



The Danish school as a haunted house: Reforming time, work life and fantasies of teaching in Denmark

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abstract

The article explores the affective effects of school policy on Danish teachers, by using a ghostly perspective supplemented with Lacanian psychoanalysis as described by Žižek. The empirical case concerns how Danish teachers experienced a series of political events, including a lockout, a school reform, and a new law regulating their working hours. Our ghostly reading draws attention to the ways in which linear time collapses as past events continue to have an influence on the present. What becomes clear is that what bothers the teachers is not a matter of having to work more or less. Nor is it exclusively a question of settling accounts and rewriting history. It is also a matter of teachers having become seriously bewildered about what others require of them. The key claim is that 'the spirit of teaching' is rooted in a fantasy of what the Other wants, and creates a desire to provide exactly that. However, this 'spirit of teaching' has been killed, and teachers are now 'working dead' (teaching machines), driven without desire. But they are also haunted by the absent presence of 'the spirit of teaching' calling to them: 'Remember me! Remember me!'

'I get really mad, when people tell me that now we have to put things behind us and move on...I can't!'. With this remark, Line, a Danish teacher, expresses her experience of a major labour market conflict and its immediate aftermath. Shortly afterwards, in the spring of 2014, Line decided to quit her job in a municipal school¹, just before a major school reform was to be implemented. In this article,

¹ 'Municipal school' is our not quite satisfactory attempt to translate the Danish 'folkeskole'. The majority of Danish children between the age of 6 and 16 attend a

we explore the experiences and the reactions of a number of teachers to this industrial conflict about teachers' working hours and the subsequent school reform.

Throughout the article, our main focus is on the case of Line. However, we recognise her reaction and sentiments throughout the wide range of empirical data material that makes up the contextual basis for the analysis of her case. Line's experience of not being able to 'put things behind her', and her later decision to quit her job as a teacher, has been our cue to dive into the growing body of literature that suggests we turn our analytical interest to the question of the performativity of policy. Several researchers have suggested the need to study policy through multi-sited policy ethnographies sensitive to the performativity of policy across different spaces and levels (Brøgger, 2014; Phillips and Ochs, 2003; Steiner-Khamsi, 2012). Others work with policy translation, showing how policies are borrowed, but also changed and reinterpreted across local contexts (Steiner Khamsi 2014). In this article, however, we primarily relate to studies of the performativity of policy through the entanglement of temporality and affectivity (e.g. Brøgger, 2016). We are interested in finding out how policy actually does something to people. In some sense, one could actually with reference to Dorthe Staunæs (Staunæs, 2018), argue that policies in line with motivational technologies become performative exactly by affecting people's feelings and emotions – and, we would add, desires and fantasies about 'the Other'. In this paper we shall dive into the affective or phantasmatic space created by recent educational policy reforms, inhabited and embodied by Line and her fellow teachers in Danish municipal schools. We adopt a 'ghostly' perspective on organisational matters supplementing it with Lacanian psychoanalysis. Through this analytical lens we will explore how Line's remark resonates with a widespread sense of wrongdoing and loss that refuses to go away, even if the events causing it are long gone. We shall use the story of Line as an entry point for exploring an 'absent presence', which not only makes itself felt, but also seems to carry a particular urge to act (Gordon, 2011).

We will be using the case of Line and the Danish teachers to argue that political and organisational life is not fully grasped without some understanding of the spirits, passions, desires, and fantasies that animate people to do (or in this case quit) their jobs, or without some understanding of the ways in which the past (or

'folkeskole'. These are – in contrast to private schools – free of charge, exclusively financed through taxes, and part of the public sector. However, they are not actually managed by the state government, but by the local governments in the municipalities. This becomes important later in the article, when the state government interferes in a labor market conflict.

the future) can haunt the present and call for action. This makes it possible to question the often naturalised understandings of policy implementation in organisations as unfolding linearly from top to bottom, or from past to future – just as when Line was asked to ‘put things behind her and move on’. Further, we will question the ways in which agency is often ascribed exclusively to the living in the here and now, and argue that the past and what is suppressed can take on agency in the present in the form of absent presences.

Background

In the beginning of 2013, Local Government Denmark (KL) and the Danish Union of Teachers (DLF) initiated negotiations about teachers’ working conditions in the municipal schools. By then, the minister of Finance had already declared publicly, that teachers’ working hours needed to be ‘normalised’ in order to establish a closer link between wage and productivity, and that teachers of all kinds had for years received raises without giving anything in return (Finansministeriet, 2012). The aim of Local Government Denmark in the negotiations were much in line with the aim of the Minister of Finance. They wanted to be able to increase the amount of teaching per teacher per week, and to give school principals the managerial right to decide how teachers’ time was spent. In order to do so, it was necessary to abandon the previous system where teachers had a fixed amount of tasks and responsibilities ‘counting for’ a certain number of hours. Instead, Local Government Denmark wanted to introduce a new system with fixed working hours, where teachers had to be physically present in the schools, so that school principals could prioritise their time more productively (KL, 2013; Vaaben, 2018). The Danish Union of Teachers were against both. They wanted to continue with the previous system, where there was a top limit to the amount of tasks for each teacher, and where teachers themselves prioritized their time. After a couple of months of negotiations and fierce discussions, not least in the media, negotiations broke down. The employers – Local Government Denmark – decided to declare a lockout. In consequence, not only most teachers, but also their students were sent home, and the teachers did not receive any pay. Instead, teachers could be found outside the schools and along main roads, demonstrating with banners expressing how much they wanted to teach and how they loved and missed their students. Because the media was busy reporting on the conflict and the debate it generated, and because most families were forced to keep some of their children at home, people all over the country were affected by, and involved in, the debate about teachers and their working conditions. After a month with closed schools, the state government decided to interfere and end the conflict. Instead of leaving the two parties to negotiate with each other teachers’ working hours were laid down by law – Act 409. This legislation sent the teachers back to work, and set a fixed limit to

teachers' working hours, requiring them to be present at school during all working hours, and many teachers felt that the state government had sided with Local Government Denmark as employers. This law meant that teachers and students could return to school, but many teachers felt, like Line, deeply wronged and humiliated, and had difficulties putting these events behind them. Moreover, in the minds of many teachers, the conflict itself and teachers' reactions to it became closely connected to the school reform that was also presented in the spring of 2013 to come into effect in August 2014.

Method and empirical data

The case of one teacher, Line, introduced above, stands out against the backdrop of a larger set of data material. Since the lockout in April 2013, we have been following the situation and the reactions of teachers in the Danish municipal schools through various projects. In spring 2014, we conducted observations and carried out 18 qualitative interviews with teachers concerning what they felt about the working hours and the school reform, and what outcomes they anticipated. The participating teachers were identified through a snowball method, in which informants were asked to point out the next informant as someone who might present a different perspective on the subject matter. The interviews were semi-structured and partially open, enabling teachers to point out the matters of greatest concern to them. However, all the interviews turned into somewhat emotional accounts of how the experience of criticism and lack of trust from politicians and 'the public' had forced teachers to reconsider their jobs, their professional identity and the ways in which they felt perceived by society in general. Within this project, we have also analysed a range of policy documents relating to the reform of teachers' working hours (Bjerg and Vaaben, 2015). In 2016, another study was conducted focusing on teachers who had quit their job in Danish municipal schools between 2013 and 2016. The method used was an open survey, asking teachers to explain in their own words what had motivated them to leave. 405 respondents replied, and from their accounts it is apparent that the events of 2013 had not vanished, but still played a part in their experiences and actions in the present (Pedersen et al., 2016). In addition to these two research projects, we have continuously followed reactions and statements from teachers in the printed media as well as the social media, for instance within a particular Facebook group called 'look into my eyes'. Here teachers exchange experiences and opinions about the school system and particularly the current reforms. In 2018 teachers' working hours was once again up for labour market negotiations. This time The Danish Unions of Teachers found alliances within other Unions representing employees in the public sector – still, the parties did still not manage to reach an agreement to replace Act 409.

Across these diverse sources of data, a picture emerges of how the events of 2013 have not yet become past, since they are still manifest in the minds and bodies of teachers. This appears, for instance, as a preoccupation with the question of how they as teachers may regain an honourable place in public discourse about teachers and the Danish municipal schools. The data has made us look for the ways in which teachers search for meaning through shaping and reshaping the narratives about themselves and their profession by linking to other narratives (Boje, 2006, 2008; Humle, 2014). What we are specifically interested in is how the teachers seem to narrate their own stories by linking in to some sort of master narrative, in which they want to occupy a proper place. As indicated above, this continuous reference to past events which cannot be left behind has led us to go hunting for ghostly matters in teachers' narratives about the lockout, the school reform and their working hours. First, however, we shall root our analytical strategies within the ghostly framework.

Animating spirits and ghostly matters

The theme of ghosts and ghostly matters in organisational life is not new. Social scientists have been chasing spirits and trying to understand their roles in human organisation ever since Weber introduced the spirit of capitalism and linked it to the Protestant ethic back in 1905 (Weber, 1992). Since this seminal work, a number of scholars have been looking for similar spirits and their roles in various aspects of modern capitalism (Appadurai, 2011; Boltanski and Chiapello, 2005; Campbell, 2005; Stavrakakis, 2010). By describing how people are moved and urged on by callings or compulsive desires, these authors have addressed spirits as animating forces urging on people to act (Appadurai, 2011). We draw on such an animistic approach in our reference to 'the spirit of teaching', in order to explore what animates teachers to do what they do. It is important to emphasise, however, that this urge does not necessarily take the form of explicit doctrines or clearly articulated ideological worldviews. Following Appadurai, it makes itself felt rather as embodied moral sensibilities and collective psycho-moral dispositions (Appadurai, 2011: 519). For a closer analysis of such animating spirits, we draw on Slavoj Žižek's use of Lacanian psychoanalytical theory. We do so in order to explore how such embodied moral sensibilities and urges might take the shape of an animating spirit of teaching, produced through subjectification, fantasy and desire. In relation to the ghostly we also draw on Žižek's idea about how the dead may be haunting the living because of unsettled symbolic debts. We will expand this perspective shortly.

Another and more direct link to the study of ghostly matters in organisation is the hauntological approach, which draws on Derrida's influential 'Specters of Marx'



**either dead acting as if it's alive
or alive acting as if it's dead**



(Derrida, 1994). Derrida draws attention to the ways in which Marx describes how things and people become animated and gain autonomised or mechanical agency (*ibid.*: 170-174, 188-205). Contrary to Marx, Derrida's project is not to exorcise ghosts in order to regain a 'pure' or 'rational' understanding of things and people from before the arrival of capitalist ideas (*ibid.*: 209). Instead Derrida tries to understand the ghostly workings of *something* (rather than *someone*). A 'something' which is there, yet not really there; absent, yet somehow present; dead yet somehow alive. Analytically it is a matter of evoking rather than exorcising the ghost or the ghostly. The analytical take from Derrida suggests a spectral reading of meaning through which we can obtain a sensitivity to the 'something' on the edges and slips of discourse. This allows us to shed light on the forces that may only make themselves felt as absent presences. A crucial implication of studying ghostly matters and how they affect organisational life is to understand how linear time seems to collapse, because absent presences may take the form of simultaneous existences in various temporalities or spaces (Brøgger, 2014). Pasts and possible futures may haunt the present and make themselves felt by capturing the bodies and minds of people, reminding them of traumatic pasts or offering glimpses into possible gloomy or uncanny futures (Pors, 2016a).

As for the relationship between ghosts and the ghostly, most approaches to the ghostly in organisations seem to abandon the idea of personalised or 'generic' ghosts as particular figures returning from the past to redeem past wrongdoing in the present (Pors, 2016a: 1642; Raahauge, 2015: 322-323). But even if there is not an interest in ghosts per se, the 'affective turn' within organisational studies certainly presents an interest in the animating forces or 'hauntings', the absent presences, which may be related to the study of the agency of affect and atmosphere within organisational life (Pors, 2016a, 2016b; Brøgger, 2014, 2016; Brøgger and Staunæs, 2016). We share this interest in ghostly matters in organisation, analysing *and* believing in the agency or performativity of 'the ghostly', and we will unfold our analysis of animating spirits and organisational hauntings by drawing on Žižek's use of Lacanian psychoanalysis. Here we focus on how "the spirit of teaching" may be conceptualised through the concepts of fantasy and desire, and how we may search for the haunting of the ghostly in the interplay between the Real, the Symbolic, and the Imaginary or Phantasmatic order (Žižek, 2008, 1992)

A phantasmatic perspective on the ghostly in organisations

Accordingly, our analytical contribution to the present interest in ghostly matters in organisations is to suggest conceptualising the ghostly through the Lacanian concepts of fantasy and desire, as these concepts are framed by Žižek. The use of

Lacanian psychoanalysis in organisational studies is widespread. Within Critical Management Studies, Lacanian psychoanalysis has been used to study the performativity of particular forms of governance through processes of identification and subjectification (Bojesen, 2008; Contu and Willmott, 2006; Hoedemaekers and Keegan, 2010), and in the interplay between different logics (Glynos and Howarth, 2007). Other studies focus on the production of subjectivity in the interplay between fantasy/ideology and desire (Ekman, 2013; Glynos, 2010; Glynos and Howarth, 2007; Muhr and Kirkegaard, 2012), or on political struggles and forms of resistance which may or may not challenge or support the hegemonic order of a particular organisation (Contu, 2008; Glynos and Howarth, 2007; Stavrakakis, 1999, 2010). Our ambition is to borrow insights from the way in which Critical Management Studies has used Lacan and Zizek, in order to contribute to the study of the ghostly in organisational life.

Fantasy and desire

In a Lacanian understanding, the subject comes into existence through the interplay between three orders: The Symbolic, the Real, and the Imaginary (also sometimes called the order of Fantasy) (Zizek, 2008). The symbolic order is the order of the social and can be expressed in language or discourse. This is the order where the subject achieves a positive existence through identifying with particular subject positions or social identities. But in a Lacanian perspective, identification is not as simple as someone identifying with a particular identity or subject position. Two forms of identification are at play:

Imaginary identification is identification with the image in which we appear likeable to ourselves, with the image representing ‘what we would like to be’, and symbolic identification is identification with the very place *from where* we are being observed, *from where* we look at ourselves, so that we appear to ourselves likeable, worthy of love. (Zizek, 2008: 116; emphasis in original)

The first point here is how positive or social identity rests upon the *imaginary* identification with a subject position within a social or symbolic framework: ‘You are a teacher because you identify with a particular image, a subject position, within a (larger) social order’. This is further explained by the idea of identification with a ‘gaze’ through which we are identified with a particular subject position. This is the *symbolic* identification with the social order understood as ‘the gaze of the Other’. This raises the questions: ‘[...] for whom is the subject enacting this role? Which gaze is considered when the subject identifies himself with a certain image?’ (Zizek, 2008: 117-118).

The second point is that the subject is always and already constituted around a lack of something. In spite of the identification with a position within a symbolic order, there is always a ‘something’, a surplus, which escapes positive symbolisation. This means that the subject is never fully grasped by, or identical with, its social identity within the Symbolic order. This ‘lack’ that constitutes the subject resides in the order of the Real. There is, however, no positive sign of the Real, as it only appears through lack, and through its effects on the interplay between the symbolic order and fantasy:

Fantasy appears then, as an answer to ‘*Che vuoi?*’, to the unbearable enigma of the desire of the Other, of the lack in the Other, but it is at the same time fantasy itself which, so to speak, provides the co-ordinates of our desire – which constructs the frame enabling us to desire something [...] *through fantasy, we learn ‘how to desire’*. (Zizek, 2008: 132; emphasis in original)

According to Zizek, it is the fantasy of the desire of the Other which again produces the desire of the subject: the subject does not only identify with the gaze of the Other; it is also animated by the fantasy of what it is the Other (really) wants, which in turn produces the subject’s desire. In this way the fantasy about ‘what the Other wants’, and about what it is the Other sees in me, turns into the animating spirit, calling us to love, to buy, to work, or – as in this case – to teach. In this way desire is not to be understood as attempting to further the subject’s own needs or wants. The point is that such desires are inseparable from the fantasy of what the *Other* wants. Accordingly, ‘the spirit’, and in this case particularly the spirit of teaching, resides in the order of fantasy. With this understanding in place, we will return to Line and her decision to quit her job.

A proper goodbye

All the 5th graders and their families are gathered in the staffroom of a municipal school in the middle of Copenhagen in an area with a mixed social and ethnic population. They are gathered to say a proper goodbye to their teacher, Line, who has decided to quit her job. After a communal meal, Line has prepared an hour-long slideshow presenting pictures from the five years she and the children have spent together. The pictures display visits to forests and farms, museums and theatres, campfire cook-outs, a raft-building project, art projects, theatre performances, street art, playing in bands, etc. Halfway through the show Line presses the stop button: ‘And they’re asking for “open schools”! I mean, what is this then?’ she asks rhetorically, before switching the slideshow and the music back on. The comment about ‘open schools’ is a direct reference to one of the core elements in the school reform of 2014. ‘Open school’ refers to the requirement for schools to increase cooperation with the surrounding society and institutions in

order to open up alternative spaces of learning within and particularly outside the schools. In practice, 'open schools' means that the pupils should leave the school, and visit places, experience nature and collaborate with institutions and companies in the neighbourhood (Bjerg and Staunæs, 2017; Pors, 2014). By putting on her show, Line points out how this is exactly what she has been doing with and for her students for years. Long before it became a policy matter. After the show, Line explains to a group of parents why she felt she had to quit her job: 'This is my little protest. I know the Minister won't hear it. But anyway'.

Line's comments show how her slideshow was not an isolated event, nor was it meant for the parents' eyes only. The slideshow, and especially the comments that Line makes about it, indicate how the narrative of the years she has spent with the children is closely interrelated with other narratives. Line very explicitly refers to some of the elements in the reform, and links her personal narrative to some of the storylines found in the political discourse about schools and teachers. Drawing more closely on the Lacanian understanding of identification, we suggest reading the slideshow as a repetitive preoccupation with the question 'Che Vuoi?' (Zizek, 2008: 123 ff). She seems to be asking: 'What is it that the Other wants from me – if it is, indeed, not exactly this... and this... and this?!!!' The slideshow becomes a statement, intended to (dis)honour the gaze of the Other, represented as 'they' or 'the Minister' (referring to the Minister of Education who initiated the school reform). But why is it that Line's rich account of her long list of trips and projects with the class is not presented with pride and joy, but rather with anger and resentment? And why is that Line, who apparently has been doing a good, enjoyable job, and many other teachers in a similar situation, have found it impossible to keep up their good work after the lockout, Act 409 and the reform? Why is it that they choose to resign and turn their backs on the schools, the kids and the profession that they used to enjoy and take pride in?

Killing the spirit of teaching

Our first reading tries to detect the roots and content of the hegemonic master narrative that Line aims to counter with her 'little protest' directed at 'them' or 'the Minister'. In their ghostly readings of policy documents, Pors and Brøgger both draw on Derridean hauntology. They conduct spectral readings attentive to the absent-presences that seem incessantly excluded. Importantly, they are sensitive to the affective traces of such voids in master narratives about how to realise desirable potentials in and of the future (Brøgger, 2014, 2016; Pors, 2016a, 2016b). Inspired by these spectral readings, we will trace the master narrative within a symbolic logic, supplementing this with a reading within a phantasmatic logic (Zizek, 2008).

The policy behind the negotiations, and the conflict about teachers' working conditions in 2013 can be read as a master narrative centred on the idea that teachers had accumulated privileges that they did not deserve, and that they worked less than 'normal' people. This narrative had been emerging over some years, and can for example be seen in ministerial reports as early as 2006 and 2007. These reports on the management of teacher's working hours were produced by the Ministries of Finance and Education in collaboration with Local Government Denmark. The reports presented existing regulations of teacher's working hours as, for example, 'a barrier to management and prioritisation', or as standing in the way of the 'flexible use of resources' (Finansministeriet, Undervisningsministeriet, and KL, 2006, 2007). In 2012, the Ministry of Finance and Local Government Denmark, representing the employer's side in high schools and state primary and secondary schools respectively, were preparing for the upcoming labour market negotiations. In some of the policy documents published in 2012 and 2013 prior to the negotiations, the Ministry of Finance wrote that the problems connected with teachers' working hours were basically the same for all sorts of teachers in all sorts of schools (Finansministeriet, 2012). The problem, according to the Ministry of Finance, resided in the fact that teachers' working hours regulations were extraordinary, inflexible and out-dated, which was why they needed to be 'normalised'. The Minister wrote:

Today a high degree of automatisisation in the way salaries in the state are regulated minimises the link between wages and productivity. This arrangement, having secured employees of the state a salary which, automatically and without giving anything in return, follows the wage levels in the private sector, and is decoupled from the tasks at hand in the state sector, is outdated. (Ministry of Finance, 2012; our translation)

In this way, teachers and their abnormal working hour regulations were presented as factors that had unfairly secured for teachers wage rises and privileges that they did not really deserve, as they had not provided any increase in productivity in return. Teachers and their working hours were presented as an obstacle, rather than an asset, in terms of realising a potentially well-functioning and efficient municipal school system (Bjerg and Vaaben, 2015). For this reason, the employers demanded the abolition of special arrangements and privileges for senior teachers and 'outer limits' to the working hours. They also wanted to give local leaders the managerial right to lead and prioritise teachers' time – 'just like in any other workplace' (KL, 2013). When Act 409 was introduced to put an end to the lockout in April 2013, it also put an end to the freedom teachers had to organise their working hours and tasks in ways which they themselves found possible and convenient. Instead, all teachers were not only supposed to teach more, they were also supposed to be physically present at their schools throughout a full 40-hour working week. The reasoning behind this was to allow the school principals to

prioritise and organise the time and working tasks of the teachers as productively as possible.

The debate about teachers' working hours not only framed the future working life of teachers, it also seemed to reframe or recalculate their past. The reasoning behind the Act suggested that up till now teachers had worked less than normal people, so in fact they actually *owed* something, which could now rightfully be claimed by insisting that they be available for managerial instructions at the school during their total working time (Vaaben, 2018).

This narrative about teachers previously not having contributed as much as 'normal people' seemed to be omnipresent in the public debate and affected the way teachers were talked about in public discourse. For many teachers, this inflicted a deep wound that did not seem to heal:

What Local Government Denmark did was to show the population that [the teachers] are a bunch of whiners, and now we have to put them in place once and for all, and at any time you may call them whatever you think they are. They helped the population to do that, and they held us for as long as they could, and then sent us back to arrange exams. And working double we fought to make that happen [...] lots of people are not over it yet. The degradation that was in it, made us feel like second class people. [...] The teachers fought for public recognition. They fought for other things as well. But I think this turned out to be the issue of greatest importance. (interview with teacher, 2014)

This teacher, like many others, was not primarily preoccupied with the actual workloads resulting from the new law. Rather, she stressed that she and her colleagues still felt the 'othering' and degradation that had seeped out of political documents about teachers and their working hours to become a public opinion. It was the fantasy of being viewed in such a degrading light that made it impossible for many teachers to let bygones be bygones. Many teachers felt that 'something' had been destroyed or killed. This happened even in cases where, for instance, local municipal authorities had introduced local working hour regulations that softened the effects of the new working hours legislation, so that they did not actually have to work or teach more than before. The wound had little to do with having to work more or not. This was not about quantity of work. It was more a matter of a symbolic account that needed to be settled.

This is where the accounts of the conflict compel us look beyond or beneath the binaries and exclusions of the discourse. We will now analyse it through a phantasmatic lens, using what Žižek calls a 'logic of enjoyment'. Our claim is that the othering of the teachers did not only take place in the symbolic realm, but also in the realm of fantasy and desire. Here, what was targeted in the undercurrent of political and public discourses and eventually in the Act itself, was not the actual

number of working hours, but the imagined ‘jouissance’, or enjoyment of the teachers: did teachers not have a much easier and more pleasurable life than ‘normal people’? Zizek has a description of a similar fantasy:

In short, what really gets on our nerves, what really bothers us about the ‘other’, is the peculiar way he organises his enjoyment (the smell of his food, his noisy songs and dances, his strange manners, his attitude to work) – in the racist perspective, the ‘other’ is either a workaholic stealing our jobs or an idler living on our labour. (Zizek, 1992: 165)

Zizek points out how the fantasy of the enjoyment of the other not only raises irritation, but also constitutes the other and his illicit enjoyment as the very obstacle that stands in the way of the full or harmonious realisation of the social order. Bringing this point to bear on the actual case forces us to attend to what seems to be an incessant underlying questioning of the legitimacy of the professional desire and enjoyment of teachers. So many teachers were deeply shaken by the course of events, and we suggest that this was a central contributory factor. What seems to have disappeared is confidence in teachers’ understanding of what it means to be a good teacher; an alteration in the alignment between the ways in which teachers have pursued their professional desire, and whether or not they appear likeable and desirable in the eyes of the Other. The lockout and the Act left teachers feeling accused of being lazy, and illegitimately living on the resources of normal hard-working people. Line explained:

I’m always working, because there are some poor cases in these classes. For some of them we are the primary adult, and I take on over-responsibility in wanting to save those children – I know that. It is such a challenge to sleep at night as a teacher. But I want it! I want to be their primary adult, if they don’t have one. But if someone bangs me on the head and calls me a lazy pig, then I won’t! (interview with teacher, Line 2013)

For Line, teaching simply is ‘it’ (Zizek, 2008: 106). She wants to take on responsibility – but only if her desire is somehow in alignment with the desire of the Other. Here we need to stress that in a Lacanian understanding, enjoyment (‘jouissance’) is not the same as pleasure (‘plaisir’). Enjoyment is closely linked to the imagined desire of the Other, and it is exactly the sacrifice or suffering of doing what others are imagined to desire, that produces enjoyment (Zizek, 1992). It is, however in this relation that the lockout has introduced long-lasting insecurity or instability. Suddenly, this correlation between the desire of self and Other is no longer trustworthy. Previously teachers had felt relatively sure that there was an alignment between what they enjoyed doing and what others wanted from them. But now they are no longer sure what the Other wants – and therefore find no enjoyment in doing what they previously found enjoyable. In the situation with the slideshow at the farewell party, we see how such instability or insecurity produces

a repetitive preoccupation with the question of ‘what it is the Other wants?’ The lockout and its aftermath did not only shake the symbolic position and identity of being a teacher; hand in hand with the factual changes in teachers’ working loads, the shockwave of this insecurity about what the Other wanted seems to have killed the spirit of teaching as such. If Line’s desire to teach does not match what the Other desires, there is no enjoyment in teaching, and she does not want to teach.

Haunted by the spirit of teaching

We now jump from the immediate reactions to the lockout and the new working hours Act to some of the first experiences of actually working under the new conditions. Our main character, Line, decided to quit before the reform and the Act where put into effect. However, a Facebook-group called ‘Look into my eyes’ gives us a glimpse of those first experiences of working under the new conditions. The group was established during the lockout, but is still (in 2018) used by teachers to exchange experiences, interpretations and critical comments on their working lives. Shortly after the reform and the new working hours Act was implemented in August 2014, the following exchange was to be found in this Facebook-group:

Initial Comment: I just caught myself forgetting about Act 409 letting myself be immersed in the preparation of a theme-week...that old great feeling of doing something extra to give the kids an experience they will remember...so I caught myself preparing outside my working hours (like I used to), and in doing some shopping to do that little extra bit (like I used to). So now I’m disloyal...but for the first time this year I have a great gut-feeling.

Commentator 1: Was in the same situation: Project week starts today, sick last week, when to prepare?

Commentator 2: That doesn’t exist.

Commentator 3: Sorry to say this, but I don’t think you’re doing anyone a favour here... not that I don’t understand you, but do you want to continue working for free in your spare time after the treatment the teachers have just been given? Are we just going to turn the other cheek, so they can hit us again?

Commentator 4: Ooh, I do hope my colleges don’t fall for that temptation.

This exchange draws a clear distinction between before and after the Act 409. Not only do teachers discuss how their working hours and tasks are to be structured and organised, they also discuss the ways in which they manage their professional desire and enjoyment. The exchange starts with a teacher proclaiming how for a moment she ‘forgot’ the new working hours legislation, and how this forgetfulness allowed her both to remember and relive the spirit of teaching. She did so by allowing herself to continue her preparation at home in order to add ‘that little

extra', even if it was outside the officially designated working hours. What she did was actually nothing new, she claimed. Rather, she did exactly what she used to do before the introduction of the new law. What has changed is how reliving the spirit of teaching has to be done in secrecy, as it is now to be considered a transgression of the law (Zizek, 1992). As Line put it: 'What should I do if I'm not done with my work at four? Continue working at home in secrecy with my curtains drawn?'. To many teachers the dramatic change does not lie in whether they work more or less than before. The dramatic difference is that they no longer recognise themselves in the fantasy of the gaze of the Other. What they see when looking at themselves through an imagined perspective of the other is no longer a teacher working proudly to fulfil her professional duty. Rather, what they see is someone snatching illegitimate enjoyment out of transgressing the law. And this greatly affects their professional desire. What used to be both legal and loyal, not only to the letter of the law, but to the imagined desire of the Other, is now a violation of both. So even if the teacher is just doing what she always did, and thereby summoning the spirit of teaching, it no longer makes her appear as a virtuous and conscientious professional in (the fantasy of) the gaze of the Other. Moreover, as her fellow teachers point out, transgressing the law is neither to be considered an opposition to it nor a threat to its existence. Rather, the secret enjoyment of teaching represents what Alicia Contu would label 'decaffeinated resistance'. Even if the teacher here refuses to follow the law, the enjoyment of transgression is actually what supports its existence (Contu, 2008). This is what her peers are getting at when they worry that if she and other teachers keep doing the little extra things, even though they are neither paid nor recognised for it, they actually contribute to upholding an otherwise impossible system (Bjerg and Vaaben, 2014, 2015; Contu, 2008; Fleming and Sewell, 2002; Zizek, 1997).

'You only die twice'

In order to grasp this, we will return to Zizek. In his writings, he draws extensively on the story of Hamlet. He describes how the ghost of Hamlet's father returns from the dead to haunt the present: 'The return of the dead is a sign of a disturbance in the symbolic rite or the process of symbolisation, as the dead return to collect unpaid symbolic debt' (Zizek, 1992: 23). Zizek points out how this disturbance in the rite of symbolisation opens up a time-space between 'the two deaths'. According to Zizek, you actually die twice: symbolically and actually. One death can precede the other, and vice versa. (Zizek, 2008: 145-151). Within this time-space between the two deaths is a space where linear time collapses. As in the case of Hamlet's father, an on-going present can refuse to become past before accounts are settled, and those who have been excluded or repressed in the past have been given their proper place in the master narrative. Or as in the case of

Napoleon, who had lost and was sent away to Elba, but who kept on living and fighting because he didn't realise that he was already symbolically dead (*ibid.*). Such a time-space between the two deaths is marked by the disappearance of desire; the desire produced by fantasy is transformed into pure 'drive' or demand: 'A drive is precisely a demand that is not caught up in the dialectic of desire, that resists dialectisation' (Zizek, 1992: 21). Being driven by pure demand is being driven without the fantasy that produces the desire. As such, the time-space between the two deaths is not only a space filled with unsettled symbolic accounts. It is also a time-space in which fantasy and desire or, as we shall put it here, *the animating spirit* has disappeared and has been replaced with 'pure drive without desire'. Within this time-space, the living dead will persist, not until but beyond their death. They may only be put to rest when the injustices of the past have been redeemed by being integrated into the official and collective historical memory (Zizek, 2008). The actions completed in this period of perseverance may, Zizek adds, not necessarily be evil, they may just as equally be marked by suffering and 'infinite sadness' (Zizek, 1992: 23).

We have already pointed out how the spirit of teaching had been killed. Now we add that this spirit has returned in the form of a ghost, or just an absent presence haunting the schools. What keeps teachers going, then, is neither their identification with their position as teachers nor the fantasy and desire related to teaching. Rather, an imagery of teachers as 'working dead' is evoked as they still inhabit the school, but in a state marked by pure drive but without desire. Or as teachers formulate it themselves as 'teaching machines'.

The school haunted by teachers as 'working dead'

In this perspective, it is not only teachers, but the school as such that is haunted. It is haunted by the absent-presence of the spirit of teaching. Furthermore, it is inhabited by teachers who may appear to be 'working dead', and who demand the settling of symbolic accounts in order to restore the imaginary of teachers in their own eyes and those of the Other(s). So the past conflict refuses to go away and keeps haunting the present. Of course, this image does not apply to each and every teacher or school in Denmark. However, it does seem to possess explanatory power in terms of understanding the large number of teachers who claim that they *had to* quit their jobs. They did not leave because they disliked being teachers; what they did was an act of despair, but also of love – for their pupils as well as their profession. Based on a survey from 2016, we have analysed responses from 405 teachers who quit their jobs in municipal schools between 2013 and 2016. In contrast to Line, many of these teachers had actually tried to stay in their jobs and to make things work after the events of 2013 and 2014. However, many of them

describe how the situation in the schools had become more and more unbearable, why the decision to quit had not felt like a choice, but rather a necessity. In Lacanian terminology, their exit from the municipal school system can be articulated as an act of will, but not of desire:

I could not look pupils and parents in the eye, and finally not myself either. My teaching was poorly prepared, if prepared at all, and I was at everyone's beck and call². What made me take the decision to quit (without having another job) was a situation where I turned away two girls who were having a conflict, because at that point I only had 30 minutes to do some preparation that I really needed. I left the girls, but then turned around and went back to help them solve the conflict, after which I went up and wrote my resignation. (Reply in questionnaire 2016, Pedersen et al., 2016: 35)

Like many other teachers in our material, this teacher talks about not being able to 'look oneself and others in the eye'. It seems that the image of teachers reflected in the eyes of the imagined Other is no longer an image in which they appear 'likeable to themselves'. But – as it is the case for ghosts – they cannot recognise their own image in the mirror (Derrida, 1994: 195). And, as we noticed above, in several of the answers to the survey, teachers describe how they feel reduced to mere 'teaching robots', 'industrial workers' or 'machines'. They describe how the municipal schools have lost their humanity and decency. And they explain how they have been plagued with constant feelings of guilt, as they have not been able to attend to their pupils in the ways they know and feel are necessary, desirable and admirable (Pedersen et al., 2016). As we see in the quotation above, the teacher's feeling that she was doing a poor job is closely related to the fact that much more 'productive work' (teaching) is squeezed into an increasingly dense and stressful working day. This leaves her with the constant sensation of having to choose, not *whether* to let pupils down, but *which ones* to select: the girls who demanded her immediate attention due to a conflict, or the pupils who would be subjected to her unprepared and possibly poor teaching half an hour later? What finally settles the matter is a situation in which she finds herself acting in a way that a 'real teacher' would never do. To her a 'real teacher' does not turn down distressed students with immediate problems. Period. When she finds herself doing exactly that, this becomes the moment when she realises that she is already dead, so she might as well die for good, and quit. In this space between the two deaths, she has turned into a 'working dead', a mechanical teacher-robot, a dehumanised 'teaching machine', driven by the raw requirement to teach and

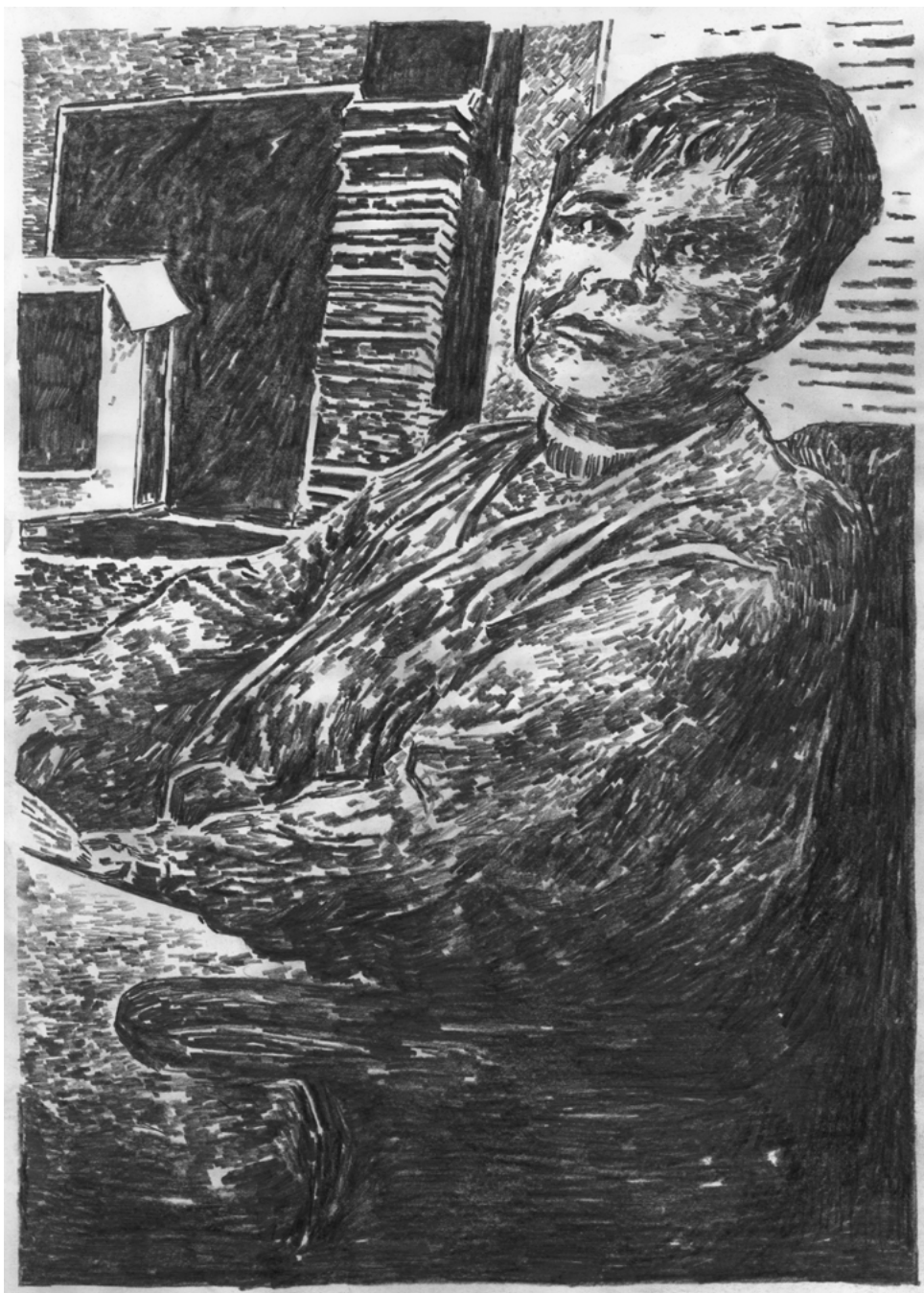
² The informant actually uses the Danish expression 'hænge i en klokkestreng', which literally means 'hanging on a bell pull.' 'Bell pulls' were originally mechanical installations of bells and ropes in houses, so that servants could be called from other rooms in the house. 'Hanging on a bell pull' is an expression for a certain way of working where you are always at the disposal of orders given by someone else.

nothing else. When she realises that she can no longer identify with that image, she sees no other option than to put an end to it. In that sense, her resignation not only resonates with that of many others in the questionnaire (Pedersen et al., 2016), it also reflects the statements of other teachers explaining how they used to *be* teachers, but now just *working as* teachers. In the case of the teacher quoted above, as well as the teacher who confessed her transgressions of the law on Facebook, the ‘spirit of teaching’ is however still lurking in the shadows, as an absent–presence calling from the past: ‘Remember me, remember me!’.

Conclusion: When the spirit has left the building

So what can be learned from such a ghastly ghost story? Through the analysis, it has become clear that (school) policy works on a symbolical as well as a phantasmatic level. Obviously, the official (symbolic) rationality of the introduced reforms was centred on increasing *amounts* of work and more specifically amounts of *lessons* per teacher per day or week. However, the teachers’ reactions were not primarily about amounts of work. What concerned the teachers, was how the value of their work in the past was unfairly questioned. It was the sense of having been wronged, which refused to go away. It kept haunting them and called them to make sure history was rewritten. In a temporal perspective this analysis is fully in line with how other researchers have suggested that past traumas or glimpses into possible futures can be meaningfully understood, by taking a ghostly perspective on organisational life (Brøgger, 2014, 2015, 2016; Pors, 2016a, 2016b). Such hauntological perspectives question the linear progression of time in organizational life and draw attention to ways in which linear time collapses and past or future can become absently present in the here and now, and cause bodily sensations such as nausea (Brøgger, 2016) or shivers down the spine (Pors, 2016b). Fully in line with this, the teachers in our study seemed to be haunted by the past, making it impossible for the teachers to ‘move on’ in a temporal progression towards the future. Our analysis also falls in line with other studies preoccupied with the analysis of affective implications of policy and organization (see e.g. Beyes and Steyaert, 2013; Brøgger, 2014, 2016; Gordon, 2011; Juelskjær and Staunæs, 2016; Orr, 2014; Pors, 2016a, 2016b).

What the psychoanalytical approach adds to the understanding of ghostly matters is an idea of how the social order of organisational life is not only brought to life through discourse, but how the discourse of organisations can become a matter of life or in this case death. Several teachers – including Line – spoke about having lost their joy in teaching. We suggest that the experience of the teachers was the death of the fantasy or rather the ‘spirit of teaching’ as such. With the idea of the interplay between the Real, the Symbolic and Fantasy, the ghostly is summoned





through the experience of a loss not only marked by disappearance. Rather the loss comes with a frustrating preoccupation with the lack of social identity and desire subsumed in the repetitive question: 'What is it the Other wants from me? How am I seen, and why am I not a likeable person when I look at myself through the eyes of the Other?' As such, the spirit of teaching has turned from a source of professional joy, desire and pride to a repetitive but persisting call from the shadow: 'Remember me, remember me!' This is what has turned the teachers into working dead, poor souls who have lost desire, but are still caught up in the drive to 'teach, teach, teach.' And this is why we summon the imaginary of the Danish school as a haunted house. We find that our analysis is supported by the fact that many of the teachers who chose to leave the Danish school, did not turn away from teaching all together. Instead they went to revive the spirit of teaching elsewhere. In the case of Line, she found a new job as a teacher in a school outside the municipal school system. In the questionnaire from 2016, we can also see that many of the teachers, did not quit teaching (Pedersen et al., 2016). Instead, they are now found in private schools or elsewhere in the educational system. And they describe how wonderful it is 'to become a teacher again', and how their joy in working has returned. In our reading we see them as being re-animated by the spirit of teaching, rather than by a joyless drive. They seem to be animated by the spirit of teaching, rather than pushed on by a joyless drive.

Here we find that the psychoanalytical approach offers an understanding of the ghostly aspects of organisational life, which also show the possible deadly effects herein. We have shown how the ghostly is not just a matter of imagination or speculation, but rather a matter of life and death with very real consequences. This does not only count for the teachers, but just as much for the school as a significant welfare institution. Our reason for being interested in ghostly matters in organisation is therefore not exclusively a wish to make a theoretical or analytical contribution to this particular field of study. It is also an attempt and an invitation to keep count of the casualties of policy making.

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