

Auditland

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Through a silent transformation which ... is ... barely possible to analyze, so-called intellectual life is increasingly administered and formatted by the editing and consumption of events ... the event goes to market. (François Jullien 2011: 132)

Even though this may go against traditional thinking, one could thus speak of an *a priori* prosthetics. (Bernard Stiegler 2003a)

Is this still capitalism? What if it was something worse? (McKenzie Wark 2013)

Audit—the ongoing evaluation of performance—began as a fairly narrow range of technical procedures in financial accounting. However, it has now expanded its range to ‘account’ for a wide range of behaviours, thoughts and even feelings, in the workplace and elsewhere. This article first suggests that audit cultures are a response to the ‘abyss of the differential.’ This is the abyss faced when too much generative difference threatens established interests, and thus everything these interests control. Such interests often face a double bind, because they also rely on exploiting generative difference and are thus fully immersed in it. Audit is seen as a useful response to this double bind—to the abyss of the differential. Audit enables both control and ongoing exploitation of the differential.

This article secondly aims to summarise some of the recent discussions of audit and then develop aspects of them. Audit technics/cultures use a flexible series of control procedures that differentially declare what is (un)acceptable. They therefore both

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energise and create shifting borders around what counts as performance, variably across multiple contexts. Audit also links the local and global, the macro and micro, pragmatically, in what I suggest is a combination of instrumental and ‘operational reason’ (Massumi 2002: 110). Audit thus enables the creation and exchange of new forms of value. It enables new relations of production. Here I suggest that audit also enables the insertion of the micro-events of work or living, little fragments of time or nervous energy, into a global mnemotechnics—the external memory work done in the networks of global media (Stiegler 2003a). Across these contexts, I argue that audit’s technics include a powerful use of the ‘pseudo a priori’ (Stiegler 2003a). This allows audit to variably repurpose the significance of events—in terms of what is (un)acceptable—*before, during and after their occurrence*.

At the same time, although I need to describe audit in some detail, this article is less concerned with audit per se than with the ethical/political questions involved. Here I suggest that audit, politically, is an example of *transitional* technics/cultures. Audit not only restructures value, relations of production, subjectivity and more in the present; it also provides passage to the social relations of the future. Audit is not the only instance of transitional technics/cultures in the contemporary world, but it is an emblematic one. In this article, the transitional quality or power of audit is at stake—especially the impulses and tendencies it brings into play.

Thirdly, in order to suggest a way to grapple with the nature of some of these impulses and tendencies, in this essay I also want to inflect the usual understandings of audit toward a very specific concept of ‘neofeudalism.’ My approach to neofeudalism acknowledges fantasies of control over all existential territories of any kind, in short, fantasies of a supercharged neofeudal world. However, the fantasies do not actually inaugurate a new, functioning feudal society. Rather, such fantasies are important in that they frame the real-world actions and impulses of those who fantasise. In short, the fantasies motivate those who are aligned with Capital/other established or even newer interests. Here, then, neofeudalism includes the real impulses and effects that result from such fantasies, realised in the often dysfunctional attempt to implement them (for example, neoliberalism¹). To reiterate, by neofeudalism I do not mean a neofeudal

¹ See Lorenz (2012) for a particularly detailed critique of audit and neoliberalism with regard to the higher education system. See Mirowski (2013) for a full critique of neoliberalism, in which audit plays a role (57).

society; rather I am referring to the rise of neofeudal impulses and tendencies in the workplace and everyday life. So neofeudalism also includes a specific if messy restructuring of social relations and concepts, such as property, the person and work, even life, infused by neofeudal tendencies. This might be best described as a micro-feudalism in everyday life, energised by these tendencies. All of this is found in audit's imposition of new social relations and, for that matter, concepts of relation in the workplace and elsewhere.

Finally, the article suggests that although they do not do this alone the impulses and tendencies carried by audit lead towards a more effective and more problematic society of direct control. This emerges from and overtakes the society in which audit has become so important (although the neofeudalism may remain). Life becomes spectral, haunted by a range of 'hungry ghosts,' such as those of neofeudalism, neoliberalism and financialisation. Too often the only way out seems to be to join these ghosts, in some kind of speculative microfeudalism.

The abyss of the differential

Since at least the development of differential calculus by Newton and Leibniz, modern societies have thrived on the energies of difference—more precisely on the *differential*, or *difference as a generative power*. Science and engineering work with differential tensions to build bridges, develop new technologies of communication, or manipulate genomes. The generative differences that move through weather events are captured in ongoing climate modelling. The brain's functioning becomes a flexible mass of constantly differing connection weights between neurons. Generative difference fuels financial markets and fashion. Arguments about the nature of difference itself are staple fare in the academy and beyond.

Yet the summoning up of the powers of generative difference often takes cultures to places they do not want to go. As much as there might be a desire to explore and exploit the creative potential of generative difference, there is just as often a desire to impossibly limit exploration—to only that differential which can be exploited, in work cultures, institutional cultures, intellectual cultures, national cultures, established cultures of practice, even individual conversations. This has led to an 'abyss of the differential.' As remarked in the film *Diva* (1981), 'the abyss calls forth the abyss.' Generative difference calls forth more generative difference, and this in turn calls forth

the ongoing generation of flexible, modulating control that for Deleuze is the mark of ‘control societies’ (1995: 169–182). These societies themselves multiply generative differentials, in the tensions between profit, social control and communication for example. Audit inhabits such tensions, providing a way of communicating and controlling through them. As Deleuze writes, the ‘quest for “universals of communication,”’² of the kind that underpin the global reach of audit principles and measures ‘ought to make us shudder ... Maybe speech and communication have been corrupted. They’re thoroughly permeated by money’ (1995: 175).²

Such exploration and exploitation of generative difference are, then, accompanied by aversion. Indeed, exploitation, exploration and aversion all become the more intense as generative difference gets out of control. Aversion grows especially when the differential produces things that are not wanted or cannot be exploited: unresolved disagreements, challenging new ideas that erode established disciplines, institutions and careers; global financial instability; climate change.

Audit can be seen as a series of cultural practices that attempt to deal with the ‘abyss of the differential.’ Audit and its necessary twin ‘performance’—both broadly conceived—play an important role in regulating this abyss³ so that exploitation is maximised and aversion minimised. Key to this is audit’s work with the flexible nature of the (un)acceptable. The shifting nature of the (un)acceptable, as constantly amended by audit, propels individual and cultural activity within a sea of ongoing differentiation. Audit presents what is a very flexible and adaptable series of declarations about what is (un)acceptable in terms of activity or ‘performance’ within differentiation. It measures, evaluates and judges the generative nature of activity, reining it in, or pushing it in a different direction. It regulates events, behaviours, attention, desire and affect.

Audit as procedure and culture

Audit is thus both a technics⁴ and a broader culture of ongoing evaluation. The ambit of

² Deleuze continues: ‘We’ve got to hijack speech ... Creating has always been something different from communicating. The key thing may be to create vacuoles of noncommunication, circuit breakers, so we can elude control’ (1995: 175).

³ I am not of course suggesting that audit is the only form of control within the complexities of contemporary Capitalism or the likes of neofeudalism. However, audit is more important, more prevalent and less innocent than is often assumed.

⁴ Technics can be defined here as an assemblage of techniques, technologies and related processes. Pels suggests ‘a regulation of human practices that comes in a certain objectified form, as a set of objects (tools, machines, buildings), as a set of more or less explicit rules, as a ritual or an exemplar of conduct,

audit has developed along three, often intertwined, pathways. First, it is an independent (usually external) accounting of (internal) accounting. That is, it concerns the accuracy of the management of finances in an organisation. Here, as elsewhere, it is an often externally imposed ‘control of control’ (Power cited in Shore & Wright 2000: 73). Second, this has been extended to a variety of other external checks on non-financial processes. This might include the like of water or energy management. All this is of course appropriate and useful. Third, however, and this is where this article begins, audit evolves into a plethora of related technics that inhabit an increasing variety of locations and occasions within culture. To an extent it *becomes* work culture, even a prominent tendency within the culture of everyday life.

In all this, audit itself is auto-generative. Audit produces more audit. As it does so, power increasingly lies in audit, for both organisations and individuals. Audit also spawns other, related forms of procedure, and activities, that are not, strictly speaking, audit, even if they inherit much of its character and purpose (performance ‘development,’ search engine rankings, likes on Facebook). Indeed, the aegis of audit extends to an ongoing measuring and accounting of much of life, usually according to pre-determined criteria and increasingly often as channeled through external interests. At this point audit as practice incorporates its archaic meaning—‘audit’ as hearing. It is an ongoing listening in, looking over the shoulder, as well as an ongoing kind of *judicial hearing*. Kafka’s famous novel of bureaucratic judgment, *The Trial*, only begins to describe the situation that results. For in audit cultures, the possibilities of Kafka’s ‘indefinite postponement’ and ‘apparent acquittal’ at a macro level are now accompanied by an ongoing series of unpostponed and very real *micro-judgments*. A more extreme example is the use of facial recognition technology to make sure workers in the service industry are smiling enough (Gawne 2012), but audit obviously has subtler processes and effects.

Audit, then, can be summed up as a process of measure and evaluation that manages / regulates / coerces other processes (including other processes of audit, as these proliferate). As it measures / evaluates, audit in-folds a series of judgements / doctrines / theories of behaviour and values of all kinds into events. This produces a certain

or as a disciplinary apparatus (of course, technology usually combines two or more of these)’ (Pels 2000: 137).

ordering of activities, a differential order that shifts depending on the shifting interests of the interests involved. This in turn controls as it modulates the little events of behavior, ‘like a self-transmuting molding continually changing from one moment to the next’ (Deleuze 1995: 179).

Yet as audit gains importance it increasingly audits in the abstract—in terms of the fulfillment of ‘Key Performance Indicators’ or other abstract objectives. It increasingly and scrupulously tries to avoid actual events outside of the circuits of audit even as it regulates these events—moment to moment work, signs of life or even actual material production. Managerial attention and therefore its exercise of power are instead deferred to audit in the abstract. This disinterest in actual work events could be seen as a failure of audit and therefore of managerial power. As Michael Power notes, looking in from outside of audit, ‘failures can make visible the gap between the rhetorics of accountability and empowerment which set auditing in motion and the actual means for its achievement’ (Power 1999: 68).⁵ To cover over this gap audit must constantly self-affirm. ‘Accordingly, auditing technology must constantly assert its claims to ‘make things auditable.’ It does this ... by adapting the environment to its objectives through the creation of auditable performance measures.’

In fact, the very gap between accountability and actual achievement that Power identifies can easily become a plus for audit. An appealing buffer zone open ups for management or other interests. They are only now responsible for implementing fairly abstract systems of audit. They are at least partly freed from responsibility for the messiness of actual processes. The desire to be on the right side of this buffer zone, because it is so appealing, moves through the system and from there to much of life as lived. Via this, audit processes progressively interfere with actual activities at all levels. Or rather, in ‘adapting the environment to its objectives,’ audit can even replace previous forms of activity. Work, learning, living tend increasingly towards audit. More precisely, working/learning/living tend towards ‘performance,’ with ‘scripts,’ directed by auditors towards the fulfillment of audited objectives. More and more activity is directed towards a good, properly audited, performance score. Of course, audit is often dysfunctional in terms of actual work/learning/living, never able to gain total control of

⁵ Power (1999) and Strathern (2000) provide two of the earliest and most complete accounts of the ‘audit society,’ or ‘audit cultures’ and their ‘rituals of verification.’

real events, and is often resisted. Yet again, however, audit can turn this into a plus. As audit makes ‘its own operational knowledge base institutionally credible’ (Power 1999: 68), it no longer needs total control in order to have the desired effect. Not only does audit demarcate acceptable and unacceptable. It also demarcates relevant and irrelevant—again, differentially, as requirements change in response to circumstances. Resistance is not so much futile as increasingly irrelevant—as are dysfunction, failures of communication, or anything else that actually happens on the ground.

Precisely because of its abstract nature, audit has been an efficient and very adaptable method for regulating work and life in many different ‘ecologies.’ Audit operates effectively across the complex dimensions of Gregory Bateson’s inter-ecological ‘ecology of mind.’ That is, it inhabits and transforms the patterns of communication that form across multiple individuals, groups and settings and from which any individual event of mind, of perception or of memory emerges, as part of a series of feedback loops (Bateson 1972). Audit can also work across political ecologies. It can work between the *macro and micropolitical*. It works effectively with the tensions that multiply at the points at which broader political and social formations meet the minutiae of everyday life.⁶ Throughout, one of audit’s strengths is that it has one foot in a unifying homogenisation and another in its own generative and differential adaptation to a wide range of events and ‘habitats.’

Audit also has another strength. If audit converts behaviour into performance it does so without always requiring an attendant belief. One does not have to believe in audit in order to live it. In the workplace one hears that one ‘doesn’t really believe in all this stuff,’ that ‘really it’s pointless, or worse, but that one should nevertheless, if cynically, at least minimally, comply.’ Yet, even if it begins in cynicism, audit practice can lead to at least pseudo-belief, a belief that even perhaps becomes more genuine over time. As Zizek notes:

When Althusser repeats, after Pascal: “Act as if you believe, pray, kneel down, and you shall believe, faith will arrive by itself,” he delineates an intricate reflective mechanism of retroactive,

⁶ Beyond everyday audit in the workplace, larger examples of audit that link macro and micro are the audits used by usually conservative governments in order to implement a political agenda that impacts upon the everyday life of workers, often in terms of lost jobs, increases in precarious labour and privatisations. A recent example in Australia is the Queensland state government’s ‘Commission of Audit’ (‘Queensland Commission of Audit’ 2013). On the politics of this see Quiggin (2013) and Hayward (2013).

“autopoetic” foundation ... in short, the “external” ritual performatively generates its own ideological foundation. (Zizek 1994: 12-13)

Also writing on Pascal, Deleuze and Guattari put the issue slightly differently, writing that ‘Pascal wagers on the transcendental existence of God, but the stake, that *on* which one bets, is the immanent existence of the one who believes God exists’ (1994: 73). Our own everyday existence becomes the stake in the game, here a game premised on the transcendental existence of a society increasingly structured by audit and performance.

Of course, there has long been a desire for forms of micro-control that are transcendental yet can control micro-events, especially in response to the threat of the crowd or expanded democracy. Audit’s precursor’s are therefore found in: Edwards Bernays’ ‘big think’ and Walter Lippmann’s ‘public opinion’ (Murphie 2010); the 1947 birth of the social technics of neoliberalism in Friedrich Hayek’s Mont Pelerin Society (Plehwe 2009; Mirowski 2013); or cybernetics and the development of control through cognitive models (Murphie 2005). Critiques of such developments include Brian Holmes’s discussion of the flexible personality (2006), building on Herbert Marcuse’s critique of the ‘one-dimensional man.’ Holmes is interested in ‘the cultural, soft-power aspects of the new social paradigm.’ He also points to a ‘technological apparatus,’ an assemblage of techniques and technologies, that allows a ‘full implementation of the flexible employment system, that is, of a labor regime in which worker mobility and variable hours are accompanied by continuous electronic surveillance and the managerial analysis of performance.’ Avital Ronell (2005) has identified a drive within this: a ‘test drive.’ Samuel Weber writes of a ‘militarisation of thinking’ that suits this test drive, found in the language and practice of ‘targeting,’ especially after 9/11 (2005). From a different perspective, Lauren Berlant writes of subjects in contemporary culture pushed towards personal investment in a ‘cruel optimism.’ This relation ‘exists when something you desire is actually an obstacle to your flourishing’ (2011: 1). The peculiar desire-formations around audit or the like of performance development involve such a cruel optimism, and often a series of tests and targets that make of one a flexible if ‘one-dimensional’ personality.

Audit cultures provide all this with sustenance as they emerge from, and evolve with it. They are full of test and trial, of aims and targets that are specific yet flexible (the goalposts not only keep moving; the whole field, including the goalposts, keeps

changing form). They encourage, indeed institutionalise, a cruel optimism across multiple ecologies. Individual people and entire nations subject themselves to the cruel optimism that, for example, internationally-imposed austerity targets will provide economic and social salvation. And most audit targets *are* in some way as economic as they are social. Indeed, audit cultures organise labour in a manner that is increasingly stable *only* in terms of its *constant adjustment* to an economic life (thus audit's importance to precarity, as I shall detail a little later). In this, audit provides an adaptable bridge between the exploitation of physical processes (work, living) and the generation of abstract value in the economy. It also aligns concepts, indeed conceptualisation as a whole, with the economy. Not only that, but it can effectively attune activity to the sub-conceptual abstract—an algorithm in the stock market, a rumour or proposition that ripples through the market or social field, a changing of an important institutional or nationwide measure (or Google's PageRank or Facebook's EdgeRank). In all cases, the realities of work/living on the ground must be brought, impossibly, into alignment with the producing/performing of value in the abstract circuits of audit culture.

With all this activity, audit becomes both a business and a busyness. Audit itself becomes surrogate work and even surrogate life. It devours money and time in both work and life. Audit culture therefore regulates a double production, a double performance. It demands that actual work/living *and* the different work/living involved in audit itself are both ongoing. Both must be regularly audited. Audit regulates—differentially, in the sense of something like a thermostat returning a room to a desired temperature—the many cruel optimisms involved. In doing so, however, there are therefore many ways in which audit exacerbates the fact that 'working ... means bridging the gap between the prescriptive [audit] and concrete [actual messy work events] reality' (Dejours 2007: 72).

Under such conditions we perhaps risk living, not in the world, but in what I will call 'Auditland.'

Auditland (The gentle informers)

What I am calling 'Auditland' can be described via Anna Funder's book *Stasiland*, a surprisingly compassionate portrait of East Germany, before and after Stasi control:

The Stasi was the internal army by which the government kept control. Its job was to know everything about everyone, using any means it chose. It knew who your visitors were, it knew who you telephoned, it knew if your wife slept around. It was a bureaucracy metastasised through East German society: overt or covert, there was someone reporting to their fellows and friends in every school, every factory, every apartment block, every pub. Obsessed with detail, the Stasi entirely failed to predict the end of Communism, and with it the end of the country. (Funder 2002: 4)

It would be unfair and inaccurate to say that many institutions, corporations or nations in 2013 mirror the German Democratic Republic (GDR), pre-1989. Yet something about the *structure of experience* recounted in *Stasiland* does resonate with contemporary experience,⁷ whether the experience of everyday audit or the more evolved version of audit found in what Zygmunt Bauman and David Lyon have called ‘liquid surveillance’ (2012).

The GDR was a country based upon a proliferation of informers. There was of course a massive technics in place designed to produce loyalty to the nation, before the entry into globalisation—and the fall of the wall. Like *Stasiland*, *Auditland* describes a parasitic culture that threatens its host. There are other parallels. Vered Amit has asked, for example, ‘Why ... academicians and universities buy [the] bluff’ of audit culture (2000: 222). *Stasiland* begins to answer this question. In the GDR people very often became informers not only out of fear, but out of a desire for simple survival or perhaps even promotion, although for those who refused (one notably by calling the bluff in public at her workplace by announcing the attempt to recruit her) the file was usually simply closed, with no consequences. In a sense, however, everyone had to go along with the Stasi one way or another precisely because they lived in what Funder calls *Stasiland*—an existential territory as much as a country.

The question of non-compliance is more complex in *Auditland* than in *Stasiland*, yet there seems increasingly little outside of the ambit of audited compliance. And, like *Stasiland*, *Auditland* generates its own fears, questions of survival, desires for promotion or even just a wish to remain part of the system in which one is necessarily invested. Of course, the *Auditland* I am posing is a much softer place than *Stasiland*—with a much gentler process of information/informing, performed by good people, who often mean well (or perhaps just as often do not even care about the processes involved one way or the other). However, if national cultures of control such as *Stasiland* thankfully mutate into the much softer, but now international cultures such as *Auditland*

⁷ Chris Lorenz (2012) compares audit systems in universities to totalitarian communism.

within global technics, it is also true that by doing so *they extend their reach*. However soft a landing, Auditland is a place where audit is increasingly gathered *by all people, about all people, and placed into highly efficient circuits of local and global exchange*.

Who runs auditland? Who lives there?

CEOs, executives and consultants, governments and policy makers thrive in Auditland. Indeed, audit seems to propel management culture in general, with its proliferation of target-directed line managers. In education, audit is found in standardised testing, in the like of the Excellence in Research for Australia audit, or the Research Assessment Exercise in the UK. Audit infests Learning and Teaching at all levels. It is found in national and international rankings and benchmarks that enable forms of international trade, in promotion and performance management situations, and in the ranking of departments or entire organisations or nations according to targets and evaluations. For example there was the recent Australian Labor government's rather ineffective My School website (2013) or the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation's rather more significant 'reform' of US education through high stakes testing.

In most of this, audit produces archives of the performance measures it collects that provide an ongoing basis for further comparison and therefore power. Such archives are increasingly networked. They are also increasingly dynamic archives, alive to the global gathering, cross-referencing and ongoing communication of data, along with the like of data mining. This is all crucial to the extended powers of audit.⁸ The rhetoric is that this will make new things happen as it attempts to corral creativity and lived experience into predetermined channels (even as this predetermination shifts over time in accord with audit's differential adaptation to circumstances). Perhaps sometimes new things are encouraged by audit, especially if these seem useful to a certain agenda. However, in reality audit more often seems to stop new things happening. It attempts to reduce the degree of difference in favour of a repeatability, even if temporary, that will enable

⁸ Bruce Schneier writes in such contexts of a 'feudal mode of computing' in which:

Users pledge allegiance to more powerful companies who, in turn, promise to protect them from both sysadmin duties and security threats ... Feudal security consolidates power in the hands of the few. These companies act in their own self-interest. They use their relationship with us to increase their profits, sometimes at our expense. They act arbitrarily. They make mistakes. They're deliberately changing social norms. Medieval feudalism gave the lords vast powers over the landless peasants; we're seeing the same thing on the Internet. (2013: 16)

It is perhaps no accident that Microsoft's Bill Gates is also driving much education 'reform' in the USA, using a powerful series of audits and networked archives to do so.

ongoing measure (for example, in academics publishing research in ‘highly ranked’ journals, most of which are aligned with commercial publishers). Such systems can of course be ‘gamed,’ and often are (for example, by manipulation of the like of various rankings, or by determining the nature of what is measured by audit, of what is counted and therefore ‘counts’).

Two quick examples might prove instructive, although any reader will have their own. Greg Thompson and other researchers at Murdoch University in Perth have extensively researched and heavily criticised the effectiveness of testing via Australia’s ‘National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy’ or NAPLAN (Thompson & Harbaugh 2012). More recently, an Australian Senate committee has been assessing the same—an audit of audit, if you like. What has become obvious, however, is that the ‘test’s custodian’s’ do not want the overarching process of audit itself to be evaluated negatively. In the Senate committee, these custodians rejected the like of Thompson’s research in favour, ironically, of far less empirically justifiable material (Clark 2013). This echoes local audit culture practices. Thompson and Ian Cook point out that one of the negative effects of NAPLAN has been that “‘Good teaching’ has changed and practices of data manipulation are becoming the new commonsense of “good teaching”” (Thompson & Cook 2013: 256). There is little generation of the new, of that which cannot be immediately represented and brought into the circuits of evaluation, or of that which does not fit with ‘commonsense.’ A different example of dubious data collection is the Bill and Melinda Gates’ Foundation’s recent commitment to the development of a kind of biosensor bracelet. This would be used in the classroom to monitor students’ ‘excitement, stress, fear, engagement, boredom and relaxation through the skin’ (Kwek 2013). It would form part of the Gates’ foundation’s extensive intervention into US education (which now influences countries such as Australia). The aim is ‘quantified teacher evaluation,’ even if on very dubious grounds (Simon 2013).

The varied forms of manipulation of empirical data in audit culture in the like of education are also found beyond it. As Thompson and Cook note, ‘the rise of the audit culture in education is an international experience’ (2013: 246), one ‘linked to wider social shifts towards processes and theories of governance that mobilize a marketized and managerialized administration of public institutions’ (2013: 244). Even outside workplaces and institutions, audit has taken hold. There is now an unprecedented audit

of informal social and individual performance. Social media sites such as Facebook, Google, and Twitter gather audit data for corporate use. Individuals use analytics or other aggregators of data for ongoing self-evaluation. These different locations and uses of audit are increasingly interlinked (work and home combining in gmail or Facebook; companies and organisations exchanging data). Many meta-surveillance initiatives also leverage this data in terms of possibilities of control. The US National Security Agency's (NSA) PRISM project is a more obvious part of a highly complex international trade in data. This is often trade in the data of audit, broadly conceived.

In obvious cases such as the NSA, it is a question of auditors versus the audited. Yet it is seldom that simple. In fact, as on Facebook, but also in the workplace, *auditors and auditees are often both us*, whether we are believers or cynics, exploiters or resisters. In East Germany, Stasi informants numbered as many as one in six members of the population. Audit provides a much better system. Nearly all of us are involved. We might not 'believe,' but we nevertheless go along with it. Indeed, as noted previously, non-belief becomes an effective alibi for the channeling of power. Audit produces a *seemingly* non-ideological means of modulating and adaptive social control. It produces new tendencies within subjectivity—towards a subjectivity of both performance and of the audit of this performance, separate from belief. These tendencies are also quite separate from other iterations of subjectivity that fall outside the ambit of audit, although the former go on to cannibalise the latter.

In proposing this mutation of Stasiland's culture of *informing* into Auditland's *information*, evaluation and modulation, I am not aiming to accuse people of bad faith (or if I am I accuse myself as much as anyone else). Marilyn Strathern comments that we should have 'no surprise that "auditors" can be shown to be "us"' (Strathern 2000a: 290). Yet we perhaps think of ourselves in this way only reluctantly. Or we believe we have no alternative but to participate in audit. The question becomes that of 'how to deal with challenges that are at once obstructive, destructive even, *and vitalizing*' (Strathern 2000c: 14). These challenges can be slippery. Audit cultures have a peculiar 'cultural logic' (Shore & Wright 2000: 83) that can be difficult to grasp. As we have seen, audit often involves the audit of other auditing processes: external audits of internal audits; higher order audits of lower order audits.

Yet even if complex as a whole, at any individual point audit cultures promote simplistic modes of analysis. Evaluative models in audit are often reductive and self-fulfilling in terms of predicted outcomes. This in turn allows for the assumption, indeed production, of cognitive or affective ‘principles’ constructed by questionnaires, for example, regarding ‘objects’ (such as ‘skills’). Students and teachers, researchers and others subject to audit *seem* to become evaluative, even sensitive agents within this process. The rhetoric is that of neoliberal ‘subjects’ capable, indeed desirous, of understanding and evaluating named (that is, reified) cognitive and affective processes. Yet of course these ‘subjects’ of audit are all reified objects themselves. In sum, if audit cultures promise autonomy at all, this is ‘only allowed certain prescribed forms of expression’ (Strathern 2000c: 8). Reductive judgement rules. Moreover, the audit and evaluation of net gain—the fulfillment of objectives—must be able to feed back into a network of symbolic processing and logics—even a peculiar global ‘feeling’—that in their entirety make up audit cultures. This in turn enables audit cultures to catalyse broader global networks. The well-intentioned, and certainly well-funded, move of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation into Higher Education is again instructive here. As reported by *The Chronicle*, some see this as meant to install ‘a system of education designed for maximum measurability, delivered increasingly through technology, and—these critics say—narrowly focused on equipping students for short-term employability’ in which ‘There is too much emphasis on getting people through the system, processing them. ... That needs to be seen in relation to what students are in fact learning. It’s a big problem, and it’s getting very little discussion’ (Parry *et al.* 2013).

In such circumstances, there is a tight regulation not only of what can be valued and exchanged, or even only of concepts of value and exchange, but also of concepts of the world, of ways of feeling the world. In this respect, audit is designed to avoid any kind of disruptive cognitive or affective event. Audit cannot even afford to ‘recognize emergent forms of creative accountability’ (Giri 2000: 174). Yet audit itself involves a creative, complex and disruptive form of reason.

Instrumental and operational reason

I have suggested that audit culture is an ongoing attempt to regulate—by modulating, in the middle of generative difference—*what is acceptable or unacceptable*. It forces an ongoing decision or feeling out, concerning what is of value in an action, a thought, a

feeling, *with regards to other interests*. As Bernard Stiegler puts it in another context, we have become ‘destined to decision, that is, to time understood in this sense, which is not that of life’ (2003b: 156). In a time ‘not that of life,’ the regulation of what is (un)acceptable provides a *surrogate groundless ground* for a society in which all has famously ‘melted into air,’ and instrumental reason interferes more intensely in everyday relations. Yet more than this instrumental reason is involved. There are ongoing conversions and exchanges between instrumental reason and what Brian Massumi terms ‘*operational reason*’ (2002: 110); both are part of audit cultures.

Instrumental reason—and old style industrial work cultures—are based on a clear laying out of divisions between thinkers, actors and materials for exploitation (whether this is a forest, engineered materials or the labour, thinking or feeling of other human beings taken as material for exploitation). Instrumental reason sequences and organises events of exploitation to control a future. It works from ‘above’ the elements it organises and sequences. It ‘transcends’ them in order to hold them in place. Instrumental reason makes ‘thoughtfully explicit,’ ‘unfolds’ material relations into clear, conceptually organised perspectives and arrays ‘futures ... as mutually exclusive possibilities’ (Massumi 2002: 110–111).

Operational reason is quite different. It is at work in the midst of events. It has a more flexible immanent perspective from within any set of events. Operational reason is a:

form of thought that is materially self-referential as opposed to reflective; that absorbs possibilities without extensively thinking it out ... that infolds without extending ... that chooses according to principles unsubsordinated to the established regularities of cause-effect; that poses an unpredictable futurity rather than anticipated outcomes. (Massumi 2002: 110)

Operational reason is a ‘folding of thought into matter as such,’ a work with generative difference in situ. Operational reason might be vague in terms of clear divisions and perspectives and in relation to other forms of organisation of the present, yet it is the more powerful for this. It has the potential to head in any direction, an ability to adapt to or even produce difference, a lack of commitment to defined futures or excluded possibilities.⁹

⁹ Obviously operational reason has a positive side. Yet it can also empower instrumental forms of reason, and supplement them where they are weak. One can also imagine much more politically positive configurations of instrumental and operational reason.

In audit cultures, instrumental and operational reason work *together* to provide a powerful way of bringing control into relation with generative difference, and structure and hierarchy into relation with flexibility. Audit's obvious instrumental reason regulates in accordance with external forces. It's more subtle and often hidden operational reason adapts to situations from within. There is constant feedback between the two. The shifting nature of the (un)acceptable generates adaptive powers that combine instrumental and operational reason, macro and micro. This enables audit culture to install multi-scalar, portable and adaptable regimes—both from above and in the midst of events. This creates a cultural tendency towards passive affects with regard to the 'system.' It enables systems to thus rework the parameters of the production of subjectivity. As such, audit meshes micro-events with global networks.

Audit as global technics

As I have begun to suggest, audit, like a thermostat, is a regulatory if differential technics, operating at different scales. On the one hand, audit is a technics designed to intervene in other, more local, technics. On the other, audit is increasingly a technics designed to work within what Stiegler calls a 'global mnemotechnical system' (2003a). The latter is a global intervention, via increasing media use, in the fundamental formation and operation of memories, and therefore perceptions and actions. It externalises the work of memory in media networks and technologies. It filters communications. It saturates everyday life. At least this is the aim. Global technics enables a particular kind of intensity to what is both a 'premediated' (Grusin 2010) and 'immediated' (in situ, on the fly) synthesis of memories and perceptions, actions and experiences. For Richard Grusin, 'Premediation':

characterizes the mediality of the first decade of the twenty-first century as focused on the cultural desire to make sure the future has already been pre-mediated before it turns into the present (or the past) ... premediation is not to be confused with prediction. Premediation is not about getting the future right, but about proliferating multiple remediations of the future both to maintain a low level of fear in the present and to prevent a recurrence of ... tremendous media shock. (2010: 4)

At the same time even global technics are a question of 'immediation,' in Brian Massumi's terms (2011: 166). Here, 'in becoming-immanent to the event of expression [elements of cultural mediation] become immediate contributory forces. They are *immediated*' (Massumi 2011: 166). As both a local and global technics, and both powerfully premediating and immediating, audit comes together with many other forms of (pre/im)mediation: computers and networked archives and databases, screens and

cameras, networked communications; explicit rules as found, for example, in university regulations, or audit cultures themselves; rituals as found in the same, or in contemporary pedagogy; disciplines of all kinds. It is lived, just to take one small example, in what has recently been called the data-driven life—an ongoing documentation, evaluation and presentation of one's life moment by moment, perhaps in online databases, in images captured by one's mobile phone, in words, in documented moods, in records of credit card transactions and so on. This documenting and recording of life is now possible with all the extraordinary detail and portability made available by networked media technics—archives, data circulation and aggregation and the new forms of expression these make available with which to think and act.

New wars over the mind

Audit therefore participates in what Stiegler has called a 'war of minds' (2003a) that is also a new 'war about typography.' By this Stiegler means that changes in media systems (for example, the move from the individual typewriter to the networked computer) allow for broader technical challenges to thought—taken as the basis for who 'we' think we are, individually, collectively and in the relation between the 'I' and the 'we.' For Stiegler, the 'challenging-forth' (Heidegger 1977) of education is functionally central to this war of minds.

Education is now subject, with its intensive audits communicated via digital and networked media, to a new international trade in educational 'objects,' measures and rankings, platforms such as MOOCs, and processes of instruction. These are thoroughly plugged into national and international agendas, precisely via audit's control and energisation of certain kinds of performance. Traditional institutions such as the modern university, never as in demand as before, are also, as Bill Readings noted long ago, 'in ruins' (1997). In the process learning, research and even just thinking suffer new constraints.¹⁰ For example, there is now 'lifelong learning,' but for many this is a burden, in terms of time and debt, as much as a joy. More dramatically perhaps, the new audit and related technics throw such strong light on the processes of education and

¹⁰ In 2013 Peter Higgs—after whom the Higgs boson is named and who received the 2013 Nobel Prize for Science—gave an interview in which he declared that 'I wouldn't be productive enough for today's academic system' (Aitkenhead 2013). Higgs commented that in the past he had been an embarrassment when it came to research evaluation exercises at his university. He 'doubts a similar breakthrough could be achieved in today's academic culture, because of the expectations on academics to collaborate and keep churning out papers' (Aitkenhead 2013).

research that there is a kind of white out. It is sometimes quite difficult to recognise exactly what learning and research are when they are not just fulfilling predetermined objectives and agendas. The captures involved are further enhanced by audit's manipulation of the framing of time.

The pseudo a priori

A return to an open world—to the unexpected, to creative potential—is obviously not favoured within audit culture—in education or elsewhere. Yet, energised by the differential, the unexpected threatens to break out at any moment. Audit has a specific strategy of capture for preventing anything unwanted that may arise.

The *a priori* provides the solution, especially what Stiegler calls the 'pseudo a priori.' As Strathern puts it, in Auditland 'their' 'intervention has already taken place' (2000c: 4). Audit is an intervention 'tied to the language and logic of a priori systems' (Giri 2000: 174). In this intervention, money and morals come together (Strathern 2000c: 1) in a relation protected by 'the prophylactic nature of ethics and methodologies' (Pels 2000: 156). There is a heightened possibility of 'censorship and prescription' (Amit 2000: 227) and this censorship and prescription can work retroactively.

Here, however, there is a simultaneous erosion of the liberal fable of individual autonomy and of the neoliberal fable of the emergence of self-organization as found in market forces. Both these fables are subsumed within the abstract counter-logic of the *a priori*. Indeed, audit is the triumph of a priori systems. Here it is first necessary to understand that the *technics* of audit create practices and systems based on cognitivist models of behaviour.

The technics of audit extends the cognitivist logic of (symbolically processed) inputs and outputs into a programmed interference in events. For one thing, this means that events are reduced to symbols and statements *with a certain syntax*. A certain restricted sense-making is imposed on events. In the process, audit also imposes a kind of *grammar* of thought and action. Events are thus ordered according to audit ideals. There must be an organised before, during and after. Of course, events are messy. So the grammar is very much imposed by processes of regulation (a distribution curve, for example, aims and objectives, or 'Key Performance Indicators'). There is even more to it than this. For one thing, as I have suggested previously, audit's required sense and

syntax change frequently. For another thing, the required sense and syntax can be imposed retrospectively—which is to say that events can be re-written retrospectively. At the same time, even if audit systems can work *a posteriori*, that is, after the fact, they usually do so wearing the mask of the *a priori* (in accordance with what ‘should have been from the beginning’).

In audit, then, the power of an *a priori* ordering of the world is increased by adding a kind of *pseudo a priori* (Stiegler 2003a). Audit creates a technical system—both prosthetic and parasitic—that is slightly paradoxical. Audit can just as easily come after in order to regulate what comes before. It can thus control the ‘unpredictable [in what] may be a matter of past ... as [much as] forward referencing’ (Strathern 2000a: 286). On the other hand, when genuinely *a priori*, audit poses another slight paradox. We are confronted with the fact that the technical prosthesis of audit—its supplementation of work and living—comes before the work and life it is supposed to supplement and evaluate. In either case, actual experience is subject to a regulative determination of events from outside that have wormed their way into the way that events are expressed. As audit fine-tunes itself it can increasingly regulate even the little fragments of time and nervous energy that form the basis of experience. A final paradox concerns the differential nature of audit itself. As I have suggested, what counts as (un)acceptable constantly shifts as audit works to modulate a changing world. This means that the assembling of before, during and after constantly drifts. The archives that record audits are dynamic, and the history that seems to determine so much of performance is fundamentally unstable. Of course, all these paradoxes create suffering. Workers must constantly reconcile this *a priori* logic with the chaotic nature of work itself (Dejours 2007). Yet it is worth emphasizing that in amplifying an *a priori* logic, even and especially if this is constantly changing, audit systems channel one of the main strengths of global media’s technics of memory. This is the ability to intervene in events, even in events of individual and collective memory, before, during and after their occurrence.

Inevitably, in constantly re-writing experience the global technics of memory deconstructs any real *a priori*. *All a priori is in this sense pseudo*. This ‘deconstruction’ is profound. In general terms, Stiegler describes the situation as follows.

Even though this may go against traditional thinking, one could thus speak of an *a priori* prosthetics. *A priori* synthetic judgement would be supported by an “*a priori*” prosthetic synthesis—an “*a priori*” which nevertheless has to remain in inverted commas because, upon

closer inspection, the *a priori* of synthetic judgement of consciousness takes place after the event [*après-coup*], after a prosthetic synthesis, and thus *a posteriori* (empirically, it pre-cedes this consciousness in time as the possibility of its already-there). But at the same time it also partakes in the *a priori* of the synthesis of judgement that it only makes possible—in a somewhat mythical, performative and foundational *après-coup*—and which, *in being a precondition for any possible experience based on recognition, is “transcendental,” even though it only exists under the a posteriori conditions imposed by the history of technical inventions.* I therefore call this situation “*a-transcendental.*” (2003a)

Arguably, the power of audit is situated within the ‘a-transcendental’ nature of global media, and the ‘pseudo’ in the pseudo a priori.

Of course, such power is not shared equally. If audit inhabits the a-transcendental it does so in order to bring the force of the pseudo to bear upon practices from work to education to relationships. Practice is reduced, only ever meaningful if it is useful to interests elsewhere (audit’s own ‘alienation of labour’). In audit, only ‘certain social practices’ count—are literally counted (Strathern 2000c: 1). These are precisely the practices that are deemed to create value elsewhere (a supervising manager’s career, the international trade in education products, a government’s need to prove reform).

It should be clear now why, far from enhancing trust, audit often ‘creates the very mistrust it meant to address’ (Shore and Wright: 77). For one thing, audit is actually ‘intended to be stressful.’ This stress is not necessarily productive, even in the sense promised by the promoters of audit culture. For a start, when stressed, people tend to ‘feign ... certain properties’ (Maturana in Giri 2000: 173) and game the system. Both this stress and the strange environment created by the crossfire of feigned properties, pseudo powers, and so on, tend to wipe out ‘the commitment and loyalty of individuals to their organization’ (Shore and Wright 2000: 79). What is left is a series of new forms of subjectivity—a series of variations on ‘self-managing individuals’ (57) in competition with others. These individuals not only ‘render themselves auditable’ but marketable (of course the two go together). Such individuals are of course not really self-managing. In fact, these marketable selves exist under conditions of ‘increased pressure to perform [and] reduced autonomy’ (Shore & Wright: 70). The strange time of the a-transcendental and the paradoxical nature of the pseudo a priori complicate this further. Audit thus leads to a constant work of pressured self-creation as both auditable and marketable, and always unstable. In universities for example, ‘grant proposals’ become an endless and over-determined ‘technology of producing a marketable self’ (Pels: 146).

This produces a particular kind of professionalisation. If audit cultures parasitically *professionalise* cultures in their own way, they do so precisely to introduce a viral expertise—*audit expertise*—and this to the detriment of other forms of professionalism or expertise. Deviation, heterogenesis, stray thoughts (sometimes thought itself), unconstrained feelings or communications, and even many forms of technical innovation, expert or otherwise, all fall outside the ambit of audit. They are devalued and discouraged—unacceptable. What is instead valued and encouraged is what Whitehead calls ‘minds in a groove’ (1997: 197), and not just any groove but the groove of evaluation. As such we could also see audit as an extension of the assessment systems of the past, a predictable if unfortunate one. As Whitehead wrote:

The dangers arising from this aspect of professionalism are great, particularly in our democratic societies. The directive force of reason is weakened. The leading intellects lack balance. They see this set of circumstances, or that set; but not both sets together. The task of coordination is left to those who lack either the force or the character to succeed in some definite career. (cited in Stengers 1999)¹¹

In some ways audit culture merely expands the sad undermining of education via assessment that permeated the entire education system long ago. Again Whitehead drew attention to this, writing that a ‘common external examination system is fatal to education’ (1967: 9). Building on this observation, audit cultures could be seen to be parasites that might eventually be fatal to their hosts.

A different example of this kind of fatality can be found in the free radio stations in France that came into existence in the 1970s. Guattari writes about the way that these free radio stations were brought to heel by the French (then socialist) state. At the moment it brought the free stations under the rule of law to ‘help them,’ the state insisted on a ‘minimum audience, quality, and social value’ (Guattari & Rolnik 2008: 162). While ‘ninety percent’ of the stations ‘succumbed to the temptation, and plunged into a funnel,’ a small number refused. Guattari’s account of this refusal is worth quoting at length:

¹¹ It is ironic in this context that Hayek loved to quote Whitehead on habit, among other things, namely that ‘Civilization advances by extending the number of important operations which we can perform without thinking about them’ (Whitehead in Hayek 1945: 527). Hayek continues: ‘This is of profound significance in the social field. We make constant use of formulas, symbols, and rules whose meaning we do not understand and through the use of which we avail ourselves of the assistance of knowledge which individually we do not possess’ (Hayek 1945: 527). He then goes on to discuss the price system, but one can see how this might work itself into audit. It seems clear to me that Whitehead influenced Hayek’s theory of experience and perception in relation to social and economic organization.

These stations said: “What we want is not to make big free radio stations but to make our own free radio stations. What we want is not to broadcast with sophisticated devices, or to extend our range, but simply to stop being interfered with on our frequency. We’re also not concerned about recognition or possible value judgments; we’re not going after audience ratings, because whoever wants to can listen, and whoever doesn’t can simply turn the dial. We want to be the only ones to guarantee what we like, what our production is, without referring to the new types of media evaluation ... that doesn’t mean that we want to be amateurs, or produce mediocre things, but simply that we don’t want to become professionals in our practice—which doesn’t prevent us from devoting ourselves to it completely.” (Guattari in Guattari & Rolnik 2008: 163)

Clearly for many professionalisation is a hindrance to devotion to work. Guattari further comments that Kafka ‘never became a professional of Kafkaism.’

It is here that I turn to neofeudalism in order to fully tease out what it seems audit means in social and political terms.

Audit and fantasies of neofeudalism

(Neo)feudalism is essentially the event horizon of modern conservatism.
Where it comes full circle, and regresses into lunacy. (Haque 2013)

As I stated at the beginning of this article, I am not suggesting that audit is part of a full, global reversion to a feudal society.¹² I am certainly not suggesting some kind of

¹² Many do, however, suggest a fundamental move globally towards neofeudalism (Meyrowitz 1997). Many write about ‘corporate feudalism’ or ‘neofeudal corporatism’ (Graham & Luke 2003). Whitehead (2013) quotes Chris Hedges: ‘A slow-motion coup by a corporate state has cemented into place a neofeudalism in which there are only masters and serfs.’ There are now a surprising number of discussions about neofeudalism. The *Urban Dictionary* defines ‘neo-feudalism’ as the ‘phenomenon of corporations taking control of cultures and individuals through money, policies, practices, and gatekeeping in general to the point that they control many aspects of everyday private life’ (‘Neo-feudalism’ 2012). Johnson (2010) draws on Galbraith’s discussion of neofeudalism in *The Affluent Society* (1998[1958]). Critics of both the left and right find it emerging in a range of locations, including the USA and Russia (Inozemtsev 2011). Indications of neofeudalism include the blurring of state and corporate powers, precarity in terms of work and everyday life, increasing disparities in the distribution of wealth, and the privatisation of security. It is often, though not always, associated with a ‘new form of regulatory state, premised upon a neo-liberal combination of market competition, privatized institutions, and decentred, at-a-distance forms of state regulation,’ founded on the principles of Friedrich Hayek (Braithwaite 2000: 222). In contemporary discussions the rise of neofeudalism is often seen in tandem with the rise in debt, which sets up the kind of obligations resonant with feudalism. This is described specifically in Michael Hudson’s ‘The Road to Debt Deflation, Debt Peonage, and Neofeudalism’ (2012) and more generally in David Graeber’s work. The situation in Detroit, in which mandatory state oversight recently followed city bankruptcy, is often seen as current example of the emergence of neofeudalism via an audit/‘debt’ politics (Johnson 2010).

Graeber links capitalism, feudalism and debt in the following comments:

I think there’s a fundamental shift in the nature of capitalism, where some people are still using a very old-fashioned moral logic, but more and more people are recognizing what’s really going on. They just don’t know the extent of it. It’s not even clear that this is capitalism anymore. Back when I went to college, they taught me that [sic.] the difference between capitalism and feudalism. In feudalism they take the money directly, through legal means, and they just shake you down, pull it out of your income, and in capitalism they take it through the wage, in these subtle ways. It seems like it’s shifting more toward the former thing. The government is letting these guys bribe

retrograde exit from capitalism. The case is the contrary. Umair Haque gets it right perhaps—neofeudalism is a kind of ‘event horizon’ from which contemporary reactionary politics, and contemporary corporate capitalism, find it hard to escape. Indeed, as many writers make clear, if there is contemporary neofeudalism, it seems to emerge in parallel to, if not from within, a more general neoliberal intervention in politics and governance in favour of a vague concept of the ‘market.’¹³ Here we can follow the lead of Philip Mirowski. Although Mirowski does not seem to call the result ‘neofeudalism’ (and may perhaps disagree with the term), his work is nevertheless suggestive in this respect. He argues that the ‘neoliberals reject ‘society’ as solution, and revive their version of authority in new guises’ (2013: 54). He states that, contrary to a common understanding of neoliberalism as undermining government and other

the government to make laws where they can pick your pocket, and that’s pretty much it. (Graeber in Maisano 2012)

Graeber actually sees the situation as one of a reintroduction of ‘serfdom’ and discusses this not only in relation to debt but also to a loss of political rights.

Regarding late stage capitalism as re-feudalization, I would argue that serfdom is a more exact historical analogy ... Feudalism has an intrinsic web of personal oaths of allegiance and familial heritage which don’t apply well to the present. But the enserfment of the former middle class alongside the already largely enserfed working class is very much in process; it’s more than simple debt slavery. The middle class have lost all political rights at the national level, for example, since political power is presently reserved to the 1% (or less). If one takes the instance of Russian serfs ... the serfs continued to hold the land in a legal sense, but the labor and in many senses person of the serfs was entailed to the ownership class—who might change individually entirely [sic.] without in any way changing the enserfment—cuts close to the bone we have to pick in our own place and time, to me. (Graeber 2011)

Graeber points out that even Keynes saw ‘rentiers as a feudal holdover inconsistent with the spirit of capital accumulation’ (Graeber 2012: 374). With a different emphasis, Habermas wrote of the ‘re-feudalization’ of the public sphere (1990: 292). Tom Cohen perhaps captures the mood of those warning of neofeudalism best. With Mike Hill, he points to a US Department of Defence report on climate change that ‘predicts water and resource wars ... in tandem with a regression to more or less feudal techno-states’ (Hill and Cohen 2009: 2). Cohen also writes of ‘hyper-financialization threatening ‘currency’ as such, ‘peak’ everything (oil, water, agriculture), neo-feudal telecracies, calculations of ‘population culling’ going forward decades’ (2012a: 33). In sum, there is:

a post-global present consolidating what is routinely remarked as a neo-feudal order, the titanic shift of hyperwealth to the corporatist few (the so-called 1 %) sets the stage for a shift to control societies anticipating social disruption and the implications of ‘Occupy’ style eruptions—concerning which the U.S. congress hastily passed new unconstitutional rules to apprehend citizens or take down websites. The Ponzi scheme logics of twenty-first century earthscapes portray an array of time-bubbles, catastrophic deferrals, telecratic capture, and a voracious *present* that seems to practice a sort of tempophagy on itself corresponding with its structural premise of hyper-consumption and perpetual “growth.” The supposed urgencies of threatened economic and monetary “collapse” occlude and defer any attention to the imperatives of the biosphere, but this apparent pause or deferral of attention covers over an irreversible mutation ... (Cohen 2013b: 14)

¹³ See for example, Pasquale (2013) or Smith (2013). On the vagueness of neoliberal conceptions of the market see Mirowski (2013: 55).

forms of control, ‘a primary aim of the neoliberal project is to redefine the shape and functions of the state, *not to destroy it*’ (56). As such, the:

political project of Neoliberalism is not *laissez-faire*; rather, it is to use state power to get the populace to prostrate themselves before the only dependable source of Truth and Wisdom in human civilization—viz., something they call “The Market.” The more discombobulated the average citizen can be rendered, the quicker they will get with the program. (Mirowski & Tankus 2013)

In the midst of this ‘discombobulation,’ neoliberalism ‘thoroughly revises what it means to be a human person’ (Mirowski 2013: 58). Along the way:

not only does neoliberalism deconstruct any special status for human labor, but it lays waste to older distinctions between production and consumption rooted in any labor theory of value, and reduces the human being to an arbitrary bundle of “investments,” skill sets, temporary alliances (family, sex, race), and fungible body parts ... the identity of the self evanesces under the pressure of continual prosthetic tinkering ... the individual displays no necessary continuity from one “decision” to the next. The manager of You becomes the new ghost in the machine. (59)

All this strongly suggests the specifics of neofeudal *tendencies* that rearrange the concepts of, and relations between persons, labour, property, capital accumulation and debt. As we know, older feudal societies involved territory-based lords, with a hierarchical structure of control, well defined forms of service and reciprocal obligation. There was a direct transfer of surplus from peasant to aristocracy (whether of grain or the body in the service of the feudal lord in wars). There was often minimal reward aside from the right to live. In contemporary *neofeudal* fantasies a new set of lords imagine themselves with these kind of rights over others (including the right to allow to live or die), and others with the kind of obligation to them found in feudalism. These fantasies lead to a very real set of impulses and programs. Social relations are fundamentally transformed. Neofeudal impulses and programs inhabit democratic processes and increasingly favour the rule of the many by the few.

It is true that the territory that forms the basis for those who now imagine themselves a kind of variation of feudal lords is much more malleable and distributed. Indeed, as Mezzadra and Neilson put it, flexible and multiplying borders become a ‘method’ for power (2013). Just as importantly, feudal ‘territory’ comes to mean just as much personal or group *existential-territory-becoming-property* as it means common-land-becoming-property (Guattari 1995: 55).¹⁴ In fact, this is a major function of audit: the conversion of existential territory into property, into ownable or rentable

¹⁴ One way to understand ‘existential territory’ is that it both allows, and results from, the available ‘diverse possibilities for recomposing [people’s] existential corporeality’ (Guattari 1995: 7).

“investments,” skills sets, temporary alliances,’ as Mirowski puts it (2013: 59). In sum, the territory of neofeudal fantasy is multi-scalar, an interlinked and variable mix of the global and local that mixes geography with ‘existential territories.’ Neofeudal fantasy’s territorial aims are thus grand: the control and financialisation of all populations, activities, thoughts, affects and energies, as well as of air, water, plants, the genome, even the climate.¹⁵

In short, the fantasy is of a revivification of persistent archaic structures in a mutated, technocratic and global feudalism (Cohen 2012a). The reality behind the fantasy is a kind of collective defence of established practices and elite cultures, as these unevenly but vigorously attempt to adapt to the abyss of the differential. The fantasy is thus also a defence against: the failure of finance and management in social terms; the bumpy and often faltering nature of globalisation; the limits that climate change and other environment problems set on ‘unlimited growth’ and the challenges this provides to established industries and interests; the disruptive powers of digital and networked media; and the rise of newer, more flexible and cooperative forms of organisation that challenge the older, more fixed hierarchical forms.

Audit provides a useful set of services to this fantasy with real effects. It builds the basis of a fractal form of control (that is, one that self-replicates at different scales as it moves through complex networks). It also absolves powers and interests of detrimental social and environment impacts via the abstraction of activity and the deferral of responsibilities. As I have indicated previously, however, this involves not so much a full return to feudalism as a series of new variants of feudal fantasies and impulses. As organised as it might be by various interests, with their think tanks and other allied institutions, this neofeudalism remains a matter of complex distributed networks, of fragments. It appears incohesive when viewed from the ground up and even sometimes seems incohesive in total. It offers diminishing protection to those who give it their allegiance. It has no answer to major social or environmental problems. And even if the new ‘feudal lords’ might be more diffuse, more a ‘ghost in a machine,’ they are no less powerful for that. There is a real regression from a beneficial globalisation or cosmopolitanism or anything that does not serve a small population of interests. Again, these interests seem to be both located ‘elsewhere’ and very much present. On

¹⁵ Again see Mirowski (2013) for a discussion of the reach of such aims in terms of neoliberalism.

the one hand, audit's participation in neoliberal interventions in governance suggests that the powers of audit are those being relayed—from above, from an invisible management, from 'the market' and its 'invisible hand,' or perhaps from national programs. Indeed, audit often feels exactly like this, a power, at best an irritant, at worst a tyranny, coming from elsewhere, interrupting 'real work.' On the other hand, I also want to once again draw attention to the *immanent* powers of audit, even if these are in relay with its external powers. Indeed audit might best be seen as a kind of go-between. It is as go-between that audit plays a key role in the immanent transforming of subjects and relations in something like a neoliberal/neofeudal conversion of work, property (through new forms of enclosure), and concepts of the 'person.' This makes audit more than an irritant from elsewhere that workers go along with grudgingly. It suggests a need for more immediate resistance to many of the processes of audit, to the new social relations and subjects these processes help to form, and to the political transitions they help to make possible.

What is to be resisted can be summed up in what I have suggested elsewhere is a 'third enclosure': 'an enclosure building on but massively expanding the first [landed property] and second [intellectual property]' (Murphie 2011). This is an enclosure that suits fantasies of neofeudalism. It is energised by the like of audit.

It involves a complexly nested and overlaid series of sometimes proprietary systems of gated demands for performance ... it encloses the basics of human experience, the relations between action, perception, reflection and decision (or it attempts to enclose these) ... the 'third enclosure' carefully constructs, through the practice of the test, a tragedy of the commons of affective intensity, of the free, open production of subjectivity. (Murphie 2011)

McKenzie Wark puts something like the first two enclosures of landed and intellectual property (to which he adds 'mass production') in the following terms:

we could imagine the commodity economy passing through three stages already: the enclosure of land, the mass production of the thing, and the commodification of information. Each stage is a distinct private property form, producing a successive polarization of classes, of owners and non-owners. (2013b)

However, things are even worse than this. Wark notes that there is nothing that contemporary capital 'won't sacrifice to private property, including life itself,' which becomes a commodity *in general*. Moreover, the 'ruling class wants to collect the rent but it doesn't want to employ anyone' (2013a). Wark would perhaps not like the term neofeudalism, although he writes elsewhere of 'quasi-feudalism' (2013b: 27). After suggesting that Capital should no longer be seen as one thing, he writes that there is a

need for ‘a new language to describe emergent forms of commodity economy. It’s not neo anything or post anything. It’s not late capitalism or cognitive capitalism’ (2013a). However, this is in part because for Wark newer political formations are not necessarily better. In *A Hacker Manifesto*, he writes that with the rise of private property and Capital, ‘peasants, who once enjoyed reciprocal rights with their feudal lords, find themselves ‘free’—from any right at all. They are free to be exploited as farmers, but also find themselves in many parts of the world violently expropriated, enslaved, indentured—exploited’ (2004: section 184). On the one hand, this is why I am writing about neofeudal fantasies, impulses and tendencies here. The point of this is that there is no functional neofeudal society, with the like of *fairly consistent* ‘reciprocal rights’ that would guarantee some kind of existence for its contemporary ‘peasants.’ If there is anything like a contemporary neofeudalism, then, it is one in which the reciprocal rights keep changing, differentially, generatively, with new ways of producing a subjectivity of obligation along the lines of generative, modulating control. As in feudalism, such rights tend to the advantage of those on the right side of the ledger in terms of command and control. Indeed, these fluctuating rights tend more and more to be very much one-sided, in a totally new way that suggests a kind of ‘quasi-feudalism’ of a different kind to that discussed by Wark. On the other hand, supposedly reciprocal rights and obligations, as one-sided and increasingly useless as they are to contemporary ‘peasants,’ do indeed proliferate, if changeably, in audit and performance. This is in part how audit works. Thus it is one way of many in which audit culture takes up and reworks the vestiges and tendencies of feudalism from within contemporary Capital.

In sum, the tendency—expressed variably in different situations (or variably even in the same situation)—is away from ‘workers’ with full, even if exploited, lives. The tendency is towards the deplorable concept of ‘human capital’ (Mirowski 2013: 58). I want to try and capture the extremity of this with the idea of the ‘third enclosure.’ This is *an ongoing and active, differential enclosure of immanence itself on behalf of both the transcendental and the transcendent*. By the ‘transcendental’ here I mean the complex, networked, never-fully-present-in-one-place forms of capture and social control that audit exemplifies so well. By ‘transcendent’ I mean the ongoing creation of the seeming ‘transcendence’ of obvious interests of corporations and individuals as well as of ‘transcendent’ concepts such as the ‘market’ or indeed something like ‘performance’ or ‘productivity.’ To put this all slightly differently, part of the work

done by the third enclosure is to *manufacture* transcendence from immanence. This ‘transcendence’ must indeed be manufactured, ongoingly from within immanence. This is necessary in a society so focused, at least with one eye, on immanent, variable events. Deleuze and Guattari are instructive here, especially with regard to the kind of communication involved in audit. They note that ‘immanence becomes immanent ‘to’ a transcendental subjectivity,’ or we might add, one that is transcendental in the sense that it’s subjectivity is formed within networks, as in the like of audit. ‘It is at the heart of its own field that the hallmark or figure of a transcendence must appear as action now referring to another self, to another consciousness (communication)’ (1994: 46).

They go on to note that ‘in this modern moment we are no longer satisfied with thinking immanence as immanent to a transcendent; we want to think transcendence within the immanent, and it is from immanence that a breach is expected’ (Deleuze & Guattari 1994: 47). Thus the new configuration of power from which audit emerges as a key technics and culture. How is power to intervene from within the immanent? ‘No longer content with handing over immanence to the transcendent, we want to discharge it, reproduce it, and fabricate it itself.’ All of these are the work of audit. ‘In fact this is not difficult—all that is necessary if for the movement to be stopped. It takes advantage of the interruption to reemerge, revive, and spring forth again’ (47). Here again the work of audit is the stopping or constraint of movement, not only of the actions of work, but of active concepts of work, of relation and so forth. Audit indeed ‘takes advantage of the interruption.’ I suggested previously that instrumental reason now performs a kind of reactionary *détournement* of operational reason. Another way to put this is that in audit, instrumental reason exerts a particular form of capture of the immanent energies of operational reason. This is what allows the farming of the generative, an engagement with the differential that returns it to control. Here I am suggesting a kind of reactionary *détournement* of immanence as a whole—of affect, of the production of subjectivity in situ, of cognitive events, of relations, of life itself. It is a *détournement* toward the transcendent.

As I began to suggest previously, the production of subjectivity is crucial to the enclosure involved. Although, as we shall see, what is produced is to some extent a series of *fragments* of subjectivity rather subjectivity per se. Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson have noted that subjectivity has become ‘a battleground, where multiple devices

of subjection are confronted with practices of subjectivation' (2013: 252).¹⁶ They point to the contemporary shift in the definition and thus the structural functioning of both the 'person' and property as legal entities. Indeed there is now an ongoing generation of new relations between capital and labour, property and person. To begin to account for this differential generation of forms of labour and so forth, Mezzadra and Neilson extend Peter Linebaugh's understanding of enclosure as the 'moment of "conversion from common land to private property."' They suggest 'a less literal use of the word *enclosure* that refers to any process in which private property is created through a violent gesture of appropriation' (Mezzadra & Neilson 2013: 295).

I am suggesting here that such an enclosure would include the enclosure and appropriation not only of labour, or the conversion of labourers into 'human capital' (Mirowski 2013: 58), but of what was previously the free enjoyment and exchange of the personal, even an attempted closure of immanence itself. All of these become someone else's property. This is key to understanding the extreme nature of the fantasies of neofeudalism than inhabit this restructuring, along with the roles that audit culture can play in this restructuring. For Mezzadra and Neilson (who do not discuss neofeudalism) the result of new forms of enclosure is the 'multiplication of labour.' This multiplication of labour has three tendencies, 'intensification, diversification, and heterogenization ... reshaping labor experiences and conditions' (Mezzadra & Neilson 2013: 92). These tendencies mean that 'labor threatens to colonize the whole of life and become the common substance of human activity' (251). In these circumstances it seems reasonable to ask, 'whatever happened to the concept of exploitation?' (243). Part of the answer Mezzadra and Neilson give is that subjects are now produced differently. Here Mezzadra and Neilson follow Lisa Adkins, who suggests that 'qualities previously associated with people are being disentangled' and become 'the object of processes of qualification and re-qualification' (cited in Mezzadra and Neilson 2013: 262). I have suggested here that audit and performance cultures are central to such processes.

Disentangling specific qualities from 'people' enables new structures of work and life to ignore such people in favour of specific qualities. People are reduced to portions of nervous energy deployed in fragments of time, divorced from the fuller lived reality of

¹⁶ 'Subjectivation' precedes and enables the production of subjectivity. Audit and performance management are closely related series of 'practices of subjectivation' as much as they are 'devices of subjection.'

workers. As such, the neofeudal tendencies involved, assisted by the like of audit, produce a kind of ‘fractal.’

For Franco Berardi, fractals are the structuring material of the new world of work. They consist of small moments of time, or of nervous energy—a particular action, behavior, feeling, sensation or thought. Via the like of audit and performance management, these fractals are increasingly all that count as work, to the exclusion of the rest of the lived body of the worker, even to the exclusion of other actual work that does not fit the immediate frame of audit. Much work becomes ‘unaccounted for,’ and therefore unpaid.¹⁷ This unaccounted work is done in the hope that it might provide the basis for future paid instants of work. The aim is to maximise one’s production of the kind of fractals that might be rewarded by the like of audit, as the situation drifts, differentially. More of life is necessarily dedicated to work, and to preparing oneself for work (and the constant audit involved), even if much of this goes unrewarded. Fractals allow for the ‘recombination of compatible (compatibilized) fragments (fractals) ... compatible with the protocols of interfunctionality, and recombinable with other fragments of time’ (Berardi 2012: 29, 118). These fractals become for sale in the now increasingly precarious labour market. Thus, ‘social time is transformed into a sprawl of fractals, compatible fragments that can be combined by the networked machine’ (Berardi 2012: 143). Again, the ‘worker does not exist any more as a person. He [or she] is just the interchangeable producer of micro-fragments of recombinant semiosis which enter into the continuous flux of the network’ (Berardi 2003).

There is also a kind of *fractal control* (audit targets might be a simple example) that moves through these fractalised fragments of time and nervous energy. Here there is a slightly different, if related, understanding of the fractal. The regular understanding of a fractal is as something that replicates across different scales, like the patterns one finds within a snowflake or leaf. As fractal therefore, fractal control can replicate at different scales. It can therefore produce ‘microfeudalisms’—miniature events in which social relations replicate or are infused by neofeudal tendencies. Each of these fractal instances of control rearranges concepts and instances of property and person in situ, while communicating with the broader networks involved. The control is “fractal” in that it aims for overarching hierarchy but is simultaneously and successfully diffuse and

¹⁷ This includes but is not limited to the like of unpaid internships and ‘work for the dole’ schemes.

scalable in its operations—a dense and complex network of flexible forces’ (Murphie 2011). Simply put: ‘the smallest part is a mirror image of the whole system’ (Baldwin 2012).

Another force that seems to run throughout this is debt. In part because of the precarity of work, and in part because of the increased financialisation of everything, debt increases. This also suggests neofeudal tendencies, expressed in obligation via debt (see footnote 10). However, this is not just a matter of financial debt. There are also new forms of debt. For example there is affective debt, precisely as defined through processes of audit and performance management. There is even debt at the level of basic biological processes, for example a sleep debt that is owed as much to one’s performance at work as to one’s own body. It could be said that more and more of life is not only subject to fractalised labour but to a fractalised commodification of life itself. The latter—for example via the purchased regulation of affect, behaviours or physiological processes, or self-paid performance training—serves to extend debt as one pays to maximise the likelihood that one’s life (even one’s sleeping patterns perhaps), will serve the new order. As they say, ‘you owe it to yourself.’ Unfortunately, in owing it to yourself, you also now owe it to everyone else. In such a situation, Wark suggests that the ‘offerings of the times are so paltry that they can only be made to seem meaningful by making others suffer something much worse’ (2013a). Thus, Wark suggests, what I am calling neofeudal tendencies here lend themselves too easily to a new fascism, in which ‘consent is only secured by designating out-groups to hate.’¹⁸ Audit is well suited to such designations—even variably in terms of ‘performance’ rankings for example—in its ongoing differentiation of the (un)acceptable.

All in all, I will suggest that the regulating powers of audit are now part of an attempt to farm generative difference in everyday life. Via an overarching ‘control of control,’ audit turns the little events—the fractals—of everyday living into a kind of accountable livestock. Audit generates new events of control that bound other events in terms of performance. It provides an international language and set of processes that enables a global circulation, regulation and exchange of these events as services or ‘objects’ with a particular value. It enables ongoing differentiation as difference itself differs. And this

¹⁸ In fact, Langthaler (2010) suggests that the concept of neofeudalism arose in 1960 when ‘political scientist Robert Koehl (1960) developed a more explicit concept of the “feudal aspects” of National Socialism’ (Langthaler 2010: 165).

in turn helps open all kinds of institutions and organisations—corporate, public, non-profit and so on—to mutual exchange, with similarly organised regimes of work and eventually financialisation.

Yet this is not where audit ends. I suggested at the beginning of this article that audit and performance cultures are transitional. They *prepare* lives, multi-ecologically and micropolitically, if perversely, for that into which we are threatening to pass. I have suggested that this is a society built on a complex set of *fantasies, impulses and tendencies* of neofeudalism. As described above, however, even if these are fantasies they have very real effects. They do not add up to a full neofeudal social structure. They rather add up to social and subjective fragmentation and multi-ecological and political catastrophe.¹⁹

Audit and performance both assist the social and subjective fragmentation and cover up the catastrophe. Given all the above, it is no surprise that audit and performance measures increasingly replace more democratic discussion and action: in workplaces; in the way that universities organise learning, teaching and research; in politics where the ongoing measure of polling infects political judgment; in a media increasingly infected by audience monitoring, and by the lobbying of interest groups and think tanks (the latter of whom constantly promote audit and performance cultures). In all these locations, audit and performance also allow for a functioning fantasy of neofeudalism in that they encourage the acceptance of increasing levels and flexibility of surveillance (Bauman & Lyon 2012), the end of privacy, and the performance-based precarity I have briefly discussed above. The best one can hope for is that either one's production of 'fractals,' or one's adoption of microfeudalisms as a form of appropriate service managing the fractals of others, will be rewarded by the new aristocracy (a reward that itself often proves to be a fantasy).

Over forty years ago, Foucault famously asked 'how do we ferret out the fascism that is ingrained in our behaviour?' (Deleuze & Guattari 1983: xiii). How can we deal with the microfascism in everyday life? We can now add another question that is not quite the same, even if they are related. 'How do we rid our speech and our acts, our hearts and

¹⁹ It is perhaps no accident that the *Game of Thrones* television series is so popular today. It is a fantastical making sense of the vectors of power and existential threat—social and ecological—in the contemporary world. Everyone wants to be a king, queen or knight. Everyone wants their own dragons.

pleasures, of neofeudal fantasies, or of a *microfeudalism* in everyday life? A collective resistance to audit might provide part of the answer to this question. I can only briefly suggest some of the ways such resistance might form. Before that, however, having suggested that audit cultures and technics are transitional, I will describe some of the social conditions towards which they might be transitioning.

Speculation and spectres

Why did Hamlet trouble about ghosts after death,
when life itself is haunted by ghosts so much more terrible? (Chekhov 2004)

I suggested earlier in this article that audit cultures, though powerful, are transitional. Although effective in themselves, they also help power prepare lives for a transition into more direct ‘societies of control’ (Deleuze 1995: 169–182). The latter are of course not new. They precede and have continued to develop in league with audit cultures and other forms of control. Yet they seem to have recently crossed some kind of threshold. How can audit be placed in relation to the new climate of control?

First, audit’s abstract ‘control of control’ is now combined with, or sometimes replaced by, a more direct control. Audit’s periodic and rhythmic claiming of our attention has prepared us for its replacement—a more complete and ongoing attunement to control (an acceptance of ongoing surveillance for example). Second, audit’s use of, if temporary, at least relatively stable *signs, statements and measures* is now complimented or replaced by a constantly modulating communication *signal* from which there is little escape. Cybernetics finally triumphs over semiotics; signal processing triumphs over symbolic processing (Thomsen 2012). Third, audit reduces work and living to narrowband, single-channel speculations that tend to reduce to audit and performance per se. The new atmosphere of control is multi-channel, broadband. This allows it to permit, because it can control and/or financialise them, far more open and varied forms of speculation and behavioural modulation. Speculation becomes highly inventive, especially in terms of the financialisation of everything (including of course speculation itself). Speculation also attains a new creativity concerning the invention of control technics across an increasing variety of contexts. Fourth, audit culture has made a significant contribution to a transformation of habit and this now intensifies, moving beyond audit. The habits of everyday speculation and everyday action are the more tied to global financial speculation, and this to ongoing

communication. The ‘general intellect’ is put to work in a collective and competitive speculation within the ongoing territorialisation of the ‘third enclosure.’ Fifth and finally, audit’s erosion of time paves the way for our acceptance of a substantial re-organisation of time itself. To understand these transitions we can turn to Jonathan Crary’s *24/7* (2013).

Crary points to Capital’s contemporary colonisation of time, so that people are now effectively working even as they consume, *24/7* (2013). As part of this phenomenon Crary points to the attempted mastery of sleep. Sleep is of little use to Capital, so it is the final frontier of *24/7* society. Sleep is therefore increasingly subject not only to audit but to more direct intervention and control, via sleep clinics and sleep apps monitoring sleep states, commercial pharmaceutical interventions, military experiment, and so on. And not only sleeping, but dreaming (Crary 2013: 97) is to be recovered for work, for Capital, from the financial barren time of ‘unadministered life’ (Crary 2013: 68). This intervention in sleep and dreams indicates that Capitalism becomes ‘inseparable from [an actual] reorganization of time’ (Crary 2013: 62), the ultimate existential territory.

This reorganisation of time is in some ways a profound extension of the pseudo a priori discussed above. Time is to become a ‘time without time’ (Crary 2013: 29), one meaningful only in terms of productive engagement with capitalised circuits of exchange. There is a ‘radical conceptualization of the relations between work and time ... productive operations do not stop ... profit-generating work ... can function 24/7’ (Crary 2013: 62). ‘Common life’—even sleeping or dreaming—is to be directly ‘made into the object of technics’ (Crary 2013: 29). The fantasy of neofeudalism extends its very real microfeudalisms into something like Crary’s *24/7*.

The whole enterprise now regulates habit differently, more directly. At times in addition to audit culture, at times without it, new technics arise that challenge given habits. These technics encourage an individual life that blurs work and leisure (even work and sleep and dreams). It also creates a series of habits, as for example in frequently monitoring one’s smartphone, that are *constantly attuned to a signal that connects local and global* (and the constant needs to adjust to the variations in communication between them). Crary points to something of this in Debord’s later comments on the ‘society of the spectacle’ that suggest a move from the ‘diffuse spectacle of the 1960s’ to ‘a global *integrated* spectacle’ (Crary 2013: 73). He also takes up Deleuze’s description of

‘societies of control.’ Here ‘institutional regulation of individual and social life’ proceeds in ‘ways that’ are ‘continuous and unbounded’ (Crary 2013: 71) and even ‘what was once consumerism has expanded to 24/7 activity of techniques of personalization, of individuation, of machinic interface, and of mandatory communication’ (Crary 2013: 72)—in short, of something beyond the usually indirect and periodic nature of audit-informed performance. Google Glass seems a relevant instance. Glass is the recently arrived glasses-frame which effectively combines a camera, a smartphone, and a heads-up display to allow full-time communicative life, in which everything can be recorded by everyone and immediately uploaded for world-wide distribution. Debord’s ‘society of the spectacle’ becomes a ‘society of the spectacles.’ Such technics encourage ‘the emergence of forms of habit that are inevitably 24/7 and reciprocally tied to mechanisms of power that are,’ as in Deleuze’s societies of control, ‘equally “continuous and unbounded”’ (Crary 2013: 77). *It is the unboundedness that shows that we are perhaps passing out of audit cultures per se.* Continuous and unbounded control literally capitalises the world—directly. There is a higher level financial enclosure of any remaining commons (even sleep, dreams). Even lower level markets are not safe as ‘international financial markets are now attempting to dominate many conventional markets as a long-term strategy to extract greater profits and accumulate capital’ (Tricarico 2013).

How can we respond to such a situation? I will suggest first that, however powerful, all this nevertheless remains haunted by the persistent failure of economic models and philosophies, even if the powers that were so heavily invested in them manage to survive. Jacques Derrida has written of the ‘spectres of Marx’ that emerged following the collapse of the Berlin Wall. Today I would suggest we have, following the recent series of financial crises, the emergence of a series of ‘spectres of Hayek’: spectres of a failed ‘free market’; spectres of archaic structures and fantasies; spectres of the like of audit cultures and other controlling socio-technics developed by market-favouring institutions that hark back to Hayek’s Mont Pelerin Society.

The life that emerges in this situation is at the same time *spectral* and *speculative*. It is haunted. An ever expanding financialisation is haunted by its own contradictions and failures, and seeks ever new forms of speculative intervention. As I suggested at the beginning of this article, everyday life is haunted by a range of ‘hungry ghosts,’ such as

those of neofeudal impulses and tendencies, and financialisation. Too often the only way out seems to be to join in with some kind of speculative microfeudalism. By this I mean speculation that is intense but limited to developing new ways of thinking and acting in concert with what are increasingly intense social controls. Dramatic catastrophes arise within the ‘ecology of mind’ and the broader environment.

De-dramatising audit

Let me, however, conclude by returning to audit to suggest some ways out of this situation. Is it possible to ‘de-dramatise’ audit—to diminish the constitution of its role in everyday life? To ‘unstage’ the concept of audit? To ‘de-professionalise’ one’s part of the world, at least with regard to audit, in order to rekindle a devotion to the world at large? To undo new forms of social control in favour of more genuinely democratic forms of social organisation—and not just nationally but locally, in workplace democracy, in forms of local community?

This might require a counter-speculation, a counter-intervention within the very basis of individual and social habits. It would obviously require an unknotting of the ties between everyday speculation and financial speculation. It would require an exorcising of the spectres of ‘archaic attachments to cultural traditions’ such as feudalism, that one still finds in societies that nevertheless ‘aspire to technological and scientific modernity’ (Guattari 1995: 4). This might allow a better analysis and questioning of more recent socio-economic models and technics such as audit, and beyond that, the societies of control. It would require a careful attention to how attention is directed and how this structures social relations. It would require us to ‘ferret out the’ microfeudalism ‘that is ingrained in our behaviour?’ (Foucault in Deleuze & Guattari 1983: xiii). It would require a reworking of the nature of visibility, of the social circuits in which visibility plays role, and of the very question of whether so much should always be made visible. It might involve a ‘speculative pragmatism’ (Massumi 2011: 29ff), something close to an operational reason rescued from instrumentality. Activity would be divorced from the circuits of audience or performance. There would be fewer a priori’s, pseudo or not. Speculation and pragmatism would be able to work together in the specific composition of events, in and of themselves, in their immediate contexts. Here ‘what will come out of a process is to some degree an open question until its ‘final characterization’ of itself at its point of culmination’ (Massumi 2011: 12). Obviously, a key part of all this would

be the creation of work/modes of living that cannot be audited. Less obviously, a key part of this might be activity that is not easily *archived and therefore data mined* by the wrong interests. As Erin Manning puts it in another context:

there is a tendency today to activate the event only to the extent that it is documentable. The problem with this is that the documenting tends to pre-ordain the event and pre-contain it to a certain circumference. So many instances of everyday life tend in this direction—grant writing, job hunting, art exhibiting, all the CVing we have to do. (Manning cited in Fritsch & Stavning Thomsen 2012)

The question becomes one of rethinking ‘what an archive demands of us’ so that ‘process’ is able ‘to develop techniques that enable a singular emergence.’

Crucially, time would be regained—taken back from the time of audit and 24/7 culture.²⁰ Impossibly for either audit cultures or 24/7 society as discussed here, Manning speaks of ‘opening the event onto its own forces for giving time—giving time for exploration, time for failure ... excavating from the event its force toward the as-yet unthought or unformed ... of restarting ... in a new kind of event-time.’

Any reorganisation of work and everyday life outside of audit will require new cultures and an inventive technics—technics that enable singular individuations of work experiences and of occasions of living. Finally, it will require a new kind of ‘transversality,’ an establishing of relations that are not restricted to those of auditor/auditee or the measured circuits of financial capital or social control. Of course, it might also require allowing people to get some sleep—their own sleep. They might even begin to dream their own dreams.

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²⁰ Something that ironically, Benjamin Bloom, who invented the taxonomy of educational objectives, understood very well. It was key to his concept of mastery learning (1984) that, strangely enough, seems almost completely ignored in learning and teaching endeavours in universities, in favour of Bloom *et al.*’s hierarchies of objectives (1956).

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