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Abstract

This dialogue uses Fred Moten and Stefano Harney's writings on the "undercommons" as a launching point to discuss our experiences with navigating the neoliberal university. From within our respective institutional contexts, we explore what it means to be a "dodgy scholar," one who maintains just enough credibility within the system to subvert its purposes and boundaries. We raise questions, for ourselves and for our readers, seeking to engage with public scholarship in an era of precarity. We ask: How are we claiming the politics and experiences of hybrid spaces for ourselves? How does care-based organizing challenge the neoliberal university? How do we draw connections between our academic life experiences and the academy as a whole? And how might we reclaim and resist the cooptation of language and strategies built out of liberation movements by counter-publics? We conclude by asking how we, as a collective, may inform this engagement further.

The undercommons is not a realm where we rebel and we create critique; it is not a place where we "take arms against a sea of troubles/and by opposing end them." The undercommons is a space and time which is always here . . . our goal . . . is not to end the troubles but to end the world that created those particular troubles as the ones that must be opposed. (Harney and Moten 2013, 9)

We are cultural workers, public scholars, and community organizers in the academy. Our backgrounds, precarities, and roles are overlapping yet distinct. We are placing these roles in conversation with each other to inspire new approaches to institution building. Our common launching point for this piece is Fred Moten and Stefano Harney's essay entitled "The University and the Undercommons" (2004), as included within and connected to their book *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study* (Harney and Moten 2013). In these writings, Moten and Harney explain the role and value of radical scholarship through the notion of the "undercommons." Rather than a set of identities that have historically been denied full participation in higher education, the undercommons is a set of practices and an orientation towards power. For the authors, the relationship between the undercommons and the university is one of criminality, and not simply critique.¹ This criminal relationship defines the work of those who are part of the undercommons, delineating a network "where subversive intellectuals engage both the university and fugitivity" (Harney and Moten 2013, 9).²

Why do Harney and Moten believe that our relationship to the university must be criminal? One aspect that they confront about the current university is its deep roots in the exploitation of labor and everyday life, and the continuation of that exploitation in an age of surveillance and neoliberalism. The growth of the administrative class, the atomization of knowledge, the efficiency-centered intervention in every aspect of the daily lives of those

who slip in and out of its bounds—this is the neoliberal university that we have to confront as scholars and workers in the academy today. To rupture that system is to be criminal in the eyes of administrative power, which often defines the rights and actions of its scholars, staff, and students. Against these conventions, the authors call for us to embrace our titles as “unprofessional, uncollegial” workers.

But what about those of us who must balance rupturing with continued existence? What does it mean to disrupt an institutional system, and at the same time, work on its frayed edges to rebuild that system? The tightrope walk of a subversive scholar is in the details, and it is these details that we bring to the fore as “dodgy” scholars. In our various precarities, we explore what it means to be dodgy, or shifty, but still “respectable” enough to stay within the institution and call this community our own.

In this dialogue, we layer the undercommons with our individual lived experiences and ask what might it mean to be hyper-visible or invisible in our collaborative, committed, and transformative university work; how the question of visibility shapes our current practices and perspectives; and how the same question might introduce new ways of developing not just a society of scholar activists, teachers, and hybrid professionals, but also a richer commons which sees a subverting of these troubles in our everyday lives. In this dialogue, we ask ourselves, and you, four guiding questions which shape our projects, hopes, and struggles. And we conclude by asking ourselves, and you, again: How may we collectively inform this engagement further?

How are we claiming the politics and experiences of hybrid spaces for ourselves?

Kush Towards the end of last year, I found myself returning to two feminists. Reading bell hooks and her classic, *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist, Thinking Black* (1989), had been a powerful reminder of the predicaments of higher education. I was amazed at how hooks, a prolific scholar, was also the one who showed us the limits of academic language in bringing us closer to our homes and communities. Reading Alice Walker and her influential *In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose* (1984) had served as an important call for connecting the legacies of women who came before us to our own work. I remained inspired by how Walker, a brilliant poet, centered her narratives on the extraordinary creativity that her mother—our mothers—brings to ordinary environments without recognition or support.

Through a series of intimate reflections, hooks calls upon radical scholars to confront the expectations of standard language and behavior within the academy; expectations that flatten out the lived contradictions of class, gender, and education among marginalized groups, distancing us from our backgrounds. Through essays written between 1966 and 1982, Walker asks her readers to reflect on how our individual subject positions constitute and are constituted by our connections to land and community. Recollecting her mother's garden in Georgia, she talks about the artistry of keeping alive the Black mothers' legacy of change from within those connections.

Both texts felt like a good place to start my undergraduate winter seminar on politics and agency in Detroit's community gardens; to locate our classroom at the intersection of histories, languages, and knowledges drawn from and tied to everyday lives; and to bridge our professional and personal biographies towards delineating a hybrid, middle ground. A hybrid, indeed, of connections, movement, discomfort, and joy.

My hybridity is this experience, this struggle with questions of how one might describe their bridge-building work on campus whilst also shaping that work through connections with community and kin. My hybridity is this ideal, this commitment to name and account for the language and privilege differences across class and geography lest our work reproduce the conventional boundaries of knowledge and power. My hybridity is this

conversation, this movement to reclaim care, accountability, and empowerment as bridging features of our collaborative work so that it can have shared visibilities and shared legacies.

As I settle into my new role as Digital Pedagogy Librarian, I find myself asking how the library might serve as a critical bridging institution for public scholarship and community-engaged practices whilst advancing the ethics and politics of care across cultural and digital divides. Equally, and quite like the end of last year, I find myself returning to one other feminist, my mother, who resides in India and whose anti-patriarchy and familial reorganizing principles continue to inform and inspire my academic work. For, as Walker concludes so powerfully, “the truest answer to a question that really matters can be found very close” (1984, 238).

Blu The politics and experiences of hybrid spaces have to be built—hewn from systems of power. Reflecting on this question in my own life, the balance between activist organizer and scholar has always meant fighting with the intent, not to lose per se, but with the recognition that I may not ever see the fruits of my actions. It means recognizing and acting with an intention that sees the university as a coalescing site of power—power than can be gathered up and distributed beyond its intended network.

For me then, I have experienced hybrid spaces built out of a contentious and fraught relationship with the university, with its knowledges, practices, and administration. But while I, as a Black trans person in the university suffering with mental illness and economic precarity, am situated in an oppositional way to the university—and have struggled to stay within its bounds—I also claim this hybrid space as a place of privilege which should always/already be disrupted; that the goal of my work as an activist scholar should be the erasure of my role as arbiter of knowledge—to be self-consciously disrupting the university through every pedagogical and organizing act.

Two central ways I’ve hewn this space for myself is the development of Black Space, a teach-in series oriented towards the education of community scholars—breaking down the binary walls between the university and the community. Within the tradition of the undercommons, Black Space is meant to bring together the undercurrents of the university—its laborers, its homeless students, its exploited and marginalized scholars—to share both knowledge and material resources. In Black Space, we share not only knowledge and expertise in political ways, but we bring together a set of credentials (in their various forms, including library and pdf/journal access) as well as collectively sharing monetary resources we’ve taken from the university.

One other way I’ve hewn space for myself within the university has been through my work as a labor organizer and in particular my work on disarming campus police across the University of California system. Bringing to bear both my expertise as a sociologist and researcher and my knowledge of escalation, contracts, and grassroots organizing I’ve sought to carve away the disciplining, armed, and deadly aspects of the university.

How does care-based organizing challenge the neoliberal university?

Blu Care-based organizing prioritizes the relational aspect of our work. Assata Shakur encapsulates the necessity of care-based organizing: “It is our duty to fight for our freedom. It is our duty to win. We must love each other and support each other. We have nothing to lose but our chains” (2001). Without care, there can be no ongoing struggle. This form of organizing recognizes the necessity of building energy and capacity through radical decentralized work, which is oriented toward creating the world we hope to see as we

organize to manifest that world. It fundamentally stands at odds with organizing and scholarship focused on meeting an end goal at any cost (material, spiritual, or emotional). It's this framework of care that the university hopes to strip from our organizing spaces.

The neoliberal university which confronts us today, in our capacities as scholars and organizers, is meant to exhaust us after it has fed on our energies and capacities. We are encouraged to join the ranks of the administrative class, to police ourselves and others, to serve as surveillance devices, and to do this all in the hope of making change for our communities. One way in which the university has become parasitic, draining our communities of care, has been its development of "feedback" mechanisms which incorporate activist organizers and scholars within its structure, pulling them from their embedded work within their communities.

A particularly apt example which comes to mind was my time on the Chancellor's Student Advisory Committee on Sexual Assault Prevention. This committee spent a year providing feedback to administrators about the various interventions needed on our campus. After all that time, not a single plan was implemented. The committee was good PR for a university which had been outed to the public for flagrant issues of sexual violence. Used to dissuade from critical attention by propping up token individuals, this committee represents a broader administrative model which incorporates the voices of everyone while doing little to decentralize the power (and material wealth) held in the hands of the few. It also pits folks officially designated to provide feedback against those who would challenge the system, erecting a buffer zone between the operators of power and the community which they exploit.

The neoliberal university is also engaged in alienating marginalized scholars and organizers from their original communities of care. In attending the university we are supposed to feel "elected," exceptional individuals who have managed to escape the "crab barrel" of poverty and exclusion, and have now been welcomed into the bosom of a new life because we've made "the right decisions." This alienation aids in the university's production of knowledge and exploitation—our choice to attend becomes the reason we should produce at extraordinary capacities while also doing an enormous amount of community work.

Organizers and scholars who are brought into this system on the promise of programmatic and systemic change are then held responsible for making their vision a reality—on their own, with little support—and it's this understaffed and overworked ethos which dominates the areas into which university organizers and activist scholars are funneled. When they fail to make the changes organizers hoped for at the outset, the university can then argue that such programs or such institutional changes are simply "impractical."

Kush Throughout graduate school, I held academic-administrative fellowships with Arts of Citizenship, a campus-wide program in public scholarship and community engagement at the University of Michigan. On the one hand, these fellowships allowed me to extend my education in architecture and the humanities, and to develop cocurricular initiatives for graduate students along participatory lines. On the other hand, they helped foster an intergenerational community of learners across campus through public scholarship events and peer-based intensives. The collective strength of this network, however, was most visible two years ago when questions about the program's relevance for students' career development within the graduate school were abruptly raised. A potential budgetary concern aside, there was no known plan to evaluate the program. I speak about this moment here in some detail because I consider the collective action that followed to be one of the most inspiring manifestations of care-based organizing, deeply rooted in the belief and ethic of higher education as a public good.

Arts of Citizenship began at the University of Michigan in 1998 in order to establish mutually beneficial connections between the academic and nonacademic communities through arts and humanities projects. After becoming a program of the graduate school in 2010, it widened its curricular scope by integrating the social

science and STEM fields, and offering graduate students a much wider set of grants- and internship-based opportunities to strengthen their capacities in community-engaged research, critique, and pedagogy.

Within a few hours of learning about the program's uncertainty, we—students and alumni—collaboratively drafted an open letter addressed to the administration with a request to include our voice and representation in the review process. The ask was simple, but the comprehensiveness of its content as well as the show of solidarity from more than 100 individuals from around the country who contributed to and signed the letter were exemplary. The letter detailed the individual and collective impact of the program on our scholarship and career visions since its inception and subsequent transition into the graduate school. The letter explained the importance of maintaining and developing this program in order to ensure equity and access for historically underrepresented and marginalized students on campus. The letter evidenced how this training was critical to understanding our labor and political work as publicly engaged scholars, teachers, and practitioners. The letter described the program as an important leader and partner among a network of graduate-level national and international efforts, and equally, as a commons for students to build community and to avail supportive opportunities more widely. Most importantly, the letter demonstrated a commitment on the part of students and alumni to the project of co-building and co-owning a robust public scholarship and community-engagement program that actively contributes to the promise and mission of a public university.

The concerns around the program's future ended, but what preceded this moment and what has continued since is the organizing efforts of students and allied staff in supporting wider public scholarship activities on campus. From engaged-pedagogy syllabus-writing workshops and teach-ins on campus activism to community story circles and curricular interventions, students and staff have actively tied the conversations on public scholarship and community engagement to an analysis of institutional power and history. The Equitable Research in Flint Organizing Committee was one such initiative asking the university to ground their response to the Flint water crisis in community efforts. Whether explicitly or implicitly, many of these actions make visible the structural inequalities in campus-community engagements. Together, we aim to disrupt the atomizing logics of a neoliberal university by reclaiming solidarity and citizenship building as the defining core of who we are, what we do, and how we produce new knowledge.

How do we draw connections between our academic life experiences and the academy as a whole—moving beyond understanding identity, towards understanding the structures that produce difference—so as to make visible our agency and collective power building?

Kush Being queer, South Asian, and first in my family to seek out a hybrid feminist space within academia, I find myself constantly grappling with ethical questions of how one might teach, learn, and talk about public scholarship, community engagement, and digital pedagogy in such unequal contexts of race, class, gender, ability, and geographical difference. Positionality matters, particularly for those of us in hybrid academic roles that are viewed as “service” or “support” professions without any transformative capacity. My work in the academy challenges this convention by structuring this hybridity around what may be referred to as “citizenship praxis”: how might we create spaces for histories, activisms, and community engagements to be shared, experienced, and preserved along ethical and inclusive lines? How might we connect with wider groups and spaces, implicate our respective backgrounds in the structuring of our values and pedagogies, and create openings for richer possibilities of shared principles to manifest across institutional boundaries?

Connection, care, critique, and capacity building are key in the political aspect of this role. As Digital Pedagogy Librarian, I teach and support the development of community-engaged academic courses around feminist principles and methodologies to critique disparities in power and privilege not just at the intersection of

technology and gender, but also between nonacademic and academic groups. I partner with colleagues in the library and on-campus public scholarship units to develop digital and public humanities learning opportunities for students, researchers, and faculty; and I consult with them on digital-storytelling and public-archiving projects to connect the what and how of digital platforms to the locations and communities of digital engagements. My recent workshop on Digital Oral History and Community-Engaged Learning, for example, positioned oral history as a form of reflection to enable students to build self-awareness across power and privilege difference. Another collaborative workshop on Teaching with Podcasts discussed podcasting in terms of deep listening, guiding participants to embrace voice and practice “writing for the ear.” In a third session on Teaching with Wikipedia, my colleague and I talked about the politics and ethics of public writing, so that instructors can examine both risks and opportunities of having students add underrepresented stories to this online encyclopedia. In each of these roles, I remain committed to coproducing values-based propositions that personalize the narratives around public scholarship and digital pedagogical work so that we may act on lived experiential, structural, and epistemological levels.

Imagining America’s Publicly Active Graduate Education (PAGE) Fellows program is one other venue where this hybridity and collective power building practice come into being. As a former fellow and current codirector of this national network, I work with fellows and colleagues to develop capacity-building webinars that help us examine the relationships between knowledge and power specific to the communities in which we work. Collaboratively, I also develop and implement care-based programmatic visions that bring the critical, creative, and intersectional work of the fellows and their community partners into being. PAGE allows us to be bold in our connections to engaged scholarship and pedagogy, in our challenges to institutional hierarchies, in our resistances to oppressive policies, and in our commitments to each other. PAGE brings together those of us who may otherwise feel inadequate in academia due to sexist, racist, ethnic, ableist, or heteronormative exclusions. PAGE makes real for many of us the inspiring words of Adrienne Rich: “There must be those among whom we can sit down and weep and still be counted as warriors” (1983).

Blu As a public sociologist, I have seen the neoliberal university take the concept of identity and use it to cement administrative control by treating students as populations. They naturalize difference by treating marginalized students—Black students, queer students, trans students, and the like—as discrete and monolithic groups. This formulation of identity allows them to exercise power in two main ways: the first as a matter of expanding administrative size and the second as a tool to displace social issues onto populations rather than on those who govern. By failing to look at identities as structured—as not existing outside of the social and material structures which produce them—identities become reified and treated as both source of and end to social conflict. In other words, something to be managed. An example: When a Black woman was attacked on our campus by white men and the Black community (rightly) decided to take action, the community and not the attackers were seen as the source of the problem by our administration. Not white supremacy, not misogyny, not any of the structuring factors which colluded to make this event happen (and make the university functional)—in essence, it was a moment of bad PR. The only way to manage this kind of event, for neoliberal administrators, is to increase administrative services *and not to ask what root processes are at work in such an event which might reflect a closely held value of the normative university.*

How can organizer scholars intervene in this process, and make visible our agency and collective power building? How can we sidestep the kind of administrative violence faced by Black students in my last example? One of the key benefits of being a scholar is being trained in critical methodologies of knowledge production. It means, in my case, explaining to a board of administrators who are trying to manage a student worker movement that the students in the room have been educated about neoliberalism, that they know the tactics employed by that system, and that the tactics developed to handle students—by leveraging identities—is not enough to handle a group of people who have developed a set of critical competencies about the social and historical worlds in which they live. Many of those students work multiple jobs, some are close to (or are)

homeless, some are newly arrived on campus—and yet they have developed a network of education informed by scholars in their midst and are able to teach and replicate that knowledge. It is our duty as scholars to embed ourselves in those networks, and it is our job as scholars to develop the longitudinal archive and history of our institutions. We must remember the tactics and strategies of those who have come before us—the #BlackUnderAttack movement, the Occupy UC Davis movement, the #FireKatehi sit-in, the Ethnic Studies Hunger Strikes—so that in each iteration of our organizing spaces we move toward a fugitive and subversive political frame.

How might we reclaim and resist the co-optation of language and strategies built out of liberation movements by counter-publics?

I Blu Identity has been co-opted. Free speech has been co-opted. So much of the language of liberation, developed out of anti-colonial, anti-racist, anti-patriarchal struggles, has been co-opted. As a scholar studying fascism and the far right, I have watched as the language and strategies of liberation movements have been leveraged by reemergent fascist and white nationalist organizations both on my campus and across the nation. These far-right counter-publics are constituted by a rejection of normative publics and an assertion of a new kind of public—one in which genocide, white nationalism, and xenophobia are not only acceptable but also a valid intellectual and ethical position. At the heart of this co-optation and contestation is the university. Groups like Identity Europa (a homegrown, Californian white supremacist organization) have actively identified the need to win over college students as a process of “rebranding.” Their goal is to make racism, sexism, and xenophobia look cool—the position held by those “in the know.” In fact, they view college campuses as an essential part of the ideological and discursive future of America because from these centers of knowledge production it is possible to seed far-right conceptions of the public far and wide.

To reclaim and resist the co-optation of the language and tactics of liberation, as scholars and organizers, requires a twofold intervention. The first is that we have to avoid only utilizing the liberation language and tactics which are amenable to the neoliberal university. As I spoke of earlier, the university itself is built on similar historical systems—if not the same logics—as the fascism and white supremacy it ostensibly rejects. A number of public scholars have found themselves supporting the administrative policies of the university when confronted by the reality of social unrest arising between, say, anti-fascist and fascist actors. Understanding how the public is constructed within the university, and how its purpose is often control rather than justice, we have to ask how our legitimacy as scholars and our methodologies should always be confronted by the question of justice first and foremost.

The second intervention is to recognize the field of power which is acting on the broader social fabric. The society we live in is grounded in a set of historical and material realities, ones which clearly identify the ways in which whiteness, colonialism, and other practices of domination have placed some at the top of our social hierarchy and others within the growing group of exploited peoples. One of the key ways in which far-right demagogues have co-opted the language of liberation movements has been to suppose (in pseudoscientific ways) a revisionist history of the world, which places all groups on an equal playing field. In doing so they can claim they are yet another “identity group” which is fighting for its place in the world. This shift towards “identitarian” white supremacy and fascism has to be seen as an analysis devoid not only of power *but fundamentally of historical accuracy*. It is our job as public scholars to intervene in this revisionist process.

Kush Citizenship: It is a term which induces anxiety, fear, and entitlement in circles that perceive immigration and multicultural politics as threats to bounded national identities. It is also a term that signals hope, belonging, and resistance within communities that are organizing to subvert prejudicial borders and colonial violence through collaborative knowledge making at the grassroots and institutional levels. My university lives on the territories of the Three Fire Peoples—the Ojibwe, Odawa, and Bodewadmi. In my hybrid academic role, I am mindful of our institution's settler colonial histories and keep alive the question of citizenship beyond its individualistic, alienating, and colonizing definition, or what the cultural historian David Scobey calls an "identity-marking function" (2001, 18). In my academic commitments, I extend the notion of citizenship to thinking about how we may responsibly work on these territories, to how we understand community struggles and institutional complicities, and to how we produce transformative public and digital scholarship. There is a growing roster of community-centered scholarly and digital-pedagogy projects, for example, that are collaborating with the efforts of organizers, activists, and thinkers in nurturing and practicing engaged citizenship through classroom learning. My work is located in this realm of developing and supporting engaged, participatory practices with students and faculty. My commitments are grounded in this collaborative higher education praxis. These frameworks, I argue, allow for the collective rebuilding of campus-community spaces, for their grounding in the knowledges of Indigenous rights, civil rights, women's rights, and queer rights histories, and equally in the active, everyday architectures of community ethics and duties.

Consider the work of Chicana feminist, activist, and academic Maria Coter. Her courses on Latina Practices of Oral History at the University of Michigan are part of an extensive digital archiving project called *Chicana por mi Raza*, set up in partnership with Chicana filmmaker Linda Garcia Merchant (Coter and Merchant 2018). Through field research and teaching, Coter, Merchant, and their students produced oral histories, recovered personal documents from homes and social spaces around the country, and built an open and accessible national archive, "liberating" it for wider cultural use. Consider also the work of historians, researchers, and teachers Rebecca S. Wingo and Amy C. Sullivan at Macalester College. Their *Remembering Rondo | History Harvest* project (Wingo and Sullivan 2016) aimed at "democratizing" the archives of African American histories in the Rondo neighborhood of St. Paul, Minnesota, by integrating oral and digital history methodology into the goals of undergraduate curriculum and campus-community engagements. In this project, local communities, with assistance from students, not only documented and preserved their own archives, but also served as agents in establishing guidelines on how those stories might be disseminated broadly.

My work is in conversation with such projects of knowledge- and institution-building. My citizenship praxis grows from my intellectual connections with scholars like Coter and Wingo; with my students, university, and *Imagining America* colleagues; and equally through my ground-up engagements with communities and lived histories in southeastern Michigan. It is within and through these overlapping and interconnected networks of mutuality and care that I demonstrate my citizenship and resist the racist and anti-immigrant languages and biases as far as possible, even as those languages and biases try to co-opt and reproduce themselves on our campuses.

How are we inviting others into this dialogue?

Kush How might we work together and enrich this conversation on labor in education and teaching even further? What current institutional and contextual structures enable or limit you to claim and fully realize your own hybrid roles and subversive commitments? What might it mean to make visible your personal backgrounds in academic biographies? We would like to call on administrators, faculty members, students, librarians, staff of community centers and organizations, and all academic hybrid professionals who work in public life to sharpen the starting points of your engagements with communities; to structure them around explicit

democratic values; to commit programs and pedagogies to the values of equity and inclusion, and equally to the politics of collaboration, labor, precarity, and publicly engaged scholarship. The concept of dodgy academic work is our response to the specific circumstances in which we find ourselves as emerging professionals, negotiating our precariousness in the academy whilst still holding on to its promise for change.

With other PAGE codirectors, I would also like to use this opportunity to invite everyone to our summit at the annual conference of Imagining America in October 2018. This year marks the 15th anniversary of PAGE and we want to build upon the long-standing tradition of political and public exchanges within IA, as well as the community sphere at large. We want to talk about our labor in academic and professional careers and we want to extend the project of Imagining America to the praxis of activating the undercommons. We want to make this conversation collaborative and have each participant bring their unique disciplinary and place-based positionality, and together we will reflect on and coauthor the many lives of our shared purpose. Please join us!

Blu We are only two voices within this discussion. As we have worked our way through these questions, starting with the personal and ending with the large web and weave of social life, we should also be thinking about what it means to “build the undercommons” as Moten discusses. We’ve led you through our own examinations of dodgy scholarship—of living in real and meaningful ways both within and beyond the university. In what ways would you answer these questions? What processes have you seen on your campus which challenge you as both an organizer and as a scholar? We’ve chosen this structure to facilitate our thinking and encourage you to take it, use it, transform it, in whatever way necessary to challenge the twin dangers of the neoliberal university and the larger shift towards explicit and approved of structures of violence.

As you work through these questions, I’d also invite you to translate scholarly reflection into practice. One of the strategies I have engaged in was the building of freedom schools and “Black Study” spaces, working with other universities to build an undercommons through and beyond the university. I invite you to do the same. I also invite you to take concrete steps to apply your scholarly power to disrupt the media cycle which tries, ever more successfully, to frame all opinions and positions as equal. The only way in which we can live in a world of “fake news” is when we cannot distinguish between the demagogues and the informed positions of scholars. What knowledge do you have on the social issues of our time? How might we confront these issues with a new sense of commons, with rigorous knowledge, and an implacable sense of justice?

Notes

1 Harney and Moten explore the concept of the criminal in particular ways: “To enter this space [the undercommons] is to inhabit the ruptural and enraptured disclosure of the commons that fugitive enlightenment enacts, the criminal, matricidal, queer, in the cistern, on the troll of the stolen life, the life stolen by enlightenment and stolen back, where the commons give refuge, where the refuge gives commons” (2013, 28).

2 For Harney and Moten, the notion of fugitivity is at once a desire to refuse and flee the imposed and singular conditions of scholarship and conduct within the neoliberal academy. We find this concept both intriguing and unsettling, particularly in thinking about the conditions and circumstances through which one might become, what they further call, “unfit for subjection” (2013, 9, 28).

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