The labour of being studied in a free love economy

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abstract

This paper takes up the economic logics of 'community-based' scholarly research and archival collection, and proposes a system of accounting for 'collaborative' labour across different locations within subcultural scenes, and 'the labour of being studied' within an academic-cultural milieu that increasingly camouflages free affective labour as collaboration and research-co-creation. Here, we consider the ways that a 2.0 academic economy thrives off the 'sharing' values of communality that were once the hallmark of counter-institutional subcultural scenes and we suggest that by introducing accounting measures as part of a research praxis, we can study the material conditions that constitute the relations of research production.

It was the ambivalence suggested by the initial proposed title of this special issue of *ephemera*, 'Workers, despite themselves', that hailed us.

As a research-creation team we are finally at a point when we can, theoretically, start to develop a proof-of-concept for our compelled fantasy project: an integrated, user-generated, open-source platform, digital archive and anecdotal encyclopaedia for trans- feminist and queer (TFQ) grassroots performance artists, audiences, activists and organizers, called The Cabaret Commons [1].

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1 Throughout the paper we refer to our research subjects as 'trans- feminist, and queer' (TFQ) grassroots performance artists, audiences, organizers, activists, etc., gesturing to the gender, sexual and political mix that makes up our scenes of study. This is not to say that everyone or everything within these scenes is transgender or transsexual, feminist *and* queer simultaneously (although many are), but rather, that we study scenes driven by and for the people and politics that converge (and not always

Responding to one of the stated priorities of our scholarly granting agency, we proposed and were awarded funding to devise a digital environment designed to enable the translocal, networked and affective sharing and research of TFQ artist and activist cultural production throughout (at least) North America [2]. As participants, creators and researchers, users, producers and produsers of these subcultures and scenes, we recognise, as Jack Halberstam put it, that 'queer academics can, and some should, participate in the ongoing project of recoding and interpreting queer culture and circulating a sense of its multiplicity and sophistication' (Halberstam, 2003: 318). We envisioned a collaborative, interactive and agential 'memories and feelings bank' and gossip rag for our research participants; a space that would collect, theorize and generate diverse and trans-disciplinary modes of trans- feminist and queer knowing, that would transform the fleeting temporality of these ephemeral and affective traces from the almost-already-forgotten into the potentially-historical, to facilitate the passage of under-studied and thus under-valued cultural production into the economies of critical accessibility and academic valuation.

We pitched a speculative methodology, in which we anticipated all of the good that could come by using TFQ modes of knowing and creating to push the limits of the possible within the digital humanities, using these limits as opportunities to foreground and articulate our knowledge praxes – a set of praxes that exceed the 'practical requirements of computational protocols' (Drucker, 2009: xiv). We proposed a research-creation project (really, co-research-creation) that would heavily involve independent performance artists and other grassroots TFQ culture producers in every step of design and production. And wouldn't the performers, audiences, activists and organizers be so happy, or even grateful, to volunteer their labour – to make or locate, scan, digitize, compress, transfer, craft, edit, upload and tag their photos and videos, posters, handbills, ticket-stubs, flyers, stories, memories and feelings from the fantastic TFQ cabaret they went to last night, last year, or two or three decades ago? Indeed, isn't this habit of demanding cheerfully donated labour from independent artists, audiences, activists and community organizers, *for a good cause*, simply an extension of and

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painlessly) within this assemblage. Indeed, not all events that call themselves feminist are trans-friendly and not all queer events are feminist. For a recent discussion of this see Julia Serano's *Excluded: Making feminist and queer movements more inclusive* (2013). For a description of The Cabaret Commons see http://www.cwrc.ca/projects/the-caberet-commons/

2   This project is funded (thank you) by an Insight Development Grant from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. For more on the Insight Program see:

http://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/funding-financement/umbrella_programs-programme_cadre/insight-savoir-eng.aspx

consistent with prevailing relations of TFQ grassroots cultural (re)production? Isn't this how these scenes have always been built and sustained? And as our research participants help to build this collaborative digital archive, wouldn't they be overjoyed by the opportunity to do this work *for their own good*, toward the promise of finally being recognized, noticed, written about and *valued* by accredited scholars and, by extension, their academic institutions?

Three years later, we find ourselves racked with doubt and hailed by the ambivalence of 'Workers, despite themselves'. This special issue on a workers' inquiry offers us the chance to consider one of our central methodological contradictions: how do we, within a project that relies on mostly volunteer labour of TFQ performance artists and other cultural producers, account for the labour of being studied? That is, over the past two years, our priorities have slightly shifted from pushing the formal limits of digital architectures to better reflect, value and enable TFQ social, cultural and political work, to speculating the design of an online network which might intervene, workers' inquiry-style, in the relations of production and conditions of contemporary labour where trans-feminist and queer artists and academics meet.

In this short essay we try to do three things: first, we consider the labour of being studied in the context of all the unwaged, immaterial and affective labour sustaining online capitalism, academic and artistic careers as well as grassroots TFQ communities[3]. In this context academic researchers are compelled to enforce rather than resist these labour conditions, trading in enduring affective currencies like goodwill, aspiration, the persistent romance of community (Joseph, 2002: 483) and 'doing what we love'. Second, we consider the hazards of donating the products of this lovingly compelled free labour to not only the

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3   Along with Christian Fuchs, we have reservations about the term 'immaterial labour.' As Fuchs (2010) notes:

It is somewhat problematic to speak of 'immaterial labour'.... It might therefore be better to characterize online labour as (predominantly) knowledge labour.... [L]abour that characterizes web 2.0 systems is labour that is oriented on the production of affects, fantasy (cognitive labour) and social relations (communicative, co-operative labour) – it is like all labour material because it is activity that changes the state of real world systems. The difference between it and manual labour is that it doesn't primarily change the physical conditions of things, but instead the emotional and communicative aspects of human relations. It is also material in the sense that in its current forms it is ultimately to a certain extent oriented on the economy, subsumed under capital, and oriented towards producing economic profit. A better term than immaterial labour 2.0 hence is cognitive, communicative, and co-operative labour – informational labour. (299-300)

We continue to use 'immaterial labour' throughout this paper, with the understanding that these (knowledge, cognitive, communicative, co-operative and informational) labours are, indeed very material.

circuits of academic capitalism but also the affective industry of Web 2.0 data mining. Third, we propose an updated set of workers' inquiry questions that confront our contemporary immaterial workplace. While we came to recognize and critically thematize these labour conditions through our work on this digital humanities project, The Cabaret Commons, we do not want to suggest that the digital has somehow *created* these conditions. Of course, several generations of feminist activists and scholars have been agitating and organizing around the ways that capitalism relies on (women's) unwaged affective and immaterial labour; and black diaspora, critical race and African American studies scholars have traced the extent to which capitalism depends on the un- and under-waged material and affective labours of racialised and indigenous subjects, as the condition of possibility for the ongoing life of colonial modernity[4]. Instead, we hope here to situate the digital free labour market within capitalism's reliance on 'labours of love' to supplement this unequal distribution of resources and autonomy.

The labour of being studied 2.0

In 'A workers' inquiry 2.0', Brian A. Brown and Anabel Quan-Haase (2012) develop an ethnographic method for studying the labour of Flickr produsers. While we are inspired by this work, we want to add a level of inquiry to our research method that would account for the labour which performance artists, audiences and organizers are asked to donate to the work of academic research. As we develop our project, we seek to value not just the labours of scene-building and cultural production, but also to document and account for the labour of being studied, something that neither Brown and Quan-Haase nor, indeed, Marx nor the Italian Autonomists, seemed to take into account. Whereas they asked workers to catalogue, itemize and recognise the conditions of labour within their workplaces – Brown and Quan-Haase attempt to get Flickr produsers to recognize their labour *as* labour – to stimulate radicalized consciousness and actionable knowledge, these methodologies all ignore the unwaged *research labour* required to arrive at that consciousness. For example, in order to 'undertake a serious inquiry into the position of the French working class,'

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4   Our thinking on this is indebted to (among others) Maria Dalla Costa & Selma James' *The power of women and the subversion of community* (1972); Leopoldina Fortunati *The arcane of reproduction: Housework, prostitution, labor and capital* (1985/1995); Saidiya Hartman's *Scenes of subjection: Terror, slavery, and self-Making in nineteenth-century America* (1997) and *Lose your mother: A journey along the Atlantic slave route* (2007); Sharon P. Holland's *The erotic life of racism* (2012); Paul Gilroy's *The black Atlantic: Modernity and double consciousness* (1993); and Walter Mignolo's *The darker side of western modernity: Global futures, decolonial options* (2011).

Marx's 1880 Workers' Inquiry asked French factory workers one hundred questions in which he requested 'that replies should be as detailed and comprehensive as possible' (Marx, 1880: n.p.); and, in order to 'gain ... insight into their thoughts, feelings, and consciousness regarding their place in the mode of produsage', Brown and Quan-Haase recruited research participants who would 'respond...quickly, enthusiastically, and comprehensively' to a list of questions issued over the course of a 'temporally taxing' multi-staged research process (2012: 497-8). The remuneration, presumably, for these research labours is the reward of consciousness itself.

We see a similar problem in our project: we planned to recruit research participants (ideally, co-researchers) to create and 'share' their artefacts, anecdotes, memories and feelings in a community-driven and user-generated online archive. Although we are able to offer small honoraria for this work to a few solicited participants, we expected that the content development of the site would also happen spontaneously, hopefully, virally. That is, a foundational assumption of our initial proposal was that the majority of the labour required to create and sustain this archive would be donated (indeed, this unpaid or minimally-paid participation is stipulated by granting agency and university policy): a labour of love, supplied by unwaged produsers of TFQ scenes, an assumption that undergirds so much grassroots cultural production and 'women's work', as well as the dependent relationship between humanities scholars and the artists that they study. We also assumed that artists would want their work represented visually within the Cabaret Commons. Although not all of our artist-produsers have object-based practices, in order for their work to be included in an archival/research space like the Cabaret Commons, they are forced to create objects like photographs and/or video or risk being culturally and academically forgotten. This 'professionalization' undermines some conceptual/performance artists' intention to *not* have material objects (like photographs or video) represent their work, offering few to no routes to manoeuvre a dematerialized practice, and is reflected not only in the bias of our proposed project seeking digitized (and *digitizable*) artefacts, but also in the on- and offline art market. Thus, the pull into the digital might be understood to increase the unrecognized workload of predominantly under-resourced TFQ artists, especially conceptual and performance artists, who are required to meet the increasing demands of the visual digital cultural economy[5].

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5   With many thanks to Dayna McLeod, who is working with us on the broader Cabaret Commons project, and who contributed a great deal of thinking to this essay, in particular this point on the ways that the digital continues to privilege objects and increases workload for conceptual artists who are required to translate/transfer their practice for digital media. See Lucy Lippard (1973) on conceptual and 'dematerialized'

We have turned to critical interventions into the logics of Web 2.0 produser economies that provide a framework for thinking about other produser economies – at work in grassroots cultural and activist scenes as well as Arts and Humanities-based qualitative academic research – which rely on the unpaid labours of *users* of these scenes to also produce their content. While 'produsage' tends to refer to user-generated online content – and the shift to economic and cultural models wherein the consumer or user also produces the product (Bruns, 2008), '[w]hat the "2.0" addresses is the "free" labour that subjects engage in on a cultural and biopolitical level when they participate on a site' (Coté and Pybus, 2008: 90). This *new* reliance on 'free' produsage and participation takes advantage of the same *old* political and economic 'not-for-profit' structure that Miranda Joseph identifies as the supplement to capital, those 'community' based under- or unpaid labours that 'articulate desires not met by capitalism for specific goods – religion, education, health care, arts, social services, or social change – but also often for an alternative mode of production, namely, gift exchange' (2002: 72)[6]. Joseph notes that the 'good' (her double entendre is intended here, we think) produced by non-profits, or through the structure of mostly unpaid labour, is 'community'; thus structures of volunteer or barely-paid labour,

> do not merely complement the market and the state but rather mark the absent center of capitalism. Appearing at moments of capitalist expansion, instability, and crisis, nonprofits indicate that something, or rather someone – the subject of capital – is missing. (*ibid.*: 73)

The 2.0 structure of volunteer labour donated to for-profit enterprises might seem to be a newly sinister version of this supplementary relationship, but if we think about the common practice in Arts and Humanities academic research of demanding volunteer labour from artists and other cultural produsers being studied in the service of a scholar's contributions to a university's profits and/or (e)valuation system (in whatever form that may take), then we see that it is an old structure – one that scholars have long helped to produce.

Following Pierre Bourdieu's observations of the 'field of cultural production' in which those cultural practices, like poetry, for which producers receive negligible monetary compensation acquire elevated value through forms of *symbolic capital*, we might extrapolate that, like the 'art for art's sake' (or art that appears most autonomous from the market), 'work for work's sake' (or work that appears

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artwork and practices and Henry Sayre on photography as simultaneous presence and absence, and as an ideal formalist art object (1989).

6   Tiziana Terranova has done much work in helping us understand how free labor and the 'gift economy, as part of the larger digital economy, is itself an important force within the reproduction of the labor force in late capitalism as a whole' (Terranova, 2013: 36).

autonomous from the market, for example when the worker 'loves' what they do or because it is a manifestation of care, like volunteer labour) has a great deal of symbolic value as a cultural, social, economic 'good' (Bourdieu, 1993: 49)[7]. Joseph's understanding of the 'performativity of production' (2002: 172) – that is, the work involved in building social formations that constitute communities as productive – helps us to apprehend how the special character of volunteer labour, usually rationalized as a form of mutual aid or 'passionate effort' (Ross, 2013: 26) produces the imaginary subjects (queers, women, 'the poor', transgender people) whose perceived needs and hopes determine its symbolic, social capital. The research structure which demands or assumes donated labour – in the form of long-form interviews, questionnaire-answering, uploading materials, sorting through personal archives, etc. – from mostly under- or unpaid 'community' artists, audiences and organizers further exploits the productive function of the social formations designed to address these needs and hopes, and further demands from 'community' members that they supplement, or bolster, that which is missing (i.e., adequate funding to pay artists a living wage while they contribute to your research project) from (academic) capitalism.

This practice is legitimized in at least two ways: first, through a tautological fetishization of unpaid labour as untainted by the vulgar incentives of financial remuneration and, thus, the expectation that participants join the research project because *they want to* (and because it's work that they *love* and, therefore, don't need to be paid for); and, second, through the ideal that Arts and Humanities research itself is community-based, and contributes to/benefits/is part of a 'wider community' beyond and including the university itself. The outcome here is simply that the labour conditions of our research practices (those we are compelled into by the demands of academic capitalism) reinforce the market logics of symbolic and social capital (like 'exposure' and reputation), in which the only acceptable incentive we can offer to artists and community organizers participating in the research is 'the good' of community itself. Furthermore, the market logics of academic capitalism suggest that research subjects (artists, community organizers, etc.) are compensated for their labour through the magical symbolic currency that might be called 'the *caché* of being studied', while academic researchers pursue a more-or-less hefty paycheque from their institutions as long as they continue to produce. Even those of us precariously situated within the university complex as adjunct professors,

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7   Of course, Bourdieu's 'autonomous art' was also autonomous from an audience, and the kinds of volunteer labours we identify here are certainly not that. We might identify these labours as what Bourdieu calls 'social art', which 'fulfill [sic] a social or political function' (166).

graduate students, or under- and unemployed independent scholars have at least a cruelly optimistic expectation of a pay-off: if our research labours are unpaid in the moment, we toil with the assurance that this work is, indeed, already 'the good life', though its material support is always on the horizon and yet to come (Berlant, 2011). As long as we keep working, the culture of sacrificial labour promises that we will eventually be financially rewarded through (continued, or better) employment, scholarships, research grants, etc.

Free love

Melissa Gregg has argued that academics need to better account for our own labour conditions – particularly the ways in which we are compelled into extensive and under-recognized forms of immaterial and affective labour – if we are to begin the task of studying or understanding the labour conditions of anyone else. Instead,

> [d]iscounting the amount of time their job takes from other pursuits, academics have often been guilty of normalising the self-exploiting tendencies now mirrored in further segments of the white collar demographic. This makes it difficult for researchers to understand such behaviour in terms of labour politics, let alone provide grounds for critiquing the motivations for the affective labour engaged in by others. (Gregg, 2009: 211-12)

We want to add that this also makes it difficult for researchers to recognise or understand our own motivations for the affective labour demanded *by* us *from* others. As Halberstam argues, by building on work in subcultural studies, queer cultural studies has developed a critical methodology that privileges, rather than obscures, the researcher's involvement in, creation of or belonging to, the subculture in question:

> academics might labor side by side with artists...[forming] an alliance between the minority academic and the minority subcultural producer...the academic and the cultural producer may see themselves in a complementary relationship...[That is,] new queer cultural studies feeds off of and back into subcultural production. The academic might be the archivist or a co-archivist or they might be a fully-fledged participant in the subcultural scene that they write about. (Halberstam 2003: 322)

However, as contemporary academic labour conditions and the 'workstyle' logics of connectivity and perpetual availability (Gregg, 2009: 212) driven by the digital workplace demands for increasing degrees of invisibilized immaterial and affective labours, what Gregg calls 'presence bleed' (Gregg, 2011: 2), we need to become more attentive to the ways that our 'complementary relationships' to low/unwaged TFQ artists and subcultural workers can obfuscate the differentially valued labours involved. For example, the researcher, already (even

if precariously) institutionally-affiliated and consecrated, labours for the promise of more institutional and/or monetary value and can extract this value from the artist's volunteer research labour; the artist or community organizer has fewer opportunities to monetize this co-research labour.

As we 'normalize the self-exploiting tendencies' of the academic (and white collar) affective marketplace, we might be tempted to generalize these conditions and demands to unpaid co-researchers, artists and research participants. That is, academics in 'new queer cultural studies', often working with the best of intentions, can normalize a shift to 'feeding off of' more than 'back into' the TFQ subcultures, scenes and 'communities' we study. In the same way that it might be an accepted practice to ask an artist to perform at a benefit cabaret for free or for very little money, or to demand that an audience respond with high-energy approval to an underwhelming event, or to ask a community organizer to send high-quality digital images or video of a performance/rally/public talk to a scholar for an academic article – keeping in mind that this labour might be understood as an obligation or condition of membership in these scenes – it is easy to structure our research projects on the expectation of unwaged content generation that Christian Fuchs calls 'an extreme form of exploitation' (Fuchs, 2010: 298). Indeed, understanding ourselves as 'part of' these sites of study, and framing our work as 'collaborations' and/or our research participants as co-researchers (or friends) runs the risk of naturalizing the unwaged work that supplements academic capitalism – making us simultaneously 'blind to the ways we might [participate] in the enactment of domination and exploitation' and to how we might, following Joseph and Gregg, 'intervene' in these conditions (Joseph ix).

Many of us engaged in TFQ studies tend to think of our participation in these subcultural scenes as valuable to our research, and our research as ultimately valuable to these scenes. That is, the 'complementary relationship' between 'minority academic and minority subcultural producer' (Halberstam, 2003: 322) assumes a sort of equal exchange of value between making/performing/doing art or creative activism and paying with exposure or critical attention by writing about it or programming it. However, blurring this line between research worker and artistic/cultural worker – or aestheticizing research work – also meets the demands of our neoliberal labour market, which finds in both artists and academics the tantalizing willingness to work for nearly nothing. As Sarah Brouillette explains,

> the creative worker and the academic equally confront a rhetoric celebrating the self-managing, flexible personality as the engine of economic growth. They tend to be also similarly invested in the idea that they should be committed heart and soul to their work. As scholars have often noted, our faith that our work offers non-

material rewards, and is more integral to our identity than a "regular" job would be, makes us ideal employees when the goal of management is to extract our labor's maximum value at minimum cost. (Brouillette, 2013: 4)

By respecting our 'faith' that our work offers us something more than monetary capital, that it can't be confined to an office space, or regular working hours, that our work is inseparable from our social, family or leisure time, management theory comes up with ways to both give us less and effectively export these labour conditions to other workers:

> corporate managers have been examining [academics] for decades with a keen sense of envy. How to emulate the academic workplace and get people to work at a high level of intellectual and emotional intensity for fifty or sixty hours a week for bartenders' wages or less? Is there any way we can get our employees to swoon over their desks, murmuring "I love what I do" in response to greater workloads and smaller paychecks? How can we get our workers to be like faculty and deny that they work at all? (Bousquet, 2009: n.p.)

And while the vast majority of our academic paycheques are indeed getting smaller in relation to personal debt load and costs of living, along with our hopes of ever securing a liveable income (recent statistics in the US show that seventy-six per cent of university and college courses are taught by underpaid and insecurely employed contingent and non-tenure-track faculty who earn an average of \$2,700 per course)[8], academic output in the form of publication is still expected as a part of the job, both to maintain these precarious positions, and to be competitive in the hope-based 'jackpot economy' (Ross, 2009: 16) of the full-time academic job market.

So, we can see that there is a growing field of scholarship on the imperilled state of autonomous academic work (on the neoliberalization, casualization and upward distribution of resources in the academic industry) as well as a booming intellectual market on labour conditions in the creative, affective and immaterial economy, but we have very little research on the extent to which academic workers compel, rely on and normalize the unpaid work of the creative precariat. When we ask artists and activists for documentation of performances or events (images, video, audio recordings) for that essay we're publishing; or to talk to us about their work, or their social/cultural scene for our doctoral thesis; or to perform/exhibit at that conference we're organizing, we are requesting work for which we are almost never able or willing to pay a substantial fee. On the one hand, this is the product of institutional policies around research funds and ethics. That is, if we have access to institutional research funds or grants, these

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8   See: American Association of University Professors (AAUP) 'Annual report on the economic status of the profession' 2012-2013; Curtis and Thornton *Academe*, March-April 2013; Tamar Lewin *New York Times*, April 8, 2013.

typically stipulate that we may not use them to pay/incentivize research subjects or non-academic collaborators, so on the occasion that we manage to pay artists for some of the work that they do for our research/careers, we do this in contravention of the rules of our university ethics boards and research finance offices. Meanwhile our institutions have neither ethical nor financial qualms about using funds to pay inflated fees for scholarly associations, conference registrations or publishing costs. On the other hand, the fact that so many of us build our degrees and careers off of such unpaid labour seems evidence of our complicity with a neoliberal labour-of-love capitalism. As Miya Tokumitsu observes,

> [t]here's little doubt that 'do what you love' (DWYL) is now the unofficial work mantra for our time. The problem is that it leads not to salvation, but to the devaluation of actual work, including the very work it pretends to elevate – and more importantly, the dehumanization of the vast majority of laborers. (Tokumitsu, 2014)

By exchanging research subjects' labour for the mostly intangible compensations of 'consciousness', 'reputation' or 'exposure', academic culture devalues 'actual work' and legitimizes an affective economy that exploits the ideal of loving, autonomous labour. However, we want to follow Selma James here and argue that just as 'demanding payment for housework...attack[s] what is terrible about caring in our capitalist society' (Gardiner, 2012: n.p.), calling attention to the forms of donated labour that buttress the academic pyramid scheme attacks what is terrible about working for love in an affective economy.

Research – or, 'doing what we love' and pursuing 'our own interests' – is increasingly the job requirement that academics do explicitly for free. As we know, so many faculty are paid only on a per-course basis for teaching-hours/credits, but are still required to update their CVs every year with evidence of 'contributions to the field' in order to compete in the 'contingent faculty' race. When research becomes so de-resourced – aestheticized and ascetic – as to be done for free or at significant personal cost to the researcher (who oftentimes pays out-of-pocket for expenses like travel for research at archives, festivals, or to undertake face-to-face interviews and certainly to present that research at conferences, another professional obligation), how do we measure researchers' fiscal responsibility to their research subjects? How do we measure the ways that (social, cultural, intellectual, fiscal) capital is gained by all participants, and is it possible to share or fairly divide this capital across participation levels? At this point does it simply mean that we are distributing our own precarity, expecting free labour from everyone involved in our research projects, *un*paying forward the diminishing academic 'rewards' (I don't get paid so nobody gets paid), reproducing the labour standards that condition our horizon of expectations? We

want to argue that this problem is particularly vital for scholars of contemporary marginal and marginalized cultural practices and populations. Rather than seeking the 'generous assistance' of an established/institutional archive that typically pays to acquire its collections, charges set rates for the reproduction of its materials and is staffed by paid employees, researchers of uncollected works by contemporary minoritized artists and activists must rely on goodwill in the form of mostly donated labour and materials to populate their research archives.

Affective Archives and Invisible Labour

Our plan for a Cabaret Commons is designed to house and activate the kind of archive of feelings that Ann Cvetkovich argues is central to the survival of feminist and queer social, cultural and political lives:

> Lesbian and gay history demands a radical archive of emotion in order to document intimacy, sexuality, love, and activism, all areas of experience that are difficult to chronicle through the materials of a traditional archive. Moreover, gay and lesbian archives address the traumatic loss of history that has accompanied sexual life and the formation of sexual publics, and they assert the role of memory and affect in compensating for institutional neglect. (Cvetkovich, 2002: 110)

An online, user-generated digital platform and network struck us as a promising site for such archive-building – with a capacity to preserve, share and connect not only records of the material ephemera of TFQ social and cultural political lives (like images of flyers, posters, handbills, street graffiti for shows) but also to preserve, share and connect individual stories, memories, feelings – the various emotional contents and labours upon which social and cultural politics are built and sustained but which have been traumatically lost and institutionally neglected.

However, we've come to recognize that our impulse to affective archiving has been anticipated, or compelled, by the current Web 2.0 business model. Robert Gehl provides a useful definition of this model as 'the new media capitalist technique of relying upon users to supply and rank online media content, then using the attention this content generates to present advertisements to audiences' (Gehl, 2011: 1229). For us, it seems the significance of this user-generated market is more than simply its capacity to supply audiences to advertisers, but also its capacity to supply our intimacies and affects as metadata surveilled, processed and transformed into policy or product by state political and security interests. Gehl suggests that this business model turns users into 'affective processers' – 'expected to process digital objects by sharing content, making connections, ranking cultural artifacts, and producing digital content'

(2011: 1229) – building massive, and massively mined, archives of affect. Web 2.0 websites are designed to

> surveil every action of users, store the resulting data, protect it via artificial barriers such as intellectual property, and mine it for profit.… These archives are comprised of the products of affective processing; *they are archives of affect*, sites of decontextualized data that can be rearranged by the site owners to construct particular forms of knowledge about Web 2.0 users. (Gehl: 1229, emphasis added)

Thus, even if we are attentive to the labour conditions of our research practices, once we launch The Cabaret Commons online, we can't anticipate or control how this knowledge about the affective tendencies of *our* produsers will be used. Welcome to Ambivalence 2.0. Workers, despite themselves, indeed.

Our efforts to build an online TFQ affective archive brings us squarely into the realm of what Mark Andrejevic calls 'affective economics' (Andrejevic, 2011) – the thriving online market of sentiment analytic software and companies which track, harvest, aggregate, translate and sell the contents of our archives of feelings to advertisers (and security agencies): 'Such is the data-driven fantasy of control in the affective economy: the more emotions are expressed and circulated, the more behaviour is tracked and aggregated, the greater the ability of marketers to attempt to channel and fix affect in ways that translate into increased consumption' (Andrejevic, 2011: 615). Were we to build a Cabaret Commons, we would be (further) submitting TFQ social and cultural politics to this Web 2.0 affective economy – the exploitation of affective labour for both marketing and security capital, but also academic capital. Furthermore, even if we host such a site on an advertising-free server, through a public university host – like the Canadian Writing Research Collaboratory (CWRC), where we are currently set to build – the affects and artefacts collected are subject to this Web 2.0 economy, as well as the profit logics of academic capitalism in which all of our research endeavours are mined, aggregated and monetized.

The labour of being studied: A research workers' inquiry

As we consider the above implications, we are still not convinced that our plan for The Cabaret Commons is completely unredeemable. However, it seems necessary to foreground and thematize the conditions in which we as academics, artists, audiences and organizers are labouring and to potentially use the site as a place to study these relations. We hope to use this project as a site in which we innumerate a methodology to account for the potentially exploitative labour relations of being studied and their particularly acute resonances in the context of online work. We are not sure that the need to create a space and opportunity to

bring researchers, artists and other cultural produsers together to concentrate on the conditions of our labour is worth the risk of submitting our affective and immaterial work to academic and Web 2.0 economies of surveillance and data mining. However, if it were, the following are some components that might enable and provoke the sort of interventions for which we have some hope.

To begin, we will implement various accounting measures in which all contributors to the Cabaret Commons clock the hours that they put into the site (including the time that they put into clocking their hours) in order to get a better sense of how much labour this kind of user-generated content actually requires. Another measure will ask participants, including ourselves, to (anonymously) make transparent their economic situation in order to draw attention to the ranges of economic disparities and realities at play in academic-artist 'collaborations'. This measure will include questions like:

1. What do you do for work?

2. Do you get paid for all of that work?

3. Did you go to school or need specialized training in order to do your work?

    3.1 If yes, what was that degree, certificate or training and how did you pay for it?

4. Do you have a reliable income?

    4.1 If yes, how much money do you make each month?

    4.2 If not, what is the range of your income each month in the past two years?

5. Do you take extra jobs to supplement the pay you receive from your primary work?

6. How many jobs/contracts have you had in the past two years?

7. Have you received a grant in the past 5 years? Artist or academic grant? How much?

7.1 If it was an academic grant, how much money did you allot to distribute to artists/organizers involved with your project? How was the other money spent (i.e. stipends, travel, supplies)?

7.2 If it was an artDst grant, how much money did you allot to documentation and archiving? How was the other money spent (i.e. stipends, travel, supplies)?

8. Approximately how much do you pay in monthly expenses?

9. Approximately how much do you pay in debt repayment each month?

10. Excluding mortgage or car loans, how have you accumulated your debt and how is it distributed (art production debt, student loans, living expenses, impulse buying)?

11. Do you rent or own your home? In either case, please describe your economic relationship to your home (mortgage/rent payments, utilities, taxes, etc.)

12. Do you have roommates? If yes, why? If no, why not?

13. Do you own a car? If yes, please describe your economic relationship to your car (car payments, gas costs, maintenance, etc.)

14. Have you ever received a significant family inheritance? If yes, for how much and what did you do with it?

15. When was the last time you travelled for vacation that you paid for?

16. Do you do any 'work' for which you are not financially remunerated? Why?

17. How have your race, gender, sexuality, disabilities, class, body size, citizenship, and/or education level impacted your financial situation?

18. Have you participated in any other form of online archiving, or
     artist/activist networking project? If yes, what did you get or learn from
     it?

19. Why are you participating in this project?

20. What, if anything, do you hope to get out of this project?

21. Do you think other people involved in this project will benefit more or
     less than you? Why?

22. Please describe the working conditions of your participation in this
     project. Do you think they are fair?

     22.1 Would you like to change these conditions? If yes, how?

Finally, we will ask participants after each session how much, or how, they think they should be paid for the labour that they contributed during that session. Marx's 'Workers' inquiry', the Autonomists' participant action research and Brown and Quan-Haase's 'A workers' inquiry 2.0' seek to raise their research subjects' consciousness about the working conditions *outside* of their studies thereby obfuscating the work of the study itself. We hope that introducing these accounting measures *within* our project will flip the gaze such that the researcher's labour conditions will be as subject to study as the workers', thereby centring the material conditions and relations of the immaterial labours that constitute the Arts and Humanities research shop floor.

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