

Up All Night, Down for the Count? A Compositionist Approach to Nuit Debout

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Nuit Debout is/was, if anything, a *furtive* phenomenon. How do we account for the emergence, withdrawal, and stuttering attempted returns of Nuit Debout? Nuit Debout needs to be analyzed, and yet its existence confounds analysis. Its operational tactic (intense actions while up all night, then dispersal) defies usual characterization as a social movement. This was compounded by its overall timeline: a rapid upsurge followed by stunning disappearance. What conceptual tools do we have to make sense of the milieu out of which Nuit Debout emerged? And what do media ecologies have to do with it? This article undertakes such an analysis by developing a theoretical framework around social bodies, compositionism, and social reproduction. It draws from autonomist social theory to address what is, or was, Nuit Debout.

Keywords: Nuit Debout, social movements, social reproduction, autonomism

Spring 2016 saw a momentous historical expression in the ongoing global circuits of struggle. Coming less than six months after the brutal coordinated attacks on Parisian nightlife's denizens, Nuit Debout (ND) launched itself into the spotlight with anti labor law protests. For approximately six weeks starting March 31, 2016, protesters intermittently occupied the Place de la République in Paris. On peak nights, thousands gathered nightly in this historic public square. Similar occupations and convergences took hold in other French cities. The largest manifestation, importantly, occurred on the March 31 launch date, with upward of a million people taking to the streets. Within 10 days, ND reached a fever pitch with police confrontations and a continuous nightly occupation of the squares for weeks.

Three hundred cities had their own occupations by early May. But the rapid appearance and contagion were also quickly demobilized. With France still under a relatively fresh state of national emergency, clashes with police polarized some in the key zones. The major day of global action on May 15 did not meet expectations (perhaps set by the unexpected fervor of the first month), and ND almost completely disappeared from the squares and public attention by June. Since September 2016, various

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attempts have been made to use the name "Debout" to mark an action, although none have evidenced anything near the passionate outpouring of those spring nights.

Nuit Debout had a compressed timeline compared with other uprisings in the cycles of struggle: It flashed with a quicker spread into other cities but with a briefer duration. On one hand, a remarkable success, as the intensity and rapid transmission of enthusiasm surprised even the organizers and opened affective possibilities for global circulation. On the other, the operation became unsustainable. Despite reboots, reenactments, and reunions, ND not only stopped spreading, it could barely maintain itself.² How do we account for the months-long emergence, withdrawal, and attempted return of Nuit Debout? Nuit Debout, as appearing and disappearing act, likewise becomes a fleeting object for analysis. For one thing, it is difficult to evaluate this fluid situation within academic structures and temporalities.³

One thing we can extract from the event known as Nuit Debout is that it provokes thinking about what a social movement is. How can we refine our conceptual tools to account for the singularity of operations while still understanding them in context of a circulation of wider struggles? How does ND pose a challenge to criteria for evaluating success or failure? In this article, I examine the mediated component of ND to evaluate its potentials and its pitfalls. But more than assessing a social movement called Nuit Debout, this means addressing a wider milieu, or social body, of which ND is an individuated expression. Reconstructing that body, especially through its media and communication practices, is the task of empirical work.

The Movement and the Body

Recently, what has loosely come to be known as social movement studies has encountered media and communication studies (Mattoni, 2012; Treré, 2012), and scholars in media and communication studies have taken to understanding what John Downing (2008) calls "social movement media" (Dunbar-Hester, 2014; Fuchs, 2014; Gerbaudo, 2012; Hands, 2011; Jeppesen, 2016; Kidd, 2003; Lievrouw, 2011; Milan, 2013; Rodríguez, 2001; Thorburn, 2013; Wolfson, 2014; see also the collections by Cammaerts, Mattoni, & McCurdy, 2013; Dencik & Leister, 2015). Much of social movement and media research

² As of October 2017, the website was mostly inactive: The blog and the Gazette seem to post biweekly, TV Debout's YouTube channel last posted something in September 2016, Radio Debout is mostly dead air, the participation tab exists as an archive of spring 2016.

³ This article's trajectory says something about the challenges in academically studying current uprisings. When this special section was proposed, Nuit Debout was in its surging phase. At that point, I sought to compare the cultural and media components of ND with Occupy Wall Street. My initial draft was sent in fall 2016, when ND was already well past its peak, and attempting haltingly to re-form. The article thus changed from being a comparison to an assessment of the "afterlife" of movements via theoretical questions about social rest and social reproduction. An extended review process and other commitments meant that revising the piece had to continue to take into account ND's ongoing development. At each stage of the article's submission, a reorientation took place. It is also important to mention here that I have only encountered Nuit Debout through media sources (and the English-language media sources almost all stopped mentioning ND in July 2016).

focuses on what Leah Lievrouw (2011) calls “mediated mobilization.” The mobilization emphasis asks such questions as the following: How did social media get people into the streets? How did the digital merge with the on-ground planning to create a massive presence? What were the technologically networked forms of decision making that directed people logistically once in the streets?

How is our research gaze drawn to social movements? Hardt and Negri (2017) argue that we need to be wary of focusing on the most visible manifestations, or their episodic quality, and instead “need to investigate the structures and experiences from which ‘spontaneity’ arises and reveal what those social bodies can do” (p. 21). A social movement’s “task is not to codify new social relations in a fixed order, but instead to create a *constituent process* [emphasis added] that organizes those relations and makes them lasting while also fostering future innovations and remaining open to the desires of the multitude” (Hardt & Negri, 2012, pp. 7–8). In other words, what needs studying in these often “‘leaderless’ movements [is the] production of subjectivity necessary to create lasting social relations” (Hardt & Negri, 2017, p. xiv). Studying something called a social movement means assessing conditions and milieu, the cultivation of constituent power, and the development of subjective relations; in sum, the process is tied to an underlying and ongoing *social body* infused with capacities.

This article follows in this autonomist tradition, arranging a constellation of terms to pose questions about Nuit Debout, but also about our tools that ND, in its flickering, has provoked. To do this, I will focus on *composition* in (1) relation to organization, as well as (2) its recompositional phase. The latter entails examining social reproduction and social rest. I make a proposition. Rather than begin with social movements, I begin with social bodies with two attributes or modalities: motion and rest. Thus, I am not studying social movements (of which ND is one case), but the capacities of a collective body in motion and rest.

Along the way, I highlight ND’s mediated qualities: How were ND’s media practices infused into a cycle of composition–recomposition–decomposition? What are the possibilities for collective political action, and how do media practices enable or constrain those? I argue that, in ND’s case, media were conveners and organizers rather than composers. ND was an activist project that sought to create a platform not just for content, but also for action. What this produced (and reduced) is what is at stake here, and tells us something about social movement media futures.

Composition and Organization

An initial investigation of the autonomist ideas of composition, especially of the passage from composition to organization, gets us on the road. The goal of this excursion is to ask how immanent ND was to its composable relations and how much it transcended those relations, forming a separate plane of organizing.

A social movement with a proper name is often studied for its formal components—its decision-making protocols, functions, and roles; planning efforts; strategic meetings; in sum, the organizational dimension. In addition, social movements involve the production of subjectivity—the encounters, relationships, and convergences that have come to be called *composition* (Armstrong, 1997; Berardi, 2012; Coté, 2010; Dyer-Witheford, 1999; Wright, 2002).

Composition is used here in two ways: (1) the autonomist Marxist framework of understanding struggles and (2) the Spinozist approach to ontology. First, composition refers to the cycles of struggle in which a class forms itself (composition), is met with techniques that disrupt and prevent that self-formation (decomposition), and a subsequent re-formation on terms usually established by capital (recomposition).⁴ Recomposition, against the dominant view that attributes such agency only to capital, can be defined as recuperation from below. The social body (*corpore*) is an accumulation of mechanisms that persist over time, whose capacities are not neutralized when its expressions, forms, and even objectives are subsumed. Our analysis needs to be attuned to the slow and often hidden recomposition that comes to form what Silvia Federici (2012) calls the “self-reproducing movements” and what Negri (2008) calls the “continuity of antagonistic expressions” (p. 67). What happens during the moments that are ordinary, not heroic, highly visible, and sudden?⁵

Second, we can turn to Deleuze’s reading of Spinoza on ontological composition and organization (Armstrong, 1997; Deleuze, 1988). In answering Spinoza’s query “What can a body do?” Deleuze (2007) notes that the body is defined “by the ensemble of relations which compose it” (n.p.), an “infinite number of particles; it is the relations of motion and rest, of speeds and slownesses between particles” (Deleuze, 1988, p. 123).

Composition designates immanent processes of transmission and transduction that begin at the lowest, most mundane interactions to combine capacities. Composition also refers to how bodies enter into relations with one another (how they affect and are affected), a coming-together that cannot be predicted from the component parts or interactions. This plan “has no supplementary dimension; the process of composition must be apprehended for itself, through that which it gives, in that which it gives” (Deleuze, 1988, p. 128; see also Deleuze & Guattari, 1987, pp. 265–272). Composition involves “*experimentally* combining powers, by entering into different relations; only in this way are the powers and capacities of any particular body discovered” (Armstrong, 1997, p. 48). Composition refers to the entity’s emergent qualities, the not-yet-formed.

Organization, on the other hand, refers to processes that externally mediate the forms according to transcendent values and ideals. Power here is “a principle of organization which subordinates the activity of things to a transcendent order” (Armstrong, 1997, p. 47). This “plan of organization” “directs

⁴ This tripartite cycle of composition–decomposition–recomposition has typically been applied to labor and class formation, but I am working in the vein of Franco Berardi (Berardi, 2012; Coté, 2011), Stephen Shukaitis (2009), and others who extend it to the cultural and aesthetic practices of various insurrections. For Berardi (2012), “the process of social recomposition is essentially the process of reactivation of the body of the general intellect, whose social existence is constrained in the precarious fragmentary form” (p. 119).

⁵ As I have argued elsewhere (Bratich, 2017), although the forms of culture jamming—the aesthetic techniques, semiotic interventions, and formalist actions—were recuperated by marketing, the collective body that generated the techniques (the milieu of artists and activists) spent those years experimenting, reforming. Ultimately, I argue, this body subsequently generated other expressions as part of early 21st century counterglobalization movements and, later, Occupy Wall Street.

the development of forms and the formation of subjects but *without itself being given in that which it gives*. It is a hidden structural and/or genetic principle that organizes and defines bodies in terms of their forms and their functions, in terms of the ends they are to serve" (Armstrong, 1997, p. 48, emphasis added).

The relations between composition and organization are vexed and complex, serving as the basis for discussions of co-optation, effectiveness, taking power, the role of parties, and ultimately what it would mean to succeed. Rather than presume the progressive nature of moving from composition to organization (the all-too-easy cry, "We need to organize!"), this approach directs our attention to that transition's pitfalls. The passage from composition to organization is the moment when enhancement *or* diminishment takes place, when decomposition can just as easily emerge as any "motion" forward. The deleterious effects might not be immediately detected, as participants are caught up in the event's enthusiasm. Just as toxins introduced during (even causing) euphoria can reduce the future of the body's capacities, so too can organizational forms decompose, like a chemical poison, the strength of the emergent body in formation. It is not that organization as such needs devaluing. Rather, it calls for a careful attention to the speeds, bodies, and repetitions involved in the passage from composition to organization.

Nuit Debout's Media Campaign From Composition to Organization

Like other urban uprisings (15-M/Indignados, Occupy Wall Street, Tahrir Square), Nuit Debout's crowd launch was not a spontaneous gathering but a result of substantial planning and promotional work. On February 23, 2016 (about a month before the initial upsurge), François Ruffin, founder of the left-wing journal *Fakir* and the director of the documentary film *Merci Patron!*, set up a meeting to conceptualize and plan a widespread mobilization. Ruffin stated that the meeting's aim was "to bring together dispersed struggles" including people protesting against a proposed airport at Notre-Dame-des-Landes, factory workers demonstrating against the Goodyear tire company, and teachers opposing education reforms (Ruffin, 2016). The month following the initial meeting was filled with communication, planning, technical infrastructure setup; in sum, logistics.

Media thus played a key role in this convergence origin story. Nuit Debout's founder Ruffin was a prominent media maker (print and video), and the movement seemed to be inspired partly by a review of Ruffin's film by economic theorist Frédéric Lordon (2016), who considered it a form of "direct action." Nuit Debout became a platform for interaction, sponsoring gatherings, calling meetings, and promoting events. Most important, the Deboutistes created their own media ecologies: Radio Debout, TV Debout, the newspaper *20 mille luttés*, and multiple online sites (including *Gazette Debout*, livestreaming, and social media messaging). This media assemblage was mostly developed in the lead-up to the March 31 convergence. In other words, the platforms were assembled to be launched with the crowd assembly, not after it. It set the conditions for the actions and directions for the assembly.

Nuit Debout was initially a platform for convergence, but one rooted in already existing networks of media production. From the reports, ND was a conflicted media effort. Ruffin's own words express this ambivalence. On the one hand, his affirmation of open-ended composition: "Personally, I think it is always

better to start from what already exists rather than try to create a dynamic ex nihilo" (Ruffin, 2016, para. 3). However, Ruffin also warns us not to think of ND as emerging from relations immanent to the gathering: Nuit Debout is

not a spontaneous movement, born as a miracle of the sum of common desires. . . . It was necessary to organize all this [euphoria], to channel these disparate aspirations and this need for action. It was necessary to communicate, to distribute hundreds of leaflets during the March 31st demonstration, to create a website and to set up barnums [tents and displays], to send the equipment to project the film. (Ruffin, 2016, para. 4)

Ruffin signals the importance of media infrastructure in shaping the direction and capacities of what seems to be an amorphous undifferentiated mass. In doing so, he expresses a key idea: Media as logistics mediate the passage from composition to organization.

ND actively sought to convene disparate groups and articulate struggles via its media practices. The Convergence des Luttes website became the generator of communiqués (<http://www.convergencedesluttes.fr/>). At times, these fliers resembled corporate-sponsored press releases, as they displayed in their headers a parade of organization logos. In other words, instead of a movement of movements, we saw a mediation of mediations. The last communiqué posted on this site was April 20, 2016, in the thick of the protests. Links to the most current attempts to converge the struggles are broken.

Convergence des Luttes also affirms the openness of the Nuit Debout platform, defining it as a "big logistics team" whose goal simply was to enable the initial occupation of the Place de la République (Ballast Collective, 2016, para. 5). After that, Ruffin (2016) notes, "The rest does not depend on us but on those who will recognize themselves in the movement and who will take it in hand . . . [a way of] *making sense and making common*" (para. 5). This affirmation of the composition of relations forming a social body runs up against a well-known tendency: the efforts by existing organizations to intervene and redirect the emerging energy. Nuit Debout's media campaigns vacillated between being a composer and an organizer, although its curtailing of some elements and its residual tendencies toward Social Front style articulation ultimately rendered it more like an organizer (not necessarily successful, as we will see).

Nuit Debout's Media Campaign as Decomposition

As is well discussed in the movements, activism has a tendency to split itself, often professionalizing through organizers, sometimes derisively called "movement managers." The most familiar versions are the party and trade unionists who show up to tap into and channel the participants' enthusiasm through disciplinary techniques. Nuit Debout has an ambivalent relationship to these ordering forces. Although Nuit Debout's origin is often positioned as a protest against labor-reform, its initial launch consisted of groups with different interests. Ruffin called it a "convergence of social struggles" (reflected in the aforementioned Convergence des Luttes).

We can think of this convergence within the composition/organization dynamic. This desire for convergence has been an ongoing objective for the French Left (and elsewhere), with the slogan signifying both a trade-union model of organizing as well as a less formalized process in militant mobilizations (e.g., the alterglobalization's "movement of movements"). Commenting on the convergence of struggles slogan, one observer thought it signaled the arrival of "specialists in 'changing the world' and technicians of social change" (Benasayag & Cany, 2016, para. 12). The concern expressed by observers was that an emerging revolt was getting channeled, controlled, and sanitized around particular objectives; in other words, that a transcendent operation sought to direct and guide an emerging composition. It is an ongoing question of whether the trade unions were successful in guiding the uprising, or whether they ended up being transformed by it.

The NGOification of social movements is another example of mediation whose agents are trained to slide between composition and organization, often generating a transcendent plane (far removed from its immanent relations and operating on a terrain already filled with other mediators such as the state). In other cases, recent "leaderless" movements are infused with guiding or *kyber* elements, typically in their tech ops groups, that can result in an internal decomposition (see Bratich, 2011).

Another, related, decompositional tendency is overindividualization. Nuit Debout's media ecologies launched at least one microcelebrity: Rémy Buisine, a 25-year-old former radio sales agent and community manager who transformed himself into a digital journalist. With more than 9 million followers on Periscope, a live streaming app, Buisine became a key media outlet for ND. During the April 3 mobilizations, Buisine's live feed of a protest had more than 80,000 simultaneous viewers. Buisine's media skills, not as reporter but as commercial social network ("community") manager, exemplify the media entrepreneurship located in Nuit Debout's DNA.

Buisine eventually found full-time employment with political news start-up Brut. The rise of a microcelebrity such as Buisine (and Ruffin, who a year later was elected to the National Assembly) also raises the specter of overindividualization. Did the individualization of the collective practices via media platforms thwart ND's responsiveness to composition? Although beyond the scope of this article, it is worth asking about the draw of the microcelebrity in a supposedly leaderless movement. When movement microcelebrities move in particular directions, what happens to collective composition?

In sum, media were at Nuit Debout's core—as logistics and platforms, not tools. However, these media practices were only partially developed in composition. Its media ecologies was mostly generated as an organizing effort, as host for compositions made in advance (under the proper name Nuit Debout). In the planning and initial task distribution, we can see how ND functioned mostly as a campaign, specifically a product launch or brand promotion.

Nuit Debout was what Hardt and Negri (2017) call an "operator of assembly within a multitude that is self-organized" (p. xvii). But what kind of operator? Nuit Debout media functioned as originator, convener, and ecology created *for* the launch, akin to *event planning*. In other words, ND operated its assembly like a brand: a transmedia campaign with parameters and preexisting objectives. Nuit Debout was, in the way Lury (2004) and Arvidsson (2006) define brands, a platform for action. Nuit Debout's

disconnection from composition thus derived from mimicking commercial techniques (branding, event planning) and composing through an external articulation experiment, hastily enacted. It is as though the lessons brand managers learned from counterhegemonic campaigns now returned to the movements themselves.⁶

The case of Nuit Debout allows us, perhaps more than most social movement media, to posit a compositionist media studies approach to cycles of struggle along the lines of what Mark Coté (2003) and others call the “communication school of autonomous thought” or “transversal media studies” (Nick Dyer-Witford and Greig de Peuter, 2009). This approach makes media a key force in developing capacities. Compositionist media studies would assess terms such as *grassroots*, *do-it-yourself*, *bottom-up*, *peer-to-peer*, and *alternative media* as a vital history of the immanent processes of media subjectivation. And it would shift attention from the mobilizing and public-facing features of social movement media to their work in binding, associating, and strengthening relationships, and reproducing collectives. In other words, combining the compositional analyses above with (as we will see below) a feminist orientation toward composition as social reproduction.

In compositionist media studies, media are less tools or platforms and more like a media culture: They form what Franco Berardi (2012) and Michael Goddard (2011), drawing from Felix Guattari, call social movements’ media ecologies. Speaking of his involvement with Radio Alice, Guattari notes that media were not just instruments, but “laboratories of thought and experimentation for future forms of subjectivation” (Goddard, 2011, p. 8). Goddard (2011) summarizes Guattari on Radio Alice succinctly, declaring that it was a “machine for the production of new forms of sensibility and sociability” that generated “a collective assemblage of enunciation allowing for the maximum of transversal connections and subjective transformations between all these emergent subjectivities” (p. 10). Media become platforms for feedback, intensification, recursivity, and duration forming “a self-referential network for an unforeseen processual production of subjectivity amplifying itself via technical means” (p. 11).

In its media genesis, Nuit Debout was ambivalent about composition: promoting it in hype, encouraging it in practice, while expressing desires for and techniques of organization. It also relied on a self-generated media core, formed by prelaunch participants. Nuit Debout found itself caught up in its own success as transmedia campaign. It was not able to avoid an autonomy of the political sphere and its attendant media separation—media as mobilizing and organizing force, as conveners of external actors, as logistical operators, as account handlers, and as brand managers.

Decomposition as Internal Separation

But Nuit Debout’s rapid decline is not solely attributable to its media elements. Assessments of other factors came from participants such as Mathilde, a 25-year-old student, for whom the waning of Nuit Debout stemmed from “the timing, just before the summer break” (which presumed a student-based operation). She also mentioned something more salient: a “lack of popular support” (Blavignat, 2017).

⁶ Given that brands draw from tactics and language found in warfare, we could say Nuit Debout was also akin to a battle or operation; not a social movement, but a social maneuver.

Most commonly, “popular support” refers to broader public opinion, one measured in terms of numbers. But we can also define its lack qualitatively as a disconnection from vital populations on the ground. Specifically, I would mark two of these material supports: (1) the historically marginalized populations in the *banlieues* (the suburbs on the outskirts of Paris) and (2) militant youth (although those two overlap significantly).

Nuit Debout’s attempts at linking its rather White, bourgeois precariat with more working-class and migrant populations in the *banlieues* were minimal, if existent, in the lead-up. Starting mid-April 2016, there were attempts at articulations, such as Banlieu Debout, or bringing working-class neighborhood residents to Place de la République (Bernard & Massemin, 2016). By June 1, hopes of a convergence between these struggles faded as participants could not get over the obstacles facing these different commitments.

Nuit Debout also had a conflicted relationship with conflict, distancing itself from the confrontational tactics with police, found mostly at the *cortège de tête* (the head of the march). In mid-April 2016, the street clashes with police repression became a topic within the assembly. Denouncements, distancing, and affirmations were given. As one local resident and participant/observer put it, “The violence is very clearly marginal, but is this fringe inside or outside Nuit Debout? We are in a gray zone” (Boutry, 2016, para. 3). However, an official Nuit Debout press release dispelled the grayness by declaring that “giving in to violence is counterproductive and weakens the movement” (Boutry, 2016, para. 2). The statement did not blame protestors, though it stripped their agency by turning them into victims of police provocation: “We are not fooled” (Boutry, 2016, para. 2).

Taking and holding space on streets was coded as “violence,” while community defense from repression was determined to be outside Nuit Debout. Conflictual acts in the *cortège de tête* were marginalized by their timing: It was said that the actions took place typically at 1 a.m., “after” the organizers’ dispersal call for the night. This reduced ND’s composition by separating some of itself from the official ND (determined by organizers). Without taking the streets as a terrain that needed to be defended and won, ND detached from its material spatial dynamics, producing a convergence without terrain. Nuit Debout became increasingly separated from its composable relations via an organizing effort. The result, as the Invisible Committee (2017) noted, was politics as “a particular sphere, separate from ‘life,’ an activity consisting in speaking, debating, and voting” (p. 55).

Compounding all of these internal tendencies toward separation was the familiar face of police repression. The French state sent in security forces to arrest marchers, provoke crowd action, and instill into Deboutistes a fear of the streets. In a heightened security state, police forces ensured that ND would not be allowed to spread, geographically and affectively. Once boundaries were tested by more militant elements in the convergence, the decompositional dispositifs of the state came in to split ND into fragments, reduce its capacities, and force it into retreat.

In sum, while the state’s extreme disruption neutralized Nuit Debout’s capacities, ND decomposed from “within” via two operations: (1) becoming an assembly operator through media entrepreneurship and logistical organization, and (2) separating itself from particular populations

(expressly or via neglect). It is not that organization as such necessarily led to this, or that all organizational forms will decompose (at least not in the same ways). But the passage from composition to organization needs greater attention—a process of reflection via a slow speed. The emphasis on motion, on movement, on rapid circulation has appeal when focusing on initial mobilization. But the more that the planning takes charge of the composition (rather than strategizing, encouraging affinities, gathering strength), the more likely a rapid disappearance will take place: in other words, a flash and a burnout. In a temporal twist, what might be needed is a *preventative decomposition* or a recomposition during composition. The next half of this article takes us to this unusual temporality with familiar processes.

Nuit Debout as Recomposition

In addition to our first understanding of composition (the Deleuzian passage from composition to organization), Nuit Debout needs to be analyzed around the recompositional moment in the autonomist cycle of struggles. Recomposition, it will be recalled, is the process of re-forming a collective body in response to the decompositional efforts by the state and/or capital, a recuperation from below during the moments in between the highly visible episodes. The easiest way to envision this is to think of the moments after a defeat (e.g., Occupy Wall Street and others' eviction from their spaces). The social body is often logistically, energetically, and even militarily vanquished by a stronger force. How do we characterize this recuperative period?

And continuing our emphasis on media practices, we ask, "How might media ecologies appear as a type of recomposition, a persistence after the decompositional efforts by the biopolitical repressive state?" Once we formulate a perspective on the ebbs as well as the flows of what we call a "movement," we might be able to approach Nuit Debout with more adequate evaluative tools. To do so, I propose adding two concepts to the constellation: (1) social rest in addition to social movement and (2) social reproduction's expanded significance in the cycles. An excursion into these concepts is needed before we turn again to Nuit Debout.

Recomposition 1: Social Bodies at Rest

Recall that in Deleuze's reading of Spinoza, a body is composed of relations between motion and rest (speeds and slownesses, deceleration and acceleration). We can redefine "social movement," then, by making movement reside in a social body as one of its fundamental attributes. This means examining its complement: a social body at rest, or *social rest*. When social movements are called social *unrest*, then social rest receives connotations such as complacency, latency, inertness, and passivity (especially when opposed to the "activists"). But what if we gave rest a break, with a newfound appreciation for it in what gets called a movement? A social body at rest needs analytic attention; otherwise, we face a one-dimensional view of how change works, especially of the capacities to act that result from the accumulated resistance-based dispositifs.

Social rest, as part of the recompositional moment, is not a passive, neutralized, immobile state of repose. Rather, we need to account for the various styles of regrouping and recuperation that take place during these seemingly inert periods. The time of rest involves a recounting and a recap, re-forming

the body through attentiveness to experiences that are not as easily available in the heat of action; in other words, a moment for the social body to form ideas of itself and its affective encounters. What knowledge is generated out of this impasse and what exit routes are forged? Finally, how might such an understanding help shape a passage to action, a surmounting that restarts the cycle of struggles again within this social body, or what Frédéric Lordon (2014) calls "the thrust that changes conditions of something from rest to motion" (p. 2).

Some activities that can take place during social rest include archiving, analyzing, reconstructing relationships, and recovering affections, all geared toward rebuilding capacities. Boler, Macdonald, Nitsou, and Harris (2014) turn our attention to these as less recognized "connective labors." John Postill (2017) asks us to consider the life and afterlife of the practices developed in fleeting actions and temporary squares. How might media facilitate stories that sift through the past's traces to determine causes of joyful encounters and sad defeats? How can platforms share clandestine and fading memories?⁷ Media platforms, embedded in social platforms of camps or communities, participate in the ongoing construction of an emergent body politic.

Once we take social rest as a necessary object of study, we can ask, "What are the different forms of rest?" In Nuit Debout's case, was it a forced rest because of a repressive defeat? Was it a result of an external co-optation? Was it precipitated by an internal dissipation of powers due to strategic errors or ham-fisted organizational undertakings? How did Nuit Debout's media ecologies form and sustain relationships, providing an environment to move out of an impasse and to restart mobilized struggles? Answering these questions would entail significantly more empirical research, but here we can point to some initial characteristics.

In social movement studies terms, recomposition or moment of rest is sometimes called *latency*. Latency, in its most common definitions, is characterized by relative visibility—the "condition of being concealed." But social rest is more than latency; it is the manifestation of the body in recuperation, repair, and restoration.

To get to recomposition's singularity, we can introduce one of latency's synonyms. *Dormancy* refers to a state of "inactivity" or being "fixed in place"—a nod to the speeds and slownesses of the compositional plane. Moreover, it means "a state of rest," rooted in the Latin *dormire* from which the French *dormir* "to sleep" derives. Sleep is not an invisible state between waking manifestations; it is a necessary difference in speed for the body to persist. Dormancy is a state immanent to the body

⁷ Decomposition lurks even at this level of recomposition. Collective memory depends on recording technologies that are often corporate platforms with proprietary data arrangements, putting access at the whim of private interests. The "industrial exteriorization of memory" or *mnemotechnics*, as Bernard Stiegler (2003) calls it, can transform "the conditions of being together" with a separation and indeterminacy (pp. 155, 163). Such dangers could be offset by a recompositional multitude that can collectively know, remember, document, store, and access more than any single individual. In any event, recomposition needs to prepare for all the forces amassed to prevent the technical preservation of a movement's memory.

undergoing it, not a hidden dimension prefacing visible expression to an outside spectator. This notion of dormancy is particularly relevant in assessing Nuit Debout's operations. What kind of recomposition did Nuit Debout undertake? What were the organizational speeds and tactical decisions that affected its rest, dormancy, and social reproduction?

Given the limited space here, ND's specific media ecologies are a matter for further detailed investigation. As a general lesson, ND asks us to turn our analytic eye toward the media forms that do not mobilize, but recompose and remember. This would mean looking at ND's media ecologies as they (re)produced a social body via gathering, reaching limits, overcoming, and transforming its conditions. In this case, ND's media ecologies, by being heavily constructed in advance, tended toward becoming an external, separating mechanism—an activity generator and articulating organizer increasingly unmoored from the emerging body.

Doing justice to dormancy and rest means examining recomposition differently. Although ND's media campaign importantly spread enthusiasm and moved people through streets, it is important to remember how media and communication researchers have urged us to look beyond activation and mobilization (Jeppesen, 2016; Kidd, 2003; Thorburn, 2017) and toward the fundamental dimension that autonomist feminists (among others) have highlighted: social reproduction.

Recomposition 2: Social Reproduction

In a 2011 interview with Max Haiven, Silvia Federici explains that "reproduction . . . doesn't only mean how humans reproduce biologically, it is a broad concept that encompasses . . . how communities are built and rebuilt, and how resistance and struggle can be sustained and expanded" (Haiven, 2011, para. 1). Elise Thorburn (2016) defines social reproduction as "the daily and intergenerational processes of reproducing human beings which takes place in the home but also in the school, the hospital, the prison, and . . . online" (p. 2). Canonical figures who led and still lead the efforts to break through the barriers within orthodox (even heterodox) Marxist analyses to prioritize social reproduction around labor and value include Maria Dalla Costa and Selma James (1973), Silvia Federici (2004), and Leopoldina Fortunati (1996). These thinkers have tended to focus on domestic labor and care work often marginalized in Marxist accounts. Recent researchers have placed media and communications technology centrally into the process of social reproduction (Fortunati, 2015; Thorburn, 2017) and within movements themselves (Boyer et al., 2014; Federici, 2012; Jeffries, 2015; Thorburn, 2013; Zechner, 2013).⁸

Leopoldina Fortunati (2015), having studied the matter for decades, says social reproduction continues but "not as we know it." In this revised sense, social reproduction is "an immense laboratory of social and political experimentations, hazards, dreams, initiatives, and visions. The reproductive sphere is where the most relevant political and social movements have developed in the last decades" (para. 7).

⁸ In addition to digital formats (social media, livestreaming), we can highlight minor or ephemeral media (e.g., zines, crafting) to understand the different speeds, circulations, and relationships that form a social body through recomposition (Bratich, 2010; Jeppesen, 2012; Piepmeier, 2009).

Fortunati argues that what we are witnessing is a "movement of the concrete": "a large social composition . . . constituted by women who bring with them the feminist and post-feminist experience" (para. 19).

Social reproduction is thus a recompositional process, but it challenges the chronology of the cycle of struggles. Recomposition at the subjective level is needed not just to sustain an operation after decomposition, but also to launch it in the first place. It operates on the micropractices in the collective social body that, when developed, propels the more visible expression (that which receives the proper name such as *Nuit Debout*). Devaluing social reproduction and neglecting community care can diminish the social body's persistence. Renewing everyday life forms the basin and conditions in which a social movement arises as expressive event or formal property (motion).

Social reproduction as recomposition also contains "myriad forms of daily resistance" that allow people to cope and sustain themselves that then underpin the "episodic but repeated revolt of potent social movements" (Hardt & Negri, 2017, p. xvii; see also Van Meter, 2017). Social reproduction tests accepted notions of movement: Instead of expressing "their political force with precipitate actions (public demonstrations, flash mobs, strikes, and so on)" social reproduction is involved in "a counter-production, a counter-consumption, and a counter-reproduction, beginning now, during the empire of the capitalist system, not after" (Fortunati, 2015, paras. 19, 20). It forms, in other words, the body whose attributes include motion and rest.

Nuit Debout struggled with its social reproduction. The key invention of ND might have contributed to its decomposition, namely, its tactical operation around encampment and the night. Its response to police shutting down the squares was inventive. Whereas Zuccotti Park occupiers sought other spaces (with little luck as the police had already planned for such measures), *Nuit Debout* created another spatiotemporality: dispersing in the mornings, reconvening at night. This operative logic was a stroke of tactical genius initially. But what kind of body could be sustained in this innovative arrangement of time and space?

Nuit Debout was a moving body, but one that did not find much rest or recuperation. One main reason for this was that it was missing the encampment. The encampment is, for some movement scholars, the core practice that allows a strong body to form through shared acts, trusted relations, ongoing support, and face-to-face accountability (see Brown, Feigenbaum, Frenzel, & McCurdy, 2017; Feigenbaum, Frenzel, & McCurdy, 2013). It was difficult to establish consistency without the renewal that comes with organizing basic needs, such as sleep. As Sarah Sharma (2014) notes, the night matters as a site and time of care. Turning it into the time of speeches and marches marginalizes the question of sleep, of *dormir*. Where and how did participants sleep? How did they recompose themselves in the light of day? What did dawn bring except for participants scattering? *Nuit Debout's* nocturnal quality made it singularly visible, while making recomposition hide in the light.

What *Nuit Debout* missed out on by leaving in the morning were all the productions of subjectivity that come with everyday recomposition, with what the Invisible Committee (2017) marks as the *commune*. *Nuit Debout*, unlike ongoing occupations and encampments, generated street enthusiasm without the basin of social reproduction, the everyday cooperative actions that construct being. It became

a sensation by severing from social reproduction (sleeping, cooking, building, cleaning, securing, eating, kissing, etc.) in favor of displays and speeches, thereby preventing the social body from composing. Nuit Debout was a campaign, complete with a launch and a transmedia experience. It carried the nineteenth century's communards in spirit, but without their material practices. This was a haunted recomposition.

Activity without dormancy is a recipe for burnout, unsustainability, and collapse. Staying up all night was innovative but ultimately untenable as this version of dormancy meant moving together while resting apart. Like collective endorphins running high at a rave, ND gave its attendees a reason to feel alive, together, and singular. But the necessary collective dormancy was missing: What awaited protestors at dawn was a job, a retreat to sleep on one's own again, a dispersion. An effective tactic (evasion, surprise) weakened the force (the social body) using it.

In its initial stages, Nuit Debout did not attend to its recomposition, to its dormancy, at a micropractical level. This inattention to recomposition by the entrepreneurial brand campaigners did not resonate with exteriorities (marginalized populations in the *banlieues* and militant youth) and resulted in an immanent decompositional dispositif. A nutrient that allowed ND to persist was also a poison. This does not mean that these were destined to happen, but as these features hardened they determined the pathways ND could take.

Conclusion: Nuit Debout Reboots

Nuit Debout seems to have learned from its own missteps. A year after its appearance, ND seemed to be undergoing another recomposition. In summer 2017, Nuit Debout's primary website announced that it was becoming part of, if not merging into, Le Front Social, a convergence of convergences. Although the original Social Front was launched as an explicitly trade unionist project, *Gazette Debout* has faith that it can overrun those origins, seeking to harvest "the fruit of the lessons learned in the spring of 2016" including "taking into account the power to mobilize social networks . . . and to build and support local initiatives rather than simply opposing the anti-social welfare policy of the government" ("Le Front social," 2017, para. 21).

The *Gazette Debout* turns its attention to the myriad existing compositions of French struggles. It accounts for the excluded populations from the spring 2016 operations, including already-existing neighborhood committees, police antiviolence efforts, Zones of Self-Defense, neighborhood festivals, and alternative media. Nuit Debout's primary media outlet also seems to be aware of the importance of recomposition, here listed as the material constraints of organizing; they seek "the construction of common spaces" and call for "taking into account the timetable of others," downplaying meeting time "to find ourselves better together" ("Le Front social," 2017, para. 23).

With this self-accounting also comes a new wariness of transcendence-based organization, especially the "political parties . . . to avoid any form of destructive internal competition" ("Le Front social," 2017, para. 20). There is also a renewed interest in movement defense as capacity building: "Solidarity against state repression must be seen as a bulwark of common mobilization" ("Le Front social," 2017, para. 22). This appears to be a recuperative use of recomposition time, a moment for sustainable

self-reproduction. The question is how much this optimistic self-assessment is the hype one would expect in a transmedia brand-oriented movement.⁹ That future will take another analysis with a different publication pace to make those assessments.

For now, in hindsight we can say that Nuit Debout tapped into something extremely vital: an enthusiasm, a feeling of potency, and a sense that being with others was a refreshing power. Nuit Debout developed and maintained a mediated social body briefly as logistics for mobilization, a laboratory for relationships and a platform for content. Its singular flash prompts us to place it in the well-worn litany of street mobilizations.

However, it ultimately generated separating tendencies from the emerging body it itself helped inaugurate. Its defining features (organizational entrepreneurship and movement speed) resulted in (1) the passage to organization becoming decompositional, in part due to its core media strategies; and (2) an inattention to recomposition that depleted the social body of its reproduction and rest. Nuit Debout provokes us to be more circumspect about the will to organization and to take recomposition (rest and reproduction) seriously.

Nuit Debout's decomposition was not simply an internal or external matter. The most obvious and destructive force was the state's policing operations that immobilized and corralled the literal movement of bodies. At the same time, the state form of mediation (political parties, traditional union organizations) recuperated prominent figures such as Ruffin and marginalized the more active elements in the *cortège de tête*. Finally, commercial promotional techniques became normalized alongside reliance on corporate technical platforms, resulting in a tendency toward separation from the body-in-composition.

One could also link in a significant way how the reproduction (maintenance, care, support) of alternative media infrastructure is tied to social reproduction (Deseriis, 2017; Robé, 2017). When relying on corporate infrastructures, the (re)compositional relations associated with technical services are removed from the social body and placed in an inaccessible sphere. This is especially the case with the common corporate platforms, challenging the nature of the social within "social media." Were these intrinsic or extrinsic attributes? A robust research agenda focusing on mediated composition would take these up in terms of degrees or doses.

In the meantime, I want to end by highlighting another spore emanating from Nuit Debout, one that can give us another thought about its recompositional future. On September 12, 2017, at the national protest against Macron's labor law, we saw the appearance of the Witch Bloc, a gathering to call for "Macron in the Cauldron." At one level, we can define this as an activist tactic: action at a distance that involved performative speech (hexes). But as a gathering, in its composition, witches signal another

⁹ One takes pause at a statement such as the following: "All the innovative modalities experienced last year will certainly find a second wind within the Social Front" ("Le Front social," 2017, para. 19). But who needs this "second wind"—the excluded militants and emboldened local projects? More likely it is the ND organizers who seek a jumpstart, lest they end up being the butt of activist jokes (Invisible Committee, 2017).

tradition. As Silvia Federici (2004) has argued in her history of capitalism's origins, primitive accumulation depended on the disqualification and even destruction of women's knowledge and healing practices under the sign of the witch. Perhaps what we see in this bloc is a revival of this seemingly vanquished body, a different haunting of a different recomposition.

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