in struggle.

One of the earliest textual expressions of intersectionality comes out of the Fees Must Fall statement announcing the insourcing decision – a moment that was characterised as the

[81] The concept builds on a long tradition in feminist organising of questioning the links between different oppressions

"conclu[sion] [of] a chapter of the struggle of the black student and black worker on campus". The statement reads:

> *The struggle for the black person is an intersectional one that recognises that race and class are always at the forefront of experience for any black person in what is primarily an anti-black world structure* (FMF statement 1 Nov 2015)

Much of our understanding of the concept in relation to the movement can be taken from a statement written on 21 November in support of the Johannesburg People's Pride march. The statement is titled "The revolution will be intersectional otherwise it is a reproduction of oppression" and in it the Wits Fees Must Fall movement is represented as "rooted in black radical intersectional praxis that recognises the interconnectedness of struggles". The text speaks of "multiple", "contested" identities that shape the reality of a person's life, and espouses a commitment to "organis[ing] across difference".

But on April 4, 2016 – a few months into the start of the new academic year – something happens on campus that sees large numbers of women disassociating from the movement under the hashtag #NotMyFMF. After a decision taken at what is characterised as another "secret meeting", activists from university campus around the country come to initiate a shutdown of Wits. But some woman and queer activists, among them Thenjiwe Mswane, disrupt the protest on the grounds of having been excluded as queer people from the decision-making process. What follows is a physical confrontation between Mswane and the group of men, where she is "surrounded by men, kicked, punched and dragged away from the protest"[82]. That day, Wits FMF tweets that "all identities of blackness will be included in this revolution or it will be bullshit". Two days later, a FMF Marginalised Bodies Caucus is held under the title "the revolution will be black-led and intersectional or it will be bullshit". The phrasing is a borrowing of the title of a 2011 essay written by "writer; feminist; Latina; sudaca; immigrant" Flavia Dzodan. In "My Feminism Will Be Intersectional Or It Will Be Bullshit" Dzodan rages against a white feminism that not only fails to account for the role of racial oppression in the reproduction of gender inequality but also, in doing so, reproduces that inequality[83]. In evoking Dzodan's essay, then, they evoke also its raging fury and deeply-felt disappointment – the sense of being almost ready to discard the name "feminist", the challenge of "one last chance". Here, however, the challenge is directed at black men rather than white feminists, and the need to issue it points towards a gap between discourse and practice in the self-defined intersectional movement.

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[82] Mswane's account, as reported by Isaacs, 2016

[83] That title has since been taken up through meme culture and proliferated globally as an "intersectional feminist" slogan as well as a cultural commodity. For more about this see "This feminist's most famous quote has been sold all over the internet. She hasn't seen a cent." (https://www.vox.com/2016/8/12/12406648/flavia-dzodan-my-feminism-will-be-intersectional-merchandise)

Negri and Hardt would no doubt argue that this clash was inevitable. At the core of their theory is the conviction that identity and difference are inherently contradictory. In line with an intersectional approach, they hold that revolution cannot be enacted in any one domain alone. But in contrast to this approach, they argue that there can be no privileging of any one identity over another in the multitude: "no one domain or social antagonism is prior to the others" (Negri & Hardt, 2009: 342). Both multitude and intersectionality acknowledge the potential for conflict inherent in organising across difference and the need for the elaboration of political methods for working through this conflict. While intersectionality understands this as a conflict between identities, Negri and Hardt argue that it is only through a conceptual understanding of the social actor as a singularity that such conflict can be managed and actually made productive. The concept of singularity, which has a long genealogy in European thought, is defined like this:

> *First of all, every singularity points toward and is defined by a multiplicity outside of itself. No singularity can exist or be conceived on its own, but instead both its existence and definition necessarily derive from its relations with the other singularities that constitute society. Second, every singularity points toward a multiplicity within itself. The innumerable divisions that cut throughout each singularity do not undermine but actually constitute its definition. Third, singularity is always engaged in a process of becoming different—a temporal multiplicity. This characteristic really follows from the first two insofar as the relations with other singularities that constitute the social multiplicity and the internal composition of the multiplicity within each singularity are constantly in flux* (Negri & Hardt, 2009: 338-339)

The nature of singularities, as we have established, means that they cannot be unified or reduced to a common identity – like that of blackness. The distinction between identity and singularity is moreover significant here as it relates to the question of "becoming". Identity politics, argue Negri and Hardt, reproduce identity categories and struggle conceptually with the question of transformation precisely because this entails a process of "destruction". For singularities, on the other hand, transformation and flux are inherent to their very nature. The capacity of the social actor to change to not only be different but become different is central to their conception of revolutionary politics. They contrast liberation with emancipation, where the former is universal and transformative and the latter is about the bettering of a fixed interest group[84]. Despite their characterisation of identity politics as generally emancipatory, they do acknowledge a strand that has struggled through identity categories while also seeking their "self-transformation". Quoting Annamarie Jagose, they argue that queerness is revolutionary because it is an identity category "that has no interest

[84] While agreeing with the value of the distinction, I do not subscribe to this particular wording and it is not the wording that I use in the rest of this paper. I will however use it here for the sake of continuity/clarity

in consolidating or even stabilising itself.... Queer is less an identity than a critique of identity" (in Commonwealth, 335)]. It is this kind of identity politics, then, that they consider "revolutionary" – a politics of identity that seeks its own abolishment, like revolutionary working class politics that aims to destroy wage labour and the "worker" himself (Negri & Hardt, 2009: 333). They use this to argue that "strong traditions of race and gender politics… already contain a desire for the multitude, when feminists, for example pose the goal as not a world without gender difference but one in which gender does not matter (in the sense that it does not form the basis of hierarchies); or when antiracist activists similarly struggle not for a world without race but one in which race does not matter – in short, a process of liberation based on the free expression of difference" (Negri & Hardt, 2004: 224).

As the argument relates to blackness, Negri and Hardt quote Fanon, who wrote that he proposed "nothing short of the liberation of the man of colour from himself".

> *This liberation from himself is the self-abolition of identity - marking not only the destruction of racial hierarchy but also the abolition of race as we know it, and thus, in Fanon's terms, the creation of a new humanity… Only a project of liberation that destroys not just blackness as an identity of subordination but blackness as such along with whiteness and all other racial identities makes possible the creation of a new humanity (Negri and Hardt, 2009: 336)*

"Biko blackness", which draws heavily on Fanonian humanism, is a concept that allows for this kind of "self-transformation". Not only does it allow for Coloureds and Indians to be Blacks, but also for Blacks to ultimately be human. This is a conception of blackness that "centres the possibility for change within the subjectivity of the oppressed person" (Alan & Turner, 1986: 22). We see signs of this same impulse towards transformation articulated in the student-worker movement. For workers, outsourcing is put forward as a system that dehumanised black life, reducing it to nothing (Mzobe, 2017:35). "It is frustrating", argues Wits worker Richard Ndebele, "to work under people who don't consider you as a fellow human being, but just see labour and profits"[85]. The insourcing struggle is therefore as much about humanisation as it is about wages and benefits. "At the heart of our struggle", states a Wits FMF tweet, quoting Lwazi Lushaba, "we want to be HUMAN in our own country!"[86]. This liberatory logic is equally reflected in the assertion in an FMF statement that "freedom is not a male heterosexual victory". Indeed, argues Ranciere (1995: 65), "the politics of emancipation is the politics of the self as an other… The name of an injured community that invokes its rights is always the name of the anonym, the name of anyone.

When forced to reflect on the emergence of the poor black family as aspiring towards a universalising humanity (good) whilst simultaneously defining itself in terms of a black

[85] Ndebele in Ntshingila et al, 2016: 92
[86] @WitsFMF 7 October 2016

identity (bad), a number of question are raised. In the first place, we are brought face to face with a contradiction at the core of Negri and Hardt's theory of the multitude. Negri and Hardt claim that singularity is incompatible with the exclusive notion of identity – meaning that an attempt to conceive of, for example, a "multitude of the blacks" is inherently contradictory. The "multitude of the poor", however, is unproblematically taken to be the revolutionary subject of our time, with all those coming together under that name considered singularities. This implies either that "the poor" is not an identity or, alternatively, that Negri and Hardt's multitude is not truly a coming together of singularities. The poor, of course *is* an identity – an economic identity more expansive than that of the working class, but not one that is infinitely expansive. It cannot, obviously, contain capitalists within it. Released, then, from the notion of singularity, the multitude is revealed as a coming together of different individuals and groups on the basis of what they share in common – including a shared condition of oppression, which they may choose to mobilise around as an identity. This category should be as expansive as possible (as their turn away from the working class towards the multitude of the poor suggests) but there must be ways for difference to be expressed within this broad category. If, as they claim, no domain of struggle is prior to others, then we also have to accept that the multitude is not one subject poised against capitalism, but the potential for a number of subjects. The "multitude of the blacks" is not contradictory after all. Whether it is a desirable "political proposition" is another question altogether. And in the same way that the dictates of class struggle mean that capitalists (as a group) cannot be included in the anti-capitalist multitude so whites (as a group) may have to be excluded from the project of the black, decolonial multitude. It is in this light that we can understand the "racial" exclusiveness of the movement, but also the way in which a few white students were indeed welcomed into it. Despite a general loathing of whiteness, space was also made for those progressive whites who "acknowledge their privilege"[87]. The boundlessness of these subjects is not to be read in their composition, as the notion of singularity implies, but in the nature of their political projects which will, in their realisation, liberate all from capitalism and race respectively.

Negri and Hardt turn to the concept of singularity to – I argue, unsuccessfully – resolve the real contradiction between identity and difference. It is this contradiction that led to the events of April 4 and, I would add, remains unresolved. Considering this, the concept of the multitude proves to be useful for the questions that it throws up – though I would hasten to add that these questions have long been posed in the black feminist tradition. When Crenshaw elaborated the concept of intersectionality, it was precisely to answer the question: How do we maintain common identity without subverting other identities and reproducing hierarchy? And when Jennifer Nash criticises intersectionality as "inextricably linked to the production and maintenance of identity categories" (Nash, 2013: 5), she was

[87] @WitsFMF 5 October 2016

posing the question: How do we love ourselves and each other whilst also propelling ourselves into the future to transform beyond what we are?

So, then, was April 4 a failure of the movement to live up to its claimed intersectionality – perhaps because of the failure of intersectional analyses to elaborate practical intersectional methodologies (Nash, 2008)? Or is it intersectionality itself that was unable to provide the conceptual tools necessary to resolve the contradictions that April 4 made manifest? It is only with relation to unity that the "divisiveness" that feminist in the movement have been accused of can exist. So, are common identity and unity inherently linked? Or is there a way to conceive of identity in a way that does not imply an imperative towards oneness? At the conclusion of this paper, I will reflect on the ways in which the concept of family may be able to help us think through some of these questions?

10.5 Considering class

A reading of the archive reveals serious unresolved contradictions in the movement along the race-gender axis. What is barely visible, however, is the class contradictions that inevitably exist within the broad category of "the poor". It is obvious that there are economic differences between workers, administrative staff and academic staff; between students that are "poor enough" for NSFAS, students of the "missing middle" and students who can afford fees; and between these groups. It is also clear that the same students who have the most to gain from free education are also those who have the most to lose by failing or missing exams if that victory is not attained. The notable absence of any discussion around these questions in the archive points toward a general neglect of the question of class within the movement. This critique, which has formed the basis of Marxist dismissals of the movement, is not unfamiliar to black political projects in South Africa. The Black Consciousness Movement of the 1970s, as we have seen, faced similar critiques for its lack of recourse to Marxist categories of analysis. From the perspective of this logic, students – a group on a one-way road to petty-bourgeois class status – can never truly be the "motive force" of history.

In the 1980s – after the Soweto riots had been violently subdued, forcing many BC activists into exile – the severely weakened BC forces in the country reconvene around the formation of the Azanian People's Organisation (Azapo). Over the same period, the socialist trade union movement – one the other hand – continues its meteoric rise. It is within the context of these dynamics – which gave significant weight to Marxist critiques of BC – that what is left of the movement embarks on a project of refining its position on the race-class dialectic (Gibson, 1987). Nigel Gibson argues that this amounted to little more than the conflation of race and class through the concept of "racial capitalism", which holds that race is a class determinant in South Africa (Gibson, 1987: 15). This facilitates a move away from the notion "a socialist solution that is an authentic expression of black communalism" (Biko in Woods

1987: 122), to be elaborated through the resolution of the BC dialectic, towards the "scientific socialism" of orthodox Marxism (Gibson, 1987: 13). Lamenting this fundamental shift – where "Scientific Socialism" is adopted as the "guide to the struggle" while BC is relegated to a "mobilising role" (Gibson, 1987: 13) – Gibson writes:

> *By the end of 1987 it seemed that BC as seen through AZAPO is something radically different from its origins. As an idea originally situated in the subjectivity of the oppressed, which refused to comply with narrow "Marxist" applications, it is now merely the projection of another Marxist-Leninist tendency. Black is the substance rather than the subject of revolution, the "phenomena" of material conditions.* (Gibson, 1987: 20)

Gibson's critique stands as a caution to black political projects today, and potentially for the student-worker movement (if it still exists), which, I argue, are once again confronted with the class question: just as the identity of blackness fragmented under the strain of gender tensions, so the broad category of the poor is unsustainable. And in the same way that universal class politics can mask and reproduce racial oppression, so too can the opposite happen, where a flattened conception of blackness may serve as a "disguise" (Hall, 1985: 112) or, less sinisterly, as the basis for a well-meaning but impotent political alliance.

The concept of the "sell-out" is a good starting point to think about this. Accusation of selling-out, so prominent in the movement, has a long history in South Africa. It was used by Azapo to criticise the ANC's negotiations with the apartheid regime; it was deployed by the new social movements against the ANC and Cosatu with the adoption of Gear; and Malema has used the term widely, against Zuma, against the ANC and regarding Mandela's "deviation from the Freedom Charter", which was "the beginning of the selling out of the revolution" (Malema, 2016). In the context of the movement it was first used against members of the PYA, and then later at anyone who went "back to class". (The irony here is that these were often the poorest students). The idea of selling out is one that individualises political dynamics. The sell-out is the corollary of the "leader", and is instrumental in the invisibilising of the material dynamics that may lead groups or individuals to abandon their revolutionary ideals – be it in the context of the movement, the ANC, the unions, or whatever. Biko acknowledged the structural basis of this threat, and touched on its political implications, when he warned that

> *any form of political freedom which does not touch on the proper distribution of wealth will be meaningless… If we have a mere change of face of those in governing positions what is likely to happen is that black people will continue to be poor, and you will see a few blacks filtering through into the so-called bourgeoisie. Our society will be run almost as of yesterday. So for meaningful change to appear, there needs to be an*

attempt at reorganising the whole economic pattern and economic policies within this particular country.

Gibson, reflecting in 1987 on the abandonment of principle in favour of power, privilege and money by BC leaders like Barney Pityana and Saths Cooper, says that "these betrayals make even clearer that the focus needs to be on the dialectic of ideas and objective conditions and the relationship of intellectuals to mass movements rather than the psychobiography of individual personalities" (Gibson, 2004: 2). I agree with Gibson's argument and suggest that it is in the context of this discussion that Negri and Hardt's concept of the multitude seems to be most useful. Without suggesting what these processes may look like, I simply put forward that these new ways of understanding value production and class can inform an understanding of those dynamics in the movement and society more broadly, and can inform an elaboration of the economic dimension of the revolutionary politics of blackness in a postmodern South Africa.

Relatedly, I suggest that an understanding of the postmodern nature of the South African economy should inform the ways in which we think about the economic aspect of the revolutionary intent clearly articulated by the movement. We are told clearly, on multiple occasions that "This is NOT a protest! This is a REVOLUTION!"[88] At the same time, there can be no denying that the basic nature of this revolution remains hazy. In one instance, student leaders claim that they will autonomously run the university from an occupied Solomon House[89]. In another, we are told that "They have promised us and NOW they must deliver! #FreeEducationNow"[90]. Here the revolution emerges as a state-orientated demand for the delivery of free services, as a claim to historical promises that were made under the Freedom Charter. In another vaguer instance, we are told that "the existence of resisting black people anywhere in the world is the beginning of a revolution"[91]. In the same statement, referencing Audre Lorde: "revolutions are not one time events and that they are also not a struggle against one issue". When these statements are read against the cultural project of decolonisation, there begins to emerge some idea of the vision of the movement. I would argue, however, that this falls short of the definition of revolution provided earlier, where revolution is defined, in addition to the "excessive" principles underpinning its thinking, as the fundamental transformation of social, political and economic life.

The powerful concept of revolution is far more vague in its use here than in the BCM. There, black cultural hegemony – the antithesis of white domination – was seen as setting the stage for the democratic elaboration of an economic system of African communalism by the people. In that case, the economic aspect was expressed not as a blueprint but as a process

[88] @WitsFMF 19 Oct 2016
[89] Kalla, et al, 21 October 2015
[90] @WitsFMF 19 Oct 2016
[91] FMF statement – 21 Nov 2015

with intent behind it. In the case of the student-worker movement, no such claim is explicitly articulated and so I would argue that revolution currently exists as little more than an empty signifier – a sign without a referent, a word with no agreed-upon meaning, which can therefore "float" around and be attached to any idea.

At the same time, I suggest that the prevalence of the land question can, at a discursive level, tell us something about the movement's revolution. The land question is probably the issue beyond campus that the movement associated itself with most closely, certainly more so than the service delivery question. In invoking the land as a foundational struggle, the movement ties itself ideologically to a line of black struggle that reaches from the Khoi resistance of the 1600s to the ICU to the YCL to the PAC to BC and, most recently to the EFF. A Marxist perspective of revolution, in contrast, actually sees an attachment to the land as a hindrance to the maturation of capitalism, and thus to the progress towards communism. It is in fact precisely because of its attachment to the land that the peasantry is regarded as a class with limited revolutionary potential: it does not have "nothing to lose but its chains". So then to demand the land is also to reject that logic, which is at its core the logic of "development", "progress" and even productivism, industrialisation and growth. This is an admittedly desirous reading of the movement's relation to the land question that should be tempered with a proper analysis of how land ownership is conceived. But, to continue along this line, I would like to also tentatively put forward the idea that this invocation of the land speaks to what is powerful in revolutionary black thought: the ways in which it leaves space for imagination, dreaming and creation. Precisely because of the open-endedness of the BC dialectic, one can approach the question of economic structure from the subjective position – moving from desire to economics, rather than allowing desire to be determined by what is rendered possible within an economistic, teleological framework. It is from this position that you can make reproductive claims, like the claim to a living wage, or demand "free education for all" before ascertaining whether it is "economically viable". It is also from this position that you can articulate the primacy of the struggle for land, even though agriculture only makes up a small percentage of GDP and the wealth of the mines is pretty much pillaged. Here we see an image of wealth beyond measure and a politics that asserts that "everything is possible" (Mzobe in Luckett and Mzobe, 2016: 97).

While there can be no doubt that material reality will always determine the extent to which any vision can be realised, the idea of boundlessness is perfectly consistent with the postmodern theory of value put forward by Negri and Hardt. Within this framework, wealth – the common – is not seen as fixed or limited, but rather constantly expanded by the productivity of the multitude. It is through a consciousness of its own productivity, and the power inherent in that, that the multitude develops its conception of a world beyond capitalism, a world of autonomous production. There are already signs that the movement has an understanding of that productivity. South Africa is of course built on the labour of poor blacks and so it is no surprise that the worker of Wits recognise that the university is

built on their "blood, sweat and tears": "Our hands built it, clean it and furnish it!" (Mzobe, 2017: 36). Here the recognition of the value of the service work and even the affective work provided to the university is explicit. At the same time, when the words "always remember that this university belongs to us" are emblazoned on university property, we see a sign of an awareness of who this value truly belongs to. The tactics of the movement also point towards a recognition of the nature of biopolitical value creation and its position of power in that process. Negri and Hardt tell us that

> *Peasant revolts throughout modernity rise up against the institutions of rent, recognising and destroying the symbolic sites of aristocratic and colonial power. Industrial worker rebellions instead develop essentially through the sabotage of fixed capital and machinery. And most interestingly for us, struggles against the biopolitical regime of social production, such as the November 2005 events centered in the Paris suburbs, demonstrate a new intelligence by focusing on schools and public and private means of transportation, that is, the conditions of social mobility and division that are essential for the metropolitan exploitation of the social labor force. (Negri & Hardt, 2009: 237)*

When understood in this way, the tactics of shutdown, burning busses and university buildings, even causing havoc in the cultural centre of Braamfontein, take on new meaning. This understanding is also enhanced when we consider that during the 1976 riots it was primarily the institutions of the apartheid state apparatus that were targeted for sabotage. Today we see a similar logic at work when community protestors target local government buildings, while the widely used highway blockade tactic is able to disrupt biopolitical production in a way similar to how the strike halts material production. It is through a critical engagement with Negri and Hardt's analysis of the postmodern economy that, I believe, the movement could reach a deeper understanding of its own productivity and the potentials for resistance that this presents.

So, then, I argue that the multitude is useful in describing the class position of the movement, and that an understanding of this position is valuable, even if it does not choose to adopt a class project centred around the name of the multitude. Rather, this class analysis can perhaps be usefully integrated into the existing intersectional framework. In his rejection of the project of the multitude, Mignolo, referencing Torres, argues that "we (those of us who feel the effects of the coloniality of knowledge and of being and who feel more comfortable with the subjectivity of the damnés) have to dis-identify and dis-engage from the universal Christian and Marxist projects attributed to the multitude" (Mignolo, 2005: 391). While accepting his argument that the project of the damnés cannot be reduced to that of the multitude, I have to disagree with his call to disengage from the theoretical tools offered by Negri and Hardt. Dis-identify, sure – but engagement is critical. This is in line with my findings that the kinds of economic conditions analyses by Negri and Hardt are

indeed dominant (if unevenly so) in South Africa. For this reason, the concept of the multitude can offer us something that the concept of the working class – rooted as it is in modernist conceptions of value – cannot.

In response to the changing conditions of work that characterise the current moment, the concept of the working class has been expanded. This was noted in the course of our historical examination of the "motive force" question, where we saw the concept of the working class was being deployed differently in the 2000s from the 1980s. As I said there, that was not a theoretical innovation – in fact it can be traced back to Capital Vol. 1, and the "expanded" notion of the working class is very common today. But I do think that it is a discursive choice worthy of some attention. While the reconceptualisation of the working class is obviously a response to changes in the nature of work (and feminists have done good work here too), it seems to me that it is also a natural and indeed necessary product of certain theoretical positions of the South African left. In the first place, it is an outcome of subscribing to a stagist revolutionary theory like the NDR, which stipulates a transition to first to nationhood and then to socialism. This implies a transition from "the people" to "the working class" as the motive force, as it is the people that legitimise the nation and only the working class that, according to traditional Marxist theory, has the sufficiently developed consciousness to fight for socialism. This idea, that socialism hinges on a proletariat, is also particularly entrenched in the South African left, which is a very orthodox left – due to proletarianisation, which did not force it to challenge too deeply the central tenets of Marxism – to "stretch Marxist theory", in Fanon's terms. Through this theoretical lens, the task of the post-apartheid left thus became to continue that unfinished project of Fosatu – to build a working-class identity and consciousness. But this imperative was now extended to include the majority of South Africans.

Marx's "reserve army" concept is both valid and useful. And the expansion to recognise women, the unemployed, casually employed, poor in general is certainly justified. Indeed, the concept of the multitude does the same thing, and takes it further in acknowledging that these groups are actually productive and not just potentially productive. I can also concede that with South Africa's high wage dependency ratios – which underpin the idea of "black tax" – there is a shared interest in higher wages. But the problem with the expanded working class arises at the level of identity, consciousness, subjectivity. On what grounds should unemployed people – many of whom who have never had a formal job in their lives (Statistics SA, 2017b) and likely never will (Hassen, 2011: 38) – identify as "potential proletarians"? The same goes for casually employed and women. At the end of the day, working class consciousness, as originally conceived, is a product of the subjective experience of very specific working conditions. Working class identity, too, is defined by so much more than mere productivity – hence even in the 1980s, at the peak of the trade union movement, a working class identity never fully crystalised (Foster, 1982). This calls into question the usefulness of the "working class" political project itself, and the way in

which it seeks to bind everyone to the identity of proletarian worker. It suggests the need to either redefine what working class consciousness and identity are, or accept that it only really speaks to one shrinking section of society. But neither of these are politically viable options – the latter for obvious reasons and the former because the concept of the working class is so inextricably tied to the factory floor that to do so would be to render it impotent. It is precisely because of its structural position in the production process that the proletariat was theorised as a revolutionary subject in the first place – but the links between the factory floor and the experiences of the so-called "broader working class" are too tenuous to constitute an identity. This project is misguided at best and, at worst, a justification for the leadership role which the *actual* working class should play over the "broader" working class. Such ideas may have been justified on the grounds that the proletariat is a universal emancipator, but that notion too has become difficult to sustain.

Workers are important – just not the working class. Luckily there is place for workers in the multitude – but the pendulum does not swing both ways. Hardt (2003) suggests that "you should not think of this discussion as an alternative, either working class or multitude. One has to think rather about the possibilities of organisation within this, a strategy of organisation". This, it seems to me, is the challenge for class struggle today.

10.6 Thinking beyond the university and beyond South Africa

I have found South Africa to be broadly, generally postmodern, but the university especially so. But there is something about the particularity of the campus space and conditions that must be fully acknowledged. The university campus is in some ways a perfect space for not only political experimentation more broadly (its relative autonomy, fixed boundaries, manageable size, etc) but also specifically for the coming together of students and workers on the basis of their common experiences of precarity, etc within a delineated space. This is an interesting idea because it relies precisely on territoriality, which is supposedly that thing that the multitude is not bound by, and suggests the ongoing importance of space in the building of political and other relations. Indeed, we should be weary of the idea that communication technology has the power to render geopolitics and the segregationist spatial dynamics of South Africa irrelevant. Considering the exceptionalism of the university space is important for thinking the relationship between the movement and other political forces beyond the university, which may not be as entrenched in the biopolitical mode. And it is important to think the exclusions that this may imply when considering the multitude at a national level. On the other hand, there is certainly an argument to be made that an emergent political form or subjectivity can be expected not to emerge equally everywhere simultaneously but rather to emerge unevenly as the hegemonic economic relation expands its reach. Certainly, it seems unlikely that the processes of postmodernisation are likely to reverse or be stopped anytime soon. By this argument, we can think of the multitude as a class in the process of "becoming". Here again, we are faced with certain political

considerations. In the same way that the process of proletarianisation could be used to justify working class leadership over the peasantry, so the position of, for example, the biopolitical workers of the university – the "most biopolitical" – can be used to rationalise hierarchies within struggle.

This also has implications for our transnational political relationships, Pan-Africanism especially. Negri and Hardt talk about a global multitude, a universal subject: "We believe that toward the end of challenging and resisting Empire and its world market, it is necessary to pose any alternative at an equally global level" (Negri & Hardt, 2000: 206). And while South Africa may be postmodern, this is something that is more difficult to sustain in some other contexts, especially in Africa. Negri and Hardt's claim that we are experiencing a generalised, global process of de-industrialisation is indeed one of their most contested claims and is the basis for many of the accusations of Eurocentrism that have been levelled against their work. Both Samir Amin and Chris Hartman argue that the world is more proletarianised now than ever before – thus challenging the idea that the postmodern organisation of labour is hegemonic. Even if we consider the reorganisation of work globally as tending towards feminised and precarious arrangements, and even when we factor in the spread of communicative technologies and workplace mechanisation on the continent as a whole, South Africa still emerges as the "most biopolitical". In this sense, our national class position (if one can speak of such a thing) or perhaps our "national privilege" is something to be taken very seriously – especially as we appeal to blackness and African identity – the pitfalls of doing so uncritically have been highlighted in the work of Sabelo Gatsheni-Ndlovu[92].

11. CONCLUDING THOUGHTS: ON FAMILY POLITICS

The story of the student-worker protests is in many ways a story about family. Not only did students and workers create a poor black family on campus, but the conditions that led to the protests in the first place cannot be separated from the home. When workers were outsourced, their children lose the right to study at Wits for free. Long hours and reduced leave represent time taken away from social life, despite, as we have seen, the increased reproductive burden placed on women workers. Below subsistence wages mean an inability to provide for the family, while one ex-Wits worker even commented that "with this salary we will never be able to buy cows for Lobola its means we will be bachelors for life" (quoted in Mzobe, 2017: 35). The inability of students to afford fees, on the other hand, has its roots in household poverty. The story of scraping together money for fees is one of familial sacrifice, while the idea of "black tax" tells us that dream of economic liberation promised by a university education cannot be conceived of individualistically. And so, when protesting students – some of them the first in their family to attend university – sang to their parents

[92] See, for example, Ndlovu-Gatsheni, S. J. (2009). Africa for Africans or Africa for" natives" only?" new nationalism" and nativism in Zimbabwe and South Africa. *Africa Spectrum*, 61-78.

off campus they apologised and asked them to please stop crying and wipe away their tears[93]. The song "nobody wanna see us together" – an ode to the power of mass action – tells of how the experiences of their parents as "kitchen girls" and "garden boys" has shaped their political subjectivity as, at turns, fallists, communists, fighters and socialists. At the same time, for poor young black students, the colonial university is probably the primary site of alienation from their families – geographically, but also through the education they receive and the upwardly mobile status that it is supposed to promise. The turn to family politics – to the metaphorical family – is perhaps a way to mitigate against that alienation. The nature of metaphor is its duality, that it exists in relation to a simultaneously-existing referent. This, I will argue, is the source of the particular, and potentially revolutionary power of "family politics".

The power of the idea of the family, and political deployment thereof, is manifest in the ways that "family values" have been used in the ideological underpinning of conservative and reactionary political projects. Indeed, the notion of the family is particularly well suited to such instrumentalisations. This point is powerfully demonstrated by black American feminist scholar Patricia Hills Collins, who provides a very useful critique of "family values" in her 1998 article "It's All In the Family: Intersections of Gender, Race, and Nation". In it she explores how "the traditional family ideal functions as a privileged exemplar of intersectionality in the United States" (Collins, 1998: 62), reminding us that the family is not only the place in which we first experience hierarchy and become trained in in its logic, but where hierarchy, precisely because of its location in the family, becomes naturalised (Collins, 1998: 64). It is within the family – with its gendered hierarchy and fixed sexual division of labour – that women learn deference to men. This deference, she highlights, is precisely that dynamic that is replicated in political struggle, when gender oppression is side-lined in the name of racial solidarity and unity. At the same time, and "as is the case with all situations of hierarchy, actual or implicit use of force, sanctions and violence may be needed to maintain unequal power relations. However, the very pervasiveness of violence can lead to its invisibility… Family rhetoric can also work to minimise understandings of violence in groups that self-define in family terms" (Collins, 1998: 66). And so while the family is generally understood as a primary site of belonging, it is also the primary site of oppression for both women and children, despite the idealisation of the home as a "safe space" for these groups (Collins, 1998: 68). Violence and other injustices in the family, as we know, are often removed from public scrutiny or invisibilised by their characterisation as "family matters" (Crenshaw, 1991) or "family secrets". The family is not only defined by its reproductive function, but also by its role in the intergenerational transmission of wealth, where entitlements – as well as obligations – are derived from mere belonging (Collins, 1998: 71). This allows for the justification of homophobia and heterosexism, on the one

[93] "We mama wami, I'm sorry. We mama wami, I'm sorry. We mama wami, I'm sorry… Ungakhala su'lezo nyembezi"

hand, but also for the kind of insider-outsider logic that can serve to perpetuate nationalism, xenophobia and even neighbourhood segregation (Collins, 1998: 67). Indeed, the phenotypical similarities passed down through family bloodlines (Collins, 1998: 70) can serve to reinforce the value of homogeneity and, ultimately, racial purism (Collins, 1998: 68). These are the ways in which appeals to "family values" can be mobilised to serve conservative, racist and reactionary political ends.

It is not only the political right, however, that lends power to family values. Pointing towards the ways in which family rhetoric has been used by Black nationalist-influenced projects within African-American civil society, Collins warns that "many groups aim to dismantle social hierarchy, yet use unexamined ideas about family in crafting their political programs" (Collins, 1998: 77). These dynamics have been examined by sociologist Paul Gilroy, who harshly critiques the "Americocentric obsession with family", centred on essentialist ideals of sameness, racial difference and authenticity (Gilroy, 2004: 91). In this discourse, he notes, "the family is the approved, natural site where ethnicity and racial culture are reproduced... [and because] women are identified as the agents and means of this reproductive process" (Gilroy, 2004: 89) "appeals to the family collapse into deeply conservative codes as social crisis becomes framed as a crisis of black masculinity, to be resolved through the "mystic reconstruction of the ideal heterosexual family" (Gilroy, 2004: 92). Collins' and Gilroy's critiques are rooted in the US, but they do nonetheless serve as warnings – in ways that echo Negri and Hardt's critiques of "love of the same" – of how conservatism and pseudo-radicalism can find convergence around ideas of racial purity, and how these may be enabled by family discourses. At the same time, however, Collins suggest that "just as the traditional family ideal provides a rich site for understanding intersectional inequalities, reclaiming notions of family that reject hierarchical thinking may provide an intriguing and important site of resistance" (Collins, 1998: 77). Similarly, Gilroy argues that through an understanding of the family as characterised by difference, hybridity, creolisation and mixing, "the political language of brotherhood and sisterhood can be used in ways that accentuate an image of community composed of those with whom we disagree" (Gilroy, 2004: 98).

Before considering the student-worker protests, it is necessary to reflect on another text. In a short 2000 article titled "Family Bonds/Conceptual Binds: African Notes on Feminist Epistemologies" Nigerian feminist Scholar Oyèrónkẹ́ Oyěwùmí notes the tendency of feminist theory to think the family through the Euro-American nuclear family. Within this framework, she argues, "woman" becomes synonymous with "wife" - "the subordinated half in a couple in a nuclear family" (Oyewumi, 2000: 1094). To this she attributes a number of shortcomings in white feminist thinking, including the neglect of race and class difference, the focus on the household to the expense of public life, and the tendency to exclude men from the thinking of gender. In her research, mainly conducted in Nigeria, she has found that, rather than wife, "the most important and enduring identity and name that

African women claim for themselves is 'mother'" (Oyewumi, 2000: 1097). This is because "the predominant principle organising African families has been consanguinal and not conjugal: blood relationships constitute the core of the family" (Oyewumi, 2000: 1096). I draw attention to this text not to evoke the idea of a somehow purer or less hierarchical South African family, but simply to remind of the need to problematise received problematisations of the family form. A proper understanding of the potentials and pitfalls of family politics in South Africa must necessarily be based in a nuanced understanding of the dynamics of family life as it actually exists in this context.

So, then, with these considerations in mind, we turn back to the poor black family that arises out of the student-worker protests at Wits – which represents, on the one hand, an exciting subjective development and, on the other, a risky discursive framework that threatens to all too easily descend into conservatism. My reading of the archive reveals that students and workers in the End Outsourcing and Fees Must Fall protests have begun a process of reinventing the family – or at least the relationship between parents and children – in progressive ways. (Indeed, the fact that the use of the terms "brother" and "sister" are far less prevalent in the archive can perhaps tell us something about how men and women related in the movement, and how that relation was discursively produced). Beyond a clearly articulated love, then, the relationship between students and workers seems to be rooted in mutual respect. The relationship is also not one characterised by naturalised obligation but, as the language of solidarity suggests, reciprocity. However, Mzobe also states that workers "look up" to students. This view is expressed in the context of a discussion about student militancy and the risks that they took for the workers' struggle. In an expression of equality and indeed reciprocal solidarity, Mzobe states that workers will "do anything" for the students who will in turn "do anything" for them. But the asymmetry inherent in the preceding statement leads one to some important questions. Is this, as the wording suggests, a case of workers looking up to students or one of parents looking up to children? When read as the latter, it looks like an inversion of age hierarchies within the family structure. This is subversive, if not egalitarian. When you read it through the lens of students and workers, it reads as consistent with the hierarchies of the university and society more broadly. These are precisely the kinds of questions that any recourse to family politics demands we continuously ask ourselves.

My interest and indeed investment in progressive family politics rests on two ideas. The first is linked to a series of questions that I posed at the conclusion of Chapter 10.4 (Being different, becoming different). There I asked how we may be able to maintain common identity without subverting other identities and reproducing hierarchy. Negri and Hardt pose identity and unity as inextricably linked, and difference as necessarily contradictory with both. Indeed, as I noted, it is only with relation to unity that the "divisiveness" that feminists in the movement have been accused of can exist. I would like to suggest that common identity and unity are not inherently linked – and that it is by thinking these

concepts through the notion of the black family that one can conceive of identity in ways that do not imply an imperative towards oneness. Indeed, the togetherness of the family is a given, rather than an imperative. Additionally, in contrast to the nuclear family "unit" of Western thought, the more expansive notion of the African family – where "brother", "sister", "mother", "father" and "child" speak of connections beyond blood – reveals a kind of togetherness that blurs the lines between insider and outsider in ways that allow for difference within the family. Indeed, the inclusion of some white students and staff in the student-worker family is testament to this.

The second idea that informs my investment in the poor black family as a political subject is the dual nature of the metaphor, to which I referred earlier. For almost every student and worker on campus, there exists beyond campus a "real" family. And if that family is the primary site of the hierarchy and violence that we see replicated in broader society, then the possibility of undoing those oppressive dynamics in that family also presents us with perhaps our best chance of revolutionising existence. Indeed, it seems impossible that we will ever know equality until it exists in the family. When an intergenerational political project like that undertaken by students and workers comes together in ways that adopt the notion of family, and also reinvent it in progressive ways, these relations become imbued with the power to find expression in the broad, black family beyond campus. Just as we bring established notions of family with us to our struggle, so our challenging of these received ideas in struggle allows us, as students, workers, staff and academics to take these home with us. When consciously framed through the notion of the family, our yet incomplete processes of grappling with questions of decolonisation, patriarchy, violence, privilege, heteronormativity, class and commodification present us with the possibility of finding new ways of being together with our mothers, fathers, children, brothers and sisters.

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Additional archival records available on request