



Fate work: A conversation*

Valentina Desideri and Stefano Harney

In April 2011, Valentina Desideri and Stefano Harney met at the Spring Seminars of the Performance Art Forum (PAF) in St Erme, France. Desideri, a dancer and performance artist, and Harney a university professor in strategy, shared an interest in the work of Suely Rolnick and Lygia Clark. Desideri and Harney began a collaboration at PAF that would see them present new material at the *ephemera* Conference in Berlin on Free Work in May, 2011, and that would continue with an intense collaborative conversation over the next few months, some of which is presented here. Both Desideri and Harney felt that the techniques and strategies in their respective fields now stood before a high wall, and it was necessary to shift attention to new forms of life altogether if performance and teaching were to float beyond this wall. In particular, they suggest it is not sufficient just to register the way work dominates both daily life and art making. Rather, it is possible to experiment with new practices that embraced the forces of fate and complicity around us. The conversation on ‘fate work’ that follows is part of an exploration into this complicit fate and the way it opens up a new form of life.

Stefano Harney (SH): Let’s propose that what we are calling ‘fate work’ arises as a potential practice in the face of the way work today is said to determine our lives. It is very common in the scholarship on work today to say that no matter how we try to strategise our way out of capitalist work in favour of other forms of working together differently, in favour of another world being possible, being present, we find that the regime of work uses this strategy of resistance against us. So if we criticise capitalist work, this regime makes it cool to be cynical about

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work at work. Or if we seek meaning away from work, this regime invites us to find meaning, find authenticity, at work. If we seek other ways to live cultural or sexual difference, this regime encourages us to bring this difference to work, to put it to work. Let's call this 'work fate'. This kind of work fate is notoriously the one found in the Boltanski and Chiapello (2007) book, *The new spirit of capitalism*, but also the one that dominates critical management studies. This work fate also leads of course to the strategy of trying to escape work through entrepreneurship or financial investment. But in either case, the case of resistance or the fantasy of escape through 'embracing your dreams', what work fate provokes is strategy. And what strategy proposes is that the future can be determined now, that it can be, whether good or bad, whether another world or more of this one, made singular and worked toward, predicted, managed, hedged. And it is not just the fantasist who strategises. He who resists also tends to resist strategically. This is perhaps because work fate appears to us so obviously now as a strategy deployed against us, all of us, and all parts of our lives, that it provokes in us this strategic reflex, a strategic reaction, this tendency to want to fix the future in both senses of the word fix. Knowing we are strategised we nonetheless try to strategise our way out.

Valentina Desideri (VD): Maybe that's because the future has fixed us, or better our current relation to the future has fixed our notion of work. Under capitalism the future is an open field ahead of us that we can shape and construct through our work. Since we're condemned to have a future, we're condemned to work, and at the same time, if you are condemned to work, you are condemned to have a future. So if you want to realize your dreams you have to work (always assuming that those dreams are something that belong to a future scenario and not the present one). If you want to avoid work, you have to work as hard because you have to find a way, you have to have a plan, a strategy. Whatever you choose you will be working and you will be acting strategically, towards a goal and therefore you'll be productive. In order to change this dominant fate that wants to control the future, and therefore stay in the realm of the known, you have to sabotage this double machine of work and future so that it stops functioning for a while and that a space is opened up (a present) and later, the future will come. One way to sabotage can be to refuse strategy.

SH: Yes I agree and this raises immediately two questions. How would one refuse strategy or even as you say sabotage it? Is it possible given that we are ourselves so thoroughly strategized? And what would come to stand in the place of strategy, what would emerge? I think that we can say the question goes even beyond the governmentality of strategy and tactic, of individuals and populations, explored by Michel Foucault (2009). The question is also one of our very form of thinking. This thinking arises not just from the interventions of governmentality

but from our habit of abstract thought, a habit we inherit, as Alfred Sohn-Rethel (1978) puts it, from our practices with the commodity form, practices that have us acting as if abstraction comes before practices, before our materiality, abstractions that rule over our materiality. Strategy is possible only where this kind of reasoning reigns. It is an abstraction of the future that is then said to be put into practice, and it is for this same reason that 'in practice' strategy generally fails or has to be constructed afterwards as a story. This not to say that strategy does not strategise us, nor that this is a matter of ideology. It is there in our daily compulsions of work. But it can of course never deliver. So the thing to ask is, can we sabotage strategy by developing a practice that does not know the future ahead of time, but works at it nonetheless, which is to say, it is not without its own intention.

VD: Yes, strategy and intention are very different. To have a strategy is to have one fate or future we envision and that we try to realise, while to have an intention means to start from the present and stay there while the future anyway happens and fates (many) unfold. If for example we set an intention 'to work together' maybe we could just continue writing and see what it produces and how it happens. Maybe it means that we need to stay sharp and sensitive in recognizing the 'work' that emerges, in the present, rather than finding a way to produce the desired work. It's different from having a working method. A collaborative writing method in this case would be a strategy, an example of what we are naming work fate rather than fate work we are proposing. Fate work could be better understood as a practice, which of course can involve tools and specific ways of using them, but that are never prescriptive, they never guarantee any result and that ultimately let the writing (or any work) emerge from the actual doing of it. An intention is not some kind of wish for the future, on the contrary it operates and changes directly the present. The moment you set an intention of doing something you assume that in a way you are already doing that very thing, just have to find out how. This also mean that there is no right or wrong way of doing something, a more or less valid practice in principle, you can just experiment with them, but with no claim of truth or attachment to its results, visible and invisible ones. Thus to set an intention is to open up a space for practices that can be generative of different and multiple futures or fates in the present. In this proliferation, the truth claim of the right strategy is swept away. In a way it already works this way with strategy, since strategies keep failing and we keep trying them, only we always readjust the narrative at the end to make the experiment somehow succeed (or not succeed but according to known parameters).

SH: And bringing the future into the present has long been the ambition of the Left too, but at the same time this has been also a strategic move. It has too often

involved a programme, a leadership, a unity in the face of the future, a unified future, even if we can understand how these 'strategies' were provoked in response to the brutal abstractions of capitalism. But as you say, developing a practice that proliferates fates, generates futures, can perhaps cause the future to lose its authority, which is to say to lose its abstraction, to come into the present as sensation, as something susceptible to the senses and something that in turn works on those senses in the present. I mean this in the most concrete way. So let's think about popular fate work, because fate work goes on all the time even if the impulse in this popular fate work appears at first to work fate, to produce a new destiny, to replace pre-destination, or to find 'the truth' of the future. Let's think of the tarot card reader, the palm reader, the village seer, the one who throws the bones. Of course for each person who is read, this fate work is designed to secure, change, or see a fate, restore the future, but the constant practice of this fate work has the opposite effect. It produces more and more fates and even for the single person having her fate told, repeated readings generate fates rather than holding one steady. But more than that, there is a confusion that takes place in the reading of fates between determination and self-determination, a confusion that undermines strategy. What I mean by this is that strategy depends on a self-determined subject positing an abstract future and then overcoming the forms of determination that stand between him and the future, or in the case of much work fate, the positing of the impossibility of overcoming the forms of determination because strategy itself becomes 'strategised'. (Work fate we should remember can be as skeptical of strategy as we are, but for opposite reasons of course. As we have suggested it can use a kind of cynical anti-strategy without really exiting strategy or even embrace a true pessimism that fastens to one bad fate when it rejects strategy as inadequate to that very fate.) But when one accepts a tarot card, one immediately accepts that the self is part of a kind, a set, and at the same time, that determination has gone into the hands of the reader, becomes part of the practice of fate work. So we have a kind of undermining of the premises of strategy, a bit of sabotage. In other words, it seems in these popular practices the subject of strategy gives up his position, and determination also yields to a reading, to an interpretation that undetermines it.

VD: If the future loses authority, how can we then relate to social and political change? We cannot hope anymore in revolution since it heavily bets on change in the future (after the violent moment of revolt society will change, it often refers to the 'post-revolutionary society'). Now the idea of insurrection is pretty fashionable, the scenario of an irrational, non-organized, diverse explosion of violence against the system which will inevitably bring change, but why? How?

Although much less future-oriented than revolution, insurrection (this moment of almost pure revolt) is also expected to bring forth change as a result of the physical experiencing of it, almost as a moment of magical transformation. It is sure that to go out and smash things is an exciting, beautiful and healthy perspective, we should all do it starting from our own stuff (at least from time to time) but who would like to live in a completely chaotic world where violence reigns in the streets for more than a couple of days? Not even the ‘rioters’. And what kind of change will it bring apart from more, and now better justified, violent state repression? And here the question of working a proliferation of fates as opposed to having a strategy for the future is fundamental. Both revolution and insurrection are, even if in different ways, strategies for a future while fate work is to go for practices that will start to make us live differently now and violence is there to be used against anything that impedes us to do so – even against ourselves or the symbolic (and non-symbolic!) order to which we give authority – and not just indiscriminately, hoping that it will change us for the best, or at all. What it is to set an intention of radical change and just be busy with that, with practicing that now, instead of projecting it into the future? And I don’t mean only small, daily life-practices within your surrounding, you can go for big changes. I take the idea of wikileaks as an example: you want information to circulate free, so you make a website where information can be released, pretty simple.

But how do we start to live differently now? The sabotage we were mentioning earlier can be useful here. Mutual self-sabotage could be a practice to develop, a practice that is inherently complicitous as it has to be done with others (and other things – like a *sabot*) and that by interrupting the machines at work, creates unregulated time and space. In this way sabotage can be a way of practicing co-determination, of unsettling each other, thus opening oneself up to co-determination while becoming more perceptive, since in order to sabotage, you need to be able to perceive the rhythms of the machines at work. You need to become a present reader, a reader of these abstract machines, and you throw a shoe in the middle of them. So that many fates can open up.

SH: Yes I think one interesting result of fate work as co-determination is that it precludes the idea of a common fate in the future. To enter into fate work together means that what is common is what is now, not what will be in the future. In fact we could even say that it reverses the idea of a common future, starting from a common present and through co-determination makes different fates together, produces different fates, different futures in the present. In this sense co-determination in fate work could be understood as what Paolo Virno calls developing a philosophy of the preposition ‘between’ to understand human nature (Penzin, 2010). But for us, it is not just human nature or human fate. But

rather we start with what we call the practice of complicity, where the accomplice can be human for some complicities but non-human for others, and between the non-human too.

One way to think about complicity, about the way we are already in a 'conspiracy without a plot' with all around us and all in us, is through the reading accomplice. Not every reader of fate can be said to be an accomplice. Especially a reader who claims authority, does only one reading, or returns always to the same fate. Such a reader is not an accomplice. But the reader who reads new fates again and again, is read by and through new fates again and again, who through the sustained act of reading again and again offers a kind of love, love because this is the word for helping someone to make fates, to generate and proliferate fates. Such a complicity of love can do two things. It can help someone avoid the full mix of self-determination and determination that strategises every attempt at self-organisation today, that assaults every singularity. It does this because this love of the accomplice takes place in superabundance, even if from the edge, even out of sight. There is always a co-determination that prevents determination from becoming individual, and it is a co-determination not of reciprocity but of mutual superabundance. And such a complicity can also open someone to the depth and breadth of the conspiracies already under way amid her being, amid the beings in her midst. As such a practice unfolds, it is commonality in the present that is enriched, generated, and the future disappears as an obligation or authority, and yields to the difference of the present modes of living. Thus commonality in the present changes in the presence of the fates proliferated from it, or in other words the common is always becoming another common through fate work, through the self-organisation it permits, organisations of the common that may also be called fates in the present, accomplished by the proliferation of readings, of fate work.

VD: If we start from what we have in common now, one thing for example is debt, but politics continue to work fate on it. We have a present situation, debt, that has to be 'resolved' (always in the face of the future of course). Whatever the ideology or party, there is a future that politicians envision for which they are trying to find a strategy, be it the future vision of the debt repaid or the vision of the debt cancelled. How can it be approached differently? What's before debt and in debt? Can we be present readers and generate a proliferation of fates and practices that can allow us to be in debt experimenting with what it is, finding ways to practice debt, until one day, when it will be the future and things will be different?

SH: Right. In what ways would these kinds of readings make debt a mechanism for deepening co-determination? If debt is the way we are currently told we ought

to relate to each other in the future then to work the future into the many readings of fate in the present, to do fate work, makes debt into something present as mutual readings, brings debt and work back together in the service of commonality now, a commonality that is already here and with practice can allow for a co-determined proliferation of self-organisation, of fate work, of fates here in the present. I can never repay nor would anyone ask me to repay nor could anyone calculate a debt in the present, but to know that such debts prepare the way for more readings, more fates, is to know debt as co-determination, as the sabotage of the future, not its predetermination, not its strategic premise. This is what you and I mean, I think, by bad debt.

So we might say that the problem with popular fate work is not that it is based on superstition or that it has its own abstractions, and anyway whatever abstractions it has are less stable than in the proper realms of strategy. I think we would say that the problem of popular fate work is that it is not popular enough, that even here something equivalent to an anti-psychiatric movement is necessary such that popular fate work becomes open to all as readers as well as those being read, in the manner that you insist on for your practice of ‘political therapy’ for instance, where anyone can become a practitioner, a therapist. This possibility of expanded practice requires that the way readers are chosen, apprenticed and initiated be opened up. How could we provoke this possibility? For me, your practice of political therapy is so revelatory here in the way it confronts the realm of politics which after all overlaps the realm of strategy closely in both its abstractions, its intellectual history, and its hold on ‘self-determined subjects’.

VD: It’s possible to open up how the reader is chosen once the authority of the reader is undermined. I’m no political expert whatsoever, so political therapy only creates the possibility to develop other languages to talk about and do politics. There is no discipline, no specific theory behind it. It’s a practice that develops as it happens and continue happening, in between the people involved, the vocabulary used, the sensations, the experience it brings forth and so on. Neither the therapist nor the patient is responsible for any kind of ‘solution’ of the problem. The problem is rather treated as an occasion for language to develop, for speculation to happen and politics to be felt.

SH: Another aspect of your political therapy practice that is crucial is that like popular fate work, it happens between two. Your practice provokes the question of how readings might be multiplied both between two and among many. What this suggests is that we can never intend to practice fate work by ourselves, even if a change in something like ‘ourselves’ is what we look for in the opening to vulnerability produced by fate work. Not only is the proliferation of someone’s fate from the beginning a collective project but also that the presence of the other

in the fate of the one means the one is already not one, the self is not self to itself but shares a sense of a fate-making self with another self, to twist Catherine Malabou (Malabou and Vahanian, 2008) a bit, and in turn this other of the self is now also in the presence of the reader, not some unknowable other but the other who is in the midst of your proliferation of fates.

Of course in order for this not to be a kind of intrusion, and also in order for this not to remain a situation of strategy or managed risk, in other words, in order for it really to be a proliferation of fates that opens up through and to vulnerability, through and to the capacity to be affected by others, people and things, to be possessed by the many futures already present in others, it is necessary to sense that such an opening, such vulnerability will not lead only to a wound. So long as one feels vulnerability will lead only to a wound, strategy remains the main approach, and vulnerability is immediately converted back into risk, into a calculation about how not to be wounded.

But even here it is important to note that such a sense of vulnerability, as a capacity to be affected and to use these new affects to chart new cartographies as Sueley Rolnik (1989) puts it, even here it is necessary to say that an opening that leads to a wound could also be productive of these affects. But, it is naturally difficult to want to be wounded. And here is where we can perhaps return to the term self-sabotage. Because here there is the possibility to say, why do such a thing to yourself, a thing that sounds potentially violent?

VD: Because it's the only way to experience transformation and there is a specific joy to it that it's not concerned with something being good or bad. When you practice this opening of vulnerability you cannot judge if the situation you're opening to is good or bad, you really don't know because if you knew, you would go for the 'good' one and that's strategy. Instead the unstrategic opening of vulnerability allows us to sense the present differently, to perceive the potential fates in the present, to perform multiple readings. And from this very concrete practice other perception emerges, other thoughts, other realities, other politics and other futures.

SH: But we are left with the fact that even with all of the emerging potentialities, even with the proliferation of fate work, even with the potential we can sense from the obvious failures of strategy both economically and politically, even with the potential expansion of the fate work of migrancy, precarity, and even the numerous governance and governmentality failures to strategise subjects, evident in riots in Britain for instance, which were anti-strategic riots, many more still do not open up to vulnerability, do not self-sabotage, do not experience this joy coming from a fate work that transforms (even if perhaps more people do

than we acknowledge). I think this is because there is one more social relation, one more social capacity we have to talk about here. I think we can say that when an opening to vulnerability becomes evident, this is also because a certain safeness was available, a safeness in co-determination. I mean a certain kind of accomplice off to the side who provides the support for someone to enter into a set of readings, to open in this way. We could call this support from the side, from the accomplice, love. But we would have to add quickly that we know it as love only by the way it produces vulnerability in another, not in itself. It may be a friend, lover, even the reader, or some combination of these, or this complicity could be a family, or a collective, some kind of complicity we did not see at the time, though maybe we could sense some kind of invisible accomplice somewhere, some kind of accomplice providing this safeness that will allow for another to become unsafe. This is love but in this way love can only be known by what it generates, as what went on ‘off to the side’, making this opening to vulnerability possible.

VD: Yes maybe the riots in Britain can be an example of a kind of fate work: unstrategic action that opens up vulnerabilities and other fates. The rioting was not something that whoever took part in them could judge as good or bad, it sprang from a situation of vulnerability that exceeded itself. The kids that ‘rioted’ in London made themselves even more vulnerable, to further police violence and ridiculous prison sentences. In the lack of a future they started to disregard it all together and instead they took care of the present (even if the present is new shoes) and they opened up new fates. Maybe what was lacking then was the accomplice(s) on the side, the safeness you talk about, a way in which this vulnerability could have started to self-organize and proliferate rather than burst and discharge. But also the riots remind us that vulnerability is not necessarily linked to any specific aesthetic of weakness or passivity. To open up to vulnerability could very well mean to stay in a situation and ‘resist’.

SH: And this seems to bring us back in some ways to Catherine Malabou’s term plasticity, for a self that gets bent and twisted but at the same time can be very resistant, and I think what we are seeing in the face of strategy, of strategising, and in these riots is a failure to be able to deal with this very resistant vulnerability. We might call this staying a militant preservation. And this for me also brings us back to the realm of politics, not just the failed politics of government, but also Left politics, movement politics.

VD: By the time an organised movement would decide what to do in a situation of riots for example, the riots will be over.

SH: Yes they go straight to the strategy toolbox!

VD: 'I told you it was Chapter 3! No, not there!' But anyway, can politics become a kind of common space or just an available space where vulnerabilities can be opened, where large scale fate work can take place? A large-scale collective fate work that makes possible the recognition and the deepening of complicities, a kind of love as a political practice.

SH: Perhaps, but in many instances as we've said, Left politics seems as caught up in strategy, and in the management of risk, as any politics. Still there may be ways for something like strategy and risk in Left politics to give way to practices that can offer openings to many fates, openings to collective vulnerabilities let's say. So we might think about occupations, of universities, of squares, of squats, or of protests in detention centres, prisons and military bases. These occupations are not always strategic, some arise as with these riots quite specifically from the failure of strategy to strategize people, which is also an opening. But many are strategic, and they are specific about the risk, calculating about the outcome, even if they may include the utopian impulse of 'who knows what might happen' in the future of this occupation. But let's also remember why these occupations occur. It is because an intolerable settlement has been imposed, a settlement that proliferates strategy, and risk management. Obviously to oppose this with a specific risk of occupying a square, or a specific strategy of marching to a building, can leave us far from the kinds of vulnerabilities that first brought on the settlement. These vulnerabilities remain in what we might call the pre-occupation, but they are now submerged not only by the settlement, settled, dispersed, subject to fortifications, but also now potentially lost to an occupation that is drawn into strategy and risk, the same weapons of the settlement.

VD: So the occupation ends up becoming a new settlement since it employs the same tools of strategy and risk management. Then fate work in this case would be a practice that dismantles the settlement (and the eventual occupation) by making the pre-occupation emerge and proliferate. An occupation, as the settlement before that, emerges from a set of pre-occupations, vulnerabilities, what are often understood as problems (precarity, debt, etc.) but the real problem is that we try to solve these problems, and whatever solution becomes a new settlement. Wouldn't it instead be possible to open up the problems, the vulnerabilities, understanding what kind of social relations they produce, what kind of affects and possessions they afford, reading their potential in the present? Such a fate work could look at how precarity dismantles the idea of future, of working for a future, and opens up a new present where people take care of how to live now and not when they'll have a car or a house or a family or a cat. How would we organize ourselves if the future would not be of our concern? This has practical consequences and practices have to be invented to deal with these new

spaces that are opened. A similar thing can be done with debt as with any other current 'problem'.

SH: Yes we would have to try to take the strategy out of the discussion of debt. Right now it seems that we are supposed to unite around debt, either to share in the agony of its exploitation, or to beg for forgiveness. This imagination of a future without debt or this coming together around the risk of debt is clearly not going to yield any transformations in being, in ways of living. It asks us to share a common fate in the future either as the exploited who will make a revolution or as the liberated who will live in a new utopia. We move from the commonality of our exploitation to the commonality of our liberation, with no proliferation of self-organisation, of fates, of complicities. Debt holds no surprises here and no potential. But I would like to imagine, and by this I mean practice, or better still join the ongoing practices, of seeing debt, and particularly bad debt as a chance not to bring us together but to proliferate our differences, not in the future, but here, right now. Because to feel a bad debt is to feel a debt that is both incalculable and unpayable and one that refuses credit, refuses to be paid back. Who for instance can pay back, would want to pay back, could count, the debt owed to that accomplice who provided the safeness, the love? Not only because such an accomplice would not want it back but because the opening it allowed generated all kinds of fates in the present, all kinds of new sensations brought on by the vulnerability to others. How to count that? Why count that? Instead let's say that bad debt, as capital would wrongly name it, means we all owe something different, and we are not drawn together in a unity by this but rather drawn by the complicity of such debt to any number of new accomplices, to any number of new conspiracies without a plot. Bad debt is a principle of association beyond the self-determined self or the determined future. It is the accumulation of fate work in the present, a present wealth, a wealth of being in the present together.

VD: I agree. I know that all this talking about proliferation of love and vulnerability can easily look fluffy, but we need to see this against the background of a prevailing narrative of scarcity that's all around. You take a debt because you lack something and then you have to repay it and with interest, just to make sure that you'll keep lacking something. This is clearly not a politics of enabling or of complicity. It's a politics of scarcity that makes sure that you will always lack something.

SH: That's right but we could go even further, or rather we could come even closer. It is possible to see both the self-help literatures, and the history of so-called self-criticism on the Left, as the politics of scarcity at the level of subjectivity. Because both are strategic tools to make something better in the

future, they both understand current forms of being as inadequate, rather than over abundant. Or if they do see over abundance, they want to discipline it, strategise it into specific futures. With self-help and self-criticism we also get the return of work fate, today especially. Think of the role self-help plays today in the reproduction of precarity, and self-criticism in the taming of the politics of precarity. The answer to precarity is not 'more', more work or more security or more rights. Precarity is super abundance, and the answer is less strategy, less self-help, less self-criticism, those practices that reduce super abundance.

VD: That's why self-sabotage! It's different from self-criticism. You don't have to criticize yourself and therefore make (become or operate as) a new settlement. You can read the present, both the tension within your self, as in Malabou, and the tension with what is around and is your accomplice. It is a way to consider your subjectivity already very abundant, capable of proliferating through interrupting mechanisms and dismantling settlements, so you don't have to waste too much time thinking about yourself or carefully controlling how your subjectivity is produced, but rather you can fully act and engage in co-determination. In a way it's much more convenient than self-help, you do two things at once, 'change yourself' and 'change the world around you', only you don't know for what... It's the kind of thing you can try when you're at the corner, when strategy fails, when future has lost authority, when to wish for the apocalypse is to think positive, a moment like now for example!

SH: In contrast to self-help and self-criticism, to their scarcities leading always to a need for strategy to win some of these scarce resources or a risk management not to lose them or even 'decision science' to attack over abundance – and always to a future that will have to deliver what is not yet here enough – fate work, self-sabotage can then really come to feel not violent, but as you say, fluffy. Because we are suddenly in the presence, in the midst of so many readings, so much love, so many fates, so many openings, so many sensations that of course it can make us drunk, make us fluffy. And in a way this abundance ought to exhaust us only in the ways that exceed us, that is only in the ways Gilles Deleuze understood as an exhaustion that finally makes possible new capacities in the face of abundance, abundant capacities, abundant fates.

It seems to me also that because as beings we are affected in more ways than we can count, name, or identify, but we are also subject to an historical process especially the dominant one emanating from Europe, an historical process encouraging us to be in control of ourselves, that we have a tendency to 'feel' things working on us must be coming from another world, because we are supposed to be able to master 'this world'. There are various ways to close down this feeling of an unseen world working on us, of not being self-determined. To

close it down or control the unseen world, as Denise Ferreira da Silva (2007) has shown us in her discussion of the persecution of affectable beings as a necessary condition of taming the transindividuality of rationality in Europe, of returning reason to the self-determined, male, white, propertied subject, or trying to. And of course religion was the classic way to acknowledge this other world and close it down, and reason might be said to be really another reaction to this other world, even if it claimed to be a reaction to this closing down. Thus anyone who seems to open up to this transbeing, to this affect, becomes the enemy, the virus to these reasonable ones, the ones who make policy, who believe in dialogue, who are the settlers. But now once we open up to this being affected, as some have always done, but with what we are suggesting, with fate work, with a surplus of readings and readers, this other world, the unseen world, becomes even more abundantly present. Once we start 'seeing things' I think something happens to this other world, and to us.

VD: Yes because this unseen world, this world of everything that affects us, from this glass of water to the smile of a passer-by to the position of the planets, everything operates in the present. In a way it's nothing esoteric, this unseen world is very concrete, just we cannot see it and measure it well. I guess that's why strategy keeps failing. It cannot bring this unknown world into its equation, but still it's pretty dumb just to ignore its existence all together and keep failing. There are ways to deal with what we don't see that can be generative and not religious or repressive. Like what we're trying to do here bringing fate into the notion of work.

SH: So instead of trying to control this other world through readings of fate, as has often been 'understood' as the tradition among oracles, soothsayers, witches, instead we see a counter-practice. We see that far from taming or lining up two worlds, such readers often destabilize, proliferate fates, bring another world into intense resonance with this one. Because really when you have your fortune told, it is in a way no help. It proves something is working on you, something you cannot control. You can only be open or not open to it. The more open you are to it, the more that the other world interrupts, disrupting that reading, requiring another. It does not matter perhaps if this other world is really other, since again with Malabou, the other is other to the self too, to whatever one would understand as this world now. This other world then is not a matter of religion or superstition. It is a matter of openness to affect, but also of what Suely Rolnik calls 'ruthlessness'. A harsh word but one she uses I think against any mode of thinking or being that attempts to stabilize worlds, or especially to make them one. And perhaps one way we have to be ruthless is by generalising reading, not allowing readers to control reading.

VD: That's what I'm interested in with practices like political therapy and fake therapy. Anyone can give therapy to anyone else, just you have to put yourself to do it for real and be open to it. If you come to have or do a fake therapy session it means you're open to find out what it is to 'cure' or 'be cured'. You practice engaging in a present with no future guarantees or specific aim but still with a full commitment, a clear intention. Here the reader, the fake therapist has no authority, she is not backed up by a discipline or a fixed body of knowledge. That's maybe part of the needed anti-psychiatric move you were talking about before, the move that would allow us to invest ourselves in impossible tasks (like to cure, or radical political change) with no expertise needed, to find out what it really means or can mean, without knowing it in advance.

SH: Maybe we could say more by returning to the rioters in London. The riots felt to me, as I walked among them because this was possible, such was their character, like an eruption of fates or readings, unsustainable, but pointing to an excess of the future in the present. Riots are a self-organisation of overflowing fates, fates produced by all the social life that gets degraded, policed, ignored or exploited most of the time but at the same time is not so ignored that it does not call forth these responses, the terroristic resistance of the state. So when those kids said they ran the city, they meant it. They organised the city even if dangerously, briefly and through their own vulnerability. But that is the point. We saw this tremendous social vulnerability, open to so much in a way that had not perhaps found its co-determinations allowing for such self-organisation to find more and more fates for all. But nonetheless we saw people allowing themselves to be possessed by the riots, taken up in a thousand readings of their fates by others.

Riots and occupations in this sense share a lot in common. Both erupt, unsettle a settlement from within, around, outside and inside that settlement, from its preoccupation, from its 'surround' as Fred Moten and I have called it (Moten and Harney, 2011). At first we might say that the occupation and the riot are both fate work riding an overproduction of social capacities but that occupations are fate work where the co-determination is in place and everyone has a chance to use this common of fate reading to make fates. We might oppose this to riots where the co-determination, including the accomplices that make vulnerabilities possible, are unstable, unmatched, in turbulence. But not so fast. Although we can certainly feel this potentiality in occupations, we can often also see the emergence of risk management, of a class of readers and a class of those being read, and more than anything else a new productivism that says we must work at this, we must set up that, we must keep discussing this thing, we must keep critiquing that thing. This productivism is nothing but a mirror of either work fate or its shadowy illusion, a better future. Riots at least show their exhaustion

up front. They have a wild productivism of their own in the way they organise a city so quickly. It is clear this cannot go on, even as it goes on. The vulnerabilities are unable to open onto the fates in this furious present. They are met with violence and become violent. Riots help us to see another world but also to resist trying to control it, resist the work fate of lining up these worlds. They introduce the question of militant preservation. A militant preservation I would understand as the resistance of the collectivized object. If strategy fails to make of these rioters the kind of logistical subjects who are compelled to connect everything to everything else, then their self-organisation as objects through which strategy will not pass is a kind of militant preservation, a plan to stay as they are, vulnerable as they are.

VD: And the question of organization within vulnerability. It implies thinking about vulnerability as a capacity for the construction of fates, rather than a state or some sort of 'condition' usually associated with a weakness. To be vulnerable instead means to be open to the organization of a present that disregards the future. Now when we have to organize something, take work for example, we have to think how to do this in order to either be the most productive, or interesting, or to meet a certain deadline. There is always an obsession about the future. To organize something in disregard of the future is to say: how could we possibly do this inhabiting the present conditions, needs and desires rather than being obsessed by the future outcome? In such a way that opens up possibilities instead of being a way to reduce the possibilities and chose one strategy over another.

The lack of consideration for the future may sound very scary and pointing directly to chaos, but that's only when you consider the actors of such organization as self-determined subjects. The only way we can really shift the attention from future to present, is through establishing a relationship of complicity with the others (animate and inanimate ones) all around us and in us. Simply because we cannot disregard the future on our own. It's a paradigm shift but one that is very concrete and not future-oriented. It's not difficult to start imagining what could be ways of avoiding future-oriented managing of our lives, work, political struggle and so on. Already when you take the time to do so, you start to engage in fate work. You become busy building present situations so even when you might be attacked or attack, you don't have to defend your original project, you'll just continue building presents now taking in consideration the situation of conflict. I'm just thinking that future is unavoidable, in the sense that it will come anyway, you want it or not. So instead of staying trapped in the expectations and subjectivities that the current notion of future creates in capitalist society, we can try another move for social change.

SH: What strategy does in one sense, is take up time and space, take it up in the name of the future, leaving nothing for us here and now, or at least this is its never-fully-realised ambition. Work fate is a fate of no free time and no free space, and of course finance produces this no free time and no free space as our permanent mood, the affect of today. There is no time or space not open to its strategies of risk and securitisation. It wants the future to look like the present and will attempt to control all present time and present space to ensure this, control the time through work and the space through settlement. This suggests to me that the concrete way to do fate work, to proliferate readings is to make the free time and free space, but at the same time, fate work itself makes free time and free space, precisely by freeing us from strategy and its future. Collective self-defense of this free space and free time against settlement, against strategy, against work fate, is not a defense therefore of fate work. You are right it needs no defending because it does not try to holding any territory. It's fugitive even when it stays. Rather collective self-defense is of the free time and free space to make fate work, and as fate work grows and produces free time and free space, so too should the need for self-defense diminishes.

VD: Yes, but free time and free spaces cannot be defended directly. For instance, if you think that sitting in silence means creating free time and you start to defend this practice as one that has to exist and be done collectively then you end up with work fate again. You know what's good, what's 'free' time and space and then you work to make it happen. This is very tricky. Fate work needs time and space in order to happen. It needs those gaps between making decisions, between identifying what can be done, between doubting and changing. In a way it is about letting those spaces and times open up. But you can't make an ideology of the gaps, of the in-betweens, of the 'free' space and time, you can't strive to produce them as if they were 'just what we needed'. You can be sensitive to them and try to inhabit them instead of wanting to produce them. You can try to break whatever mechanism you recognize that is closing them down or not letting them happen. I guess it also has to do with understanding yourself as a kind of co-determining agent rather than a self-determined subject, so you can engage your abundant subjectivity in these processes and act against any kind of settlement you are able to recognize and sabotage them.

SH: Yes only practice will tell! No free or unfree time or space but practice makes it so. And this brings us back to the concrete practices. Of course it cannot be just tarot cards or palm readings that can be the materials of fate work, so too can any materials that make a certain free space and free time that release us from strategy long enough to start experimenting with other fates, and with enough room to bring those fates right into the present, right now. Here is what might at first seem an unusual example from the US, but also from Africa and Latin

America, even from Singapore. Bible study groups. Okay this kind of study is often degraded and not only, or perhaps we could even say not mainly, because it retains a notion of centralised authority and singular fates, both of which are a problem. But this is no reason to neglect this social form of reading, of studying, of making fates, any more than we would reject tarot cards for the way they are used to capture fates sometimes rather than release more. Bible study is largely neglected as a form of self-organisation of fate work because it is conducted in the US by black people or poor white people, and in Africa and Latin America by poor people often on the margins of more powerful Christian institutions. But it is a mass popular form bringing together fate work, reading, and study. It needs its own liberation of course, it's own liberation theology just as in the Catholic base communities (and often it has been set against such communities, and certainly against the hierarchical power of the Catholic church). But such bible study demonstrates the social capacity to share readings, to study without end, without credit, in debt to each other. Or indeed as we have reached this point we could say without too much trouble that every form of self-organisation present today is by definition also a practice of fate work, of making fates through the unfolding of organisation, or changing and accumulating fates with every unfolding, every new combination, intensity, extension of these common organisations, every new common rhythm of speed and slowness. Every instance of self-organisation from children's games, to gaming communities, to parties and carnivals, to new kinds of families, though none of these are without the struggles accompanying self-organisation in a society that is subject to constant if unsuccessful enclosures, all these instances and more make fate work happen. Fate work it turns out, is everywhere.

VD: Indeed! The problem is that every form of organization or activity is now measured and valued in relation to its 'success', its functionality, its capacity to produce measurable results, in other words through its single fate. So it's no surprise that all the already existing instances of fate work are usually overlooked and not so much taken into serious consideration. The legend that self-organization doesn't work, that all the attempts of re-organizing communal living in the 60s and 70s have failed is built on this system of valorization of the single fate. A system of valorization that doesn't want to see (and let exist) the multiple fates, not even the frictions, the time and spaces that such experiences opened, the intensities they produced detached from any notion of success. Fate work disregards the future and with it any system of valorization that is attached to determining the future. Instead with every new fate it makes possible, fake work produces a new valorisation of the present. In fate work, it is not the future but our present that is full of wealth.

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