

# Contemporary Aesthetics

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*Volume 14 (2016)*

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2016

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## No-media: Against the Coming Singularity

Gavin Keeney

### Abstract

A summary of the possible persistence of so-called useless humanistic research against the diktat of the Edufactory, the essay "No-media – Against the Coming Singularity" problematizes the complex field of forces and factors currently leading the life of universities toward the servicing of reduced aspirations for scholarship in an ultra-monetized society – plus neo-liberal academia's penchant for the manufacturing of events and reputations at the expense of impersonal (confraternal) intellectual inquiry proper. An oblique critique of "vertical integration" strategies derived from corporate business models, foremost in media empires, and as applied to the production and management of knowledge, the essay prefigures a return to forms of scholarly and artistic production in alliance with universal moral and ethical precepts as preserved in *droit moral* – the Enlightenment-era concept of the Moral Rights of Authors.

### Key Words

academia, anti-capitalism, cognitive capitalism, cultural patrimony, digital humanities, moral rights, neo-liberalism

### 1. Patrimonial capitalism and academia

The re-application of top-down regimes of control to academia by neo-liberal capitalism is a return to pre-1900 forms of patrimonialism, a return that proceeds on several fronts all at once – yet, notably, from within and from without. "Within" connotes complicity by universities with what is imposed from "without," while complaints against what is imposed from without from within illustrate the incomprehension and/or apathy of those actors reduced to serfdom by the new system that constitutes what Max Weber understood, in *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft* (1922), as the arbitrary measures required to effectively administrate a "royal household."<sup>[1]</sup> Today it is the managerial class from top to middle that institutes and maintains the various regimes of control with constant re-branding campaigns plus capital projects covering the tightening of the immaterial and material means of control and domination. It is the absence of free or independent agency that constitutes the status of retainers or slaves who participate in the regimes of power that lead, increasingly, in incipient "royal households" to the suppression of transformation – either social, economic, or cultural. The creeping determinism of such systems is palpable, and the intellectual class (the faculties) is the most malleable or, per Antonio Gramsci, the most traitorous.

This petite bourgeoisie will go whichever way the wind is blowing, according to Gramsci, following the perks and incentives to conform, while it is the peasant class (the students) who will rebel first, which also explains why universities today pretend to privilege students over faculties.

The obvious attempt to co-opt revolt at the lowest levels includes converting students to consumers, with the ability of students to rate their faculties the most blatant inverted marketing device instituted via faux-democratic auspices that are part of the conversion process. For this reason, any significant change within the present-day, neo-liberalized academic system (one that is beginning to resemble a factory for the production of cultural goods, with students as future serfs and faculty research as hoped-for marketable commodities) will need to originate in the lower echelons and proceed to the upper echelons via increasingly Balkanized faculties. In a rather complex equation that is also not reducible to conventional revolutionary intervention, the Name of the Father will need to be replaced with the "Name of the Holy" – the Name of the Holy being, in this case, roughly equivalent to speculative inquiry proper. Speculative inquiry in this scenario will also have to have an anti-utilitarian lining that appears, at first, as anti-capitalistic. The Name of the Holy thus becomes the temporal address for an incipient anti-capitalist sublimity.

The abject social-media aspects of academia today (both at the level of marketing the university and the marketing of scholarship) mirror the abject research and publication strategies that have overtaken formerly integral processes of conducting, disseminating, and archiving works – the primary vehicle for archiving works having been actually existing books in actually existing libraries (or actually existing books in the hands of actually existing readers). Mass digitalization is the equivalent of Pandora's Box for such "old-world" concerns, permitting the mining of scholarship without the intermediary prospects of a reader (the presence of a conscious and critical subject). It is the purview of metrics that drives research today; and it is metrics and research assessment frameworks that have facilitated the internal capture of research toward commodifying it beyond academia proper – primarily as trans-mediatic spectacle. Cognitive Capitalism is a direct result of digital technologies run amok. Complaints from within academia against the predatory practices of for-profit publishers (for example, subscription rates for high-end journals) are hollow insofar as the research assessment regimes established from within privilege quantitative means for calculating a return on investment (faculty budgets and faculty salaries) that trap academics within the corrupted cycles of peer review, digital and analogue publications via prestigious and preferred journals, and the subsequent toxic capture of value via citation, replication, and conformity. The digital humanities, for example, promote the quantitative cannibalization of works, using the new technologies of data- and text-mining, suggesting that a larger data set automatically connotes a higher quality for the conclusions of any such "study." The result is an inward-spiraling vortex of intellectual determinism that further distresses any normative definition of an open field – the first prerequisite for speculative works that might alter the terrain of cultural production (cultural production as aesthetic field).

Past insurrections (such as Paris in 1968) by which the architecture of patrimonial closure might be challenged look less and less likely given the tightening strictures of the processes in play, plus their inherent immaterial agency, with

the slow-university movement or the open-access movements signaling shifts that will only protect certain forms of scholarship given to an ameliorative humanistic agenda resembling the failed social-democratic bias of liberal civil society. In fact, one of neo-liberal capitalism's prime targets *is* civil society, or what remains of open networks that mediate between patrimonial systems and the so-called people. Yet campaigns for open-access publication are one of the few instances where the predatory excesses of market fundamentalism may be countered within the university, even if the entire rebellion proceeds via digital means. The likelihood of new patrimonial clubs being formed within the open-access movement is, however, a case for concern insofar as the more pernicious aspects of *de facto* censorship will proceed via re-calibrated forms of peer review and alliances across disciplines that are serviced by the conference circuit and the social-media practices associated with academic narcissism. For the latter to collapse, the necessary correctives include exiting viral networks, excluding certain disciplines from authorized venues of reproduction and circulation, and the creation of new walled gardens resembling the confraternal monastic enclaves of the so-called Dark Ages where the Name of the Holy may once again be acknowledged.<sup>[2]</sup>

## 2. Topologies of indifference

There are topologies of difference (theorized beautifully – here and there – in philosophical exegesis as caesuras and aporia) and there are topologies of indifference (theorized – here and there – as alienation, abjection, and anomie), the latter exemplified by the novels of Hermann Hesse and, to a degree, Thomas Mann. While both are primarily existential states, experienced as crises to normative or everyday consciousness, topologies of indifference have become a professional state within neo-liberal academia as it increasingly comes under the control of market forces.<sup>[3]</sup> What must be noted in terms of topologies of difference, however, is that crisis is productive of positive change – doubt and reflection induce introspection and a form of critical-aesthetic revelation that produces rebirth for subjects without the attendant baggage of ideological or authorized systems. Under such auspices, rebirth for subjects and citizens proceeds without mediation. This is, in effect, veneration of the Name of the Holy in an a-theological modality.

Enforced or elective indifference cuts two ways, thus constituting a chiasmus (arguably, the first sign of an emergent topological knot). On the one hand, academics are increasingly begrudging of the assault on academia that is primarily externally imposed while managed from on high from within academic bureaucracies (the invasion of management strategies resembling invasive species that colonize and destabilize entire so-called native ecosystems). The current walled garden of the academy is thus caught in the double bind of serving two masters: Enlightenment-era universalist precepts embedded in public universities since at least the nineteenth century; and late-modern neo-liberalism intent on disciplining and extracting tribute from what are perceived as publicly funded institutions that have for too long been indulged under the rubric of “institutions of higher learning.” Thus the second cut is on the reverse bias: neo-liberal

capitalism, which seeks rent wherever there might be untapped or undervalued resources, is intolerant of dissent and expects compliance or capitulation. One of the defining characteristics of neo-liberalism is that it is excessively non-democratic.<sup>[4]</sup> Those who disagree may leave for whatever version of "Canada" they might find, in whatever corner of the world the functional equivalent of a "socialist paradise" might yet exist. For similar reasons, plus to simply escape the overwrought state of their own critical-aesthetic milieu, novelist-critic John Berger chose rural southeast France in 1974, while filmmaker and second-generation contrarian Jean-Luc Godard chose the hillsides of Lake Geneva in 1978.<sup>[5]</sup> Yet both fired back from their elective idylls missives aimed at what they perceived as the injustice and hypocrisy rampant within Western, now-globalized capitalist society. Will exiled academics engaged in new critical-aesthetic inquiry (Marxian, anti-capitalist, anarcho-syndicalist, and otherwise) do the same? And from where?

This schism suggests that a possible solution to precarity for the many brought on by the enrichment of the few (the primary symptom of the neo-liberal catastrophe sweeping the planet, from climate change to mass migrations, as diagnosed from Paul Krugman to Thomas Piketty) is, after all, new forms of radical scholarship that are creative and generative versus merely critical and ponderous. Humanists would claim that such is what precipitates renaissances, cultural and otherwise, with any attendant paradigm shift long ago established as proceeding from outside of normative discourse within any field but always developed in tension with what passes as normative discourse within a field or discipline.<sup>[6]</sup>

The mechanistic and Darwinian nature of what is encroaching within the walled gardens of academia today would, given most analyses, preempt any such radical or unforeseen shifts ever occurring from within. The foremost mechanism of control or conquest, argued for and against from within academia and from without, and yet another topological knot, is the value of research metrics, peer review, and allied issues such as the merits of open-access publishing, the latter but one example of countering the persistence of apparently ineradicable invasive species, insofar as academia has long been thoroughly colonized by for-profit publishers earning billions at the expense of those who pay for, create, and manage the intellectual property expropriated (the pre-appropriation "value chain" including, in diminishing order of return, the public university, the research institute, and the author). Yet the proposed antidote currently on offer is in many ways far worse. Open Access in the arts and humanities is an ideology posing as resistance. It is formulated from the exact same premises as those models it opposes. The premises switch position based upon perspective. The invasive species are now doubled through the warring dictates of the for-profit version of academic publishing and the not entirely benign, neo-liberalized version of the open-access movement. The mutations in the rhetoric and construction of the open-access camp are truly frightening given that the author-pay aspect is spiraling out of control. Authors may soon be forced to pay up to \$10,000 to publish an open-access monograph with a prestigious academic press. Thus, the neo-liberalization of Open Access creates the exact same straightjacket for authors

as the for-profit and predatory model it attempts to displace. The same straightjacket also induces suffocating conformity across disciplines.

Curiously, this displacement of the author seems to represent the caesura by which one might locate the ultimate contest for domination from without serviced by neo-liberal forces from within academia. Notably, the author or scholar today has virtually no rights, those rights previously conferred by copyright law generally subsumed by the discordant and fractious processes of academic and neo-liberal privilege – another topology of enforced indifference or compliance representing not so much a knot as a tightening noose around the neck of authors and scholars. The author writes for nothing – or else. The next step, on its way, care of open-access protocols, is that the author writes for nothing and pays fees for the right to write for nothing. The justification is that he/she is seeking prestige and/or patronage, climbing the ladder, well-paid already, or any number of variations on the theme. Royalties? Only celebrity academics are likely to ever see royalties for their published works. Perks? Such come in innumerable forms, and are well known. Yet the first perk for a scholar today is to merely have a secure job. The argument is circular. Precarity produces the self-loathing and perpetual anxiety that permits the non-celebrity scholar to give his/her work away, whether to the corporate hegemon running the for-profit academic presses or the open-access networks increasingly being neo-liberalized as the game shifts back toward arguments about cultural patrimony, public good, and public commons. In the shadows, meanwhile, lurks the next wave – full-bore text- and data-mining operations that will securitize knowledge in ways hitherto thought unimaginable. It is possible under such a scenario that only the arts will escape this next wave, given that visual media are resistant – thus far – to assimilation as data. Such is also one reason why the visual arts remain one of the principal venues for anti-capitalist agitation, while critical inquiry in the arts and humanities is slowly exterminated.

This holds true in almost every market in developed countries where academic publishing and humanistic scholarship produces wave upon wave of speculative work, foremost in the imperiled arts and humanities, which are caught in yet another form of colonization known as the "digital humanities," a stalking horse for practices associated with cognitive capitalism's thirst for digitizing everything. It is not difficult to track the money flowing into the digital humanities to see that the dual origin is mostly well-meaning philanthropic foundations (for example, the Mellon Foundation) and governmental agencies (in the United States, the National Endowment for the Humanities) attempting to prop up the failing public domain plus private equity firms looking for last chances to commandeer intellectual property in the same manner that they buy up water rights in Third World countries in anticipation of a drought. The drought in intellectual affairs that is coming, however, seems epochal and likely to cut off any chance for collective "redemption." These inordinate games of brinksmanship now at play in what is being billed in social-science circles as the Anthropocene, an irreversible geological shift underway based on the calamities visited upon the natural world by human activity, will play out in a far more

spiritually destructive way once the rich ecologies of difference in forms of scholarship are exterminated. Willful extinction of species and enforced extinction of speculative inquiry are the two monumental blunders now being perpetrated by – and it is impossible not to name it – predatory capital via its hoped-for coming singularity, the mass digitalization of life.

### 3. The Name of the Holy

It is critically important to state that the Name of the Holy (versus the Holy Name) is an irreligious concept – and that it is only embedded in religion as religion's most dynamic feature. All of Giorgio Agamben's archaeological excavations of religious practices buried or hidden in secular practices may be reduced to this fundamental truth. Since *Uomo senza contenuto* (1970), Agamben has been flirting with an elective nihilism that is a mask for the Name of the Holy – bracketing an explicit evocation of the Holy Name which opens onto Christic themes not permissible in orthodox-secular scholarship today. Massimo Cacciari investigated the same critical-aesthetic field with *Dallo Steinhof* (1980) and *Architecture and Nihilism* (1993).<sup>[7]</sup> Both scholars then went on to study patristics – not so much a coincidence as a telltale sign of what they were truly in pursuit of. The fact that both circle back to 1900 is also instructive. The conversion of the Name of the Holy (and the Holy Name) to modernist ideology proceeds from roughly 1900. Its previous, main secular-aesthetic incarnations via academia and art academies, while compromised by the same forces that always command ideology in the name of patrimony, tend to indicate the post-Hegelian version of ideological insurrection simply reverted to form, servicing the political, which is not full justification for dismissing ideology *per se* but, instead, for dismissing its complicity with arbitrary regimes of power. For ideology is not automatically disposed toward this-worldly power, while its corruption certainly is. Speculative inquiry as ideology (as the Name of the Holy) is consistently co-equal to the Bachelardian “right to dream” beyond mere politics.

Thus the highest flights of speculative intellect are always on the side of the lowliest (the most-humble and often-debased) forms of being – for example, the “ready-to-hand” of Martin Heidegger or the decrepit “shoes of Van Gogh.”<sup>[8]</sup> This contradictory nature of the Name of the Holy works *through* works both socially and politically, but across ethics and morals (therefore always transversally, as if to be tested on two planes). It also serves to reduce the elitist functions of mere intellectual and aesthetic inquiry (academicism) to shambles, insofar as such are part and parcel of systems of patrimony and/or pointlessness itself.<sup>[9]</sup> The infinite largess of speculative inquiry is to be found in its re-naturalization, which, in turn, serves as a means for a proper reading of the ready-to-hand of Heidegger and the shoes of Van Gogh.

There is another game within academia that is based in other problems, and wholly practiced from within, but leading to the same crisis. It is called “moving the goalposts.” This is practiced by scholars and constitutes what passes as the production of intellectual fashions. Such is also used by the neo-conservative bureaucratic regimes associated with disciplining faculties to dismiss disciplines. The humanities



have partly been savaged for this reason. Thus did critical inquiry (not quite dead) shrink by a thousand cuts to be displaced by the digital humanities.[\[10\]](#)

These twin ravages, from within and from without, leave a narrowing gap through which dissent may be staged. The question remains where such maneuvers might take speculative inquiry – or, where it may survive and what form it might take to evade the collapsing premises for revolutionary praxis in the arts and humanities. The present rebellions are at best symptoms of this collapse versus orchestrated or true and sustainable confraternal attempts to organize fields of resistance to capitalist exploitation of knowledge production. It is in the uselessness of certain fields that the promise survives; that uselessness always defined in terms of what may not be capitalized (whether because “not wanted” by capital or “not appropriable” by capital).

Patrimony of all forms, over the trajectory of modernity, is reducible to escalating battles for supremacy of one form or another of patrimonial exploitation. The rent-seeking practices of the more recent neo-liberal assault merely amplifies trends evident over centuries. Weber’s insight that one system merely replaces another is applicable to leftist and rightist insurgencies, the latest being an extreme instance of a rightist ideology serviced by ideologies of markets (with the left bought off by perks and privileges from within the somewhat monolithic technical architecture of neo-liberalism). The university as possible marketplace is under attack because it both represents a last bastion of so-called liberality, a former aspect of civil society that may be mined and exploited, and one of the prime addresses for periodic revolt. Yet what served as the source of past revolts from inside the academies fundamentally transcends the academies today. In the end, one does not need academia to prepare the way for the requisite resistance to the campaign to hyper-financialize knowledge itself. The sublime maneuvers permitted by that narrowing gap seem to lead away from academia, toward new wildernesses of thought and direct action. “Direct action,” far from an instance of the further production of mere words, involves the resurrection of the word in service to the Name of the Holy – paradoxically, the return of a de-naturalized form of conceptual thought in service to “nothing.”

#### **4. “No-media”**

It may be argued that the primary means of the exploitation of discursive knowledge is to convert it to “trans-media” (to digitalize it and mine it). The same is true for the visual arts. The perverse coming singularity that neo-liberal capitalism seeks is the conversion of collective cultural property to corporate private property via mass digitalization. Yet the alt-capitalist projects in the arts and humanities that pass as critique of capital, claiming to bypass capitalist exploitation, are most often quietly supporting that coming capitalist singularity, which will be duly totalitarian in practice. The intellectual-ecological devastation is easy to foresee. What capital wishes for all to see is a flowering of entrepreneurial exuberance, across platforms, across media, and across works that will provide the long-term rent sought. It is, in fact, a *de*-flowering... . This returns to academia in terms of the



diminished prospects for what might be serviceable for capital through academic exuberance. It would seem, then, that the alternative to this coming singularity is to restore diversity across the intellectual-ecological systems of exchange through refusing rent to capital, thus denying the "royal household" its tribute.

One task of late modernity is to return to lost causes; that is, to projects prematurely evacuated or projects vanquished. An example is how certain discrete disciplines have been lost to super-disciplines over the course of time (decades or centuries) – the contemporary terms *interdisciplinary* or *transdisciplinary* quite often translating into meaninglessness, lack of focus, or anti-intellectualism. Visual Culture is an exemplary instance of a super-discipline absorbing relatively benign or outmoded disciplines. The examination of many of these new "schools," however, shows signs of external and subtle market forces driving the convergence – as if the super-discipline was merely in service to a super-market of cultural products that converge beyond the academy under the rubric *media*.

Therefore, "no-media" is one answer, no matter how temporal or circumstantial. Already post-digital everything is on the way as the latest radical-chic fashion statement. Under the above auspices, no-media is also no digitalization, which translates roughly into no capitalization, since the perversity of the prevailing model is that capitalization proceeds via digitalization. Previously, part of the post-digital, radical-chic posture was "part-digitalization," whereas now, with the prevailing model approaching closure and a new totalitarianism of market-driven patrimony, the most avant-garde practices will eschew digitalization for analogue practices antecedent to the hegemony of the digital. In terms of academic practices and scholarship, the digital humanities are the venue for the last campaign to subdue intellectual inquiry on behalf of quantitative-determinist practices operating in the public domain and in neo-liberal capitalist exploitation of cultural property. The two domains overlap, and they are competing for the same intellectual property rights, with the same result for scholars, artists, and whoever else is in the line of fire. The lost cause in this case is immaterial labor, with the result for the laborer the same regardless of which side of the battle one's work falls within. Extolling the virtues of the public domain, the apparent agenda of those favoring open-access publishing is to make immaterial labor universally available. Yet the campaign is no less at the expense of the author of the work made universally available through mass digitalization.

The solitary scholar is another lost cause worth revisiting, as is the loose confederation or confraternal order where the solitary and contemplative soul might work toward a different model of universally accessible immaterial capital. Intellectual inquiry as the Name of the Holy (as the mythic rose of medieval romance literature) is the signal gesture of all stirrings toward renaissance. The Ivory Tower or the Lonely Tower are semaphores in a gathering storm for the great lost cause – Bachelard's "right to dream" as the founding right for speculative inquiry itself. For this reason, the Moral Rights of Authors as defined by the Berne Convention open onto anti-capitalist sublimity itself. [\[11\]](#) The battleground vis-à-vis neo-

liberal academia is co-equivalent to the right of the author/artist to determine how his/her works are to be assimilated to the public domain – privatized, securitized, or otherwise.

With such a “station” from which to begin a defense of the arts and humanities, a proverbial crossing of the Alps appears near Giffre River Valley in the Haute-Savoie, the place of John Berger’s exile south of Geneva and Lausanne (and Lac Léman, site of Jean-Luc Godard’s exile), toward Saas-Fee, Switzerland, nominal home of the European Graduate School, site of a very delicate appropriation of intellectual inquiry as a stylish *modus vivendi* and latest model for the alternative academy insofar as those who attend the annual Summer Sessions are privy to some of the most astute critiques of the prevailing model of academicism and the parallel realities subsumed under media and cross-disciplinary studies, inclusive of the specter of “no-media,” even if it is not quite acknowledged as such in the exquisite and surreptitious annals of the EGS’s public relations machine, and even if the latest additions to the curriculum prop up the visual studies side at the expense of intellectually and critically focused long-form works.[\[12\]](#)

The EGS might be exemplary were it not for its celebration of celebrity intellectual culture, its faculty stacked with the most famous academics rentable by the School. Its intellectual output is difficult to measure due to the de-centralized model, with students working independently around the world toward completion of their degrees.[\[13\]](#) Here the socially progressive version of the capitalization of knowledge is achieved by converting apparent speculative inquiry to privileged Cloud-based “enclave,” Saas-Fee serving merely as base of operations while the EGS mimics a “university without borders,” an elaboration of an alternative model that is nonetheless market driven. Since 2015 its market orientation has become increasingly obvious, with an expansion of bespoke programs and the opening of a second campus in Malta. The EGS’ market share is the moneyed international graduate student, able to pay the fees and able to attend the required annual sessions fronted by the celebrity faculty. The exclusivity is the point, regardless of denials, and the possible introduction of an authentic anti-elitist or communitarian ethos is all but impossible.[\[14\]](#) Clearly such is also not the goal, despite the leftist credentials of its illustrious faculty.

It is the neo-liberal destruction of public and private universities that makes the EGS tenable, while it is all but impossible to expect the EGS to offer anything critically sustainable *from within* to counter the worst trends in the reduction of intellectual inquiry to either a support mechanism for quasi-criminal capitalist activity (the capture of intellectual property) or the conversion of immaterial labor to commodity status and the elimination or marginalization of anything incapable of servicing capitalist ideology. Indeed, the EGS rents the bulk of its esteemed faculty from the same prestigious public and private universities that are slowly succumbing to market ideology, the same cadre hedging their bets and banking their last privileges. As a high-end version of the Gramscian petite bourgeoisie, such an elite faculty is caught between two winds blowing in opposite directions: a

rightist wind, which fills their sails in terms of propping up their radical-chic credentials; and an anti-capitalist wind, which will topple their glamorous clipper ships as they tack between Saas-Fee and Valletta, all intellectual goods sinking to the bottom of the sea.

Somewhere between the modernist (not post-modernist, neo-liberal) ivory tower and the lonely tower of the solitary scholar (Yeatsian or Hölderlinian) the answer to this strange chiasmus is to be found – yet only where a true communitarian spirit dwells on behalf of the required rebellion against the coming singularity of capitalist capture of immaterial labor. The discussion of rights of authors is only of use insofar as those responsible for laws governing intellectual property rights are listening. It is more than apparent that they are not – at least as of early 2016.<sup>[15]</sup> The author has been abandoned for the twin forces of capitalist appropriation and the well-meaning but utterly flawed premises for assimilation of works to open-access or public-domain repositories to bypass or subvert corporate piracy.

## 5. Lifeworks

It is how works are editioned, disseminated, and archived that illustrates how the capitalization of works might be managed by authors toward what in exemplary cases may only be called the lifework – a transcendentalist affair. This is especially prominent as a cardinal concern with authors and artists who have a natural inclination to overturn the prevailing conventions of their own times in pursuit of a re-calibration of existing norms for assimilation, plus a progressive versus regressive view of forms of cultural patrimony. If this is often utopian-romantic, that is simply the outcome of the confrontation with conventions and not a sign, as such, of blissful naiveté or ignorance.

Since the advent of the artist's book, from Stéphane Mallarmé forward, both speculative-critical and speculative-literary works, combined with speculative-visual works, have sought to condition reception and assimilation. In most cases this involved collectors and patrons, but also colleagues (the confraternal side). The fact that these editions have since been hyper-financialized in the secondary market (in the same manner that artworks have been hyper-financialized by auction houses) simply illustrates the fact that the author and artist often have little control over the ultimate fate of the lifework.

Yet it is the work of Chris Marker, the French author-artist, that best exemplifies the circuitous and often-virtuous maneuvers an artist or author might take to secure their fundamental moral rights against expropriation by increasingly monolithic market forces, foremost when their artistic identity includes an ideological position that is essentially anti-capitalistic, communitarian, or socialistic. Marker, as author and artist (and it is a mistake to reduce him to filmmaker), left behind what only appears to be a casually constructed archive – and it is the current disposition of his posthumous bequest at the Cinémathèque Française in Paris that underscores incipient and subsequent forms of both subtle and overt forms of capitalization of lifeworks via State fiat in collusion with market ideology.<sup>[16]</sup>

Marker's posthumous bequest went to the Cinémathèque Française after State intervention in 2013. He died at the age of 91 in July 2012. The bequest is said to have been the result of a concession by Marker to Costa-Gavras (president of the Cinémathèque), yet a concession never formalized in writing, with the outcome subsequently contested by Institut Mémoires de l'Édition Contemporaine (IMEC), an archive established in 1988 to receive literary and artistic estates for preservation and long-term, slow-form study by scholars. Suffice to say, by most estimates, Marker's legacy might better be served by IMEC, where he previously donated materials, than by the quasi-governmental and quasi-commercial auspices of the Cinémathèque Française, which is most likely to drip feed the public "discoveries" and slowly canonize Marker in the process under the fashionable singularity known as "trans-media."<sup>[17]</sup> Suffice to say as well, that Marker's concession to the Cinémathèque may have been provisional and/or circumstantial, since it is rumored (*sotto voce*) that at the time of the verbal bequest he was living out his last years through the good graces of Costa-Gavras and other friends, plus any royalties on the few works he had bothered to monetize. If nearly dirt broke, and no one is quite willing to say so out of respect for this highly elusive and principled soul, Marker's laissez-faire approach to capitalizing his works may then be said to have come, honorably, full circle.

Moreover, Marker's pre-1960s' non-filmic, literary-critical work (from the mid-1940s through the late-1950s) remains an extensive and important submerged continent, to be studied carefully, primarily because he refused to discuss anything prior to his seminal film, *La jetée* (1962), and the lyrical relationship between text and image runs like an electrical current through his lifework. This lifework may only be understood, then, as operative across diverse forms of media (a *de facto* "trans-media" bias *avant la lettre*); and that lifework only makes sense when his late, somewhat negative estimation of the future of cinema (c.2000) is taken fully into account. Notably, post-2000, after two decades of new-media projects, he returned to very-still photography, with only two major new-media commissions – *Owls at Noon Prelude: The Hollow Men* (2005), produced for the Museum of Modern Art in New York, New York, USA, and *Ouvroir* (2008), a museum created in hyperspace with Max Moswitzer, for the Museum für Gestaltung, Zürich, Switzerland, in conjunction with the exhibition *Chris Marker: A Farewell to Movies (Abschied vom Kio)*.<sup>[18]</sup> It might be said that Marker's last years were spent erasing and/or re-formatting genres – which means, in this context, simplifying his artistic agenda and disposing of spent practices that had been co-opted by capitalist, mediatic spectacle. That is but one reading, of course, of a complex equation of artistic principles at play, yet it explains the proverbial "fade to black" and primitive gesturalism of the late works that may only be properly read across the arc of the lifework.

In closing this essay on speculative scholarship in the arts and humanities with Marker, it is highly appropriate to recall the apocryphal words of Belgian novelist-artist Henri Michaux: "Il faut raser la Sorbonne et mettre Chris Marker à la place." Marker surpassed and left behind almost every genre he

assisted with developing, from *cinéma vérité* to direct cinema. Eventually he effectively left behind cinema itself. Why he did so is highly applicable to the trends now rolling through academia that are only trends because they serve the neo-liberal model of expropriation that permits them – the digital singularity that threatens to engulf everything. In Marker's case, he abandoned various genres when there was no hope of saving the genre for speculative inquiry. For example, as the juggernaut of nouvelle-vague cinema took off in France, launched by many of his confreres from the 1950s, Marker produced, in 1962, both *Le joli mai* and *La jetée*. *Le joli mai* (made with Pierre Lhomme) more or less closed down his 1950s-style collaborative documentary work, until it re-appeared in altered form in the late-1960s with the direct-cinema work created with the radical SLON/ISKRA collective – that is, highly political films. As surplus affect to *Le joli mai*, *La jetée*, a genre-smashing, pseudo-sci-fi film, situated halfway between fantasia and film-essay, would make his name in art-house cinema, forever, despite the fact that the publicly screened version was a mere 29-minutes long and comprised almost entirely ("99.9%") of black-and-white still images.<sup>[19]</sup>

If Marker's methods for editing and disseminating his works to evade capitalist capture seem passé today, it is because, with few exceptions, the aesthetic complexity of such works is also more or less passé today. That complexity is also a politically inflected complexity, an aesthetic force field. What needs to transpire, then, is for that *dynamis* in his lifework to be thoughtfully studied and transferred across new and multiple regimes of signification, for artworks to become forms of scholarship and vice versa. For it was that *dynamis* that produced the means to ends employed, subjective-speculative means to no singular end.

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Published on May 26, 2016.

## Endnotes

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[1] Max Weber, *Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, ed. Guenther Roth, Claus Wittich, trans. Ephraim Fischoff et al., 3 vols. (New York: Bedminster Press, 1968). First published *Wirtschaft und Gesellschaft*, 2 vols. (Tubingen: J.C.B. Mohr/P. Siebeck, 1922).

[2] See the importance of writing for the Carthusians in

Michael G. Sargent, "The Transmission of the English Carthusians of Some Late Medieval Spiritual Writings," *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 27, No. 3 (July 1976), 225-40. "If the prior has so provided, there is one work to the performance of which you ought especially to attend; that is either that you learn to write (if, of course, you can learn), or if you can and know, that you do write. This work is, as it were, immortal work; work, if one may say so, not passing but lasting; work certainly, may we say, and yet not work; the work, finally, which, among all other works is most fitting to literate religious men ..." Adam of Dryburgh, *Liber de Quadripartito Exercitio Cellae (On the Quadripartite Exercise of the Cell)*; cited in *ibid.*, with reference to *Consuetudines* of Guigo I, written between 1121 and 1128.

[3] For example, see: Benjamin Ginsburg, *The Fall of the Faculty: The Rise of the All-Administrative University and Why it Matters* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); and David West, "The Managerial University: A Failed Experiment?" *Demos Project* (April 14, 2016), <http://www.demosproject.net/the-managerial-university-a-failed-experiment/>. Accessed April 28, 2016.

[4] "Neoliberal policies aim to reduce wages to the bare minimum and to maximize the returns to capital and management. They also aim to demobilise workers' organisations and reduce workers to carriers of labour power .... Neoliberalism is about re-shaping society so that there is no input by workers' organisations into democratic or economic decision-making." Benjamin Selwyn, "Neoliberalism is Alive and Well," *Le monde diplomatique* (December 2014), <http://mondediplo.com/blogs/neoliberalism-is-alive-and-well>. Accessed April 28, 2016.

[5] See: Richard Brody, "An Exile in Paradise," *New Yorker* (November 20, 2000), <http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2000/11/20/exile-paradise>, accessed April 28, 2016; and Philip Maughan, "I Think the Dead Are with Us: John Berger at 88," *New Statesman* (June 11, 2015), <http://www.newstatesman.com/culture/2015/06/i-think-dead-are-us-john-berger-88>, accessed April 28, 2016.

[6] In this regard, Thomas Kuhn's "spiritual" or "intellectual" dependence on the work of Gaston Bachelard is instructive, as is Michel Foucault's. Indeed, Giorgio Agamben's work is indirectly fed from the same "mountain streams." Alain Badiou characterizes the main lines of transmission in French philosophy as: "existential vitalism" (from Bergson to Sartre to Deleuze); and "conceptual formalism" (from Brunschvicg to Althusser to Lacan). Alain Badiou, "The Adventure of French Philosophy," *New Left Review* 35 (September-October 2005), 67-77.

[7] Massimo Cacciari, *Posthumous People: Vienna at the Turning Point* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1996). First published *Dallo Steinhof: Prospettive viennesi del primo Novecento* (Milano: Adelphi, 1980). Massimo Cacciari, *Architecture and Nihilism: On the Philosophy of Modern Architecture*, trans. Stephen Sartarelli (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993).



[8] A common subject of Van Gogh's still-life painting from the Paris period.

[9] Aquinas: "The speculative intellect by extension becomes practical (*De Anima* iii, 10). But one power is not changed into another. Therefore the speculative and practical intellects are not distinct powers." Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. Fathers of the English Dominican Province, 22 vols. (London: Burns, Oates & Washburne Ltd., 1920-1924), "The Intellectual Powers," Q. 79, Art. 11.

[10] It is almost impossible to define the digital humanities. At the rudest or elementary level, the super-discipline privileges the manipulation of data sets (computational strategies) to arrive at spurious, pseudo-scientific conclusions at the intersection of the social sciences and the humanities.

[11] See "Berne Convention for the Protection of Literary and Artistic Works," *World Intellectual Property Organization*, <http://www.wipo.int/treaties/en/ip/berne/>. Accessed April 28, 2016.

[12] See European Graduate School, <http://www.egs.edu/>. The EGS was founded in 1994. The Media and Communications division has recently been re-branded as Philosophy, Art and Critical Thought (PACT). The fact that few scholars are ever in residence is covered by the alt-academic neologism, "low-residency."

[13] For an insider's view and a defense of the EGS, see Dan Hughes, "The School for Social Hackers," *Medium* (November 15, 2015), <https://medium.com/the-workshop/the-school-for-social-hackers-b3797caf3a7b#.9hw89sqeb>. Accessed April 28, 2016. This *apologia* for the EGS includes crediting it with sponsoring both Occupy Wall Street and Podemas, albeit by way of former students.

[14] "I have learned that the EGS has been perceived by some as an 'elite' institution because it has never actively publicized its programs, relying on the renown of its faculty (communicated via YouTube in filmed lectures) and word of mouth. And the faculty do constitute a kind of 'elite,' though only in the sense that their quality is globally recognized as exceptional (only distinguished professors and highly regarded practitioners from the arts are invited to teach courses). But the fact is that the EGS is an institution that is open to any qualified student capable of independent work and motivated by the possibility of being exposed to the highest level of cross-disciplinary teaching in the world." Christopher Fynsk, Dean of the PACT Division, "A New Future for the European Graduate School," *European Graduate School* (October 28, 2015), <http://egs.edu/news/a-new-future-for-the-european-graduate-school>. Accessed April 28, 2016.

[15] Miraculously, as of late 2016, the Moral Rights of Authors have appeared on the radar of both the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), a Geneva-based United Nations agency, and the United States Copyright Office, but only after making an appearance at the UN Human Rights Council in 2015, where the industry was duly frightened by possible linkage of author rights to human rights. See Catherine Saez, "UN Human Rights Council Debates Report Criticising



Copyright," *Intellectual Property Watch* (March 11, 2015), <http://www.ip-watch.org/2015/03/11/human-rights-council-debates-report-criticising-copyright/>. Accessed April 28, 2016.

[16] The posthumous bequest includes the entire contents of Marker's studio, including two hard drives from computer workstations that no doubt contain unfinished projects, plus suppressed and/or apocryphal works prior to *La jetée*. Marker was constantly cannibalizing and re-digitalizing his back catalogue.

[17] This manufacturing of events in the name of trans-media spectacle was already well underway via the otherwise admirable posthumous Marker retrospective held at Whitechapel Gallery, London, UK, in 2014, with the re-launching of the re-digitalized installation "Zapping Zone" (1990-), courtesy of the Pompidou Center, Paris, and the inclusion of a translation of an early, pre-1962 Marker text in the exhibition catalogue. Regarding theories of "trans-media," see: Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York: New York University Press, 2006); and Alessandro Ludovico, *Post-digital Print: The Mutation of Publishing since 1894* (Eindhoven: Onomatopée, 2012).

[18] It was also post-2000 that Marker established a relationship with the distinguished New York gallerist Peter Blum to manage and monetize his late photographic output through editioned prints and books.

[19] Multiple versions exist.