4

Dance and Post-Fordism

I noted in the previous chapter that artists, because of their versatility and adaptability, are, as Pascal Gielen and Paul de Bryune put it, the model employees of the new post-Fordist work ethic.[1] This is because artists are versatile and adaptable when facing a flow of ever-interchangeable possibilities and are often prepared to blur work and leisure activities. As Isabel Lorey has pointed out, during a virtual roundtable discussion, cultural producers and knowledge workers choose to have precarious working lives because of the freedom and autonomy it gives them in comparison with full employment. However, the application of neoliberal austerity measures, which have increased since the 2008 financial crisis, has led to a situation in which 'precarious living and working conditions are no longer "alternative", resistant, or unusual for the majority of workers'.[2] Austerity measures have led to the lowering of wages and benefits, an increase in part-time or short-term work, decreased security due to the dismantling of social security infrastructure, and higher health and safety risks. Neoliberal austerity has made peoples' lives more vulnerable, precarious, and exposed. In the same discussion, Bojana Cvejić and Ana Vujanović argued that 'the marginal place of artists in society and their precarious conditions of work do not relieve them of their responsibility to deal critically with the working conditions of production'.[3] Post-Fordism has impacted on the relation between artists and society.

1. Pascal Gielen and Paul De Bruyne, "Introduction: Fresh Air and Full Lungs," in *Being and Artist in Post-Fordist Times*, ed. Pascal Gielen and Paul De Bruyne (Rotterdam: NAi Publishers, 2009), 8.

2. Isabelle Lorey, contribution to Lauren Berlant et al., "Precarity Talk: A Virtual Roudntable with Lauren Berlant, Judith Butler, Bojana Cvejic, Isabell Lorey, Jasbir Puar, and Ana Vujanovic," *The Drama Review* 56, no. 4 (2012): 163.

3. Ibid., 176.

This chapter considers two works in which artists have dealt critically with the effects of post-Fordism. These are the theatre piece *1 Poor and One 0* (2008) by BADco. and the video installation *Mass Ornament* (2009) by the media artist Natalie Bookchin. Both were made by artists with left-wing political views. BADco. is a performance collective based in Zagreb, Croatia. They grew up, as Goran Sergej Pristaš has explained,[4] at the end of the communist period in former Yugoslavia and witnessed, first, the development of radical progressive movements in the 1980s, and then, in the 1990s, with encouragement from the International Monetary Fund, experienced a neoliberal structural adjustment to the Croatian economy that included the dismantling of the social-welfare support structures of the former Communist state. Bookchin grew up in New York in a left-wing family, many of whom were involved in trade-union activities; her uncle, Murray Bookchin, was a libertarian socialist and a pioneer in the ecology movement.[5] Both Bookchin and the members of BADco. are very aware of current social and political issues, and the works discussed in this chapter each proposes a critique of post-Fordist labour.

BADco.'s *1 Poor and One 0* takes as its starting point the 1895 film *La Sortie de l'usine Lumière à Lyon* (usually called, in English, *Workers Leaving a Factory*) by the pioneer cinematographers Auguste and Louis Lumière. During the piece, members of the collective offer a series of interlinked performative reflections on differences between leisure in a Fordist and post-Fordist economy. *Mass Ornament* is a video installation which is constructed out of found videos of dance material circulating on the Internet via the video-sharing site YouTube. Its starting point is an essay of the same name about the early twentieth-century chorus-line dance troupe, the Tiller Girls, written in 1927 by the German intellectual Siegfried Kracauer. In Kracauer's view, leisure activities are conditioned by the logic of work practices. Bookchin's installation proposes that when someone makes a video of themselves dancing in their bedroom and posts it on social media, this leisure activity is conditioned by the way post-Fordist work practices utilise workers' social skills. By citing these historical sources, each work uses the past as a reference point in order to provoke reflections on the differences between Fordist and post-Fordist work

4. Pristaš said this during the conference 'The Public Commons and the Undercommons of Art, Education, and Labor', Giessen, Germany, May 29–June 1, 2014. Video of the final discussion of the conference is available at https://vimeo.com/99667025 (accessed March 21, 2015).

5. Bookchin discusses her family's and her uncle's work in her 2011 interview with Blake Stimson. Blake Stimson, "Out in Public: Natalie Bookchin in Conversation with Blake Stimson," *Rhizome*, March 9, 2011, http://rhizome.org/editorial/2011/mar/9/out-public-natalie-bookchin-conversation-blake-sti/.

practices. They were doing this at a time when a clear understanding of these differences was still emerging. Each piece uses aesthetic means to explore or present experiences that involve ways of moving which derive from, or are related to, the problematic intersection of work and leisure.

This chapter continues the discussion of neoliberalism and post-Fordism and focuses, in particular, on potentials for artistic critique. To understand why artists are supposed to be the model post-Fordist workers, it is necessary to survey recent writing about the post-Fordist world of work. Paolo Virno's discussion of Marx's concept of the general intellect and Franco 'Bifo' Berardi's work on networks offer a perspective on the blurring of work and leisure time and the increasingly precarious nature of labour under post-Fordism. Virno and Berardi are both associated with the Italian operaist movement, adapting Marxist theory to the conditions of post-Fordist production. *1 Poor and One 0* was made before the 2008 financial crisis, and *Mass Ornament* was made before the impact of the crisis had become apparent. Both nevertheless reveal the way the post-Fordist world of work was making workers' lives increasingly precarious.

POST-FORDISM AND THE GENERAL INTELLECT

Fordism refers to a process of streamlining factory production through standardisation, particularly that devised by Henry Ford in the early 1900s to manufacture the Ford Model T. The process often involves increasing efficiency by simplifying workers' operations on the production line. A well-known scene from Chaplin's film *Modern Times* (1936) where Chaplin is swallowed up by the machines on the factory assembly line has become the iconic image of Fordism. As Toni Negri and Judith Revel put it, Fordist factory work conjures up the image 'of a body that transforms itself into cannon fodder for serialized production, of repetition without end, of isolation, of exhaustion'.[6]

The term 'post-Fordism' is used to describe working and business practices that have arisen with the decline of heavy industrial and manufacturing in the developed West and the exploitation instead of information and communication technologies. In Negri and Revel's view, this is a world 'of cognitive capitalism, of immaterial work, of social cooperation, of the circulation of knowledge, of collective intelligence, [and] we are trying to describe both the new expansion of the capitalist plundering of life, its investment not only in the factory but also in the whole of society'.[7]

6. Antonio Negri and Judith Revel, "Inventing the Common," *generation-online.org*. March 13, 2008. http://www.generation-online.org/p/fp_revel5.htm.

7. Ibid.

An effect of this change has been a blurring of the boundaries between work and leisure. Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello have pointed out that management studies in the 1960s advocated a 'radical separation between the private world of the family and personal relations on the one hand, and that of professional relations and work on the other'.[8] By the 1990s, however, this separation was seen by management theorists as problematic because 'it separates dimensions of life that are indissoluble, inhuman because it leaves no room for affectivity, and at the same time inefficient because it runs counter to flexibility and inhibits the multiple skills that must be employed to learn to "live in a network"'.[9] As I noted in chapter 2, Boltanski and Chiapello point out that the new use of these kinds of social skills and affective labour within the workplace is, in effect, an answer to the criticism in the 1960s and 1970s by members of the counterculture that work was a boring and alienating experience. The new uses of social skills and affective labour are still alienating, but in a new way. Alienation, in Marxist terms, comes because the employer makes a profit when the value of what a worker produces exceeds the amount she or he is paid for doing it. This excess is what Marx called 'surplus value', which can also be derived from rent, tax, the licensing of products, royalties, and other related sources of income. Within Fordist production, surplus value came from material goods and property. Within the post-Fordist world of work, it increasingly derives from intangible sources, such as the use of intellectual property, social skills, and affective services.

Paolo Virno proposes that the skills which are exploited in the new, post-Fordist world of work are not ones that people learn in the workplace: 'Post-Fordist workers educate themselves outside the workplace and their entire lives become job competency and thus devoted to the labour process.'[10] This applies as much in the so-called creative industries as it does in other work situations. In his solo *Product of Other Circumstances* (2009), Xavier Le Roy gives a telling example of this. His friend and colleague Boris Charmatz, director of La Musée de la danse[11] in Rennes, had sent him an email recalling that Le Roy had once said that it would only take two hours to learn butoh

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8. Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, *The New Spirit of Capitalism*, trans. Gregory Elliott (London: Verso, 2007), 85.

9. Ibid.

10. Paulo Virno, "The Dismeasure of Art," in *Being an Artist in Post-Fordist Times*, ed. Pascal Gielen and Paul de Bruyne (Rotterdam: NAi Publishers, 2009), 31.

11. La Musée de la danse is currently one of nineteen Centres chorégraphiques nationaux. These were set up in 1984 by Jack Lang, then France's minister of culture, as part of his strategy for decentralising culture in France.

and offering him a fee to produce a piece *Xavier fait du rebutoh* (Xavier does re-butoh) for an upcoming festival. The result was a lecture performance in the same format as his earlier *Product of Circumstances.* In the more recent work Le Roy explained how, knowing nothing about butoh, he researched it using the Google search engine and YouTube video-sharing website. His process closely resembles the idea of teaching oneself in an unauthorised way discussed in chapter 3, which Rancière, following Jacotot, advocates in *Le maître ignorant* (The ignorant schoolmaster). Because Le Roy didn't have much time, he explains, he ended up working on the solo in his free time and on holiday. It was therefore, he said, an 'amateur performance' since it was the result of performance he had done in his free time.[12] Le Roy explains that although the fee had initially sounded generous, when he added up how much time he had actually spent on the project, the hourly rate was somewhat modest. Artists like Le Roy are thus exemplary employees because of their readiness to blur work and leisure activities, and because of their ability to be versatile and adaptable when facing a flow of ever-interchangeable possibilities. These are the kind of qualities that employers value. They are also qualities that workers need to survive in the precarious world of work created by austerity. By discussing his fee and work schedule during the performance, Le Roy however reveals the normally unnoticed nature of the economy in which his work circulates.

Le Roy talks about the particularity of his work experiences in ways that allow others to relate to general aspects of them that are in common with their own experiences. This relation between the general and the particular is one that is discussed by theorists of post-Fordism. Paolo Virno says that the general is something that exists between people. Referring to Marx's concept of the 'general intellect', Virno argues that 'in modernity, the general in both art and philosophy is involved in a complex struggle to get away from the universal'.[13]

The universal is abstracted from the general. Marx's discussion of the 'general intellect' comes in the 'fragment on machines' in his book *Grundrisse* (1858). The term refers to the general level of knowledge about science and technology: thus when a particular technology has been fully adopted and knowledge of how to operate it can be taken for granted, this knowledge has become part of the general intellect. Capitalist industrialists exploit this knowledge when they invest in the machines for their factories, and this knowledge itself becomes a factor in enabling the creation of surplus value. In the factories of Marx's day, this knowledge was thus objectified through capital in

12. Marketing material for performance in Brussels, 2010, http://archive.kfda.be/2010/en/node/1081 (accessed December 8, 2014).

13. Virno, n. 10, 21.

the hardware of machinery. Political economist Will Hutton recently observed that British investment in intangible assets, such as computer code and patents has, since 2000, been 50 percent higher than investment in factories and machines.[14] Virno discusses the implications for the general intellect of this move away from mechanical industry to an economy based on cognitive and emotional labour. He argues that

> the so-called 'second generation autonomous labour' and the procedural operations of radically innovative factories such as Fiat in Melfi show how the relation between knowledge and production is articulated in the linguistic cooperation of men and women and their concrete acting in concert, rather than being exhausted in the system of machinery.[15]

Cooperation and acting in concert, Virno argues, constitute a necessary 'technology' for exploiting global flows of goods and services and so are also part of the 'general intellect'.

These qualities are developed outside of work, only for post-Fordist industries to capture and abstract them in order to create surplus value. At the same time, the shift to immaterial production has contributed to the increasing casualisation of labour and thus to increasingly precarious working lives. The way that workers cooperate and act in concert in the Fiat factory are exceptional in the post-Fordist world of work, which is generally one in which workers' experiences of increasing vulnerability and precarity lead to isolation and the fragmentation of social bonds. This undermines the kinds of social and political solidarity that Virno values. The process of the abstraction of the general intellect corresponds, in some respects, with the capturing and enclosure of a commons.[16] I noted earlier Negri and Revel's use of the idea of the community of the common within their account of post-Fordist labour.

Together with virtuosity, the 'general intellect' is something that Virno hopes can be repossessed for the good of the public in general rather than as a means for generating profits for industry. He asks, 'What aesthetic and political experiences can we develop to transfer from the universal to the general

14. WIll Hutton, "Give Our Cities the Power to Prosper and All Britain Will Flourish Too," *The Observer*, November 9, 2014, 38.

15. Paulo Virno, "General Intellect," *Historical Materialism* 15, no. 3 (2007): 5.

16. As I noted in chapter 3 the operaists often speak about the common instead of the commons. By abstracting from worker's singular contributions and focusing only on the use value of their labour, postindustrial capitalism privatises something that would otherwise be part of the common pool of resources of a community of the common.

without consequently destroying the particular?'[17] Virno is calling for a reclaiming of personal abilities and competencies from the world of work and their return to the realm of social and political relations. Where dance performances are concerned, I propose that this means reclaiming the critical potential of particular experiences by creating works that speak of these experiences in ways that seem authentic to spectators and can thus inform and provoke thought. Furthermore, works that do this have a radical edge that prevents them from being absorbed into an abstracted, apoliticised worldview that tends to divert any critical potential into a too-often platitudinous, universal narrative about emotional experience and the individual's freedom to express this. The readings of *1 Poor and One 0* and *Mass Ornament* that follow show that the way each piece troubles preconceptions about leisure in post-Fordist times can allow beholders to imagine possibilities for renewing the common space for social and political relations.

1 Poor and One 0 (2008)

BADco. describe themselves as a collaborative performance collective, based in Zagreb, comprising four choreographer-dancers, two dramaturgs, and one philosopher. They focus in their work

> on research of the protocols of performing, presenting, and observing by reconfiguring established relations between performance and audience, challenging perspectival givens and architectonics of performance, and problematizing communicational structures.[18]

1 Poor and One 0[19] (Figure 4) is the second piece of a trilogy that BADco. have made around the topic of labour. The first, *Changes*, premiered in 2007, and the final part, *The League of Time*, premiered in 2009. All three combine dance material and film or other kinds of projections with spoken texts, from different performers, that are sometimes philosophical and sometimes political or take the form of a personal stream-of-consciousness narrative. All three also had extensive programmes with additional textual materials relating to the theme of the piece. Thus the programme for *1 Poor and One 0* included an

17. Virno, n. 10, 21.

18. BADco, "Provocation: The League of Time," *The Drama Review* 53, no. 4 (2009): 3.

19. A full length video of the premier of *1 Poor and One 0* at Dom im Berg in Graz has been posted on the dance-tech channel on vimeo, https://vimeo.com/24983376 (accessed December 4, 2014).

Figure 4 BADco. in *1 Poor and One 0* (2008).
Photo by Ranka Latinović.

essay by Harun Farocki, a passage from Samuel Beckett, and notes on diverse
topics referred to in the piece, including the filmmaker Jean-Luc Godard, con-
tact improvisation, and the relation between leisure and exhaustion.

As I noted earlier, *1 Poor and One 0* takes as its central reference point the
1895 film *La Sortie de l'usine Lumière à Lyon* by the Lumière brothers. The
moment of leaving the factory is, as Farocki has pointed out, the point at which
work finishes and leisure time begins. BADco.'s piece begins by showing all
three versions the Lumière brothers filmed of their workers walking through
the factory gates. This is immediately followed by a 'leisure' section in which
all the company's members sit on low stools and perform choreographed arm
and hand gestures that seem abstracted from the sorts of handcraft hobbies that
one might engage in during one's spare time. This is accompanied by an audio
track from a documentary about hobbies that sounds as if it had been made in
the United States in the 1930s or 1940s. Its narrator has a slightly patronising
tone as he reproves a teenager for wasting his spare time. His parents' genera-
tion, we are told, had less time because of all the chores they had to do before
their long work shifts. Modern domestic appliances, such as washing machines,
and modern automated factories give people more spare time, which should be
put to good use. As the old-fashioned tone of the narrator and the rather dated
hobbies he mentions suggest, this approach to leisure, and the idea that leisure
is radically separated from the world of work, is now a thing of the past.

The footage of the Lumière workers is then shown again in short numbered segments, after each of which members of BADco. reconstruct the movement trajectories of the workers passing through the gate in that segment, and then the dancers return to their own starting points to wait for the next segment to play. To leave the factory, as a programme note suggests, is not just to leave the world of work; on a metaphorical level, it is to make a transition from a Fordist world of work to one in which one's image as a media object can be monetised. It is as if the BADco. members, by embodying the workers' movements, are trying to understand what the film means for each of them individually as cultural workers in a post-industrial or post-Fordist economy.

The rest of *1 Poor and One 0* consists of a series of scenes which each address this issue through movement or speech or through both together. Each of these begins with one of the numbered segments of the 1895 film. As Bojana Kunst observes, by continually going back and walking through the gates of the factory, BADco. are constantly drawing attention to the dividing line between work and leisure.[20] Each scene stages what the company call an unstable communicational exchange between movement and words. BADco.'s practice here recalls the politicised interrogation of image and text that the French film director Jean-Luc Godard and his collaborators engaged in during the early 1970s. Indeed, the title *1 Poor and One 0* comes from a discussion of capitalism in Godard and Anne-Marie Miéville's 1974 film *Ici et ailleurs* (Here and elsewhere).[21] This, a voice in the film over explains, is how capital functions: 'Perhaps one poor [1] and one zero [0] equals one less poor; one poor and another zero equals one even less poor; one even less poor and one zero equals one richer; one richer and another zero equals one even richer.'[22] Expressed numerically this is a sequence: 1, 0, 10, 100, 1000, 10,000, 100,000. Serge Goran Pristaš explains this while writing the numbers with a clear marker on thin, fragile textile fabric, which looks like silk, stretched over a large frame. The fluid in the marker pen gradually eats into the fabric, dissolving it so that soon all that is left is a spreading hole in the screen, a big zero.

In another section, Ivana Ivković speaks a fragmented first-person narrative about capitalist working conditions as the choreographer Nikolina Pristaš and two other dancers stand beside her in a companionable way. Their hands

20. Bojana Kunst, *Artist at Work: Proximity of Art and Capitalism* (Winchester, UK: Zero Books, 2015).

21. In *Ici et ailleurs* Godard and Miéville revisited some film footage of Palestinian revolutionary fighters that Godard had shot in 1970 for an unfinished film project, *Jusqu à la victoire*.

22. The text of this narration from Godard and Miéville's film is quoted in the programme for *1 Poor and One 0*.

casually tucked into the side pockets of their dresses, they walk through little segments of the moves of three of the workers leaving the Lumière factory while Ivković is talking. They develop these movements, repeating the sequence and adding to it, rotating the directions of travel through a right angle, and expanding this into space, and Ivković joins in so that a trio becomes a quartet. There remains a curious mismatch here between the serious political nature of what Ivković is saying and the easy, casual familiarity of the dancers' interactions. But perhaps the mismatch is between the casualness of networking in a post-Fordist workplace and the alienating capture of the general intellect within this new capitalist business plan.

A programme note tells us that *1 Poor and One 0* 'interrogates the complicity between the history of contemporary dance and the history of post-industrialisation'. Bojana Cvejić and Ana Vujanović have argued that the marginal place of artists in society does not put artists in a position where their work is automatically critical of the state of society but that they have a 'responsibility to deal critically with the working conditions of production'.[23] This, I suggest, is behind BADco.'s recognition of the complicit nature of contemporary dance. The history of contemporary dance is one in which innovators seek alternatives that are relevant to their historically specific experiences. BADco. draw attention to this complicated history. In a late section in the piece, Goran Sergej Pristaš adds or subtracts the years in which significant events in contemporary cultural history of dance and movement took place. This scene recalls the earlier scene where he added one poor and one zero. This time he writes each sum of years in chalk on the seat of one of the rectangular stools. The first is 1972–1947 = 1925. The year 1925 has an indirect connection with movement. As Pristaš explains, the Soviet Russian documentary filmmaker Dziga Vertov claimed that in his avant-garde film practice, the movie camera is a 'kino eye', and, in 1925, the film director Serge Eisenstein replied that in his own revolutionary films he used the camera as a 'kino fist'. In this context 'kino' means moving pictures but could suggest movement in general. In 1947, Rudolf von Laban, having worked with the industrial consultant F. C. Lawrence to apply his approach to dance movement analysis to the analysis of factory work, published the book *Effort*. Steve Paxton first began to explore what became contact improvisation in 1972. A programme note states, 'The implicit understanding of communication between subjects in contact improvisation resonated with the changes of its age.' This, the note continues, was the early postindustrial age when society moved away from 'the class struggle model of social relations to post-antagonistic forms of social

23. Cvević and Vujanović in Berlant et al., n. 2, 176.

interaction' exemplified by the spontaneous, non-hierarchical nature of contact improvisation.

Contact improvisation appears elsewhere in the piece. In one scene Tomislav Medak and Ivana Ivković talk through an imaginary contact improvisation between the two of them, one saying what move they would do and the other replying what they would do in response. It is as if they were analysing the movement in the same way that the company analyses, through re-enactment, the movements of leaving the factory. In chapter 3, I argued, following Boltanski and Chiapello, that the radicalism of countercultural dance forms like contact improvisation was subsequently appropriated by neoliberalism. This debate is not spelled out in the performance itself. Here, as elsewhere, spectators are left to work out connections and references on their own. Much of this reflection may take place after the performance while one is reading through the programme. If one follows what BADco. are saying about these particular years, which is also explained on the back page of the programme, this is what emerges. If one takes contact improvisation's connections with early post-Fordism (1972) and takes away from it Laban's involvement in Fordist factory work (1947), this leaves revolutionary movement that can punch like a fist (1925). By subjecting their contact improvisation to this verbal analysis, Medak and Ivković are trying to understand and resist its current complicity with the post-Fordist world of work. They are trying to ungovern dance.

The format that BADco. devised for *1 Poor and One 0* means that running through all these scenes is a relation between, on the one hand, political and theoretical ideas and, on the other, actual dance material and discussions about dance and its history. I earlier posed Virno's question 'what aesthetic and political experiences can we develop to transfer from the universal to the general without consequently destroying the particular?'[24] BADco.'s choreographed movements convey the particularity of their experiences while their commentary on the latter invites beholders to recognise the general nature of the issues that *1 Poor and One 0* raises. BADco. do nothing to hide the fact that their words and movements come together on stage in awkward, unresolved relationships. The result is nevertheless thought-provoking and offers beholders opportunities to think about the ordinary contradictions in the everyday experience of work in a society that is created by post-Fordist work practices. *1 Poor and One 0* shows an onstage community who are thinking critically about movement in ways that help beholders imagine possibilities for ungoverning dance, and who by doing so are defending a common space for social and political relations.

24. Virno, n. 10, 21.

Mass Ornament (2009)

Natalie Bookchin's *Mass Ornament* is a video installation made from found video footage posted on the video-sharing website YouTube.[25] These videos were made by young people on their own and show them dancing in their bedrooms (or other parts of their homes). Bookchin has edited them, choosing short extracts which are lined up side by side with two or more other videos and placed against a black background (see Figure 5). Underneath each one, in white print, are details about how many views it has received or, in a few cases, the information that the video has subsequently been removed from YouTube by the user. The installation is shown in a fairly intimate blacked-out space that is the same width as the projection and has five speakers, three at the front and two at the back, so that there is a surround-sound effect. After a relatively slow introduction—or overture—featuring shots of empty rooms which wobble slightly as the young people, out of frame, adjust the angle of their cameras, a male voice is heard singing part of the song 'Lullaby of Broadway', and the title *Mass Ornament* appears. After this, the young people enter the individual frame of their videos, and after a slow build-up, start dancing. The soundscape for the installation is a montage from the soundtracks of two films from 1935, Busby Berkeley's Hollywood musical *Golddiggers of 1935* and Leni Riefenstahl's documentary about a National Socialist Party rally in Nuremberg, *Triumph des Willens* (*Triumph of the Will*). There are also thumps, footfalls, and other background noises as the young people move around in their rooms.

Bookchin selected extracts from the videos in which young men and women are doing the same dance movements, or other related actions, at the same time, and she has placed the videos side by side so that the young people appear to be performing in unison. Among the dance movements they perform are high kicks, jumps, turns, rhythmic shaking of the buttocks (twerking), vogueing arm gestures, and a wave that moves along one arm to the shoulders and then out along the other arm. There are also other less obviously dance-related movements, such as handstands, backflips, and aerobic exercises, performed in front of a television that shows a fitness class. People move close to the camera so that their face fills the frame as they make small shifts to the camera angle; they dance while ironing clothes, they dance in front of their Christmas trees.

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25. Having used video footage found on the Internet in *Mass Ornament* and other projects, Bookchin likes to put some documentation of these back onto the Internet. A video of *Mass Ornament* can be found at https://vimeo.com/5403546 (accessed December 4, 2014). I am grateful to Bojana Kunst for introducing me to this work. It was only when I was making the final revisions to this book that her own book was published, and I found out that she too wrote about *Mass Ornament* and *1 Poor and One 0* in the same chapter.

Figure 5 Natalie Bookchin *Mass Ornament* (2009). Exhibition view *When We Share More Than Ever*, Museum für Kunst und Gewerbe Hamburg, curated by Esther Ruelfs, Teresa Gruber, architecture and graphic design Studio Miessen, Studio Mahr ©Henning Rogge.

A few young people seem slightly out of control and fall over awkwardly—some of the videos are marked as having been taken off line by the user. Each extract from the found video footage is quite short and the number of videos in the line changes frequently, increasing to make more impact then focusing down onto a few featured dancers, swelling and declining in an almost natural flow. The montage is very musical. The second half of the piece is mostly set to a lush instrumental version of the song 'Lullabye of Broadway' from Busby Berkeley's film, and dancers' key movements are often synchronised with strongly accented beats or climactic moments in the music. As the music builds up to its finale, the line fills with more and more videos in a visual crescendo which then, with the final note, dramatically disappears.

As I noted earlier, the title of the installation cites a much-discussed essay from 1927, 'Ornament der Masse' ('Mass Ornament') by Siegfried Kracauer (1889–1966).[26] In this essay, Kracauer discusses the Tiller Girls, the well-known, kick-dancing, chorus-line troupe, which he cites as exemplifying a

26. Siegfried Kracauer, *Mass Ornament: Weimar Essays*, trans. Thomas Y. Levin (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1995).

popular phenomenon of 1920s stage revues and gymnastic displays in which a large number of people move in perfectly synchronised unison. The anonymous precision of the Tiller Girls, Kracauer suggests, is reminiscent of the kind of economical precision required of workers on a modern factory production line. He calls the dancers Taylorists, referring to the method devised by the European 'efficiency engineer' F. W. Taylor (1856–1915). In an interview, Bookchin told Carolyn Kane:

> I tend to look backwards, to history, in order to speak about the present. It has to do with the fact that my work grapples with the need to be reflective in the present, with something that we are right in the middle of. History allows us to gain perspective.[27]

Through citing Kracauer and the two films from 1935, Bookchin uses examples of the now historical Fordist era to gain a perspective about post-Fordism. Kracauer proposed a connection between Fordist (and Taylorist) production methods and the worker's leisure activities so that the worker's experience of the mechanised production line can be seen as equivalent to the precise, efficient synchronisation of the chorus-line dancers. By citing Kracauer, Bookchin implies that the same connection between work and leisure can be found in post-Fordism, although the nature of both work and leisure have now radically changed. During working hours, individuals use computers to make connections across the Internet in order to create profit for their employers and then, during their leisure hours, use their home computers to continue making connections over the Internet. These connections are apparent from the number of viewings that their videos receive. The line of videos of young people dancing alone in front of their computers becomes, through Bookchin's montage, a virtual chorus line, an Internet-age equivalent of the Weimar German chorus lines that Kracauer analysed.

The Tiller Girls' unison was, for Kracauer, not only an expression of the rhythm of modern times; it also filled a gap created by modern metropolitan life. Philosophically Kracauer draws on a Kantian account of the rational unitary subject of the Enlightenment and a sociological and philosophical critique of the alienating effects of modernity. Thus he argues that there is something worrying about the apparent de-individualisation of the dancers as they become as much as possible like the other members of the chorus line and are reduced to no more than a small, anonymous element in the mass ornamental performance. By doing so they no longer appear to be in a position

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27. Carolyn Kane, "Dancing Machines: An Interview with Natalie Bookchin," *Rhizome*, no. 27 (2009): http://rhizome.org/editorial/2009/may/27/dancing-machines/

to make the kinds of disinterested judgments that, in Kant's philosophy, is an essential characteristic of rational, enlightened subjectivity. But, on the other hand, Kracauer nevertheless also found, in the dancers' harmonious interconnectedness, a utopian glimpse of new possibilities for social harmony that contrasted favourably with the alienation and fragmentation of contemporary the metropolitan social experience. If Kracauer, in 1927, was thus ambivalent about what he called the 'mass ornament', with the subsequent rise of the National Socialist Party in Germany in the 1930s, his views about it hardened into unequivocal criticism. In 1947, when he wrote *From Caligari to Hitler*,[28] his study of cinema in Weimar Germany, he no longer found anything utopian in the mass ornament. The anonymous mass of alienated workers walking into the lifts in Fritz Lang's 1927 film *Metropolis,* in Kracauer's view, had the same impact on the viewer as the massed ranks of marching party members that Leni Riefenstahl celebrated in *Triumph of the Will*. The mass ornament, Kracauer argued, prepared the German people for their acceptance of National Socialism. Submission to the Führer involves giving up individual agency through merging oneself within a larger group that is itself subordinate to his supposedly masterly leadership. The implication of this is the loss of any potential to exercise free and independent judgement.

The soundscape of *Mass Ornament* includes sounds from Riefenstahl's film, but I doubt that many visitors to Bookchin's installation are likely to recognise that, although they may learn what it is by reading information about the installation. Apart from this, there is no obvious reference to Hitler or National Socialism in the installation, nor has Bookchin mentioned this in any of the interviews with her that I have read. But the implied tension between the different ways in which mass ornaments are presented in Berkeley's and Riefenstahl's films is also present within the effect that Bookchin creates through her montage of found video material. There is an ambiguity in the installation concerning the virtual chorus line of otherwise isolated dancers who all appear to be doing the same things in perfect synchronisation. There is perhaps a pathos in their vulnerability as they dance in isolation. But does the fact that they are all doing the same movements imply a lack of individuality, or does Bookchin see in their dancing some potential for interconnectedness?

As Bookchin pointed out to Carolyn Kane, the dancers in the videos 'perform the same movements over and over, as if scripted, revealing the ways that popular culture is embodied and reproduced in and through individual bodies'.[29] When Bookchin was working on *Mass Ornament*, YouTube postings

28. Siegfried Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of German Cinema* (London: Dobson, 1947).

29. Kane, n. 27.

still largely consisted of user-generated content created by the users themselves. It was only later that commercial corporations and entertainment companies began using postings as part of their marketing strategy (see chapter 3), and its owners, Google, had yet to devise a way of generating revenue through targeted advertising. The user-generated content that Bookchin sampled was, in effect, ungoverning the media industry. Google's subsequent monetising strategies are attempts to enclose a commons.

One thing that appears to have been of interest to Bookchin was the non-hierarchical nature of the young people's creative practice. As she told Kane, the videos were produced by the consumer: 'There is no need for a director or choreographer (or foreman) to keep production flowing or to keep the dancers moving in sync. It is a perfectly individualized self-generated, self-replicating system.'[30] Bookchin's installation reveals evidence of the way this system functions as a network. A significant difference emerges here between the way the mass of people relate to one another in the society created by Fordist and by post-Fordist economics. The factory production line produces a flow of goods that is facilitated through mechanical means, whereas in the post-Fordist workplace, information flows through digital networks. To understand the social and political implications of these digital flows, it is useful to consider Franco 'Bifo' Berardi's discussion of the network and the swarm.

Whereas, on a philosophical level, Kracauer refers to a Kantian rational unitary subject, Berardi's account of subjectivity is Deleuzian. A network, for Berardi, is formed from 'a plurality of organic and artificial beings, of humans and machines who perform common actions thanks to procedures that make possible their interconnection and interoperation'.[31] Through operating together in this way, it becomes possible to keep enormous amounts of information in rapid circulation. The living beings who are part of this network behave in ways that 'follow (or seem to follow) rules embedded in their neural systems'.[32] In Bookchin's installation, the dancers are exhibiting what, following Berardi, might be called 'swarm behaviour', which, Bookchin argues, is self-generating and self-replicating. No one person is or could dictate what movements the swarm should perform, as these emerge out of the interconnections between different parts of the network. In a swarm, Berardi argues, 'it is impossible to say "no." It's irrelevant, you can express your refusal, your rebellion and your nonalignment, but this is not going to change the direction of

30. Ibid.

31. Franco Berardi, *The Uprising: On Poetry and Finance* (Cambridge, Mass: Semiotext(e), 2008), 14.

32. Ibid.

the swarm, nor is it going to affect the way in which the swarm's brain is elaborating information.'[33] In the case of the dancers in Bookchin's installation, it is not just the swarm's brain on its own but the hybrid fusion of psyche and material flesh with circuitry and data that elaborates these dance movements. Its interconnection gives it speed and allows it to encompass huge complexity, too fast and too large for conscious human elaboration.

The ability to connect to and operate within the networks that Berardi discusses here is part of the general intellect that post-Fordist industries exploit. What Bookchin shows in her installation is the potential for these networked interoperations and interconnections to function as a commons. While the individual young people dance alone in their rooms, Bookchin places them side by side to allow us to imagine a commons. As she told Blake Stimson:

> The videos come from online social networks, which offer exalted promises of creating social relationships and making the world more open and connected, but instead, produce a cacophony of millions of isolated individual voices shouting at and past each other. What I am trying to do through my editing and compilation is reimagine these separate speakers as collectives taking form as a public body in physical space.[34]

Earlier, I cited Virno's hope that the general intellect could be repossessed for the public good and his proposal that this would involve a reclaiming of personal abilities and competencies from the world of work and their return to the realm of social and political relations. Bookchin's installation creates a virtual space which can help beholders become aware of the current form of the general intellect and imagine a new collective space—a commons—in which the affordance of this general knowledge and competency can be returned to the realm of social and political relations.

CONCLUSION

Virno and Berardi, by analysing aspects of the post-Fordist world of work from the point of view of the operaist movement, are optimistic in the way they theorise possibilities through which people can renew a public space for social and political relations. The two pieces I have discussed in this chapter were both made before the full impact of the 2008 financial crisis and of the consequent increase in the application of austerity measures had become clear.

33. Ibid., 16.

34. Stimson, n. 5.

Both pieces look back to early Fordism, to the Lumière Brothers' workers in 1895, to Eisenstein and Dziga-Vertov in 1925, Kracauer in 1927, and Busby Berkeley and Riefenstahl in 1935. This allows these artists to show how working conditions have changed since the early twentieth century, revealing how, in the twenty-first century, workers' alienation and isolation are taking different, less easily recognisable forms. Kracauer worried that Fordist production interfered with the worker's capacity for independent, critical thought. Post-Fordist labour exploits the capacity for thinking. The precarious, short-term, or casual nature of so much employment in the twenty-first century, however, particularly under austerity regimes, mitigates against the renewal of a collective social and political realm. It is this collective space for critical thinking that BADco.'s and Bookchin's works allow beholders to imagine. Both works respond to Cvejić and Vujanović's demand that artists should acknowledge that despite their marginal, precarious conditions of work, they nevertheless have a responsibility to create works that deal critically with these conditions. What *1 Poor and One 0* and *Mass Ornament* demonstrate is the potential for movement to make critical, political propositions. Both ungovern dance.