### 1AC

Content Warning – Mentions of panic, depression, suicide

#### Welcome to the dawn of semiocapitalism, marked by the commodification of affective labor. This demand forces all subjectivity under the will to productivity, flattening all creativity and value, necessitating neurosis as the very structure of the brain is altered by the symbolic order. Thus, the role of the ballot is to resist semiocapitalism.

Jagodzinski 17 Jan, Professor of Art and Media Education in the Department of Secondary Education, University of Alberta, Canada, hates Moodle with a burning passion, “The Precarious Future of Education, Education, Psychoanalysis, and Social Transformation” Ch. 1: The Precarious Future of Education: The Speculative Fictions of Education //saenl

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The academy is slowly awaking to the realization that the ‘world’ that we have ‘created’ for-us as a work of ‘art,’ where everything is aestheticized so that it can be sold, the lawns manicured and the housing plots landscaped to present us with an urban landscape refl ective of our control and mastery over Nature, has finally come to haunt us. The story of ‘progress,’ shaped by Enlightenment thought, forwarded by a capitalist class whose interests were instituted through ‘democratic’ forms of nationalism based on colonial conquest in the name of what is ‘human’ and ‘civilized,’ has finally come to a reflexive turn, now that the melancholia of postmodernism has been able to face its lost object of modernism, only to face the void of our own species extinction. What ‘story’ is compelling enough to face such a void if the telluric imagination of technology is but a Faustian dream that continues to reinvent itself so that we can continue to repress our self-destruction? Is this not what is happening to education in general? Might there be room to write a ‘dark’ pedagogical introduction given these times when our species extinction is on the horizon? So much of the educational imaginary is wrapped in the folds of technology and the entertainment industries. That is where the jobs are after all. The historical dovetailing of capitalism with the educational schooling is a fundamental reality. Childhood, adolescence and currently post-adolescence, each has been shaped by the capitalist industries of their times. Global capitalism now demands a new subjectivity: the flexible performative self, who must now show her wares of productivity, change or shorten her last name so it does not sound ‘foreign,’ especially Middle Eastern, so as to be competitive enough to find a productive job in the symbolic order. This subjectivity is the creation of our own making. That is to say, education is complicit in continuing such a trajectory, maintaining its reproduction despite knowing better, as many, many educators do, who lament over this state of affairs. I came across what I felt to be an extraordinary refl ection of our contemporary world by Robert Macfarlane ( 2015). Two of his most provocative paragraphs read like this: Is there a word yet for the post-natural rain that falls when a cloud is rocketseeded with silver iodide? Or an island newly revealed by the melting of sea ice in the North-West Passage? Or the glistening tidemarks left on coastlines by oil spills? We speak memorably of a murmuration of starlings, to describe vast fl ocks of those birds dancing and palpitating in the air above reed beds and wetlands. But as yet we have no term to denote the gulls that swirl above our landfi ll sites, or the red kites [birds] that turn above the meat factories of the Cotswolds [south central England]. Such language stands in a fascinating and provocative relationship to the idea of wonder. For Descartes, wonder was ‘the fi rst of all the passions.’ It was also at the heart of the scientifi c method, because in Descartes’ view, the experience of wonder provokes a twofold response: first we are amazed (wonderstruck), and then we seek an explanation for that amazement. Reason is exceeded, then provoked. In this way wonder is distinguished from our sense of the ‘sublime,’ that form of affect so powerful that it presents an outrage to the understanding. Wonder and sublime: the two ends of intensive affect, the former opening the world up and the other recognizing that this world can swallow us up. But the ‘world’ that Macfarlane is alluding to is not the (Kantian) world-for us, it is a world-without us, a world for-itself that will remain long after our species is gone. Should not the educational imagination become drawn to this extraordinary paradoxical tension? Is this not the problematic of our ‘times’? Perhaps, without this redress, we have no ‘future’ as it is commonly thought as a chronological movement of time, whereas philosophers such as Gilles Deleuze tell us, drawing from the Stoics, that there is a time of Aion, a timeless time, the time of the Cosmos. Earth is but a speck of dust in the galaxy, which is but a speck of dust in our quadrant of the universe. The limits of comprehension quickly fade. Against this backdrop and given the ‘event’ of the Anthropocene, education is in need of some serious fabulation. New possible imaginative narratives are needed, possible worlds that engender thought, like that of science fi ction, or as Deleuze would have it: ‘sci-phi’ as a philosophy of the future (Flaxman 2008). What we have instead is the pressure to turn education into programming. As the UK prepares to change its national curriculum, which has been dragging its feet given the present government turmoils, the poster boy for such a push is an adolescent programmer, who in a scripted speech gives the impression that his whole life is now engaged around his ability to write programmes (BBC News 2014). 2 Programmers will become the new ‘secretaries’ for the continuously growing technological industrial complex, and so the reorientation of education in this direction should be of no surprise. The cybernetic ‘brave new world’ that is being shaped seems, more and more, to be confirming the prescient thoughts of Gilles Deleuze ( 1992) and Félix Guattari’s succinct summation of ‘societies of control,’ where the modulation of affect is continuously channelled in ways that make the populace believe that democracy is indeed ‘progressing’ as choice and free will are being promoted within all too specified and invisible constraints as to who can and cannot participate. Jacques Rancière’s ( 2004) call for a ‘distribution of the sensible,’ requiring a rethinking of the educational imagination, seems too optimistic today as the continual developments of smart technologies, computer apps, wearable recording and communication devices take us into the unknowable direction of identity theft, hacking frauds, cyber- bullying, surveillance technologies, tracking and imprinting, genetic manipulation and so on. The increase of surveillance and tightening of access are amplified in a time of ‘perpetual terror.’ What it means to be ‘human’ is changing on the physiological level of the brain and the body that affect the changes to the psyche. With nano-microchip devices implanted into our brains and bodies as forecast in the near future the modifications to our species will become even more remarkable and drastic. If Freud thought neurosis was the (dis)order of the day during the transition into the twentieth century, and Slavoj Žižek ( 2012) can address contemporary paranoia in popular culture (i.e., via Radiohead’s music video Paranoid Android), while Deleuze and Guattari ( 1987) banked on schizophrenia as a projection of what it takes to think the unthought, it seems today that the range of the so-called neuronal disturbances, from attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) to the many varieties of autism, is increasing as there is no ‘normativity’ per se but a ‘drift’ to a new psychic orientation that modifies our species behaviour in relation to the new media and the increase in social isolation. Difference, used both representationally and non-representationally, is the order of the day. Difference in relation to sameness now becomes a way for capitalism to cater to ‘individuality,’ the oxymoron of ‘mass customization’ becomes a reality, while the Deleuze–Guattari ‘becoming’ of difference has been perverted by being taken up by neuromarketers to increase sales via the mining of affect. 3 The more the earth’s population rises, let us project the fi gure at 11 billion by 2100, the more likelihood that a post-postmodern Bubonic plague, a pandemic will happen, as it is only a question of time. Such projections of these disasters are ubiquitous on our small and big screens, now made easier through the wizardry of digitalization. 4 On the one end, the zombies are to be found everywhere, on the other end the clones cannot be differentiated form humans, and in the middle are the ‘missing’ or disappearing people from ‘The Rapture.’ 5 To ward off this apocalyptic scenario Marvel has released its hoard of action hero movies, this revitalization of superheroes assures us all that we will be saved at the end, much like the perennial rash of crime and nurse–doctor televised series when it comes to our health and victimhood. And, of course, the weaving of anti-terrorist fi lms and television series is there as well. 6 So what can be done given this precarity in the world? UP IN THE CLOUDS: TAKE 2 The contemporary educational visionaries are compelled to be heard through the social media, and no better place than one framed by an entertainment venue, not quite pecha cucha, but close: The Technology, Entertainment, and Design (TED) Talks make a perfect sales pitch: compelling, riveting, interesting, believable and convincing—the descriptors continue. So what are the ‘best minds’ in education promising for the future? What are the current fabulations that are being pitched to the public imagination? I wish to start with the vision of Sugata Mitra, 7 who is a professor of educational technology at the School of Education and Language Science at Newcastle University, England. His Hole in the Wall experiment and his development of Self-Organizing Learning Environment (SOLE), as well as his projected future school called The Cloud, are perfectly suited for the next phase of advanced technological thinking. And suited well for a capitalist class that needs the brainpower of a labour class, which (sadly) can be found among the children in the poor sectors of the social order who are eager to learn. They are the source of potentially a new asset, not to be exploited, of course, but to be ‘helped.’ 8 It should be pointed out that Mitra is the chief scientist, Emeritus, of the for-profi t trading company NIIT Technologies. Mitra’s vision is extrapolated from the second-order cybernetic theory, the cognitive biology of autopoiesis based on the work of Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varlera ( 1980). It is a form of constructed enactivism that has a great deal of popularity, especially among mathematics education and management education for change. The ‘magic ingredients’ to make learning happen are a combination of broadband communication (technology), collaboration (among peers) and encouragement (an outside source). With these components the structure becomes self sustaining, autopoietic and self-correcting, students self-learn as they are motivated to do so. In this model, knowledge is obsolete, or falls out in terms of centrality, the ‘school’ is completely decentred, more as a ‘space’ where learning can take place around the most important piece of contemporary technology: no, not the cell phone, but the computer. Unquestionably wonder and the curiosity of children are captured as, in Michael Hardt’s ( 1999) terms, immaterial and affective labour. Mitra sees his model as opening up jobs and the entrepreneurial spirit. The source of this seemingly endless energy to be harnessed is found in the poor districts throughout India where his ‘experiments’ were conducted. Just give poor children a computer to play with and they will figure it out. The role of the teacher is no longer a pedagogical one, that is, someone who is to guide children’s development. Rather, the teacher is more as someone who encourages and applauds the exploratory work the children do on their own volition. Mitra calls this a ‘granny’ factor; grandmothers always give their children the motivational boost they need through such encouragement. The School Cloud, however, only needs ‘one’ grandmother, or rather a ‘built-in’ grandmother to keep up the motivation: ‘good job kids!’ All of this is very appealing. It is part of the Social Entrepreneurship programmes established in many schools where the ‘big questions’ are being raised that address the future: What does it mean to be human? What is our responsibility today? How do we understand the world? This is sort of philosophy snuck in the back door under the business model of life. Aspirations are harnessed early. Along the same lines, Apple marketing executives concur that the education system is outdated, and they are there to help. 9 Mitra’s model is really not ‘the future.’ It is already in place in such tech companies as Google, Apple, Microsoft and Mitsubishi; their way of the future is now. In the USA, it is billionaires who influence how education should be run: Bill and Melinda Gates, Eli and Edythe Broad and The Walton Family Foundation form the Gates–Broad–Walton triumvirate. They set the direction for the future of education in the USA so as to have a workforce that can compete globally in the twenty-fi rst century (Barkan 2011). Technology continues to be on the agenda by upgrading the ‘learning machine’ where the teacher drops out yet again (as above). This is the futures push under the rhetoric of ‘humanizing the classroom’ via technology, as the claim is that each student is different and special, any learning problem can be overcome if there is an opportunity to repeat the problem often enough (ten times it is recommended) before mastery sets in. Unlike Mitra, who seems to accept Nicholas Negroponte’s ( 1999) (cofounder of MIT’s Media Lab in 1985) claim that ‘knowledge’ is a dead issue in education as it now becomes simply more information, Salman Khan, founder of Khan Academy, turned ‘good guy’ from being an analyst at a hedge fund, upgrades the ‘learning machine’ of the twentieth century into neo-Taylorist terms. Students now work at their own pace to ‘master’ as he puts it, the knowledge that is expected of them. Through data monitoring, teachers facilitate this ‘learning’ by calling on peer help to show the ‘slower’ ones how to accomplish the task. Teacher complicity in this programme is absolutely essential as they are the ones who help track the students through various differentiated speeds. Here differentiated learning fits the ‘mass customization’ in a more narrow way, as there is a hierarchy to the knowledge that is being taught. Once you master one level you push onto another more complex level. The whole idea of edutainment (i.e., Gee 2003) is built on this premise so that learning can be ‘fun.’ Khan boasts that homework and schoolwork have been reversed: students now come to school to experiment and play, following what has already happened in some workplaces where work and play have collapsed. The fantasy of this approach is that a ‘learning machine’ programmed to the right level to the right individual will enable even the ‘slowest’ and most mentally challenged student to achieve a ‘mastery’ of that level. Students achieve points and badges just like in a video game. And, much like in a video game, one never ‘dies’ or fails; you can keep making mistakes until you ‘get it.’ So, progress is couched in a different sense of complexity theory, as there is an assumption that all knowledge begins with a simple base and moves up in difficulty. It is no surprise why mathematics is the subject that the Khan Academy caters to in what is now a non-profi t organization. It is the educator’s dream of believing that even the most diffi cult concepts can be simply broken down into simpler components so that the student is able to comprehend, and thereby apply the knowledge in ‘game-type’ situations. Above all, it is time that is made flexible, and, as we all know ‘time is money.’ Flexible time is usually the prerogative of the wealthy class. It is now being passed down to those with less fortunate circumstances to make them productive, passed down only now when the school can no longer manufacture the type of ‘worker’ needed for the digitalized economy. Flex time, or an ‘individual’s’ time, is now recognized for its variation so that the knowledge (or ‘job’) will eventually be accomplished. Khan’s academy can now free up time for a street kid in Calcutta (his example) to help his family during the day, and then spend two hours that are now possible in school. All possible schedules can be (theoretically) met, and all forms of age differences that can create embarrassment overcome, like the shame of being an illiterate adult. Khan believes in a ‘global one world classroom’ as peer-to-peer teaching possibilities via technologies become available (via Skype and so on). Khan’s TED lecture 10 ends with Bill Gates asking him questions that fl esh out why this is the future of education. It is, after all Gates’ vision of educational achievement. This approach to learning is best delivered by the so-called elite ivory universities around the world (Stanford, Oxford, Cambridge, MIT, Columbia and Harvard). Not only do elite universities now have satellite campuses around the world, they are now in the business of online courses, what are often called ‘machine learning classes’ where upwards of 100,000+ students are registered around the world. Whether ‘free,’ as with Coursera.com , or students pay a modest fee to complete the course, the mega numbers of students make them lucrative. Given the edutainment mentality of this futures approach, it is the best professors who are chosen to deliver the ‘material,’ thereby assuring the dominance, not only of the institutions that package the delivery, but of a particular approach and interpretation of the ‘material’ that is being delivered in the name of ‘global reach’ to those who would otherwise never have access. Online courses deliver the ‘information,’ reversing the usual need for students to come into the university to ‘receive’ the information. Every elite university has a network of branches where faculty and ex-faculty are able to teach. 11 These courses are made ‘real,’ in the sense that they are graded and have deadlines, offer credit and certifi cates for job resumes and credit transferences to other institutions where possible. The ‘material’ is ‘delivered’ in short segments that may be repeated as long as it takes to ‘master’ the ‘material’ before the next level is possible. A ‘retrieval’ practice is put in place to assure an endless loop that refreshes the screen so that another attempt is made possible redefining ‘failure.’ Such ‘machine’ courses are claimed to be ‘personal,’ again humanizing, catering to the time and place constraints of the individual who is ‘plugged in.’ The ‘goods’ so delivered promote the needed skills ‘out there;’ they are said to promote lifelong learning so that the mind is always ‘expanding,’ and such courses can reach innovators ‘out there,’ who would never have had the opportunity to develop ideas and inventions without such a base understanding of the ‘material.’ ‘Machine learning courses’ assume that knowledge is commodifiable and deliverable, like any skill. Peer grading is used to ensure that standards are maintained, and self-grading assures that an internalization and a self-policing take place as the content is ‘mastered.’ Given the global reach of these courses, they operate 24/7 as there is always someone online in some time zone who can ‘answer’ queries to questions. The idea of learning is understood basically as the ability to go through a curriculum and master its content through quizzes and feedback answers, sometimes with an instructor, in what are referred to as ‘blended course.’ The teacher or professor ‘delivers’ the package. Perhaps more insidious is how learning now becomes ‘big data,’ as every click, every homework submission, every forum post from the thousands of online students can be now mined for data. With such data the effi iency of the course can be improved as ‘mistakes’ that a large majority of students make can now be reworked so that more of a percentage get the right answer. The more the misconceptions are cleared up, the greater improvement in learning to succeed is achieved. The ideal is that every student will get the right answers eventually as they work through the course, just as if they had a private tutor. Such online courses that deliver commodified knowledge have become the standard money maker for higher education. Aside from the obvious reductionism as to what is ‘knowledge,’ these courses are most applicable to the sciences rather than the humanities, and rather useless when it comes to the arts (drama, visual art, dance, poetry, music and so on). The question of interactivity is always claimed to be plus feature of such learning. Few think of the obverse side of such interactivity, which is interpassivity (Pfaller 2003). The learning machine course, through its formatting, structures the type of student subjectivity desired, a subjectivity that complies with the programme’s structure that has been programmed. The exchange is one sided as the mastery of knowledge as content information is the overriding goal. But this is mastery not of the student; rather, it is the mastery of the programme that ‘desires’ such mastery to take place. Machine-learning, of course, is a naive way to think of knowledge. It overlooks the important relationships that need to be established between the teacher and the learner. How bodies affect and are affected (Deleuze 1988), which is not part of the University Discourse that Lacan had articulated. Mitra recognizes this in his machine-learning model, but in a very simple way, as if a machinic facilitator is able to impart the needed encouragement. In complete opposition to such ‘teaching machines’ is the message of the future delivered by ‘Sir’ Kenneth Robinson. 12 Perhaps no one does it better in terms of entertaining an audience than he? Robinson essentially says the same thing: schools are outdated and in order to release ‘creativity’ it is high time to recognize differentiated talents that can be encouraged to bloom so students fi nd their place in the social order. Robinson is sort of a ‘gun for hire’ type. He speaks to corporate types as well as to school boards, and is sought as an inspirational speaker at educational conferences. He is right to point out that the question of what kind of education is needed for the future is impossible to answer. And, rehearses, each and every time, the mind–body split of subject areas that are a holdover from Modernism. So what is the alternative if, unlike Salman Khan, whose academy is backed up by Gates to promote interests in technology, there is to be hope and faith in a young generation? Of course it is creativity. Robinson tells many stories of ‘creativity’ by young people in their ability to ‘risk’ and be ‘wrong’ as they experiment early in life. He simply maintains that adults ‘grow out of creativity,’ and become less fl exible, rigid. A strong believer in the arts, creativity is the magical substance that speaks of the richness of human capacity. Robinson’s pitch for the future is appealing, and (sadly) perhaps that his message has been heard loud and clear by the communication and entertainment industries. Creativity is put to work for innovative means to maintain the consumption of ‘goods.’ Creativity for Robinson is ‘having an original idea that has value.’ The diffi culty is in the term ‘original,’ as creativity is a ‘rare’ occurrence. If one looks at the artists who are not part of the entertainment and capitalist means of production, one finds a much more difficult story. Not only do artists ‘resist’ the social order, many, as is historically known, are unable to maintain their stability in the social order that has little to no place for them. For Robinson’s message regarding creativity to be heard, a future with a different set of transformative values would have to exist; otherwise, creativity becomes synonymous with affective labour. Cognitive capitalism is now simply supplemented by affective (bodily) capitalism. Robinson’s ‘creativity’ becomes reduced to innovation when it is applied to the decentralizing of schooling for the ‘future.’ Creativity becomes harnessed via entrepreneurial learning as praised by such organizations as the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the European Commission. Some of the most successful models are found in Sweden (Leffl er 2014). But, it seems the targets for this entrepreneurial push are the populations that are the most vulnerable, in slums and favelas where the thirst for change to improving one’s survival and qualities of life awaits just below the surface. ‘Radical innovation,’ as it is said, ‘often comes from where there is huge need,’ which should not surprise anyone. Social entrepreneurship is touted as the future of education globally as it facilitates low cost ways for learning when it comes to large-scale populations in the so-called developing countries. But it also works all too well in countries such as China where class sizes are staggering in relation to even those of North America. Here management thinkers such as Charles Leadbeater 13 promote a style of education where technology is again fun and accessible, where gaming theory is put into action. This ‘futures’ model is rather ‘simple.’ The key is always to tap desire (usually called motivation); this desire is driven by a way to improve one’s survival and lot in life. There has to be a payoff and so the pragmatics of learning has to be in place as such programmes must be relevant for life. Based on projects and questioning, their basic idea is taken from Paulo Freire’s model of participatory education, but now put to entrepreneurial use rather than any left-leaning claims of socialism that Freire followers have. The most common technologies in place in such ‘developing countries’ to broadcast entrepreneurial educational programmes happen to be the mobile cell phone, and not the computer. Creativity is that allusive ‘daemon’ that each one of us is asked to ‘discover’ in a society of control. Finding our ‘thing’ makes us ‘productive.’ It is not easy to find your ‘thing’ in contemporary society. Although the arts are rather ‘useless’ in relation to placing a price tag on them, yet this is precisely what happens. As the saying goes, ‘What is shit to one is gold to another,’ as the transubstantiation of matter continually depends on context, desire and current marketing practices. Creativity, the way it has been taken up via capitalist interests, trades on characteristics that fit the neo-liberal entrepreneur; they emerge from the inside as the genius of the creative artist. For those philosophers, such as Deleuze ( 1987) where creativity always comes from the outside, it is an apprenticeship of signs that matters. An ability to have the world ‘stare’ back at you, so to speak, and answer back. Artists are symptomologists for Deleuze; they are often delirious and ‘visionary’ in terms of the ‘possible worlds’ they create, providing new intensive affects and percepts that have never before existed. There are always inherent emotional risks when ‘creativity’ is not taken glibly as simple innovation, and the idea of genesis is given its full understanding of experimentation and invention. It makes ‘learning’ quite another matter where, again wonder and curiosity are explored without the pressures of meeting client demands, regardless if time has become flexible in the workplace. Deleuze and Guattari had the idea of ‘becoming child,’ and Robinson is right when he says that children are fearless in their experimentation. Mike Leigh’s fi lm, Happy-Go-Lucky (2008), presents us with a character we seldom come across—a primary school teacher named Poppy, who acts like a child, but she is an adult. How can that be? She seems to go through life accepting the fate that life brings in such a child-like way. From a Deleuzian standpoint, the question of relationships in the teacher–student transference is thought through assemblages of productive desire. Enigmatically Deleuze and Guattari say, ‘Children are Spinozists’ (TP, 256). By this they are referring to the Spinozian adage ‘what a body can do.’ The turn is towards pre-subjective affects, the intensities that increase or decrease the body’s capacity to act. Affects concern the puissance of a body, where power is relative and contrasted to pouvoir, where power is dominant. ‘Body’ refers to an assemblage, that is, a composition or a consistency of competing or unequal forces. These forces act differentially on one another within the entanglement of their relations to produce a singular individual. When bodies encounter one another, this relational encounter is a question of puissance; impersonal affects circulate or transfer between bodies. Relationality so understood, say between the teacher and the student, takes into consideration these affects, but also recognizes that these affects do not ‘belong’ to the individual, it is what emerges in the encounter. This can happen optimally, as well as what Deleuze and Guattari call reaching a ‘pessimal threshold,’ a degree zero when considering the intensity of affective composition. Optimal threshold refers to the highest possible degree a ‘subject’ is able to affect and be affected before the subject becomes something else. On the other end, a decomposition or deterritorialization takes place in relation to the pessimal limit. The subject is destroyed, disassembled and the degree of power diminished to non-existence. This range plays itself out in the classroom depending on the assemblages of power that are formed. All this is to say ‘becoming-child’ in Deleuze and Guattari’s terms has nothing to do in relation to a child–adult dualism, that is, the child will ‘become’ an adult. Becoming-child refers to the formation of a consistency of affects, which presents a particular degree of power. It is the capacity to relate to the world like a Spinozian, that is, one assesses the signs that are posed by the milieu or situation and then finds creative ways to solve them. Each chronological age, in this respect, has a ‘becoming child.’ As they write, ‘the child is the becoming-young of every age. […] Knowing how to age does not mean remaining young; it means extracting from one’s age the particles the speeds and slowness [that is, the affects], the fl ows that constitute the youth of that age’ (TP, 277, added emphasis). This brief diversion into the thought of Deleuze and Guattari is simply to be reminded that ‘learning’ and the relationships to further learning are never so easily understood as simply being technical. Learning for Deleuze and Guattari is much more disruptive and much more ‘risky and dangerous,’ for it requires a formative transformation in the encounter. It happens when the given assemblage is at the ‘edge of chaos,’ and perhaps then new worlds open up by those who stay in tune to the signs from the Outside that come to them. 14 UP IN THE DARK, DARK CLOUDS: TAKE 3, THE FUTILITY OF RESISTANCE? Few realize that the largest university in the USA is a corporate university, University of Phoenix (UOP), with over 200 locations scattered across the USA in 39 states, which boasts 240,000 students around the globe and over a million graduates. It has the largest business school in the USA, graduating 14,000 masters of business arts annually. It caters to working adults and employees of transnational corporations (TNCs) such as AT&T, Boeing, IBM, Intel, Lockheed Martin, Motorola and of course the US military offering online degrees composed of, as the online advertisement puts it, ‘industry responsive curriculum.’ E-learning, flexibility of chronological time and a wide selection of courses is the obvious future here. No need to put your life on hold for four years or fi nd a parking space on campus. ‘Resistance is futile,’ when it comes to this vision of education … so get used to it. The future is already here. ‘Resistance is Futile!’ a phrase that immediately conjures up the image of the Borg of Star Trek fame. How are we to interpret the iconic image of The Borg’s ‘cubical ship,’ the least aerodynamically shaped vessel in the imaginative world of spatial science fi ction? They do not move, but colonize from a quadrant of control. Is The Borg our technocratic educational elite who will eventually take over our species, assimilate us into their mould? Perhaps they are the ‘true’ commune—the threatening image of communism in disguise assimilating all differences so that banal sameness will prevail as the will is evacuated and the body or mind is put to use as a social drone: some will say that is what capitalism already is. China has become the mutant capitalist-communist country. We now sell our brainpower, if not so much our body power, often referred to as cognitive capitalism now that the manufacturing sectors are waning and disappearing. The permanency of capital is here to stay, as stable as The Borg cube, as are the ingenious technologies of the creative industries that sustain it. We all have our Macs and PCs, but few of us are hackers in the true sense of the term, and still fewer of us are familiar with copy left software and the Linux operating system that would make us free agents of corporate technology and the growing cloud technology that spreads its mist to cover us. It is just too time consuming to ‘resist’ given our busy ‘productive’ performative lives to keep up with the new operating platforms that are being introduced. In the past few years, my university, the University of Alberta in Edmonton, Canada, has introduced three new platforms that had to be learnt—a new e-mail service operated by Google; a new centralized telephone service; and an expectation that all of our courses will eventually go interactively online using Moodle (that is the Modular Object-Orientated Dynamic Learning Environment), a free source e-learning software platform, thereby making the future of learning a cyberspace event. The similarity of logos between MacDonald’s and Moodle should give one pause to think. Is this paranoid thinking or a fall into ‘becoming-schizo’? Another meaning of ‘resistance is futile’ emerges with the recognition that resistance today is to be found everywhere; today’s art is resistance and resistance is art. Resistance has become a way of life and a very profi table activity. Today resistance exists on every corner but nothing changes. Resistance is just another brand like FCUK. In a contemporary context, artworks are staged within a binary of a critical model based on negation, deferral and lack, or an aesthetic model based on the ideas of transcendence. 15 In 2011, TIME placed the ‘Protester’ as the Person of the Year, a 25-year-old woman who decided to protest against the Bank of America. Even the non-sanctioned Occupy Wall Street protests were removed through fire regulations and municipal laws governing public parks and festivals. To protest today is to occupy no ground whatsoever; one must become a perpetual moving sign with placard in hand, a zombie routed through streets ‘peacefully’ by police on horses or motorcycles. Does this simply confirm that the public–private divide has all but disappeared? You can eat your lunch and read in a park, but in what spaces you can truly protest have all been repressively desublimated: in other words freedom of speech and civil liberties have become restricted through the structural manipulations of open spaces; only cyberspace is left that is not yet fully controlled and regulated to get your message out. But this too is being shut down slowly, regulated incrementally. Modern liberal politics as we once knew it has all but disappeared. It is the lament that a liberal arts education and the humanities are no longer ‘useful,’ that there is an aversion to social values and civic mindedness, and a waning of intellectual integrity. 16 The future that the humanities once entertained seems to have dimmed and even in some universities gone out. Romantic resistance in ‘societies of control’ emerges around the agency over the body: notably punk, Goth, body tattooing, piercing and modifi cation, and porn-chic (the so-called slutwear and hookerwear—belly shirts, visible G-strings, sexercise), and plastic surgery of private parts such as vaginal rejuvenation and penis enhancement and abdomen tucks for men. Now, as a number of sociologists have argued, even the headscarf or hijab has become commodified and marketed (especially in Turkey) as a form of class distinction and rebellion against orthodoxies of Islam (Göçek and Balaghi 1994). The bulk of these resistances is metonymically located in girl’s bodies. In all these cases, however, resistance is equated with autonomy and agency over one’s body, which is tied to commodity consumption for special niche markets, which then feeds back into the neo-liberalist agenda of capitalism—namely, freedom as attached to chains of debt. These forms of resistance are the remaining vestiges of the disciplined society as outlined by Michel Foucault that have now become commodified in their own right. The trend is oxymoronically towards mass customization or designer capitalism of the ‘goods life’ (jagodzinski 2010). In control societies resistance is an assemblage of flows: The G-string or belly shirt can mean fashion in one context, sexual availability in another, pride in one’s body, or functionality—it is hot outside or simply sheer habit. The headscarf can be a sign of fashion, of religious belief, political ideal, all or none of these depending on the assemblage that is formed where desire is circulated and holds the meaning in circulation for a given period of chronological time. Any stability of a defining image no longer holds for long. The diagram of the panopticon has been supplanted by a reconfi gured abstract machine, the synopticon, which now regulates and modulates a smooth, continuous and uniform space rather than as a striated or hierarchical one. One has to spray a mist over such space to make visible the forces that are at work, much like in many action sci-fi movies where a spray reveals the laser beam lights that crisscross and defi ne the space to set off the alarms; many boundaries remain invisible, without detection, so that the body can be choreographed and positioned without coercion. ‘Resistance is futile’ in a control society has to be rethought for the future of education, especially now that digitalization has brought to fore what now characterizes globalization or the contemporary world order in general where the modern dialectic of inside and outside has been replaced by a play of degrees and intensities, of hybridity, artifi ciality and immaterialism. Immaterialism, after Jean-François Lyotard ( 1991), has nothing to do with being the opposite of matter; rather, it is the manipulation of matter via structural rules of organization (matrixes and algorithms) that no longer are human measures of space and time. The collapse of art, science and technology is one such obvious occurrence of the posthuman, where artists must now share with technologists and engineers the co-creation of the ‘work,’ thus separating the artwork from the collaborative team that made it happen, desubjectivizing its creation. The creative assemblage of tool making (or instrumentalization), composition, performance and reception through the intra-personal collaboration of a production team, best thought of as a cell, like Critical Art Ensemble, provides the implosion of disciplines that necessitates the creation of a new nonsense signifier for art—something like ‘art-techno-sci’ since this is no longer ‘art’ in the modernist sense. Art-techno-sci is created as much by accident, technology, the structure of matter, the context of presentation than by an entity called an ‘artist’ who expresses him or herself consciously through the so-called language of art. Agency is not only dispersed throughout this network of forces, but desire as the unknown factor X only emerges once the ‘work’ is released. ‘Work’ has the specificity of affect in this way of understanding, as an event. The posthuman is a neurological shift in human understanding of precisely that which cannot be controlled in a society of control, which tries to control that which cannot be controlled through surveillance, tracking and marketing, and through various conservative reclamations of the social justice agenda such as postfeminism, postracism and green capitalism. Above all the shift to creativity is constantly captured by designer capitalism. This is how posthumanism rewrites itself as humanism, preserving anthropocentric thought and managing the so-called ‘crisis’ of resistance and protest rather than becoming a Durcharbeitung (a working through) of the death of Man. Anamnesis is continually thwarted or repressed. In other words, it is the continued colonization of the virtual Outside where thinking can still take place. What cannot be controlled are things like fate, accident, contingency and unconscious desire as drives; these are the vestiges of unknowability which philosophers such as Deleuze named the Outside, Lacan the Real and Freud the uncanny. It is also the interiority of the body, the intrinsic body as opposed to the extrinsic body. Although both ‘bodies’ are intimately related, it is their continual capture in terms of the control that is at issue. The challenge is to have ‘art-techno-sci’ that can still think the Outside that has vanished or rather controlled by global forces of capitalism and the technologies that support it. This is the worry Bernard Stiegler’s ( 1998) work presents when he maintains that ‘tertiary memory’, or mnemotechnics as the exteriorization of the human, has become an ‘industrialization of memory.’ Within the context of the Anthropocene, is resistance futile as well? The big existential questions of human survival seem oddly silent in our public education systems, although the awareness of climate change grows only because the threat and damage of storm systems and unusual weather conditions just keep on occurring. What of the future here? All of the projected educational futures that I have discussed in this introduction are about a world-for-us, nothing about the world-without-us. This directly speaks of the title of this collection: the precarious future of education, whose state is now in the balance.

#### Modern academia is grounded in the drive toward rationality contingent on the total transparency of the self and outside world, feeding the global fantasy of efficient communication and subject formation contingent on the complete eradication of radical alterity. This nature demands instead a fatal strategy, a conceptual suicide that pushes the logic of the system to the point of systemic implosion

Hoofd 10. Assistant Professor in the Communications and New Media Programme at the National University of Singapore, “*The accelerated university: Activist-academic alliances and simulation of thought,*” Ephemera Journal, vol. 10 no. 1

But far from an ‘a-disciplinary self-constitution’ that supposedly overcomes any fictitious distinction, Investigacció for one relies heavily on the common fictitious distinction between activism and academia to validate their praxis. By contrasting their initiative to the false objectivity of academicism, they validate their own knowledge production by claiming to be in the margins as opposed to the ‘ivory tower’, as if the latter is a stable area from which one can detach oneself from the outside world and hence objectively analyse. Also, one could wonder to what extent one is actually speaking from the margins when one has the time, technologies, spaces and connections to organise an event like Investigacció. The desire to generate knowledge from ‘one’s own subjectivity, without limitations’ (2005: 3) is analogous to the mythical humanist narrative of breaking with and improving upon previous knowledge – a form of knowledge-innovation that the academic institution is also infused with. The university of excellence as well as its doublings into projects like Investigacció are therefore an effect of its repetitions (with a difference) into the neo-liberal mythical space of progress and acceleration. The creation of more and more ‘spaces and mechanisms of production, exchange and collective reflection’ (2005: 3) is indeed precisely what late-capitalism seeks to forge, as long as such reflection generates an intensification of production. The idea that subjectivities from social movements are in any way less produced by neo-liberal globalisation is highly problematic. In fact, such an idea suggests a rather positivist notion of the subject – similar to that supposedly objective academic individual Investigacció seeks to dethrone. Investigacció then somewhat nostalgically narrates a subject untainted by power structures and technologies. In fact, the Investigaccióinitiative displays how the subject of activist research empowers her- or himself throughrecreating the fictitious distinction between activism and academia. S/he does so by reproducing this opposition, which in turn co-creates and accelerates these ‘new spaces’ – spaces that were created with the goal of facilitating global capitalism and its speed-elite, and that allow for the perfection of military power through technologies of surveillance. The call for participants to become active and productive in co-organising the international event – of course, without any monetary remuneration – is also much present in Investigacció’s rhetoric. They suggest that participants should engage with one another not only at the meeting, but especially through the online spaces Investigacció has created for the purpose of generating activist research. ‘Take action!’ says their flyer, ‘[...] make it so the conference is yours!’ This seductive appeal to the subject-individual as the centre of creative production is very common to neo-liberal consumerism and its emphasis on cybernetic interactivity. But it is also false in that it gives the participants a sense of control over Investigacció that they actually do not have – eventually, the main organisers (have already) set the agenda and handed out the stakes. In short, the organisers fail to situate themselves by pretending everyone is on the same level of privilege – for example, not requiring monetary compensation – in this project, and this failure is strangely an effect of their attempt at reviving a more democratic academic structure. Information Initially, one could think that Baudrillard’s assessment confirms my analytical suspicion regarding activist-research projects. In ‘The Implosion’, Baudrillard starts from the premise that the increase of information in our media-saturated society results in a loss of meaning because it ‘exhausts itself in the act of staging communication’. New media technologies exacerbate the subject’s fantasy of transparent communication, while increasingly what are communicated are mere copies of the same, a ‘recycling in the negative of the traditional institution’ (Baudrillard, 1994: 80). New technologies are simply the materialisation of that fantasy of communication, and the ‘lure’ (1994: 81) of such a technocratic system resides in the requirement of active political engagement to uphold that fantasy. This translates in a call to subjectivise oneself – to be vocal, participate, and to ‘play the [...] liberating claim of subjecthood’ (1994: 85). The result of the intensifying circular logic of this system, he says, is that meaning not only implodes in the media, but also that the social implodes in the masses – the construction of a ‘hyperreal’ (1994: 81). Contra the claim of Glocal Research Space that such praxes of alliance are ‘without an object’ (Glocal Research Space, 2003: 19), this does not mean that objectification does not take place at all. Instead, and in line with Baudrillard’s argument, the urge to subjectivise oneself and the objectification of the individual go hand in hand under speed-elitism – a double bind that locks the individual firmly into her or his technocratic conditions. Indeed, the argument in ‘Activist Research’ that ‘research [should be] like an effective procedure [which is] in itself already a result’ (2003: 19) describes the conditions of Readings’ ‘university of excellence’ where any research activity, thanks to technological instantaneity, translates immediately into the capitalist result of increased information flow (Readings, 1996: 22). Active subjects and their others become the cybernetic objects of such a system of information flow. The insistence in ‘Activist Research’ on free, travelling and nomadic research simply makes sure that this logic of increased flow is repeated. Because of this desire for increased flow and connection, activist-research projects are paradoxically highly exclusivist in advocating the discourses and tools of the speed-elite. The problem with projects like Edu-Factory or the productive cross-over of activism and academia is therefore not only that their political counter-information means just more information (and loss of meaning) as well as more capitalist production, but that it puts its faith in precisely those technologies and fantasies of control, communication and of ‘being political’ that underlie the current logic of overproduction. It is at this point that John Armitage and Joanne Roberts in ‘Chronotopia’ contend that such a ‘cyclical repetition’ (Armitage and Roberts, 2002: 52) is particularly dangerous because the fantasy of control remains exactly that, a fantasy. At the same time, this increasingly forceful repetition can only eventually give way to ‘the accident’ because chronotopian speed-spaces are fundamentally and exponentially unstable. Armitage and Roberts’ idea of ‘cyclical repetition’ through chronotopianism does thus not mean an exact repetition of the speed-elite’s quest for mastery – instead, I would argue that it is this immanent quality of difference in repetition, of the ‘essential drifting due to [a technology’s] iterative structure cut off from […] consciousness as the authority of the last analysis’ as Derrida calls it in ‘Signature Event Context’ (Derrida, 1982: 316) that allows for the accident or true event to appear. The difference through technologically sped-up repetition appears then perhaps as a potential, but only precisely as a growing potential that cannot be willed – in this sense, it will be an unanticipated event indeed. One could then speak of an intensification of politics in what is perhaps too hastily called the neo-liberal university, opening up unexpected spaces for critique in the face of its neo-liberalisation, which in turn points to the fundamental instability of its enterprise. Activist-research projects add to this intensification by virtue of their techno-acceleration. This intensification of politics is no ground for univocal celebration, since it remains also the hallmark of the neo-liberal mode of production of knowledge through the new tele-technologies as excellent, regardless of its critical content. The current university’s instability mirrors and aggravates the volatility of a capitalism marked by non-sustainability, a growing feminisation of poverty, the rise of a new global upper class, and highly mediated illusions of cybernetic mastery. This nonetheless also opens up new forms of thought, if only appearing as ‘accidents’. Derrida hints at this, but also at the university’s elusiveness, in ‘Mochlos, or: the Conflict of the Faculties’, when he claims that he ‘would almost call [the university] the child of an inseparable couple, metaphysics and technology’ (Derrida, 1993: 5, emphasis mine). Almost, but never quite – here then emerges the possibility of truly subversive change. But this change will not be brought about by the mere content of the critique, but by the way it pushes acceleration to the point of systemic disintegration or implosion. In Fatal Strategies, Baudrillard calls this the ‘fatal strategy’ that contemporary theory must adopt: a sort of conceptual suicide attack which aims at pulling the rug out from under the speed-elitist mobilisation of semiotic oppositions, and which shows the paradox behind any attempt at structural predictions. In ‘The Final Solution’, Baudrillard relates this intensification of the humanist obsession with dialectics, mastery, and transparency – the quest for immortality that is at the basis of techno-scientific research – to destruction and the death drive through the metaphor of and actual research around cloning, which strangely resonates well with Derrida’s investigation of the tele-technological archive in Archive Fever. I read Baudrillard’s ‘Final Solution’ here as a metaphor for the duplication (cloning) of thought into virtual spaces outside the university walls proper. If contemporary research seeks to make human cloning possible, argues Baudrillard, then this endeavour is equivalent to cancer: after all, cancer is simply automatic cloning, a deadly form of multiplication. It is of interest here to note that the possibility of creating an army of clones has likewise garnered much military interest, just as academia today more and more serves military ends. As the logic of cloning as automatic multiplication is typical of all current technological and humanist advancements, the exacerbation of this logic can only mean more promise and death. At this point my argument mirrors the apocalyptic tone of the activist-research projects. In the final analysis, the problem with Edu-Factory, Facoltà di Fuga, Investigacció, Universidad Nómada, Ricercatori Precari, and Glocal Research Space is that these projects entail a very specific form of subjugation with dire consequences for the slower and less techno-genic classes. Techno-scientific progress entails a regress into immortality, epitomised by a nostalgia typical of the current socio-technical situation, for when we were ‘undivided’ (Baudrillard, 2000: 6). I contend that Baudrillard refers not only to the lifeless stage before humans became sexed life forms, but also makes an allusion to psycho-analytic readings of the ‘subject divided in language’ and its nostalgia for wholeness and transparent communication. The desire for immortality, like archive fever, is therefore the same as the Freudian death drive, and we ourselves ultimately become the object of our technologies of scrutiny and nostalgia. The humanist quest of totally transparency of oneself and of the world to oneself that grounds the idea of the modern techno-scientific university, is ultimately an attempt at (self-)destruction, or in any case an attempted destruction of (one’s) radical difference [alterity]. The urgent political question, which Stiegler problematically avoided in Disorientation, then becomes: which selves are and will become caught up in the delusion of total self-transparency and self-justification, and which selves will be destroyed? And how may we conceive of an ‘ethic of intellectual inquiry or aesthetic contemplation’ that ‘resists the imperatives of speed’, as Jon Cook likewise wonders in ‘The Techno-University and the Future of Knowledge’ (Cook, 1999: 323)? It is of particular importance to note here that the very inception of this question and its possible analysis, like the conception of the speed-elite, is itself again a performative repetition of the grounding myth of the university of independent truth, justice and reason. Therefore, in carrying forward the humanist promise, this analysis is itself bound up in the intensification of the logic of acceleration and destruction, and that is then also equally tenuous. This complicity of thought in the violence of acceleration itself in turn quickens the machine of the humanist promise, and can only manifest itself in the prediction of a coming apocalypse – whether it concerns a narrative of the death of thought and the university, or of a technological acceleration engendering the Freudian death drive. We are then simply the next target in the technological realisation of complete γνωθι σαυτον (know thyself) – or so it seems. Because after all, a clone is never an exact copy, as Baudrillard very well knows; and therefore, the extent to which activist-research projects hopefully invite alterity can thankfully not yet be thought.

#### Such semiotic codification creates a form of technovisuality in which static algorithms of productivity dictated by semiocapitalism function as the metric by which bodies are deemed valuable, forming the register through which violence is enacted

Beller 13. Jonathan Beller, Edited by Arne De Boever and Warren Neidich, “Pathologistics of Attention,” *Psychopathologies of Cognitive Capitalism: Part 2*, Archive Books, p. 117-155 //brackets for clarity

As it turns out, our non-existent “democracies” increasingly rely on automation, and more particularly the automation of psychopathology in order to sustain the irreality necessary to their function. While an overly general term, psychopathology in the modern sense most often results resulting from some dissociation of sensibility, or, in other words, some slippage of the signifier from the signified. While this latter descriptor was correctly grasped by post-structuralism as characteristic of language function generally, a historicization of these emerging insights into the ontological failure of language to image being, understands post-structuralism as itself an inflection point in which this generalized slippage intensifies. While the paradigms of “reality” and “truth” are irrevocably lost, retroactively one sees that the gradual intensification and awareness of this slippage was also the condition not only of structuralism but of the theater of psychoanalysis in toto. Naturally (as it were), this view of signifiers slipping off of no longer fully presentable signifieds in accord with new organizational principles or logistics (drives, fetishes, ideologies, etc.), could be stretched back into historical time to explain the need for hermeneutical analysis (Marxism, Psychoanalysis) as well as the opening of the space (gap) that will give rise to modern literature, abstraction, and visual culture. Here however, I will be interested in what I take to be the increasing automation of this dissociation of sensibility, that is, of psychopathology—if you will, an automation that tends to exceed its psychic dimensions while extensively developing the patho-logical dimensions.¶ Though one could pursue the automation of pathologistics of attention from the standpoint of the experience of today’s large-scale psychological afflictions (burn-out, depression, autism, sociopathology, etc.) my interest here will be less in the psychoanalytic aspects of the generalization of mental illness in the twenty-first century and more in the infrastructure of the logistics of attention that organize psychopathology. As any mediological analysis would be aware, these logistics are not only internal to subjects but distributed throughout the mediatic and material forms of the socius itself.¶ To explore the pathologistics of attention requires the following hypotheses:¶ 1) Films are programs of visualization and hence for discourse.¶ 2) Iconic Films mobilize paradigmatic programs. These programs provide the infrastructure for the organization of attention.¶ 3) Psychological aspects of these programs are functional and legible but the logistics are distributed in the organization of bodies and apparatuses—in materiality.¶ 4) Apparatuses automate aspects of formerly human decision and intelligence.¶ 5) Increasingly, sovereignty is moving into the material, which is to say the computational environment.¶ 6) Convergence, ordinarily thought to mean the convergence of various media platforms into the digital medium known as the computer, must also be understood as the convergence of linguistic function and financialization with these others vectors and platforms. This is a tendency, not a fait accompli.¶ “Pathologistics of Attention” builds on the claim developed in my book The Cinematic Mode of Production that cinema brings the industrial revolution to the eye. By studying select films made at various moments along the evolutionary path taken by cinema, we may document with some precision the implication of Marx’s idea that “industry is the open book of man’s essential powers, the exposure to the senses of human psychology.”1 However, in this case, our “open book” will be cinema, and cinema as a transitional phase between industrialization and what is understood today as the social factory of digital culture (Post-fordism); and we will be documenting, dialectically as it were, the organization of the psyche itself as well as the modes of attention that correspond to said organization. To this end we may observe that montage, deep focus and the cut, as theorized during the history of cinema thus far, all correspond to neuro- and psycho-logical processes as well as to specific forms of attention. We now know too, that these forms were “destined,” more or less, to be utilized in capital’s emerging regimes of production and monetization collectively termed attention economy or cognitive capitalism. Thus we begin a kind of archeology of forms of attention—neuro-, psycho-, photo-, cinematico-, informatico-, and capital-logical—that have both paved the way to and achieved a culmination of sorts in the capture of the cognitive-linguistic commons by life-destroying modalities for the organization of attention. These include not just acknowledged media platforms, but also (it must be stressed) student-debt, blood computing, drone warfare and the everyday function of representation floating on the surface of an ocean of unrepresented—and in the current conjuncture unrepresentable— suffering of more than two billion people living on less than two dollars per day.¶ This study of the pathologistics of attention, is then necessarily also about the scrambling of the symbolic order, the bankruptcy of sign-function, the de- and re-structuring of grammar, the proletarianization of the senses, the expropriation of the cognitive-linguistic, the installation of the regime of cognitive capitalism over and on top of or adjacent to the persistence of spectacular, industrial and feudal regimes, the mining of attention as an amalgamating means of command-control-production, the current and ostensibly indominatable reign of short-termist thinking, the life-sucking suction of financialization, the acid-corrosiveness of the Wall Street nano-second, the ever-advancing seizure of the commons, and the effect of all these projects in relation to mentality, warfare, global dispossession and planetary collapse. It is also, not entirely incidentally, an effort to explore the following irritant: today, in the neo-liberal West at any rate, the liberal is a fascist who thinks they are a democrat.¶ So, in addition to the breakdown of language function and the re-distribution and/or liquidation of meaning, this paper is unavoidably on the psychopathology and the logistics of perception of contemporary fascism, otherwise to be thought of as the totalitarianism of finance capitalism— a formation that is at once without us and within us. You, my readers, will already have noted that it is only with real difficulty and a certain tentativeness that I can name my object of analysis, a problematic that has everything to do with what I am calling the pathologistics of attention. Expressed in the briefest formulation possible, this formula refers to the dialectic between the expropriation first of labor and then attention on the one side, and the shortcircuiting of the body and then of thought on the other, as the definitive means for the production of the present, such that it is… present.2¶ [cont.]¶ Well, if in 1960 the normal man masturbated, what does he do today? What do any of us do? Particularly after half a century of cinema, digitization, visual saturation, and visual financialization? Citizen Kane or Norman Bates? Neurotic megalomania or psychosis? Two programs for subjectivization. In today’s world in which the entire visual field is posited as a site of value extraction, it is no secret that pornography represents 30% of internet traffic at minimum. If we consider that computer energy usage has expanded to account for more than 3% of electricity consumption world-wide, that’s a significant amount of fossil fuels devoted to jacking off. Still if reaching orgasm in order to ward off psychosis were the main use of fossil fuels, the world might be a better place. However, the effects are somewhat more serious than all that: structural violence, systematically deployed, titrated with highly fungible vectors of racism and sexism—are embedded in the technovisualization of everything that appears with the express goal of capturing sensual labor and the consequence of liquidating both subjects and the subjectivity of their objects. Bernard Stiegler’s notion of the stripping of the libido and the proletarianization of the senses by what he calls “retentional systems” would be useful here. As is Marcuse’s idea of one-dimensional man. From Kane to Bates to porn we witness the mediatic functionalization of subjectivity and the virtualization of the object world. These three pathways are programmatic compensatory means to ward of the radical disempowerment wrought by programs. More than a tendency, the result is an automation of psychic function by computerized and capitalized apparatuses.¶ But our analysis thus far is only to 1960, and predominantly in the U.S., more specifically, the white U.S. Indeed the forms of neurological and psychic dysfunction and reformation, described herein—people fragmented, castrated, and cut up by money and machines and driven to seek subjectivity by pathological means—are relatively easy to understand, delimited as they are and as compared with the logistics of perception now current. Not to minimize them, since they violently imposed various regimes of the body, psychology, personhood and desire, on subjects as well as upon those who became objects for said subjects, but we must remark here that they are local manifestations specific to a few dominant nations, races and classes in a particular epoch.¶ Nonetheless, their mainstream expression and dissemination makes them valid precursors, if you will, to the (con-)temporary psychosis of today’s mainstream. Yesterday’s white supremacist capitalist patriarchy still configures today’s white supremacist capitalist patriarchy in the U.S. and Europe and beyond—a formation that is symptomatically specific to one class fraction but nonetheless potentially deadly to every planetary denizen (if also to itself) for all that.¶ Admittedly, there are countless other ways to render this analysis, but since my theme was psychopathology I found myself going to these films first. In any case, outing the whiteness of my examples thus far is not to universalize them, but precisely the opposite. For with Fanon, we should also recognize the limits of psychopathologizing discourse, which is to say the limits of psychoanalysis. For Fanon, no talking cure was going to cure the sicknesses of either torture victims or socio-paths, only insurrection and revolution could overthrow the forms of egoism and hatred endemic to colonialism and fascism and thus bring about the needed paradigm shift. So in tracking the white psychopathologies that lead towards the dissolution of their hosts, we are witnessing the implosion, the practical deconstruction of whiteness.¶ By way of moving towards a conclusion, I want to make two final points: one about whiteness and what Anne Anlin Cheng astutely calls the melancholy of race—this will be an additional and indeed constitutive patho-logistical vector that characterizes the operating system of the representational dominant. Then, a second concerning a generalized liquidation not just of particular human beings but of human being and of being itself.¶ Anne Cheng in The Melancholy of Race reminds us that the melancholic is both sad and aggressive. She writes, “Dominant white identity in American operates melancholically— as an elaborate identificatory system based on psychical and social consumption-and-denial. This diligent system of melancholic retention appears in different guises. Both racist and white liberal discourses participate in the dynamic, albeit out of different motivations. The racists need to develop elaborate ideologies in order to accommodate their actions with official American ideals, while white liberals need to keep burying the racial others in order to memorialize them. Those who do not see the racial problem or those who call themselves nonideological are the most melancholic of all because in today’s political climate, as Toni Morrison exclaims in Playing in the Dark, ‘it requires hard work to not see.’”9¶ Though Cheng will be interested in “the question that Freud does not ask: [namely] what is the subjectivity of the melancholic object?”10 for the moment I want to remark that the canonical cinema of the U.S. can be thought of as a melancholy canon—organized as it is to portray white narratives as universal narratives in a society profoundly structured by racial inequality—organized in other words “to not see.” While bell hooks and many others have commented on “the oppositional gaze” in Hollywood cinema, particularly the oppositional gaze of black spectators watching white films, we must learn to better recognize how whole systems of visualization and thus for the organization of attention are structured around a disavowal of racism or of the existence of racialized bodies, and oftentimes the active annihilation of racialized bodies. Cheng, citing Thomas Mann, who says that “[w]hat we call mourning for our dead is perhaps not so much grief at not being able to call them back as it is grief at not being able to want to do so”, shows that “it is exclusion rather than loss [that] is the real stake of melancholic retention.” 11 Indeed, melancholia approaches psychosis when the lost/excluded object rises up to challenge the melancholic who in truth no longer desires [or can abide by] its return.¶ Take for example Clint Eastwood’s all too convincing portrayal of “Dirty Harry,” a sad cop whose disillusionment and melancholic self-loathing have almost cost him his job on the SFPD. When one of the rare black characters in Hollywood cinema asserts himself, albeit scripted in the most stereotypically racist of ways—black bank robber running from the interpellation of a white man who also happens to be a cop—the line of sight through the peephole of psycho, a masculinity machine if their ever was one, becomes the sight line down the barrel of Clint’s 44 [[[the]]] magnum. The title of the sequels, Magnum Force and The Enforcer, are telling, because the psycho does not simply deny reality (the possibility of other ways and practices beyond his ken); he imposes his vision on others, by making them dead, if necessary. Eastwood’s persona from Dirty Harry forward is that of being too much a man for these muddled, liberal and overly tolerant times—his career turns out to be a heroic elegy of his racial melancholia, which is to say the melancholia of his racism. As one blogger appreciatively writes, “Dirty Harry put a bullet in the heart of the flower power generation” and it’s true, psychosis overcame poetry and too many Americans loved him up.¶ Here we can grasp the virility at the end of Peeping Tom’s camera, which he uses to film women as he murders them, in the form of the camera’s bayonet blade extension, and the virility in the extension of Eastwood’s racist gun. These prosthetics of the gaze constitute what we should understand as the working-edge of so-called universal man. Dirty Harry’s melancholia is of a profoundly different order than that of African-American filmmaker Charles Burnett’s characters in his extraordinary Killer of Sheep. That film, which could be read as a kind of black Modern Times in which images of the desultory Watts community in the mid- 70’s is also metaphorically figured as composed of sheep (and on occasion as killers), but here the machines hardly work. The film is a kind of bearing witness to the lived temporality, disempowerment and affective experiences of racialized exclusion. One finds in this film a distinctive composition that creates an apperceptive space of black knowing which is in certain real ways outside the economy of visual forms and structures proferred at the Hollywood box office (even as it is arguably a partial result of this economy). Following the lead offered in Saidiya Hartman’s work, one might say that the incommunicability and opacity of the legacies of slavery, racism, and Jim Crow are partly the contents of this film. The very difficulty of generating a subject constituting line of sight, image, or fully resolved perspective or representation testifies to a non-hegemonic visuality, an unrealized subjectification, and the presence of counter-histories that mobilize a perceptual mode different from that which will align itself and hence be at once repurposed and devoured by the mainstream.¶ However, the annihilating gazes abstracted and in-formed in Psycho, Dirty Harry, Peeping Tom, etc., are a condensation of a specific mode of white life’s universal application of a violently imposed sexism and racism to the organization of its perception. These “pure gazes” mobilizing racism and sexism on various platforms for the prosumption of post-fordist tramps to the profit of today’s entrepreneurial Citizen Kanes, small and large, are also the legacy of colonialism, of slavery, of imperialism and humanism. Today these vectors of for-profit programmatic annihilation consolidate to form, among other manifestations, the predatory gaze of the drone in a global war to be human. These pathological programs of visualization continue to function in ways that are equally as important as the digital computer. The drone, effecting what Allen Feldman calls a liquid archive, couples all the capacities of computation for aerodynamic navigation, videography, cartography, facial recognition and weapons deployment to create technologically enabled psychosis. Cyber-psychosis. The drone and its melancholic functionaries—its cybernetically incorporated pilots (who will go home to kiss their kids after pulling the trigger on someone else’s family half a universe away) along with their entire staff of statisticians, researchers, and commanders who serve both machine and country— draw on a panoply of mutable, and thus programmable raced and gendered assumptions. As does the press that covers these exploits, and “the nation” that sanctions them. In short, data processing can morphologically produce whatever variant of racist/sexist phobic rage is required for any operation.¶ It being understood, of course, that an operation here means the liquidation of the visualized target. The violent and incorporating logistics of this gaze are utterly banalized in the technical rationality of computers, national security, military protocols and the scoops of networked news that together produce the required taxidermic effect on each days’ requisite Other. Thus the drone, as both financial exploit and paradigmatic mode of visualization in the era of mediatic finance capital also represents the full automation of not just visuality but subjectivity. Because all systems (computation, financialization, visualization, militarization, national borders and migration, racialization, aestheticization, etc.) tend towards its logic, subjectivity within these programs is only to be found in the logistics of the annihilating gaze—subjectivity has itself become a program and all outsides are zones of crisis. This subjectification through annihilation is the real meaning of “convergence.”¶ So alongside the regular fare we have war games, war porn, food porn, fashion porn, news porn, reality porn and regular porn. In fact that is the regular fare and it is all part of the attention economy. This all-consuming production by mediated sensual labor functions at a variety of levels from the ratification of a particular screen image to the game, blog, show or channel through to the interface or platform and their advertisers, shareholders, banks, militaries and states. We have the bundling of modes of attention by computerized delivery systems and systems of account. We have, in short, the programmatic simulation of reality, the virtual mise-en-scène of all looking, without the guarantee of any real event beyond that orchestrated by the inexorable logic of advertising and value extraction. That our thoughts and perceptions are programmed, accumulated and capitalized testifies to the automation and expropriation of the general intellect. The general intellect, distributed across media platforms and automated in various apparatuses is, not just part of the means of production in the industrial sense, it is the means of production of sense perception and knowledge. It has rendered sensuality productive for capital and subjectivity at once automated and fully virtual. Subjectivity is a contingent instantiation (and always was), but the mediatic matrix of its materialization has fully transformed the local conditions of production and it has itself entered into computation.¶ In some brilliant pages of Alex Galloway’s new book The Interface Effect is the following proposition: “The computer, [which Galloway calls a metaphysical medium because it functions through simulation and instantiates its own objects] is not of an ontological condition [as cinema is purported to be], it is on that condition. It does not facilitate or make reference to an arrangement of being, it remediates the very conditions of being itself. If I may be so crude, the medium of the computer is being.”12 Galloway continues, “If the cinema is, in general an ontology, the computer is, in general, an ethic”.13 The distinction, as Galloway tells us, is comparable to that between a language and a calculus. The profilmic event as “referent” versus the program that in object-oriented computing instantiates the very objects it will then manipulate.¶ As evocative and indeed arresting as this formulation is in defining the flight from being as a metaphysical transformation ushered in by the digital computer, it is also partially incorrect, at least if we are going to abide by Vilém Flusser’s notion of the photographic apparatus—a machine that automates forms of thinking by executing concepts in a programmatic fashion. For Flusser, the technical image, produced by the apparatus known as the camera, is the first post-industrial image, in as much as the camera is already a computer—a programmed apparatus whose function is informed by the linearly written notations of the sciences of optics and chemistry. An apparatus for Flusser is something that automates an aspect of intelligence, and it is no less composed of programs than is a digital computer. Thus, Flusser claims quite convincingly that for nearly two centuries cameras have organized the world for the improvement and proliferation of cameras, such that today everything exists in reference to photography, suggesting that this constellation of programs evolves as the photographic apparatus by subjugating humans to its functions, much as a Darwinian evolutionary vector might transform and then dominate a habitus.¶ Thus one might say that if “computation is an ethic”— the imposition of strict rules upon the emergence and trajectories of entities, then cinema was a mode of computation whose ethos was ontology—at least for a time, the time of Bazin. Indeed we already know that this was only true for a specific modality of cinema, deep focus, as montage with its production of attractions and concepts, already involved a derealization of the profilmic “content” of the image. It’s useful to say things this way because doing so provides a necessary corollary to W.J.T. Mitchell’s notion that “there are no visual media,” that can be used to show that the computer is still fundamentally embroiled in the visual. Mitchell argues that since even the most “purely visual” media rely on other mediatic modes to function—silent cinema for example had its musical score and intertitles, Abstract Expressionism had its critical discourse—no medium is really visual. The corollary, indeed anticipated by Mitchell himself is that they are all visual media, but what’s important, as Mitchell tells us, going back to McLuhan, is the sense ratios. And, we must add, the program. For visuality is overrun with programs. Thus we see that while the computer is a break in the mode of informaticization (the way in which worlds are textualized and then treated as information [for it must be remembered that nothing is ontologically information—“information” is itself a conceptualization of what to do with being, and thus a program]), it remains under the sway of the program of visualization induced by the co-function and indeed convergence of visual media, which, emphatically now, are all of them.¶ Already in Antonioni’s Blow-Up and as far back as Eisenstein, the profilmic real was not real, it was, material, raw material organized by semiotic systems. This is no less true with computation, which utilizes abstraction to work on the world. The computer is an apparatus composed of apparatuses, a program composed of programs. For all this, actually existing computing is no less keyed into the visual nor into the pathologistical vectors I have identified here. The alienation of “man” from “his” object, is not alienation 2.0, it is alienation to the google: programmed, weaponized, photographic apparatuses evolving an extraordinary materialist complexity that runs from the atomic to the planetary by siphoning off the sensual activity of human life to the point in which this process has presided over a generalized liquidation of being. Emergent media however, like the species’ enlarging carbon footprint, do not cancel what has gone before but rather develop media-ecologically, that is, in relation to extant energetics, whether considered from the standpoint of thermodynamics, labor or information. No doubt new media are marked by quantitative transformations that precipitate qualitative effects, however we are looking at a transformation that has taken place over several centuries. The ontological categories and ontology itself have been shifting towards a complete liquidation of being—as a category, as an experience or (and here this word ceases to make sense), as a “reality.” This, indeed, is the story of twentieth century philosophy in the West which, taken as a whole turns out to be a theory of the image.¶ Nonetheless, we find it necessary to insist that race and gender based exploitation, systemic encampment, rape, enslavement, national wholesaling of populations, and murder, continues apace with capitalism’s evolving algorithms— inequality and injustice is the substrate of capitalist simulations. Thus we can be sure that while the patho-logistics of capitalism are our common lot, they function on a system of differences. These differences are lived, and contradictorily perhaps, we will claim that these lived differences are real and that they matter. For otherwise love is outmoded and indeed impossible, and there is nothing to non-capitalist values, less perhaps profound naiveté or cynicism. Capitalism, the very image of non-being, the very life of non-life, would remain our conceptual horizon, however, the world that haunts today’s images persists. And it is calling you. It rebels.¶ Paul Virilio, whose inflection of the term logistics I have heavily relied upon here, would agree that there is a crisis, and that the intensifying rhythm of the pulverization and reformation of subjectivity is today endemic to the function of power. In his recent book length interview entitled The Administration of Fear he speaks of the developmental sequence of three bombs, the atomic, the informational and the ecological. “The second is no longer atomic and not yet ecological but informational.” 14 This bomb comes from instantaneous means of communication and in particular the transmission of information. It plays a prominent role in establishing fear as a global environment, because it allows the synchronization of emotion on a global scale. Because of the absolute speed of electromagnetic waves, the same feeling of terror can be felt in all corners of the world at the same time. It is not a localized bomb: it explodes each second... It creates a “community of emotions,” what Virilio only half-ironically calls “a communism of affects.” “There is something in the [global] synchronization of emotion that surpasses the power of standardization of opinion that was typical of the mass media in the second half of the twentieth century...”;15 and a little later on: “With the phenomena of instantaneous interaction that are now our lot, there has been a veritable reversal, destabilizing the relationship of human interaction, and the time reserved for reflection in favor of the conditioned responses produced by emotion.”16¶ So rather than deep focus and the time of the long take, Virilio sees us in the thrall of a new order of montage (already dimly visible in the newsreel from Citizen Kane)—what in an earlier work I called the cinematic mode of production. Far more intensive than Eisenstein’s programmatic montage or even the ambient but still cinematic montage of midtwentieth century mass media this digital montage is produced by the continued and near continuous arrival of information and affect bombs all competing, in increasingly self-conscious ways that are feed-back loops of the market, for the capture and expropriation of human attention. Ours is an increasingly impoverished and militarized society, characterized by a total war on the body, on consciousness, and on the senses, but also on equality, on solidarity and on democracy. Today’s attractions rely on sequence, certainly, but also frequency, intensity, channel, repetition and spectrum. Taken together, these “attractions” generate ideas, affects, panics, crisis and swarms: a global impulse network evolved (if that’s the word) to manage and expropriate a world population by revamping its sensory inputs. The cultural ballistics, arguably akin to the sensory deprivation and over-saturation of interrogation techniques designed to force the ego into existential crisis, institute an establishment of fear as a so-called global environment.¶ The expropriation of increasing quantities of subjectivity that might otherwise have been used for purposes other than capitalist production and annihilation is today the condition of and for the continuing intensification of the capitalist media environment—the fragmentation and as has been noted, fractalization, induced by capitalized media machines. But more than that, the induction of fear and prevailing if not permanent psychosis is at once a result and a strategy, a modus operandi, a mise-en-scène. Not just a result of but a condition of production of the reigning administration, it has succeeded in giving us many good reasons to be afraid. But it is also an administration that, as Pussy Riot recently demonstrated subsequently articulated from prison, may fear nothing more than poetry and thus makes every effort to drive it out.17 For it may be that the world making practice of poetics, in all its forms, is what remains to those extrinsic crisis zones: zones, peoples, parts of people, aware of their oppression and refusing to seek liberation through oppression. Otherwise, awash in intentional signals, literally caught in myriad and all pervasive gazes in which seeing and being seen have become one and the same act, everyone, à la Baudrillard, is just sending messages that ratify the dominant codes. We are the media…; We, the media... Everyone, desperate to make words, to make images, that will testify to their existence in an environment of semio-war. But the situation functions as if each and all were suddenly in the position of Borges’ narrator Yu Tsun in “The Garden of Forking Paths.” Each person a nodal point of multiple inheritances seeking agency in a battle for the control of information. Warding off abjection for themselves and for their ancestors in an informatic war, and pressed, to convert another or many others into a sign, by murder, if necessary, if only to flash their own existence on some platform’s program. Let us offer a definition of Psychosis in the contemporary: the instrumental inscription of signs and images on the lives of others, at speeds and intensities that foreclose their being.¶ A final note: for capital, and therefore for capitalists, the human species has become a means to the end that is this very mode of representation and visualization engaging therefore in the practical deconstruction of being itself. The species as a whole has become the means of representation, which is to say, the means of capitalist informatic management. This de-essentializing instrumentalization of the species of course resonates with Debord: “in the spectacle all that was once lived has moved into mere representation.” But now representation is really an end in a double sense. First as the drive to which all human production accedes (Flusser makes a similar argument in Philosophy of Photography), but second, as a new order of alienated production that results for post-fordist workers (and everyone else) in what precisely Marx wrote 170 years ago resulted for the industrial worker alienated from his product, “the loss of reality.” Today, in the near total saturation of mental life by distributed capitalist media, representation is the denial, indeed the negation, and finally the impossibility of reality. Its functioning is, in short, the very definition of psychosis. Representation wholesale is now the active production of non-being. Like the state and the banks that are themselves constituted in it, representation, visual and linguistic, is structured by a matrix of pathologistical processes, and is today totally bankrupt. And this bankruptcy unfolds even as it mounts various exploits and derivatives—abstractions—to stave off a final accounting. If in service of the preservation of the historically and now evermore precariously constituted ego, psychosis entails the denial of reality, then speaking at all today may be its number one symptom.¶ Because the reality is that, at least as far as capital is concerned, we do not exist. Shall we prove otherwise?

#### Thus, vote affirmative to endorse a space outside of the productive imperative

Fleming 14. Peter Fleming, Nate’s dad, *Resisting Work: The Corporatization of Life and Its Discontents*, p. 124-144 //brackets for clarity

So much worker militancy today is saddled with outdated notions about how we are to resist capitalism, especially as its idiom seeps into our dreams and desires. Oppositional strategies in the West still function as if the factory is the dominant template of corporate power. In doing so, it misses an important part of control in today’s workplaces and beyond. An example might suffice to illustrate this, one unfolding as I write. In the United Kingdom, the university is becoming a hotbed of political unrest, with neo-managerialism in full swing and employee protest organizations readying for industrial action.¶ One of the leading teachers unions threatened to express their discontent by striking for one day. As planned, the strike went ahead. Did it ~~cripple~~ [destroy] the university and bring it to a halt? Of course not. This institution is not like a car factory where the workforce clocks in and out around fixed times. Think about the young university lecturer I mentioned at the beginning of the book, meeting her goals even when it meant a rendezvous on Friday night. Similarly, on the day of the strike, most staff members were working from home as usual and not planning to be on campus anyway. And those scheduled to teach that day simply covered the missed material the following week—because of not managerial pressure, but student pressure. After all, their grades and their future careers were at stake. What might have brought a factory to a standstill didn’t even cause a ripple in this biocorporate setting. What looked like an act of militancy fizzled out fairly quickly.¶ None of this is to say that strikes (or the factory, for that matter) no longer matter. They undoubtedly do, perhaps more than ever. But biocracy is powerful precisely because it does not need to be situated in any confined space or time. This type of regulation resides in our ongoing social practices, ways of life, knowhow, and sensibilities. These qualities by nature transcend formal working hours. One might go so far as to suggest that it is biopower’s very aim is to pull the rug out from under the feasibility of the conventional strike.¶ Of course, once one mentally departs the site of exploitation—be it to attend a strike or to exit in more permanent ways—things begin to look different. We start to see a livable life once again. But that sensible space of perspective is the first victim of biopower. Once we enter the terrain of biocracy, there appears to be no outside or end to work. It takes over everything, much as a small worry in the middle of the night makes us feel as if our whole world is at stake. Furthermore, the biopoliticized worker often displaces the real enemy (i.e., capitalism) onto a specific persona, tyrannical boss, backstabbing co-worker, or even ~~him- or her~~[the]-self. If we ask what employees hate most about their jobs, what keeps them up at night, what gets under their skin, it is no longer “the man”—the old Fordist proxy for an exploitative company— but a real person. The neo-capitalist fetish is complete. When power truly goes virtual as biopower does, it paradoxically takes on an overly concrete or even personal quality that feels impossible to escape.¶ This is how work organizes us today. In its biopolitical setting, power pursues us from the side, as well as from above, and sometimes even from below. Accounts from contemporary employment show us that what ought to be basic class politics is displaced onto moments of stress, personal alienation, secret fears, and so forth. This overly personal tenor to the injuries of working today is due to the resource that biopower makes use of the most: our embodied intelligence, social networks, and self-management. And how does one resist a mode of regulation that puts life itself to work? This is a crucial problem because when employees try to resist work, it often feels like they are sabotaging themselves or their colleagues. Recall the lament of the “sleep worker,” Rob Lucas (2010), in Chapter 1. He was well aware that if he engaged in factory-style resistance (foot-dragging, work-to126 rule, sabotage, absenteeism), it would merely create havoc for him and his co-workers.¶ Making matters more complex are the discursive techniques that corporations now deploy to look like one of us, evoking themes sympathetic to emancipation and freedom. Harney and Oswick (2007) have argued that today it is ironically management that is mostly against management, making bizarre allusions to anarchy and antiauthoritarianism. Right-wing popular management gurus now gush over the benefits of modeling the firm after ’68 slacker cool. Even the dark satire lampooning corporate life in the TV show The Office has made its way into human resource training programs (the icon of the bad-manager, David Brent, stars in the latest Microsoft induction video). Of course, amid all this, capitalism, exploitation, and private property remain very much intact, or even more so, which is perhaps the true objective of liberation management.¶ And the final challenge for those seeking to subvert biopower in the name of some post-capitalist future pertains to fear, [[[is]]]a key emotional currency of neoliberal hegemony. In the halcyon days of Fordism, fear was a weapon of the workers’ movement, imposing trepidation on the factory floor, often to the point where managers were too afraid to socialize with them over lunch. Things are different today. Workers are the ones deeply afraid. And there is no coincidence that this occurs precisely when capitalism becomes so reliant on living labor. Moreover, as the worker/manager/boss distinction is blurred via diffused hierarchical structures, that fear becomes a universal cultural metaphor. Its source feels objectless and thus inescapable, just like work itself.¶ This is more than just fear of possible unemployment or precarity. For that is an objectively rational response to the present situation. No, the widespread anxiety and hopelessness I am referring to is mostly needless, a political invention built into the very logic of work today. This makes its universalization seem inevitable and inescapable. In other words, when our jobs become the index for living as such, our fear becomes existential and seemingly without object. And the problem with fear is that it tends to individualize its victims, and we find it difficult to resist without turning on ourselves; it activates and promulgates the very power effects that we now need to refuse within the current biopolitical situation.¶ I am, however, in danger of making a bad mistake here. Have I not conferred far too much power on the corporate Leviathan and its ideology of work? Indeed, the title of this chapter is somewhat misleading given my argument so far. If we posit the commons—living social labor—as always in excess of the reductions that our jobs place on it, then perhaps we must turn the old political formula around once again. As workers continue to escape back into life, the corporate Leviathan only clocks moments of resistance. But as we now know, the resisting party here is the corporation itself. It rejects the full realization of the social openness most jobs parasitically rely on. This is why I have argued that biopower becomes a qualitatively dominant logic when capitalism can no longer organize itself sufficiently and turns to enlist us instead. Biopower always signals a major failure in this regard, which we need to keep in mind as the following argument develops.¶ So, if we are to appreciate how neoliberal control is counteracted and subverted by workers today, we must be sure to avoid surveying the scene from the viewpoint of capital. That perspective sees the corporation (capital) as first-mover and then awaits the resisting subject (labor). This popular formula cedes far too much constitutive energy to an otherwise ossified system, including neoliberalism more generally. It is living labor that generates worlds of wealth. Neocapitalism makes good use of this for sure. But the power of the commons represents an extra-capitalist political tendency, which the modern enterprise both requires and cannot completely capture.¶ The collective exit into life characterizes much labor struggle today. This chapter maps how the life-affirming qualities of this social surplus might escape its biopolitical prison and enjoy the freedoms already intrinsic to it. As stated above, time-tested acts of revolt like the strike are still very relevant. But counter-work opposition also needs to significantly rethink the meaning of refusal in light of these biopolitical trends.¶ In order to understand how and why biopower is refused at work today, three preliminary points must be made. First, and as I have also sought to emphasize throughout this book, we must appreciate the socially constructed nature of work. Our obsession with it in the West and its seemingly omnipotent influence over our lives is no longer linked to economic necessity. The bills and mortgage have to be paid, no doubt, but what we have called the ideology of work decouples our social energies from concrete shared needs, and may, in fact, be antithetical to the requirements of collective survival.¶ This is why work under biopolitical conditions (especially associated with neoliberal thought) generally feels imposed for its own sake. We need to realize that work today is a rather extreme ritual linked to a dying capitalist project. As a result, we cannot say to ourselves, “We have done enough,” since like all rituals, it functions by way of a self-referential loop. The U.K. conservative government’s controversial Back-to-Work scheme illustrates this perfectly. The unemployed are forced to sweat in fast-food restaurants without pay. The message is clear. This has nothing to do with material preservation; it is more about maintaining an ideological habit or addiction and the lack of perspective this engenders. This is also the case for the working poor who toil in multiple jobs and barely make a living (see Robinson- Tillett and Menon 2013). Wages are secondary to the ideological role of looking like a worker.1 This realization is the first step toward refusing work. It must not be confused with refusing oneself or refusing economic necessity (i.e., survival). Indeed, the contrary.¶ This is not to say that there are not large groups of people whose work is directly linked to material subsistence, especially in the poor Global South and among the working poor in the North. And it is certainly true that any analysis of work in the West that omits the massive reliance on cheap and impoverished global labor would simply fetishize the category of work in rich countries. The ideology of work I am referring to, however, concerns the way in which almost every activity in Western societies appears to be linked to this sign of necessity—that is, work—which has now ballooned into an all-encompassing template for life itself. It must be remembered that before the arrival of capitalism, the average time spent working was about three days a week. Someone from another period would look at us and think we were crazy.2¶ Related to this, we should also be vigilant about the way the global ultra-poor are used by neoliberal apologists to justify the Western obsession with work. Someone might say to us, for example, “Hey, you think you’ve got it bad; just look at the Rat Catcher of Mumbai. . . . [Y]ou can’t complain.”3 A nice double bind is thereby created. Accept your relatively well-off, overworked miserable life, because the only alHow ternative is being knee-deep in effluent in a Third World sewer. Well, perhaps neither option is acceptable.¶ Of course, merely realizing that work is made up doesn’t make being evicted any less real when you fail to pay the rent. This brings us to the second point. Successful acts of resisting biocracy begin by digging deeper into the causes of this strange over-ritualization of labor and identifying what it does to us individually and collectively. As I have argued throughout this book, it is the depressing feeling of endlessness that really defines the condition of working today, mainly because we are always carrying it with us, recognizing it in our gait and dreams, seeing a future that only reflects an impossible present.¶ Creating some kind of departure or rupture in this false infinitization of work becomes an important moment of refusal in the biopolitical workplace. As I mentioned in Chapter 1, we can see how this can be done in a self-destructive manner, especially when the body is mistaken for the boss function that works through it. An end to life is thought to be the only way out of a system that so fully harnesses life to the logic of production. Perhaps this is why so many attempts to induce a limit or afterwards to work life end up becoming individualistic acts of escape: passing out from too much alcohol, burnout, suicide, even yoga.¶ More optimistic strategies of detaching the social body from the parasite of work have a better image of what a post-work future means. In a growing plethora of communities, we can note the growing establishment of inoperative thresholds—that is, collective forms of life that are no more productive than they need to be.4 The line is arbitrary, no doubt, and this makes it very powerful. We can bring the level of work to zero and live very well. Moreover, surplus or superfluous productiveness can be identified only through social endpoints that, for want of a better term, have been incredibly de-worked. We only need to consult the communism of uselessness in Charles Bukowski to see what this looks like.¶ The idea does not mean that nothing gets done. One of the key ideological traps that keep us wedded to work in its current form is the myth that society would stop without it. But, in fact, the opposite is the case. Social labor is freed from the impoverishing strictures of capitalist instrumentality so that purposeful activity can be pursued once again. This can be seen in jobs that we might already positively identify with and take pleasure in. It is the wonders of living labor we are enjoying rather than work, since its qualities are based on open self-determination rather than structured exploitation.¶ This can be explained in less esoteric terms. As we noted at the beginning of this book, the problem with capitalist work relations today is not about having too little time away from our jobs. Contemporary cognitive capitalism requires that we have plenty of that. Some take holidays (if they are lucky), weekends, and so forth. Neoliberalism does not function by totally colonizing these nonwork spaces. It wouldn’t survive if it did. All it needs to do is index them to the ideology of work. Recall the vignette discussed in the Introduction in which an overworked employee found it impossible to enjoy his vacation on a southern European beach. He viewed his free time as a horrible vacuum. Like a smoker who has decided to quit the habit, the temporal register of non-working is experienced as a vapid emptiness.¶ What appears to be a symptom of its power is, in fact, a weak link in the neoliberal fetish of employment. It is how we socially configure our free time that is critical. Once we get that right, then it’s just a matter of escalating and expanding it into something new. Refusing biopower therefore means insisting that work has nothing to do with life. In other words, refusing work is a matter of exiting into life, reclaiming it back for ourselves so we can live again. But what exactly is a livable life? It depends, of course. But it might be defined as a way of living that does not pray for its own end, does not proceed on the basis that any kind of conclusion or terminus would be infinitely preferable.¶ And where might we find this livable life? Ironically, perhaps, everywhere. Is this not the open secret of neoliberal capitalism? If we had pure and unadulterated free markets, commercialization, private ownership, and individualism, society would implode under its own weight. Neoliberalism persists despite itself. Now we have arrived at the nub of the problem concerning the possibility of a post-work future. And this is our third point. Working today is not only mythological (rather than bound by economic necessity) but also extremely parasitical. The corporation and its obsession with work are being left behind by society. So it plunders the most progressive elements of the common to sustain itself, transforming those shared energies into an unbearable situation once again. Here is the imperative question. Can this collective threshold of non-productiveness be reclaimed toward more civilized ends? Or is it destined to remain what David Harvey (2012) labeled a “negative common,” forever serving a parasitical capitalist system?¶ The multiple sites of what might be called “threshold soviets” currently emerging in society are symptomatic of the massive divestment in the social legitimacy of working today. Participation no longer feels like a sensible option in a system that is purely parasitical—hence the rise of non-participation politics, withdrawal, and self-valorization: put simply, exit.¶ It is interesting that this heightened desire to escape work (rather than fight for it in the name of inclusion or participation) is occurring at a time when unemployment is chronic and job security is so precarious. How do we explain this apparent contradiction? Why would we long to leave work behind when it is now so hard to come by? I think it is related to the way we have drastically changed our stance toward capitalism, neoliberal market society, and work more generally. These institutional realities now signify something unsalvageable and backward, with nothing left to offer us. As a militant workers’ collective recently put it, “One does not tidy up in a home falling off a cliff” (Institute for Experimental Freedom 2009: 156).¶ While the evidence remains fragmented, the growing incidences of those wishing to exit employment are telling of the new biopolitical makeup of the workforce today. There has recently been an exponential growth in websites advising employees about the best way to quit. A Google search reveals that “How to Quit Your Job” is only second behind websites designed to help people kick smoking. It is rather sad how individualistic some of these websites are. The lessons they impart tend to be overwhelmingly psychological: When you are wedded to your immiserating job, unable to distinguish yourself from it, the boss, and the company, then the barrier stopping you is not the mortgage, the kids, or lack of alternatives—it is you.5¶ One might expect the over-exploited customer service worker or low-paid factory-hand to feel like escaping, but what about those in well-paid and relatively prestigious jobs? Here too the yearning to exit is evident. In an interview with the famed critic Terry Eagleton (Barker and Niven 2012), the scholar discusses impending retirement from his academic post. What he finds most notable about those in his profession today is the striking desire to exit their jobs that has gripped so many academics in the United Kingdom and elsewhere. As he puts it, “Most people I know in academia want to get out. Which is a pretty new situation. I’ve never encountered that before” (Barker and Niven 2012). According to a recent study, many people who hold Ph.D.s (especially women) do not even want to embark on an academic career after witnessing the nature of this work firsthand. For women, the intention to seek an academic position has “plummeted from 72% in the first year to 37% as they finish their studies” (Rice 2012).¶ We now turn to a very different occupation, the police force. In a recent employee morale survey of the U.K. police, the level of disillusionment was astounding. One police officer stated, “Morale is the lowest I have ever known. . . . I have worked for CID for over 15 years but due to the lack of front-line recruitment we are having to back-fill any uniform vacancies[;] I wish I could leave tomorrow” (“Four in Ten Female Officers” 2012). And in yet another example, the U.K. Border Agency (UKBA) has recently been severely compromised by its own redundancy program and needed to recruit new staff, since “more people than expected wanted to leave” (“Border Staff Being Cut Too Fast” 2012)¶ So much for the public sector. What about the private? Perhaps the most stunning example of this interest in exit can be found among members of ultra-pro-business circles, such as those who read the Harvard Business Review. In an article entitled How to (Finally) Quit Your Job (Gulati 2012), the writer offers advice for making the break, a decision that for many is perhaps as inconceivable as it is desirable. He contends:¶ “Since writing “Why You Won’t Quit Your Job” earlier this year, I’ve been inundated with all kinds of public feedback, personal stories, and follow-up questions from people looking to overcome the psychological biases that trap them in unsatisfying roles and prevent them from doing work that matters. While these senior executives, 20-something bankers, and mid-career marketers, analysts, and lawyers all knew that they wanted to leave their current roles, executing their plan proved to be a perennially insurmountable challenge. In fact, the most common question I got was “How can I overcome the hurdles to quitting and actually quit?” (Gulati 2012)”¶ This is not an isolated case of exit work advice in the corporate sector; it is part of a broader trend including various types of self-help books, coaching advice and web-forum discussions.6 A former manager told the author recently that he had never been so congratulated by his fellow workers as when announcing his resignation. Indeed, the idea that being jobless is some kind of social death might now be in the past. I would propose that even the unemployed are quitting. This is understandable given the laborious work that being unemployed in a neoliberal society entails. The U.K. government recently announced that the number of unemployed rose by 15,000 in the first part of 2013. However, unemployment benefit applicants dropped by 7,300, which might imply the unemployed are quitting their roles as defined by the punitive neoliberal state (“UK Unemployment Rises to 2.52 Million” 2013).¶ This desire to depart the terrain of power might certainly be the result of an all-time low concerning the cultural worth of work today. As the budgets of large firms and the neoliberal state are reduced in times of austerity, work becomes intensified, stress rife, and the dream of getting out a soothing palliative—even when we would not seriously act on it. This might be the biopolitical version of Nietzsche’s famous quip about suicidal thoughts being “a powerful comfort: by means of it one gets through many a bad night” (Nietzsche 1966: 281).¶ This would be too much of an apolitical reading of the trends noted above, however, since it abstracts the wish from the unique nature of corporate capitalism today. We need only to return to the 1970s to see how the vocabulary of the working class was animated not by exit, but by social democratic participation and inclusion. For many years under Fordism, working and survival were almost inextricably intertwined. Without a job, you perished. A good deal of pressure was placed on the workforce to make the best of their predicament and engage in political campaigns to be more fully recognized in the working project. More jobs, a deeper relationship with our work, and control over its objectives animated the guiding principle of the labor movement.¶ In the biopolitical era, as we have seen throughout this book, work is experienced in a much different way. Exacerbated by an over-ritualized economy, seemingly abstract and far away from economic necessity (in the West at least), our jobs feel sadly self-referential. The daily humiliations, micro-managed tasks, and permanent stress appear all the more unnecessary in the wake of this growing purposelessness. For many workers today, inclusion and recognition are no longer considered useful for counteracting domination, but actually tie us even tighter to our lifeless positions. This is why the mass hope to exit work represents a new development in the way we refuse capitalist subjugation. I believe this underlies Hardt and Negri’s approach to what they call exodus. It is a process of¶ “subtraction from the relationship with capital by means of actualizing the potential autonomy of labor-power. Exodus is not a refusal of the productivity of bio-political labor power but rather a refusal of the increasingly restrictive fetters placed on its productive capacities by capital. . . . [E]xodus does not necessarily mean going elsewhere. We can pursue a line of flight while staying right here. . . . [E]xodus is possible only on the basis of the common. (2009: 152–153)”¶ To reformulate this statement, exit is meaningful only if it involves a social evacuation from capitalist relations that consist of pure negativity. Exit is therefore not about escaping to somewhere else. On the contrary, if neoliberal capitalism relies on collective social riches that it cannot provide itself, then exodus simply means becoming more fully what we already are.¶ One of the problems that exit politics confronts is precisely this challenge from power to outline the terrain to which we are escaping: “What is your alternative?” I have no answer to this specific question.7 It is the wrong question to ask, especially in the context of a neoliberal nightmare that would like us to believe its world is all there is. Indeed, the very nature of the question betrays a deeply conservative sentiment, because it contains its own answer: There is no alternative. This is why one of the most interesting qualities of exit politics, in my mind at least, is a resolute and confident radical silence.¶ Because the question “What’s your alternative” is so laden in favor of shutting down the political imaginary of the working and unemployed 99 percenters who now want nothing more to do with capitalism, they are initially silent. And is this not symptomatic of the changing way in which neoliberalism and its plunder of life itself is being refused today?¶ Two recent events are illustrative here, both of which are linked to the legitimacy crisis of work that we are exploring. In the late summer of 2011, the streets of London were ablaze. After the police shot and killed Mark Duggin in the northern part of the city one warm afternoon, a large gathering of concerned citizens assembled outside the local police station. Feelings between them and the Tottenham constabulary had been tense for some time, and this appeared to be the final straw. The gathering was met with police hostility, and all-out violence ensued. The dispute spread throughout the city and other major U.K. centers, including Manchester and Birmingham. A good majority of those involved were younger people, in their teens, and proficient in the art of self-organization.¶ On the surface, such unrest is not that surprising. Like other large cities marked by excessive wealth and manufactured deprivation, London has long been prone to street fighting of this sort, as E. P. Thompson (1963) records in his history of the English working class. And as the media started to report on the events, the customary questions emerged almost immediately: Why are they doing this? What is their rationale? What are they trying to achieve? In the conservative press, typical scorn about ungrateful welfare recipients abounded. The looting was opportunistic, symptomatic of a Broken Britain whose light touch on unsocial behavior was now bearing fruit. On the other side of the coin, the liberal media gave more socio-economic explanations about alienated youth, bad jobs, and poverty.¶ Both sides of the media, of course, missed the point. One of the most striking aspects of these revolts was the outward silence of those involved, especially regarding their rationale and objectives. Official representation was solely the preserve of the middle-class media, policy pundits, and other moralists. And this silence confused the experts profoundly. When pressed to communicate the program motivating their behavior, no representative or leader emerged to speak, no charter was delivered. Only a taciturn withdrawal from the machinery of dialogue was evident.¶ Braving the second night of arson attacks, I wandered through my East London neighborhood eager to discover “their” side of the story. Many of the young people I approached were courteously disinterested in my inquiries as they regrouped around a large supermarket. I too was met with mute non-recognition. Of course, this did not mean that they were not talking among themselves, planning and deliberating on the nature of their refusal. A rich stratum of communication was clearly apparent. But when encouraged by power to represent their concerns, the mood decidedly changed. It was as if a secret compact had been made—best to remain opaque rather than gift to Prime Minister Cameron et al. what they so fervently sought: our voice.¶ Detachment and exit from the unworkable neoliberal world is first signaled through the absence of representation. And did not this silence also frustrate many observers in 2011, when Wall Street was occupied, and then Zuccotti Park, and then so many other pseudopublic spaces, including St. Paul’s in London? Commentators on both Left and Right were perplexed: What do they want? We ask them, but they seem to have no workable plan. They don’t even seem to be interested in making a plan. And so on.¶ Of course, there were many experts at hand ready to speak on the occupiers’ behalf. Even Bill Clinton and Slavoj Žižek got in on the act. Inside the movement, much debate and dialogue were pivotal for its political mobilization. Assemblies were held, political concepts debated, and new modes of democratic self-organization tested. But a curious structural silence prevailed. It was enough simply to state, “We are the 99 percent”; we are you. This reticence was no more evident than when called on by the extreme neoliberal apparatus to testify and deliver a policy, a point-by-point charter of demands. Spray-painted on a wall in East London (Norton Folgate Street), the anonymous reply to this invitation was borrowed from the streets of 1968 Paris: We ask nothing; we will demand nothing; we will take; we will occupy.¶ Understanding the logic of this silence tells us much about the groundswell gathering against biopolitics today, especially when the means of representation appear to have been so irrevocably compromised by power. The first point we must observe is that the refusal to represent is not itself bereft of words or expression. In fact, the opposite is true. The Occupy Movement, for example, was a swarming din of plans, alternatives, and molecular moments of collective exchange. It simply chose not to talk to power, especially in the manner that power wanted them to. Occupiers refused to enter into the discursive mirror game that is now governing so much neoliberal discourse. The erstwhile radical clarion call to be recognized (e.g., Habermas 1987; Honneth 1996) is displaced by what we have termed post-recognition politics. Many are now suspicious about speaking up and being counted. Recognition by the powerful is just another way of being sucked back into a one-sided arrangement with its pointless commitments. The refusal to be recognized might therefore convey a kind of resilience. As Kolowratnik and Miessen (2012) conclude, awakening from the nightmare of participation means reclaiming the means of social self-defense.¶ Perhaps, then, neoliberal capitalism is maintained today not by too few words, but by too many to the wrong people. When we speak to the manager, the teacher, the police officer, the bureaucrat, even transgressively, we are identified once more, fixed within a constellation that will never accept us. What Moten and Harney (2012) call managed self-management functions via a plethora of accounts (to be accountable), responses (to be responsible), and reports (to be reportable). Hence there is a confusing paradox: “Today nobody can hear you over the noise of talk” (Moten and Harney 2012).¶ And yet, there is so much silence. Why would we want to theorize about it, conserve it, strategize it, share it, enrich it, or occupy it in relation to the politics of work today? I experiment here with the idea that silence might be suggestive of an emergent kind of under-commons, no doubt transitory, but demonstrably collective in its opposition to the ideology of employment. Its commonality is founded on the shared misgiving that the neoliberal project now gains sustenance from any kind of communicative participation between it and the 99 percent. In its dying stage of development, corporate hegemony even welcomes dissenting discourse into its language game, as long as it abides by the prefixed rules.¶ Accordingly, I propose that the silent commons is anything but reserved quietude or fearful seclusion. At the present juncture at least, in which a myopic economic formalism has colonized so many modes of social representation, mute opacity in the face of participation politics might tilt toward something transversal, truly communal, and classless.¶ Complications do arise, however, at this stage in the argument. Refusing work and activating the threshold soviet, as theorized above, through silence entail characteristics long considered regressive in social theory. When it comes to the functioning of power and domination, is silence not a synonym for elite secrecy and agenda setting—and on the other side of the coin, consent, capitulation, and fear? A long tradition of thought has convincingly cautioned that those rendered speechless before the law pose a double travesty. Silence according to this viewpoint indicates not only (1) the sheer enormity of an individual’s or group’s oppression (for Anne Frank in her secret attic or Winston Smith in Orwell’s 1984, speaking would surely equal death) but also (2) a dangerous opportunity for oppressors themselves to speak on the behalf of the silenced. The circle of power is thus closed.¶ The case against silence has antecedents in recognition politics championed in the United States. The influential community power debates during the 1960s are illustrative here. C. Wright Mills among others revealed how elites partially manage populations by erasing certain issues from public discourse, especially those that might reveal hypocrisy (Lukes 2005). The cold war context undoubtedly inspired some of these observations. A key tool of totalitarian societies is to constrain the very words used (and not used) in everyday parlance. During the dark years of Stalinism in the Soviet Union, party officials hoped that manufactured non-signification would disappear the very thought denoted by the word.8¶ But is this deficit the only component of public silence? Or might it have hidden strengths of its own? This is the problem Jean Baudrillard grapples with in his book In the Shadow of the Silent Majorities (2007). He argues that the social—or its living modes of representation apropos classes, peoples, cultures, and nations—has been dissolved into a sheer single nothingness, only capable of being symbolized through abstract surveys and opinion polls. Silence despite obvious injustices is now one of the most characteristic elements of this inscrutable mass. Behind the abstraction is a voiceless universe that merely absorbs, observes, and sinks back into anonymous oblivion. The political orientation of this silence is uncertain. On the one hand, it is symptomatic of a new constellation of dissent, one that emerges from a long and fruitless battle with modernity. This could well become “an absolute weapon” (Baudrillard 2007: 49) if its ironic signature disrupts the din of capitalist talk and lays the ground for a more transformative engagement with power.¶ On the other hand, however, without any new and positive referents the silent majority will never assemble enough explosive capacity to overcome its own negative content. In other words, Baudrillard insists that we characterize the silent crowd as yet another instance of the oppressed failing to speak out. This makes it both refreshingly inaccessible to classical schemas—including emancipatory ones—and also inert and pliant: “The mass is dumb like beasts, and its silence is equal to the silence of beasts. . . . [I]t says neither whether the truth is to the left or to the right, nor whether it prefers revolution or repression. . . . [I]t is without conscience and without unconscious” (Baudrillard 2007: 54). Because the silent majority is unreadable, it can never enter the lexicon of democratic exchange. It therefore becomes the nothingness of its own non-existence, something encouraged by the neoliberal rebuttal of all imaginative alternatives.¶ How then might we analytically connect the silent biocratic worker with a moment of collective escape and departure—that is, the refusal of work? We might begin by revisiting Marx and some of the most striking pages of Capital ([1867] 1972) where he gives graphic details of what factory work does to people, especially in the dark and dirty English workhouses of the early nineteenth century. The passages in “The Working Day” (about overwork), “The Division of Labor and Manufacture” (about exploitation), and “Machinery and Large-Scale Industry” (about forced submission) are still remarkable in how they depict the human misery underlying capitalist wealth production. But as Jameson (2011) argues in his rereading of Capital, something very strange is occurring here, which is essential to Marx’s critique. As opposed to other reports on the horrors of life in the factory (or the coal mine, the nascent bureaucratic offices emerging at the time, and so on), Marx consistently refuses to describe hired labor power as living, breathing people. Even in the most disturbing sections, a worker’s singular anguish must remain secondary to the whir of a nonfigurative process.¶ Dickens breathes life into his workers so that we might identify with their predicament. The Utopian Socialists cradle them in effusive sentiment to shed light on the dreadfulness of work. Marx remains stubbornly stone cold. Jameson (2011) highlights this strange paradox, since the Bible of Labor ultimately leaves its humanity mysteriously unrepresented—but why? According to Jameson, this is crucially necessary if Marx is to remain faithful to his understanding of capitalist exploitation. To imbue work with human qualities would fudge the reality of the labor process, inadvertently (and ideologically) transporting us “outside of the realm of capital, which is not in the lived qualities of work as such, but only its quantity and the surplus values to be extracted” (Jameson 2011: 112). Abstract labor cannot speak, for it is strictly lifeless, formalized dead time. It is only when the impossibility of the capital accumulation process appears—overworked bodies collapsing, overproduction of commodities, unsustainable immiseration—that individual personages with singular histories are allowed to emerge in Capital. This sort of vanishing point of impossibility is necessarily extraneous to the accumulation process but, more importantly, it is indicative of something preceding the dominance of dead time. This is the social surplus of living labor.¶ This thematic of impossibility is so central to Marx’s analysis that hired labor power must remain mute if it is not to be crowned with the false virtues of bourgeois reconciliation. A silent workforce remains truthful to what it is in the eyes of capital, a conscious bearer of an unfeasible world. To speak to the boss or manager would participate in the fantasy that some kind of life under capitalism might be viable after all, blinding us to its untenable nature. This point was well understood by activists during the May 1968 events in Paris, especially the Situationalist Internationale. Public dialogue had to be approached with extreme caution. Otherwise it might sanctify an outmoded (and strictly unreproducible) way of life. Meaningful antiwork protest can only be instigated in the idiom of a voiced impossibility. More recently, we saw this during the French banlieues riots in November 2005. As some astute commentators put it, “The rioters didn’t demand anything[;] they attacked their own condition[;] they made everything that produces and defines them a target” (Théorie Communiste 2012: 49). In other words, it was their very own impossibility that spoke with bricks and fire.¶ It is here that Vaneigem (2001) points to the combative elements of silence: “Our freedom is that of an abstract temporality in which we are named in the language of power, with choice left to us to find officially recognized synonyms for ourselves. In contrast, the space of our authentic realization (the space of everyday life) is under the dominion of silence. There is no name to name the space of lived experience” (2001: 56). Any naming would betray the unworkable social existence that currently passes for living under capitalist conditions. Moreover, like a governmental consultation meeting that invites multiple views to legitimate an authoritarian decision that has already been made, the form kills the content. Why so? First, even critically addressing power perpetuates the mistaken notion that this power has not reduced us to nothing (i.e., abstract, dead labor). This grants capitalism certain synergies with life, something it doesn’t deserve. Second, the post-capitalist kernel contained in abstract labor’s own impossibility is forsaken, since the struggle becomes overcoded through its very relation to the enemy—hence the event’s capture, delivered back to us as an inescapable post-limit that is purely self-referential, without end or coda. In rather crass terms, think here of the stockbroker wearing a Capitalism Sucks T-shirt with an image of Lenin giving the finger. ¶ The analysis forwarded in this book has attempted to demonstrate that a society based purely on neoliberalism—or any type of capitalism— would not last a day. Due to its anti-social precepts, it cannot reproduce itself on its own terms and thus requires shared sociality to continue. This is how we might define the social today, a communist underbelly that both absorbs the shocks of extreme capitalism and provides the living sustenance it needs. Henceforth, living labor can be conceptualized as something autonomous or in excess to the datum of capital accumulation, since the latter could never exist in a world that perfectly reflected its own principles.¶ Life itself must be recruited for the capitalist enterprise to persist despite itself. In order for this to happen, it needs to cultivate ways of gaining our recognition, attention, and interest. Speaking to power in this parasitical setting, even critically, thus risks granting it something, implying worth to the addressee. Perhaps this is why emergent political movements are so reluctant to enter into dialogue with the corporation, the state, the military, and so forth. From the enigmatic provocations of the Invisible Committee to the anti-work cooperatives in the largest cities of Europe and the Americas, exit or opting out (Jones 2012) appears to be galvanizing democratic praxis. But what does “exit” mean here and how is it related to radical silence?¶ Hardly anyone today fears being abandoned by power. That would be a blessing. No—what really frightens us is the idea of being included, forced to participate in an unwinnable mirror game with the Master. To make matters worse, the Master is now diffuse and increasingly difficult to identify. Kolowratnik and Miessen (2012) encapsulate this in their analysis of the nightmare of participation around distributed work systems. From corporate community liaison meetings to the consultative listening exercises of multinational firms to team-building meetings in the postmodern workplace, the new injunction is to enter a no-win domain—and speak. Its objective, of course, is to render one’s voice truly silent, truly impotent.¶ Some critical elements of this radical silence can be traced back to Foucault’s ([1982] 1997, 2011) far-reaching insights regarding how biopower grips us in neoliberal societies. In an interview conducted in 1982 he suggested that silence might be weapon for the weak only when voice loses its disruptive content, overcoded by a reductive form (religious settings, bourgeois mannerisms, fake parliamentary exchange, and so on). Whatever we say in these settings, no matter how seditious, merely reinforces its totalizing setting. No proper rupture is possible. The speaking subject is also the subject of the statement, as Foucault (1978) famously cautioned. An obvious example is the catholic confessional, but so too is the frenetic compulsion to speak under liberalism and now, neoliberalism (also see Foucault 2011). There is undoubtedly an aspect of flippancy in the philosopher’s remarks: “Silence might be a much more interesting way of having a relation with people” (Foucault [1982] 1997: 122). The tone, however, belies the seriousness of his investigations at the time. This becomes evident in his last set of annual lectures entitled The Courage of Truth (Foucault 2011).9¶ Toward the end of his life, Foucault returned to ancient Greek thought in order to conceptually reassemble something like a predisciplinary subject. There is no romanticism or nostalgia here, but a strategic reinvention of techniques that might allow us to fight an enemy that has been inserted into our everyday subjectivity. As Hardt (2010b) points out, this is especially important in the biopolitical society where economic optimization is seemingly indistinguishable from living itself. This is why, according to Foucault, biopower operates unlike anything we have seen before. Its currency is permanent visibility, binding us to a strange talking-person-machine, or what the right-wing economist Gary Becker preferred to call human capital. And perhaps this is also why personal authenticity is so salient in recent management ideology: “What is unique about you, what makes you standout, and how can it be enhanced, used, and traded?” But what happens when human capital replies? Not unlike Marx’s factory worker of yesteryear, it camouflages its own impossibility, having us believe that abstract labor might somehow have a life.¶ Any kind of visibility in a biopolitical clearing, no matter how radical and subversive, reconnects us to the subordinating flows we are all keen to escape. Perhaps what Foucault (2011: 17) calls “structural silence” is wise because it points to social goods lying beyond the operative grid of neoliberal sociality. And if silence provides a space for inscrutable communication, then might it not also engender inflections of solidarity with those who have already awoken from the nightmare of work?¶ If so, then the silent common is more than just a reclamation of dignity despite everything (see Foucault 2011). Nor is it a stylization of politics, since that too is exactly what the unstated majoritarian now seeks to break away from. It is more a turning away from power. Again, in order to conceptualize this, we have to purge our analysis of any Hobbesian presuppositions. Rather than picturing the laboring majority as tragically dependent on (yet systematically excluded from) an unfair institutional edifice that produces our world, we ought to reverse the scenario. Capitalism is a pure subtraction that feeds on modes of life that struggle to supersede the stupidity of private property, timetables, and an obsession with pointless employment.¶ Now we can appreciate why the multitude is refusing to recognize or be recognized by power as they attempt to exit the ideology of work. Silence here does not aim to send a signal to capitalism (i.e., a moment of aplomb amid adversity). Nor does it attempt to bamboozle its laws of domination by remaining mute amid violent demands for our acknowledgment. It is more like a background after-image that flares up as we turn our backs on a world of useless work and disappear. Non-signification is all that remains once the bioproletariat escapes back into life.¶ An Australian palliative care nurse, Bonnie Ware, recently published a moving account of her conversations with people very close to death. Across a broad range of patients, she noted a striking similarity concerning the things they regretted most about their lives. At the top of the list was not having pursued the life they had really desired— their lost opportunities for authentic happiness. And a close second was regret for having worked too much; it seemed such a waste of a life. For them it was too late, but what about for us? If only we could collectively embody that final realization throughout our entire lives, workplaces, neighborhoods, homes, and desires.