

*WHAT IS
CALLED
SCHOOLING?*

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CRIMINOLOGY

DPHIL CRIMINOLOGY

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Much has been said about the accountable school, the performative school, the school wholly given over to a corporate cult of assessment and accountability; the monarchy of criteria; and the sovereignty of the exam. Lamentations resound as the trend deepens and the cult starts to bite. But let us look another way. Based on a two year ethnographic study of an inner city comprehensive school in North London, this thesis tries to illuminate all of those mechanisms, technologies, processes, and structures, through which an attempt is made to bind us to an order of truth, fix us to a regime of conduct, and render us subject to definite arrangements of knowledge and power. Regimes of truth, orders of conduct, and modes and mechanisms of attachment. Positing as problematic those studies which take as their object a part or aspect of a system or structure that exceeds them, this thesis tries to grasp something of the whole, standing beside the student and following the thing as they make their way through the school's gauntlet, attempting to detail all of those moments in which they are analysed, classified, sorted, distributed, trained, punished, and corrected.

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OUBLIER

FOUCAULT

PART DEUX

THESEUS: Dear children, twas your father's spoken will
That no human voice should ever violate the
mystery of the tomb wherein he lives.
He promised, If I truly kept this word,
My land would evermore be free from harm.
The powers which no man may transgress and live,
The oath of Zeus, bore witness to our troth.

Sophocles, Oedipus at Colonus (401BC [2014])

Government and Power

In the 1991 collection *The Foucault Effect* (Burchell et al), Colin Gordon speaks of the manifold trajectories of thought and investigation made possible by the 'rich seams of material' (1) lying dormant in Michel Foucault's (at the time unpublished) lecture courses at the College de France. These lectures were delivered annually from December 1970 until Foucault's untimely death, three months after completing the final series in March 1984. Each course lasted three months and was a summary of Foucault's work in the preceding year. Taken together, these lectures are testament to the breadth, originality and sophistication of Foucault's thought. The diversity of his encounters is astonishing: from truth and juridical forms in Ancient Greece (1970-1971 [2013]) to the development of "The Punitive Society" in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (1972-1973 [2015]); from the emergence of the domain of "the social" as a political problem (1975-1976 [2003]) to the long and meandering history of the institution of the Christian confession (1979-1980 [2013]); from the practice of the care of the self in Greco-Roman antiquity (1981-1982 [2005]) to the role of free and frank speech (*parrhesia*) in democracy (1982-1983 [2010]; 1983-1984 [2011]).

In spite of Foucault's varied and ebullient intrigue, Gordon reserves special praise for what he argues represent the 'two most remarkable annual courses' (in Burchell et al 1991: 1) entitled *Security, Territory, Population* (1977-1988 [2007]) and *The Birth of Biopolitics* (1978-1979 [2008]) respectively. It is in these lectures that Foucault develops the concept of "governmentality," or:

Firstly ... the ensemble formed by institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, calculations, and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific, albeit very complex, power that has the population as its target, political economy as its major form of knowledge, and apparatuses of security as its essential technical instrument. Second

... the tendency, the line of force, that for a long time, and throughout the West, has constantly led towards the pre-eminence over all other types of power – sovereignty, discipline, and so on – of the type of power that we call “government” and which has led to the development of a series of specific governmental apparatuses (*appareils*) on the one hand, [and, on the other] to the development of a series of knowledges (*savoirs*). Finally, by “governmentality” I think we should understand the process by which the state of justice in the Middle Ages became the administrative state in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and was gradually “governmentalized.”

Foucault 1977-1978 [2007]: 108-109

Foucault is concerned with the question of how the fact of human life as a species, as a fact of nature, became over a certain period both object and target of a general strategy of power. Foucault wants to ask why, at a certain period of our history, did questions of conduct, health, wellbeing and happiness, become questions and responsibilities of the state? (Adorno 2014) Under what conditions does the quality or strength of the population pose a necessary and insistent problem for state reason? His argument is that this occurs as part of a series of historical developments such as the movement from a feudal society of Lords and peasant farmers to a liberal society of experts, owners and workers; as part of a set of transformations in the general strategy of power that makes these formations possible, such as the movement from the sovereign power of the law and interdiction to the disciplinary power of classification and ordering; and in respect of the field of competing forces in which these developments take place, such as the conflict between a feudal lord eager to regularise and localise his agrarian workers and the mercantilist factory owner who demands that flexible wage-labour ebbs and flows to the rhythm of production.

Foucault's primary concern in this period is of course power (Hindess 1996). He argues that each historical moment is characterised by the dominance, ascendancy or waxing of

a general strategy of power(s), and that we can distinguish and differentiate each strategy by asking four questions: 1. What does it take as its object and target, or what does it understand itself to govern; what is the governable substance? - Governing a territory is different to governing a population is different to governing an individual. 2. What is the dominant or primary body of knowledge concerning that which is governed and in accordance with which one must govern? - Is it the legal knowledge of the sovereign's bureaucracy or the total knowledge of the elements of production? 3. What are the technologies, instruments or mechanisms through which government and power are materialised and instantiated into the real, into the everyday reality of the governed? - A sovereign who forbids and threatens punishment for transgression by means of a system of sheriffs and magistrates is different to the monitor who exerts an uninterrupted surveillance upon his students in a lecture hall. Finally, 4. What is the end, goal or purpose? - The sovereign cares little for the health of his populace insofar as he is able to make sufficient deductions of wealth to raise an army to maintain his sovereignty. Different indeed to the political leader whose position is threatened by the drop of his nation in the international health league tables.

Foucault identifies and contrasts three general strategies of power, each one assuming preeminence at a specific historical moment. The first is the sovereign power of the Middle Ages. Sovereign power takes as its object the wealth and strength of the sovereign, takes as its target the actions of its inhabitants, uses as its instrument the law and interdiction, and has as its end the generalisation of the sovereign will in the form of obedience. Sovereign power works through law, decree, censorship, refusal, deduction. It is always that power that threatens or says no, that power that takes away, refuses, censors, or exiles. Its perfection is circular: the perfect articulation of sovereign power is the articulation of sovereign power that is obeyed perfectly.

Disciplinary power emerged with the formation of the great institutions of confinement and training (the school, the hospital, the factory, the prison) in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (Foucault 1975 [1977]). Disciplinary power functions through the fixing of bodies in time and space according to a hierarchical gradation, thereby permitting the formation of artificial multiplicities for comparative evaluation and training (by age and ability in the school, by gender and pathology in the hospital, by responsibility and danger in the factory, by criminality and threat in the prison). Its object is the body, its target is the ability-conduct of individuals, its primary instruments are institutions of confinement and surveillance, and its end is an ideal ought, a towards which, a form of perfect conduct that serves as measuring rod against which degrees of conformity or deviance can be specified.

The final mode of power, the mode which enjoys ascendancy in our time, is the power of government. Governmental power is combinatory, bringing together a multitude of agents, centres, institutions, etcetera, and then co-ordinating them in the service of political objectives such as reduced unemployment or increased longevity.

Governmental power takes as its object the population, which is understood here not as the *de facto* inhabitants of a territory at any given time but as an epistemological artefact deriving from the instruments, institutions and practices through which we apprehend it. Its primary instrument is the apparatus of security that works on the basis of an empirically apprehended norm. The end of governmental power is the optimal adjustment of inequalities between segments according to an economic calculation (we receive 50p more economic benefit per pound invested if we target our language training at Somali migrants, significantly improving their rate of employment in respect of the much higher level of employment typical of well educated white males).

It is important to note here that rule conducted on and through the population and its corollary mechanisms of security does not replace or supersede the sovereign power of law nor the disciplinary power of ordering, classification and surveillance, but renders the problems associated with these powers more acute. To take the example of disease, never has the problem of sovereignty been more acute than when attempting to found and articulate the right to decide an economically viable level of morbidity given the costs of intervention and the dangers it poses to the accumulation of capital. The law of marginal return does not pause for human life. Never has the problem of discipline been more acute than when instituting a transnational regime of inspection, testing, classification, vaccination, sequestration. Sovereign power, disciplinary power, and governmental power, rely upon each other, call upon each other, presuppose and deploy each other. Rather than a succession of individuated modalities in their singularity and overlap therefore, we have a trio of reciprocally modulating elements.

Let us materialise this somewhat abstract analysis and consider the problem of labour and how the problem of labour might look from the perspective of each regime of power. The problem of labour from the perspective of sovereign power might assume similar dimensions to that of vagabondage in England in the mid 16th century (Castel 2002). Population growth and inflation led to an increase in the price of bread and downward pressure on wages. Throngs of farmers flocked to the cities looking for more or better paid work. The loosening of organic bonds typical of small farming communities and idleness in the cities was perceived as a grave social problem carrying the threat of rebellion. The solution of the sovereign was at once simple and economical: decree a strict punishment for the crime of vagabondage; a vagabond being any person of sound body and without sufficient private income found to be out of work for three

days. So it was that Edward VI passed the Vagabonds Act of 1547, which decreed that any man found to be a vagabond, seized by a member of the public and presented to two magistrates would, his vagabondage being confirmed by two honest witnesses, become the slave of the person who accused him of idleness for two years. The slave could be held in chains, beaten, whipped and traded just as if he were cattle.

Punishments for disobedience ranged from prolonged periods of enslavement to branding and even death. This is the problem of labour from the perspective of sovereign power, the law, interdiction.

In a primarily disciplinary modality of power we will see a new architecture enshroud the figure of the vagabond or the man out of work: the disciplinary institution. Here it will not be a question -as in the sovereign power of law- of rule and punishment, but of the body to be made useful: of the individual who will be subjected to an uninterrupted regime of testing, inspection, classification and surveillance. Exhaustive use will be made of his time. Comments will be made of his history. Data will be recorded and files will be collated concerning his performance, his attitude, his skills, his capacities, his degree of conformity or deviance. His life will become a life of the bell, the signal, and the correct performance perfected. This is what the problem of labour might look like from the perspective of disciplinary power.

When it comes to governmental power the difference is more sophisticated (Lazzarato 2009) due to its status as a primarily co-ordinating power that brings together heterogeneous elements to act at a distance (Rose 1999) in the service of political objectives. Opposed to the centripetal functioning of a disciplinary power that isolates and encloses within a given institution, the apparatus of security typical of

governmental power are centrifugal, attempting constantly to integrate new elements in the service of governmental objectives (Stenson 1998). Like the vagabond of the late 18th century, the unemployed man of the 20th will be subjected to a regime of surveillance, inspection, classification, coercion, and training, but the job centre will not serve as the privileged site of governmental power as the workhouse served disciplinary power. It will function not as a space of enclosure, confinement, exclusion, but as a nodal point of connection, relay, refraction. The job centre will not train, but co-ordinate. It will not instruct, but elicit. It will not confine, but threaten deduction.

The second core difference between disciplinary power and governmental power concerns the functioning of the norm (Brockling et al 2011). Where in a disciplinary system an ideal set of behaviours would be defined and the capacity of each individual judged on the basis of their conformity or deviation in respect of an ideal (this is how to behave perfectly, and it is to the extent that your behavior is in conformity with perfection that you will be judged), a governmental assemblage will compare rates of employment according to a segmentally differentiated population and attempt to intervene so as to bring the worst average in line with the best (this section of the population has the highest rate of employment, what is it that makes them differ from that segment which has the lowest and how can we intervene so as to lessen the gap between these differing normalities). Government may draw upon discipline to modulate averages, but its starting point is always an empirically apprehended population as opposed to an ideal.

Governmentality

So, three modalities of power and a modality currently dominant called “government”. It is important here to re-establish the slippery barrier that divides Foucault's work and its Anglophone development in the school of governmentality (McKee 2009).

Governmentality has proven to be a rich and fertile domain of investigation, with studies undertaken in fields as diverse as social insurance, education, unemployment, poverty, development, insecurity, children, refugees, cities, the countryside, death, paedophilia, the workplace, organisations, crime, madness, medicine, media, politics, social work, immigration, and by scholars from the UK, Canada, Australia, Germany, Switzerland, the Nordic countries, and France (Miller & Rose 2008; Brockling et al 2011). Clearly, the field of application is broader than that of Foucault, who focused on the transformation of government between the sixteenth and the twentieth century. Further, studies of governmentality are keen to stress that they do not constitute a theory, methodology, or school, but are characterised instead by relationships of family resemblance and advocate a 'wandering fidelity' (Dean 2010) to Foucault which is nonetheless founded on a precise use of his concepts.

So what then is government? We do not refer here to the nation state, or that centralised and unified sovereign body generally understood to hold a monopoly on legitimate violence within a circumscribed territory. Government refers to any activity that attempts to direct, modify or channel the way that others conduct themselves, to any of the 'more or less rational activities, undertaken by a multitude of authorities and agencies, employing a variety of techniques and forms of knowledge, that seek to shape the conduct and beliefs of various actors, for definite but shifting ends and with a

diverse set of relatively unpredictable consequences, effects, outcomes' (Dean 2010: 18). The government of schools, sea, food, highways, air, water, language (etc. etc.) are all instances of the general class "governing", and need not involve an identifiably institutional actor at all.

The study of government is not limited to the activities of elected representatives, bureaucratic officials, or state functionaries, but considers any domain in which an attempt is made to direct or influence the way individuals and groups conduct themselves (Rose et al 2009). In distinction to those analyses which focus on the (dys)functionality of state actors; or on the legitimacy, scope and proper bearers of state power; governmental analyses focus upon the 'multitude of programmes, strategies, tactics, devices, calculations, negotiations, intrigues, persuasions, and seductions, aimed at the conduct of individuals, groups, populations, and indeed oneself' (Rose 1999a: 5). The state, as opposed to the actor of origin and final return, appears here as a temporary and mobile effect of shifting governmentalities, as a nodal or relay point acting at a distance to bring together those 'thousands of spatially scattered points [through which its] constitutional, organisational, fiscal and judicial powers ... are connected up with endeavours to manage economic life, the health and habits of the population, the civility of the masses, and so forth' (ibid: 18). The question for studies of governmentality therefore, is not: how well does the state go about exercising its rightful business of governing? But: how has the state become governmentalised? Or, how has it become the business of the state to concern itself with welfare, unemployment, homelessness, the education of children, the frequency of divorce, hygiene, etcetera. At what point, for what reasons, and by what logic of combination did it come to pass that the health, happiness and wellbeing of its citizens became a problem and a responsibility for government? There is a dual movement. The state takes on ever more responsibilities at

the same time as delegating the fulfilment of those responsibilities to a range of state and non state actors (Donzelot & Gordon 2008).

Dean (2010) makes a fourfold distinction between questions concerning governmentality and the governmentalisation of the state. He argues that any articulation of governmental power can be individuated and investigated by answering the following four questions:

1. How does it see, perceive, talk? This is the question of regimes of visibility, of how diverse actors gravitate around common problems through the background of shared vocabularies, forms of talk, conceptual assemblages, beliefs and values, taxonomies, distributions of the useful and the useless which cut up experience in definite ways, disclose certain elements as essential whilst rendering others unimportant, make certain actions imaginable and other actions impossible. To return to our example of unemployment, these would be elements such as the moral value accorded to hard work; the idea of personal responsibility for normative failings; the notions of fecklessness and dependence; the concept of desert; a strong sense of private property; unemployment as a universal etiology for harm and degeneracy; and an enduring suspicion of state provision; which come together and coalesce into a particular objectification of the unemployed individual, forming the basis upon which any attempt to apprehend, understand, manage, or intervene, must rest.
2. How does it think, question, produce truth, i.e. how does it come to form a body of knowledge about its object and target? What techniques of calculation and

inscription, forms of notation, methods of assessment, routines of information gathering, etcetera, are brought together in a more or less systematic way, with what purpose, and with what effect? How is this information to be organised, collected, stored, and transported, and who is authorised to speak authoritatively about it? Every art of government in every domain must rest for its support on the grounds of a knowledge about that upon which rule is exercised. Ruling on the basis of a knowledge of that which is ruled at the same time inaugurates a series of questions common to the present day: Should the thing be governed at all (does it possess an internal logic or principle of self regulation), who should it be governed by (given what it is, the most appropriate body), and finally, how should it be governed (so as not to frustrate its optimisation by governing incorrectly). In the context of unemployment this means the creation of institutions for the collection, standardisation and recording of data; the character and frequency of unemployment; trends and patterns; the individuation of statistically significant variables (poverty, generational dependence, psychological and social wellbeing, the occupation of parents, education, etcetera). It involves bestowing on the outputs of these institutions a certain kind of legitimacy, excluding *ipso facto* alternative forms of knowledge that lay claim to the same object.

3. How does it act, intervene, direct? A reflection on governmental practice is never merely a reflection but an analysis with a view to intervention. Governmental knowledge then, does not exist primarily in the realm of reflection, but must find ways and means to make itself real in the world. A governmental technology is any assemblage of 'means, procedures, instruments, tactics, techniques and vocabularies' (Dean 2010: 42) through which a rationality or way of thinking

about governmental practice is instantiated into the lives of the everyday. Let us try to make some sense of this with the example of unemployment. The job centre interview, the case file and the conditional provision of benefits and services are three techniques that when brought together constitute an important technology for the government of the unemployed (McDonald & Marston 2005). The first is a technique of assessment and examination, itself dependent upon techniques of asking questions, sorting responses into true, false or doubtful, deciding what counts as meaningful and what does not. The second technique, the file, is a technique for recording and inscription; for the organisation of elements; for the fixing and comparison of elements on the horizon of time; for practices of cross filing and error checking. The third technique, the conditional provision of benefits, is a technique of coercion that is in a sense the buttress and support of the entire system, resting upon a whole array of institutions such as banks, job centres, the produced dependency of an individual upon economic exchange for subsistence, a society at an advanced stage of hyper-reality and simulation (where, like in *Pokemon Go*, simulation kills), the maintenance of cash benefits always at a level less than the worst possible employment. The bringing together of these three technique - the interview, the file, payment/ destitution - serves as the material basis through which a particular way of thinking about unemployment is carved out in the everyday reality of the unemployed and the collective imaginary of the general public.

4. Forms of subjectivity, self, personhood, agency. The attempt to govern does not find itself confronted with a universal subject who is always the same everywhere. Government proceeds on the basis of objectification (Revel 2009). The legal subject is objectified as volitional, rational, self interested, free of

conscience and therefore liable to guilt. The psychiatric subject is objectified as deranged, out of joint, dangerous, and therefore to be contained and to be cured. The pedagogic subject is objectified as a blank slate, immature, incapable, subject to disturbance, and therefore to be disciplined and educated. The object that any particular materialisation of governmental power takes as its target will have a number of consequences for the way in which it is governed.

As well as objectifying subjects in certain ways and acting in light of these objectifications, programs of government call for the production, enactment and embodiment of certain kinds of subjectivity or personhood (as the site of multiple subjections) understood to be superior, virtuous, ethical, right, proper, etcetera. The “good” unemployed subject is not he who points to the structural or de facto circumstantial nature of his situation, but one who accepts, embodies and performs the fact that it is his personal failing that has resulted in his unemployment, who, having accepted this, actively identifies himself (subjectifies himself) as the site of failure, instantiates this into a discourse of shame, lamentation and resolve, and who constantly applies himself to the search for employment, actively trying to correct the deficiencies understood to have resulted in it in the first place.

One of the most fruitful areas of governmentality studies has been the investigation of neo- or advanced liberalism. Foucault's reconceptualisation of neoliberalism was radical at the time. Against thinkers such as Harvey (2007) who view neoliberalism as an ideological discourse that covers over and conceals the transfer of wealth from the poor to the rich and the reduction of the expenditure of the state at all costs, scholars of

governmentality ground their work in a Foucauldian insight that operates on two levels:

First, the technical-phenomenological level. The discourse on governmental practice is not external to government, nor does it exist in a relation of representation. It cannot express, conceal, distort or obfuscate with the character of fidelity or degeneracy. It cannot, therefore, be understood as an ideology. The discourse on government is part of the workings of government, it is internal and necessary to its very operation (Rose 1979).

Second, the substantive-descriptive level. Where many thinkers conceptualise neoliberalism as the blind and irrational commitment to the reduction of the state at any cost, Foucault points out that neoliberalism is not the political strategy that seeks to reduce the state to an absolute minimum, which was typical of the nineteenth century and is better known as “Manchester Liberalism” (c.f. Hobsbawm 1969; Castel 2002). Neoliberalism is a critique of state reason that sees the market, exchange, and property, not as natural entities that the state needs to leave alone in order that they function according to their unknowable principle of sufficient operation, but as produced and constructed entities which are therefore weak and fragile: in need of maintenance, care and protection (Lemke 2014). Neoliberalism does not seek to wither away the state but to remodel it on the enterprise form. Open competition on the free market always produces the best outcomes. What is necessary therefore is to generalise exchange and the price mechanism across the entire surface of the body politic, eliminating any meaningful distinction between the social and the economic. The market is a site of veridiction, a regime of truth, through which all social practices must pass. Where previously the extension of rule was limited by a dual subject, on the one hand as a

subject of right that cannot be transgressed (political, social contract), and on the other as a subject of interests that must not be interfered with (economic, liberal), in order to make space for the natural functioning of the market within an already constituted domain of sovereignty; in advanced liberalism, the question is how to constitute a domain of sovereignty on the grounds of the economic exchange that must be its foundation (Revel 2009). Thus, rather than the domain of the economic being but one aspect of the government's rightful articulation of its popular sovereignty, the sovereignty of the economic becomes a permanent site of tribunal for the sovereignty of government. Government must always rationalise itself according to economic objectives, and economic objectives are best served by the cultivation of conditions for exchange and the generalisation of the enterprise form and the price mechanism. Good government, legitimate government, is government that serves the economy.

The reduction of the state, therefore, is not due to a blind commitment to a series of economic dogma, nor is it the real set of transfers covered over by an ideological discourse of the trickle down effect, but is rather something approximating a technical insight. State provision interferes with the form of the enterprise, the technology of competition, and the mechanism of price, so the state must be repositioned as the body that supports, guarantees and intensifies those processes considered to be the guarantee of freedom, prosperity, and justice, for all.

Let us use the dimensions offered by Dean's typology and enumerate some of the core features of neoliberal governmentality:

1. How does it see, perceive, talk? Within a milieu of ideas, beliefs and values

concerning the supremacy of the individual and the divinity of choice in the marketplace; the unquestionable ability of the market to always provide the best “outcomes”; a history of criticism regarding the failing welfare state; a sense that welfare is demoralising; the ethical primacy afforded to work and desert; the glorification of self making through conspicuous consumption; the moral worth afforded to the entrepreneur and the practice of entrepreneurialism; a conviction that all and everyone can attain self transcendence through hard work, sacrifice and the buying of things.

2. How does it think, question, produce truth? Neoliberalism demands for its support an expert knowledge indexed to a particular version of the scientific method and the peculiar neutrality afforded to mathematics. It collects data on general questions concerning accumulation such as monetary value, purchasing power, economic growth, inflation, unemployment, and the elements thought to frustrate or augment them such as health, happiness, market fluidity, transportation. It brings these data together in databases, charts and tables, and it plots or models the relationships of different elements making possible their regulatory adjustment according to an economic calculation.

3. How does it act, intervene, direct? The ethical primacy afforded to the individual responsibly managing risks and the desire to generalise the enterprise form across the body of society results in a form of activity that is regulatory and from a distance. Neoliberalism is not the practice that crushes freedom, but rather presupposes it, produces it, works through it. It is the art of steering as opposed to rowing, setting parameters and conditions for delivery rather than telling people what to do. It is

characterised by a distance between formal institutions and collective or individual actors in the form of the enactment of governmental objectives by localised agents invested with a certain margin of freedom within which to fulfil their responsibilities. Technologies characteristic of neoliberalism, therefore, are those which allow the joining up of centres of calculation, investigation, therapeutics, to nodal centres of assessment and instruction such as the state bureaucracy or the corporate headquarters. Regimes of accounting and financial management, audit and budgeting make possible the enumeration, calculation, investigation, monitoring and inspection of sites of government.

4. What forms of subjectivity does it objectify and call for? Neoliberal government is that form of government which requires its subjects to be entrepreneurs of themselves; who constantly seek out economic opportunity; who are autonomous, active, prudent, and forward looking; who maximise the quality of their life, health and happiness through the exercise of choice on the marketplace; who take risks and plan for the case of failure (Lemke 2014). The neoliberal subject, therefore, is always already involved in a project of enrichment, is always already analytical, is always already evaluating one's present trajectory against the promise of another.

Governmentality and Critique

As much as it has been proven to be an invaluable perspective for scholarly research, studies in the field of governmentality have come under a series of critiques that have been sustained since its first articulation.

The first is the problematic distinction between the rational reflection on governmental practice and governmental practice itself (c.f. Hodges & Hussein 1979). Rose is generous in his repetition of the theme that 'analyses of governmentalities are empirical but not realist. They are not studies of the actual organisation and operation of systems of rule, of the relations that obtain amongst the actual organisation and operation of systems of rule, of the relations that obtain amongst political and other actors and organisations at local levels and their connections into actor networks and the like' (Rose 1999a: 19). But this distinction is fictive. Programmes think about the possibility of; presuppose in the act of conception of; and implement measures to prevent their failure in respect of: subversion, appropriation, maladministration, mismanagement. There is no such division between a way of thinking about a system and the "witches brew" of its actual operation. Governmental reason is pregnant with this witches brew, and we are blind to the character of the pregnancy if we do not investigate the witches brew itself (O'Malley et al 1997).

The unstable, unequally distributed, differentially appropriated and strategically deployed rationality is constantly on the move, looking for new supports as old ones fall away, having questions posed of it, sacrificing parts to save the whole, optimising elements, deciding which elements to optimise, being transcribed into technology and retranscribed into a rationality that bears no semblance to the rationality of origin (Butler 1995). Some elements persist for a long time, some have a foundational status that cannot be shifted without revolution of the whole, whilst some appear and disappear as if in the flash of a camera that comes at us obliquely from an unseen angle. These machinations rarely make it into the discourse of reflection, are often presupposed, or perhaps in some instances form a background.

Secondly, whatever a programme is, it has to be implemented, and again, there is no clear boundary between those who design a programme and those who implement it. The parameters of implementation are such that what happens rather than a separation is a rapid backwards and forward movement where the schemers are constantly trying to integrate the implementers. Perhaps the schemers used to be implementers, or live according to a calculated adjustment between the two, or do both at the same time, but scheming always has a kind of structural superiority: you can implement without scheming, but many prefer to scheme without implementing; you can implement at the same time as scheming, and implementation without scheming is in an important sense a blind form of obedience. There are in addition those implementers who try to evade the schemers' purposes, perhaps to do what they believe to be the good, perhaps for less noble reasons, or with deleterious effects, which is not to mention those ironic folk who scheme, implement, and subvert both their scheming and their implementation all at the same time (Bevir 2010). Whilst a kind of formal distinction exists between schemers and implementers it is nonetheless fictive to assume some hard and fast boundary.

It is this fictive distinction that leaves studies of governmentality blind to moments of resistance, refusal, blockage, and subversion (O'Malley et al 1997). All is too perfect, too seamless, too rational. Movements have been made, continuities have been forged, domains have been colonised, and subjectivities have been produced (McKinlay & Taylor 2014). All is already over in the tense of pluperfect completion. All has already occurred according to a concerted lubrication. The picture is as in Wittgenstein's aphorism concerning the "Machine-as-Symbol":

193. The machine as symbolising its actions: the action of the machine – I might say at first – seems to be there from the start. What does that mean? - If we know the machine, everything else, that is its movement, seems to be already completely determined.

We talk as if the parts could only move in this way, as if they could not do anything else. How is this – do we not forget the possibility of their bending, breaking off, melting and so on? Yes, in many cases we don't think of it at all.

Wittgenstein (1968: 77e-78e)

Governmental analyses then, betray the diabolical automatism of the machine-as-symbol, of the infernal machine machine that once switched on becomes unresponsive, cannot be stopped, and proceeds seamlessly onwards without resistance or rest, operating according to an insuperable logic that is wholly its own. It is the fantasy of power in its ideal functioning. This perhaps accounts for the totalising character of these analyses (Jameson 1991). Power advances imperiously, occupying every interstices, guarding every domain in advance, lying in wait around every corner.

Contrary to the notion that governmental analyses “destabilise the present in pointing to its contingency” (Rose 2007: 5), there is a paradoxical affect of inertia and stasis. Many studies have found that governmentality results in a kind of aporia in the very being of thought (cf. Brockling et al 2011), a sense that things simply could not have been otherwise (Dupont & Pearce 2001), that there is no alternative. The sheer mass of a governmental assemblage; the volume and complexity of its continuities, connections, relays, nodes, and surfaces; the strength and rigidity of its enclosures; when considered alongside the unbearable putting into discourse of all the vital terms that it invokes makes thought outside impossible, unthinkable! - outside there is no oxygen, I cannot breathe (Brady 2014).

An aporia in the being of thought leads ineluctably to an aporia in the being of action: Where can I go? Where can I turn? I am unable to move, for everywhere I look I see the power from which I try to escape. Every avenue is closed or already co-opted; every pathway is protected by violence or enmeshed in a labyrinth of relationships I could not begin to untangle; every source of light is obscured, blocked out, or passed through a transformative filter that lends no clue to the materiality of its origin (Lippert 2014). Either, we are left in thought as the Trobrianders, whose stupefaction can only increase with the superabundance of goods that are piled before them (Mauss 1954; Bataille 1989a), or, we are left in action like the man in Kafka's parable "Before the Law" (1993), waiting before a door that will never open.

This ideal cartography is a discourse of power with effects of power, acting as a multiplier and intensifier of the power it seeks to describe: a description with emancipatory intent that is taken hostage by power in the very moment of its articulation. Rather than a caesura of power, governmentality results in its extension (Stenson 1998).

If, then, studies of governmentality result in a kind of aporia in the very being of thought, it is because they function as discourses of power with effects of truth. The mantra like evocation of the dimensions of governmental analyses; their problematisations, explanations, technologies, authorities, subjectivities and strategies (Rose 1989); result in the instantiation of almost any conceivable phenomena (or any phenomena unconceived) into a rigid and immovable grid (Brady 2014), whilst the endless and incessant repetition of the terms of the discourses redoubles and revivifies

them, lending them a unity, clarity and coherence that they would otherwise lack, and in an important sense carving them out in reality (McKee 2009).

If, then, studies of governmentality result in a kind of aporia in the very being of action, it is because they function as discourses of truth with effects of power. Everything is more real, more definite, more unsurpassable. Where once one might have seen a web of fragmentary, fragile, and tangential continuities possessed of a thin veil of rationalisation and encountering a plethora of obstacles in their materialization (Bevir 2010), now, one is confronted by a vast and immovable body whose tentacular profligacy and cast iron reason is arrested by no barrier (Walters 2012). The analyses of governmentality pile one upon the other like so much concrete around one's feet.

The idea that studies in the field of governmentality result in a kind of aporia is similar to a set of criticisms levelled more broadly at Foucault's work of that period. In an interview reproduced in the First Manifesto of Governmentality *The Foucault Effect* (Burchell et al 1991) the interviewer notes: "One finds that the arrival of *Discipline and Punish* had an absolutely sterilising or rather anaesthetising effect on them, because they felt your critique had an implacable logic that left no room for initiative..." (ibid: 82), to which Foucault replies: "You're quite right to raise the problem of anaesthesia, one of which is of capital importance ... Perhaps what I written has had an anaesthesia effect. But one still needs to distinguish upon whom ... I have the impression of having had an irritant rather and anaesthetic effect on a good many people. The epidermis bristle with a constancy I find encouraging" (ibid: 82-83). But this is a mischaracterisation of the charge and a restatement of the problem. It fails on these grounds. Foucault locates a profusion in the domain of discourse whereas the charge locates aporia in the being of

thought. It is not whether people are speaking and with what volume or intensity that is in question, but whether what is spoken allows anyone to move beyond the point where they are right now. Those who complain of a sterilisation or anaesthesia do not complain of a sterilisation or anaesthesia of speech but a sterilisation and anaesthesia of movement and direction in thought and in action.

We can render these criticisms less abstract by considering a core claim of governmental analyses: that forms of governmentality do not crush or deny an individual's freedom but rather presuppose, work through and produce it. Government, so the story goes, acts by acting upon the field of possible actions, by acting 'upon these forces, instrumentalising them in order to shape actions, processes, outcomes in desired directions. Hence, when it comes to governing human beings, to govern is to presuppose the freedom of the governed" (Rose 1999a: 4). But a closer analysis of the kind of freedom that they are talking about shows it to be a formal rather than substantive quality. In the advanced variant of liberalism characteristic of our time it is of course true that governmental actors have a certain freedom of implementation: a freedom to alter the parameters of a programme or the fulfilment of a responsibility within definite limits and according to definite objectives, but this is far and away from what we conventionally mean by freedom in its positive or negative sense. Whilst a headteacher might be able to change the organisation of the school day, alter the length or size of a class, modify the distribution of elements within the school, intensify or moderate discipline and punishment, take funds from here and put them over there etcetera, they cannot deny the examination or throw away the syllabus. Their freedom is a freedom in-order-to, a kind of limited, partial, chopped down freedom to achieve a set of objectives that are continuous between institutions and which operate within definite limits (Mitchell & Lizotte 2014). The margin of freedom when compared to the

behemoth of regulation is miniscule. The freedoms that are denied are infinite, the freedoms that are cultivated limited. Thus, this constant evocation of the freedom of the governed, given the strong normative connotations of the word, ethically elevates advanced liberal governmentality. It reproduces the neoliberal conception of itself in which it is the provider and guarantee of Freedom. It aligns the notion of freedom of the reader with the notion of freedom to which they are constantly subjected. Freedom, surely, is not the freedom to fulfil a responsibility, but the freedom to decide what should be a responsibility in the first place.

Indeed, this elision of freedom in particular and freedom as such 'throws into question [the] conceptions of individual autonomy' (McNay 2009: 56) which are traditionally understood as the opposite or limit of government, power, subjection. 'If I am always-already free, if in fact my individual autonomy is not the opposite or limit to neoliberal governance, but rather lies at the heart of disciplinary control through responsible self-management, what are the possible grounds upon which political resistance is based?' (*ibid.*). If my freedom must always be this freedom always already arrested by power, how can I ever break free? The freedom of governmentality is the freedom of the man who does not know the door is locked; that man who, believing the door to be open, never tries to turn the handle. It seems to me that rather than freedom, this is the very essence of subjection perfected, a subjection so immanent that it is experienced as a kind of freedom. One might oppose this with the following notion: the enterprising self who regulates themselves is free to do otherwise, and this is different to the passive subject who obeys and follows orders, or more fundamentally, to the slave in the field with their chains. But is this not simply a displacement? Subjection occurs on a different plane, on the plane of responsibility, programme, accounting; this subjection may be less barbarous, less brutal, less obvious, less grotesque, but it is subjection nonetheless.

As McNay notes:

Any apparent increase in individual autonomy in fact represents an intensification of a certain disciplinary power, an effect of which is the blurring of the boundaries between the public and the private realms. The overall effect of these transformations is to instil in the individual a seemingly paradoxical compulsion to responsibility. The normative and emancipatory force that inhered in the idea of personal responsibility is eroded as individuals are forced to assume responsibility for states of affair for which they were not responsible.

McNay 2009: 65.

Unfollowed Trajectories

The lectures on governmentality arise at an important moment in the transformation of Foucault's thought. The first series, *Security Territory Population* (1977-1978 [2007]), began on the 11th of January 1978, just over a year after the publication of the *History of Sexuality Volume 1* in 1976 ([1978]). What follows is an eight year publishing hiatus, with the *History of Sexuality Volume 2* not arriving until 1984 ([1985]), the year of Foucault's death. The ideas developed in the 1977-1978 and 1978-1979 lectures on governmentality are quickly moved beyond and in a substantive sense abandoned, with the 1979-1980 lectures *On the Government of the Living* ([2014]) bearing witness to the turn to ethics, askésis, and modes of subjectification—the themes that will occupy him until his death. The notion of governmentality is almost entirely absent from the text (it does surface later on but in a form that is different and which whilst interesting to consider need not be theorised here). If Foucault himself moves beyond the ideas on which the school of governmentality is based, let us follow this movement and move along with him.

The History of Sexuality Volume I

The publication of the History of Sexuality Volume I in 1976 ([1977]) marks the limit point of a series of analyses that began with Foucault's inaugural lecture at the College de France on "The Order of Discourse" (1970 [1981]). It is here that the analytics of power that had occupied Foucault for the previous six years receives its fullest expression. Foucault wants to free Western reason and political practice from the juridical conception of power to which it has been enslaved since the Middle Ages. In this conception, power is that unitary form interned within the institutions and mechanisms of government which ensures the subservience of citizens to the state or society. Power is the law, the interdiction, the rule. It is that which says no, which refuses, which blocks, which denies and conceals. It does not produce, facilitate, or enable, but only poses limits. It is the buttress and support of a system of domination through which one group subjugates another. This power is articulated in the speech of the legislator, through the insistence of the rule, and in the form of a cycle of prohibitions. Whether power over sexuality, power over belief, power over practice, or power over expression, it is always the same mechanics of power that are in operation: Always from the top to the bottom, always as taboo and censorship, always through the law of transgression and the punishment of the elicit.

Foucault argues that this model of power is formed on the basis of an historical misconception. The Monarchy and the state apparatus of the Middle Ages arose in the face of an ever shifting milieu of competing forces. In opposition to the instability and conflict which resulted from the dense and complex entanglement of competing powers, authorities, sovereignties, kingdoms, lineages, allegiances, and enmities; the Monarchies

offered a series of principles of right which transcended and could therefore adjudicate between heterogeneous and competing claims; a set of institutions to arbitrate disputes and enforce judgments; and a regime that could demarcate, fix and therefore stabilise relationships. They were unitary regimes rather than multiple forces, they identified their will with a law that applied equally to all, and they materialized this will through technologies of interdiction and sanction.

The error in Western political reasoning occurs on the basis of the enlightened critiques of the 18th centuries which, turning the law back against the sovereign, depicted the Monarchies as unlawful in their rule and arbitrary in their application. This, for Foucault, overlooks the fundamental trait of Western monarchies, which is that they were constructed as systems of law, articulated and enacted through theories of law, and made their mechanisms of interdiction and sanction work in the form of law. Our understanding of power is a hangover of this historical misconception. Indeed, 'despite efforts that were made to disengage the juridical sphere from the monarchic institution' (Foucault 1976 [1977]: 88), our representation of power remains entrapped within the dream of the capricious sovereign. 'In political thought and analysis, we still have not cut off the head of the king' (*ibid*: 88-89).

That we are still wedded to this erroneous conception in political practice is clear enough to see. Gaddafi in Libya and Hussein in Iraq arguably served a similar function to 16th century European Monarchies. Thousands of years of the residue and sedimentation of ethno-religious conflicts occurring between a multitude of tribes, grouping and allegiances; all answering to different principles of sovereignty and right; and all holding differing senses of entitlement and desert; were held in a delicate if not

brutal balance by a tyrannical figure who could intervene over here and allow over there, take from this group to give to that one. Along the exact lines that a reading of Foucault would have predicted, their overthrow has resulted in the re-emergence of the conflicts that they moderated. Their regimes might have been monstrous, but the horrors that have followed their overthrow have far outshadowed the horrors of their rule. The failure of Western governments to adequately respond to the terror and destruction waged by Islamic extremists, consequently Al Qaeda, consequently the Islamic State, follows similar dimensions. Cut off the head and the body will die, thought the Americans. And suicide bombs still rumble....

Against this sovereign conception of a localised, unitary and repressive power, Foucault articulates an analytics of power in its positivity. Power is not that which refuses, which says no, which blocks, denies, or conceals. Power is the productive stuff through which various relationships are made and maintained. It is not some “thing” that can be possessed, held onto, given away, or lost. Power is a relationship, a strategic relationship, or that set of strategic relationships that can be arranged as tactics in the games of force that run through and constitute the domains that they make possible. Power is not localised —it has no centre. Power is everywhere. It is not interned within state institutions or positions of leadership. Power comes from below, occupying every interstices and saturating every interaction. This is why it is an error to imagine power as separate from and occupying a position of exteriority in respect of other relations such as the family, politics, the economy, or sex. These domains, as well as the practices that give them shape such as science, medicine, and the law, are constituted in and through relationships of power. These relationships are not static. They emerge through the endless series of confrontations in which they are taken up, deployed, transfigured, neutralised, and arranged into systems. Though they might crystallise in institutions,

they are, even in this momentarily ossified form, always strategic relations, always locally deployed tactics, always liable to slippage, evasion, overthrow or reversal. It is amidst this dense field of criss-crossing, overlapping, contradicting, developing and decaying, cohering and contradicting field of opposing forces that one can find a strategic position and articulate a discourse or exercise a practice that has effects of power, or material effects in reality.

Important to Foucault's characterisation of power is its coterminacy with resistance. If we take the preceding characteristics as sum, that power is everywhere and not local, that power is immanent and not exterior, that power is a relation and not a thing, that power is a strategy and not a possession, we can see how resistance cannot be other to power —how resistance cannot be that outside of power which presents its limit. Struggles are never a struggle against power as such but a struggle against its direction, a struggle against its operators, or a struggle against its end. People rarely demand no government, but deny *that* government, by *those* people, in *this* manner, for *these* reasons. Power and resistance are two sides of the same coin. Wherever we have a relationship of power therefore, we always and at the same time have a relationship of resistance.

A simple example will suffice. Homosexuality in the nineteenth century was considered a deformity of nature, a perversion of birth, and an aberration that deserved punishment or correction. In the twentieth century we see the same discourse that was used to deny homosexuality taken up, turned around, and combined with new elements. A discourse of power becomes a discourse of resistance. A discourse of resistance becomes a discourse of power. The notion of homosexuality as a fact of birth

is combined with the voluntaristic and intentional notion of guilt and culpability that is the foundation of our judicial system. You cannot punish me for my homosexuality, says the accused, because my homosexuality is not my fault. It is a fact of nature that I am a homosexual and it is unjust and absurd to punish someone for their nature. The discourse that portrays homosexuality as a natural aberration to be corrected is appropriated and turned around to state that I cannot be culpable for a fact of nature that is beyond my control. Foucault summarises:

In short, it is a question of orienting ourselves to a conception of power which replaces the privileges of law with the viewpoint of the objective, the privilege of prohibition with the viewpoint of tactical efficacy, the privilege of sovereignty with the analysis of a multiple and mobile field of force relations, wherein far-reaching but never completely stable effects of domination are produced. The strategical model, rather than the model based on the law.

Foucault 1976 [1977]: 102

Put to work in the field of sexuality, Foucault wants to investigate the 'regime of power-knowledges that sustains discourses in human sexuality in our part of the world' (*ibid*: 11). He wants to locate the figures of power, the routes that they take, and the discourses that they permeate, in order to ascertain how it is that power seeps into our most intimate thoughts, our most singular conducts, our most everyday pleasures. Foucault wants to move beyond the idea that behind the limitations of a differentially limiting repression lending sexuality a variably perverted form there lies a true and honest sexuality waiting to break free. Instead, Foucault wants to understand how every form of sexuality is always-already enmeshed in, shot through with, and constituted by, relations of power. To experience the "free expression" of one's sexuality as revolutionary is, for Foucault, naïve. Sexuality is not external to relationships of power.

To give in to one's sex is to give in to power. Worse still, It is to misrecognize as autochthonous and authentic what is in fact an external subjection. Instead of perceiving sexuality as the insurrectionary force which Reich (1971; 1974), Deleuze & Guattari (1983) and Marcuse (1966) imagined, Foucault wants to conduct an investigation in which sexuality is a surface, plane of emergence, node, relay or point of transference for complex configurations of knowledge-power.

This he wants to achieve through the articulation of a new history. His first theoretical target is the repressive hypothesis, or the idea that the Victorian era gave rise to prohibition, repression and the silencing of sex. Foucault wants to look instead to the discursive explosion in which from the nineteenth century onwards the obligation to confess our sex, to listen to its whispers, to find in it our deepest secret and hidden truth, was generalised from the specific institution of the Christian confession to become an obligation for the entire population.

The economy of discourses – their intrinsic technology, the necessities of their operation, the tactics they employ, the effects of power which underlie them and which they transmit – this, and not the system of representations, is what determines the essential features of what they have to say. The history of sexuality – that is, the history of what functioned in the nineteenth century as a specific field of truth – must first be written from the viewpoint of a history of discourses

Foucault 1976 [1977]: 69

Foucault lays out a grand and ambitious outline of the studies that are to follow the *History of Sexuality Volume I*. The first line of investigation is a series of studies on what

Foucault claims to be the four great strategic unities constitutive of the experience, practice and discourse of sex in the nineteenth century. The first is the hysterisation of women's bodies, or the way that the feminine body – analysed, qualified, disqualified, integrated into medicine, and placed in communication with the social body – came to be a privileged target knowledge-power. The second is the pedagogisation of children's sex, or the way in which sexual activity amongst children came to be seen as posing physical, moral and collective risks. The third is the socialisation of procreative behaviour, or the way in which families or couples were enjoined by law and economic incentives to precocity or limitation in sex. The fourth and final strategic unity is the psychiatrisation of perverse pleasure, or the way in which heterodox sexualities became objects of medical knowledge and therapeutic correction in the form of pathology.

The second line of investigation concerns the periodisation or historical character of the development of discourses about, practices of, and experiences of, sex. Foucault wants to overthrow that history in which sexuality is understood through the mechanisms of repression; in which there is first the advent of prohibitions and censorships and then that glorious moment when prohibition is loosened, tolerance is multiplied, laws are reduced and taboos are lifted. As opposed to this twofold periodization, Foucault wants to investigate instead 'a perpetual inventiveness, a steady growth of methods and procedures, with two [other] especially productive moments in this proliferating history: around the middle of the sixteenth century, the development of procedures of direction and examination of conscience; and at the beginning of the nineteenth century, [with] the advent of medical technologies of sex' (119).

The History of Sexuality Volume II

Foucault does not complete any of these investigations. Without denying the important continuities that run throughout Foucault's oeuvre (Elden 2016), it is undoubtedly the case that when the *History of Sexuality Volume II* is published eight years later in 1984, we are presented with a series of studies 'in a form that is altogether different' (1984 [1985]: 1). The first chapter is entitled, somewhat playfully, 'Modifications'. Gone is the concern with sexuality as a node, relay, surface of emergence or point of transference for complex relations of knowledge-power in the nineteenth century. What follows in *The History of Sexuality Volume II: The Use of Pleasure* is a consideration of sexual ethics in antiquity.

By the ethics of sex, Foucault does not mean that more or less coherent ensemble of rules and values, transmitted by some kind of prescriptive agency, which we might call a "moral code". What interests Foucault are practices where individuals 'comply more or less fully with a standard of conduct, ... obey or resist an interdiction or prescription ... respect or disregard a set of values' (*ibid*: 25). It is the enactment of a morality, the practice of an ethic, the taking up of sexuality as a lived moral problem that concerns Foucault, as opposed to the ethical code as such. What interests Foucault, then, are not rules and interdictions, their arrangement, the degree of their coherence, their points of attachment or significant features, but the ways in which these rules and interdictions are interpreted, taken up, and made the subject of a definite ethical practice. It is not the injunction "thou shalt not kill" that would interest him, but the question of who this is addressed to, and how they apply it (at all times, in certain circumstances, for better or worse reasons, etcetera).

Foucault delineates four key questions that determine an ethical form of moral conduct, the way that a moral code is taken up and instantiated into life, or the 'different ways for the acting individual to operate, not just as an agent, but as an ethical subject of an ... action (*ibid*: 28). The first is the determination of the ethical substance, or the way that an aspect of oneself such as one's thoughts, one's actions, one's soul, or nowadays even one's genetics, are constituted as the point of application for an ethical form of conduct, as an object of ethical concern that one must attend to. The second is the mode of subjection, or the way that one recognises oneself as bound or compelled by a rule and therefore under obligation to put that rule into practice. This could be because of the membership of a group, the heir to a tradition, the participation in a lineage, or even on the grounds of a quality or characteristic that one feels it is vital to bestow on one's life. The third is the form of the elaboration of ethical work, or the form and character of ethical practice that one submits oneself to. Does one engage in the practice once and then it is over with, or return to it regularly, or does it form a dimension of one's life, a constant battle, a continuous struggle? The fourth, finally, concerns the *telos* or end of the ethical practice. One can implement the same rule for many different reasons. One can consider oneself subject to the reduction of sexual pleasures out of a respect for feminism, to become a master of oneself, or because one aims for a certain kind of tranquility of the soul. Ethical conduct, then, is not simply a form of conduct that conforms to a rule or law, but requires a process by which one is formed as an ethical subject:

A process in which the individual delimits that part of himself that will form the object of his moral practice, defines his position relative to the practice precept he will follow, and decides on a certain mode of being that will serve as his moral goal. And this requires him to act upon himself, to monitor, test, improve and transform himself. There is no specific moral action that does not

refer to a unified moral conduct; no moral conduct that does not call for a forming of an ethical subject; and no forming of the ethical subject without modes of subjectivation and an ascetics or practice of the self that support them.

Foucault 1984 [1985]: 28

In place of a careful tracing of sexuality as a privileged point of transference for knowledge-power relations, therefore, we have here proposed a history of the constitution of the moral subject, and an investigation of the evolution of morally reflective practices.

But what could account for such a radical transformation? Most scholars seem to accept Foucault's own explanation that this is nothing more than a characteristic shift in his thought. That, like before, acting gropingly and without clear direction, Foucault stumbles into the limitations of one path, retraces his steps, and continues along another. This account I find wholly unconvincing. Just as the direction taken in the 1970 lecture *On the Order of Discourse* ([1981]) was a direct response to the criticisms levelled at the *History of Madness* and the *Order of Things*, it will be my argument that the tenor and morphology of Foucault's movement in the *History of Sexuality Volume II* is likewise explicable by reference to the criticisms made of Foucault's work at that time, in this case, the resounding critique of Baudrillard. Indeed, it will be my argument that the entire trajectory of Foucault's later thought is best understood as a deep conversation with the criticisms made by Baudrillard, firstly in *Forget Foucault* (1977 [2007]), and secondly in *Seduction* (1979 [1990]).

This argument will be made in three steps. Firstly, an outline of the critique made by Baudrillard in *Forget Foucault* and an explanation of the ways in which his critique of

Foucault's work matches my concerns regarding the governmentality lectures and the studies of governmentality that take them as their inspiration. Secondly, by demonstrating that the two lecture series that follow Baudrillard's critique match up precisely to its morphology, and are best understood as strategic manoeuvres in respect of it. Third, by the remarkable discovery that the moment Foucault frees himself from this critique and begins the development of a series of methodological and theoretical concerns that will occupy him until his death, he articulates a coded and allegorical response to a number passages found in Baudrillard's point by point rebuttal of the History of Sexuality Volume 1, *Seduction*. This will allow for the construction of a new anthropological perspective in which the ideas of two thinkers usually studied independently can be brought productively together to illuminate and make sense of a number of contemporary phenomena, but, in this case, the school.

Oublier Foucault, Le Act Premiere

The essence of Baudrillard's critique in "Forget Foucault" (1977 [2007]) is that Foucault's all-too-perfect writing is 'the mirror of the power it describes' (30). The strangeness of this writing too beautiful to be true, too magisterial to be human, lends it a myth-effect, a seductive force, that enchants or enrages the reader and in any case entraps them. For Baudrillard, Foucault is only able to write about power in this way because the era of power is done with. This is what lends the analysis its pluperfect quality: all is over, completed, finished—an inescapable determination. Foucault speaks of power on the condition that it is already dead. In shifting the analytics of power from a 'reactive and transcendental conception ... which is founded in interdiction and law for a positive,

active and immanent conception' (54), Foucault achieves nothing more than writing the other side of an already extinct form. It is this inability of Foucault to free himself from the traditional optic of power that blinds him to its character as hyperreality and simulation. Foucault cannot make sense of the contemporary scene in which power turns on itself and vanishes. He is unable to trace the last spiral of power in which it becomes lost in its own simulacrum and ceases to exist.

For Baudrillard, power appears in Foucault as sex appears in pornography: grotesque, immediate, and realized with the telescopic zoom of the camera lens that leaves nothing to the imagination. This is the obscene basis of a culture based on irreversibility and accumulation. Make everything visible, make everything usable, make everything clear, make everything transparent. 'Let everything be produced, be read, become real, visible, and marked with the sign of effectiveness' (37). Baudrillard opposes to this contemporary obscenity a counter-logic of seduction. Power does not operate through its reality principle —its simulacrum— but through artifice, myth, and the play of absence and presence, viz, through seduction. If production, drawing on the French verb *pro-ducere*, is to make visible, to materialize, to make appear that which belongs to another order, then seduction is that which 'withdraws from the visible order and so runs counter to production, whose project is to set everything up in clear view, whether it be an object, a number, or a concept' (*ibid*). Against the myth of real power, actual value, useful accumulation, Baudrillard deploys a contrary logic of symbolic exchange and the gift.

Any order of pure accumulation is bewitched by a mortal fascination. Like the massed goods of the Trobrianders piled high and doomed to exuberant destruction (Bataille

1989a, Malinowski 1922), it is Baudrillard's claim that capital will meet a similar fate if unhampered by restriction, if set free to collapse beneath the vertigo of an interstellar ascent without limitation (for no one can defy gravity). There are echoes here of Polanyi's thesis in *The Great Transformation* (1957). Polanyi argued that it is mistaken to understand the social limitations placed on capital in the 19th century as corrupting and frustrating an otherwise necessarily beneficent growth. The social destruction that was a necessary counterpart to the process of industrialization was such that a lack of compensatory mechanisms would have resulted in societal collapse or revolt. What have been generally understood as limitations on the development of liberal capitalism were in fact an essential condition of its expansion. As Baudrillard puts it, capital is forever cutting the branch upon which it sits. Stop patching it up then, and let it fall.

Against a Foucauldian account of an always present resistance premised on the possibility of reversal and redeployment, Baudrillard advocates an escalation of the system beyond all limitations: A challenge 'which dares those who hold power to exercise it to the limit ... A challenge to power to be power, power of the sort that is total, irreversible, without scruple, and with no limit to its violence' (61). The challenge to power to become itself is a game in which the only response is death. Naïve realists such as Foucault will never understand power because it 'is a simulacrum and because it undergoes metamorphosis into signs and is invested on the basis of signs' (64). Great politicians realise that power is nothing, just as great bankers realise that money is nothing.

The sceptical reader would be wise to consider recent developments in world politics. Donald Trump is the president of the United States. Boris Johnson is the Foreign

Secretary of the United Kingdom. Ronald Reagan was in Hollywood before he was in the White House. David Cameron's only job outside of politics was in Public Relations and Marketing. Government departments issue statements suffused with rhetoric, doublespeak, screenspeech, and propaganda. The public imaginary has reached a hitherto unknown level of absurdity, with empty phantoms, endlessly repeated and thereby emptied of meaning, such as the "u-turn", "equality", "transparency", "to be clear," and "difficult decisions", its apocryphal watchwords. A vote on Britain's membership of the European Union was lost on fantastical fabrication and mythological promise. Digital images are tagged without irony #nofilter. Is not the bad conscience of thought in our age the denial of the truth that in the end, rationality matters not a jot? Every argument in the domain of the real is in a sense doomed to failure. In the case of Brexit, the strategic mistake was to base a campaign on the plane of a reality that no longer exists. In our era of mass communication, it is the dizzy ecstasy of the sign which reigns supreme.

The Governmentality Lectures as a Response to Baudrillard

If power is the central concern of the trajectory of work culminating in the *History of Sexuality Volume I*, and if the later Foucault is best understood as in deep conversation with Baudrillard, we should not be surprised to see a renewed engagement with power as the starting point for the first series of lectures which follow Baudrillard's critique: *Forget Foucault*, and which serve as the basis for work undertaken in the school of governmentality, namely: *Security, Territory, Population (1977-1978 [2007])*.

The first of these lectures attempts an evisceration of the object that is the target of Baudrillard's critique: power. Foucault tries to free himself from Baudrillard by declaring that:

1. There is no theory of power onto which Baudrillard's critique could legitimately latch on to.
2. Power cannot be the object of my study because it is not separate, 'in addition, alongside, or on top of ... relations' such as the family, production, or sex. It is intrinsic to them, immanent within them.
3. It is not the seamless continuity of 'an interstitial flowing of power that seeps through the whole porous network of the social, the mental, and of bodies (Baudrillard 1977 [2007]: 29) that concerns me, but a politics of truth that shows 'the knowledge effects produced by the struggles, confrontations, and battles that take place within our society, and by the tactics of power that are the elements of the struggle' (Foucault 1977-1978 [2007]:3).
4. My work does not concern power in its rigidity where 'all this is here and now over with' (Baudrillard 1977 [2007]: 30), but power in its fragility. It is the weak points, the interstices, the lines of force, that my genealogical tracings draw out.
5. You are a polemicist, Baudrillard, and one must 'never engage in polemics ... [for there the relation between] struggle and truth 'only dramatises itself, becomes

emaciated, and loses its meaning and effectiveness' (Foucault 1977-1978 [2007]:4).

But this is a restatement rather than a response. An evasion rather than an overturning. It is the movement of the fighter who has lost his balance, lacks a centre of gravity, and tries desperately to refind his feet. It also misses the effective centre of Baudrillard's critique. The argument of Baudrillard is not so much that Foucault makes an erroneous analysis of this object called power, but that in tracing the tentacular profligacy of always-already completed *operations of power*, he becomes the mirror and extension of the operations that he claims merely to describe.

Beyond this declarative response and in terms of the substance of the work that follows, Foucault's movement towards governmentality in *Security, Territory, Population*, can be seen to respond to the work of Baudrillard in three ways. First, its uncertain ontological status, that sense on the one hand of strangeness and indefinability, that the objects of Foucault's analysis and the studies of governmentality that take them as their inspiration must *somehow* connect to the world, must have *some kind* of explanatory quality, must make *some kind* of sense, and, on the other hand, that this relatedness, this connection, is nothing definite, nothing clear, nothing definable, nothing explicable without a lingering sense of doubt and confusion ("this can't be real?!"). This seems to me a consequence of an attempt by Foucault to introduce a principle of irreality to his analysis and escape the tyranny of the Real, to free up the analysis of power from its reality principle and move beyond an account based on what Baudrillard would claim is its own simulacrum. Second, if the primary criticism of Foucault's account of power is that it results in a kind of stasis or aporia—a sense that things could not have been otherwise—we should not be surprised to see an attempt to introduce a principle of

activity at the centre of his analysis. The active principle in governmentality is introduced in the following way: tables must be drawn up, accounts must be tallied, decisions must be made. These are not necessarily studies of always-already completed operations of power, but studies of the multi-dimensional apparatus through which operations of power are effectuated. Third, the insistent stress on the freedom of human actors in advanced liberal societies is also, I would argue, a consequence of this attempt by Foucault to respond to the charge of anesthesia and aporia. Governmentality, in presupposing the freedom, the necessary freedom, of the actors that must effectuate its extension, introduces agency into a discourse labelled as soporific of human potential.

This move does not work, however. Calculations are a form of repetition not agency. Tables and taxonomies speak with the voice of an other. The level of analysis is still within the stasis of the archive and the record. The dynamic principle in tabulation is the process of reckoning between words and things: it is the determination of the appropriateness or fit between a set or criteria more or less well specified and something that exists before you (c.f. Cavell 2002; Mulhall 2001; Wittgenstein 1968). The thesis of governmentality lends too much weight to the ordering of the tabulation as such and zero weight to the processes by which an instance becomes “counted” beneath them. This localized and stochastic process of interpretation in which an instance is counted as something —matching up something you see before you to an evaluation or category drawn from a table or code— is inaccessible to a methodology that takes as its datum the stasis of the archive (McKinlay & Taylor 2014). By reproducing in discourse the automatic effectivity of technologies such as the table, the examination, the case; with their targets, their strategies, their objects, their rationalisations; and without at the same time determining the ways in which these materials are taken up, interpreted, deployed, attenuated, subverted, or overthrown; the 1977-1978 lectures *Security, Territory,*

Population fail to free themselves from a reality principle that is rooted precisely in the truth of this automatic efficacy.

The failure of the movement in *Security Territory Population* is evidenced by the shift that comes only a year later in the following lecture series, the second of which Burchell and the school of governmentality consider as the ‘most remarkable annual courses’ (Burchell et al 1991: 1): *On the Birth of Biopolitics*. Indeed, if the lectures contained in *Security Territory Population* are indicative of an attempt by Foucault to free himself from the critique of Baudrillard in a downward movement: away from *a posteriori* evaluations of institutional sedimentations and towards the activity of power in the mechanisms, technologies and techniques through which it is enacted; then the lectures contained in *On the Birth of Biopolitics* can be seen as a manoeuvre following Baudrillard that takes the opposite direction —a movement towards the ideal. In these lectures, the datum of the analysis are not the instruments of governmental power but the rational reflections on governmental practice: the theories and arguments concerning the proper being, scope and limits of just and proper government. It is in these reflections that the elements of governmental practice are taken up, constituted as an object of thought, reflected upon and criticised. Again, we see the attempt to introduce an active principle into a discourse widely accused of stasis and aporia. In this case, the active principle of critical reflection.

Perhaps this attempt to introduce agency and initiative through its necessity in critical thought is an effect of Foucault’s engagement with Descartes (Foucault 1972 [2006]). Whilst the novelty of Foucault’s reading is to reposition Descartes as an historical episode in knowledge that ended the belief in the spiritual conditions of truth (the artist

who must go mad to create; the penitent who must renounce the world to attain redemption; the ascetic who must suffer mortification to understand god; the hero who must go into exile to save his people), there is nonetheless a sense in Descartes *cogito* that thinking, reflecting, and reasoning, is a necessary site of activity, a necessary site of agency, and perhaps, if we follow the usual reading of Descartes as an episode in the history of philosophical skepticism (c.f. Cavell 1979), the only site of agency we can approach with any certitude.

The problem with this manoeuvre is that the reflections Foucault considers are not innocent or disinterested. The rational reflections on governmental practice are narcissistic mirrors in which Power and its admirers are surreptitiously absorbed in a grandiloquent repetition of their own self conception. They are, as Adorno & Horkheimer might point out (1979), deviations from the norm whose propinquity to the norm only serves to reinforce the norm itself. This is due to their immanent affective standpoint, or the being-towards-which, that is constitutive of their form. These are not, after all, critical discourses on the non-necessity of power as such, or on the dream of a power destabilized, desubstantialised, or deinstitutionalised. These are discourses of flattery. They do not want to overthrow power but to capture it. They do not desire the dissolution of power but its redirection for their own ends. Their starting point is always some kind of illegitimate articulation: that this deployment of power is unjust, that this use of power is erroneous, that these applications of power contradict the principles that determine its legitimacy.

Put simply, the rational reflections on governmental practice that form the basis of Foucault's analysis in *On the Birth of Biopolitics* are expressions of the desire for power,

more power, albeit power that takes a different form. Schooled in the mechanisms for the realization of want, they flatter, they charm, they seduce. In their attempt to mirror their other and thereby attain mastery over it they construct an image that corresponds with its fantasy of itself. Thus, the movement to the ideal, to the rational reflection on governmental practices in a sense wholly freed from the materiality of power, does not work. Foucault has fallen for discourses of seduction, discourses that embody a fantasy of power in its ideal functioning, discourses which serve as narcissistic mirrors in which power is absorbed, dreaming of the extension, multiplication, or totalisation of power — power's necessity—, rather than its limitation —power's non necessity—.

I have argued that the two lecture series that follow the publication of *Forget Foucault*, and which serve as the theoretical foundation for studies in the field of governmentality, are attempts by Foucault to free his work from the critique of Baudrillard. These attempts take place inversely along a vertical axis. The first series *Security, Territory, Population* responds to Baudrillard by moving downwards, away from the historical (dis)continuities of momentarily stabilised assemblages such as the prison and towards the material technologies that are the concrete stuff of their operation. The second series *On the Birth of Biopolitics* responds to Baudrillard by shifting upwards, away from the mechanisms through which rule is instantiated into ordinary everyday practice and towards the ideality of critical reflection on these practices. These moves fail insofar as they fail to free Foucault's work from the problems identified by Baudrillard, viz. the problem of stasis or aporia; the problem of extending rather than limiting power; and the problem of denying rather than making possible new forms of human relatedness. Given that these movements reproduce rather than move beyond the limitations identified in Baudrillard's first critique, we should not be surprised to see Baudrillard resume his attack with new ferocity in the follow up volume to *Forget Foucault: Seduction*

(1979), nor should we be surprised to see Foucault continue his tet-a-tet with Baudrillard in the lecture series that follows it (1979-1980). It is to this set of engagements that the paper will now turn.

Seduction

Published in 1979, *Seduction* is both an elaboration of the claims made in *Forget Foucault* and a radical critique of the view of sexuality articulated in the *History of Sexuality Volume 1*. For Baudrillard, it is not as a node, relay or surface of emergence for relations of knowledge-power that sexuality is of interest, but as a privileged domain of seduction.

To be a master of seduction is to be a master of the symbolic universe. It is the attainment of supremacy not through the reality of power and its determinate forces but through the play of empty signs and their elliptical signification. Foucault participates in the monstrosity of an obscene culture of accumulation by privileging the productivity of sexuality, that which makes appear, that which can be accumulated, taken stock of, and known. Foucault is both hostage and accomplice to the orgy of production characteristic of contemporary society. Seduction is that which radically opposes the imposition to produce. It is the play of absence and presence, lack and plenitude, the illusion and disguise, of rouge and lace, or the void that compels in its very emptiness. As opposed to the finality of a power which dominates, seduction is the form which inaugurates reversibility, play and symbolic involvement. We can see this from the other side in its contemporary characterization. In a society based on transparency, seduction is always

that which must be exorcised as artifice, ruse, or as a form of black magic that deviates from the truth —an unjust exaltation of the malicious use of signs.

If, for Foucault in the *History of Sexuality Volume I*, power is the missing element that can make sense of the contemporary experience of sexuality, for Baudrillard:

Seduction is stronger than power because it is reversible and mortal, while power, like value, seeks to be cumulative and immortal. Power takes of all the illusions of production, and of the real; it wants to be real, and so tends to become its own imaginary, its own superstition (with the help of those that analyse it, be they to contest it). Seduction, on the other hand, is not of the order of the real, and is never of the order of form, nor relations of force. But precisely for this reason, it enmeshes all power's real actions, as well as the entire reality of production, in this unremitting reversibility and disaccumulation – without which there would be no power to accumulate.

Baudrillard 1979: 46

We might call this a thematic-substantive critique of Foucault which nevertheless implicates Foucault directly. Baudrillard takes up the material of Foucault's analysis and looks through it with a different set of premises. It is in the negativity of a seduction that compels in its emptiness that sexuality finds its most essential determinant. This much is fairly obvious. What has gone unnoticed in commentators is a set of coded passages in which Baudrillard personally insults Foucault. Against the scholarly consensus in which it is accepted that Foucault never responded directly to Baudrillard, it will be my argument that Foucault responds in kind to Baudrillard's critique the moment he feels he has freed himself from its central points. The response will come in the form of a parable with which Foucault opens his 1979-1980 lectures *On the Government of the Living*

(2014), the first set of lectures that follows the publication of Baudrillard's *Seduction*. Let us turn firstly to Baudrillard's insult to Foucault in *Seduction*, where he mythologises:

The deception can be inscribed in the sky; its power will not be diminished. Every sign of the Zodiac has its form of seduction. For we all seek the favour of a meaningless fate, and place our hopes in the spell that might result from some absolutely irrational conjuncture – here lies the strength of the horoscope and zodiacal signs. No one should laugh at astrology, for he who no longer seeks to be seduced by the stars is the sadder for it. In effect, many a person's misfortune comes from their not having a place in the sky, within a field of signs that would agree with them – that is to say, in the last instance, from their not having been seduced by their birth and its constellation. They will bear this fate for life, and their very death will come at the wrong time.

Baudrillard 1979: 70-71

If seduction is the seduction of an empty sign, a sign 'without referents, empty, senseless, absurd and elliptical' (*ibid*: 74), then Baudrillard here invokes the embryonic Foucault of power, the Foucault who, in his inaugural lecture at the College de France given on the 2nd December 1970, begins

... I should have preferred to become aware that a nameless voice was already speaking long before me, so that I should have only needed to join in, to continue the sentence it had started, and lodge myself, without really being noticed, in its interstices, as if it had signalled to me by pausing, for an instant, in suspense. Thus there would be no beginning, and instead of being the one from whom discourse proceeded, I should be at the mercy of its chance unfolding, a slender gap, the point of its possible disappearance.

Foucault in Young 1981: 51

The pausing and suspense is the void of anticipation between the prophecy of the oracle and its coming to being by means of its words. Foucault must deliver this speech; it is not by chance, accident, luck or fortune. Fate and destiny hang above him. This speech of Foucault is inscribed in the stars, the stars of his birth by which he desires to be seduced, foretold. And what are the stars and astrology other than a nameless voice, a prophetic voice without a body – that needs a body –, a speech function that can be taken up, appropriated, redeployed or transfigured entirely? And what then is the reader, the fortune teller, the *medium*, other than that vessel through which the nameless stars can be instantiated in the form of a form for a formless body. Baudrillard, in *Seduction*, continues:

Thus the charitable idea of founding an Institute of Zodiacal Semiurgy where, just as one's physical appearance can be corrected by plastic surgery, the injustices of the Sign could be righted and the horoscope's orphans finally receive the sign of their choice in order that they might be reconciled with themselves. It would be a great success, at least the equal of that of suicide motels where people will come to die in a manner of their choosing.

Baudrillard 1979: 71

We all know that it was Foucault's only or most notable desire to be able to turn death into an art of pleasure, to arrange for oneself a sequence of pleasures and die at the time, place and manner of your choosing. Foucault dreamed of a death set free from the ballast of tradition and the smug affirmation of selfish life. Remarking upon the heterotopias of pleasure available in Japanese sex hotels he fantasises their equivalent for death, where one can:

Die free of all stereotypes. There you'd have an indeterminate amount of time – seconds, weeks, and months perhaps – until the moment presents itself with compelling clearness [that] would have the shapeless shape of utterly simple pleasure.

Foucault 1979

Baudrillard's mockery is personal and virulent. The text is at bursting point and overflows with rage. Baudrillard has taken up the symbolic challenge of Foucault and returned his gift with vengeance. This, Baudrillard feels, is a service of gratitude. Beware of disciples, thought Nietzsche, and Baudrillard thinks he has done Foucault a favour in freeing him from them. It is Foucault's silence that enrages Baudrillard. This is the lashing out of the ostracised.

The scholarly consensus on "the later Foucault" is that he never responded directly to the accusations of Baudrillard. Whilst Dosse in his biography of Deleuze & Guattari (2010), close friends of Foucault, notes that Foucault was deeply wounded by Baudrillard's critique, the only mention of Baudrillard in contemporary readers of Foucault is as a belligerent contemporary whose work was of less importance and who was generally shunned by the intellectual community. Not one commentary-as-such mentions him. Rose (1999a) draws on what he finds to be an interesting conceptualization of the social in Baudrillard but is silent as to his importance to the work of Foucault and specifically to the governmentality lectures on which he has based his entire oeuvre. Elden (2016), who has had access to Foucault's personal archives and has spent the last two years rummaging through them is similarly silent. The commentaries of Rabinow & Dreyfus (1983), Lemm & Vatter (2014), Dean (2010; 2013), Hoffman (2014), Gutting (2003), Faubion (2014), Nealon (2008), Bernauer & Rasmussen

(1987), Paras (2006), Cousins & Hussain (1984), Davidson (1997), McGushin (2007) Veyne (2010) Flynn (1997; 2005) all similarly make no mention of the importance of Baudrillard to the Foucault that emerges in the *History of Sexuality Volume II*.

Thus far, I have demonstrated how the trajectory of Foucault's work after the *History of Sexuality Volume I* which is found in the lecture series *Security, Territory, Population* and *On the Birth of Biopolitics* can be understood as a response to the claims of Baudrillard made in *Forget Foucault*, and I have outlined a further set of criticisms made by Baudrillard in *Seduction*. What I would like to do now is turn to the series of lectures that follows the publication of Baudrillard's *Seduction* in order to demonstrate that Foucault makes an allegorical response to Baudrillard in the form of a parable.

Foucault Responds to Baudrillard

The lecture series *On the Government of the Living* (1979-1980 [2014]) begins:

The historian Dio Cassius recounts the following story about the Roman Emperor Septimius Severus, who, as you know – well, at any rate, as I know since yesterday – ruled at the end of the second and the beginning of the third century, between 193 and 211 I think. Septimius Severus had a large palace built in which there was, of course, a large ceremonial hall where he granted audience, delivered his judgments, and dispensed justice. On the ceiling of this hall, Septimius Severus had a representation of the star-studded sky painted, which did not represent just any sky, or any stars in no matter what position. What was exactly represented was the sky of his birth; the conjunction of stars that presided over his birth and so over his destiny. His reasons for having this

done are quite clear and explicit and fairly easy to reconstruct. For Septimius Severus the purpose was, of course, that of inscribing his particular and conjunctural judgments within the system of the world and of showing how the *logos* that presided over this order of the world, and over his birth, was the same *logos* that organised, founded, and justified his judgments ... He also wanted to show how his reign was founded by the stars, that it was not an error that he, the roughneck from Leptis Magna, had seized power by force and violence, that it was not by chance or as the result of any human plot that he had seized power, but that he had been called to the position he occupied by the very necessity of the world. His reign, his seizure of power, which could not be founded by the law, was justified once and for all by the stars.

Foucault (1979-1980 [2014]: 1)

Foucault takes up the elements of Baudrillard's critique and rearticulates them in a dramatic form. Fate, destiny, ordination, one's future inscribed in the stars. For Foucault, Baudrillard's characterization of himself is as if he is like Septimius Severus, the roughneck from Magna Carta who sought to justify his power by inscribing it in the very necessity of the world. Foucault will deny this characterisation as he continues:

Severus was nevertheless a prudent man, since if he had his astral sky represented on the ceiling of the hall in which he passed judgment, there was however a small patch of this sky that he had not represented, that he carefully hid, and that was represented only in another room, the emperor's own, to which only he and no doubt some of his household had access, and this small patch of astral sky, which no one had the right to see, which only the emperor knew, was, of course, what one calls the horoscope in the strict sense, that which enables one to see the hour, this being, of course, the hour of death. Of course, no one had access to the sky of death that fixed the end of his good fortune.

Ibid: 2-3

If, Baudrillard, I am as you accuse me: this Septimius Severus; this Emperor of the philosophical establishment; this Caesar; this tyrant who elides the injustice of his power with the empty phantom of a promised liberation... If I am all this that you accuse to me to be then I am nevertheless prudent. I am the captain of my fate, the master of my destiny. I will not follow you to that place where you want to lead me. No one can take charge of my fate and place on me a limit that would result in my death.

Foucault is about to perform another maneuver, a shift in his thought that will allow him to continue the analysis of themes such as madness, the prison, the abnormal, that are so characteristic of his work, whilst at the same time freeing these analyses from the critique that threatened to destroy them. It is by investigating this movement, this penultimate turn, that we make possible the articulation of a new ethnographic perspective free from the limitations of the earlier Foucault and from the studies in the field of governmentality that takes them as their inspiration. Foucault continues:

The star-studded sky of Septimius Severus, above his justice, is almost the exact opposite of the story of Oedipus. For after all, the destiny of Oedipus was not above his head in a star-studded sky represented on a ceiling, but attached to his feet, to his steps, to the ground and to the paths going from Thebes to Corinth and from Corinth to Thebes. His destiny was in his feet, under his feet; a destiny known to no-one, neither him nor any of his subjects. A destiny that was going to lead him to his ruin.

Ibid: 3

I am not Septimius, says Foucault. I am Oedipus. I am not that tyrant who sought to install his power as a necessity founded in the very order of the world, but the truth

seeking savior of the city, cursed by my powers of sight, and driven into exile by the very people I tried to save. I have not proceeded cynically, each step representing a calculated maneuver to extend and solidify my power. I have roamed humbly, not knowing where I am going or who I am, but blindly following an unknown path that I was led along by the soles of my feet. Before making the movement that will free himself from the critique of Baudrillard, therefore, Foucault responds in the form of an allegory, he responds by saying that I am not this person you think I am, and I will show you this by making a further turn in my work.

In making this movement, Foucault does not merely respond to the criticisms made of *Discipline and Punish* and the *History of Sexuality Volume I*. Instead, he invokes the series of works that in an important sense began with his inaugural lecture at the College de France: *The Order of Discourse*. It is a move in regard to his own corpus similar to that of Heidegger at the beginning of *Being and Time* (Mulhall 2001). The invocation in his description of Septimius of the logos that presides over his judgments as the logos that founds the order of the world is a clear invocation of the analysis that began Foucault's aventure amoureuse with power: his first series of lectures at the College de France *Lectures on the Will to Know* (1970-1971: 2013). It is in the *Lectures on the Will to Know* that Foucault considers Hesiod's *Works and Days* (700BC [2010]), an ancient song that warns of the dangers that face a people when their King's decrees do not cohere with the logos of the world. Out of joint with the order of things, Diké, the goddess of Justice, leaves the city, and in her absence chaos reigns.

The *dikaion* [justice] is linked therefore to an order of the world; Diké ensures that man's happiness corresponds to the soundness of judgments; absent from it, she sees to it that the town and fields suffer unjust judgments.

Foucault 1970-1971 [2013]: 95

Foucault, if he can avoid the charge that he is Septimius Severus, is not just freeing himself from the problems associated with the governmentality lectures, but is also freeing himself from the problems associated with his former analyses, from the trajectory of analyses that began with *The Order of Discourse* and which reached their apogee in *The History of Sexuality Volume 1*. These analyses are defined by their engagement with the problem of power; the problem of power, of course, being the exact turning point of the critique of Baudrillard.

Let's turn to the movements that follow the parable of Septimius Severus and see how Foucault once again takes up this problem of power. The first thing to note is a shift in terrain. In the lectures *On the Government of the Living* the datum of the analysis will no longer be the traces and residues of power in the form of its always-already completed operations (*Discipline and Punish* 1976, *The History of Sexuality Volume I* 1977). Neither will it be an analysis of the technologies and instruments through which a rationality of government is made real in the ordinary everyday of its subjects (*Security, Territory, Population* 1977-1978). Nor, finally, will it be an analysis of the rational reflections on the proper use of power and the reasoned construction of a governmental edifice that is mindful of its limits (*On the Birth of Biopolitics* 1978-1979).

What will concern Foucault in the lectures *On the Government of the Living* 1979-1980 is power inasmuch as it is displayed, staged, and made manifest alongside the truth that must serve as its foundation. This is not a truth rationally established through procedures of demonstration or proof, but the *mise en scene* of a truth that makes 'itself appear against the background of the of the unknown, hidden, invisible, and unpredictable' (6). Where Baudrillard argued that power is not a positivity nor finality

but is transfigured into signs and becomes its own simulacrum, Foucault agrees that there is no power without luxurious manifestation, no power without the truth of that power being displayed in a ritual proceeding of exuberant dramaturgy.

Where there is power, where power is necessary, where one wishes to show effectively that this is where the power lies, there must be truth. And where there is no truth, where there is no manifestation of truth, it is because there is no power, or it is too weak, or incapable of being power. Power's strength is not independent of a truth that goes far beyond what is merely useful or necessary to govern well

Foucault 1979-1980 [2014]: 9

Foucault proposes a study of *alethurgy*, or the ritual 'manifestation of truth [through] verbal and non verbal procedures by which one brings to light what is laid down as true as opposed to false' (*ibid*: 7). In conducting this study of alethurgy Foucault wants to emphasise three themes. The first is the simple observation of a relationship between the manifestation of truth and the exercise of power. No power without show, no show without truth. The second theme is the curious necessity of the truth in alethurgy to manifest itself in the form an individual subject who says "I am, I was, I saw, I agree". As in the tragedy of Oedipus where the truth has to pass through an eyewitness before it can be accepted by the chorus, there is no alethurgy which does not in some way implicate the subject. The third theme, finally, is that the effects of truth manifested in alethurgy are always beyond utilitarian relations of knowledge. The display of power is always excessive, always beyond what might be necessary to found its validity or justify its extension.

When considered in the context of a movement away from the problems associated with

his earlier works it is the second theme of alethurgy that proves decisive. One of the major criticisms of Foucault highlighted earlier in this chapter was the strange epistemological status of his writings. What do they relate to, what is the manner of their relation, and how do they relate? This strangeness and ineffability (“it can’t be real?”) is in part down to the strangeness of the positioning of the subject: a subject which is at first absent and then second epiphenomenal.

The Foucault of *The Order of Things* (1966 [1969]) sees discourse as a strange, ineffable, mysterious and most importantly anonymous phenomenon. The subject disappears as a point of non-intentional refraction. Discourse works in and through individuals without them ever really controlling or directing it. The Foucault of the *History of Sexuality Volume I* sees discourse as the condition of subjectivity and subjectivity as the object-effect of power-knowledge relations forged in discourse. Here, the subject is not understood as a point of discursive refraction but as a point of transfer, node, or relay. Discourse does not pass anonymously through individual subjects but constitutes them, is negotiated by them, is taken up by them and deployed in the struggle against particular forms of government. The subject is epiphenomenal in respect of the discursive formations of which it is the inescapable outcome. A thin account of subjectivity replaces an account based on its absence. The subject in the analyses of *On the Government of the Living* is not the absent subject of the *Order of Things*, nor the thin subject of *The History of Sexuality Volume I*, but a thick subject understood as an embodied site of entanglement in which multiple and competing relations of truth and power ossify and are made to cohere through practice, resulting in a particular kind of life, experience, and being. It is in and through the subject working on itself, concerning itself, and by itself or in relation to others, that regimes of truth and power are able to take hold and hold fast, that the subject is, in a word, subjectified, or made subject. They

do not achieve this mysteriously, ineffably, or anonymously, but in and through collective practices in which self-to-self and self-to-other relationships are formed. The subject is not subjected by chance or accident but by (in)definite mechanisms of subjection that subjectify the subject in accordance with (in)definite objectives.

The focus on procedures of alethurgy is central to the problematic of the subject because in alethurgy the truth must pass through an individual subject in order to be true. It must pass through an individual who can say I, an individual who can serve as the I of power. Alethurgy implicates the subject inasmuch as it demands and requires truth acts. The implication of the subject in these truth acts takes three forms: Firstly, the subject is implicated operator, as the person who carries out the ritual. Secondly, the subject is implicated as spectator witness, as the person or people who confirm that the ritual has been carried out and who verifies that the correct procedures have been followed. Thirdly and most importantly the subject is implicated as its object or that which the truth concerns, that which at the end of it all the ritual of alethurgy is about.

If we take the classic example of the *benge* oracle (Evans-Pritchard 1937) we can see the three roles quite clearly. The *benge* oracle is a ritual procedure utilized by the Azande of Nigeria to determine whether or not a member of their community harbours ill feelings towards another. A poisonous mixture is made from a special bark and culpability is determined depending on whether or not a chick who is fed this mixture lives or dies. The outcome of the ritual is the production of a truth that connects up with and sets in motion determined mechanisms of reconciliation (truth effects/ power). In the administration of the *benge* oracle there is of course the operator: the shaman who conducts the ritual, prepares the poison, and administers it to the chick. Then there are

the witnesses: the members of the community who watch the ritual and make sure that the proper procedures are followed and that no trickery is involved. Finally there is the object, or that which the ritual concerns, in this case being the person whose culpability will depend on whether or not the chick lives or dies. Ritual production of a truth. Truth effects of truth. The implication of the subject as operator, witness, or object in the procedure of alethurgy.

There are many procedures of alethurgy that take on this tripartite structure. There is also, however, a special kind of alethurgy in which the role of operator, the role of spectator, and the role of object, are all performed by the same individual. These are the reflexive truth acts, or the truth acts that are carried out by oneself, witnessed by oneself, and which in the end concern oneself. For Foucault the most historically important example of the reflexive truth act is the practice of the Christian confession. In confession the subject is the operator of the alethurgy, since it is through his own speech that something is revealed and brought to light; the subject is the witness of the alethurgy, inasmuch as he gazes into his own soul to discover the truth of what he is; and finally, the subject is the object of the alethurgy, inasmuch as the confession concerns himself and is delivered in order to bring about a transformation in the relation of self to self.

The confession is a privileged example of reflexive alethurgy because of its far reaching historical consequences. It is for Foucault the essence of a philosophical event, or a moment in thought which takes on such dimensions as to have consequences today. The focus on the Christian confession is also what allows for a broadening of the dimensions of Foucault's analysis from a practice one might consider somewhat marginal or

anachronistic to a near total indictment of our cultural system. It is what allows Foucault to ask:

Why and how does the exercise of power in our society, the exercise of power as government of men, demand not only acts of obedience and submission, but truth acts in which individuals who are also subjects as actors, spectator witnesses, or objects in manifestation of truth procedures. Why in this great system of relations of power has a regime of truth developed indexed to subjectivity?

Foucault 1979-1980 [2014]: 82

Why does power not only demand a subject who says “look, here I am, obeying you” but “look, this is who I am, this is what I have seen, and this is what I have done”? It is through the long and meandering history of the Christian confession, argues Foucault, that we can begin to understand the foundations of a society that is at its heart confessional, a society in which there is a constant obligation to make manifest the truth of oneself, a society which binds its members through the obligation to speak and embody the truth of what they are, and a society in which the truth of the subject is the essential condition for the reproduction of the relationships that make it what it is. What is proposed is an analysis of the ritual procedures of alethurgy which is at the same time a history of the force of truth, ‘a history of the force of truth and of the ties by which men have gradually bound themselves in and through the manifestation of truth’ (*ibid*: 101)

Let us bring this penultimate movement in Foucault’s thought back to the critique of Baudrillard before considering how an evaluation of the contours of the movement —to the subject, to modes and mechanisms of subjectivation, and to ritual procedures of

alethurgy— allows for the fashioning of a new ethnographic perspective on contemporary modalities of subjectification.

To Baudrillard's challenge that Foucault is the mirror of power he describes, that by tracing always-already completed operations of power he shows it to be more real, more unsurpassable, more definite, acting as power's indefinite extension, Foucault shifts the focus of his analysis to the mechanisms and procedures through which power-truth relations are forged. A prospective-constructive perspective, then, rather than a retrospective-constructed one. To the charge of stasis and aporia, that there is no movement, no activity, and no space for meaningful resistance, Foucault begins an analysis in which it is through the conscientious activity of the individual subject that power takes hold and holds fast. Since a society without power relations is inconceivable, the identification of the locus of subjectification is at the same time the identification of the locus of freedom, as it is through an engagement with the modalities of one's subjection that one is able to constitute one's being as an object, reflect upon it, and decide whether or not to be something else. To the charge of strangeness and indefinability of relation to the world, Foucault begins an analysis of the concrete mechanisms through which the subject is bound to the regimes of truth and power which make it what it is. To the charge that tables and taxonomies speak in the voice of another, are in an important sense anonymous, and ignore the hermeneutic process in which they are taken up and instantiated into a definite practice, Foucault begins an analysis of truth regimes in their plethora, in which the subject, object, and end of the regime is always in question.

Baudrillard, Foucault & Ethnography

There are two sets of questions that emerge from an analysis of Foucault's later thought understood as a deep conversation with the resounding critique of Baudrillard. These questions can be taken as the starting point for the articulation of a new kind of ethnographic investigation concerning personhood, social (re)production and modalities of subjectification in late modern society. It is through an ethnographic investigation of these questions that an analysis of the government of conduct can be made which frees itself from the limitations of Foucault's earlier works and from the limitations of the studies of governmentality which takes these works as their inspiration (Brady 2014).

An investigation which sets out to answer these two sets of questions would at the same time address one of the central issues in critical thought: the problematic relationship between continuity and change. This problem takes on two forms depending on whether an analysis privileges social reproduction or social change. In analyses which privilege social reproduction there is often no space left for initiative, agency, or dynamism. The subject becomes inert matter epiphenomenal to the structured forms that they are doomed to repeat. We can see how patterned regularities emerge but cannot account for divergences and dissonance. In analyses which privilege social transformation there is often no space left for continuity, reproduction, or stability. Everything is in a state of radical flux or entropy. We can see how things are always changing but cannot account for the exasperating stubbornness of repeatable forms.

The first set of questions that, investigated ethnographically, would begin to address the problems of continuity and change and move beyond the limitations of Foucault's earlier works and the governmentality studies that takes them as their inspiration would be a set of questions concerning the regimes of truth and procedures of alethurgy that make possible the forms of being characteristic of our times. These are questions such as: What are the regimes of truth and power? How have they come take on the form that they have? What are their epistemological and ontological supports? On what presumptions are they founded? What do they presuppose? What do they take as their problem and how respond to that problem? On what matrices of continuity and discontinuity are they based? This would be an analysis of the complex field of competing, contradicting, opposing or cohering forces that provide the framework within which or background against which particular forms of being come to exist and are reproduced.

This first set of questions has been addressed from the perspective of the archive in both Foucault's own studies and in governmentality studies. The problems and limitations arise because of the perspective that these investigations take as their starting point. They are always based on a methodology committed to the stasis of the archive, the inertia of documentation, or the remembrance of the interview. They are analyses of always-already completed operations blind to moments of deviance, refusal, subversion or overthrow. The framework provided by regimes of truth and power takes on a totalizing and tyrannical character, infiltrating every interstices and saturating every dimension. There is no outside. An account of how these regimes are actually realised in empirical settings is totally absent. They betray a kind of diabolically autonomous character and seem more effective, more real, more definite and more insurpassable than they actually are.

The second set of questions is not so much concerned with the tenor and morphology of the regimes of truth and conduct to which we are subjected but with modes of subjection and the mechanisms of attachment through which more or less successful attempts are made to bind us to these regimes. The analysis of this second set of questions would develop a generally unremarked upon aspect of Foucault's later work which is the constant evocation of a vocabulary of binding, holding, fastening, fixing. I call this the semantics of attachment. An investigation concerning attachment would be an ethnographic investigation of the mechanisms and procedures through which we become subject, in the sense of subjected, to certain orders considered to be true, just, virtuous, right, necessary, fair, proper, etcetera. How is it that we become bound to and thus compelled by external orders of truth and conduct? In what ways does the archipelago of rule in late modern society demand and require that we embody and speak a truth that in the end concerns ourselves? How are these mechanisms constructed and operated in the banal context of the ordinary everyday? What kinds of strategies are deployed to deny them, evade them, subvert them, or overthrow them? To what extent do they grasp individual subjects in their very being and to what extent does the individual subjectivity break free of them and reserve a part of themselves for themselves?

If personhood is understood as the site of multiple subjections, as the residue and sedimentation of forms of behavior, regimes of conduct, orders of belief, kinds of performance, viz, as that complex and contradictory locus in which certain things are true and ought to be done, then an investigation into mechanisms of attachment should give us some insight into the constitution of the modern soul and the (re)production of personhood in contemporary society, both in terms of the kinds of person we desire to

be produced and the kinds of person that our mechanisms of subjection encourage the production of. Where most commentators have a kind of normative obsession with the idea of askesis, self-fashioning and life as the art of existence in Foucault's later work, I would like to focus on Foucault's earlier themes of compulsion and docility but with a renewed anthropological lens that avoids the problems associated with them.

The School

Though there are many contemporary phenomena that could be studied from the perspective of regimes of truth and modes and mechanisms of subjection to those truths one institution represents something of a privileged domain and that is of course the school (Simons & Mascchelein 2006). Whether or not we feel that the school performs its function well or badly, teaches the right or the wrong thing, helps in the formation of the right or wrong kind of person, imparts knowledge that is useful, useless, legitimate, illegitimate, comprehensive, conservative, enabling or restricting, the school is the embodiment *par excellence* of an assemblage or *dispositif* that (1), upholds a series of regimes of truth, and (2), attempts —through various mechanisms, technologies and procedures— to bind its students to these regimes, to render them subject, to subjectify them.

Much has been written about the school as the essential vector of social (re)production (Apple 2000, 2004, 2006, 2011; Bourdieu 1990; Illich 2000; Postman & Weingartner 1971; Willis 1977) —as the institutional *dispositif* through which normative forms of relatedness are cultivated in the young, thereby making possible the varying forms of

inequality and injustice which constitute our strange new world (Dardot and Laval 2014). The mid twentieth century was the rosy fingered dawn for the hope of a society made just through universal education accessible equally and to all (Ball 2013; Walsh 2006). This dream, and the cosy nostalgia for childhood that came along with it, darkens in the social reproduction literature. Here we are gripped by a bleak twilight in which education rigidifies rather than loosens our socio-economic structures and the idealities which serve as their support (see also ref – history of the school). More recent studies (Ball 1999; 2003) extend these concerns to a proximate mutation in which the school is colonised by neoliberal imperatives and a corporate culture of managerialism, performance, and targets based learning. The latent potential of an educative growth always tending towards the outside is finally annulled by high stakes testing and the inescapable destiny of career. Where once in the interstices one could experience something approximating learning and empowerment now all avenues are closed and subjection to the examination total and complete.

Both of these literatures suffer from many of the problems associated with the literature on the earlier Foucault and the studies of governmentality which takes these works as their inspiration, viz. the problem of stasis and aporia (how could it ever be different, how can we move forward?), the problem of extending rather than limiting power (operations are completed perfectly, without resistance, subversion or failure), and the problem of denying rather than making possible new forms of relatedness (given the rigidity of the school as it is and the complexity of its positioning in relation to other institutions it would be inconceivable that a form could be created which diverges too widely from its current dimensions). The tendency is to flatten the specificity and complexity of this strange and anachronistic assemblage into something resembling a cold and unfeeling monster for the manufacture of consent. The positioning of the

analyses also allows for the suspension of disbelief. They more often than not state that particular forms are prevalent, claim that particular forms cohere, argue that particular outcomes are inevitable, but what they do not show, at the level of everyday practice, is how these institution-effects come, or do not come, to be. This is again a methodological necessity. An interview, like the archive, pertains to completed operations, definite outcomes, formed evaluations.

An ethnographic perspective concerning regimes of truth and modes and mechanisms of subjection to those truths would alleviate some of these difficulties. By freeing ourselves from the stasis of the archive and the remembrance of the interview we become alive to moments of refusal, subversion, redeployment, or overthrow — moments to which the archive is in an important sense necessarily blind (Clarke et al 2007). By untangling ourselves from the mantra like grid of governmental analyses we dismantle that cage in which discourse is always necessary and effective and make possible the analysis of discourse as irony, play. This allows for an analysis in which the quality and extent of the penetration of discursive power into the materiality of practice and the innermost heart of the subject is placed as a question to be answered rather than a *fait accompli* (Teghtsoonian 2015). It would not tend towards totality, like the superabundant promiscuity of an archive, but would form itself as a landscape: as a series of moments in which attempts are made with varying degrees of success or failure to make an individual subject; moments which often do not cohere; moments which more often than not contradict, undermine, ignore, or oppose each other; moments which are uncertain, unstable, unevenly distributed and rarely without opposition; moments which, finally, need not be earnest, serious, or determinate, but which can free themselves from the ballast of rule in subversion, mockery, or the always satirical form of perfunctory symbolism (Collier 2009).

When we add to this re-imagining of the school as a privileged territory of subjection the critique by Baudrillard that made it possible, we are able to articulate the outline of an ethnographic investigation of the school that makes two moves in respect of studies in the field of governmentality.

Firstly, it allows for an investigation of the school as an assemblage of techniques, structures, processes, mechanisms, etcetera, understood as modalities of subjection, or the material practices through which,

1. individuals are made the subject of various truths, and,
2. individuals are made subject to the regimes of truth that make these truths possible, —subjection to the truth, and subjection to the regime that makes truth possible, are the fundamental conditions of being and becoming in human society.

The question is not simply: what are the mechanisms? And how are they connected in thought? But: how do the mechanisms fail? And how are people attached to them in materiality? How does power take hold, keep close, and fix those under its sway to the principles internal to its operation? How do people evade its grasp? What efforts are made to subvert, evade, deny, or overthrow the truth of truth (the truth-as-such), the regimes of truth (truth-in-kind), and the truths-in-particular (this or that truth) that make up the possibilities of being and experience in late modern society?

Secondly, it allows for the deployment of Baudrillard's thesis of hyperreality and seduction —usually depicted as opposed to Foucault— alongside him, providing, in

fact, the first and most remarkable element of disciplinary culture, namely, the hyperreality of signs and the game of seduction. By positing the later Foucault as in deep conversation with Baudrillard, I am able to squeeze myself out from between them and deploy their insights in a complementary rather than contradictory manner.

What these moves make possible in turn is the articulation of an ethnographic perspective on the modern school that I will call The Disciplinary Triumvirate, a reductive abstraction, that allows for a territorialisation of the modalities of an institution, the purpose of which is to make individuals the subjects of truth in the following senses:

- as the subject of the truth of truth
- as the subject of the truth of knowledge,
- as the subject of the truth of conduct,
- as the subject of the truth of identity,
- as the subject of the truth of desire,
- as the subject of the truth of the norm,
- as the subject of the truth of temporality,
- as the subject of the truth of law,
- and as the subject of the truth of morality.

In short, as the subject of the truth of a mode of being —a form of life.

The Disciplinary Triumvirate

The Disciplinary Triumvirate is a three-levelled system of attachment to the mechanisms of power constitutive of the contemporary imagination and the qualities of being that it makes possible. The subjections just indicated are the outcomes and function of this system. The three levels are: 1 The system of signs and seduction. 2 The disciplinary culture proper. 3 The incorrigible and the exclusion.

In the first section concerning the system of signs and seduction, *Seduction and its Discontents*, I articulate the emergence of the performative school against a very brief history of schooling. The main content of this section is a thoroughgoing ethnographic analysis of the corporate cult of performance and assessment that grips the contemporary comprehensive school. Following the student as they progress through the school year, I investigate the sites of observation and analysis where classifications are made and values are assigned. I try to show how these assessments materialise themselves in real world settings, and further, how students and teachers relate to them, negotiate them, relay or refuse them. The next question is what happens on the basis of evaluations thus formed? Here I show the ways in which classifications are linked up with secondary mechanisms of monitoring, isolation, punishment, and correction. I then move to the classroom and try to show all of the ways that the cult of performance shapes pedagogic practice. I understand the series of mechanisms that embody and express the cult of performance as manifold ways in which the school tries to integrate students into its culture, bind them to a regime of truth, fix them to an order of conduct, and render them subject to definite arrangements of knowledge and power. The structure of assessment and structure of classroom learning appear as two primary

means for the establishment in Scoolies of the monarchy of criteria and the sovereignty of the exam. The internal contradictions of this cult are outlined and an attempt is made to show how these contradictions manifest themselves in the school. It is argued, in the end, that the this system produces rather than abates the disorder that is a primary concern in public debates on schooling. Finally, I draw a number of theoretical conclusions from this perspective on the inside, and make a number of arguments concerning the function of the school in relation to society.

This first level of discipline, however, does not work, fails, and constantly breaks down. Thus the second level of the disciplinary triumvirate can be understood as a kind of supplementary and secondary group of procedures that step in where the system of signs and seduction fails (the point of signs and seduction, of course, is to produce an auto-compliance that attenuates the necessity of other enactments).

The system of signs and seduction fails when students are not seduced by empty signs (perhaps recognising their emptiness and irrelevance), when students refuse to acknowledge the value of brute acquiescence to the regime of the test (perhaps understanding that it limits in the same movement that it promises), and when students refuse to accept the constantly proposed relation of necessity between their blind subordination in this moment and their promised freedom in another (perhaps understanding that this promised freedom is in fact a modulation in the conditions of domination, and a more thoroughgoing one at that). In short, the system of seduction fails when it is disavowed at the level of its rationalisation or enactment by students for whom there is little to hope for from compliance and much to gain by subversion.

This second and supplementary system is the level that one might conventionally understand as the level of discipline proper, and concerns the structures, processes, networks, flows, actors, spaces, subjectivities, signs and symbols, speech and gesture, techniques and technologies, through which attempts are made to reattach recalcitrant subjects to the discipline of the test, to the mechanisms of assessment. An investigation of this second system would ask questions such as: What regimes of categorization are used to identify students understood as difficult, troublesome, recalcitrant, or incorrigible? How are these values generated? What effects do they take? What pathways do they enable? What trajectories do they foreclose? What procedures do they activate? What spaces do they bring into being? Which personages do they bring to life? In short, the analysis of the second level will form an ethnographic study of the disciplinary culture of the school.

But this second system in turn breaks down, fails continually, is subverted, resisted, attenuated, undermined and overthrown. Thus, where the first system fails to seduce students into conformity through the deployment of a gradated system of empty signs, and where the second system fails to induce students into conformity through an array of practices, promises and punishments, there is a third level for the production and removal of the incorrigible subject. This is, of course, the level of exclusion, representing the terminus point of the disciplinary trajectory. Exclusion here is differentiated from the forms of exclusion present in the second level (internal exclusion, the referral room, etc.) and refers rather to temporary and permanent exclusion from the school proper.

Here, in the domain of exclusion, I will consider the set of processes, practices, rituals, trajectories, patterns, actors, subjectivities, techniques, technologies and forms of

discourse through which the value of incorrigibility is produced, and how it is that this value goes on to be actualised in the form of the removal of the student from the school, rationalised by staff in a unified and unifying discourse “we have done all we can.”

So, *The Disciplinary Triumvirate*:

1. The System of Signs and Seduction.
2. The Culture of Discipline.
3. The Incorrigible and the Exclusion.

Into the Field

We might ask practically, how do we utilise this somewhat schematic perspective and get on and go about the field? How do we start out, orient ourselves, and begin to address the questions that frame our investigation in an ethnographic context? Firstly, we must be there, in person, to observe the enactment of these logics and so to be alive to moments of failure and subversion. Secondly, and as a consequence, we must direct our attention not to one or another mechanism but to the functioning of the institution as a whole and to those linkages which will inevitably serve as weak points (c.f. Ball 2015b). Put simply, we must follow the thing (Appadurai 1986; Marcus 1995). If the school is understood as an assemblage of mechanisms, processes, technologies and procedures for the attachment of student subjects to the regime of the examination, the truth of the test, and the inescapable destiny of career, then we must direct our attention to all those moments where students try to resist these orders, to the events and confrontations which the school endlessly inflicts upon hardy souls running the

gauntlet of resistance, to those repeatable forms whose very contours are defined by the possibility and probability of subversion.

Schools, like most disciplinary institutions, are characterized (formally, if not substantively) by an appearing-to-rational, appearing-to-be-linear and appearing-to-be-coherent system for attenuating subversion, recalcitrance, refusal or denial in respect of those truths that they hold to be true. If we follow the student as they make their way through the triumvirate we should be able to compose a bricolage of privileged moments that attempt to bind the student to an order of truth. We cannot be at all times everywhere. Pathways become lost; trajectories fall short; discussions are anxiously sequestered in private offices; data is erased; incidents posing mortal danger are glossed over, hidden, put to the side, or in any case cease to be a subject for polite discussion. We follow our feet then, conscious of all that we are missing, and assemble something approximating a landscape, an impression, an accentuation of significant features and a casting into shade of that which escapes the scrutiny of the eye and the deftness of the hand.

Too Much Too Young

It could be argued that the objects I try to consider are altogether too large, the subjects too unstable, the scenario effervescent and overflowing and the *mise en scene* at once immediate and incapturable. It could be argued further that this is all too much; that each section of this thesis could, or perhaps should, form a thesis of its own; that my analyses are altogether too brief —too hasty; that rather than engaging with the whole I

should engage with a part: that rather than exploring now I should explore later; that rather than expanding my scope I should narrow it down until it is “small enough to fit on a pin head,” as a supervisor of a friend once said. But it could also be argued that each subsection could, or perhaps should, form a thesis. And then it could be argued that each heading could, or perhaps should, form a thesis. And then each paragraph. And then each sentence. And finally, with a little imagination, we would be left with The Word, and the word would devolve to words and the words would devolve to sections and the sections would devolve to books... We would start with the whole too small, end up with the part too all, and be back where we started. I have proceeded as I have, and I believe that the results justify the approach.

My thesis is singular in the way that it rejects hypotheses and the kind of investigation a hypothesis presupposes, in the way that it eschews the investigation of established or already-framed problems, in the way that it denies the existence of disciplines and disciplinary boundaries, and in the way that it inverts the usual direction of scholarly enquiry: where most studies take a problem in scholarship, say, the relationship between gender and language, and find some site or problem that might address it, say, the emergence of a particular form of gendered talk in the classroom, I try to take problems in real life and see how scholarly discourse can help make sense of them. This results in two oddities. An oddity in the status of literature and an oddity in the arrangement of the text.

The status of literature becomes odd because of the sheer number of topics that a thesis that tries to capture something of the whole of schooling has to contend with. While nearly every section of this thesis has an established literature it could be positioned in

response to, the sheer volume of that literature would make the thesis untenable. There is an old but fascinating literature, unique both in contents and scope, on discipline in the school, that emerges at the beginning of the twentieth century (references). There is a characteristically technical discussion on exclusion in contemporary education studies (Carlile 2012; Machin & Sandi 2018; McCluskey 2012; McGregor et al 2015; Parsons & Castle 1998; Rendall 2016; Slee & Allen 2001). I could have positioned my first section in response to a criminological literature on labelling (Becker 1963; Lemert 1951; Matza 1969), or I could have pursued the more abstract route of Baudrillard and hyper-reality (1981, 1990, 1993, 1994, 1998, 1996a, 1996b, 2005, 2007, 2010a, 2010b). The notion of performance could have been broken out by a sustained engagement with Butler (1990; 1997a; 1997b; 2005). And surely, when I talk about laughter, I could talk about Nietzsche (1872 [2000]; 1887 [2001] , and Kierkegaard (1841 [1989]), and Schopenhauer (1818/1844 [1907]), and that's before we get close to our contemporaries.

Further to the sheer volume of literature necessary, to have to, in an arbitrary and gauche manner, make each moment or argument or section respond to a literature would destroy the coherence and fluency of the text, confusing the reader and ruining the argument. Connections from one section to the next would be lost as these strange and awkward literatures loomed like so many icebergs. The reader would become something of a hurdler, jumping over the literature to rediscover the thread of an argument that preceded it. The continuity, cadence and flow would be sacrificed, and sacrificed for nothing.

As opposed to proceeding in the traditional way, therefore, I have explored a substantial literature on Governmentality Studies, on Foucault, on Baudrillard, and on critical studies

in Education. I have utilised these literatures to form a perspective or a way of seeing, and then I have deployed that perspective or way of seeing in the context of a school. Elaborating on a scenario or an occurrence I draw upon various ideas, concepts, studies or debates from philosophy, anthropology, history, critical theory, education or criminology, to illuminate or make sense of it. There is a necessary ambivalence here. A comprehensive study of one set of literature to formulate a perspective on the one hand, and a magpie approach of many literatures to make sense of the problems that this perspective throws up on the other.

Adopting a perspective and placing my feet on the ground throws up a second oddity and that is in the arrangement of the text. It would make no sense for me having proceeded in the way that I have to foreclose each elaboration in the iron cage of an introduction or the eschatology of a plan. To do so would be contrary to the essence of the thesis and to the spirit of an educational field in which enclosure is a prime deficiency. In every piece of analysis where it is appropriate to do so I first describe a scenario, an occurrence, or a scene, break it out into an analysis, and then break out the analysis into questions or conclusions or continuities. The form of my writing corresponds with the form of my analysis. To give the end at the beginning would spoil the quality of the argument, like those movie trailers that tell the whole story in advance and leave you wondering what the point of watching the film is.

This is what lends the thesis its heteroglossic quality (c.f. Bakhtin 1982). Rather than situating myself within a discipline, reaching out now and again, here and there, gropingly, and without rigour or proper understanding, I situate myself within *a world*, and see what opportunities for understanding that world provides. Where I see a

cultural product like a film or a television show, or a social practice that in some way relates to the school or to the features of the school I am trying to describe, I deploy that text. There is something of a dialectic where the inside is brought into conversation with an outside so that, on the one hand, continuities and contradictions can be brought out and investigated, and also so that, on the other, my arguments become illustrated by and embedded within the pathos of a story as opposed to the tedium of a rubrick.

“But you have just written a preface?”

“At least it’s short.”

M. F.

Foucault (1972 [2006]): 68

What I Did

I spent two school years conducting a full time ethnography of a tough comprehensive school in North London. It took me some time to find a suitable research site. I must have written letters to a hundred schools, had a look around ten or twenty, seriously pursued five or six, and finally decided on one. My main concern in making this decision was firstly, the representativeness of the school – I wanted a school that was in some sense *prima facie* typical – and secondly, the level of access that I could secure in exchange for voluntary work. I chose the school I did mainly because of the level of access they offered. My proposal, which was happily accepted, was to offer fifteen hours per week of my time in a voluntary capacity (acting simultaneously as a researcher) and to have as close to free reign to the rest of the school as possible when I wasn’t required to work (acting solely as a researcher). Naturally, some teachers and members of staff

refused participation, but the level of access I achieved was in the end quite remarkable. A summary of my research activities should serve as sufficient demonstration of this.

I tried to split my time as best as possible between the various aspects of the school, to get as good an insight as possible into each aspect and to understand how these aspects fit together. As a researcher I spent a lot of time observing lessons, chatting to staff in the smoking area, listening to conversations in the staff room, taking notes in the restorative centre or the referral room, walking down the corridors during lessons and in break times, digging around in the school's computer system to see what documents or information I could find. I tried to avoid openly taking notes wherever possible. I never used a dictaphone. And I only started to conduct formal interviews in the last 4 months of my stay as I felt doing so earlier would interfere with my research.

It was as a volunteer-researcher, however, that I really got an insight into the backroom processes of the school, became close to the staff and the students, and began to fade into the background, as every good ethnographer should. This started with quite basic tasks like yard duty, break duty, lunch duty, helping out at after school events, and the like. But as soon as the school started to see my capabilities they were quick to utilise them. Where I did a good job I would invariably be given more responsibilities and quickly. At first I was appointed as a member of the Student Support Panel which is a weekly meeting where senior staff got together to discuss problem students. Knowing that I was going around observing lessons, the teachers would often ask if I had anything to contribute, any feelings about a student, anything that I had seen, and sometimes, if I had any knowledge or expertise on a particular problem.

As (most) of the staff's confidence in my commitment and abilities grew I began delivering classes on my own, covering for supply teachers where one could not be found or when one failed to turn up, working with the differentiation team to help and support less able students or students suffering from behavioural, mental health, or language difficulties, filling in as a teaching assistant when and where necessary, temporarily supervising the restorative centre or the referral room to allow regular staff to carry out more important duties, holding difficult or troubled students before exclusion or transfer to an external agency.

I utilised this bit of leverage to commit myself more fully. I ran an after school class on advanced critical reasoning for more able (or willing) students. I mentored, tutored, and otherwise supported students in national challenges and competitions. When the head wanted to put forward the best students for a bursary from the Sutton Trust—despite my ideological disagreement—I helped the students through the application process and was proud to see a number of my students win the award. On Saturday mornings I participated in a charity programme to help the lowest performing students improve their literacy and numeracy. I was the first to volunteer for helping with trips away. I even played with the staff football team. And broke my foot doing it.

There were always those teachers and members of staff who didn't like me, didn't like the fact I was conducting research, didn't want to participate, etcetera, but apart from this admittedly wise minority I seemed to cease to be a researcher and fade into the background. I became a bit of furniture. Staff like any other. Albeit with less definite responsibilities, more freedom, and a longer and more definite stay. I remember one

meeting where the staff talked openly about manipulating the attendance register. I kept quiet, of course, but was amazed at how quickly the mask slips.

My basic method was as simple as it was effective: 'deep hanging out' (Geertz 1998; Browne & McBride 2015; Walmsley 2018). The best information, the most interesting cases, were generally things that happened around me, as if by accident. It wasn't a case of me purposively and systematically investigating a class, space, practice, etcetera. It was more a case of being on the alert for leads and following them wherever possible. I would catch a whiff of a conversation in the staff room about a student. Maybe then I would go and observe some of their lessons. Have a look at their records. Go fishing with their name in random conversations and see if anyone took the bait. Or talk directly with one of my key informants with whom I had a close relationship. If I knew the student personally I could talk to them about it. But it wasn't just as a form of access to information that deep hanging out was successful. I became friends with teachers, staff, students. They would confide in me. Vent at me their frustrations. Chew my ear off with the latest gossip or most recent scandal. And that's when things got really interesting.

One of the main challenges of conducting this type of research was my inability to be in more than one place at one time. An incident might happen in a lesson, but I can't follow the process there and then if am teaching. So I would have to play detective. Remember that a kid was referred from English in period 2. Pop into the referral room in my free period 4 and ask them what happened. Read the documentation. Seek out alternative views from different members of staff. Construct some kind of account of

what happened. And then try and get a closer look at the processes independent of the instant.

This is why the thesis, whilst written as a monologue, is in fact co-created. Many of the instances or occurrences that I report have only been grasped by me in an aspect or a part. The mainstay of the story has been filled in by other staff. Sometimes it would be a question of assembly, sometimes of deduction and analysis, but in almost every instance I was heavily reliant on the testimonies of staff to fill in the gaps from my own observations, overhearings, or documentary research.

The research is also co-created in a more conventional way. My two years at the school was a period of personal growth as much as it was a period of investigation. I was constantly testing my ideas, viewpoints, positions, or critiques, against members of staff, against teachers, against students. I tried in my critical reasoning class to think alongside the students, to not simply ask for their ideas or viewpoints, but to think together, collectively, on common and everyday problems that affect us all. Naturally, there were only some members of staff and some students who were interested in my ideas or prepared to talk openly about them, and there were only some members of staff who could be spoken to openly without any risk of repercussion, but my work would not exist in the form it does today without these exchanges.

Unfortunately the method I chose made it impossible to document any of this. My main focus was on the quality of information and getting as full accounts as possible. Writing things down or using a dictaphone would immediately draw attention to my positioning as researcher and affect the quality of research. In any case, in fast moving,

complex, emotional, and sometimes violent, circumstances, it was not practical to write notes until I was home at the end of the day. At that point I would be more focused on getting a clear sense of what went on than trying to remember exactly who said what and when. Of course, I lost many interesting cases, happenings, occurrences, because I forgot a key aspect, or because I did not have a relationship with a key member of staff, or because I couldn't follow the process at the time and to quiz a teacher about it would be untoward or rude, or because, in some way or another, the trail went cold. To fade into the background is not without a cost. And my work bears the scars of it.

Given my expertise, the classes I observed and assisted with were primarily in English, the Humanities, the Social Sciences, Art, and Drama, though I also observed and assisted in other classes to a lesser degree. This is important because of the claims made in this thesis. Science is more amenable to an examination culture of mimesis and repetition inasmuch as there is much more and much more obvious fact and fiction, truth and false, the right answer and the wrong one. To teach science simply must be in many cases a drama of delivery, or the couching of information in games and activities to enchant and excite and improve retention. But science does not free itself from these critiques. It just bears them more lightly. For a student to believe first and foremost in scientific fact, as opposed to scientific method, or scientific inquiry, is just as limiting, I would argue, as the reduction of literature to the identification of literary techniques and recall of plot and character. It is not only the humanities that the pace of major breakthroughs has slowed almost to a halt, after all (c.f. Graeber 2015).

Addendum – Wither Governmentality?

Having come to the end of this first, introductory chapter, it is worthwhile before we continue to return back to the start and ask: is there any future for studies in the field of governmentality? Certainly, these studies, ever more voluminous, have opened up new dimensions in thought and understanding, carefully tracing the viral contamination of governmental rationalities; the fungal growth of practices, institutions and subjectivities that materialize and embody them; and the tentacular colonization of almost every conceivable domain with modalities of thought and practice that take them over, repurpose them, and turn them towards different pathways in different directions and with differing ends. But are the criticisms that have been levelled not devastating? In an engaged and political conception of thought, is there any space for the continuation of analyses that result in stasis and aporia, the extension of socio-normative power, and the denial of new forms of human relatedness? Are we, in pressing onwards with governmentality, like the man in the Buddhist parable of the raft who, having built a raft to cross the river, does not throw it away when he reaches the other side, but picks it up and carries it lumpenly on his back?

A way out is suggested by a move made in the later work of Rose (1999). Responding to a growing body of criticism that from different directions and with differing purposes nonetheless possesses something of a regularity, coherence (Ball 2015a), and similitude with my own concerns, Rose argues that it is a mistake to understand studies in the field of governmentality as a mirror of that which they describe. One should understand them rather as a map—an abstract and schematic representation of the significant features, geographical morphology, territorial limits and major pathways—which

fastens onto a material reality whose dimensions always exceed it. In an amusing piece of irony unnoticed by Rose, the idea of governmentality as a map is taken from a remark made by Deleuze to Rabinow and Dreyfus, equally bemused as to its significance (Rabinow & Dreyfus 1983), that we should understand Foucault's work as a map of power and not its mirror. Deleuze, colleague and friend to Foucault, mortal adversary to Baudrillard, clearly knew about the significance of Baudrillard's critique (Dosse 2010). This can be seen with similar clarity if one considers Deleuze's (1988) posthumous commentary on Foucault in which the figure of power is almost completely absent.

The problem with the reconceptualization of Rose is that it in the end reproduces many of the problems that it tries to escape. His conception is of a map of representation, of the map over which the sovereign concernedly ponders the extent of his rule ("here be rebels!"). A map in the sense of representation still functions like a mirror albeit with some elements missing and a limited claim to fidelity. It fails to escape governmentality's mortal focus on always-already completed operations. It is no coincidence that there is a close affinity between the activity of mapping and the activity of rule, and no coincidence either that in proceeding with governmentality studies understood as descriptive map one ends up again with the problems of stasis and aporia (where can I go, in this map all avenues are determined, all spaces are filled in, all contours are rigidified), the problem of the extension of power (the map, like the list, is an accumulation which stupefies as do the goods piled up for exuberant destruction before the trobrianders), and problem of the denial of new forms of human relatedness (it depicts with fixity what is as opposed to drawing out a set of possibilities of what could be).

Mapping as representation proceeds irrevocably towards the farce of the Borges fable (1946 [1998]):

... In that Empire, the Art of Cartography attained such Perfection that the map of a single province occupied the entirety of a City, and the map of the Empire the entirety of a Province. In time, those unconscionable Maps no longer satisfied, and the Cartographers Guilds struck out a Map of the Empire whose size was that of the Empire and which coincided with it point by point. The following Generations, who were not so fond of the study of Cartography as their Forebears had been, saw that the vast map was Useless, and not without some Pitilessness was it, that they delivered it up to the Inclemencies of Sun and Winters. In the Deserts of the West, still today, there are Tattered Ruins of that Map, inhabited by Animals and Beggars; in all the Land there is no other Relic of the Disciplines of Geography.

—Suarez Mirana, *Viajes de varones prudentes*, Libro IV, Cap. XLV, Lerida, 1658

Each mapping is a turn of the screw in which the map grows more unsurpassable, more insurmountable, more unchangeable. Perhaps in the spirit of governmentality we can rescue this metaphor by repurposing it and giving it a different form. Maps, after all, are not primarily decorative or instructional artefacts that sit in gilt edged frames along the corridors of power. There are these kinds of maps, of course, but then are maps that are made for use: for picking up and getting about with. They need not occupy the dimensions of a wall, a city, or even an empire. These maps can be shrunk down, folded up, and placed safely in one's pocket. Alongside one's eyes, one's feet, and a reliable compass, these maps are made to be put to work in the navigation of unfamiliar terrain. Let's take the work of governmentality, then, and use it in a forward motion: fix our feet to the ground, and stumble along the contours of a landscape painted all too

perfectly.

In using governmentality in this way —shrunk down, folded up, and placed in one’s pocket— the concern is not to take a practice, a mechanism, a technology or an institution, and show how it is impregnated by various forms of seeing, perceiving or talking, nor to understand what kinds of truths it relies upon and the archival material of their production. It would not consider in abstraction the character of action and intervention, nor from a documented self-conception what kinds of subjectivity are presupposed, called for or demanded. Where governmentality is concerned with the assemblage, the configuration, and the series, an ethnographic investigation of modes and mechanisms of attachment in the school would concern itself with the scenario, the utterance, the instance; with the nascence of a power coming-to-be rather than the traces of a power already completed. We follow the thing then, with the works of governmentality alongside us, like a background (c.f. Tamboukou & Ball 2013).

SEDUCTION

AND

ITS

DIS

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But I am malicious — what is the number of the house? What do I see? A window display of trinkets; my beautiful unknown, perhaps it may be outrageous in me, but I follow the gleam . . . She has not even seen me. I am standing at the far end of the counter by myself. A mirror hangs on the opposite wall; she does not reflect on it, but the mirror reflects her. How faithfully it has caught her picture, like a humble slave who shows his devotion by his faithfulness, a slave for whom she indeed has significance, but who means nothing to her. Unhappy mirror, that can indeed seize her image, but not herself! Unhappy mirror, which cannot hide her image in its secret depths, hide it from the from the whole world, but on the contrary must betray it to others, as now to me. What agony; if men were made like that! And are there not many people who are like that, who own nothing except in the moment when they show it to others, who grasp only the surface, not the essence, who lose everything if this appears, just as this mirror would lose her image, were she by a single breath to betray her heart to it?

Kierkegaard, The Diary of a Seducer (1903: 46)

Scenes of Instruction

1.

Annie Hall (1977) begins with an allegory that expresses Woody Allen's characteristically New York existentialism: "There's an old joke, two elderly women are at a Catskills mountain resort, and one of them says: Boy the food at this place is terrible." The other one says: "Yeah, I know, and such small portions..." Well, that's how I feel about life. Full of loneliness and misery and suffering and it's all over way too quickly." Soon after we see the loosely autobiographical lead, Alvy Singer, as a bespectacled young boy slouched on a worn brown sofa in a smoke stained doctor's office. His mother, straight laced in her smart skirt suit, coloured silk blouse, riding gloves and an Ascot hat, is sat beside him. She complains to the doctor: "He's been depressed. All of a sudden he can't do anything." The doctor asks why and Alvy's mother answers for him: "It's something he read." The doctor: "Something he read, huh?" Alvy: "Well, the universe is expanding, and if it's expanding someday it will break apart, and that would be the end of everything!" His mother shouts at him, and then the doctor: "What is that your business? He's stopped doing his homework!" The young Seneca can't see the point of homework when everything is in the end futile, but his mother is insistent: "What has the universe got to do with it? You are here in Brooklyn! Brooklyn is not expanding!" The doctor agrees, and looks down on Alvy with a warm, paternal smile: "It won't be expanding for billions of years yet, Alvy, and we've gotta try and enjoy ourselves while we're here!"

A couple of short reflections later and we are alongside a reverie of Alvy's school days: "I remember the staff at our public school. You know, we had a saying that those who can't do, teach, and those who can't teach, teach gym, and of course those who can't do anything I think were assigned to our school." The camera tracks past three stern teachers, first seriously, then concernedly, then contemptuously speaking at the front of the class. The classroom is traditional. There are single wooden desks, a blackboard at the front with maps tacked on, an American flag in the corner, and black and white portraits of former presidents lining the walls. A Trunchbull like teacher looks gloomily over the class as children lean over and talk, pass notes to one another, tap their rulers, or pick their nose. A chubby kid at the front, his face covered in chocolate, nibbles greedily on a large cream puff pastry. Alvy: "I must say, I always felt my schoolmates were idiots. Melvyn Greenglass and his fat little face and, Henrietta Farrell, just Miss Perfect all the time... And Ivan Ackerman, always the wrong answer. Always." Alvy gets out of his seat to kiss the cheek of the girl sat next to him. The girl jumps up and scrubs her face whining: "Eurrghhhhh he kissed me he kissed me!" The teacher is venomous as she demands that Alvy step up to the front of the class: "You should be ashamed of yourself!"

An ingenious sequence follows. The present day Allen takes Alvy's seat at the back of the class and defends his former self to the teacher: "Why? I was just expressing a healthy sexual curiosity." The teacher replies: "Six-year old boys don't have girls on their minds..." Alvy confesses: "I did." The girl that kissed Alvy turns to him and gestures as she says: "For God's sake Alvy, even Freud speaks of a latency period!" "Well I never had a latency period. I can't help it" he pleads. The teacher asks Alvy with disappointment and regret: "Why couldn't you have been more like Donald? Now there is a model boy." Donald is smartly dressed in a grey tweed jacket, a brown patterned

jumper, a bow-tie, and a white shirt with a long pointed collar. Young Alvy asks Donald from the front of the class: "Tell the folks where you are today, Donald" and Donald replies smugly: "I run a profitable dress making company." Present day Alvy: "Sometimes I wonder where my classmates are today..." We are treated to a carousel, where a number of students stand up one at a time and announce their future selves. The first boy: "I'm the president of the Pinkus Plumbing Company." Second boy: "I sell tallises." Third boy: "I used to be a heroin addict and now I'm a methadone addict." Second girl: "I'm into leather."

2.

The opening scenes of *The Girl on a Motorcycle* (1968) contrast the pedestrian monotony of lead Rebecca's schoolteacher husband, Raymond, to the violent and transgressive pleasures of her rebellious lover, Daniel, a lecturer in philosophy at Heidelberg. Raymond's impotence is staged in the classroom. He stands before the class in ill-fitting, unfashionable clothes: brown tweed trousers, a dark green woollen jumper, and a white shirt poorly finished with a badly arranged tie that sticks out awkwardly from the neck. Raymond is teaching geography. He speaks prosaically as he describes where "the Rhein starts, in fact where I come from: Switzerland." As Raymond turns around to scrawl on the blackboard a student bends below his desk to light a cigarette. He heaves and puffs great billows of smoke and the quiet gives way to chuckles and guffaws. Raymond half turns his head as the student hides the cigarette and frantically tries to waft smoke from the air. When Raymond turns back to the blackboard the student starts to smoke again, drawing heavily until the cigarette is smoked almost to the nub. Raymond looks around: "Why are you waving your arms Phillippe?" Ashen faced and looking as if he is about to be sick, Phillippe raises his hand: "can I go the toilet please,

sir?" The students burst into laughter as Phillippe is excused. "SIILENCE!" shouts the teacher... The students spring to attention, and for a moment there is quiet, but as soon as the teacher turns back to write on the board the high jinx begin again. A student turns on a portable radio he has hidden beneath his desk and pop music starts to blast around the classroom. The teacher tries to find the radio but the students are uproarious as they pass it among themselves as the teacher flounders after them. He looks in bags and under chairs the students divert his attention by pointing and shouting. Finally, the radio is smuggled out of the classroom and a broken Raymond stands humiliated in a corner.

3.

The second episode of animated science fiction comedy "Rick and Morty" (2013) has two parallel storylines, both of which embody a profound meditation on the status of schooling and knowledge. Rick is Morty's grandfather, a scientific genius and fugitive in hiding for crimes against the intergalactic federation. In the first storyline, Rick has been taking Morty out of school as a sidekick for his adventures, but Morty's parents are worried about the effects that this is having on Morty's education. They demand an improvement. If Morty's grades don't get better then Rick won't be allowed to take Morty on his adventures. Rick invents a device that allows one to enter or "incept" another person's dreams. If Rick and Morty can enter one of Morty's teachers dreams and convince his subconscious that Morty deserves better grades, then Rick and Morty can continue their adventures uninterrupted. Rick tells Morty his plan, but Morty has a more straightforward understanding: "Jeez Rick, in the time it took you to make this thing could you not have, you know, helped me with my homework?" Rick is visibly irritated as he replies: "Are you listening to me Morty, homework is stupid, the whole

point is to get less of it... Just come on, let's get over there and deal with this thing and incept your teacher... You're frustrating me."

Later in the episode all has not gone well. Rick and Morty end up running from a pink lymphatic character called "Scary Terry" —a Freddy Kruger like monster with razor sharp teeth and knives for fingers who ends every sentence with the word "bitch". Realising that Scary Terry can travel through dreams they hatch a plan to incept him while he sleeps and convince his subconscious that he should help them. As Scary Terry tosses and turns in his sleep Rick thinks that he must be having a nightmare. Morty wonders what horrors could possibly scare Scary Terry? They incept his dreams and find out that what Scary Terry is dreaming about is, of course, the school.

Scary Terry is late for class. He has forgotten to wear any trousers. As the scene cuts to the classroom we can see that it is traditional and like the two scenes already described albeit with important elements shifted to the scary dimension ("Scary Presidents" and a "Scary Teacher"). The teacher walks in front of the class as he asks Terry loudly: "Mr Terry, why don't you tell the whole class the proper word play to use when one is chasing one's victim through a pumpkin patch?" Terry looks crestfallen as he bends his head to the ground and scratches his chin before offering a tentative answer: "Oh, uhhmmmm... Bitch?" The teacher mocks Terry as he questions him aloud: "Oh come on Terry, can't you think of a pun involving pumpkin, bitch?" Morty intervenes: "Hey, you leave him alone!" and Rick backs him up: "Yeah, this is a bunch of bullcrap. Who cares what stupid pun you make when you kill someone? Why don't you let the poor guy say whatever he wants?" The teacher is at a loss. Embarrassed, he mutters and

stammers before declaring: “Well I see no reason to stand here and take this” and leaves the classroom.

In the second storyline of this episode Morty’s father, Jerry, wants Rick to find a way to stop the dog from pissing on the carpet, so Rick builds a device that increases the dog’s intelligence such that he can understand and obey instructions. On returning from their dream adventures Morty notices a number of dogs in robot suits standing guard and patrolling around his house. Rick has a theory: “Well, it’s possible that your dog became self aware and made modifications on the cognition amplifier and then turned on Jerry, Beth and Summer (Rick and Morty’s family) after learning about humanity’s cruel subjugation of his species but, your guess is as good as mine...” The family are in the garden wearing collars attached to chains secured by a stake. Summer is reflective: “I can’t believe how mean Snuffles got just because he is smart. This is why I choose to get Cs.”

Remarks

These scenes are the cousins of our own recollections. They return to us like sweet madeleines. None of these films are explicitly about education. The school in each piece is in an important sense incidental. Yet despite spanning different genres, mediums, and a period of about half a century, they betray a remarkable commonality of thematics and representations. The goofiness of childhood; the fear of being singled out; the ambivalent relationship of school to later life; the carnival of classroom laughter; teachers who are variously stern, forgiving, angry, authoritarian, committed, or

incompetent; the gloom of the classroom with its didactic wall displays, its disciplinary arrangement, the diversity of its characters, and the distribution of its bodies; the imposition of the timetable, the regimen of the clock, and the assortment of mortifications for failing in respect of either.

The medium is the message (McLuhan 1967). We do not remember the content of our lessons, but their form. We do not remember purpose, but structure. Our remembrances of the school are about a mode of conduct, a way of life, a long time before they have anything to do with knowledge. These three scenes are dramas of subjectification. Their commonness is the occasion for the recollection of something that we already know: that the school is the privileged site of subjectification, of that vast assemblage of technologies, structures, procedures and events which attempt to bind us to an order of truth, fix us to a regime of conduct, and render us subject to definite arrangements of knowledge and power. They depict the school as the privileged site of confrontation between the individual and the common, the privileged site of the initiation of the individual into the common, and the everyday site in which the myriad obligations of the common are most forcibly resisted. We remember the school, then, precisely insofar as it is an assemblage of mechanisms and procedures for the production of subjectivity, the subjectification of the subject, our subjection in common. Of the myriad occurrences and phenomena that could be the object of a representation of the school, nearly every one singles out this particular aspect.

The form of subjectification characteristic of the school is never to a personal, autochthonous or authentic truth, nor to the cultivation of capacities that might allow one to develop one's own truth, but to an external, conventional or social order of truth:

to the truth as such, in the case of our society an objective, ahistorical, disinterested and universal truth dispatched by an accredited organ. This makes possible subjectification to truths in particular, or to any number of truths that obey the correct structural-institutional form. The truths in particular to which we are subjected can be divided roughly and schematically into three kinds: there are truths concerning the world, such as the geographical truths of "The Girl on a Motorcycle", there are truths concerning others, such as the truth of the relation in "Rick and Morty", and there are truths concerning ourselves, such as the truth of the innocent child in "Annie Hall."

If the school is a privileged site for the articulation of an analysis of mechanisms and procedures of subjection, then it will be necessary in the study of the nature, functioning and consequences of that subjection to consider subjection of the order –to, for the subjection-to will be of a diabolical necessity dependent on the –to to which we are subjected. The scenes just recounted depict an important transformation of the order –to, the terminus point of which will form an important element of the analysis that follows. This transformation of the order –to concerns a certain transformation in the status and functioning of knowledge, first as alibi, then as outcome, and finally as condition. Let us consider, then, the status of knowledge in each of the scenes and see what conclusions can be drawn.

In the classroom scene from "Annie Hall" knowledge is present only as alibi. What is really in question is a moral form of conduct imposed under the cover of knowledge acquisition. In the scene in the doctor's office, the elaboration of a scientific knowledge is depicted as contradicting the need to do one's homework, to follow the correct procedure, and to obey the rules. It is not knowledge that matters but a certain kind of

moral order and conformity to or correspondence with that order. This vision of the school corresponds loosely to the 19th century vision of education and specifically to the monitorial school, where the acquisition of knowledge serves as an alibi for the disciplining of bodies and the development of the orderly habits and moral appetites necessary for the insertion of the individual into the monotonous labour of the factory.

In the scene from “The Girl on a Motorcycle” we see the same elements in play but their relationship is inverted. The scene begins with Raymond’s attempt to communicate factual, geographical knowledge, an attempt that is thwarted or frustrated by the disorder of the class. Orderly conduct appears here as a condition for the acquisition of a knowledge that is nonetheless independent from it. Discipline moves from the aim or outcome of education to become its condition. This corresponds roughly to the twentieth century conception of education that is still common today, and which presents itself in all those representations of the indomitable teacher fighting against impossible odds for the good of their students. Discipline and knowledge are brought together as complementary elements and arranged in a series.

In the scene from “Rick and Morty” however, something quite radical has occurred. The depiction of the classroom and the teacher are normal, stereotypical, the same as in the other scenes. But this changes when we look closely at the status and functioning of knowledge. The knowledge that is the subject of “Rick and Morty” is not an absent knowledge that serves as the alibi for discipline, nor an independent knowledge with discipline as its necessary condition, but a professional knowledge wholly subordinated to the inescapable destiny of career. So the first shift in this scene is a shift in knowledge

now wholly subordinated to an outside, to a knowledge organised by reference to the career into which it will be inevitably inserted.

The second shift concerns not the contents of the knowledge but its form. When the teacher asks Scary Terry the question it seems expansive as it concerns word plays, of which there are many. But we discover upon elaboration that the range of answers is already limited. The first question serves as a cover for the second, more specific question, which asks not for the creative freedom of the word play but the specificity of a pun. And the answers are limited further still. The teacher does not ask for any word play, or any pun whatsoever, but for the right pun, the correct pun, or, as it is expressed in the scene, the “proper” pun. What we see here, then, is a second subordination of knowledge, not to the career that is its inevitable destination, but to the grades that are that career’s necessary condition. This is the kind of teaching characteristic of the school in which all is subordinated to the rightness of the exam, the correctness of the test. So the second shift is the subordination of knowledge to the standards of rightness and correctness that typify a credentialist or examination/assessment based mode of education.

Third shift. When Morty asks Rick why he would go to the trouble of making a device for an unconscious dream adventure when he could have just spent the same time helping him with his homework, Rick finds Morty’s question to be absurd, frustrating, an annoyance. The school for Rick is not a place for earnest endeavour but a game to be played. It is not a place for serious work but a place to get the best grades possible for the least amount of effort. An uncoupling has occurred between the grades that one obtains from school and the talents or abilities that they are supposed to express. Grades

have become arbitrary simulacra, unhooked, untethered, and thereby freed from the ballast of signification.

A consequence of this is depicted in the fourth shift. Schooling and the attainment of good grades becomes a bureaucratic performance that allows for and makes possible the real learning that goes on elsewhere. The school is disavowed as a site of cultivation or growth and repositioned as the master in a game of arbitrary signs. Real learning happens in an outside to which the school nonetheless holds all the keys. The corollary strategy, then, is of tactical engagement, or moderated refusal. Do what is necessary in order to get a series of grades whose only meaning is to function as currency in a social game that accepts and demands them.

In *Rick and Morty*, then, we have a representation of the school that is on the surface familiar, but a closer inspection reveals a transformation in the positioning of knowledge that can be characterised by four shifts. Firstly, the subordination of the contents of knowledge to the organising principles of a career into which it will be inevitably inserted. Second, a subordination of the form of knowledge to the standards of rightness and correctness characteristic of an examination. Third, the end of the signifying function of the grade and its evaporation into the dizzy ecstasy of signs. Fourth, and as a consequence, the disavowal of the school as a site of learning and its repositioning as the master of currency in a game of positioning and advancement that accepts them as articles of exchange.

The school might look familiar, but in its heart it has undergone a revolution: The managerial school, the performative school, the school which is wholly given over to the

technology of the exam, the inescapable destiny of career, and an entrepreneurial-credentialist society where grades are both currency for exchange and condition for advancement. The public imaginary is only just awakening to this quiet revolution, but it has been the subject of serious scholarly reflection for well over a decade. A short consideration of this literature and a short history of the contemporary school will acquaint us with the terrain of the ethnographic analysis to follow and will at the same time provide us with its final two elements, namely, the performative school as the site of fabrication, and the consequences of this for the problem of the subject.

A Very Short History of the Contemporary British High School

The British High School has a long history, but the history that concerns us is closer, finding its roots in the social and economic crises of the 1970s (Baker 2008). Global recession; high unemployment; socio-political malaise; a sense that Britain lacked the spirit to compete in a new economic order; that traditional values were in a state of collapse; and that the common culture which had served as anchor, ballast and sword to an Empire, was being eroded; were held to have a common cause in the profligacy and corruption of the post-war welfare state (Apple 2012). Schools and many other public bureaucracies were rebuked as bloated, unresponsive, wasteful, inefficient, and stifling of the private initiative deemed necessary for economic salvation (Tolafari 2005). State provision, it was argued, led to the creation of relations of dependency, reduced the incentive to work, and undermined the discipline of traditional familial authority. The school had gone soft, they said: reducing competition; levelling aspiration; praising low

standards; teaching weak subjects; and lacking proper discipline and real knowledge. What was needed was a return to the strict discipline and traditional pedagogy that had toughened up the boys who went on to win two world wars.

The age was alight with a restorative impulse. But the desire to go back would soon be allied with an imperative to move forwards. For things to stay the same everything must change. No longer would the state serve as the benevolent grandfather who moderates exchange, tempers conflict, and swoops down in times of crisis. What was to be created was a new national culture founded on a revival of the values of the 19th century: free market, entrepreneurship, enterprise. The nature and character of the state, and the nature and character of its relations with its citizens, were to be changed. Schools would be both object and instrument of this transformation. Like other public institutions, schools were to be reformed through privatisation, the discipline of the market, and the importation of a culture of performance and techniques of management from the world of business (Clarke and Newman 1997).

It was in this way that an economic rationality came, once again, to dominate education (Watson 2009). If the school was to be made fit for the twenty first century, it was argued, then it must cultivate the competitive, self-interested and self-directing individuals who are at the heart of economic productivity. Students should be understood as human capital —little reservoirs of untapped economic potential— who are to be equipped with the skills, habits and attitudes required to effectively participate in a dynamic market economy (Walsh 2006). Because the market was believed to be the most effective allocator of resources, the most efficient co-ordinating mechanism, and the most rational decision making process, it seemed obvious that an effective, efficient

and rational school would be one that understand itself as a market enterprise and reformed itself as a market organisation. It would in this way become leaner, more efficient, more dynamic, more flexible, and more responsive to the needs and desires of its rightful consumers.

These bedrock imperatives led to a sustained and systematic series of reforms to the British education system. These included the opening up of the sector to private providers and the creation of the Qualifications and Curriculum authority and OFSTED to regulate the market; a national curriculum and standardised testing; the creation of league tables and the publication of statistics relating to school performance; the erosion of democratic control and the promotion of consumer choice; competence or skills based governance, corporate leadership structures and a widening of the margins of parameters of implementation; an emphasis on contractual relations, and the movement towards performance related pay for teachers and leaders transformations in funding arrangements (Gleeson & Husbands 2001).

For Bailey and Ball (2016), these developments were not limited to the education system in the United Kingdom but have been mirrored by or related to educational reform around the globe. They argue that the last 20 years have borne witness to a global convergence of education policy underpinned by a neoliberal emphasis on the market and a neoconservative emphasis on command and control over knowledge, a narrow and prescriptive curriculum, and traditional methods of teaching. Apple (2006) sees a third undercurrent in the form of an aspirational middle class whose advancement depends on the monopolisation of the expertise required to manage and administer corporate structures of performance and accountability.

A common group of related and reciprocal criticisms of the marketisation of education has grown over the last decade. For Hennessey and McNamara (2013), the reforms have led to a conservative and politicised education system enforced through intensive surveillance and high stakes testing in which standardised rote learning takes the place of engaged critical inquiry. A liberal functionalism focused on the production of technicist outputs has led to a preoccupation with examination based achievement and pressure to engage in kinds of work that are visible and measurable, marginalising or corrupting the richness of endeavour that resists simplification, reification and numericisation (Fielding 2006). Schools become semiotic machines and the manufacture of signs in the forms of grades and statistics is prioritised over personal cultivation (Ranson 2003).

The pressure to produce results that are competitive on the marketplace leads to schools narrowing the curriculum and teaching to the test. Schools intensify test work and test strategies as those around them increase their scores. Low performing schools feel this pressure more than most and so pour huge proportions of their resources into result led interventions (Webb et al 2009). Learning in many of these schools comes to mean nothing more than the absorption of testable materials, assessment is understood solely in terms of examination scores, and a broader sense of accountability is flattened into a slavish dependency on tests, audits, and certifications (De Lissovoy & McLaren 2003). This amplifies the cultural and social capital of those able to provide what the school lacks themselves or more commonly to send their children to higher performing schools where more emphasis is placed on personal development and socio-cultural enrichment (Reay 2008).

The pressure to perform flows through to the students who become stressed, anxious, fearful of the future, and depressed. Parents take on these feelings not only out of concern for their children but also because so much is asked of them. The home becomes an extension of the school as demands for parental involvement are intensified. Many parents choose to bulk up their children's schooling with private tuition at home, and this deepens socio-economic inequalities even further as many families simply cannot afford the cost (Oakes et al 1997).

Teachers too feel a huge amount of pressure to meet targets and produce results (Perryman et al 1997). Their workload is multiplied and more and more time is taken up by auditing activities and accountability exercises (Ball 2015c), often to the expense of actual learning. The professional identity of teachers is called into question as teaching is shoehorned into an endless sequence of tests, examinations, and data gathering (Pignatelli 1993). Teachers lose the discretion afforded to professionals and become technicians or administrators (Hartley 1997). It is in this way that a formerly dignified occupation becomes in effect proletarianised (Pottery 1991). Because teachers are not allowed to form their own judgments about the meaning, purpose or worth of education, many cease to act out of commitment or belief, acting instead to stay under the radar, to avoid being, punished, silenced, disregarded, or sometimes simply to keep a part of themselves to themselves (Peters 2003; Webb et al 2005).

For Ball it is important that we avoid the mistake of regarding these reforms as a series of technical changes to funding, administration, assessment, or as a means for raising standards or improving schools. These reforms bring with them profound changes to

the very meaning of education. This not only applies to the institutional structure as such but to the people who animate it too. As Ball remembers from Thatcher, economics is the method, but the aim is to change the soul.

Ball (1999:6) summarises this series of reforms as a move to “performativity”:

Performativity is a technology, a culture, and a mode of regulation that employs judgments, comparisons and displays as a means of control, attrition and change. The performance of individual subjects or organisations serve as measures of productivity or output, or displays of quality, or moments of promotion or inspection. They stand for, encapsulate or represent the worth, quality, or value of an individual or organisation within a field of judgment, making silences audible.

For the purposes of the analysis that follows I would like to focus on two aspects of Ball’s account of performativity. The first is his concern, following Butler (and perhaps Derrida – c.f. Learmouth 2005) of performance as enactment, as fabrication, or of performance in the sense of staged or fake. One could say that for Ball, performativity is a paradox. On the one hand, it is a regime of truth that incites us and hails us to understand and recognise pedagogic practice in its own terms (2015d). On the other hand, it seems to result in false fabrications of good performance that wither and wilt pedagogic practice rather than supporting it. Instead of measuring and thereby motivating a practice or process that continues beneath it, the performance itself comes to stand as substitute for the practice. The practice is the performance.

The school fabricates itself for OFSTED inspections, for parents, and indeed, even for itself. Fabrication involves the manipulation of performance through events,

publications, products, press coverage and impression management. Signs become the substantial reality and the reality they once represented evaporates. This results in an ironic depthlessness, as the demand for more transparency through a responsiveness to external targets results in stage managed performances that lend the school a kind of opacity (1999). A need to be seen to do takes the place of actual doing. Anything that cannot be measured, numericised, and represented in a field of signs, is corrupted, de-emphasised or lost altogether (Ball 2000). Education, then, becomes a continuous flow of performances unrelated to substantive or meaningful learning. The performances that have come to constitute education are not symbolic or representative but fabricated spectacles, fantasies that exist only for the eye who judges them on these terms (Ball 2004).

The second element of Ball's work that I would like to draw attention to is his sustained engagement with the problem of the subject and the consequences for contemporary subjectivity that follow from a performative system of education. The move to performativity is not just a change in the structure and process of education. It also demands that we relate to ourselves and constitute ourselves in new ways. Management exists not only to enforce rules and ensure that procedures are followed but to determine how teachers, students and parents think and feel about themselves. It is not a technical system, but a moral system (Ball 1997).

'Within this framework of performativity, academics and teachers are represented and encouraged to think about themselves as individuals who calculate about themselves, add value to themselves, improve their productivity, and live an existence of calculation. They are to become enterprising subjects, who live their lives as an

enterprise of the self' (Ball 2000: 20). In this way the self is both staged and aestheticized (Ball 2015a). Teachers make fantasies of themselves and get lost amidst the representations. They feel the need to fabricate themselves as a great burden, becoming alienated and exhausted by the very movement that was supposed to render them invigorated and empowered (Ball 2015c). There is no continuous I that can be maintained behind a façade of performance, rather, the self is transformed in and through its representations. 'Increasingly, we choose and judge our actions and they are judged by others on the basis of their contribution to organisational performance, rendered in terms of measurable outputs. Belief is no longer important – it is output that counts' (Ball 2014:10).

We have discussed a series of changes to the British school and located their origins within a broader socio-economic context. A critical literature on the consequences of these changes has been given an overview and a special place has been reserved for the work of Ball. There are four important themes that emerged from this discussion that will shape and inform the analysis that follows. These themes will not form discrete domains of analysis nor explicit points of reference, but like the work of governmentality with which this thesis began will serve as a backdrop, a kind of tableau of interests that works its way in and through an ethnographic analysis that exceeds them in the same movement that it expresses them. In sum, the themes are: 1.) The school as a privileged site for the analysis of mechanisms and modalities of subjectification. 2.) The importance of the subjectification-to, or the order of that to which we are subjected, in understanding the character of subjectification. 3.) The role of fabrication and performance in subjectification. 4.) The consequences for subjectivity, or an indication of the kinds of subjectivity that the performative school encourages.

The description of organisations and organisational structures is often characterised by a misleading coolness, a kind of bureaucratic formalism that covers over and conceals the affective messiness of the processes that they seek to describe. This coolness, this lack of feeling and emotion, is a structuring limitation in the overly rational accounts that this thesis set out to contend. We need not be in the hot hot heat of a witch's brew to remember that organisations are not primarily or solely machine like assemblages that produce outputs and regularise flows but are firstly and most importantly the *mise en scene* for an undeniably human drama. Only the cruellest technocrat could forget that organisations are the dwelling spaces for jealous, angry, hoping, dreaming, feeling, fucking people. They are sites of gravity as well as grace (c.f. Weil 1952 [2002]), with enough ennui to make Flaubert blush. Rather than beginning with a schematic and abstracted description of the structure and process of the system of accountability and management that dominates the contemporary school, then, my description will begin with a description of affect and feeling—an invocation of its ordinary everyday. I offer six vignettes that are in a sense privileged moments of entry into the culture of the school that I studied. The point here is that the meat and bones of a culture is never in the abstraction of a structure itself, but in the pulse and breath of the hardy souls that animate it.

What I'm thinking is: Here I am, lying under a haystack... The tiny place that I occupy is so small in relation to the rest of space where I am not and where it is none of my business to be; and the amount of time I'll succeed in living is so insignificant by comparison with the eternity when I haven't been and will never be... And yet, in this atom, in this mathematical point, the brain works, the blood circulates and even desires something as well ... What sheer ugliness! What sheer nonsense!

Turgenev – Fathers and Sons (1862 [2008: 68])

Scenes of Disruption

i. A Class.

Ian was a warm and affable teacher, rarely seen without a smile, who would give off an air of indefatigability even at his lowest ebb. He would arrive first thing in the morning bright eyed and clean shaven wearing smart sand chinos and a coloured striped shirt. His waistcoats fit him perfectly and his ties were always made of silk. He tied them neatly with a full Windsor and his top button was done up even in the hottest weather. About half way into my first year at the school Ian took on some extra duties to record, collect and otherwise administer data. You could see that this left him overloaded with work and exhausted. His skin became pale, his stubble was left to grow, his eyes darkened and hollowed out, and his patience with students slowly began to fade away. He would arrive at school two hours early, leave two hours late, and still have to carry on with his work at home. Rarely would a morning pass without him telling me some horror story about the amount of time he had spent last night working on data reports and examinations. A change in his family life made these demands even more acute and when I came back to the school after a long period of illness he had sadly left the school for good.

What Ian described to me was a seemingly endless supply of constantly changing demands and requirements, not just of creating and scheduling examinations or examinable tasks that could generate data for reports, but marking and moderating them; inputting the results into spreadsheets, performing calculations against historical data; benchmarks and thresholds, highlighting students that required consideration for intervention; and providing more detailed reports for students already marked as a cause for concern. These figures would have to be arranged into modes of presentation

such as graphs, charts and tables. He would present these summaries to departmental meetings and in turn to the Senior Leadership Team where he would also have to provide reasons or give account for any dissonant numbers, aberrant figures, or individuals signalling red or yellow rather than green. It was not just the additional labour of data collection and reporting that resulted in difficulties, then, as if all that were at stake was a kind of pure mechanical extension of labour-time. It was the stress of confrontation, the weight of responsibility, and the anxiety that enshrouded a bad set of numbers without desculpable reason or reasonable redress.

The data and accountability requirements became so overwhelming that in the end Ian had to give up his role as a teacher in order to fulfil them. I do not mean that he stopped teaching, but that teaching became a perfunctory task that got in the way of the proper job of recording, collating and presenting data. I learned this not only from the changes in our relationship, from the increasing amount of time that he would spend talking about data, worrying about data, working on data, but from my observations and assistant work in his classroom.

I remember one class in particular where Ian had misread the lesson plan for the day while waiting for his computer to start up. Much to the amusement of the students he began to give the same introductory talk that he had given to this class just two days ago. The lesson that he was to deliver was pre-prepared so he shrugged off the mistake and once his computer was fired up projected today's lesson on to the electronic whiteboard at the front of the class. As he explained what would be happening it quickly became evident that Ian had no idea what the lesson was about. You could see that he was reading from the whiteboard and then interpreting it to the class. He would

occasionally make a mistake before covering it up with laughter and hurrying through the slides. Every now and then he would pause as if confused before deciding it was not necessary and skipping past. Finally, he reached a slide with a writing task that the students could get on with without further direction. Once the class was settled and the chatter died away Ian got on with the really important work: making some required changes to last week's data report.

Some students completed their work more quickly than others and began to complain that they had finished before agitating and disturbing the students around them. Ian, annoyed, expanded the task to such dimensions that it could not possibly be completed by the end of the lesson. Naturally, this led to much huffing and puffing and dragging of feet. Rather than getting on with the extension task many students chose to quietly chat to their neighbours or play with their phones. The background noise would slowly build towards an intolerable threshold before fading away after stern rebukes from Ian to quiet down, complete the tasks carefully, and when you are sure you have finished go back over your work and check your spelling, punctuation and grammar. In a conversation in the staffroom some days later Ian admitted to me that he hadn't read or studied the curricular content for the year.

Students aren't stupid, and noticing Ian's complete lack of grasp of the class material they slowly lost all respect for him as a teacher. They became disorderly and unruly, and a game of finding out, undermining or humiliating him became their favourite sport. They would make remarks behind his back, chirp like birds, turn their stationary into drum kits, or scream and wail like wounded animals. When the atmosphere was too tense for bassoon impressions the students would sit playing games on their phones,

goofing about with classmates, doodling on their notebooks, or tearing apart class handouts before fitting them together again in delicate abstract structures. If Ian did have their attention then the game was played with even more intensity. Any mistake, any uncertainty, any error, any task unclear or passage unexplained, any omission or accidental repetition, was seized on by a pack of wild hyenas who would whoop and holler and sneer and snigger as they rounded in joy and festivity on the closing gap that separated them and their helpless prey. The classroom became a carnival and Ian was the King become fool. This reached an incendiary point one day where, challenging the student he thought to be most persistent troublemaker, he met a fierce and determined resistance. The pair were almost at blows when the head of the department, called by Ian moments earlier, arrived and inserted herself between them. The student was dragged away, tears streaming down his face, screaming "You can't teach! You can't teach! Get him out of here, not me, the man's an idiot. You can't teach!"

The humanities are the most vital subjects, the most enlightening, the most challenging, the most humanizing, and the most humane. I breathe with Cavell when he remarks that reading the humanities is like recalling the memory of a friend we never really lost. Our society is an embodiment of these books, and in their etchings we see our protean forms. The classes in which I participated could only be described as a wrecking ball. It was an occasion of great sadness to realise that many of these students would have no other relationship with books for their entire lives. But the teachers are not to blame. We are talking about a structural vandalism. This is a vision of overwroughtness with the institution at breaking point.

ii. A Conversation with a Student

The Restorative Centre is a space of internal exclusion where students too troublesome for “general circulation” are held by a pastoral officer. I spent many hours in this room observing what went on, speaking to students and occasionally helping them with their work. Sometimes I would try to help students think critically about education, the school, the system of compulsory schooling, and what it all means: about what its purpose might be, and what ways there might be to negotiate it.

When I started at the school I was naïve and idealistic. I would become Quintilian in the courts of Rome, expounding in high rhetoric the timeless beauty of knowledge and the radical freedom of a critical consciousness. I remember one exchange in particular where I was speaking to a charming young student I had developed a relationship with during his many visits to the centre. He was a difficult lad who would often fool around, disrupt lessons, refuse to complete tasks, and agitate other students, but he had no malice in him, more of a general sense that the whole exercise was pointless, that he would fail anyway, and that, though he might try, the school had no meaning or importance for him. The school for him was something to be endured rather than savoured. An imposition, not an opportunity.

I was trying to convince him that the school wasn't all about grades, that education wasn't all about performance, and that knowledge didn't amount to that which you could repeat on an exam. To learn was to practice freedom, to exercise self mastery, and could lead to wonders and mystery later in his life. The student scoffed at me and laughed. As if the school wasn't about grades, as if there could be any reason to study other than to get the figures required to study at college. I pressed my point home and

Jacob who ran the centre joined me in my plea. It's not all about grades, there is more to knowledge than levels, it's about your personal development, your interests, your life, your very soul. There was something about the doubling of my discourse that sent the student over the edge. He flipped. His hands began to shake, tears welled up in his eyes, and he began to flail his arms and gesture wildly as he screeched "What are you on about? Not about exams? What? What?" he began to stutter and stumble, choking on his words as he held back the tears. "What is all this shit then? What the fuck? What the fuck is all this shit? Look at this shit, reports, fucking, fucking shit like this? For what? Why?" at this point the student's words became incomprehensible, inaudible, a series of gargled half syllables and crunched up sentences, semi sobs and unfulfilled sentiments.

The cult of performance was so total that there could be no outside. The very notion of hope was the occasion for despair. He couldn't bear it. Perhaps this was an expression of the more general truth that it is bad enough to suffer a mortification, but worse still to do so unnecessarily. Humiliation is more thoroughgoing when it did not need to be but was accepted as such. For this student playing on a computer in the Restorative Centre there could be no outside, for outside there is no oxygen, he can not breathe.

iii. An Encounter in the Corridor

The bell rings for the end of the lesson and hundreds of students burst from their classrooms like the Queen's Second Riflemen on the first day of the Somme. As they stream into the corridors they collide with other students who are coming, going, or just passing by, and their contradicting cohering movements quickly become a heady maelstrom of shenanigans and villainy. Some hit their classmates on the head before laughing and running away, some carefully navigate the path of least resistance before

making a beeline for the exit, while others take the opportunity to cause a bit of trouble: multiplying or intensifying the points of blockage and affray, pushing students into the paths of others, holding closed classroom doors, or making a curious son of both wrestling and walking as they stumble and play fight their way to the next class.

Older girls in heavy make up with skirts hitched high and arms folded upwards into coat hangers for small clutch bags glide through the commotion like ice breaking ships. Younger girls, some half their height, are frozen with awe as the older boys who just a moment ago were slouched languorously next to doorways now become boisterous and form a chorus of *I'm a bigger man than you*. More adventurous young students leap into the throng and bounce off the bigger boys like balls inside a pinball machine. The younger boys feel lucky to get away without a slap to the forehead, a box to the ear, a scrub of the head, or a promise to meet you at the gates after school, and they dart off like weasels before a friendly warning becomes a hard punch to the face. The older girls grow tired of peacocking the moment that it turns to violence and with a shake of the head and a heave of the chest they glide away quickly with their arms linked in threes.

The martial sounds of teachers barking rules and shouting instructions can be heard booming down the corridor. Feeling their voices insufficient to bring order to the horde some launch into the mass like heroes of the *Illiad*, using their greater weight and combat savvy to break up eddies and re-establish flows. Smaller teachers haunt their doorways, peeping out like ghoulish bouncers, while others stand and gesticulate rage and fury.

Amid this everyday fugue a small drama occurs, noticeable only if you can wait patiently by the commotion and listen for the whispers. Khalifa is bounding down the corridor with a smile on his face when he is grabbed by a teacher who wants to stop him for a few quiet words. It is about the coursework that he submitted last week. Khalifa looks crestfallen as he learns that the coursework is not up to the required standard and that because of its weighting on the course he now needs at least a B on the final examination to receive a C overall. I had mentored this student throughout the year and I knew how much extra work he had put in. I was thinking of going over to offer words of consolation when some friends of his jumped him from behind, pulling him by the bag straps and punching him playfully on the shoulder. Khalifa wasn't in the mood so he pushed his friends away and asked them to leave him alone. Not understanding the hurt he was feeling Khalifa's friends redoubled their efforts and a playful altercation quickly escalated into a fight. Now real punches were thrown and the teacher who a second ago was talking to Khalifa about his grades was joined by another who pulled the students away to break up the fight. "This is why you're grades are poor." "This is why you're not going to succeed at this school." "No wonder your coursework is so bad with this kind of attitude." "You're never going to improve if you keep behaving like this," they say. Khalifa holds back the tears which crowd the corners of his eyes before he is removed from his normal schoolday and sent to the referral room. After some time of waiting around and doing nothing it is decided that Khalifa must be punished for his behaviour and he is sentenced to three days in the Restorative Centre for fighting. The last of the students, now ten minutes late for their class, disappear from the corridor and the noise dies away.

iv. An Examination.

If there is one place that should be free from the weight of this cult, that should escape this endless anxiety about the future, grades, levels, and targets, it is the examination. All roads end here. Nothing else can be done. The student will write what they write and that will usually be the end it. There is no remedy, no hope of transformation, no chance of a different trajectory if only the student behaved in this way, with that attitude, for these reasons. One would imagine the role of the teacher here to be administrative, to make sure the rules are followed; to be festive, celebrating the fact that whatever the result it is all over and done with; or to be supportive, reassuring the students that no matter what their grades are it will all work out, that the end is in sight, or that it wasn't so bad after all.

But even in the examination the anguish of accountability is ever present. Having prepared so strategically for the exam there is always a chance that the teacher made a mistake, that they read the stars wrong, that the topics they expected to come up failed to appear, or that they came up in a way that is altogether unfamiliar. I remember once when I was invigilating the exam of one of my favourite teachers at the school, Mary.

Mary was a smooth operator, dedicated to her students, who managed to forge something of a route between the requirements of the examination and an authentic commitment to her subject. In spite of the mortifications of her role, the reduction of her privileges, the endless requirement of pointless reporting, she maintained a genuine enthusiasm for learning and a joy in teaching. When her students produced good work it would be met with with great rapture and honest applause.

In the examination though she was unusually subdued. It was, after all, the examination for her subject. Present before her were her students, and sitting on their tables was the examination paper that she had prepared them for. The behaviour of the students gave it away in an instant. Many were sat dolefully turning pages while others sat still staring blankly into space. The teacher hid her anxiety as she padded up and down the aisles, smiling at her students, acknowledging them with a glance, or scrunching up her shoulders and forcing a smile as she gave an encouraging thumbs up. Finally, she picked up a paper near the front of the hall, spent some time examining the contents, placed the paper back on the table, and walked to the rear of the hall where I was stood observing.

As she stood behind the desks where the students could not see her Mary began to sob, choking back a cry and wiping away the tears that poured down her face. Later, in the staffroom, I asked her what was wrong, and she explained that the exam board had unexpectedly changed the wording of the exam. She thought that, precisely because of her intensive preparation, the students would struggle to understand the questions that were asked of them. It felt as if a whole year of strife had, in an instant, come crashing down around her.

v. Bringing in the Parents

School finished four hours ago but the teachers are still here. They look fraught with anxiety as they fidget about the corridors organising students, moving items of furniture, or trying to work out exactly what is happening before relaying this to students. Some teachers prefer to remain hidden away in their classrooms where they can pimp out their wall displays, practice their presentations, make sure their

paperwork is in order, or avoid being roped into some perfunctory task that they think is a waste of time and that in any case they really can't be bothered with.

In the canteen by the main corridor a troupe of second year students labour in the heat of a compact industrial kitchen as they prepare national dishes from the Caribbean and Turkey. When the parents arrive and before the talking begins the students hand out the food and the parents sit down to eat and chew the fat. Dotted around the edges of the canteen are less sociable staff who stand patiently with folded arms and wooden stares. The headteacher is stood by the door greeting parents, giving instructions to staff, and telling disarrayed students to wear their uniform properly, tuck in their shirts, and come here and stand by me, I want to watch you do your tie up properly.

The month is February and examination season is in full swing. I don't mean that the examinations have started, but that the anxiety that enshrouds and envelops the impending tests has already reached fever pitch. Preparations in respect of it have already begun to intensify, diversify, multiply. A deputy head shouts over the buzz of chatter and the clatter of plates and cutlery that the presentation is about to begin, and slowly but surely the throng leaves the canteen and heads over to the assembly hall.

The atmosphere is festive but the parents are soon to learn who is in charge as they are rebuked for being too noisy just as their children would be. The role of the head is ceremonial. She opens up proceedings and gives some ominous warnings about the immediacy of exams and the necessity for preparations to begin right away. She addresses the parents directly as she stresses how much of a role they have to play in supporting their children, the teachers, and the school, in the run up to exams. Every

parent has been given a book of pointers, tips and suggestions, and the cover of this book has been mocked up to look like an examination paper. The slippage here is blunt and obvious. It engenders a semiotic of subordination. The examination of your children is at the same time an examination of you as parents. It creates a continuity between students and parents, and discloses, perhaps, not without a hint of irony, an important truth about the education system. That despite the endless attempts at individuation, what is examined is never an individual, but always a group. Better open the cover, then, and follow the instructions.

The deputy head in charge of data and accountability takes the stage and the presentation begins. He starts by congratulating the school on their excellent results, on their excellent progress, and on their journey into a culture of aspiration that began with appointment of a new headteacher some years ago. Then come the graphs, the lines showing the school's performance this year and the lines showing the school's performance the year before. These are placed alongside more lines comparing this school to other schools, to national targets, to minimum expectations, and to local benchmarks. The presentation goes on and now we break out into year groups and subjects: this year's group is compared to last, the attainment of different subjects are compared with one another, and finally we are presented with a spider's web of rising and falling lines, gently curving or steeply rising before falling off a precipice, colour coded and with a handy index telling you what each one refers to on the left hand side.

About halfway through this orgy of performance the parents became restless and I start to feel confused. The evening was supposed to be about helping parents to help their children, yet now we are made to sit through a twenty minute talk that is all about the

school, about the students in their aggregate, as opposed to persons in their individuality. It is the school's performance that is in question, it is last year's performance that must serve as a benchmark, and it is in comparison that we must pause and consider. The parents came to learn about their child, their future, what they need to do to get the best grades possible, but the presentation is all about the school, where the school needs to go, what the school needs to do, and how the children and the parents can help them in their mission.

At the end of the presentation the families were organised into ethnic groupings for more focused break out sessions. This was done with good intention given the fact that many of the parents struggle to speak English, but it quickly resulted in conflict as some parents refused to identify with the category that they had been assigned to. The break out sessions were admittedly more examination focused than the presentation. Members of staff talked the parents through the tips and tricks in the examination booklet before setting out expectations of time spent on revision and the importance of attending half term top up courses and after school intervention groups. As the parents filed out and the students headed home the teachers stayed behind to clear up and reflect on the encounter. Most were not surprised by the poor attendance, and not without a certain glee was it that they remarked that the parents that they didn't think would turn up, hadn't turned up, and that the students that they knew wouldn't bother, hadn't bothered. They were keen to emphasise, of these students, that when their results came through, with all the support they had been given, they would only have themselves to blame.

vi. **A Dance in the Staffroom**

It's the twenty minute morning break between the second and third lesson of the day and the staff room is busier than usual. At the far end on a round table by the windows three members of staff are sat talking whilst eating some food. They are complaining about the lack of independence amongst students and believe that the intensive culture of support and intervention at the school is to blame. The students are over reliant on staff and never do anything for themselves. This, they noted affirmatively, prevents their individual growth. The key is independence.

Yafeu, a pastoral officer, begins to tell a story about a student who answered the wrong set of questions on an English examination he had invigilated last week. The set text was *To Kill a Mockingbird* but the student answered questions on *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*. Yafeu was only just starting to tell his story when the teacher of the student in question sat down to eat some food. "Hey, this lad Jamal, he's one of yours isn't he?" jibed Yafeu, and the teacher replied affirmatively before saying "I'm not at all surprised. It's a shame really. He's a poor performing student and his margin is small. If he doesn't get the marks for the set text he will fail the exam. There is no way he will score highly enough on the other questions to pull his grade up." Yafeu laughs and shouts "I give him a U!" And the teacher replies "A U! Ha! He won't get a U! He will be lucky if he gets a Z! You know what, if Jamal gets a U I will do a dance." The teacher bursts into laughter before standing up from his chair to do a little dance. It's some kind of riff on the funky chicken. He folds his arms into wings and flaps them with gusto while nodding his head and bobbing his body up and down. The teachers reel with laughter and one loses it completely and spurts a mouthful of half eaten food all over the table. You can see that there is a something of a pride and a joy taken by these teachers in the sad truth that the examination will confirm. It casts an aura of veracity on the

predictions that have haunted the student since they arrived, and it is not without a tinge of schadenfreude that this latest confirmation of the student's uselessness is met.

Numbers First

Breathing alongside these vignettes we can begin to feel how the school is saturated by this cult of performance, by the weight of all these numbers, and by the fear of the numbers that are to come. There is not a conversation, a lesson, a wall display, or a chance meeting in the corridor where the productive imperative is not the central organising principle. Performance is an atmosphere, a background, the inescapable end, and a mood. It links up and redirects practices, organizes them in kaleidoscopic structures, animates and adds urgency to events, invests bodies and heats up affects, takes over and repurposes relationships, and serves as the background for the most quotidian of the everyday, whether you are eating your lunch in the staffroom, walking down the corridors at the end of a lesson, or standing by the school gates at the end of the day. This is a culture in profligacy, overflow, exuberance and excess.

It all starts in the summer holidays. Before the student sets foot in the school her doubles will have been the object of frantic concern. Many hours will have been spent feeling her out, plotting her trajectory, tracing her steps, and linking her up with technologies that will seduce her, envelop her, entrap her, or guide her. These doubles will be her ballast, her foundational truth, and will function like a heavy anchor that can be dragged along the seabed, that can be heaved step by step from its starting point, but which can only be removed from the ground with the greatest difficulty.

In the summer before the new intake arrives the student is a number before they are a person, or better, they are a number-person, a loose assemblage of figures, differentials, histories, and possibilities, which will precede and constitute them. Numbers from this school, and that demographic, in this postcode, within that local authority, will be gathered together with these numbers representing those subjects, and placed together in a file. The numbers that precede the student will be calculated alongside other numbers: baseline targets, national targets, school targets, the numbers from last year, the numbers from other schools, and their arrangement into hierarchy. They will be reflected upon, talked about, adjudicated, and brought together in a calculation to form a new set of numbers, closely guarded, in a constellation, an imaginary, that will serve as both end and limit to a student's time at Westfield Grange.

When I was researching the school it was in the midst of a vast swathe of transformations to the system of assessment and accountability. The most important and pressing move was from an old system based on levels (1-10) and expected levels of progress (2 levels per key stage) to a Progress 8 score based on grades of A* (1) to G (8). The Progress 8 score is calculated on the basis of the actual attainment of a statistically homogenised cohort to form a mean average of a student's progress from the SAT exams at the end of primary school to the GCSE examinations at the end of high school. The school was also preparing to move from an A*- G system of grading to a new system based on numerical scores of 1-9. Previously, the A* equated to an 8, so the 9 would be a new level of higher attainment that could not be understood in terms of or converted in respect of the old scale. The school's performance from 2016 onwards was to be judged on the mean progress 8 scores across a batch of qualifications; the attainment 8 score which measures final grades instead of progress; the proportion of

students attaining a C grade or a level 5 in English and Mathematics; the percentage of students entered for the English Baccalaureate; the percentage of pupils achieving the English Baccalaureate; and the employment destinations of students. Because the progress 8 score is based on actual attainment and is impossible to measure or forecast before the final examination results (Treadway 2017), it would exist alongside the old system of levels until something new could be worked out. From 2017 the measures would move to the 1-9 system but this would not occur simultaneously across all subjects so there were effectively three different systems of measurement in play during the time I conducted my fieldwork.

At the beginning of the school year each teacher is assigned to teach a number of classes that are grouped firstly by their year and secondly by their performance in a given subject. For each of these classes they are provided with a performance matrix that details the students' performance from previous years and the performance that the school expects from these students at the end of the year. As noted earlier, this performance matrix was based on the old system of levels 1-10 which were then further subdivided into fine levels of a, b, and c. The expectations detailed in the performance matrix were the result of a long and complex analysis. I spent two hours with the deputy headteacher for data and accountability and left just as clueless as when I went in as to how these numbers were actually generated. Heads of department didn't seem to have much of an idea either. As for the teachers, the general feeling was one of arbitrariness and frustration. They felt that the targets set were without any relation to the characteristics of their students or the composition of their classes. Many teachers used these words: "she picks the targets out of thin air."

This was especially the case for students who were new to the school as their targets were based on their performance Key Stage 2 SAT examinations taken at the end of primary school. These examination scores formed the grounds on which the targets for all subjects were formulated, yet they covered only English and Mathematics and even then in the most rudimentary and diminished form. English would take the English scores and Maths would take the maths scores and for the rest of the subjects the teacher could pick the scores from one subject or a mean of the two. The targets set had two dimensions. There was an expectation of the level of performance of individual students and an expectation of a mean level of performance for a class, which meant that one student's poor performance could be elided on the mean level by the better than expected performance of another.

The stakes of these targets are high. At the school level, below average performance can result in governmental inspection and in the worst case scenario the Senior Leadership Team and the headteacher can be fired. Above average performance is one of the conditions for an OFSTED rating of outstanding and can also free a school from the threat of inspection for a calendar year. For the teachers, their performance is reviewed yearly and whatever the headteacher deems as good performance is what their pay is based on. A teacher whose classes perform lower than expected will quickly come to the attention of leadership. They can expect an intensification of observations and a redoubling of forms of surveillance and intrusion such as book scrutiny or learning walks. Their wafer thin discretion will be narrowed further still as the expectation that their lessons take a determined structure and an intelligible form is intensified. In the face of bad numbers they will have to account for themselves to the departmental head, a member of the Senior Leadership Team, or the headteacher. Strategies for

improvement will be expected. Accounts will be demanded. And consistently poor performance can result in dismissal.

It should not surprise us, then, that the first few weeks of the new school year are characterised by an obsessive concern with the performance expectations of the year to come and the performance matrices that teachers have been given for their classes. In the beginning, the school is almost entirely occupied with the performance expectations of new students. Only the year 11 team or the heads or deputy heads of other year groups will think closely about returning students. On the first day back the staffroom is alive with chatter about the composition of the new year, its ability compared to the last, and the prophecies and expectations that will serve as the background for the year to come.

“What a load of shit,” “fucking bollocks,” “have you seen my set 7, I’m expected two levels of progress and half of them don’t speak proper English,” “set one this year, a load of shit, I don’t know why they bother with the primary school tests they don’t relate to ability at all,” “how is your set 5?” “I can see from my set 2 already that this year is going to be a nightmare, their behaviour is terrible, it’s going to take me weeks to get a routine set in before I can start properly teaching,” “it’s all politics, we were dragged down by humanities last year so they’ve stuck one on the English department who performed quite well,” “have you taught your set 4 yet, what are they like?”

We see in this chatter an aspect of a broader strategy of moderation and control. Targets cannot be changed entirely but there is room for negotiation and manoeuvre. What the teachers are trying to do is work out how their classes compare to others, how other

teachers feel about the expectations set out in the matrices, and how they might use this information to exert some control over a series of numbers that appear as if out of thin air. Teachers huff and puff that this class has this type of person, that this class lacks this type intervention, that the results from primary school were misleading or that the targets for these students are inflated. The declarative statement is a symbolic challenge that must be returned. Each remark concerning the composition of a class is reciprocated by a remark concerning another. In this way the teachers elicit a field of competing forces along a plane of fairness. With greater knowledge of the field the teachers are able to gain maximum leverage in negotiations with leadership, though it is important to note that few of the teachers I spoke with came out of these negotiations happy or satisfied with the targets that they had been set.

Many scholars understand this process of negotiation to be a form of resistance, an instance of agency through which teachers push back against the crushing requirements of performance (Webb et al 2009), but I would like to characterise it instead as a form of anguished fulfilment. The challenge is made to the system, on the basis of the system, and in the terms of the system, and so the fundamentals of the system are affirmed and legitimated. Never did I hear an indictment of targets and accountability as such, at least not in public. What was in question was its articulation in a particular case: its intensity, its accuracy, its bluntness, its lack of fidelity, the drug using child in this class or the one who doesn't speak English in another, the kid from that class who spends half her time in referral or the kids in this one who have formed a little posse of disruption. The negotiation of a matrices of expectations at the level of contents reaffirms the cult of performance at the level of form.

For the performance targets of incoming students the next element of this strategy is the creation of a new and competing set of performance matrices. The students will study a subject in miniature and after two or three weeks sit an examination on its contents. They will be arranged into sets based on this performance and the level they receive will form the basis of their progress measures for the year to come. The teachers are keen to drive their targets down so the exams are moderated with a view to harshness. These internal measures are then presented to the leadership team who will allow for reductions in targets only insofar as these reductions do not push the school below the minimum threshold of performance demanded by the central authority or below their own targets for improved performance in respect of previous years, other schools, or desired standards. Again, this is a complex, stochastic and situated calculation.

Once the targets have been set and the composition of classes finally decided, the students, if they are to move, are sent from the class to which they were assigned on the basis of their SAT results to a class based on the results from the internal assessment. They are given a sheet to stick in their book and the current level and target level of every student is read out to the class. The students must write these numbers down on the sheet and this will serve as the end and limit of their learning for the current year.

Before the student has had time to breathe, then, they have been classified, sorted, examined, and re-arranged according to a modular distribution. These stratifying judgments are heavy and will weigh like so many anchors around a student's neck. The internal assessment is a ritual of alethurgy that produces a truth constitutive of the institutional limits that will be placed on a student's educational imaginary and sets in motion a number of effects of power. They are a level, and that is all. The immediate

instantiation of the level is a form of branding that marks a student as a success or a failure before they have even started to learn. While targets are marketed as aspirational openings onto a horizon of achievement they function more like limits and boundaries that trap and ensnare students within an institutional assessment of ability.

Binding, Fixing & Holding Fast – Structures of Subjectification

In order for this branding to function as a motivator of practice it must not be a free floating sign or follow the student as their shadow. It must become internalised as an effective and binding truth. The materialisation of criterial immanence or the binding of the subject to the truth of the level is an institutional necessity that can be understood as occurring along three planes. First, there is the imposition of a structure of formal assessment: a periodic set of examinations that will serve as the objects of concern, reflection, action, or relay, linking up students or teachers with procedures that will guide them, exhort them, sequester them, or enshroud them. Second, there is the imposition of a structure of learning, or the reorganisation of learning activities such as lessons into examinable segments that embody and express a prescribed and determining form. Third, there is the reformulation of knowledge, or a radical transformation of the contents of learning, the what-is-to-be-learnt and the what-counts-as-learning, on the basis of the necessities of the structure of formal of assessment and the structure of learning that follows as a corollary and a consequence. Knowledge does not continue unaffected by these structural transformations, nor is it merely cut up, divided, re-arranged or repurposed. Being-towards-assessment (c.f. Heidegger's

discussion of the being-towards-which (1958 [1996]), the being of knowledge becomes something else entirely. And from this a number of consequences will follow.

The Imposition of a Structure of Formal Assessment

The first series of numbers generated by the initial assessment of incoming students is recorded as assessment point 1 or AP1. The school year is divided into three terms and each term into half terms. At the end of every half term there will be a formal assessment or examination that will form the basis of a new AP, and the sheets that the students stuck in their books at the start of the year have blank spaces where the students are required to fill in their attained grade and target grade for each AP. That means that the basic structure of formal assessment in the school is composed of six formal assessments. Each assessment is based on the contents of the lessons that have been studied during the preceding half term. At the end of every term an analysis will be made based on the students' attainment and progress in respect of their target between the AP1 and AP2 assessment of that term. The teacher in these meetings will communicate to the student what they feel they need to do in order to improve their performance and meet their new target grade in the AP1 and AP2 that will take place in the following term. These meetings are strictly in terms of examination criteria and levels. There is no sense of a knowledge or growth occurring on the outside. Already then, we see the roots of the radical immanence that is characteristic of the system of assessment and accountability exhibited by the modern school.

The data from these assessments will be inputted into various monitoring systems. At the time I was at the school there were three different recording systems that teachers were required to input data into. The first is the SIMS database which is a whole school computer program that recorded various characteristics of students. The second are RAPS sheets which detail previous performance, current performance and expected future performance, and which must be colour coded green, yellow or red to show whether a student is secure in their performance, insecure in their performance, or underperforming. The final system is a system called 4matrix which allows teachers and the leadership team to perform calculations and generate comparisons of classes, students, year groups, subject groups, expectations, attainments, and averages. These figures would then be arranged hierarchically, generating tables of well performing or poorly performing students, teachers, departments, or year groups.

It is the progress measure that ensures commensurability and forms the basis of comparative evaluation. When the head of department or head of year or senior leadership team scrutinises these figures they are able to compare an English set 7 with a maths set 9, the year 8's performance in geography with year 9's performance in drama, the progress of English as a Foreign Language students with the progress of statemented students or students who had newly arrived at the school. An internal specification of depth is rotated sideways onto a horizon of becoming-able whose stratification is mimetic across subjects. Defining the process of osmosis might be a very different procedure to using the correct structure in a writing exercise, but to progress from defining osmosis poorly to defining osmosis more accurately and to progress from writing in an unstructured way to writing in a more structured way are understood as comparable, inasmuch as those situated transformations are rearticulated onto a linear, segmented and hierarchical code. A level is a level.

Evaluations of progress thus formulated, recorded, collated, and arranged into tables, charts, graphs, and diagrams, form the principle of intelligibility through which the student or teacher is apprehended, understood, and responded to or acted upon. Heads of department or the leadership team will analyse this data and ask questions of underperforming students, classes, teachers, departments, or year groups. Teachers or heads of department or heads of year group will then be summoned to more or less regular meetings where they will have to give an account for or justify numbers that are lower than expected or be praised for and congratulated on the basis of numbers that are higher than expected. In this sense, the data will function as an object of assessment and account. But it will also function as the instrument of relay and refraction.

Where the performance matrices do signal or evidence unacceptable deviations from the norm these matrices serve as nodal points of relay and refraction. They link up with secondary processes of performative exhortation that can be understood as falling roughly into two types: enjoinders and impositions. An enjoinder would be the requirement of a student to attend a particular programme such as after school or lunchtime top up lessons, half term revision courses, or a course for gifted or more able students. They are quite literally “joined-up” with a procedure, process or programme that repeats, intensifies, or augments the ordinary everyday of the school while nonetheless being distinct from it. An imposition would be the intensification of the monitoring, surveillance, or “support” of a student, such as asking a member of the pastoral team to observe their lessons and make an assessment, asking a teaching assistant in their lessons to pay special attention to their behaviour in class, or seeking out an evaluation of needs that might lead to additional funding for one on one support. Imposition is differentiated from enjoinder here inasmuch as an enjoinder is an

attachment to an outside that refers back to the everyday of the school, whereas an imposition is situated within that everyday. We begin to see here the relation of the evaluative to the disciplinary that will be the focus of the next section of this thesis.

The form of scrutiny characteristic of the formal system of periodic assessment intensifies as the students move up through the year groups. It reaches its apogee in the year of the students' final examinations, where a full time team composed of a teacher, a pastoral officer, and two teaching assistants, enact and materialise strategies and tactics that emerge from data based analysis. This team of action is instructed by a team of evaluation involving the headteacher, the head of year, and other members of staff as and when necessary, who meet every week to discuss the progress and problems of the year 11 eleven group running up to their final examinations. Despite the move to the progress 8 measure there is still a high stakes measurement of the number of students obtaining a grade C or above in English and Maths, and so the gaming characteristic of this baseline is not avoided but reproduced. On the walls of the meeting room there are boards displaying mugshots of students secure (meaning grade C or above) in English and Maths, secure in English or Maths, insecure in English or Maths, and insecure in English and Maths. The year 11 team will further scrutinise the documents generated by teachers and heads of departments and use these as the grounds on which to make analyses, assessments, or interventions.

The structure of formal assessment, then, is a network of intelligibility that generates objects for assessment and evaluation which are linked up with strategies and technologies for the augmentation of progress through the exhortative imposition of a normative requirement to perform. In its insistence and in its extent the structure seeks

to ensure subjection to a credentialist model of learning through the brute repetition of the sovereignty of the exam. It is a question of both space and time: for anything else, simply put, there isn't any, just the monotonous gong of another assessment or the trill and fearful echoes when results are released. But the cult of accountability does not end with these periodic snapshots of a student's ability to answer questions on an examination or complete an assessment such as a book review, an essay, a maths problem, or a take home project, or with the strategies and tactics that emerge on the basis of their evaluation. It does not maintain itself in a position of structural exteriority from which it is possible to grab onto and take a hold of a substantive practice of learning that continues unaffected in form but intensified in quality or output beneath it. Accountability is miniaturised into a prescribed and determining arrangement that will run through and constitute learning activities to the extent that it becomes a constant and uninterrupted imperative that is tyrannical in respect of its object.

The Imposition of a Structure of Learning

The second technology for the materialisation of criterial immanence or the binding of the subject to the truth of the level, then, is the imposition of a structure of learning, or the reorganisation of learning activities such as lessons into examinable segments that embody and express a prescribed and determining form.

The imposition of a structure of learning begins with the organisation of lessons.

Every lesson must have a learning objective displayed on the board at the start of the lesson and copied by the students into their workbooks as the title and header for the lesson's work. The learning objective is a technique of enclosure. There can be no independent, autonomous, novel, or personal understanding or interpretation of a given subject. The objective is the purpose and that is the end of it.

Every lesson must have a starter exercise. This must be displayed on the board beneath the learning objective. It could be a writing task, a maths problem, or a question to discuss in groups. The starter exercise is a technique of engagement that elaborates upon the learning objective. It is always an exercise of immediate activity. Whilst it is generally understood to have a disciplinary function: to minimise the dead time in which attention is lost and disruption emerges; I would like to draw attention to its enclosive function. What is eliminated as well as the dead time in which attention can wander is the possibility of pause or reflection. There can be no questions asked because the space is eliminated. One must get on with the task and that is all. Admittedly, this starter exercise might sometimes take the aesthetic of a question: "What is metaphor?" but the questioning is cynical inasmuch as it is a ruse to a predetermined answer. The students are quite aware of this and will quickly give up if the answer is not easy to find.

Every lesson must communicate substantive curricular content. This is that part of the lesson that most closely resembles the old but still commonly held image of teaching: of the class sat at their desks listening to a teacher who communicates through speech, demonstration or example a knowledge, method or skill. It might involve explanations or elaborations, and it might involve the questioning of students to test their understanding and make sure they have "got it." The form of interaction is a form of

signalling. The teacher signals content or example to the class and the students reply with a set of signals that confirm that they have received the message. Deviation from message is strictly prohibited. The content is sovereign and can not be challenged. It is by the hand of grace that these truths are communicated to you. Better shut up, then, and pay attention.

Every lesson must contain an exercise or activity that in some way puts to work the substantive curricular content. This exercise or activity cannot be one of reflection or challenge, but must grasp and activate the consciousness of the subject in such a way that it is fastened onto and engaged with the substantive curricular content. Though it is discouraged it can involve copying from the board or a textbook. More often it will involve completing a worksheet, conducting a writing exercise or solving problem. It could also be a group activity, a dramatic exercise, a game, or an experiment. The activity or exercise must in some way put to work the substantive curricular content in a way that takes hold of the consciousness of the subject, minimising space for deviance or divergence.

An important requirement of the exercise or activity that puts to work the substantive curricular content is that it produces a determinate and testable outcome. It must resolve itself into a binary of quality (satisfactory / unsatisfactory) or a binary of completion (complete / incomplete). The activity or exercise, then, has a semiotic dimension as well as functioning as a technology of subjectification to necessary truth(s). The exercise or activity must signal or communicate to the teacher the extent to which the student has absorbed and is able to reproduce the truth delivered, providing the raw material which forms the secondary basis (the first being the performance matrix) of a teacher's

evaluation of the ability of a student, where the task itself was not explicitly delineated into levels.

Every lesson must be differentiated according to level and ability. This differentiation takes two forms. There is a differentiation of substantive curricular content and a differentiation of the exercise or activity that puts it to work. The differentiation of content could be a division between a level 4, 5, or 6 mathematical method, scientific explanation, or literary technique. The differentiation of exercise or activity could be a division between an easy, challenging, or difficult mathematical problem, scientific definition, or explanation of a literary technique.

This stratification of the content and activity of curricular learning on the grounds of difficulty is another procedure through which the student is ensnared within an institutional assessment of ability. While the argument might be made that the differentiations are not always explicitly levelled, a student who attempts a task that is considered below their level will be sternly rebuked and instructed to attempt the task that is level appropriate. "For those of you in this class who are targeted a level 7, I expect that you attempt, at minimum, the challenging exercise, if not the difficult one." Similarly, a student who attempts an exercise that is considered to be above their level will be pushed towards an exercise within the bounds of their ability. "You did really well on this exercise, but maybe next time try the easier activity and you will be left with more time to check for mistakes and correct your spelling punctuation and grammar." The level is metonymic in respect of ability. Only with the greatest effort and most consistent demonstration can a student be freed from its shackles.

Every lesson must conclude with a plenary. This could take the form of a presentation, a performance by students, a question and answer session led by the teacher, a discussion, or an exchange of opinions. The plenary must take as its object the substantive curricular content, it must take as its end the subjectification of students to the truth of that content by means of an active and conscientious engagement. If it is a performance, it is a performance of the content and within the bounds of examination criteria. If it is a question and answer session it is a procedure by means of which the teacher can check the extent of repeatable absorption of content and avert or deny aberrant interpretations or deviant understandings. If it is a discussion then this discussion is limited by or channelled towards the kinds of responses that would be appropriate on an exam or test. If it is an exchange of opinions then these opinions must be disavowed by the teacher if they fall outside a rigid set of socio-normative parameters.

The plenary is the only part of the lesson that we might understand as nominally free from assessment in terms of levels and therefore from the attempt to subjectify a student to the truth of, and thereby instantiate as immanent apperception, the institutional assessment of ability. Performances and presentations, however, can be good or bad, better or worse, and can articulate or dramatise the substantive curricular content with greater or lesser fidelity. Discussions can be participated in or not participated in. Opinions can be proffered or withheld. And so as with the requirement to differentiate, the plenary becomes another foil or surface of emergence for assessment, evaluation and exhortation in terms of levels. "You really need to be participating if you want to reach a level 6." "I would expect a level 8 student to deliver a better presentation." "Kyrese is only at level 3 and she is performing better than you."

The imposition of a structure of learning in the form of the imposition of a structure of lessons has been shown to be composed of six requirements: First, that every lesson must have a learning objective. Second, that every lesson must begin with a starter exercise. Third, that every lesson must communicate substantive curricular content. Fourth, that every lesson must have an exercise or activity that puts that content to work. Fifth, that every lesson must be differentiated according to an institutional assessment of ability. And sixth, that every lesson must conclude with a plenary.

The imposition of a structure of learning is the imposition of an assemblage of procedures for the binding of the subject to the repeatable truth of curricular content and for the rendering immanent as a structure of apperception the necessary truth of an institutional assessment of ability. The structure attempts to ensure subjection to content through a totalisation of time and space whereby every moment is taken over by performative or curricular imperatives and the gaps in which a novel, autonomous, or personal understanding can emerge are eliminated; through a game of signalling and review, in which the sovereignty of curricular content is assured and the possibility for subversion is attenuated; through a festivity of conscientious engagement, in which an attempt is made to latch on and take hold of the subject in their very being; and through the refusal (should not) or denial (can not) of aberrant interpretations and deviant understandings. The structure attempts to ensure a differentiation of ability and stratification of content through a hierarchical distribution of praise and censure.

Structuring Structures

The imposition of a structure of formal assessment and the imposition of a structure of learning are latched onto, augmented and intensified by three additional procedures that seek through rebuke or punishment to ensure the structures' proper elaboration. These are SILT exercises, SELFIE exercises, and book scrutiny.

The framework of these technologies is a structure of reporting and review. Teachers are expected to design their lessons with a view to assessment, and the students must complete a task that can be assessed at least once a week. Following the completion of a task the student will be asked to conduct a SILT exercise, short for Strength, Improvement, Level, and Target. This task will be differentiated into three or four tasks of graduated difficulty, and a student will be asked to consider their level and their target and pick the task that is relevant to their ability. The tasks generally do not differ in substance but rather intensify or multiply one element. A writing assessment after a week spent on exciting vocabulary, for example, will be differentiated to the students as: Write a story using 3, 5, 7, or 9 pieces of exciting vocabulary.

The strength typically repeats whatever it is that the student has done. In the case of a student who had used 2 pieces of exciting vocabulary, this would be listed as a strength, in the case of a student who attempted a maths problem above their target level, this would be listed as a strength. The improvement is similarly mimetic in respect of the dimensions of the assessment. If the task was in a science class to say, write down the definition of osmosis, and the student had incorrectly defined the process, the improvement would be write down the definition of osmosis correctly. The level would be in reference to the mark scheme that specified the requisite ability. If some grasp of

osmosis was a level 2a and a good grasp of osmosis a level 3, the student would write their level as 2a. Their target, then, would be a level 3, or, in other words, and through some acrobatics, the target would speak in a numerical form the requirement of the student to learn and be able to articulate the definition of osmosis.

These exercises are supported and augmented by SELFIE exercises. In a SELFIE exercise the student goes back over their book and looks for SILT exercises or remarks or instructions from their teacher. They are expected to perform the improvement exercises or improve or correct other work with a green pen. The leadership team check to see that these procedures have been followed by conducting book scrutiny. Every half term they will go around classes and collect a random sample of books and make sure that SILT and SELFIE exercises have been completed. The scrutiny, however, is not substantive but procedural. Rarely would the leadership team reflect on the meaningfulness of the exercises completed or the quality of the lessons in respect of the subject that was taught. Leadership checked that the exercises had been completed, in sufficient quantity, and with sufficient regularity, and that is all.

The teachers as well as designing their lessons for assessment and conducting and marking exercises are expected to go through every piece of work completed by a student that half term. Books without significant evidence of assessment or green pen work by students will result in the teacher receiving a stern rebuke from leadership and the surveillance and monitoring of their teaching will quickly intensify. Every spelling and grammar error must be corrected, every omission must be noted, and the requirements of teacher scrutiny extends even to pointing out where dates have been missed or titles not underlined. Any suggestion of an exercise or lesson that could not

result in an assessment or would not generate an outcome in terms of a level and target was quickly dismissed. The SELFIE exercises themselves were conducted sporadically, chaotically, and often served as little more than an excuse for a teacher to get on with some data reporting or to reply to any one of the hundreds of emails that they received every day.

These additional procedures, as checks and doublings of the imposed structures of assessment and learning, come round full circle as a secondary structure of periodic assessment. Like the primary structure they generate objects for scrutiny, concern, relay, and refraction, but this time with different objects and for different purposes. The primary structure is ends based, it is about the currentness of an exertion against the promise of reward. The secondary structure is procedural and one step removed. It seeks to ensure the elaboration of a number procedures that augment, intensify or accentuate the intelligible stuff of the primary structure.

Structures of Subversion, Structures of Fabrication

The description of this assemblage of mechanisms and procedures in terms of structures of imposition was intentional. Perhaps, in the language of the performative school, a better term would be structures of aspiration, for these structures, though specified, set out, detailed, reflected upon, developed, demanded, imposed, checked upon, and exulted as saviour, are hardly ever realised, are frequently subverted, and are subject to an endless process of criticism and revision.

The imposition of a structure of periodic assessment is frustrated by a number of weak points that provide the conditions for its failure and the opportunity for its subversion. The first and most obvious is what we might call the truth condition of the test, or that which must be the case in order for the result or outcome of a test to assume the status of truth and take on effects of power. Any test requires as a necessary condition the preparation, readiness and thoroughgoing commitment of the tested object. To test the maximum strength of my arm, or the ability of my arm to lift a given weight, would require that I had prepared, that I was not intoxicated nor exhausted, that I was not ill nor emotionally distracted, and most importantly that I give a shit, that I care about the test, brood over its outcome, worry or dream of the effects of power that follow, and give myself over to it without hesitation or reticence. The first locus of subversion and failure, then, is a refusal to prepare, participate, or give oneself over to the necessary conditions of the test.

Most students feel that the endless procession of tests and examinations is stupid, pointless, a waste of time. Some cheat, copy from their neighbours, give satirical answers, or intentionally answer the wrong questions. Others develop stomach aches, migraines, finger cramp, a feeling of faintness, and demand that they be sent to medical. Still others somewhat miraculously and at the very last moment remember they had a college visit, a trip to the doctor's office, training with a sports team, a music lesson, or the surprise funeral of a long lost relative to attend. And then there are always those who missed the last few lessons, turn up late, forgot that there was a test today, or left their exercise books at home.

All of this is not helped by the poor arrangement, bad design, or lazy administration of tests often sprung at the last minute and without sufficient time for preparation. The sheer mass of labour demanded by the cult of performance leaves little time for a teacher to devise meaningful examinations. What happens instead is a kind of haphazard attempt to produce the doubles of performance that are demanded and experienced unproblematically as symbols of worth and competence. It matters not what these signs are evidence for. The Scoolies are indifferent to the evidenced object. What matters is that there is evidence, and that is all.

This imperative is tyrannical to such an extent that some teachers in fulfilling it set examinations on texts or lessons that haven't—because of poor planning or slow progress—been studied yet. Others are more than happy to spring a test on a student who has missed the last month of school due to illness just so that their spreadsheet can be filled. The same applies for many teachers, remarkably, when dealing with English as a Foreign Language students, often first generation migrants, who speak little or no English, and can't read the examination paper. Only a few teachers complain about the absurdity of this situation. For the many, the student looks quietly at a page they cannot understand for an hour, and the teacher gives them a zero. Box filled. Everyone happy. We return again to this notion of anguished fulfilment, or the desperate attempt by teachers to fabricate the signs that are the conditions of their continued employment and increasingly, their very sense of who they are and what they mean as persons-in-the-world.

If the periodic structure of formal assessment fails and is subverted because of the apathy of students or the frenzied life of the modern teacher (the truth conditions of the

test are not met), the structure of learning is undermined by the weight of its own inertia.

The imposition of a structure of learning requires for its completion an intensive labour of planning and preparation. The curriculum —opaque, contradictory, indeterminate, and organised according to an arbitrary taxonomy must be interpreted and translated into a scheme of work for following year, term, or half term. This scheme must contain a detailed and meticulous plan for each lesson, and each lesson plan must document and demonstrate (evidence) how it meets the requirements specified in the curriculum and according to the criteria against which it will be examined. Each lesson plan must evidence further how it incorporates, is structured by, embodies and expresses the six elements of the structure of learning. The subject must be divided then: not only externally, against other subjects; not only internally, by object, method, topic, theme, or question; not only transversally, by year, term, half term, week, day, hour; but in a certain sense, because of the reach of the elaboration, universally, on the inside — through and in— by the structure of learning.

After all this exertion, there is a further labour still, for the fulfilment of the structure of learning is not simply a labour of division where, as with the aristocrats at the fall of the British Empire, a ruler is placed over an indifferent geography that maintains its contours even whilst being territorialised. To structure learning in such a way is a labour of creative imagination, invention and productivity, or the measure that changes the measured in the very act of measuring. It is as with Baudrillard's re-imagination of Borges' map. For Borges, the perfection of the map is at the same time its murder. The map is the tragedy of a positivist metaphysics. In its very movement towards perfection

it becomes useless, is given up, and now remains only in fragments that are inhabited by animals and beggars. For Baudrillard...

Abstraction is no longer that of the map, the double, the mirror, or the concept. Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being or a substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal. The territory no longer precedes the map, nor survives it. Henceforth, it is the map that engenders the territory – PRECESSION OF SIMULACRA – and if we were to revise the fable today it would be the territory whose shreds were slowly rotting the map. It is the real, and not the map, whose vestiges survive here and there, in the deserts which are no longer of the Empire, but our own.

Baudrillard – Simulacra and Simulation (1981 [1993]: 1)

To imagine a subject thus divided (externally, internally, transversally), and then divided again (universally, through and in), into a learning objective, starter exercise, content, activity, plenary, and differentiation, is not to imagine the same subject divided at all, but it is to refigure it into something else entirely.

Lesson	L/G	AO		Literacy	Homework	Cross-Curr links (inc ICT)	Resources
Week 1 1	To research Vikings and explore new language from a variety of texts	AO1 and AO2	Lesson 1 research Beowulf Starter: Memorise facts Learning Activity: Compare texts from different time periods Mini Plenary: Recall facts from starter (quiz) Learning Activity: Research the Vikings in groups finding interesting facts Mini Plenary: feedback facts Learning Activity: Introduce New terms (matching activity) Homework: Uses new terms as plenary for last learning activity	Reading of texts from a variety of sources	Words associated with Vikings	Historical information	All available on the system
2	To comment in detail on the effect of figurative language	AO2	Lesson 2 Chapter 1 Starter: Introduce similes Learning Activity 1: Explain similes and their effect Learning Activity 2: Create examples of similes (model one) Feedback Mini Plenary: What are similes and their effect? Learning Activity 3: reading chapter 1 pages 1-3 using SPLAT mat to identify similes. Feedback to the class Learning Activity 4: Analyse the spindrift simile. Model a PEE Learning Activity 5: Students Peer Assess PEE paragraphs PLENARY: Write a target	Analysing text and the effectiveness of language techniques	None	Reference to film (media) Using words to create a picture (art)	On system
3	Read Chapter 1 Explicit and implicit meaning as well as identifying key points from the text	AO1	Starter: Who is who? Learning Activity 1: Answer questions from chapter 1. Teacher model an answer using embedded quotations. Learning Activity 2: Read Chapter 2 Learning Activity 3: Write a P and E to answer a question about implicit meaning Learning Activity 4: Order the events of the chapter (summary)	Summary Implicit meanings	Take up homework		Lesson on system
4	To create kennings	AO6	Starter: Guess the key word Learning Activity 1: Revise noun types	Poetry Noun types	None	ICT – video link	Lesson on system

All of this takes a lot of work. The school year in Britain is 39 weeks. Each teacher has 4 hours of lessons a day, plus lessons that need to be covered, and minus training days, beginnings and ends of term etcetera, means 780 lessons need to be prepared for the year. A lucky teacher might have duplicate classes. Let's say half of their classes are duplicate. That is still 390 lessons. 390 Learning objectives. 390 starter exercises. 390 segments of curricular content. 390 plenaries. And 1,170 differentiations. No wonder that this is turned into a specialist labour and then divided amongst staff to be completed over summer, or, better yet, outsourced, bought in, and looked up on the day.

Naturally, many of these lessons are unimaginative, uninspiring, incoherent or poorly conceived. Some are incomplete, with sections missing or interactive exercises that do

not work. Even when all goes smoothly they often finish too early or take too long, resulting on the one hand in vacuums and on the other in backlog. Teachers have often not even looked at them before lesson time, so as well as being badly conceived, the lessons are often badly delivered. Delivered, being the key here... A neoliberal vision of the teacher as postman. No surprise then, that this structure which attempts to bind us to a regime of truth, fix us to an order of conduct, and render us subject to definite arrangements of knowledge and power, has the effect of alienating students, or boring them to death.

The shortness of lesson times also poses a significant difficulty. A lesson is only one hour long, which is far too short for all but the most diligent of classes to make it through the six steps. Rarely did a lesson take the prescribed form, and I remember many where getting sat down, writing the date, copying the learning objective, and completing the starter exercise, took the whole lesson, if it was completed at all. Plenaries are crammed in at the end if bothered with. And as for the other segments, they are skipped past at will or applied at random.

On the rare occasion that a lesson did take the prescribed form it tended to do so for reasons of performative fabrication rather than pedagogic expertise. The rationale was demonstrative: for a lesson observation, because of a rumour that the headteacher is on the prowl, because of an imminent OFSTED inspection, or in readiness for a best practice exchange. Teachers could often be seen in the staff room, smoking area, private office, or choice nook in the corridor, in apoplexy at their most recent observation, at the fact that the head was checking lessons on a Monday, that a teacher has been sent to observe them, or that their model lesson carefully prepared for assessment by the

leadership team had quickly turned into an unmitigated disaster. Most disheartening is the fact that the teacher's indignation is almost always directed at a failure in terms of the cult of accountability and assessment. It is not that the six requirements make good or bad lessons, enthuse or dissuade students, produce better or worse outcomes, but that the six requirements were completed or not, that the headteacher thought the lesson was good or bad, that the new teacher observing will or will not mention the moment two thirds in when the class got completely out of hand in their write up.

PE MOVEMENT PLAN

Level 4

PUPILS SHOW CONTROL WHEN PERFORMING SKILLS AND TECHNIQUES. THEY UNDERSTAND MATCH TACTICS AND ANALYSIS OF PERFORMANCE. THEY CAN EXPLAIN THE DIFFERENT COMPONENTS OF FITNESS NEEDED TO BE A SUCCESSFUL SPORTS PERSON.

Level 5

PUPILS SHOW CONTROL AND FLUENCY WHEN PERFORMING SKILLS AND TECHNIQUES. THEY UNDERSTAND AND RECOGNISE ONGOING MATCH TACTICS AND ANALYSIS OF PERFORMANCE. THEY CAN EXPLAIN AND IDENTIFY THE DIFFERENT COMPONENTS OF FITNESS NEEDED TO BE A SUCCESSFUL SPORTS PERSON.

Level 6

PUPILS SHOW CONTROL, FLUENCY AND PRECISION WHEN PERFORMING SKILLS AND TECHNIQUES. THEY UNDERSTAND, RECOGNISE AND CAN INFLUENCE ONGOING MATCH TACTICS AND ANALYSIS OF PERFORMANCE. THEY CAN EXPLAIN, IDENTIFY AND DEMONSTRATE THE DIFFERENT COMPONENTS OF FITNESS NEEDED TO BE A SUCCESSFUL SPORTS PERSON.

Level 7

PUPILS SHOW CONTROL, FLUENCY, PRECISION AND FLAIR WHEN PERFORMING SKILLS AND TECHNIQUES. THEY UNDERSTAND, RECOGNISE, INFLUENCE AND DICTATE ONGOING MATCH TACTICS AND ANALYSIS OF PERFORMANCE. THEY CAN EXPLAIN, IDENTIFY, DEMONSTRATE AND ORGANISE THE TESTING OF THE DIFFERENT COMPONENTS OF FITNESS NEEDED TO BE A SUCCESSFUL SPORTS PERSON.

Level at the start of school

Level at the end of school

End of year PE target

Start of school
End of school



We find a similar set of problems when we consider the third structuring structure, or the system of report and review that is designed to ensure the imposition of a structure

of periodic assessment and the imposition of a structure of learning. SELFIE work, SILT exercises, and book marking are completed almost at random, in the gaps, whenever there is time. A lesson completed quickly or an exercise that can be skipped is the fertile ground for impromptu book work. I saw teachers give over entire lessons and even whole weeks of lessons to manicuring books for inspection, ensuring that everything was marked, spelling corrected, is dotted and ts crossed, while the students are made to sit and fabricate the completion of green pen exercises. Again, the focus here is on prestatation, demonstration, not learning or understanding. Often, the teachers will simply complete the exercises for the students, going through the book and completing the green pen and selfie exercises themselves. When the students do bother, it tends to be administrative, perfunctory, and simply to get it done.

The Kafkaesque and the Classroom

Thinking upon all of this breakdown; failure; and desperate, grasping, anguished fulfilment; we might now imagine the school as a strange and all too human machine inhabited by alienated teachers and estranged students with odd motives and foreign intentions, stumbling through lessons that aren't believed in or understood, asking questions that cannot be answered, conducting pointless exercises and empty demonstrations, forcing figments into object measures that transform the measured, giving warnings that are unfamiliar about things that don't seem threatening, and distributing bodies according to an arbitrary taxonomy that is indecipherable when it is not absurd, all so that the signs demanded by a mysterious, capricious, and inaccessible authority—which, though apparently centralised in fact exists everywhere— can be fabricated. The school as anomic, as antimony of meaning, or as abyss. Better said, this

is the school as Kafkaesque, or the school as embodying those qualities so typical of Kafka, those qualities being, formally considered, the same as those which we have built up in our investigation of the performative school.

But this would be a mistake. A misreading of Kafka and a misreading of the school as Kafkaesque. Let us re-imagine Kafka, and the school alongside it, and let us conduct this re-imagination in four movements. 1. Where the Kafkaesque and the school are imagined as dysfunctional, let us imagine them as ruthlessly effective. 2. Where the Kafkaesque and the school are imagined as meaningless, let us imagine their meaning in profusion and excess. 3. Where the protagonists of the Kafkaesque and the teachers of the school are imagined as partial or incomplete, let us imagine them, not only as whole, but as whole because they are possessed by an idea. And 4. Where the scenario of the Kafkaesque and the school are imagined as those that exclude, repel, forbid, or deny, let us imagine them as those that intrigue, allure, bring close, and include.

1. The Kafkaesque and the School as Inherently Dysfunctional.

In *The Trial* (1925 [2000]), protagonist Josef K is subject to a judgment whose contents he does not understand, on a charge that will remain a secret, from an authority he does not recognise, and according to principles of administration he cannot make sense of. Nonetheless, a judgment is passed, a sentence is given, and a punishment carried out. The agents of the court who for unknown reasons and at irregular hours turn up to speak with K are not inept but effective. They find their charge with ease, they follow some kind of protocol, and they appear sure of their authority and station. When a behaviour threatens the completion of their task or the manner of the completion of their task it is dealt with as an unjust aberration to an otherwise regularity. Their offices,

despite appearing as a strange and ineffable, bustle with an industry that the blundering K can't help but get in the way of. The institutions of Kafka's late night reveries are not inherently dysfunctional, but ruthlessly effective.

Similarly, in this school which now seems to us so dysfunctional, teachers are recruited, exams are administered and lessons delivered. Inspectors come and go. The results are not worse than expected. And at the end of the year the oldest students will graduate with a set of certificates that will in no small part determine their future and a full complement of new recruits will arrive and the production line will start again. There are no grand public scandals, no urgent investigations, no generalised rebellion or structural revolution. It is considered by OFSTED to be a "good" school. The headteacher is praised for her achievements.

What surprises me, what amazes me, continuously, right now, to the nib of my pen in this very moment, is that in spite of all this dysfunction and a constant sense of crisis the school endures, worse, intensifies, doubles down, enlarges, grows, like a ghost ship that proceeds uninterrupted growing bigger and bigger as it sails through obstacles.

Whatever grand purpose this institution serves, and we will have something to say about that later, the school must serve it with exceptionally well. This is the Kafkaesque and the school as ruthlessly effective.

2. The Kafkaesque and the School as Meaningless.

The Castle (1926 [2015]) is the tale of a land surveyor summoned to a remote village covered permanently in snow and dominated by an unreachable castle and its strange, lascivious bureaucrats. After arriving at the village amidst some confusion K is assured

of the value of his work and the necessity of his appointment in a message from the elusive Klamm, a high ranking official from The Castle whose name is related to the Slavic word for illusion. K is given two assistants to aid him but they appear to know nothing about land surveying. Instead, K these Charlie Chaplin protégés spend most of their time goofing around, pulling pranks, playfully flirting with K's lover or cartwheeling happily in the snow. They appear in a sense meaningless, or absurd, without end or purpose, farcical, and offensive to any notion of decency or order, like those cartoon characters who after being hit square in the face with a mallet spawn birds and stars and sway momentarily before fighting again. K finds them to be an incredible annoyance, and despite warnings and entreaties from the townspeople goes to great lengths to dismiss them. But upon meeting one of the assistants later, freed from K's service and so freed also to speak, we discover that all was not as it seemed. The authorities had taken notice of K's gloomy disposition and instructed the assistants to cheer him up. Slapstick comedy was their job. To tell K about this would have been a derogation of duty. How many slapsticks, after all, stop mid performance to remind the audience that what they are doing is comedy? As for their skills as land surveyors, the castle thought that K could give them all the training they needed, when the time was right. Their actions then, are not meaningless or absurd, but possessed with a meaning which for K is ungraspable.

If we consider the activity of meaning making more broadly, meaning making here, referring to the act of creating something that is intelligible to someone, not the act of creation of a necessary, universal or transcendent meaning (meaning without truth is still meaning), the officials and their secretaries and undersecretaries and assistants are almost constantly scrutinising records, interviewing the townspeople, or holding hearings. Their work is arduous and the requirements exacting. They are held in great

esteem by the villagers. Only K is confused as to their meaning or function. The records are of the highest importance, even if they will never be read. So exhaustive are the records that in one scene an account is demanded of an utterly banal and innocuous everyday conversation. We do not see here, then, an absence of meaningfulness. It is simply a meaningfulness that eludes K. Meaning, in Kafka, is always in plenitude.

We might broaden this to all our civic institutions. Indeed, what is an institution other than a vehicle for the production and reproduction of common meanings? Is the NHS not that organisation that turns inchoate and disparate symptoms into individuated disorders such that the unwell become sick and the sick become well? What are the Police, other than that organisation that produces from an undifferentiated mass deviants, criminality, and the like, such that it can be identified, isolated, responded to, or combatted? What are the military, other than that organisation that produces from an indifferent geography the borders of a nation? And what then is the school, other than that organisation that produces from an irregular mass a hierarchical and stratified distribution whose groups thus formed are then placed into comparative calculation and analysis, an institutional machine for the production, not just of meaning, but of common meaning, accepted meaning, what Wittgenstein (1968) calls bedrock meaning and Heidegger (1958 [1996]) calls being-in-the-world?

Though collapsing under the weight of their own inertia, the structures of periodic formal assessment and the structure of learning are dispositive structures for the production of meaning: meaning in plenitude, profligacy, exuberance, and excess. These signs might be empty, elliptical, free floating, and freed from the ballast of an intelligible object, but they are meaningfully experienced, and meaningful in terms of their effects.

Meaninglessness in the school, as with K in the Castle, is an error of perspective. This is the Kafkaesque and the school as sites of meaning in plenitude.

3. The Characters of the Kafkaesque and the Teachers of the School as Partial, Malformed, or Incomplete.

The protagonists of Kafka's novels are often conceived of as ineffable, bizarre, and acting without decipherable motives or intelligible reason. This lack of intelligibility is always depicted as a lack of humanity, or a lack of soul. It is as if his characters act in the way they do without explicable reasons. But Kafka's protagonists are in fact lucid, clear, verbose and logical in the explanation of their own behaviour, the behaviour of others, or of the structures of power in which they find themselves enmeshed. Like the assistants from the Castle who in the end were just doing their duty, the characters of Kafka's novels, at times through lengthy elaborations, are revealed to be operating rationally, but according to a rationality that is not our own.

Kafka's characters pursue their duty or station with remarkable dedication and fervour, as if possessed by it as in idea. Barnabas, the Castle's messenger, even in his lowest ebb of shame and humiliation; shunned by his superiors; refused work; still pursues his role in good faith and with the utmost dedication. Frieda, the barmaid, despite constant advances and harassment, can see no other life for herself. She is the barmaid, and that is all. Most remarkable, then, is not the protagonist's strangeness, but their committedness. It is as if there could be no life except their current one, as if the limit point of their imagination is its perfect fulfilment. For Dostoevsky (Bakhtin 1984), to be whole is to be possessed by an idea, to live up to it fully, and in this sense we can say

that the characters of Kafka's novels are never partial or incomplete; they are whole because they are possessed by an idea.

We might think similarly of the teachers at the school, desperately trying to fulfil the requirements of the performativity, delivering lessons that frustrate learning and personal growth, making judgments and classifications derived from indeterminate criteria, and rolling, as if off a treadmill, more failure than they ever will success. We might conceive as malformed the desperate face of the teacher seeking validation for the inevitability of a test sprung at the last moment or a whole week given over to the manicuring of books for book scrutiny. We might see it also in the violent and aggressive outbursts that are all too common.

But most of the teachers in the school are wholly given over to the cult of performance. More, they are enchanted by it. They are possessed by it as an idea. We can see this in the general parameters of teachers' critique: less exams, better targeted interventions, improvements in classroom management, more economical systems of administration... It is the elaboration of the cult in a case that is in question, in its extension, in its intensity, in its exhaustiveness, in its weight, in its contradiction, or in its abundance. Not no more exams but fewer and better devised. Never no more homework but strategic, economical, smartly administered and rigorously enforced. Never no more targets but softer targets that are better understood and more cognisant of context. Indeed, most of the teachers that I spoke with believed that the proper implementation of a performance culture into the school is the best way to increase student attainment. The protagonists of the Kafkaesque, then, and the teachers of the school, are not partial or incomplete, but possessed by an idea, and in a Dostoyevskian sense whole.

4. *The Kafkaesque and the School as Excluding, Repelling, Forbidding, or Denying.*

The heroes of Kafka's stories are always outsiders: the land surveyor in *The Castle* (1926 [2015]), the common man in the *The Trial* (1925 [1992]), the atheist in *A Hunger Artist* (1993) the son in *The Judgment* (*ibid.*), the hideous vermin in *The Metamorphoses* (*ibid.*).... Generally, they are seeking to gain admission, acceptance, or redemption, somewhere where it is forbidden or refused. In *Before the Law* (*ibid.*), for example, a man waits before the entrance to the Law, a doorway guarded by a fearsome bouncer who refuses admission. In *the Penal Colony* (*ibid.*) the officer who operates the diabolical machine is nonetheless forever other to it, though he feels part of it in his very soul. In *The Metamorphosis* (*ibid.*) when Gregor Samsa awakes to find that he is a hideous vermin, he is, in a sense, excluded from the human world in which he wishes to remain. But again, all is not so simple.

The man who is refused admission to the law waits, he waits until the end of his days, until his hair is grey and his eyesight is poor and his hearing is failing. At the moment that he dies, the door is closed, for this door was made only for him. Does it matter what, if anything, was behind the door? The man was held, held close, and bound fast. What is important about the door is not whatever is behind it but the promise of what is behind it and the power relationship that this forms (c.f. Judith Butler 2013) for a discussion of Derrida's reading of *Before the Law* in which it is the anticipation of a response that is constitutive of the power relationship). The land surveyor in *The Castle* is it at first perplexed by his failure to reach the authority, to be given proper assistants, and to fulfil his role so that he might leave, but he ends up working as a school janitor

married to a barmaid and effusive in his defence of the officials and their bureaucracy, now elevated and ennobled in his discourse.

Might we think similarly, again, of the performative school, or of the school that brands students and organises them according to a hierarchical distribution, that sets minimum standards for participation, and when these standards are not met removes them, with its walls and fences and spaces for the enclosure of the recalcitrant, whose classifications will deny entire trajectories of life to a vast majority of its students. Is this not an institution that forbids and repels?

We might think again if we consider Foucault's critique of Levi-Strauss in *The Punitive Society (1972-1973 2015a)*. There is no form of exclusion which is not and at the same time a form of inclusion. Every exclusion is a means to re-include, every denial an incentive to attain the conditions of participation, every refusal the opening onto a new horizon or pathway, less than beautiful than the first, but more suitable for the ugly. Even exclusion from the school as such, total removal, exile, is an exclusion to another institution of inclusion, to another institution that will attempt to instruct, coerce, contain, and allure. The school does not try, on the whole, to push its students out, but to keep them in. This is the Kafkaesque and the school as the sites of intrigue, of attraction and of inclusion.

Four Dimensions of the Kafkaesque

We can say then that the school is Kafkaesque, but Kafkaesque in the sense of a re-imagination that assumes four dimensions. First, the Kafkaesque and the school as ruthlessly effective. Second, the Kafkaesque and the school as the profusion of meaning. Third, the protagonists of the Kafkaesque and the school as possessed by an idea and therefore whole. And fourth, the Kafkaesque and the schools as sites of intrigue and inclusion.

The Outsider, Disclosure and Operational Functionalism

The essential element that allows for the articulation of a new positivity of the Kafkaesque and the Kafkaesque school is the position of the hero as outsider. This is because the presence of the outsider is an occasion for the disclosure of strangeness. In order for the societies depicted in Kafka's novels to appear as strange, they require an outsider and the immanence of a contrary form of life to bring out that strangeness through juxtaposition and interplay. Kafka is the foremost modernist because this disclosure of strangeness is at the same time a disclosure of groundlessness. The vision of a society rational unto itself, sufficient, coherent, but other, is a challenge to the absolute and the universal—two notions central to the Western idea of truth and society (Heidegger 1958 [1996]).

The death of god which Nietzsche speaks of is the death of the absolute and of those forms of life that depend on him/her. As god retreats as a totalising explanatory habitus for the order of the world what is left is something of a vacuum. Modernism, then, is the experience of vertigo, or the vertigo of the abyss. It is the redoubling of the ethical away from divine truth and onto the individual. Painfully we realise that our castle is made of sand, and are forced to confront the terrifying prospect that that we might be alone in a cold, hostile and brutal universe.

Could it be that Kafka, rather than the auteur of despair, is in fact the auteur of hope and redemption? Consider two points. One. That despite the irreality of the stories, the constant invocation of the ironic K lends every tale an earnest palpability. The stories might be fantastic, but they are written, and they are written by someone real. Two. The pain suffered by the heroes of Kafka's novels is always the pain of ignorance. They trudge blindly on, without investigation or understanding, pause, analysis, or repose. Winding their way into the spirals of power, they become entrapped, sequestered, but only and always through their ignorance, every time through their lack of knowledge.

This is because the societies in Kafka's novels are not dysfunctional but operationally functional. Coherent unto themselves, they are possessed by rules without points of reference, ethics that emerge only in practice, boundaries that come to light only insofar as they are crossed, and authorities that turn up as they wish. But there are rules. There are ethics. There are boundaries. And there is, or at least seems to be, an authority.

Kafka's novels are parables of ignorance in the face of modernism and the death of god. The Kafkaesque, then, is not the inevitability of hope and despair but the possibility of

hope and redemption. What is demanded is the turn from power and the leap of faith to a critical knowledge. Do not get sucked into the abyss! Says Kafka. Keep your distance. Understand. Negotiate. This world functions, is intelligible, and with time we can discover an order. What we lack are the points of reference, the forms of life, that might allow us to do so. Operational functionalism. Not the denial of meaning, but the call to its discovery. The Kafkaesque as operational functionalism. The school as Kafkaesque.

PICK UP THE GUN OR WE SHOOT: THE PARADOX AND THE DOUBLE BLACKMAIL

If we began by identifying the school as the privileged site for the analysis of subjectification, and proceeded to consider two structures that attempt to ensure it, but saw immediately how these structures break down and fail, before hearing through a reading of Kafka that the school does, in fact, work, produce meaning, function, albeit operationally, in reference to itself, and in terms of the signs that are its conduit to the outside, we might now feel that we are in a muddle.... How can the school from the inside look wrought with disorder, contradiction, breakdown, and anomie, but from the outside look functional better or worse—a bit more funding here; some smaller class sizes there; more teachers please; and maybe a reform in governance too.... How does the external functioning of the school cover over and conceal the internal functioning of the school? Could these seemingly contradictory analyses in fact necessitate each other, presuppose each other, rely on each other, and call upon each other?

I would like to argue, from the inside, that this is in fact essential, and ensures the broader social functioning of the school. In order for the school to function, produce meaning, possess an idea, and allure, it must at the same time not function, destroy meaning, appear partial, and exclude. This is because in order for the school to function it must differentiate between individuals, individuate, or produce individuals in their difference, and in order for the system of schooling to function it must differentiate between schools, individuate, or produce schools in their difference. In order for the system of schooling to function it must produce difference through failure, and in this way, the school produces the signs that are the conditions of its own acceptance. Let us consider the terminal point of this cult of performance, the examination, and see how an analysis of the examination can bring these features together in such a way that we are able to deduce, from the inside, the social function of the school, so that we are able, from the outside, to resolve the functioning/ dysfunction contradiction, such that, the schools internal dysfunctionality becomes, in fact, the necessary condition of its external functioning.

The Examination

Outside the examination hall the air is abuzz with the steady hum of conversation. Teachers stand ready and alert as they motion or whisper to students, dousing little fires. Fifteen minutes before the exam and the mood turns serious. The teachers ssshhh furiously and there is the occasional bark to walk slowly, quiet down, put your bags and coats on the left hand side and walk directly to your seat IN SILENCE. Most students are quiet now. The sounds of chairs being scraped, coats being removed, papers being shuffled, and stationary being organised, echo wildly around the hall. At random

intervals and with steady exasperation the teachers shout instructions to the students. Amid fidgeting and agitation the students settle down in anticipation of the clock. The teacher makes their utterance for the examination to begin.

It is difficult to capture the atmosphere of this curious ritual. This is it. The moment of truth. This is what it was all for. All of those hours of planning, trying, testing, exhorting, hoping, dreaming, crying, laughing. All of the struggles and the fights, long days and late nights, and the memory of all that was lost along the way. All of this is contained in the rattle of a lid on a simmering pot. The space feels heavy, the air is thick, the teachers are wooden and stodgy, and the students, boisterous just seconds ago, now sit in fear and trembling.

There is no talking now; only the scratching of pens, the shuffling of paper, and the gentle pad of the invigilators' footsteps as they amble slowly up and down the aisles. A student raises his hand to ask for an extra worksheet and an invigilator hurries over like the anxious mother of a wounded faun. A girl sits on the edge of her seat as if perched upon a precipice: her feet are held in ballet poise, her elbows tightly locked, her toes barely graze the floor, and the bearing of an impatient pen runs before her. Heads bob gently to the rhythm of anguished prose. Jaws clench. Grips tighten. Some students are writing while others tap their legs, roll their pens, stretch their arms, and now and again glance sideways or upwards to look at the time, a companion, the ceiling, or just to earn an approving glance from an invigilator. Through a row of windows near the ceiling of the hall you can see the tips of trees sway lazily in the summer sun. A large golden balloon, half deflated, hangs delicately above these worker bees, trapped by the rafters that form the structure of the hall's high roof.

All this might seem very familiar, more memories that warm us like long lost friends. What I would like to focus on in an investigation of the examination is a group that we all remember but whose significance in our hastiness escapes us, is explained away, or serves as the presentified redoubling of a truth which seems so natural. I would like to focus on the outsiders, the anomalies, the points of intensification and elaboration of which will provide the key that will guide our understanding. These are the refuseniks, the deniers, the students who refuse to accept the truth of the examination, refuse to submit to the requirements of the examination, refuse, even, to open their paper, look at the questions, or bless it with the kiss of identity. Generally, they are the students whose school life is characterised by resistance: A refusal of the demands of the school, a refusal of the disciplines it imposes, a refusal of the knowledge it conveys, and a refusal of the society into which it plugs. These students' refusal is a refusal of subjection, a refusal to subjectify themselves as the site of the truth of the examination, by denying the right of an arbitrary and distant authority to tell them who they are and what they can or ought to be.

The total refusal of the examination is relatively rare. The students who do so are usually those students who have challenged the school from the outset. They are the most truculent, most troublesome, and the most likely to fail. By the time of the examination it is almost certain that these students who have spent five long years resisting, refusing, struggling, evading, denying, in short, playing the long game with a school who will never be their master, will not succeed in the context of an examination increasingly based on rote repetition of unreasonable response. It struck me as curious, then, that these students pose a problem to their teachers. They do not pose a disciplinary problem. There is a kind of stoic commitment to their defiance. These

students who could not sit still for five minutes, who could not keep quiet for two, now sit still, pen down, arms folded, adamant.

In spite of the lack of consequence —they would fail the exam in any case— and in spite of their calm demeanour —they are not disturbing the students around them— the refuseniks very quickly become the object of anguished concern. Generally, an examiner or a teacher will notice that they have not started, will ask them what they are doing, and will walk away with a short sharp sigh and a shake of the head. Soon after, the teacher or the examiner will return, this time to give a gentle exhortation, a mild and whispered plea, an injunction to go on, go on, just give it a go. Some time will pass and, seeing the student still sat in a pose of quietly dignified refusal, the teacher or the examiner will come back again, this time kneeling beside the student, huddling up to her, befriending her, asking her to please, please, please just write your name on the paper, open it up, take a look at the questions, try and give some answers, one answer, any answer, you never know where it might lead. Finally, and only if the teacher or examiner who is present knows the student and knows the content of the exam, there will be a fourth attempt. The teacher or the examiner will again kneel beside the student, huddle up to her, befriend her, talk to her in whispered pleas, soothing tones, gentle and forlorn exhortations. But this time they will go further. They will open the paper, walk the student through it, point out the answers that they know they know, elicit the answer from the student to prove that they are able, that they can do it, or even in a final turn, tell them the answer, state it to them.

The fact that all this is in breach of regulations does not bother them. The fact that even a concerted effort would most likely result in failure is irrelevant. What matters here is

that the student accepts the authority of the exam and subjectifies themselves as a site of its truth, even through an act as simple as writing their name. Every teacher has a story to tell about these interactions. The memory of them echoes around the school. In the staff room after an exam, or in a team meeting the next day, one almost always hears the joyous boasting of a teacher who proudly recounts how they got the most reticent of characters to write their name on an examination paper and complete a few answers. No teacher is without a battle story of a paper they once marked that was blank, bearing no name, only fuck off, or another expletive, scrawled on the page.

At the time I witnessed this it seemed to me rather odd. What reason could possibly exist for this? What end or purpose could justify it? Thinking more productively, I began to ask in what way it might be essential. Could it be that there is some latent necessity, explicable in terms of the social functioning of the examination, that even the refuseniks, the rabble rousers, the failures, the recalcitrant and incorrigible, must accept the authority of the examination, must submit themselves to its requirements, must subjectify themselves as a site of its truth?

The examination is a dissimulation of power relations whose principle of measure and equivalence is the condition of possibility for the justice of its truth and the effects of power that it makes possible and sets in motion. To explore this point more fully it is necessary to briefly consider the works of Michael Apple and Pierre Bourdieu.

For Apple (1977), the school has always served an important function as a mechanism of social selection and economic distribution. The school marks those who are safe risks for capital, places them into roles according to an academic status, and eliminates or

marginalises unwanted groups or individuals in order to produce an economically efficient core of citizens. Academic performance lends a normative meaning that justifies economic reward. School, then, is the means through which:

A society reproduces itself, perpetuates itself, perpetuates its conditions of existence through the selection and transmission of certain kinds of cultural capital on which a complex and unequal industrial society depends. The school is an institution through which a stratified Advanced Liberal society it maintains cohesion among its classes by propagating ideologies that ultimately sanction the existing institutional arrangements.

(Apple 1977: 356).

Bourdieu, in his work with Passeron “Reproduction” (1977) focuses similarly on the socio-economic functioning of the school understood as a classificatory machine. The school unevenly distributes the cultural capital that is the basis for class distinction and does so by stamping inherited or unearned differences with a meritocratic seal of justice and endeavour. Academic titles perpetuate and legitimate social hierarchies, reproducing inequality by safeguarding powers and preserving the structural distribution of people and ties. For Bourdieu, power works through the imposition of meanings that serve to conceal the relations that are the basis of power’s force. These meanings add a symbolic weight to power relations but only to the extent that they conceal them. The essence of symbolic violence, then, is the dissimulation of power in the very other through which it is effectuated. The meritocracy of the school and the equality of the examination covers over and conceals the real forces of inheritance and inequality that structure the social field.

How does the examination fit into all of this? The examination is the ritual space for the production of the truth and the affective space for the production of subjectification to its truth. These truths rendered subject make possible the symbolic violence which is the necessary condition for the current composition of the field of forces. That the examination is a ritual space is easy enough to see. That it produces a truth to which we must be subject likewise. The strange behaviour around refuseniks, however, poses a problem. Does the examination not function with or without the diligent commitment of a few of its victims? My argument is that it does not. By paying close attention to this strange behaviour regarding refuseniks we are able to illuminate, at the level of mechanism, the necessary conditions for the ritual production of truth in the examination.

The examination is tyrannical and always seeks to impose a monopoly. It cannot simply present its own truth but must liquidate its opponents. In the same movement that the exam consecrates a field of value it must defend that field from other values. This is in order to safeguard the distribution of rank, status, and reward, for which the examination is the most important technology. The galaxy of difference must be substituted for the repeatable stamp of the same. It must not be possible, or the likelihood must be minimised, that a person deploy value originating from outside of the dominated field and achieve and justify an accession thereby (because this would challenge the domination of the field). All must be subject to a common measure. All must be reduced to a value over which the field's dominators exert control. The refusenik is she who threatens the commonness of the measure by denying her measurability. She is the occasional materialisation of a threatening value that originates beyond the limits of the dominated field, the violent eruption of the alterity of value and a radical denial of the reduction to the same.

By lending the paper the kiss of identity, by writing the answer to even a few questions, the authority of the examination is accepted and the refusenik is defeated. We can make sense of this by reference to the game like quality of the examination. If I agree to play a game of chess, I agree to play by the rules of chess, and I agree to be the subject of the truth that this game produces, viz., a winner or a loser. I agree to constitutive rules, such as the shape and arrangement of the board; the identity, organisation and movement of pieces; the sequencing of turns; the fact that the game will result in a win, a loss or a draw. I also agree to regulative rules, such as the rule that when I can occupy the space already occupied by my opponent with a piece of my own I can take their piece; that when a pawn reaches the end of the board its player can swap that piece for a more powerful piece that had been taken by their opponent; that when my pieces bear a certain relationship to the king piece of my opponent I can call check and checkmate and win the game. I also agree to strategic rules. To move one pawn backwards and forwards would not count as playing chess. Neither would randomly moving my pieces without knowledge, aim, or strategy. I must try to win. I must move my pieces in a way that I believe is most likely to defeat my opponent. I must commit thoroughly to the game, so that it not be possible that its truth be threatened by excuse (I wasn't really playing, I wasn't paying any attention, I couldn't be bothered so I gave up).

The consequences of the breach of any of the rules of the game is twofold. On the one hand, the game is declared null and void. On the other hand, the truth that the game produces is null and void also. I can declare your win null and void by identifying you as a cheat. But I cannot say if the rules have been followed that you are not a winner. It is the same with the examination. By submitting to the authority of the exam, by playing according to the rules of the exam, the student at the same subjectifies themselves as a site

of the truth of the exam. If we return to the example of the refusenik and consider them alongside the necessary conditions for the production of truth, clearly, they cannot threaten the constitutive rules of the exam, that there is an exam, that it is completed by an individual, that it takes place in this space and this time. Neither can they threaten the regulative rules of the exam, that this kind of response results in this kind of grade, that if you make an error at the beginning of a maths problem you are only marked down for the error and receive the following marks if your subsequent calculations are correct. What the refusenik challenges are the strategic rules of the exam. That the exam can only take hold and hold fast inasmuch as the individuals who submit to its authority do so thoroughgoingly, earnestly, candidly. The refusenik does not commit, does not play, and in doing so renders the truth of the exam, for themselves at least, null and void.

The danger that the refusenik poses is twofold. First, a danger of limitedness through the threat to the commonality of the measure. The generalisation of refusal, or the spread and contagion of denial, would challenge the truth that the examination produces, since the measure would retreat from the totality that is the condition for its effects (power). In order that the examination dominate, it must measure all. In order that some succeed, it is necessary that others fail. Second, a danger of the alternative. The denial of this value is the opening up of space for another. The production of another value threatens necessarily the value that is the condition for the current configuration of the field. It threatens the reproduction of status, rank, reward, inasmuch as it threatens the legitimacy of an uneven distribution desired and demanded by the field's dominators. It must be stamped out. And we see this latent materialisation in the behaviour that surrounds the refuseniks. At a broader level, a policy level, we can see this fear materialise in the constant attempt to make our

examination system competitive with other examination systems. Witness the panic that arises when schools begin to adopt the French baccalaureate, for example.

Ok, you might say, but this is all rather abstract. I can understand the social functioning of the examination, I can understand that the examination is a space for the ritual production of truth, and I can see how important it is for a certain class of people to control and dominate this truth, inasmuch as this truth is the condition for their rank, value, and status. I understand all of this at the statistical level, at the broad, social level, but surely you cannot ascribe to these situated individuals who administer the exam the weighty intention of holding up a vast social mechanism of distribution and selection? Surely there must be some other explanation that motivates this behaviour. I would argue that there is not, because it is not so abstract after all.

Who is the teacher, the examiner, or the member of the Senior Leadership Team, but the person who has gained a certain rank, status, reward, in and through the mechanism of the examination? Who is the teacher but the person who has accepted the authority of the examination, who has subjectified themselves as a site of its truth, and who has accepted the operations of power and uneven distributions of wealth and status that follow as a consequence? The refusenik is a direct manifestation of a threat to the very fabric of our credentialist society, and consequently, to all those who feel themselves elevated or ennobled by virtue of its various mechanisms. Refuseniks instantiate and materialise the latent fear that the arbitrariness of the field might be exposed.

This is the most important trick that the occupiers of dominant positions in the field play in order to secure their domination. I call it the integration of the least significant

destiny. It is a little clearer in the case of property. The vast web of interconnected mechanisms that exist to produce and secure properties and their owners apply to the small landholder or independent shop keeper in a similar way to the inheriting baron or supermarket chain. He who defends his half an acre relies on similar mechanisms to he who defends his half a nation. The least significant destiny clings onto their tiny elevation, the narcissism of a small difference, and often more brutally.

This latent consciousness manifests itself in the gentle exhortation of the refuseniks, in the anxious and anguished concern that their presence elicits in the context of an examination they are almost fated to fail. But we might ask, going one level deeper, if we can see that the examination plays this role, is an important mechanism in this function, how does it achieve this? If the examination must bring all under a common measure and dissimulate inequality under the banner of fairness, what about it specifically enables this move? Fortunately we need not speculate. The examination states its strategy itself.

The corridors leading to the examination hall and the examination hall itself are covered with posters that spell out the rules of the examination in an abbreviated form. They are reminders and warnings of what one must and must not do, and what the consequences might be if they are not heeded. There are of course the usual instructions to not talk, to not aid others, to leave any electronic devices with an examiner, to not have in one's possession any papers or notes. But there is also a final injunction, an enveloping statement, almost too beautiful to be true, which is pornographic in its candour. The injunction states: Do not bring anything into the examination hall that might give you

an unfair advantage. All of the injustices of birth and becoming are left at the door. The constitution of the examination as a site of equality is the denial of the inequality of the outside. This is the essence of symbolic violence, the dissimulation of power. Educated parents; economic security; a house lined with books; a quiet place to study; help with your homework; a stable home environment; money for equipment; freedom from struggle, violence or abuse; good teachers; an expensive school; private tuition; a room with a view; long holidays; free time for study and reflection.... All of this inequality is detained at the threshold. More than this, it is denied, erased, and pushed through a filter that obscures it entirely. The inequalities of an unruly outside are obliterated by the formal equality of an orderly inside.

We need not speculate or theorise, then, that the examination is a site for the ritual production of truth, that it adds a meritocratic stamp to an uneven distribution, that it does this by denying every difference that we know impacts upon examination performance. We need not theorise this because the examination states it, right there on the door.

The Necessary and Sufficient Principle: Competition

The final examination is the ultimate intensification of the thousands of little judgments that led up to it, and of the mechanisms and practices that gave it shape. If we were to look for a necessary and sufficient principle, however, a central organising element that, whilst unable to capture the whole of the witch's brew that is the school, is nonetheless able to account for the materialisation of a culture of performance and assessment just

described, we would not end up with the examination. After a number of disqualifications, we would end up with the principle of competition, which in fact serves as mechanism.

Nations must compete with nations, regions must compete with regions, cities must compete with cities, boroughs must compete with boroughs, wards must compete with wards, schools must compete with schools, teachers must compete with teachers, we all must compete with each other, and finally, we are made to compete against ourselves: against the self that we know we were yesterday, and the self that we might become tomorrow. There is a twofold generalisation of value whereby, in the first instance, competition is valued as a good in and of itself, *ab initio*, and before the rationalisation that will go on to justify it, and, in the second, whereby competition becomes a transferrable form and principle of intelligibility by means of which it is possible to assess the value of things. Competition is good. And a good school is one that is competitive.

The cult of performance that runs through and constitutes the school is an instance of a broader re-figuration of the common, being the generalisation of competition across the entire surface of the social body: as a ritual of truth that produces winners and losers, as a disciplinary mechanism that demands a rationalised practice, and as a value or general normativity whose applicability knows no limits. The current version of the permanent crisis (c.f. Deleuze 1993) gripping our social institutions can be read in an important sense as the eschatological unravelling of competition when an attempt is made to bring every intelligible body into competition with every body of a similar type.

Necessary Conditions for the Generalisation of Competition

The generalisation of the mechanism of competition cannot occur, however, without a thoroughgoing transformation of that-which-must-be-made-to-compete. This requires a number of operations. Firstly, there must be a delineation of competitive units. In the case of the school the cumulative units of comparative competition are in the order: Nation, borough, ward, school, department, class, teacher, student.

Units of comparative competition must compete over something. What follows, then, is a secondary operation of standardisation and the creation of common measures. The measures must be clear and distinct, must facilitate differentiation of the required character or magnitude, must eliminate arbitrariness and discretion, must be simple and repeatable, and must be impersonal and objective.

These measures are applied both externally and internally. Considered externally, for example, to compare school with school, we must narrow and homogenise teaching and assessment. To isolate the variable school, or the quality of what is taught, such that schools can be brought into comparative competition, we must firstly stabilise teaching or assessment, or the what is taught, such that the school produces unambiguous public outcomes. Considered internally, for example, to stabilise the variable teacher, we must teach the same thing at the same time, must conduct the same exercises and the same

assessments, must have the same amount of time to complete the same amount of tasks, etcetera.

The Neutralisation of Play in Respect of Reason

Knowledge-to-be-assessed in-order-to-compete cannot be an exhilarating, dynamic, mysterious, inchoate, or uncertain knowledge: a knowledge that is open to interpretation, criticism, or the creative freedom of play. Critique, or irony, or satire, as elements hostile to knowledge-to-be-assessed and the generalisation of competition, must be isolated from Reason. Play, as interference frustrating the purity of the variable and the commonality of the measure, must be neutralised. The Reason that dominates the contemporary school is not a heterotopic Reason of empowerment and growth but an impotent Reason of obedience, mimesis, verisimilitude, and flattery: a sick and servile Reason devoid of charm and sovereignty.

I remember this materialising itself somewhat baldly in an English class I was assisting. The topic for the term was writing understood as an isolable and testable skill. The English syllabus understands the skill of writing to be divided into three kinds: writing to persuade, writing to inform, and writing to describe. Students were given the definition of each kind of writing and a list of their characteristics and features which they were expected to learn. Having learnt the definitions and the characteristics students were then asked to identify pieces of writing as falling under one or the other category. Finally, the students were required to produce a piece of writing embodying the features and characteristics of the chosen type.

Students immediately noticed that the division was arbitrary and the categories promiscuous. A piece of information can be persuasive, a description can be informative, and one can certainly describe in such a way that the reader is persuaded by the description. But the examination does not allow for reasoning independent of its specifications. There is no possibility for understanding where understanding refers to an outside which is other than the understood... Writing is divided this way because the syllabus says it is divided this way, and if the syllabus says it is divided this way then it will be definitely divided in this way on the exam, and if it is definitely divided this way on the exam then you better shut up and learn it.

How are students in these conditions expected to develop their ability to reason or understand? On what grounds can they assess or analyse, when they are only ever asked to repeat? With which tools would they be able to differentiate the better argument from the worse? According to which criteria and which faculties of application could we ask them to distinguish a reasonable request from a unreasonable one? Would we not, in every instance, be forced to refer to some diabolic code? And to the authority of the speaker? The code anorexic which, requiring at every moment a simple application or unproblematic transparency between act and evaluation, becomes thinner and thinner and thinner, slimming and narrowing until finally it is close to death.

Students become unwilling or unable to utilise their own initiative or develop their own strategies for solving problems or evaluating information. When faced with a challenging task requiring the operationalisation of a faculty or the application of a skill

they are quick to give up and demand from teachers the answer which they know to await them at the end of their endeavour. What this results in further is students who not only require, but demand, authority, instruction, justification, and validation. They are, simply put, addicted to school. Rote learning and repetition is what they ask for, and their resistance, in this sense, serves only to further their own domination — tragedy, or the fall by virtue of that which gave you grace (Aristotle).

It is as if in generalising competition to a knowledge that denies it we reduce our students to the status of Echo, the accursed figure of Greek mythology:

Once, as he was driving the frightened deer into his nets, a certain nymph of strange speech beheld him, resounding Echo, who could neither hold her peace when others spoke nor yet begin to speak until others had addressed her.

(Ovid 1993:149).

Echo is punished for her trickery of the gods. When Zeus came with Hera to possess her beautiful compatriots Echo would hold the gods in speech until the nymphs had escaped. Echo, like the students, is punished for a creative speech that interrupts and frustrates the enactment of socio-normative power. Like the students, in tragedy, Echo will fall by the same power that made her rise:

'[JUNO:] "That tongue of thine, by which I have been tricked, shall have its powers curtailed and enjoy the briefest use of speech." [Now] she merely repeats the concluding phrase of a speech and returns the last words that she hears' (*ibid*: 151)

[ECHO] lurks in the woods, hides her shamed face among the foliage, and lives from that time on in lonely caves ... Her sleepless cares waste away her wretched form; she becomes gaunt and wrinkled and all moisture fades from her body into the air (*ibid*: 153)

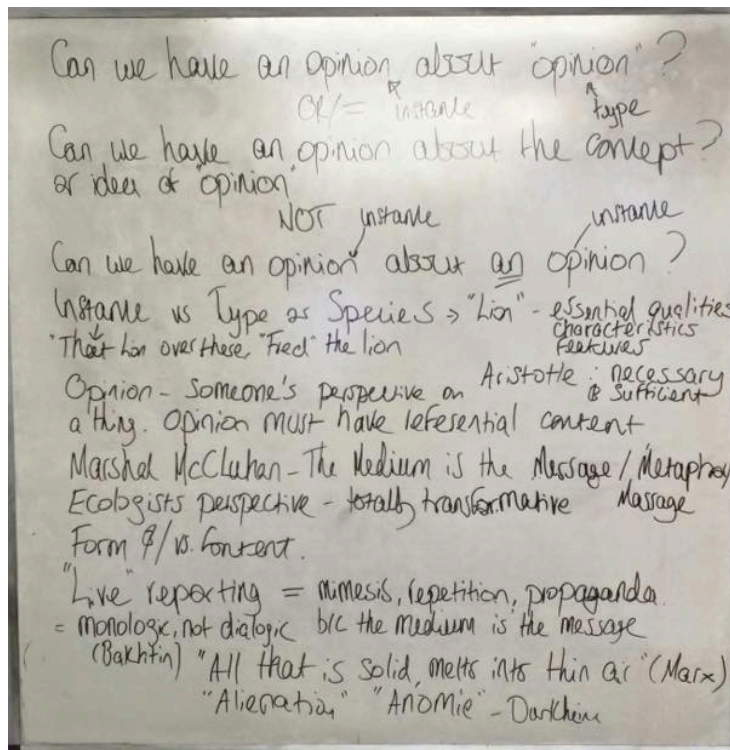
Reply to an Anticipated Objection or an Essay on Opinion

—You, said Heron. Byron the greatest poet! He's only a poet for uneducated people.

—He must be a fine poet! said Bolan.

—You may keep your mouth shut, said Stephen, turning on him boldly. All you know about poetry is what you wrote on the slates in the yard and were going to be sent to the loft for.

Joyce A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man (1912 [1992: 44])



The school might argue that they provide all sorts of opportunities for students to develop their own perspective, their own voice, to articulate their own ideas, develop their own capacities of reasoning and critique... Everyone is entitled to their own opinion. We ask our students all the time...

Opinion is a trap. The status and functioning of Opinion in the classroom notwithstanding—where the time for opinions is limited where it exists at all; and where irregular or transgressive opinions are checked or refused—there is a broader functioning of Opinion in social life that the school at once embodies and reproduces. This is Opinion as the double freedom where, on the one hand, the radical equality of each individual's perspective means that whatever your rank, status, title, or background, you are free, in the sense of free from interference, to make personal discursive representations in the public sphere ("because everyone is entitled to their opinion"), and, on the other hand, when you make a personal discursive representation in the public sphere, you do so in such a way that your utterance and indeed your soul, is shielded from the the affect of a rebuke ("because this is just my opinion") or the necessities of an analysis ("because that's just an opinion").

I would like to show how the notion of Opinion, functioning in the school as much as it does in everyday life, is a trap, and I would like to do so from three perspectives: from the perspective of formal linguistics of the kind you might find in Saussure (1916), from the perspective use or grammar typical of Wittgenstein (1968) and Cavell (1993), and from its functioning in the context of a social structure as you might find in Marxist anthropology or structuralism of the Manchester school kind (Evens 2006).

From the perspective of formal linguistics, Opinion is a trap because its commonly held meaning contradicts and obfuscates the logical truth of its ontological structure. This leads us to misrecognise as personal and authentic what are in fact a series of external determinations. Indeed, the meaning typically activated in social exchange is that an opinion is a free utterance springing autochthonously from the self unchecked by external determinations. The ontological possibility of the practice of Opinion, however—what must be the case in order for it to be the case—contradicts this meaning. Properly understood, the formal linguistic structure of Opinion should point us towards an alternative normativity and a distinct social practice. Indeed, in order for it to be possible for anyone to have an opinion at all, Opinion must be a commonly exercised, commonly determined, rule based social practice, that we can participate in or give assent to without ever being able to declare ourselves its master. In order for us to have *an* opinion, the practice of *Opinion* that lends the word its proper “meaning” must hold between us. It is simply not possible to have an opinion (instance) about Opinion (type). The substantive indeterminacy of the instance would eliminate the necessary determinacy of the type.

Believing in the general normativity of Opinion, then, we are tricked into perceiving a necessarily constrained discourse as the free expression of our authentic self. We deny at the level of form that discourse is a rule governed practice which forbids particular kinds of being in the same movement it makes others possible. And we deny at the level of substance that any opinion articulated within a discourse is by necessity constrained by the form that made that discourse possible. As a misrecognition of the outside as stemming from within, Opinion is a mechanism of subjectification that functions in and through the misrecognition of external truths as internally determined. This is Opinion as a trap from the perspective of formal linguistics.

From the perspective of grammar or use Opinion is a trap because it declares itself to be a thing when it is actually an action. Opinion is articulated in the limiting form: “this is just my opinion” (personal-other limitation), “that’s just an opinion” (other-general limitation), or “well everybody has an opinion” (general limitation). In each case the declaration of opinion is a doing rather than a saying. And in each case the declaration of opinion serves to frustrate or prevent the articulation of analysis or critique. One cannot compare the merits of one view against another, or, better said, one can, but it would be pointless, given that whatever the outcome each view is in the end equivalent. This aborts the possibility of the practice of analysis and critique at the same time that it prevents the development of the capacities and qualities that this practice requires and encourages. A discussion or debate can be halted immediately, all movement ceased, all challenge erased or rendered impotent, by the simple declaration of “opinion.” It is a monstrous generalisation of a critical caesura once based on the richness of learned argumentation but now reduced to a button, switch, pull-string or shutter. This is Opinion as a trap from the perspective of grammar or use.

From the perspective of its socio-political functioning Opinion is a trap because it fools us with the empty promise of an impotent right in the same movement that it congeals and solidifies already existing concentrations of power. We are given the right to an opinion at precisely the moment our opinion ceases to hold any importance. You can say what you like when what you say means nothing. If we care we won’t listen though when we don’t you have our ears. Public debate becomes little more than the floating of commonly held positions and social interaction starts to look like a strange game of signalling. Under these conditions the reason for saying or believing something becomes

far less important than the fact that you said it. Our sense of powerless is then correlated with the profusion of our speech.

More worryingly, in a field of forces characterised by an unequal distribution of right and capacity, opinion devolves to status. It whimpers in the vestibules while Power bellows from the stage. Though it is recognised that everyone has a right to their opinion there are some opinions that count more than others. It might be your opinion that my arm is broken but it is not his opinion because he is a doctor. It might be my opinion that the boiler needs replacing but it is not her opinion because she is a heating engineer. We are tricked, once again, into believing that we have entered the hallowed garden of equivalence when, in fact, we are constrained by precisely those networks of hierarchy and expertise that we feel we had escaped.

The zero point of this analysis is a radical impotence. It is not simply that others voices count where our own does not, but that, being articulated from an accretion of power, others powers count and ours do not. Or, our power to Opinion is a non power masquerading as power, whereas their power embodied is not. It is just my opinion, after all, that the current distribution of wealth is unjust. The current distribution itself is not of the order of opinion. It is just my opinion that the royal family are brigands and thieves. That they are royal is not something my opinion could ever alter. Facing power it is just my opinion. Occupying power it is not. This is Opinion as a trap from the perspective of its socio-political functioning.

The school might argue that every student is entitled to their opinion, but we have seen that Opinion is a trap, and we have seen this from four perspectives. From the

perspective of its positioning in the classroom, Opinion is a trap because it is a restrained and restraining practice that clothes itself in the rich vesteries of free expression. From the perspective of formal linguistics, Opinion is a trap because it causes us to misrecognise as autochthonous and authentic what is in fact governed by a series of external determinations. From the perspective of grammar or use, Opinion is is a trap because it declares itself to be a thing when it is actually a doing. And from the perspective of its socio-political functioning, Opinion is a trap because it devolves to status and re-affirms already existing concentrations of power.

The Externalisation of Play in Respect of Reason

Opinion, as a form of play, is neutralised in respect of reason such that the standardisation required by competition is not frustrated. But what, we might ask, at the level of affect, happens to knowledge? In order that knowledge be dissected it must first be killed. The school is a site for the elaboration of its murder. Knowledge is chopped down, cut up, torn apart, sterilised for safe handling, divided according to an arbitrary taxonomy, stitched back together, dressed in its smartest suit, and made up ready for the funeral. As with any autopsy, the body does not survive the examination. What remains is a cadaver, disenchanted and dead, without movement or signs of life, referring only to itself or the principles by which it was dismembered.

How to enthuse students with this stagnant and lifeless knowledge? Play must be externalised to become an enveloping element in respect of reason. We must reintroduce that dynamic principle which excites and allure but in such a way that all intrigue is

detained on the outside. Speaking roughly and schematically, we can say that there are two broad groups of technologies for the externalisation of play in respect of reason. There is the simple and banal form with which we are all familiar where the learning of facts and formulas occurs in and through forms of activity that resemble play or games. And there is the more thoroughgoing form where the game becomes the substantive activity and the learning of knowledge starts to appear as an afterthought or effect. I would like to consider briefly a powerful example of the more thoroughgoing form: Accelerated Reader.

Accelerated Reader

'I read' I say. 'I study and read. I bet I've read everything that you've read, don't think I haven't. I consume libraries. I wear out spines and ROM drives. I do things like get in a taxi and say "The library, and step on it." My instincts concerning syntax and mechanisms are better than your own, I can tell, with due respect.

'But it transcends the mechanics. I'm not a machine. I feel and believe. I have opinions. Some of them are interesting. I could, if you'd let me, talk and talk. Let's talk about anything. I believe the influence of Kierkegaard on Camus is underestimated. I believe Dennis Gabor may well have been the Antichrist. I believe Hobbes is just Rousseau in a dark mirror. I believe, with Hegel, that transcendence is absorption. 'I could interface you guys under the table,' I say. 'I'm not just a creatus, manufactured, conditioned, bred for a function.'

I open my eyes. 'Please don't think I don't care.' I look out. Directed my way is horror. I rise from the chair. I see jowls sagging, eyebrows high on trembling foreheads, cheeks bright white. The chair recedes below me.

'Sweet mother of Christ,' the Director says.

David Foster Wallace – Infinite Jest (1997: 12)

Accelerated reader is an independently owned program bought in by schools to improve their students' reading. It works through incentivisation and assessment. An algorithm gives a selection of books a points score and a reading level. Each student sits an exam at the start of the year that determines their reading level. This level determines the books that students are allowed to read. They can pick any book appropriate to their level. Once they have finished they sit a multiple choice recall test. If they score eight out of ten on the test then they receive the points for that book and move towards a new reading level. Students are encouraged to compete with each other and themselves, and at the start of every class, a variety of statistics are displayed showing who has read the most books, who is falling behind, who is close to an award or threshold, and how close the class or school is to other classes or other schools. Periodically the teacher awards prizes.

The problems begin with the algorithm whose judgments bear no relationship to the quality or difficulty of a text. Because students are incentivised to score points they quickly start to game the system by finding easy texts with high points scores and avoiding difficult texts with low ones (Huang 2012). The tests are based on recall alone which marginalises where it does not eclipse completely the other forms of sensibility, capacity, or aptitude, associated with reading (Betty 1996). There is no discussion, no questioning, no sharing. The value of reading is transferred to a series of incentivisation of structures which take pleasure along with them

No longer can one simply enjoy a book, now one must pick what one reads strategically, compare one's pace and level constantly with one's classmates, submit oneself to an examination, focus one's attention on the kind of details likely to come up in a test. Students who can read quickly and recall well, often without understanding or insight,

are praised as great readers. Students who read more slowly, who consider a book beyond “what happened,” take on more challenging texts, or want to read something “out of their level” are chastised. It is a truly perverse system that robs the students of a chance to develop a love of reading in the same move that it robs teachers of the opportunity to teach. A room with a view indeed. Now, again, the teacher is ringmaster and clown in a game of crowd control. Their role is administrative and supervisory as opposed to pedagogic.

I remember one session where a talented young woman came to ask me for some advice on what book to read. I love books, and quickly assumed the demeanour of a Cheshire cat. I talked with the student for a little while about what she had read, what she was interested in, and suggested *Skellig* by David Almond (2013), linguistically a simple text but profound in its consideration of deeply human themes such as suffering, care, compassion, obscenity, and disgust. The student said it sounded great and went to find it. Ten minutes later and she comes back looking crestfallen with two books in her hand. “Well Sir, I *could* read *Skellig*, I mean it looks ok, but there is this batman comic I found, it’s really short, looks quite easy, and I get more points for it!”

Postscript on Social Reproduction

Our concern with assessment and the examination was positioned earlier in this chapter alongside a sociological literature on education and social reproduction. We considered two influential accounts from Apple (1977) and Bourdieu and Passeron (1977), both of which understand the educational archipelago as a body for the re(production) of a

stratified Advanced Liberal society and as the mechanism for the production of a ruling class or elite within that society. Our focus was on the school as the signifying machine in a game of semiotic exchange that makes possible an uneven distribution of opportunity, employment, status, and economic reward, through the stamping of inherited or unearned difference with the seal of meritocracy.

I would now like, roughly and schematically, to draw a distinction that allows for a modification of these theses from the perspective of regimes of truth and modes and mechanisms of attachment to those truths. This distinction is between the school as signifying classificatory machine that certifies an elite through the uneven distribution of capital and as a moralising technology for the inculcation of habits and appetites necessary for lower rung employment. I would argue that these two functions appear throughout the literature on education as two inter-related axes: There is, however, a crucial third term, "discipline," that binds these two functions together: it is the knot or fastening that, tracing the contours of its threads, allows for a modular resolution.

What I would like to show, following an analysis of the generalisation of competition in the form of the pedagogic imposition of a corporate cult of performativity and assessment, is that the structural necessities of this generalisation, by virtue of a diabolical complicity, makes possible in the same move: the certification of a ruling elite, the moralisation and enfeeblement of the working poor, and the constitution and empowerment of an aspirational middle class.

Earlier, we saw that the generalisation of competition between regions, schools, students, classes, and teachers, requires as a condition of possibility standardisation and the creation of common measures. Further, we saw that these common measures must stabilise the measured in order to measure, and that this leads to two necessary consequences: the neutralisation of play in respect of reason and the reintroduction of play as an external element to help minimise the negative effects. Standardisation. The neutralisation of play in respect of reason. And the externalisation of play in respect of reason. We will consider each one of these features in turn.

Standardisation of assessment requires not only the homogenisation of curriculum and class. It also requires a regulated procedure of marking that makes equivalent or comparable the marks assigned to works from different markers; markers who have different tastes and values; different views on what counts as good work; different views on marking and examinations as such; and different pedagogic histories. From all this difference we must produce the Same. What is needed, then, is the neutralisation of difference through the constant attempt to minimise discretion. The application of criteria must become ever clearer, ever more discrete, objective, impersonal, unproblematic, and thus difficult to challenge or problematise. Put short, the mark must be free from the taint of subjectivity. It must be purified.

What this results in practically is a chopped up criterial knowledge with “clear” conditions of success and “unambiguous” rules and outcomes. The application of a mark scheme must be unproblematic where the answer is not wholly predefined and tending towards a stylised mimesis. But the application of a mark scheme is never unproblematic or unambiguous. It is almost impossible to purify the mark from the

taint of subjectivity. This Sisyphean labour results in a Brownian reduction, where diffuse and yet viral challenges to the purity of the mark lead to an ever further narrowing, an ever further specification, an ever further and ever clearer and ever more complex laying out of the conditions of success, such that the possibility of discretion is minimised, and imagination and creativity along with it.

Consequently, high marks become in a certain sense easier to obtain, as diligent and strategic application of examination criteria increase rates of success at the same time and from the other side that it becomes more obvious “what you have to do to get a [insert mark here]” year on year. More students get high marks in most years and the grades that are based on those marks begin to lose their differentiating quality. This leads to a number of effects: First, there is an accelerating credentialism and the ramping up of qualifications in every field such that it becomes almost impossible to secure a position or obtain gainful employment without a thoroughgoing submission to the monarchy of the exam. The most likely to succeed are the most likely to submit, and thus those with the confidence already that the world has a place for them receive a double head start. Second, alternative forms of differentiation obtain a new saliency. Those with the privilege of a peer or sponsor to provide resources, lend encouragement, and clear the way, enjoy numerous advantages: Money and connections, voluntary experience or an internship, the shadowing of a professional, trips abroad, extra curricular certification, public speaking skills, interview training, university application ghost writing, and the like. The cultural, social, economic and political capital so essential for ascendancy are appropriated and then guarded jealously. The unruly poor are formally admitted to this game of semiotic prestation but denied the resources to be truly competitive. This is usually blamed on their lack of discipline, their laziness, and moral laxity. It is the alibi or excuse for the imposition of a number of punitive, coercive,

and seductive measures. An elevation of a few over the bodies of the many. Class stratification augmented and intensified as a structural consequence of the generalisation of competition into the domain of the pedagogic.

If we consider the neutralisation of play in respect of reason, in the first, we see a similar effect in play: without residue and thus the possibility of explanation or apprehension outside of the internality of an arbitrary division what is required to achieve is submission to an oblique knowledge the likelihood of which increases with the likelihood of success. This leads to a number of effects that, again, favour those with the resources to provide ameliorative measures for the absorption of dead knowledge with a view to mimesis and repetition. We see the generalisation of two measures: drill and tuition.

Drill most obviously invokes the principle of discipline that is the thread, tie and turning point for these zero sum functions. Again, the student most likely to submit to the tiresome repetition of lifeless knowledge is the student who can see that submission results in a tangible reward. Where a subaltern refuses, resists, challenges, subjects to critique, or attempts to deploy an alternative knowledge, this is portrayed as a lack of discipline, a disrespect of legitimate authority, and the sufficient grounds for the implementation or intensification of coercive, seductive, distributive, or punitive measures.

The exponential growth of private tuition is partly a consequence of this augmentation of the relationship between repetition and success and partly a consequence of astral credentialism. There is simply not enough time in the school day. A student given four

hours a week private tuition in a given subject more or less doubles the time for guided and directed repetition, again, favouring those with the resources to make this radical intensification of school life into everyevening life. The role of discipline here is marginalised given the intensity of direction but still serves as a differential quality between those who do more or less well as a consequence.

An analysis of the externalisation of play in respect of reason proceeds along similar dimensions. The criterial knowledge of the performative school simply cannot be resuscitated with the dynamism of a critical exchange, the free flotation of exhilarating ideas, or the articulation of new and divergent possibilities –heterotopias. What is required again is the teacher as circus performer: both ringmaster and clown, and the space, the time, and the resources, in which to devise or improve the activities and exercises, dramatisations, stagings, games, competitions, and other sources of enchantment and incentivisation.

Discipline is invoked more powerfully in the context of a state school that, due to the burden of lesson planning and preparation, outsources its creative work to external agencies. Here, where the job of the teacher is, quite literally, administrative, the key question always concerns the residual order of the class and the capacity of the teacher to create or enforce that order where the residual is lacking. Poor children lack discipline. Their misbehaviour frustrates the delivery of lessons. Low level disorder from some is ruining learning for others. The necessary and sufficient conditions for the generalisation of competition into the school are covered over and elided by an accusation of indiscipline (which, as we have shown, produces disenchantment and

thus disorder) that serves as alibi. More rigorous. More punishment. More direction. Zero tolerance.

The new middle class, then, will not simply be empowered by their ability to provide the differentiating materials that are the keys to advancement. It is not simply that, even at a bad school, they have the attitude and resources to make up for it where they can't send their kid to a "better" one. The new middle class, through discipline, will be the fulcrum upon which the whole system turns. Indeed, if, by a seesaw motion, the working poor are enfeebled in the same movement and by the same mechanisms that the ruling elite are elevated, the middle class will be the pivot in the middle, higher than the working class going down, lower than the ruling class going up, and this is not simply a metaphor of positioning. The middle class are the mechanism.

What is required is a whole army of bureaucrats, practitioners, technicians, and experts, who will devise, implement, operate and administer new mechanisms for the attachment of the recalcitrant to the truth of the test. Now there will be leadership teams, teaching assistants, pastoral workers, intervention teams, and an accentuated role for psychology. There will be new spaces too: centres for internal exclusion, restorative centres, spaces of integration, community learning halls. Which is not to mention new institutions: pupil referral units, specialist schools and the like. There will even be new agencies who capitalise on the opportunity to provide learning materials, instruction in behaviour management, to offer advice and support, to run training courses and provide specialist staff. They will cling to their elevation, brutally, as was the case with slaves. We all know that for Plato, and for Sophocles, the raising of a new middle class was the foundation stone of tyranny.

The necessary and sufficient conditions for the generalisation of competition in the form of a corporate cult of assessment, then, both reproduces and exacerbates existing inequality. It is the structural nature of this intensification that I emphasise here. Advanced Liberalism demands, for an efficient, economic, peaceful and prosperous nation, the generalisation of competition, drawing always the best from people, producing always the best outcomes, encouraging always the democracy of free choice... The generalisation of competition requires the standardisation of knowledge and assessment. In order to standardise knowledge and assessment play must be neutralised in respect of reason. Play is then reintroduced as an external element so that the lifeless knowledge of the performative school might be raised from the dead. Zombie capitalism. The zombie school.

Discipline is the knot that ties these three figures together. It is what the few have and the many lack. The successful succeed because they have discipline, and the failures fail because they don't. What is advocated on the basis of its absence is more intensive, more thoroughgoing, more fervent, more fierce, and close to totalisation or complete enclosure. Docility, conformity, imitation, repetition, in short, discipline, in the sense commonly used, becomes the primarily examined object.

The examination of writing skills, for example, is not an examination of skills or faculties (which probably do not exist, and what is writing anyway? As Phillip K. Dick (1980: 174) remarked: "I write with my hands") but an examination of the extent to which a student is prepared to submit to a nonsensical knowledge for the sake of a good grade. It is not in question whether or not a student writes well. What is in question is

the extent to which a student produces a piece of writing tending towards criterial fulfilment and mimesis. A good student is docile, she follows instructions, she does what she is told, and she repeats what her teacher tells her too. This is the object of the examination, and not the writing itself.

More troublingly, in the context of an unintentional class strategy, we can see how the structure succeeds further inasmuch as it neutralises the threat of imagination, creativity, critique, and thus ascendancy on the grounds of innate talent –so many Freddy Kruger’s in the nightmares of the petit bourgeois. It is simply not possible to be a gifted student who lacks the discipline or conditions to succeed but does so through sheer power of will and mind, as you cannot arrive at the “correct” answer by means of Reason. You must repeat, and that is all. Success in this way becomes a function of submission. Innate talent is almost eliminated as a hostile element frustrating the necessity of elements within the control of those who dominate the field. What is demanded is a Victorian morality that the working classes are depicted as lacking. Moral examination. *A Moral Education* (Durkheim 1961 [2002]).

Apple, Ball, Bourdieu, and Passeron are correct in their identification of the school as functioning to (re)produce a stratified society and its elite, but there is no Big Other here, just a diabolical felicity, impossible and yet it is, that leads to the elaboration of a structure, and to the necessities and consequences that follow.

Postscript on Convergence

If an analysis of the structural necessities of the generalisation of competition into the school made possible an important modification to two influential theses concerning social reproduction, proceeding along the same analytical trajectory, we are also able make an important modification to another influential thesis: that the global convergence of education policy and the evolution of a new orthodoxy in schooling (Ball 1999) is the result of an unholy alliance forged amidst the contradictory interests of neoliberals, neoconservatives, and the aspirational middle class (Apple 2000; 2001; 2004; 2006). The formal implication is that groups of ostensibly opposed actors put aside certain differences to shape and transform institutions such that they embody and express a common set of values at the same time as encouraging the manufacture of a particular kind of person.

While this might be the case at the level of appearance / affect, if we shift our perspective to that of mechanism and structure we arrive at a quite different conclusion where this “unholy alliance” finds its necessary and sufficient principle not in the sympathetic coming together of intentional actors but in the structural necessities of a managerial *dispositif*. It is because the kind of pedagogy demanded by a managerial system of performance, accountability and assessment is by a diabolical complicity the same kind of pedagogy that a neoconservative would in any case demand and that the new middle class would in any case be required to administer that we see this coming together of seemingly opposed groups.

The neoconservatives which Apple (*ibid.*), Bailey and Ball (2016), and Ball (1999) describe, align roughly with the common understanding. Neoconservatives demand a return to Calvinist values of duty, submission, hard work, obedience, sacrifice, and humility. The knowledge that they espouse is an absolute knowledge of established facts learnt through rote and repetition presupposing submission to a higher authority and requiring long periods of fastidious preparation. It is a discipline of commitment, moral purity, and obedience to a series of principles believed to be the founding stones of independence.

If we park for a moment the religious aspect we are left with a knowledge of facts and information, a learning of rote and repetition, and a discipline of docility and obedience. Are these not exactly the same features that we saw arise as a consequence of the generalisation of competition into the domain of the pedagogic as part of series standardisation -> neutralisation -> externalisation? —A spur of the broader neoliberal imperative to generalise competition and the enterprise form it presupposes into every domain of social, political, cultural, and economic life? No compromise need be made, as the structure has made it for them.

The monopolisation of management and administration by an aspirational middle class makes possible this collusion. In the same way that discipline serves as the third term bringing together the ostensibly opposed functions of certifying a ruling elite and moralising and enfeebling a working poor, so the middle class will be third figure that makes possible the strategic union of neoliberals and neoconservatives. This is not only because the new middle class will depend for their elevation on this monopoly of pedagogo-managerial expertise, nor that in realising this monopoly they will become its

operators, but because by virtue of being aspirational and desiring an elevation that only the school can provide they must accept it, more than this, they must exalt and protect it. It is in this way that the new middle class become the system's most ardent defenders and the cornerstone of its legitimacy. Buttress. Support. Operators.

We can agree with Apple, Bailey, and Ball, that there has been a global convergence of education policy leading to a new orthodoxy of the school. Where we disagree is how this has come about. The actors are only seemingly opposed. The ruling elite, an aspirational middle class, and the working poor, are brought together in a hierarchical distribution not through the forging of a common ground in the face of opposing interests but by virtue of a diabolical structural complicity in which the knowledge and discipline demanded by a neoliberal system of performance management is the same knowledge and discipline as that which is demanded as part of the neoconservative return. As for the new middle class well, you don't go around asking what something is when you are busy using it to get you where you want to go (c.f. Das 2006) .

Rationalisation and the Knowability of the Known

Given all this we might ask: what does the school understand as the rationale for its practice? What reasons do they give for organising the institution in this way, according to this set of values and beliefs? The level of rationalisation is remarkably thin.

Generally the story goes something like this: to succeed in life students need good grades and the discipline that good grades presuppose. Failing this, just the discipline will do.... At least if they are stupid make sure they are obedient. With good teaching

and appropriate support every child will have the opportunity to be the best that they can be. Aspiration is the watchword here. Aspire, work hard, and with a little help from us you will succeed.

There is little to no discussion of what success actually means. Success means good grades in the examination, and good grades in the examination mean grades that show sufficient progress between years seven and eleven. It is likewise with aspiration. It is a value, a good, and an imperative. It is not a question, or a problem, it simply is. Like success it remains disembodied and detached: a ghoulish echo used to justify wildly different programs, policies, behaviours, practices.... A teacher screaming at a student in the corridor can justify it by saying he wanted the student to aspire. Further book scrutiny and more marking? We want to be an aspirational school. Not wearing lipstick in school? It's about aspiration. A longer school day? To help the kids aspire, of course.

These interventions are enacted without a clear sense of direction or purpose and without any systematic evaluation of their impact. They exist to make students aspire, and that is all. We are reminded here of the scandal of the University Walk, where a primary school decided to make children walk with their hands behind their backs. Accused of authoritarianism and the creation of an oppressive, dictatorial atmosphere, the headteacher's response was as succinct as it was revealing: 'Our recently introduced University Walk inspires children to be the best that they can be and "go shine in the world" [the school's motto]' (Weale & Tran 2015).

If in the normative sense of positivity the school understands itself as providing the conditions and opportunities for students to be the best they can be there is also a

technical sense of positivity that makes up and explains practices that terms such as aspiration relate to only as a haunting or ghoulish presence. That is in the positivity of the known, the knowability of the known, and the necessity to know in order that you might demonstrate your knowing.

Teachers and leadership talk all the time about knowing where you are at, knowing where you are going, and knowing the steps to get there. This imperative materialises itself in the imposition of a structure of formal assessment; in the techniques of enclosure characteristic of the imposition of a structure of learning; in the dramatic enticement that we see as part of the externalisation of play in respect of reason; right down to the worksheets and activities that are the mainstay of a student's day to day learning experience. All presuppose the knowability of the known. All are the result of an elaboration of this conviction into practice.

In order to progress a student must know, but the way in which they must know, and what they must know, is peculiar. We are not talking here about a knowledge of content. The knowledge that the school demand of their students, endlessly, is a knowledge of procedure and a knowledge of one's position and role in respect of that procedure. Put short, it is a knowledge of procedural positioning. The student must know clearly and incontrovertibly what a lesson is about; what counts as success or failure; what their level is; what level they are aspiring to; what they have done to attain this level; what they must do to attain that level; and how to bridge the gap between. This knowledge of positioning in respect of a procedure of learning often seems more important than the knowledge as such that such a procedure is supposed to bring about.

The positivity of the known —its knowability— as organising principle and rationalisation of school practice.

But what if this was all a mistake? What if this idea of the positivity of the known, its knowability, and a necessary relationship between this procedural-positional knowledge (the knowing of knowing as opposed to knowing as such) and success is based on a fundamental error? Against the positivity of the known in terms of the knowability of the level and criteria I would like to demonstrate their unknowability before offering a counter thesis of negativity and seduction.

The central problem is the applicability of criteria to a work in order to assign it a level. A rule cannot contain the conditions of its own application (c.f. Wittgenstein 1968), requiring always a process of interpretation that is in an important sense ineffable (c.f. Kant). We see this in the ritualistic social practices that surround marking and moderation. Teachers rarely agree upon what counts as falling under this or that criteria in the context of assessment. In one exercise I participated in, which was typical, the first set of marks given to the same work by different teachers was wildly divergent. There was a long period of argumentation and discord before the head of the department revealed the “correct” answer. The moderation meeting, then, is a ritual space of agon in which divergent understandings of interpretive criteria are brought to a roughly equal measure.

The moderation meetings in school are preceded by another set of meetings in which a representative of the department liaises with the exam board and goes through a similar process. We would be mistaken to think that they return, however, with explanations

and elaborations of criteria. They come back with exemplars. The teacher, even in this ritual space of agon, does not leave primarily with a better grasp of how to apply criteria, but with a series of examples that embody them. And we can see how quickly this tends to rote learning and repetition. Explanations of rules and criteria devolve to examples of that which fits the criteria and examples of that which fits the criteria become models to be replicated.

All of this background to and fro, essential to using criteria, is foreign to the student, who is in a sense constitutionally unable to understand by virtue of their absence from the process that lends it. The rules must be applied and students, for the most part, lack the resources to do so. Where teachers are able to apply criteria it is usually the result of a long process of trial and error, getting it wrong and getting it right, coming close, being mistaken.... the sedimentation of which leads to a feeling or intuition that is by its very nature incommunicable (but only where there is stability in that which is examined). How often do we hear a teacher say "I just felt it was a level 7" or "I knew it was a B in my gut."

You see this every time marked work is returned. Bafflement and confusion abound. There is shouting. There are tears. A student feels she has done everything asked and has not reached the level she expected, another student did not try at all and received a surprisingly good grade. Where students feel there are inconsistencies, or can't understand why their paper got this mark when another paper got that one, attempts by the teacher to explain are rarely successful. The unknowability of criteria, then, and the negativity of the level.

A second site of unknowability is the movement of the application of criteria away from the domain of truth and towards the domain of strategy. The level attempts to function as a truth when it speaks of an honest assessment according to criteria, but this is frequently elided for a strategic function: levels are used cynically as teachers manipulate levels in an attempt to manipulate students. Too big for their boots? Mark them down. In need of encouragement? Mark them up. Are you going to bother reading the handwriting of that student who always causes you trouble? And are you going to pay special attention to that student who you know tries so hard? Should I try and give marks for this paper or should I mark harshly and seek out mistakes? The level becomes a strategic signification in a battle of wills. Moving from the domain of truth the level becomes determined by a hidden set of criteria that are to the student unknowable.

There is, in fact, a whole gamut of possible disturbances that render problematic where it is not impossible the positivity of the known in the sense of the knowability of the level: the quality of the test or assessment; the diligence of the teacher's marking; differences in opinion between teachers of the same subject; the *mise en scene* of departmental politics; the lead teacher's understanding of exam board moderation and their ability to communicate this to other teachers; the ability of a teacher to convince an examiner about the suitability of marks; the bell curve which ensures a standard distribution; the school's results last year; their targets for the year to follow; the relationships that hold between heads of department, their teachers, and the leadership team.... And this is where teachers don't make up the grades altogether, don't cheat, don't complete students' work for them.

The level is unreal, unknowable, and cannot function as expressed in its rationalisation, through positivity, or the knowability of the known. The level is free floating, aleatory, elliptical, and empty. It appears and disappears; it reveals and conceals; allures and incites; comes close before slipping gently out of your grasp. It is the object of a frantic and anguished concern, whose conquest lends great pleasure and esteem. It is beautiful, intoxicating, ugly, terrifying, aggressive, demure, ecstatic, and mundane. The level does not function through the knowability of the known. It must function through its negativity, its unknowability, and its absence. The level is a game of seduction.

Love me boughte,
And love me wrought,
Man, to be their fere;
Love me fedde,
And love me ledde,
And love me letted here.

Love me slow,
And love me drow,
And love me leyde an bere;
Love is my pes,
For love I ches,
Man to byen dere.

Ne dred thee nought,
I have thee sought,
Bothen day and night;
To haven thee,
Wel is me,
I have thee won in fight

—Unknown in Keegan (ed), 1583 [2018]

Scenes of Seduction in Ma Nuit Chez Maud

Eric Rohmer's *Ma Nuit Chez Maud* (1969) tells the story of Jean-Louis, an Engineer working at the Michelin Factory in provincial Clermont; the delightful Maud, a local paediatrician and unrequited love of Jean-Louis' schoolmate, Vidal; and young Francois, a woman Jean-Louis meets at Church. The film is a masterpiece of seduction. Though exhibiting a richness far exceeding this limited domain, *Ma Nuit Chez Maud*, and the *Moral Tales* (1994) series of which it is a part, centre their circumnavigation of everyday moral dilemmas on moments of seduction and the ethical quandaries that these moments pose. I will select four scenes from *Ma Nuit Chez Maud* that embody or exemplify the formal characteristics of seduction as identified by Baudrillard (1994) before attempting to show how these same features, formally considered, help make sense of the elaboration of a corporate cult of assessment and accountability in the school.

1st Scene of Seduction

Bells ring from the tower of a Church in provincial Clermont. Jean-Louis is on his way to Sunday Mass. Believers stand transfixed as the priest delivers a sermon from the pulpit of the Church's grand hall. There are large columns topped with acantha leaves and lit candelabras and ornate stained glass windows and tall narrow arches and a perfectly proportioned crescent with the priest on his pulpit speaking from the centre. He asks that the Lord have mercy on us all. 'May we share eternal life and glorify you through your beloved Son Jesus Christ. Through Him, in Him, and with Him, in the unity of the Holy Spirit, all glory and honour is yours, Almighty Father forever, Amen' (03:48). The priest speaks deliberately and performs a number of rites. He is wearing

white cuffed robes with a patterned strip down the front and a long hood draped down the back.

The congregation begins to recite the Lord's Prayer and the camera turns to Francois, a beautiful blonde woman some years younger and just a couple of rows in front of Jean-Louis. The camera lingers on the priest as he performs communion, breaking the bread that will become flesh and preparing the wine that will become blood. At precisely the moment when the ceremony is finished and transubstantiation complete Francois turns to look at Jean-Louis.

2nd Scene of Seduction

When Jean-Louis leaves the Church he sees Francois walking in front of him. She crosses the road to collect her scooter and Jean-Louis decides to jump in his car and follow her. Through the narrow winding streets of Clermont Jean-Louis pursues Francois until she passes by the side of a car that is blocking the road. He quickly accelerates to the top of the hill but Francois is nowhere to be found.

In the evening the next day Jean-Louis sees Francois on her scooter and pursues her once more. It's Christmas time and the streets are beautifully decorated with lights and laurel. He beeps his horn and Francois turns around to look at him, smiling. She scoots off through traffic and Jean-Louis loses her again. He decides to visit a bookshop where he flicks through some volumes on the calculation of probability and the mathematics of chance. In another bookshop further down the street Jean-Louis picks up a copy of *Pensées* by Louis Pascal. The theme of chance continues as Jean-Louis bumps into an old

school friend, Vidal. They have a long conversation about the applicability of Pascal's wager to life and Vidal invites Jean-Louis to see his friend, Maud.

3rd Scene of Seduction

The third scene of seduction takes place in Maud's apartment. The characters start to talk about religion, Pascal, love, and marriage. It doesn't last long. Vidal is teasing Jean-Louis for his mistresses and ex-lovers. Maud wants to know more but Jean-Louis is evasive, 'the past is the past' (38:17), he says. Vidal asks Jean-Louis if he is beyond all seduction and is suddenly excluded from the conversation. Maud walks towards Jean-Louis and sits on her bed facing him, her feet outstretched between his. She looks at him intently and holds his gaze before turning away. Vidal interrupts and now all three are talking together again. Vidal guesses that Jean-Louis is in love. He denies it but for Maud it is clear as day. 'Tell us. In return I will tell you my life story ... Is she in Clermont? ... Is she blonde or brunette?' (39:20-40:05).

Maud changes into a nightgown. 'I admit they dressed more elegantly for salons.' 'You just wanted to show off your legs,' replies Vidal. 'Precisely, they are my only means of seduction.' 'Only.... come now. Let's say your principal means....' 'I'm a terrible exhibitionist. It just comes over me.'

Vidal opens a window to clear the room of smoke. It's snowing. Jean-Louis wants to leave. Maud wants him to stay. She tells him about an ex husband who died driving in the snow. 'You'll get killed.' 'I'm not afraid of a bit of snow.' 'It's most dangerous when it's falling.' 'Please, or I'll never get to sleep from worrying.' Vidal leaves and Jean-Louis tries once again to go. 'I really am used to driving in the snow. There's absolutely no

danger.’ ‘This type of snow is very treacherous’ (45:35-46:47). An agitated exchange follows, with Maud increasingly annoyed with Jean-Louis and his refusals. She insults him:

Religion has always left me cold. I’m neither for it nor against it. But people like you prevent me from ever taking it seriously. All you’re worried about is your respectability. Staying in a woman’s room after midnight – that’s just terrible. The fact your staying might comfort me when I’m feeling a bit lonely, the fact we might go beyond convention and make real contact, even if we were never to meet again – none of this would occur to you. I find that stupid, and not very Christian

(47:46-48:30)

Jean-Louis wants to sleep and Maud wants him to sleep beside her. Jean-Louis takes a blanket and turns off the lights and uses an armchair and a footrest as a makeshift bed. Maud takes off her dressing gown. ‘Idiot,’ she whispers, naked beneath the covers.

4th Scene of Seduction

Jean-Louis is stood with Francois on a hill overlooking Clermont. She tries to wrest herself away from him but Jean-Louis holds her tight. Jean-Louis: ‘What would you wish for?’ Francois: ‘That we had always known each other.’ Jean-Louis: ‘Me too, though, I feel I’ve always known you, that you’ve always been part of my life.’

Seduction in “Ma Nuit Chez Maud,” Seduction in the School

The writing of Baudrillard is especially challenging and *Seduction* (1990) is no exception. Opposed to the fixing of definite truth or the endowment of the word with absolute meaning—lost, perhaps, or constantly refounding in the margins of his own spiral—Baudrillard constantly writes against himself, contradicts himself, mocks or satirises himself. Where in Foucault there is a clarity of writing and a complexity of ideas, in Baudrillard both the ideas and the writing are of equal complexity. The sheer range of his insights also makes reduction problematic. How to find a positive thesis amidst this maelstrom? Rather than spending a long time engaging with the complexity and contradiction of Baudrillard’s thought I have extracted from his work five key principles of the seductive: The seductive as the reign of appearances. The seductive as the play of absence and presence. The seductive as that which reveals and conceals. The seductive as the game of chance. And the seductive as the ironic kinship of destiny and chance. Let us consider each one in turn and see seduction in the school as we see seduction in the film.

The Seductive as the Reign of Appearances

For Baudrillard, seduction is always the seduction of the surface. It is the exaggeration of the artificial such that it becomes more than a sign. Freed from the burden of signification the emptiness of a look poses a mortal fascination (hence why we call a strong outfit “a look;” the outfit compels and thus takes on the quality of an action; a look makes you look, whereas clothes just are). That which is seductive does not exhaust

itself in meaning but in the surface of an appearance that allures at its vanishing point. The Church must allure, not solely through the presence of God or the fear of damnation but through the possibility of his absence and the fascination of an empty signifier (what is the signified of dress, after all?). Hence why we see this attempt to instantiate the grandeur and glory in God in the grandeur and glory of a building. The tone of the priest, his speech, his dress, the heaviness of his performance, the hall.... Before it is a site of God the Church is a site of seduction. How many millions visit the domed halls of Florence, and how many are true believers?

The move to performativity has been accompanied by a renewed emphasis on the management of appearances and aestheticisation. One might find it surprising to see the inordinate sums spent on the entrance lobby, the front gardens, the website, the prospectus, a social media officer, a deputy head for data and accountability, a professionally designed newsletter sent out to parents and the local community every half term, etcetera.... And what, after all, is the presentation of exam results, of all of those pretty graphs and charts and lines and scales and tables and diagrams and colour coding and the nice lady at the front who explains it all to laughter and applause, other than an attempt to master the domain of the sign, to appear in a combinatorial differential as a little better than the least worst option? To stage manage, as it were, the school as performance. The school does not seek, in the first instance, to appeal by means of Reason, by means of a rational demonstration or the principles that might guide one, rather, the school seeks to appeal through seduction, through a maleficent use of exalted signs.

The Seductive as the Play of Absence and Presence

The missing dimension is the space of seduction. A body nude is not seductive but obscene. It is the suggestion lent by as little as a garter that rescues the body from obscenity and reinstates the indeterminacy that is at the same time a reinstatement of the body-seductive. In the game of seduction one can never give too much away. Hence the term "suggestive." To state one's intentions baldly is suicide. It is the shadows that we seek. Why does Francois turn to Jean-Louis at the precise moment that the ceremony of transubstantiation complete? Because transubstantiation being complete the wine and the bread are no longer just wine and bread but the blood and the flesh of Jesus Christ our Lord and saviour. God is present, but God is absent; in some way he is there in these sacraments we are about to consume and in another he is not there but somewhere else, maybe everywhere, and at the same time nowhere.

Perhaps it is also as an absent presence that the school seduces. Not contained within itself, the school reaches into the deepest vestiges of our imaginary and the everyday life which that imaginary sustains. It is always in some sense there, and always in some sense not. As a child before school it is a foreboding; as a student at the school a compulsion; for the adult after a remembrance; and for the parent current a distribution. Could it really be the case that every parent believes that through diligent application to the discipline of the school their child will have the best possible chance in life? Or perhaps they are tricked, seduced, by that presence that always escapes them; escaped them in their youth; escaping them forever. How much, we might ask, does the parent fixated with "the best" for their child really know about education, about pedagogy,

university, career? Too often, little. And where they do, what is the surface which they see? The dizzy interplay of signs is what allures. Rationality never stood a chance.

The Seductive as that which Reveals and Conceals

That which seduces always carries with it the risk of disappearance. In the same movement that it brings one aspect to light it casts another into shadow. This is the play of absence and presence with the consciousness of an endeavour. Returning in her nightgown, Maud playfully reflects on her appearance as seductive, but this is a sleight of hand. Maud hides in plain sight. The revelation of figure in dress is the hiding of figure in talk and countenance. In the same movement that the positivity of attraction is suggested through exhibition it is denied in discourse. Jean-Louis' refusal of the discussion of his past has a similar quality. All the moves are out there on the board. Jean-Louis' demonstrates his infatuation with Francois precisely through his attempt to conceal it. In a more banal form the scene of the pursuit is also a revealing that in the same movement conceals. Francois wants to be seen, to be followed, to be seduced, but not at all costs. Slipping away in traffic, Francois holds in suspense the pure demonstration that is always the end of seduction. The question remains. The pursuit continues.

The grade. The level. That abstract figure. How else are they to function other than through a revealing that in the same motion conceals? In the simplest sense – quality dissolves to grade. And yet we never quite know what that a grade signifies, for the values are constantly shifting, not only in themselves as such, but as apprehended in

exchange, in relation to historical and contemporary Others. If discipline is the effectively examined object then the revelation of grade as quality conceals its examinee with the warm blanket of meritocracy. We see here an echo of our analysis of the examination, not just as that strange and ineffable end, but as that which detains the inequality of an unruly outside at the threshold. All of those advantages vanished in a letter. The transubstantiation of signs.

The Seductive as Chance

Chance and probability are themes taken up again and again in *Ma Nuit Chez Maud*. Jean-Louis bumps into his old school friend Vidal by chance. It is chance that Vidal is visiting Maud. Chance that the snow blocks the road and prevents Jean-Louis from going home. Chance too that Maud's ex-husband died in a car accident. Jean-Louis wants to calculate the chance of this strange meeting. And of course, Pascal's Wager is a question of chance: the gains of the divine are infinite, however small the likelihood. The indeterminacy of chance leads to a raising of the stakes in which adversaries ramp up the wager to a threshold where all cards are on the table and all that is left is to call the hand and play. The question becomes: are they bluffing?

Chance in the school has a somewhat ambivalent status. Chance is an unfortunate past (you had your chance); a forwards striving (you have to maximise your chances); an imperative (take your chance); a threat (this is your last chance) a calculation (chances are), a refusal and sometimes a mockery (you've got no chance). It is an ambivalence of

the done, determinate, outlook, and inchoate. On this juncture seduction turns. The chance itself is seductive, but the rarest chance is destiny.

The Ironic Kinship of Destiny and Chance

We might imagine the probabilistic nature of chance as the antithesis of destiny but these two are the sweetest of bedfellows. It is in the excess of an unlikelihood that chance becomes destiny. Fortune, pushed to a limit beyond foresight, becomes fate. The unlikelihood of a spontaneous attachment is read as predetermined. We might suggest that it is not simply in the avoidance of an affair that Francois wishes she had known Jean-Louis forever. We are fascinated and in this way seduced by the radical necessity of an arbitrary conjuncture, impossible and yet it is.

These two terms, opposed but interchanging, in a certain sense materialise the outer reaches of scholastic imaginary. One could imagine a spectrum, from Destiny to Chance, with teachers arranged along per their preference. But destiny as such is never seductive (even the Oracle at Delphi could not seduce straightforward). Only when allied with its opposite, emerging from it, contending it without negation, does fate become seductive. Maybe this is one for the teachers, the smiles on their faces, when the kid they always thought would do well excels.

Subjectification and Seduction

If this goes some way to explaining how a system of signs and seduction brings towards and draws close, attracts, and allures, there will be a further operation that seeks to ensure that, beyond mere proximity, the moral imperatives of the performative school take hold and hold fast. If we return to the story of Echo, we can see that to seduce is never to repeat. Mimesis scares away. Seduction is never that of the mirror, a surface of reflection, but as in Baudrillard's reading, a surface of absorption. Narcissus is the minor figure in the grander story of Echo. Echo falls in love with Narcissus, but given her curse, cannot help but drive him away from her —and what is more terrifying than one's own reflection? Seduction, then, does not imply mimesis. As in Kierkegaard's *Diary of the Seducer* (1903 [2009]) and Byron's *Don Juan* (1906), Seduction implies transformation.

One must transform oneself in order to be seduced in the same way that one must transform oneself in order to seduce. Seduction is othering. In drawing students in this way the seductive game of the level does not invite a steadfast and Odyssean continuity in which the student maintains and elaborates a self maintained in spite of all that avails it. Rather, it militates for and demands a transformation of self in-order-to-be seduced. It has a compulsive function with disciplinary intent. The woman who before sitting alone at the hotel bar dons silk gartered stockings beneath a short black dress; rouge cheeks; red lipstick; lined eyes; and red soled seven inch heels; does so to appear seductive, to be seduced, or if it was de rigueur, then the scenario seduced her, and she returned the gift with vengeance.

We could argue this with regard to all systems of targeted managerial signification: The better luck next time; the chance proffered and taken away; the colleague who gets it and you don't worry, the joy and the despair, the pleasure, the pain, the long suffering nights wondering why, why, why, why not me? "But I can change I can change I can change I can change" (LCD Soundsystem 2010). The strategies proffered. The lending hand. The smile and the touch entices.... Amidst this dizzy interplay of signs we are seduced, and we are seduced in a way that invites transformation. This is never wholly successful if it rests on mimesis. It must be a deviation from the norm whose propinquity only serves to reinforce the norm itself (Adorno and Horkheimer 1979). The narcissism of a small difference masquerading as self assertion. As with Sartre's apocryphal entrance to the Ecole Normale. I gave them what they wanted to hear, but in an interesting way.

The managerial system of accountability and assessment is a system of signs in seduction. As a drawing towards in five senses: seduction through the reign of appearance; seduction through the play of absence and presence; seduction through that which reveals and conceals itself; the seduction of chance; the ironic kinship of chance and destiny. As a mechanism of subjectification seduction engenders transformation: transformation of the self in-order-to-be-seduced.

The Troublemakers Are in Control

There is a wicked irony to this complex reconfiguration of knowledge, power, and seduction: the troublemakers are in control. We can see this in three senses, a spongy sense, a soft sense and a hard sense. In the spongy sense, the absolute imperative of

progress leads to the most troublesome students sucking up a vast amount of teachers' attention. In the soft sense, the system of signs and seduction lends a temporary (in terms of duration), limited (in terms of effects), singular (in terms of enactment), and foreclosed (in terms of possibilities) series of powers to the deviant and disorderly. In the hard sense, the discontents of seduction are lent a permanent, collective, open and ongoing series of powers in which the very position of the teacher and the tenability of the institution as such is at stake. Let us consider the spongy sense first.

The absolute imperative of progress means that there is a strong incentive for teachers to engage with those who behave and perform the "the worst," worst here meaning a signification of the greatest difference between target and attainment. A student performing far below their assigned potential because of bad behaviour harbours the greatest possibility for progress points if the behaviour can be checked and endeavour facilitated.

Those who perform the worst are quickly flagged as objects of concern in leadership team and departmental meetings. If, over a period of time, the student does not improve, then the teacher in question will be summoned to give account. Questions will be asked of them. Explanations will be demanded. Action points will be taken. The teacher will have to justify their teaching methods, elaborate on the steps that they have taken to ensure improvement, and defend the organisation of their classroom and the character of their relationship with the student in question. This is especially the case with C/D borderline students in Maths and English.

But teachers are not just responsible for the individual scores of students. They are also responsible for the average performance of the class as a whole. Again, those with the biggest disparity in expected and actual attainment are those with the biggest effect on the average. A grade A student beyond the pale can drag a class' average well below what is deemed acceptable. So of course, with the stakes of performance so high, it is the grade A student beyond the pale who will get the most attention and support in class. The troublemakers are in this sense like sponges who absorb the attention of teachers given their privileged position in a differential matrices of signs. They are the nodal points through which a whole array of continuities, impositions, exclamations, and emotions, are forged.

Students who perform exceptionally well might receive adulation and praise or be held up as exemplar (held up in three senses: held up in the sense of publicly demonstrated as representative; held up in the sense that the class is held up or stopped momentarily while a demonstration is made; and held up in the sense of taken hostage, where the student becomes the unwitting accomplice in the celebration of a system that exceeds them), but they will rarely be the object of anguished concern, and do not in this sense occupy a position of power in respect of the teacher.

The second or soft sense in which the system of signs and seduction leads to the reign of the troublemakers is through a situated and immanent appropriation of the imperative. All a badly behaved or poorly performing student has to do to receive the immediate attention of the teacher or divert the class to their own ends is to show the slightest bit of effort. A student who has been goofing around or otherwise disrupting the class can evade a punishment, an imposition, or an exclusion, by the smallest drama of intrigue.

The look of glee on a teacher's face when a difficult student asks a question that demonstrates engagement. How quickly they will move to positively reinforce this behaviour through praise. And how quickly they forget (at least at first....) the behaviour that preceded it and that will surely follow.

If punishment follows behaviour beyond a threshold, feigned endeavour of the deviant and disorderly will take them away from that threshold and provide further opportunities for independence and disruption. It is a battle of wits, sometimes with the whole class in on the act, and sometimes resulting in the most hilarious scenes, where a student will push in both directions, oscillating near the threshold where mortification is certain, balancing on the precipice and revelling in the vertigo. It is an everyday drama, where students watch on with respect and adoration wondering: just how long can he walk this tightrope? Just how high can he lift it above the ground? The troublemakers, precisely through their status as deviant underperformers, exert a power over the teacher, the predictability of response meaning that this power is also a form of control.

The third, or hard sense, in which the system of signs and seduction leads to the sovereignty of the troublemakers rests again on the imperative of progress and the teachers' dependency on its signs, but this time in a more naked fashion. This is the possibility for strategic performance, or for students to intentionally flunk or throw a test so that the teacher gets in trouble with leadership or in extreme cases is replaced or fired. This technique surfaced in a number of classes I observed where the students would resist a test, examination, or assessment, often, but not always, in cases where the students were ill prepared, the class ineffectively "delivered," the exercise sprung at the

last minute, without sufficient notice, or on a subject partially covered or not covered at all. It also materialised in a more thoroughgoing way in those classes where the students did not like the teacher, had some form of historical grievance, and wanted rid of them, or at least to make them suffer, get them in trouble, put them on the rack and force a confession. The key is that performance is consciously manipulated in an attempt to manipulate or undermine the teacher.

I remember one class in particular where the students came out with their strategy directly. As the class files into the room the teacher, late, hurries in clutching a wad of papers and announces that the class is behind and that in order to move on to the next topic the class will have to complete a mock examination today, as the lack of data from this test that should have been completed last week is holding up the analysis that needs to be completed before the end of term.

Bags are thrown on the floor. Chairs are slammed. Some students slouch resigned in their chairs while others cry out in protest. 'But sir! We haven't had any time to prepare!' 'We haven't even finished the unit!' 'You can't just ask us to do a test like that!' 'You have to give us warning!' 'It's not fair!' 'It's not our fault you're a shit teacher.'

'Oi!' says the teacher. 'We are doing this test today and no argument. Your results will form the basis of your performance review with myself and with the head of department. We will take into account the fact that you haven't had time to prepare. There is only one question that you are not able to answer and that has been removed. Just try your best and get on with it.'

'But sir, like, this data is for you yeah, it's not for us, like.... It doesn't mean anything if we didn't prepare for it. So what's the point? The data is for you. So if we flunk the test we flunk you too eh?' There is laughter and then an awkward silence. The teacher begins to hand out the papers. 'As you can see, question eight has been crossed out. Examination conditions please. That means silence. Write your name and class in the boxes on the front and just try and answer the questions the best you can.'

It is no surprise to see a number of students put down their pens and fold their arms. 'Errrrmm, as you know year ten, refusal to work means referral. Daniel, complete the paper or I will refer you.' 'I'm not doing it.' 'OK then.' The teacher picks up his pen and begins to fill in the green referral form. 'Anyone else?' Reluctantly most students pick up their pens and begin to write, sighing and tutting as they go. The teacher fills in more slips. 'Daniel, Sarah, Jarween, Khalid, Nazeefa, here are your slips, please go directly to the referral room.' Leafing through their papers at the end of the class after they had slammed them in the hands of the teacher on their way out the door I couldn't help but think: what an absolute shit show. And the responses showed it. Lazy, unfocused, off topic, waffle. But grist for the numbers mill, nonetheless.

Should we be surprised, given all this, that the system of signs and seduction will fail in its attempts to bind students to a regime of truth, fix them to an order of conduct, and render them subject to definite effects of power? In the last example we saw the introduction of a new element: the referral slip; a new space: the referral room; and the parallel circuit of sequestration, evaluation and monitoring that joins them, referral. This is but one of the mechanisms that comes into play when the system of signs and seduction, collapsing under the weight of its own inertia, fails. Following the failure of

seduction, let's move on to the next stage of the disciplinary triumvirate, the disciplinary system as such, or discipline and punishment traditionally understood:
Vestiges of Discipline.

VESTIGES
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A Scene of Disorder

Pencils fly through the air as students duck and dive beneath tables become shelters and chairs become shields. Shirts are untucked; collars left open; bags and jumpers are strewn carelessly across the floor; ties, undone, are removed and then repurposed as whips or bandanas. A few kids try to get on with their work but are distracted by the laughter of a gang along the side who whoop and holler as they dance Monty Python's silly walks up and down the aisles. The teacher is crouched beside a student trying to explain how to use a compass to draw a pie chart detailing government spending on urbanisation but the student is playing silly buggers and cob handedly using the instrument and looking confused and making mistakes and asking questions so that the teacher has to demonstrate the same basic motion over, and over, again.

Crash! Bang! Uproarious laughter! A table is turned over and finally the teacher stands up to shout at the class: 'EVERYBODY! SIT. DOWN.' A kid mocks his accent and the laughter erupts again. For most teachers this is as close as it gets to pandemonium, or a complete loss of control. But the head of department whose class is just a few doors down has heard the racket and bounds in. 'STOP THAT RIGHT NOW!' 'PICK THAT UP!' 'What are you doing with that compass?' 'OI, YOU, OVER THERE, MOVE BACK TO YOUR TABLE AND GET IN YOUR SEAT!' 'I'LL HAVE NO LIP FROM YOU.' 'Why is your tie on your head?' 'RIGHT! I WANT EVERYONE SAT DOWN SAT UP LIPS ZIPPED SHIRTS TUCKED IN BUTTONS DONE UP AND TIES PROPERLY KNOTTED IN FIVE, FOUR' —the students scum past each other as they pick up their things and begin to organise themselves— 'THREE.....' —now they are leaping eagerly about the classroom, bursting into laughter as they try to get themselves sorted before the countdown ends— 'TWO!!!!!!!!!!!!' —their things

are mostly arranged on their desks, their backs are mostly straight, they are mostly silent, but there are still a few of the most disorderly roaming around, rooting behind chairs and under tables to find whatever it is that they lost in the heat of battle— ‘ONE!!!!!!!!!!’ Finally they are silent. The last of the students get in their seats as others tuck in their shirts, do up their buttons, and tie up their ties, awkwardly, because they have to do it sat down. The teacher waits, looking carefully across the classroom as if to hold each student just for a moment in her gaze. She finishes this slow lighthouse scan and pauses before speaking. “Never, ever, ever, in my thirty years of teaching, have I seen such disgraceful behaviour from a class” (this, I would soon learn, was an ironically frequent refrain).

‘It is now ten to eleven, you have wasted almost an entire lesson, you have wasted my time, you have wasted my students’ time, you have wasted your teacher’s time, and you have wasted the time of whoever among you was here ready and prepared to learn. It’s unacceptable. I will find out who is responsible for this later. Now, I have a class to teach. In the meantime, it’s one hour detention for the lot of you, tomorrow. Failure to attend WILL result in a day in the RC. Do I make myself clear?’

“Yes Miss.” The chorus replies.

“Now, apologise to Sir...”

“Sorry sir.” They chant, obediently.

“Right, I’m going to go now. If I hear one peep out of you.... One.... Peep.... And have to come back in here, I will be speaking to Miss

Bennett, and we WILL be sending you home. Is that understood?”

“Yes Miss.”

“Right.” She nods to Sir, and leaves the classroom, shutting the door gently behind her.

This kind of scene is by no means rare. The classes at the school I researched could get really wild. I thought I would be able to cope with them. The fall out of this assumption wasn't pretty. But I wasn't at all alone. Many teachers struggle to cope with the hostility and resistance of this kind of class. Once order is lost it takes a strong armed authoritarian to do anything about it. This is because disorder has a curious, exponential quality. It starts off lightly, begins to catch, and if you don't stamp it out before it spreads —chain reaction, BOOM. And we should not be surprised to see it manifest itself, given our previous analyses, where the system of signs and seduction produces, as a necessary condition of its social functioning, the failure and disorder that it is allegedly there to combat.

This is especially the case in the context of a poor performing school with a diverse student body in a very deprived area. Most of the kids have been branded as failures since primary school: trapped within an institutional evaluation which, from the inside, offers no hope of success. Maybe they are asked to aim for one level of progress. But what's the point when it's only progress towards failure? Schools might tell their kids to aspire, but if aspiration means getting a D instead of an E and the bare minimum qualification for the most basic employment is a C, then the whole affair starts to look a bit pointless. For these students the school is experienced as something like a pure oppression, a raw and unadulterated abuse of power, and they tell us this every morning when they bowl through the entrance shouting: 'WELCOME TO THE PRISON YEAH?!' before fist bumping their buddies and making their merry way.

Control in the Classroom

Teachers and members of staff have an array of strategies, tactics, techniques and mechanisms, with which they attempt to avert disorder and re-attach students to the discipline of the test. These practices, however, are myriad, and lack consistency. There seems to be no standard policy as to how to discipline and control a class. Thus, the title of the chapter: *Vestiges*. There are of course those old methods: writing lines; after school detention; discourses of exhortation; shame; abuse; and flattery; postures; gestures; modulations in speech; spatial isolation; that persist and are commonly utilised albeit in wildly varying forms. But then there are new methods such as the ubiquitous countdown, or the traffic light or smiley face on the board system. A thoroughgoing survey of this complex and stochastic distribution is beyond the scope of this thesis. Instead, I try to situate the analyses that follow within our model of failure, and highlight some of the common practices, or privileged moments, where this second system of attachment kicks in as a consequence of the failure of the first. The documents that follow are part of a policy booklet on student behaviour that is given to every student, member of staff, and parent.

HOME—SCHOOL AGREEMENT

Effective education requires a partnership between home and the academy.

The academy's service pledges:

- Good teaching – we will provide your child with 5 properly prepared, well taught lessons each school day
- Homework – we will give your child homework in line with our homework policy (which you will receive a copy of)
- Assessment and monitoring of students progress – we will regularly mark you child's work and assess his/her progress
- Attendance – we will monitor your child's punctuality and attendance and will inform you of any concerns.
- We will provide your child with a welcoming and safe academy Environment and we will effectively support your child by:-
- Dealing with bullying
- Dealing with disruptive behaviour that may affect his/ her lessons.
- Supporting him/ her to be fit, encouraging a healthy lifestyle.
- Preparing him/ her for the world of work and economic well being.
- Encouraging him/her to be a positively contributing citizen.
- Being Safe

The academy acknowledges its responsibility for the safety of its students. The academy is proactive in ensuring that no person brings knives or other weapons into the academy.

To be able to reassure parents and students that people are safe whilst at The academy there is a policy of regular checks for knives etc administered by the academy's police officer using a hand held metal detector. Complying with such checks is a requirement of being a student at [REDACTED]

THE STUDENT'S PLEDGE

I will:-

- Attend school every day and be punctual for the start of the day and lessons.
- Be responsible for ensuring that I am properly equipped for all lessons.
- Wear the academy uniform correctly.
- Complete homework and hand it in on time.
- Behave in a respectful and cooperative way.
- Understand the right of students in my classes to learn without me disrupting the lesson and I will not attempt to do so.
- I will behave safely so as not to endanger myself or others or damage or deface property or the academy building or grounds

Classroom



Students will:

- Enter the classroom ready to work
- Take off outdoor coats, scarves and gloves and have the full academy uniform visible
- Sit down as instructed by the classroom teacher according to the seating plan
- Be prepared with the necessary equipment
- Work positively & respectfully with other students and the adults in the classroom
- Be attentive, positive and ready to learn



Students will not:

- Shout out across the classroom
- Get out of his/her seat without permission
- Make negative comments to staff or students
- Disrupt other learners
- Chew gum or eat in the lesson
- Take out combs, mirrors or any other personal items that are not relevant for the lesson, including mobile phones
- Change the colour of his/her hair

Classroom discipline begins, in fact, just outside, where students are expected to line up in single file, without talking, and wearing the correct uniform correctly. The argument generally made by teachers is that by forcing the students to enter the classroom in an orderly and supine fashion this mode of comportment or being-towards-which (c.f. Heidegger) will carry through the lesson as a mood or atmosphere (*ibid.*), the assumption being that “learning” occurs best where students, are docile, obedient, submissive, and other than when called upon to participate, anonymous.

One can see immediately how this practice takes shape within a field of forces such as the one described earlier: when performance in an examination is a case of mimesis and repetition the teacher becomes ringmaster and clown for the insertion of a dead and lifeless knowledge into minds-to-be-made-receptive. The latent assumption is that concepts, ideas, understanding, or critique, can not, in and of themselves, motivate or inspire. What is first required is an act of submission that will be the condition of possibility for the learning that is to follow. Learning, like foul tasting medicine, is in this way characterised as an unpleasant but necessary regimen.

One can see further how this practice of lining up students in silence joins up with and augments the class reproduction effects discussed earlier. Irrespective of one’s qualities, one’s talents, one’s knowledge or understanding from an Outside, one must nonetheless prestate one’s submission in order to learn the school knowledge that will be the subject of the examination and the condition for advancement in a stratified Advanced Liberal

society. Discipline, in an important sense, in and through its positioning as necessary condition, is further embedded as the effectively examined object.

We can illuminate this point with an example. The great irony of trying to get kids to line up outside their classroom is that, whether or not it is demonstrated to have a positive effect on performance, actually getting a class to do it is a nightmare. Sure, the classes that do it might do better. But getting them to do it is precisely the problem. Rather than ensuring a docile and orderly class the practice of forcing students to line up in silence provides a flashpoint for conflict and resistance.

I remember waiting outside a typical class as the students began to arrive after their morning break: laughing, joking, playfighting —excitable and full of beans. They were still acting boisterously as the commotion in the corridor died down and teachers started to martial students inside. The teacher of this class arrived and started shouting immediately. ‘Errrrm! Year Seven! This is not how we line up. This is disgraceful. When I arrive at a class I expect you to be lined up, in silence, wearing the correct uniform, ready to learn. I should not have to be telling you this. Now walk, in single file, in silence, and stand behind your chairs. No talking.’

As the students walked in some of them began to laugh and talk quietly. The teacher erupted: ‘YEAR SEVEN! It seems that some of you have not learnt how to follow instructions. Let’s try that again, in silence. All of you back outside and in a line.’ The teacher stands to the side of the students, pauses, nods, and the class begins to file in again. But this time there is some whispering as the students stand behind their chairs. “EXCUSE ME. I told you to walk into the class in silence. We will do this, and we will do it again,

until we get it right. Back outside.’ The next time the students were rebuked for sighing as they left, then there was another repetition because a student tutted and shook his head as he entered, and then there was a final repetition because the teacher was dissatisfied with the manner in which some students took off their coats and bags.

When the students had finally managed to enter and sit down and arrange their things to the satisfaction of the teacher she announced grumpily that she was disappointed because she had planned a fun activity today: a drama or staging of a piece of writing they had worked with last week. Now she is unsure if they deserve it. Maybe she should just make them copy from a book. ‘Nooooooooooooo, please Miss, please’ they sigh. After a moment the teacher decides that the class can continue as planned but only after the students had written their after school detention in their planners and without the participation of the worst offenders who would have to sit and watch.

What I find fascinating about this whole scene, endlessly repeated throughout the school year, is the extent to which it suggests that the primary concern of the teacher in this instance is the establishment and maintenance of moral authority. Learning is incidental if not unimportant. Worse, it is a reward, an externality or incentive structure, that exists only to motivate the good conduct that is the real objective. One must first behave well, follow instructions, adopt our values, and then, and only then, will you be granted the privilege of learning. A more progressive teacher who was party to the affair put it this way: ‘it’s as if punishment had to be meted out before the lesson could begin.’

The emphasis on moral authority is established further by the classroom environment and the positioning of teachers and students within it. The teacher stands elevated before the

class as ruler, gatekeeper, and confidant. The teacher herself drew attention to this. 'Look at that wall up there... You see those? Those posters show you what you need to do to succeed. Does any of you know what AF1 is?' silence]No, well how do you expect to learn and succeed if you can't even behave well in class? How can I help you get the best performance possible if you aren't willing to help yourself? I want to help you, but you have to give something back.' I am the gatekeeper. I hold the keys to your level, to your success, and therefore your life. Without me you are nothing.

We see the same pattern in play when students are punished for trying to help a teacher or student. In a number of classes I taught, assisted, or observed, a student would be strongly chastised for explaining to a comrade how to complete an exercise; for helping them with their spelling or vocabulary; for giving them some guidance as to how work out a maths problem; or for showing them how properly to use scientific equipment. Some teachers encouraged mutual assistance but for many it was strictly forbidden.

In cases where a student tries to help a teacher discipline a student or the class without that help being asked for the demarcation is far clearer. Most times that I saw a student in some sense side with the teacher, repeat, rely, or augment their authority, the student would be punished. On a number of occasions I saw students punished for talking when clearly they were trying to help out. Other times students would take it upon themselves to resolve a situation the teacher could not: grabbing a pencil off a thief and returning it to its owner, or picking up the planner that they threw off the floor and refused to pick up, etcetera. Again, they would be punished, to varying degrees, for a transgression of taboo.

That the example preceding concerns a class in year seven is important. Both the technique of forcing students to line up and the troubling punishment of helpers change in character and intensity as the students progress through the years. In year seven almost every teacher tries to make almost every class line up in this way. But by the time the students reach year eleven the status and significance of the technique will have changed entirely. What previously was a condition for entrance into the classroom now becomes a punishment for misbehaviour within it. It is a punishment in two senses: firstly, as an enforced movement and therefore an imposition; and secondly, as a total conduct and therefore a mortification.

What this tells us, I would argue, is that the necessary and sufficient principle for the technique or practice of lining up students outside of classrooms is not educative. It is authoritarian. Its purpose is to establish a moral mood in school through the moral authority of staff. It dissipates as students move through the years because there comes a certain point where the moral authority has been established or it hasn't. Truculent, recalcitrant, rebellious students are too far gone, and well behaved students find it infantilising and offensive.

The same goes for punishing helpers. Whilst the taboo upon students appropriating a teacher's authority remains, by year eleven students are more or less free to help other students with their work, to explain to them formulas or vocabulary or tasks, to help them understand examination criteria, to make suggestions or improvements. The fact that this practice is encouraged among the less able or quickest to finish is instructive. It can not be the case that in year seven the students are unable to help but by year eleven have become so through maturity and ability, because then we would expect to see the most able helping the least. Instead, I would argue, it is simply because the monopolisation of the pedagogic

function ceases to be meaningful way through which a teacher can solidify, re-establish, or re-activate their moral authority. Thus, the practice re-emerges as punishment: 'if you don't stop messing around I'll give you some more work to do instead of allowing you to help others.'

In Silence

Where the technique of lining up begins with teachers shouting at students as they arrive at their classroom, there is an inverse technique that begins with the teachers silently waiting inside the classroom as students enter freely. The technique of silence is allied with a technology of inscription. The teacher stands to the side of the white board without speaking, armed with a wipe off marker. Students who walk in talking, without proper uniform, or who do not get sat down and unpack their things quickly have their names written on the board. If the behaviour continues, or they commit another offence, the teacher puts a tick by their name, then a second, and finally a third, which means punishment or referral, about which we will talk at some length shortly.

This practice reverses the taboo on student use of teacher authority because the taboo applies primarily to its appropriation: to unauthorised use rather than use itself. It is the expectation of the teacher, in this instance, that students will discipline each other as much as themselves. As names begin to be put on the board and students you start to hear hushes and shushes; you see students nudging to their partner, whispering in their ear, or occasionally pleading with them to be quiet because 'look! She's writing names on the board!' Once the class has quietened down the teacher is quick to inform them how long it

took to get settled and how much time they have wasted. Any incomplete work will be set as homework at the end of the lesson.

This enjoinment of a technique of writing and a technique of inscription is a version of a broader technology common across the school. Instead of writing names and ticks most classes have two boxes drawn on the board: one with a smiley face at the top, and one with a sad face at the top. A student who participates or performs or otherwise contributes, behaves or excels, has their name written beneath the smiley face and two ticks later will receive a reward. A student who misbehaves has their name written beneath the sad face and two ticks later will receive a punishment or a referral. This practice is common right until the end of year eleven when the students are fifteen or sixteen.

The attribution of marks and ticks, even in the same class with the same teacher, can be radically different. The same behaviour can attract a wildly different response. Further, the technology of inscription does not follow a discrete, linear escalation. One tick does not mean one infraction. The continuation of a minor transgression can result in a mark or a tick. A single transgression can garner a name and a tick at the same time, or even two ticks. And more severe transgressions can proceed directly to punishment or referral. Even minor transgressions, if the teacher feels like it, can skip this warning system entirely.

Viewed cynically, or strategically, as you like, these practices of lining up or waiting silently could be said to produce the disorder that they claim to attenuate. Disorder thus produced becomes the handle or hold onto which a teacher can found or materialise their authority. The boisterousness of energetic young people just back from the carnival of morning break is obviously going to create a flashpoint of disorder when suddenly put up against an

authoritarian demand for docile conduct. Similarly, being used to the immediate imposition of moral authority at the door, students are likely to talk and get ready at a more leisurely pace when allowed to walk in freely. The few more progressive teachers simply get on with the class. And they do so for precisely this reason. Demanding a docile and acquiescent classroom before the lesson begins only creates a flashpoint for disorder and wastes time. In the same way, they argue, that counting down only gives a student more time in which to misbehave.

What other reason could these practices exist for, then, other than to bring out the disorder upon which the teacher will establish their authority? If we were to represent the second practice as a theatrical farce we might imagine a scene where some students are entering a classroom and their teacher is hidden behind the door. His foot is outstretched and he trips up the students as they walk in. Once they have picked themselves up and brushed them off he says to them severely: "You should watch where you're going!" *THE DOUBLE BLACKMAIL: PICK UP THE GUN OR WE SHOOT!*

In a perverse way, we see that these practices exist to bring out rather than attenuate disorder from the other side when a teacher arrives and the class is perfectly well behaved. The look of shock and awe. The long pregnant pause. The sharp intake of breath and the shake of the head before finally they announce: "Well well well year 7, I am very impressed. I am very, very impressed." It is as if they have, for a moment, lost their centre, lost balance, and take a moment to assess their situation before flinging out their arms to steady themselves. It is never too long before they rediscover the grounds of their authority: 'I hope that this behaviour will continue throughout the lesson. Please walk in, in silence, and unpack your things.'

On the Publicness of Classroom Discipline

Being marked up on the board (as focal point of class consciousness) is indicative of a curious feature of classroom discipline and punishment when considered in the context of a system of hyper-individuation: its generally public character. A name is up there. THE RULES have been broken. Follow them, or you might be next. It is the immanent grounding of an inviting possibility.

More generally, remarks, instructions, rhetorical questions, admonitions, abuse, humiliation, mockery, and the like, are public in nature. Rather than waiting to speak to a student privately, never mind institutionalising this privacy within appropriate spaces, the teacher will often shout over the class, or talk to a student so loudly that everyone can hear. Even when it comes to report, an individualised form of surveillance where a student hands the teacher a sheet at the start of a lesson to be completed and graded by the teacher at the end, you will often see them outwardly pondering what mark to give the student, weighing up their behaviour, before announcing the mark. I remember one class where all of the students were quietly working and the teacher started speaking to a student sat at the back of the class from behind his desk at the front. Unable to come to a decision himself he asked the whole class what they thought she deserved. 'Has she behaved well this lesson, year 9?'

Discipline and punishment, then, tend to function something like a *Wahlspruch*. It is demonstrated or stated what ought to be done. Through this demonstration or statement

we are reminded that we ought to do it. And the demonstration or statement serves at the same time as a proposal made to others to do likewise.

Discourses in the Classroom

The most public of all disciplinary or punitive interactions are those forms of admonition, rebuke, exhortation, shame, abuse, humiliation, that we just briefly considered, and with which anyone who went to school will be all too familiar. Discourses typical of the classroom and common amongst teachers differ in kind to discourses typical of pastoral officers, teaching assistants, and other members of staff. Classroom discourse is more concerned with power, authority, admonition, and abuse, than pastoral discourses, which tend to be more concerned with the individual, their history, their future. This is not a hard and fast boundary but it is nonetheless an analytically useful distinction.

The disciplinary and punitive discourses of teachers tend to be emphatic, declarative, didactic, and suffused with repetition: 'I told you.' 'This is the last time.' 'Put that tie back on.' 'Your work is unacceptable.' Frequently, these declarative admonitions are allied with discourses of shame: 'I am disgusted year 8.' 'Your behaviour this lesson has been horrendous.' 'I am ashamed of you.' 'You should be ashamed of yourself.' Unfortunately, these discourses of shame often escalate into discourses of humiliation and abuse: 'You're an embarrassment.' 'You're useless.' 'Your work is pathetic.' 'You're pathetic.' 'You might be able to get away with being lazy and talented but a lazy idiot is never going to achieve anything.' 'Just look at the work x has produced this lesson. I am disgusted, year seven. Disgusted at how little work she has managed. And I could pick up any of your books and

say the same.' This kind of discourse tends to emerge at that zero point before all order is lost. 'Use what God put between your ears other than cotton and blondeness.' 'Autism and arseholes: know the difference.'

Irony and Performance

The caustic wit evident in the last two injunctions draws attention to the importance of irony, sarcasm, wit, and other forms of humour, in attempting to instil docility in the classroom. This is another domain that could be the subject of a more thoroughgoing study but here is only touched upon passingly. And in any case, the more general role of laughter, the culture, if you will, of humour that runs through the school, should not be reduced to the perspective of this study. There is an instrumental, cynical humour of attachment, that I describe here, and then there is a broader, more thoroughgoing culture of humour, that I do not. It is the stand out omission of the thesis, and one that I hope to pursue at a later date.

In the context of this study the most common form of cynical irony for attachment is mock surprise or false or rhetorical questioning. Usually this will proceed a more direct instruction. Before telling a student to shut up a teacher will invariably say something like 'Excuse me, am I talking or are you?' 'Sorry, I am waiting, in fact I am not sorry, because I shouldn't be waiting.' 'Do you not understand how not to talk while a teacher is talking? Then why don't you do it then?' 'Sorry am I talking to myself?' 'You need to go to medical as well... Why don't I take the whole class down and we can have it there?' 'Sorry, am I talking to myself?' 'I'm just shocked that a class could be so rude as to speak while I am speaking.' What is interesting is that this staged or put on shock, offense, surprise, etcetera,

is not just a cynical means of attachment, but forms something of a culture of complaint. It is the foundation of a common through an exaggerated airing of grievance.

The most specific materialisation of irony as a means of re-attaching the recalcitrant to the discipline of the test happened in a class I was assisting. The students were laughing and the mood was spreading in that way that it does shortly before exploding. Noticing this, and at the precise moment where I felt the teacher was about to lose the class, he suddenly adopts a camp persona, a camp voice, and talks to students as a drag queen does their audience: making jibes about their sexuality, about his sexuality, and making suggestive comments about work and working. As the students began to laugh the adoption of a voice became a full blown performance: walking effeminately, bending his knees, kicking out his leg, flapping his hand.

What the teacher achieved through this performance was a scrambling of the constitutive power relations of the classroom. The authoritative, didactic, male, who normally commands the class in and through his masculinity, is now a foppish drag queen with a feminine voice and a camp demeanour. The students find this hilarious. They laugh. And they laugh. And they laugh. Indeed, they laugh so hard that they forget all about the classroom, the lesson, the teacher, and themselves. They give themselves over to their laughter, and in that moment becoming nothing. It is at this very moment which passes in an instant that the teacher clicks his fingers and snaps the students back into the classroom. "Right..." he says, before resuming into the lesson. The students are rapt with attention, focused, and cowed, shocked, perhaps, at this sudden and rapid transformation of power relations.

We can make sense of this by reference to a thesis of Bataille (1989a), who understands the kind of laughter to which we give ourselves over, alongside sacrifice, love, the orgasm, luxury, and eroticism, as a form of sovereignty. For Bataille, that is sovereign which is sufficient unto itself, which does not subordinate itself to an Other or to a future, but that explodes in a moment and dissipates in an instant. The Queen is sovereign because while the nation labours for her, she labours only for herself. A good orgasm does not generally happen when you are wondering what time it is, whether or not you left the oven on, or if your current bedfellow is as gifted as the last. A sovereign orgasm, therefore, is one which we give ourselves over to, which takes us over, and which in taking us over turns into nothing: *la petit mort*, after all. In becoming nothing, we lose our effective subjectivity and dissolve in a moment of bliss.

In this instance, however, we see a cynical deployment of sovereign laughter to control. The teacher, losing the class, scrambles the constitutive power relations of his usual authority by adopting the persona of a drag queen. The students laugh, and their laughter is so throughgoing that they give themselves over to it, they lose themselves to it, and in losing themselves to laughter become nothing. Just moments ago the students were opposed to the teacher in a positive movement of resistance. Now they are neutralised, their resistance dissolved, and their antagonisms sent up in smoke. It is in this moment, this very moment, that the teacher snaps them back to attention and brings them back to the room.

There are many performances similar in form but different in content. Since it always involves a scrambling of power relations the kind of performance that attains such a scrambling will depend on the kind of power relations to be scrambled. In any case, what is essential is that students give themselves over to laughter, and in giving themselves over to laughter lose their positively charged antagonism and become nothing. Sovereign laughter as a performative-discursive technique for the re-attachment of the recalcitrant to the

monarchy of criteria and the discipline of the test. We confirm here Bernstein's (1992) critique of Bakhtin and extend the critique to Bataille. Laughter is not in and of itself sovereign. There is no escaping reversibility. Even laughter is appropriable in the game of attachment.

The cynical appropriation of sovereign laughter is quite difficult to pull off. It requires a great deal of confidence, a good sense of humour, a capacity for self-abasement, and absolutely perfect timing. Thus, like all of the mechanisms for attachment, it will frequently fail, and subsidiary mechanisms will kick in and attempt to make good on this failure. Having analysed students, classified them, sorted them, compelled them to attend school, forced them to wear ill fitting and unfashionable clothes, subjected them to a relentless assessment, admonished them, shamed them, humiliated them, abused them, subjected them to impositions and mortifications of various kinds, now, where misbehaviour continues, we must punish them.

Punishment

It is with punishment that we get the strongest sense of vestige, or remnant, of discipline. Punishments materialise as if at random, without consistent conditions of application, nor consistency in character or intensity. There are three reasons for this. Firstly, punishment has been devolved to a parallel circuit of isolation, monitoring, evaluation, and intervention. Where previously a teacher had only their personal abilities of mastery in the classroom, traditional punishments such as writing lines or after school detentions, exceptionally being able to send a student to their head of year or the headmaster, and

finally threatening or enacting exclusion, now there is a structure and process that diverts the student from the classroom setting in order to avoid the threat of contagion. Secondly, and as a consequence, the older forms of punishment become far less consistent in quantity and intensity of application. Some teachers rely almost entirely on the parallel circuit of internal exclusion whilst others are reluctant to use it. Finally, almost anything can function as a punishment if applied to the right person and in the right context. What is great privilege to one person is a great mortification to another. This creative aspect of punishment frustrates the formation of a typology or an enumeration of forms. Let us consider, then, the common vestiges of punishment and the insignificance of praise before moving to consider the most remarkable characteristic of the new performative school: the formal structure of discipline and punishment.

An admonition or rebuke is already in itself a kind of punishment in the form of a wounding inflicted on the subversive in response to what is perceived as an offence. The same goes for shame and humiliation. They are not articulated to, in a heightened, exaggerated, or ironic form, highlight misbehaviour. Nor are they articulated from the other side to draw attention to the standard of conduct a student has fallen short of. They are deployed in order to wound, and through wounding to discourage. It is a form of mortification through which students are racked.

Moving a student to the front of the class and making them face the wall is another common form of punishment. In this instance it combines the punitive aspect of the movement and isolation with the functional effect that the student cannot be distracted by or disturb the others around them. An intensified version of this same practice is where students are sent to stand in the corridor. This is risky for the student. Perhaps they are

known for mischief by another member of staff. If they see them standing outside the classroom, a more serious punishment is sure to follow.

The other main forms of classroom punishment take place on the outside whilst referring back to the classroom itself. Writing lines, after school detention, the removal of break time privileges, supervised break and lunch, having to arrive early or leave late. Each of these is presumed to work in a typically liberal fashion: they either give pain, or remove pleasure, and thus make misbehaviour costly. At least, it is argued, their sequestration, isolation, or completion of a repetitive task, will localise the disorder in the hostile object and save the rest from the threat of contagion.

The removal of privileges becomes important in a school where learning is often positioned as a reward for good behaviour. Perverse, but typical, a teacher will prevent a student from participating in any number of activities in an attempt to ensure their submission. Sport, drama, music, trips to universities, interview training, work experience help with public speaking, revision classes after school or during the Easter holidays... All can be withdrawn in the attempt to instil docility amongst students. This can be done directly or indirectly. A teacher can ask the head, the head of year, or another member of the leadership team, to see about the removal of their privileges, or, they can simply make demands that conflict with them, putting the student into detention, for example, at the same time that they have their dance practice or football coaching, or refusing to allow them to leave the class for a music lesson.

The great contradiction in punishing is that there is a tendency for it to have the opposite effect of what was intended. Where punishment does not lead to resentment in and itself

and as such it tends to do so in its strikingly uneven application. Students have a keen sense of fairness and injustice that is invariably frustrated by the character, frequency, intensity, and object, of punishment. We can say that the demand for fairness and justice is frustrated by three characteristics of punishments common to the school: how often it is they are collective, how random they are in their application, and how random they are in their intensity or severity.

First, collective punishment. How often is it that a student loses privileges, is made to go to a detention, is forced as part of a class to write lines, or write an apology to a teacher, despite having done nothing wrong? The argument is that by punishing the many for the misbehaviour of the few, the many will make the few feel bad and the few will behave better. But this completely misunderstands that power relations among students in the classroom. The most likely to conform are the least likely to have any sway or influence on their peers. To add insult to injury, when teachers do hold a whole class detention, the main instigators are often at the same time the least likely to show up.

Second, random distribution. Punishments do not vary solely along the lines of teacher, class, time of year, etcetera, but can be wildly different in response to the same kind of behaviour administered by the same teacher in the same class. The teacher might let off a bit of talking and then “make an example” of the loudest in an attempt to quiet the rest. One week a form of behaviour is acceptable and the next it results in detention. At the start one the lesson the teacher said it would be nice and relaxed but now she is sending a student outside of the class for accidentally knocking her pencil case off the table. After sitting through many lessons it must seem to the students, as it did to me, that there was simply no rhyme or reason for who was punished, for what, and in what way. Indeed,

though students could be confident that a certain kind of teacher wouldn't punish in a certain kind of way, that another kind of teacher won't punish for a certain kind of offence, even a teacher who refuses to give detentions, or allows talking in their class, for example, will be uneven in the administration of other punishments, will have other idiosyncracies in their weighted tableaux of transgression.

Thirdly, and correlatively, there seems to be no consistency in the severity of punishment as it relates to an offence. The most serious punishments can be administered for the most minor of offences while serious transgressions can pass unchecked. Two students in different parts of the class might be talking in a similar fashion and at similar volume to the students next to them. One might be told off, the other, a detention. This leads to a profound sense of injustice amongst students often leading to further disorder. Once a student has the notion fixed that a punishment is unfair or unjust, a drastic heightening of disciplinary response is often required to make them conform. The unfair punishment of a student can also lead to a general loss of respect for a teacher such that resistance becomes more frequent.

On the Insignificance of Praise

A whole story could be written on the strange status of praise in the school I researched. Certainly, it should, and in other schools perhaps does, serve as one of the primary modalities of attachment, but in the school I researched it seemed almost insignificant. Despite their being a system of reward and merit, it was hardly ever utilised. In all my time at the school I did not see one student receive a merit for their work. Last year the school

became an academy and adopted a public school/Harry Potter house system hybrid. Each house starts with a thousand points. They are awarded points for good behaviour, and lose points for bad. Twelve months after the houses were created and every one still has that starting thousand points.

This is not to say that praise does not serve an important role, more that, as with the discussion of punishment that preceded, it becomes stochastic, random, down to the character and style of individual teachers, as opposed to being a matter of policy. There is no generality that an ethnographic analysis of the whole could latch onto. What would be needed would be a more focused work in which the status of praise can emerge in all its complexity. This is another arena of research I am interested in pursuing in the future.

REWARDS

The main reward the academy can give to its students is to be an outstanding school. However, extra effort by students should be rewarded in a special way; this is why the following reward system has been introduced, so that students who are consistently well behaved, positive in attitude, hard working and unselfishly helpful are publicly recognised. The overall aim is that students' behaviour in school is impeccable. Every class must have a nominated or appointed House Points Monitor.

Have you awarded House points?

WALLIS TULL KING BYRNE ADKINS

Co-operative Model Student Good Attendance Risk Taker

Presentation of Work Sporting Achievement 100% Effort Act of Kindness to Peer

Helpful Extra Curricular Involvement

The Formal Structure of Discipline and Punishment

With disorder and resistance a near constant, students more familiar with an oppositional street culture, the troublemakers in control by virtue of the cult of performance, and a new focus on the low level disruption so common in these kinds of school, it is no surprise to see the emergence of a battery of structures, processes, spaces, strategies, techniques, technologies, and visibilities, that will attempt to re-attach students to a regime of truth, bound them to an orderly conduct, and fix them to definite arrangements of knowledge and power.

Where the teacher fails to control a student or a class there is a novel set of procedures that they can draw upon or activate beginning with an internal exclusion in the referral room and ending in permanent exclusion from the school. This appearing to be coherent, appearing to be rational, appearing to be linear system of discipline and punishment is clearly and concisely set out in a policy document that is given to every student, every parent, and every member of staff. I will reproduce these documents to give the school's own account of its system before detailing the ways in which these policies are undermined by its actual functioning.

POLICY FOR STUDENT SUPPORT, GUIDANCE AND BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT

Discriminatory Behaviour – The academy places a priority on equality of opportunity. Behaviour by any member of the academy’s community which is of a racist, or sexist nature, or which victimises a person on the grounds of sexual orientation or disability is regarded as extremely serious.

There is a possibility that exclusion will in itself be an effective sanction and cause a student to rethink his/her attitude and behaviour. Most frequently, however, exclusion on its own will not bring about positive outcomes and needs to be undertaken as part of a structured review process and reintegration programme. This especially applies to vulnerable students such as those with special educational needs and looked after children.

It is to be noted that there is a legal requirement for parents to keep a student at home, indoors and off the streets during a period of exclusion.

4.15.2 The only person legally empowered to exclude a student from academy is the Principal, or the member of staff who is deputising for the Principal in her absence. An exclusion cannot take place prior to consulting with the Principal or the person deputising for her.

4.15.0 Restorative Centre—Where there is a breach of the Academy’s code of conduct, students will firstly be considered to spend between 1-5 days in the restorative centre (RC) as long as their time in the RC does not pose a health & safety risk to students and adults on the premises.

4.15.3 Zero tolerance in relation to fixed term and permanent exclusion – There are a number of circumstances when, having established a student’s responsibility for unacceptable behaviour, the student will **automatically** be excluded for five school days. Following further investigation some instances will lead to a recommendation for permanent exclusion depending on the circumstances.

4.15.1 Exclusion – As a general rule of thumb exclusion is resorted to when all other reasonable steps have been taken to support a student and to guide his/her behaviour. Occasionally exclusion will be the result of a single, serious instance of misconduct or a series of serious incidents. By excluding a student the academy is making a statement that the right of other students to be taught free from distraction and disruption and/or to be safe, is now the priority.

N.B. students will not be permanently excluded in the first instance. All permanent exclusions will be preceded by a fixed term exclusion of at least five days to provide an opportunity to fully investigate the student’s culpability.

4.15.3 (Cont.) The circumstances where zero tolerance applies are –

- **Physical aggression/Abusive Action** Serious acts of violence against another student or a member of staff leading to injury, or repeated violence against the same victim where exclusion has already been undertaken will result in permanent exclusion.
- **Aggressive / Abusive actions** which represent a challenge to the school's authority such as to undermine the maintenance of future good discipline.
- **Possession of weapons/dangerous substances** The use or attempted use of weapons including knives, fire arms, knuckle dusters, razor blades, clubs and the use of 'everyday items' such as belts & combs will result in permanent exclusion.
- **The possession of proscribed substances** including tobacco, drugs and alcohol. The act of passing on or selling such substances on school premises, or attempting to do so will result in permanent exclusion.
- **The possession or use of explosives including fireworks** on school premises or the wider community will result in permanent exclusion.
- **Racist and sexist conduct, discriminatory behaviour** directed at people with disabilities or homophobic conduct. If such conduct is repeated involving the same victim, where exclusion has occurred previously, the result will be permanent exclusion.
- **Health & Safety** Where a student's behaviour puts all students and staff at serious risk of harm, including themselves

All listed zero tolerance issues will always lead to recommendations for permanent exclusion.

4.15.4 Other circumstances where exclusion may be an outcome are: abusive behaviour, bullying, dishonesty including theft, repeated deliberate disobedience.

4.15.5 All students who are formally excluded will be placed on the targeted support list by the member of SLT coordinating behaviour management, who will assign a support teacher to the student. The support teacher will have a reintegration meeting with the student within two school days following the student's return to school. The student's parent/carer will be invited to the meeting and the support teacher will complete an Initial Meeting and Monthly Review Meeting Report which will be emailed to the student's Achievement Coordinator (AC), a member of The Senior Leadership Team member (SLT) and the student's parent/carer. If the parent/carer does not have an email address a copy of the report will be posted.

4.15.6 Keeping children safe in education is our priority. This school works in partnership with the wider school community to ensure Children and their families are safeguarded from radicalisation and extremism. In line with the [PREVENT duty](#) we will ensure that all staff and governors are trained, informed, recognise vulnerability and mitigate the risks. We will produce an action plan to mitigate identified risks and ensure the curriculum embeds British Values, teaching our staff, children and visitors to be tolerant and have respect for all faiths within our multi-cultural society. This is underpinned by a range of other school policies including 'e' safety, curriculum, staffing and safer recruitment. Our school's statement of values respects learner and staff diversity, encourages freedom and openness and promotes the learner voice

[Keeping Children Safe in Education – March 2015](#)

Student Conduct and Misbehaviour Outside the School Premises

A teacher may discipline a student for:

- Any misbehaviour when the student is:
 - ◆ taking part in any school organised educational visit
 - ◆ travelling to or from school or

LEVEL 2

Students who are involved in:

- Refusing to leave the room when requested
- Verbally abusing staff
- Threat or intimidation
- Physical violence
- Aggressive behaviour, including damage to furniture.

SLT or the Pastoral team should be contacted immediately via the ALERT email or send for support from HOD or the Referral Room

Stage 1 (Referral Room)

Further consequences will follow once sent due to one of the above

- The student will be issued with a B1 with his or her details, including the time for the post referral meeting. The B1 will be taken to the referral room and given to a member of staff. The student will then be asked to complete a B3(students will be given a copy for their post referral meeting) and then continue with the class work sent with him/her. The subject teacher will complete a B2 by the end of the day (this can be submitted the following morning provided the REF.group has been informed of it's arrival) and follow up the referral with a meeting at the agreed time with the student before the next lesson. It's the student's responsibility to return to the subject teacher.

- The teacher must inform the 'REF' group that the referral has been resolved.

- A student cannot be sent to the referral room for the second time by the same teacher if a meeting has not taken place following the first referral.

- If the first meeting has not taken place, the relevant teacher will arrange for the student to work with another teacher within the department until the second meeting has taken place.

Stage 2

- Should students fail to turn up for their first meeting, a further meeting is to be arranged. *The Head of Department must be informed*
- Failure by the student to attend the second arranged meeting, the student's name must be passed to the Assistant Principal responsible for behaviour with the dates and times of when the meetings were arranged.

The student will move on to Stage 3

The Assistant Principal will pass the name and details of the student to the relevant Achievement Co-ordinator. The student will be placed in the Restorative Centre for 2 days and discussed at Student Support Panel meeting.

Stage 3

- The student will be issued with a letter to take home and a copy to be posted home informing them of the 2 days to be spent in the RC. Following this period in the RC, the student will be placed on report for a week to his/her tutor/AC/AAC/SLT.
- Further arrangements may be made for him/her by the Pastoral team/ SLT should the RC not be an option.
- Students issued with 2 referrals in a day or 3 or more in a week will spend 1 day for each event in the Restorative Centre. They will follow the 6 period day with the school day ending at 4pm. A letter will be sent home informing parents/carers of the appropriate sanction. The student will be given a copy of the letter to take home.

Students who fail to serve their time in the Restorative Centre will be recommended for a fixed term exclusion.

Parents will be informed by letter when a student has been recommended to spend a period of time in the Restorative Centre.

The Infraction & Referral

As with the administration of discipline and punishment in the classroom the activation of this parallel circuit of isolation, monitoring, assessment, classification, therapeutics, and punishment, is incredibly variable. Though there appears to be a clear codification of offence and action these rules are rarely followed. At the simplest level some teachers use the referral system almost automatically and for the most minor of infractions. Rather than making an attempt to control the classroom themselves they will send a student to the referral room at the slightest hint of truculence. Other teachers use it more rarely: threatening a student, warning a student, drawing their attention to the rules, explaining

how they have fallen short of them, and what they need to do to improve, before they finally refer them. And then there are those teachers who never use it at all, arguing that the whole affair gives students an easy out —‘why don’t you just refer me then’— or that the process is too disruptive to their lessons.

So the first major source of variance is a variance in the tendency to utilise or activate the system. The second source of variance is the kind of behaviours a teacher will refer a student for and the kinds of scenario in which a teacher is more or less likely to refer. This second source of variance concerns the majority of teachers who fall into the middle category of tendency to utilise or activate. It makes sense to begin with the zero tolerance behaviours as this is where the system’s actual functioning diverges most obviously from policy.

According to the policy document ‘all zero tolerance issues will always lead to recommendations for permanent exclusion,; but in fact, this is rarely case. Only when a zero tolerance breach is severe or involves dealing rather than possession will the recommendation be made to exclude. In other cases teachers and staff are more likely to keep the knowledge of a zero tolerance infraction to themselves as a threat or bargaining chip to use to try and control the student concerned. On the other side the zero tolerance exclusion policy provides a good excuse to get rid of undesirables. See a student you don’t like smoking, tell a member of the Senior Leadership Team you saw them selling cigarettes, the student is picked up from their lesson, searched, and bada bing! Exclusion.

The variance does not just come with zero-tolerance offences. Again, there seems to be no rhyme or reason as to why a student is referred. There are those obvious forms of

aggression, abuse, defiance, refusal, etcetera, that will usually result in referral, but this seems to be down to the mood of the teacher as much as anything else. In one class a student who stood up without asking is told to sit down and ask. Next time in the same class with the same teacher a week later a different student stood up and was sent to referral. A student can punch another student and get away with it, another student can gently push their friend on the shoulder and get referred.

This was made more complicated by the introduction of learning behaviours as actionable transgressions in the referral system. Most teachers found the idea of sending a student to the referral room for lack of the right equipment absurd, while others used it as a tactic for removing undesirable students from their classroom. Being slow to work or follow instructions is a charge that could be levelled at almost any student during almost any class. Calling out without permission, not bringing the right equipment, use of mobile phones or electrical devices, are routine behaviours. So if a teacher can't be bothered with a student it's easy enough to write them up and send them on. Naturally, this leads to an incredible amount of variance.

Many teachers find that using the referral system to combat low level disorder is too disruptive to be effective. If a student is already refusing to follow instructions, already acting out, already challenging the authority of the teacher, then the rigmarole of telling them that they are going to the referral room; the inevitable dragging of feet and arguing; the potential for disorder to spread if students feel the referral is unfair or unjust; the possibility of a student refusing to leave and the teacher having to call in a senior member of staff or member of the pastoral team to remove them... If the idea of including learning

behaviours in the referral system is to make non compliance costly and increase effective teaching time, many teachers find that the opposite is the case.

What the referral does provide, however, is another opportunity for the teacher to establish their moral authority. An immediate referral at the start of the lesson is often described by teachers as a way to nip bad behaviour in the bud. A student is made an example of, or sacrificed, in an attempt to bring the rest of the students in line. It can also provide an opportunity for the teacher to establish their moral authority by drawing students' attention to expected forms of behaviour through the threat of punishment. Now that these behaviours have been pathologised and codified explicitly by the school it is easier for the teacher to pathologise them in the classroom. These are the rules, this is how you are falling short them, and this is what will happen if you continue to misbehave. I got the power.

During my research at the school I did begin to collect systematic data on referral. Unfortunately, due to a conflict between the union and the leadership team, data relating to behaviour was locked down and access restricted before I had a chance to complete my dataset. I have kept in contact with key informants at the school and hope a chance will arise to collect and analyse this data at a later time. I can, however, point to some broad trends from my observations, interviews, and notes that I took while I was at the school.

There tends to be few referrals early in the morning and then they increase throughout the day. The period after break and before lunch tends to be the busiest, with anything up to 12 students in the room at full capacity. The morning break is only twenty minutes long, which seems just long enough for the students to reach peak energy and excitement but not long enough for them to tire themselves out and calm down before lessons begin again.

Altercations or antagonisms that arise in the yard are also often brought into the classroom. When you add to this the fact that teachers are often late to arrive to their lessons after the short morning break it becomes obvious why this is the busiest time.

Referrals are also more common just after the holidays when teachers are instructed by leadership to refer students quicker and more often. The idea is that strictness at the beginning of a term will result in better behaviour at the end of it. Towards the end of a term referrals tend to drop off for most students but increase for those now well established as the usual suspects. The system does not apply to final year students in the run up to their examination who instead are to be sent to the year eleven team, their head of year, or the headteacher, where they are found to misbehave or act as if they are not “ready to learn”.

The Referral Room

The referral room is about half the size of a regular classroom. There are twelve individual desks for students and two desks at the front of the room where pastoral officers sit facing towards the door. Personal touches like potted plants make the room more homely than most but there was talk before I left that they created the wrong kind of environment and should be removed. On the walls are bright and bold and angry looking signs that tell the students: ‘SILENCE IN REFERRAL’ ‘RESPECT YOURSELF AND OTHERS AROUND YOU AT ALL TIMES’ ‘DISRUPTING THE REFERRAL ROOM COULD RESULT IN EXCLUSION’ ‘THINK ABOUT THE REAL REASON WHY YOU WERE SENT HERE.’

The problems usually begin the moment a student arrives. When a teacher sends a student to referral they are supposed to complete a B1 form that the student takes with them and hands in at the desk. Often, a teacher has not completed the form which sometimes results in the student being sent back to their lesson and at other times is chased up later, depending on whether or not the teacher usually follows procedure or not. This wouldn't be so bad if the teacher completed the the B2 form before 4pm but many teachers don't bother.

Referral Details: to be completed by teacher and should be entered on (B2) the system before 4pm on the day of referral

Student's Name	Date Referred	
Tutor Group	Subject	Period Referred
Teacher's Name		
Description of Incident		
Resolved	Date set for meeting	
Unresolved		

Teachers Sign:

Name in full

Resolved or Unresolved

Date set for meeting

B2s must be returned to the Ref Group by 4pm on the day of the referral.

If a student is sent to the referral and fails to show up, we can't do anything about it if the paper work is late.

If a student is sent to referral and no B2 is sent it comes of the system (and an email is sent to you).

Referral Slip (B1) To be completed by the teacher and given to the student sent to referral room

Student's Name					
Tutor Group	Meeting arranged for lunch/after school				
Teacher's Name					
Subject					
Time sent to Referral Room					
Reason for Referral (level 1)	Refusing to work in the lesson	Persistent talking	Date sent to Referral Room	Use of offensive language	Refusing to leave the room when requested
	Verbally abusing peers/staff	Threat or intimidation		Physical violence	Aggressive behaviour, including damage to furniture
Reason for Referral (level 2)			Please state (not for being late)		
	Other Reasons				
Time of arrival to Referral Room					

Name in full

Tutor Group

Time for meeting

Date and time sent

Subject

Reasons for referral

There can be a great disparity between what happened and how it is categorised on a B1 form or described in a B2. Some teachers might say that a student who gives them a menacing look is being abusive or threatening, others will refer a student for persistent talking when they have only opened their mouth once, and physical violence can mean anything from a punch in the face to grabbing someone by the shoulder. Usually, a member of the pastoral team will ask the student when they arrive: 'Why are you here?' before listening and nodding and without ever looking up from what they are doing instructing them to pick up and complete a green B3 form. Often, the students will say they do not know, or 'for nothing,' where they feel their behaviour was ok or their infraction minor and thus not warranting a referral.

B3 STUDENT ACCOUNT OF REFERRAL

Student's Full Name Tutor Group

You have been referred from a lesson and you must now give your view about what led to the referral. You must fill out every section of this form. If you have difficulty filling out this form please ask for help from the person in charge of the referral room or the teacher helping him.

- Which period were you referred? Period Subject
- Which day were you referred? Mon Tue Wed Thur Fri
- What was the date?
- Were you referred in:-
 - The first 15 minutes of the lesson
 - The middle part of the lesson
 - The last 15 minutes of the lesson
- Were you on time for the lesson? YES NO
- Which teacher referred you?
- Has this teacher referred you before this year? YES NO
- Do you think this teacher refers you a lot? YES NO
- Do you think other teachers refer you a lot? YES NO
- If you think other teachers refer you a lot, how many do this:-
 - Most of them
 - Three or four
 - One or two
- Do you know why you have been referred? YES NO
- Please explain your answer
 -
 -
 -
 -
- When is your post referral meeting Date:..... Time:.....

have given the student a chance to give their side of the story, to present their case, and thereby lend the process the air of a juridical investigation.

The forms, however, are almost never fully completed. Whilst students are usually convinced through threats and exhortations to fill in the factual information and tick box sections of the form they are at the same time often reluctant, where they are willing at all, to fill in the sections that ask for an explanation. When they do the answers tend to be cursory and unfocused unless someone has sat down and gone through it with them. When the student hands the form in a member of the team will look over it. "Why haven't you filled in this?" "What happened? ... Well why don't you write it down then." "Sit back back down and fill it in correctly." "Well if you don't know say that you don't know." Students who refuse to complete the form are sent to the headteacher and often this resulted in them being "sent home" (illegally excluded).

This makes problematic those claims of scholars who try to deploy Foucault's (2010) work on the Christian confession in an attempt to understand the emergence of novel disciplinary trajectories such as the referral system (Barker et al 2010). In the confession there is a fastidious concern and a thoroughgoing introspection applied to a self which is doubled into discourse with painful honesty. In the forms of exchange that typify disciplinary interactions with the pastoral team we see most frequently a constant effort to evade or a kind of reluctant fulfilment neither of which could be meaningfully called a confession.

When a students is sent to the referral room the teacher is supposed to send them with enough work to last until the end of the lesson but many students are not sent with

work or are sent with work they do not understand or are sent with a small amount of work that is completed quickly. Where students are sent with work the atmosphere of the room except in the quietest of periods is enough to frustrate any attempt to complete it.

At times it felt like a soap opera scene. The pastoral team have often established friendly relations with repeat offenders. They relate to them as does the butcher to the adorable young rogue who is always trying to steal an extra sausage: 'You again!' Repeat offenders often have friends in the room, either because they know them from the outside or because made them in here: 'Yes Nazeefa what's 'appenin' 'Ah you know, Mr Davies innit, man's a fool. Dat class is dead fam' and then laughter. Students sit and chat with one another, mess about, pretend to work for a bit when they are shouted at by a member of staff before doodling or playing with their phone or passing notes to their friends. There isn't much the pastoral team can do about this when many of the students have nothing to do. It's hard enough to make them sit still and focus in a lesson.

The coming and going of students is matched by the coming and going of staff. Some teachers bring a student to referral personally to avoid them roaming round the school until next lesson. They usually announce quite loudly what went on and everyone stops whatever they were doing to listen to the drama. Heads of year, members of the leadership, and members of the pastoral team not on duty also pop by, to see if students they know are in there, to ask a question about an incident or drop something off, to talk about something that needs to be done or to discuss short term or long term problems and how to solve them.

The tendency of senior members of staff to arbitrarily ramp up punitive and disciplinary responses leads to lots of juicy conflict that is a great spectator sport for the denizens of referral. I remember one day in particular when I had been sat in there for a few hours observing and helping out as and when required. I was doing my usual trick of pretending to take notes from a book when I heard the abrasive yawping of the headteacher boom down the corridor. 'What are you doing?' 'Get out here right now.' I walked out to see what was happening and the head had pulled a student out of their lesson. 'It's now ten minutes into the lesson and you are still looking through your bag. You should have done that in thirty seconds and be working by now.' 'Sorry Miss my pencil broke I was looking for another one.' 'It's no excuse, you turn up to your lessons on time and ready to learn. You are ruining your education and ruining the learning of others around you. Get to the referral room.'

'She's on the warpath,' a member of the team says before the student walks sheepishly into the room. 'Just get sat down,' he says, before the headteacher makes her appearance. 'Fill in the form for me Mark, refusing to work, he will tell you the rest... I want to see you outside my office after school. Do you understand?' 'Yes Miss.' She turns to a student slouched in a chair at the back: 'And you, what are you doing here?' 'Nothing.' 'What do you mean nothing. It can't be nothing. Sit up with your back straight. Look at me when you speak. How dare you be so rude. Do you treat your parents like this?' 'I suppose.' 'You suppose? Well I suppose you're heading for an exclusion. Get that tie on properly. Now, I have better things to do than to waste my time on you. But you will be hearing from me. Sir, any problems and he comes straight to me.' 'No problem Miss.'

Just moments later a member of the leadership team walks by and notices one of her students and bowls into the room shouting at him. Her voice is so loud I almost jump out of my seat. 'What ya doin' here boy? What have I told you? I don't want to see none of my year up in here. You 'ere me?' She pokes the student and gesticulates wildly whilst she shouts before turning to the member of the team sat at the front: 'What should we do with him Sir? He's useless' 'I don't know Miss, I lost hope to be honest.' 'Where is your B1 form? Where is his B1 form Sir?' 'He didn't bring one Miss. He said the teacher didn't give him one.' 'Well, we will see about that... Why haven't you filled in your B3 form yet? You're not deaf. Did sir not tell you to fill it in?' 'Yes Miss.' 'How is learning taking place if you're not listening. You're not deaf. You just can't follow instructions. You will be spending your lunch time with me, and you will do the work that is required, do you understand?' 'Yes Miss.' The head of year then stood chatting and joking with the team, sharing a bag of pistachios which she chewed sloppily with her mouth open whilst complaining about how useless her students were, and then she left.

The pastoral team find all of this very frustrating. They are always complaining about teachers not following the procedure, not sending the right forms filled in correctly, sending students inappropriately, sending students without work, failing to organise a referral meeting leading to more time for the student in referral. Though they themselves contribute to the carnival it's hard to blame them when they are dealing with difficult students bored because they have nothing to do. They were also keenly aware of the extent to which some teachers rely too heavily on the system, and, on the other side, how easy it was for students to get out of lessons and spend time in the room

instead. 'They rely on it.' 'They depend on it.' 'I think you like being in here more than being in class.' They would say.

The referral room has a number of functions. It is firstly and most simply a space in which to isolate students deemed too troublesome for the classroom. It is a space of assessment and analysis where pastoral officers can begin to build up knowledge about students, their backgrounds, their attitude, their patterns of behaviour. The space clearly has a punitive function, given the tendency for disciplinary and punitive responses to escalate by virtue of a student having been referred and the humiliation, insults, and abuse, that are regularly directed at students by member of staff. It is also a nodal or relay point that connects up with other mechanisms and processes of attachment. The information garnered in the referral room will be communicated to decision making centres such as the senior leadership team, the year eleven support team, or the student support panel, where further action will be directed.

After Referral

The fictive relationship of the behavioural policy to actual practice continues after the referral period is over. Teachers are expected to arrange a referral meeting with the student to resolve the issue that led to the referral before they can return to class. Sometimes this doesn't happen for weeks on end and so the student has to come to the referral for every period that they have that teacher. Where a satisfactory resolution cannot be reached or an interpersonal problem is identified the student has to be moved

to a different class. This can take quite a while, with teachers often reluctant to take on the extra workload of a student already marked as difficult by their colleagues.

Where a student is referred twice in one day, or three times in one week, they are sent on to another space of internal exclusion, isolation, monitoring, evaluation, assessment, and therapeutics, called the Restorative Centre. The amount of days they spend there is supposed to correspond to the number of referrals. Two referrals in one day = two days in the RC, for example. Five referrals in a half term is supposed to result in two days in the RC, and after three spells in the RC students are supposed to have a disciplinary hearing with the board of governors. Though these procedures are generally followed students can be sent to the RC, like the referral room, for pretty much anything, but more will be said about that when we come to consider the meetings in which decisions about the RC are made.

The Restorative Centre

Students sent to the RC follow a different timetable to the rest of the students and finish later in the day. They have some time in the yard instead of a regular break and have lunch at a special table under the supervision of staff. They are picked up at the start of the day from the main entrance to the school and are not allowed to leave until after four o'clock.

The restorative centre itself is a slightly larger than classroom sized room in the far corner of the school. There are a few double desks facing the board at the front of the

room and a few large tables for group work. There are paintings by Basquiat and educational posters about the relationship between emotions and learning. A huge wall display asks: 'How are you feeling today?'

The RC is run mainly by a trainee psychoanalyst with significant experience in restorative approaches to behaviour but is covered by another member of the pastoral team for one hour a day whilst Jacob takes his free period. Jacob is a big character loved by students and staff. He strides through the corridors always smiling and with a twinkle in his eye. He is youthful and playful and exuberant and commands great respect.

A day in the RC usually begins with some interpersonal work before school work proper begins. Jacob sits the students round a round table and asks them to introduce themselves. Already we begin to see the focus in this space on the individual and personal expression. Each student is asked to tell him about themselves, say something about themselves, anything at all, what they like to eat, where they went on holiday last, which football team they support.... For Jacob, a big problem with education is that we ignore the fact that we are dealing with emotional, hormonal, immature and inexperienced children. We don't treat them as individuals. And we don't treat them with enough respect.

Unlike a member of the teaching staff rushed off their feet as they try desperately to fulfil the overbearing requirements of the cult of assessment, Jacob has the time to get to know the students. He wants to know how the students feel: about themselves, their

family life or lack of it, the school, their future. It's only when you are emotionally ready that you are ready to learn, he says.

There is a diagnostic element to this, a therapeutic element to this, a disciplinary element to this, and a punitive element to this. Naturally showing interest in students, asking them about themselves, is one way to find out if there are any root causes at home or in the students' personal life that is contributing to their bad behaviour in school. The therapeutic element comes when Jacob tries to help students to develop strategies to avoid getting in trouble in the future. The disciplinary element is that by showing interest in the students, showing interest in their lives, treating them with respect, adopting a youthful and exuberant demeanour, but still being firm, Jacob is able to better influence student behaviour. The punitive element of the RC comes in the form of the student's isolation, their removal of break time and lunch time privileges, and the longer school day.

As with the referral room, the constant subversion of official procedure is a source of frustration to the members of the pastoral team who operate the centre. Work is a primary failure, with students often being sent to the RC for between three and five days and only receiving work for half of their lessons. This leads to boredom, frustration, and disorder, preventing other students from completing their work even when they are given it. Considering that the RC is often occupied by the most difficult students one can imagine how quickly things get out of hand. To ameliorate this Jacob has tried various strategies, even setting his own course of work for all students to follow where enough of the students in the RC on a particular day lack it, but these

attempts were criticised by the Senior Leadership Team who wanted the RC to serve more as a punishment than as a space of diagnostics and therapeutics.

Often, students turn up at the RC without any explanation having been sent by a senior member of staff. When the referral room is full the RC becomes something of a spill over and many times when I was observing and assisting Jacob would be asked to “hold” a student, often for unspecified reasons and for an indefinite amount of time. Whilst Jacob would like to do more with the students his efforts are frustrated by this constant hustle and bustle, toing and froing. These interruptions make it difficult to complete activities or help students with their work, and so it ends up half finished or completed without proper effort and attention.

When you consider how much time some students spend in there, the consistent failure of teachers to provide work or support for students in the RC is scandalous. A difficult student returning to a class they were already struggling with is now also a week behind with their work. This makes further disorder and disruption more likely. Teachers who do send work find the scenario similarly frustrating but are generally understanding of the fact that it is impossible to create a working environment when half of the students have nothing to do. No wonder then, that students who attend the RC on more than one occasion and more than a few days are firmly on the road to exclusion.

Pastoral Discourses

Perhaps the most interesting aspect of the referral room and restorative centre is the way in which pastoral officers relate to, understand, and communicate with students. These discourses of personal history, concern, and care, differ markedly from the didactic discourses of shame and humiliation common amongst teachers. Again, a full survey of these discourses is far beyond the scope of this thesis. What I would like to draw attention to are three forms I find especially interesting: Discourses of personal failure, discourses of blameless responsibility, and discourses of presentification. What is evident in all of these discourses is a tacit critique of the cult of performance and the examination based model of education that grips the school. As Yafeu once said: 'Real education is the development of a person, holistically, spiritually, and physically. Learning is not just reading and writing on a piece of paper. It is having good manners. Being who you are. You lot are getting things twisted every day without even realising.'

Discourses of personal failure are continuously utilised by the pastoral team in an attempt to materialise the possibility of success and transformation in the consciousness of students branded from the start as inadequate. The team have led very interesting lives, and most of them have been in some form of trouble at some point or another, have endured hardship, and suffered. A discourse of personal failure is a regulated form of talk in which a pastoral officer reveals to a student their own chequered history and compares that to the person they are today.

'When I was your age I was tearing about Kingston, fighting, stealing, misbehaving. Look at me now. It's down to you.' 'I understand, I get you, I know how it feels when someone disrespects you and you just wanna pop 'em in the face.' 'My dad used to beat my ass til' it was raw. I never beat my kids, but I understand why he did it. I learnt my lesson.'

As well as positioning themselves in opposition to, or at least in awkward relationship with, classroom discipline and the monarchy of the exam, these discourses lessen the vertical power relationship between staff member and student. Rather than establishing moral authority through brute force they attempt to appeal to that aspect of the student in which they see an aspect of themselves.

A member of the team explained to me why they are so keen to talk about and emphasise their personal failures to students. He said that the ways that teachers present and wield their authority is dangerous. They act towards students as if they are irreproachable, perfect, all knowing. If we model this behaviour to our students, what happens when the mask slips and the illusion falls away? We have to show them that we are just like them. That we are human. That we make and have made mistakes. And that we are always able to act differently. "It's about being real."

The second kind of discourse I would like to draw attention to are discourses of blameless responsibility. These discourses generally follow an incident in which the student feels they were responding appropriately to a threat or provocation. What is stressed in every instance is that the individual is always in a position to choose how they react. You can't control what happens, but you can control your reaction to what

happens. This was the most common form of conversation I heard between students and members of the pastoral team. It carries with it a grin and bear it philosophy of life.

A typical exercise involves a member of the pastoral team asking the student to run through a happening step by step. Sympathetically an officer listens, waiting for the moment when they think they student could have acted differently. At this point: 'Right. Stop right there. What could you have done differently' Where a student says a teacher has got it in for them they say, 'well it's up to you to prove them wrong then.' Where a student says that they were provoked they say, 'but you have to make the decision: do you want to go down that road?' The point that is emphasised is that irrespective of who to blame it is about how the student reacts. They are responsible for their behaviour irrespective of blame. 'And if you feel that building up inside you, if you know that in that space you are going to react that way, then you have to remove yourself from that space, and prevent it from happening.'

The final kind of discourse I would like to draw attention to are discourses of presentification. In these discourses a future possibility is presentified as a necessary outcome of present conduct. In order to be something else tomorrow, one must be something else today. If you want to attain x career, or y wealth, or z status, then you need to come to school, pass your exams, get into college, etcetera. What is interesting is that the future possibility can serve as a justification for any present necessity by virtue of being placed on ideal trajectory that proceeds inescapably from behaviour in the present moment.

The problem with these discourses is that they rob the present moment of its vitality by subordinating it to a future. In relying on a strict individuation of responsibility and choice they elide the structural forces and social factors that we know make such a difference on a student's likelihood to succeed and which the students feel keenly themselves. Moreover, they seem to miss the effective core of most student's concern, which is never what is happening tomorrow, but usually what is happening right now. It was in that class that I was disrespected. 'They wouldn't treat me like that if I was rich.'

After some time at the school I came to the conclusion that the school is the institution where the present does not exist. Every moment is immediately displaced onto a past that is its necessary origin or a future towards which it inescapably proceeds. Education is an unfolding of being that in the event attains stasis. The bivalent temporality of past/future is annihilated when no displacement can free the present from the burden of convention and conviviality. Power, as Emerson remarked (ref self reliance), ceases in the moment of repose.

The Student Support Panel

The Student Support Panel or SSP is a body that meets twice a week to discuss under performing students and decide what to do about them. It is composed of the headteacher, members of the pastoral team, members of the year eleven team (in the year ten and eleven SSP), the relevant heads of year, the special educational needs co-ordinator or SENCO, and the school psychologist. The panel meets in a small room

adjoining the headteacher's office. Running down the middle of is a long table with chairs cramped around the outside making the room look a bit like a mouth with too many teeth. Displayed on the walls are mugshots of year eleven students arranged into groups of: 'Secure in Maths,' 'Secure in English,' 'Insecure in Maths,' 'Insecure in English,' 'Insecure in Maths and English,' with secure or insecure here referring to the likelihood that the student in question will attain a grade C at GCSE.

The meeting of course has a number of technical functions important in the game of attachment. It is firstly a space of visibility where sightings, reports, murmurings, and rumours, can be substantiated in talk and brought to a collective understanding. The SSP is secondly a space of investigation in which information from members of staff who have dealings with students of concern can be shared or sought. Third, it is a space of analysis where staff members can bring their knowledge and expertise to bear on individuals and scenarios with a view to classification and decision making. Fourth, a decision having been made, the SSP acts as a nodal point of relay and reflection, linking up questions, analyses, concerns and decisions with technologies that might fulfil them and agents who might enact them.

The character of decision making in SSP is in a certain sense peculiar and worthy of analysis. Thinking conventionally, one might expect the making and enacting of decisions to look something like this: a student is raised as a point of concern; the behaviour or performance of the student is problematised; the nature of the problematisation leads to the generation of questions for which answers are sought; the information, having been gathered, is analysed and a classification is decided upon; a

strategy is then formulated in respect of this classification and agents are enjoined to enact it.

In this procedure classification is objective. There is a natural kinship between the object and the category to which it belongs. Having gathered enough information, the object announces itself for what it is, and being identified thus, certain possibilities are foreclosed in the same movement that others are opened up. The question becomes one of best fit, where the task of the panel is to join up the objectively established classification with a course of action appropriate to it. It is a positivist sense. Classifications emerge on the basis of qualities and characteristics that inhere in the object. A course of action emerges necessarily and sufficiently from the morphology of this classification.

But this rarely happens. As opposed to a rational deliberation resulting in logical consequences the process is reversed. A decision is made, has been made already, regarding the course of action most appropriate for a given student, and evidence is sought such that the student in such a way that the predetermined enactment becomes inevitable. We can consider an instructive example.

In one of the many SSP meetings I attended there was ongoing concern about a young woman said to be struggling with academic performance and behaviour. It had already been decided that the student was beyond the capacities of the school and that she would probably cope better in alternative provision. The problem was that her behaviour wasn't bad enough to exclude her, and without a statement of needs profile it was unlikely that an alternative school would accept her. Thinking around the

problem, the school's psychologist suggested that her behaviour could be seen as placing her on the autistic spectrum, and that if we emphasised these behaviours and downplayed others we could probably get a diagnosis. The diagnosis being made, it was suggested, we could put in a package of support we know won't do any good, and thus build up an evidence base. Once it has been demonstrated that the student is autistic and the school is unable to cater to her needs, transfer to alternative provision becomes inevitable, and all that is required is for the school to present the file.

Decision making, then, generally does not take the form of: a child presents difficulties, those difficulties suggest autism, an analysis is sought from a qualified professional and on the basis of that analysis a diagnosis made. That diagnosis demonstrates that an alternative school specially designed to cater for students with these kinds of needs is most appropriate, and the student is sent to that school. Instead, it is decided that the student should be in alternative provision, a classification is sought that makes this trajectory inevitable, and evidence is sought out to justify this classification. The nature of this process is instructive of a general characteristic of bureaucratic enactment. Once a certain classification is fixed, a certain course of enactment becomes locked in also.

Given this we can say that the characterisation of SSP with which we began and which is the school's frequently recounted self conception is inaccurate. Whilst it might be the case that sometimes the panel operates as a rational body of enlightened investigation, more often it is a ritualistic body of cynical attachment. Indeed, we can say further that the necessary and sufficient principle for the existence of SSP is not to do with individual students at all, but rather seeks to (re)produce a common through the collective instantiation of truth, catharsis, and camaraderie. Much of the time in SSP is

given over not to investigation and analysis but rather to gossip, grievance, and the communism of disgust. It is an arena in which the mission of the school, the practices which support that mission and the agents who enact them, become centred upon a common ground of understanding and evaluation. General disagreement was incredibly rare and indeed, somewhat taboo. Dissenting views where held were articulated elsewhere, the tacit requirement of SSP being the prestation of allegiance for the instantiation of the common.

The Year Eleven Team

The year eleven team are the shocktroopers of the examination. It is their job to ensure that examinations run smoothly, that the truth conditions of the test are met, that everyone turns up properly equipped and well prepared in the right place at the right time and that, having turned up, they give their very best. The team keep poorly performing students under close surveillance, assist students with difficulties or difficult classes, and deal more generally with behavioural issues with regards to students on the C/D borderline in English and/or Maths. The team also organise and administer revision sessions, extra lessons, half term study, and other forms of more individuated engagement. The team is composed of a former teacher, a pastoral officer, and three teaching assistants, and works closely alongside the headteacher and the leadership team.

Much of what the team do is brute organisation: chasing up absences, making sure students attend what they are supposed to attend, removing hostile elements, and more

broadly trying to maintain discipline across the year group. It is with the activities of the year eleven team that we most strongly get this sense of vestige or remnant. Its very existence is testament to the dazzling array of possibilities and the unevenness of their application. To stitch together this seething mass into something resembling a coherent whole is a constant labour.

I remember one afternoon close to the beginning of exams when a one hour period had been timetabled for personalised study. Instead of going to their regular class with their regular teacher, students had an hour in which to focus on a specific limitation. A student struggling in Maths would be sent to a remedial Maths lesson; a student who needed to bring up their English would go to English; need to finish coursework in Science, then Science. But then there were other students with different destinations.... Perhaps they hadn't finished coursework but were struggling in Maths or English, and so shouldn't go to complete their coursework but to work on the two core subjects. Perhaps they have a personal mentor, are working on their public speaking skills, or are trusted to study in the library independently and without direct supervision.

It was pandemonium. Over two hundred students, all with different places to be and few with any idea where to go; the year eleven team with long lists already out of date and full of errors detailing the destination of each student; teachers sending students back, insisting a student should not be with them; the team sending students back again, insisting that they should; absent teachers who thought they had a free and angry teachers who have had their free taken away from them. The lesson became something of an extended break. Even the classes that by the end of the period had received most of their students were ruined by the confusion and consequent disruption.

Special Educational Needs and Differentiation

The Special Educational Needs and Differentiation teams were excluded from my study on the grounds of the vulnerability of potential research participants. The status and function of the teaching assistants that are part of this team is talked about elsewhere in the thesis.

Parents

Parents have always been an important, and for some the most important, figure in the loop of high school discipline. But it would be difficult to think of a time when they were called upon more thoroughly than today. Parents, like their children, will be expected to sign up to a particular ideology of education and the mission of the school. Alongside their children they will sign codes of conduct and ratify lists of expectations. Their attendance will be expected at parents' evenings; awards nights; exam preparation; behavioural assessments; referral meetings; restorative meetings; and the like. They will have to ensure that their child attends school and if they do not they will be fined and potentially imprisoned. They will have to sign their child's planner every week. If their child is referred they will receive a text message. If a student is "sent home" (illegally excluded), or formally excluded, temporarily or permanently, the parent will have to make sure that their child is kept indoors and under supervision for the duration of the school day.

Parents, then, are expected to function as a relay of school power. In every instance and every interaction it is expected that the parent will stand beside and support the school. A good parent is one who accepts the evaluations of the school and works diligently to fulfil them, a bad parent is one who does not. We see this both in the character of interaction with, and the character of reflection upon, parents by the school.

Considering the interaction of the school with parents the extent to which the school would treat the parents of students like students themselves was striking. They would shout at them, rebuke them, tell them how they thought they were failing in their role of parents or failing in respect of the demands of the school (depending on the parents, of course). Though I was not able to attend the meetings between parents and teachers, leadership, or other members of staff, I was able to find out something about the character of the meetings through secondary reports. Most of the staff I spoke to were shocked by the way that leadership and the head treated parents: 'You can't just go around telling someone how to raise their kids.' Some staff were also concerned by the judgmental nature of these interactions and the lack of sympathy or understanding: 'She might not be the number one mum in the world but she is doing her best. I don't know how Miss Bennett thinks she can do anymore.'

This positioning of the parents as existing only insofar as they are a relay for school powers materialises itself in the language used to refer to them. Parents are never individuated. In a conversation about say, Malika's behaviour, where a teacher thought it important to involve Malika's mother as the primary contact for the school, a teacher would not say, 'I think we need to speak to Malika's mum,' but simply, 'we need to speak to mum.' The form of life lending vitality to the term "mum" does not in this

instance require a specific personage or an individual with their life, their history, their views and values, for in relation to the school all this is irrelevant. The parent is an abstract function understood solely in relation to school objectives, hence, the abstract linguistic denotation “mum” or “dad” as opposed to the mum of, or the father of.

Interventions

The notion of intervention has a peculiar double status at the school. On the one hand, intervention can refer to any effort made to re-attach the recalcitrant to the discipline of the examination and the truth of the test. On the other hand “intervention” has a more specific meaning referring to the various programmes, processes, structures, and actors, with which the school tries to deal with difficult students. Like the SEN and differentiation team, it was not possible to conduct research of interventions as such given the extent to which they generally deal with vulnerable students, though they do surface elsewhere in the thesis, but there was a more interesting factor that frustrated research, and that was the pace of transformation.

When I arrived at the school there was a whole battery of disciplinary destinations for students judged to have difficulties: student or staff mentoring; one on one support; a social and emotional aspects of learning group; “the house” as a space for students with more severe difficulties to spend time out of lessons with a specialist; the SENCO and her team; the school psychologist; supervision by teaching assistants; supervision by members of the pastoral team; specific skills groups; needs focused behaviour plenaries;

in class support or break time support; parental involvement or collaboration with external agencies; etcetera.

By the time I left, around two and a half years later, many of these interventions had been scrapped. There was a general movement away from holistic or so called “wrap around packages of support” with a welfarist comportment to a more punitive arrangement with a Liberal comportment for dealing with behaviour. It was felt that students were too comfortable, too happy, receiving out of lesson support, and that the interventions were proving in any case ineffective. Out of lesson interventions should not be places where students feel comfortable. They should be undesirable destinations that students seek to avoid with good behaviour.

The Police

One might understand as a part of this movement towards a more punitive mood the introduction of full time fully warranted police officers into the school as part of Labour's *Police and Schools Partnership*; and one might conceive of this introduction of police into the school further as part of a broad set of institutional transformations generally referred to as ‘the punitive turn’ (Garland 2001; Dean 2009; Pratt 2007; Simon 2009;), or the unprecedented expansion of punitive practices that has been recorded, to a greater or lesser extent, in democratic states around the globe (Wacquant 2009a). But this would be a mistake. Indeed, rather than acting as an intensifier of disciplinary intervention through the criminalisation of otherwise non-criminal but deviant behaviour the police at the school acted instead as limiter.

Though the general assumption might be that a police officer would go round the school reclassifying non criminal behaviours as criminal, resulting in what in America has been called the school to prison pipeline (Devine 1996; Ferguson 2001; Kupchik 2010; Lyons & Drew 2006; Rousmaniere et al 1997; Nolan 2011) in fact, the police officer, considering most of the disorder in school to be trivial compared to what they have experienced on the streets, seems to attenuate rather than augment the discipline and punishment of students. Even in instances that were *prima facie* criminal such as online bullying or assault the priority of the officer was always, within certain limits, to take positive action that avoids criminalisation.

Thus, whilst there is evidence of a movement towards a more punitive mood in the school, one cannot say with Jonathan Simon (2007) that crime has become a rubric through which the school is governed. There is a powerful consciousness amongst members of staff and the police that a criminal conviction at such a young age can hold back a young person for life. Criminal charges, then, become the option of last resort, and the school police officer was proud to let me know that, in spite of the reputation of the school and the demographics of the surrounding area, he had not had to make one arrest in all of his time there.

INTERLUDE

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DEATH: Phoebus! You lay down your law in favour of the rich!

Apollo: How do you mean? You a sophist too? Who would have thought it?

Euripides – Alcestis (480BC [1930])

In trying to articulate an analysis of a process our critique has begun to break down and fall apart as the stochasticism of its objects frustrates the enumeration of its forms. Perhaps this was inevitable in the analysis of *a process*. Skirting along the surface, it was necessary to reduce moments rich in possibility to the illumination of a linkage. Let us cut a different way, attach ourselves to a technology, and see how that technology cuts through various aspects of the process. Before considering the disciplinary triumvirate's *fin de siècle*, where those deemed incorrigible and beyond hope of institutional assimilation are removed from the school by way of exclusion, let's look at its refusal, in the analysis of a discursive resistance that is the line that guides the cut as we slice our way through modalities and mechanisms of attachment but this time in the third dimension.

On the Field

Boys in the changing rooms jostle and holler as they grapple for spare bits of second hand football kit. Odd socks, oversized shirts and mismatched coloured bibs are set against the vibrancy of lurid pink or yellow astro boots. There are Tottenham shirts, Arsenal shirts, Chelsea shirts and a couple of last season's Manchester United. White shorts, blue shorts, yellow shorts, purple shorts, and for the poor soul who forgot to bring a pair, odious black PE shorts lingering in the spares box and reeking, unwashed. Tired teachers and anxious coaches bustle through the changing rooms checking kit, tying shoelaces and pleading with the boys to please please hurry up. A large group leaves, one or two follow, and slowly the rooms empty.

It's a friendly game after school between the boys from year eight and year nine. Both teams stand huddled beneath a blanketed grey sky at opposite ends of a worn sandy astro pitch. They are discussing roles, talking tactics and strategising on how to beat key opponents. As spectators begin to gather in pockets on the touchlines the huddles break to position and the coaches leave the pitch. The referee blows his whistle. The game begins.

Twenty minutes in and the game is evenly matched in spite of the age difference. The year 9 team are disorganised and their performance is hampered by the selfishness and immobility of one of their best players, Zachary, who has a semi-professional contract at one of the most regarded academies in the country. He plays as a sweeper-keeper for his club but his skill on the ball, pace and intelligence in movement make him more

dangerous as an attacker when facing less skilful opponents. When he plays for the school he plays in attacking midfield at the tip of a diamond behind two strikers.

Zachary has the ball at the edge of the box and is one on one with the last defender. The defender wants to block Zachary's path to goal and force him out towards the wing where he is less dangerous. This would prevent a goal scoring opportunity and give the defending team a chance to run back, get organised, and defend a cross into the box. Zachary dribbles towards the defender as a teammate makes a smart run into space on his right. All Zachary has to do is spot the run, dink the ball, and his teammate is clean through on goal. He slows his movement to a jog, steps over the ball, feints left, feints right, but the defender anticipates his intentions and blocks his path. Zachary is shepherded out wide where he makes a bad pass from a poor angle and loses possession of the ball.

A year eight defender quickly and efficiently recycles the ball upfield. Zachary remains, hanging lazily around the edge of the penalty box. Mr Omaboe shouts to him to run back and help his team defend, but Zachary does not like these strained notes of care. He shouts vehemently. He stamps his feet. He holds his arms outstretched and raises his palms, upturned towards the sky. He grimaces. The coach, seeing the altercation unfold, shouts to Zachary 'He was only trying to give you some advice!' Zachary turns on the coach. Tempers fray. The heat rises. Zachary and the coach are having a full blown argument as the game goes on around them. The coach is exhortative; Zachary, adamant; and so Zachary is substituted and asked to leave the pitch.

Zachary walks laboriously towards the touchline where he resumes his argument with Mr Omaboe —part of the pastoral team at the school. Yafeu is a calm man whose radiating warmth and soothing Caribbean tones are the nectar I saw cool many a hot temper. He fought for the British Army in the Falklands, left to become a Pan-Africanist revolutionary in Ghana, but grew disillusioned with internal power struggles far removed from the peace, joy and liberation that he dreamed of for his people. Yafeu moved the struggle to more humble settings, building a library in Ghana and devoting himself to youth work in England.

He walks around the school at ease, his beaming smile and assuring mien a friendly encounter for the students and staff that greet him as he passes by. He wears dark suit trousers, polished black shoes, a loose Oxford shirt, and a vibrantly patterned Kufi cap which sits delicately on his head. Though I would not be fooled by this lucent disposition.... Yafeu stands an imposing six foot two. His chest is stout, his figure is stocky and his biceps bulge gently beneath the loose folds of his shirtsleeves.

Zachary is obdurate as Yafeu tries to instruct him in the virtues of selflessness and sacrifice. Had Zachary passed the ball instead of trying to dribble past the defender his team would have had a good chance of scoring a goal. Yafeu's hands dance heavily to the melody of wise counsel, rising and falling and rising and falling before settling into the gesture of a steady point. Zachary, at first shifting uneasily, takes offence at the gesture and slaps down Yafeu's hand shouting 'don't you point your finger at me!' Yafeu rises. His back straightens, his chest burgeons, his eyes widen, and student spectators, conscious of an escalating spiral whose gravity threatens to envelop them,

arrest for a moment their keen listening, half turn, and with a sharp intake of breath bashfully position themselves a pace or two away —the social signal for disavowal.

Zachary looks with anguish as he steps back from the imposing Omaboe. 'Don't you ever,' Yafeu growls, 'ever, lay your hands on me again boy, because if you do, it will be the last move those hands ever make.' Thus begins a puerile tet-a-tet, with Zachary adamant that he had been disrespected by Mr Omaboe, and Yafeu adamant that Zachary should be able to take criticism, listen to advice. Yafeu makes a point, Zachary evades it, Yafeu makes a point, Zachary evades it, Yafeu makes a point, Zachary evades it, Yafeu makes a point, Zachary evades it. Backwards and forwards to and fro on and on the dustup goes. Each attempt, every utterance made by Mr Omaboe is repelled, evaded, or blocked by Zachary; and each refusal, every rejection made by Zachary, leads only to the articulation of a new line of attack.

Holdings

There are three elements of this exchange that deserve our close attention. Firstly, the strict equivalence between attack and defence, measure and countermeasure, thrust and parry, jab and weave. Admonitions, instructions, promises, prophecies, warnings, pleas, exhortations... —These are not simply ignored by a mute subject who opposes to many interjections one steady withdrawal, refusing engagement before beating a hasty retreat. Each and every utterance is singularly and obliquely opposed. No strategy without counter strategy. No power without counter power.

The oblique character of these rebuttals is the second element of the exchange that deserves our close attention. Not one of them engages directly, head on, as it were, with the content of the utterance; with its significance. They evade. They deny. They refuse. And they do this through disqualification. They do not overturn, defeat, or overthrow, but sidestep. These are not the moves of the judo master, who uses her opponent's momentum to throw them over in a moment of felicitous reversal. These are the movements of the featherweight boxer who ducks, bobs and weaves in order that she might avoid a knock out blow.

The third element is the comprehensive nature of the evasions and the pattern of escalation they proceed along. Zachary does not adopt one line of defence and maintain or repeat it, as we see in the form of silence and withdrawal. Neither does he deploy discourse randomly, as we see in the form of acting out. Zachary's evasions are ordered, systematic, and follow a linear escalation. Zachary adopts a strategy to the point of exhaustion, and when one strategy fails he moves on to another, each time escalating, each escalation raising the stakes of the exchange. By the time the argument has drawn to a close, Zachary has almost exhausted the possibilities of discursive self defence. His evasions, therefore, represent something of an inventory, a blueprint, or a roadmap for the possibilities of discursive resistance, and for this reason it is worthwhile to trace their contours and detail each modality of disqualification in turn.

Four Forms of Disqualification

The first disqualification is *the disqualification of the speaking subject*. To Yafeu's conviction that Zachary should have run back to help his team defend, Zachary does not reply with a tactical or strategic reason for staying upfield —with a substantive explanation that would defeat Yafeu's contention at the level of reason— but that Yafeu is incompetent, unqualified, or otherwise lacking the formal or experiential authority to make such a claim. 'Who did you play for again?' 'What team did you manage?' 'When did you get your training badges?' The substantive content of the utterance —its significance— is evaded through the articulation of standpoint conditions he knows the utterer to lack. For the utterance to count, to possess an effective quality, it must be articulated from a legitimate standpoint, in this case, a standpoint legitimated experientially, institutionally, or juridically. It is not sufficient that the utterance is mimetic, analogous, or sympathetic in respect such a standpoint. The fact that any professional player, manager or UEFA training course would agree with Yafeu is irrelevant. What counts is not the utterance or its quality but the standpoint from which it is articulated. The illegitimacy of Yafeu's standpoint allows for a disqualification of his discourse as effective or meaningful. *The disqualification of the speaking subject*.

The second disqualification is *the disqualification of the comparative instance*. When Mr Omaboe moves on from the bald instruction 'need to run back and help your team to defend' to state that 'you wouldn't behave like this at your club,' Zachary's response is along the lines of: of course not. That is there and this is here. That is serious and this is not. That is real life and this is just school. In this instance, I am excused from adherence to strategic rules of the game because it does not count as a meaningful instance. Your

discourse is disqualified because the domain of its deployment is not a meaningful instance of the rule in question. For your discourse to be effective it must relate to an instance in which something matters—in which something is at stake. This instance does not matter, and neither do your words. *The disqualification of the comparative instance.*

The third disqualification is *the disqualification of the activity as such*. To Zachary's argument that it does not matter, it's just school, Yafeu adopts a new line of attack: 'But it's about respect for your teammates, it's about respect for the school, everyone else is giving a hundred percent, why aren't you?' Zachary replies 'it's just a game, it's just football, it doesn't matter.' Thus, when the disqualification of the comparative instance fails, Zachary disqualifies the activity of which the instance is a part. What is interesting about this move is that an important threshold has been crossed. The first and second forms of disqualification preserve the value of the activity as such. In the third, the activity is sacrificed. To care so much about football is to be in error, to treat me in this way because of football is to be in error, because it doesn't matter, it's just football, it's just a game. *The disqualification of the activity as such.*

The fourth disqualification is the rarest, most interesting and perhaps most complex form of disqualification. This is *the temporal disqualification of the interpersonal relationship*. This disqualification is rare because unlike the preceding three it presupposes: (1) A developed and established relationship between interlocutors that goes beyond the formal, professional or pedagogic. And (2), a willingness on behalf of one or both interlocutors, who may be individuals or may be groups, to risk this relationship and the benefits or privileges that it entails. The circumstances in which it is worthwhile to

risk the modification, transformation or annulment of the relationship are rare because it is an asymmetric relationship of power that can yield significant benefits, especially in terms of evading or attenuating the operation of the disciplinary system. This disqualification, therefore, represents something of an end game, a last resort, or a terminus point in discursive resistance. It is the explosion whose blast radius threatens the barricades. When all else is exhausted and Yafeu continues to plea with Zachary, Zachary says simply, 'I thought you were good.'

We must be careful here. 'I thought you were good' is not simply an articulation of error, i.e. that I was mistaken in believing you to be good, that previous circumstances led me to believe you to be good but present circumstances show otherwise. It is the opening of a possibility of reclassification. It states, in not so many words, that you have disappointed me in turning out to be the kind of person I thought you were not. I believed you to belong to one category, but now I find that you belong in another. I am disappointed that, having made this discovery, or having come to this realisation, the character of our relationship, the quality of our relationship, the intensity of our relationship, or even the duration of our relationship, might have to change to accommodate your new status.

The conditionality and indefiniteness in this articulation is important. The utterance is not equivalent to 'you are not good.' It is not simply a lament, a regret, or a sadness at the loss, modification or transformation of a cherished relationship. It is also a threat and at the same time a conditional promise. It creates for the other a space in which they can return and readopt their former status: a clearing in which the truth of this now degenerate relationship can finally be restored. The currentness of my antagonism and

defiance, speaks the utterance, can be replaced once more with sweet convivial familiarity. Cease your opposition and you are good. The relationship is restored. Continue and you are not good. The status of the relationship must change. *The temporal disqualification of the interpersonal relationship.*

Power does not like to reveal itself but prefers to remain hidden. The failure of tacit power leads to denudement. Where capillary power fails, naked power plugs the gaps. Consider Zachary's first, second and third disqualifications. They are not attempts to reorganise relationships of power but to avoid a particular form of power taking hold and holding fast. They slip through power's clutches rather than breaking its fist. With this this fourth utterance; this terminalutterance that promises and threatens; we see a naked attempt at the reorganisation of relationships of power through discourse. And what power does Zachary have other than this? Other than this pathetic power to alter the quality or erase altogether his relation with another. This alone is his domain. This alone is his weapon.

The first, second and third disqualifications were bivalent, at once active and passive. Active, inasmuch as an evasion is a positive act, but passive, inasmuch as they do not overturn, overthrow, or neutralise, but sidestep. Disqualification in these cases does not defuse the bomb. It moves it to safe distance. The fourth disqualification is special insofar as it constitutes a direct and denuded attempt to reorganise relationships of power. It is an in-order-to, one step removed from the evasion itself. It is a non passive positivity that lacks the bivalent structure evident in the preceding three. It is a last resort, and if the movement to pure positivity is not a sufficient demonstration of this, then the movement that follows is.

Yafeu does not cease in his attempts to coach Zachary, to teach him, to instruct him, and at this point, means of discursive resistance exhausted, Zachary asks to be excused. To leave.

The effectiveness of Zachary's fourth disqualification becomes all too clear. He has successfully re-engineered the relationship but to his strict disadvantage. The coach and Yafeu quickly re-establish their power, authority and control over the situation. Zachary's engineering is appropriated by the instruments of power. 'He has to go down.' 'We've had this for two years now.' 'There is no point speaking to him.' Thus ends for the year Zachary's participation in the school football team. The special relationship he held is annulled. The advantages and privileges he received on account of it are gone. One can hardly see this as a victory for anything but pride. Whether or not this is a valuable thing, only being and time will tell.

* * *

Yafeu pays Zachary no more attention. The coach is focused on shouting instructions to his team. The game continues. Year eight are 2-0 up. Zachary asks to be given the keys to the changing rooms. No response. He asks again. No response. He asks a third time. No response. He pleads... 'Come onnnnnnnn, jus' gimme the keys yeah? Commeeeee onnnnnnnn, I wanna go!' The coach, without taking his eyes off the game, without even turning his head, outstretches his arm to the right hand side and gently shakes the keys from a loosely clenched fist. Zachary takes the keys, takes one look back at the astro pitch now turned in on itself, and walks alone to the changing rooms.

Disqualification and Rarefaction

The disqualification of the speaking subject bears some important similarities to a set of procedures highlighted by Foucault in his inaugural lecture at the College de France, *The Order of Discourse* (1981 [1970]). Foucault contends that in every society there exists a set of operations by means of which 'discourse is at once controlled, selected, organised, and redistributed,' (52) in order that its powers and dangers may be warded off, its chance events mastered, and its ponderous materiality evaded. *The rarefaction of the speaking subject* is the third grouping of procedures for the rarefaction of effective discourse, following exterior procedures of exclusion (the prohibition of speech; the division between reason and madness; the will to truth), and interior procedures 'which function rather as principles of classification, ordering, and of distribution' (56). *The rarefaction of the speaking subject* is that set of procedures for 'determining the conditions of discourses application, for imposing a certain number of rules on the individuals who hold them, and thus of not permitting everyone to have access to them' (61). By drawing attention to the insights of Foucault, and delineating the similarities and differences from my own position, I hope to be able to articulate more clearly the morphology and dimensions of discursive resistance as it is manifested in a high school setting.

Let us begin, then, with the similarities. When Zachary articulates the necessity for the possession of standpoint conditions that he knows the utterer to lack, he is clearly articulating a form of disqualification that rarefies effective discourse, that denies discourse taking hold of his subjectivity and serving as an active principle for the government of conduct. Yafeu's speech is disqualified as the kind that should engender change in the subject's modality of being.

We can illuminate this by a consideration of the ordinary-everyday statement: “they are listening, but they are not *listening*.” This is neither contradictory nor paradoxical. Our ordinary use of the verb *to listen* recognises two senses: (1) listening as hearing, and (2) listening as acting upon that which is heard. In many cases, to say “they were not listening,” “they are not listening,” or “they never listen,” does not mean that they cannot or did not hear, but that they are not acting in a way correspondent with having taken my utterance to heart, with having turned my utterance into an active principle of conduct visible through their behaviour. “They won’t listen” does not mean “they won’t hear, they are deaf,” but “they won’t do, they are unwilling.” One can say without error “I know you’re listening to me but you’re not hearing me,” because to listen means to hear, and to have heard means to act upon. When Zachary disqualifies Yafeu, it has the effect of rarefying effective discourse, of making Yafeu’s discourse the kind that is listened to but not heard.

The differences between my position and that of Foucault in *The Order of Discourse* are more pronounced. I do not wish here to become entangled with or comment upon Foucault’s lecture as such. The problems of this period of his work have been discussed already (see also Rabinow & Dreyfus 1983). Instead, I would like to articulate three primary differences: of domain, of modality, and of temporality.

The first key difference is a difference in domain leading to a difference in methodology and a difference in analytical content. Foucault is methodologically committed to the archive and to the record. He is blind by default to those discourses ‘which are said in the ordinary course of days and exchanges, and which vanish as soon as they are

pronounced' (57). These utterances —ordinary, everyday, transient, and in a historical sense ephemeral, without lasting effects beyond the radius of their immediate articulation— rarely reach the threshold of inscription; rarely make it to the archive; are rarely found in the records. Though there were definite and lasting effects to the exchange just described, they are not such to result in a change of policy, to result in a review or an assessment, to be noted or otherwise recorded. Foucault's methodology blinds him to these kinds of exchange. His concern is with the configuration, the assemblage, the series. My concern is with the scenario, the utterance, the instance. The first key difference, therefore, between *the disqualification of the speaking subject* and *the rarefaction of the speaking subject*, is a difference of domain leading to difference in methodology and and therefore a difference in analytical content.

The second key difference is a difference in modality. Foucault is concerned with the positivity of discursive assemblages, with the positivity of complex configurations of discursive constraint, with the way that, precisely through a repeatable arrangement of limits, discourse can pass from point to point, is enabled to flow and take on effects of power in distant locales between diverse subjectivities. Foucault is interested in those discourses which enable, which make possible, rather than those which negate, which block, which refuse. Foucault is interested in the positivity of formations of discursive constraint beyond the individual, whereas I am interested in the deployment of discourse to prevent its attachment to an individual subject. A difference in modality.

The third difference between *the disqualification of the speaking subject* and *the rarefaction of the speaking subject* is a difference in temporality. Foucault's magisterial tracing of the surface of discourse, of the shifting set of relationships between knowledge and power,

allows for an analysis of the emergence of socially valid and materially effective discursive regularities. Foucault is in a sense one step removed from the ordinary-everyday, at a meta-level that conditions the possibility of local manifestations. Zachary's discourse can only succeed insofar as the processes detailed by Foucault are always-already completed. It is only insofar as the discourses that Zachary draws upon are socially validated and possess an effective quality that he is able to appropriate them and deploy them in a tactical struggle against subjectification. He does not draw upon marginal, esoteric or nascent discourses, nor does he rely upon figures of authority far removed from the context of articulation. He draws upon those discourses which are valid, stable, repeatable, and accepted. Because of an always-already completed rarefaction, Zachary is able to draw upon its dimensions and evade the content of an utterance that seeks to compel him. A difference in temporality then, with Foucault concerned with a discourse becoming effective in its very unfolding, and this thesis concerned with the active deployment of a discourse always-already formed.

The exchange described at the start of the chapter was chosen because it represents something of a blueprint or roadmap for the possibilities of discursive resistance in the modern high school. In the section that follows we will detail the phenomenon of discursive resistance more broadly, delineating the varying spaces, domains, actors and processes in which the four forms of disqualification previously discussed are manifested. These disqualifications can be usefully understood as taking place along two axes: the evaluative and the disciplinary, and it is to these axes that we now turn.

The Disciplinary and the Evaluative

The rarefaction of effective discourse through disqualification proceeds along a disciplinary axis and an evaluative axis. There is no neat and unproblematic boundary that divides these axes. It is a core contention of this thesis that the evaluative is always in a sense disciplinary; that as much as the appellation of grades is the material for positioning and stratification outside of the school, the constant evaluation, assessment, categorisation and classification of students is carried out with a disciplinary intent within it. What this distinction refers to, firstly, is the distribution of formal and informal powers, and, secondly, the extent to which a particular role has a disciplinary or evaluative emphasis. A teacher, whilst a disciplinary agent, perhaps primarily a disciplinary agent, is nonetheless engaged in the game of evaluation with far greater frequency than a pastoral agent, who tends to be engaged in the administration of evaluations made by others rather than evaluation as such. Discursive resistance on the disciplinary axis, then, can deny the imposition of a disciplinary trajectory, can free oneself from a disciplinary space, can liberate oneself from the subjection of a punishment. These modes of attachment cannot be evaded by an articulation on the axis of the evaluative. This is because of the second distinction between the two axes. Resistance on the evaluative axis is always resistance against the internalisation of an evaluation, categorisation, classification or assessment, against its fixing and taking hold, against it becoming an active principle of feeling and action. It is resistance against subjectification. Whilst the disciplinary axis is equally reliant upon assessments, evaluations, categorisations and classifications, these occur in a different register and with different effects.

The Disqualification of the Speaking Subject

The Evaluative Axis

The evaluative axis is populated primarily by agents whose role is pedagogical or instructional. Resistance on the evaluative pole is resistance to categorisation on the plane of identity. It is a resistance to the fixing of a grade or mark, to the fixing of an evaluation of effort, commitment, ability or character.

Consider the following interaction: A teacher marks an assessment. The student disagrees with the mark, either on substantive grounds or as a reflection upon them in terms of status. To prevent the evaluation taking hold, to refuse internalisation, the student questions the credentials of the teacher, throwing into doubt their ability and therefore shifting the necessary and sufficient reason for the mark away from themselves and towards the body that was supposed to prepare them.

These contests can result in the most remarkable scenes. On one occasion, I was knelt down discussing the finer points of a passage from *The Hunger Games* (Collins 2011) with a vivacious young woman in the corner of the class where the wall with the whiteboard meets the wall with the windows. I could see on the next table over a teacher quietly discussing with a student their levels as the rest of the class worked quietly around them. The teacher believes the student to have excellent ability but zero application. He considers the student to be better than his grades or levels or marks indicate. The student refuses the evaluation, proceeding through an array of

manoeuvres before finally throwing into doubt the capability of the teacher. The teacher raises his voice as ears prick up around the classroom. Now they are engaged in a verbal volley. The teacher is incensed at the behaviour of the student, while the student denies the teacher's right to make these assessments. The student is told to cease his antagonism or be removed from the class. The altercation continues as the teacher gets up, moves away from the desk, and picks up his phone to call for the attendance of the head of the department. He asks in a kindly anguished tone 'can you get over here quickly please?'

The teacher then returns to confront the student. The rest of the class are frozen. No-one dares move. Mouths hang open. The teacher and the student are almost at blows. Finally, the door opens, the head of department strides in and inserts herself between the student and the teacher. The student shouts over her with anguish and despair. Tears well at the corner of his eyes. Finally, the student has to be physically dragged from the classroom. He struggles against the head. He brandishes his fists and gesticulates towards the teacher shouting: 'YOU CAN'T TEACH! YOU CAN'T TEACH! YOU DON'T KNOW ANYTHING! YOU CAN'T TEACH!'

In this instance, the student resists the fixing of a classification by bringing into a play a failed responsibility. This assessment is not valid, says the student, because you lack the ability that would make it so. You fail as a teacher, and your failure disqualifies the effective quality of your evaluations. I do not need to listen to the substantive content of your speech, to its significance, because you do not qualify as a meaningful agent.

This form of disqualification is found in spaces other than the classroom. Consider, for example, the half termly one to one meetings with form tutors in which report cards listing grades, levels, efforts and predictions are discussed. The tutor might notice a discrepancy in levels or grades, high effort in one subject and low effort in another, high achievement with one teacher and low achievement in another, a drop in marks from the last time an assessment was made or a level lower than expected. "Why is X figure Y when I would expect it to be Z on the grounds of A or in respect of B?" 'Because he can't teach.' 'Because he didn't teach that module well.' 'Because he rushed us through it.' 'Because he didn't give us any notice for the test.' 'Because he didn't prepare us well enough.' In each case, the evaluation of the teacher is disqualified through a positioning of the teacher in lack. What is usually considered as falling under the class 'excuses' are in fact disqualifications of the effective quality of an utterance or inscription on the grounds that the teacher has failed in the fulfilment of their role. They are disqualified as one whose practice lends validity to their assessments, and their assessments are, for the student, null and void.

We need not deny here that the student is not sometimes, in certain circumstances, perhaps often, right. That the teacher does not or cannot teach, that their workload or incompetence resulted in certain assessments being rushed, delivered without notice, or lacking adequate preparation, that a unit was missed or disrupted by any of the myriad factors that can impose upon the delivery of knowledge in the classroom. What is interesting is the divergence in the understanding of the interaction between teachers and students.

From the perspective of the teacher, the meeting does not exist necessarily or by default to allocate blame. The evaluations are not definitive. They exist in order to prepare for assessment and improve performance per the requirements of the exam. Whether or not the teacher prepared well, taught well, gave proper notice and time for revision is irrelevant. It is the student who sits the exam, the student who bears the mark or grade, and the student who will at the end of the day be confronted by a question on a paper whether or not it was taught badly, taught well, or taught at all. There is a certain truth to the argument that a grade in the end is the student's responsibility. Once the grade has been printed onto an examination certificate, no amount of disqualification will allow for the evasion of the mark and the set of distributions and stratifications that it facilitates.

From the perspective of the student, however, the evaluation occurs on an entirely different plane. They are, generally, not interested in the disqualification of some future said to depend upon or follow necessarily from a particular evaluation. They are concerned with the evaluation as such. It is the currentness of an evaluation that threatens their self-conception; threatens the conception which others hold of them; threatens their status or position within the school. They do not care that the grade in the end is immovable or that it is their responsibility alone. They care about how this grade reflects upon them in the here and now. One must question the value of these forms of surveillance, evaluation, and the exchanges that occur on their basis, then, when students and teachers sail past each other like ships in the night.

If the discourse of teachers in the form of evaluation and assessment can be disqualified by throwing their credibility into question, one has to feel for the position of the

Teaching Assistant (TA). TAs occupy a somewhat borderline position within the classroom. Without their relationship with their students being initiated or prefaced by the validation of their academic credentials or authority by an agent who already possesses them (a teacher or member of the Senior Leadership Team), a TA can barely make an assessment of work, performance, effort, etcetera, without being immediately disqualified as effective evaluative agents. 'You're not a teacher.' 'You don't know about literature.' 'You don't know what my level is,' are all-too-familiar refrains. This disqualification of the validity of the utterances or remarks of TAs can also take the form of a test, where a student challenges a TA to reproduce a grade or level of a piece of work that has already been marked by a teacher. Failure to reproduce the grade or level results in an immediate disqualification of the effective quality of their discourse.

As I frequently and ironically experienced, the quality of my utterances were mostly irrelevant as long as I held the status of TA and had not been prefigured by the teacher as an agent whose discourses count. My ability to hold a sophisticated discussion on the characteristics of metaphor is immaterial. My words could always be disqualified on the grounds of my positioning within a hierarchy. The fact that the statements, evaluations, assessments, utterances, remarks or inscriptions are mimetic, analogous to, or excessive in regards to quality of those which emanate from an authorised standpoint did not matter. The lack of a formally validated authority or status allowed for a negation of the effective quality of my discourse.

This, I would argue, goes some way to explaining the strange, marginal, and in a sense superfluous status of TAs in the classroom. Deprived of the ability to instruct, or to be otherwise integrated as effective agents into a performance culture of evaluation and

assessment, they become task masters, the only roles left for them being the encouragement of the completion of tasks, the adoption of a secondary gaze for the production of order and the cessation of disruption, or the occupation of a nodal point for questions concerning the mundanity of fulfilment ('should I write the date here?' 'Do I need to underline it?') and the sufficiency of completion ('are two pieces of exciting vocabulary enough or should I try three?'). The lack of socially validated authority conditions the possibility of the disqualification of TAs as agents whose discourses count, whose utterances matter, resulting in a shift away from the pedagogic and towards the disciplinary. TAs assist teachers in one respect only, the maintenance of order understood as the diligent completion of tasks as specified and without disruption. They circle the classroom like hawks, using height, proximity and the occasional exhortation to abate chatter and refocus the students on their tasks. They hover over the slothernly, park themselves beside the reticent, and insert themselves between the conversant.

Another form of the disqualification of the speaking subject on the evaluative axis is *the prophetic presentification of future possibilities*. We discussed earlier a form of disqualification in which an agent of evaluation or assessment—in this case a tutor—removed from the concrete context of instruction uses the marks and grades on a half-termly report card to presentify a future possibility and to prophesise your ability to obtain it, namely, the possibility and likelihood—given your current signs for effort, attainment, demeanour, attitude—that your grades will be lower than you expect or desire, and that you alone will be responsible for them once the heralds of the last judgment have sung.

This prophetic presentification of of future possibilities takes on a different character in the classroom or in one on one performance meetings with a teacher in the immediate context of instruction or as a technique for reattachment to the mechanism of the examination. The element in play here is not the responsibility for grades, but the likelihood of obtaining a kind of life that requires them. There is a rendering immanent of three elements: (1) a future possibility that is desired or believed to be desired by the student; (2) an attitude, demeanour, set of characteristics, or level of attainment said to lead inevitably to the desired future possibility, what Heidegger (ref) would call a being-towards-which; and (3) a present situation in which said being-towards-which is lacking. The articulation of a prophetic presentification of future possibilities creates for the student a behavioural-attitudinal space into which they can step, making real in the present the future that is its inevitable outcome.

The prophetic presentification of future possibilities in the classroom or one on one performance meetings with a teacher often takes the form that X career requires Y grades; B job or lifestyle requires the development of C characteristics or virtues; N practice or activity requires Y attitude or demeanour. 'You will never be a G if you don't attain an F.' 'Act like a J and you will never obtain a K.' These forms of prophetic presentification, which are at the same time an evaluation and assessment, a threat and a promise, are evaded by the student on the grounds that the teacher lacks the professional or experiential authority to make such a judgment. 'You're not a lawyer, what do you know.' 'You didn't go to medical school.' 'What do you know about music/art/fashion/dance?' 'The University you went to is shit anyway and now you're a teacher (haha).' In each case, the effective quality of the teacher's utterance is disqualified on the grounds that they lack the formal or experiential credentials that would validate it and render it effective. I need not change my behaviour, need not

transform your utterance into an active principle for the government of conduct and feeling, because you are not a subject with the authority to make your discourse count.

Thus far we have considered the disqualification of the speaking subject on the grounds of pedagogical authority or capability and on the grounds of professional authority or experience. I would now like to consider a disqualification occurring in a different domain, that which occurs on the grounds of medical authority.

The feigning of illness was one of the forms of resistance to the rigours of assessment and the mechanism of the examination discussed in the first segment of this thesis. It was also discussed in this segment as a mode of resisting the imposition of certain disciplinary trajectories; of freeing oneself from a space of isolation, evaluation and assessment such as the referral room or the restorative centre; of avoiding a punishment such as litter picking, standing outside the classroom, or after school detention. The feigning of illness is a primary form of resistance. It can be successful or unsuccessful. If the prestation of symptoms fails, if the signs of illness are challenged or denied, there can occur a secondary resistance that proceeds by means of the disqualification of the speaking subject on the grounds of a lack of medical authority and expertise.

There are, of course, numerous grounds on which the prestation of symptoms can be cast into doubt as a genuine expression of illness. The most frequent is a history of feigning illness; a past in which symptoms were prestated but found to be or strongly believed to be simulated. There are also certain convergences of circumstances that raise suspicion, such as being ill just before a test, or being ill just before a punishment is due to be administered. These convergences of circumstances move quickly to a judgment of

simulation when they are instantiated by a character deemed unwilling to work, truculent, or otherwise recalcitrant. When this occurs, when a judgment is made that the student is a simulator of symptoms for the purposes of evasion, the student is denied participation in the ordinary community where the expression of pain is not an occasion for doubt or scepticism but an occasion that calls for your acknowledgment (Cavell 1979; Das 2006; Wittgenstein 1968). When membership in the ordinary community of transparency is revoked on the grounds of simulation, the student is able to disqualify the effective quality of this revocation and refusal on the grounds that the teacher, pastoral officer, member of the senior leadership team, or other member of staff, lacks medical authority.

When the first resistance fails a second resistance can be mounted by means of disqualification. 'You're not a doctor.' 'You're not a nurse.' 'You don't know how I feel.' 'You don't understand my condition.' All variations on the same theme. The utterer lacks the qualifications, the experience, and therefore the authority that depends upon them, to make an evaluation that would legitimately deny my liberation from circumstances that I find unbearable.

The disqualification of the speaking subject in the medical domain, on the plane of illness, is one of the few disqualifications that is found equally on the disciplinary and evaluative axes. It can resist —on the axis of the disciplinary— the isolation within a space; the administration of a punishment; the imposition of a disciplinary trajectory. It can resist —on the axis of the evaluative— the fixing of a mark or grade; the articulation of a correspondence between a mark or grade and being or status, I for Oneself and the Other for I (Bakhtin 1984); an examination or assessment that will be the basis of a mark or grade in the future. Let us use this disqualification as a point of departure from

considerations of the evaluative axis, and move to consider the disqualification of the speaking subject on the axis of the disciplinary.

The Disciplinary Axis

Agents with primarily pastoral or managerial responsibilities have formal and informal powers exceeding those whose role is primarily pedagogic or evaluative. Formal powers refer to those powers, positions, roles and responsibilities that are set out in the formal documentation of the school: in job descriptions, policy statements, rule books, and memos on the administration of statutory arrangements. Informal powers refer to those constantly shifting powers, positions, roles and responsibilities that are negotiated on the ground day to day: in meeting rooms, classrooms, the staff room or corridors; relying upon networks and allegiances between those with powers and those without; enmities and resentments between disciplinary agents; considerations of status, workloads and strategic acts of anguished refusal; the holding of aspirations, identities, and interpersonal evaluations of effort and ability; on the grounds of chance events that disrupt, confused hierarchies that double book resources, spontaneous demands that leave gaps, and troublesome students who block or slow down.

These powers include but are not limited to: the power to exclude; the power to escalate, attenuate or transform a disciplinary trajectory; the power to skip steps, bypass evaluations, or sequester those on whom the system has no hold; the power to intensify any element of the disciplinary system, introducing new requirements or more substantial mortifications; the power to bypass the formal disciplinary system altogether and curate a strictly individuated institutional response.

Two key elements in the disqualification of the speaking subject on the axis of the disciplinary are error and non knowledge. Let us consider the teacher who attempts to instantiate, threatens to instantiate, or points towards, the insertion of a student into a disciplinary trajectory that exceeds their formal powers. This teacher can be immediately disqualified on the grounds of lack. You lack the power to realise your threats. Your threats are without ground, and therefore do not count as effective. You are in error that you have the grounds or capability to impose the disciplinary trajectory that you have invoked.

Whilst a teacher, integrated into the culture of the school, may occasionally be in error, a supply teacher, lacking understanding of the culture of the school, is in a position of non knowledge. The supply teacher is in a sense ignorant by default of the complex array of possibilities that they can draw upon to maintain order, acquiescence and docility. Their non knowledge can result in an inability to administer discipline, the losing of a class, but it can also result in error, the attempt to impose a form of discipline that exceeds their powers.

The carnival of laughter, the frantic and embodied excitement that erupts when a class finds out that they have a supply is premised precisely upon this possibility for disqualification on the basis of partial, non, or inaccurate knowledge. Given the complexity of disciplinary relations and the kinds of trajectories or pathways a student can be pushed along a student can be fairly confident that a supply teacher, or even a teacher new to the school, will be to a great extent ignorant of the school's complex culture, blind to the complex distribution of formal and informal powers that make

possible a particular articulation of the disciplinary system. That they will not know, therefore, how to draw on it effectively for the purposes of maintaining classroom order and ensuring the diligent completion of tasks.

The disqualification of the speaking subject on the axis of the disciplinary and on the grounds of error can be a far reaching and total disqualification. If a teacher or supply teacher makes an incorrect threat that a student will have to do something that is not school policy, against school rules, or otherwise impracticable, all credibility is lost. The teacher here appears as something as a fool or jester, and the disruption that the threat or promise aimed to attenuate is in fact exacerbated. This disqualification is automatic and does not require the introduction of a student's discourse to occur. The student need not articulate the disqualification because the teacher has accomplished this on their own accord. They have disclosed their incapability as an agent of order and constraint. They are thus not disqualified by a statement that denies them, but rather by the eruption of laughter that acknowledges them, and in a sense, confirms them in their new status.

On the many occasions that this happened, the escalation in disruption was such that all semblance of order was lost, only to be restored by a call to the emergency line and the presence of a disciplinary agent with the power, knowledge and authority to re-presentify disciplinary trajectories, raise into collective consciousness the culture of the school, and to restore by proxy the authority of the teacher, usually with threats and promises of escalation and intensification. 'Any more of this and it will be detention every day all week for the lot of you.'

Knowledge & τέχνη

This is, in a sense, the simplest way that non-knowledge or error can result in disqualification and disruption. But the Gordian web of elements constitutive of the disciplinary assemblage and the culture of the school more broadly make knowledge a key element in the play of resistance against subjectification. This complex field of overlapping forces and conflicting elements lends to the student an array of possibilities for disqualification. As the disciplinary assemblage increases in complexity there is a correspondent increase of weak points, faulty linkages, tangled interstices, sites of friction, blind spots, non-knowledge, and confusion. The disciplinary assemblage in a sense produces the resistance that threatens constantly to stall it, slow it down, force it along unfamiliar terrain, or change its destination completely.

The assemblage, therefore, exhibits a principle of entropy and a principle of inertia. The faster it hurtles towards complexity with the aim of totalisation, the faster it tends towards chaos and uselessness (principle of entropy). The faster and more efficiently it tries to move the bodies it lays claim upon along its flows, trajectories and pathways, the more that this lateral movement is transfigured into rotation, and the energy that propels it exhausted due to the turning upon itself that is a consequence of its very unfolding (principle of inertia).

By coming to terms with the variation of significant elements in the disciplinary assemblage; by understanding the locales of inertia, the pathways towards entropy, the nodes of blockage, the relays with the possibility for subversion; a student can negotiate

these elements, locales, nodes and relays for the purposes of evading a trajectory that seeks to subject them. It is within this constantly shifting milieu, this interaction of spaces, functions, pathways, histories, characters, personalities, relationships, enmities and allegiances, that a student can find the weak points, the gaps, the lines of force, the faulty linkages and weak connections, the unlikely possibilities, or those that, as if in a sci-fi movie, warp one into a different space altogether. It is in the midst of all this that a student can negotiate a path of non compliance, resistance and defiance; liberating them, at least partially, at least for a moment, from the forms that attempt to subordinate them, control them, order them, evaluate them, classify them, categorise them. The successful disqualification of the speaking subject, the successful evasion of a disciplinary trajectory, relies upon the differential distribution of knowledges of the elements of which they are composed.

These evasions are dependent first of all upon a knowledge of the formal system: of the rules, regulations, pathways and trajectories; and upon the official distribution of powers and abilities; the formal hierarchy; bureaucratic requirements etcetera. They are dependent further upon a knowledge of the informal system: of the constantly shifting, locally negotiated distribution of powers and responsibilities; of the relations between teachers and agents with the power to escalate a disciplinary trajectory, skip steps, administer punishments, or fashion a new pathway altogether. They depend further again upon an interpersonal knowledge obtained experientially or referentially: of the characters, personalities and pressure points of teachers, pastoral assistants, heads of year, and the leadership team; of who is tolerant of minor transgressions and who is not; of who lets what fly and who allows nothing; of who is strict and who is lenient; of what one person hates and another doesn't mind so much; of whether an individual is stressed or relaxed, anxious or calm, disappointed or elated, happy or sad. It depends

finally on a knowledge of events: of events that might transform, attenuate, exacerbate, suspend, modify, or blur, the disciplinary system and school culture more broadly. Any number of occurrences can change the mood, tone, intensity, or morphology of school discipline; can remove agents from circulation or otherwise occupy them; can bolster their effective powers or render them impotent. These events can be local to the school, external to the school but occurring within the local area, or national, following the announcement of a new policy, power or restriction in the news.

Thus, there are four groupings of knowledges and understandings whose differential distribution allows for a tactical evasion of the imposition of a disciplinary trajectory: (1) a knowledge of the formal system; (2) a knowledge of the informal system; (3) a knowledge of the actors who animate them; and (4) a knowledge of events that modify them.

But it is not only this shifting ground of knowledges, themselves dependent on the coming together of a myriad of actors in definite settings, that condition the success, failure, or very possibility of the disqualification of the speaking subject. Discursive resistance on the axis of the disciplinary is a *τέχνη* (*tekhne*), an art, that rests on a host of skills, aptitudes, capabilities, characteristics, and virtues. The ability to relate to and understand others; to read the complex intersubjective relations within a determining context; to display the right to demeanour to the right agent; to adopt a certain line of engagement to one agent and a different one to another; to push one towards a certain limit and move away from it with another; to push this one over the limit; to approach the limit in this scenario, at this time, in this space, with these inhabitants, and to avoid it in that time, in that space, with those. It also relies upon personality traits, a friendly

or humorous demeanour, a tone of voice that reassures rather than troubles, the confidence to attempt articulation in the first place.

The necessity of the development of a *τέχνη* of discursive resistance in the form of the disqualification of the speaking subject on the axis of the disciplinary provides, quite fascinatingly, another opportunity for disqualification. The fact that some students are good at resisting, denying, evading, attenuating, modifying, blocking or refusing introduces a principle of inequality into the articulation of the disciplinary assemblage. It allows a student to disqualify on the grounds of unfairness or inconsistency. ‘You don’t treat her like that’ ‘Why do I have a detention when she gets to finish the work at home?’ Etcetera. This disqualification goes beyond the immediate—that this particular intervention is unfair—and casts doubt on the credibility of the institution as such. It is a disqualification of the speaking subject that flips over to a disqualification of the comparative instance. The school is not fair, therefore I need not adopt the requirements of its culture. Given that it treats students unfairly, that some can receive less of a response by manipulating the system, its credibility as an institution is lost. As a representative of an illegitimate institution, you are disqualified as a speaking subject.

Resistance and (Re)Production

There is a more troubling aspect to discursive resistance. The student liberates themselves, blocks, denies, evades, even frees, but from what and at what cost? We can make here an analytical distinction between three kinds of the disqualification of the speaking subject. There are those disqualifications that are in a sense internal to the

culture of the school, that rely upon a knowledge of school culture, its distribution of powers, its rules, subjectivities and exceptions. But there are also those which rely on exterior knowledges, national hierarchies, conventional regimes of status and authority. The disqualification of the ignorant supply teacher would be an example of disqualification relying on internal knowledges. The disqualification of any agent on the grounds of a lack of pedagogic (you're not a teacher), medical (you're not a doctor), professional (you don't know the requirements of that career or future) or legal (what you are trying to do is against the law), knowledge, power, status, or authority, would be an example of disqualification relying on external knowledges. Finally, there are those disqualifications which rely upon enveloping elements that in a sense pass through and enshroud the school such as ethics of fairness, consistency, and good humour.

The risk or cost, then, is not simply failure, retaliation, escalation, but production and re-production of socially validated configurations of discursive power. When a student draws upon an external or enveloping feature as a tactical element in the struggle against subjectification, they declare their avowal of the legitimacy of the element, and the structures that act as its support, by means of its instantiation and (re)production in a definite setting. They declare further that their subjectivity is a site where these elements can legitimately take hold and lay claim. To the extent that these same authorities, ethics, values, will go on to dominate them in later life, dominate them in their school life, perhaps dominate them in their social life and family life, the student who instantiates them for a temporary advantage in terms of liberation from an evaluation or disciplinary trajectory at the same time re-enforces their subordination to these same authorities, ethics, or values elsewhere.

We remarked on the *τέχνη* of discursive resistance, the art of not being governed, of resisting forms of classification and disciplinary trajectories. This *τέχνη*, or art, that conditions the possibility of disqualification, straddles this internal-external boundary. On the one hand, the *tekhne* itself is immanent to school culture, it relies upon a knowledge of its areas, practitioners, spaces, trajectories, pathways, and domains, but it crosses through the culture that envelops it in two ways. Firstly, in the sense that the characteristics that are valued in the school are also valued more broadly. There is not some radical disjuncture between what is valorised in the school and what is valorised beyond its gates: A willingness to play the game, to subordinate oneself to rules, to toe a line between defiance and respect, to engage with humour and in good faith. Secondly, in the sense that the disqualification is based on socially valid ethics such as consistency or fairness.

What is interesting is that this is remarked upon and accepted by members of staff. When a student points out a discrepancy in the administration of a disciplinary evaluation, instance, or trajectory, 'but Miss you're not being consistent!' they reply with a smile 'Ah, but they know how to play the game.' 'they know when to keep their mouths shut.' 'They know how to say it the right way.' Etcetera. The student here attempts to disqualify a disciplinary trajectory on the grounds that it is unfair or inconsistent. In this way they introduce a new element into the game of disqualification, this being an enveloping element which is neither pedagogic, legal, medical or professional, but ethical.

This move is evaded by the agents of the school by a modification of the enveloping element in the immanence of a school culture and its ordinary-everyday practice.

Consistency or fairness is given a different content. Where the student tries to deploy consistency or fairness in the sense of sameness or mimesis, the teacher overturns this by deploying consistency or fairness in the sense reciprocity, exchange. To each their due rather than to each the same.

A primary risk or danger to the student in the articulation of discourses which draw upon an exterior authority or an enveloping ethic, then, is the risk of reversal. In the case of law, the student may be mistaken in their understanding, or the same rule you draw upon now may be used to lock in a disciplinary trajectory at another time. In the case of the medical, the doctor or nurse that confirms your illness now might deny your illness at another. In the case of the pedagogic, a TA or supply teacher might call upon an agent with the power to administer the forbidden trajectory in spite of your disqualification, as teachers and pastoral agents are more than happy to act in solidarity as a conduit, extension and intensifier of the power of those whose formal or informal status denies them it. In the case of the professional, the denial of a statement mimetic in respect of an authorised standpoint might free you from its implications in this moment, but when someone with that authority comes in you are compelled by your own deployment to accept them. In the case of the ethical, the articulation of conditions of consistency, fairness or equality can be turned around to say: 'You are not consistent in your behaviour or performance.' 'Is it fair that you take away other students learning time by disrupting the class?' 'Do we give time equally to other students who get on with their work as we do to you who cause us all these problems?' In each case, drawing upon an external order or enveloping element can result in a reversal and a double lock. Rather than being compelled solely by the school, the student is now situated at the intersection of two complementary regimes of power.

We can make here an important modification to Foucault's (1978) thesis on the reversibility of power. Reversal is not a privilege evenly distributed across the field of forces. Reversal is the preserve of the powerful. While a student may resist, attenuate, block, or even reconfigure relationships of power, reversal is rarely available to them. One might say, in a limited sense, that the ability to utilise the law that constitutes the possibility of school discipline to limit it is a reversal, but this is a reversal only in a limited sense. They might use that law to resist this one application, but the broader structure not only prevails but is re-affirmed. True reversal would be the deployment of the law that constitutes the institution to overturn the institution as such, but this never happens. The only reversal as such that occurs is the one discussed where a teacher or agent is in error, where their very attempt to articulate a disciplinary trajectory results in their total disqualification as an effective agent. In drawing upon external knowledges or enveloping elements for these purposes, students lend socially valid agents of authority with the privilege of reversal, of deploying those same knowledges to subject them further, whilst at the same time denying their right to overturn the institution as such, given that the knowledges that they deploy are constitutive of its very possibility.

The second danger, closely linked to the first, and which is in fact an inevitability, is the re-enforcement of regimes of external power, conventional hierarchies, socially valid arrangements of status and authority. Disqualifications that draw upon an exterior order, that shift the terrain of struggle from the immanent culture of the school to a regime that in a sense envelops it, flows through it, sets its limits and dimensions, or even constitute it as such, reproduces the effective powers of these regimes. The disqualifications coincide with or are coterminous with the dimensions and morphology of socially validated authority. In articulating a superiority of a structure outside of the

school in order to limit an occurrence within it, the structure is instantiated and re-affirmed, re-enforced and reproduced.

Resistance to the immanent order of the school, then, is at the cost of the reproduction of configurations of discursive power elsewhere. It effectively extends their field of application into the school, thus providing a new modality of domination. Rather than simply evading power through discourse there is a twofold or dual aspect of attenuation-intensification, negation-reproduction. Conventional elements of power and the configurations that act as their support and foundation are reproduced through the strategic deployment of tactical elements in the struggle against subjectification.

Discursive resistance that draws upon conventional orders, therefore, is always and at the same time a subordination.

We can reflect here on the differentiation made earlier between *the rarefaction of the speaking subject* and *the disqualification of the speaking subject*. In rarefaction, the articulation of configurations of discursive restraint is constitutive of a positivity that allows for the circulation of discourse and the fixing or temporary stabilisation of relations of power. In disqualification, the appropriation and deployment of discourses already fixed, stabilised, or at least possessing a quality that is effective on the ground level, block immanent relations of power only to reproduce and reaffirm them elsewhere.

This discussion was much longer than the one that will follow considering the second, third, and fourth forms of disqualification. The reason for this is relatively simple. The disqualification of the speaking subject can latch onto any of the myriad elements of

school culture that are constitutive of the disciplinary assemblage. More than this, it can be directed at the complex ways in which these elements cut across one another; modify, negate, or transform one another. Each element, each juncture, requires a form of disqualification that is strategically positioned in respect of it. There is a strict reciprocity, a strict equivalence, between measure and counter-measure, thrust and parry, bob and weave, call and response. In the disqualification of the comparative instance, the disqualification of the activity as such, and the temporal disqualification of the interpersonal relationship, the scope for disqualification is much narrower, drawing on broader elements that are fewer in number. The disqualifications that follow also fall primarily on the evaluative or categorical axis. They cannot be used, at least in immediacy, to block, slow down, refuse, or evade a disciplinary trajectory, but are deployed to prevent the internalisation of a particular value, to prevent the turning of an evaluation into an active principle for the governance of conduct.

The Disqualification of the Comparative Instance

The disqualification of the comparative instance is a form of disqualification that maintains the value of the activity, subject, endeavour, ethic, or morality, whilst disqualifying the current instance of its materialisation as one that counts, one that matters. Let us turn firstly to see how this kind of disqualification works in the classroom.

Earlier, we saw that during interactions with tutors or teachers where report cards are assessed and answers sought for the profile of marks, a mark can be disqualified by

noting that the teacher failed to fulfil their role in such a way that the instance in question can be counted as a meaningful instance of learning. The mark is disqualified inasmuch as the agent who recorded it is disqualified. In the disqualification of the comparative instant, we see the same scenario of an assessment of a profile of grades, and a similar disqualification of those grades as meaningful or representative, but along a different plane. It is not: this teacher did not prepare me properly so the grade does not count; but, this test is not the final test and so does not matter. I did not take this test seriously because it does not count towards my final grade. This test is not reflective of me because I was not thoroughly committed to the fulfilment of its requirements. The test did not take hold of me in my being and so the measure cannot be considered to take hold of me in my being. It does not meet the necessary and sufficient conditions of the test, that it matters; that it is more than an internal document of assessment; that due to something being at stake I prepared for it; that due to my preparedness I submitted to it; that my thoroughgoing submission and diligent preparation makes the examination score a valid measure of my ability. The result is not identical or conterminous with what it seeks to measure. I am other to your signification.

As well as disqualifying assessments made at the end of a period of learning, a student may also disqualify aspects of the process of learning. If a teacher attempts to make an evaluation of a student based on their commitment to a task in class, the student might disqualify this by saying, 'it's just a stupid exercise,' 'it's just a game,' 'it doesn't matter,' 'what's the point?' 'It's just homework.' We saw earlier that a remarkable consequence of the performance culture of schools is an almost total focus on the examination and the assessment. All that falls outside of its narrow confines is banished from the school. This also functions by disqualification of comparative instant. This won't be on the examination, it doesn't matter, it doesn't count.

This can apply to the form or structure of learning as well as its contents. A student might attempt to disqualify attempts to evaluate them, admonish them, classify or categorise them, on the grounds of temporality. That it is the start or end of the lesson. That it is the start or the end of the day. That it is the start or the end of term. That examinations are this far away and I have the time to “turn things around”. I need not prestate to you the behavioural signs of attentiveness, acquiescence and docility because the moment in which you demand them does not count, does not matter. These signs cannot take hold of me in my being as an evaluation of my character because they are confined temporally to moments, to edges of moments, to the transitional periods between instants, that do not count, don’t matter.

The next form of disqualification of the comparative instant is premised on forms of behaviour which are not localised by class, subject, form, year, etcetera, but by the quality of a relationship between two individuals. “You’re good for me, why not for him?” “You do well in my class, why not hers?” Of course, any of the tactics for comparative disqualification can be deployed here. It could be because that subject does not matter, because your college does not require it, because the examination is easy. But what I would like to focus on here, are those discourses which directly implicate the personal qualities of an other. “Because you are funny/kind/respectful/understanding/caring etcetera” and they are not. Exterior social values such as reciprocity and respect believed to govern assessments of the value of interpersonal relationships are deployed in order to disqualify an instance which threatens a particular status or positioning.

There are also tactical reasons for this kind of disqualification which provide a conduit to the disciplinary. To say that you are x and he is y is a form of flattery; it is a raising up of one and a lowering down of another. A child may articulate this disqualification for reasons of allegiance. They may feel that this articulation of difference in behaviour provides an opportunity to begin, resume, or intensify the formation of an interpersonal relationship with an agent who has the power to modify the administration of the disciplinary assemblage, to shield them from aspects of it, to protect them from certain trajectories or destinations.

The disqualification of the comparative instant, therefore, has only one link to the disciplinary, and that is through the potential to flatter an agent who might protect, shield, aid you later in your school life. Even this is a kind of long term game, it cannot in the instant of its articulation prevent a trajectory, prevent activation, prevent a punishment. It falls primarily into the domain of the evaluative or the categorical: of assessments of an individual or their behaviour against a normative horizon of what it is supposed to be, or of the generalising of an assessment or evaluation from a particular instance that at once localises and contains it to the plane of identity understood here as the continuity of an assessment or evaluation throughout different locales or instances.

The disqualification of the comparative instance on the grounds of interpersonal qualities also requires a materialisation within the school of social ethics found on the outside. While few would argue that mutual respect is an important value, a value such as consistency is much more problematic. The very grammar, or set of uses, of *consistency*, is most often disciplinary, accusatory or exhortative. Its positive form: that/this/it/he/she/they is or are consistent is much rarer than its negative form:

that/this/it/he/she/they is or are inconsistent. It is often articulated as a demand: that we need consistency; or as an accusation: that you are inconsistent. Such is the absurdity and generality of this value that one can prefer consistent bastards over the inconsistently good without contradiction. There is an ordinary-everyday expression of this, a testament to its broad acceptance: “at least we know where we stand”.

Consistency is a value eminently related to power, control, order and domination. To make administrable, to make measurable, to make comparable, to make possible the construction of a field of visibility, it is necessary in the first instance to make regular, to make consistent. Many of the staff in the school despise the current educational field, but many, especially those in positions of management or leadership, would prefer for this torrid configuration to continue than have to face any more change. They would rather labour within a configuration that is absurd; contradictory; without meaning, aim or purpose; which is abusive; violent; conservative; limiting; demanding; and exhausting; than change it for the better. As long as it is consistently absurd; regularly contradictory; unproblematically without meaning, aim or purpose; habitually abusive, violent and conservative; predictably demanding and exhausting. They are more angry when an unfair rule is applied inconsistently than the existence of the unfair rule itself.

These idiocies stem from an anterior subordination to the ethic of consistency. The analytic point here is the re-affirmation and reproduction of elements of the social in a tactical struggle against subjectification. The appropriation and deployment of the accusation of inconsistency might free them from this subjection in this moment, from this evaluation in this instance, but it also dominates them, both currently inasmuch as it is a foundational ideological ethic that structures the entirety of the modern school, but

also in the future, whether they lack the imagination to be inconsistent on the basis of its internalisation or they want to change something but cannot because of social admonition on the grounds they are inconsistent.

Similarly to the disqualification of the speaking subject, then, the disqualification of the comparative instant draws upon and deploys conventional hierarchies of social validity. It does this, for example, in the case of the subject or the discipline. Disqualifying media as a subject in which one should behave or pay attention or otherwise commit oneself reinforces its status as a subsidiary or subordinate discipline, unworthy of endeavour inasmuch as it is disrespected by employers, universities, the media, and other agents of social stratification. More so than disqualification on the grounds of pedagogical, medical, professional or legal authority, this is a disqualification that thoroughly subordinates students in the then and thereafter. Given that over 50% of students at the school will fail to get even a pass in English and Maths (and of what worth is a C today?), and given that a large proportion of poorly performing students take subjects such as media. Deployment of conventional hierarchies of status for the purposes of evasion results in their affirmation and reproduction. The evasion of a compulsion in this moment reaffirms and (re)produces compulsion elsewhere.

The disqualification of the subject or discipline on the grounds that it is disrespected by holders of socially valid authority reaffirms by proxy and as it were vicariously the notion that education is about qualifications, credentials, and social advancement understood in terms of monetary remuneration and conventional matrices of status and regard, as opposed to, for instance, the refinement of the human soul, the intensification of reason, or the cultivation of liberty. It also reinforces an instrumental view of

education in which learning is reduced into one elephantine in-order-to. You have to adopt the right attitude and demeanour as you submit yourself to the demands and impositions of the modern school. Why? Because this will improve your academic performance. But why would I want to improve my academic performance? Because better academic performance now means better grades later. But why would I want better grades? Because better grades will get you into a better college. But why would I want to get into a better college? Because getting into a better college will get you into a better university or get you onto a vocational training course or apprenticeship. But why would I want to go to university, to a training course, or enrol onto an apprenticeship? ... What do you mean?!?!? You want a job don't you?!?!

It was the argument of the first section of this thesis that the instrumentalisation of education as a pathway to meaningless employment, the transformation of education into an elephantine t in-order-to, has devoured and digested the sense of education as the verdant soil for a cultured, critical, engaged and able-active demos. Whatever is going on in the school, learning, growth, development, and cultivation are not.

In disqualifying the requirements of commitment, diligence, dedication, etc, because the activity to which they apply will not be on the examination, the students reaffirm the notion that education is all about examinations; is all about credentials; is about individuals finding the least-worst position on the socio-economic hierarchy; is *not* about reason; is *not* about growth; is *not* about equality, justice, liberty or freedom. The disqualification of the comparative instance on the grounds that it will not be examined re-affirms all of the degeneracies that stem from the idea that education is about credentials, and all the elements that act as this idea's support.

The disqualification of the non-examined is especially pernicious in the context of this school, given that it is precisely the examination that will legitimate the students' subordinate status later in life and given that it is precisely by articulating attainment, achievement and social worth outside of the examination, or by denying the validity of the examination as a meaningful measure of social worth, personal capability and excellence (disavowing), that a student might hope to obtain advantage or advancement correspondent with their interests.

The Disqualification of the Activity As Such

The disqualification of the activity as such is that form of disqualification that denies any value, meaning or purpose to Education *überhaupt*. It is a disqualification that takes the form of 'It doesn't matter, it's just school,' 'I don't care what you have to say, you're just a teacher.' It is generally a kind of disqualification articulated by the most truculent, the most resistant, the most obstinate, the poorest performers, the least integrated into school culture. It is the go to of those who feel they have nothing to gain and little to lose; who disrupt, who deny, who subvert, who satirise, parody and turn into farce, who disqualify at every possible opportunity. Free me from this burden. Free me from this routine. Free me from this prison. Free me from this punishment. Anything at all to be free from this unbearable institution. Anything at all to be free from these idiotic constraints. Anything at all to be free from these fools who think they can tell me who I am and what I can be.

Like the disqualification of the comparative instance, the disqualification of the activity as such is not a form of disqualification likely to evade, attenuate, or otherwise lessen in severity the administration of a disciplinary intervention such as a punishment or evaluation, nor can it avoid one's insertion onto a disciplinary trajectory. If anything, this form of disqualification ramps up the intensity of the disciplinary assemblage, increases the level of mortification in a punishment, skips steps not to lessen but to augment the severity of a disciplinary trajectory. The disqualification of the activity as such is another of those disqualifications that operates primarily on the plane of self-conception and status. It denies the authority of the school to make assessments and evaluations of personality, worth, value, character, etcetera, in the same breath as it denies their fixing and taking hold of an individual in their subjectivity. I need not pay attention to your admonitions, I need not listen to your words and transform them into an active principle for the government of my conduct. You are the representative of an institution illegitimate by default.

The disqualification of the activity as such is rarer than *the disqualification of the comparative instance* and rarer still than *the disqualification of the speaking subject*. There are two reasons for this, the first being the scale and number of the kinds of activity it can disqualify, and the second being its radically uneven distribution within the student body —amongst certain groups of students it is almost non-existent, whilst amongst others it is almost total. Let us consider the first reason.

All classroom activities are in a sense instances of the broader activity of education or learning. Completing tasks, solving puzzles, reading out loud, writing answers, watching videos, listening to the teacher... Each one is a genus of the species *education*

or *learning*. To reject the activity as such is not to reject one component of your education or learning, but the activity writ large. It is not to reject this school, but The School. It is not to reject this particular instance of education, but Education. The disqualification of the activity as such, therefore, is a disqualification of the value or worth of every single activity that forms part of the academic-behavioural culture of the school or is a disqualification of the academic-behavioural aspect of any activity with residual qualities, which usually occurs in a subject with a creative aspect such as media or music, or a subject such as PE that has activities and games with *jouissance* outside of their delineation into levels of assessment.

In a school culture that valued knowledge for itself, that valued academic endeavour and exploration outside of the constraints of the examination, that valued the development of what the government calls “soft skills” such as critical thinking, deductive reasoning, memory, public speaking, self-confidence, creativity, etcetera, it might be possible to disqualify the examination without disqualifying the activity of learning as such. One might say in a different context: I enjoy reading literature; or I value the open and critical debates we hold concerning the issues of the day; or I recognise the importance of being able to do sums in my head; but I am frustrated that these activities are limited in number or affected in character by the requirements of the examination. In the context of a school totalised by the performance principle however, there is no gap between the denial of the examination and the denial of education. Education simply is learning things that you need to pass an exam. School is assessment. There is no outside.

The second reason is its radically uneven distribution amongst the student body. Those who disqualify the activity of education or learning as such are generally those with little to gain and nothing to lose, those whose destiny has always been to fail, or those who have an out or a future that does not depend upon the attainment grades. They might have a family business to inherit, a professional contract at a football club, or a wealthy husband lined up in an arranged marriage. More broadly, they might have, or believe they have, skills, abilities, capabilities, qualities, that will ensure a position in society irrespective of what the school says about them. On the other side, there are those who, feeling they have no place in society, feeling they have no future, feeling they have no prospects, reject the institution that legitimates the stratification from which they suffer. It is a consistent disqualification, a sustained refusal, and leads quickly to the road of exclusion.

The Temporal Disqualification of the Interpersonal Relationship

The temporal disqualification of the interpersonal relationship is the rarest form of disqualification. Its parameters were detailed fairly exhaustively in the example given at the start of the chapter. It is more often found inversely, with the teacher threatening to disqualify their interpersonal relationship with a student unless their behaviour or attitude changes. These two aspects are interlinked. It is because an interpersonal relationship with a disciplinary or pedagogic agent outside of a strictly professional relationship can yield significant benefits for the student that it rarely pays off to risk its annulment. It is usually found inversely because the benefits are less for the teacher

than they are for the student. These kinds of relationship are for most teachers the oxygen that aerates the swamp of contemporary schooling. But a teacher will rarely have just one, and though it might be emotionally painful to sever a special relationship with a student it will not result in a general reduction of their status, it will not effect their career or their professional development, it will not levy upon them requirements, constraints or mortifications more substantial than if the relationship was maintained.

It is also a difficult form of exchange to gain witness to. Given its status as a terminus point or last resort, its instances of manifestation are necessarily limited. It is also a more private kind of interaction. It is private in the sense that, though these relationships are often widely known, remarked upon and discussed, most teachers try not to disclose them in the public fulfilment of their role. They occur in those one on performance meetings, in words of consolation or advice at the end of a lesson, in the remarks made in a book. Their visibility is often cumulative. It is having seen a number of interactions that one can deduce a special relationship between a teacher and a student. It is also private in the sense that the disqualification carries with it a humiliation, inasmuch as it is a direct attempt to reorganise relationships of power through discourse, a material lowering of the status of the teacher, an inversion of a relationship of power in which the student can dominate. To disqualify a special relationship with a teacher publicly would be to humiliate them publicly. The reaction would in all likelihood be extreme. As well as posing the risk of the loss of significant benefits, therefore, it also carries a radical risk of escalation.

Remarks on Discursive Compulsion

Having detailed the Gordian web of possibilities for discursive disqualification that exist in the school, one might reasonably ask, why do students bother? Why do they feel this need to disqualify? In the case of a disciplinary imposition or trajectory, this is obvious, they disqualify to avoid it. But what about the cases where the disqualification is not the avoidance of a mortification but rather the avoidance of the fixing of a particular kind of status, the refusal to internalise an admonition or rebuke and transform it into an active principle for the government of conduct? Why cannot a student say simply: 'So what?' ... 'Yes I am inconsistent.' 'Yes I am lazy.' 'So what?' 'I know my examinations are coming soon. I don't give a fuck.' We can ask further, why do they say anything at all? And further again: Why do they feel the need to counter an utterance with one that denies it? Why do the students not simply nod their heads, relay the teachers' evaluation back to them, and continue as they would have done in any case. There are students who behave in this way, but they are rare. It as if the utterance itself demands response. As if the student is compelled by the articulation of an appellation to deny it. We touch here upon one of the strangest and most ineffable characteristics of the utterance: it's quality as lock and compulsion.

Let us consider this phenomenon in the broader domain of the social with three examples. Firstly, superstition. There is a widely held superstition that bringing something into speech carries a risk of bringing something into being as a consequence. The practice of touching wood exemplifies this par excellence. 'I've been OK this year, touch wood.' The fear is, by instantiating into speech their health, they risk instantiating into being their illness. Secondly, the case of being found wrong, of stating principles

and acting against them, of avowing a truth that is found to be erroneous. To state that we must proceed in this way and then to proceed in another brings peels of laughter, flushes of embarrassment, hilarity, and a radical lowering of status. It is as if by instantiating something into speech one is then bound by it, subordinated by it. The utterance locks in a course of action the divergence from which results in a radical loss of status. Thirdly, and in a sense related to the second, there is the media's fascination with the political spectacle of the U turn. This can never be evaded through a substantive argument such as, I spoke to people who knew more about it, I learnt more, I came to different conclusions on the basis of better information and/or a more relevant theory of the significance of the information. The U turn itself, the reversal of the terms in a discourse, the betrayal of a previous utterance, is greeted with the most uproarious rebuke. The utterance compels. Its betrayal reduces. Thus, we see in the school, every day, every hour, discursive resistance.

Much has been said in this thesis about the incorrigible, the refuseniks, those with little to gain and nothing to lose in the game of attachment and resistance. There is only one destination for them, and that of course is exclusion, the third and final prong of the disciplinary triumvirate, where we rotate our axis horizontal once again, and proceed, like the crayfish, sideways.

Sacrifice, The Gift and (il)Legal

Exclusion



“Hear me, Phaeacian leaders, lords and nobles.
This stranger seems extremely wise to me.
So let us give him gifts, as hosts should do
to guests in friendship. Twelve lords rule our people,
with me as thirteenth lord. Let us each bring
a pound of precious gold and laundered clothes,
a tunic and a cloak. Then pile them up,
and let our guest take all these gifts, and go
to dinner with them, happy in his heart”

Homer – The Odyssey 720BC [2015]

The School Thus Told

If the school is that institution of transparency and obscurity which seeks to bind us to regime of truth, fix us to a an orderly conduct, organise us according to a hierarchical distribution, and behold us to definite arrangements of knowledge and power —so that it might subjectify the subject— then the school will be a wild profusion of structures, processes, technologies, strategies, and tactics, which try to take hold of us in our subjectivity: to train us and correct us such that, instantiated and materialised within us, are all of those attitudes, demeanours, knowledges and behaviours that make a society, in and through us, what it is.

We saw in the preceding two sections of this thesis two groupings of the modalities and mechanisms that seek to produce and maintain these attachments. The first grouping was in the form of a managerial system of accountability and assessment that seeks to incentivise the transmission of a dead knowledge through the externalisation of competitive play; to totalise all available time and space such that the possibility of an outside is eliminated; and to seduce its audience with the dizzy interplay of elliptical signs... Always just before us, yet always so far away.

This study of our shadows was followed by an analysis of the second grouping: what one might normally understand to be the disciplinary system proper, or that vast assemblage of spaces, flows, actors, objects, ideas, beliefs, values, forms of talk, kinds of exhortation, etcetera, that kicks in where the system of signs and seduction fails. Here, we saw a disciplinary system that identifies and marks students, scrutinises them with assessment and evaluation, links them up with programmes of reform or correction, subjects them to punishment and humiliation, isolates them and removes them from circulation, before

finally placing them in a parallel circuit of monitoring and evaluation. In the face of an overbearing cult of assessment that seems to know no limits the disciplinary system proper is secondary not only in the sense of responding to failure, but secondary in the sense of ceasing to be systematic. We are left with remnants picked up and deployed by teachers as if at random.

But, as we saw, this system will also fail to hold onto its charges, will be incessantly undermined, evaded, blocked, or overthrown, and more than this, will be the subject of an unremitting critique, resistance, mockery, and subversion. This failure and resistance, it was argued, cannot be conceptualised as a kind of accident: the unfortunate outcome of a poorly devised programme or a badly administered intervention. Failure and resistance are internal to the system's very functioning. The entropic principle at the heart of the disciplinary triumvirate is such that the faster that the system moves towards unity, coherence and totalisation, the faster it hurtles at the same time towards dissolution into chaos and uselessness.

The coming together of these two trajectories, on the one hand, of the school that seeks to subjectify the subject, and on the other, of the school as beset by constant failure, is the convergent ground for the necessity of the final aspect of the disciplinary triumvirate: the exclusion, or the removal of students deemed too recalcitrant for institutional assimilation.

In talking about exclusion at the level of mechanism, from the perspective of attachment, on the plane of micro-process, it is necessary, in the first instance, to consider the technology by means of which the exclusion is achieved from the opposite direction, as a means of binding, fixing, holding fast, viz. as a technology of inclusion. In an amusing piece of irony, the logic of the gift so essential for the sacrifice of the student in the ritual of exclusion is at the same

time the most essential and pervasive mechanism of subjectification in the game of attachment. The hand that gives, the hand that takes away.

First, then, an analysis of the Aztec sacrifice and the logic of the gift that runs through it. Second, an exposition of Mauss' infamous essay *The Gift* (ref). Third, an account of the elaboration of gift logics in the school, first for solidarity, second for competitive expenditure, and thirdly, in exclusion. Finally, a number of case studies, each of them representing a type or kind of exclusion that provides a privileged moment for the understanding of the practice more broadly.

The General History of the Things of the New Spain

The *General History of the Things of the New Spain* is an ethnographic study of the Mesoamerican Aztecs written by a Spanish missionary and published in 1569. It was acquired by the Medici in 1588 and is better known as the *Florentine Codex*. Within it, Franciscan Friar Bernadino de Sahagun provides us with the following account of Aztec ceremony, which I have edited for style and coherence.

'The first month of the year was called ... Atl Caualo ..., this month began on the second day of February. On the first day of this month, they celebrated a feast in honour – according to some – of the Tlaloc gods, whom they held to be gods of rain.

In this month they slew many children; they sacrificed them in many places upon mountain tops, tearing from them their hearts, in honour of the gods of water, so that they might give them rain.

The children who they slew [were] decked in rich [and varicoloured] finery' (Book 6: 1-2), with vestments set with pearls, head bands crammed with precious feathers, necklaces, bracelets, and faces painted in dark green, black stripe, chili red, light blue, or white liquid rubber.

'They all went honoured; they were ornamented with all the valuable things which went with them' (Book 7: 44). 'And they [were] adorned with flowers. And they were carried in litters on [warriors'] shoulders. And priests proceeded them playing musical instruments, dancing before them.

'They were sought everywhere; they were paid for. It was said: "They are indeed the most precious debt payments. [The Tlalocs] gladly receive them; they want them. Thus they are well content; thus there is indeed contentment." Thus with them the rains were sought, rain was asked' (Book 7: 42-43).

'And if the children went crying, if their tears kept flowing, if their tears kept falling, it was said, it was stated: "It will surely rain." Their tears signified rain, therefore one's heart was at rest' (Book 7: 44). 'Those who carried them rejoiced, for they took it as an omen that they would have much rain that year' (Book 6: 2) and they said 'verily already the rain will set in; verily we shall be rained on' (Book 7: 44).

‘There was much compassion. They made one weep; they loosed one’s weeping; they made one sad for them; there was sighing for them’ (Book 7: 44).

‘The second month they named Tlacaxipeualiztli. On the first day of this month they celebrated a feast in honour of the god called Totec ... where they slew many slaves and captives.

When the master of the captives took their slaves to the temple where they were to slay them, they took them by the hair’ (Book 6: 3) and ‘when some captive lost his strength, fainted..., went continually throwing himself on the ground, they just dragged him.

But when one made an effort, he did not act like a woman; he became strong like a man, he bore himself like a man, he went speaking like a man, he went exerting himself, he went strong of heart, he went shouting. He did not go dormant, he did not go spiritless, he went exalting his city.

He went with firm heart; he went saying: “Already here I go: You will speak of me there in my homeland!”

And this being so they were made to arrive at the top of the pyramid of the sanctuary of Uitzilipochtli’ (Book 7: 48).

‘Having brought [him] to the sacrificial stone ... they threw [him] upon it, on [his] back, and five or six priests seized [him], two by the legs, two by the arms, and one by the head; and

then came the priest who was to kill him. And he struck him with an [obsidian] knife held in both hands, and made in the manner of a large lance head, between the breasts. And into the gash which he made, he thrust his hand and tore from the victim his heart; and then offered it to the sun' (Book 6: 3). 'They offered it to him, they nourished him' (Book 7: 48).

'After having their hearts torn from them and [having] poured their blood into a gourd vessel which the master of the slain man received [and drank] ... they started the body rolling down the pyramid steps' (Book 6: 3), and 'they bounced them down, [and] they came breaking to pieces, [and] they came headfirst, [and] they came turning over and over' (Book 7: 48).

'The body came to rest upon a small square below. There, some old men of [the Calpulli] ... laid hold of it and carried it to their calpulco ... in order to eat it' (Book 6: 3). 'There they portioned him out, they cut him to pieces; they distributed him. First they made an offer of one of his thighs to Moctezuma. They set forth forth to take it to him.

And as for the captor, they applied the down of birds to his head and gave him gifts. And he gathered together his blood relatives; the captor assembled them in order to go eat at his home.

There they each made offerings of one bowl of stew of dried maize ... They gave it to each one, on each went a piece of the flesh of the captive.

They named the captor, "Sun," "Chalk," "Feather," because he was one whitened with chalk, decked with feathers.

The captor's being pasted with feathers was done because he had not died there in war or else [because] he would yet go to die, would go to pay his debt, in war, or by sacrifice. Hence his blood relations greeted him with tears; they encouraged him' (Book 7: 49).

Sacrifice Amongst the Aztecs

These sacrifices would continue one after another in all of the festivals in all of the sixteen months of the Aztec year. Children, as we saw, were not spared, and neither were women, though they were slain in far fewer number, and had the good fortune, or privilege, of being beheaded before their hearts were torn from their breasts and presented still beating to the radiant sun.

The dead would be flayed and priests would cloth themselves in their bloody skin. Immolation was common. When men were not simply burnt in a great fire or hung like suckling pigs over white hot coals they would be lowered into a furnace and then pulled out by a hook before being thrown onto the executioner's block, writhing, still with breath, ready for the priests who were to come and tear from them their hearts. Countless sacrifices were made. Some historians suggest a figure of 20,000 per year.

It would be a mistake, then, to imagine the sacrifice as a kind of limited, episodic, ancillary or adjunctive feature of Aztec society; as a periodic celebration of all that is cruel, whose only explanation is an ancient era of cruelty and barbarism. The sacrifice was a continuous injunction, an unremitting imperative, and a desperate need.

The Aztecs were not a society of conquest but a society of sacrifice. More, they were a society who engaged in conquest in order that they might sacrifice. It was the organising principle of their civilisation, a total social institution. All structure, all process, all rank, status, or endeavour; can be explained through an analysis of its contours.

But what, we might ask, was the reason for this institution? What desperate need did it answer? What essential purpose did it fulfil? What could cause a great and noble people, whose society exhibited a richness and sophistication far exceeding our own, to destroy all of that which they had gone to such lengths to create or acquire? A clue is given in a passage of the *Codex* where Sahagun describes the behaviour that would surround a solar eclipse.

‘When an [eclipse of the sun] came to pass, he turned red; he became restless and troubled. He faltered and became very yellow. Then there were a tumult and disorder. All were disquieted, unnerved, frightened. There was weeping. The common folk raised a cry, lifting their voices, making a great din, calling out, shrieking. There was shouting everywhere. People of light complexion were slain [as sacrifices]; captives were killed. All offered their blood ... And in all the temples there was the singing of fitting chants; there was uproar; there were war cries. It was thus said “If the eclipse of the sun is complete it will be dark forever! The demons of darkness will come down; they will eat men!” ‘ (Book 2: 1-2).

We find a further clue in book 6 of the *Codex*, where Sahugan recounts a prayer uttered to the god of the sun by the mother as part of the ritual that accompanied the cutting of the baby’s umbilical cord.

'In truth you [the Sun, our God] are not wrong to want [our son's] to die in battle, for you did not send them into this world for any other purpose than to serve as food for the sun and the earth, with their blood and flesh.

My precious son, my youngest one, behold the doctrine, the example which thy mother, thy father ... have established. I take, I cut the umbilical cord here from thy side, from thy middle. Heed, hearken: thy home is not here, for thou art an eagle; thou art an ocelot; thou art a roseate spoonbill; thou art a troupial. Here is only the place of thy rest. Thou hast only been hatched here, thou hast only come, arrived. Here is only thy cradle, thy cradle blanket, the resting place of thy head. Only thy place of arrival. War is thy desert. Thy task. Thou shalt give drink, food, nourishment, food to the sun, the lord of the earth.' (171).

The Aztecs deepest fear was that the sun would go dark because it had not been nourished by the blood of the earth. The Aztecs were the guardians of the light of the sun. Ever more must be slain lest it ceases its shining.

The laboured light of the sun was the inauguration of a debt relationship: a debt that had to be repaid. The cycle of conquest and sacrifice characteristic of the Aztecs was their attempt to repay this debt, but more than a simple attempt to settle one's account, the sacrifice was an attempt to integrate the sun into the intimacy of a circular exchange, not merely to repay the debt that was owed, but to oblige the sun in turn to reciprocate, to oblige the sun, through his acceptance of their precious gifts, to keep shining and to never falter such that the earth would be left in darkness and demons would come to feast on the bodies of men.

Now, perhaps, we think that we have left this all behind: that our society bears no traces of this most barbaric of religious rites; that this archaic, primordial, irrational and primitive

culture of sacrifice, and the logic of the gift that runs through it, is the stuff of a past best forgotten. Perhaps what most brutalises our sympathy is the sense that the Aztec sacrifice was all for nothing, that it was an error of perspective, that unlike the orgy of destruction of two world wars, the excessive waste and squander of the contemporary food system, or the redundant and overflowing luxury of our system of fashion and dress, the Aztec sacrifice was without any discernible utility, had no greater good, end, or purpose, but was an obvious outcome of erroneous belief, another grotesque consequence of religion and magic best left in the dark ages.

We would then imagine ourselves further as rational, self-motivated and volitional individuals who pursue autochthonous interests in and through contractual exchange that once completed leaves no residue, imposes no further obligation, and results in no consequence except that which is specified in the brutal abstraction of law, as with the obscene legalism of *Fifty Shades of Grey* (James 2012), or the naïve and juridical clamouring for “exhaustive and enthusiastic consent.” That all can be specified, detailed, rendered subject to criteria, and agreed upon in advance. That the world, therefore, is a kind of malleable surface for the elaboration of a rationality-towards-transcendence whose limits emerge only from the internality of its fit and proper functioning.

But I am sure that we are all familiar with the phrase: “to kill someone with kindness”; that we have all felt the pang of anger, disappointment, sadness, or regret, when a loan has not been returned, a favour unreciprocated, a labour unacknowledged, or, if you have had the misfortune of living in Denmark, the blanket horror when a small courtesy such as making way, holding open a door, letting a car turn, or allowing a pedestrian cross, is at first taken, and then, not just ignored, but met with a kind of purposive and thoroughgoing indifference, as if you were a ghost, as if you did not exist.

I am sure that each of us, also, has received a gift that left us feeling, at least, smaller, somehow lowered in status, or obliged. That at least some of you will have vaingloriously fought your way out of Boots Opticians, holding like an amulet to ward off the dangers before you the piece of paper that states quite clearly that your eye test is free.

Then there are the more serious cases: those gifts that render one speechless, trembling, unable to move, dumb. Finally, there are those actions of largesse that in their scale and grandeur annihilate or destroy, that are so impressing in their magnitude you feel as if your very soul is at stake. I am talking of course about Jesus and his cross; although, more prosaically, there is a reason why in films that involve a daring rescue, the hero always gets his girl.

Mauss, in his infamous work *The Gift* (1954), recognises this explicitly:

‘A considerable part of our morality and our lives themselves are still permeated with this same atmosphere of the gift’ (83).

‘Charity is still wounding for those who accept it, and the whole tendency of our morality is to strive to do away with the unconscious and insidious patronage of the rich alms giver’ (83-84).

‘All our social insurance legislation, a piece of state socialism that has been already realised, is inspired by the following principle: the worker has given his time and labour, on the one hand to the collectivity, and on the other hand to his employers ... Those who have

benefited from his services have not discharged their debt to him through the payment of wages. The state itself, representing the community, owes him, as do his employees, together with some assistance from himself, a certain security in life, against unemployment, sickness, old age, and death' (86).

But Mauss goes further when he says: 'Thus we can and must return to archaic society and to elements within it. We shall find in this reasons for life and action that are still prevalent in certain societies, and numerous social classes: the joy of public giving; the pleasure in generous expenditure on the arts, in hospitality, and in the private and public festival. Social security, the solicitude arising of reciprocity and co-operation ... all are of greater value than the mere personal security that the lord afforded his tenant, better than the skimpy life that is given through the daily wages doled out by employees, and even better than the capitalist society – which is only based on a form of credit ... It is even possible to conceive what a society would be like in which such principles were the rule ... In doing so, we shall return, I think, to the enduring basis of law, and to the very principle of normal social life' (88-89).

It will be my intention to show, as a corrective to this overbearing normativity that must meet its limits, that the gift is alive and well, not only in the sweet solicitude of ordinary circuits of reciprocal exchange, not only in the excessive and combative expenditure of the potlatch, but in the micro mechanisms of institutional (re)production, where the gift that cannot be returned becomes an essential element for the forcible removal of students in the form of their permanent exclusion from the school. Symbolic exchange or death.

In doing so, we take heed of the Nietzschean (1887) principle that no social technology is intrinsically good or bad, that any institution can be appropriated, subverted, undermined, redirected, or redeployed, in arenas distinct from its domain of origin, with targets other

than its initial object of application, and with ends far, far away from its original intention. In this sense, this essay is also a subtext on the politics of resistance.

So let us now return to our problem of the gift, and see how the tripartite logic of the gift and its combative form of the potlatch play an essential role firstly, as a modality of attachment concerning the school writ large, secondly, as a combative and competitive form of expenditure, and finally, in the micro-process of ordinary rituals of exclusion.

The Gift

Mauss in his famous account describes the gift as being composed of three obligations: there is the obligation to receive, the obligation to reciprocate, and the obligation to give. It is the continuous fulfilment of these obligations in societies where gift exchange is the central organising principle that results in a 'continuous flow in all directions of presents given, accepted, and reciprocated, obligatorily and out of self interest, by reason of greatness and for services rendered, through challenges and through pledges.'

Roughly and schematically we can say that there are two primary modalities of gift exchange. On the one hand, we have those forms of gift exchange that are mostly concerned with social solidarity, or the making, maintaining, repairing, augmenting, or transforming of social bonds. On the other hand we have the gift exchange of the potlatch. As opposed to being concerned with social solidarity, the potlatch is a gift exchange of rivalry, challenge, or

the attainment of honour, status or rank through excessive expenditure and exuberant squander.

A succinct example of gift exchange geared towards solidarity is found in David Graeber's (2015) book on debt, and concerns a study conducted on the women of the Tiv community in Africa:

'It would be entirely inappropriate to simply accept three eggs from a neighbour and never bring any back. One did not have to bring back three eggs, but one should bring back something of approximately the same value ... It had to be a bit more or less. To bring back nothing at all would be to cast oneself as an exploiter, a parasite. To bring back an exact equivalent would suggest that one no longer wants to have anything to do with one's neighbour. Tiv women, [the anthropologist] learned, might spend a good part of the day walking for miles to distant homelands only to return with a handful of okra or a tiny bit of change, in an endless cycle of gifts in which no one ever handed over the precise value of the last object received and in doing so continually recreated society' (42).

This is an analysis typical of the form of gift exchange geared to social solidarity and reproduction, in which relationships are made and maintained in and through this constant circulation of roughly unequal gifts, in which, more than this, the very basis of relatedness in society, and therefore society itself, is a whole tapestry of gifts given and received, obligations fulfilled and unfulfilled, generosity in its presence remembered and in its absence scorned.

The potlatch is a form of gift exchange perhaps first analysed by Bronislaw Malinowski in his foundational text *Argonauts of the Western Pacific* (1922). In Malinowski's analysis, chiefs

or nobles compete to outdo each other with ever larger forms of competitive squander. In the potlatch, a gift is presented not to enhance or establish solidarity but to humiliate, challenge, and oblige. As Bataille notes, 'the recipient has to erase the humiliation and take up the challenge; he must satisfy the obligation that was contracted by accepting. He can only reply, a short time later, by means of a new potlatch, more generous than the first: he has to pay back with interest' (1989a: 68).

The potlatch is, as Mauss would put it, 'a purely sumptuary destruction of wealth that has been accumulated in order to outdo the rival chief as well as his associates. It appears as a service by the chief on behalf of all of his clan ... But this act of service on the part of the chief takes on an extremely marked, agonistic character. It is essentially usurious and sumptuary. It is a struggle between nobles to establish hierarchy among themselves from which their clan will benefit at a later date' (1954: 8).

A story that we find in *Argonauts of the Western Pacific*, where he talks of *Vilanalya* magic, is instructive:

'This magic is intended to make the food last long. Before the storehouse is filled with yams, the magician places a special kind of heavy stone on the floor, and recites a long, magical spell [and performs a number of other rites] ... All this will make the food plentiful and the supplies last long. But, and this is the important part for us, this magic is conceived to act, not on the food, but on the inhabitants of the village. It makes their appetites poor, it makes them as the natives put it, inclined to eat the wild fruit of the bush, the mango and bread fruit of the village grove, and refuse to eat yams, or at least be satisfied with very little. They will boast that this magic is performed well, half of the yams will rot away in the storehouses and be thrown on the wawa, the rubbish heap at the back of the houses. Here

again we meet the typical idea that the main aim of accumulated food is to keep it exhibited in the yam houses until it rots' (182).

The potlatch, then, involves a destruction of the gift and its redemption from profane relations of utility. The gift is never used but is wasted or squandered. That which is destroyed is always that which is most valuable or symbolically potent for the community. Expenditure characteristic of the potlatch can take the form of straightforward destruction, as with the Trobrianders of Melanesia, who would pile up their yams and then leave them to rot, or as with the Indians of the Northwest Coast, who would set fire to their villages and break their canoes to pieces, or as with the Chukchi of the Siberian Northeast, who would slaughter teams of sled dogs so necessary for their survival; but it can also take the form of an unnecessarily excessive consumption that destroys utility by surpassing it in the form of excess.

We can remind ourselves here of the incredible energy that is spent by all species in sex, in the frantic expenditure that surrounds desire and the orgasm, or in that outburst of energy, even in the simplest of creatures, that is necessary for the transmission of seed (Bataille 1989a). But we can also think of eating until one is sick; of taking so many drugs that one blacks out; of the feeling of shame and dejection that strikes when, returning home from a shopping frenzy, one finds half of the purchases unwanted, ill fitting, or far in excess of what was convenient or necessary. What is crucial is that the ritual expenditure in some way strips the item of its utility, that whatever end or purpose it might serve it denies or surpasses in excess, and that it is concerned, in the end, with the attainment of rank, status, or honour, in such a way that it obliges or compels a response.

Let us turn now to the school, and see how these logics of gift exchange and the potlatch play an essential role in its everyday functioning. Firstly, as a modality of attachment. Secondly, as a combative and competitive form of expenditure. And finally, in the micro-processes of ordinary rituals of exclusion.

The Gift of Exchange and Attachment

Of course, in the school, the logic of the gift as solidarity is ever present. From the moment they step foot in the door to the celebrations or commiserations after they have finished their final exams, staff constantly stress to the students how much they do for them, how much work they put in, how much stress they suffer, how much time they have spent. There is an unremitting evocation of the semantics of investment, and a constant expectation that this investment is returned. There are metaphors of balance, discourses of reciprocity, symbols of equality, and an overbearing discourse almost entirely concerned with student obligation.

This manifests itself most clearly in disciplinary interactions which are exhortative in nature. Pastoral officers will stress to the recalcitrant how they owe the school, how they owe their teachers, how it is not fair for them to put in so much work, time, or effort, when the student gives nothing in return. This can also manifest itself in those incendiary moments where, a staff member having really put the extra mile in for a student, having actually gone to great lengths to assist or support them, the student misbehaves, fails to complete an assignment, or in some way fails to live up to an expectation that the teacher had developed on the basis of their increased investment. That a fundamental ethical principle has been breached is evidenced by the explosive nature of the teacher's reaction.

More generally, a large part of the anguish and frustration expressed by teachers seems to revolve around an assumed or constructed obligation and a corresponding lack of reciprocity. The staffroom abounds with the ritual expiation of these petty grievances, minor enmities. And this ritual expiation - with its fixed positions, defined roles, illegitimate and legitimate forms of response and expression - is itself, of course, something like a gift exchange, where the airing of a grievance is reciprocated with sympathy, a reticent voice of heightened pitch, sighs and tuts or a shake of the head, an aggressive or pointed affirmation, an oblique sentiment of support, and which is completely free from challenge or critique, which are taboo. As a consequence, for the interlocutor, the vector or agent of the expiation-event, there is a right to expect their gift's return: to collar that teacher by the ear and demand from them —without it ever being stated as a principle, without it ever being made explicit— the compassionate understanding that they had previously supplied. When the saga is longer running or better known a sequential or periodic drama can ensue, a soap opera, where teachers and staff will gossip loudly about what a student is “up to again,” about the latest exertion refused, labour evaded, or gift unreciprocated. Other teachers will shout across the staffroom to add to the drama with glee, while others might perform impressions, re-enact sympathetic scenarios, gesticulate wildly with approval, or simply just sit, listen, and laugh, like any good audience.

The students are not foreign to this merry dance, and have a number of tactics that allow them to free themselves, at least from their own perspective, from the burden of the gift. One of the most common is a discursive reversal of gift-power, a form of speech often deployed when a student is challenged to fulfil an obligation that they feel they have not contracted or do not wish to observe: it is the teacher's job, they say; they are paid to do this; they are contracted and remunerated. The relationship is not, and cannot be, a gift relation, as it falls into the domain of economic exchange. It is an exertion already paid for that imposes no obligation, leaves no residue. Most cheekily and not without an expression of

amusement from their peers is when they push it a bit further to say: I am compelled to be here, I am obliged, therefore my presence is a debt. I am already owed by you, the institution who forces me to be here; and since my parents pay their taxes, my parents pay your salary, the obligation is on you. Dance for me.

Gift obligations become an atmosphere or a malevolent presence. There is a sense in which this generalisation of the tripartite obligation of the gift-towards-solidarity over the entire surface of the school, such that it provides a kind of volatile and ever present ideational cloud, to use the metaphor provided by Celia Lowe (2012), is due to the convergence of two key factors already discussed, and is therefore, a structural necessity.

On the one hand, there is the ideology, or on the ground rationalisation of educational practice, of achievement for all, of mission, of all being in this together, of every student being able to make it if only they try and if only we provide the right conditions in which they can thrive. This immediately compels schoolies into a web of obligations that is far more thoroughgoing than would the local authority school with its elderly teachers going through the motions of sometimes well prepared and sometimes enthusiastically delivered lessons, but never having to really care if anyone is listening because their performance is up to them and the grades turn out in the end anyways.

On the other hand, there are the exhaustive requirements of the contemporary regime of assessment and accountability, that, as we saw earlier, effectively rob teachers of their job to teach. Teachers who become, in effect, managers of behaviour and consciousness for the insertion of a pre-packaged knowledge. When we combine these two phenomena, ideology, and exhaustiveness, we can see how, for the teachers, every minor exertion, every task

properly completed, every lesson into which they actually put themselves, put their souls, is really an additional exertion, is really a gift.

The corporate structure of assessment and accountability dominates the space in such a way that all of the activities we might previously have called “real teaching” now become extra-professional gifts alongside and secondary to the fulfilment of the overbearing demands of a rapacious and ever growing bureaucracy. They are not, as the students might argue, a part of the contractual relation, and they certainly are not remunerated. One has to feel for the teacher who, realising that tomorrow’s powerpoint lessons are a pile of shit, edits them, modifies them, transforms them into something they think is more engaging, sensitive, or appropriate, removes the ham fisted elements and replaces them with something more attractive, more beautiful, only to be confronted by the same dull response, the same refusal, the same resistance, and the same sense of failure. One can imagine how much it hurts, in view of how much of themselves they feel they are putting in, when a student reverses this logic of the gift, and says to them, in effect, I am your boss, you owe me, now dance.

This would be a brief summary of the too-and-fro of the elaboration of the gift as that geared towards solidarity: towards mutual obligation through unequal and reciprocal exchange.

The Potlatch

When it comes to the potlatch we can think more radically. If we shift our perspective to that which Bataille (1989a) would call *global economy*, or the movement of energy on a cosmic level, can we not understand the entire system of education as one giant potlatch? As an exuberant form of wasteful expenditure through which a nation obliges and compels its

subjects at the same time and through the same mechanism that it competes for honour, status, rank and prestige with other nations?

Consider that the discourse of educational spending is one of the main prisms through which we understand the quality of our democracy, despite this discourse bearing no relationship to the quality or character of education itself. One might as well say that we spend this money on air. It is an unknown quality of indifference and a known quantity of anguished concern.

Consider further, that the public and political discourse that surrounds schooling is one that considers education almost exclusively in terms of expenditure: Is spending rising or falling? Is this in real terms in line with inflation or in cash terms as a simple increase? Is spending increasing proportionate to the increase in demand for schooling or is spending in effect reducing per student given that more and more students are claiming from the same pot of resources? The USA spends more than us! Yes but as a proportion of GDP or as a gross amount? We need to match our spending to meet that of Scandinavia! OK but do we have the tax base to support it? The educational spend of South American nations is growing and we need to increase to keep up! ... This I call the discourse of gross expenditure, as if the school and education was a kind of homogenised and undifferentiated mass, like a mould that can only ever change in weight and volume without its quality or contents ever being in question.

The other side of public discourse is still concerned with expenditure, but this time on the plane of equity: whether all students have access, what equality of access means, whether or not disparities in expenditure embody and express social inequalities, etcetera. In all of my time thinking about the school and education, not once have I seen a meaningful or

substantive mainstream engagement with the question of what education is, of what it is for, of what the classroom looks like, how lessons are arranged, what is and is not taught, and how? Even the recent media furore concerning exclusion on the basis of ability was in essence a question of access and distribution, viz., a question of expenditure. And in those disciplinarian dramas, those tragedies of attachment that we call the *Educating... [x]* series, how much attention do we pay the decoration of the class, the smartness of the uniform, the shininess of the shoes, viza vie, the school in its redundancy, in its luxury. Do we really believe that the difference between Wellington College and an Inner City State Comprehensive is in the quality of its teaching or the vibrancy of its lessons? No! Those glossy brochures to justify expensive fees will of course roll out the usual chaff about catering learning to the individual, but then so does every state school. It is the manicured fields, the imposing buildings, the extensive grounds, the luxurious uniforms, the high ceilinged dining halls and wood panelled classrooms. These are the true differentiators at the level of consumption.

But we can take this sense of the school and education as potlatch one step further, closer to the ground, more radical still, and consider how this analysis can provide an elegant solution to what I consider the central, originary and enduring paradox of the global educational edifice. The paradox can be roughly stated thus:

On the one hand, we have this huge and ever increasing investment in schooling. A constant and cumulative proliferation of reforms, programs, strategies and initiatives, which, at a more tangible and local level, is manifested in the monstrous growth of after school sessions, holiday classes, lunchtime and weekend revision, examination practice, writing skills, summer schools, and for those who can afford it, private tuition, perhaps even a personal learning co-ordinator, or a meeting over tea with father and the dean of admissions. This movement of expansion is complemented by a contrary-cohering movement on the inverse

of compression and miniaturisation. Now all space and time is filled the only option is to simmer down, reduce, shrink, or compact, this plethora of *things*, such that expansion can continue when all space has been filled. There has been a kind of dizzy and unstoppable ascent into the stratosphere such that for some unlucky students their entire youth is given over to preparation for, participation within, or recovery from, the school. Worse still, that this is a kind of reduced schooling, a cut down and compressed schooling, a stripped out schooling where nothing ever lasts, nothing has permanence, nothing is for long enough, without depth of engagement or meaningful understanding. This is the school as McDonald's and education as a Big Mac. So well advertised, so quickly delivered, and for a moment, oh so tasty, but then, twenty minutes later, hunger strikes.

So, first side of the paradox, a movement of unstoppable growth, and a contrary-cohering inverse movement of compression which ensures it.

On the other hand, considering the opposite side of the paradox, there exists always alongside this monstrous growth, this diabolical ascent, this exuberant piling of programme after programme, one after the other, a constant and unremitting criticism, a discourse of condemnation so prevalent that it forms something of an ever present background to the educational imaginary: that the school is an institution in crisis unable to produce the kind of citizens needed in a rapidly changing liberal/social democratic/late capitalist civilisation. This chorus sings that the school encourages docility, produces conformity, stifles initiative, and results in young adults unable to think for themselves, unable to take care of themselves, who lack independence, who are unfit for work, who cannot imagine a life, possibility or future except within the confines of narrow institutionalised boundaries.

Stranger still, the criticisms and expenditure tend to come from the same sources: leaders of business, the civil service, politicians, charitable foundations and the like. The Bill Gates foundation on the one hand lambasts the educational system for its waste and inefficiency and on the other pours money into that very system without any noticeable return.

Given that these criticisms emerge at the same time as the education system itself, that the story is not one of the development and growth of an enlightened institution rationally criticised and progressively reformed but of an institution in crisis from the outset, we might ask: why does it endure? It makes sense here to take the Foucauldian injunction found in *Discipline and Punish* (1975 [1977]), where he inverts the critical history of the progressive prison and the corollary sense of a noble institution in enlightened failure to say: perhaps the school, like the prison, is not, and never was an institution in crisis, defined by failure. Perhaps the school, like the prison, does precisely what it is supposed to. Perhaps the reason for its endurance as an institution, in the face of constant and unremitting criticism, in the face of the constant evocation of a state of crisis and the immediate imperative of reform, is because it fulfils its role very well. We are just mistaken as to what that role is.

Perhaps we can say that the primary mechanism of institutional socialisation that characterises the school is not found in the specificity of its mechanisms, the quality of its procedures, or the robustness of its processes, but in an exuberant and combative expenditure, in a gift that must be returned, in a gift that in its largesse, in its lavishness, and in its overbearing grandeur, obliges and compels, instituting, as it were, a necessary kinship with the hand that gave.

But how does this logic find its way into quotidian domain of exclusion? In what way does the potlatch provide an essential and psycho-socially necessary function for the cutting and removal of a student from what the school calls “general circulation”?

The Exclusion

The exclusion is the apex and terminus of the disciplinary system. It is a deeply contentious act fraught with difficulty, not least because the quantity of temporary and permanent exclusions is one of the main indicators that OFSTED, local authorities, and other regulatory agencies, use to evaluate the quality of a school and the effectiveness of its leadership. The almost total elimination of local authority oversight and the soft touch approach of OFSTED inspections which can pass a school having seen a grand total of three classes and having spoken to one or two students mean that the contemporary school is in essence a tyranny. The last thing a headteacher wants is a regulatory agency paying too close attention to their new found kingdom, so schools will go to great lengths to hide, obscure, or manipulate, figures relating to temporary and permanent exclusion.

At the school I researched illegal exclusion was an everyday practice. If you count each day a student is illegally excluded as one instance of illegal exclusion, there is evidence of thousands of instances in a single school year. But this never shows up on the figures. OFSTED, the regulatory body responsible, told me that a school found to be illegally excluding its students would be placed immediately in special measures and the leadership team suspended pending investigation. In their most recent report the school received a score of “good”. Similarly, when it comes to permanent exclusions, there is a constant gaming of the figures, a whole host of tricks and deviations, that allow the school to permanently exclude a student without formally admitting so, or to push the permanent

exclusions into different terms so that there are no noticeable spikes and the overall level of exclusions remains within acceptable parameters for the school.

There is a second reason that exclusion poses a profound challenge to school staff and administration and that is the existential threat that it poses to the school's sense of purpose and value. The ever repeated ideology is one of aspiration: that any child can make it, that any child has the capacity to succeed, that with the right attitude, good teaching, and good behaviour in the classroom, it is in the capacity of every child to make the best of themselves. To exclude, then, is in a certain sense to admit failure, to throw into question the central mission of the school, to cast doubt and uncertainty over the ability of the teacher to attain their transformational mission, to turn, as it were, all of those attempts at expenditure, all of that effort and energy, into a pure waste, a waste free from the logic of the gift whose loss results only in vertigo. The student to be excluded is dangerous. They pose a risk of contagion, inasmuch as they pose the possibility of jamming up school mechanisms which require and presuppose the promise that no child is left behind behind. On this basis, we should expect to find, then, a powerful set of rites, rules and prohibitions, taboos and expectations, encouraged and forbidden practices, surrounding the student to be excluded, insulating the school from the violent eruption of its disease.

A more basic anthropological reason for the special status of exclusion concerns the relational nature of human communities or institutions. What is the school, we might ask, other than a series of relationships, moods, atmospheres, modes of comportment, or what Heidegger would called being-towards-which, which are constantly evoked, called for, conjured, or demanded? What, in the end, does the school consist of, other than a constant and exhaustive attempt to make, maintain and repeat the sets of relationships and relational phenomena that make it what it is? One cannot simply remove a person from a community, disinterestedly tear them free from this complex set of criss-crossing cohering contradicting

relationships, and be done with it. What is required is a ritual mechanism that allows for the maintenance of relationships that constitute the institution and the re-arrangement of relations concerning the individual to be removed without disturbance. A whole network of obligations, responsibilities, incomplete exchanges, affects, and emotions, have to be untangled and re-arranged.

Where I would now like to turn, is to one of these rituals of re-arrangement, a ritual of exclusion, with the logic of the gift, of the potlatch, of competitive and combative squander, at its heart. Before I do so, It is important to clarify the status of this and the other case studies that follow. I have chosen these stories because they in a way cut through the various phenomena that surround exclusion. They are, in literary terms, a foil. More importantly, I have chosen them because they are representative or indicative. Each study is a privileged moment that allows us to see the articulation of a particular modality, mechanism, technology, or tactic, that is found more broadly.

Case Study #1: Michael and Re-arrangement

During my time as a volunteer support worker and observer with the pastoral team I came to develop a relationship with a young man called Michael. I heard him talked about often, and assisted and observed in some of his classes. He was a good kid but suffered multiple deprivations in his life out of school, and this greatly affected his ability to fit in. Michael's family were involved in organised crime and there were suggestions that the son was being lined up for the family business.

Michael had a full needs profile which meant that additional funding was provided to the school to give him intensive one on one support in lessons as well as an extensive package of extra curricular interventions and activities. He was also under the direct supervision of the SENCO or special educational needs co-ordinator, having been diagnosed with learning and mental difficulties that I will not go into here.

His main behavioural issue seemed to be a kind of radical insecurity and a violent need for respect. Sit Michael alone with a similarly able student, help him with his work, be patient and understanding, and there would rarely be a problem. Challenge him or sit him alongside a more able student who would, in effect, disclosed his difficulties by comparison, and he would start to act out, mess around, agitate students around him or otherwise disrupt the class.

Michael had a severe problem with authority. He would never go so far as to pose a direct challenge, but if he felt he had been disrespected or shown up somehow he would contradict, argue, refuse to follow instructions. Sometimes these altercations would heat up so far that a pointed disagreement became a full blown row.

He behaved similarly towards students. When treated cordially, with respect, Michael would pose no problem. But when insulted, offended, disrespected or attacked by another student he would refuse to back down, he would retaliate. He had a keen sense of fairness, of justice, of who and why someone was responsible for a wrong, and of what the appropriate means of response were. Once it was set in his mind that a particular happening was justified or unjustified, it would be very difficult to change his mind.

The answer to his problems, to me and to the pastoral team, was relatively simple. Treat him with respect, handle him with care, be sensitive to his insecurities when setting tasks and asking questions. Be conscious of the fact all is probably not well at home, and that he is bringing that with him, here into the school.

We were surprised then, to hear that a meeting had been called with his parents to discuss his removal for a period of “alternative provision,” a temporary exclusion to a specialist institution that we all know is basically an administrative precursor to permanent exclusion.

In attendance at the meeting were Michael’s guardians, as his parents could not attend, three members of the leadership team, the headteacher, his head of year, two members of the pastoral team, and a needs coordinator.

What followed can only be described as a group of adults ganging up on a vulnerable young man. The tone was apologetic but the message was clear: this student has a set of needs that the school cannot cater for, he is disrupting lessons, his work is not up to standard, he is not making progress or achieving his target grades, and his behavioural problems have not significantly improved. It is best for him, it is in his best interests, if he moves to alternative provision. The meeting was a ruse. The game was fixed. All that was left was to perform the operation. Indeed, while some members of the meeting thought it was going to be a strategic meeting to discuss how the school might best provide for Michael’s specific needs, it had in fact already been decided by the head, not only that Michael must be placed into alternative provision, but the kind of alternative provision into which he would be placed. There was no discussion, no possibility of challenge. The guardians were upset, the student embarrassed and perhaps ashamed, some of the members of staff surprised but reluctant to engage in a battle against the head that would almost certainly result in loss.

When this gentle exhortation failed to convince the parents the leadership team started to produce documents, reports, analyses and assessments, stacking them, as it were, one after another. Finally, they presented a document called a personal support plan, or PSP. The PSP is a document that details all of the support that the school can provide a student. It is supposed to be used strategically and prospectively. A group, similar but smaller than the one assembled in this example, would get together and think through the student in question, what might be causing them a problem, what his needs might be, and how the forms of additional support that the school offers might be able to help. But in Michael's case there was no such meeting, this document had not been produced before, and its presentation in this meeting was the first time most of the staff present had seen it.

The head proceeded to list each item in turn, saying, look at all we have done for this student, look at the support he has been given, look at how much we have invested in him, and things just haven't changed. He has had this form of support, that kind of intervention, these kinds of allowances, those types of extra curricular activity. Look at all we have given him, and he has given us nothing.

Michael had not just incurred a debt that had not been returned. The expenditure of the school was thrown down at his feet in the form of a symbolic challenge that could not be reciprocated. What is this untimely prestation of amassed intervention, support, investment, other than a potlatch? How else can we understand this sudden appearance of a document that piles on debt without the hope of return? The inverse prestation of the PSP is a combative deployment of exuberant expenditure which aims to immobilise and to silence; a cynical and degenerate potlatch that does not take off with the promise of re-integration

into a cycle of reciprocal exchange, but a symbolic prestation of wealth which cannot be returned. Symbolic exchange or death.

The very presence of all these members of staff lends weight to this thesis. The student without representative or defence, without warning or time to build a case, against all of the staff, all eight of them, with their documents, their records, their assessments and evaluations. Never before had I heard of a meeting where so many were instructed to attend. The way in which the documents were related to is also telling. There was no question of the quality or appropriateness of the support or intervention that had been given, no question as to whether it was effective or efficient, and no real question as to whether it met Michael's needs. It was given, and that is all. A pure demonstration of expenditure.

The student was speechless, the parent was crying, the head wrapped up the meeting. The potlatch then, an exuberant and wasteful expenditure thrown down at one's feet as a challenge to. But in this instance, not with hope of re-integration into the circuit of exchange, but a cynical and degenerate use, only to exclude, humiliate, immobilise, render speechless, and destroy.

Perhaps we are not so far away from those Aztecs who would tear out the hearts of their victims and hold them still beating before the radiant sun, given that we can see in three senses this same logic of the gift in that most quotidian of institutions, the school. First, the gift of solidarity and compulsion, or the constant evocation of how much the school gives in order to oblige. Second, the potlatch of the education system writ large, or the sense in which an ecstatic and exuberant competitive expenditure is a dual movement through

which nations compete with nations and the citizenry become compelled. And, finally, the cynical deployment of the potlatch in the micro-mechanism of everyday exclusion.

On the Appropriateness of the Concept of the Sacrifice

Spectacular violence and the pathos of a bloodcurdling cry, the spray of warm blood on your face, the pain of desperate pleading and the totality of the body's refusal –it is in this way that we imagine the horror of sacrifice, an act of killing that is vicious and without mercy, notable for its extreme cruelty and a barbarism far in excess of its aim or object. It seems strange, then, to deploy this logic of the sacrifice in the context of the removal of a student from school. Must we always associate the sacrifice with violence? Must we always understand the sacrifice as involving an act of killing? It will be my argument that we must not. In the following, I offer a theoretical justification for my use of the logic of sacrifice to make sense of the exclusion of the intransigent from contemporary schooling. I offer two accounts of the sacrifice from Girard (1977) and Bataille (1990), demonstrate the non-necessity of physical violence in each, and show how their insights can help make sense of the processes and practices of everyday (il)legal exclusion.

For Girard (ref), the sacrifice is functional. It exists to 'restore harmony to the community, to reinforce the social fabric,' (9) to neutralise or attenuate the build up our outburst of enmities, feuds, quarrels, jealousies, or rivalries, to return, in short, a system that had run off course to its proper functioning, and to prevent further breakdown.

A classic example of the sacrifice in this structural-functionalist perspective is found in E. E. Evans-Pritchard's (1937) account of the Benge oracle as practiced by the Azande of Southern

Sudan. Bengé is a malevolent black substance that grows and festers in the hearts of the ill willed before escaping at night to consume its victim, leaving them sick, wounded, delirious, or mad. It is an act of witchcraft, and to harbour bengé is to be a witch. The bengé oracle is the prescribed means for determining the identity of a witch, and will be quickly called upon once an accusation of witchcraft has been made. It is a ritual procedure for the production of truth whereby a shaman administers a specially prepared poison to a newly hatched chick. If the chick lives, the accusation was incorrect and no further action is taken. If the chick dies, if the chick is, in effect, sacrificed, then the accusation holds, and a number of definite procedures are set in motion. But what are the conditions in which an accusation is made, and what happens when that accusation is successful?

An accusation of witchcraft is normally made in the case of a feud or quarrel. Perhaps an obligation was not properly fulfilled, a remark was made that was hostile or aggressive, more was taken than was due, etcetera. One is not born a witch, but becomes one. The bengé builds up alongside feelings of ill will or malice towards one's fellows. Witchcraft is not intentional. Sorcery, or the volitional attempt to harm or control another, is sharply distinguished from witchcraft. One harbours bengé almost, as it were, by accident. It is not one's fault. The successful sacrifice, the truth of the oracle, allows for the setting in motion of definite mechanisms of reconciliation. Antagonistic parties are brought together with the approval and support of the whole community. The bengé oracle, then, is a technique for the restoration of social harmony that functions in and through the elimination of intention or blame. It allows for the community to come together and make peace in the absence of an obstacle that might frustrate it.

The exclusion, similarly, is a ritual that seeks to quell conflict or disruption and return the community to its normal functioning through the removal of a hostile or antagonistic element. This is the self conception of the actors who perform it. I remember being on a

school trip, talking with a member of the Senior Leadership Team on the way. I could hardly suppress a smile when she said to me: 'sometimes we have to put one on the cross to save the rest'. More broadly, the articulation of the notion of sacrifice is common in talking about or attempting to justify past exclusions. The student was disrupting others' learning; the student was dragging others down around them; the student was frustrating the attempt to teach, the student was setting a bad example for others; the student is a ringleader and focal point for deviance and disorder. We were right to get rid of him, we were right to exclude her, it was for the good of the community, for the good of all.

But the removal of a hostile or antagonistic element is only the first aspect of a functional restoration. The second, as we saw with the the benge oracle, is the setting into motion of definite mechanisms of reconciliation, or the making and remaking of communal bonds. The ritual of exclusion, likewise, is not just a cutting and re-arrangement of relationships such that the student is removed without disturbing or posing a threat to the broader operation of the school. It is also an occasion for the collective and mutually implicating affirmation of shared values and beliefs, for the symbolic prestation of institutional commitment and the self's belonging, for the exchange between teachers of small acts of kindness, gratitude, and mutuality, and for the making and remaking of bonds of fealty and kinship. The ritual of exclusion, then, does not only ensure the removal of that which has been deemed a threat to the community, but is also the occasion for the (re)production of those relationships that make that community what it is.

This operation need not involve physical violence. Perhaps we can say that sacrifice always involves some form of cutting, or separation, but that this cutting need not be material. Malice, mockery, the potlatch or the gift that cannot be returned, all of these are forms of distancing or cutting operating in the domain of the social body.

For Bataille (1989b), the sacrifice is restorative in a different manner. Sacrifice exists to restore 'to the sacred world that which servile use has degraded, rendered profane' (55). In labour we become thingified as an object, as a commodity which is to a certain extent homogeneous insofar as it is no different to an equivalent unit of labour power, which is fungible or which can be replaced without noticeable effect, and which is exchangeable or which can be traded on a marketplace of goods of different kinds but similar value.

The operation, however, is imperfect and incomplete. On the one hand, one cannot, according to Bataille, make a thing out of an Other without at the same time becoming a thing oneself, without at the same time setting for oneself the boundaries of a thing; without at the same time entering into a world in which a person can be estranged from their most intimate Being. On the other, this atmosphere of the commodity comes to extend over the whole of human life, generating the anxiety and anguish characteristic of a world in which a person can be a slave or a commodity. 'It is this degradation that man has always tried to escape. In his strange myths, in his cruel rites, man is in search of lost intimacy from the start' (1989b: 57).

The act of sacrificial killing, for Bataille, restores to the sacred world that which servile use had rendered profane. It does this through the denial of all utility. If profane man is man put to work, man made use of, man understood as a bundle of abilities and potentialities that must be exploited, that it is immoral not to exploit, then that which restores him to the world of the sacred will be that which eliminates the possibility of work, makes useless. More than this, it will deny the injunction of use, insofar as that precious resource which ought to be utilised for productive ends is in fact destroyed in a ritual of exuberant squander.

Students, of course, are the sacred denizens of the educational edifice. They are its object and end, its reason for existence. Like all things sacred, students are surrounded by rituals and ceremonies, prohibitions and taboos, strong guardians and mystic incantations, which seek to maintain them, augment them, protect them from harm or degradation. But this sanctity is tied up with their status as a student, with their thoroughgoing commitment to the institution and its aims. The intransigent and the recalcitrant, in resisting, refusing, denying, subverting, mocking, and evading, fall from the sacred realm of the divine individual to be nourished and cultivated and are roughly transferred to the profane realm of things, objects, obstacles, that are to be moved, managed, or otherwise controlled—an antagonistic element shorn of its divinity that is to be sequestered for fear of contagion. And as with the profanity of servile labour in Bataille, the fall of one student casts an atmosphere over the rest, such that all students now bear this degradation of the thing, such that all students can now fall, without hope of redemption.

For the school to function the child must be sacred. What is needed therefore is a ritual mechanism that restores to sanctity that which transgression and punishment had rendered profane. In the case of Michael, we can see this materialise itself in the tone of voice, the attitude, demeanour, and mood, that characterised the ritual space of his exclusion.

Previously, as profane, Michael would be the subject of anger and abuse. Teachers would insult him, humiliate him, mock him, emphasise his limitations and weaknesses, minimise his abilities and strengths, excoriate his lack of value or worth. But then, in the meeting in which he was to be excluded, the tone is soft, the attitude is apologetic, and the demeanour is calm.

To remove Michael to alternative provision is to reinsert him in the educational circuit in a manner that restores his sanctity. It is a move through which he will become, once again, the divine object of anguished concern. A god to be esteemed, respected, protected, and taken

care of. Who it is forbidden to harm or violate. Who must be handled with delicacy and great care. We see, once again, that material violence is but one form of the cutting that is internal to the sacrifice. Here, it is the restoring of the profane to the sacred which is the necessary and sufficient principle, and the use of violence is but one means of achieving that.

Michael's case is special inasmuch as it is a privileged moment of analysis for the most general mechanisms of exclusion: that of the gift and that of the sacrifice. The following cases are more specific.

Case Study 2: Arshan and the Imminent Threshold

Exclusion can be temporary or permanent, legal or illegal. Illegal temporary exclusions are those which breach any of the following conditions: The exclusion must be for a period not exceeding ten consecutive school days; for the first five days the school must set and mark work and after the fifth day the student must be placed into full time alternative provision until the exclusion ends; the school cannot set conditions or requirements for the return of the student, the exclusion cannot be made on the grounds of academic ability or attainment; and finally, the exclusion must be properly recorded by the school.

The breach of these conditions is routine. Students are often simply "sent home", obliquely, perfunctorily, and without a clear sense of what they have done wrong or why it is that what has happened has resulted in their exclusion. The exclusion could be for the rest of the day, a week, or even months, and is rarely fixed in advance. Usually, the school sets conditions for return, demanding a meeting or conversation with the parents before the student is allowed

back, that the student apologise, write a letter, return something they are accused to have stolen, or fix or pay for the repair of something they are accused to have damaged.

When students do come back they are normally held to a far higher standard of behaviour than other students, which seems strange given that the exclusion is itself a *de facto* recognition of individual struggle and institutional failure. It might be that they have been warned that if they behave in a certain kind of way again they will be permanently excluded, that without a change in attitude or an all round improvement in academic performance they will be permanently excluded. It could be that one teacher in particular is looking for them, asking about them, paying special attention to how they are getting along, searching out their teachers in the staffroom or bringing their records under greater scrutiny. It could also be a mood or an atmosphere, a background of heightened surveillance and sharpened response that is in some cases instituted and then checked upon by the leadership but which in others is because of gossip, rumour, or the publicness of the offence.

Simply put, students who are temporarily excluded are set up to fail. They return to the school with little in the way of support or guidance, and though sometimes a meeting is arranged or extra help or support offered, it is more likely that the issue that led to a temporary exclusion will be left unresolved. When programmes or strategies for re-entry are called for there is rarely much follow up. The head or a member of the leadership team might casually ask in a meeting or the staff room if so and so student is causing any problems, but usually the first time you hear of them again is because of another incident or outburst of unacceptable behaviour.

As well as being held to a higher standard of behaviour and coming back to the school without much support or guidance, there is a tendency among teachers from this point on to read a

student's behaviour in the worst possible light. There is a hermeneutic double down with two axes. First axis: Guilty until proven innocent. Now the student is constantly doubted, assumed to have done the wrong thing, to be lying. Second axis: The worst of all possible worlds. Here, indeterminate signs take on their worst possible significance, such that something as banal as innocently picking up a pencil that had rolled off the desk becomes the intentional disruption of others' learning. Once the impression of a troublemaker has begun to take shape it is very difficult to shift. You are marked.

Given all this, it is no surprise that illegal exclusion can become something of a conduit or pathway to permanent exclusion. Students return bitter and confused to the same scenarios and milieu that led to their removal. They feel watched and persecuted. Though some teachers will treat their return discreetly, welcoming them into the class with a knowing look or instructing them to complete some everyday task that says they are back to business, most will announce the student's punishment as a portent for the misbehaved. The slightest transgression is jumped on. Residual antagonisms are left to fester. And rancour grows.

If Michael's case represented a general mechanism of exclusion, then Arshan's will cut through the practice as a surface for the analysis of some of the characteristics just described.

Arshan was not known to me personally, though he was often talked about in meetings and by members of the leadership and pastoral team. Two weeks before the summer holidays Arshan was sent home for a minor offence at school. The following day, the school decided that Arshan should stay at home until after the break. No work was set and no alternative provision was found for him. Arshan was not asked to return to school for another three weeks after the holidays. When he came back he was told in no uncertain terms that he was being watched: the slightest infraction and you're out.

Soon after, there was an issue raised in a student support panel meeting. Arshan had been instructed to put on his blazer by a teacher before entering their classroom but refused and stormed off. 'He's out of control,' they said, 'he's beyond the capacity of the school,' 'he has to go.;; Speaking to some teachers about what happened, they said the reason given for his exclusion was defiance, aggression, and the refusal to follow instructions. The teachers strongly disagreed with this. It could have been dealt with in the school, they said, by a few words from a teacher he trusts or a restorative meeting. As for being beyond the capacity of the school, Arshan didn't storm off, they said, he went straight to his head of year, waited patiently outside the door, and explained to the head what had happened and that he had not just stormed off, rather, he was in a situation that made him angry and he wanted to remove himself from that situation so he didn't do something stupid. 'Does that look like someone who is out of control of the school?!' said one member of staff. He was marked from the start, they said, he had no chance.

So Arshan was sent home for an indefinite period without work or movement to alternative provision for five weeks without it being recorded as an exclusion. On his return he had little support or guidance and was quickly excluded at the slightest hint of deviant behaviour. This is the exclusion of the imminent threshold, where an apparently rational, coherent, and tariff based system of punishment is bypassed at the smallest infraction. The good news was that Arshan's permanent exclusion was bumped into the next term, which made things look much better on the end of year report.

Case Study 3: Jameel and the Magic of Classification

Arshan's case demonstrates the casualness with which conditions surrounding exclusion are breached, but it also showed us one of the ways in which illegal exclusion is in an important sense invisible to the public. The illegal exclusion is not properly recorded, and when it does appear it appears as a reasonable permanent exclusion with no mention of the illegal temporary exclusion that preceded it. But there is also something else going on here: another covering over that is essential for the disappearing of illegality of exclusions, and that is the categorical transformation that occurs when an indeterminate happening is finalised into a case.

Arshan was hot so he refused to put on his blazer. Rather than let it go, or give the student a punishment, or follow it up later, the teacher turned the altercation into a power struggle in which one combatant had to back down. Taking control of the situation by removing himself was one way in which face could be saved for both parties. The teacher gets on with his lesson and his authority over the classroom re-asserted; Arshan is not forced to put on a blazer before entering a classroom only to take it off again when he sits down, sweltering in the summer heat. But when transcribed, when turned into a case, an incident, or a report, the scenario looks rather different. Arshan was defiant and aggressive. Arshan refuses to follow instructions. The context is stripped away and what remains though in a sense technically correct nonetheless carries a gravity far in excess of what actually could have been said to have occurred.

We can see the importance of categorical transformation most clearly in the case of a kid called Jameel. Jameel was a young man with a reputation. His family were involved in organised crime and were known for violence. All of the students knew who he was and who his family

were. They were afraid of him, of what might happen if.... Teachers and the leadership team were especially suspicious, and two of the heads saw no distance between his family and him and wanted him gone.

They got their chance in a support team meeting while discussing what to do about an incident the day before. A student had a new watch and his friends asked to see it. Laughing, they took the watch and ran off with it, taunting him to come and get it. The student ran after them and they ran circles around him, taunting him, telling him to get it, passing it among themselves. When a student carrying the watch bumped into Jameel he had an idea: If I get Jameel to hold this watch the guy won't be able to touch it. He gives it to Jameel and asks him to look after it. When its owner finds our friend he says that he gave it to Jameel, and that if you want it back, you will have to go and ask him for it. Jameel, who could be antagonising, or simply misreading the situation, refuses to return the watch. Fine, the owner says, I'll see you after school.

After school there is a fight but it is quickly broken up by a teacher. The young pugilists are bruised and a little bloody but the watch is returned and everyone goes home. In the meeting the next day they realise this is their chance. They record his offences as theft and assault – inscription thus resulting in a categorical transformation with two dimensions. On the one hand, there is a stripping out of context that greatly increases the weight of the alleged offence that we have already discussed. On the other, there is categorical transfer. To invoke a theft in particular is at the same to invoke the entire field of theft. This theft is in a sense tainted by all thefts. We see this more clearly in the case of rape. Few but the most hardcore activists would equivocate lying about a condom falling off during intercourse with violently grabbing a woman from a street or drugging her before fucking her without consent. But insofar as they are all understood to be instances of the class “rape”, they carry the weight of the most extreme

behaviours within that class, behaviours which are in a sense almost conjured, or invoked, by the use of the word.

The what happened is erased in the same movement as it is written over, as the writing over becomes the what happened and the what happened fades away. We know that Jameel's exclusion was cynical, mendacious and unjust but in the records it appears as the reasonable and legitimate exclusion of a dangerous child who steals from others and fights. This, then, is a mechanism of categorical transformation. Just like magic.

Case Study 4: Ranjit or the Body Without a Handle

The cynical manoeuvring of leadership to classify students and their behaviour in such a way as to lock in exclusion is one of the most insidious ways that illegal exclusions are disappeared. But there is another way that they are hidden, and that is the way that they are recorded in the school database, SIMS. SIMS records basically everything that the school wants to record about their students. One element, however, is beyond their control and is governed by statute, and that is the attendance register. Attendance has to be coded, P for present, D for sick, E for unauthorised absence, etcetera. To falsify the attendance register is a criminal offence.

There is a mark, C, which stands for all other authorised absences. This would include interviews for apprenticeships or jobs, trips to visit college or university, an important family occasion such as a wedding or a funeral. The staff use this category to hide illegal exclusions. Once you work that out it makes them easy to find. You simply print a report of all the C

absences and look for any student with more than 10 in one year. Of course, you are going to miss out on some. But they do tend to cluster. The last report I printed had a student with more than 80 in one year. That's almost half of the entire year of schooling (190 days), and almost double the upper limit for *legal* temporary exclusions set by the government (45).

Ranjit hadn't been around English for a while so I asked his teacher where he had gone. Oh, she said, he's still on roll, but he is listed as absent. Why? I asked. I dunno, he's listed as other authorised absence. So I stayed back late and decided to have a root in SIMS. I found an option to include "remarks" on the report so I did. Spectacular. It turned out the school *did* record illegal exclusions: in the remarks! Where for each C absence there was noted a reason and the initials of the member of the staff who completed the form.

I spent so long rooting around SIMS trying to find out information about Ranjit because of how much his absence surprised me. I knew him from his first lesson. I remember a rotund young fellow always smiling who didn't speak much, walking around the classroom, his face a glaze, laughing and joking with other students. The teacher clocked him messing about and told him to come and sit at the desk at the front, facing the wall. Every now and then he would look dozily at the class, smiling or playing with his stationary. He was a bit dopey but not unintelligent, almost bashful, easy going, not really caring, just wanting to lark about and have fun with his mates, but not excessively, never such that it would warrant punishment or stern rebuke.

In almost every lesson he would fool around a bit. It seemed to be his character, his way of being. He just didn't seem to care about school, about grades, but unlike many others he was not angry or bitter. He wasn't confrontational or aggressive. And generally, he did what he

was asked. So it didn't make any sense to me. It can't be because he is bad... I thought of him as harmless. A possibility struck me: maybe he isn't really anything?

I started to speak to his teachers; to drop references to him in the staffroom and gauge the reaction; to listen out for mention of him in meeting; to speak to his friends and find out if they knew what was going on. Most of the staff said roughly the same thing. It wasn't so much that he had done something wrong, more that his indifference left the school with nothing to grasp, nothing to cling onto. Even the most difficult students in a certain sense flatter the authority of the school inasmuch as they try to avoid it. For the staff there is the joy of discovery and the thrill of the chase, and as well as the pleasure of finding out there is the pleasure in the fact it was hidden. Ranjit was a body without a handle, an indifferent spectre and portentous ghoul of the meaninglessness of the whole affair. He had to be removed.

There was further, another aspect of his character that contributed to his exclusion and that was how easy he found the work. He completed it quickly, became bored, and started messing about, staring into the sky, muttering to himself under his breath, fiddling with a pencil and an elastic band. When asked to he would return to work, and the game would start again. We would be mistaken, however, to assume that it was his behaviour as such, itself, that contributed to his exclusion. It seemed to me rather that he undermined one of the central myths of the school: a belief that discipline leads to learning, that without discipline there can be no learning, and that discipline and learning are complementary and form a series. How to convince others to pay attention, to listen, to underline the title and the date, or to sit up straight, if Ranjit gets by with such indifference? The body without a handle. He had to go. It was some months later that I asked about him again. He had been put in a pupil referral unit called *the Octagon*.

The organisational structure of exclusion would seem to be a rational and coherent way of removing from the school students too troublesome for general circulation, who disrupt the rhythm and flow of the institution, who interrupt the experience of others and undermine the key objectives of the collectivity. It is a liberal juridical system following a linear escalation where each offence attracts a points score and sufficient points results in intervention. Where intervention fails and support does not work, it is obvious that the institution is not for them. But it is, in fact, an aleatory process depending more on the whim of senior staff members than its correspondence with a predefined code. There are of course some students who are properly excluded, for dealing drugs, say, or bringing weapons or explosives into school, but these cases are both rare and uninteresting. Old feuds, long lasting prejudice, folk tales and hearsay, these are the grist for exclusion's mill.

Scholastic Dreams – Postscript on Exclusion.

The queens are ready. The dresses are prepared. Dicks tucked, glitter at full volume, heavy contour make up. The Madonna of drag, Rupaul Andre Charles, struts down the catwalk with a wolfish smile, posing at the end with a turn of the hip before joining his panel of judges. It's a big stage with a long, glassy T-shaped runway, loud music and extravagant lighting but no audience, just rupaul and his judges, at its feet (*Rupaul's Drag Race* 2017).

Here come the girls. Each queen has had to prepare a costume or dress based on a theme set by Rupaul earlier in the show, and now they have to sissy that walk along the runway before the judges. We see the wildest creations. There are neon feathers, repurposed spartan lace, more mascara than you can shake a stick at, a western ensemble with denim and leather and

waist long fringing, and even a dress made from scrunched up translucent pink plastic gift wrapping someone found in a bin.

After the last queen finishes her walk the contestants line up and the judges give their critique. First come the middling queens, those who neither bombed nor excelled but who are nonetheless safe for next week's show. The best and worst queens remain. Rupaul speaks first to the queens who just scraped through before sending them to wait at the back of the stage. Then he speaks to the winner who is instructed to join them. Now we are left with two: two queens who are up for elimination. It's time for them to lipsync for their lives.

Lights flash, pop music blares, and it's on. The two queens are bounding across the stage, jutting, strutting, pouting, voguing... Anything they can do to outdo their opponent. They spin, they twirl. They crash into each other. They are forced to interact, negotiate the other's presence, or sometimes to integrate the other into the reciprocity of a spontaneous routine. But then the music becomes ominous and the performances come to an end. It's time for elimination, exclusion, or the time when we find out which queen will stay, and which queen will, well, sashay away. The tempo slows and the mood becomes serious. A low thumping bassline keeps the whole thing moving as the action is for a moment suspended. Sparse, melancholic chimes add to the tension as the camera passes over the queens' wrought faces.

What strikes me watching the ritual of exclusion that concludes each episode of Rupaul is the emotion, the demeanour, the sense of a person as if stretched on a rack, the furtive anguish. Maybe it strikes me so powerfully because of how many hundreds of hours I spent watching this exact emotion in the school, of students facing judgment. Maybe it also strikes me as strongly evocative insofar as it something of a condensation point, condensation here being distinguished from that criminological line (C.f. Loader & Mulcahy 2003) of thinking that

draws upon Turner, in which inchoate and disparate fears are united in the fantasy of a Big Other (Zizek 1997). The pathos of exclusion in RuPaul is the cumulative anguish, the gathered and compressed anguish, of all those millions of little judgments that make up an institution such as the school, and increasingly, our lives themselves. It is as if, in this moment of judgment, there is a transparency of the self, an openness, a self raw and naked, or a self, put short, that is at stake.

We need not talk about causality here, but certainly, in *Rupaul's Drag Race*, we see an echo, reverberation, semblance or similitude, of the ritual of exclusion that we found in the school. A dramatization. A staging. Maybe even a Parmenidean laying out before us, where a moment that haunts us as spectre is then neutralised in affect through parody and the ironic.

But it is not only in the final ritual of exclusion that we get a sense, watching Rupaul, of the presence of the school. The show is shot through with its elements. Like the school, the show is familiarly institutional. There are series of discrete tasks whose completion is evaluated and criticised. Each task is in an important sense sovereign. Creativity is kept within strict bounds. There is no possibility of challenge or critique from contestants and any deviation is quickly referred back to task or specification. The criteria by which the contestants are judged are mysterious and in a sense ineffable. There is the privacy of judgment as such. We never see the act of judgment *in media res*, or in elaboration as the process of judging is not represented. Rather, a judgment already formed is communicated. The discourses of evaluation and feedback bear a frightening similarity to the discourses of exhortation and encouragement that we saw in the school. Even the backstage area where much of the show takes place is arranged like a classroom, with symmetrically organised workspaces, a functional reciprocity of flows and surfaces, and the strict individuation of spaces.

Many shows have a similar structure to RuPaul and present many of the same features, but where other features may come and go, there is always exclusion, and exclusion is always king. It would not be too much of a stretch to argue that these competitive task based reality game shows are one of the dominant forms of cultural experience in our time. There are literally hundreds of them. Whole nations are moved by their intrigue. There is Big Brother, Masterchef, the Great British Bake Off, Survivor, X Factor, America's Next Top Model, Strictly Come Dancing, and these are only the most famous. In the Apprentice, the whole show revolves around the idea that, come the end, someone will get fired. It says it at the start and keeps reminding you after every ad break.

It might turn out in the end that our obsession with these game shows is just a kind of generalised Stockholm Syndrome, where after so many years of being looked at, analysed, evaluated, and assessed, there arises a need to become a judge yourself, to imitate the judge, come closer to Judgment, and thereby alleviate the pain of its echoes. It is the fantasy of an impossible exchange: to judge others for yourself, to contest and articulate criterion of judgment, to judge without responsibility, obligation, reciprocity, effect or consequence. Like.

But it is not only in game shows that we see these similitudes, semblances, echoes or reverberations. We take the school with us. And this is in two senses. First, there is the banal sense in which an individual is inevitably shaped by the school, that they will have developed a set of attitudes, desires, feelings and the like that will shape and structure the rest of the lives. But second, and further, and more interestingly, there is the way in which we imagine ourselves as persons in ways familiar to the school: how we imagine our lives as divided into distinct periods, how we generally associate with people of the same age or social class, how we sort ourselves and understand our quality and potential on the basis of schoolie evaluations, how we understand our "journey" as a kind of linear progression in which

despite deviations and downfalls the general correlation is upwards, how we think of life as a series of challenges to be overcome, how we imagine our person as something that must always grow and develop by means of textbooks, programs, courses and institutions.

Focusing on the moment of exclusion in the school does not mean that, for the excluded, and for the rest of us, we leave behind those logics, mechanisms, strategies and tactics that attempted to bind us to a regime of truth, fix us to an orderly conduct, and distribute us according to definite arrangements of knowledge and power. They are everywhere. Not just in schools, and not just in the schooled, but out there in the world. From the judicial system to contemporary sexual relations our imagination of the solution to a social problem is often conceived as scholastic: re-education, training programs, a course on dangerous driving, or a workshop on sexual consent. One can almost imagine a society in which there is no life, only the training for life, which, taking such an extended duration, ends up taking it entirely. In sport and dance and performance arts with a degree of rationalisation and coherence a perfectly completed action is considered “textbook”. In politics and business we are instructed to always look for lessons, to learn our lessons, and when we do not we are chastised for failing to learn, failing to look. Maybe we are sent on an intensive program. A lesson on learning lessons.

The imagination of the school becomes further an instrument of refutation, as when we fail or struggle and are blamed for not learning our lessons. It even becomes a material violence, as when the bald guy sometime before smashing a bloke’s head to bloody pulp says “I’m going to teach him a lesson,” or, in the past tense, as when the guy is dragged away from the writhing body on the floor by his friends and feigns mercy as he shrugs them off saying: “I think he has learnt his lesson.” It even forms a part of our identity and a plane of socialisation: “what school did you go to?” And how we like to talk about it. And how we like to remember. And how some of us —poor, sorry souls— like to think of it as the best time of our lives.

What is obvious, then, is that the school is not contained within itself. It seeps into the deepest vestiges of our imaginary. Following the excluded we leave the school, carrying it within us, only to encounter it again. The school is not a phase, a qualification, or a hurdle. It is not something you complete and then leave behind. It is a mood surrounding, an atmosphere enclosing, and a series of elements within, our everyday lives. In coming so close to the materiality of the school, to the school in its micro practice, we re-emerge, still in the school, still with the school, but on the outside, past the barbed wire fence.

Remarks

We set out to undertake a critique of positivity but ended up (re)producing it. This critique proved positive in ten senses.

First, in the positivity of a problem: of a series of limits that beset the works of Michel Foucault and those studies in the School of Governmentality which takes these works as their foundation. Limitations tirelessly repeated and without resolution or passage to an outside. Leading necessarily to an aporia in the being of thought and an aporia in the being of action.

Second, in the positivity of a movement until now unexplained, between the History of Sexuality Volume I and the History of Sexuality Volume II, and in the centrality of the

critique of Baudrillard in making sense of this movement: its passage beyond the limitations identified in the first, opening up onto new horizons.

Third, in the positivity of a negative critique of seduction as counterpoint to the obscurity of power and in the positivity of its refusal by contemporaries, institutions, disciplines, schools, indeed everyone, except its object.

Fourth, in the positivity of a text that was made to speak, compelled to speak and reveal its secret (at the risk of its disappearance), and to a new arena of positivities that follow: alethurgy, or the ritual production of truth through dramatisation or staging, where truth is made to appear dazzling against the background of the unknown.

Fifth, in the positivity of consequence, of a series of methodological imperatives and of the questions ever unravelling: how is it that we become bound to an order of truth, fixed to a regime of conduct, and made subject to definite arrangements of knowledge and power? Or, how is it that we do not? And what kinds of persons are formed in the margins? The fashioning of tools then. Praemeditatio of a malady.

Sixth, in the positivity of a school, an archipelago of attachment, where a whole army of practitioners struggle to subjectify their students to the truth of the test and the discipline of the examination.

Seventh, in the positivity of a system of assessment and accountability, performance based learning, and the consequences for (the) class that follow: enclosure in a structure

of assessment; enclosure within a structure of learning; a positively dead knowledge; the introduction of new elements in the game of class struggle; and the repositioning of discipline as the effectively examined object. Wither meritocracy.

Eighth, in the positivity of a culture of discipline, of new circuits of monitoring, evaluation, assessment, and sequestration, and the dispersal of its vestiges in tatters, whose random elaboration frustrates an enumeration of its forms, producing the disorder it was supposed to attenuate both as unintentional but necessary consequence and also as handle, grasp or clutch for the founding of pedagogic authority.

Ninth, in the positivity of sacrifice and the removal of the recalcitrant in the form of exclusion; in the compulsion of gift obligations and the potlatch of the gift not returned.

Finally, tenth, beyond the barbed wire fence, in the positivity of an atmosphere or a mood in which the school is within us, around us, beyond us, and never so far away.

So much for positivity.... For the obscenity of an overbearing presence. Let us follow our paradox, act out our tragedy, and materialise a fantasy ecstatic as delirium. After all this positivity let us ask: what might the world look like without the school?

Would young boys jump over ticket barriers in the middle of the afternoon and in spite of the rush hour traffic?

Would gangs roam the streets their faces covered with stylised bandanas?

Would literacy drop; numeracy decline; skills vanish; discipline evaporate; and the companies that demand this abscond to a different locale where the school still reigns supreme?

Would politics forsake itself to ignorance and celebrity?

Would we get sick sooner and die earlier?

Would growth be stalled or aborted?

Would we be able to turn the lights on; would we have electricity; would people still get out of bed at six o'clock in the morning?

Would morals be cast asunder?

Would cultures balkanise and nations fragment?

Or.

Would children, unleashed, flourish?

Would we see kids again playing hopscotch on the street?

Would public spaces be repossessed? Would new meaning and new life flood into and repurpose our hyper-political spaces of normative consumption?

Would forms of lateral organisation, collectivism and care emerge amongst youngsters no longer forced to face off against each other like dogs in a ring?

Would the world have to slow down, breath, and laugh again?

Would politics explode onto the street?

Would there be protest, rebellion, revolution, or would the young unleashed slip even further into the neoliberal web?

Much depends on how you view the old cliché: the school exists to protect children from the harsh realities of the world. No, I say, the school exists to protect the world from the harsh realities of children.

THE SCHOOL MUST BE ABOLISHED!

This being unlikely, let us make some suggestions for a positive policy on education:

1. The abandonment of the curriculum.
2. The end of continuous assessment.
3. The dissolution of all management structures.
4. The removal of any teacher uncomfortable with this.
5. The implementation of a learner's democracy.
6. The reinstatement of drama, the arts, exploration, and adventure, as centre points and not luxurious subsidiaries.
7. The end of compulsory schooling and its reconfiguration into a voluntaristic model responsive to the needs and challenges our world presents us; not when the world demands of us, but when we demand of the world.

Let there be joy. Let there be laughter. Cut off the branch, and let it fall.

Afterword

A few months after I had finished my fieldwork I was on a bus to Walthamstow when I felt a hand on my shoulder. It was one of my old students. He didn't get the football contract he wanted and he hadn't gone to college. 'School's dead fam', he reminded me. I asked him what he was up to, what he was going to do, and he didn't really know... Kick about, sell some drugs, hustle. I was laughing at how easy he was taking it all when I heard my stop on the speaker. I gave him a nod as I turned to walk down the stairs and the young lad shouted to me:

'Eh Sir, remember when you asked me to write that letter?'

'What letter?'

'You know, to apologise to the club; for homework.'

"What of it?"

He looks at me with the brightest smile and those dancing, radiant, mischievous eyes...

"Well I never done it eh!"

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