Every age has its riots. In ours, each day, all over the world, they go off by the hundreds: food rebellions, landless peasant uprisings, worker strikes that get out of hand, anti-police brutal-
ity riots in urban slums. At what point does this steady beat of riots crystallize into an age, into a time of riots? How should we understand the riots we see or do not see, the riots we fear and the riots we take part in, when they begin to assume a kind of configuration, to accumulate in a certain chaotic order, and begin to echo each other, as if converging obligingly in one single, if still largely unprocessed, assault on the exist-
ing order? Le temps des émeutes was the expression used in France after 1848 to refer to the early years of the workers’ movement, the two decades preceding the sudden eruption of revolt across Europe that year. This period was marked on one hand by a certain discon-
nection between the proliferation of socialist and utopian sects, with those alternately arcane or lucid schemes for treating the emergent so-
called “social question,” and on the other by the immediate needs of workers themselves in their often violent responses to transformations of the production process occurring at the time. The formal subsumption of worker activity under capitalist social relations combined with radical changes to industrial production—only just begin-
ing—often occasioned the sabotage of the work process and the outright destruction of newly introducted machinery.

However, punctual their occurrence and often short-
cato their rhythm, these worker assaults, often a defense of older forms of the labour process, began to almost unconsciously produce a certain organic form of social and political self-organization, usually for a time. To be sure, the virtual commonality of the events is less a matter of structural unity in specific objective conditions, namely those of a crisis internal to a particular phase of capitalist development, than of the disorgan-
izations of these relations, often occasioned by the need to reconstitute the production process without underestimating the more contentious process whereby revolts communicate through the pro-
leration of affects, affinities, and haemorrhoids that circulate among previously unconnected places and times, sometimes with a speed so rapid they seem to happen everywhere all at once, forming a ring of fire.

Our year for five or six years, probably begin-
ing with the barbican riots in France in Novem-
ber 2005 up to the London riots of August 2011, from the anti-CPE struggles in France in 2006 to the so-called “movement of the squares” that spread across the globe, the anti-austerity general strikes in Greece over the past two years to the astonishing revolts in North Africa last year, we are awakening from the neo-
liberal dream of global progress and prosperity after forty years of reaction, after four decades of defeat, we have in the secreted the uncertain stream of history. We bear witness to a new cycle of struggles against which to orient.

The most remarkable aspect of the Arab rebel-
sions, and of these more general disturbances of the 21st cen-
tury or rather the 21st century under the sign of modernity, is the appearance of the occupation in the west. This is not the ‘modernization’ of populations that we are used to...