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# Becoming-professional: notes on the university and the production of MFAs

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BECOMING-PROFESSIONAL: NOTES ON THE UNIVERSITY  
AND THE PRODUCTION OF MFAs

by

Heath Schultz

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the  
Master of Arts degree in Art  
in the Graduate College of  
The University of Iowa

December 2011

Thesis Supervisor: Assistant Professor Sarah Kanouse

Graduate College  
The University of Iowa  
Iowa City, Iowa

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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MASTER'S THESIS

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This is to certify that the Master's thesis of

Heath Schultz

has been approved by the Examining Committee  
for the thesis requirement for the Master of Arts  
degree in Art at  
the December 2011 graduation.

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## CHAPTER I

### BEFORE WE GET STARTED

#### ***1.1 Occupy Everything (or, before we get started...)***

To search for a critique of the university and the production of MFAs requires recognition that capitalism affects all positions and relations. It shapes, frames, and informs those relations, allowing and encouraging them in an uneven development. This does not mean we no longer have a class analysis or recognition that capital affects particular groups disproportionately with varying degrees of violence and exploitation, instead we must add more texture to our class analysis and a more subtle understanding on the effects of capitalism in our lives.

We insist on a critique immanent to positions with certain privileges—in this instance graduate students, but also undergrads and even faculty. To pursue an immanent critique is to inhabit or to occupy our given situation—to recognize not the need for a withdrawal, but instead the need to co-constitute a new set of possibilities with others within a given social composition.<sup>1</sup> It is to recognize that capital has put us all on the losing side, and to recognize a need to find our voices to join the poly-vocal chorus of critiques and gestures. Insisting on some myth of purity of the most oppressed leaves most of us silenced and paralyzed, which we can no longer afford. We need to learn how to move transversally, cutting through scales of power and representations that segment us, understanding all of our respective positions as important in any movement that resists the multiple sites of power that constitute contemporary capitalism. We need to occupy

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<sup>1</sup> Colectivo Situaciones, “On the Researcher-Militant,” *Transversal*, Apr. 2006: Accessed October 23, 2011. <http://eipcp.net/transversal/0406/colectivosituaciones/en>

all positions, *occupy everything*.

### **1.2 Preliminary notes**

The ‘freedom’ of the MFA program presents itself as full flexibility (“you can do anything!”) as well as full potential and privilege (“You’re so lucky to be here! You need to relish this time!”). The spinelessness of the university, weighed down by administrative weight and continual loss of public funding, if not previously recognizable, has finally presented itself. The liberal spaces of movement inside professional art discourse appear to be bound to the maintenance of social, political, and cultural status quo. We make these assumptions on a felt experience of getting lost inside the university and the art world, but further exploring these appearances critically and analytically can help lead us through the complexities of manipulative affective persuasions within the unique space of art graduate school as they relate to capitalism as well as the production of culture within the context of the university and the professionalizing of the artist via the MFA. We should remain careful not to take these felt experiences as a given, nor assume they are totalizing in their deployments. Instead we need to follow the complexities of both pleasure and coercion inside those spaces, in hopes of finding escapes routes from their seemingly totalizing inscriptions and subtle coercions.

We’ll start by looking at the MFA as a worker within the context of the contemporary university and from there attempt to situate that position in relationship to capitalism by charting out how the university uses workers for its own ends much like any capitalist business would, which results in the over-producing MFAs. From here, we can look toward the broader consequences of this large production of cultural producers and their becoming-professional. The consequences of this becoming-professional, I want to

argue, are much more problematic than they initially appear, which further destabilizes our ability to act as anti-capitalist and anti-authoritarian cultural producers without further strengthening the forces we seek to oppose. Finally, I'll try and develop Stefano Harney and Fred Moten's concept of the criminal as well as Deleuze & Guattari's thinking on smooth spaces and a socio-political shifting toward that of the control society. Last I want to look at various ways of thinking about fleeing or evacuating to help us chart escape routes by moving past traditional artistic notions of institutional critique and other professionalizing discourses learned within the spaces of MFA production.

## CHAPTER II

### SITUATING THE STUDENT-WORKER

#### ***2.1 Labor cannot be divorced from production***

There is a confluence of problems that present themselves to the MFA student, some more obvious and theorized, some less so. The problem of labor is largely transparent—graduate student workers’ presence in the university is primarily due to the need for their relatively cheap labor. The ratio of adjunct and student labor compared to that of tenured faculty is 4:1 and has been increasing since the 70s.<sup>2</sup> The implications are obvious—there is a disproportionate *production* of MFAs (and PhDs) of which there is no *use* for beyond the labor that students provide in the interim of time-to-degree. Mark Bousquet illustrates terminal-degree holders that are used for several years for teaching labor as detritus of the graduate student process as “waste labor.” *Waste* labor: workers (aka students) shit out of the university when a degree is completed. Nowhere to go, no jobs to apply for.<sup>3</sup> It doesn’t take a genius to do the math—if the ratio of student to faculty labor is 4:1 there aren’t enough jobs within the current configuration of the university, underfunded arts organizations, and a flailing capitalist economy. The result is thousands of university detritus working low-wage service jobs and tens of thousands dollars in the hole, if not more, chained to work by their debt. For anyone working toward the possibility of political engagement the consequences of waste-labor at the expense of students’ time and money derails many possibilities for engaging with much more than

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<sup>2</sup> Mark Bousquet, *How the University Works: Higher Education and the Low-Wage Nation*, New York: NYU Press, 2008. pp 2.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. pp. 21-27.

finding ways to sustain oneself in precarious and difficult living situations.

But in many respects these problems are not entirely new, they merely have been accelerated recently with a wave of financial setbacks that are reflected in the universities ability to raise money from private investors. But there is a long running shifting toward our current state of the university. Post-war there appeared to be a common agreement on the benefits of the university as a social institution which was able to develop underprivileged groups through education and ‘equal access,’ at least partially moving beyond the harsh and capitalist-friendly meritocratic rhetoric that is often used when speaking to the possibilities and functions of the university. Generally speaking, this was illustrated by the government’s willingness to fund the university regardless of the commercial interests of that research. But following the recent shifts in the university takes us back to their roots the 1970s, where we begin to see increasing investments in administrative and managerial strategies to help coordinate more stream-lined and efficient economic environments, drifting closer to corporatist logic by re-structuring the way the university functions to correspond more closely to business models.<sup>4</sup> This is further illustrated by continual private investments, endowments (several reaching over one billion), and fund-raising, all the while the state/federal funding dwindles over the course of thirty years creating a slowly changing university that is now reliant upon private funding and administrative surveillance keeping streamlined financial environments that correspond not to a broad mission of learning, but instead to emphasize more lucrative, or at the very least more financially efficient, research and

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<sup>4</sup> Christopher Newfield, *Unmaking of the Public University: A Forty Year Assault on the Middle Class*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008. pp. 160.

knowledge production.<sup>5</sup> Practical effects of this loss of state/federal funding is such that an increasingly small amount of the budget is no-strings-attached, as most donors have stipulations on their willingness to give to the university. This means, in effect, that funds for general operations of the university, like teaching labor, are increasingly scarce and thus workers are increasingly squeezed for labor, and both graduate and undergraduate students are squeezed for more tuition to cover the loss in general funding.<sup>6</sup> This allows for a hierarchical structuring of an environment under the guise of efficiency that empowers administration to manage workers (grad laborers as well as faculty) in increasingly authoritarian ways, as well as makes access to the university as a student increasingly more reliant upon capitalist corporations—like Sallie Mae and Citibank—for students' ability to pay tuition with high interest and unforgivable loans.

In lieu of these long-developing changes, it is not surprising that graduate student-workers often receive messaging from faculty and administration that, in effect, attempts to divorce labor and creative practices as a way to focus on the 'precious time' given to graduate students. In many ways this is understandable, and probably intuitive for many who have themselves internalized a becoming-professional, as well as pinched between administrative hierarchy and exploited labor, often while tenure hangs over his/her head. I suspect these subjectivities harden in response to a highly regimented, hierarchical, and bureaucratic environment, but also realize many (especially non-tenured) faculty struggle in a similar way regarding their own precariousness, and attempts at finding pleasure and sincere affinities and affections within spaces of the university. Either way, I think the majority of the time all of this adds up to a distancing from the struggles young people

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid. pp. 164.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid. pp. 192.

face in a contemporary capitalist society; which of course include the precarity of most graduate students. And while it is true that the time afforded in school may indeed be greater than the time afforded after graduation (assuming graduates jump into the game and begin hustling for jobs immediately), there are two problematic assumptions when we hear such suggestions. One is simply that the pulling apart of ‘student’ and ‘laborer’ at times can tacitly approve the exploiting of graduate student labor from faculty and administration. Focusing solely on our ‘precious time’ to create original projects or research directs energies away from both the broader political concerns and implications of becoming-professional, as well as the immediate realities of being a student-worker. But the splitting of labor and research / creative production also helps to push our thoughts back to where they are ‘supposed to be.’ Or, more bluntly, “Shut up and be glad you are here!” Of course, this is only an implicit message but many student-workers internalize this mantra (if they had not already) by overworking because of the ‘privilege’ of being in graduate school. But it is important to point out that the problem is not simply overwork. Rather it is reflective of a hierarchically structured university that paralyzes the abilities of all but top-level administrators to push back. To point out this overworking is to recognize first a structural problem reflected in an increasingly corporatist managerial environment, then a working environment which passively perpetuates that culture on a large scale.

The second problem, in my estimation, is subtler. When the experience and understanding of graduate labor is divorced from the production of artwork(s) or the development of a creative practice, the broader implications of the institutional *production* of that practice/discipline is glossed over. *MFA's are produced and professionalized*. Becoming-professional. From an anti-capitalist perspective, the problem with this professionalization

is primarily that it paralyzes a political practice by inscribing onto cultural producers normative practices that continue to prop up the various institutions of culture (museums, universities, galleries, art schools, etc), as well as making ‘legitimate’ cultural practices dependent upon the spaces capitalism affords them. There is nowhere to go and little to do with our newly developed professional practice (and newly acquired debt). Here we begin to see the first signs of the university’s double-bind continued as part of various contradictory voices within it. One can ‘do anything,’ but one can only continue to practice if the game is played, making the flexible possibilities of art practice not so open after all. So the implications of the production of cultural producers becomes clearer; if we are forced into positions of clamoring for the coveted tenure-track job we have no choice but to ‘play the game.’ And this game of curving one’s back to first critiques, learning the language, understanding the discourse, then journals, galleries, museums, adjuncting for poverty wages, etc.—various institutional rhythms—all the while tens of thousands in debt, erodes the possibilities for a radical practice. This is also why it is important to broaden our analysis of the university as working in conjunction with a broader agenda of the production of workers. Any public institution operating within a capitalist society will always be subject to the whims of that society, and the restructuring of the university drifting further toward corporatization over the last thirty years is no exception.<sup>7</sup> Plainly, if we are all shit out into the ‘real’ world, clawing for the same withering jobs, the university should become demarcated as a site of struggle that proliferates capitalist competitiveness and the rhetoric of scarcity while simultaneously

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<sup>7</sup> Research and Destroy, “Communiqué from an Absent Future: on the Terminus of Student Life.” Self-published but widely read and influential to those looking for an anti-capitalist critique in response to the budget crises that resulted in and harsh tuition hikes and austerity measures within the UC system. Written in response to the explosion of activism around this crisis in public education in 2009. Accessed October 23, 2011. <http://researchanddestroy.wordpress.com/2009/10/04/communiquefromanabsentfuture/>

espousing rhetoric of accessibility and quasi-egalitarianism.

## ***2.2 The double-bind of the university***

In problematizing the university we recognize it is not just about MFAs—about artists and the double-bind ponzi-scheme of graduate school—it is also about crystallizing the function of the university as an arm of capitalism and the production of workers. Students typically understand their positions in graduate school as being one of volition and opportunity, a training ground for a future life doing precisely as he/she desires. Over time, this fable withers (usually post-graduation in a struggle to scrape by), and yet many who continue to practice as artists continue to do so with the hopes of the coveted tenure-track job, hustling to get shows, making work he/she probably otherwise would not, publishing in boring journals, etc. In other words, even though there are no jobs, we continue to conform to the sterile institutionalization and ‘legitimatization’ of creative practices.

The very fact that students are usually forced to go into debt—entangling them into the world of financial capitalism—should be enough to pull the university from its purported benevolence and supposed autonomy or neutrality. Already there is a felt presence of private lenders—capitalists—like Sallie Mae, which ought to at least suggest the connection to a broader socio-political relationship between students and the university as it relates to capitalism, the future of workers, and the agenda of the university. Further, the government subsidizes the interest of these for profit loans while students are in school, effectively communicating that this capitalist institution—Sallie Mae, which turned a profit rate of 37% in 2004—is more important to protect financially by insuring its profit by subsidizing interest accrued, all the while public funding

continues to fall and tuition continues to rise, in an unfolding of governmental priority since the 70s.<sup>8</sup> The message is clear, profit trumps affordable education and young peoples' future bares no protection. And yet, we still display confusion about the role and function of the student-worker, both during school and after graduation, as well as sympathy for the 'public' university, or perhaps hope for its future. We continue to separate the greed of banks and private loaners from that of the university, failing to see that the ideological and political decisions that were made by the various intuitions that willingly restructured to correspond to a more business-like model of organizing itself, as well as governmental failure to support universities with funding rather than subsidizing capitalism through supporting loaners rather than students or universities directly. Corporate interests are well-funded and represented by way of endowments and donations (or investments) and able to be elaborated by this neoliberal structure allowing for the privatization of knowledge production, while non-valorized knowledge is pushed increasingly toward professionalization and is paid for by increasing tuition paid for by more capitalist loans binding student and future workers to debt. The question becomes: how is the cycle broken? How are the State, capitalism, and the university all implicated?

Understanding the double-messaging of the university is possible, at least in part, if we insist on an understanding of graduate students' primary *use* in the university being of/for labor. From this vantage point we see that the prospect of tenure-track or other professional jobs is not likely for the graduate, but instead the often-internalized story told to cycle needed labor through the university doors. Paradoxically those recalling the story are the exception to the rule, e.g. when faculty suggest such stories, they wrongfully speak

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<sup>8</sup> Jeffrey Williams, "The Pedagogy of Debt," in *Toward a Global Autonomous University*, eds. Edu-Factory Collective. New York: Autonomedia, 2009. pp 93.

on behalf of all their former peers who are adjuncting or cannot find a job with their degree. These problematic narratives obviously continue to support certain expectations and possibilities for a life post-graduate school. These narratives also can inform relationships between faculty and student-workers, as well as with the distant yet authoritative administration. For example, by suggesting particular common statements like “well, any work spent now is work you won’t have to do in the future!” or suggesting that one’s labor (teaching) corresponds so closely with one’s research that overworking is acceptable because the divisions of work/research are indistinguishable. These I suspect common thoughts, while often probably meant without malcontent (though certainly not always), further shade the larger political conditions that inform the student-workers situation both within the university as well as more broadly speaking as a subject in relation to various forces of capitalism, institutions, and culture.

An understanding of the neoliberal university, debt, labor, and this narrative supporting old notions of the university as being outside capitalist persuasions should inform us at the very least that the promise of a middle-class life, leveraged against various investments in money and time, presents its emptiness. From the perspective of the MFA and grad student-worker the corporatization of the university is clear in its *use* of the student-worker. Practically speaking, any benefits gleaned by way of knowledge desired should be considered payment, similar to wages, given to calm any confrontational tendencies. If mistakenly perceived as a gift bestowed upon the ‘privileged’ (“you’re so lucky to be here!”) rather than ‘payment’ (knowledge gained) traded to the worker, the myth that the university continues to provide some ‘authentic’ existential fulfillment for the student outside the corrupting forces of the market, particularly proliferated within humanities departments, further perpetuates itself. We

must remember the wonderful ‘privilege’ to ‘do what one wants’ within academic programs is ultimately false, or at the very least comes at the cost of the graduate students’ being exploited (like all wage labor), and bamboozled into debt. In plainer terms, the ‘what is gained’ is necessarily disproportional when leveraged against the many very material post-graduate realities that often arrive in the wake of graduate school. If we insist upon remembering the primary *use* and function of the graduate student as that of labor, this mythic perception is destabilized and we can begin to see more clearly how the image of the university as historically liberal and benevolent is internalized, allowing, in part, the proliferation of capitalist social relations within it. Insisting on the framing of the use of the grad student-worker as being of/for labor simultaneously grounds the MFAs’ experiences within a space of critique by deterritorializing or uprooting the narratives that aid the further exploitation of student-workers, as well as destabilizing the forces at work on their becoming-professional.

### ***2.3 Locating the student-worker***

To understand the University as a tentacle and crutch for a contemporary capitalist society necessarily complicates how to pursue an anti-capitalist practice within it. Taking this observation one step further and insisting that it is not just a matter of participation (“if you don’t like the institution, leave it!”), but it is always entangled in a complex class and social composition that makes living and ‘doing what one wants’ extremely difficult. For many, the question of getting a degree or not getting a degree is the difference between having a job one might find bearable (an increasingly slim possibility) versus a job one finds intolerable, though neither of these necessarily equates to a paradoxical ‘*good* job.’ In my case, before I came back to school I was a cashier, so

when I suggest a critique of the neoliberal university and the production of MFAs and in turn receive responses that amount to little more than the simplistic “love it or leave it” I not only find this common response to critiquing the institution far too simplistic but also frustrating in its myriad of assumptions. To perpetually provoke to those critical of the institution—“well, why are you here then?”—is to dismiss entirely the bind that post-Fordist and neoliberal realities have left us with. There remains a continued imagining of an inherent bourgeois character in university students that is operative in the response “love it or leave it,” assuming these students somehow are not subject to the forces of capital. This imagining is trampled by a reality of students now sacked with debt and no jobs, and in terms of pure economics (which is to say, to leave aside race privilege and cultural capital, if only to make a point),<sup>9</sup> makes it impossible to suggest those students are not scrambling to put their lives together in some kind of meaningful way. Most students, like non-degree holders and all subjects under capital, are trying to escape the misery of service work, retail, and other precarious work experiences. This of course does not mean that my experience is not easier and more privileged than, for example, the various immigrants still working on the line in increasingly dangerous and cruel conditions. It merely means we have all been put on the losing side, and we urgently need to recognize this. Of course, we must be careful to not conflate all experiences into one, which can obviously lead to very problematic understandings of race, class, and gender. Traditional Marxist class relations are infinitely complicated in post-Fordist corporatist context, but as a place to start, exploitation and misery of lives is not nearly as tricky. This is our logic

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<sup>9</sup> Although to dig just a little deeper one would find that the amount of debt and difficulty and/or risk in participating in the increasingly expensive university experience disproportionately affects people of color and working class folks, which really is no surprise considering the disproportional economic injustice that exists prior to engagements with student loan capitalists like Citibank or Sallie Mae. See Jeffrey Williams “Pedagogy of Debt,” 2009.

when we say, “occupy everything”—occupy all positions.<sup>10</sup> All institutions, work places, markets, media, etc. are saturated with capitalist manipulations. This means student-worker struggles, as well as discursive or disciplinary struggles, cannot be separated from a broader anti-capitalist struggle.

On a related but slightly different level, those interested in developing a critical language or analysis and critique of contemporary capitalist society, find almost no spaces in which to do so outside the university. While there is a growing DIY autonomous / self (collective) education tendency,<sup>11</sup> these groups remain sparse and, for most, difficult to participate in due to the everyday constraints of simply sustaining oneself and a dwindling of leisure time. Confronted with the difficulty of merely ‘getting by,’ many, myself included, find themselves unsure of what to do, how to participate in struggle, how to live a life that isn’t entirely miserable, how to resist, and where to locate one’s energies. All of this to say, when one is asked “if you hate the university, why are you here?” this is something of an answer reflected in the difficulties of navigating our engagements and relationship to power and capitalism. These difficulties, though it probably goes without saying, also support young students willingness to continue entering into relationships with the university, as identifying the problems with the university does not mean other spaces are not more untenable. While we inevitably find particular spaces problematic, to cleanse ourselves of all relationships to capital is impossible, and in integrated world

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<sup>10</sup> “Occupy Everything” became a popular slogan surrounding the militant student occupations in 2009, in particular UC but across the US. It has since been elaborated upon by various radical theorists and activists, perhaps notably the militant research platform, located primarily in California which takes the slogan as its name, which can be viewed here: <http://occupyeverything.org>.

<sup>11</sup> There are several quite sophisticated ‘militant research’ or ‘autonomous research’ projects. To name only a few in the US, see especially 16 Beaver Group in NYC, <http://www.16beavergroup.org/>; Slow Motion Action / Research Collective in Chicago, [http://messhall.org/?page\\_id=771](http://messhall.org/?page_id=771); Brian Holmes’ ongoing collaborative project ‘Continental Drift,’ <http://www.16beavergroup.org/drift/index.html>; This is Forever, also out of NYC, <http://www.thisisforever.org/>; and of course, a project I am involved in with a few others, SOS, <http://selforganizedseminar.wordpress.com/>.

capitalism we are forced to negotiate these complexities constantly and often find ourselves making decisions based on what is the lesser of evils. My sense is that many have long ago abandoned 'purity,' having found such concepts to be paralyzing (if not also problematic in their utopian assumptions) in an attempt to adhere to its impossible demands.

## CHAPTER III

INTEGRATED WORLD CAPITALISM<sup>12</sup> AND THE FLEXIBLE UNIVERSITY**3.1 “Freedom” and Flexibility**

Many would agree that there is great freedom or flexibility in art school in terms of what you can *do* as one’s practice, or maybe what one can get away with and call it art on the condition that it cycles back into the art sphere, usually back to the white cube in some form. This necessary cycling back is a forceful disciplinary agent. Despite an almost infinite possibility of how one can produce one’s art, that is, what one can do to make it—from Hugo Ball’s shouting of nonsense, to Duchamp’s urinal ready-made, to Serrano’s piss, to Tiravanija’s dinner parties—we always understand it in the same way because we always translate it and interpret it in the same way. We use the same terminology, the same frames of reference, the same forums for exchanging them. While we may have invented a vast vocabulary of new words, they are part of the same language—spoken in the same tongue, in the same room. It is within this inevitably binding language that we explore the seemingly unlimited possibilities of creative gestures allowed and/or encouraged within art discourses across the world—but they always return to the same ontology or habitus, locked inside the academy and inhabited in a biopolitical becoming-professional. The result is a commitment to formal and institutionalized aesthetic paradigms that keep an arms distance from breaching the soft consensus and structural toothlessness of market and academia, parroting back normative discursive, cultural, and

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<sup>12</sup> Felix Guattari, trans. Ian Pindar and Paul Sutton, *The Three Ecologies*, New York: Continuum, 2008. Guattari defines IWC as capitalism which is “tending increasingly to decentre its sites of power, moving away from structures producing goods and services towards structures producing signs, syntax and—in particular, through the control which it exercises over the media, advertising, opinion polls, etc.—subjectivity.” pp. 32.

critical practices. The failure to build anything *else* results in more of the same neutralized and cowed cultural practices widely called and practiced as Art. To veer away from these particular and homogenous articulations of culture, aesthetics and political engagement would require at the very least a de-professionalizing on the individual as well as collective level, if not the complete destruction of the institutional-culture machines that remain the gatekeeper of bourgeois culture and ‘acceptable’ aesthetic inquiry.

How long will the basic cowardice of criticism continue to render artistic practice so broadly insignificant, leaving it either as a plaything for the rich, as a neutralized image of the status quo for the academics, or as a melancholic object of desire for radicals stuck in the pasts of their dreams?<sup>13</sup>

### **3.2 Flexibility expanded**

In “The Flexible Personality” Brian Holmes traces the recent shifts in capitalism (following what Boltanski and Chiapello call the new ‘spirit’ of capitalism).<sup>14</sup> Using the metaphor of the ‘networker,’ who operates in a ‘connexionist’ world (that of the network), Holmes maps out the ways in which capitalism has consumed and recuperated the artistic critique of alienation so widely present among radical movements of the late 60s and early 70s, but also to be found in the cultural theory informing those movements. Holmes shows the ways in which the New Left movements looked toward Marcuse—who encapsulated this spirit 60s radicalism in a desire for autonomy—and further illustrates the ways in which this desire for ‘authenticity’ in exiting a life of work within the Fordist

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<sup>13</sup> Brian Holmes, “Financial Crimes.” Presented at the exhibition *Democracy in America: The National Campaign* in NYC on Sept. 23, 2008. Text version self-published. Accessed October 20, 2011. <http://brianholmes.wordpress.com/2008/09/24/financial-crimes/>.

<sup>14</sup> Brian Holmes, “The Flexible Personality,” *Hieroglyphs to the Future: Art & Politics in a Networked Era*, Zagreb: Arkzin. 2002. Book is out of print but can be found online at: [http://1000littlehammers.files.wordpress.com/2010/02/holmes\\_hieroglyphs.pdf](http://1000littlehammers.files.wordpress.com/2010/02/holmes_hieroglyphs.pdf), and the essay can be read at: <http://eipcp.net/transversal/1106/holmes/en/print>. Luc Boltanski & Eve Chiapello, trans. Gregory Elliot, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, New York: Verso. 2006.

rhythm of capitalism has been recycled and restructured into the practice of the management of the networker. What Holmes attempts to show is not just that (net)workers have become more precarious through temporary labor contracts and freelance gigs (though they certainly have), but that the existential desire to produce something of value, previously articulated by Marcuse et al to be necessarily outside of the capitalist field of labor, helped create this new ‘spirit’ of management in capitalism. Today, rather than spending forty hours a week on the assembly line, the networker bounces around as he/she desires, with no job security or health care, but instead the ‘freedom’ or ‘autonomy’ to work when and where he/she wishes.

Of course, it does not quite work this way. The trade off for this flexibility is the perpetual need to be connected to the network, to be always plugged in. The result is the not only precariousness for the networker, but also a recuperation of creative energies into “flexible accumulation”<sup>15</sup>—a concept that describes new forms and disciplinary strategies for the management of seemingly individual decisions reflecting when one wants and is willing to participate in valorized work processes. As one might imagine these tendencies in semiotic and creative sectors of capitalism work especially well. As Holmes states:

Rather than coercive discipline, it is a new form of internalized vocation, a ‘calling’ to creative self-fulfillment in and through each work project, that will now shape and direct the employee’s behavior. The strict division between production and consumption tends to disappear, and alienation appears to be overcome, as individuals aspire to mix their labor with their leisure.<sup>16</sup>

In other words, not only have affects, desires, and emotions been recycled into a feedback

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<sup>15</sup> Brian Holmes, “The Flexible Personality”. Holmes’ borrows David Harvey’s concept of ‘flexible accumulation here, originally elaborated in his book *The Condition of Postmodernity*, Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1991.

<sup>16</sup> Brian Holmes, “The Flexible Personality.”

loop of commodity / consumer, but also labor and careers—what one *does* with one's life—has been recuperated. What once was transparent alienation and disinterest on the assembly line (who ever really cared about pressing bumpers for Ford?) now has shadowed itself by creating and valorizing labor that pretends to be responsive to the individual need for self-fulfillment and the desire to produce something of value.

With regards to management, what this suggests is a paradigm exceeding what we traditionally have considered authoritarian—the forced coercion of the worker into determined roles—and instead transformed into something more dispersed in its deployment of manipulation and coercion. Indeed this is the whole point, these new forms of control are more Foucauldian—dispersed and invisible, but *felt* and *internalized* technologies of control that “exist just beneath this level of domination: they are subtler forms of collective channeling, appropriate for the government of democratic societies where individuals enjoy substantial freedoms and tend to reject any obvious imposition of authority.”<sup>17</sup>

Let's return to the production of MFAs. I lay some groundwork from Holmes precisely because I think his theorizing of the ‘networker’ resonates with the becoming-professional of the artist. But first we should note that within the connexionist world of the networker there is an intermingling of forces that inform and inscribe one another—for our purposes, primarily capitalist valorizing / recuperating forces on the one hand, and individual subjectivities and desires on the other. I do not intend to suggest that these divisions between ‘authentic’ desire and capitalist motivations hold, quite the opposite. Instead the two tendencies become indistinguishable—this is one of the points Holmes is working toward, and why the ‘connexionist’ world is so insidious.

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<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

Continuing with becoming-professional of the MFA, one key difference in understanding the networker v. production of MFAs, is the *labor* that influences *desire* (labor→desire) for the networker is reversed for the MFA. That is to say, with the MFA it is not the labor that moves towards desire, as with the networker, but instead one's desire that moves toward valorization (desire→labor), until finally they enmesh. In other words, with the MFA the 'authentic' desire *appears* to maintain its status as autonomous from the commodity sphere for longer than that of the networker. While both ultimately become valorized, artistic strategies and feelings of the MFA conceal themselves more successfully, as they are shielded within the perceived space of 'authenticity,' akin to what Marcuse spoke to, for longer. Ultimately this space, supposedly motivated entirely by one's own autonomous volition, is one of coercion that allows for misdirected feelings to continue, and illustrates why it is so important to understand the becoming-professional of the MFA that hides itself so well in the subtle molding of the creative over time.

What makes this perceived space of 'authenticity' so tricky is the very real possibilities for friendship, affection, and inquiry within them. In other words, the space allowing for 'authentic' feeling is never pure in its valorization or manipulation, and the people who inhabit them—in this case faculty and students—can readily and often inhabit pockets of non-capitalist desires and affections that can cast a shadow over the larger politics of the university. These micro-politics are illustrated in the ways we constantly move between positions, within seconds switching from teacher (worker), student, friend, collaborator, mentee etc. The same is true for faculty, who switch on a moments notice from teacher, course supervisor (boss), friend, mentor, collaborator, etc. These micro-politics of affection can also be used to subvert the hierarchical institution, possibly creating radical spaces bonding and knowledge production inside it, but that

requires an understanding of the ways in which those affections are manipulated to extract labor, knowledge, and affect, as well to perpetuate a cycle of producing professionalized artists.

On the other hand, Holmes' networkers' freelance engagements with capitalism are clearer—they are, after all, plainly working for this or that corporation, they merely 'enjoy' that work more so than traditional Fordist labor. The slight difference between the networker and the MFA, I think, reduces down to this: the networker has been willingly seduced by capital, but the artist continues to insist that ultimately his/her existential motivations and frames of reference to produce creative work remain 'pure' or 'authentic,' even though his/her work might be necessarily professional in the sense that it is displayed in museums and he/she must build a CV. Although a seemingly subtle difference in the direction of movement, an important one if we are to understand why the university is able to proceed with such little resistance, despite its marriage to capitalism even within the so-called non-capitalist humanities. With the production of the professional artist, the MFA, what once could be thought to be outside of capital—the non-valorized desires which Boltanski and Chiapello suggest have been recuperated—necessarily merge with some form suited for the accumulation of capital and thus 'becoming-professional' is completed on the level of discourse, on the level of the body.

For many young cultural producers, what once was an existential desire to create, to produce something of value—which might also be understood as possessing and insisting on a *joy* in engaging in these activities, in one's life—is now being molded into the practice fit for marketability, be it the reproduction of institutional discourses, the proliferation of signs and affects to be recuperated by capital, or straightforward engagement in the commodity system. To proceed in any humanities graduate program

is, in effect, to submit to the paradoxical becoming-professional of one's desire to create non-valorized practices. This becoming-professional becomes a requisite to succeed in continuing this desire, except it is too late. The desire has transformed, debt has accumulated, and the becoming-professional has begun.

## CHAPTER IV

### INSTITUTIONAL CRITIQUE

#### ***4.1 The problem of the Institution of Critique***

I suspect that one of our problems as radical cultural producers, at least in part, is how we understand institutional critique, especially within Art discourse, where we often find ourselves trapped in what Andrea Fraser has termed the “Institution of Critique.”<sup>18</sup> With the institution of critique we often have trouble seeing past its internal usage and imagining new possibilities for criticism, but most importantly what the institution of critique (a la Haacke, Fraser, et al) make evident are the ways in which the institution structures critical voices within its ribcage. Regardless of how critical the institution of critique might prove to be, it maintains an internal criticality that props up the institution, proves how ‘progressive’ and ‘self-reflexive’ it is. In other words, while certain works perform the act of critique, it still provides content for the apparatus of capture to consume, twist, turn, and *use* for its own purposes.

Consider such bizarre and radical acts like Hugo Ball yelling “blago bung / blago bung / bosso fataka / ü üü ü” in a sorcerer outfit, shedding the language of a world he no longer understood, the language he saw as intolerable, a language of war and death.<sup>19</sup>

Next take a walk down your university library’s stacks to see the countless works of scholarship legitimating Ball’s anarchistic and tragic post-war gesture. In a slightly

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<sup>18</sup> Andrea Fraser, “From the Critique of Institutions to an Institution of Critique,” in *Artforum*, September 2005. pp 278-283.

<sup>19</sup> Hugo Ball, “Karawane,” performed in Zurich at Cabaret Voltaire in 1916. Recordings as well as the text can be found at: <http://www.ubu.com/sound/ball.html>

different context of critique consider Andrea Fraser and Fred Wilson's ability to earn a living from the same institutions they are so invested in critiquing. What these by now exhausted examples continue to illustrate is the myriad of ways that well meaning and radical and left-leaning individuals within institutions struggle against the seemingly everlasting problem of articulating a radical critique that is not at the service of the institution, or at least cannot be made use of by the institution to strengthen ability to subsume its critics rather than making any structural changes.

These result is the institution is able to push out its threshold, its border, make it fuzzy and almost porous, allowing for greater movement, greater 'freedom,' within particular confines which refuse to reveal themselves. The limits or the threshold is always displaced, always being pushed outward. Each creative gesture one believes might challenge the contours of the discipline—to critique—instead becomes the very breath of the institutional body. Each articulation of critique is like an inhale expanding its ribs and chest, and then an exhale, always returning safely with a stronger core.

*In, and out. In, and out. In... ...and out...*

The rhythm of the institutional life-support.

In this sense, *how* we understand critique is itself the problem. We fail to realize, or perhaps refuse to admit, our languages and movements can quickly be recuperated, their usage necessarily functions as translation, and thus it always seeks to be territorialized, grounded.<sup>20</sup> In the act of translation there is always a movement, always an attempt to find a home, to land. As we produce critiques and *translate* them for institutions (and those accustomed to speaking institutionalized tongue) to recognize we put forward more

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<sup>20</sup> Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari, trans. Brian Massumi, *A Thousand Plateaus*, Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press. 1987. pp 430.

discourse that spirals in shoots inward, seeking its root inside the threshold in hopes of growing outward. The institution of critique tends to deploy the Trojan horse strategy—send in some troops hidden in plain sight—cloaked in institutional tongue—unleash them, unleash the critique, fight fire with fire. This impulse always attempts, it seems, to break through the certain threshold, or often ‘reform’ the institution. The task today, I think, is to begin by understanding our own micro-political becoming-professional as well as the socio-political composition of the various institutions we engage with, and interrogate why or how that becoming-professional fails to offer us more complex abilities to engage with those politics and structures the art of critique to be predisposed to recuperation considering that we’ve been trained to keep speaking its language, to fight on its terms rather than our own.

#### **4.2 No borders**

In his book *Art and Revolution*, Gerald Raunig problematizes ideas of inside / outside within the socio-political context of what he describes, looking at the work of Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze, as a “mixed discipline/control society.”<sup>21</sup> Following Foucault, if what we have previously understood as confinement and disciplining as primarily existing first within the home, then school, then the factory—the geography of discipline was somewhat clearer and contained, operating in more concrete spatial terms by bracketing off social and economic spaces for subjects to exist within. But over time, these somewhat striated forms of confinement become internalized—hetero-normativity,

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<sup>21</sup> Gerald Raunig, trans. Aileen Derieg, *Art and Revolution: Transversal Activism in the Long Twentieth Century*, Los Angeles: Semiotext(e). 2007. For the development of ‘disciplinary society see especially: Michel Foucault, trans. Alan Sheridan, *Discipline and Punish: Birth of the Prison*, New York: Random House. 1995; and on the ‘control society’ see: Gilles Deleuze, “Postscript on Control Societies,” *Negotiations*, trans. Martin Joughin, New York: Columbia University Press. 1995. pp 177-182.

obedience in the work place, obedience in relation to authority—creating consequences on how we experience ourselves, others, politics, in short—how we (obediently) participate in society. This internalization—the becoming-docile of the worker and the citizen<sup>22</sup>—corresponds and makes possible a broadening of the transnational governmental and capitalist configurations that allow for the presentation of a new form of control that has much greater spaces of liberal movement (what Deleuze and Guattari call a ‘smooth space’), as well as the capitalist ontologies developed over time.<sup>23</sup> Like the connexionist world this expansion does not mean more authoritarian disciplining, instead it operates more closely to Guattari’s dispersed integrated world capitalism—through a mediatic stream and a production of signs and subjectivities, also producing knowledges and desires suited for capitalist obedience and consumption.<sup>24</sup> These capitalist ontologies are reflected in the ways we understand our existence in the world—which is how we can understand them in relationship to discipline or control, noticing how they often correspond to the benefits of capitalism, similar to Foucault’s docile body, but also reflected in the continual desires to consume various commodities.<sup>25</sup> In the shift toward Deleuze’s formulation of a control society, capitalism and control have shifted toward a more horizontal dispersal, perhaps erasing its recognizable limits—inside and outside—

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<sup>22</sup> See Foucault’s *Discipline and Punish*, especially pp. 135-170.

<sup>23</sup> On ‘smooth spaces,’ see “1440: Smooth and the Striated” in *1,000 Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. pp 474-500.; On the shift toward a transnational governmental order and the internalization of capitalist ontologies, see Michael Hardt & Antonio Negri, *Empire*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2000.

<sup>24</sup> Guattari, *The Three Ecologies*, pp. 32.

<sup>25</sup> Michael Hardt & Antonio Negri, *Empire*, pp. 22-41; 354-364. In a struggle against capitalist ontologies, it follows that we must construct non-capitalist feelings and knowledges. Hardt and Negri spend an ample amount of time theorizing the possibilities for this creationist need by elaborating upon Foucault’s notion of biopower, using its negative critique of the passive capitalist subject also as the possibility and need for the active creation on communist/anti-capitalist ontologies.

and instead establishing fluctuating categories, codes and niches allowing for the proliferation of coding various bodies and subjectivities all safely within the umbrella of commodification and obedience. But it is not only about the broadening of the market's reach (though in large part it certainly is) because when we say the field of the commodity has proliferated, we need to go further still in insisting on how that dispersal has effects on our frames of reference. To suggest that the field of commodification also encroaches upon in to the space of desires and ontologies, like Holmes' networker, also suggests a shift in the ways in which *control* operates in spatial, if immaterial, terms. Raunig offers:

...the focus is less and less on classical forms of confinement, which seek to prevent movement through incarceration, but rather an absolute command over the distribution of space, which is here imagined as tending toward unlimited totality. Confining exclusion and excluding confinement supplement one another in a zone of the increasing indistinguishably of inside and outside.<sup>26</sup>

Specifically discussing counter-globalization movements and the timely *no border no nation* slogan, Raunig attempts to illustrate, through the concepts of borders, this “command over the distribution of space.” In response to this commanding and movement toward expanding horizontalization, Raunig suggests the need to conceptualize this movement as, among other things, a *dilation* of borders—the turning of borders into *border spaces*. This transforming of borders as a limit to borders as a space is to suggest that the borders can be *inhabited*—where differences “can be made to oscillate.” Ultimately Raunig goes on to theorize that the “border space that emerges in dilation [is not] to be understood as a static container.” Echoing Deleuze's insistence that the control society is a rhythm, a modulation, Raunig's dilated border is “in motion and its form is constantly changing, its

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<sup>26</sup> Raunig, *Art and Revolution*, pp 251.

impact expanding successively in all directions.”<sup>27</sup> Which is to say, it is in motion, always on the prowl, always recuperating differences as well as critiques.

Raunig’s theorizing of the border as fluctuating as well as expanding into a space which can be inhabited enables us to think through institutional critique in different way than we are accustomed do, which tends to correspond more or less to two lines of thought—institutional critique can continue to help reform the institution and is worth struggling over, or, we should retreat, build our own institutions, and abandon all relations with various institutions from museums to universities. Instead, Raunig shows us that what constitutes an ‘outside’ is actually unknowable, as the borders are constantly fluctuating according to the rhythms of what is being produced by its critics as well as what is marketable, and quite often these critiques have been made marketable. If we keep in mind the becoming-professional of the MFA and cultural producers, then the question becomes not only about participation in particular spaces (galleries, museums, universities), but also about the ways in which we already are inside institutional discourses in the sense that we are inscribed with its languages and gestures, and with every critique we presume to make we speak in a tongue that has been constituted by a long developing institutional coding. So, when we consider what it means to *inhabit* a border space, we can begin think not only in terms of inside and outside, but working in immanence within the biopolitical terrain already entangled with our conception of cultural and political practices. If we can recognize that both the project of breaking through the threshold (the avant-garde ‘rupture’), as well as simply existing outside of it, is false, we can occupy Raunig’s border space and begin to build a new social assemblages that perhaps can overflow the discursive boundaries we find ourselves burdened with, and

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid. pp 254.

that appear to keep pulling us in even as we keep desperately trying to break out.

To exceed the institution, to exceed the discipline: this is the task of the political practices that explore possible escapes from the forms of contemporary capitalist governance. Nonetheless to exceed does not mean to leave behind, forget or refuse: it means to go beyond, overflow. Exceed as a practice for composing new sites for the production of situated knowledge and social cooperation able to open breaches where statements emerging in social mobilisations can proliferate.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Joan Miguel Gual and Francesco Salvini, "Be Network, My Friend," published online at: <http://radical.temp.si/2010/05/be-network-my-friend-by-joan-miquel-gual-and-francesco-salvini-members-of-universidad-nomada/>. Accessed October 29, 2011.

CHAPTER V  
ESCAPE ROUTES

**5.1 *Becoming-criminal***

With critiques of the neoliberal university in place, it becomes difficult to invest oneself fully into the university process, in the making of professionals—in what I have been referring to as *becoming-professional* and the *production of MFAs*. Everything becomes suspect, even trusting oneself. Various questions arise: When should I participate? What should I participate in? What is my motivation for this research? Is it institutional legitimization? If so, is it worth it to subvert the power gained by institutional recognition? Is my work politically relevant, or merely mimicking the banality of academic production? When must I push back? How can I resist? Of course all of these questions become immediately slippery and complex in their crisscrossing relationships to various sites of power.

*Everything is suspect.*

When the university cannot be trusted, and everything is suspect, we are forced into a corner and “the only possible relationship to the university is a criminal one.”<sup>29</sup>

No doubt there are resources within the university—fellow criminals with which to slip underground, equipment, libraries, technologies, etc., as well as many knowledges ripe for the picking (of course, they usually need to be altered to make use of them). The relationship to the university must be a criminal one because any anti-capitalist knowledge worker or cultural producer recognizes there is no longer (if there ever was!)

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<sup>29</sup> Stefano Harney & Fred Moten, “The University and the Undercommons,” in *Toward a Global Autonomous University*, eds. Edu-Factory Collective. New York: Autonomedia, 2009. pp 145-151.

any possible way to wholly invest in the institution without also propping up capitalism.

This inevitable position of the criminal, like all paradoxical positions, is complicated, sometimes requiring a refusal or resistance and other times a withdrawal—a slipping under the radar or a retreat. Often this retreat takes the form of dropping into a subterranean landscape, where counter-knowledges and non-disciplined bodies can be produced.<sup>30</sup> But neither refusal nor withdrawal can be pure. Pure refusal merely results in a total withdrawal, and if it were possible (not to ask of its *usefulness*) I suspect many radicals would not find themselves within the university. Instead a subtler politic recognizes the ways in which these suggestions of withdrawal point toward an outside, when in reality we know there is only a fleeing movement. Withdrawal is not to suggest a pure outside; it is to suggest a reinvestment of energies to create a different ontology, one that is not saturated by the embodied institutional discourses and enslavement to professionalism.

Resistance is more of a game, or perhaps more accurately a re-writing of the rules of what is already clearly a game. To resist, perhaps, is to refuse or retreat when possible and necessary, and to twist the scenario when needed. Particular points of disciplining (especially critiques for art students, but also theses,\* curriculum, etc.) can be subverted but require planning and a certain tactical negotiation. Like with Melville's *Bartelby*, some things are inevitable—he still had to go to work, after all, even if he refused to do anything after he got there. We don't have the power, space, support to simply 'not go to work'—pure refusal—or more accurately to play the academic game. This inability to

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<sup>30</sup> Colectivo Situaciones, "On the Researcher-Militant."

\* The irony here, of course, is not lost on me. I'm writing full of ambivalence and looking for ways to make use of this text and knowledge in ways that extend beyond this particular institutional venue and checkpoint. If I did not believe a version of this text could be made use of elsewhere, I would be submitting a very different project.

‘not go to work’ is why we’re forced to become-criminal.

*We retreat because we need more. We need more support, more love, more politics. To critique is, in a sense, easy. So many problems rise to the surface of our experience in the university (though not all, of course). When we occupy it is because we care, we struggle, we gum up the machinery, When we evacuate it is because we must sustain ourselves, learn to experience each other, learn what communism feels like, learn how to support one another. We evacuate because we shouldn’t have to explain ourselves all the time, it is exhausting. We evacuate for our health, our psyches, our friendships. We occupy so we have space to evacuate. Struggle often feels like a paradox.*

## **5.2 Occupy and/or evacuate**

We have no idea how to break outside of the rhythmic feedback loop of integrated world capitalism—the cycling back into itself, first through minds and hearts and always back again, always expanding its domain, eating new gestures, subjectivities, knowledges, and building new shelters for them. When an overflow begins to spill, institutional tongue will always fail to recognize it, to learn a new language, to seep past its own porous boundaries. Within the ‘institution of critique’ there is tendency assume a complete inability to exceed itself, its own discourse, to put forth the postmodern axiom ‘there is no outside.’ There is probably merit to such a suggestion, but to adhere to this dictum is, in a sense, to throw one’s hands in the air in a painful gesture of giving up.

If institutional critique is not to be fixed and paralyzed as something established in the art field and confined within its rules, then it has to continue to develop along with changes in society and especially to tie into other forms of critique both within and outside the art field, such as those arising in opposition to the respective conditions or even before their formations.<sup>31</sup>

For the practice of institutional critique, as well as critique broadly construed, to reach its core, or to reduce itself to an egg of potentiality, it requires an investigation of the production of the critical voice itself—housed within the becoming-professional of the

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<sup>31</sup> Gerald Raunig, “Instituent Practices: Fleeting, Instituting, Transforming,” *Transversal*, Jan. 2006: Accessed September 26, 2011. <http://eicpc.net/transversal/0106/raunig/en>

MFA—used by the institution to maintain its appearance of self-examination, criticality, and reform. The intervention cannot come after-the-fact—after prohibitive languages, after the institutional tongue has been instituted and inscribed in the body and mind. Instead the intervention must arrive on the modes of production itself, that is, the production of the language(s) and discourse itself, the *production of MFAs*. Any critique on this terrain would require a taking seriously of the control society and disciplinary apparatus. Or, if we cannot find an outside then there also can be no reform, only a twisting away or moving through space so that one can re-make *one-self*, becoming-other, deterritorializing into an egg of potential.<sup>32</sup> It is to situate a resistance on the molecular rather than the molar, as Deleuze & Guattari would say, and then move through scales transversally.<sup>33</sup>

Raunig borrows from Foucault and lays some ground work suggesting critique often functions in response to a desire to ‘not be governed *like that*,’ or a common dialectical negation of whatever power institutes itself upon its subjects. In a control society, in response to the biopolitical landscape of governmentality, critique requires not only a negation, but also a transformation of the ‘arts of governing’ more generally. If the ‘arts of governing’ are not vertical in traditional hierarchical and authoritarian movements, but instead disperse in all directions, then so too must our critical gestures move rhizomatically, corresponding to the dispersing of control. But it is important to note these arts of governing also include inscribed self-governance (biopolitics). Thus to critique, and more importantly to begin building spaces and social structures and

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<sup>32</sup> Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen R. Lane. *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. 1977. pp 19.

<sup>33</sup> See Gilles Deleuze & Felix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus*, and Felix Guattari, trans. Rosemary Sheed, *Molecular Revolution: Psychiatry and Politics*, New York: Penguin. 1984

defending them against closure,<sup>34</sup> in our environment requires a double-movement—to occupy and evacuate. To occupy and make space for fleeing, an intervening in the production of one’s becoming-professional. Resistance and critique within a control society requires a new form in which “the aim is to thwart a dialectical idea of power and resistance: a *positive form of dropping out*, a flight that is simultaneously an instituent practice.”<sup>35</sup> “Nothing is more active than a flight,” says Deleuze & Parnet “to flee is to create something real, to create life, to find a weapon.”<sup>36</sup>

To withdrawal or flee then can to interrupt the production of the MFAs at the site of biopolitical production, the becoming-professional. Like our becoming-criminal we can say that this act of fleeing is to *betray* the apparatus of production, as well as the objects of that apparatus—our discourses, representations, even ourselves, our becoming-professional. In reflecting on Walter Benjamin’s famous essay “Author as Producer,” Raunig states: “This necessary betrayal consists in the transformation of his position, from someone who *supplies* the production apparatus with contents, as revolutionary as they may be, to an engineer who *changes* the production apparatus...”<sup>37</sup> To flee is to withdraw from the apparatus of production, to interrupt the process of our own becoming-professional. “There is always betrayal in a line of flight. [...] betrayal like that of a simple man who no longer has any past or future. We betray the fixed power which try to hold

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<sup>34</sup> Gerald Raunig, *Art and Revolution*, pp 31.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. My emphasis.

<sup>36</sup> Gilles Deleuze & Claire Parnet, *Dialogues*, New York: Columbia University Press, 2007. pp 36, 49.

<sup>37</sup> Walter Benjamin, “Author as Producer,” *Reflections*. New York: Schocken, 1978, pp 220-238.; Raunig, *Art and Revolution*. Original emphasis.

us back, the established power of the earth.”<sup>38</sup>

To flee or withdrawal is a place to begin on the level of our own bodies, minds, and feelings. It is the re-making of our singularities and subjectivities, a response to a pervasive control society with elusive borders. We no longer find questions of inside and outside to be adequate. Instead we ask in what ways can we re-make ourselves and our parts, so that we might make better use of them. We want to shed the skin we no longer desire, unlearn our bad habits. It is to use Deleuze and Guattari’s concept, a *becoming-other*, a line of flight seeking a psychic and bodily break with everyday rhythms of the control society. We of course do not see these becomings as solutions but rather a step in a process helping us to break our conditioning down and re-imagine ourselves and what we are capable of. The key is, I think, to begin.

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<sup>38</sup> Deleuze & Parnet, *Dialogues*, pp 40.

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