

# Study, Students, Universities: An Introduction

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*That which could continue educating us had as yet to  
be created.*

—*Peter Weiss, Aesthetics of Resistance*

With the onset of the recent global crisis of capital, education is once again becoming a contested terrain. This issue of *Polygraph* brings together texts from several registers dealing with different educational situations across the world, the status of the University and of other institutions of learning, the practice of study, and the question: what does it mean to be a student today? Previous issues of *Polygraph* have addressed some of the major contemporary questions in the fields of philosophy, critical theory, and cultural studies, but with this issue we attempt to reflect more directly on our own situation as a university-based journal and editorial collective made up exclusively of graduate students. Starting with problems arising from our particular situation does not mean abandoning the theoretical inquiry *Polygraph* is dedicated to as an international journal of culture and politics. We wish, rather, to use that standpoint to force certain theoretical questions that address the processes and events we struggle to comprehend and yet feel intimately connected to at the level of the everyday. Thus this issue gathers articles that propose heterogeneous theoretical possibilities for grasping the vexed status of study, students, and universities.

## **From the Collapse of Traditional Knowledge to the Figure of the Student**

The challenge presented by the current economic crisis appears in the field of education as a continuation of the shifts and transformations of the University, which have in the past forty years been diagnosed by numerous theorists: as the turn

from the master's to the university discourse (Jacques Lacan), as the advent of the postmodern organization of knowledge production (Jean François Lyotard), in terms of a shift from a "university of culture" to a "university of excellence" (Bill Readings), as a slow process of privatization and collapse of public higher education (Christopher Newfield), and as an institutional reconfiguration in light of a new hegemonic type of immaterial, cognitive labor in post-Fordist capitalist economies that turn Universities into "knowledge factories" (Stanley Aronowitz). These theorizations have informed the most influential lines of critique which have accompanied and challenged the mutation of the University from its status as an ideological state apparatus to its reinvention as a transnational corporation; a process that can further be characterized in Gilles Deleuze's terms as the shift from the University as a disciplinary institution to the University as it operates in a "society of control."<sup>1</sup>

Adding to these debates and in an effort to reflect on the present moment, the Program in Literature at Duke University hosted a conference under the title "The Collapse of Traditional Knowledge" in January 2007. The conference was pitched as an attempt to "reflect critically on the conditions of our own thinking," while expressly avoiding the pitfalls of a "simple political complaint about the corporate University."<sup>2</sup> Bringing together an impressive group of academics, the conference aimed at continuing the discussion—which has itself become a tradition of sorts in the humanities—of the transformations in the contemporary University's guiding rationale and its corresponding models of the production and transmission of knowledge. In trying to identify the structural causes of a shift in the organization of knowledge, to relate them to concrete effects, and, it was hoped, to open up new possibilities for thought, "The Collapse of Traditional Knowledge" conference covered a wide range of questions: the crisis of public education and the erosion of academic freedom in the face of increasing privatization; the transformative effects on thought and knowledge of new technologies, new media, and digitally "revolutionized" modes of communication; and a reconsideration of "alternative" and "unstable epistemologies," both in relation to the discourse of scientific rationality, as well as from the positions of marginalized and excluded subjectivities. Above all, what the conference made apparent to us was the need to identify the novel aspects of these continuous shifts in the organization of knowledge and to explore new subjective possibilities, distinct from the ones offered by the established accounts of the transformation of the modern University.

All of the articles in this volume of *Polygraph* take the general crisis described above as their background, but they all also attempt to develop new ways of either distancing themselves from its familiar narrative or of reevaluating the crisis itself in order to make something new appear in its midst. For example, Alessandro Russo's "Destinies of the University" offers an unprecedented periodization of the University as an unstable institutional formation at the cross-section of the modern organization of knowledge, the nation-state, and emancipatory politics. What emerges from Russo's account is a rather unexpected history of the University (after Humboldt), which he sees not simply as an apparatus of the modern State, but rather as an anomalous invention, singular in its dynamic and its effects, which needs to

be examined as such in the new context of corporatization and the extreme commodification of knowledge. In Russo's analysis, one gets a deepened understanding of the contemporary crisis of the University, which now—with the student, as a kind of symptom, at the center of a broader development—appears not only as a result of the slow disintegration of the fragmentary consistency of modern knowledge, but also as a consequence of the crisis of the party politics of nation states, and of the emergence of new forms of revolutionary action that have accompanied the decline of traditional working-class organization.

While “The Collapse of Traditional Knowledge” conference illuminated many questions, what struck us most in the conceptual and historical accounts presented there was the almost complete absence of any discussion of the pedagogical relation in the contemporary situation, and consequently, the absence from the discussion of students—i.e., of the place and of the role of those who study and learn. If a seismic shift has indeed occurred in the organization of modern knowledge—a shift that seems to hold something almost inexhaustible for all the “seismologists” who measure its dimensions and its consequences—would this not also necessitate a reconsideration of the pedagogical relationship that was at the center of this organization? Would an epochal transformation of knowledge not also necessitate a reflection on the student, which, together with the researcher-professor, was a crucial part of the pedagogical relationship in the period that now seems to be over? In the modern organization of knowledge and in the modern University as its institutional form, the student does not arrive as an afterthought to an already established configuration, but is rather from the very beginning internal to it, is one of its constitutive parts. The relation of knowledge to the one who does not yet know, but who wants to know, is part of the very situation of knowledge in the modern University and is, therefore, also a condition of any thought that might be produced in it. The absence of this dimension at a conference dedicated to a critical reflection of the conditions of contemporary knowledge production emerged as something we felt uniquely situated to address.

Our initial reaction in the *Polygraph* collective was to publish a call for papers soliciting responses to a very simple proposition: “There are Students in the University!” We hoped such an obvious and self-evident factual affirmation would prove sufficiently estranging to help us investigate—along with our contributors—what the student might mean today, what the character of the pedagogical relation (if such a thing even exists) would be in the contemporary situation of knowledge production, and how, in the context of all of this, we could think the relationship of knowledge and thought to emancipatory struggles and politics. The more we discussed these questions, however, the more the initial proposition guiding our call for papers seemed ineffective and inadequate; in its place numerous questions began to appear. “There are Students in the University!” is an affirmation, we had to admit, most university managers and bureaucrats would be more than happy to recognize. The growing interest in the management of “student life,” the constant reorganization of the University into a set of services that are there to be consumed by students, the apparent student-centeredness of university culture, all testify not

to a forgetting but, quite the opposite, to the centrality of a *certain* category of the student in the contemporary University.

The category of the student produced by the University today is, as Nina Power shows in her article, “Axiomatic Equality: Jacques Rancière and the Politics of Contemporary Education,” a student as a split and confused subjectivity. She writes: “If one thing characterizes the current status of students in the University, it is *confusion*. Confusion about their status—are they clients, as the university brochure is at pains to assure them, or are they subjects-supposed-to-be criticized (or even failed)? Are they buying a degree, or are the students themselves the “product” to be sold (or to sell themselves) to employers?”<sup>3</sup> This confused status of students today is, for Power, closely related to their largely depoliticized existence and uncertainty about their own agency.

With the increasingly pronounced presence of this late capitalist category of the student—the student as a depoliticized consumer/product—the student as the one who does not yet know, the not-yet of knowledge and thereby the condition of any new knowledge, slowly recedes into the background and begins to disappear. Moreover, this omnipresence of the student as a category of administrative and managerial discourse only makes the absence of the student from the discussions of critical intellectuals that much more visible. It is at this point that the figure of the student *itself* becomes a question. Emphasizing the student as a *figure* can perhaps allow us to move away from the statistical *category* used by management and administration toward the production of a common notion that can help us think the student as part of a new configuration of political subjectivity and agency, and a new relationship to knowledge and thought. Such a figure of the student can enable us to articulate connections and shared struggles that, drawing on various experiences, cut across different empirical situations.

But our initial assertion that “There Are Students in the University!” quickly became insufficient in yet another way. Seeking the relation between students and thought solely within the confines of the University, when this relation is in fact less and less to be found there, precluded the very possibility of what we were after—i.e., identifying and engaging with a figure of new knowledge, research, struggle, and thought. There is no reason to look for such a figure exclusively within the walls of the University. There are students—people who study, investigate, and learn—everywhere, and it is often easier to find them outside than inside the University. To ignore the actual forms of self-organized education, of extra-institutional pedagogy and intellectual work, and the countless strategies of autodidacticism, to ignore all of this in a situation in which the University itself seems to have lost the consistency of an enclosed site, misses crucial reference points for any research into the figure of the student today. We thus include in the present issue previously untranslated texts by two Argentinean collectives, Colectivo Situaciones and Universidad Trashumante, whose work passes through several sites usually inaccessible to academically disciplined discourses. In “An Elephant at School and Other Texts” by Colectivo Situaciones, one moves from a meditation on adolescence and violence in high schools, to a discussion of the form of investigation and publication, to the

changing principles of popular education, and finally to a striking discussion of the University. “Walking the Other Country: Reflections on *Trashumancia* and Popular Education” by Universidad Trashumante, on the other hand, records an itinerant movement that collapses the city-countryside division and attempts to discover “another country” within the existing one. What Colectivo Situaciones and Universidad Trashumante illustrate is a conception of thought and research as transversal activities characterized by a singular consistency. The activity of Colectivo Situaciones and Universidad Trashumante is in fact composed entirely of the materials offered by each individual site of investigation. Both take up these materials in a process of thought that can be defined as an unwillingness to give what happens over to the always other discourse of specialists and experts.

Any exploration into what it might mean to be a student today deepens its perspective not only by looking outside of the University, but also by looking at history and into the way figures from the past still make demands on our present. The *Polygraph* collective’s conversations on the figure of the student and the state of the contemporary University took place around the fortieth anniversary of the global events of May ’68. Organized in the form of a semester-long seminar in Spring 2008 and culminating in a day-long event that included a lecture by Marc Bousquet and a roundtable with Bousquet, Stefano Harney, and Fred Moten (a transcript of which we publish in this issue), our discussions frequently referred to the epochal transformations that took place in the 60s and 70s of the twentieth century. To a certain extent May ’68—which, of course, does not refer only to the month of May 1968, but to a whole sequence of events in the late 1960s and early 1970s that many of us still believe form an important part of our present political horizon—names a sudden, if brief, burst of the figure of the student onto the stage of politics. During May ’68, students appeared prominently at the intersection of several historical transformations: the restructuring of the economic order, changes in the field of possibilities for a range of new political agents, processes of cultural and sexual liberation, and shifts in the organization of knowledge. As Kristin Ross has shown in her remarkable book *May ’68 and Its Afterlives*, it is impossible to think the originality of May ’68 without the student. At the same time, however, this figure, all too often reduced to that of rebellious, libertarian youth, has come to stand for May ’68 as a whole and thus obscures our understanding of what actually happened during that sequence.<sup>4</sup> We can observe a reductive and ideological operation not only in the subsequent history of this period in France, but also in the U.S., where processes of political innovation and collective experimentation between workers, people of color, women, anti-war, and anti-colonial militants are covered over by a narrative of an emerging liberal individualism. Due to the complexity of the status of students in that period and the ease with which it lent itself to ideological appropriation, the relation of the figure of the student to the event of May ’68 has to be carefully evaluated and struggled over.

During May ’68, as a historically new sequence of politics, the figure of the student emerged as one of the points of condensation and intensification of the general situation. As Maurice Blanchot, radicalized by the events of the 1960s, put it: “in the so-called ‘student’ action, students never acted as students but rather as revealers of

a general crisis, as bearers of a power of rupture putting into question the regime, the State, society.”<sup>5</sup> As Ross shows, this figure emerged only to the extent that being a student of May ’68 meant breaking from the sociological category of “the student,” or “the youth.” The political existence of students depended on an act, or rather a practice, of dis-identification with any proper allocation to a social position or role. The student can thus be said to name a figure that is capable of breaking with the limits of its social place, the logic of its sociological assignment, and linking up autonomously—i.e., at a distance from and in opposition to the State—with other such figures.<sup>6</sup>

During the time we spent working on this volume of *Polygraph*, our interest in May ’68 focused on the relationship of students to the emergence of forms of politics that upset the police logic of the State and developed autonomously from the representative apparatuses of working class unions and parties. It is our belief that such an understanding has important consequences for questions facing us today. If the emergence of the political figure of the student signified an appearance of politics predicated not on identification with one’s social being or class position, but rather on the capacity of social groups to dis-identify, collectively, from their proper positions in the social order, then the appearance of the student as a figure of politics also points to a shift in the status of other political agents. The political existence of workers, for example, would in this new situation not follow directly from the understanding of the social or class being of workers and would thus also necessitate a distancing from traditional forms of working class organization and political representation (the Union, the Party, etc.). Recalling this change in the character of politics is relevant today, since in our own situation a large number of calls for the politicization of students come precisely in the form of identifying students as workers. One particularly powerful example is Marc Bousquet’s *How the University Works: Higher Education and the Low-Wage Nation* (2007), which offers an account of the increasingly indiscernible distinction between student life and wage labor in U.S. higher education. In a chapter entitled “Students Are Already Workers,” Bousquet reveals a rather shocking fact: “if you are a U.S. citizen under age twenty-five, you are more likely to be working if you are a student than if you are not.”<sup>7</sup> Bousquet’s critique of the U.S. university system and his analysis of the contemporary conditions of academic work show vividly the often brutal reality of student and contingent labor that support present-day academia. As Bousquet demonstrates, “most graduate schools admit students to fill specific labor needs. One of the core functions of graduate programs is to enhance flexibility, always presenting just enough labor, just in time.”<sup>8</sup> Basing his claims on this analysis of academic labor, Bousquet suggests that political action in the University is possible to the extent that graduate students (together with the growing population of adjunct faculty) recognize themselves as workers and begin to organize as such—e.g., begin to form student and contingent faculty unions. This strategy is certainly not to be underestimated, but it is also at this point that the question of political autonomy and the question of new forms of political organization opened up by May ’68 can be posed once again. To put it simply, we, students and teachers, might identify with being workers, but that still

leaves open the question of what it means, today, to exist politically as a worker. That is to say that the lack of mobilization and the ineffectiveness of political organization in the University do not simply come from the failure to identify with and replicate workers' organizations, but rather that the status of the latter might no longer be as clear and decisively determined as it once was.

Several of the texts we publish in this issue significantly develop and expand this discussion of students' relationship to work and explore the various consequences of that relationship for organizing struggle within the contemporary University.

Renaud Bécot's "Universities in France: Forty Years After May '68," provides an account of the current state of French student organizations in the context of European Union higher education reforms (the so-called Bologna Process). Writing as a member of *Sud étudiant*, Bécot's overview of the situation of students in France emphasizes the continuing necessity for students to be aligned with wage workers, while criticizing the way this alliance has been dominated by the interests of political parties and subsumed under the logic of the State. In addition to enabling a comparative analysis of student struggles in contexts outside the U.S., Bécot's text revisits the legacy of May '68, the appropriation of that legacy by contemporary reformers, the history of the relations between student and worker unions, and the struggle over the concept and meaning of "autonomy" within that context.

Isaac Kamola and Eli Meyerhoff's "Creating Commons: Divided Governance, Participatory Management, and Struggles Against Enclosure in the University," develops from an analysis of the increasing presence of the logic of competition and capitalist value practices within the corporate University. Their work explores the new possibilities for struggle within the University opened up by this arrangement, as well as the necessity to transform the terms of that struggle. Drawing insights from their experience at the University of Minnesota, Kamola and Meyerhoff move to a general analysis and critique of what they identify as two contemporary forms of enclosure by the University. Expanding the Marxist concepts of commons and enclosure, which have become increasingly important in a range of debates about contemporary revolutionary politics, Kamola and Meyerhoff provide a vocabulary for reimagining the terms of class struggle within the University. In an effort to move away from those institutional forms that separate the power to make decisions from the agents of academic labor ("divided governance" and "participatory management"), their article provides tools for students, workers, faculty, and administrators at all levels to begin reworking the University by constructing non-capitalist commons that resist new forms of enclosure.

While several existing critiques of the University have made it impossible to ignore the fact that being a student also means being a worker, the staggering problem that being a student in the U.S. today also increasingly means being in massive debt has only very recently come to the attention of activists and theorists of the contemporary politics of education. Morgan Adamson's "Financialization of Student Life: Five Propositions on Student Debt," tracks the emergence since the 1970s of a new regime of profit and social control through the increasing production of unforgivable student loan debt. In addition to providing a much needed historical account of the

process by which students became a privileged population for experiments in new instruments of financialization, Adamson's essay presents one of the first theoretical attempts to think through and formulate the specific subjectivity—the relation to one's life, one's future, to time—produced by student debt. In her discussion of the “student-in-debt,” Adamson argues that debt can best be seen as a form of counter-revolution. She writes,

The conquering of student life through debt is the capture of a site of revolutionary potential manifested in the late-1960s. What was previously a location of dynamism, innovation, new forms of social networks, creativity, and unpredictability, the student has now become a locus for experiments in financial control, aiming to cultivate and capture these very attributes.<sup>9</sup>

Determining a central locus of struggle for student life today around the figure of the “bankrupt,” Adamson's theorization of the limitations placed on student life by these forms of control through debt also provides a conceptual framework for us to imagine the creation of a new student movement of collective resistance and refusal of life in debt.

## Study

Another possibility offered by the texts we present in this issue can be said to consist in a move away from the student in order to pose the question of study and the place and meaning of thought in our present situation, a move away from the problem of the figure of the student to the specificity of the student's practice.

The goal of the *Polygraph* 2008 roundtable discussion with Marc Bousquet, Stefano Harney, and Fred Moten was to clarify some questions regarding the situation of contemporary education, Bousquet's contribution to our understanding of the exploitation of academic labor, and the possibilities opened up by Harney and Moten's concept of the undercommons.<sup>10</sup> But what surprisingly emerged as the most interesting aspect of the roundtable discussion was the idea of study. At some point during our conversation the question came up: “Why does the University go to such lengths to avoid identifying students with study?”<sup>11</sup> The University has little problem viewing students as consumers or as an exploitable labor-force to be managed, but it is increasingly difficult to avoid the fact that Universities today do everything they can to ensure that study does not take place. In the course of the roundtable discussion, a concept of study emerged, designating a relation to learning and to thought that would not be reducible to the accumulation of information, to the current organization of knowledge, or to the logic of professionalization that governs so many of our activities in the University. Study would instead name those “unprofessional activities” of thought and experimentation that leave one intoxicated, those moments of encounter in a text or conversation that blow one's mind, driven by curiosities that are closer to pleasure, to play, to wandering, to leaving work. From here it becomes possible to further disengage the figure of the student from the docile consumer or the inert product of the University and provide an additional definition of a “stu-

dent”: a student is not only an exploited and invisible worker, a person in debt, but also someone who *struggles to study*. Or even, as our favorite dictionary definition of the student has it: a student as someone “addicted to study.”<sup>12</sup> A compelling suggestion: that one might have picked up the habit of reading intensely or of writing to excess, that there might be something a bit zealous, obsessive, uncontrollable, and unaccountable in study.

Study should be distinguished from the accelerated circulation and accumulation of knowledge taking place in the contemporary University. Due in large part to the development of communication infrastructures and the movement of capital and information they enable, Universities today are increasingly becoming dispersed sites of knowledge-production. For this reason, one could easily claim that there is no outside to the University. Following Deleuze, we might even describe this pervasive logic of the contemporary University as a logic of control.<sup>13</sup> However, it is also necessary to recognize that this logic of control, which tends toward constant movement and subversion of (disciplinary) boundaries, relies as well on a continuous policing of movement and thereby ends up producing new, even more brutal, forms of exclusion and violence. As Gökçe Günel shows in her contribution, “The Gated Campus: Its Borderless Subjects and the Neighborhood Nearby,” as inhabitants of the elite private universities indulge in the ideological narratives about themselves as the new borderless agents of world economy and administration, their institutions deepen the physical boundaries between their inside and the outside that surrounds them. The boundaries that separate campuses from their rural, suburban, or urban environments are intensely policed and most often end up turning local communities into something to be viewed with suspicion and contempt. While people in the surrounding communities are needed to provide the labor required for running these institutions, they are often barred from taking part in the material and educational opportunities these institutions allow. Günel’s example is Koç University in Istanbul, Turkey, but we could just as well cite Duke University here in Durham, North Carolina.

Introducing the concept of study with respect to the context of control and exclusion described above potentially opens up the possibility of mapping differently the complex spatial dimensions of the contemporary University. Stefano Harney has suggested that we understand study as a political concept, as an activity of sabotage and refusal of what he identifies as the dominant form of capitalist production today: governance. For Harney, governance designates a process of constant “prospecting of mass intellectuality,” and the University, insofar as it offers education in the form of a proliferation of consumer choices and a ceaseless solicitation of interest, can be seen as one of the key sites of governance today.<sup>14</sup> To the extent that the University today operates according to this logic of governance—with a specific determination of its inside and outside—study can perhaps be seen as a self-organized practice that short-circuits the logic of the University with a different topology, where it becomes possible to construct an outside within the inside, enabling new ways of moving and thinking that elude control. As Fred Moten noted during the roundtable: “This outside of the University is inside of it, too.”<sup>15</sup> Such a relation to the outside reminds

us that any institutional critique or political struggle within the University that does not insist on the irreducibility of study risks simply folding back into the administrative logic of managed education, however improved and reformed the latter might become.

In addition to the spatial dimension of the inside and the outside, however, there is also the temporal dimension of study, which might best be understood as a collective construction of time against the rhythm and the demands of professionalization. A concept of study, if we assume that it is what students do and want to do, may also help explain a fact that puzzles so many no-nonsense analysts of contemporary academia; namely, why do so many still willingly enter graduate school in the humanities in spite of the increasingly dismal job prospects offered by such an education? We would like to suggest that many of these students enter PhD programs not in order to become professional academics or experts, but in order to prolong the experience of study. Of course, there are numerous mechanisms in place that attempt to transform this desire for study into a struggle for recognition (exams, competitive scholarships, “the job market,” etc.), but with a renewed concept of study we can better analyze what actually happens when we invest in these mechanisms. How do they change our relationship to thought? Take for example, the examination. As Harney asked during the roundtable: What happens when one announces, “I’ve finished my exams!”? That all too often means “I’ve finished my studies!” That is, one is led to believe that she is no longer a student—she passed, she crossed the line. But what exactly was that line? How does it function to separate study-time from work-time, from leisure-time? How does it function to separate what goes on “inside” the University from its supposed “outside”—and how do all these exercises police the boundaries between those who know and those who don’t?

The concept of study affirms the potentiality of the “general intellect,” of a socially productive capacity to organize, act, think, and create autonomously and in common. In this sense study would also name a practice and an educational form opposed to the constant differentiation operated within the University. Or, in a slightly different vein, we might say study would rest on the affirmation of a generic human capacity to think, an egalitarian starting point, which Nina Power, in discussing Jacques Rancière’s *The Ignorant Schoolmaster* and the concept of “axiomatic equality,” tests against the increasingly unequal reality of our contemporary world. Referencing the feminist theorist Mary Evans, Power suggests that the contemporary University, caught up in a cycle of reproducing social inequality, is currently involved in a campaign of “killing thinking.”<sup>16</sup> Against this campaign, Power explores what the de-institutionalized autodidacticism implied by Rancière’s radical destruction of the pedagogical relation and his affirmation of the absolute equality of intelligence would mean in relation to university education. Among other things, Power emphasizes the importance of refusing the myth that is so often resentfully rehearsed by instructors at all levels, that students do not want to think. Power forces us to consider how often this myth functions to project the logic of the institution onto students and displace the anxiety and suspicion that in fact those who are supposedly paid to think, certified to think, and recognized as “thinkers,” aren’t really thinking at all.

Christopher Newfield's "Risky Business: How Public Loses to Private in American Research" helps us identify the notion that students don't want to think with the corporate logic that has underwritten the dominant narrative of university education in the U.S. since the early 1980s. According to Newfield, the "hero" produced by that cultural narrative identifies completely with the profit-seeking nature of the corporate University—students go to school and try to get into the "best schools" not to study, but in order to make money. This cultural narrative has helped create and legitimize the conditions, Newfield claims, by which public contributions to the common social project of education (taxes, tuition, subsidies, etc.) are rerouted for private gain.

It might be that from the perspective of the contemporary managed University, directed towards profit and gain, something like study can only appear as "unprofitable," "useless," or a "waste of time." Juliet Flower MacCannell expands on the paradoxical theme that contemporary universities function primarily to organize and manage knowledge, and thus foreclose thought or the production of any new knowledge. Following Jacques Lacan's analysis of the four discourses (master, hysteric, university, analyst) in his 1969-70 *Seminar XVII: The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, MacCannell argues that we should not be so quick in thinking the University as a site of *knowledge*-production, since what is actually produced there is not at all knowledge, but a form of subjectivity—a split subject, subject as "waste." In her contribution to this volume, "Surplus Knowledge; Or, Can We Teach Today?" MacCannell demonstrates how the "university discourse," which for Lacan described the dominant social relation in capitalist society, attempts to manage, secure, and constantly revalorize already accumulated knowledge. MacCannell's elucidation of the Lacanian schema shows how the structure of the university discourse involves a separation of students from agency as well as from any possibility of subjectively assuming the wealth of existing knowledge, further underscoring how study, as a practice, could perhaps push at the limits of the dominant mode of contemporary social relations.

To a certain extent all of the articles presented in this issue of *Polygraph* relate to the concept of study we have attempted to outline above, albeit in multiple ways and in some instances from very different perspectives. During our roundtable, study emerged as a concept that moves away from politics organized around a figure to a politics conceived in terms of practice. But in Juliet Flower MacCannell's terms, study might mean the production of new knowledge as opposed to the mere management of already accumulated knowledge. For Nina Power, study would perhaps be realized in the affirmation of an egalitarian principle against existing inequalities and in the form of autodidacticism. For Christopher Newfield, it would work against the "risky business" narrative of research for private profit and would enable the reinvention of a cultural narrative in which the public is the hero of both basic and advanced research. In her introduction to the texts by Colectivo Situaciones and Universidad Trashumante, Beatriz Llenín-Figueroa suggests that any radically renewed relation to study would imply first and foremost that the University itself become a student of new epistemologies, toward which both the itinerant acts of popular education of Universidad Trashumante and the militant investigations of Colectivo Situaciones point. For Renaud Bécot, the possibility of study would depend on wresting the

concept of autonomy from the privatizers of education and putting it back into the hands of democratically organized researchers and students, and similarly, for Isaac Kamola and Eli Meyerhoff, it would have to be accompanied by the creation of the University as a non-capitalist commons. In light of Gökçe Günel's contribution, study would challenge the gated character of educational institutions. The figure of the student-in-debt, theorized by Morgan Adamson, raises the stakes of the struggle to study and demands a collective challenge to the contemporary forms of financialization and control of student life. And finally, for Alessandro Russo, study would simply name our "desire to think beyond knowledge."<sup>17</sup>

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Our initial impulse in preparing *Polygraph 21: Study, Students, Universities* was to affirm the fact of students' existence, without determining in advance what it might mean, except that it could not simply be that of students as consumers. Since we have started working on this issue numerous events have caused students to reappear. The occupations of universities by British students protesting the Israeli occupation of Gaza, the riots of Greek students against the brutality of the repressive apparatus of the Greek State, the student occupation of the New School in New York, the continuing mobilization of French and other European students in opposition to the proposed reform of higher education and research, and, even as we write this introduction, the occupation—under the slogan "One world, one struggle. Education is not for sale"—of their University by Croatian students, all point to an increasing and renewed political importance of the student. One can assume that in a time of global crisis of capital in which the attempts to privatize education and subsume it even more completely under the demands of the market and the criterion of profitability, the student will remain an important point of political contestation. We thus no longer feel as much as we did that this existence itself is in doubt. We are convinced, however, that the questions it opens up to—the relation of the figure of the student to the figure of the worker and to the problem of debt, and the importance of affirming study, thought, and investigation—are more relevant than ever and are the locus of our future struggles. It is in preparation for these that we hope this issue of *Polygraph* helps us sharpen our weapons. ■

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1 Jacques Lacan, *The Other Side of Psychoanalysis*, trans. Russell Grigg (New York: Norton, 2006); Jean François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984); Bill Readings, *The University in Ruins* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996); Stanley Aronowitz, *The Knowledge Factory: Dismantling the Corporate University and Creating True Higher Learning* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000); Christopher Newfield, *Ivy and Industry: Business*

- and the Making of the American University, 1880-1980 (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003); Christopher Newfield, *Unmaking the Public University: The Forty-Year Assault on the Middle Class* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2008); Gilles Deleuze, "Postscript on the Societies of Control," in *Negotiations, 1972-1990*, trans. Martin Joughin (New York: Columbia University Press, 1995), 177-182.
- 2 <http://literature.aas.duke.edu/news/ConferenceAgenda.php>
- 3 See, in this issue, Power, 123.
- 4 Kristin Ross, *May '68 and Its Afterlives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).
- 5 Quoted in Ross, 25.
- 6 Ross identifies the egalitarian character and central idea of May '68 in the appearance of new forms of politics: the establishment of joint worker-student action committees, the practices such as *établissement* (the practice of mostly Maoist intellectuals taking up positions on the factory assembly lines in the banlieux) or *enquête* (carrying out the investigation of the existence of workers that sought to break with the statistical or census logic of the sociology of workers). "That dimension lay in a subjectivation enabled by the synchronization of two very different temporalities: the world of the worker and the world of the student. It lay in the central idea of May '68: the union of intellectual contestation with workers' struggle. It lay in the verification of equality not as any objective of action, but as something that is part and parcel of action, something that emerges in the struggle and is lived and declared as such." Ross, 74.
- 7 Marc Bousquet, *How the University Works: Higher Education and the Low-Wage Nation* (New York: NYU Press, 2008), 150. For a review of Bousquet's important book, see, in this issue, Canavan, 215-223.
- 8 Bousquet, 20.
- 9 See, in this issue, Adamson, 115.
- 10 Fred Moten and Stefano Harney, "The University and the Undercommons: Seven Theses," *Social Text* 22.2 (2004): 101-115.
- 11 See, in this issue, "On Study," 170.
- 12 The first listed definition of the student in the *Oxford English Dictionary* says: "A person who is engaged in or addicted to study." *Oxford English Dictionary*, <http://www.oed.com>.
- 13 In an interview with Antonio Negri, Deleuze defines control in the following way: "We're definitely moving toward "control" societies that are no longer exactly disciplinary. ... We're moving toward control societies that no longer operate by confining people but through continuous control and instant communication. Burroughs was the first to address this. People are of course constantly talking about prisons, schools, hospitals: the institutions are breaking down. But they're breaking down because they're fighting a losing battle. New kinds of punishment, education, health care are being stealthily introduced. ... One can envisage education becoming less and less a closed site differentiated from the workspace as another closed site, but both disappearing and giving way to frightful continual training, to continual monitoring of worker-schoolkids or bureaucrat-students. They try to present this as a reform of the school system, but it's really its dismantling. In a control-based system nothing's left alone for long." Gilles Deleuze, "Control and Becoming," in *Negotiations*, 174-5.
- 14 For more on the concept of governance, see: Stefano Harney, "Governance and the Undercommons" (2008), <http://slash.autonomeia.org/node/10926>.
- 15 See, in this issue, "On Study," 176.
- 16 Mary Evans, *Killing Thinking* (London, New York: Continuum, 2004).
- 17 See, in this issue, Russo, 80.