

# ScholarWorks@GSU

## Inside the Magic Circle: Conjuring the Terrorist Enemy at the 2001 Group of Eight Summit

Authors	Guano, Emanuela
Citation	Guano, Emanuela. Inside the Magic Circle: Conjuring the Terrorist Enemy at the 2001 Group of Eight Summit in Sen, Arijit, and Lisa Silverman. 2014. Making Place: Space and Embodiment in the City. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.
Download date	2026-04-13 15:18:38
Link to Item	<a href="https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.14694/476">https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.14694/476</a>

**Emanuela Guano**

**Inside the Magic Circle:  
Conjuring the Terrorist Enemy at the 2001 Group of  
Eight Summit**

Published in Sen, Arijit, and Lisa D. Silverman (eds.) *Making Place: Space and Embodiment in the City*, Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2014. Pgs. 69-94.

**Abstract**

Held in Italy shortly after the election of Silvio Berlusconi's conservative government, the 2001 Group of Eight summit went down in history as the battle of Genoa. From July 20<sup>th</sup> through July 22<sup>nd</sup>, the leaders of the eight wealthiest countries in the world conducted their debates inside Genoa's "red zone:" a militarized citadel at the heart of this city's downtown. In the meantime, the surrounding "yellow zone" became the theater of a guerrilla warfare and a police and army violence that had few antecedents in recent Italian history. As a state of exception was established in Genoa for the duration of the summit, over a hundred police officers and four hundred protesters were injured, more than three hundred demonstrators were illegally apprehended (and, in some cases, tortured), and one was killed under circumstances that were never fully clarified. This article argues that the events that took place in Genoa were precipitated by the inscription of a political imaginary into a peculiar spatiality: a magic circle where the suspension of normal social life, the crystallization of conservative media narratives, and the spectacularization and militarization of political action enabled the performance of a highly abstract, and yet devastatingly real, social drama featuring the confrontation between righteous selves and their evil foes.

## **Inside the Magic Circle: Conjuring the Terrorist Enemy at the 2001 Group of Eight Summit**

*The arena, the card-table, the magic circle, the temple, the stage, the screen, the tennis court, the court of justice, etc, are all... forbidden spots, isolated, hedged round, hallowed, within which special rules obtain. All are temporary worlds within the ordinary world, dedicated to the performance of an act apart. Johan Huizinga<sup>1</sup>*

Held in Italy shortly after the election of Silvio Berlusconi's second conservative government, the 2001 Group of Eight summit went down in history as the battle of Genoa due to the violent clashes and the extreme brutality of state repression. From July 20<sup>th</sup> through July 22<sup>nd</sup>, the leaders of the eight wealthiest countries in the world conducted their debates inside a militarized citadel—a magic circle—at the heart of downtown Genoa. In the meantime, the rest of the city became the theater of a guerrilla warfare and a police and army violence that had few antecedents in recent Italian history. While most protesters sought to hold their demonstrations peacefully, Black Bloc anarchists carried out hit-and-run attacks on the police as well as on civilian targets, ravaging and burning down parked cars, banks, and small businesses. Instead of seeking to contain the Black Bloc's offensive, police and army corps responded by indiscriminately beating all of the protesters who happened to be in their way. Over three hundred of them were illegally detained; more than four hundred had to be hospitalized, and one young man, Carlo Giuliani, was shot in the head.

The end of the violence coincided with the conclusion of the summit on July 21. By July 22, most protesters had left town; over the next several weeks, the devastated city slowly returned to a disconcerted normalcy. As cleaning crews moved in to pick up the burnt rubble and business owners began replacing their shattered shop windows, astonished local and global publics who had followed the events from afar wondered what on earth had happened in Genoa.

Instigated by the media apparatus owned by Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, Italian conservatives blamed the social movements; progressives, instead, pointed the finger at the Fascist undercurrents in Italy's newly elected government.

Even as Italian political factions kept accusing each other, myriad reports on the events materialized not just in newspapers and television broadcasts all over the world, but also on the Internet. In a matter of weeks, countless sites documenting the battle of Genoa made their appearance on the web, while books and videos on the same topic piled up on the shelves of Italian bookstores. Drawing on such testimonials as well as on ethnographic interviews, this article is yet another attempt to make sense of the battle of Genoa.<sup>2</sup> Rather than compiling an investigative report, however, in what follows I use the tools of anthropological, sociological, and geographic theory to examine the narrative and spatial dynamics that contributed to the collective enactment of a starkly polarized political imaginary: one that, populated by discordant representations of righteous selves and evil foes, played an important role in triggering state violence.

More specifically, this article engages recent sociological analyses of social dramas as collective enactments of crisis and resolution as well as geographic debates on the resistive spatialities created by protest movements—an approach which it complements by drawing on current anthropological enquiries into the organizational and performative practices of global social movements.<sup>3</sup> However, while much of the anthropological and geographic literature on social movements focuses exclusively on the strategies enacted respectively by the protesters and by those seeking to police them, here I highlight the existence of yet another public, though one that was largely excluded from the event: that of Genoa's own residents whose urban everyday

was forcefully interrupted through the creation of a highly contested, though ephemeral, spatiality invested with antagonistic political worldviews.

Political imaginaries are culturally negotiated landscapes of power in which a “people”—that is, a collectivity sharing an enemy—entitles a sovereign agency to wage war in its name.<sup>4</sup> As they legitimize sovereign power, such Manichaean narrative schemata<sup>5</sup> feed social dramas as public enactments of conflict and resolution.<sup>6</sup> I argue that the drama that took place in Genoa was precipitated by the inscription of a political imaginary into a peculiar spatiality: a magic circle where the elimination of normal social life and the spectacularization and militarization of political action enabled the performance of an “act apart”<sup>7</sup> of epic proportions. As, on one hand, the Italian police and the army took it upon themselves to protect the free world from its communist, anarchist, and Al-Qaeda-inspired enemies, on the other hand, the social movements lashed out at the symbols of global oppression and exploitation. The epochal clash that ensued took place in the name of the “people” whose rights and freedom had to be protected.

### A Spectacle for What Publics?

In the story I am about to tell, the “people” were in the first place the highly abstract signifier that emerged from the interpellations issued by Italy’s media, the majority of which were (and still are at the time of writing) controlled by conservative leader and Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi. An important condition for the hailing of such a “people,” I suggest, was the almost complete erasure of those other populations who did not fit this abstract, hypothetical mold—Genoa’s own residents in the first place.

The summit had been designed as a global spectacle to be watched on television rather than seen in person; its imperial placelessness was to be enforced through the threat of violence

as well as through aesthetic intensification.<sup>8</sup> Being particularly concerned with the performative aspects of the first world summit he would ever host, newly-elected conservative Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi took charge of even the most minute visual details of downtown Genoa. After all, this is where he would get his first chance ever to be immortalized next to the like of George W. Bush and Vladimir Putin.

As a seasoned media tycoon, Berlusconi could not help fretting over a beautiful city that was seemingly not beautiful enough. He had flowerpots re-arranged, ordered that lemons be hung from non-citrus trees, and had unsightly buildings covered with trompe l'oeil sheets featuring baroque façades.<sup>9</sup> His beautification measures included, among others, an embargo on drying laundry on window lines. Even as it drew much ridicule, this bizarre imposition became indicative of the intent to exclude Genoa's residents from the event: implicitly redefined as "matter out of place"<sup>10</sup> that should not be seen, citizens' everyday life was not an acceptable background to the summit.<sup>11</sup> By the same token, Genoa's residents were not an intended public of observers, either.

Little did it matter that the renovation of Genoa's downtown had been presented as a gift to the city and its residents: the Genoese would have to wait to enjoy the restored buildings and the freshly paved pedestrian areas.<sup>12</sup> Far from being exclusively symbolic, their exclusion was operated through fear. "Genoese, in the weekend from July 20<sup>th</sup> through the 22<sup>nd</sup>, if you are not on vacation yet and if you have a chance to, go to the beach or the countryside"--this was the message issued by Achille Vinci Giacchi, the ad hoc minister for the G8 summit, in order to encourage Genoa's residents to vacate the city.<sup>13</sup> In the meantime, the militarized citadel that was being built right at the heart of the city made it obvious that the latter was to become unlivable for whomever resided or worked in that area. As the barriers were being erected, police officers

went from door to door, issuing passes and informing residents that they were expecting riots and, potentially, even terrorist attacks. Leaving the city, thus went the message, would be the most reasonable choice in view of the summit.

Many Genoese heeded the recommendation. By the time the event began, at least one third of approximately 600,000 inhabitants had left.<sup>14</sup> Others sought to use their sense of humor to lighten up what was becoming an unbearably tense atmosphere in a city that was no longer their own. In this vein, a group of unionists residing in the downtown historic district tried to drag a mock Trojan horse through a gate, reciting poems to stone-faced police officers who, as one activist told me later on, “didn’t find it funny.” The presage of state violence inscribed unto the militarized cityscape—the metal fences, the massive presence of the army and the police, the sight of snipers on rooftops—was compounded by the worrisome news seeping in about the alleged plans of antagonistic social movements that were expected to ravage the city. This is how the owner of a small business in Genoa’s historic district described his feelings at that time:

On one hand, we saw the rising threat of state violence; on the other, we were being told that the city would be invaded by deviant youth (*spostati*) keen on destroying everything.

Dismayed at the realization that the very same event that was supposed to promote the city on a global scale had turned ominous, he decided to close and barricade his shop for the duration of the summit. Many of his fellow business owners did the same. As an increasingly deserted Genoa took on the feel of a ghost city, some of those residents who had not left made a point of participating in the protests—at least until they figured out that it was not safe to be in the street. As one man told me,

I went with my wife to the migrants’ march [*corteo dei migranti*]; initially the atmosphere was festive, and there were a lot of people with their children.... However...the police in anti-riot gear looked scary. I saw them, and then I saw some of those [anarchist] kids dressed in black with their somber faces... I figured that, if anything

had happened, we could have been easily trapped between the two groups. Then I told my wife: let's go home, I don't like it here. And I was right.

Like many others, he eventually opted for following the summit from his own home, monitoring the events from his windows whenever he could, but mostly through television.<sup>15</sup> Many fellow Genoese did the same. As they lost the right to their own city—to inhabit, use, and experience it as they pleased<sup>16</sup>--the Genoese who withdrew to their homes had to join the summit's global audiences of television viewers. They, too, became yet another atomized public in a public sphere that had been engineered as a consensus-making machine.<sup>17</sup> If the suspension of normal social life contributed to the onset of liminality in downtown Genoa, the justification for a state of exception whereby fear legitimized sovereign violence<sup>18</sup> was provided by the narratives of danger that had engulfed the Italian public sphere.



*Figure 1: Who is out of place? A resident walks her dog while, on the background, the police prepare to attack the demonstrators. (Photo by Federico Figari)*

## Conjuring the Terrorist Enemy

Even as many of Genoa's residents had been persuaded to vacate their city, a multitude of social movements grouped under the umbrella of the Genoa Social Forum flocked to it for the sake of holding a countersummit. Their goal was to publicly question and challenge the purposes and modalities of the summit while proposing an alternative model of globalization: "another world is possible," was their slogan. The Genoa Social Forum (GSF) was comprised of a variety of movements ranging from environmentalists to feminists, from Catholics and unionists to indigenous groups, and from Gypsies and migrants to anti-IMF activists.<sup>19</sup> Regardless of their heterogeneity, though, what the GSF-affiliated movements had in common was their critique of forms of oppression and exploitation imposed by dominating powers.<sup>20</sup> The multifarious ideals and purposes of the over 200,000 GSF affiliates who convened for the countersummit were thus summarized in an open letter to Genoa's citizens:

...actions of international cooperation, environmental protection, valorization of citizenship and labor rights, the promotion of ethical and responsible economic models, development of forms of multi-ethnic coexistence and of intercultural exchange, affirmation of the principles of peace and struggle against injustice.<sup>21</sup>

The overwhelming majority of social movements also shared peaceful intentions and non-violent strategies. A few of those who planned on participating in the countersummit, however, had pledged to carry out violent attacks in order to express their rejection of global capitalism. Prior to the summit, these groups obtained a disproportionate attention in the Italian public sphere.

In the weeks preceding the event, the Italian media had launched a fear campaign<sup>22</sup> that sought to inscribe and congeal a specific narrative of the GSF as the enemy of western civilization.<sup>23</sup> Conservative newspapers owned by, or aligned with, Berlusconi and his allies

published daily reports on how the GSF movements were going to ravage the city and carry out indiscriminate attacks on civilians and police officers alike. The protesters would allegedly be armed with balloons filled with HIV-positive blood. They would also fling marbles full of a disfiguring acid; the most benign among them would use catapults to throw dung,<sup>24</sup> and marginal youth groups such as the *punkabbestia* would unleash their pitbulls against the police.<sup>25</sup> As if this were not enough, rumors circulated about a possible Al-Qaeda attack. Osama Bin Laden himself was supposedly planning on instigating riots among the protesters in order to distract the police and the army while his drones and scuba-divers would annihilate the leaders of the free world.<sup>26</sup>

Concerned with the potential of extremist violence, even much of the moderate Italian left led by the Democratici di Sinistra party distanced itself from the GSF.<sup>27</sup> This failure to provide a public counternarrative in the mainstream media allowed conservative television channels and newspapers to shape and control the climate of growing anxiety. Little did it matter that the crowd of protesters spanned a highly heterogeneous multitude. Pacifists, human rights activists, migrants, environmentalists, feminists, and many other declaredly peaceful groups were all subsumed under the generic, and generically threatening, label of “*no-global*,” a somewhat English-sounding sobriquet that not only simplistically homogenized them as antagonists to globalization, but also marked them as alien to local culture and society.<sup>28</sup> As such stark dichotomy of just selves and evil others became inscribed unto Genoa’s physical territory, the tension was bound to escalate.

### The Map is the Territory

The officialdom’s preemptive defense against the threat allegedly posited by the protesters had been the rearrangement of the area of the summit into a highly defensible citadel.

In the days that preceded the summit, Genoa's airport, its railway system, and the port were sealed off, and 2,000 people were turned down at the Italian border.<sup>29</sup> Following a strategy that had been implemented in Quebec City during the Free Trade Area of the Americas summit of April 2001,<sup>30</sup> much of the city center was turned into a red zone (*zona rossa*) meant to protect the sacred ground of legitimate power. This area was surrounded by a metal fence (and, in some cases, heaps of containers) that isolated the area of the summit and prevented any face-to-face engagement between the G8 leaders and the movements. Around the militarized red zone was yet another ring—a yellow zone (*zona gialla*) that included the remainder of the city center as well as adjacent residential neighborhoods.<sup>31</sup> Inside the yellow zone, social movements had been assigned thematic plazas (*piazze tematiche*): spaces for representation<sup>32</sup> where they could not only hold their meetings but also performatively manifest their goals and express their critiques of dominant powers by directly addressing global publics instead of political referents.<sup>33</sup> As performative counterpoints to the theatricality of the summit, their banners, symbols, chants, music, and costumes sought to convey complex messages to their global publics.<sup>34</sup> By the same token, their carnivalesque antics criticized and mocked an ostensibly self-absorbed and self-referential establishment intent on discussing world poverty even as it played a major role in its perpetuation.<sup>35</sup> Commenting on the resistive quality of GSF practices in the yellow zone, one activist remarked:

There were two different cities. In [the yellow zone] there was an outdoor university with economists, pacifist, people like Rigoberta Menchù talking with the youth from other countries. On the other hand there was the police that kept pouring in, and the huge fences that created the ghetto of the powerful.

For the protesters, the hierarchical separation between the red and the yellow zone constituted a ready-made physical and metaphoric terrain of resistance that lent itself to the

spatialization of dissent.<sup>36</sup> By the same token, however, the protesters were also painfully aware of how they were being kept in their place, both spatially and metaphorically.<sup>37</sup> In the words of a Ya Basta affiliate, the fence separating the red from the yellow zone was a material reminder of the “enormous wall” symbolizing the global conflict between the North and the South of the world:

Just as the symbol of the third world war was the Berlin wall, the symbol of [this war] is the enormous wall that starts at the Rio Grande and runs through to Turkey, passing Gibraltar and then north, leaving out Eastern Europe; it divides Australia and Japan from the rest of East Asia. This wall is an insult to humanity.<sup>38</sup>

The fence, in this perspective, provided the ultimate evidence of how global political and financial elites sought to avoid a dialogue with the people they claimed to represent. Confined to the exterior of the citadel, the “people”, in this view, were excluded from the process of making decisions that would impact them all. What many protesters had contemptuously dubbed “the cage” (*la gabbia*) symbolically reproduced the separation between the rich and the poor, the powerful and the dispossessed—or, as one activist put it, “the New World Order, the Global Empire, protected by 20,000 police and military, besieged by the new Global protest movement.”<sup>39</sup> Signs displayed by the movements read: “8 *stronzi in gabbia*” (“eight shits in a cage”), “*zona rossa di vergogna*” (“the zone is red with shame”), “*strada chiusa: muro della vergogna*” (“dead-end road: wall of shame”).<sup>40</sup> The fence effectively collapsed the global scale of inequality into a very tangible, very local, and very sizeable symbol: one that posited an irresistible instigation to be torn down.

In her analysis of the spatial politics of standoffs, sociologist Robin Wagner Pacifici<sup>41</sup> observed how, as state representatives and anti-establishment groups confront each other, their moral and ideological polarization is reinscribed—and exacerbated—through the physical boundaries that surround the central point of containment. Almost inevitably, such a binary

organization of space increases tension and leads to violence. On a similar note, I suggest that, by designing and building the fence, the Italian government did not just prospect and seek to stave off a violation attempt; it *invited* it. Prying open the red zone, even though only symbolically, became a categorical imperative<sup>42</sup> for the protesters: one that was matched only by the army and the police officers' determination to prevent any trespassing. To them, too, the fence was the boundary where the enemy began to manifest.

Some movements purported to trespass the fence only symbolically, for example by throwing flowers and balloons over it. Others braved the mace cannons to pin messages to its meshes, thus seeking to draw attention to that very same reciprocal acknowledgement and dialogic communication with political leaders that had been denied to them. Occupying the ambiguous space between the declaredly non-violent movements and the extremist fringes, the White Overalls (*Tute Bianche*) affiliated with Ya Basta,<sup>43</sup> instead, decided to try and physically violate the fence. A few weeks before the summit, their leader Luca Casarini added fuel to the fire by publicly declaring war to the G8 summit: "we shall block the G8 summit," he declared to the Italian media.<sup>44</sup> And yet, the White Overalls' agenda was not quite as explicitly violent. Their strategy was characterized by a Gandhi-inspired passive resistance<sup>45</sup>—with the caveat that, even as they professed restraint from proactively violent attacks, the White Overalls purported to use the weight of their mass to tear down the red zone barrier.<sup>46</sup> In the words of one member,

The aim was to shut down the G8. The strategy was to attempt to breach the fortifications from a variety of positions. The tactics were direct action. The first task was to break through the myriad fortified police lines.<sup>47</sup>

Like Gandhi's freedom fighters, however, the White Overalls also sought to expose themselves to police brutality in order to show the world the true colors of an essentially repressive state.<sup>48</sup> On July 20, movement members hosted in the Carlini stadium prepared for

their march by taping Styrofoam sheets and empty plastic bottles to their bodies: while symbolizing the waste produced by consumer capitalism,<sup>49</sup> these items were also meant to protect them from police attacks. Hiding behind Plexiglas shields, the White Overalls set out for the fence. They never made it. Riot police and carabinieri corps attacked them when they were still in the yellow zone, about a mile away from the red zone fence:<sup>50</sup>

First a frantic barrage of tear-gas, lobbing over the front lines, deep into the heart of the demonstration. Nobody here had gas masks. The poisonous gas first blinds you, then hurts, and then disorientates you. It is immediate and devastating. The people, packed in tightly, panicked and surged backwards. The chaos was manic.<sup>51</sup>

Armed with the highly toxic CS tear gas that had been banned by the 1997 Chemical Weapons Convention as well as with the T-shaped *tonfa* batons known to produce deep wounds,<sup>52</sup> the police pushed the protesters against a wall. The protesters fought back, and mayhem ensued. By that evening, hundreds of civilians lay injured in local hospitals, or detained in police stations and army barracks. One of them, Carlo Giuliani, was dead, shot in the head by a young carabinieri conscript under circumstances that were never fully clarified.<sup>53</sup>

### The Black Bloc: Liminal and Elusive

The police attack had taken place in a yellow zone area for which the White Overalls' march had been authorized;<sup>54</sup> the alleged trigger had been an incursion by Black Bloc anarchists. Long before the summit, the Black Bloc had been singled out as a major security concern. Their participation at the 1999 World Trade Organization summit in Seattle, the 2000 International Monetary Fund and World Bank meeting in Prague, and the 2001 summit of the Americas in Quebec had been characterized by a high level of devastation.<sup>55</sup> Due to their declaredly violent intent, the Black Bloc were feared not just by the Italian defense apparatus, but also by the

majority of GSF movements who were concerned about the effects that their violence could have on their own efforts to promote their cause. As expected, the Black Bloc wreaked havoc in Genoa, too—and other protesters ended up paying the price for it.<sup>56</sup>

In what follows, I suggest that the Black Bloc played the role of mythological tricksters who, positioned betwixt and between, simultaneously violate and establish boundaries.<sup>57</sup> Frequently described as cunning deceivers and liars, tricksters are ambiguous and polyvalent.<sup>58</sup> Most importantly, they are shape-shifters, situation-invertors, and metaplayers who break the rules only to reaffirm them.<sup>59</sup> Just like the tricksters of world mythology, the Black Bloc who took part in the 2001 G8 countersummit used shape-shifting, chaos, and ambiguity to help crystallize representations of the terrorist enemy, thus escalating a repression they invariably eluded.

Surprisingly enough, the Black Bloc' participation in Genoa's countersummit was characterized by their lack of interest in the very same fence that had monopolized everybody else's attention.<sup>60</sup> Instead of targeting the red zone, the Black Bloc made quick, unexpected appearances in the yellow zone, where they carried out violent attacks against what they described as the symbols of global capitalism. Their objectives supposedly included the destruction of luxury vehicles, banks, chain stores, car dealerships, and the city jail; however, apartment complexes, small shops, and cheap cars were also hit in the process.<sup>61</sup> Black bloc targets included journalists, photographers, and—although from a safe distance--army and police officers.<sup>62</sup> In the words of one of them,

firstly the Black Bloc did a lot of property damage, some of it sensible: banks, porn shops, petrol stations, expensive cars, supermarkets; some of it stupid: traffic lights, bus shelters, cheaper cars; and some of it lunatic: starting a fire in an office above which was an apartment bloc.<sup>63</sup>

Whenever they launched an attack, the Black Bloc donned their peculiar attire: black clothes, hoods, and surgical or gas masks. On occasions, they also enacted a ceremony of their own, waving black flags and marching in circles to the sound of their drums before leashing out at their targets. This visibility, however, was carefully restricted in time and space. The Black Bloc always materialized out of nowhere, and left behind no evidence. They disappeared immediately after their attacks, either by dispersing through Genoa's maze of shortcuts or by changing clothes and blending in with the crowds. Even their weapons were improvised out of materials that were quickly harnessed and just as swiftly discarded. The stones they hurled at the police were ripped from flowerbeds, and their Molotov cocktails were concocted out of bottles picked from recycling bins and filled with gas removed from parked vehicles. Masters of elusiveness, the Black Bloc met attempts to photograph or film their raids with violent attacks, during which cameras and camcorders were routinely destroyed.



*Figure 2: Black Bloc immortalized during an attack threaten the photographer. (Photo by Anonymous).*

Best described as a tactic of urban guerrilla warfare rather than a movement,<sup>64</sup> the Black Bloc groups roaming Genoa's yellow zone were open to anyone willing to wear black clothes and join them in their attacks. Through their masks, the Black Bloc sought to deny the existence of subjectivities for the sake of becoming, as Avery-Natale put it, an undetermined "anything."<sup>65</sup> By the same token, however, donning a black mask allowed *anyone* to become a Black Bloc. Interviewed by a journalist, for example, a man acting as part of a Black Bloc group self-identified as a British Nazi, and declared: "I don't give a dime about the G8... I am here to wreak havoc and I am having a hell of a good time."<sup>66</sup> The uncertainties about the Black Bloc's political affiliation also contributed to raising questions about the real purposes of their attacks. This was all the more the case since the latter took on the same modality again and again: after positioning themselves in front of a group of non-violent protesters, the Black Bloc would lash out at the police, pelting them with stones and Molotov cocktails. Then, the police would attack—but never before the Black Bloc had vanished into thin air.<sup>67</sup> Each time, peaceful protesters were left to bear the brunt of the repression: the blows, the tear gas, and the arbitrary arrests which the Black Bloc invariably escaped.



*Figure 3: After positioning themselves to the front of the protest, the Black Bloc attack the police. They will vanish before the police retaliate. (Photo by Anonymous)*

Along with their elusiveness, the organizational fluidity of the Black Bloc<sup>68</sup> and their lack of a consistent, and consistently identifiable, public persona gave way to competing readings of their strategies and real identities. For the police and the military who had been bombarded with warnings about the terrorist threat, the Black Bloc were the proof that all GSF movements were essentially violent, and that, as such, all of them had to be repressed by using all means available.<sup>69</sup> Many GSF members, instead, were irked by the police officers' lack of responsiveness to the Black Bloc. Eyewitness reports but also films and photographs proved how the police consistently failed to contain the Black Bloc, targeting peaceful protesters in their stead. Black Bloc were also spotted and even photographed as they socialized on the roof of a carabinieri barracks.<sup>70</sup> Others were seen as they filmed journalists and reporters at a check point; interacted collegially with carabinieri and police officers, and walked freely in and out of police precincts and army barracks, carrying guns under their black clothes.<sup>71</sup> The suspicion thus arose that Black Bloc had been infiltrated by police officers keen on delegitimizing dissent and providing an alibi for state repression.<sup>72</sup>

While answering the question of the Black Bloc's real identity is beyond the scope of this paper, here I wish to highlight their pivotal contribution to precipitating the drama of just selves and terrorist others inscribed unto the G8 summit. By holding a revolving mirror to the political fantasies of all parties involved, and, most importantly, by exacerbating the fear of an elusive, if dangerous, enemy, the Black Bloc enabled the sovereign violence that was exercised through police retaliations.<sup>73</sup> Tricksters, as has been observed, are made sacred by their violations; in turn, this sacredness separates them from society and puts them in the condition of those who can be killed with impunity.<sup>74</sup> Just like mythological tricksters, however, the Black Bloc also held the

ability to divert the consequences of their actions unto others;<sup>75</sup> hence, their sacredness was transferred to the other protesters, who consistently paid the price for the Black Bloc's raids.

### **Spaces of Death**

The disruptive ambiguity that the Black Bloc injected into the battle of Genoa contributed to the creation of sinister liminalities: “spaces of death in the land of the living”<sup>76</sup> where illegally detained GSF affiliates were stripped of their rights and subjected to a brutal repression, even as fellow activists, lawyers, and families were prevented from intervening.<sup>77</sup> In a plot that kept repeating itself throughout the duration of the summit, the alleged presence of the Black Bloc provided the pretext for the violent police incursion in the Diaz school that hosted the Indymedia center as well as several GSF members and journalists. On July 21, at about 11pm, a police commando irrupted into the school. Unidentifiable because of their anti-riot gear,<sup>78</sup> the police officers who broke into the Diaz school that night beat up and severely injured 62 out of the 93 journalists and GSF members who were staying there. The police reportedly walked around the rooms screaming “where is Carlo? [Giuliani, who had been killed earlier that day]” and savagely attacking people still in their sleeping bags. By the time they were done, the rooms of the Diaz school were splattered with blood, and 62 people had deep wounds and fractured bones.<sup>79</sup>

During the incursion, a crowd amassed in front of the school: concerned GSF members, physicians and nurses, journalists, and even politicians, none of whom was allowed to enter the premises as the massacre went on.<sup>80</sup> All they got to see was the bleeding bodies of the wounded who were carried away, to be taken into custody. As legality was restored few days later, Italian magistrates cleared all of the apprehended: none of them, they found, was a Black Bloc. The two

Molotov cocktails that were exhibited as evidence turned out to have been planted by an officer during the raid.

The plight of many of the Diaz school victims did not end with their arrest, though. 75 of them were taken to the Bolzaneto barracks. Along with the other detainees, they were to be subjected to physical and psychological abuses in an environment where legality had been suspended. Jailers would confiscate or even rip prisoners' identity documents as they told them "See? Here you are nobody, you have no rights."<sup>81</sup> One detainee reported: "I requested a lawyer, and all I got was more blows."<sup>82</sup> Reduced to bare life that can be disposed of with impunity,<sup>83</sup> the detainees were deprived of sleep, water, and food, and were not permitted to use the restrooms. Many prisoners, regardless of their injuries, were forced to lean against walls as they stood on their toes, their arms eagle-spread, for hours on end:

those who showed signs of weakness and let their arms down were invariably slapped on their neck, kicked on their feet or shins, punched on their belly or hips.... As to myself, I was in that position... for about 15 hours.<sup>84</sup>

Signs of perceived deviance were forcefully removed from bodies: piercings were ripped away, and long hair was summarily shaven. Earlier on, the protesters' colorful clothes, costumes, and hippie garbs had mocked the dark uniforms of the police as well as the black suits of politicians;<sup>85</sup> their upbeat music and improvised dances had challenged army discipline and the stiff formality of the officialdom. In the Bolzaneto barracks, however, the same unruly bodies that had made fun of the establishment were punished through degradation and violence. Women were molested and threatened with rape; prisoners were made to walk through two rows of soldiers who spat and urinated on them.<sup>86</sup> Often, the blows were administered on existing wounds, so that the victims' bodies would bear no additional evidence.<sup>87</sup> Even such distortion of the concern with legality was not consistent, though. At times, the viciousness of the abuses

betrayed a bold confidence in the victimizers' impunity: as one prisoner reported, "all of a sudden, a policeman.... took my hand, spread my fingers apart and pulled them violently, thus tearing my flesh and splitting my hand."<sup>88</sup>

The space of exception that had emerged inside the barracks—one whereby state powers dealt with the threat of terrorism by suspending legality in the name of the law<sup>89</sup>--dissolved with the end of the summit, when prisoners were eventually released. The injuries, however, persisted. Their signs scarred the violated bodies of the victims; they also lingered in the collective psyche of those publics who still grappled to come to terms with the events.<sup>90</sup> In the aftermath of the battle of Genoa, much was said and written about the seemingly inexplicable brutality of police and army corps. Persistent rumors surmised that Gianfranco Fini, Vice President of the Council of Ministers and leader of the post-fascist Alleanza Nazionale party, had taken a trip to Genoa during the summit. A Genoese woman who watched the events from the safety of her home told me:

I see a motorcade enter the barracks, and shortly after that I hear this loud chanting and applause, so many applause. Then, the following day I hear that Fini was in town. It must have been him, he came here to incite the violence [*metterli su*]. Who knows what he promised them.

On the other hand, apologetic explanations for police brutality singled out the conspicuous presence of inexperienced young conscripts along with that of corps that had never been trained in peaceful crowd control methods and only worked with dangerous detainees; such tenuous circumstances were further compounded by the lack of non-lethal weapons in police and army equipment.<sup>91</sup> -

On a deeper level, however, the repression of dissent at the 2001 G8 summit shed light on the extent to which the military machinery activated by the government was, in fact, a self-

standing political player capable of embodying and performing its own version of the state:<sup>92</sup> one that owed less to utilitarian rationalism than to a highly abstract Manichaean worldview.<sup>93</sup> As this political imaginary was being called forth, it became appropriate for soldiers and police officers to chant hymns to Mussolini and Pinochet as they abused their victims, often even forcing them to sing along.<sup>94</sup> A fantasy was at work that not only exceeded functional rationality, but also activated a sedimented fascist repertoire: a root paradigm of “symbols, archetypal characters, and rhetorical appeals” that is still known to haunt the conservative Italian imaginary.<sup>95</sup> As soldiers and police officers inscribed their discursive, yet absolute Other (communist, anarchist, terrorist, queer, hippie, etc.) unto the humiliated and brutalized bodies of their detainees,<sup>96</sup> their personal enactment of the dominant narrative became thicker, more intimate, and also more extreme. It became a rapt, and deadly serious, deep play where everything was at stake,<sup>97</sup> and whose bloodbath was simultaneously highly symbolic and very real.

By then, captive GSF members had become anonymous blank screens unto which a dangerous alterity could not only be projected, but also punished by means of the same brutality that had been imputed to it.<sup>98</sup> Given the enormity of these Others’ imaginary crimes, their retribution could reach above and beyond legality. Thus, in the magic circles drawn around the Bolzaneto barracks and the Diaz school, the summit that had begun as a ceremony meant to illustrate and celebrate the global world order turned into a ritual of elimination of the chaotic Other.<sup>99</sup> Blending the mode of the “world *as if*”<sup>100</sup> with that of real actions with tangible consequences, the sovereign violence applied to the defeated bodies of the protesters enacted the pretense of an epochal victory over its absolute, if multifarious, enemy. The fiction of this victory, however, did not outlast the end of the heterotopic spatiality<sup>101</sup> that had been created for

the summit. As soon as the summit reached its conclusion on July 22<sup>nd</sup>, the magic circle of the Bolzaneto barracks was lifted, too. This is when the spell broke, and news about the abuses committed during the summit erupted in the global media.

### The End of the Drama

While Italy's conservative television channels and newspapers had had a considerable impact in framing the anti-G8 protests for the public opinion before and during the event,<sup>102</sup> theirs was not the only gaze on the G8 events. The summit was characterized by an intense participation not only of international journalists, but also of independent and amateur reporters and photographers who generated an alternative flow of information. Following Indymedia's advice "don't hate the media, become the media," hundreds of protesters armed with camcorders and cameras produced a mass of evidence of police and army brutality, thus assembling a counternarrative that challenged the official version of the events.<sup>103</sup>

Once they flooded the media, the images of bruised, lacerated bodies, and the myriad reports of police repression, torture and violence generated a global spectacle of horror that cast a deep shade on the G8 summit as well as Italy's conservative government. In the aftermaths of the summit, the public confidence in the police and carabinieri corps reached its lowest levels ever. As one Genoese woman told me, "the presence of the police used to make me feel safe. Now when I walk by them I get nervous." Formal investigations began of the abuses of the Diaz school and the Bolzaneto barracks, followed by first- and second-degree trials that often failed to give the victims the closure they expected.<sup>104</sup>

The loss of trust in the Italian state was just as stark on a global level. If the official narrative of the government had posited the need to defend western civilization, globally

circulating tales of a repression that was unheard of for a European Union country opened up a crevice in Italy's claims to the status of western democracy. After the events of the Diaz school, even conservative media around the world began condemning the brutality of the repression;<sup>105</sup> furthermore, that such violence had taken place in twenty-first century Europe made things even worse. Leading European and US newspapers called Italy a "Chilean," "Argentine," "East European," or "Cuban" dictatorship,<sup>106</sup> thus activating a transnational imaginary whereby the Italian state's attempt to confirm its membership in an ideal western civilization had produced the opposite result. As it became clear that the violence that had been initially imputed to the social movements had, in fact, been committed by representatives of the Italian state, what had been regarded as the solution to the terrorist problem was singled out as the problem itself. In the weeks that followed the end of the summit, Silvio Berlusconi's legitimacy as a G8 leader and as Italy's Prime Minister became the object of intense, and intensely critical, debates, both at home and abroad. For much of the summer, Berlusconi's government seemed to be heading for a quick demise. All of a sudden, however, a highly dramatic event took place that provided a formidable validation for Italy's conservative government, its fear campaigns, and its violent repression of protesters.

On September 11, 2001, two hijacked airplanes rammed into New York's World Trade Center, destroying the towers and killing thousands; a third plane hit the Pentagon in Arlington, Virginia, and a fourth one crashed in Pennsylvania while presumably en route to the White House. Western civilization was, indeed, under attack. Now that the terrorist enemy had turned out to be every bit as dangerous as expected, the state of exception became a welcome—and permanent—necessity.<sup>107</sup> As concerned citizens around the western world stockpiled canned

food and duct tape, the global indignation over the abuses committed in Genoa faded in a splashing of orange alerts. Berlusconi's government lasted till the end of its five-year mandate.

### Conclusions

Rather than being a merely physical gesture, the act of drawing a magic circle and assigning meaning to it makes it possible to create a “sphere of activity with a disposition of its own.”<sup>108</sup> By virtue of being “apart together,”<sup>109</sup> participants in this circle enter a shared imaginary world where normality is interrupted.<sup>110</sup> In this article, I argued that the tragic events that transpired from the G8 summit—the guerilla warfare as well as the violent repression—were at least in part a product of the creation of a *sui generis* magic circle: one that inscribed an ideological map unto a cityscape that had been transformed for the occasion. The suspension of normal social life, the crystallization of official narratives, and above all the creation of a militarized citadel inside the city were all pivotal to turning a highly abstract and starkly dichotomic political imaginary into lived experience.

Rather than being an attempt to improve residents' own lives, the restoration of Genoa's built environment prior to the summit was only the first stage of a deadly serious deep play: one whereby the creation of a peculiar placelessness went hand in hand with the need to claim and defend territories at all costs. What had begun as a constellation of camera-ready vignettes (of world leaders celebrating themselves, and of GSF movements debating, marching, and performing in their thematic plazas) thus unfolded into a full-fledged social drama. The stakes were high for all those involved. What, for the officialdom, was the epochal clash between the free world and its terrorist enemies, for the protesters epitomized the chasm between humankind and the agents of global oppression. While these imaginaries differed radically from each other, they both shared the same Manichaean organization of righteous selves and evil enemies. Hence,

both the protesters and the state representatives respectively sought to enact their own narrative even as they recruited each other in the role of the “familiar stranger:” the blank screen for projections of “predictable but unreasonable, unaccountable, deeply flawed, possibly immoral” alterity.<sup>111</sup>

By skillfully blending violence and shape-shifting, the Black Bloc intensified the polarization, thus contributing to precipitating the events. Not only did their transgressions enable the Italian state to reclaim its monopoly over violence,<sup>112</sup> but they also made it easier for it to suspend the law in the name of legality.<sup>113</sup> Death spaces thus emerged where the terrorist enemy could be punished or even exorcised, in an exercise in magical thinking whereby attacking the part became equivalent to vanquishing the whole.

After the end of the summit, as normality was reinstated, the realization of the brutality of the repression sent shock waves through the very same western world whose defense had supposedly been at stake. Only a few weeks later, however, the lingering indignation was upstaged by the 9/11 attacks. What followed was a decade of grappling with enemies who were sometimes real, and often imaginary. The battle of Genoa had been but a dress rehearsal; eventually, the magic circle had gone global.

---

*Acknowledgements.* I am deeply indebted to my anonymous reviewers as well as Jennifer Patico, Katherine Hankins, Faidra Papavasiliou and Megan Sinnott for their comments. A version of this article was presented at the *Embodied Place-making in Urban Public Spaces* symposium of the Center for 21st Century Studies on April 29, 2011. I am grateful to my fellow presenters as well as the audience and the colleagues of the Center and the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee for their comments on my paper. Any errors and omissions are entirely my own.

## Endnotes

<sup>1</sup> Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture. Boston: The Beacon Press. 1955:10.

<sup>2</sup> Unless otherwise noted, the reports and testimonials used in this article are drawn from ethnographic interviews conducted from 2002 through 2010 with individuals who resided or worked inside the Red Zone.

<sup>3</sup> Robin Wagner Pacifici, The Moro Morality Play: Terrorism as Social Drama, Chicago: University of Press, 1986; and Theorizing the Standoff: Contingency in Action. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2000; Ron

---

Eyerman, The Assassination of Theo Van Gogh: From Social Drama to Cultural Trauma. Durham: North Carolina, Duke University Press, 2008. Don Mitchell The Right to the City: Social Justice and Public Space. New York: The Guilford Press, 2003; Paul Routledge “Critical Geopolitics and Terrains of Resistance” Political Geography, (1996) Vol. 15(6/7): 505-531; and Kurt Iveson’s Publics and the City, New York: Wiley-Blackwell, 2007. Jeffrey S. Juris, Networking Futures: The Movements against Corporate Globalization. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006; Jeffrey S. Juris “Performing Politics: Image, Embodiment, and Affective Solidarity During Anti-corporate Globalization Protests,” Ethnography, (2008) 9(1): 61–97; David Graeber Possibilities: Essays on Hierarchy, Rebellion, and Desire. Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2007.

<sup>4</sup> Susan Buck-Morss, Dreamworld and Catastrophe: The Passing of Mass Utopia in East and West. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2002:12; Michael Hart and Antonio Negri, Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire. Harvard University Press, 2004:16.

<sup>5</sup> Bruno Gullí, “Beyond Good and Evil: A Contribution to the Analysis of the War Against Terrorism.” In Aronowitz, S. and H. Gautney (eds.), Implicating Empire: Globalization and Resistance in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century World Order. New York: Basic Books, 2003: 83-94. James Wertsch, “The Narrative Organization of Collective Memory,” Ethos, 2008 36(1): 120–135.

<sup>6</sup> Ron Eyerman, The Assassination of Theo Van Gogh: From Social Drama to Cultural Trauma. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2008. Victor Turner, Dramas, Fields, and Metaphors: Symbolic Action in Human Society. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1974. Robin Wagner Pacifici, The Moro Morality Play.

<sup>7</sup> Huizinga, Homo Ludens: 10.

<sup>8</sup> Michael Hart and Antonio Negri, Empire. Harvard University Press, 2000; Retort (Iain Boal, T.J. Clark, Joseph Matthews, and Michael Watts) Afflicted Powers: Capital and Spectacle in a New Age of War. London: Verso, 2005.

<sup>9</sup> Mizio Ferraris, I silenzi della zona rossa. G8 e dintorni. Genoa: Fratelli Frilli Editori, 2001.

<sup>10</sup> Mary Douglas, Purity and Danger. New York: Routledge, 1966: 33.

<sup>11</sup> Berlusconi’s request did not sit well with many (traditionally left-leaning) Genoese, who reacted to this imposition by hanging underwear from their window lines for the duration of the summit.

<sup>12</sup> Genoa’s renovation cost 70 billion lire (approximately 35 billion euros, see Marietto Chiesa, G8/Genova. Torino: Einaudi 2001: 6). Its reconstruction after the end of the summit cost another 8 million euros (Donatella Della Porta and Herbert Reiter, Polizia e protesta. L'ordine pubblico dalla Liberazione ai "no global". Bologna: Il Mulino, 2003: 5). For a detailed list of the restorations, see the Speciale G8 issue of Arkos, 2001: 1.

<sup>13</sup> Genoa Social Forum (GSF) Genova. Il libro bianco. Milano: Nuova Iniziativa Editoriale. 2001: 16.

<sup>14</sup> In the days preceding the summit, electrical consumption and waste disposal reportedly dropped by 40% (Della Porta and Reiter Polizia e protesta: 3).

<sup>15</sup> Continuous coverage at the local level was offered by the Genoese television station PrimoCanale. Broadcasts on the event were provided by Italy’s three public (RAI) television channels along with Berlusconi’s own Canale 5, Rete 4, and Italia Uno. While RAI 1 and RAI 2 were tightly controlled by Berlusconi’s government, RAI 3 is traditionally closer to the Italian left. At that time, however, the latter was still critical of the Genoa Social Forum.

<sup>16</sup> Henri Lefebvre, Writings on Cities. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1996.

<sup>17</sup> As prospected by Juergen Habermas in his well-known 1989 theorization of an ideally democratic public sphere as one comprised of face-to-face dialogic engagements among members of culture-debating publics (The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press), contemporary television and print media are, indeed, characterized by a lack of participation in the process of opinion formation. And yet, this monologic quality does not have to be an insurmountable obstacle to democracy--provided that the pluralism and the accountability of information channels are guaranteed (see J.B. Thompson, “Social Theory and the Media,” in Crowley, David, and D. Mitchell (Eds.), Communication Theory Today, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1994: 27-49). Unfortunately, both of these conditions were denied in the organization and official coverage of the 2001 G8 summit.

<sup>18</sup> Giorgio Agamben, State of Exception. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005; Hart and Negri, Empire, 2000.

<sup>19</sup> Della Porta and Herbert Reiter, Polizia e protesta; Jeffrey S. Juris, Networking Futures: The Movements against Corporate Globalization. Durham: Duke University Press, 2006.

<sup>20</sup> Donatella Della Porta, M. Andretta, L. Mosca, L. And Herbert Reiter, Globalization from Below: Transnational Activists and Protest Networks. Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2006. Juris, Networking Futures; Paul Routledge, “Critical Geopolitics and Terrains of Resistance” Political Geography, (1996) Vol. 15(6/7): 505-531.

<sup>21</sup> GSF Libro Bianco 41.

- <sup>22</sup> Stefano Cristante, *Violenza mediata. Il ruolo dell'informazione nel G8 di Genova*. Rome: Editori Riuniti.
- <sup>23</sup> Della Porta, *Polizia e protesta* 6. On the role of the media in crystallizing narratives, see Eyerman, *The Assassination of Theo Van Gogh* 17.
- <sup>24</sup> Andrea Colombo, *Storia politica di un disastro. Il caso Genova: da piazza Alimonda alla scuola Diaz*. Roma: Manifestolibri, 2002. Cristante, *Violenza mediata*.
- <sup>25</sup> Antonio Sema, "Limoni e sangue: a che servivano gli scontri di Genova," *Limes*, (2001) 4: 17-28.
- <sup>26</sup> Sema, "Limoni e sangue" 22.
- <sup>27</sup> Della Porta et al. *Globalization from Below* 148.
- <sup>28</sup> The movements were critical of neoliberal and corporate globalization rather than globalization as a whole, see Della Porta, *Polizia e protesta* 12.
- <sup>29</sup> Della Porta et al. *Globalization from Below* 3.
- <sup>30</sup> Juris *Networking Futures* 55.
- <sup>31</sup> For the GSF map of Genova's Red and Yellow Zones, see <http://www.processig8.org/GSF/redz.htm>.
- <sup>32</sup> Mitchell, *The Right to the City*.
- <sup>33</sup> Graeme Chesters and Ian Welsh, "Rebel Colours: 'Framing' in Global Social Movements," *The Sociological Review*, (2004) 52 (3): 314-335; Graeme Chesters and Ian Welsh, *Complexity and Social Movements: Multitudes at the Edge of Chaos*. London: Routledge, 2006; David Graeber *Possibilities: Essays on Hierarchy, Rebellion, and Desire*. Oakland, CA: AK Press, 2007; Jeffrey S Juris "Performing Politics: Image, Embodiment, and Affective Solidarity During Anti-corporate Globalization Protests," *Ethnography*, (2008) 9(1): 61-97; Juris *Networking Futures*; Della Porta and Reiter *Polizia e protesta*.
- <sup>34</sup> Graeber *Possibilities*; Chester and Welsh, *Complexity and Social Movements*; "Rebel Colours".
- <sup>35</sup> Graeber *Possibilities*; Juris *Networking Futures*.
- <sup>36</sup> Routledge "Critical Geopolitics" 517-520.
- <sup>37</sup> Tim Cresswell *In Place/Out of Place: Geography, Ideology and Transgression*. Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1996: 3; Stef Jansen, "The Streets of Beograd. Urban Space and Protest Identities in Serbia," *Political Geography* (2001) 20: 35-55.
- <sup>38</sup> <http://www.struggle.ws/global/about/yabasta.html>, accessed on June 12, 2010
- <sup>39</sup> <http://struggle.ws/global/genoa/ramor.html>, accessed on June 11, 2010
- <sup>40</sup> GSF *Libro bianco* 61, 37, 17.
- <sup>41</sup> Wagner Pacifici, *Theorizing the Standoff*.
- <sup>42</sup> Wagner Pacifici *Theorizing the Standoff*: 8.
- <sup>43</sup> Lucio Caracciolo, "Editoriale: Da Marx a Matrix," *Limes*, (2001) 4: 7-14. Emily Vanderford, "Ya Basta!--" A Mountain of Bodies that Advances, Seeking the Least Harm Possible to Itself," in Opel, Andy, and Donnalyn Pompper (eds.), *Representing Resistance: Media, Civil Disobedience, and the Global Justice Movement*; Westport, Connecticut: Praeger; 2003: 16-26.
- <sup>44</sup> Fabrizio Ravelli "Dichiariamo guerra al G8. Le tute bianche a Genova: saremo in 200.000." In *La Repubblica*, May 27, 2001. Available at [http://www.lamiaterraan.it/pdf/ng27\\_05\\_01c.pdf](http://www.lamiaterraan.it/pdf/ng27_05_01c.pdf), accessed on February 14, 2011
- <sup>45</sup> Francesco Vitali, "La rete della sconfitta," *Limes*, 4: 67-70.
- <sup>46</sup> Alex Callinicos, "The Anti-Capitalist Movement After Genova and New York." In Aronowitz, S. and H. Gautney (eds.), *Implicating Empire: Globalization and Resistance in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century World Order*. New York: Basic Books 2003: 133-150. Juris, *Networking Futures*: 44.
- <sup>47</sup> <http://struggle.ws/global/genoa/ramor.html>, accessed on June 12, 2010
- <sup>48</sup> Caracciolo "Editoriale": 12.
- <sup>49</sup> Vanderford "Ya Basta."
- <sup>50</sup> As Mike Zajko and Daniel Béland point out, the role of the police at recent international summits has increasingly become that of enforcing a territorial form of state power that is asserted through the creation of no-protest zones. See "Space and Protest Policing at International Summits" *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* (2008) 26:719-735.
- <sup>51</sup> <http://struggle.ws/global/genoa/ramor.html>, last accessed on June 12, 2010
- <sup>52</sup> GSF *Libro bianco*: 24, 108.
- <sup>53</sup> On July 20<sup>th</sup>, Giuliani had joined the White Overalls march towards the Red Zone. In the clashes that ensued after the police had attacked the White Overalls, an army Land Rover Defender got cornered in nearby Piazza Alimonda. Carlo approached the jeep holding a fire extinguisher in his hands. From inside the jeep, *carabiniere* conscript Mario Placanica fired two shots, one of which hit Giuliani in the head and killed him (see GSF *Libro bianco*: 80-91). In the ensuing trial, Placanica claimed he had acted in self-defense; he also argued that he had aimed in the air, but a

---

falling stone had deflected the bullet, causing it to hit Giuliani. Placanica's line of defense was accepted, and his acquittal drew much discontent from the GSF and Giuliani's parents. By then, however, Giuliani had become an icon of the movement. In 2006, a room of the Italian Parliament was dedicated to his memory. On July 20<sup>th</sup>, 2011, a memorial stele was erected on the site where Carlo had been killed.

<sup>54</sup> Della Porta and Reiter Polizia e protesta: 161.

<sup>55</sup> GSF Libro bianco: 164.

<sup>56</sup> Juris Networking Futures. This is what happened, among others, to Rete Lilliput movements (mainly pacifists and feminists) assaulted by the police in piazza Manin on July 20<sup>th</sup>, as well as to the protesters who were attacked in the Foce neighborhood on July 21<sup>st</sup> (see Chiesa, G8/Genova; see also Juris Networking Futures).

<sup>57</sup> Barbara Babcock-Abrahams, "A Tolerated Margin of Mess: A Trickster and His Tales Reconsidered," Journal of the Folklore Institute, (1975) 11(3): 147-186.

<sup>58</sup> Laura Levi Makarius, Les sacré et la violation des interdits. Chapitres V á VII.

<http://bibliotheque.uqac.quebec.ca/index.htm>. 197: 44. Last accessed on July 14, 2010. William J. Hynes, "Mapping the Characteristics of Mythic Tricksters: A Heuristic Guide," in Hynes, William J. and William G. Doty (eds.), Mythical Trickster Figures, Tuscaloosa, Alabama: University of Alabama Press; 1997: 33-45.

<sup>59</sup> William J Hynes, "Inconclusive Inconclusions: Tricksters as Metaplayers and Revealers," in Hynes, William J. and William G. Doty (eds.), Mythical Trickster Figures, Tuscaloosa, Alabama: University of Alabama Press; 202-218. Hynes "Mapping the Characteristics:" 37-38.

<sup>60</sup> As Juris pointed out, small pack actions are synonymous with a commitment to "diversity, de-centralization, and self-management" (Networking Futures: 8)

<sup>61</sup> Della Porta and Reiter Polizia e protesta: 137.

<sup>62</sup> If, as posited by David Waddington in "The Madness of the Mob? Explaining the 'Irrationality' and Destructiveness of Crowd Violence" (Sociology Compass (2008) 2: 675–687), violent acts committed by protesting crowds are typically guided by a rationality of their own, the question of how Black Bloc selected the targets of their attacks contributes to raising issues about this group's real affiliation and purposes.

<sup>63</sup> <http://www.struggle.ws/freearth/genoa.html>, last accessed on June 12, 2010

<sup>64</sup> Franz Gustinchic "Anatomia del Black Block (con una scheda di Emmanuela C. Del Re – Facciamo che io ero un antiglobalizzatore violento)," Limes (2001) 4: 41-50.

<sup>65</sup> Edward Avery-Natale, "'We're Here, We're Queer, We're Anarchists': The Nature of Identification and Subjectivity Among Black Blocs." Anarchist Developments in Cultural Studies "Post-Anarchism today" 1 <http://www.anarchist-developments.org/index.php/adcs/article/view/7> (accessed March 20, 2010).

<sup>66</sup> GSF Libro bianco: 68.

<sup>67</sup> Chesters and Welsh Complexity and Social Movements: 84.

<sup>68</sup> Gustinchic "Anatomia del Black Block:" 452.

<sup>69</sup> Sema "Limoni e sangue."

<sup>70</sup> GSF Libro bianco: 118-119.

<sup>71</sup> GSF Libro bianco: 119-121.

<sup>72</sup> Caracciolo "Editoriale": 9.

<sup>73</sup> Giorgio Agamben Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988 :85. Callinicos, "The Anti-Capitalist Movement," Juris Networking Futures.

<sup>74</sup> Babcock-Abrahams "A Tolerated Margin of Mess:" 164; Makarius Le sacré et la violation: 37. Not to be confused with the contemporary definition of "sacred" as "holy," the sacredness of tricksters is akin to the condition of those ancient Romans who, after committing a forbidden act, were deprived of their rights and could be killed by anyone (Agamben, Homo Sacer: 82-84).

<sup>75</sup> Babcock-Abrahams "A Tolerated Margin of Mess."

<sup>76</sup> Michael Taussig, Shamanism, Colonialism, and the Wild Man: A Study in Terror and Healing. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987:4.

<sup>77</sup> Also drawing on Taussig, in his ethnography of anti-capitalist global movements Juris called Genoa in its entirety a "space of terror" brought about by "blurring the line between law and violence, order and chaos" (Networking Futures: 167-168). While I agree with Juris's argument about the liminality that emerged within this city's boundaries during the July 2001 events, here I prefer to maintain Taussig's definition of "space of death in the world of the living" for the sake of emphasizing the victims' experience of the disconnect between what was happening to them and the discourse of legality and rights that continued to regulate to varying degrees the "world of the living" just a short distance away, both within and without the city limits. It is important to note that the repression peaked at specific locations, and not all of Genoa was directly and homogeneously subjected to the terror of police violence.

- 
- <sup>78</sup> Italian police and *carabinieri* officers are not required to wear visible identification.
- <sup>79</sup> GSF Libro bianco: 281.
- <sup>80</sup> GSF Libro bianco: 129-131.
- <sup>81</sup> GSF Libro bianco: 146.
- <sup>82</sup> GSF Libro bianco: 143.
- <sup>83</sup> Agamben Homo Sacer.
- <sup>84</sup> GSF Libro bianco 142.
- <sup>85</sup> On the sartorial politics of social movements and the officialdom, see Graeber Possibilities 329.
- <sup>86</sup> GSF Libro bianco: 142.
- <sup>87</sup> GSF Libro bianco: 143.
- <sup>88</sup> GSF Libro bianco: 144.
- <sup>89</sup> Agamben Homo Sacer; State of Exception.
- <sup>90</sup> Historically, the practice of violently suppressing public protests culminated with mid-twentieth century *scelbismo* (named after Christian Democratic Prime Minister Mario Scelba), and became considerably less prevalent in the late 1900s (Della Porta and Reiter Polizia e protesta).
- <sup>91</sup> See Andrea Nativi “Militari e poliziotti: Le lezioni da imparare,” Limes (2001) 4: 51-58. This is certainly not to say that all the police officers and soldiers deployed in the G8 summit participated in the repression. In fact, throughout the battle of Genoa there were several outstanding cases of officers who succored the victims of their own colleagues’ brutality (GSF Libro bianco).
- <sup>92</sup> Giorgio Agamben Il regno e la gloria. Per una genealogia teologica dell’economia e del governo. Homo Sacer II, 2, Vicenza: Neri Pozza, 2007: 303. Begonia Aretxaga “Maddening States: On the Imaginary of Politics,” Annual Reviews of Anthropology, (2003) 32: 393-410
- <sup>93</sup> Taussig Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man.
- <sup>94</sup> GSF Libro bianco 142-143.
- <sup>95</sup> Robin Wagner Pacifici, The Moro Morality Play: Terrorism as Social Drama, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986: 7.
- <sup>96</sup> See also Della Porta and Reiter Polizia e protesta: 172.
- <sup>97</sup> Clifford Geertz, The Interpretation of Cultures, New York: Basic Books, 1973.
- <sup>98</sup> Taussig Shamanism, Colonialism, and the Wild Man.
- <sup>99</sup> Ceremonies, as Victor Turner suggested in his “Social Dramas and Stories about Them,” (Critical Inquiry, 7(10): 141-168), have illustrative purposes; rituals, instead, have transformative effects.
- <sup>100</sup> Turner “Social Dramas:” 163.
- <sup>101</sup> Here I draw on Michel Foucault’s notion of heterotopia as an “other” place: that is, a segregated spatiality that helps compensate a society’s needs, crises, and desires (“Of Other Spaces,” in Mirzoeff, Nicholas (ed.), The Visual Culture Reader, New York: Routledge 1998: 237-244.
- <sup>102</sup> David Perlmutter and Gretchen L. Wagner “The Anatomy of a Photojournalistic Icon: Marginalization of Dissent in the Selection and Framing of ‘A Death in Genoa’,” Visual Communication, (2004) 3(1): 91-108; Nancy Snow, “Framing Globalization and Media Strategies for Global Change,” in Opel, Andy, and Donnaly Pompper (eds.), Representing Resistance: Media, Civil Disobedience, and the Global Justice Movement, Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers; 2003: 108-114.
- <sup>103</sup> Della Porta and Reiter Polizia e protesta: 113. Aside from beating whomever they encountered, the police who irrupted into the Diaz school also destroyed all of the Indymedia computers, camcorders, and equipment that contained images and testimonials of the abuses perpetrated throughout the summit: a behavior that critics interpreted as the attempt to eliminate evidence of state repression.
- <sup>104</sup> In 2010, the conservative government led, once again, by Silvio Berlusconi and Gianfranco Fini refused to ratify the suspension of the high-ranking police officers who had been found guilty at the trial for the raid on the Diaz school. In 2012, however, 25 police officers were found guilty by the Court of Cassation, and the victims were entitled to damages. Yet the latter were to be paid not by the perpetrators, but rather by the state on the basis of a recently approved *ad hoc* law. As to the tortures in the Bolzaneto barracks, 44 defendants were found guilty during the second degree trial. However, these crimes may become statute-barred before the final, third-degree trial is held.
- <sup>105</sup> Jeffrey S. Juris, “Violence Performed and Imagined: Militant Action, the Black Bloc and the Mass Media in Genoa,” Critique of Anthropology, (2005) 25(4): 413-432
- <sup>106</sup> Federico Fubini “Il prezzo di Genoa lo stiamo pagando anzitutto in Europa,” Limes (2001) 4:85-99. Matteo Colombi, “L’Italia intravista dagli Usa: piuttosto illiberale e totalmente ininfluenza,” Limes (2001) 4: 99-106.
- <sup>107</sup> Agamben State of Exception.

---

<sup>108</sup> Huizinga Homo Ludens: 8.

<sup>109</sup> Huizinga Homo Ludens 12.

<sup>110</sup> To some extent, the placelessness imposed unto Genoa by the Italian state was mirrored by the degree of abstraction that this city took on in the collective imaginary of global social movements. In post-2001 resistive narratives, “Genoa” frequently became a time/space coordinate fully defined by state repression (see for example Juris Networking Futures: 194; 169). Many of the Genoese I interviewed, however, take exception at this categorization. Not only do they resist the reduction of the spaces of their everyday life to a theater of brutality, but they also find that such a designation complies with the conservative government’s intent to mar Genoa’s image as a traditionally left-wing city. As one man put it:

When I say I am from Genoa people look at me and say “oh, that’s awful!” I had friends [from another city] visit a couple of months ago, and all they wanted to see was Piazza Alimonda [where Carlo Giuliani was killed] and the Diaz school. This makes me very angry.... At the end of World War II, Genoa was the only Italian city that did not need to be liberated from the Fascist, because it liberated itself, and this is why it earned a Gold Medal for Anti-Fascist Resistance [*medaglia d’oro alla resistenza*]. The 1960 Genoa riots caused the [conservative] Tambroni government to fall after it had permitted a neo-Fascist rally here. Tambroni wanted to stick it up to the Genoese, but we didn’t allow him to. What happened with the 2001 G8 [repression] has been a revenge of the Italian right against a city that has always been on the left [*di sinistra*].

While more research is needed on this topic, the ethnographic component of this article is meant to acknowledge those publics who, living in locations that become theaters of highly divisive events, feel stifled by how dominant and resistive narratives coalesce in defining their cities.

<sup>111</sup> Cheryl Mattingly, “Reading Minds and Telling Tales in a Cultural Borderland” Ethos, (2008) 36(1):136–154. Citation from page 145.

<sup>112</sup> Max Weber, Politics as a Vocation. Minneapolis, Minnesota: Fortress Press, 1965.

<sup>113</sup> Agamben Homo Sacer: State of Exception.