

1 **Introduction**

2

3 **RESISTANCE AGAINST THE AGAINST**

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5 The dearest memory of my childhood is when we moved to our new house. ... This gave me  
6 the chance to regularly attend ... the Circle for the socialist childhood, where young socialists  
7 introduced us to class struggle and on how to build a better society, with no classes and no  
8 exploitation.

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10 A young couple was not allowed to have a walk together without the presence of a family  
11 member ... We discussed on the backwardness of this custom. We decided to challenge it ...  
12 going out hand in hand with our girlfriends.

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14 [In 1943] I founded the - provisional - National Liberation Committee for the Castelli Romani,  
15 to which I participated in my capacity of president. (Capogrossi 2018) [My translation].<sup>1</sup>

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17 Those are flashes of a resistant life in the age of Resistance par excellence, one of the dispersed  
18 accounts of Resistance to Nazi-fascism during World War II. Salvatore Capogrossi has not drawn much  
19 historical commentary. Nevertheless, his memoirs meticulously describe the everyday struggles that  
20 marked his life, including those years in which local fascist authorities and then Nazi occupiers tried  
21 to domesticate his rebellious little town, Genzano<sup>2</sup>, situated on the outskirts of Rome (Castelli  
22 Romani) and better known as 'little Moscow'.

23 Yet, the pages of his book where disillusion and bitterness prevail are not those that describe  
24 the infamous injustices of Nazi-fascism. Once weapons are silent, it is time for reflections and also  
25 for recognition. In the aftermath of World War II, Resistance becomes material to be codified. On  
26 the one hand, the works of historians that reconstruct the crucial battles, the main characters, the  
27 acronyms and the political parties. On the other hand, the formal recognition of the State that  
28 distributes the honour (and the pension) of 'Resistance partisan' to those who participated to at least  
29 three armed conflicts between 1943 and 1945. For Capogrossi, both these processes are not only  
30 incorrect, but also dangerously reductive. He thinks of historians who attributed to the Allies the

1 successful sabotage of Nazi trains directed to Cassino<sup>3</sup> conducted instead by his brigade. He thinks of  
2 those young women who risked their lives transporting weapons for the partisans hidden in the  
3 countryside, whose crucial contribution will be ignored and forgotten by the processes of official  
4 recognition. But, more generally, he thinks of his own life, his lifetime engagement that cannot be  
5 restricted to the years of war. Sadder but wiser, he concludes: 'As I was able to show in this book,  
6 Resistance to fascism in Genzano actually started in 1919' (Capogrossi 2018: 246).<sup>4</sup> Before armed  
7 struggle, even before fascism in Italy came to power (1922), his Resistance was already there. But  
8 what is this Resistance that Capogrossi describes then? Can his Resistance still have the capital letter?  
9 Perhaps Capogrossi's memoirs are more about resistances, without capital letter and in the plural. It  
10 is in the hiatus that separates those resistances from Resistance that we need to find a trajectory for  
11 problematizing the concept of resistance. That will be the task of this book.

12         The problem, though, is whether there is actually room to think resistance outside the  
13 historic memory of the Resistance during World War II. Jacques Derrida probably summarizes the  
14 general feeling of his generation when defines resistance as a 'word loaded with all the pathos of my  
15 nostalgia, as if, at any cost, I would like not to have missed blowing up trains, tanks, and headquarters  
16 between 1940 and 1945' (Derrida 1998: 2).<sup>5</sup> This sense of overloading and conflation can partly  
17 explain a certain reluctance to the conceptualization of resistance in political and theoretical  
18 debates. Michel Foucault's engagement with resistance is quite emblematic in this sense. Although I  
19 aim to unveil his engagement with resistance throughout the whole of his work, Foucault's explicit  
20 use of the term is soon abandoned in favour of other germane, but perhaps less historically laden,  
21 concepts. As Judith Butler notes, in his 'What is critique?' 'one might be tempted to think that  
22 Foucault is simply describing resistance, but here it seems that [critique as] virtue has taken the  
23 place of that term. ... We will have to ask why' (Butler 2001: 218). Michael Hardt (2010) attempts to  
24 answer this question in the frame of Foucault's refusal to sign a petition in defence of the Red Army  
25 Faction's attorney Klaus Croissant, in which the West German state was accused of becoming fascist.  
26 His hypothesis is that the historical legacy of Resistance has somehow managed to impose precise  
27 theoretical implications on any possible conceptualization of resistance. Resistance was somehow  
28 bound to be stuck with its own enemy (fascism), but also with those specific modalities (armed  
29 struggle and clandestine bands). Especially in the late 1970s, Resistance and fascism come to form a  
30 political and theoretical compound - when there is fascism, there *must* be Resistance: 'in groups like

1 the Red Army Faction and the Italian Red Brigades, the claim [of a ‘fascist state’] carried specific  
2 political consequences: since the state was fascist, the only effective means to oppose it was armed  
3 struggle organized in highly disciplined, clandestine bands’ (Hardt 2010: 154).

4 A similar hypothesis has also been advanced by Howard Caygill to justify the striking absence  
5 of a theoretical engagement with the concept of resistance in the works of Italian Autonomia,  
6 particularly in the work of Antonio Negri and Mario Tronti. Caygill wonders ‘whether the avoidance  
7 of the term “resistance” was an allergic response to the mythology of Resistance in Italy and its  
8 ideological role in the post-war Italian constitution or to the Red Brigades’ description of themselves  
9 as partisans of a “New Resistance”’ (Caygill 2013: 219).

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## 12 Against the traditional understanding of resistance

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14 Away from the monolithic couple Resistance-fascism, resistance has received a growing attention  
15 after the cycle of struggles in 2011, ranging from the Arab spring to the Spanish *indignados*, the Greek  
16 *aganaktismenoi* occupations, the Occupy movement and the UK riots. Instead of blocking a  
17 theoretical engagement with the concept of resistance, the streets of Athens, Tunis, Madrid, Cairo,  
18 New York and London have been more than an inspiration for a much-needed theoretical analysis of  
19 resistance and political struggle. Several publications have alimanted a growing debate whose  
20 urgency reaches far beyond the necessity of filling a theoretical lacuna in virtue of its own  
21 embodiment into concrete practices of resistance (Hardt and Negri 2012, Mason 2012, Žižek 2012,  
22 Caygill 2013, Douzinas 2013, Worth 2013, Bloom 2016, Fishwick and Connolly 2018). In these works,  
23 there has been a significant advancement in conceptualizing resistance well beyond the couple  
24 Resistance-fascism: each resistance has its own enemy and this does not have to be necessarily  
25 fascist. By the same token, each resistance has its own modality and does not necessarily involve  
26 neither armed struggle, nor secrecy or clandestinity.

27 Yet, what persists, more or less implicitly, is a certain identification of resistance with rare  
28 and spectacular events of struggle. Resistance involves masses, barricades, occupations, clashes, a  
29 certain degree of violence and febrile enthusiasm. These coordinates define a circumscribed moment  
30 in history that momentarily disrupts the ordinary stability of power. This appears prominently in

1 Costas Douzinas' proclamation that the recent uprisings suggest that 'ours is an age of resistance'  
2 (Douzinas 2013: 9). Douzinas looks at resistance through Alain Badiou's concept of event: 'a pure  
3 break with the becoming of an object of the world, ... an intemporal instant which renders disjunct  
4 the previous state of an object (the site) and the state that follows' (Badiou 2007: 39). The event of  
5 resistance marks a rupture, an absolute separation with the rest of history given in its isolation and  
6 circumscription. But when did our age of resistance actually begin? Is it still on? And what happens  
7 to resistance in the age that precedes an age of resistance?

8         Capogrossi's assertion of the continuity of his resistance poses a radical challenge to these  
9 questions. Against Badiou's concept of event, Daniel Bensaïd highlights the theoretical and strategical  
10 problems that this account of resistance implies: '[d]etached from its historical conditions, pure  
11 diamond of truth, the event ... is akin to a miracle. ... Its rarity prevents us from thinking its expansion'  
12 (Bensaïd 2004: 101). On the one hand, there is power in its ordinariness; on the other hand, there is  
13 resistance in its miraculous exception, always already on the verge of vanishing to leave room for  
14 another age of non-resistance. Despite the assonance, this account of the event does not capture the  
15 theoretical potential of Foucault's relationality between power and resistance: 'Where there is  
16 power, there is resistance' (Foucault 1978: 95). Not only, resistance as event undermines the  
17 contemporaneity and coextensiveness of power and resistance; it also reduces the crucial  
18 contributions of a multiplicity of resistant practices (e.g. Capogrossi's resistances before 1943-1945)  
19 that precede the miracle of the age of resistance. The notion of rarity has the effect of closing off  
20 the possibility of thinking the expansion of resistance (as continuous multiplicity of practices), but  
21 also the possibility of thinking resistance *as* expansion: proliferation, creation, openings, becomings.  
22 The exploration of this possibility defines the trajectory of this book.

23         Foucault's concept of resistance serves here as the overarching theoretical framework. His  
24 intuition that 'resistance comes first, and resistance remains superior to the forces of the process'  
25 (Foucault 1997a: 167) hints towards a conceptualization of resistance that fully accounts for its  
26 creative and affirmative character. The primacy of resistance operates a Copernican revolution of  
27 traditional understandings of the relation between power and resistance. The latter has often been  
28 conceptualized as subordinated, reactive, negative and bound to defeat. This is not only the result  
29 of explicit theorizations, but it also reflects a certain sedimentation in the ordinary use of the word  
30 resistance. Within this traditional understanding of resistance, it is possible to distinguish two main

1 axes: one focuses on the oppositional stance of resistance; the other on its reactive character. These  
2 axes represent trajectories defined by the convergences of multiple conceptual lines on which  
3 distinct understandings of resistance install themselves. The two trajectories often tend to overlap  
4 as the reactive tradition necessarily rests on the oppositional understanding of resistance. Yet, recent  
5 attempts of challenging the reactive tradition have nevertheless maintained the oppositional  
6 trajectory, de facto demonstrating their distinction. The task is to show how the primacy of  
7 resistance can successfully reject the reactive understanding of resistance through the  
8 problematization of its oppositional stance, by subordinating the latter to the creative and  
9 transformational character of resistance. The hypothesis is that opposition does not constitute a  
10 defining feature of resistance, but its accidental destiny. The idea is to problematize the relation of  
11 resistance and creation (against the reactive tradition) through the problematization of the relation  
12 between resistance and struggle (against the oppositional tradition). There is no intention to claim  
13 that resistance does not imply a moment of opposition. Rather, we need to wonder whether and how  
14 to bracket this moment of opposition in order to fully appreciate the creative dynamics that  
15 resistance sets in motion. If resistance needs to be against something, it is primarily against the  
16 against that follows it.

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## 19 The oppositional tradition

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21 The oppositional tradition sets resistance always against another force or agent. The latter is usually  
22 given as more powerful or in a position of domination. Resistance is never presented in its  
23 independence, but needs its opposite or its enemy as its own qualification: resistance to what?  
24 Against what? This is deeply embedded in everyday language, but it also constitutes the bulk of the  
25 various possible conceptualizations of resistance so far available. Following the typological account  
26 provided by Christine Chin and James Mittelman (2000), Owen Worth lists and analyses the different  
27 possible frameworks through which resistance can be understood: ‘through Gramsci’s uses of  
28 counterhegemony, through Polanyi’s understanding of the counter-movement, and through James C.  
29 Scott’s bottom-up understanding of hidden transcripts or infrapolitics’ (Worth 2013: 34). All the

1 different accounts converge on this oppositional logic: *counterhegemony*, *counter-movement*,  
2 bottom-up.

3         The enemy represents the essential condition of possibility of resistance. It is the very  
4 moment of struggle and opposition that circumscribes the emergence and the duration of resistance.  
5 Resistance lasts as long as its enemy fights back and its existence is not given outside the context of  
6 warfare or confrontation. This enemy is usually identified with a precise entity that constitutes its  
7 defining qualification: Resistance to Nazism, anti-capitalist resistance, resistance against austerity.  
8 Whenever resistance is successful in overthrowing the singular target of its opposition, even its own  
9 existence loses its significance. The end of the adversary turns to be the end of resistance as well.  
10 This is quite ironic from a conceptual perspective: by entering a conflict, resistance seems to proceed  
11 towards its own extinction. Either repressed and erased under the blows of its enemy or exalted by  
12 the triumphant trumpets of victory, the end of the conflict always implies the end of resistance. We  
13 bizarrely move from the uncertainty of struggle to the absolute certainty of the extinction of  
14 resistance.

15         The same does not seem to apply to power. Confrontations and oppositions are often only  
16 marginally mentioned in the discourses of power. For instance, global capitalism seems always  
17 concerned with its own dynamics (how to promote competition, how to foster the circulation of goods  
18 and capitals), but not with anti-capitalist resistances. Confrontation is (strategically) ignored in these  
19 discourses: power presents itself as an already accomplished pacification, casting opposition to its  
20 outside. Hardt and Negri place this conception of power in direct connection with the tradition that,  
21 from Hobbes to Rousseau, defines ‘the dominant stream of modern European thought’: ‘Modern  
22 sovereignty is meant to put an end to civil war. ... [T]he sovereign power [Hobbes] proposes will be  
23 constituent, producing and reproducing the people as a peaceful social order and bringing an end to  
24 the war of all against all that is synonymous with social and political chaos’ (Hardt and Negri 2004:  
25 238-239). The dualism (pacified civil order vs. natural state of war; the people vs. the multitude) is  
26 not resolved, but effaced, mediated and reproduced in ‘the *transcendence* of the sovereign ... over  
27 the social plane’, embodied by Hobbes’ ‘unitary Leviathan that rises above and overarches society  
28 and the multitude’ (Hardt and Negri 2000: 325).

29         Power becomes insulated from resistance. The boundaries of civil order impose a closure  
30 through which the opposition of resistance is cast outside. This subordinates the oppositional stance

1 of power to the problem of government. In turn, resistance is reduced uniquely to a mere opposition.  
2 In the process of posing the people as constitutive synthesis within the unitary order of Leviathan,  
3 ‘the multiplicity of difference’, which is proper of the multitude, is relegated to ‘binary oppositions’  
4 (Hardt and Negri 2000: 140): the multitude against the people, the state of nature against civil order,  
5 resistance against power. To the unity of sovereign power corresponds the unity of resistance. Once  
6 again, resistances become Resistance. This reduction is at once the reduction of resistance to its  
7 oppositional stance.

8         The oppositional tradition needs to be thought as a reaction to the other tradition of  
9 modernity that, from Étienne de La Boétie to Spinoza, founds itself on ‘the discovery of the place of  
10 immanence and the celebration of singularity and difference’ (Hardt and Negri 2000: 140). The binary  
11 scheme of the oppositional stance is exploded in an absolute multiplicity. Resistance has to resist the  
12 centralization of the multiplicity of its difference. When resistance is understood as against a single  
13 enemy (e.g. against Leviathan), it undergoes a process of centralization that betrays its constitutive  
14 multiplicity. ‘As Spinoza says, if we simply cut the tyrannical head off the social body, we will be left  
15 with the deformed corpse of society’ (Hardt and Negri 2000: 204).

16         Prolonging the lines of this tradition, this resistance against the centralization of resistances  
17 finds a consistent conceptualization in the idea of transversality. Gilles Deleuze sees the emergence  
18 of this theme of the transversality of resistance in the theoretical and practical experiences of  
19 Milovan Djilas’ model of workers’ self-management in Tito’s Yugoslavia, Tronti’s Autonomist  
20 reinterpretation of Marxism in Italy and Sartre’s involvement with the struggle against the Algerian  
21 War - a turning point where anti-colonial struggles force French intellectuals to rethink resistance  
22 (Deleuze 2018b). These experiences express the transversal conjunction of multiple resistances:  
23 against capitalism, against Stalinism, against Marxist dogmatism. This series of ‘against’ radically  
24 challenges the binary scheme of the oppositional tradition: which is the defining ‘against’? At the  
25 same time, Deleuze notes how these transversal struggles are immediately projected towards a  
26 creative aspect: ‘this theme of transversal struggles, of non-centralized struggles, inspired first by  
27 Yugoslavian self-determination, then by Italian autonomy, had been mingled with a question that  
28 was more unclear, more difficult, which was what? Something like: toward a new subjectivity’  
29 (Deleuze 2017a). For Deleuze, Foucault’s primacy of resistance responds to the problem of  
30 accounting for both this transversality of struggle and the creation of new subjectivities. Resistance

1 subordinates its oppositional moment by fully affirming its multiplicity (against this, against that,  
2 against that other) and immediately discovers its relation with creation and transformation. We will  
3 have to wonder whether resistance is not only against something, but also against its reduction to its  
4 enemies: is resistance also against this tendency of necessitating an against that follows? Can  
5 resistance be against the 'against'?

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## 8 The reactive tradition and the primacy of power

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10 The other tradition that generally follows the oppositional understanding of resistance relates to its  
11 qualitative modality of operation. The enemy is generally charged with a variety of features that  
12 decree its ultimate primacy. From a chronological perspective, resistance always seems to be against  
13 something that precedes it, something that is there before the emergence of resistance. Although  
14 the anecdote on Capogrossi invites us to do so, we can hardly think Resistance to Nazism before the  
15 actual Nazi occupation. As for any colonial occupation, enclosure of commons or dispossession of  
16 natural resources, although those that will then resist are actually there before by definition (the  
17 natives, the indigenous), the invasion has the quasi magical effect to come before the resistance that  
18 will then follow. Also in terms of force, there is a differential in strength that establishes a certain  
19 hierarchy between resistance and its antagonist. The latter is more powerful and qualitatively  
20 superior in terms of (military) means and capacity of struggle. Resistance starts from a position of  
21 inferiority and weakness. And this position is often radicalized to the point in which resistance seems  
22 to vanish into complete powerlessness (Adorno 2005).

23 From this chronological priority and this superiority in strength, power affirms its conceptual  
24 (or even ontological) primacy. Resistance is reduced to a mere response, a reaction to something  
25 that comes first and that would have been there with or without the presence of resistance. This way  
26 of understanding resistance defines the reactive tradition. Power is understood as active insofar its  
27 affirmation is autonomous and independent. Resistance is instead given as reactive insofar its own  
28 emergence, its existence, its modality of operation and even its temporal trajectory (its duration)  
29 rest on its opponent. This differentiation evokes Friedrich W. Nietzsche's distinction, then elaborated  
30 by Deleuze (2006b), between active and reactive forces, where the former are 'superior forces that



1 dominate', while reactive forces are 'conditioned or constrained by superior forces' (Patton 2000:  
2 60). By the same token, the active character that defines power implies that those forces are  
3 creative, affirmative, transformative and self-directed, whereas resistance is considered as a force  
4 of reaction, adaptation and conservation.

5         Nevertheless, Deleuze's account of Nietzsche's distinction is complicated by the fact that  
6 'the reactive forces of the slave who hates not only all others, but also himself, become the  
7 dominating forces in a regime of reactive forces. ... In a regime of reactive forces, the world thus  
8 becomes inverted, and the weak rule the strong' (Hoy 2004: 27). Neither is any power active, nor is  
9 any resistance reactive. The reference to this Nietzschean distinction helps challenge the reactive  
10 tradition in the understanding of resistance. But even in these approaches, there seems to be an  
11 inevitable tendency to fall back into a conception that does not move fully beyond the reactive  
12 tradition. In order to explore 'the possibility of resistance that is not merely reactive' (Hoy 2004: 6),  
13 David Houzens Coy proposes a further distinction: 'The word 'resistance' does not of itself distinguish  
14 between emancipation and domination. That is why I speak of *critical* resistance. Critique is what  
15 makes it possible to distinguish emancipatory resistance from resistance that has been co-opted by  
16 the oppressive forces' (Hoy 2004: 2). As such, Hoy seems to be subtly trapped once again in the  
17 reactive paradigm, although in a slightly different form. In fact, this critical resistance does not seem  
18 to set forth the idea of an affirmative and self-directed force. It ends up subordinating resistance to  
19 emancipation, de facto implying that power comes still first and emancipation will follow.

20         A similar ambivalence survives in Douzinas' attempt to reject an exclusively reactive  
21 understanding of resistance. 'Resistance is a mixture of reaction and action, negation and  
22 affirmation. ... Reactive resistance conserves or restores a state of things power has disturbed. Active  
23 resistance deconstructs the adversary's arms, and borrows, mimics or subverts their components'  
24 (Douzinas 2014: 90). The mixture that Douzinas proposes is indeed a repetition of the same  
25 ingredient: reaction. Even when he calls it active, resistance finds already an adversary that seems  
26 to come first. Although Douzinas rightly recognizes the creative and affirmative character of  
27 resistance, the reactive tradition ultimately persists: 'every force affected by another provokes a  
28 resistance, which thwarts the first without stopping it' (Douzinas 2014: 89); 'Resistance is the bodily  
29 reaction to an overwhelming sense of injustice, an almost irrepressible response to hurt, hunger and  
30 despair' (Douzinas 2014: 93).

1           In his *On resistance*, Caygill (2013) challenges the reactive tradition by framing the  
2 conceptualization of resistance through an approach that focuses on the strategical interplay of  
3 forces. Resistance confronts itself with counter-resistances that emerge in a complex sequence of  
4 interactions in which the defining factors are the seizure of the initiative and the purpose of the  
5 struggle. In particular, by establishing a dialogue between Nietzsche and Karl Marx on the events of  
6 the Paris Commune, Caygill problematizes this understanding of resistance as reactive in connection  
7 with *ressentiment* and with slave morality: ‘Marx’s emphasis on the affirmative character of the  
8 Commune places the purity of Nietzsche’s genealogy of *ressentiment* into question. There is never a  
9 pure noble morality free of *ressentiment*, nobility consists not in innocent creation, but in overcoming  
10 a predicament of *ressentiment*. In Marx’s scenario, the proletariat in its struggle against Empire finds  
11 affirmation in the struggle for a new political form’ (Caygill 2013: 39). With Marx, Caygill holds that  
12 resistance is never only a struggle against something. It is never only a revenge, a reaction. Resistance  
13 implies the emergence of an affirmative moment in which the struggle is projected towards (or even  
14 subordinated to) the creation of a future to come: ‘It becomes less the spectre haunting the old  
15 capitalist world than a sphinx inhabiting the borderlands of the new’ (Caygill 2013: 39). There is a  
16 complex interplay of these two distinct moments of affirmation and reaction, noble and slave  
17 morality, repression and expansion. Any confrontation involves therefore two opponents which are  
18 neither active nor reactive, as they both share a fluid and varying combination of these two  
19 approaches. As such, antagonism can be rephrased in terms of resistances and counter-resistances  
20 without relying on the reactive tradition: ‘There is never a moment of pure resistance, but always a  
21 reciprocal play of resistances that form clusters or sequences of resistance and counter-resistance  
22 corresponding to each other in surrendering or seizing initiative’ (Caygill 2013: 5).

23           Caygill’s analysis is crucial for debunking the problematic aspect of resistance as merely  
24 reactive and its implicit corollary of the primacy of power over resistance. This rescues the  
25 affirmative and creative character of resistance which has been traditionally locked up by the  
26 reactive tradition. What Caygill ultimately achieves is a more balanced distribution of this affirmative  
27 and creative character to power and resistance. Affirmation is not only power’s business. What has  
28 been traditionally denied to resistance and attributed exclusively to power, it is finally extended to  
29 both the warring parties. Resistance is not only reactive, but also active. At the same time, we  
30 discover that power is not only active, but also reactive. This creates a sort of equivalence between

1 the two. But to what extent can this equivalence suffice to reject the traditional primacy of power?  
2 To what extent is power conceptually affected by this rethinking of resistance? Insofar as the  
3 oppositional logic is concerned, the conceptual equivalence of power and resistance in relation to  
4 the problem of affirmation and reaction leaves the strategic differential between the two quite  
5 intact. Power still comes first, even though it is not as creative as we thought it to be. Resistance is  
6 still in a position of inferiority, even though it is not as reactive as we thought it to be. Have we  
7 actually got rid of the reactive tradition that affects and has affected our understanding of resistance?

8         The problem amounts to the persistence of the other axis that defines the traditional  
9 understanding of resistance. By insisting on the moment of struggle and opposition, the reactive  
10 tradition does not seem to be completely rejected but only weakened. The question is whether we  
11 can actually get rid of the reactive tradition while maintaining an understanding of resistance based  
12 on an oppositional logic. To an extent, Peter Bloom (2016) produces a similar critique, but he ends  
13 up getting rid of resistance altogether. In *Beyond power and resistance*, Bloom proposes to overcome  
14 the paradigm of power and resistance for a radical politics where social change revolves around  
15 possibility rather than opposition. He traces the history of the power/resistance discourse from its  
16 modern origin in the Enlightenment where power and resistance represent a continuous struggle for  
17 sovereignty. In turn, Bloom looks at contemporary social movements pursuing social change through  
18 non-resistance based transformational politics<sup>6</sup>. Their main purpose is not to resist power, but to  
19 create alternative arrangements and way of living. According to Bloom, there is a historical divide  
20 between social and political movements that have tried to seize power through struggle and  
21 opposition and those that have instead explored alternative possibilities breaking with the paradigm  
22 of power and resistance. But to what extent can these two types of social and political movements  
23 be made into an opposition? Is there no creative side in those who oppose power? In creating  
24 alternative arrangements and ways of life, is there not an extent of opposition, although accidental?  
25 As proposed throughout the book, resistance is primarily a matter of creative affirmation and  
26 exploration of possibilities, but opposition can accidentally emerge when these possibilities are  
27 blocked or obstructed by reactive forces. Opposition is not constitutive, but accidental. By  
28 understanding resistance as prior to power, by posing opposition as constitutive of power and as  
29 accidental for resistance, we do break away from the sovereign paradigm of power and resistance.  
30 Why should we maintain that there is a mutually exclusive choice to be made, i.e. either resist or

1 build the new? Why cannot these two moments be thought together within practices that we have  
2 always defined as resistant? Why should resistance stop and something creative begin straight after  
3 that? Is not this as well a closure of possibilities for which only one possibility can be actualized per  
4 time?

5 In his *Experimental practice*, Dimitris Papadopoulos (2018) highlights how new contemporary  
6 forms of resistance are characterized by an ‘insurgent posthumanism’: movements that operate on  
7 the continuum between the human and the non-human, creating alliances and interconnections that  
8 transform both society and the world in general at the level of matter, in the materiality of the  
9 practices that they create and foster. These more-than-social movements craft alternative and  
10 autonomous forms of life (alterontologies) affirming ecological, social and economic justice.  
11 Opposition becomes necessary only when power stumble upon their trajectory. And yet, even then,  
12 the affirmative and creative character of resistance persists. From forest defenders and indigenous  
13 struggles against dispossession and ecological destruction to local movements rejecting intrusive  
14 infrastructures (Greyl, Healy et al. 2012), resistance constructs the ontological conditions of  
15 autonomous creative becoming.

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## 18 Rethinking resistance

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20 The challenge is to set forth an understanding of resistance that acknowledges the microphysics of  
21 forces, to say it with Foucault, and the complexity of their strategical interactions. Resistance with  
22 a capital letter is nothing but the strategical coding of a multiplicity of local, more or less dispersed  
23 and transversal resistances. These resistances are the material fabric that is somehow condensed  
24 into a revolution, an occupation, an exodus. Effacing the constituent power of resistance helps power  
25 to claim for the benefit of the ordinary, its tranquillity, that reassuring sense of security and  
26 certainty. Paraphrasing J.K. Gibson-Graham’s (2006) analysis of capitalism and Peter Kropotkin’s idea  
27 of mutual aid (O’Hearn and Grubačić 2016), we need to recognize that it is precisely upon the  
28 effacement of the presence of resistance and of its already actual strength that power reactively  
29 reproduces itself. ‘Whereas Machiavelli proposes that the project of constructing a new society from  
30 below requires “arms” and “money” and insists that we must look for them outside, Spinoza

1 responds: Don't we already possess them? Don't the necessary weapons reside precisely within the  
2 creative and prophetic power of the multitude?' (Hardt and Negri 2000: 65). Resistance is already  
3 the ordinary, resistance is always present. Resistance is what actually constitutes the thickness of  
4 the present and its opening towards the future (Ghelfi 2016). Any apparatus or dispositive of power  
5 is always already a backward past, it is the parasitical clinging of a past that does not want to pass.

6 This does not mean that a moment of destruction and opposition is never given. But this  
7 moment occurs in the midst of a multiplicity of processes of affirmation and creation which are  
8 primary despite their traditional subordination. In the rare instances in which a constitutive role has  
9 been recognized to resistance, this moment has always been depicted as the step that follows a  
10 successful confrontation: 'Unforeseeable, unexpected, sudden, the process of protest and resistance  
11 turns into a moment of innovation' (Negri 1999: 147). After the defeat of power, resistance is  
12 supposed to abandon its oppositional stance (and even its qualification as resistance) and to finally  
13 engage with a process of creation. This duality persists even when resistance is identified exclusively  
14 as creative: 'Disobedience negates, resistance creates' (Douzinas 2013: 98). From a theoretical  
15 perspective, the attention should then be focused on this exact instant of passage, this turning point  
16 that signals a quasi-metaphysical transformation: '[what] constitutes political society [is] the active  
17 resistance that is rationally transformed into a counter-Power, the counter-Power that is collectively  
18 developed in active consensus, the consensual praxis that is articulated in a real constitution' (Negri  
19 1991: 112). But this point of transformation has never been fully problematized. Perhaps there is no  
20 such a turning point because resistance is affirmative and creative from the outset. In any struggle,  
21 there are already practices of affirmation and creation that are primary: new modalities of  
22 organization, new social relations, new forms of solidarity and bonding, new techniques of warfare.

23 What is urgent is therefore an inversion that turns these subordinations (to power, to  
24 opposition) upside down. In order to affirm the creative, constitutive and transformational aspect of  
25 resistance, we need to engage with a Copernican revolution (Toscano 2009) in political philosophy.  
26 But this inversion needs to be accounted for in its contingency. More than an inversion, we need a  
27 re-inversion: the inversion of something that was already inverted, that was already upside down in  
28 relation to the ontologically materiality from which it necessarily emerges. The subordination of  
29 resistance is already a strategical inversion, an effacement that aims to destroy or annihilate the  
30 very capacity of resistance. Inverting this subordination though is not only strategical. Evading the

1 oppositional tradition means also to understand this inversion as beyond strategy, as the tuning with  
2 ontology in its materiality.

3

4

### 5 'A third kind of affect'

6

7 This requires a move beyond the distinction between active and reactive. Although the inversion  
8 seems to draw resistance towards the active side of the relation with power (Checchi 2014), with  
9 Deleuze (or with Deleuze's interpretation of Foucault) we find resistance attached to a kind of affect  
10 that escapes the binary partition of active and reactive. Resistance constitutes a kind of affect on its  
11 own. A third kind of affect: 'I can no longer say, as I was happy to do up until now, that there is a  
12 fundamentally a double power in relation, namely, a power to affect and a power to be affected.  
13 Now I must link it up with a third power: the power to resist. The power to resist is a third sort of  
14 affect, irreducible to the active affects and to reactive affects. It is a third kind of singularity.  
15 (Deleuze 2018d). We move beyond the Nietzschean distinction and even beyond Deleuze's  
16 characterization in his work on Nietzsche. The modes of operation of active and reactive forces are  
17 qualitatively distinct. But Deleuze attributes these two modes to the poles that constitute a relation  
18 of power. Through Foucault's definition of power as 'an action upon an action' (Foucault 2001: 340),  
19 the two poles that constitute a power relation are respectively active and reactive. None of these  
20 poles though exerts resistance though. Resistance affirms itself outside this relation.

21 This offers an avenue to rethink resistance and its relation to the oppositional tradition.  
22 Resistance can be understood as a third affect to the extent that it draws a trajectory that runs  
23 through a liminal and subtle line between its contemporary affirmation and negation. The ultimate  
24 dream of resistance is modulated upon the undecided negotiation of its appearance and  
25 disappearance (Checchi 2015). The oppositional tradition recognizes only one side of this  
26 ambivalence. Resistance fights for a change or a transformation and, in turn, acquires its own  
27 significance through the struggle that might possibly bring this transformation. This is arguably a  
28 crucial component that animates resistance and its will to change and transform the existent. But  
29 this postulates once again its traditional subordination to power. Although resistance might often  
30 seem necessary or even a moral duty, this does not erase its defining posture: resistance aspires not

1 to fight, it would have preferred not to engage in confrontations or struggles. This marks the affinity  
2 of resistance with Deleuze and Guattari's war machine: 'war represents not at all the supposed  
3 essence of the war machine ... The other pole seemed to be the essence; it is when the war machine  
4 ... has as its object not war but the drawing of a creative line of flight, the composition of a smooth  
5 space and of the movement of people in that space' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987: 422). By  
6 understanding the primary character of creation and transformation, the opposition that resistance  
7 encounters needs to be understood as an accidental and tedious burden: a misfortune.

8         This is brutally evident in the history of colonialism: the native does not want to be forced  
9 to fight the settler - the native does not want the settler at all, even before the settler arrives. Its  
10 arrival is a tragic misfortune, an unnecessary disruption that should have not taken place. As between  
11 the native and the settler 'no conciliation is possible, for of the two terms, one is superfluous' (Fanon  
12 2001). Likewise, Capogrossi's resistance mentioned at the beginning of this introduction would have  
13 gladly done without fascism and its capitalist allies. The process of affirmation that resistance brings  
14 about is halted and obstructed by the moment of opposition that often (but perhaps not inevitably)  
15 arises. Resistance does not seem to emerge for the sake of resisting. Resistance affirms itself  
16 dreaming that the obstacle of power will never emerge on its path. The opposition is only accidental.  
17 When resistance is understood as exclusively oppositional (as Resistance with the capital R), the  
18 paradox is that its final objective is its own end. Resistance to Nazi-fascism dreams that the latter  
19 will be defeated and that Resistance will no longer be needed. Resistance shows a paradoxical  
20 suicidal aspiration. Its existence is oriented towards its own annihilation.

21         In order to escape this paradoxical trap, resistance needs to be followed along its trajectories  
22 of creation and affirmation. Rather than an oppositional stance, resistance shows an affinity to  
23 becoming. This trajectory of continuous motion moves away from the subordination of resistance to  
24 power and from the traditional account that have more or less overtly supported the primacy of  
25 power over resistance. On this trajectory we discover the (re-)inversion that poses resistance as prior  
26 to power: the primacy of resistance not as the arrival point of this trajectory, but as the trajectory  
27 itself in its multiplicity of lines, its paths of creations, its closures and its new openings. The primacy  
28 of resistance affirms a movement and a dynamic that is beyond opposition, a material or materialist  
29 politics of movement, kinopolitics: 'instead of analysing societies as primarily static, spatial, or

1 temporal, kinopolitics or social kinetics understands them primarily as regimes of motion. Societies  
2 are always in motion' (Nail 2015: 24).

3 This dynamic trajectory rejects and transforms the pretence of stasis and equilibrium that  
4 power strategically attempts to impose. Power operates for the reproduction of the existent or for  
5 the reinforcement of the structures that support the strategic mapping of its present social field.  
6 The state, one of the traditional and longstanding centres of power, reveals in its etymology a sheer  
7 relation with the absence of movement: stasis. What the primacy of resistance affirms instead is a  
8 process of *de-stat-ic-ization*, the eruption of a movement that, although accidentally, affirms  
9 dynamism over any attempt of crystallization of the existent, over any attempt of presenting a static  
10 ontology, of which the state is a quintessential expression. Hence, even the etymology of resistance  
11 can be reinvented. That resistance comes from re-sistere (a clear appeal to stasis) is a strategic  
12 effacement perpetrated by the combination of the traditional accounts that have tried to impose the  
13 subordination of resistance to power. The primacy of resistance instead reinvents its own etymology:  
14 rather than re-sistere, *re-existere* - renovating existence, change, transformation, becoming.

15 The failure of the traditional understanding of resistance lies in fact in a conception of power  
16 that is unable to account for change. As Deleuze puts it, the primacy of resistance cannot be thought  
17 as an additional or alternative way of problematize resistance in relation to power: the primacy of  
18 resistance is a conceptual necessity.<sup>7</sup> Resistance cannot be thought otherwise than as prior to power.

19

20

21 Why the primacy?

22

23 Why does resistance come first? Once we get rid of the oppositional and reactive traditions, power is  
24 unveiled as constitutively reactive and parasitical. The existence of power rests exclusively upon the  
25 anticipation of an autonomous affirmation that is likely to diverge from a desired course of action.  
26 No force is exerted upon another unless the latter is expected to affirm itself in a way that does not  
27 correspond to a precise objective. Power is exerted only when resistance is anticipated to occur. As  
28 such, resistance is the condition of possibility of power, its *raison d'être*. The reverse is valid only to  
29 a limited extent. In fact, although there is a contemporaneous emergence of power and resistance,  
30 the latter might be already there under the guise of practices that only at a later stage will determine



1 an opposition to power. These practices often emerge autonomously without necessarily intending  
2 to constitute a resistance to a given power. This once again shows that resistance is not oppositional  
3 per se, but only accidentally oppositional. The contrary is valid for power, whose operational  
4 modality is necessarily oppositional.

5         The second problem with power is its tendency towards conservation and stasis. This does  
6 not imply that power is exclusively repressive. Although with Foucault it is necessary to acknowledge  
7 the productive character of power, the latter is doomed to a conservation of the status quo or to the  
8 strategic consolidation of the advantage on its own adversary by 'overcoming the enemy's capacity  
9 to resist' (Caygill 2013: 58). Hence, change and transformation can never occur on the basis of the  
10 action of power. If any transformation of its action occurs, it is given as a response to resistance or  
11 its possibility. A power relation that is not endangered by any virtual or actual resistance has no  
12 reason to modify its action. Only resistance triggers change by forcing power to reactively take action  
13 against its affirmation. 'Resistance in this sense is the provocation of a new action' (Proust 2000).

14         The primacy of resistance rests therefore upon its relation to the new, to creation, to a  
15 constitutive unpredictability that poses itself against the pretence of certainty that power attempts  
16 to affirm. Power relations are indeed only relatively stable and show a regularity that is constitutively  
17 made up by the unregulable. Against and beyond the illusion of power, resistance affirms its primacy  
18 through this appeal to the regularity of the irregular, the normality of the abnormal, the stability of  
19 the instable.

20         Resistance claims its appeal to the 'plenitude of the possible' (Foucault 1978: 145), the  
21 indefinite proliferation of possibilities that align practices to the ontological becoming of matter.  
22 Stasis is the accidental enemy that this creative eruption encounters. These crystallizations are  
23 nothing but temporary closures that reclaim an eternity that they will never be able to reach. We  
24 need to follow Negri's Spinoza in positively embracing the impossibility of an ultimate crystallization,  
25 an ultimate closure: 'Spinoza ... attacks and supersedes precisely these connections internal to the  
26 Hobbesian definition of Power; by analysing its own origins again, Spinozian thought demonstrates its  
27 inconclusiveness, recognizing the contradiction represented by an eventual closure of the system  
28 (effective in Hobbes) and, on the other hand, grasping the possibility of opening the constitutive  
29 rhythm toward a philosophy of the future' (Negri 1991: 70).

1           To each closure, there are an indefinite multiplicity of openings, creative trajectories  
2 oriented towards a future that is already present. But the present is already resistant matter. Power  
3 poses itself as the determination and constitution of the existent. The primacy of resistance  
4 denounces instead its obstinate obsolescence: the present of power is always already past as it is  
5 unable to account for movement towards the inexistent, towards what does not exist yet and yet  
6 exists. This is ‘the real urgency of the inexistent’ (Negri 1991: 160): the future is always already  
7 present. History and its becoming are therefore the continuous interplay of closures and new  
8 openings. The affirmation of resistance generates a trajectory on which power install itself. Power  
9 usurps its energy, its élan and seals off its continuation. Resistance comes first because it always  
10 finds new routes, new paths, new trajectories, new openings. Will these contemporary openings be  
11 closed off by power? Most likely. But this is not a problem per se. The political principle that descends  
12 from the primacy of resistance is not the contraposition against closures in general. Rather, the  
13 primacy of resistance aims to constitute a mode of organization in which closures favour new  
14 openings, new creations, new becomings. Through the primacy of resistance, organizations are no  
15 longer measured according to their stability, but according to the degree in which they are able to  
16 favour and sustain their own overcoming, their own transformation.

17

18

## 19 Overview of chapters

20

21 The objective of this book is to transform the intuition of the primacy of resistance into a concept.  
22 This requires a radical rethinking of resistance that inverts its traditional subordination to power.  
23 The concept of resistance that emerges here moves away from traditional accounts of resistance as  
24 reactive by problematizing its oppositional stance. The latter is not understood as essential in the  
25 conceptual definition of resistance, but as accidental and contingent. We cannot simply ask against  
26 what a resistance is. This would imply a reduction that effaces the complexity and the materiality of  
27 the processes through which resistance emerges. Rather, we need to follow its affirmation in the  
28 multiplicity of its creative practices. The primacy of resistance rests upon this creative and  
29 transformational potential that appeals to becoming.

1           My personal engagement with resistance is situated at the crossroad between theory and  
2 historical practices. In the last decades, resistance has been exerted through a variety of dispersed  
3 and transversal struggles. This aspect finds a productive resonance in Foucault's concept of  
4 resistance. However, his idea ultimately lacks a robust and consistent conceptualization. The role of  
5 resistance in Foucault's model of power is still an open issue. In the reception of his work, resistance  
6 has been understood in the most diverse and conflicting ways, to the extent that some have come to  
7 the conclusion that no resistance can find room in his model (McNay 1994). This confusion is definitely  
8 the result of the lack of a unitary account, but it also amounts to the scarce attention given to other  
9 less known parts of Foucault's work. In particular, little effort has been made to take seriously  
10 Foucault's interview of 1982 in which he declares that 'resistance comes first' (Foucault 1997a: 167).  
11 I used this intuition as a guiding principle to research resistance in his work. To be sure, there is no  
12 intention of affirming that such a choice leads to the correct way of reading Foucault. It would be  
13 anti-Foucauldian to assume the possibility of an orthodox reading of his work. However, the primacy  
14 of resistance allows, on the one hand, an original rethinking of Foucault's resistance that accounts  
15 for the specific forms of struggle that have emerged in the last decades; on the other hand, it favours  
16 the prolongation of a conceptual trajectory from Foucault to a wider tradition based on the affinity  
17 of resistance and creativity.

18           This wider tradition has already been introduced earlier in this chapter. It is the tradition  
19 that connects La Boétie and Spinoza, Autonomist Marxism and poststructuralism. This constitutes the  
20 theoretical horizon of this book. Within this horizon, I looked for conceptual lines that could  
21 contribute to the conceptualization of the primacy of resistance. I propose four trajectories in which  
22 the conceptualization of the primacy of resistance has been problematized: human nature, labour,  
23 politics, ontology. These four trajectories represent affirmative openings of the primacy of  
24 resistance. Each trajectory has been observed in its historical and conceptual evolution, its multiple  
25 interactions and their relation with the present. In particular, I tried to observe whether these  
26 trajectories can still function today as conceptual lines of resistance. This led me to divide these four  
27 trajectories into two parts. The first part includes those problematizations that have historically  
28 encountered a closure to their affirmative conceptual path. For closure I mean an obstruction that  
29 inverts the conceptual lines at stake, using its potential to transform the concept in a way that  
30 neutralizes and annihilates that potential.

1           The challenge amounts to the fact of constructing a conceptual trajectory through  
2 conceptualizations that were originally oriented towards other problems. In none of the works  
3 analysed, the primacy of resistance emerges in a coherent and extensive way. There is a trajectory  
4 that binds various conceptual lines together, but none of these lines manages to create the concept  
5 of the primacy of resistance. This claim does not have to be understood in the negative, as lack.  
6 Rather, it is a matter of orientation: ‘if earlier concepts were able to prepare a concept but not  
7 constitute it, it is because their problem was still trapped within other problems’ (Deleuze and  
8 Guattari 1994: 27). What I have done in this research is to detect these ‘earlier concepts’, separate  
9 them for their specific problems and finally orientate them towards the problem of the primacy of  
10 resistance. But this requires a quite ambiguous enterprise: looking for something that is not  
11 (explicitly) there. For Bensaïd (2001), resistance has to do with moles: we need to acknowledge its  
12 presence even through its apparent absence. The bodies of thought discussed in the following  
13 chapters have been chosen keeping into account this fundamental principle. In these works,  
14 resistance is barely mentioned, but its presence can be grasped somehow through the lines of these  
15 discourses, it can be sensed in the omitted logical implications of a conceptual line, it can be  
16 imaginatively added to a theoretical framework that has obviously built its own foundations on a  
17 terrain traversed by a multiplicity of mole tunnels.

18           Each conceptual line has been observed in its interaction with the primacy of resistance,  
19 although the latter has maintained a virtual status throughout this research as a conceptual line in  
20 becoming. The interaction between these conceptual lines and the primacy of resistance has been  
21 observed both in its presence and its virtual prolongation. In this sense, I followed the trajectories  
22 of these conceptual lines beyond their original content. When a line did not explicitly address the  
23 conceptualization of the primacy of resistance, I have tried to interrogate its potential prolongation,  
24 its unexplored connections or consequences. I often pushed the texts beyond the original intentions  
25 of their authors, trying to imagine possible continuations of their thinking. I read these sources in  
26 their openness, as living multiplicities.

27           The chapters that follow trace the trajectory of the primacy of resistance in the interplay of  
28 historical closures and contemporary openings. Chapter 1 serves as an entry point: it sets the  
29 theoretical framework and the terminology that supports the overall project.<sup>8</sup> In this chapter, I  
30 attempt to build up a creative narrative that runs through Foucault’s work driven by the

1   problematization of the primacy of resistance. From this perspective, I first outline a definition of  
2   power relations in terms of circulation through multiple relays. Resistance does not find itself trapped  
3   as one of the relays in the relation. On the contrary, resistance remains outside power relations as  
4   an irreducible vis-à-vis, in a relation of co-existence but also of double conditioning. For the primacy  
5   of resistance though, this double conditioning needs to find its polarization. This task is facilitated  
6   by decentring the focus of the analysis on the dimension of the possible or the probable. Foucault  
7   presents resistance as doubled by its possibility, where power is re-defined as the management of  
8   the field of possibility that is available to action.

9           The rest of the project is divided in two parts. Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 engage with the  
10   historical closures that have reactively usurped and obstructed the affirmation of the primacy of  
11   resistance. In chapter 2, I focus on conceptual lines emerging between the sixteenth and seventeenth  
12   century in opposition to political authority articulated upon a certain appeal to nature. The latter is  
13   given as prior to power, as a state that precedes it. Power operates reactively upon a natural material  
14   that is recalcitrant to its action. The affirmation of the primacy of resistance consists of a radical  
15   rejection of the misfortune of power that implicitly opens to an art of not to be governed at all. In  
16   La Boétie's *Discourse on voluntary servitude*, there is an implicit call for reverting the misfortune.  
17   The affirmation of resistance against power draws a constitutive trajectory towards natural  
18   companionship and cooperation, in which forces are combined in their natural complementarity  
19   rather than restrained.

20           This trajectory though finds its closure with the liberal arts of not to be governed that way,  
21   where the state of nature needs to be escaped in favour of a civil power. The liberal discourse of the  
22   social contract from Hobbes to Rawls operates a closure by transforming the constitutive moment of  
23   the primacy of resistance into a matter of individual rights. The proliferation of rights seems to  
24   increase realms of social life liberated from power, but ultimately confirm and consolidate the  
25   necessity of its existence.

26           Following Deleuze's invitation to look for an echo of the primacy of resistance in Tronti's  
27   interpretation of Marxism, chapter 3 focuses on the problem of labour. The primacy of labour might  
28   seem the economic equivalent of the primacy of resistance. Nevertheless, its creative potential  
29   allows labour to trespass this border and to affirm itself in the non-economic. This chapter is devoted  
30   to the analysis of this process of expansion or extensification, i.e. the inclusion of a range of activities

1 traditionally not regarded as labour. This is at work in Arendt's idea of the modern victory of labour,  
2 where the primacy of labour is not structured upon its relation with capital, but with the other human  
3 faculties. An expansive conception of labour is presented also in the Autonomist tradition especially  
4 in the idea of self-valorization and refusal of work. Likewise, Gibson-Graham's insistence on the  
5 diversity of the economic landscape and the extension of labour to previously unrecognized forms of  
6 economic contribution participates to this conceptual body and to its enterprise.

7 On the other hand, there is a perversion of this process of extensification, a closure of this  
8 specific conceptual line that acts upon and against itself through neo-liberal discourses. Here the  
9 process of extensification of labour aims at the effacement of antagonism in direct relation with the  
10 contemporary model of extraction and appropriation of value. The process of biofinancialization  
11 completes the transformation of labour into human capital initiated with the neo-liberal discourse of  
12 Gary Becker. These two limbs of the bifurcation of the primacy of labour see their trajectories  
13 culminating in distinct but analogous scenarios where labour vanishes either in an apparent fusion  
14 with human action or in its becoming-capital under the drive of biofinancialization.

15 These trajectories are somehow obstructed and the affirmation of the primacy of resistance  
16 can hardly continue along these paths. However, its creative eruption constantly finds new openings.  
17 Chapter 4 and Chapter 5 explore these contemporary trajectories. Chapter 4 observes the avenues  
18 that politics offers today for (re-)thinking resistance. Although there is a series of manifest  
19 appearances of resistance in 2011 and its aftermath, it is necessary to refrain from celebrating these  
20 cycles of struggles as the hallmark of an age of resistance. This would only reproduce once again a  
21 reactive understanding of resistance. Through Rancière's coupling of politics and aesthetics and  
22 Negri's political ontology developed with and beyond Spinoza, the primacy of resistance becomes  
23 political creation, continuous and spontaneous affirmation. Political resistance makes history: no age  
24 can interrupt this eruptive flow. Once again, a Copernican revolution: an inversion that redirects the  
25 attention towards the constitutive and affirmative character of resistance, where the moment of  
26 opposition and negation becomes accidental and contingent.

27 Negri's political ontology defines also an additional trajectory that invites to an exploration  
28 of material becomings. Chapter 5 starts an experimental journey driven by the primacy of resistance  
29 that follows the evolution of Deleuze's ontology from his collaborative work with Guattari, *A*  
30 *thousand plateaus*, to his monograph on Foucault. The chapter attempts to reconstruct the trajectory

1 through which Deleuze transforms his view on Foucault's resistance through the problematization of  
2 its primacy. This trajectory opens up to an ontology of matter that promises to be central in several  
3 debates that range from social science to political philosophy. This drives towards a conclusion that  
4 craves not to be a conclusion: an opening, a multiplicity of new creation, resistant re-existences.

## *Introduction*

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<sup>1</sup> ‘Della mia infanzia a Genzano il ricordo che più di altri ha inciso nella mia mente è quello del cambio di abitazione [...]. Questo fatto mi dette la possibilità di frequentar[e] spesso [...] il Circolo per l’infanzia socialista, nel quale I giovani socialisti e gli adulti davano i primi insegnamenti di cosa era la lotta di classe e quali obiettivi si ponevano I socialisti per costruire una società migliore, senza classi e senza lo sfruttamento dell’uomo sull’uomo’ (Capogrossi 2018: 9).

‘Una coppia di fidanzati non poteva andare a passeggio senza la presenza di qualche familiare. [...] [S]i facevano molte discussioni sull’arretratezza di questa consuetudine. Deliberammo di romperle [...] [uscendo] per il paese con la fidanzata a braccetto’ (Ibid., 42).

‘[Dopo l’8 Settembre 1943] costituì un Comitato di Liberazione Nazionale, provvisorio, per i Castelli Romani del quale facevo parte io stesso come presidente’ (Ibid., 159-160). All subsequent translations are mine.

<sup>2</sup> In his introduction to Capogrossi’s book, Claudio Del Bello defines Genzano as ‘an extremely distinctive microcosm’ which radically expressed communist demands despite its agrarian context. Even Antonio Gramsci remained puzzled by this anomaly (Ibid., 119). Today, that communist, rebel, agrarian Genzano does not exist any longer. I was born 2 miles away from Genzano and I learnt about Capogrossi only recently thanks to Paola and Peppe of the bookshop ‘Le Baruffe’. I felt close to Capogrossi’s story because he partly reminds of my grandparents (who worked in those same vineyards) and partly reminds me of comrades from my area, such as Paola and Peppe, with that attitude that is at once aggressive, impatient, obstinate, loud and often unwelcome. Even though my contribution to resistance is risible in comparison to their historical achievements, I have always felt bound to that way of resisting.

<sup>3</sup> After the invasion of southern Italy by the Allies, Nazis set up a series of military fortifications in Cassino (the Winter line), strategically situated on the main route north to Rome. The town was therefore the site of protracted fighting in the so-called battles of Monte Cassino.

<sup>4</sup> ‘Come ho potuto dimostrare, la Resistenza al fascismo, a Genzano, e’ cominciata nel 1919’ (Ibid., 246). This is highlighted also by Del Bello in his introduction who notes that this ‘is not a book focused on the facts of the Resistance ... as, in Capogrossi’s life story, the partisan struggle represents almost a minor time [un tempuscolo], a handful of months’ (in Capogrossi 2018: 1-2).



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<sup>5</sup> Psychoanalysis has managed somehow to shelter its engagement with the concept of resistance from the experience of Resistance to Nazism. From Freud to Lacan, resistance has featured especially from a clinical perspective in the relation between analyst and patient: ‘Whatever disturbs the progress of the work is a resistance’ (Freud, 2010, p.520). Although there have been several attempts to integrate this psychoanalytic concept of resistance within a socio-political debate (see in particular Butler, 1997; Žižek, 1999), these accounts might be said to rely upon a reactive understanding of resistance (Trumbull, 2012). As such, psychoanalysis does not seem to offer an appropriate trajectory towards the primacy of resistance.

<sup>6</sup> Resistance affirm itself in a variety of different forms and practices. We regularly witness the emergence of novel forms of resistance. Some manage to mark the practices of entire generations. While it is worthwhile detecting these historical distinctions in terms of practices, at times this ends up erasing any thread of continuity. However, if we look at resistance strategically, practices of resistance converge towards a common conceptual trajectory. To what extent contemporary social movements can be said to refute the idea of resistance? Mark and Paul Engler emphasize the importance of the strategic turn in the practice of nonviolence. They cite Gene Sharp’s *The politics of nonviolent action* as a turning point where nonviolent action is separated from its moral and spiritual dimensions and presented as an effective strategy of resistance. This is the troubling revelation that comes from Sharp’s research on Gandhi’s satyagraha: ‘[Sharp] found evidence that most participants ... did not embrace nonviolence out of a sense of moral commitment. Instead, they chose to employ nonviolent struggle because they believe it worked’ (Engler and Engler 2016: 4). On this premise, Engler and Engler elaborate their model of civil resistance or movement-based organising. Notably, this model has inspired a number of experiences that, despite they might not explicitly refer to resistance (as in the case of Extinction Rebellion), can definitely be subsumed under a wider understanding of resistance advocated in this book. This allows to place different forms of resistances (violent and nonviolent, movements and organisations, traditional Marxist militants and LGBTQIA activists, etc.) in a creative continuum of diverse strategic practices.

<sup>7</sup> ‘Hence, the importance of this affair of the points of resistance, and, I say to you: a destiny! It is truly a destiny, a destiny must draw him to posit more and more the points of resistance as primary, because to say “the points of resistance are primary” is already to have crossed the line. But one cannot cross the line by simply saying something that arranges things in a different order - it must be

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necessary, it must be absolutely necessary in such a way that one cannot do otherwise' (Deleuze, 2018d).

<sup>8</sup> An earlier draft of this chapter has been published in the edited volume *Engaging Foucault* with the title 'Engaging with Foucault's Microphysics of Power through The Primacy of Resistance'.