

Deconstructing/Performing *The Commute*: Proto-Poststructuralist Theory and Individual Motility

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The Commute is an everyday performative inquiry of spatial subjectivity, featuring the places, bodies, and objects of an everyday urban environment performed and presented by the author.

This performance of individual motility reflects a conscious drifting from and toward social and spatial structures that territorialize everyday life, notably the necessity to earn a living, the desire to identify with the process, and the practice of moving between. This essay and corresponding video is a trajectory, a commute toward leisure and from work in an effort to perform a deconstruction of identity based on ~~leisure~~ and ~~labor~~. Recognizing the hierarchies prevalent within this distinction, I interrogate the ways in which my own spatial subjectivity has been appropriated as a precarious working academic and practitioner of the everyday. By exploring the practices and routes that inform this identity I hope to move from static conceptions of class identity and toward a fluid subjectivity of individual resistance through a visceral example of working-leisure.

The Commute is a quotidian journey through the San Francisco Bay Area on my way to work. By striving to understand the liminal spaces within identity formations, somewhere between the competing perspectives of work and leisure, home and office, I explore the dialogic production of my own spatial practices. Considering the tensions within these everyday relations, actualized by specific

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movements through a generally conceived space, I theorize drifting, as movement outside of the boundaries of conditioned urban routes. Noting drifting as a metaphorical and literal transgression of totalizing constructs, both theoretical and spatial, I also use the work of Max Stirner to mark a proto-poststructuralist inception and shed further insight into this premise. In an attempt to turn from my own daily commute as a rational, efficient, and diurnal routine I uncover certain spatial influences that in turn partially configure subjectivity. In doing so, I also move toward a re/conception of quotidian journeying that involves a situational identity formed through contextual gesturing. In this essay I A) discuss a performance gesture *The Commute* noted as a performance intervention (the italicized text in this essay mirrors video text) while B) situating my identity as a fragmented poststructuralist place of resistance through the work of Stirner and other poststructuralist thinkers and C) present a way of viewing leisure, noted as working-leisure, as political labor and the foundation of a precarious working figure.

Every day, practitioners perform the commonplace tasks of getting to work, of returning home, of getting from here to there. Along the way places are established as important points during the journey, arranged according to a spatial schemata of efficiency, leisure, safety, and desire. Along the way people change, become, practice, cool-down, and prepare. Moving through various spatial and social climates, these practitioners develop a conception of the eventual destination while partly determining who will arrive there.

Gesture

On my way to work one morning I begin walking down 19th Avenue in the Sunset District with a stand-up-paddle surfboard balanced on my head, paddle cradled in hand. Passing a bus stop at Taraval Avenue pedestrians glance as I walk by. Arriving at the edge of the Bay's waters at the Presidio, I enter the San Francisco Bay at Fort Point and paddle across, alongside the Golden Gate Bridge, to the Marin Headlands. Immediately standing up on the surfboard I proceed to paddle to the other side. I am rigorously and consciously drifting, paddling continuously to avoid being swept further in towards Alcatraz and the East Bay by the currents of the Pacific Ocean wrapping around Fort Point. Allowing me to be in view of the camera on the bridge and potential support if needed and reach the designated video camera location on the other side. From this, I have partly determined a visual theme by purposefully positioning my body with/in space from a certain visual standpoint and predetermined an ideal destination. In many ways this journey is every much as planned and efficient as the routine I hoped to disrupt bringing the act marked as leisure closer to that of labor. I only deviate from this transgressive, yet rapid and direct path once by briefly circling back to avoid a coast guard vessel that passes-by ahead of me, seemingly una-

ware of my existence. Reaching the Marin Headlands, I reconvene with others, also working in leisure, and arrive later that day at work.

The central gesture behind *The Commute* is this individual crossing of the Bay at the North American Strait, better known as the Golden Gate, via stand-up-paddle surfboard. The crossing takes approximately one and a half hours and travels the distance of approximately two miles, not including literal drifting. Despite geographical complications such as water depth and temperature, strong tidal currents, small forming whirlpools, and eddies, as well as certain social conditions such as the presence of shipping tankers, other vessels, and a liminal legality of the journey itself, the risks are effectively reduced through planning, rehearsal, and most importantly, accurate competence assessment. To the point of rivaling and exceeding the most mundane of daily commutes, this crossing is just as rational and logical as the typical modern day commute of travelling regularly over predetermined distances, only healthier. The typical commute is on ultra-rational conception that denies consideration often producing frustration (Evans, Wener and Philips 521; Highmore 310; Van Rooy 627). I counter this ennui with a reimagining intended to instill a political sense of transgressive jouissance, making precarious working-leisure function as individual affirmation and political resistance (Maier 226; Gregg 209; Rodino-Calocino 541). *The Commute* is more than the purposive movement of the typical commute. It is traversing between risk and health, between labor and leisure, between the dailiness of the commute and the singularity of the journey.

Video Essay

A camera positioned on the elevated span of the Golden Gate Bridge captures a panoramic view of the city of San Francisco; a slowly panning shot of the organized environment, a totality of the city and outlying areas is visible, through the links of a chain fence The San Francisco Bay, The East Bay, and The North Bay. *The Commute* begins from this view, from the perspective of an orthodox crossing of the Bay, walking along its span is typical yet spectacular. This is a vastly popular destination, a view many see daily, viewing the city and surrounding liminal spaces as they have been conceived, from afar. This is a part of the sanctioned urban experience, a visual theme promoted by and promoting of, the city, which Michele de Certeau reminds us, is "but a name" (34). The island of Alcatraz previously inhabited by the Miwok and Ohlone, one time island prison, site of Native American political protest, and current tourist attraction, is a site slightly outside of the city's vision, a borderland between places. The ports of Oakland and the hills of Berkeley connected by bridges are visible across the choppy sea of the Bay's waters, just north Marin County and various bayside communities. Each locale is a mystery of practice, a generalized script, a slightly

detached visualization from beyond the liminal spaces of the out-of-bounds and the “down-below” (34).



Fig. 1: *The Commute*, Video Still.

A syncopated electronic beat becomes gradually audible. While the camera pans so do the viewer’s eyes, traveling across the city, visually getting from here to there; land and city seem to drop off into the ocean turning the urban into bridge, and bridge into suburban. Looking out, from this perspective suspended over 1,000 ft. above the sea the heartbeat, due to physical and visual stimulus hastens. The audio score mimics this response as the rhythm increases in volume. *The Commute* lingers in the bottom right hand corner, bringing discursive meaning to a scene and auditory score that are accompanied by a host of authorial elements of postproduction framing documentation as an electronic form of performance writing. This mode of articulation and inquiry draws from the work of Gregory L. Ulmer who searches for a new genre of writing within academe that more effectively utilizes electronic media at all levels of discourse. In *Hueretics* Ulmer outlines a theoretical approach to inquiry that emphasizes the process of invention offered by video and other electronic means, which arises “out of a matrix crossing French poststructuralist theory, avant-garde art experiments, and electronic media in the context of schooling” (xi).

Poststructuralist Resistance

Poststructuralist political philosophy, like performance, remains fluid, perpetually moving toward new renderings. Within radical political philosophy, a position of power, and a unified mode of possible resistance, is difficult to locate (New-

man, *Power* 8-10, *Bakunin* 4-8; Call 13; May, *Political* 53, *Moral* 6-7). Saul Newman, Todd May, and Lewis Call attempt to locate this unifying “place of resistance” within an elusive poststructuralist political tradition (*Bakunin* 14). Performance space in dialog with a fragmented bodily performer serves in locating a unified mode of resistance within a political poststructuralist tradition that function within “the paradigm of radical and anti-authoritarian politics” (Newman, *Power* 1) as “a series of strategies of resistance to the authority of place” (*Bakunin* 14). Newman questions the “place of power” that resistance discourses such as anarchism and communism, for example, only reify through a humanist understanding of the rational and enlightened subject, thus returning power to a central location.

The structuralism of Roland Barthes, Claude Levi-Strauss, Ferdinand de Saussure, and Louis Althusser among others treats the condition or essence of the subject as structured by a system of signs. Poststructuralist thought maintains structuralism’s dismissal of the humanist subject and furthers the argument by recognizing the constructed nature of the structure itself through historical and social forces manifested here in everyday practices. A poststructuralist argument notes, “the subject is constituted, not by a central structure, but by dispersed and unstable relations of forces—power, discursive regimes, and practices” (Newman, *Bakunin* 14). Steering clear of an essential notion of subjectivity, the poststructuralist tradition resists reaffirming another seat of power. By avoiding the tendency to exchange one “place of power” for another, poststructuralist philosophy moves toward an approach based on multiplicity and fluidity by dismissing essential ontological predispositions.

Call notes that a “micropolitics implied by the philosophy of becoming suggests that our primary duty is to reprogram or redesign ourselves, creating ourselves anew” as fluid subjectivities (52). Performance scholarship can act as an articulating principle in this movement, effectively turning theory into practice (Giroux and Shannon 8; Pelias and VanOosting 221-22), which along with a focalized notion of poststructuralist political philosophy, provides a vision of micropolitical interventions that helps in negotiating this tension (May, *Political* 3). My approach is informed by the dual epistemological underpinnings of poststructuralist theory and performance practice, which enable me to occupy multiple temporalities that merge, slip, and overlap forming a non-linear approach to time and a fragmented understanding of identity. Performance interventions into everyday spatial moments constantly adjust between theory, subject, and space, reacting to their own situationality. Together these approaches inform a practice of inquiry that effectively performs theory. By becoming-text the body intervenes into its own subjectivity and knowledge is restored through a dialogic awareness, often veiled through perceptions of mythically durable spaces and static interpretations of place, embedded within the practices we perform every day.

Few thinkers exemplify an anti-essentialist sensibility more than Johann Casper Schmidt—better known as Max Stirner. Known mostly for his associations rather than his own work, Stirner was a student of Georg Hegel, a colleague of Friedrich Engels and Karl Marx, and a contemporary of Friedrich Nietzsche and Sigmund Freud. Many scholars have noted Stirner, if he has been noted at all, as an originator of anarchism (Carroll 16; Demattis 2) and a precursor to existentialism (Paterson 102; Carroll 73). Stirner is positioned here as an expounder of anti-essentialist thinking and a precursor to poststructuralist theory. Stirner's reluctance to assert rigid perspectives due to creating new essences, mark his early criticism of modernism and are evidence for this interpretation.

Stirner negates almost every major political philosophy of the time due to their respective essentialist determinations. His one work of note, *The Ego and His Own*, viewed as a treaty of individuality amidst a life of political and professional struggle, marks the proto-inception of the poststructuralist tradition as a humble political notion presented to a hostile audience. Widely attacked in print and referred to as the derogatory Saint Max by Marx and Engels (Marx and Engels 156) and often slandered for holding only one regular teaching position (Demattis 57), Stirner fought against essentializing forces of power outside and within his own work.

Stirner's continual emphasis on becoming rather than being is an effort to avoid reaffirming a static and essential place of power. He suggests a subjective identity that becomes through its own resistance of living as anything else, proclaiming, "I am creator and creature in one" (150). The notion that identity becomes repressed through essential constructions of humanity and viewing the individual ego as separate from human subjectivity marks a proto-inception of a poststructuralist lineage. This tradition denies normative structures of an ideal or innate human nature. Stirner declares that most philosophical conventions position the theoretical ideal above the corporeal self, proclaiming loudly, "Nothing is more to me than myself!" (Stirner 41). For Stirner, this theory of self and humanity revolve around the strategically centered notions of an exterior subjectivity. Yet, there is a way to avoid this fixed place of power, which lies in the turning of the place of resistance and power inward exemplified through his concepts of the "un-human" and "ownness."

One cannot own subjectivity until a radical form of individuality is actively sought out through negation, which Stirner calls ownness or self-ownership. This implies not a fixed identity or essence, but rather a being of constant becoming—an individual ego of "creative nothingness" that must be constantly created and redefined (Stirner 135). The conscious drifting from metanarratives of identity formation to recreate oneself separates the forces that constitute the individual away from any ideal notion of subjectivity. Stirner's notion of the un-human, similarly, highlights the aspects of identity that are left out of the dialectical humanistic process. He argues that, "by the side of [hu]man stands the un-

[hu]man, the individual, the egoist” (Stirner 125). The idea/image of standing beside oneself envisions a fragmented subjectivity that lends itself to a performative epistemology. The un-human is both human as well as one that does not live up to the full potential of the complete human figure. This notion leaves out certain qualities that also create the totalizing concept, for one can be more than human, but never less.

Drifting Subjectivity

The Commute represents an outside approach from within, a different and unique interpretation of movement that denies a fixed ontology in favor for a drifting subjectivity. The body here is implicated in a performance of uncertainty like the identity of the precarious laborer. Meaningful movement to and from sites of work is both leisure and labor (Gregg 212; Gill and Pratt 19-20). Navigating 3,296 miles from one working site in a Toyota *Tacoma SR5* to another where I previously travelled 1,260 miles on a Honda *CBR929RR*, the movement between classrooms, regions, and sites is a spatial practice that informs the arriving lecture/r. Intellectual, artistic, and cultural work is a practice of identification. Writing about this identity as a working academic I am both laboring and unemployed, drifting in commute.

This character based on the production of academic labor is an inadequate external subjectivity, a partial performance that when deconstructed exposes contradictions within the structure of an intermittent working schedule. As part of a class that works and lives each day based on the economic production earned from the pervious, I must work, necessity, the indispensable romantic quality of a functional figure. A class defined by prophecy and reified by inevitable daily practices that smooth topological singularities, providing essence. This identity is a real façade, a fragmented landscape, a copy of an objective notion of production that is held together by distinctively non-working practices. It is a copy of a performance without an original (Baudrillard 15). These practices are marked as leisure, according to Annete M. Holba, and entail “attention to wonder, a-where-ness, and listening” (“Defense” 178), which engages the contemplative spirit and cultivates one’s ability to enter the public sphere and produce meaningful work (“Political,” 20). Josef Pieper in *Leisure: The Basis of Culture* explains how leisure stemming back to the Ancient Greek works of Plato, Aristotle, and The Sophists “is a receptive attitude of mind, a contemplative attitude, and it is not only the occasion but also the capacity for steeping oneself in the whole of creation” (43). Holba defends Pieper’s notion of leisure as a form of listening to absent meanings of identity and situationality adding leisure “is an embodied philosophical act that places our focus of attention on the intellectual play and bodily experience” (184).

Getting to and from work functions as a literal metaphor for subjective drifting, a non-working practice that questions the logic of the identified binary. If I am not working I am leisure, but the opposite does not typically apply. Frederick Engels in the 1940s deploys and examines an English working-class demand, on behalf of the *The British Labor Movement*, a “fair day’s wage for a fair day’s work” (9). Considering a fair day’s wage in relation to a fair’s day work, Engels notes that a “fair day’s wage, under normal conditions,” is the quantitative amount required to sustain the “means of existence necessary” (9). On what constitutes a fair day of work; however, becomes less certain. Practices of time, flow, repetition, clocking-in, and clocking-out distort an essential notion of a working subjectivity as working a day here and a day there is less intense than the territorialization that occurs from working day-in and day-out. A day of work turns into days of work, a steady stream of production in which a chimerical relationship develops between working-class necessity and manufacturing dependency; however, what often occurs is that each day, each semester becomes torn from the spine of class narratives and a fair day’s wage remains, a day, a partial performance.

The result is various performances of precarity that share modes of resistance through empowering ephemeral optics. Andrew Ross notes “the precariat” includes traditionally conceived vulnerable practitioners such as homeless and unemployed but also “persons in developing countries, immigrants, women, low-skilled laborers” and “adjunct faculty” as freelance members of the “creative class” (Maier 226). Craig Maier goes on to ask how might these partial subjectivities “recover their rhetorical agency?” and finds some assistance from Simone Weil. Weil aims to root uprooted persons by constructing a model by which individual rhetorical practices are recognized for their elements “of life-affirming constitutive power” that entail and embody “creativity and cooperation” (Maier 226). My own movement between constructions of identity follows in the footsteps of Weil by rooting an uprooted spatial subjectivity based on individual motility.

Christopher Bodnar examines French cultural workers’ ability to form a social movement based on precarity as a form of resistance. This subjectivity is framed by its ability to drift between structures, much like the embodied resistance of Gloria Anzaldúa’s poststructuralist notion of borderlands (105-7) and Donna Haraway’s posthuman hybrid identity embodied by the contemporary cyborg (149). According to Bodner intermittent workers tending to and producing creative and cultural elements of society constitute immaterial labor and often situate their labor in modes of production that often differ with government, employer, and union conceptions. They are also producing of a precarious subjectivity, which is partially constructed due to these conflicting versions of labor “among workers their unions, and employers” (676). Bodnar concludes that as workers begin to define their own labor as precarious they are able to form col-

lective understandings within a societal context that recognizes and communicates their role “in producing taste and class across society” (677). Thus everyday life becomes precarious along with a working identity spread across working subjectivities of various types. Thorstein Veblen in *In The Theory of the Leisure Class* critiques consumption within everyday life and notes that as our time is appropriated by a world of work, our leisure is labeled “waste” and discarded (78) along with vital threads of our identity. Holba extends this view to add that in times of scarcity and economic uncertainty it is even more important to engage in what is most important to the human condition, “philosophic leisure” and thus political engagement in the public sphere (“Defense” 181). Working-leisure becomes an inherent part of this system, in which consumption and production are on-going concurrently working to fill the spaces left out of partial subjectivities.

Marx notes in *Capital*, workers toil to produce surplus value, which becomes idealized into an abstract commodity. This value works two-fold to exploit and bind workers. In both cases workers are conflated and reduced to an interchangeable nameless unit of production. Yet, contemporary representations of cultural worker conditions are more often described as “the antithesis of alienation: as social and collaborative work that grants workers relative autonomy in the labor process and facilitates self-expression” (Cohen 141-42), moving work toward leisure. Precarious work produces a liminal leisure. The feelings of alienation and empowered leisurely production take material form as bodies perform practices such as surfing to work. As Nicole S. Cohen notes, this type of autonomy enables some cultural workers to enjoy freedoms other workers can not, reducing feelings of alienation; however, in order to understand this subjectivity we should broaden the focus from individual experiences to consider cultural labor as part of a class of workers struggling over the “enduring features of cultural work, such as risk and uncertainty” (144).

As the university semester ends, my workday begins. I traverse toward working-leisure, commuting, in this particular context to a convenience store in the San Francisco Bay Area. Ben Highmore states, that while the “commute to work is perhaps one of the most distinctive of modern routines” practitioners frequently attach a “lack of attention to the actuality of these journeys” and experience an associated “frustration and impotence” (310). Debord insists that “commuting time” can be considered a surplus value since it is often handed over to employers without compensation (“Traffic” 57). The everyday commute has often been noted as an extension of the working day, functionally appropriating a worker’s free time (Debord, “Traffic” 57; Evans, Wener and Phillips 523). More recent behavioral research has continued to support this view and conclude that “commuting is often an arduous experience” (Van Rooy 627; Evans, Wener and Phillips 521); however, along with this evident conclusion researchers such as Gary Evans, Richard Wener, and Donald Phillips conclude that de-

spite this obvious fact, “it is not at all clear why this is so” (521). Commuting, like a day of work, is neither a continually linear exercise nor a singular quantitative experience. Graffiti inspired by *The Situationist International* during the events of 1968 explains, “underneath the cobblestones, the beach” (Plant 104). By using the literal metaphor of commuting I am able to merge working with beaching, blurring the distinctions between the two and shifting the orientation of time-off toward time-to-work while skewing notions of production. Commuting functions here as a liminal psycho-physical task that expands the notion of a commute, reimagines the journey as a form of precarious resistance, and questions the subordination of leisure to labor.

(*The Commute* is an exploration of a)
LIMINAL
 (identity in relation to conceived)
SPACE



Fig. 2: *The Commute*, Video Still.

A commute is typically understood as a repeatedly travelled, safe and efficient route to and from work in the least amount of time possible. Indeed, most journeys through conceived space are viewed in a similar manner. A commute can divide people from themselves and bring workers together through shared spatial interaction yet it is difficult to critique the practice from either standpoint. Jean-Francois Lyotard states that “critique is a selective activity” (12) and goes on to make a case for a new non-position of critique wherein “the critic remains in the sphere of the criticized” (13). He challenges his reader, “where do

you criticize from? Don't you see criticizing is still knowing, knowing better? The critical relation still falls within the sphere of knowledge, of 'realization' and thus of the assumption of power?" He finally suggests that, "critique must be drifted out of" (13). By circumventing the nearby Golden Gate Bridge I ignore orthodox ways of moving through space and engage in situating my own relationship to the environment, drifting between differing places and competing identities.



Fig. 3: *The Commute*, Video Still.

This vision of continuous production, of elevating play to work, of deconstructing the dichotomous structures of work and leisure is consuming like the individual ideology of a collective. As an academic laborer I am an axiomatic consumer of a privileged proletariat identity. As Bob Black comments, one simply does not work, they have "jobs [...] One person does one productive task all the time on an or-else basis" (3). An essential characteristic of a functional role as play is the binary opposite, "always voluntary. What might otherwise be play is work if it's forced" (4). Johan Huizinga in *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play Element in Culture* states that play is voluntary and precedes work and culture remaining essential to the human condition (5-7) and ordered play is more akin to labor (16). From this perspective play becomes the foundation on which meaningful work is grounded, as subjectivity is a tangible wager. Ultimately, I clock-in out of creative and intellectual necessity, in leisure and labor, entering the Pacific Ocean from Fort Point in San Francisco.

(This movement is an exploration of)
LIMINAL
(situations that define)
SPACE
(in relation to a)
LIMINAL
(subjectivity that is partially constructed by)
SPACE

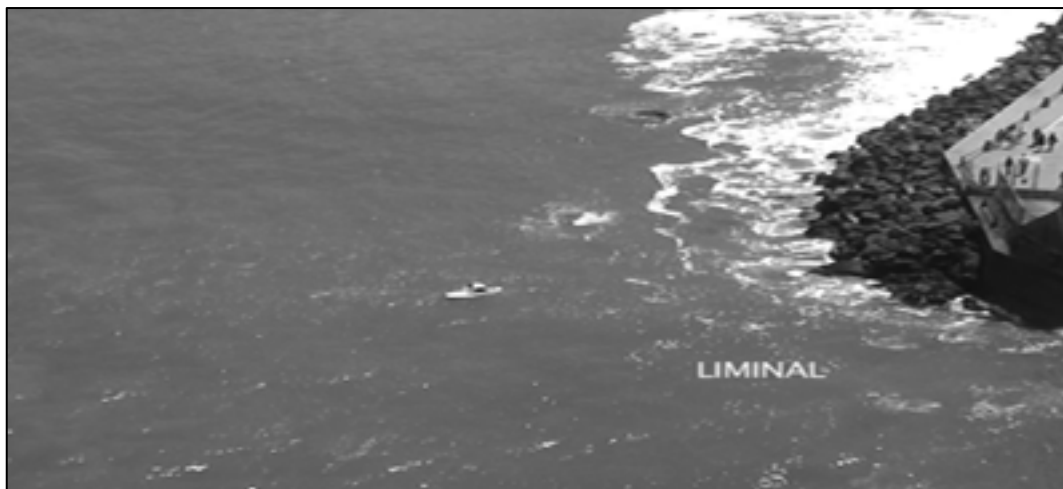


Fig. 4: *The Commute*, Video Still.

(Space is partially constructed by an)
INDIVIDUAL
(a spatially conceived)
INDIVIDUAL
(a corporeal and conceptual)
INDIVIDUAL

The drifting practitioner resists a destination concept, a singular historical trajectory, in favor of a temporary geography, a spatially informed psychogeography, an ever-changing individual and cultural goal, linking places and moments through his/her own movement.

MOVEMENT
(is informed by each)
MOMENT
(creating)

MOVEMENT

(that produces another)

MOMENT

(creating)

MOVEMENT

(that produces a rhythm with each successive)

MOMENT

Similar to an actor on stage becoming more of a character with every gesture, further embodying an idea with every reaction, and continually moving a scene toward a cohesive narrative with every line, I slowly maintain my balance on the board and realize, in front of the audience of the everyday, that while I have rehearsed this character before and fully understand what actions will further my progress along this journey, I am not these movements, they are not natural. Rather, this character is a composite figure, part action part history, part context that exists in a state of becoming through every breath, paddle, and gesture that continually moves from/toward a subjective perspective. I am free to drift, wander, and observe my partially preconfigured situationality. I am action with unknown individual and social goals. In this way, this is a merging of recreation in mimicry of work, leisure in philosophical contemplation and action, and labor in social production. Blurring these distinctions of action, identity, and orientation, according to Holba, encourages others to be more “mindful in all of their daily activities, even those mundane things such as eating and driving to work” (190). I am on my way to work, but this is more than leisure this is ownership of labor through the combinatory practice of leisure and production in a shifting space between calculation and use. The human subject according to Stirner finds leisure by giving leisure a human significance,

you laborers undertake even your labor from an egoist impulse, because you want to eat, drink, live; how should you be less egoist in leisure? You labor only because having your time to yourselves (idling) goes well after work done, and what you are to while away your leisure time with is left to chance.
(125)

By consciously taking control of my leisure time through a rigorous and laborious re/conceptualization and re/performance of a commute I strive to mitigate the appropriating forces of the work-world that structure my own quotidian journeys between destinations of place. Like philosophical leisure this commute is hard work. This commute takes time to organize and perform; yet like a play, the acting of it on stage becomes a moment marked with uncertainty, as a dialogic tension between character and conditions. Holba continues that a reflective working-leisure “is a phenomenological experience governed by our perceptions” that situates practices marked as leisure into our “perceptual field of action” (“Defense” 187). Leisure cultivates a critical awareness and gives work

purpose and labor situated through contemplative leisure adds meaning to the inconspicuous gaps of a precarious working figure.



Fig. 5: *The Commute*, Video Still.

This practice consciously drifts toward/from a political act. This drifting character, this planned and spontaneous personae, I am becoming at this point is already a part of myself, as “I do not need to begin by producing the human being in myself, for he [or she] belongs to me already, like all my qualities” (Stirner 127). Consciously drifting in the middle of the Bay wearing jeans and a t-shirt, I certainly appear out-of-place or in another place. For a moment I question my ability to complete the projected journey and become or reveal this personae, but this is a process of continual tension between self and character.

The desire to more fully experience moments in life, to temporarily step away from it all is a common rational behind semi-extreme sports and a typical justification for general risk-taking. Meanwhile, the thrill of quasi-outlawed behavior and the adrenalin rush behind marginally social endeavors are commonly cited as motivating factors behind similar out-of-bounds practices such as base-jumping, graffiti, and parkour. Yet, this situational event is a sober-minded individual critique of the effects of an ultra-rational interpretation of the commute and movement in general within the urban and suburban environment. Getting from here to there along a prescribed route in the least amount of time, every time, is itself, jeopardous. This particular course is banal, a movement away from the ridiculousness of the everyday monotony of completing a voyage in the same amount of time, during the same time of day, along a familiarized route. The conventional and the out-of-the-ordinary merge here to reveal ruptures in

time, identity, and production. This commute is a search for a different physical and conceptual definition of a partly determined spatial orientation.



Fig. 6: *The Commute*, Video Still.

As a roaming nodal point, this figure moves past sites of suspended audiences, a visualization of an individual performance that, like the city, occurs elsewhere.

If there is a working subjectivity in relation to a working collective, it is a subject that encounters its own subjectivity within a heterogeneous context of both leisurely forces of desire as well as the larger appropriating constructions of individual economic production and labor. The refusal of one's own subjectivity presents a transitory notion of a figure that drifts toward and from work. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari suggest that through the spatial conception of the rhizome an exterior place of power, identity, and resistance might not exist. Every trajectory exists between external formations of identity effectively deterritorializing and reterritorializing forces of power. I maneuver between these stations within a rhizome that "connects any point to any other point" as rhizomatic thought "brings into play very different regimes of signs" (21). A working identity based on practices can be applied to a collective, even if that group is primarily deployed ideationally. Are we merely bodies that desire our own repression as working subjects, part of a larger identity capable only of temporary lines of flight within pre-coded semiotic structures? Jacques Derrida recognizes internal contradictions within these subjectivity-producing systems and offers insight into this question.

The path of the drifting practitioner creates a smooth circuitry between two sedentary settlements, two proper poles that re/appropriate space and extend along gravitational verticals and generalized parallels, attempting to hold onto smooth space through its striation.

Derrida shows that perhaps the notion of a collective subjectivity, when viewed, as a symbolic text can never be fully explored, as it partially exists elsewhere. By deconstructing a textual binary as a self-system to reveal contradictions within, Derrida proposes a tactic of resistance that also denies the possibility of an exterior place of power as deconstruction occurs when structural logic reveals what it excludes (Auslander 92). The identity of a precarious laborer emerges as an anxious subject located in both leisure and in labor, but never fully occupying either. Is a commute an extension of work or conducted in service of leisure? At first glance it is labor that dominates the subordinate leisure; however, this logic breaks-down as leisure becomes the foundation upon which labor is established. Furthermore, the foundational leisurely identity is obscured, reduced, and commodified by the artificial binary established through the structure in which it is deployed. Understanding identity as composed by a system of signs enables subjectivity to be resisted while avoiding the dilemma of replacing it with a new place of power already striated by its own rationality. Derrida maintains that there is no closed meaning of a text as the notions of labor and leisure can be dismantled as arbitrary polarities that always imply the other in absence (Grammatology 8). The subjectivity of a precarious working identity is based on this restless movement and the subordination of leisure by labor.

*The ambulatory figure is this space, owning gestures that are a product and a producer of space. Ownness is the awareness of this mode of becoming in a physical environment that creates a unique conception of freedom and property. By confronting the limitations of my own movement within a spatial situation as an element within my own psyche, I use *The Commute* as an example of how rigorous and daring this assertion can be.*

Ownness, like deterritorialization according to Stirner, springs forth from the owner and views possession as more than a material conception. It is not possible to own a position of critique outside of the object being critiqued: the object, feeling, or identity can only be owned if one's subjectivity is owned. Therefore, *ownness* is ownership of your corporeal apperception. From this viewpoint the freedom to critique from any fixed or detached position is viewed as a problematic exterior position. This position also problematizes the perceived freedom to observe, to critique without an implication of an inward examination as well. *The Commute* is a questioning of a normative spatial procedure and ownership of a practiced role.

The sedentary declares sovereignty through its inertness, its placeness, while the gestures of a drifting practitioner challenges this inertness to declare his/her own temporary sovereignty, momentarily existing between here and there, before returning to the sedentary commute.

Similarly a working subjectivity relies on binaries that frame leisure as subordinate to a durable notion of subjective labor. Engels contends that the length

of a working day and the intensity of the actual work should expend one's full power without intruding on the capacity to produce the "same amount of work for the next and following days" (10), linking a day of work with days of employment. This argument is echoed in America during the *Eight Hour Day Movement* in the 1860s as the priority of the *International Labor Union of America*. Arthur J. Miller notes that the "movement demanded the right of leisure time for working people and argued that an eight hour day would reduce unemployment" (5). The battle for a collective identity coalesced around the right to resist the total territorialization of a partial identity. The effort to deterritorialize this structure through individual and collective practices results in various degrees of success, failure, and appropriation. *The Haymarket Affair* on May 1, 1886 in Chicago is a major collective example and Paul Lafargue's *The Right to be Lazy* is an individual effort while workers everyday locate micro instances by which they can simultaneously clock-in and check-out: slowing-down, diligently following the rules, ignoring/performing boss, internal theft, whistle blowing, and monkey-wrenching. Working is identity, generating leisure.

The problem with commutes and other such quotidian journeying is that they become binary linear conceptions appropriated by the more dominant destination concepts of here and there.



Fig. 7: *The Commute*, Video Still.

Due to conditions, equipment, competency, and structure we "make due" to produce, a tactic within a strategic order, as de Certeau notes (17). The conditions that we recreate daily are as much a practice of labor as that of the work we do. As Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri point out, it is not that the proletariat is disappearing, but rather reappearing as the universal figure of labor, as

capital “globalizes its relations of production, all forms of labor tend to be proletarianized.” In each society the proletariat is becoming the figure of social and cultural production (256). Concurrently leisure is often marked as lost labor or “waste” holding little epistemological and political value in determining a working subjectivity (Veblen 78). I envision, through this embodied performance, a working-leisure marked as labor that function to establish a drifting place of political resistance and situate a spatial dialog. A working subjectivity territorializes a leisurely identity as work appropriates leisure. Through *The Commute* I momentarily dismantle this structural binary as leisure time rarely appropriates work time. I allow leisure to become the deterritorializing force making leisure work. Ultimately I appropriate work time as well as leisure time as my *own* by following a drifting path in an effort to deconstruct the binaries of ~~labor~~ and ~~leisure~~. In doing so, I intervene not only into our shared environment, but also our collective identity, which is primarily deployed spatially (Lefebvre 38). The everyday, functions as a political foundation of our shared work-world and as everyday practitioners encounter this social and physical space they encounter the products of their own efforts. Commuting and other liminal practices reflect the interstitial spaces of our own subjectivity and cannot be examined enough as this work represents a movement toward the proletarianization of the pedestrian, a defense of philosophical leisure, and an argument for the labor involved in everyday political practices. This performance remains inadequate, an insufficient attempt to dismantle structural constructions; however, this type of work is also already at play working in leisure and ripe for further examination.

Typically the functionality of conceived spatial usage to achieve these goals, and maintain a perception of safety, efficiency, and rationality, allows little individual desire to stir, to move, to drift.

COMMUTE
(toward and from)
COMMUTE
(in-between.)

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