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Hone the Means of Production: Craft Antagonism and Domination in the Journalistic Labour Process of Freelance Writers

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Abstract

The works of Karl Marx have been central to the formation of a body of critical communication scholarship in Canada. But as Nicole S. Cohen adeptly shows, the influence of Marx's thought has been absent, mostly, as it relates to questions involving cultural labourers. Of particular interest to her is Marx's formulation concerning exploitation and its relationship to the field of journalism as it affects freelance writers.

This dissertation extends the notion of a "missing Marx" by incorporating other concepts from his *oeuvre*. His writings on alienation help to address one of two major research questions posed in this dissertation. The first being: why is it that freelance writers in Canada are willing to work for such low levels of remuneration?

Historically, a dichotomous rendering has prevailed as to whether exploitation or alienation provides a better explanatory framework for understanding the experiences of workers—in this case, freelance writers. One of the aims of this work is to bring alienation and exploitation into conversation with one another by drawing heavily on Marx's theorizations around value formation.

This requires an analytical investigation of the journalistic labour process. Ideas of craft have helped shape identity and understandings of work in the journalistic field over a few centuries now. This understanding segues into the second research question: at this juncture of deepening capitalist crises, and subsequent renewed interest in craft modes of production, what relevance do these forces have in the lives of contemporary freelance writers?

As purveyors of digital news media strategies are further subordinating the craft elements of the journalistic labour process to the needs of abstract labour, this devaluation of skills is being expressed through the dual conditions of alienation and exploitation. This dissertation addresses both of the above research questions as well as the aforementioned phenomenon through interviews of Canadian freelance writers in the spirit of Marx's workers' inquiry.

These 25 interviews in combination with documentary analysis of the historically changing conditions of journalism explore the pertinence of the field's craft sensibility upon its freelance workforce under circumstances of intensifying alienation. Statements from

informants reveal the craft dimensions of the labour process as both a source of domination and of resistance as well as playing a possible future role in the enactment of broader class struggles.

Keywords

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<center>Chapter 1</center>

1   Introduction

This chapter first outlines how I developed an interest in the field of journalism, and, especially, the working conditions and remuneration levels of freelance writers. This frames the research questions that have guided the entirety of this project. I then present a more general rationale for examining the labour conditions of media workers in communications studies. I argue the inordinate amount of attention researchers in the field have devoted to questions concerning the ideological function of news media have sidelined materialist investigations into the labour processes of news media workers. From there, I consider how recent interest in a "missing Marx" has privileged the category of exploitation over alienation as it relates to the labour conditions of freelance writers in Canada. I conclude with a preview of the chapters that constitute this work.

1.1   The Sociological Imagination: Situating the Researcher; Situating the Reader

For the eminent American sociologist, C. Wright Mills (1959), the intersection of biography and history comprises what he terms "the sociological imagination." This conceptualization contrasts sharply with the defining suppositions of the neoliberal era. Whereas humans' intersubjective activity contributes to historical social formations that are dynamically durable, the purveyors of the neoliberal project have wished to construct deracinated and ahistorical individuals: "I think we have been through a period when too many people have been given to understand that when they have a problem, it is the government's job to cope with it … (As) you know there is no such thing as society. There are individual men and women and there are families. It is our duty to look after ourselves" (Thatcher cited in Brittan, 2013). However, for Mills (1959), the personal is inextricably sociological, mediated as it is through a series of interwoven institutional patterns and cultural norms.

This, too, is the view of Don Heider (2004), a former journalist who turned to the academy, in a life path similar to the one that has unfolded for me. As a reporter in

Washington D.C., Heider (2004) encountered the same homeless man outside the same subway station on a daily basis. From this interaction, he developed a scholarly interest in representations of class in news media accounts, leaving him to conclude all sociological research has its origins in autobiography (ibid).

In the tradition of Mills (1959) and Heider (2004), I wish to begin this investigation with a brief, personal account illustrating how my own biography is inscribed upon this inquiry into the work experiences and the work conditions of freelance[1] writers in Canada. Throughout this investigation, I shall refer to the participants as freelance writers and not by the historically more commonplace nomenclature of freelance journalists. This naming convention more accurately reflects the empirical reality that journalistic work, conceived of as writing/recording/filming stories for newspapers, magazines, radio, television, online news platforms and any other media, is not remuneratively lucrative enough for most freelancers (Cohen, 2011, 2012b, 2013, 2016b). This means freelancers must seek additional employment opportunities in the domains of communications work, in post-secondary education institutions, and as copyeditors, researchers, etc.

Although I never gave consideration to becoming a freelance writer, I wish to highlight how an ongoing interest in, and concern with, the institution of Canadian journalism, and the news workers located within it, continues to shape an unfolding life narrative. Furthermore, this recollection serves as a fulcrum, linking the personal with the more objective research questions that have guided this project. I should also note that this narrative would not have crystallized without the cooperation of the freelance writers I interviewed for this study. It has been through their willingness to communicate the

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[1] The term free lance predates the consecration of Canada as a nation state by several centuries. Scholars have traced the origins of the term to the Middle Ages (Pink, 2001). At that time, knights who did not have an allegiance to a feudal lord were itinerant in their search for compensated employment (Horowitz and Sciarra Poynter, 2012). As a band of mercenaries willing to sell their services to the highest bidder these knights were "free lances." This designation does not indicate a willingness to provide services without remuneration, but only that they were "free" to the extent that they did not affiliate exclusively with any particular feudal regime. The term freelance is first used in relation to journalists in late seventeenth century England (Mytton-Davies, 1968). Although better known for their literary efforts, Daniel Defoe and Jonathan Swift are considered two of England's earliest freelance journalists (ibid). It is not until the first decades of the eighteenth century that freelance journalists begin to cover events or institutions regularly. The first recorded female freelance journalists do not appear in England until the nineteenth century (ibid).

details of their career trajectories that my own more clearly came into focus.

Not unlike a plurality, if not a majority of the participants with whom I spoke, I, too, have passed through what the American journalist and chronicler of work, Studs Terkel (1972), describes as a search for "daily meaning as well as daily bread, for recognition, as well as cash, for astonishment rather than torpor; in short, for a sort of life rather than a Monday-through-Friday sort of dying" (p. xi). A similar sentiment has its origins with the Situationist International ensemble. During the spring and summer of 1968, it was not uncommon to encounter the following slogan graffitied throughout Paris: "We don't want a world where the guarantee of not dying of starvation brings the risk of dying of boredom" (Thompson, 2017, p.60).

The intersection of social history with personal biography translated, for me, into graduating from a Geography and Environmental Science program in the year the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario, under the rubric of its "common sense revolution", reduced the budget of the Ministry of Environment by 40 percent (Bourette and Immen, 2000). The foreclosure of one of the previously surest pathways to entry-level employment for a graduate led to the retention of the call centre position I had held as a summer student during the entirety of my undergraduate matriculation.

Call centres have become workplaces of great interest to academic researchers in recent decades (Kolinko, 2002; Brophy, 2010; Woodcock, 2017). Their expansion is indicative of an informational turn in capitalist social relations, revolving around an accelerated circle of production, circulation and commodity consumption (Brophy, 2010). Continuous feedback loops of information between consumers and manufactures mediated by call-centre employees, have become a key component of production regimes characterized by on-demand logics, customization, and a greater dynamism involving the circulation of commodities (Harvey, 1990).

It was in one of these loci of informational capitalism that I became deeply familiar with workers' acts of micro-resistance. The call centre employing me referred potential clients to mostly new, non-affiliated lawyers across Ontario. The centre was organized by the dual disciplining logics of Fordist automation and Taylorist planning and surveillance

(Woodcock, 2017). Without the benefit of access to recent research on call centres, I had to learn the tactics of micro-resistance on my own—discovering, for example, that it was possible to press the hold button just as those phoning were disengaging from the call. By doing so, it would appear to any management surveillant that a caller remained on the line. This would allow for a few extra moments of rest before I would release the button, and the next caller in the queue would arrive in my headset. Management's introduction of even more invasive surveillance techniques coincided with my decision to depart this workplace permanently after a little more than a year of full-time employment.

After a few peripatetic years, my desire to neither die of starvation on the streets, nor of boredom in the workplace led to my enrolment in a one-year, post-graduate journalism program. This, I thought, would fulfill a dual desire. The first was to secure a creative means of employment focused on writing. The second wish was to find a career path that could be conceived of as contributing to a greater public good. It was within this program, with its strong vocational orientation, that I first heard references to journalism as a craft. The instructors/professors emphasized, *ad nauseam,* that as a craft, it was the responsibility of the practitioners to try and hone it. At least implicitly, such discourses signaled journalism's historical association with a type of production that was eventually eclipsed by the rise of industrial capitalism (Rutherford, 1982; Gans, 2003).

The faculty's complete failure to elaborate upon the craft traditions of journalism even while constantly evoking them was symptomatic of a contradiction. The thoroughly instrumental orientation of the program's curriculum meant that the actual instruction provided was incongruent with the frames of reference constantly cited, i.e. craft traditions and craft work. The curriculum the instructors actually relayed was far removed from the deep skill acquisition of the medieval workshop and the artisanal roots of journalism (Rutherford, 1982; Coleman, 1988; Braverman, 1998).

The enunciations of craft that continue to be transmitted in journalism school curricula remain highly attenuated. Analyses of journalism-school curricula have revealed they are more homologous with Frederick W. Taylor's insistence on there being one best way to perform each aspect of the journalistic labour process (Skinner et al, 2001). What faculty

teach are the sedimented layers of rationalized techniques institutionalized with each set of technological changes, dynamic alterations to the capitalist mode of production in the journalistic field[2], and shifts in the social relations that mediate these large-scale interactions between capital and technology.

In my journalism school experience craft as a cognitive frame of implied meaning and understanding appeared to operate at a level of consciousness either just below or just beyond critical appraisal. It elicited little scrutiny, and engendered even less elaboration as to what it might mean in an era of consolidated, capitalist ownership of media outlets large and small in Canada. The effacement of the craft ethos in journalism during the second half of the nineteenth century is a direct outcome of the diffusion of capitalist markets and the initial establishment of their monopolistic tendencies (Solomon, 1995). By the conclusion of the nineteenth century, the printer-journalist as craft person, overseeing all facets of their business operation, had been replaced by an entrepreneur publisher, a lawyer as editor, the first instantiations of modern reporters, other specialized news media workers, and the segregation of printing tasks from the above (ibid)

My own search for meaningful work within the journalistic field concluded in 2006. It finally became apparent to me that daily newspapers within corporately controlled media

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[2] Pierre Bourdieu uses the term "field" to refer to a metaphorical social space, intended to bring attention to the relational exchanges that take place between individuals and institutions governed by specific norms, values, discourses, etc. (Webb et al, 2002). Within any field social agents are differentially located depending on the types and the amounts of capital they possess. This refers to symbolic capital (awards, designations, accolades) and cultural capital (skills, knowledge, *savoir faire*, etc.). Within any social field agents compete and exchange symbolic and cultural capital to accrue more of these types of capital, and to position themselves advantageously within the field. They may also exchange these types of capital for economic and political capital (Hesmondhalgh, 2006). Journalism is a semi-autonomous field found within the large field of cultural production. Here cultural production refers to the creation of symbolic texts and the norms that govern their creation. The latter in journalism would include notions of newsworthiness, the "watchdog" function of news media, the rules of objectivity and fairness, etc. Due to the ability of news media to construct and transmit meanings about the manner in which the social world operates, journalism is also part of the larger field of power, but only weakly so. This is because Bourdieu (2005) views the journalistic field as "increasingly heteronomous" (p. 41). This means it is less able to organize itself around its stated norms and values. Rather, it is commercial imperatives that shape its internal practices. As the alleged crisis of profitability worsens across news media outlets, commercial imperatives further exert force upon the field and re-make it increasingly in its own image. Those social agents who possess a *habitus*, a historically embodied and internalized set of beliefs and dispositions, that is more closely aligned to these developments are more likely to find career success within the journalistic field.

conglomerates would not easily accommodate the types of stories I was most interested in pursuing. Specifically, this would have entailed writing extensively about matters of income inequality, and the efforts to redress this issue. The decision to abandon journalism as a possible future occupation precluded any consideration of becoming a freelance writer given my focus upon permanent, full-time employment. Instead, I opted for a master's degree and a future career path in communications/public relations. Historically, this has not been the path less traveled among journalists. Practitioners in the journalistic field widely acknowledge work in communications/public relations as being both more secure and better compensated. Since at least the nineteenth century, if not prior to this date, journalism has served as a way station for young men, and only more recently, young women, on their way to more prestigious and/or lucrative pursuits (Rutherford, 1982). This has remained a discernible tendency despite the field's propensity to attract romantics and idealists (Leab, 1970; Brennen, 2004).

The social critic Barbara Ehrenreich (1990) has described the general eschewing of idealistic pursuits in favour of secure employments as exemplifying a "premature pragmatism" (p. 210). She is referring to the tendency among university undergraduate students to abandon any type of romanticism and intellectual curiosity with regards to career trajectories in favour of business and law degrees in the hopes of securing middle-class comfort and stability. Even though I may not have identified it as premature at that particular life juncture, in deciding to suspend efforts to try and attain journalistic work I opted for my own instance of pragmatism. However, had I continued my pursuit of stories concerning income inequality in a freelance capacity, a class of workers worthy of such investigatory attention would have been freelance writers themselves.

By way of coincidence, 2006 is also the year the Professional Writers Association of Canada (PWAC) conducts a survey of 858 freelancers. One of the striking findings from this probe is that the average annual income for freelance writers in Canada declined over a three-decade span. Earlier findings from 1979 and 1996, in non-inflationary adjusted figures, respectively show freelance writers in Canada earning $25,000 and $26,000 per annum (Salamon, 2016a). The results from the 2006 survey uncovers that this annual average income figure has decreased to $24,000 (Crummer, 2009). In absolute terms, the

value of the labour freelance writers in Canada perform has undergone a decline.

These tabulated income figures from 2006 are now more than a decade old. Yet it appears neither PWAC, nor any other organization that represents the interests of freelance writers in Canada has attempted to conduct a subsequent survey (Salamon, 2016a). As part of her doctoral work, Nicole S. Cohen (2012a, 2013) undertook a survey garnering 200 responses from freelance writers in Canada. This has helped to fill the interim void on income data. The results from her survey indicate that 45 percent of respondents earn less than $20,000 annually. Another 18 percent have annual income figures between $20,000 and $30,000. The next two categories, encompassing $30,000-to-$40,000, and $40,000-to-$50,000, each contain 12 percent of respondents. Those respondents who classify themselves as earning more than $100,000 comprise only two percent of the survey sample. My own survey findings, which I will present in chapter three, roughly parallel those of Cohen (2012a, 2013).

More recent figures from both the U.S. and the U.K. show similar levels of pauperization among freelance writers in those countries. In the summer of 2015, the U.S. based media software company, Contently, administers its own survey of freelance workers. This evaluative tool is comprised of 643 participants across various fields of employment. Approximately 82 percent of the respondents identify themselves as writers. This equates to roughly 525 of those that participate in the study. The mean income averaged across all survey participants is $30,000. An estimated five percent of the respondents in this survey indicate they earn more than $100,000 (Teicher, 2015).

Without access to the raw data Contently collected, it is difficult to assess the precise meaning of the averages their researchers calculate. For example, even as freelance writers represent an overwhelming majority of respondents in the survey, it is possible that a small slice of well-paid freelance engineers or computer programmers may have participated. Such a group of small, but well-compensated workers may have affected the average income figure in a disproportionate manner. Since averages are prone to such distortions median figures may offer a more accurate portrayal of freelance writer income. If that is the case, then the prognosis is even more dismal. The calculation of the

median income figure displays a range between $10,001-and-$20,000, meaning 50 percent of respondents earn less than the amount indicated in this range while 50 percent earn more (ibid,). The U.K. Authors' Licensing and Collecting Society authorizes its own earnings survey in 2013. One of this group`s primary responsibilities is the collection of royalties on behalf of its 87,000 members. From that membership pool, it polls 1,250 freelance magazine and newspaper writers. The report that follows from the field study reveals 58 percent of respondents earned less than £8,000 in the previous year from their writing (Ramdarshan-Bold, 2014).

Instead of the security and comfort on offer in more highly-regarded professions these penurious income figures suggest a different set of motivations may help to account for the pauperization freelance writers in Canada, the U.S., and the U.K. appear willing to accept. In their totality, these survey findings appear to contradict Ehrenreich's (1990) thesis of a premature pragmatism. They also stand in opposition to the personal narrative that I have outlined here. The "get a good job" mantra, incessant as a drumbeat from childhood onwards, has multiple underlying and unspoken suppositions. The first of which is that in a social formation organized around the exchange of commodities a good job is one that can provide the means of existence that are required on a daily basis. But in a dichotomous rendering between manna and meaning, starvation and stimulation, freelance writers in Canada appear to have chosen the latter in each of these pairings at the expense of the former. In fact, depending on city size and family size, the reported annual average income of these freelance workers places them, potentially, in a low-income category (Grant, 2014). The tensions and ambiguities the Situationist International and Terkel (1972) identify lead to the formulation of the following two questions that have shaped this inquiry:

1) Why are freelance writers seemingly willing to work for such inadequate levels of compensation?

2) Given the recent renewal of interest in craft production methods and their historical association with journalism, what role, if any, do craft conceptions play in relation to being a freelance writer?

1.2 Media Workers: Still the Blind Spot of Communication Studies?

I have tried to intersect my own historical narrative with an objective interest in the labour practices and the work conditions of journalists in general and freelance writers in particular. I outline how questions of labour fit within the field of communication studies.

In 1983, Vincent Mosco and Janet Wasko edited *The Critical Communication Review, Volume I: Labour, the Working Class and the Media.* Contributors to this book project examine the effects of mass media upon working-class consciousness and working-class communities, the history of labour unions within media industries, representations of labour unions in commercial media, and lastly, what the implementation of information and communication technologies in the workplace mean for news media workers. William H. Melody's (1985) review of the volume praised it for bringing attention to an underdeveloped area of scholarship in communication studies and hoped it would engender additional studies detailing the junction between labour and media.

Yet nearly three decades after the publication of this volume, one of its editors wrote that the study of media systems continues to focus on the political economy of ownership, the issue of the nature of messages in news media content, i.e. their ideological content and function, and the manner by which audiences actively or passively engage with the aforementioned messages (Mosco, 2011). The development of the field had continued to under develop the question of labour. Only more recently have a new generation of critical Canadian scholars in the field of communication studies (Brophy, 2008; de Peuter, 2011; Cohen, 2016b) again pointed to the "blind spot" (Smythe 1977) of labour in the field. This renewed interest represents a departure from an emphasis upon the ideational realm of ideology to a materialist one focused on labour.

Other non-Canadian academics have made similarly-themed claims. British media scholar, David Hesmondhalgh (2010), writes researchers in the area of communication studies have privileged issues of consumption over those of production. This is especially noticeable in the importance researchers have ascribed to the consumption of news media content and its effects upon consciousness and cognition (ibid). What is concerning to

Hesmondhalgh (2002) is that the excess stress upon news media texts has served to deflect attention away from those who are responsible for their production on a daily basis, and the work processes journalists and freelance writers employ in order to do so.

The above is predicated on a particular understanding of the role of news media in liberal-democratic societies. It is one that views communications as the transmission of informational content for the purposes of forming an informed, rational, autonomous citizenry that is then able to perform its assigned civic duties knowledgeably (Carey, 1992; McChesney, 1999; Hardy, 2010).[3] Hesmondhalgh (2002) categorizes scholars conducting this research as operating within the Schiller-McChesney tradition. This nomenclature derives from two of the most well-known exponents of this investigatory type: Herbert Schiller and Robert McChesney (ibid). However, the likely best-known text is Edward Herman and Noam Chomsky's (2002) *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of Mass Media.* In the authors' opening gambit, they declare that capitalist owned mass media act "as a system for communicating messages and symbols to the general populace. It is their function to amuse, entertain, and to inform, and to inculcate individuals with the values, beliefs, and codes of behaviour that will integrate them into the institutional structures of the larger society" (Herman and Chomsky, 2002, p. 1).

James P. Winter (2007) writes that the images and descriptions news media conjure are the most important way populations encounter, and comprehend events that are spatially and temporally distant. Edward A. Comor (2008) assigns to capitalist media systems, including news media, the power "to shape how humanity thinks. (This) constitutes its most formidable tool in shaping what policies are feasible, or not feasible, what social trajectories are imaginable or unimaginable" (p. 14). Corporate (news) media not only exist as economic monopolists, but also exercise a monopoly over knowledge formation.

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[3] James R.Compton's (2004) *The Integrated News Spectacle: A Political Economy of Cultural Performance* extends concerns about the transmission of rational currents so central to the critical political economy of communication studies debate by devoting serious consideration to ritual forms of communication as also being epistemologically significant. Through the binary of the sacred and the profane, Compton (2004) examines the manner in which the tabloidization of news media content is not an apocalyptic moment, but rather presents opportunities for publics to both challenge and to reproduce dominant values, mores, and other systems of cultural meaning making.

Concerns about the monopolistic tendencies and ideological functionings of news media trace their roots to the publication of *The German Ideology* in the mid-1840s. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels (1998) famously identify the harms private ownership of the means of communication give rise to: "The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production … thus their ideas are the ruling ideas of the epoch" (p. 67). The power the capitalist classes exercise over the major organs of communicative activity translates into a large degree of control over the circulation of dominant discourses at any particular historical moment. In this rendering, a dominant ideology develops in which a dominant class is able to produce and circulate a compelling and cohesive belief system that is consumed and absorbed by subordinate working classes (Abercrombie et al, 1980).

The introduction of this "dominant ideology thesis" serves a twofold purpose: 1) it has substantiated why the study of media workers and their labour processes is necessary; 2) it has served to introduce a reframing of knowledge production I pursue in the closing chapter of this work. A great deal of concern with the content emanating from news media outlets has attended to its epistemological distortions with respect to the maintenance of a democratic polity via an informed citizenry (McChesney, 1999; Hesmondhalgh, 2002). This outlook presupposes the nature of knowledge is contained in the what of (news media) content, and its ideological mystifications, over the how of material labour/learning processes (Holloway, 2002).

With regards to this latter point, Marx (1964) demonstrates in a series of criticisms he levels at Ludwig Feurbach that it is possible for materialism to remain exclusively within the ideational realm: "The chief defect of all hitherto existing materialism—that of Feurbach included—is that the thing, reality, sensuousness, is conceived only in the form of the object or of contemplation, but not as sensuous human activity, practice, not subjectively … Hence he (Feurbach) does not grasp the significance of "revolutionary … practical-critical activity" (p. 67).

The parallel with those scholars operating in the Schiller-McChesney tradition is that even in their express concern with materialist issues such as inequality or colonialism

their epistemology remains largely idealist. This is because, like Feurbach, they do not sufficiently engage with the "practical," "sensuous" activity journalists and freelance writers enact in their labour process(es). Consequently, in the chapters to follow, I give considerate attention to the subjective experiences of freelance writers in their labour process. I do so, in part, to explore the "revolutionary" potential, if any, of their "practical-critical" activity in these processes.

For Marx (1964), the type of material, practical activity journalists and freelance writers must engage in on a daily basis is emblematic of a kind of aesthetic education. The deeper implications surrounding this set of ideas will become more apparent in my examination of the craft elements of journalistic labour processes in the second half of this work. For now, it may suffice to cite Bob Black (1986), who claims "you are what you do" (p. 22). The dark inference he is articulating is that the capitalist labour people engage in daily is not only the source of much human unhappiness, it is also the single most important determinate in explaining the "creeping cretinization all around us … even (more so than) such significant moronizing mechanisms as television and education" (ibid). If conceived of in this manner, then the labour processes media workers, such as freelance writers, participate in, and not the content they produce, may serve as the most valuable epistemological tool they have to offer. This is because it may aid in counteracting the cretinizing effects Black (1986) detects.

It is worth reiterating, once more, recent years have seen a discernible increase in the number of studies investigating the labour conditions of media workers by Canadian scholars. Examples of this scholarship include the already mentioned work of Enda Brophy (2008, 2010) into worker resistance at call centres, Nick Dyer-Witheford and Greig de Peuter's (2009) interrogation of the video gaming industry at the intersection of labour, culture, and politics, and Leslie Regan Shade's (2014) look at the gendered aspects of labour inside the digital media industries. Closer to my own area of study is Catherine McKercher's (2002) examination into the possibilities of converged journalists' unions acting counter-hegemonically against the highly concentrated ownership of media outlets. Overall, the matter of labour appears to matter once more. If labour remains a blind spot in the discipline of communication studies, then a quick

check would seem to reveal that it is rapidly gaining ground as an area of inquiry. It is in this vein that I offer this work.

1.3 The Value of Marx's Analysis: Exploitation and Property Relations

A theme throughout Cohen's (2011, 2012a, 2012b, 2013, 2015a, 2016a, 2016b) exhaustive and ongoing assessment of the labour issues affecting freelance writers in Canada is that investigations of this kind generally suffer from a "missing Marx" (Cohen, 2012b, 2016b). Part of her (2012b, 2013, 2016b) valuable scholarly contribution is this recognition of Marx's omission from critical debates around issues of cultural labour. But in addition to mere recognition, she has contributed to a revival of interest in his body of work by direct application of the concepts he developed in the nineteenth century to the contemporary moment. Undoubtedly, Cohen's (2011, 2012b, 2013, 2016b) investigation of Canadian freelancers is the major scholarly work in this area. And overall, the elevated interest in Marx's corpus roughly correlates to the start of the most recent capitalist crisis in late 2007—the severest one since the Great Depression (Mason, 2015). Mosco (2012) sees the renewed appeal of Marx's *oeuvre* as stemming from both his conceptualizations as a revolutionary theorist and with his thinking as a radical political economist.

It is Marx's ideas from this latter category Cohen (2012b, 2013, 2016b) says have been lacking in media scholars' investigations of cultural labourers. This is especially true of Marx's notion of exploitation: "exploitation remains the key process driving transformation in the cultural industries" (Cohen, 2012b, p. 142). In chapter two's literature review, I will explore her work at greater length, noting points of convergence and divergence with this work. However, while I fully concur with her observation about a "missing Marx," recovering his critical perspective involves restoring not only the concept of exploitation, but also that of alienation, a category central to this study.

Exploitation is at root a phenomenon that refers to the structural deprivation of access to key resources by one social group over another, i.e. a social relation (Hesmondhalgh, 2010). Historically, this has entailed the denial of ownership over productive lands for the purposes of growing food, making shelter, etc., by a small, yet dominant group, over a

larger, but much less powerful social group (Mandel, 1970). The latter, lacking other recourse, whether in slave or feudal societies, exist in a condition of having to work for the ruling faction. Due to the structurally iniquitous nature of the relationship between the socially dominant and the socially subordinate group, the former is able to dictate terms of production to the latter. This equates to the establishment of working conditions, ranging from length of the working day, to the number of days worked, to the intensity of work, etc.

The other element of this relationship that is of equal importance is the ability of the ruling fraction to establish the rate at which they will appropriate the surplus the subordinate group is able to produce (ibid). This identifies the second dimension of exploitation. The manner by which the dominant group organizes work typically results in a surplus of produce above the subsistence levels the subordinate group requires. Systematically, the dominant fraction of the social groupings appropriates, without compensation, the surplus product populations are responsible for bringing into being. This feature is not particular to capitalism. But it does take a fetishized form in capitalist social formations. In slave and feudal societies, this uncompensated appropriation is transparent to all parties involved. However, under capitalism, detection of this phenomenon is more elusive for owners and workers alike (Elson, 2015).

Marx situates the source of this deceptiveness in the measure of the differential between labour power and labour (Mandel, 1970). For the working classes a part of their workday is dedicated to reproducing their capacity to work, i.e. their labour power. Marx refers to this as necessary labour (ibid). This is the portion of the labour workers perform that the capitalist class compensates. But this amount is necessarily less than the total number of hours capital hires labour on a daily basis. This differential in hours, products, or both, between the minimum amount of work required to reproduce labour power and the actual amount of labour workers perform, is what capitalists appropriate in an uncompensated manner. This is surplus labour from which capitalists extract surplus value (Elson, 2015).

One way in which capitalism as a system of commodity production extracts surplus value is through a lengthening of the working day, i.e. absolute surplus value. Alternatively,

capitalists can try to generate more surplus value via a reorganization of the labour process. Most often this involves the introduction of labour-saving technologies—whether they are mental or material in nature. The intended effect of this manoeuver is to enhance productivity through the realization of greater efficiencies in the labour process (Mandel, 1970). Marx (1977) terms this the extraction of relative surplus value under conditions of real subsumption.

Despite the above set of explanations some critical labour process scholars have come to question the ongoing validity and utility of Marx's theory of surplus value *vis-à-vis* capitalist exploitation (Jaros, 2005). Paul Thompson (1989) writes that "exploitation does not depend on the notion of labour alone creating value, not to mention socially necessary labour time determining the value of a commodity in exchange. Rather, it rests on the appropriation of the surplus labour by capital, based on its ownership and control of the means of production, and the separation of direct producers from those means" (p. 242). Despite such disagreements among certain factions of researchers, Marx's conceptualization concerning surplus value remains the best representation of the specific form unpaid labour takes under capitalist relations of production (Mandel, 1970; Elson, 2015).

Marx's rendering of capitalist exploitation helps to account for how the value of freelance writers' labour power is in decline as a commodity. However, it does not explain why, for generations now, young men, and later, young women, have wanted to become journalists and freelance writers. The historian Daniel J. Leab (1970) may have captured, perfectly, the *geist* of this group of workers through his felicitous phrase, the "romantic blah" of newspapering. Here, Leab (1970) is referring to the cultural norms and values that seem to predominate among those who wish to work in news media. He describes this romanticism as determined by a desire for adventure, novelty, being privy to secret information, having access to the famous and infamous as well as achieving a modicum of name recognition through the by-lines reporters receive (Leab, 1970). These characteristics, when coupled with the transience and the resigned fatalism about the state of poor pay in the industry, posed a severe challenge to initial efforts at union organizing in the U.S. during the Great Depression (Leab, 1970; Brasch, 1991). But even prior to

this, around the turn of the twentieth century, journalists in Canada were already perceived as "disenchanted soul(s) in search of a modest but interesting living" (Rutherford, 1982, p. 79).

McKercher (2002) presents a list of traits characterizing this historically preponderate identity among North American journalists. It expresses itself through a mistrust of rules, a wariness about the social role of trade unions, and an identification with being members of the intelligentsia instead of the working classes. Findings from researchers in the U.K. differ little. There, neophytes to the field display a strong revulsion to the standard nine-to-five work day and express a wish "to escape from set routines" (Tunstall, 1971, p. 61). Marianne Salcetti (1995) describes the journalistic field as providing "a sort of legitimate career for persons who perceive themselves as renegades of sorts having difficulty conforming to most occupational structures and strictures" (p. 58). More recent research suggests this ethic of documented romanticism persists into its third century (Meyers et al, 2012). Nor is it confined to those working in newsrooms. At an inaugural meeting of PWAC on May 1, 1976, some of 75 freelance writers in attendance refer to themselves "as non-joiners and mavericks" (Cohen, 2016b, p. 201).

In its initial guise, the Romanticism of the mid-eighteenth century remonstrates against capitalism's deepening presence in European society (Sayre and Lowy, 1984). This critique does not limit itself to the related matters of exploitation and the inequality it engenders. It encompasses disenchantment with qualitative changes to social forms that are subjected, increasingly, to the logics of calculation, regimentation, and rationality (Campbell, 1995). Although the Romantic period begins approximately 100 years prior to the publication of Marx's first writings, the influence of this thought on his work is not insignificant (Lowy, 1987). His critical assessment of capitalism is concerned with the private ownership of the means of production and the exploitation it facilitates. But at times, it also incorporates Romanticism's more qualitative objections about the overall change to society's structure of feeling (Lowy, 2013).

It is these changes, and their effects, that come to define artists in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in ways that prevail into the present (Lloyd, 2006). Shifts in the

dominant institutional frameworks that had supported artist patronage in the forms of the aristocracy and the church mean that artists become, in the modern parlance, "free agents" who are precariously employed (Zoiberg, 1990). Subsequently, in combination with the proletarianization of work during this period of rapid industrialization, "artistic work is even more sharply contrasted with those of other types of work" (Wolff, 1981, p. 18). This is the manner by which the individualized artistic figure becomes idealized. For it now appears that s/he operates outside the confines of industrial capitalism.

In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, a primary determinant in the embrace of freelance status by journalists/writers has been the wish to de-territorialize the encroaching spatialization of bureaucracy and corporate capitalism (Cohen, 2016b). Consequently, journalists, and freelance writers, continue to perceive themselves as being artists and not members of the working classes (Brennan, 2004). A message to a listserv for Canadian freelance writers from the summer of 2014 provides a clear representation of the above: "I love it (freelance writing). It sure beats working for a living, and I have made a decent living—and avoided the C-suits of major corporations. I've worked like heck to make a living, a darn good one for a freelancer".

The presumptive belief among freelance writers appears to be that by averting formal employment in corporate/bureaucratic settings, the strictures that govern writing for these media can be avoided. Yet the fallaciousness of this logic should be as evident as that of the suggestions made by publishers and editors in the 1930s. At that time, these figures claim the formation of journalists' unions at newspapers would diminish the creative element of their work by turning the newsroom into a factory-like setting (Brennen, 2004). This inverts the reality that the implementation of Taylorist and Fordist production methods, by the very same figures making the above claim, already had turned journalistic work into something resembling industrialized labour. This is a historical tendency in journalistic work that exists independently of whether it takes place in a formal or freelance employment relationship or in a unionized or non-unionized setting.

The perpetuation of elements of the romantic belief system has resulted in the toleration of high levels of financial insecurity. This precariousness has not been merely tolerated,

but almost embraced; it symbolizes a commitment to retaining artistic freedom and integrity in the face of corporate capitalism, organizational bureaucracy, and the manifestation of the latter quality in both the public and private sectors of employment (Lloyd, 2006). The freelancers I interviewed did not practice romanticism in the extreme. The financial insecurity they experienced did not serve as a signifier of artistic purity. What the tendencies of the Romantic movement do help to identify is that a Marxist critique of cultural labour would also need to include another of his central precepts.

1.4   Out of Sorts and Sorting It out: Extending Marx's Analysis

The above refers to Marx's (1988) contribution to developing further the concept of alienation. Once more, Feurbach's ideas are germane to this discussion. His theorizations, which precede those of Marx (1988), construe human alienation as deriving from religious belief (Hands, 2007). The capabilities humans possess for making the world they inhabit in their own image are attributed, instead, to a 'god' external to them, according to Feurbach. Humans come to be dominated by this objectified projection of the mind to which they have alienated their human constituting powers (ibid).

Again, Marx shifts the plane of Feurbach's work from the ideational realm to the material. In the process of doing so, Marx radically transforms the understanding of alienation to the degree that it is now part of the everyday lexicon—albeit in distorted form from his presentation (Sayers, 2005). He does this by locating domination not in the sphere of religion, but in the capitalist categories of private property, the detailed division of labour, and widespread commodity exchange predicated on money (Meszaros, 1970). From these categories, Marx (1988) identifies alienation as occurring within and across four dimensions of human existence.

A cursory review of these four dimensions finds in the first instance alienation is a social relation involving the transfer of possession of products from those responsible for their fabrication, i.e. the working classes, to those in the owning class, in exchange for monetary compensation or its equivalent (Marx, 1988). This dispossession entails both the loss of control over the products workers make as well as the loss of control over how

they make them. The latter, the second dimension of alienation, takes place in and through a labour process that is undergoing, continuously, changes to the technical and the detailed division of labour. The fragmentation of the labour process that ensues from management's rationalizing efforts leaves workers unable to comprehend the totality of the labour process they contribute to daily. This lack of objective control lends itself to feelings of estrangement with respect to the particular contributions workers make as well as their role in the whole of the operation (ibid).

Marx's (1988) ambiguous concept of "species-being" encompasses the third dimension in his schema. Through this precept, Marx (1988) wishes to highlight the particular animal character of the human species *vis-à-vis* other living species. Yet it is also a reference to the eternally inescapable need for all living creatures to mediate much of their relationship with nature through work for the purposes of providing food, shelter, etc. What distinguishes humans from other species is not the ability to work, but the expansive consciousness that accompanies work activity and develops from it—along with the remainder of humans' capacities. The collective, conscious manner humans are able to work with one another across a vast range of activities means the possibility exists humans could develop a much fuller range of capacities: "(Animals) produce only under the dominion of immediate physical need, while man [*sic*] produces even when he is free from physical need and only truly produces in freedom therefrom" (Marx, 1988, p. 77).

The more far reaching the spread of commodity production, encompassing more spheres of human life, the more humans will experience capitalism as a hostile, external, and alien phenomenon to their interests. Subsequently, the longer the working classes are compelled to alienate their control over what it is they produce and the manner they undertake to do so, the greater the fetters on the realization of "species-being" (ibid).

In combination, the forces of capitalist control over the product, the process, and the potentialities of the species contribute to the fourth and the final manifestation of alienation. In the last dimension of estrangement, Marx (1988) denotes alienation from the totality of products, processes, and potentialities leads to alienation at the level of individuals. The making and exchange of commodities conceals the social nature of these

production processes, leaving people to encounter one another in largely alien ways.

The intervention the concept of alienation makes in this discussion, at this juncture, is cause to re-evaluate the first research question I posed earlier in the chapter. There, I asked why it was freelance writers were willing to work for such low levels of compensation. Cohen (2011, 2012b, 2013, 2016b) argues this is due to a lack of awareness on the part of freelance writers regarding the levels of exploitation they are experiencing. Marx's (1988) formulation surrounding the phenomenon of alienation suggests an antagonistic and contending explanation. Consequently, a preliminary response to my initial research question is that freelancers' apparent acceptance of their remuneration levels suggests a desire for lines of flight from work that is more alienating to work that is organized and experienced in ways that are even slightly less alienating.

The introduction of Marx's conception of alienation provides no easy resolution as to how to investigate the question of labour with respect to freelance writers. It only further problematizes it. Even as Mosco (2012) names Marx as a pre-eminent revolutionary theorist, Cohen (2011, 2012b, 2013, 2016b) makes no explicit summons for revolutionary activity on the part of freelancers. She does advocate for this class of workers to apprehend the conditions of their exploitation for the purposes of forming a collective body capable of representing their (declining) material interests. In Cohen's (2012b, 2013, 2016b) estimation, it is evident that an understanding of Marx's idea of exploitation is the appropriate tool to animate freelancers to act in this desired manner. But Marxist scholars have debated at length, without resolution, whether the lived reality of exploitation or alienation would best serve to catalyze workers into struggle.[4]

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[4] These divides have grown into wider chasms at different historical junctures. The revolts of the 1960s and the 1970s exemplify these sharpening divisions. A nearly three-decade period of largely unimpeded economic growth in North America, reconstructed Europe, and Japan corresponds to peak real wages, on average, an expansion in the social wage through the liberal welfare state along with peak levels of union density in the U.S. (Fraser, 2015). These rapid improvements in material living standards are unable to ensure a peaceable set of relations between labour and capital. Herbert Marcuse (1970) outlines how an immiseration theory may no longer suffice in accounting for class struggle: "(W)e must eventually come to grips with the idea that, in the period of advanced capitalism, the driving revolutionary force may not be generated by poverty and misery, but precisely by the higher expectations within the better living conditions, and by the developed consciousness of highly qualified and educated workers" (p. 96). John

1.5 At the Intersection of Alienation and Exploitation: The Labour Process and the Labour Theory of Value

Rather than continuing to propagate the privileging of one of these two concepts over the other, a fuller rendering of Marx, if not, perhaps, a full Marx, would dehierarchize exploitation and alienation, viewing them relationally instead. I contend the most appropriate means by which to conduct this relational analysis is through labour process theory and the labour theory of value. I begin, then, with a brief overview of some of the key tenets of labour process theory prior to moving on to a discussion of the labour theory of value. Lastly, I touch on how these bodies of thought help demonstrate the inter-relationship between exploitation and alienation.

Systematic analysis of the labour process as a category of inquiry originates in the work of Marx (Braverman, 1998). In the first volume of *Capital,* Marx (1977) nominates the transhistorical qualities of the labour processes humans undertake. The first characteristic of the labour process Marx (1977) names is the ability of humans to engage in "purposeful activity," i.e. work (p. 284). The second feature humans require is an object to which they direct their "purposeful activity" for the purposes of transforming it into

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Holloway (2010) describes the events from the timeframe Marcuse (1970) describes as a "defeated revolution" (p. 191).

Worker opposition in this instance is historically anomalous for it does not revolve around, primarily, questions of deprivation and the distribution of material resources (ibid). Instead, workers come to reject the alienating work regimes of Fordism and Taylorism (Braverman, 1998). The labour historian Craig Heron (2012) writes, "Misery itself is rarely enough to cause workers to revolt" (p. xvii). Rather, unrest arises when material conditions are rising but expectations for work fulfillment go unmet (ibid). Freelance writers at present face both a decline in their material standard of living as well as dissatisfaction with the terms and conditions of their work regimes. Despite this, strictly economistic arguments persist into the present (Adler, 2007). Sheila Cohen (1987) insists it is the only concern that has mattered to workers throughout the ages: "If we look at the nature and content of workers' struggles both now and in the past, it is clear that workers have been overwhelmingly concerned not with the qualitative content of their work but with its 'extrinsic' content—pay, job security, effort levels … subsistence (is the) central consideration affecting worker response within the labour process" (p. 43-44). More recently, however, David Harvey (2014) has identified alienation, not exploitation, as an animating thematic by which, sustained, collective political action may come into being: "There is a crying need for some more catalytic conception to ground and animate political action. A collective political subjectivity has to coalesce around some fundamental concept … The concept I here find most appropriate is that of alienation" (Harvey, 2014, p. 267).

something that meets a need. The final trait of the simple labour process is the use of tools/technologies to mediate the relationship between the subject (human activity) and the object (nature) of transformation (ibid).

In the time since Marx's (1977) postulations on the labour process contemporary analysts have turned away from his explicit anthropology that understands the labour process as the mediating institution between humans and nature. Instead, researchers have centred on the social and technological relations responsible for organizing industrial and post-industrial workplace activity (Lembcke, 1993). Additionally, labour process researchers have expressed a sustained interest in how the aforementioned relations at the point of production explain the temporal and spatial unfolding of management control, worker consent, and worker opposition to employment regimes (Taylor et al, 2015).

Current labour process theory therefore shares a conflictual relationship with Marx's initial ruminations concerning this phenomenon (Jaros, 2005). Yet it is a Marxist analyst who is largely responsible for renewing interest in labour process inquiries. Harry Braverman's *Labour and Monopoly Capital,* first published in 1974, manages to refocus scholarly attention on the labour process. In particular, Braverman's (1998) own investigation into the labour process displays an acute concern with a perceived degradation of work processes over the course of the previous century. The furthering of the detailed division of labour into more and more fragmented tasks serves to leach the labour process of the historical craft skills workers had developed. In summary, Braverman (1998) equates capitalist fragmentation and rationalization of the labour process with the de-skilling of workers.

The first sets of works following Braverman's (1998) landmark study maintain an interest in Marx's corpus. But as reflective of the historical time frame in which they were published, the period of the late 1970s, they oftentimes take either a structuralist or culturalist approach. Respectively, then, these works, for example, either attack Braverman's humanism from a structuralist standpoint of history not having a subject (Cutler, 1978), or they concern themselves with questions of securing worker consent to regimes of capitalist accumulation at the point of production in the superstructure of the

workplace (Burawoy, 1979).

The 1980s and 1990s mark a move away from Marx's concepts. Perspectives of a post-structuralist variety come to the fore as concern with class struggle recedes in favour of individual worker resistance (Thompson and Smith, 2010). Resistance is no longer found in labour power's indeterminate character. A second shift has occurred; one that situates resistance in polyvalent worker identities that are destabilized. This multiplicity of identities makes it difficult for management to infiltrate and appropriate 'authentic' worker identity to advance processes of capital accumulation (ibid).

From this set of contending developments Thompson (1989, 1990) attempts to formulate what he terms a "core theory" of postulates comprising labour process analysis. The first element in this core set of principles is recognition of the labour process as a privileged site of analysis within this discipline. This emphasis is necessary because the point of production, and the labour processes that constitute it, is where "surplus" is generated (Thompson, 1989). The importance of this is that the generation of this surplus is indicative of an exploitative set of social relations (ibid).

The second focal point in this set of propositions, and the final one that will concern us here, is the dynamism of the labour process in its capitalist guise. The need to secure more surplus for the purposes of accumulation between competitive units of capital means the labour process is subject to constant innovation, including the incorporation of changes to the technical and the social division of labour. This has the effect of compelling "capital to transform the conditions under which work takes place and cheapens the cost of production, sets limits to the use of workers' creative capacities and constrains attempts to dispense with hierarchical relations (Thompson, 1989, p. 243). It is this loss of control over the labour process that Thompson (1989) recognizes that also comprises the second dimension in Marx's (1988) four-tiered model of alienation.

It is the alleged overcoming of this loss of control that has recent examinations of cultural labour from a variety of non-Marxist scholars dismissing the concept of alienation (Hesmondhalgh and Baker, 2011). Florida (2002) writes the work of the members of the "creative class" cannot be "taylorized" like that of industrial workers. In another instance

of such analysis, Cohen (2016b) cites Mark Banks (2007), whom she says, "rightly warns against a vision of cultural workers as 'condemned to serve as alienated labour … assumed to be devoid of active subjectivity and suppressed from above by managers and owners'" (Banks cited in Cohen, 2016b, p. 36). In order to reintroduce the "missing Marx" into debates involving the cultural labour of freelance writers, Cohen (2012b, 2013, 2016b) mostly dismisses the category of alienation and its concerns.

The bringing of exploitation and alienation into conversation with one another ultimately requires the inclusion and the articulation of Marx's labour theory of value. The labour theory of value refers to the average quantity of labour that is necessary to produce any commodity for exchange on the market as measured by the amount of time needed for its creation (Mandel, 1970). This theorem applies equally well to the articles, stories, and other materials freelance writers produce for a variety of publications. This measure of the average amount of time to produce a commodity, what Marx (1977) determines to be socially necessary labour time, is what makes possible the exchange of all commodities in the marketplace. For a measurable amount of objectified labour is the human quality all commodities share in common.

In effect, this commonality is the source of the value of all commodities (Mandel, 1970). When the labour that comprises any commodity is evaluated only from the perspective of the measure of time then its specific qualities, i.e. its concrete labour, are effaced in favour of the consideration of the category of abstract labour. The latter is assessed solely by the amount of socially necessary labour time required to produce commodities (ibid). Due to the competitive quality of commodity production there is a continual need to reduce the amount of socially necessary labour time the commodity contains. The greater the increases in productivity, the more surplus value can be extracted in the labour process as the amount of time that is needed to produce each commodity lessens (ibid).

Again, according to Thompson (1989, 1990), the labour process remains a key site of analysis because it is at the point of production that capital exploits labour—even as he disregards Marx's labour theory of value Yet it is that very postulate that brings the cognate phenomena of exploitation and alienation into relation with one another. The

appropriation of unpaid labour time that characterizes exploitation occurs at the point of production. In order to continuously increase the amount of surplus value that is extracted, which may be subsequently realized as profit in the circuit of capital, owners, publishers, editors, and other members of the managerial class in news media have had to appropriate control of the labour process. They have done so in order to reduce the amount of socially necessary labour time that is required to produce the articles and stories freelance writers produce. The effect of which is to create the objective conditions of alienation that these freelance writers subjectively experience.

The future for freelance writers in Canada that I outline in the remaining chapters of this project is likely one of deepening exploitation and alienation without countervailing efforts consisting of collective action. Yet retention of the craft elements of the field are unlikely to be secured by union structures as they are presently configured. What is needed, I argue, is an examination of the labour process that is materialist, locates the twin conditions of exploitation and alienation in this material reality, and lastly, suggests a way to envision the labour process as being both the present site of domination as well as a future means to get beyond this current state of affairs.

1.6   Chapter Outlines

In chapter two, I examine the small body of existing literature on the work lives of freelance writers in Canada, and elaborate my discussion of Cohen's major contribution.

Chapter three presents my empirical findings from semi-structured interviews I conducted with 25 freelance writers from across Canada. The interview findings are central to the project for they inform the theoretical considerations I present elsewhere. I situate this effort within a longer Marxist tradition of workers' inquiries.

The fourth chapter examines the common claim that precarious cultural labourers, such as freelance writers, are the embodiment of neoliberal subjecthood. An extensive examination of neoliberalism in both its material and ideological manifestations and the repercussions for subjectivity follows. I conclude the chapter by looking at changes to the curricula of journalism schools towards a more entrepreneurial orientation.

The main argument I present in chapter five is that freelance writers in Canada are not totally homologous with the aims of the neoliberal project. Contra this, and based on informants' responses, I contend they remain haunted by the spectre of alienation.

Chapter six marks the beginning of an intensive look at the craft traditions in the journalistic field and commences with a look at the figure of the master-printer. Subsequent changes to newsgathering practices in the twentieth century have had the effect of reframing debates around journalistic skills. But this has largely neglected the role of conception in conditioning newsgathering. A short case study shows the threat "content mills" pose in further reifying the conception portion of the labour process.

This analysis of the journalistic labour process continues in chapter seven. Emphasis is on news writing. After evaluating the creativity of the inverted pyramid, and its related forms, I argue digital media are likely to exacerbate the exploitation and alienation of freelancers in the coming decades. Once more a brief case study to conclude will illustrate how artificial intelligence is separating conception from execution in news writing.

The final chapter covers substantial terrain. The waning of labour militancy in the 1970s sees labour process research divert its analysis away from class struggle onto more particularized forms of resistance. I appraise the relevance of these concepts of resistance to the working lives of the freelance writers that have participated in this study. After this assessment, I reframe the concept of resistance via Marx's category of the dual character of labour. From resistance, the chapter's focus returns to class struggle, and the role concrete labour may play in facilitating these types of broader and more sustained actions. Out of this analysis, I conclude by presenting a final defence of the craft dimensions of the labour process of freelance writers.

These individual chapters comprise the arc of a sustained examination that I pursue throughout. After a review of the current literature on Canadian freelance writers, I present the findings of interviews I conducted with 25 writers. This shapes the argument I develop in the following ways. First, neoliberal subjectivity is recast as a rejection of the Taylorist-Fordist relations of industrial production. As the labour process is the locus of

alienation, it is also the means by which these informants seek to ameliorate their experiences of estrangement. The craft characteristics of the journalistic labour process under conditions of neoliberal capital remain a source of stymied aspirations. Yet these same conditions mobilize creativity in ways that could serve to undermine this regime. It is these tensions I draw out in the remainder of this work, refracted through the prism of the Marxist categories of alienation, the labour process, its dual character, value production and, contradictorily perhaps, presumptions surrounding craftwork.

Chapter 2

2   Freelance Writers in Canada: A Literature Review

In this chapter, I review research on the labour conditions of freelance writers in Canada. I contextualize this literature review by looking at journalism's exaggerated crisis of profitability, and the layoffs that have ensued. I then examine why researchers have overlooked the freelance category of labour within the journalistic field. After I establish a rationale for studying this group of media workers, I examine the small body of extant literature. This portion of the review begins with liberal celebrations of freelance flexibility and autonomy. I next examine a study of magazine freelancers that re-casts flexibility and autonomy through the concept of risk. This appraisal continues with a return to the political economic concerns of exploitation and alienation as formulated by Marx. Lastly, cognate studies of craft workers outside the realm of journalism are explored. It is through the final two portions of this review that I establish the basis for the remainder of my investigation.

2.1   Freelancing: Choice or Crisis?

Daniel Pink (2001) casts the U.S. as "free-agent nation" with more than 50 million freelance workers in America today—roughly one-third of the overall U.S. labour force (Horowitz, 2015). The Executive Director of the Freelancers Union[5], Sara Horowitz, predicts this figure could exceed 40 percent by 2020 (Lindzon, 2016). A recent survey sponsored by her organization reports 60 percent of participants have become freelancers by choice. Other polls opinion and consulting firms have undertaken over the past few years consistently find freelance workers to be more content with their employment situation than their counterparts in permanent, full-time employment (Rampton, 2017).

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[5] The Freelancers Union counts roughly 250,000 workers as members. Legal prohibitions prevent the Freelancers Union from engaging in collective bargaining on behalf of its membership. Unable to act in this manner, the organization does engage in public advocacy campaigns on behalf of the working conditions of its members, partakes in political lobbying activities as well as acting as a service provider to try and ameliorate the working conditions of its members (McEnery, 2014).

The converse of this more optimistic telling is that large proportions of the labour force in the U.S. and Canada have come to their freelancer status due to dynamic changes in the labour-capital relation. An example of this portrayal is Cohen's (2011) gloomier account of freelance writers in the news media industries. She writes that "journalism—a once secure, well-remunerated form of labour, thanks largely to a long history of unionization of staff journalists—has become an increasingly insecure form of work" (Cohen, 2011, p. 119). The already contingent lives of freelance writers have come to be marked by heightened levels of insecurity, diminished rates of remuneration, and a reduction in the provision of services (Clement et al, 2010). The combined effects of this situation are enhanced feelings of "existential, financial, and social insecurity" (dePeuter, 2013, p. 32).

The term "precarity" has come to serve as a kind of shorthand to describe this new set of arrangements between labour and capital. Its etymological roots are in Latin, from the verb *precor,* meaning the act of pleading to retain one's job (Ross, 2009). A report on employment status in the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area, Canada's most populous region, places the number of workers precariously employed at approximately 50 percent (Monsebraaten, 2013; Mojtehedadeh and Monsebraaten, 2015). During a 25-year period, beginning in 1990, this represents a nearly 50 percent increase in the number of workers contingently employed (ibid). Global calculations suggest up to 75 percent of the world's working population may be precariously employed (Stewart, 2015). This trend toward conditional employment has its parallel in news media industries in Canada. The growth of precariousness in these industries is at least a partial outcome of the flexibilization of employment relations, a decline in union density, and a discursive celebration of the figure of the entrepreneur (Cohen, 2011, 2013, 2015a, 2016b).

Newsrooms across Canada's media landscape have incurred significant worker losses over the same 25-year span (Campion-Smith and Ballingall, 2017). The journalists affected by these losses have likely experienced them more as a crisis than an act of choice in the labour market (Cohen, 2013, 2016b). The capitalist crisis that commenced in 2007 has accelerated the creation of this surplus population of journalists. Since 2010, Postmedia Network Inc., Canada's largest newspaper conglomerate, has pared its workforce by more than 50 percent. From 5,400 employees, management had reduced its

editorial staff to 2,500 by the end of 2015 (Livesey, 2015). These reductions have continued apace at Postmedia Network Inc. in the ensuing interval with the termination of 90 journalists in 2016 and another 54 staffers on the editorial and administrative side in 2017 (Canadian Press, 2016; Watson, 2017).

Similar decreases have occurred elsewhere: The Torstar Corp. laid off 300 editorial and production workers in 2016. Late in 2017, Postmedia Network Inc. and the Torstar Corp. traded ownership of 41 newspapers in a territorial non-compete agreement, resulting in nearly 300 job losses (Watson, 2017). Rogers Media Inc., one of Canada's largest magazine publishers, cut 200 editorial and administrative positions in 2016 (Canadian Press; MacGregor, 2016). The Canadian Media Guild (CMG) places the figure of journalist job losses at 10,000 over five-years between 2008 to 2013. Other studies suggest as many as 33 percent of newspaper editorial workers may have lost their job between 2010 and 2016 (Wallace, 2017). Broadcast news staff have not fared better with projected job losses totalling 1,000 at small-and-medium sized television stations across Canada by 2020 (Lu, 2016). In early 2018, Global News announced newscasts for some communities in Atlantic Canada would be produced in Toronto after instituting job reductions totaling 80 production workers and on-air personalities (Sagan, 2018).

The growing impotence of labour unions may well be a determinant in the swelling ranks of precarious news media workers (Cohen 2011, 2013, 2016b). So too has the financialization of the news media industries in a context of state deregulation contributed to the conditions news workers find themselves within (Winseck, 2010). The current government regulatory environment has enabled elevated levels of concentrated ownership in media industries (ibid). Increasingly, it is large, leveraged pools of capital one may find in a hedge fund that are purchasing media properties (ibid). Again, the actions of Postmedia help exemplify this trend. In 2010, the hedge fund Golden Tree Asset Management LP, along with 19 other financiers, purchased the assets of the bankrupt Canwest Global Communications Corporation for $1.1 billion. This led to the creation of the Postmedia Network Canada Corporation (Livesey, 2015). In the spring of 2015, Golden Tree Assessment Management LP announced its willingness to purchase more bonds from the Postmedia Network Canada Corporation to finance the $316 million

purchase of Sun Media Corporation properties (Bradshaw, 2015). This resulted in the addition of 200 more news sites to Postmedia's portfolio (Livesey, 2015).

But the heightened levels of debt necessary to finance these acquisitions have had deleterious effects on the editorial function of news media. The *Toronto Star* business columnist, David Olive (2015), expects "further cost-cutting and asset stripping" in order for the Postmedia Network Canada Corporation to meet its financial obligations to its bondholders. One of the consequences of the strengthening of monopoly-finance capital, and its search for synergies, via greater degrees of horizontal and vertical integration, is that it is likely to swell further the ranks of unemployed journalists.

Estimates from the Canadian Freelance Union[6] (CFU) claim there are as many as 10,000 freelance writers in Canada (Adaszynski, 2013). Numbers from Statistics Canada provide a different portrait. Figures from the agency indicate 15 percent of all Canadians who identify their occupation as that of journalist are also self-employed (Service Canada, 2014). Between 2001 to 2011 there is a slight decline in the number of journalists who self-report as being self-employed. Data from 2001 places the number of self-employed journalists at 2,100. The data the agency collects in 2011 reveals that number has dropped to just below 2,000. At the same time, the overall number of Canadians who identify as journalists actually undergoes a small increase from 12,965 to 13, 280 (Skelton, 2013). Any apparent discrepancies in these figures might be attributable to the conversion of the mandatory national census to the voluntary household survey, instituted in 2010 (ibid).

Irrespective of this, although the changes in the numbers Statistics Canada reports are negligible, there is nothing to suggest industry jobs on offer are more secure. The feeling around the economic structure of the industry is that insecurity continues to flourish for freelancers and journalists alike even as newspapers and magazines remain profitable

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[6] The Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union of Canada (CEP) founded the freelance local in 2009. Following the merger of the CEP and the Canadian Auto Workers Union (CAW) in 2013, the CFU became one of two community chapter locals under the converged UNIFOR banner. Much like the Freelancers Union in the U.S., and the freelance branch of the Canadian Media Guild (CMG), the community chapter provides advocacy on behalf of freelance writers as well as being a service provider with regards to health insurance and other benefits related to the occupation.

(Cohen, 2016b). Between 2006 and 2013, "all publicly-traded newspaper companies in the U.S. and Canada posted an annual operating profit" (Edge, 2014, p. 223). Recovery is underway by 2010 as newspaper companies are exhibiting profit margin percentages in the low-to-mid teens (Gitlin, 2011). This trend continues (Edge, 2017); although it must be noted these profit margins are only about half of what they were prior to the Great Recession (Edge, 2014). Perhaps it is this fall in the rate of profit that leads Mosco (2009) to postulate that the "future of journalism" is one in which there are no journalists (p. 350). In even more apocalyptic terms, Robert McChesney and Victor Pickard (2011) title their co-edited volume, *Will the Last Reporter Please Turn Out the Lights.* Even if the title is hyperbolic, reductions in the number of reporters are real and significant.

James Curran (2010) summarizes the threat this poses by stating that "the current crisis of journalism is weakening public understanding, and poses a threat to democracy" (p. 465). Mosco (2009) states the void the crisis of 2007-2008 created cannot subsequently be filled by bloggers, citizen journalists, curators, or aggregators. This new labouring class of amateurs is "not trained in the craft" of accessing documents in the public interest, assessing such documents once procured, and then presenting and distributing relevant findings in a meaningful way (Mosco, 2009, p. 351). James Compton and Paul Benedetti (2010) reach similar conclusions about the contributions of amateurs in the journalistic field. They conclude the celebratory tone surrounding amateur contributions serves to decentre issues of labour. In particular, they highlight the precarious labour practices commercial media have incorporated into their production logics.

Although I do not dispute the assessments Mosco (2009) and Compton and Benedetti (2010) make, they do reveal a bias that has so far been overlooked. Mosco (2009) and Compton and Benedetti (2010) necessarily bring to the fore the work conditions of journalists. Yet they do so in a manner that frames the terms of the debate as amateur contributor versus professional journalist. In doing so, both parties overlook the journalistic contributions and labour conditions of another class of journalistic workers: freelance writers. This reveals, albeit in a small sample size, a predilection among journalism scholars to privilege reporters who are employed on a full-time basis within legacy news outlets. This tendency is not limited to the research programs of Canadian

media scholars. Mirjam Gollmitzer (2014) encounters this same bias in her study, which examines the working circumstances of freelancers in Germany and Canada. Her work identifies and addresses the blind spot of communication studies with respect to freelance news media workers. It is in the following sections that I review the small body Canadian-based literature examining the labour conditions of freelance writers.

2.2 Choice as Flexibility and Autonomy: Comparative Analysis

Gollmitzer's (2014) investigation examines what she terms the "atypical" working conditions of freelance writers from the perspective of the workers themselves. In order "to explore the subjective accounts of actors," Gollmitzer (2014) conducts 18 semi-structured interviews with German writers that range in length from 60-to-120 minutes (p. 831). The analysis of her interviews with Canadian freelancers and the subsequent comparison to their German counterparts remains forthcoming (Gollmitzer, 2015). Her preliminary findings indicate freelance writers enjoy the perceived autonomy they possess over their immediate labour process and the structure of their day. Second, these same workers do not enjoy the administrative tasks they need to attend to as independent workers. Third, is that the actions of overbearing editors and clients prompt responses of micro-resistance from these workers. Lastly, Gollmitzer (2015) concludes freelancers are taking on more work assignments that are less journalistic in orientation, an indication of the declining material status freelance writers endure in both Canada and Germany.[7]

Research from other jurisdictions is also consonant with the conclusions Gollmitzer (2015) outlines. The findings of Swedish academics Maria Edstrom and Martina Ladendorf (2012) illustrate how freedom and flexibility are the qualities freelancers most desire. Flexibility is especially important as it relates to childcare and other familial responsibilities that disproportionately fall upon female freelance writers (ibid). Errol Salamon's (2016a, 2016b) research into the working lives of freelance writers in Canada

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[7] Gollmitzer (2015) notes that freelance writers in Germany do enjoy greater levels of state protections and welfare provision to mitigate, at least partially, some of these declines.

further supports this claim. In addition to the perceived benefits of enhanced flexibility, a survey of female freelance journalists in the U.S. finds they are "happier working for themselves" (Massey and Elmore, 2011, p. 672). The degree of satisfaction women freelancers declare is a function of the scheduling flexibility they enjoy as it relates to childcare (ibid). By comparison, freelance journalists in Australia exhibit a more complicated relationship with the prevailing discourses and performances around freedom, autonomy, and flexibility. In one instance, a respondent notes freedom is the freedom to work seven days a week, 24 hours a day (Das, 2007).

In summary, the findings from the subjectivist accounts of Gollmitzer's (2014, 2015) participants centre on the flexibility and autonomy that these agents prize as freelance writers. Similarly themed research programs from jurisdictions outside of Canada, involving broader categorizations of freelance media labourers, have identified the prevalence of this same set of desires among this class of workers. In utilitarian fashion, the rewards appear to outweigh the risks, and it is to this notion of risk that I now pivot towards in continuing this literature review.

2.3   The Risky Business of Freelancing

The German sociologist Ulrich Beck (1992) writes that a society of risk emerges as part of the longer historical project of modernity. During the feudal era, human agents ascribe their largely fixed social roles to tradition and fate. However, with the rise of democratic forms of governance, capitalist social relations, and Enlightenment notions of knowledge and scientific understanding, a process of detraditionalization is unleashed. Concomitant to this is a project of individualization (Beck, 2001). With the ostensible erasure of prescribed social roles, social agents become responsible for choosing a life of their own making (McGuigan, 2009). This is a potentially liberating development. But one that also imposes serious negative consequences. Primary among these is the loss of traditional supports, which coincides with the rise of a new series of existential threats. These circumstances explain the emergence of what Beck (1992, 2001) terms a "risk society."

For the Quebec-based researchers, Martine D'Amours and Marie-Josee Legault (2013), Beck's thesis of detraditionalization in the transition from feudalism to modernity

evolves further in late modernity to encompass destandardization as well. This refers to the "creation of a risk-fraught system of flexible, pluralized underemployment, in which both risk and the responsibility for protecting against it are being shifted to workers" (D'Amours and Legault, 2013, p. 89). Earlier in this literature review, Gollmitzer (2014, 2015) focused upon the subjective desires of freelance writers for autonomy and flexibility. In contrast, D'Amours and Legault (2013) claim that risk is a more appropriate heuristic than flexibility for examining the work contexts of freelance periodical writers in Quebec. In their estimation, autonomy and flexibility as characteristics of current work regimes are manifestations of the will of capitalist owners.

D'Amours and Legault (2013) examine three groups of workers they term, "highly skilled professionals doing project work" (D'Amours and Legault, 2013, p. 89): Video game designers, performing artists, and freelance journalists writing for periodicals. From this investigation, D'Amours and Legault (2013) develop a five-point typology of risk for the cultural workers studied. The first dimension in their typology they deem "inherent business risk" (D'Amours and Legault, 2013, p. 92). By this, the authors highlight that it is freelance labour, and not capital, that must accept the entrepreneurial risk of potential failure. Strategies of horizontal and vertical integration have afforded media conglomerates the ability to spread the threat of risk across the entirety of their corporate network. These types of risk avoidance strategies are unavailable to the individualized periodical writers D'Amours and Legault (2013) investigate. Not even the Province of Quebec, with its relatively stronger traditions of social provision, can sufficiently buffer magazine writers from the risks they must absorb to be viable economic agents.

An extension of the business risk freelance periodical writers assume is what the authors term "performance risk." This refers to the possibility of commissioned and completed articles not being published. This could be due to an editorial judgment concerning the quality of the piece, but is more often attributable to some other cause (ibid). Regardless of the source of the decision, the outcome is that the writer is paid only a partial amount of the originally agreed upon fee. This is referred to as a "kill fee" (ibid). This performing of duties that is then unremunerated recognizes freelance writers as pieceworkers who are not paid for the amount of hours they work. It is to the question of

the fairness of this practice that D'Amours and Legault (2013) wish to draw attention through their concept of performance risk.

The remaining risk factors they identify are as follows: The first they deem "employment risk." This refers to whether freelance writers are categorized as employees or as independent contractors (ibid). If they fall into the latter category, they then enjoy fewer legal protections while being in a continuously precarious state. The second last category they denote is "occupational safety risk." Occupational health and safety may seem to be a milieu of concern largely involving industrial workers. But D'Amours and Legault (2013) detail the extensive exercise and health routines their freelance writers engage in to try and maintain their wellbeing. The other potential related threat to loss of income comprises the final category, which they term "social risk" (p. 92). This makes reference to instances of bereavement, family caregiver leave, and ma/paternity leave that are mostly outside the purview of protections for self-employed workers.

The authors then move away from an explicit engagement with Beck's (1992) ideas around risk. They turn, rather, to an account reliant upon critical political economy of media with respect to how freelance writers in the province of Quebec encounter elevated levels of risk. Yet this account omits a few necessary concepts by which to understand the increased levels of risk they endure. For instance, D'Amours and Legault (2013) attribute the proliferation of niche media outlets within media conglomerates to concentrated levels of ownership in a neoliberal, deregulatory political environment.

This viewpoint overlooks two other contributing factors. The first is part of a longer historical transformation in the logics of capitalist production. In this great transformation, the production of standardized goods for mass markets gives way to niche markets that present products for more individualized tastes. Both Thomas Frank (1997) and David Harvey (1990) locate these shifts as part of a larger cultural change in which a critique of a conformist, mass society happens to intersect with stagnating levels of profitability as market saturation of mass goods becomes problematic in the late 1960s. The second factor that they do not explore sufficiently is the matter of technological convergence, and the effects it has had upon the media industries.

McKercher (2002) has defined convergence as the employ of new media (digital) technologies for the purposes of advancing the accumulation of capital. In their totality, these technological developments have enabled the mass media of print, audio, and video to recombine in historically unprecedented ways. This has resulted in merged media companies pursuing a two-fold strategy of horizontal and vertical integration (Croteau and Hoynes, 2006). The former strategy has allowed these companies to enlarge their scope across media platforms as they have sought strategies to monetize one product across multiple fora. As D'Amours and Legault (2013) correctly note, media companies are now able to use the same piece of freelancer-derived content across several platforms. While outlets may have proliferated, the actual number of avenues for freelancers to publish in has decreased. To attribute this solely to greater levels of concentration of media ownership misses the key variable of convergence in this equation.

In the last part of their investigation, D'Amours and Legault (2013) examine the perceived lack of collective action freelance periodical writers have undertaken to date. They acknowledge that Canadian labour laws, at both the federal and provincial levels, narrowly circumscribe the range of activities that freelance media workers can engage in to represent their interests. The seeming response of periodical writers is to engage in activities to maintain a healthy lifestyle and to establish a broad network of contacts to mine potential work opportunities, etc. These are approaches D'Amours and Legault (2013) find confounding because of the apparent inability or unwillingness to act together in terms of concerted collective action towards improving their working conditions (ibid).

Such a claim has validity only to the degree to which collective action is co-extensive with the collective bargaining authority of certified unions. D'Amours and Legault (2013) largely intimate that for worker actions to be successful they need to be channelled into existing institutional frameworks. The authors' suggested action runs counter to reality; in Canada most self-employed workers or independent contractors are legally unable to undertake union membership for collective bargaining. Media workers who fall under these categorizations are excluded from such provisions—with the exception being freelancers who contract with federally-regulated entities (Bittle, 2007).

The works of the next three authors I examine attend to the very concerns D'Amours and Legault (2013) raise regarding the lack of collective action. In the efforts of these researchers to redress this perceived shortcoming there is a move away from the work of Ulrich Beck, and his ideas as they pertain to the concept of risk. These notions are replaced by a more critical interrogation of capitalist social relations, and their neoliberal form and content. According to Jim McGuigan (2009), Beck's theoretical suppositions are inadequate because they are consonant with the broader aims of the neoliberal project. More pointedly, McGuigan (2009) accuses Beck (1992) of insufficiently interrogating his detraditionalization thesis. The latter may aid in demonstrating how social agents have attained a measure of autonomy from the formerly all-powerful institutions that were the family and church. But it fails to examine how the neoliberal state has for several decades now imposed individualization through retrenchment in welfare provision, through the weakening of labour laws, etc. At this juncture, it is therefore necessary to move away from the works of a contemporary sociologist to one of the founding fathers of the discipline, and his continued relevance in examining the labour-capital relation.

2.4   Assessment after Risk: Return of Marx's Spectre

In chapter one, I drew attention to Cohen's (2011, 2012b, 2013, 2016b) invaluable contribution to the study of Canadian freelance writers. Of particular import is her explicit interjection of Marx's concept of exploitation as it relates to debates involving cultural labourers. Concerns over the growth in precarious labour and income inequality have found wider articulation since 2007-2008. Yet Cohen's (2011, 2012b, 2013, 2016b) intervention remains formidable in articulating a frame for comprehension that is all too often neglected except in instances of non-payment for stories or other examples of explicit wage theft freelance writers experience. An emphasis upon Marx's rendering of exploitation makes ordinary the yet hidden from view ways wage labourers, such as freelance writers, do not retain enough of the value they are responsible for generating.

Exploitation as social relation *vis-a-vis* freelance writers occurs along two dimensions of organized work activity according to Cohen (2012b, 2013, 2016b). The first of these is in the arena of intellectual property regimes. Canadian legal precedent has assured independent contractors ownership over the works they produce. In the specific case of

freelance writers, this has meant media outlets license their works for a definite period of time in exchange for a fee (Cohen, 2012b). The property rights associated with their works have enabled freelance writers to resell their articles in other markets in an acknowledgement of their precarity. But media concentration and technological convergence have made it possible to alter what was an already iniquitous power relation between publishers/editors and freelance writers. News media outlets in Canada are aggressively expropriating copyrights legally enshrined to freelancers (Cohen, 2012b, 2013, 2016b). Cohen (2012b, 2013, 2016b) cites changes in these property regimes as the primary manifestation of exploitation visited upon freelance writers.

It is at this macro-level of current labour-capital property relations that her study of freelance writers working conditions is at its most incisive. Cohen's (2012b, 2013, 2016b) close examination of these relations illustrates heightened levels of exploitation as media corporations adopt accumulation strategies of dispossession. Here, Cohen (2012b, 2013, 2016b) describes what Marx (1977) terms the mechanism of "formal subsumption." This refers to the capitalist colonization of property rights without an accompanying transformation of the detailed division of labour. Cohen's (2012b, 2013, 2016b) investigation necessarily brings attention to the contours of how exploitation is being configured across news outlets operating in the Canadian media landscape.

But in adopting this approach, she largely ejects the point of production as the study's focal point—despite claims of foregrounding labour process analysis (Cohen, 2012b, 2013, 2016b). This tack follows from her reading of Sheila Cohen's (1987) avowal that labour process researchers after Braverman (1998) have overdetermined relations of control as though they are part of an essentialist "lust for power inherent in human nature" in the labour-capital struggle (p. 42). In support of this thesis, Cohen (2012b, 2013, 2016b) notes how editors relinquish a degree of control over the labour process to freelancers because it has not interfered with capital accumulation: "However, under the capitalist mode of cultural production, copyright's primary function is to guarantee its owner exclusive right to exploit the work and to extract surplus value from workers who have been granted relative autonomy at the point of production" (p. 150).

In this manoeuvre, Cohen (2012b, 2013, 2016b) shifts the front of contested control between labour and capital from the point of production to the sphere of intellectual property, i.e. copyright control. The difference, then, between Nicole S. Cohen's (2012, 2013, 2016b) and Sheila Cohen's (1987) analyses is that the latter's dismissal of control in the name of exploitation remains rooted in the centrality of abstracting concrete labour: "(I)t turns out the issues (of control) have to do with the extraction of surplus value, the reduction of socially necessary labour time and exploitation. In short, accumulation and valorization" (Cohen, 1987, p. 42). Control is understood as a means to reduce the amount of socially necessary labour time that is required in the production of a commodity in order to increase the amount of value management is able to extract.

Contrary to this, Cohen (2012b, 2013, 2016b) details how concentrated and converged news media corporations are using their deepening monopoly powers to obtain additional sources of profit. In taking this argumentation, Cohen (2012b, 2013, 2016b) unwittingly jettisons analysis of the labour process as the site where exploitation occurs. The work of Jakob Rigi and Robert Prey's (2015) illustrates producers (in this instance freelancers) create no value in the sphere of monopoly property rights. Instead, profitability stems from the selling of space or time to advertisers in or on news media properties. Access to these properties for the purposes of advertising is a kind of rent payment. Media firms extract monopoly rent by exercising greater control over intellectual property rights across the landscape of concentrated media ownership. This is a means of capitalist appropriation that is external to the labour process. As a consequence, rent supersedes the measure of time in determining the value of the writer's commodity (Rigi, 2015).

The second dimension of exploitation Cohen (2012b, 2013, 2016b) draws readers' attention to is freelance writers' status as piece-wage workers. At source, comprehending exploitation in piecework production systems emerges from a Marxist understanding that workers are not paid for a full complement of their labour time: "The piece wage is therefore only a modified form of the time-wage" (Marx, 1977, p. 694). What this means for freelance writers, according to Cohen (2012b), is that the "arbitrary per-word form of payment, popular among magazines and newspapers, obscures a large portion of the labour time that goes into the writing of those words" (p. 148-149).

Here, she makes reference to the uncompensated time freelance writers expend in conceiving story ideas, sending story proposals to editors, conducting research, doing interviews, writing stories, and editing and rewriting their pieces. Due to freelance writers' positionality outside the standard employment relationship, and the material reality that they do not receive a salary, "(i)t appears that they sell simply a finished piece of work … not the labour time required to produce that piece" (Cohen, 2012b, p. 147).

However, the elements Cohen (2012b) identifies here comprise the totality of the journalist's labour process from conception to execution. There is little to distinguish how the above varies for staff reporters at newspapers, magazines, or digital outlets compared to freelancers. Marx's labour theory of value illustrates how a portion of the labour of salaried workers goes uncompensated (Jaros, 2005). Since the tasks freelance writers engage in are the same as staff reporters, then one may conclude the researching, interviewing, and editing paid staffers conduct also goes uncompensated in some proportion. Piecework is a manifestation of exploitation as viewed through a Marxist lens of analysis. It does not distinguish, in any crucial way, the exploitation freelance writers are subject to from that which occurs to their counterparts in newsrooms. The diffusion of piecework systems in industrial settings throughout the course of the twentieth century further shows that this form of production and payment cannot explain the precarious and exploitative character of freelance work (Burawoy, 1979).

There exists a second consideration concerning piecework as a crucial category of understanding. McKercher's (2014) investigation of freelance writers in Canada from a Marxist-feminist standpoint spotlights the individualizing quality of piecework. This follows from Marx's (1977) assessment that piecework gives "wider scope … to individuality, tends to develop both that individuality, and with it, the worker's sense of liberty, independence and self-control. And also the competition of workers with each other" (p. 697). Freelance writers can therefore only begin to reverse the individualizing tendencies immanent to piecework, and the decline in their pay and prestige, by developing a collective understanding of themselves as highly educated labourers—not as entrepreneurs, small-business owners, or pieceworkers (Cohen, 2016b).

In response to the contradictions confronting them, Errol Salamon (2016a) chronicles the types of oppositional tactics freelance writers have adopted to counteract capital's incursions upon intellectual property rights. These include class-action lawsuits and boycotts. On three separate occasions, freelancers have undertaken the legal tactic of a class-action lawsuit against publishers. In each instance, the cause of this action has been media companies' use of copyrighted material without authorization or compensation. This has prompted Canada's media corporations to institute rights-grabbing contracts to insulate themselves from future legal proceedings brought by freelance writers (ibid).

Salamon (2016a) also investigates two instances where freelance writers have employed boycotts in opposition to the practices of TC Media, formerly Transcontinental Media. The impetus for these campaigns emanates from TC Media's attempts to gain control over an additional dimension of copyright known as moral rights. Moral rights enable writers to have their name associated with their work. They also make it possible for freelance writers to maintain integrity over the totality of their work (Cohen, 2016b). Failure to retain moral rights over one's works means media companies can repurpose portions of a work for any means they deem fit (ibid).

The second boycott effort against TC Media takes place in 2013 when the company once more seeks to undermine authors' moral rights by including contract language allowing them to alter the content of any story by using it, potentially, for non-journalistic purposes. This could entail the inclusion of portions of a story in an advertisement, for example (ibid). Freelance writers in Quebec, however, attain a partial victory in this second instance of struggle against TC Media through a removal of some of the worst provisions in the contract (ibid). It is possible to detect in Salamon's (2016a) analysis an indebtedness to Marx's dialectical logic of all social phenomena being pregnant with their contrary. That is, he demonstrates how the same digital technologies that contribute to the declining living standards of freelance writers have contributed, positively, to undermining the interests of TC Media by helping to facilitate the boycott instituted.

The combined efforts of freelancers, and their organizations, as measured by an inventory of "collectivity and resistance" features prominently across Cohen's (2011, 2012b, 2013,

2016a, 2016b) research as well. She notes the existence of several such organizations for freelance writers across Canada. The largest and the oldest of these is PWAC. Another indispensable contribution Cohen (2011, 2013, 2016b) makes through her project is the primary research she conducts concerning PWAC's history. This archival work marks an indisputable transformation in the group's mandate and governance structure from its inception in 1976 to the present. At its founding meeting, and in the period immediately afterwards, discussions take place as to whether the term "union" should be inserted into the group's moniker. Although this does not come to fruition, written materials from that era indicate the presence of terminology unions might use, such as "rank and file" and "exploitation," while also making reference to the need for collective action (ibid).

The arrival of the 1980s denotes the departure of this type of language in favour of more accommodationist framings that seem to embrace magazine publishers as partners. This organizational outlook becomes more entrenched as the 1990s turns into the first decade of the new millennium, mirroring the business-first ideology of neoliberalism. A former PWAC executive director describes this transformation as one of "(e)volution as opposed to revolution" (Cohen, 2016b, p. 205). As part of this evolutionary process, PWAC staffers concentrate their efforts on service provision and professional development for a membership largely excluded from participating in the group's daily operations (Cohen 2011, 2016b). Also abandoned in this set of developments is any commitment to attaining collective bargaining rights for freelance writers. This appears as an especially acute failure from Cohen's (2016b) perspective for collective bargaining is "the most powerful tool workers have historically obtained through union membership" (p. 171).

Thus far, Cohen's (2012b, 2013, 2016b) investigation has centred on the heightened conditions of exploitation freelance writers encounter in the context of changes to property rights regimes. As remedy to this set of unfolding events, Cohen (2011, 2012b, 2013, 2016b) looks to the possibility of independent contractors, i.e. freelance writers gaining the ability to certify unions for the purposes of engaging in collective bargaining. In this emphasis upon exploitation and its amelioration through the trade union movement, she does not give serious consideration to the phenomenon of alienation as engendered by the capitalist organization of the labour process. She adjudges freelance

writers as possessing "relative autonomy," which she simultaneously deems "powerless autonomy," with respect to having control over their immediate labour process. Consequently, the analytical frame of alienation lacks salience for her with respect to the experiences of freelance writers—though it should be noted this is a viewpoint that undergoes some modification in her later writings (Cohen, 2016b).

The above does not intend to suggest Cohen (2012b, 2013, 2016b) ignores changes to the labour process. She comprehensively reveals, with ample empirical evidence, just how news media outlets are altering the journalistic labour process through the practices of outsourcing, automation, etc. Cohen (2012b, 2013, 2015b, 2016b) makes effective use of the tools of labour process analysis in a Marxist vein in chronicling these changes.

But in the same moment in which she details this dynamism there is a simultaneous move away from a Marxist consideration of the working conditions of freelance writers. Instead, Cohen (2015b, 2016b) turns her gaze to the consequences these developments are having upon news media's ability to create an informed citizenry. This has a salutary effect, rectifying a criticism of the Schiller-McChesney tradition of scholarship by paying heed to the work processes of journalists and freelance writers. But in doing so, she simultaneously returns to the logic of that paradigm and its ideational focus on journalistic texts. For Braverman (1998), by way of comparison, labour process analysis from a Marxist standpoint must ultimately function as a "tool of combat" in workers' struggles (p. 313). It is Braverman's (1998) preferred craft ethos that I review in the final portion of this chapter

2.5 The Hobby Lobby: Craft as an Ethic Beyond Leisure

I conclude this literature review by first looking at what Cohen (2016b) terms the "craft mentality" of freelance writers (p. 130). This she equates with the willingness of freelance writers to display high levels of commitment to their work as though they are artists. With this devoutness comes a confounding acceptance of low rates of remuneration. In this assessment, Cohen (2013, 2016b) concludes the concrete aspects of their craft—the personalization of their pieces, the attachment of a by-line, etc.—serves to mask the entirety of journalism's production process—editing, layout, printing,

distribution, retail—and their place within it. This leaves an impression of freelancers as pursuing the individual pleasure of creative work with little regard to the interdependent totality of the journalistic labour process from which they derive their satisfaction.

Cohen (2013, 2016b) gives the matter of craft only brief consideration. But in this lack of attention, she is not alone. At present, there do not appear to be any other researchers in Canada, or elsewhere, who have looked at the renewed interest in craft methods of production and extrapolated this interest to the field of journalism and freelance writers. However, a revival in interest in craft production among "amateurs, artisans, small firms, and enterprises" in other domains is attracting the curiosity of many investigators (Banks, 2007, p. 123). What is said to define these craft ways of fabrication are control over all the facets of production—from design to final execution (Campbell, 2005). This description accords with the historically romanticized vision of craftwork that associates this modality with a greater degree of autonomy, creativity, status, and respect for individual skill along with freedom from the dictates of management's control prerogatives (Ciulla, 2000).

Spheres of craft activity scholars have investigated include the handicrafts of crocheting, knitting, needlework, embroidery, and jewellery making (Campbell, 2005; Williams, 2011). These gendered activities of interest to researchers, most often affiliated with the home and homemakers, have undergone an expansion. Investigators have enlarged their scope to include distilling, butchering, and barbering, which may have been considered, previously, as low-skill, manual, and even blue-collar jobs (Ocejo, 2017).

For three centuries, the ebbs and flows of affinity with craft culture in the U.S. have roughly corresponded with economic crises and other social upheavals (Boris, 1986). The periodic renewals of interest in handicrafts over the past half-century roughly parallel the crises of a deepening technocracy, deindustrialization, and neoliberal globalization (Boris, 1986; Williams, 2011). The politics of crafting can be viewed as distrustful of government and bureaucratic controls and as being wary of global economic trends. Craft invokes the myth of America's self-sufficient past in an earlier pre-lapsarian phase (ibid).

Participants in emerging craft communities have informed researchers about a series of

interrelated concerns they share, which have them gravitating to craft modalities of production. Primary among these is worry about questionable labour practices in relation to sweatshop conditions in the manufacture of textiles (Bratich and Brush, 2011). This labour dimension of the opposition to corporate globalization is combined with environmental concern as well regarding the sustainability of mass production and mass consumption (Levine, 2009). The coming together of these two critiques leads to an emphasis upon local production and local consumption (Dawkins, 2011). Buy local campaigns code artisanal production and niche consumption as practices that are more sane and humane.

This vision, however, possesses darker undercurrents beneath its rosy outlook. According to Nicole Dawkins (2011), in findings that echo those of Cohen (2011, 2012b, 2013, 2015b, 2016b), in the search for greater flexibility and more creative opportunities these "craftivists" have formulated subjectivities that mask the exploitation and precarity of the neoliberal capitalism they say they oppose. The autonomy, choice, pleasure, self-fulfilment, and self-improvement these actors cultivate are ultimately consonant with the current capitalist moment (ibid).

The craft commodities they produce do not threaten or undermine the entire apparatus of exchange value. Antke Engel (2011) finds the desire for these types of "communal economies" do not undermine the larger structural imperative of global capital. This is a tendency Engel (2011) attributes to an inadequate mapping of the "complex interdependencies" that comprise the internal workings of global capitalism. This is a persistent failing of such efforts even in instances where the practices of large corporate entities do receive criticism: "The focus of attention falls on the development of a self that is engaged in community enterprises, is poor-but-happy, and functions as a self-activated, positive thinking being who forsakes global perspectives of social justice … but creates alternative economies posing no threat to profit-oriented structures" (p. 159).

Over the last two decades, one of the most prominent and prolific writers examining this current instance of craft renaissance has been Richard Sennett (1998, 2006, 2008, 2012). One manner to interpret his work is as an extension of Braverman's (1998) concern with

de-skilling. Whereas Braverman (1998) wished to illustrate the fallacy of liberal prescriptions for more education and job training as remedy to capital's falling rate of profit, Sennett (1998, 2006, 2008, 2012) has a different temporal concern. But one that he still sees as determining the acquisition of higher levels of skill. For Sennett (1998, 2006, 2008), legible and durable time frames are the affordances enabling people to develop meaningful levels of skill and expertise within any particular field. This way of coming to know the objective world and the subjective self is challenged by a fast capitalism that flexibilizes, fragments, and spatializes production processes across the globe.

The temporal universe he envisions is also necessary for the skill of building social relations. The enduring relations institutional work settings made possible for most of the twentieth century facilitated an understanding of social relations as predicated on responsibility, trust, reciprocity and other mutual obligations. The contingencies built into work organizations at present inhibit the unfolding of character consisting of the aforementioned qualities (Sennett, 1998). This threatens to spill over into other institutional arenas such as democracy itself, which requires trust and mutuality in order to function (Sennett, 1998, 2006).

One of the best accounts of the ongoing faith in the transformative premises ascribed to craftwork remains Mills's (1956), *White Collar: The American Middle Classes.* Mills (1956) outlines several developments he sees as having taken place in the period from the last decades of the nineteenth century to the mid-point of the twentieth century. One of these is the growing prevalence in the massification and bureaucratization of the organization of work under conditions of increasing monopolization. In this, he sees a deepening alienation as more "jobs are routinized" and people work below the skills and capacities they have developed in school and elsewhere (Mills, 1956, p. 225). This tendency is especially pronounced in the mental labour of white-collar workers (ibid).

A second theme discernible from Mills's (1956) study is what he perceives to be "the decline of the independent individual" (p. xii). The cause of this diminishment is the rise of mass society in both the spheres of production and consumption. Individuals had enjoyed greater independence in a more economically liberal and competitive phase of

American capitalism during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (ibid). However, unlike the farmer and petite bourgeoisie of that era, the new white-collar middle class of the last century no longer retain control over the means of production. This process of proletarianization gives rise to the appearance of the "Little Man," among the "white-collar people", who lacks any sense of "culture to lean upon except the contents of mass society that has shaped him [*sic*] and seeks to manipulate him [*sic*] to its alien ends" (Mills, 1956, p. xvi). The comfortable form of material existence this class of workers has achieved has left them bereft of any purpose or passions that are their own (ibid).

Despite his defence of a certain kind of rugged American individualism in the shape of the independent farmer and shopkeeper, Mills (1956) proposes to counteract the ennui and meaninglessness he so vividly depicts in white-collar workers through a resuscitation of the craft worker. This is not, in his terms, the debased notion of craft as hobby, comprising the leisure sphere (Mills, 2008). Contrarily, what he envisions is a Weberian ideal type able to suture together the perceived rupture between alienated production and alienated consumption: "The craftsman's work is the mainspring of the only life he knows; he does not flee from work into a separate sphere of leisure; he brings to his non-working hours the values and qualities developed and employed in his working time. His idle conversation is shop talk; his friends follow the same lines of work as he, and share a kinship of feeling and thought. The leisure William Morris called for was 'leisure to think about our work, that faithful daily companion …'" (Mills, 1956, p. 23).

Ultimately, Mills (2008) elevates craftwork to "the highest human ideal" that social organization should strive to bring into being (p. 181). This is because the craft worker represents the fullest expression "of the unalienated human being and the very root of free human development" (Mills, 2008, p. 183). In spite of these proclamations, Mills (1956), in at least one instance, insists he does not wish to propagate "the metaphysical view that man's [*sic*] self is most crucially expressed in work-activity" (p. 225).

It is in this perspective of metaphysical thought Kathi Weeks (2007) identifies elements of what she refers to as "humanist Marxism" or "socialist humanism" (p. 243). She then proceeds to contrast Autonomist Marxism with humanist Marxism. The aim of the former

is liberation from work. The latter, by comparison, seeks liberation through work. The error in this is that it ontologizes labour (Weeks, 2011). Thus, it removes the question of labour from the sphere of political contestation. According to Weeks (2011), humanist Marxism further naturalizes the work ethic, making it more difficult to de-centre labour as a chief organizing principle in capitalist societies.

Evidence for this problematic is present in the current neoliberal moment, which has combined enterprise and creativity in a manner in which "work has become an essential element in the path to self-realization, and the strivings of the autonomous self have become essential allies in the path to economic success" (Rose, 1990, p. 154). This rendering of the current historical moment shows how a refusal of alienation has not translated into a refusal of work. Conversely, in many circumstances, including those of the freelance writers in this study, it has meant a deeper integration into the hyper-productivist ethos of neoliberalism. Under these conditions, it would appear that heritage understandings of craft do not prove beneficial to freelance writers in the present. But in his portrayal of craftwork, which contains an uncited indebtedness to humanist Marxism, Mills's (1956, 2008) thought borrows liberally from Marx's theoretical *oeuvre*.

Specifically, he appropriates Marx's notion of material praxis, and how that situates worker understanding in the labour process: "The craftsman [*sic*] imagines the completed product … even if he [*sic*] does not make it, he [*sic*] sees and understands the meaning of his [*sic*] own exertion in terms of the total process of its production. Accordingly, the details of the craftsman's [*sic*] daily work are meaningful because they are not detached in his mind from the product of his work … This is the root connection between work and art" (Mills, 2008, p. 181). The depth of knowledge the craft worker attains is through the labour process, which "confesses and reveals him [*sic*] to the world" (Mills, 2008, 182). Crucially, to this, I would add the world is revealed, simultaneously, to the craft worker. And in this are the seeds by which I intend to address the second research question I posed about the ongoing relevancy, if any, of notions of craft. I aim to pursue this line of investigation in ways consistent with Marx's tools of analysis, but also diverge from them when necessary. All the while, I maintain focus upon aspects of the journalistic labour process freelance writers find themselves enmeshed in most regularly.

Chapter 3

3 Survey Says: Canada's Freelance Writers in their Own Words

This chapter is an empirical presentation of results from the 25 interviews I conducted with Canadian freelance writers. It consists of three parts. The first section situates this inquiry within the broader context of Marx's "workers' inquiries" and includes an assessment of the phenomenological outlook I adopted in conducting the interviews. An overview of how I undertook the study, consisting of methodological details, comprises the next portion. In keeping with the *nous* of workers' inquiries, I present detailed findings from the interviews, emphasizing the thoughts and experiences of participants.

3.1 Method: A Workers' Inquiry

Just prior to his passing in 1883, Marx (1997) constructed a survey consisting of 100 questions he simply entitled, "*A Workers' Inquiry."* The questionnaire aims to investigate all facets of workers' lives from workplace matters addressing occupational health and safety issues, to employment standards revolving around break schedules, to general enquiries dealing with worker resistance along with basic demographic questions (ibid). The questionnaire appears on April 20, 1880 in the *Revue Socialiste,* an organ of socialist thought, enjoying distribution in French factories (Brown and Quan-Haase, 2012; Haider and Mohandesi, 2013). Apparently, neither Marx, nor the publication, ever receive a single completed response from factory workers or any other members of the publication's audience (Haider and Mohandesi, 2013).

The preamble to the workers' survey contains a rationale for the inquiry from Marx's (1997) pen, which consists of three interrelated parts: 1) no European government to date had undertaken an investigation into the lives of its working classes; 2) members of the working class are best positioned to articulate the degradations they experience daily under command of capitalist social relations; 3) socialists of all orientations need to comprehend more fully the circumstances under which the proletariat work and live to try and develop organizational building capacities (ibid).

Jamie Woodcock (2014) has interpreted Marx's (1997) second axiom to mean that investigators attempting to further this tradition should not treat their participants as "passive subjects to be researched" (p. 497). Workers are not only the most advantageously positioned to describe the conditions that affect their lives, they are the only social group poised to transform their circumstances (ibid). Marx (1997) makes his adherence to this outlook unambiguous in the questionnaire's prefatory comments when he exclaims there shall be no external saviour for the working classes. He is critical of the orientation among the working class to seek saviours of the metaphysical kind. The overcoming of this propensity to alienate human powers of creation to exterior forces requires systematic and scientific forms of knowledge in his estimation (ibid).

Even as Marx's (1997) only foray into this type of social scientific survey did not elicit a single response, the crises that have beset capitalism in the new millennium have reinvigorated interest in workers' inquiries (Haider and Mohandesi, 2013; Woodcock, 2014, 2017). After Marx's (1997) ill-fated, initial attempt at this type of investigation, a period of nearly 70 years would elapse before a second set of Marxist researchers, writers, workers and activists would embark upon a workers' inquiry. This latter effort arises from the balkanization of the U.S. Socialists Workers' Party, part of a larger movement of international factionalism on the Trotskyist left, in the period immediately following the Second World War (Haider and Mohandesi, 2013; Woodcock, 2017). Two groups of interest emerge from this splintering. The first is the Johnson-Forest Tendency in the U.S., and the second is the Chaulieu-Montal Tendency in France (Woodcock, 2017). The former is responsible for the publication of *The American Worker* in 1947, signalling a first intervention into workers' inquiries in the twentieth century (ibid).

This lengthy pamphlet consists of two sections. The author of part one is Paul Romano— a pseudonym for a General Motors worker in a New Jersey auto plant. This is an autoethnographic account, chronicling the life of an autoworker inside and outside the plant. Primarily, Romano details the alienation he and his fellow co-workers experience: "The pamphlet is directed to the rank and file worker and its intention is to express those innermost thoughts which the worker rarely talks about even to his fellow-workers …Their feelings, anxieties, exhilaration, boredom, exhaustion, anger have all been mine

to one extent or another" (Romano and Stone, 1947, p. 1).

The complement to the ethnographic detail of the pamphlet's first half is the theoretical exposition authored by Ria Stone—the penname of the recently deceased Chinese-American activist, Grace Lee Boggs. Stone builds upon Romano's analysis of alienation by arguing it foreshadows the realization of Marx's (1973) notion of general intellect. The de-skilled workers in the industrial plants Romano describes will be able to master all facets of the factory's operations in short order. This flexible comprehensiveness is an outgrowth of societal scientific knowledge and achievement, according to Stone. Consequently, it prepares these workers for a future post-capitalist formation in which all of humanity will have the ability to develop all of its capacities (ibid). This is a contention I will address in greater depth in the concluding chapter of this work.

This giving voice to workers' quotidian experiences would also inform the group's approach to the newspaper it begins publishing in 1951 under the title of *Correspondence.* Contributions from a diverse constituency of workers accounts for most of the writing, editing, and design features appearing in the newspaper. The members of the Johnson-Forest Tendency had high expectations for the newspaper. The collective viewed the newspaper as a means by which to orchestrate the manufacture of class-consciousness (Haider and Mohandesi, 2013). Almost contemporaneous to the efforts of the Johnson-Forest Tendency are those of the *Socialisme ou Barbarie* group in France (also known as the Chaulieu-Montal Tendency). This faction also places emphasis on long-form narrative accounts of workers' experiences in French factories, mirroring *The American Worker* (Haider and Mohandesi, 2013; Woodcock, 2014, 2017). Additionally, the French tendency follows the Johnson-Forest group in publishing newspapers and journals to provide workers with more fora for the expression of their experiences (ibid).

Today, researchers operating in the tradition of Autonomist Marxism are linked, most often, with the method of workers' inquiries. This iteration of this research program traces its start to a FIAT car factory in Turin in the late 1950s (Woodcock, 2017). It is there that different mobilizations of Marxist sociologists, activists, and rank-and-file workers begin to conceive of a way to establish "the joint production of social knowledge

from below" (Wright, 2002, p. 22). From these initial efforts in centres of Italian industrial production, workers' inquiries have evolved to encompass sites of immaterial production such as social media platforms and call centres (Brown and Quan-Haase, 2012; Woodcock, 2017).

What further distinguishes the Italian approach to workers' inquiries from earlier variants is the notion of "co-research" (Woodcock, 2017, p. 28). This intimates the active participation of investigators in an explicitly political project alongside workers (Brook and Darlington, 2013). This methodological approach engages the worker-researcher as a participant observer in the adopted field of employment by "apprenticing" in order to gain embodied knowledge of the labour processes involved for the purposes of attaining shared perceptual understandings. (Brown and Quan-Haase, 2012 and Pink and Morgan, 2013). This provides the participant observer with an emic perspective as the objective outlook of the positivist social scientist is transformed into a relation of the inside-outside participant observer (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983). Brian Brown and Anabel Quan-Haase (2012) have described Autonomist Marxists' updating of the workers' inquiry method as an ethnographic endeavour "as practiced by anthropologists" (p.502).

The American Anthropological Association (2004) defines ethnography as the examination of human activity "in the natural setting in which" it occurs. Additionally, ethnographic undertaking involves fieldwork in which the researcher is immersed with the community in question for a sustained period of time, "watching what happens, listening to what is said, asking questions; in fact, collecting whatever data are available to throw light on the issues with which he or she is concerned" (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983, p.2). The ethnographic approach therefore concentrates on culture— understood as values, beliefs, customs, rituals and behaviours—as they are enacted by individuals and groups within geographical, historical, political and economic contexts (American Anthropological Association, 2004). Lastly, it is an inductive method that gives primacy to the perspectives of participants (ibid). In social scientific fields outside of anthropology, including communication and media studies, ethnography has come to encompass all manner of qualitative, descriptive studies characterized by observation and interviewing over a protracted time frame (Deacon et al, 2007).

Researchers engaging in workers' inquiries "from below" borrow heavily from the tool kit of anthropologists. This span of multi-method data collection extends from direct observation, to participant observation, to the use of structured and unstructured interviews, to other intersubjective means that facilitate the description of experience, to the collection and analysis of texts and other artifacts (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983 and American Anthropological Association, 2004).

As I alluded to above, workers' inquiries depart from anthropological/ethnographic methodology in the overt embrace of a political outlook and a political position. The aim of co-research projects from below is for the participant-observer research to create knowledge intersubjectively through a variety of day-to-day interactions and methods (Brown and Quan-Haase, 2012). For instance, this type of action research conceives of both participant observer and informant as obtaining knowledge and understanding through the interview process. Yet the intent of co-research from below is not to refresh the academic literature, or generate new theoretical constructs in a grounded manner (Woodcock, 2017).

Rather this type of action research possesses a three-fold intent: 1) sharpen the critical consciousness of research participant and informants; 2) make effort to tangibly improve the lives of participants; 3) work towards larger transformative moments involving changes to social relations and social structures (MacDonald, 2012). Such undertakings are to involve participants in each phase of the project, including, for example, the construction of interview schedules to be used (Brown and Quan-Haase, 2012 and MacDonald, 2012). It is through this level of engagement with the knowledge generating process that workers become aware of the iniquities in the workplace and with the extant possibility of changing their "political composition," leading to collective types of struggle (Brown and Quan-Haase, 2012).

In relation to the manner workers' inquiries, with their ethnographic basis, are deployed currently, my project would appear to situate uncomfortably within this paradigm. Primarily because I did not engage as a participant observer for any extended period of time with the freelance writers who comprise this survey sample. Secondly, I did not

present the project as having an obvious political objective. Next off, I did not engage the participants, directly, in developing the arc of the project. Lastly, the data presented in this chapter stems from the semi-structured interviews I conducted and the survey I issued, which may be limited relative to a preferred multi-method approach.

Despite these appearances, I did bring a reflexivity to the project that is integral to the ethnographic process as outside researchers acquire inside access and understanding through reflection (Hammersley and Atkinson, 1983). The difference being, in this instance, that I did not need to "apprentice" in order to familiarize myself with the labour processes of freelance writers. I could draw upon my own experiences in the journalistic labour process, from pitching stories to writing stories using the inverted pyramid, to comprehend what respondents were communicating to me.

However, this developed level of reflexivity had less applicability *vis-à-vis* the reproductive aspects of the (work)day. More than 75 percent of informants identified as female with a majority having already or being in the midst of intensive childcare responsibilities—two subject positions to which I have a strictly etic relationship. A more reflexive understanding of female positionality in the journalistic field of freelance labour, and the attendant child rearing responsibilities which still fell heavily upon the women in the survey, would have necessitated an embedded and lengthy ethnographic undertaking.

With respect to the participation of respondents in the project, a defining feature of co-research, I did not appeal directly to the informants for input regarding any facet of the project. Yet the conversations I undertook with those I interviewed gave a certain dynamism to the interview schedule as I did make changes to the questions as the process unfolded to try and better engage with the manifold dimensions of their respective experiences. Moreover, the informants' responses brought to the fore what was already hidden in plain sight. That is, how the alienation in and through work design for the intent of commodity production had so strongly conditioned my own search for meaning and fulfillment through my labour. The arrival upon this finding, which was presupposed without being transparently explored in the interview schedule, was central to shaping the

direction of this project.

Lastly, I did not embark on a project for the immediate improvement of the lives of the directly affected workers nor to engage in larger scale societal transformation—however much it is desired. The above qualities have characterized the action focus of workers' inquiries over several decades now (Woodcock, 2014). Yet at least some of the questions I posed from the interview schedule had the intent of trying to "make the worker aware of his (sic) own predicament in capitalist society, to cut through the fog of illusions … and by thus making the worker conscious of his (sic) predicament giving him (sic) a chance to solve it" (Burnham, Shactman, and Spector, 1938 cited in Brown and Quan-Haase, 2012, p. 489).

Better then to conceive of this examination within this genealogy of workers' inquiries as a "from above" project with the aim of producing knowledge and "theoretical insights" through access to a particular class of workers (Woodcock, 2014). This level of inquiry should precede a from below production that has the formation of political organization as an intended outcome. But for the latter to occur there needs to be present a detectable degree of "workers' self-activity" (Kolinko, 2002). This was, at best, inchoate amongst the freelance writers I surveyed.

At the same, I argue the approach I have employed upholds elements of what characterized earlier attempts at workers' inquiries. Akin to the experiments of the Johnson-Forest Tendency from the 1940s and the 1950s, it prioritizes the articulation of workers' experiences—in this instance those of Canadian freelance writers. This is in keeping with the historical spirit of workers' inquiries dating back to Marx's (1997) preamble, where he states only those affected "can describe with full knowledge the misfortunes from which they suffer and that only they, and not saviours sent by providence, can energetically apply the healing remedies for the social ills which they are prey." This despite the irony that the survey instrument Marx (1997) designs does not afford respondents the opportunity to give personal voice to their circumstances.

In fact, in this regard, Marx's (1997) research tool more closely resembles that of the administrative research of twentieth century industrial sociologists, and researchers in

cognate disciplines, who have directed their investigatory interests towards the maintenance of capitalist social relations since the field's inception in the 1920s (Kalleberg, 2009). John O'Neill (1995) has described the evolution of sociological investigations of this kind, rooted in the positivism of the natural sciences, as farcical in their claims to neutrality. Research projects conceived from the standpoint of reproducing social relations in ways favouring the ongoing accumulation of capital belie objectivity. Many of the claims emanating from industrial sociology invoking scientific objectivity are "already in the paid service to the project of political control" (O'Neill, 1995, p.174).

In contrast to this, workers' inquiries confront the positivism of administrative research by emphasizing the oppositional ways participants interpret and understand their own lives. To facilitate such an outcome in my work, I attempted to incorporate a more expressly phenomenological outlook with respect to the questionnaire I devised *vis-à-vis* Marx (1997). In the latter survey, most of these questions were close-ended, meaning they were of the yes/no variety. Only the final query in the survey would have afforded workers the opportunity to detail the conditions of their lives in a non-prescribed manner.

By comparison, I employed a semi-structured interview schedule. This modality operates at a meso-level between open-ended interview schedules and the type of questionnaire Marx (1997) constructed. Counterposed to the quantification the latter lends itself to, I attempted to analyze the interview transcripts in a qualitative manner that tried to efface the dichotomy between the knowing subject, i.e. the researcher, and the object of knowledge to be measured, assessed, etc. Yet according to Daniel C Narey (2014), this type of inductive analysis remains problematic as it may only minimize the aforementioned Cartesian dualism more expressly evident in the kinds of content analyses researchers frequently use in the study of texts.

Additionally, with respect to design, the mid-point interview tool I employ better aligns with a phenomenological interest in how humans consciously perceive the object world through their senses (Ritzer, 1988). Such thinking concerning human experience derives from the philosophical writings on phenomenology by Edmund Husserl. Through a process of "phenomenological reduction," Husserl seeks to bracket out all of the given or

naturalized perceptions that accumulate as part of the socialization process as they pertain to any particular phenomenon (Throop and Murphy, 2002). He posits it possible to penetrate pre-theoretical assumptions, resulting in newfound understandings, through the investigation of any phenomenon (ibid).

David Jary and Julia Jary (1991) define phenomenology as "the descriptive study of experience" as it relates to the perceiving of phenomena (p. 365). In its sociological application, phenomenology prioritizes the intentionality of human agents within social contexts, and how they make sense of commonplace experiences. Phenomenological sociology is concerned with interpreting meaning from the perspective of social members comprising any group. This refers to the ways participants form shared meanings and understandings in the praxis of discourse and action. Sociological phenomenology is therefore consonant with the second directive Marx (1997) delineates in the preamble to his questionnaire, i.e. workers' understanding and articulation of their own conditions.

My phenomenological approach tries to respond to the question Ida Harper Simpson (1989) poses: "Where have (all) the workers gone?" (p. 571). This, she asks, in reference to her criticism of industrial sociology for moving away "from seeing workers actively creating their own work cultures, towards seeing workers as objects of external forces" in the latter half of the 1950s and into the 1960s (Harper Simpson, 1989, p. 571). This parallels a similar move, over the same time period, in Marxist studies towards a structuralism that views human agents as interpellated subjects. This model treats actors as mere bearers of the powerful structural forces and relations that shape them, leading to the interpretive framework of a history without subjects.

In its current guise, this type of structural outlook tends to depict cultural workers as exemplars of neoliberal capitalism. Greig de Peuter (2013) interprets researchers operating in this theoretical tradition as portraying cultural workers as expressing neoliberalism's structural imperatives so thoroughly that it "formats (their) subjectivity in its likeness" (p. 41). This has left "old left critics bemoan(ing) a mantra of losses," including the decimation of trade unions and an overall lack of interest in political culture (McRobbie, 2004, p. 187). Scholarship in this vein concludes cultural workers are

neoliberal dupes "complicit with the aims and ambitions of the project set in motion by Mrs. Thatcher" (McRobbie, 2005, p. 387).

Carrie M. Lane (2011) provides a counterweight to the above postulations through her ethnographic study of precariously-employed, high-technology workers in the metropolitan Dallas area. Her investigation occurs in the years following the first capitalist crisis of the new millennium with the tearing asunder of the technology asset bubble. She writes, regarding her research approach, that by focusing upon "job seekers' own words and experiences … and elucidating their worldview in a manner that is both accurate and sympathetic … I hope to go beyond simplistic assessments of these job seekers as unwitting dupes of the (neoliberal) capitalist system" (p. 12).

In adopting a phenomenological approach to this workers' inquiry, I, too, wished to explore if the freelance writers in my survey were displaying anything beyond a set of discourses and dispositions consonant with the imperatives of neoliberalism. The adoption of this kind of micro-sociological outlook re-centres subjective experience, marking it a legitimate means of intersubjective knowledge construction between researcher and participant (Burawoy, 1991).

It is worth noting phenomenological methodologies have invited sharp criticism. Opponents claim this approach lacks sociological rigour and regard for social structures such as class. Critics state phenomenology insufficiently addresses the overdetermined ways state apparatuses condition subjectivity formation and delimit understandings of social formations (Ritzer, 1988). Another critique of phenomenological sociology is that in its descriptive orientation it accepts uncritically what participants tell researchers about their experiences (Smart, 1977). It therefore treats common sense understandings as valid sources of knowledge. I attempt to redress some of these shortcomings across the remainder of this work through an analysis of ideology, the inclusion of political economy approaches, and a focus on Marx's objective category of value.

3.2 The Interviews: Research Methodology

The interview schedule I employed consisted of three sections, counting 60 pre-

determined questions. The first section examined the work histories of the participants to better comprehend their willingness to labour for wage rates afforded freelance writers. The final portion of the interview schedule looked at freelance writers' responses to the atomization and individualization often associated with neoliberal cultural labourers.

The second segment of the interview schedule was the shortest in length and the least successful in its aims. My intent was to explore how the routine temporal arrangements freelance writers partake in daily, as exemplars of immaterial work processes, might be undermining the labour theory of value, and therefore, the processes of capital accumulation. I wanted to assess whether the dissolution between work and non-work time in the "social factory," characterized by relations of communication, cooperation, and intelligence, was at all prefigurative in demonstrating "the potential for a kind of spontaneous and elementary communism" to appear (Hardt and Negri, 2000, p. 294). For Hardt and Negri (2004), the production of commodities in these inter-subjective ways is "immeasurable, because it cannot be quantified in fixed units of time" (p. 146).

Overall, the second phase of the interview schedule can be evaluated as a poor attempt at operationalizing some of the key concepts developed by Autonomist Marxist theorists with respect to investigating class composition. The questions I asked more likely resembled those one might find in an orthodox work-life balance study (Duxbury and Higgins, 2012). These are studies I characterize as seeking to find accommodation with the need to reproduce labour power for furthering the process of capital accumulation.

The sample size of 25 interviewees exceeded the minimum recommended number of 15 as suggested by Steinar Kvale (1996) in his book on interviewing as a research method. Others such as Greg Scott and Roberta Garner (2013) have recommended interviewing until a saturation point is reached. That refers to the stage in the process when responses converge upon the same themes without any significant novelty. Based on the interview schedule prepared, the saturation point was reached prior to the 25th interview.

The length of the interviews ranged from 45 minutes to over 120 minutes. I conducted only one formal interview session with each respondent. These interviews took place beginning in the late fall of 2013 and continued into the winter of 2014. The majority

were facilitated using Skype as the interviewees came from seven of the 10 provinces in Canada—though none of the territories were represented. Where possible, and when the respondents were located in southern or south-western Ontario, I conducted the interviews in person. If possible, the transcribing of interviews took place the same day I conducted the interview using downloadable software that was freely available. The handling and storage of the data collected and transcribed adhered to the standards recommended by Western University. Any follow-up that I undertook with the participants beyond the formal interview session occurred via e-mail.

Those conducting workers' inquiries in factory settings in an earlier era had the benefit of drawing upon a population that was spatially singular and temporally recurring (Brown and Quan-Haase, 2012). Freelancers, by contrast, are a physically dispersed group of workers, who are also temporally differentiated in their occupational routines. The initial recruitment of participants took place through a series of websites frequented by freelancers: www.freelancewritingjob.ca, www.mediabistro.com, www.thestoryboard.ca, www.canadianwritersgroup.com. I also posted the recruitment advertisement on several electronic classified sites and in spaces and locales that freelance writers might frequent.

The highest response rate was from a subscription-based Yahoo! group dedicated to Canadian freelance writers and their issues. In-person recruitment consisted of asking participants if they knew of willing participants. In instances of an affirmative response, I provided my contact information to the participant that they would then forward to the potential participant(s). On multiple occasions, participants asked me if I had interviewed a specific individual in the community. With a negative response, I would then pass along my contact information to be forwarded in this modified form of snowball sampling.

Demographically, 19 of the 25 participants were female. The remaining six identified as male. Though I did not formally record their ages, the age span of informants seemed to stretch from mid-20s-to-mid-60s. With regards to the sample's racial/ethnic composition, only one participant identified as a visible minority. Other demographic data came from a survey of the respondents. The response rate for the surveys was 52 percent. From these, I calculated respondents earned an average income between $37,000 and $49,000 during

the previous year. The range of weekly hours worked spanned from 37-to-46 hours. All those who returned surveys had some level of post-secondary schooling. Nine of the 13 respondents possessed a university degree. Of those nine, three had an advanced-level degree. I have anonymized interviewees by assigning pseudonyms but have included information that provides the contours of a life history without jeopardizing their identity.

3.3   Results

3.3.1   Work Histories and the Experience of Labour

I began the interviews by asking respondents what the word "work" meant to them. The responses can be grouped into three categories. The first suggests a near total unity in identity between the freelance writer and their work. At the opposite pole, respondents did not share a strong identification with their occupation. Finally, a subset of responses did not conform to the already defined categories. These responses warrant a separate acknowledgment I will address throughout the presentation of the findings.

Among the respondents in the first category was Jahnette Holly, a freelance writer located in Saskatchewan with experience working for private and public broadcasters. When asked about the meaning of work, she effusively responded by saying: "I am my job, 24/7." Holly made clear that she was willing and/or available to work at any time, if necessary. Other respondents betrayed an attachment and a commitment to their work that was all encompassing in its presentation. For Marcie Duchamp, a desire for meaningful work was long standing. Her entry into freelance writing upon her graduation from journalism school had done nothing to diminish this:

> This is a huge part of my identity … I've never wanted a job that I just sort of left at the end of the day. This is totally how I self-identify. Like when people ask me what you do, I answer, 'I'm a writer.' I find my sense of purpose with my job so my body of work is really important to me. It's the biggest significance. Most of my life is structured around it. In busy times it is entirely what I do. And in off times it is what I worry about.

Rhonda Schmidt explained that being a freelance writer was a means to escape the fate of family members she saw as simply counting down the days until they could collect their pensions. Schmidt only acted on this insight after decades of clerical work prompted her

to try freelance writing despite not possessing any training or experience as a journalist:

> You know, I guess let's put it this way, I can imagine not doing it (freelance writing). But I mean it really is a huge part of my life and part of who I am. Partly because I have no pension plan it is something I can see me doing until they shut the box into the oven … It (writing) is something I have done since I was a kid. And it is a way of being. I don't know. I'm nosy and curious about the world.

The more instrumental pole was typified by responses in which the freelance writer saw work mainly as a means by which to earn money to secure the necessities and pleasures of life. Oftentimes, this latter category only existed outside of the wage-labour relationship for those interviewed. Brian Middleman, a freelance writer and instructor in a journalism program at a post-secondary institution in Ontario, told me that he had "long lost the romance" often associated with the job. In his own words, it was now "all about getting paid." Even in instances where such instrumental attitudes prevailed, participants seemed to suggest that they would still prefer freelance writing instead of other career options. Mary Channing exemplified this outlook. Located in a metro area in Quebec, Channing had transitioned from being a registered nurse at a hospital in a permanent, full-time position, to being a freelance writer focusing on health-related stories:

> Very basically, work is to me just what I do for money so I can pay my bills. There is no magic to that. If I didn't have to work, I wouldn't. But the significance to my life now is more significant than what I used to do. I was a nurse, a registered nurse and although that work was very fulfilling in one way. But the work I do now as a freelance writer, I get to work on my terms. I get to work when I want to work, and how I want to work.

A couple of respondents provided more philosophically oriented answers as to what constitutes work. In one instance, a respondent described work in a manner that at least somewhat parallels Marx's (1977) description of the labour process conceived in a transhistorical manner. The following is part of the exchange I had with William Stakes-French, high school teacher turned freelance writer:

R – In your estimation, how would you define the word work?

W – It is expending physical or intellectual energy on a regular basis.

R – Towards?

W – In some activity. So cooking is work. Cleaning the house is work. You are expending physical and/or intellectual. There might be another one. I wouldn't put emotional in there. I would just put physical and/or intellectual.

R – And does that include writing to you?

W – Absolutely because that is an intellectual activity done on a regular basis. Because if you are writing, you know, you are spending a certain number of hours per day working at your, doing your work … with a specific goal in mind. It's a task oriented or goal-oriented activity. Physical, intellectual activity toward a specified, defined goal.

In another more self-reflexive response, a British Columbia writer, Yasmine Woods, described work as engagement within a labour process that results in an objectification of the self. This act of externalizing the self leaves an imprint upon the self and environment outside and beyond oneself: "For me work is the exercise that you do throughout the day, paid or unpaid, that gives your life meaning … It is an externalization of your internal values. And it does not have to be paid. Much of my work is unpaid. But I still feel that it is the meaningful activities that you do that are an externalization of your inner values."

After trying to establish how it was that those comprising my sample understood the concept of work, I next asked them about their early part-time and full-time work experiences. I tried to ascertain whether these early experiences had influenced their decision to become freelance writers. Despite the profoundly formative influence I might ascribe to my own initial wage-labour interactions, those interviewed appeared to view these early experiences as simple rituals one must pass through on the way to serious consideration about future occupational prospects. Jahnette Holly was one of several respondents who unequivocally claimed that there was no relationship between her first work experiences and her present employment as a freelance writer: "They probably have no relationship whatsoever. They were just a way of a teenager keeping busy and making some money. No, I don't think they relate to my current status in hardly any way at all."

Though this was a prevailing sentiment, it was by no means a unanimous one. In her teenage years, Helen Vitalis spent her summers picking produce as a farm worker in British Columbia. From this, she realized she was not suited to "rote work or anything that was unvaried. I was just more bored with it than anything. I just realized that I was really gonna have to find a way not to be a labourer." Like Vitalis, Eleanor Cameron, also

resided in the lower mainland of British Columbia. She also expressed a similar set of sentiments about her early work experiences, both part-time ones as a teenager, and then into her adult years as she moved into the full-time labour force: "They were drudgery for the most part. I have never had a full-time job that I felt was satisfying in any meaningful way … I've had some jobs that were okay. But I was always working to help keep somebody else's business afloat rather than working for my own satisfaction, or working for some kind of common good. I've always found it rather drudge like full-time work."

If those interviewed did not understand their early work experiences as formative, it might be because they realized at an early age that they wanted to be journalists/writers. This was a widely held sentiment. Most surveyed indicated they were aware of their future career trajectory in elementary school, or in the early part of high school. In multiple instances, participants transitioned to freelancing later in life. But even then, there was an acknowledgment that writing and journalism were activities of interest from an early age. The change in careers to freelancing did not come as a complete surprise.

In fact, a plurality of participants indicated it was the act of writing that first attracted them to becoming a journalist and/or freelance writer. This included participants who indicated an initial preference to be poets and novelists, but only pivoted to journalism because it seemed to be better remunerated[8]. In only a few instances did participants indicate that it was the public service ethos of journalism that attracted them to the field.

Irrespective of the origins of their initial interest in journalism and/or writing, few of the participants indicated any propensity to abandon their current freelance status. That is, only a small percentage of respondents expressed a desire for a permanent, full-time job at a newspaper, magazine, broadcast, or online media outlet. This attitude was pronounced among the older and/or more experienced freelancers interviewed. Bernard Thorn, a journalism-school instructor and freelance writer in Ontario, responded in the following way when asked about returning to permanent, full-time work in a newsroom:

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[8] This would be an acutely cruel irony if it did not remain true. A survey conducted by The Writers Union of Canada demonstrated that published authors in this country only earn about 50 percent of what freelance writers in Canada earn (Renzetti, 2014). This translates into $12,000 *per annum* for their writing efforts.

> I have thought about it. But every time I thought about it I thought do I want to go back to what I was doing 10 years ago. Going to meetings, going to City Hall. Certainly there were some lean times in the freelancing and you are thinking why am I doing this because the money isn't coming the way you wanted to and, maybe I should think about that? But I never made the step because suddenly something else came along.

Conversely, these same attitudes were less prevalent among the more recent journalism school graduates I interviewed. For them, freelancing was less the exercise of choice and more of an only option. Norma Lynn Smith, an Alberta-based writer, was the only person I interviewed that directly attributed the loss of a staff job at a small, chain-affiliated newspaper to "the Great Recession." When I asked if she would like to return to a staff position, she said yes. Part of her motivation for this was attributable to the unfairness she perceived in being compensated only a small fraction of what staff reporters receive for doing the exact same work. This implies the labour process of both of these categories of news workers is identical, even if their value is not:

> I just started freelancing in order to keep paying the bills. With the idea that with my foot in the door somebody would hire me with something full time. Yup, I love anything to do with getting paid on a more regular basis. I have just come to a point in my life that there are bigger things I would like to pay for.

In the last third of the questions comprising the first section of the interview schedule, I moved away from questions that inquired directly about the work experiences of the participants. I turned towards a series of questions centred on discourses and practices that constitute identity. In particular, I examined occupational identity, class identity, and subjectivity formation in relation to being a freelance writer. I began by looking at a long-standing debate in the journalistic field. That is, whether journalists, and by some extension, freelance writers, consider journalism to be a craft, a profession, some amalgam of the two, or perhaps something else entirely different.

3.3.2   Craft versus Profession

As already referenced above, the categories of craft and profession have historically dominated the occupational debate of the journalistic field. This binary conceptualization was the manner by which those I interviewed largely understood it. With respect to the

idea of journalism as a craft, responses generally fell within four sub-categories of enunciation and understanding. The first was the viewpoint shared by multiple respondents that a craft consisted of a narrow range of skills that were acquired and applied in a circumscribed set of contexts. Multiple times, journalism as a craft was equated with the building trades. The Montreal-based writer, Jordan Kovich, provided one of the clearest articulations of this standpoint:

> I think we have come to the conclusion that journalism is not a profession but a trade. It is closer to plumbing than it is to being a lawyer. But creative plumbing if you will. Because … in journalism school, you were not learning the kinds of things you would learn if you went to law school or to become an accountant or a doctor. It wasn't a profession. It was literally nuts and bolts kind of stuff. So, I would classify it as a trade.

In Moores's estimation there was no distinction to be made between writing as art and writing as craft. She described, "Writing is a craft. You're taking, you're sculpting. You're working with raw materials and hopefully turning them into something beautiful. I see it as an art as well as a craft." Like Moores, David Trendle was a Toronto resident possessing decades of freelance experience. For him, the craft element of the creative process was its iterative aspects. In his estimation, it was through the iterative aspects that people learn to collaborate in and through the labour process, to problem solve, and to work with difficulties encountered to be able to overcome them. Consequently, the iterative aspects illustrate the labour process as a medium that conveys meaning and understanding of what is possible, probable, and even impossible at any particular time:

> (I)t is a craft because you edit and shape and think and go for a walk and you are writing which is why I carry paper … I love the craft of the edit(ing) process and refining it. Thinking what is not working here or maybe giving it to a friend and getting insights to your own work. Then thinking, oh okay, this is what is going on. I need to do this. There is collaboration there in that sense. It's the fine-tuning. It's the working of sentences. It's making things work. It's being restrained. Showing restraint. Lopping off words. All that sanding and polishing. I like that.

In the U.K., journalism school accreditation as a means of gaining entry to the newsroom became commonplace much later than it did in either Canada or the U.S (Baines and Kennedy, 2010). This may help to account for why Earl Hopkins, an émigré from England, continued to view journalism as largely craft based. For Hopkins, the job was

learned in the workplace, not through schools and the accumulation of credentials:

> (S)ome people always thought of journalism as a craft or a trade. In the late (19)60s that changed with more and more people coming in post-war with more universities, universities opened up, a lot more university graduates started getting into journalism. Before that you started as a copy boy and then you got to be a street reporter and you phoned in your stories to rewrite, and then you got an inside job, and then you worked to become editor, and you learn from the bottom up. It was only later when degrees started coming into the business that it became a white-collar profession and wages started to come up and unions came in … It's a craft in that you don't need a degree to do it. If you have basic communication skills you can do it.

3.3.3 Profession

Perhaps a defining feature in the debate between journalism as a craft or profession centred on the role played by formal education. The respondent Diana Mill was working as a freelance writer when I spoke with her. This suited her childcare needs at the time. Previously, though, she had worked at a national newspaper on a few senior beats. She was also one of the most vociferous proponents of understanding journalism, and by extension, freelance writing, as a profession. The first quality she listed for what constituted journalism as a profession was university-level schooling:

> I would say it is a professional job to me. I think it is a job you need a university education for. One could argue that you don't. I think you need a solid background. Some years of history in all kinds of subjects behind you. I think you need a journalism degree. I think my degree gave me a lot of grounding and a lot of sort of the basics of journalism … You know, people think because they have a blog and they write, or they start writing this Mummy blog that they are journalists … If you work for a major newspaper, or a major news association, you have your editor and publisher and they stand behind you. I think that is what makes it a profession. You are not just floating by yourself doing your craft. You have a whole group of people behind you … There are standards. That's the other thing. There are professional standards that you should follow. There are rules and guidelines that are followed … To me, I guess that is important, and I like that and I think that makes it a profession.

Even as a few respondents were emphasizing the importance of education in relation to professional respectability, Catharine Moores noted that journalists, unlike engineers, doctors, architects, and dentists, lacked a specific designation and an accrediting system by which to attain such a status. Therefore, for her, journalism and/or freelance writing

could never be considered a profession.

3.3.4   Class

With regards to class, my aim was to map the prevailing constellation of understandings surrounding this concept. I was attempting to ascertain whether those who comprised my sample viewed class as a fundamentally structuring social relation rooted in property ownership, or as a set of rather fixed categories that economically stratifies people based on income. Lastly, I wished to interrogate whether the notion of "creative class" had any resonance or salience given the prominence it has attained over the last decade.

A plurality of the respondents who participated in the interviews interpreted class as a category of economic stratification based on income levels. As Catharine Moores succinctly phrased it, class is "strictly economic. It's based on income level." The participants equated earnings in the average income range with being middle class. Though this perception predominated, it was not the only one. Jaime Archambault wished to erase the concept of class entirely. When asked whether she identified herself and her occupation as working, middle, creative, or some other class designation, she responded:

> That's really hard to say. I wouldn't put a class marker on it. I really believe you can be of any class to do this work as long as you are willing to put in the time and get the experience. So, I wouldn't want to (define it) according to class *per se*. I would consider my husband and myself, like if you are talking about our income bracket, it would probably be upper middle class. I'm not really comfortable with that label because I don't want to put myself above people. That's more of a tick for me. I don't like that.

By Chelsea Austin's own admission, she had not given a great deal of thought to the idea of class, nor did she have a clear understanding as to what it is:

> I can't afford a car and there is no house in sight. (But) I don't feel like I'm economically exploited. I feel like I am making more than I was last year for doing the same thing. Which probably means that my editors see value in me and are reflecting that in what they are paying me. I feel like I'm doing better (than) a lot of friends in terms of, like, I'm doing what I want to do and probably making more, slightly, because not many people my age make any money here (Nova Scotia). I feel like I have a good life, you know.

Several of those interviewed stated that freelance writing sat at the intersection of middle-

class and creative-class designations. Quite simply, they attributed this to the average amounts of income earned, coupled with the creative orientation of the work. Bernard Thorn attributed another possible motivation to selecting this hybrid identity. He thought it plausible that journalists/freelance writers did not wish to view themselves as working class. This was due to a mental association in which manual labour was equated with membership in the working class. This was how Marcie Duchamp defined the category working class. That is, corresponding only with work in a factory or in the trades. As a result, she believed freelance writers could not be members of the working class.

In only one instance did a participant reference the relational aspect of class. This analysis was put forward by Kate Pernaud, a Calgary-based writer and co-founder of an online, alternative news media website. She contended that class was not only a structural and relational proposition, but that it was also difficult to discern: "The people who are amongst the class do not see it as a relationship between labour and capitalism". At a later point in the conservation, I asked her to assess how labour was fairing at present in its relationship to capital. She responded: "Labour is losing. Labour always loses. I mean most of my adult life in writers' organizations we've been fighting for partnerships with publishers. Now the publishers are going away. My god they are predators. I did not realize that those business schools train them to have … certain primary objectives."

Finally, with respect to the issue of class, it is also worth noting that none of the participants identified it as a relational process of becoming based on an understanding of oppositional interests between the social groupings of labour and capital (Thompson, 1980). In fact, multiple respondents stated that they were in a partnership with the hedge funds and corporations and their managerial representatives who continued to contribute to the diminishment of the living standards of this group of workers.

3.3.5 Subjectivities

The above concept of class presupposes a certain collective or group identity. But in the next section of the interview schedule, I wanted to explore the characteristics those surveyed felt were necessary in order to succeed as a freelance writer. A quick survey of the adjectives invoked most frequently by the interviewees was notable for just how

deeply individualized these perceptions were. Evidence for this tendency was demonstrable in just how often the interview participants used the modifier "self." For example, across demographic distinctions, participants told me of the need for self-discipline, self-confidence, and self-motivation. Furthermore, while the phrase was never itself used, self-promotion was a defining feature referred to repeatedly.

Paradoxically, only one of the respondents referenced what one might consider the core competencies of the journalistic labour process as necessary for continued success in the field. Christine Smythe, a freelancer based in the Maritimes, identified these skills as consisting of researching, writing, reporting, and editing. Related, but perhaps more secondary qualities were mentioned by several interviewees. These included a need to be curious, and a need to remain current through the embrace of constant self-learning. What accompanied this latter category was a certain discernment that enabled one to gauge the news worthiness of particular events, trends, etc.

The last set of characteristics invoked were less explicitly journalistic, and more associated with the freelance aspects of the occupation. These included the need to persevere in the face of continuous rejection of ideas, having patience in awaiting further instruction from editors on how to proceed with accepted pitches, as well as a willingness to accept criticism from editors and/or clients. With regards to the latter, managing expectations along with providing good customer service were also seen as key attributes.

3.3.6 Summary of Overall Satisfaction Levels:

Via the final question in this first section of the interview schedule, I wished to assess how the respondents felt about their career choice. My informants spoke of becoming freelance writers in mostly positive and favourable ways. Roughly one-third of the interview participants seemed to "love it" unequivocally. Catherine Moores effusively described being a freelancer as "carrying out the life you want. It may not be the most lucrative life, but it's the life you want. That's what I like about it." For several other freelancers I spoke with, it represented the fulfilment of a desire they had harboured since their youth. It was also an activity they spoke of continuing deep into their dotage. More profoundly, they felt attainment of this long-term goal set them apart from the majority of

the adult workforce. The comments provided by Bernard Thorn are illuminating:

> I think it is a really interesting life. A really interesting thing to do. It's a cliché, but there are, I know, so many people who are in a job that they fell into that wasn't necessarily their dream job. Probably they like it. It is okay. It's paid them well. They've even had a good life. But you ask them what they studied in university and they say I studied this but it is nothing to do with my job. And you think good for you if that is what works. I love the fact that what I studied in university is what I do for a living. I studied journalism and now it is my livelihood. I know I have friends who are envious in a way with that.

Although all those I interviewed expressed some degree of satisfaction with their career choice, a majority also cited ambivalence as well. Eleanor Cameron provided a clear example of the types of frustrations freelance writers typically encountered: "I find it very satisfying. But there is also a large measure of frustration with this career. I've spent a lot of time over the last two years writing pitches that have not been accepted. It's a real rollercoaster. There are moments of deep despair usually followed by euphoria, and that is my experience of freelancing." Marcie Duchamp provided an even more succinct expression of the ambivalence she felt towards her chosen career. She summarized it in the following way: "I like it. Umm, (but) I'm often frustrated by it. But I like it a lot. So it's, umm, a love-hate thing." But those expressing such frustrations said they would expect them in any occupation they would have selected. Given that, the degree of satisfaction experienced appeared to outstrip the frustrations that were a daily part of being a freelance writer for those participating in the interviews I conducted.

3.4 Temporal Distribution of Work-Life Arrangements: Not Working 9-to-5

Comprehension of the freelance writers' workday requires giving consideration to its temporal characteristics. In order to try and bring legibility to this part of their experience, I started this portion of the interview schedule by asking the respondents how many hours a week they worked: 37-to-46 hours. I then wished to understand the distribution of those hours over the span of the (average) day. This qualitative assessment began by asking the participants to outline how a typical day unfolds. Their responses revealed that they perceived their days as being atypical. Yet, in the course of the respondents' descriptions, it was possible to discern the solidity of certain work patterns

in the face of the flux and variability these flexible, autonomous workers experience.

The logic underlying this initial, in-depth question was the desire to phenomenologically understand how the participants experienced the dissolution of the Fordist day in which the delineations between production and reproduction were more perceptually apparent. The descriptions the informants provided, however, showed the degree to which different parts of the day remained zoned for certain activities while also illuminating the instances where these boundaries were blurred. For instance, Rhonda Schmidt recalled a time when she had to conduct an interview during her dinner preparations and with her children home. She went to the basement to do the interview, telling her children not to disturb her unless there was an emergency. Moments into her call there was a sudden eruption of pounding on the door. She excused herself, ran upstairs, and found her panicked children pointing at the oven where dinner had caught fire: "I picked up the pan of sausages, threw them into a snow bank, and went (back) downstairs to finish my interview."

In the nomenclature of Autonomist Marxist theorists, this erasure between the demands of production and reproduction, in which work comes to suffuse all dimensions of social life, is referred to as the "social factory" (Dyer-Witheford, 1999). Although this seems to suggest the current apogee of capital's domination, the dialectical reading of Autonomist Marxist scholars holds out the promise that this may be an instantiation of what is, when multiplied infinitely, representative of how the time measure of labour value is undermined. This development thus posits the possibility of a future horizon beyond the current relations of wage labour. But in Schmidt's account, and the similarly-themed anecdotes of other participants, there was no recognition of how this set of circumstances might be contributing to the ushering in of a transformative social moment.

Through the next set of questions posed, I wished to better apprehend the competing temporal demands placed upon freelance writers. A plurality made at least some reference to their child-rearing responsibilities as accounting for their greatest time commitment besides work. Multiple respondents remarked how they could not imagine fulfilling their parental duties if both partners had worked in conventional white-collar environments. Informants viewed the flexibility freelance writing affords as facilitating

the meeting of competing temporal demands they experience in their daily lives. This included enhancing the ability to participate in a wide-range of organizations and activities existing in the domain of civil society. Still, temporal pressures left many of the informants wanting to have more time to socialize, to exercise, and to simply relax.

Helen Vitalis said she wished for more leisure time that would allow her to read: "I love reading magazines. Just to spend the entire day to read my novels and magazines (would be ideal)." In contrast, granted more time and less exhaustion, Norma Lynn Smith would try to advance her career: "Instead of sitting on my butt and relaxing, I could be back on the computer researching story ideas to pitch. I could be networking with people, who may in some way help." The shearing forces between what had attracted these freelancers to the field, and the temporal demands of their occupation were even more apparent in Marcie Duchamp's thoughts on what she would like to do if she had more time:

> I wish I had more time to write with my Internet not on so that people could not reach me. I wish I had more time to work where I didn't have to constantly be thinking about other work. It's hard to fully tunnel in on one thing and make it as good as can be when you have to pitch two more articles, and like, do these interviews for this other thing and apply for this contract. So … I wish that I had more time that was outside of having to try and find more work.

The next grouping of questions, four in total, probed aspects of psychological and physiological well-being from the perspective of the participants. I asked the respondents in the study how they felt at the end of the day, how they felt during periods of acute busyness, how they felt during fallow periods, and the types of workloads they normally undertook. In addressing the final question, first, an average of four appeared to be the rough upper limit of how many projects the participants would undertake at any time.

The respondents expressed a range of views with respect to how they felt at day's end, from satisfaction, to exhaustion, to panic. Most tellingly from this series of questions, respondents' well-being appeared to diminish during less intense working periods. This inverted totality encompasses many of the contradictions of being a precariously employed creative worker under conditions of neoliberal capitalism with the ostensibly liberated self, straining under the disciplining pressures of a deeply internalized work ethic. These feelings were exacerbated in the more inexperienced respondents who

panicked when their story proposals were rejected, their networks were not yielding new opportunities, and overall decreases in work were leading to money insufficiencies.

Over the course of the interview schedule no other pair of questions elicited such a visceral set of responses as the two queries found in the final part of this section. The 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. workday was one of the defining characteristics of the post-war, standard employment relationship for a burgeoning class of white-collar workers. The saliency of what this figure of time connotes appears undiminished among these freelance writers. In the first of the two questions, I asked what their attitude was towards the 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. workday. The follow-up question asked them to compare their workday to this standard. The 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. workday is not the objective source of alienation, but as a symbol it seemed to represent all that these freelancers found alienating about hierarchical, bureaucratically organized work in both the public-and-private sectors.

Jordan Kovich's antipathy to the prospect of working in an office environment from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. stemmed from his childhood experience of watching his father leave for work in the morning and return home a changed person:

> It terrified me … And it reminded me of my dad … 9-to-5 very quickly became 9-to-7, 9-to-9, and even later. Not that he was an unhappy guy, but during periods when had had to work that much it wore down on him. You saw it in how he talked and how he walked. And I never wanted to have to go through that. Despite the comfortable lifestyle he managed for himself and his kids. It just never seemed worth it to me … I've got friends who have got their law degrees, their actuarial degrees, their accounting degrees … It's just such a nightmare, trapped behind a desk all day. I much rather, I get to talk to people and chat to people and go out and see some incredible things, talk to incredible people. It's just so much more appealing to me than sitting behind a desk for nine hours a day.

When I posed a follow-up question, trying to get him to articulate what he found so nightmarish about his father's work-life trajectory, or that of his friends who are employed on a permanent, full-time basis, he responded by saying:

> The routine. The idea of going and doing the same thing at the same time at the same desk for 40 years. Ahhhh, and all you are doing is staring at a spreadsheet. I, at least, get to be creative. Get to put my words down on paper, and you know, I'm not writing creatively, but I'm writing stories. Whereas I don't think you really get to do that when you are working with Excel all day.

Based on the surveys returned, participants were working somewhere between 37-to-46 hours a week. This figure closely mirrors the 40-hour workweek, which has served as a norm in the post-war period. The interview participants were vigilant in protecting their weekends and weeknights from the intrusion of work-related responsibilities. Though impending deadlines could impinge upon these boundaries with some regularity.

In spite of these realities, those interviewed found the prospect of a standard 40-hour workweek abhorrent even as their own work schedules mostly paralleled it. More than the amount of hours worked, it was what the 9-to-5 connoted that they seemed to find most repellent. For those interviewed that structure implied a lack of control over the immediate contours of their day. This meant a lack of flexibility to attend appointments, pick-up children from school, etc.

3.5   A Survey of Recompositional Efforts: Co-operation, Collaboration, and Competition

The initial set of questions I posed to begin this last section of the interview schedule inquired after where the freelance writers in my sample did the majority of their work, why they worked from this location, and whether they could envision an ideal work space. At the crux of this question cluster was an interest in how this despatialized and disaggregated workforce might be recombining in novel ways. Marx and Engels (1967), and Marx (1977) write of how the socialization of capitalist labour processes heightens the rate of economic exploitation. Yet, by these very same processes in which labourers are brought together to work more co-operatively, the purveyors of capital are creating conditions by which these social relations may eventually be negated through workers' struggles. What then happens to worker sociality and accompanying class interest when neoliberal capital decomposes previously prevalent forms of work organization?

With this question in mind, I wished to gauge the interest of the freelancers in my sample to participate in alternative workspace arrangements. I thought to operationalize this by asking them whether they would ever consider using a co-working space. Alessandro Gandini (2015) has defined co-working spaces as a means for freelance workers to maintain their much-desired autonomy and flexibility while simultaneously also deriving

the benefits that accrue from a shared work environment. In effect, these are workspaces which provide desks, chairs, wi-fi and office-type amenities for freelance workers in the knowledge and creative industries (Spinuzzi, 2012). The first co-working space was established in 2005 in San Francisco (Spinuzzi, 2012). In the decade that followed, these spaces began to spread, creating an eventual global matrix. By 2015, it was estimated that there were more than 2,500 co-working spaces worldwide (Gandini, 2015).

Overwhelmingly, respondents said they had not considered renting space in a co-working setting due to the additional expense. In two instances, interviewees had used co-working spaces previously, and four others had given the possibility consideration. Of the six participants who viewed co-working spaces favourably, four said they had given it some thought to better maintain separation between work time and leisure time and between workspace and living space. For Caroline Campbell, who resided in downtown Toronto, and Helena Vitalis, located in the suburbs of Vancouver, the expense of real estate in those cities meant they were only able to afford housing in which their respective bedrooms doubled as offices. This was an arrangement both said they would like to alter.

If the freelance writers interviewed relayed a lack of interest in shared workspaces, I next wished to gauge their comfort level(s) with collaboration through formal co-authorship arrangements or shared by-lines. Again, a lack of economic feasibility was cited for not working more formally with other freelance writers. Multiple writers did note that while they would be open to the possibility of collaborating with others on projects, the prospect of doing so never arose. In one instance, involving Eleanor Cameron, a proposed collaborative radio project was rejected by management of the station citing a lack of budgetary resources for anything beyond one freelancer and one in-house producer.

Most often, collaboration was viewed as a means by which to escape the more isolating aspects of the occupation. It was primarily this motivation that prompted Eleanor Cameron to seek opportunities to work together with others on projects. Angela Brancatto went so far as to describe freelance writing as a lonely existence. Overall though, most seemed to accept the isolation and even loneliness as an occupational hazard one must be able to accept to succeed. Kate Pernaud explained: "You cannot talk

and write at the same time." Norma Lynn Smith made an interesting distinction between being isolated and being solitary during intensive writing periods. Outside of those occasionally prolonged periods, Smith saw her work as being inherently social in the rest of its facets. She attributed this to being reliant on conversations with friends, family, and fellow freelance writers for sources of information and inspiration for future story ideas.

Eleanor Cameron addressed the issue of isolation through memberships in multiple groups, organizations, and associations centred on the activities and the issues of freelance writers. In some instances, these groups first existed as online entities in the form of listservs or Facebook groups before evolving to the point where subscribers would meet in person. In other instances, with an entity such as PWAC, which has existed since the mid-1970s, the electronic capabilities of the group developed decades after its inception (Cohen, 2011). With more than 20 chapters across Canada, PWAC was the association most cited by those interviewed with respect to possessing a membership.

A strong plurality, if not a small majority of the respondents, had either been members or continued to be members of PWAC. Others were members of freelance worker unions such as the freelance branch of the CMG, or Unifor's CFU. Through these more formal channels, or through networks that have been cultivated personally, most interactions appeared to revolve around the garnering of advice in online settings. This seemed to include the more prosaic aspects of the occupation such as the answering of grammar questions, contact information for editors at various publications, and the searching out of sources for particular stories that were being written, etc.

But beyond these more transactional, informational exchanges, there were also deeper, dialogical ties of community and camaraderie formed. Freelance writers I interviewed referred to joining the likes of PWAC as gaining membership to a tribe. Rhonda Schmidt described it as "finding your tribe … and just having people to commiserate with." This notion of commiseration arose elsewhere as well. In describing what is tantamount to an embryonic beginning of the recognition of shared concerns, Yasmine Woods described gatherings where fellow freelance writers combined to discuss the state of the industry, contract conditions, bad editors, and the like as "pitch-and-bitch" sessions. She described

them as follows: "We commiserate. We have a shared trauma bond. Because at my other job no one understands this stuff. And my family, they are just like whatever. So, it is nice to find other people … and sometimes we even do creative stuff together." Eleanor Cameron has also participated in the "pitch-and-bitch" sessions. She said they were important because it was sometimes necessary to discuss what it is like "not to have a steady job, and a pension plan, and dental benefits, and how much of a hustle it is."

These opinions were not shared by a majority of those with whom I spoke. Several cited having let their PWAC or other organizational membership lapse because of the incessant "bitching" that inevitably arose at any meeting. Brian Middleman said he "soon got bored. Sitting around talking to people, 'Oh this is terrible, poor us. We don't have any benefits.' I just got tired of the complaining. And, other than the fact that we were writers, we had nothing in common." The shared position of wage labourer was insufficient in the formation of strong social ties for Middleman. More fundamentally, the structural position freelance writers occupy in capitalist creative economies was not a topic that seemed to receive a lot of consideration. This appeared to be the case even for someone such as Diana Mill, who acknowledged the degree of exploitation that occurs in the industry. But when asked how often she discussed such issues with her fellow freelance writers, she said it was an infrequent occurrence, if it took place at all:

> If you are talking about a meeting of the minds on the state of freelance and how it is going today, I don't do a lot of that, and I don't know a lot of people who do. Like sort of like bitching about your day as a freelancer. And maybe it is because we don't have time? Maybe it is just like get it done, you know? Everyone has kids, you know, and other things to do. There is not a lot of time to hash over what life is like if you are a freelancer.

I concluded the first part of this final section of the interview schedule by inquiring after whether respondents found their interactions with their fellow freelance writers to be more competitive or cooperative in character. Once more, an overwhelming consensus quickly emerged. However, for a class of workers often described as having absorbed the entrepreneurial ethos of neoliberalism *in toto,* the answer provided by most was not necessarily the one I expected. This was because a sizable majority of the respondents described their relations with their fellow freelance writers as being cooperative,

governed largely by mutual aid and reciprocity. Chelsea Austin described how she initially recoiled when a colleague asked her for contact information for an editor. She thought to herself, "Why would I give you their name? They only have so much budget." Ultimately, though, Austin shared her contact information with her colleague because others had provided her with similar information in the past.

However, as the interviews progressed, I noted the importance that almost all respondents placed upon self-promotion. This led me to insert a question in which I asked them if they saw any contradiction in claiming to act cooperatively with one another while continuously trying to distinguish themselves from each other for the purposes of securing a next contract. Of those I queried, not a single person said their 'look at me' efforts on social media, at networking events, etc., contradicted the alleged exclusively cooperative nature of their relations. Paulina Henderson contradicted this prevalent narrative, stating that "there is a lot of competition out there in terms of perceived status."

In only one instance did a participant convey to me that he saw other freelancers as a potential threat to his livelihood. In response, Brian Middleman felt rather reluctant to share contact information with possible competitors. He also acknowledged that it was the competitive pressures involved in being precarious labourers that hindered the efforts of freelance writers in organizing themselves to represent their collective interests:

> You know when someone comes to me and says, how do I get into (name of magazine)? And I'm like, well, maybe you should go somewhere else because I like being in (name of magazine), and there is only so much space available each and every month.

3.5.1   Union Attitudes

The final five questions included in the interview schedule addressed the experiences, if any, and attitudes of the respondents towards labour unions. The history of journalists' formation into collective organizations is one riven with tensions and strife. The fault lines responsible for this largely diverge along two trajectories. The first determinant has tended to revolve around journalists' self-perception as workers not subject to the same constraints, laws, logics, and disciplinary regimes as other workers (Leab, 1970; McKercher, 2002). The second dimension, closely related to the first, has involved

journalists' self-understanding as non-manual workers. Again, as McKercher (2002) describes journalists have tended to be independent, competitive people, "who are wary of rules, suspicious of trade unions and likely to see themselves as intellectuals rather than as members of the working class" (p.64). Historically, journalists did not wish to affiliate with militant printer unions, who might have been natural allies in their shared workplaces (Lichtenstein, 2002). In treating freelance writing as a cognate field to journalism, I wanted to explore whether these same tensions or divisions have persisted into the present. Once again, I wished to do so within the context of the neoliberal present. Of particular interest was how labour unions, and more broadly, collective action, have been largely marginalized, if not demonized.

My findings again seem to confound the characteristics often attributed to this ostensibly neoliberal class of workers. In part, the respondents appear to counter such claims through their overwhelmingly favourable response to the prospect of organizing into a union, or some other type of collective organization for the purposes of performing and representing their interests. In the sample of 25 freelance writers that I ordained, only three expressed outwardly negative views regarding such a proposal. In two of those instances, the interviewees had had negative union experiences in the past. The final instance of anti-union sentiment came from Angela Brancatto, and it seemed to stem from the many years she had worked as an editor hiring freelance writers for projects she oversaw. When I asked her specifically about the efforts of freelance unions and writers' associations to educate members about rights-grabbing contracts, she was clearly hostile to such efforts:

> That's unfortunate that if a writer pulls that stuff they won't get a job. That's what happens. Editors, publishers, they run the game. They run the game. You go in and say copyright blah, blah, blah. Too bad. I'll go to the next writer … I think what most of us have to do as freelancers is to do our jobs, and earn our income. It all depends on what you want. Don't worry so much about your copyright rights. Keep working and your income is going to go up. Find your niche, and your going to get your money.

Although all others surveyed supported unionization, none could actually envision how it would come to fruition. This was not due to the legal restrictions on collective bargaining for independent contractors, as not a single interviewee made mention of this legal and

political limitation on the rights of this class of workers. Multiple interviewees instead referred to what might be termed the "herding cats" thesis. By this they meant that freelance writers are such a spatially and temporally diffuse group, leading such disparate lives, that organizing them would prove impossible. Participants also recognized other challenges that might inhibit organizing efforts. Multiple participants indicated they felt as though the occupation of freelance writer attracted those that harbour anti-union tendencies. A couple of participants even suggested that anti-union fervour was higher among freelancers than the population at-large. Others still countered such a supposition, claiming that freelance writing was a liberal profession that attracted union sympathizers.

The widespread agreement among the participants about the need for collective organization and representation was met with an equal amount of disagreement about the role that such a body should play. Further to this, even as some discussed their vision for how the formation of a union for freelance writers could improve their working conditions, it was evident that the discourses of management had infiltrated how they saw such possibilities. Earl Hopkins said any union for freelance writers would have to offer potential members "a value proposition." This included the exchange of membership fees for programming and services such as professional development seminars and health-care benefits. His vision for a freelance writers' union involved cooperation and solidarity, but not necessarily between the parties one might expect:

> My view of what unions should be is that they're very necessary and they should be a partnership between owners, management and labour or talent, if you want to put it that way. A three-way partnership because if the company does well, then everybody does well. And there should be a way to disperse the profits of that in a more equitable basis without fighting over, fighting over dogma for want of a better word. I think too often, unions are entrenched in ideology, um, and sometimes, more often than not, management is entrenched in dogma, (and) so are the owners.

Decades of empirical evidence illustrate how concessionary bargaining has resulted in deeper losses for unions and their members, even when couched in the language of partnership (Geoghegan, 2014). Hopkins was not the only respondent who parroted the logic of capital while claiming the need for the organization of labour. Paulina Henderson claimed that what was needed was the further commoditization of online content. Rather

than online gift economies posing as a potential existential threat to the measure of value, and the wage-labour relationship, Henderson suggested that by commoditizing such efforts more fully writers would then receive a portion of the value they created.

The other set of needs revolved around education and its alleged ameliorative, if not transformative effects. As Chelsea Austin explained it, a body representing the interests of freelance writers would be able to conduct advocacy and/or public education campaigns informing the public about the legitimacy of freelance writing as a profession. Rhonda Schmidt felt that any educative efforts needed to be directed at the media corporations that employ freelance writers. She felt these companies needed to be made aware of the need for a raise in word rates. Lastly, for Christine Smythe, it was not the corporations that required a campaign to raise awareness for they were already well acquainted with the rates they were paying. The efforts of writers' associations and freelance unions should instead be directed at the writers themselves, providing them with information about the importance of retaining the copyright to one's work.

Because it was anomalous in nature, one final response received merits mention. Marcie Duchamp relayed her strong support for unionization efforts. However, she feared participation in such efforts might result in reprimand if not outright sanction. Even though she was the only writer surveyed who made mention of being blacklisted there exists a long historical precedent for such actions. Given the earlier comments by Angela Brancatto concerning freelance writers attempts at protecting their copyrights, it would not appear to be a totally unfounded fear that Duchamp was articulating. Such a consideration when combined with the lack of legal protections afforded freelancers means other alternatives require further examination. This I take up in the final chapter.

By way of conclusion, Eleanor Cameron contended that part of the reason freelancers could not envision how they would work together to form a co-operative, a union, or some other organizational form was because all too often they did not even know one another. She conveyed that she had been working for nearly a decade as a freelance media worker in radio before meeting other radio freelancers. It was through a CMG organized social event that Cameron met her first set of fellow freelance media workers.

Even if these types of events, either self-organized though social media, or hosted by media unions, focus too greatly on networking opportunities and self-promotion, it would appear that the nullification of current working conditions for freelancers in these industries does entail, at least partly, the overcoming of an excess of atomization and isolation based on Cameron's account.

This chapter as but one instantiation of a workers' inquiry has centred on the understanding of experience as told from the perspective of the participants in this study. As such, I have tried to keep to a minimum the level of interpretation accompanying informants' articulations. The arguments and investigations I present in the chapters that follow, however, have as their basis the perceptions expressed to me. For instance, in chapter four, I take pronouncements communicating a certain consonance with neoliberal subjectivity to interrogate ideological analysis *vis-à-vis* cultural labours. Chapter five builds on this ideological analysis by taking the hostility of respondents to the 9-5 workday as a means to investigate the alienation of Fordist-Taylorist paradigm.

Chapter six relies on the apprehension of those I interviewed with respect to what constitutes the craft aspects of the journalistic labour process to examine the matter historically. Subsequently, I trace the craft origins of journalism back to the master-printer of several centuries ago. Other elements of the newsgathering process that I consider in chapter six also emanate from the reflections of the respondents in this chapter. I use participant statements about their desire to write to assess the creativity of news writing in chapter seven. Lastly, accounts concerning the attitudes of those I interviewed towards unions, and the means by which they consent to, and subvert, the demands of the labour process inform speculations as to how these freelancers might come to resist and struggle against, individually and collectively, the conditions under which they work.

Chapter 4

4 Neoliberalism: Objective Forces, Subjective Outcomes

Critical scholarship of cultural labour tends to depict this field as being the domain of neoliberal subjects. This assessment defines the need to outline neoliberalism in both its subjective and objective registers. This multi-dimensional analysis makes it possible to assess the scholarly treatment freelance writers in Canada have received in this regard, and the extent to which they have been interpellated as neoliberal subjects. I conclude the chapter with a brief case study analyzing the very real efforts to entrepreneurialize journalism school curricula, and how students have reacted to these initiatives.

4.1 Portrait of the Creative Worker as Neoliberal Subject

Workers in the creative industries, along with those employed in information and knowledge sectors, have been the focus of much scholarly research over several decades now. From these investigations, a portrait of this class of workers has emerged, depicting them as demonstrating subjectivities that are centred on the following: autonomy, choice, entrepreneurial risk taking, expressions of personal creativity, self-fulfillment, self-help optimism, and self-improvement (Gooptu, 2009; Dawkins, 2011). The rise of these discourses of the self, or, alternatively, of personal responsibility, come to prominence in the early 1980s and reflect a concurrent retrenchment of the welfare state and the erosion of the post-war, labour-capital accord (King, 2006).

This has led to a segment of critical researchers representing this group of workers as the direct bearers of neoliberal thought as expressed through their subjectivity (McRobbie, 2004, 2005; Ross, 2009; Lane, 2011; de Peuter, 2013; Haiven, 2014). Angela McRobbie (2004) has described the tendency among "leftists" to equate desire for individual expression and meaningful, creative work with total capitulation to the values of neoliberalism. Such portrayals are indicative of a lack of a political vocabulary able to reach beyond the impasse of whether these workers are, or are not, neoliberal subjects, in her estimation.

Among this study's participants examples were numerous of the frequency with which the precepts of neoliberal discourses informed the conceptual apparatuses they deployed. Toronto writer Sarah Simpson, previously employed, unhappily, in a corporate marketing environment, conflated the reputational capital integral to the careers of freelancers with the ethos of personal responsibility: "I think as a writer, as any person who is putting their own work out there, you need to take the weight onto your own shoulders sometimes, and look at what you can do to improve … It's not like when you work for McDonald's and, you know, something goes out there, and it's got McDonald's name on it, right? It's got your name on it, so why not take the responsibility to do-it-yourself?"

From her rural New Brunswick home, Christine Smythe cautioned those, like Simpson, transitioning to freelancing from bureaucratically-organized workplaces, that it is "not like going to your job where they hand you your work and hand you your paycheck." This embrace of self-reliance and personal responsibility has its parallels in the findings of Nandini Gooptu's (2009) research. Her interviews with service-sector workers in India reveal a disdain for an "obsolete form of easy '9 to 5 jobs,' where a salary could be drawn without much exertion" (Gooptu, 2009, p. 49). This type of "slothful living" is no longer available, nor desired by her interviewees. For them, the dynamism of India's new economy will afford opportunities to those who work the hardest.

This meritocratic thinking also informed Smythe's assertion "that there is enough work out there for everybody." Subsequently, it was the fault of those who trained as newspaper men and women and broadcast journalists for not wanting to write "advertorials" or work on websites. In this framing, Smythe effaces the systemic imperatives of media corporations for continued growth, realized as profits, and the deleterious effects this imposes upon journalists and freelance writers in both their skilled productive capacities as well as in their reproductive functions.

In another instance, the entrepreneurial self was homologous with the risk-taking self I reviewed in chapter two. In the opinion of Catherine Moores, freelance writers needed to be risk embracing. She stated that she had freed herself "of the safety net. Yeah, I'm okay to fly the trapeze without the net." This allusion to cutting the bottom out of the social

safety net reveals an acceptance, if not embrace, of the state's abrogation to manage economic activity in a manner that better managed the interests of labour and capital. But these kinds of statements were not without their contradictions. Smythe was one of the most ardent proponents for union membership as well as membership in professional organizations. Her own participation in such groups had served to educate Smythe about rights-grabbing contracts. It also enabled her to participate in advocacy efforts on behalf of freelance writers with respect to the multitudinous issues affecting them.

For her part, Simpson's embrace of an entrepreneurial outlook came with an acknowledgment that this was attributable to the growing precarity in labour markets. These paradoxes do not surprise as the capitalist mode of production in the cultural industries requires not just competition but cooperation. As Andrew Ross (2009) notes, the desire for freelance employment does not necessarily contravene the ability to act in solidaristic fashion. Nor can it be reduced to "the neoliberal ethos of the self-directed entrepreneur" as one identity does not map perfectly upon the other (Ross, 2009, p. 6).

The subjective expression of the neoliberal turn in the shaping of character has its accompanying structurally objective set of determinants. Yet it is important to recall that the neoliberal project largely began as an intellectual endeavour in response to the labour-capital accord that takes hold (Srnicek and Williams, 2015). The unprecedented levels of state intervention and expenditure into economic and welfare activity in order to ameliorate the periodic crises of capitalism receive an organized refutation at the Walter Lippmann Colloquium held on Paris in 1938 (Maglin, 2000; Horkheimer and Adorno, 2002; Fraser, 2015; Rehmann, 2013). By 1947, business patrons have funded the Mont Pelerin Society comprised of the likes of Ludwig von Mises, Milton Friedman, and Friedrich Hayek (Rehmann, 2013; Srnicek and Williams, 2015). When the "golden age of capitalism" is beset by a series of crises in the first half of the 1970s, the conditions for ushering in the neoliberal epoch had been decades in the making already (Marglin, 2000; Reich, 2007; Srnicek and Williams, 2015).

Labour's demands for continuous wage increases combined with stagnating levels of productivity, as workers resist efforts to further rationalize labour processes, lead to

declining profit margins among monopoly capitalist firms. Workers' critiques come to encompass the state as well, demanding the provision of more social programs. This forces governments into deficit spending to try and meet the rising expectations of working and non-working peoples (ibid). These circumstances are conjoined to catalyze a counter-offensive by capital's representatives in opposition to the gains achieved by the working class during this period. In the political sphere, the implementation of the neoliberal program is signified by the election of Margaret Thatcher in the U.K. in 1979 and the following year with the election of Ronald Reagan in the U.S. (Stiglitz, 2003).

David Harvey (2005) describes neoliberalism as a set of political and economic theories and practices that propose the following: 1) the meeting of human needs can be best satisfied through the release of the entrepreneurial energies of individuals; 2) in order for entrepreneurial individuals to attain success, it is imperative to institute and maintain a regime of robust private property rights, free markets, as well as the pursuit of free trade agreements; 3) the role of states within this doctrine "is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices" (p. 2). The latter involves ensuring the integrity of the money supply, funding coercive institutions such as police and military forces in order to ensure the sanctity of private property rights, and finally, to create markets for services that were previously within the public domain.

The creation of markets where none had existed previously is one of the main mechanisms under neoliberalism by which wealth redistribution has occurred upwards. Harvey (2005) terms this set of overlapping processes "accumulation by dispossession." Concurrent to this tendency towards privatization is the imposition of insecurity upon workers who had enjoyed comparatively stable relations of production during the "golden age of capitalism" (Reich, 2007). Initial attempts to create the conditions of precarity revolve around the institutionalization of high interest rates by the central banks of the advanced industrial economies in the late 1970s and early 1980s. The reason given for such a manoeuvre is to lower rates of inflation. But an equally important determination in such efforts is the wish to increase unemployment in order to weaken the strength of the working class by creating a more contingent labour force (Fraser, 2015).

The defeat of public-sector union strikes in the U.S. and the U.K., involving air-traffic controllers in the former in 1981 and miners in the latter in 1984-1985, sends a broad signal to capital that the social terrain is now conducive to the reassertion of (capital) class power (Marks, 2012). The overall effect signals the following for Harvey (1990):

> (A) general shift from the collective norms and values that were hegemonic at least in working-class organizations and other social movements of the 1950s and 1960s, towards a much more competitive individualism as the central value in an entrepreneurial culture that has penetrated many walks of life … It has also permitted substantial redistributions of income to be achieved, which have advantaged, for the most part, the already privileged. Entrepreneurialism now characterizes not only business actions … (but) has even reached into the nether corners of academic, literary, and artistic life (p. 171).

In sum, the structurally objective features of neoliberalism Harvey (1990, 2005) details form what he terms a "regime of accumulation." Ash Amin (1994) defines regimes of accumulation as a set of macro-economic considerations operating at a global level and organized around labour process exchanges involving workers, raw materials, and forces of production. This totality of processes occurs within a regulatory framework enabling the ongoing accumulation of capital. The regime of accumulation is an analytical tool attempting to account for the constellation of productive considerations that define any social formation, at any particular point in history.

A significant objective of the neoliberal program is the facilitation of entrepreneurial subjectivities. This trend has accelerated among cultural labourers in the creative industries since the crisis of 2007-2008 (McRobbie, 2015). More than a decade prior to the Great Recession, elected governments began to view the cultural sectors as sites of employment growth for the entrepreneurially oriented as well as a strategy for enhancing economic expansion (Garnham, 2005). The establishment of these industries as growth sectors becomes an imperative for all levels of government to counteract the deleterious effects of deindustrialization while simultaneously trying to secure some type of comparative advantage in globally competitive markets vying for talented workers (ibid).

The Australian Labour Party is recognized as drafting the first policy paper of this kind in which the creative industries are to be deployed for the purposes of generating

employment and economic growth (Hesmondhalgh, 2008). Their proposal, entitled *Creative Nation,* was released in 1994. Although the first of its kind, the likely best-known document in this genre is the U.K. Labour Party's *Creative Industries Mapping Document* (Schlesinger, 2007). With this paper's publication in 1998, it outlines 13 sectors of economic activity comprising the creative industries (McGuigan, 2009). This includes television, radio and newspapers as part of the publishing industry. This encompasses the fields of journalistic activity that have employed, historically, freelance writers

The document goes on to define the creative industries as "those industries which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property" (Schlesinger, 2007, p. 379). This definition perpetuates the hierarchies, inequalities, and divisions of capitalist social relations by locating creativity in the individual in what Haiven (2014) terms the "private property of each isolated person" (p. 192).

This is a hallmark of the neoliberal paradigm along with the deepening commodification of the arts and media, which coincides with the state's reduction in subsidy for the fine and performing arts and the deregulation of the commercial mass media (Dorland, 1996). Richard Florida (2002), a known exponent for this individualized and commodified model, describes this evolving set of circumstances as demonstrating that "there is no corporation or other large institution that will take care of us—that we are truly on our own" (p. 115), and that this is not due to "evil corporations taking aim at defenceless workers; rather, it is a deep and fundamental shift in the nature of the economy" (p. 108).

Reductions in state supports in public news media along with deregulation effects in commercial news media have advanced the proliferation of entrepreneurial initiative in these sectors (McRobbie, 2015). This has combined with an overly exaggerated profit crisis to further the spread of contingent employment conditions. Besides factors of financialization and debt, this decline in profitability in the newspaper industry, with which the majority of the freelance writers I interviewed had some employment experience, is attributable to an over reliance on advertising revenues, a failure to adapt to

technological changes that have undermined the reliance on previous advertising monies, and these same digital technologies eroding the trust of audiences in legacy media, who previously held a near monopoly on truth and storytelling (Siles and Boczkowski, 2012).

4.2 The Dissonance of Neoliberalism: Material Practice or Ideational Project

Concomitant to any regime of accumulation is a "mode of regulation." Harvey (1990) describes this as the "materialization of the regime of accumulation" that is composed of the norms, habits, laws, and other regulatory mechanisms that align as closely as possible, in scope and scale, the subjectivity of individuals with the objective logics that govern production. A mode of regulation addresses the need for any social formation to reproduce its dominant concerns in any historical moment. Marx (1952) explains the mapping out of the points of intersection between aspects of the reproductive and productive as the act of writing the history of humanity in each and every epoch in which people are conceived "as both the authors and the actors of their own drama" (p. 115).

As unlikely a figure as the now deceased Margaret Thatcher gives further credence to Marx's (1952) credo regarding the inextricable concatenation between the productive and the reproductive. In an interview with a newspaper reporter in 1981 about the implementation of neoliberal reforms, she tells her interlocutor that while economics is the method, the objective of dismantling the institutional infrastructure of the welfare state is to alter the soul of Great Britons (Harvey, 2005). This involves changing the cultural fabric of the U.K.'s citizenry with regards to the dominant belief systems that had shaped understandings of the role of the state and capital in the post-war period. The legitimation of Thatcher's neoliberal reforms as a program of political and economic proposals requires new sets of cultural discourses and politics to emerge (McGuigan, 2009).

As I have already alluded to, neoliberalism is an ideational project as well (Barnett, 2010). The term ideology traces its etymological roots to the eighteenth century. The French philosopher Destutt de Tracy, is cited as first using the word (Williams, 1983). In its initial usage, the term denotes a systematic or scientific approach to the study of

human ideas (ibid). By the first half of the following century, the term had undergone a transformation in meaning. Rather than a classificatory approach to systems of ideas, it came to refer to differing sets of related conceptualizations (Eagleton, 1991).

In his exhaustive examination of ideology as concept, Terry Eagleton (1991) concludes there is of yet no definition of the word able to capture its many contested meanings. Despite this lack of a stable reading, he provides several thumbnail definitions for the most common means by which this concept is deployed. These include ideology as a symbolic means by which humans create meaning for the purposes of a shared social life, antagonistic belief systems belonging to differing class factions in any spatially and temporally defined social order, and the promulgation of ideas to legitimize a dominant class interest as disseminated across a gradient of social institutions with the correlate to this being that these ideas are representations that are in some sense false and illusory.

Implicit to these last two usages is the notion of ideology referring to distorted means of communication as engendered by the unequal relations of power in class stratified social orders (Thompson, 1990; McGuigan, 2009). For the communications scholar, Christian Fuchs (2008), ideology is a system of false representations that "do not map reality, but are social constructions that show how certain groups want to define reality in order to make others see reality in the same way" (p. 74). The illusory dimension of ideology, and its dissemination from more-to-less powerful social factions, is also present in Louis Althusser's (1971) general definition of ideology: "(I)deology is therefore not the system of the real relations which govern the existence of individuals, but the imaginary relation of those individuals to the real relations in which they live" (p. 165).

The above categorizations all share an indebtedness to Marx and Engel's (1998) earlier formulation. In this, one of their most memorable definitions, ideology expresses the transmission of the set of beliefs of the dominant social class made possible by their control over the means of communication. Ideology, here understood as false consciousness, appears as a purely analytical category that is externally inculcated and only resides in the mind (Rehmann, 2013). What Marx and Engels (1998) under theorize in this instance is any systematic presentation of the means by which ideologies are

materially embedded and diffused (Soper, 1986). This shortcoming has not lessened the association of ideology with false representations of reality, promulgated by a dominant class over a subordinated class within Marxism (Williams, 1983). Therefore, the enduring value of Althusser's (1971) schema is that it attempts to remedy this failing by connecting ideology as mystified thought to the concrete institutional means and mechanisms responsible for its perpetuation and imputation (Rehmann, 2013).

As Althusser (1971) explains, the reproduction of the social order in a social formation that facilitates the ongoing accumulation of capital is as important as the production processes from which capital emanates (ibid). In order to ensure workers will cooperate in these valorization process(es) their labour power has to be reproduced outside the point of production in the cultural sphere: "I shall say that the reproduction of labour power requires not only a reproduction of its skills, but also, at the same time, a reproduction of its submission to the rules of the established order, i.e. a reproduction of submission to the ruling ideology for the workers" (Althusser, 1971, p. 132-133).

In order to illustrate what processes constitute these reproductive pathways, Althusser (1971) constructs a "Marxist theory of the state" (p. 140). The state operates at the superstructural level in his historically-specific paradigm. This cultural or superstructural dimension consists of two planes. The first level is comprised of the state in its political/governing function as well as in its responsibility in executing jurisprudence. It is in the second level of this model that one explicitly encounters the state's ideological function (ibid). These second-degree institutions Althusser (1971) terms the ideological state apparatuses (ISAs)[9]. A non-exclusive list of ISAs would include the church, the school, family, mass media and culture understood as sports, fine arts, etc. These bodies "amount to the most sensitive instruments of social control … (even though) formal freedom is guaranteed for everyone … However, all find themselves enclosed from early

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[9] In Althusser's (1971) model of state power, the complementary set of institutions to the ideological state apparatuses are the repressive state apparatuses (RSAs). Whereas the ISAs operate in a more diffuse manner to generate consent to the dominant order, the RSAs operate under more centralized state control in the form of police forces, law enforcement more generally, and the military. These institutions represent the directly coercive dimensions of control that function through disciplinary force and punishment.

on within a system of churches, clubs, professional associations, and other relationships"
(Horkheimer and Adorno, 2002, p. 120).

Althusser's (1971) model has its basis in a structuralist, scientific Marxism that is
premised on the "theoretical practice" of an intellectual elite (Humphries, 2016). It
conceives of human subjects as the mere epiphenomena of the class-structured division of
labour. He makes specific reference to "individual-subjects occupying the posts which
the socio-technical division of labour assigns to them in production" (Althusser, 1971, p.
182). Human history therefore appears to unfold through a set of underlying structural
relations that are independent of the human agents located within them. This model
produces subjects "for the place in society they support" (Soper, 1986, p. 109).

For Althusser (1971), no role exists for knowledge deriving from the experiences of
human agents in their everyday material praxis: "(T)his appeal to human cognition and
action is fundamentally misconceived. For it relies on the mistaken idea that human being
are the ultimate 'subjects' of the social processes in which they are enmeshed" (Soper,
1986, p. 104). This disjuncture with the arc of this project I shall address more fully in the
case study at chapter's end.

Although the class imposed relations of production create occupations across the
variegated social and technical divisions of labour that require filling, it is the mediating
effects of the ISAs, as the repositories of ideology as well as its belts of transmission, that
creates the appropriate subjects to occupy positions (ibid). The overall effect is that
subjects develop not according to their needs or desires, but to the capitalist mode of
production and the various components of its division of labour (Mansfield, 2000). It is
through the social construction of subjectivity, of an understanding of the self as
interpellated into a state of subjectification, as constituted via ideology, that the working
class fulfils the systemic needs of capitalism. ISAs produce "good subjects" who regulate
themselves; that is, they "work all right all by themselves" (Althusser, 1971, p. 181).

This account demonstrates how concrete individuals are interpellated into this state of
subjectification. This refers to the mutually constituting ways by which all those
subjectified, which is everyone in the capitalist mode of production according to

Althusser (1971), reproduce ideology, and how they are simultaneously constituted as subjects through ideology. To be a subject implies a relational aspect through which a person or group is positioned beneath, in a subservient manner, to some other entity, i.e., to be subjected to (Mansfield, 2000). Simultaneously, it is also a reference to personhood in which one considers oneself to be a "free independent person, guided merely by one's inner impulses, convictions and beliefs: the subject is subjected in the form of autonomy" (Rehmann, 2013, p. 156). Interpellation is the process by which people come to occupy the contradictory position of the "free subject" (Lorey, 2006). Under conditions of neoliberalism this takes place through engagement with the material and the intellectual in "our intuitions and instincts, (in) our values and our desires as well as to the possibilities inherent in the social world we inhabit" (Harvey, 2005, p. 5).

This theory of ideological subjectification informs accounts of cultural workers. In the estimation of Isabell Lorey (2006), freelance writers and other cultural workers epitomize the tenets of neoliberalism due to their delusions and the fantasies for self-fulfillment and self-actualization in the labour sphere. In their unwavering belief that these expressions of selfhood can only take place in and through individualized contexts these workers can then be more easily exploited by employers as well as engaging in self-exploitation (ibid). In their advocacy for personal responsibility and adherence to the secular work ethic, it is possible to detect in Smythe and Simpson's statements some of the characteristics of neoliberal subjecthood—even as they simultaneously contradict them.

The texture of this analysis is present in Cohen's (2011, 2013, 2015a, 2016b) own work. When Cohen (2016b) deliberates whether freelance writers are engaged in a prefigurative refusal of work in their quest for a less alienating occupation, or whether they are representative manifestations of neoliberal ideology, it is the latter that is given extensive evidentiary consideration. Cohen (2011, 2015b) notes that neoliberalism as a particular modality of capitalist production has furthered the development of social character that is oriented towards individualism, self-reliance, self-governance, and risk taking: "The ideal worker-subject is ready to work anytime, social, and self-directing, embodying the traits of neoliberal subjects: flexible, adaptable, and enterprising" (Cohen, 2016b, p. 126). In its totality, neoliberal ideology has "interpellated" freelance writers "into entrepreneurial

discourses" (Cohen, 2016b, p. 124).

As a consequence of these unfoldings, neoliberalism is "an ideology … (which) further dilutes an understanding of freelance journalism as work" (Cohen, 2016b, p. 115). It does so by contributing to the formation of an "occupation identity … which is based upon notions of professionalism and artistic labour and shaped by the current neoliberal cultural climate, which idealizes the individual, entrepreneurial worker and undermines the very notions of solidarity and struggle upon which collective bargaining is based" (Cohen, 2011, p. 133). The success of neoliberealism as an ideological project is in part due to the "individualism, entrepreneurship, and self-sufficiency" it promotes (Cohen, 2013, p. 229). In response, unions, and other workers' organizations, will need to devise means to nullify the "individualism and structural competition that characterizes freelance media work and foster an understanding of freelance workers as workers" (Cohen, 2016b, p. 231). Her presentation of freelance writers' consent to the neoliberal paradigm is put forward as a false representation of the relationships these workers have to the real conditions of their existence (Althusser, 1971).

In possibly not wanting to revert to the adumbration of the "neoliberal dupe," Cohen (2013, 2015a, 2016b) situates freelance writers' desires for flexibility and autonomy not as a simple reflex of current market ideology, but also as an outcome of the material organization of their labour market: "The structure of freelance work produces particular subjectivities and occupational identities … that freelancers do not just adopt as a product of ideology, but rather as a requirement of finding work, for competing, and for succeeding" (Cohen, 2013, p. 208). Elsewhere, she observes "entrepreneurial behaviour is not just a condition of neoliberal ideology, but also an imperative because of how work is organized" (Cohen, 2015a, p. 525).

The adoption of this analytical lens leaves Cohen (2012b; 2013; 2016b) to disregard Marx's (1977) best-known postulate for explaining the materialist expression of ideology, i.e. commodity fetishism. The material particulars structuring freelance writers labour Cohen (2011; 2012b; 2013; 2016b) identifies are situated within a nearly universalized system of commodity production and exchange. This system performs by

dressing humanity's interdependent social labour in a mask of atomized individualism.

Yet in recognizing the role of compulsion in shaping subjectivity as being beyond the ideational realm, Cohen's (2013, 2016b) assay retains its Marxist orientation even if it remains unnamed. Alternatively, what she adopts from Marx (1977) is the conceptualization that the beliefs and behaviours of working peoples are nothing more than an expression of the "silent compulsion of economic relations" (p. 899). What Marx (1977) suggests here is that ways of working and living become naturalized over time in the *longue duree* of succession from feudalism to capitalism. Consequently, "by education, tradition, and habit (the working class) look upon the requirements of that mode of production (capitalism) as self-evident natural laws" (Marx, 1977, p. 899).

Nicholas Abercrombie et al (1980) write that Marx's (1977) "dull compulsion" argument indicates an absence of ideological content among workers. The working class at this stage in the development of capitalist social relations has no definitive set of beliefs, illusory or otherwise. There is mere acceptance of this set of conditions as an ontology that is entered into and encountered in its apparent unalterable givenness (ibid). The explanatory strength of the thesis is in its ability to capture the power of reified habituation in attuning workers to systemic needs.

At the same time, Cohen (2011; 2012b; 2013; 2015a; 2016b) does oscillate between materialist and culturalist understandings of (neoliberal) ideology. There is both the intimation of an impelled consciousness that arises in a top-down manner as an expression of power exercised from above. Alongside this sits the suggestion freelance writers are materially enacting their neoliberal subjectivities through the exercise of choice in their labour markets and labour processes.

Kate Soper (1986) argues this is an unresolved tension present in *The German Ideology.* In one turn, Marx and Engels (1998) present ideology as practical forms of consciousness engendered from groups of humans engaged in metabolic exchange with nature. From this necessary, material activity, there develops "mental life in general," including language systems as well as belief systems situated in religious practices, etc. (Eagleton, 1991, p. 73). This organic construction of ideology is contrasted by the reified approaches

adopted by the "conceptive ideologists" of the ruling class who attempt to mystify the real conditions of the lived relations of subordination (Marx and Engels, 1998, p. 68). According to Soper (1986), Marx and Engels (1998) do not clearly articulate or distinguish between these two conceptions, nor do they develop them any further.

Althusser (1971), by contrast, makes more explicit the linkage between ideology and materiality in how the former is realized in and through the ISAs. He wishes to explore how "ideology has a material existence" (Althusser, 1971, p. 165). The transmission of ideology occurs via the ISAs through prescribed, patterned, and ritualistic behaviour. Voluntary participation in rituals enacted daily in school, at dinner, on a team, and in church is how subjects tacitly agree to ideology and embody it. Content is less important than form in this model. With respect to the educational system, it is the architecture of the apparatus that is most effective in communicating hierarchy, obedience, subservience, passivity, etc. (Fremeaux and Jordan, 2012; Kaltefleiter and Nocella II, 2012). The seeming unassailability of this alienated learning experience facilitates the ideational aspect of the subjectification process (Rehmann, 2013; Silva, 2017).

Cohen's (2011; 2012b; 2013; 2016b) material presentation of ideology as something more than the circulation of 'common sense' discourses shaping understanding has at least a partial grounding in Althusser's (1971) conceptualization of subjectification. Her understanding that the compulsion to labour under capitalism presupposes the need for any ideological work being conducted is also present in Marx's (1977) analysis. Under the latter scenario, the stick of starvation does not necessarily require the carrot of ideology. But in Cohen's (2011; 2012b; 2013; 2016b) repeated injunction for the union movement, or other workers' organizations, to inculcate class consciousness into freelance writers there is a reluctance to abandon an understanding of neoliberalism as an epistemologically idealist project.

This kind of comprehension implies freelance writers are representative of the types of subjectivities the neoliberal program wishes to condition. Resistance, either as a refusal of work, or as a search for meaningful work, as engendered by alienation, is sidelined in such a presentation. Yet paradoxically, neoliberalism's social relations are configured

both in its regime of accumulation and its mode of regulation such that attempts to evade modalities of more alienating work require the internalization of a neoliberal praxis.

Neoliberalism programmatically portrays itself as "liberating agency from a patronizing state-bureaucracy … by permanently interpellating (cultural labourers) to be active and creative to show initiative and to believe optimistically in the success of their efforts. At the same time, it calls upon the subjects to submit to the fateful order of the market that regularly and increasingly fails and frustrates the efforts of the many" (Rehmann, 2013, p. 287). This is evident in the accounts of Smythe and Simpson from this chapter as well as from other informants in the previous chapter and chapters forthcoming. In the chapter directly proceeding this one, I investigate the historical, material, and cultural legacies of Fordism contributing to the adoption of neoliberal subjectivities. Prior to doing so, I first present a case study on the manner in which ISAs are being deployed to try and cultivate entrepreneurial outlooks in the form of ongoing changes to journalism school curricula.

4.3 Case Study: Craft Worker, Professional, Entrepreneur: Changing Types and the Neoliberalization of Journalism School

I earlier referred to Althusser's (1971) identification of specific ISAs. His list consists of eight institutions. Of these eight bodies, he singles out the education system as being the most powerful and influential in reproducing capitalist ideology. The school system supersedes even the family and the "communication apparatus," which fills "every 'citizen' with daily doses of nationalism, chauvinism, etc." (Althusser, 1971, p. 154). Socio-economic formations prior to capitalism, such as slavery and feudalism, largely reproduce the skills required of the division of labour at the point of production. More important than these skills are the attitudes and behaviours that are inculcated in ordinary, routine, everyday ways within educational institutions. This is a process that involves "not only a reproduction of its (labour power) skills, but also, at the same time, a reproduction of its (labour power) submission to the rules of the established order, i.e. a reproduction of submission to the ruling ideology for the workers" (Althusser, 1971, p. 132-133).

The near disappearance of guilds along with the long-term decline in importance of apprenticeships in the transition from feudalism to capitalism necessitates the creation of an education system based on formal schooling. For each role in the social and technical division of labour, students receive the proper amount of ideological training to fulfill the role assigned to them based on the initiative and the ability demonstrated at different stages of their educational training (ibid). One can conclude from this assessment that the system of education is most successful when the doxa of student-workers is homologous with the logics of capitalist (re)production.

Journalism education itself grows out of a craft tradition of apprenticeships and guilds (Tunstall, 1971). Their decline has resulted in the prominence of journalism schools as training grounds for preparing the next generation of journalist student-workers. This process has not unfolded in a problem-free manner. A vortex of controversies have engulfed journalism schools periodically since their presence becomes ubiquitous at the start of the twentieth century (Macdonald, 2006). Tensions have arisen when the profit motive of capitalist news media has come into conflict with its public service orientation aimed at creating an informed citizenry as mediated by journalism schools.

Excessive incursions of the former upon the latter that have served to undermine citizen-audiences' faith in the integrity, accuracy, and quality of reporting have been the oft-cited source for the tempests that have emerged. This very type of scandal is responsible for Joseph Pulitzer's commitment of a two-million-dollar endowment to Columbia University for the creation of a standalone school of journalism in 1904—one of the first of its kind in North America (Desbarats, 1996). This is Pulitzer's response to the "yellow journalism" humiliation he incurs during the Spanish-American war at the conclusion of the nineteenth century. This leads Pulitzer to embark on a series of efforts to rehabilitate his own reputation as well as that of the industry that had made him wealthy, culminating with his pledge to Columbia University (Boylan, 2003).

Calls for reforms following crises have tended to emphasize a shift in educational training from vocational—rooted in dominant understandings of the craft traditions of newspapers—to professional in alignment with the public service tradition of lawyers and

doctors (Skinner et al, 2001). The latter has been a long-standing, well-established and favoured position among scholars in journalism schools and communication departments. These very sentiments are present in the statements Pulitzer makes to coincide with the establishment of his endowment. His remarks articulate a vision of journalism as a profession rooted in training in the liberal arts. This training is to imbue journalists with an ethical credo, which would inoculate them from the commercial pressures in the newsroom: "Recognize that journalism, is, or ought to be, one of the great and intellectual professions … One that requires the widest and the deepest knowledge and the firmest foundations of character" (Pulitzer cited in Desbarats, 1996, p. 226).

This lofty, even well-intentioned rhetoric belies the news media industries preference for vocational training ostensibly anchored in the craft traditions of the industry (Skinner et al, 2001). This continues into the present despite the conclusions of Canada's Special Senate Committee on the Mass Media nearly half a century ago. The report states the training system "works well enough for apprentices on an assembly line, but it is far from adequate for an occupation which likes to regard itself as a profession" (Special Senate Committee on the Mass Media cited in Macdonald, 2006, p. 750). An Althusserian (1971) analysis might suggest these student-workers are ejected into the labour processes of the news media industries with the just the proper amount of ideological training to ensure the mostly smooth reproduction of the relations of production.

Prior to the Great Recession of 2007-2008, concentrated ownership of news media, neoliberal deregulation at the state level, and technological media convergence had engendered another series of debates among journalism educators about the colonization of economic considerations into the public sphere (Bollinger, 2003; Macdonald, 2006). The renewal of these debates once more results in advocacy for a more rigourous liberal arts component to journalism-school curricula that would transmit a professional seriousness to students. This professional code, on an individual level, would better equip students to resist the structural, institutional, and economic imperatives they are likely to encounter in the newsroom of corporate media (Adam, 2001).

Criticisms of this kind from some journalism scholars have done little to displace the

otherwise widespread agreement about the institutional role of journalism schools. There remains a belief that the primary objective is to prepare students to work in newsrooms as wage labourers (Cohen, 2015a; Casero-Ripolles et al, 2016). After the events of 2007-2008, and the profitability crisis that ensued, arguments over liberal-arts professionalism counterposed to craft-based vocational training have undergone a seismic shift.

What comes to the fore since that time is the figure of the journalist and freelancer as entrepreneur. Eileen Fredman Soloman (2016) writes journalism school curricula needs revising to acknowledge the changing labour dynamics of the industry and to accommodate the needs of a growing class of freelance workers. Her recommendations for achieving this involve teaching students how to devise business plans, read contracts, manage accounts and file taxes as all are duties integral to being a solopreneur (ibid). Entrepreneurship is cast as a "silver bullet," reinvigorating the industry by enhancing profitability while simultaneously creating a new form of employment. In sum, entrepreneurship is a "response to the financial weakness of journalism, the destruction of employment, and (the) loss of job security" (Casero-Ripolles, 2016, p. 288). Statements from journalism school administrators and educators indicate a desire to "better equip students to establish" entrepreneurial ventures (Baines and Kennedy, 2010, p. 100).

In the summer of 2010, the City University of New York (CUNY) announced that it would become the first post-secondary institution in the U.S. to offer a degree in entrepreneurial journalism (Claussen, 2011). The program's director, Jeff Jarvis, stated that it is only through a renewed commitment to entrepreneurialism, at the level of the individual journalist,[10] that journalism can sustain itself. Sustainability is now defined in

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[10] Rozane De Cock and Hedwig De Smaele (2016) note that as many as 33 percent of practicing journalists across the globe are freelancers/entrepreneurs. There is an important distinction to be made between the two designations. As Casero-Ripolles et al (2016) write, freelance journalists are employed in a temporary way with a media outlet. Journalists who are entrepreneurs are the proprietors of a media outlet they own. Freelance journalists may be enterprising, but are not necessarily entrepreneurs; they do not distribute commodities, which contribute to the further valorization and circulation of capital. They remain wage labourers (Cohen, 2015a). Fuchs (2008) refers to freelance writers as a "self-employed labour class" (p. 200). These are workers who may 'own' their means of production, i.e. computer, brains, etc., but are left in a permanent position of having to sell their labour power to media corporations. This is an outcome under neoliberalism in which capitalist operations seek to reduce their variable and constant capital costs through various outsourcing schemes (McChesney, 2013).

explicitly market terms with respect to the attraction and valorization of capital: "(J)ournalists must become entrepreneurs … They need to sense and serve the market" (Jarvis cited in Siapera and Papdopoulou, 2016, p. 178).

Future profitability of the industry, and those within it, is to be ensured within entrepreneurial curricula that emphasizes "disruption" and "creative destruction" as technological advancements intersect with creativity and new business models to revive a moribund field (Baines and Kennedy, 2010; Siapera and Papadopoulou, 2016). This runs counter to the prevailing wisdom that had governed journalism curricula for roughly a century in tension between professionalism and vocationalism (Baines and Kennedy, 2010). The changes to curricula implemented prioritize entrepreneurialism as skills-based learning is decentred. The fierce competition for audience attention and inadequate advertising revenues means that it will be innovation and creativity, not technical skills, that distinguishes one enterprise from another (ibid).

In sum, these proposed changes to journalism-school curricula are intended to acclimatize prospective journalists and freelance writers to a work regime characterized by more intense effort, for less pay, in a more insecure environment, with fewer social supports. These efforts represent a paradigmatic move away from craft-based training as well as a pedagogy of professionalism that privileges public service. For Cohen (2015a), the entrepreneurial turn is "less about teaching particular skills and more an effort to orient individual journalists toward an ideology of enterprise" (p. 520). The proposed entrepreneurial curricula stress learning basic business skills of tax codes, accounting and marketing, contract regulations, soft managerial skills involving leadership and project management (Claussen, 2011; Fredman Soloman, 2016). Most important is the requirement to learn how to write a business plan that can be presented to investors (ibid).

Yet research data from a journalism-school program in Spain suggests as students in the school's 374-person cohort approach graduation their enthusiasm for entrepreneurial endeavours actually declines (Casero-Ripolles et al, 2016). Researchers attribute this to a series of realizations these students arrive at during the course of their matriculation. The first involves fears among participants about their ability to attract investment capital for

their proposals. From this follows the next two concerns they identify. Primary among these is the ability to generate profits. A second dependent variable that arises from the aforementioned is what kind of wage (in)security will they experience as proprietors of a small business. Lastly, in a hyper-competitive environment, the students surveyed voiced worries about their ability to differentiate themselves in a financially viable way (ibid).

The general effect of these realizations is to decrease the desire of participants to pursue a career in journalism after the completion of their degree (ibid). This illustrates, if not resistance, then at least a partial rejection by these students of administrators' efforts to try and entrepreneurialize the curriculum. As a point of comparison, participants in this study who had graduated most recently from journalism school were most receptive to entrepreneurial initiatives being introduced into journalism school curricula. As Chelsea Martin explained, "journalism schools didn't really tell us that there weren't going to be jobs … As I progressed through journalism it became really clear what was happening to jobs in journalism." This led Martin to conclude she would have welcomed classes that would have prepared her to operate her own business.

Future efforts of this kind are unlikely to be confined to journalism school programs. In 2015, the Canadian Council of Chief Executives, an advocacy group consisting of the largest corporations in Canada, released a report: *Career Ready: Towards a National Strategy for the Mobilization of Canadian Potential.* The ideological implications of the report are unmasked when its author, Ken Coates, professor of Public Policy at the University of Saskatchewan, writes Canada's post-secondary institutions lack "a market-driven approach to workforce development that matches education, training, and the availability of workers to the needs of the economy" (Coates, 2015, p. 7). One of the five remedies he proposes to address this alleged deficit is for Canada's colleges and universities to serve as a Petri dish for the incubation of entrepreneurial activity.

Ideological efforts of the above kind, comprehended as an institutional expression intended to universalize class interests, or as obfuscatory attempts at masking particular class interests, and the intertwinement between the two, are likely to generate contradictory consciousness in students as well as workers. Resultantly, Althusser's

(1971) state ideological model continues to provide an effective framework for evaluating the specific characteristics of historical modes of regulation as overall projects of subjectification.

It is for this reason Jordan Humphries (2016) concludes Althusser's (1971) theory of ideology remains useful. But the latter's abrogation of a theory of alienation proves more problematic. Althusser's assessment of the working class(es) is they have no wish to try and attain a metaphysical human essence (Ryder, 2015-2016). Their concern rests solely upon the improvement of their material conditions, which is achieved through an overcoming of exploitation. Collectively, workers do not require Marxism to be aware of this exploitation. But it is through a scientific Marxism that has its origins in "theoretical practice" that groups of workers may come to know what comprises exploitation under capitalist social relations (Ryder, 2013). This knowledge can then lead to the formation of "ideological sub-formations" that may result in resistance and struggle against capitalism (Ryder, 2015-2016).

However, Jan Rehmann (2013) questions just how classes of workers are to struggle and resist under Althusser's proposition if they are so deeply enmeshed in the practices and rituals of the ISAs as instruments of subjectification. The functionalism inherent to Althusser's (1971) writings on the ISA translates to his ignoring the contradictions and struggles immanent to those institutions. It is also abstracted and "cut off from any standpoint in human praxis itself" (Rehmann, 2013, p. 196). Absent an analytic of estranged labour, rooted in the social agency of the labour process, there is no immanent way for workers to overcome the effects of subjectification. The ISAs there have to be captured and reoriented towards a Marxist science of ideology (Humphries, 2016).

This divorce of knowledge and understanding from the material activity of workers in the labour process gives rise to an "inflated" role for theory and the intellectual in their task of developing a scientific Marxism (Rehmann, 2013). Since Althusser rejects the humanism of alienation theory, he can only posit strategies of working-class resistance and revolt that are "elitist" (Humphries, 2016). Focus is not on how workers can become conscious of their potential emancipatory role. This is the domain of a group of specialist

scholars and praxis comes to mean the formulation of theory (ibid).

Although Althusser (1971) lends a material basis to his writings on ideology, his dismissal of alienation conjures another issue. Not only does it deny the possibility of worker understanding drawing upon material activity in the labour process, it also is unable to map how alienation and ideology work in tandem. The autonomous ways the relations and commodities of production confront people are the source of alienation. The perceptions this generates of a system beyond control of those located within it facilitates efforts to universalize particular class interests, i.e. ideology. The fatalism of accepting that "the market" operates outside one's purview makes agreement with 'common sense' news media accounts about daily market determinations much more consonant. This is attributable to the circulation of symbolic understandings being seemingly congruent with lived material reality. But this level of concurrence is only possible because workers are alienated from their cooperative activity, according to Humphries (2016).

Nara Roberta Silva (2017) writes alienation and ideology are able to perpetuate each other indefinitely in a system of commodity production. Yet the possibility also exists the two phenomena could disentangle from one another in her estimation (ibid). What could instead emerge is an "emancipating ideology" (Silva, 2017, p. 381). But Silva (2017) never specifies the possible source of this critical ideology, leaving the impression it is once more to be idealist even with her criticisms of the limitations of Althusser's (1971) ISA paradigm. By contrast, Humphries (2016) claims clearly that the overcoming of ideology can only occur with the undermining of alienation: "Thus the theory of alienation explains the reproduction of bourgeois structures and ideologies while retaining a central role for human agency."

I bring attention to the ongoing alienation effects of the Fordist regime of accumulation and the refusal of its ideology by the freelance writers in this study in the chapter to follow. For now, the skepticism of a select group of Spanish journalism students demonstrates the objectives of neoliberal conditioning, as conducted in and through the ISA that is the education system, may not be unfolding entirely as planned. Althusser's (1971) model can still aid in helping to make such an assessment. But this project has its

own epistemological break with his contention of a subjectless history. As Marx (1997) notes in his late work, the preface to his workers' inquiry, only "workers in town and country … and not saviours sent by providence, can energetically apply the healing remedies for the social ills which they are prey."

Chapter 5

5 Alien Nature or Alien Nation? Foreignness in the World of Twentieth Century Work Paradigms

In this chapter, I make a case for the ongoing usefulness of the concept of alienation in accounting for the attitudes and behaviours of the freelance writers in this study. Challenges to the appropriateness of alienation as an analytical tool are now numerous. They range from precarious employment elevating the importance of exploitation to claims of alienation's overcoming in post-industrial/knowledge/creative work settings. But it is the post-structuralist critique I address to conclude the chapter that best serves to demonstrate the continued resonance alienation enjoys as an explanatory framework for better understanding the experience of work under capitalist relations of organization.

5.1 The Spectre of Fordism

One of the best-known examples of Marx's (1994) aphoristic writing ability is found in the opening paragraphs of *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte.* Marx (1994) observes humans make history, but not under conditions of their choosing is a now oft-cited refrain. The portion of the passage that immediately follows is invoked with less regularity. Marx (1994) proceeds, writing the "tradition of all dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living" (p. 15). This is a reference to the failed revolutionary efforts that took place in France, and across much of Europe, in 1848 and 1851, Specifically, he is criticizing attempts to resurrect the tactics, slogans, etc., that were employed half-a-century earlier in prior struggles in what were the bourgeois revolutions of the eighteenth century.

The aphoristic salience words and phrases develop often occurs in circumstances decontextualized from the original source as the above shows. In wishing to briefly follow this practice of decontextualized appropriation, I argue the attitudes and behaviours of the freelancers I interviewed suggest that if they are not accidental neoliberal subjects, then they are somewhat reluctant ones. This is because it is not the

weight of failed political revolutions that continues to "weigh like a nightmare" upon those surveyed. Rather, it is the wholly transformative effects of the Fordist-Taylorist complex upon labour processes, persisting into the present in durably transformed ways, that shapes the outlooks and experiences of Canadian freelancers in the neoliberal epoch.

The presentation of interview findings in chapter three showed young and old alike appeared to be attuned to such concerns whether they were experienced directly or directly observed. This was acutely illustrated in the orientation of the respondents to the post-war standard workday. But other shared anecdotes were also highly descriptive. For instance, Rhonda Schmidt described the discontent engendered by the stack of papers neatly piled at the corner of her desk day-after-day over several decades of clerical work in the insurance industries in the following way: "Not that I mind writing business letters, but if that is all you are doing. I mean some people might get a feeling of reward from that, (but) having that pile of paper at the end of the day, sometimes that … (respondent trails off without finishing her response)."

This developing sense of dissatisfaction resulted in Schmidt moving to freelance writing at a later career and life stage, not wanting to wait for a peaceable retirement like her numerous family members. Articulations of this kind were common among participants. They show that while alienation is structural and objective, and therefore social, it is acutely experienced in the psyche of the individual (Rinehart, 1987). The centrality of alienation as a concept of critique has been eclipsed over several decades (Jaeggi, 2016). Scholars, government officials, members of the public and others associate alienation with the perceived passing of industrial production (McKercher 2014). The alienating work conditions marking that period of capitalist development are not seen as germane to discussions of the creative shape of cultural labour in the present. Though the substance of alienation attributable to the capitalist organization of work may have undergone some alteration, it is questionable as to whether it has diminished. For this reason, alienation remains a tool of analysis with ongoing relevance roughly 175 years after Marx's major theoretical contribution addressing this phenomenon (Blyton and Jenkins, 2007).

Suggestions of Marx's absence in investigations of cultural labourers emphasizing

exploitation to the exclusion of alienation would appear to be partial. This very friction between exploitation and alienation is present in the accountants of the informants. Earl Hopkins claimed the following to be universally and rectilinearly true about his fellow freelancers: "That's what they all want, rate change and more control over rights." This statement recognizes the exploitative conditions under which freelance writers labour. Schmidt's anecdote shows alienation is present under capitalist production, especially when understood as a loss of control and a subsequent wish to appropriate the labour process and products to "make what one does, and the conditions under which one does it, one's own" (Jaeggi, 2016, p. 2). Alienation, and the wish to free oneself from it, may make exploitation more tolerable to freelancers while contributing to behaviours and outlooks that accord with neoliberal demands. In attempting to evade the subjectification of the Fordist-Taylorist paradigm, they have acceded to its neoliberal variant.

Hopkins's claims, while not false in the sense of misrepresenting the real conditions of freelance writers' working lives, do draw attention to another set of occurrences that arise during the temporally thick portion of the twentieth century. Instructively, in this regard, Andre Gorz (1968) warns that workers' preoccupation with quantitative phenomena may not be what it first seems: "Wage demands are more often motivated by a revolt against the workers' condition … These demands translate the desire to be paid as much as possible for the time being lost, the life being wasted, the liberty being alienated" (p. 37).

Unlike the precise scenario Gorz (1968) is describing, the deepening pauperization of freelancers is a real feature of their current work conditions. A focus on quantification and the money problem may mask deeper internal cleavages within the field that are more fully comprehended through the concept of alienation. It is only under conditions of a more vulgar economism, that become fully entrenched following the conclusion of the Second World War, that issues of labour process (re)appropriation in the form of workplace democracy, reduction in work hours, and the reduction and/or elimination of wage labour itself are sidelined within the labour movement (Swift, 2016).

Unions' abandonment of the control issue over the labour process also means doing away with an earlier critique of wage labour more generally, which was commonly referred to

as "wage slavery" in the nineteenth century (Aronowitz, 1985). Subsequent to the dismissal of these concerns, the demands of labour and capital converge around the need for continued economic growth. Representatives of labour and capital posit this as the scenario most beneficial to both classes. This is a viewpoint Hopkins espouses because in his estimation "if the company does well, then everybody (unions/workers and owners/stockholders) does well." But as Marx (1988) contends, the purpose of propagating this stance is to have workers internalize the logics and imperatives of the owning class. Even if this acts to lessen the extent to which labour power is exploited, it necessarily contributes to a deepening fetishization of relations and more alienation:

> (A) forcing up of wages (disregarding all other difficulties, including the fact that it would only be by force, too, that the higher wages, being an anomaly, could be maintained) would therefore be nothing but better payment of the slave, and would not conquer either for the worker or for labour their human status and dignity. Indeed, even the equality of wages demanded … only transforms the relationship of the present-day worker to his labour into the relationship of all men to labour. Society is then conceived as an abstract capitalist (Marx, 1988, p. 82).

5.2   Origins of the Crisis: Fordist Regimes and Taylorist Practices

A super majority of my informants displayed an at least partial rejection of the (most) alienating demands of the dominant modes of capitalist work organization. This exhibits the enduring relevance of the very concept of alienation in trying to more fully capture and comprehend the totality of these workers' experiences as workers' inquiries aim to do. Professionals such as Mary Channing, nurse turned freelancer, knowledge workers like Yasmine Woods, civil servant and freelancer, and pink-collar employees like Rhonda Schmidt all sought to offset the effects of alienation by turning to freelancing.

Despite the positionality of the above workers in what might be considered, both before and after their transition to freelance writing, post-industrial work settings, the genesis of capitalist alienation in relation to labour processes begins with the founding of industrial production. Even as Marx (1988) is writing about estranged labour during the era of the "dark satanic mills" of the nineteenth century, his insights concerning alienation appear even more prescient with the institutionalization of the Fordist-Taylorist complex of

industrial production in the first two decades of the twentieth century. The effects of which continue to haunt most of the freelancers in this study into the twenty-first century.

According to Katherine Stone (2004), Fordist methods of assembly and Taylorist production techniques are closely associated with one another. The terms are even used interchangeably as though they are describing the same phenomena. But the two are not exactly co-extensive (ibid). More precisely, Henry Ford's production methods refer explicitly to the employ of the automated assembly line. Worker knowledge in this configuration comes to reside in the technological form itself, transferred from living labour to dead labour. Eventually, Fordism comes to constitute "a total way of life" as both a regime of accumulation and a mode of regulation (Harvey, 1990, p. 135).

But this was not always the case. Prior to the opening of the Highland Park Ford plant in 1910, early automobile fabrication was overwhelmingly craft based. The workers in these formations would perform multiple, complex tasks over the course of the workday (Sennett, 1998). The introduction of the automated assembly line at the Highland Park plant in Detroit in 1913 irrevocably changed the relationship of these craft workers to their production processes. One of the first effects of the introduction of the assembly line at this plant was the unprecedented level of turnover amongst workers. For every 963 employees hired, only 100 would remain in their position for at least one year (Crawford, 2009). As the Ford Motor Company expanded its number of manufacturing sites throughout the City of Detroit, retaining workers continued to prove challenging. Between 1912 and 1915, a survey of Ford plants found these turnover rates ranging from 40 percent to 348 percent (Smith, 2006).

Conversely, Frederick W. Taylor's project retains knowledge of the production process with living labour. But this knowledge shifts from networks of various workers on the shop floor to a management lead, centralized "planning department" (Rinehart, 1987; Stone, 2004). The engineers, work design specialists, and other management functionaries located in this office would create charts and other types of schematic representations that would illustrate work flows and processes. The undergirding logic informing Taylor's infamous "one-best way" of organizing production processes is the

application of "technique." This refers to the "totality of methods rationally arrived at and having absolute efficiency" (Ellul, 1967, p. xxv). Taylor thus sets out for himself the task of eradicating inefficiency, unpredictability, and a lack of measurability in labour processes through a faith in science, Enlightenment rationality, calculability, and reproducibility (Davies, 2015).

Under this schema, members of the planning department deliver detailed written instructions outlining each day's tasks for each worker to foremen [*sic*] located on the shop floor (Rinehart, 1987). This is the precise mechanism by which management systematically separates conception from execution (Braverman, 1998). Consequently, this step represents how the craft heritage of work is denigrated, if not destroyed (Stone, 2004). This ongoing process is tied to developments in the forces of production and the further subdivision of tasks within the detailed division of labour. Comparatively, the prior unity between conception and execution entails mastery over tools and materials used, leading to the production of objects that contain both aesthetic appeal as well as utility (Braverman, 1998).

Although Taylor undertook these efforts approximately 30 years after Marx's death, his time-and-motion studies attempt to give scientific precision to calculating the historically determinate amount of socially necessary labour time. Thus, the aim of Taylor's time-and-motion studies is to recode the concrete, living labour of the craft labour processes of workers into an objectified calculation of labour time. In the end, it is abstract labour and its measure that concerns Taylor. What results from this transmogrification are labour processes that consist of fragmented and simplified tasks (Braverman, 1998).

When Taylorist abstractions of labour are taken to their zenith, and combine with automated assembly lines, these twin logics are developed to their extreme, leaving workers to become mere "appendages" as "labour is drained of all meaning" (Holloway, 2010, p. 181). While Taylor's notion of scientific management and Ford's assembly line may not be co-extensive developments, they are complementary to one another for they represent the organization of humans into systems of activity with no historical precedent (Rinehart, 1987).

The effects of these dual phenomena upon workers are profound. In organizing labour processes in a systematically hierarchical manner for the purposes of attaining greater levels of efficiency and productivity, they serve to "deprive the majority of workers of their collective autonomy through transferring skills to machines, or to the executives of administrative function" (Aronowitz, 1985, p. 30). The Fordist-Taylorist complex is an unparalleled system of control as it involves a class monopoly over knowledge of labour processes. According to Braverman (1998), Taylorism "is the most decisive single step … taken by the capitalist mode of production" for the manner in which it furthers the development of the detailed division of labour through the "separation of (the) hand and brain" (p. 87). Braverman's (1998) contemporary insight represents an extension of thought dating back to ancient Greece. Work is there seen as a detriment to human wellbeing when "one man [*sic*] executes the thought of another" (Murphy, 1993, p. 8).

5.3 Peak Crisis: Alienation and the Post-War Decades

By the early 1970s, journalists at mainstream publications such as *Newsweek, Fortune,* the *Wall Street Journal,* and many others are writing about the "blue-collar blues" and the "white-collar woes" in an effort to name and address the matter of worker alienation (Henwood, 1997). Sets of experts express worry about the possible threat to the capitalist social order that alienation seems to be posing (Zerzan, 1974). Especially concerning are the actions of workers, encompassing chronic absenteeism, high rates of mobility power, i.e quit rates, wildcat strikes, and outright sabotage on the production line (Garson, 1975). In turn, one of the great paradoxes of Fordism is the inverse relationship between rising wages and decreasing levels of worker satisfaction (Holloway, 2010).

The apex of concern to the crisis of workplace alienation culminates with the release of the report, *Work in America,* in 1973. The U.S. federal government's Department of Health, Education and Welfare commissions the study, concerned with reports about worker insubordination. Anecdotally illustrative of what worries authorities is activity at the General Motors Plant in Lordstown, Ohio. There, countercultural demands intersect with worker militancy during a 1972 strike over "speed-ups" in the assembly line and other working conditions fuelling employee alienation. The president of the United Auto Workers local at the plant describes the strike as "the Woodstock of the working man"

without much admiration for the workers' actions (Fraser, 2015, p. 343).

The release of the report reveals what is already known. Worker discontent is widespread, and it is associated with alienation across diffuse sectors of employment and in various industries (O'Toole et al, 1973). The dissatisfaction with work regimes of the era are most pronounced among its youth. Their parents' generation, born during the period of the Great Depression, sought stability, security, and order as supplied through the large private and public bureaucracies of the dominant workplaces in the period following the conclusion of the war. The better-educated cohort that follows, born into relative affluence, comes to seek intrinsic rewards of satisfaction from their work (ibid). Survey data from the report shows the most important job characteristic among the youth interviewed is access to interesting work (ibid). The categories of good pay and job security, rank, respectively, as the fifth and seventh most important qualities among the eight job characteristics interviewees are asked about.

From these survey findings, researchers arrive at three conclusions. The first is that participants in the interview process express a desire to exercise control over their immediate labour process. The second states that in an affluent society self-esteem and self-actualization are the highest-level needs humans seek to fulfill. The third and final recommendation posits entrepreneurialism as a partial remedy to the bureaucratization of workplaces in both the public and private sectors of economic activity[11].

The research of investigators more sympathetic to labour from the same era arrive at a similar set of inferences. Barbara Garson (1975) conducts interviews with employees at

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[11] Despite the concerns of officials about the grave threat posed by alienation, the *Work in America* report found little widespread support for the abandonment of capitalist relations of work. Even at the height of the countercultural movement in the U.S. between 1968 and 1971, approximately 67 percent of U.S. college students professed views that the report deemed to be "mainstream" about the organization and operation of society's main institutions, including capitalism. Approximately 85 percent of those surveyed stated that businesses had an obligation and a right to be profitable enterprises (ibid). This contrasts with more recent survey data in which greater numbers of Americans evaluate the term "socialism" positively—especially among those who are between 18-to-29 years of age (Aridi, 2015).

10 blue-and-white collar places of employment. Those participating speak about feelings of humiliation, monotony, boredom, and resentment resulting from the highly rationalized and routine work they undertake. Unsurprisingly, these same workers also discuss the acts of sabotage they engage in to give expression to the frustration and alienation they are experiencing. What Garson (1975) did not expect to find in her ethnographic study is the extent to which "people passionately want to work" (p. xi).

Canadian research findings do not deviate in any significant way. James Rinehart (1987) encounters the same contradictory tendencies in his own investigation(s). Workers demonstrate resistance to alienating labour conditions through acts of sabotage, absenteeism, and through minimum levels of effort and cooperation. Yet at other times, they perform their work duties in the most exceptional ways. The workers he encounters also discuss their desire for meaningful work as being a central determinant in their lives. The development of a historical need for consequential and expressive activity conflicts with the capitalist organization of work; this desire is normally thwarted for a majority of white and blue-collar workers of that era (Sayers, 1998; Bellamy Foster, 2017).

Even without worker-led conflicts on the evening news giving rise to government commissioned reports, alienation remains a central issue in the working lives of most at present. A Gallup opinion poll of nearly 225,000 workers from across 142 countries indicates that only 13 percent of respondents feel engaged at their jobs (Crabtree, 2013). Nearly a quarter of those surveyed indicate they are "actively disengaged". The report defines the "actively disengaged" as those who are unhappy, unproductive, and who display a poor attitude while being in the workplace (ibid). The response that is cited most often by those who take part in the poll is that they are "not engaged." The pollsters use this designation to indicate low levels of motivation. This lack of motivation translates into little additional effort being exerted by these workers to support organizational goals and outcomes (ibid). An unrelated survey dealing exclusively with Canadian workers indicates roughly 50 percent of the respondents are unhappy in their job (Ferreras, 2016).

In some instances, recent reportage seems to have substituted the word "boredom" where

alienation would be more appropriate (Hoare, 2012; Willsher, 2016; Pickles, 2016). In at least one example, a worker has filed a civil action against his former employer for causing work-related depression due to the alienating nature of his job. In his statement of claim, the Parisian gentlemen says that his job as a manager at a French perfumery was so boring that it led to him suffering a seizure while driving (Willsher, 2016).

Psychology researchers at a British university have suggested that boredom is now one of the largest sources of workplace stress. They ascribe this development to two contradictory forces. The first is the trend towards greater bureaucratization in standard office employments (Hoare, 2012). Conflictual with this occurrence is the increasingly expressed desire by workers to derive pleasure and fulfillment from their jobs (ibid). Other more recent research claims that boring work not only induces higher stress levels, but that it may also contribute to the impairment of cognitive function (Pickles, 2016).

The shape and contour of the earlier *Work in America* report is in part influenced by the scholarship of Robert Blauner (1964), and his book, *Alienation and Freedom: The Factory Worker and His Industry.* The main thrust of his investigation is locating the source of growing worker discontent, which he attempts to do by examining labour processes at a print shop, a textile mill, an auto factory, and automated chemical plant.

At a historical juncture when Marx's (1988) writings on alienation appear to encapsulate a growing *zeitgeist*, anti-Marxist investigators direct their attention to discrediting his claims (Seeman, 1967). Blauner's (1964) book is one such investigation in these efforts. He sets out to refute Marx's notion of a fundamental, structural divide to capitalist, class-based societies. Steady employment, increasing wages, and the provision of benefits have helped to stabilize the post-war social order. On the class-divided nature of property relations under capitalism, he writes that "the average worker no more desires to own his [*sic*] machines … (than) automobile and chemical workers, by and large, don't feel deprived because they cannot take home the Corvairs or sulfuric acid they produce" (Blauner, 1964, p. 17). Blauner's (1964) *ipso facto* postulation wishes to suggest that since workers do not want to own the commodities they produce, the lack of ownership control under capitalism cannot be the source of their alienation.

Blauner's (1964) premise that the working class does not wish to challenge capitalism's private property relations combined with its near total absorption, satisfactorily, into the consumer society means the source(s) must reside elsewhere. What he determines is that the "large-scale … and impersonal bureaucracies that pervade all industrial societies" are responsible for the alienation workers experience (Blauner, 1964, p. 3). Due to this bureaucratic arrangement of work processes, workers experience feelings of powerlessness and meaninglessness as they do not possess control over their labour: "(A)lienation exists when workers are unable to control their immediate work processes, to develop a sense of purpose and function, which connects their jobs to the over-all organization of production, to belong to integrated industrial communities, and when they fail to become involved in the activity of work as a mode of personal self-expression" (Blauner, 1964, p. 15).

As production processes and their associated divisions of labour become larger and more complex, workers are unable to comprehend the totality of these processes. Nor are they able to understand their particular, fragmented contribution to these processes. The remedies Blauner (1964) proposes are premised on the introduction of craft-like production methods where possible. He equates craft production with the manufacture of unique goods. He reasons the more unique goods are, the greater the connection workers will feel towards them and the processes responsible for their fabrication. Where production of that nature is not possible, he suggests that management tasks workers with being responsible for more aspects of a commodity's manufacture. The more whole the labour processes workers are involved in, the less fragmented and less alienated they feel.

In Marx's (1988) treatment of alienation, the second dimensions, "self-estrangement … within the labour process" receives only half-a-page of direct attention (p. 75). Over the course of his half-page treatment, Marx (1988) deduces that in "the act of production" workers do not relate to the labour they are undertaking (ibid). Through this statement Marx (1988) is noting that workers experience the immediate labour processes they are engaged in as something foreign and enervating with respect to the orientation of their own desires. But since the pre-ordained direction of Blauner's (1964) investigation is to refute the fundamental structural basis of capitalist class society, he focuses almost

entirely on the second dimension of alienation identified by Marx (Archibald, 1978). He concludes workers only want "control over the immediate work process … which affects their immediate jobs and work tasks and (are) least likely to be concerned with the more general and abstract aspects of powerlessness" (Blauner, 1964, p. 16).

This remains a preferred approach in the inventory of management prerogatives. Amanda Lang (2012), describes how a contemporary and well-known Canadian apparel manufacturer has discontinued the practice of using a traditional assembly line. Alternatively, the company has organized the labour process at one of its Canadian factories into work circles consisting of six-to-eight people. These workers still perform a single, specialized task. Each unit is responsible for completing a single item. The organization of work in this proximal manner allows workers to see their contribution to the whole, and in the estimation of the owners, to feel more connected to their work.

Carl Cederstrom and Peter Fleming (2012) have described present equivalents to the type of investigation Blauner (1964) undertook as comprising a field they term "liberation management." This is a kind of "anti-corporate business ideology" that critiques bureaucracy, but not the production of commodities (Cederstrom and Fleming, 2012, p. 22). One of its shortcomings is that it overlooks what necessitates the introduction of bureaucracy in the workplace in the first place. That is, Taylorist planning departments in service to the capitalist imperative of endless accumulation (Archibald, 1978).

James Bernard Murphy (1993) initially argues that in "light of what we know about the sources of human happiness and well-being, the debate between capitalism and communism over the ownership of capital seems misguided: what workers value most is challenging work, not owning the means of production" (p.5). After initially appearing to uphold Blauner's (1964) major conclusion, he later acknowledges only by attending to control in the realm of ownership can a majority of the labour force ever hope to engage in work that is knowledge rich and creative.

Chris Bilton (2007) takes up the "powerlessness" Blauner (1964) mentions only in passing with respect to what control could signify in the creative industries. In spite of his light treatment, he does attempt to re-imagine what immediate control over labour

processes encompasses *vis-à-vis* the unity of conception and execution. In relation to freelance writers, what Bilton (2007) proposes would extend control beyond the generation of story ideas that are then brought to fruition with the assistance of an editorial team and a media outlet's technical staff. It would go beyond by offering freelancers greater oversight and participation in the direction of operations at news media outlets. This could pave the way for worker-operated initiatives at some later date.

The freelance writers in this survey, however, had given little thought to the prospect of working within co-operative workplace structures. If they had, or to the extent that they had, they could not envision how such an endeavour would operate. In concurrence with Blauner's (1964) observations, what they did express a desire for was control over their immediate labour processes. The degree to which they prized the unity of conception and execution did not often extend beyond the purview of whatever stories they were working on at any particular time.

Overall, it is possible to adduce that Blauner's (1964) designations concerning alienation had much more saliency to the freelance writers in this survey than those of Marx (1988). What this suggests is that if freelance writers do not have to exert ownership control over their production processes, they at least have to own the product psychologically (Mills, 1956). With greater specificity, this relates to freelance writers knowing "what goes into it (the story) by way of skill, sweat, and material, and that his [*sic*] own skill and sweat are visible to him [*sic*]" (Mills, 1956, p. 221). This set of conditions partially comprise the craft character of labour for both Mills (1956) and Blauner (1964).

These craft qualities as represented in the above signifies a means by which the freelance writers in this study have tried to evade work fates more intensively Fordist-Taylorist in their configuration. Recall once more the contemptuous manner Schmidt regards the pile of paper at the corner of her desk. The at least partial alleviation of their felt alienation is attained through control over their immediate labour processes via their limited unity of conception and execution. This circumscribed level of appropriation is representative of a problematic effort to gain control over, and find meaning in, their labour.

The experiences of freelancers, viewed in this fuller totality, may necessitate a re-

evaluation that their "relative autonomy" is merely a form of "powerless autonomy" (Cohen, 2013, 2016b). The desire to exercise this micro-level of control may make them less neoliberal dupes, and more like agents of a highly individualized response to the worst depredations of the Fordist-Taylorist world of work. This response is likely adaptive to how deeply neoliberalism's objectives have suffused subjectivity, and how widespread alienation from the self and from others is even in the creative industries.

None of this analysis denies the hegemonic force by which a regime of accumulation and its accompanying mode of regulation operate with at any particular historical juncture. However, at the same time, through this detailed history, I wish to possibly enlarge the frames of understanding used to interpret the attitudes and behaviours of freelance writers towards their low levels of remuneration, seeming willingness to "self-exploit," etc. This may serve to help facilitate an eventual overcoming in the discursive impasse among "leftists" that McRobbie (2004) denotes.

5.4   The Crisis of Origins: Limits of the Alienation Critique

The more facile dismissals of the concept of alienation from management gurus in an ostensible post-industrial epoch have been met with a more forceful and thoroughgoing critique of alienation from scholars influenced by post-structuralist thought. One such author in this latter camp is the feminist Autonomist Marxist Kathi Weeks (2005; 2007; 2011), who has questioned the continued usefulness of alienation as an analytical tool by which to critique capitalist relations of production. Her critique affiliates alienation with the traditions of "humanist Marxism" or "socialist humanism[12]."

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[12] In these same volumes, Weeks (2005; 2007; 2011) also finds fault with critiques of capitalism that privilege exploitation. Weeks (2005; 2011) strongly links this critique with the "socialist modernization" program of V.I. Lenin, and others who pursued programs of state socialism in the twentieth century. She describes "socialist modernization" as the "post-capitalist alternative most popularly ascribed to Marxism" (Weeks, 2011, p. 83). In this critique, exploitation is identified as being located in the contradictory relation between private appropriation of socially produced wealth. However, the near exclusive focus upon property relations means that reforms to labour processes and to authoritarian command structures over the organization of labour processes is permanently cast aside. Her conclusion in this rendering is that the working class nominally replaces the capitalist class as the owners of the means of production, but the characteristics of capitalist labour are largely unchanged with a continued focus upon an austere work ethic for the purposes of economic growth (Weeks, 2005, 2011). This negative assessment of capitalist production is insufficient for it preserves too many of its dominant logics.

One author's canon through which she traces the development of humanist Marxism is the collected works of Erich Fromm. She writes that Fromm interprets the central motif in Marx's work as concerned with self-development, human self-fulfillment, and a fulsome humanity in which all dimensions of one's being have the opportunity to be fully expressed. What she finds most objectionable in this is his claim that this fullness can only be realized in humans' intercourse with nature, i.e. work. Within this model of an aspirant life course, for the whole of humanity, alienation does not lead to the negation of productivism. Rather, its overcoming is reliant on the full development of these productive forces and all people's participation within them.

Fromm's (1970) writings exhibit some of the essentialist and ontologizing qualities Weeks (2005) assigns to him. An example of which is Fromm's (1970) depiction of a post-capitalist formation enabling humans to recapture an organicism and a wholeness with nature, and with each other, which capitalism has temporarily interrupted. This leads Weeks (2007) to assess humanist Marxism as overly fixated on "a nostalgic ideal of pre-industrial, artisanal work and to an essentialist ontology" (p. 43). Once more, Fromm's humanist Marxism acts to naturalize the industrial work ethic according to Weeks (2011). As Fromm (1970) himself observes, "self-realization" and "self-creation" occur only "through the process of his [*sic*] work and his [*sic*] production" (p. 26).

If work is the natural condition for humans as a species, then by what means can capitalist labour be dethroned as the sovereign organizing principle at both the individual and the societal level? The consequences of amelioration are evident in recent efforts to humanize work regimes. This has resulted in work becoming "an essential element in the path to self-realization, and the strivings of the autonomous self have become essential allies in the path to economic success" (Rose, 1990, p. 154). If capitalism is able to deliver the proverbial goods in the realm of consumption, as well as in the sphere of production, then challenges to its hegemonic position are further curtailed (Frayne, 2015).

Weeks (2011) then goes on to distinguish Autonomist Marxism from humanist Marxism by noting the latter envisions the possibility of a liberation of work through the re-claiming of the lost, creative element inherent in the individual. The former, by contrast,

seeks the attainment of liberation from labour. Labour is here understood as a manifestation of capitalist relations of production. If labour is the source of value, then there is no ideal of labour worth recapturing. At present, labour is culturally valorized in the bourgeois work ethic and in a union movement that cannot think of its own negation. The union movement is therefore left to advocate for higher minimum wages, more jobs, better jobs, and a "fair day's wage, for a fair day's work" (Merrifield, 2011). This is what Moishe Postone (1993) calls the critique of capitalism from the standpoint of labour. This he contrasts with a critique of labour, and its possible elimination (ibid).

A final criticism of Fromm's (1970) thought is that he reproduces the dimorphism of whether the central theme in the works of Marx is exploitation or alienation. He cites the latter category, saying Marx's corpus is concerned with the manner in which alienation engendered by capitalist production norms retards the development of the total capacities of the individual and the species. Under monopoly conditions, this manifests in a "conformity, which has wiped out individuality to a remarkable extent" as demanded by "the big state and the big corporation, and the highly rationalized workplaces that have been created in their image (Fromm, 1970, p. vi).

Weeks (2005) describes these tendencies in Fromm's (1970) formulations as "problematic" and "less relevant in the contemporary context" (p. 116). But as the responses from the participants in my survey sample exhibit, Fromm's (1970) observations retain a greater degree of pertinence than Weeks (2005) is willing to accede. The efforts of freelance writers to resist alienation that I have described thus far can be interpreted as a "struggle to reunite subject and object, to recompose doing and done" (Holloway, 2002, p. 89). Alternatively formulated in the language of craft, there is an attempt to forge unity between conception and execution at least at the level of the individual if not at the higher orders of social coordination.

An additional feature of post-structuralist criticisms of the concept of estrangement address the very liberal, humanistic renderings of the self that are central to Fromm's (1970) observations about an increasingly administered society. Fromm's (1970) critical assessment, evocative of New Left and countercultural arguments, treats society's

paradigmatic institutions as inhibiting the expression of a full individuality (Soper, 1986; Mansfield, 2000). Post-structural theorists invert this understanding. Society's dominant institutions, including experts in the academy, do not repress individuality, but rather consecrate knowledge in which the self is comprehended as a monadic entity (ibid).

Disciplines such as sociology, psychology, criminology, etc., have attempted to construct a modern, subjected self for the purposes of organizing human populations by identifying a unit of study that is more easily investigated, and ultimately, controlled. The aforementioned can be thought of as the disciplines of discipline. The development of these scientific discourses accelerates over the course of the nineteenth century with the decline of the stable, collective feudal order, as expert knowledge systems act to "isolate and control (humans) … in (a) cage of individuality" (Mansfield, 2000, p. 36).

This constellation of processes Michel Foucault terms "governmentality." This is a portmanteau Foucault himself coins, combining the conception of government with rationality in an attempt to capture how governance eventually moves beyond obvious state institutions and into a diffuse terrain in which direct interventions into the conduct of populations are less necessary (Barnett, 2010). That is, consent replaces coercion as self-subjection becomes normalized through the overlapping effects of a particular set of institutional arrangements. Rose describes governmentality as a "complex of notions, calculations, strategies, and tactics through which diverse authorities—political, academic, medical, and theological—have sought to act upon the lives and conducts of each and all … to achieve states of health, happiness, wealth, and tranquility" (p. 143). Governmentality therefore aims to empower populations for the purposes of enhancing health, welfare, etc. (King, 2006).

The overall development of this tendency derives from what Foucault terms "pastoral power" (Vrasti, 2011). Pastoral power refers to governance whose intended aim is the happiness of populations (Lorey, 2006). This ethic Foucault links to notions within the Judeo-Christian religious tradition of shepherding the flock (Vrasti, 2011). A dimension of this secularized form of pastoral power that begins to present itself in the nineteenth century directs governing at a distance for the purposes of well being towards the

reproduction of labour power (Lorey, 2006). Body, mind, and soul become aspects of one's being that one wishes to develop, and to care for, in order to ensure the ongoing sale of one's labour power (ibid).

Experts come to reify workers' capacities and desires "as a resource to be developed, not requiring external control but regulating themselves ... fusing the purposes of the organization with those of its members and of society at large" (Rose, 1990, p. 107). These efforts attempt to harmonize the aspirations of workers with those of capital where work is no longer a fetter upon freedom, but is, instead, a site where it can be realized through the attainment of greater self-fulfillment (ibid). This description of a commitment to meaningful labour is a defining attribute among cultural labours, and it was also evinced by the freelance writers I interviewed. It is also identified as an expression that is indicative of their neoliberal subjectivity within post-structural analyses critical of essentialized discourses around conceptualizations such as alienation (McRobbie, 2015).

What is seductive about the aforementioned desires of cultural labourers in the neoliberal epoch is that work finally fulfils its supposed promise of delivering joyous production. However, Isabel Lorey (2006) refers to the desire for self-fulfillment and self-actualization in the labour sphere as a delusion and a fantasy. In part because alienation as a tool of critique presupposes an ontology of labour that capitalism appears to have brought to fruition, finally (Weeks, 2011; Jaeggi, 2016). If the worst elements of capitalist production can be negated, at least in its Fordist-Taylorist variant, through the creative industries, then humanity can at last begin to reclaim its true nature as a labouring species. Here, the alienation critique serves to further naturalize the work ethic thereby removing work from the realm of contestation, i.e. politics, and the possibility of struggling over "the right to be lazy." This acts to sideline consideration of post-work scenarios in which idleness becomes a human ideal (Weeks, 2011).

As the respondents in this study contradictorily noted, repeatedly, their perceived freedom, flexibility, and autonomy was dependent on exercising an iron form of self-discipline as well as a strict adherence to the work ethic. Idleness was not an option in their efforts to address alienation. This combination of characteristics was a response to

the ethos of a precarious labour market in which one's self-worth was equated to the market values of exchange, reputation, etc. The respondents conveyed to me on a regular basis that you are only as good as your last published piece. Freedom is here recast as the obligation of having to choose amidst a range of worsening assignments and employment conditions. This ability to have to decide is indicative of both subjectification and freedom (Lorey, 2006; Walkerdine and Bansel, 2010). One of the most revealing contradictions of the neoliberal order in the cultural industries is its mobilization of workers to be creative, active subjects who show initiative and have steadfast faith in these efforts while subjecting these same workers "to the fateful order of the market that regularly and increasingly fails and frustrates" their attempts (Rehmann, 2013, p. 287).

Further to this, as Knights and McCabe (2000) and Lorey (2006) intimate, creativity in its neoliberal iteration acts as a positional good of distinction that individuals possess in varying quantities. This does not mitigate alienation in the ways promised. It merely reinscribes the hierarchies, cleavages, and inequalities of the already existing capitalist order. Additionally, the precarious labour markets the freelance writers I interviewed found themselves within meant that their creativity was an inventory of potentialities to be called upon, quantified, disciplined, and dismissed as needed by those possessing the power of capital along with managerial authority. Creativity instituted in this manner is both reified and alienated from its relational and social contexts (Kuryel and Firat, 2013).

In the pursuit of creativity to ameliorate alienating work conditions, freelance writers in Canada have to act instrumentally upon themselves as entrepreneurs of the self in various networks of sociality: "The individual is forced to reduce his [*sic*] entire existence to a marketable and commodifiable set of behaviours and performances" (Newman, 2016, p. 121). Humanistic discourses revolving around notions of alienation and creativity are examples of "the most subtle and comprehensive confinement of the human subject" (Knights and McCabe, 2000, p. 426). Their privileging of the individual along with the elevation of autonomous activity as the ultimate ethical ideal proves perilous to try and exit from. Humanism, here, acts as a catchment basin for the tributaries of capitalism, power, and discipline to flow through and shape subjectivity in narrow, circumscribed ways (ibid).

But contrary to the assertions of the post-structuralist critique, I argue, in a qualified manner, that humanist essentialism does not necessarily pervade the concept of alienation. The oppositional strivings against alienation articulated by the freelance writers in this study did not reach back to a mythical past involving a preconceived notion of human nature. Nor did it appear to involve a wish to reclaim a pre-existing, 'natural' self from which they had become severed. On the contrary, they represented manifestations of a historically-specific rejection of the Fordist-Taylorist paradigm. Alienation revolts may have reached their vertex between 1968 and 1973, but the oppositional outlooks they gave voice to persist into the present.

A longer historical lens shows opposition to industrial capitalism from at least the Romantic period onwards has posited creative work as an antidote to the alienation of the most regularized capitalist work processes. Marx's own normative rendering of unalienated work was predicated on "the idea of artistic self-expression" (Eagleton, 2011, p. 239). What Marx privileges is a conception of permanent self-development (ibid). In service to this, some Marxist scholars have contended that his critique of capitalism is not that it is too individualizing, but that it was not individualizing enough (Berman, 1970; Fromm, 1970; Virno, 2004). At first blush, there appears to be a level of congruence between Marx's proposal(s) and the tenets of neoliberalism as they are expressed through the cultural industries.

The primary difference between the creative individualism of neoliberalism, as response to the alienation critique, and Marx's ethic of what might constitute a life well lived is that Marx situates artistic thriving at the individual level as only possible within a social context marked by cooperation and by a coordinated, regulated economy that ensures a more equitable distribution of the social surplus produced (Dyer-Witheford, 2001; Ross, 2009). These are the conditions by which Marx's "social individual" would be able to flourish: "Only within the community had each individual the means of cultivating his gifts in all directions; hence personal freedom becomes possible only within the community" (Marx and Engels, 1998, p. 86). As Adam Schaff (1966) explains, Marx remained committed to the project of individual happiness and development throughout his life, but reasoned that this could only be realized in the sphere of the social.

Gavin Rae (2010) argues people in their productive and reproductive role(s) already glimpse, regularly, what a non-alienated future might look like. This does not entail "the reappropriation of an essence that had previously existed, but the appropriation of what had been constituted in alienated form" (Postone, 1993, p. 32). This is appropriation as command over not just the immediate labour process that, for instance, freelance writers are engaged in, but all aspects of production, distribution, circulation, and consumption. In capitalist class societies, the phenomenon of alienation is therefore an "issue of who or what controls the processes and directions and controlling definitions of ceaseless self-development. The central problem Marx raised in relation to species being, namely the alienation of these collective human capacities into the hands of privatized ownership" (Dyer-Witheford, 2001, p. 184).

Continuous human engagement with nature, and the cooperation, coordination, and communication that it requires, gives rise to a 'human nature' that is constantly being made anew in a historically determined manner without end. Nick Dyer-Witheford (2010) further reframes the debate about alienation, and whether it presupposes an essentialized conception of human beings when he refashions species being as species becoming. This intersects with post-structuralist sensibilities that reject fixed notions of a singular human nature that can be emancipated. The post-structural anarchist, Saul Newman (2016), writes that "the self is not an essence but a series of becomings, an ongoing project of self-constitution without any clear end or *telos"* (p. 125).

Both standpoints view human subjectivity and the human body as fluid and consequently socially constructed. The difference being, in the two outlooks, according to Carol Wolkowitz and Christ Warhurst (2010), that the constructivism of post-structuralists takes place through discourses whereas as for Marx, it occurs through humans' productive engagements with nature. The need for this intercourse is universal across historically specific social formations, but the needs that are met through this activity are particular to any social formation (Holloway, 2010). Therefore, creative activity in its non-neoliberal guise, and denuded of its fetishisms, is unlikely to be fixated upon innovation for enhancing market exchange. Brian Holmes (2013) suggests appropriated command over the reproduction of everyday life in an aesthetically satisfying manner

will consist of producing subjectivity, affectivity, and collectivity in ordinary ways.

If alienation is understood as the mediation of humans' relations to nature as well as humans' relations to one another via language, technology, etc., then it is an ineliminable feature of modern life in large, complex, technologically-advanced social formations (Garnham, 2011). And while a "basic" amount of alienation is inescapable, the "surplus" alienation capitalist social relations impose are both excessive and unnecessary (Archibald, 1978, p. 135). Istvan Meszaros (1970) terms the latter second-order mediations. These include private property, money, the division of labour, market exchange, and the commodity fetishism the aforementioned engender.

The net capitalist class relations casts, captures a breadth of antagonisms that are not reducible, in Marx's theoretical *oeuvre,* solely to the matter of exploitation. Alienation remains a key feature of capitalist labour processes evident in the thoughts and actions of the freelance writers in this survey. Furthermore, as their responses indicate, the alienation critique need not necessarily propagate any essentialisms. Their rejection of the Fordist-Taylorist paradigm was not steeped in any sepia-toned gaze. It was a response to the abstracting qualities of capitalist production and capitalist social life based on a praxis of direct experience and direct observation.

Neoliberalism's entrepreneurialism and possessive creativity demonstrates capitalism's need for successive ideological responses to the estrangement it engenders. Informants' opposition to the acute alienation of the Fordist-Taylorist modality has contributed to the mutated forms alienation takes under the regime of neoliberalism, i.e. enhanced reliance on individual responses and solutions. This gives credence to the observation that alienation, as well as ideology, is a phenomenon that "furnishes its own camouflage" (Erikson, 1986, p. 7). This, however, is never beyond complete concealment to the participants here. Over the final three chapters of this work, I will explore the capitalist logics of domination in the journalistic labour process, the antagonisms they engender, and how this might contribute to the eventual overcoming of both alienation and exploitation.

Chapter 6

6 Printer-Gatherer: The Unity of Conception and Execution in the Craft Ideal

In this chapter, I assess changes to the craft elements of the journalistic labour process. I historically trace journalism's craft legacy from the work conditions and processes of the master-printer's workshop, in Europe and North America, to changes to the technical and social relations of the print shop that serve to reconfigure the labour process at the end of the nineteenth century. This leaves newsgathering and news writing as constituting the craft elements of the journalistic labour process for most of the twentieth century. The emergence of the digitally converged newsroom at the end of the previous century re-introduces technical considerations into the labour process. The subsequent focus upon the technological facility journalists (and freelance writers) possess overlooks the degradation to story conception that has occurred simultaneously. This is illustrated through a brief case study centred on content mills, and how they are automating conception. Finally, an appraisal of newsgathering routines will enable an assessment of some of the enduring Romantic myths enveloping the field.

6.1 Degrees of Mastery: The Rise and Fall of the Print Workshop

It is necessary to trace the historical development of these components, starting with Braverman's (1998) privileging of craft labour processes, where craft work epitomizes the height of skilled human work. This stems from control over the processes, as realized through the unity of conception and execution, which resides in the individual craft worker (Littler and Salaman, 1982; Ryan, 1992; Blyton and Jenkins, 2007). It is this relational unity between conception and execution that imbues work with its creative possibilities (Smith and McKinaly, 2009). The sundering of this unity, as it occurs under conditions of industrial capitalism, denies human work its creative potential according to Braverman (Smith and McKinlay, 2009).

Braverman's (1998) *Labour and Monopoly Capital* singles out farming as most

representative of what encapsulates craft skill prior to the advent of the Industrial Revolution. This he attributes to farming encompassing within it the activities of smithing, masonry, carpentry, butchering and baking among others (ibid). He also points to the tanner, potter, weaver, glassmaker and cobbler as other significant craft occupations. Each of these forms signify a specific branch of the social division of labour. This means workers combine thorough intellectual knowledge of the craft with a series of embodied skills, methods, techniques, facilities and capacities. In sum, these workers enjoy familiarity with the totality of their craft. Thus, they do not resemble the detail worker of the Fordist-Taylorist paradigm.

At least one craft occupation appears to have escaped Braverman's (1998) attention – the craft of the printer. Elizabeth Lester (1995) notes how historians have linked the origins of the earliest known "news writers" to a time frame spanning between 59 B.C. and 222 A.D. (p. 36). But an investigation of the craft elements of journalism commences with the slow rise of the master-printers as newspaper persons in sixteenth century Europe. The utility of this juncture as a starting point is that it will contribute to evaluating, as G. Stuart Adam (2006) argues, that journalism is one of the highest forms of art actualized and recognized by humankind. This is in addition to Pulitzer's earlier appraisal of journalism as one of the pinnacles of human intellectual achievement (Desbarats, 1996).

More than a century elapses between Johannes Gutenberg's deployment of the printing press for commercial purposes in the middle of the fifteenth century to the emergence of the craft of printing, *vis-à-vis* newspapers, in the second half of the sixteenth century (Hardt, 1990). The increases in literacy rates across Renaissance Europe couple with the spread of mercantilism to impress upon growing urban populations the need for more efficient methods of printing and information transmission. The Gutenberg press serves to meet this developing set of societal needs (Eisenstein, 2005).

Yet the introduction of the printing press does not immediately coincide with the advent of the newspaper. In the arena of news relay, the oral tradition largely remains. In the European cities of London, Venice, and Paris a majority of inhabitants are accustomed to receiving their news from walking newsmen (Hoyer, 2003). In exchange for a coin, these

men would recount snippets of stories as well as bits of information and gossip they had managed to gather through their network of contacts. Estimates link roughly 15,000 walking newsmen with the City of Paris during the sixteenth century (ibid).

Even as the bulk of burgeoning urban populations in European cities receive their news coverage in this manner, proto-newspapers or newsletters begin to appear in the 1500s (ibid). The introduction of the first newspapers in the early 1600s is made possible with the consecration of a network of post offices across Europe (Ornebring, 2010). Postmasters and the post office system they oversee distribute these initial newspapers (Hoyer, 2003). The postmaster also serves as a *de facto* foreign and domestic news bureau worker, compiling information and stories for both domestic and international consumption (Stephens, 1988). While the postmaster is a key figure in the development of these ventures, it is the master-printer who is the hub amidst a fan-like series of social relation spokes (Kealey, 1986; Barnhurst and Nerone, 2001; Hoyer, 2003).

For the figure of the master-printer, what mainly comprises the conceptual aspect of the labour process is the collection of news items, deciding which materials will appear in these one-to-four page publications, and designing the layout for where stories, opinion pieces, etc., will be placed (Stephens, 1988; Ornebring, 2010). Additionally, the master-printer serves as assignment editor—contracting with the earliest version of freelancers for briefs and other usable items—proofreader as well as being the editor/publisher of the newspaper (Barnhurst and Nerone, 2001). On occasion, the master-printer would also have to report and write a story for the newspaper due to a paucity of appropriate materials (Ornebring, 2010). Although the master-printer is responsible for gathering all items that appear, little of this work is original in nature (Stephens, 1988).

Additionally, master-printers do not set editorial policy for the newspaper in the sense of establishing a political or ideological orientation. In seventeenth century England, and across other European monarchies, there are in place strict censorship laws to which printers are subject. The content that appears is reviewed prior to its distribution to ensure there is no material that would contravene the sovereign. Failure to comply could lead to a loss in the privilege of operating a printing press. Consequently, master-printers mostly

avoid political and critical content that is domestic in nature (Mirando, 2002).

Suggestions from Svennik Hoyer (2003) and Henrik Ornebring (2010) that master-printers exert complete control over their newspaper operations appear provisional at best. Determinate power relations between contending social groups condition the labour process and the product of the master-printer's labour. These latter figures must alienate their intellectual curiosity and political viewpoints to remain within the confines of the monarch's reductive censorship laws. These restrictions help ordain the network of contacts the master-printer requires to ensure a sufficient amount of publishable material.

Once the master-printer would have accrued enough news items to include in the paper, he would then turn attention to its printing. These activities would comprise the execution portion of the labour process in the early iteration of the print workshop. This would involve two sets of related activities. The first of which would require the master-printer, or one of the apprentices/journeymen, to act as the typesetter/compositor. A handwritten manuscript would have to be transcribed block-by-metal block to the printing press. It is in this that the compositor would undertake to proofread the article one final time prior to it being printed. The literacy skills those in the print workshop possess, prior to their widespread diffusion throughout European and North American populations, designate them as members of a small elite of knowledge workers (Mosco and McKercher, 2008).

After the craft workers would compose the type, it would then be necessary to produce it upon the printed page. This responsibility falls upon the pressman, who would ensure that the image from the metal type would be imprinted upon the paper by pulling, forcefully, upon the printing press. Researchers who have examined the print workshop consider this the most physically rigourous aspect of the entire process as it would require men of substantial strength. In addition to all this, the members of the print workshop are also responsible for fabricating the printing presses and their plates as well as manufacturing the paper that is used in the printing process (Mirando, 2002; Mosco and McKercher, 2008). By the first decades of the nineteenth century in North America, master-printers who do not oversee all facets of conceptualization and execution of their newspaper are considered failures short on character and rectitude (Im, 1997; Heron, 2012).

A non-moralistic, though not non-normative, critique of the portrayal of the above is that notions of skill and creativity are represented in overly individualistic ways. Andy Merrifield (2011) characterizes craftwork "as an outmoded form of production" because it is from the "fruit of one individual" (p. 99). This, he contrasts, with what he views as emergent types of socialized and cooperative forms of production in the immaterial realm following the works of Hardt and Negri (2000; 2004; 2009). Elsewhere, this same criticism has been levelled at Braverman (1998) as well (Littler and Salaman, 1982).

Braverman (1998) writes conception must always precede execution, but that the unity between the two has been degraded because it need no longer reside in the individual—giving credence to the fault line identified by his critics. He adds that under conditions of real subsumption, the capitalist division of labour reconfigures conception and execution at a higher level of social organization amidst more advanced technological systems (Braverman, 1998). Here, social does not refer to types of work that are consciously guided in a cooperative manner by those participating in them. Rather, the skills that reside in individual craft workers are juxtaposed with technologies derived from the work of scientists, engineers, and technicians—in Marx's (1973) terminology, the latter refers to the general intellect—which I shall examine further in this work's final chapter.

These technologies are manifestations of social forms of labour and knowledge production, according to Braverman (1998). However, they exist under the strict auspices of management control. Labour processes that are organized at a level of apprehension beyond individual workers are an instantiation of de-skilling and deny humankind "its birthright of conscious and masterful labour" (Braverman, 1998, p. 309).

The portraiture of the master-printer's workshop (Kealey, 1986; Stephens, 1988; Barnhurst and Nerone, 2001; Hoyer, 2003; Ornebring, 2010) mostly accords with Braverman's (1998) depiction of craft mastery residing in the individual. It is the master-printer alone who seems to exercise dominion over the conception of the newspaper despite the print workshop having between two-to-12 apprentices and journeymen (Rutheford, 1982; Kealey, 1986; Barnhurst and Nerone, 2001). In appearing to emphasize that the unity of conception and execution is located in the individual, Braverman's

(1998) work in its application to the printer's workshop does not seem to deviate greatly from bourgeois ideas of creativity and artistic works emanating from a lone individual.

The research of labour process analysts Chris Smith and Alan McKinlay (2009) follows decades after Braverman's (1998) scholarship. Yet it shares some characteristics in common with it. For instance, these researchers also view the creative possibilities of human work as arising from the unity of conception and execution with more importance placed upon the conceptual, which must precede the execution. Unlike Braverman (1998), though, Smith and McKinlay (2009) place equal weight on the possibility that the conceptual can be realized at the level of the group as well as that of the individual.

Investigations of craft workshops from across feudal Europe support such an outlook. They suggest highly cooperative relations between master, journeymen, and apprentices, coupled with work processes that are not sub-divided into fragments below the level of individual wholeness (Wittkowers, 1963; Wolff, 1981; Coleman, 1988; Sennett, 2008). For those in the workshop, this means being educated universally and not as specialized technicians (Wittkowers,1963; Coleman, 1988; Braverman, 1998).

Arnold Hauser (2003) observes that until the start of the sixteenth century, artistic labour processes are collective labour processes within craft workshops. It is only during the Renaissance that individual artists come to prominence, and treated as being apart from the craft dynamics of the workshops in which they are situated (Wolff, 1981; McIntyre, 2007, 2012). This development signals the beginnings of the conflation between originality, creativity, and individuality with respect to artistic work (Sennett, 2008).

Prior to this, the word art is synonymous with the word skill. The two terms are not simply interchangeable, but are coextensive: "The history of art is really the history of skilled work—no more, no less" (Coleman, 1988, p. 1). Printers, refer to each other as the "art preservatives," providing an impression they view themselves as both skilled and creative (Kealey, 1986). The textile craftsman, and Marxist, William Morris, makes clear the connection between skilled activity, creativity, and aesthetics in his declaration that art is "the expression by man [*sic*] of his pleasure in labour" (Morris cited in Kinna, 2000, p. 49). Objects emanating from the craft workshop are to combine the maximum amount

of utility with the greatest amount of creative expression within a collective setting (ibid).

After a centuries-long process, an eventual distinction between craft and art is established. According to Sennett (2008), craft comes to be thought of as referring to the work of a "collective agent" in work methods located within the workshop (p. 73). In opposite fashion, art comes to be understood as the purview of a single agent (ibid). To further distinguish the two, the latter figure is referred to as an artist, while the former is known as an artisan (Coleman, 1988). These historical accounts of craft workshops contradict claims of individualism in craft forms of production (Merrifield, 2011), or what is perceived as the "craft mentality" of freelance writers (Cohen, 2013, p. 228). They also make substantive the rhetoric of craft journalism-school instructors connote.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, changes are afoot in the social relations governing print workshops in North America. Just as the personage of Michaelangelo exemplifies the formation of a star system in the craft workshops of the Renaissance, a similar, though more limited, transformation occurs in these North American work spaces. Previously anonymous workers in print shops, reproducing unoriginal items from afar begin to give way to widely known persons with explicitly political aspirations. From a Canadian perspective, Joseph Howe serves to personify the unfolding of these developments. Howe begins an apprenticeship in a print shop in 1817, at the age of 13. By age 24, he is proprietor of the *Novascotian,* and challenging libel laws aimed at censoring newspaper accounts (Sotiron, 1997). His subsequent court victory propels Howe into candidacy for political office and an eventual victory at the polls (Beck, 1972).

Although he may not be an entirely representative figure, Howe acts to illustrate changes to the role of the master-printer from the start of the nineteenth century to its middle portion in North America. By the end of the century, a more complex division of labour begins to materialize with the master-printer eclipsed in importance by the publisher-editor complex. This signifies the dissolution of the unity between conception and execution as encapsulated in the figure of the master-printer.

Further changes to newspapers' division of labour occur with changes in the periodicity of their publication. The establishment of daily publication as a new norm requires higher

levels of capitalization at these media outlets. Newsgathering practices and writing methods become specialized activities that are sharply distinguished from the activities of printers (Ornebring, 2010). Journalism as it is conceived of, and practiced, at present, begins to emerge during this period. And by the late nineteenth century, a more common occupational trajectory for printers is from apprenticeship in the composing room but not to proprietorship. Rather, it is to the newsroom as a reporter (Starr, 1997).

Additional changes printers experience to their labour process(es) are due to technological advances occurring during this era (Marjoribanks, 2000). Yung-Ho Im (1997) posits that the replacement of letter-by-letter typesetting by the linotype machine, in the 1890s, further denotes the diminished status of the printer. These technological shifts are not confined to typesetters, but also pressmen in the transition from wooden to metal presses (ibid). Simultaneous to this is the ascendancy of reporters in importance to newspapers. In time, reporters succeed the craft aristocrats of the print shop as the most well-compensated, non-managerial employees at newspapers (Barwis, 1981).

The introduction of video display terminals across North American newsrooms throughout the 1970s and 1980s permanently transforms the craft of printing. The implementation of these terminals renders typesetters largely redundant as copy editors and even journalists are able to layout pages for printing (Marjoribanks, 2000). Although printers had withstood the threat of degradation presented by the Industrial Revolution, they are less able to resist the forces of digital revolution.

In less than a 100-year span, technological innovation accompanying changes in capitalist social relations, and mutually determining interactions between the two, first separate, and then further degrade the labour process(es) of the master-printer. By the beginning of the 1980s, this reversal in fates between reporters and printers is complete. Public perception concerning printers views them as back-of-house mechanical workers (Im, 1997). On the other side is a growing class of celebrity reporters who have enjoyed a half-century of by-lines (Hohenberg, 1973; Im, 1997). This makes reporters and columnists the recognizable figures in any community that citizen-audiences invite into their homes and workplaces on a daily basis (Schudson, 1978).

Responses to these changing sets of circumstances in the twentieth century are accompanied by reconceptualizations of craft within the newspaper industry. These are notions that are again under renegotiation in the twenty-first century. This time involving the re-embedding of more technical, production-oriented tasks within journalists' daily routines with the advent of digital technologies in newsrooms organized to take advantage of the promises of convergence (Bromley, 1997; Singer, 2004; Liu, 2006). However, for most of the twentieth century, there exists a separation between the technical and the journalistic (Ornebring, 2010).

This disjuncture engenders a reformulated craft conception consisting of two distinct but interrelated components (Singer, 2004). The first activity comprising this reconceived labour process is the newsgathering element. The second is the news writing aspect of the labour process (Ornebring, 2010). This rendering provides the appearance the newsgathering component aligns neatly with the conceptual portion of the labour process while the writing element is the execution function. In actuality, each stage within the newsgathering and news writing process has conceptual moments followed by their enactment in a continuously unfolding spiral of mutual constitution.

In combination, newsgathering and news writing comprise, according to Colleen Cotter (2010), a reconstituted definition of the craft of journalism in the twentieth century. She writes that those practitioners who excel at both components "are exemplars of the craft" (Cotter, 2010, p. 32). G. Stuart Adam and Roy Peter Clark (2006) have referred to the constituent parts of the journalistic labour process as composing a democratic craft.

Newsgathering consists of obtaining, through everyday procedures, press releases, backgrounders, and related briefing materials from organizations and institutions sponsoring events and meetings. Another essential part is conducting interviews with a variety of experts, spokespersons, and eyewitnesses/ passersby (Adam, 2006). Additional means of securing requisite materials involve archival searches journalists and freelance writers undertake. Other types of primary materials journalists and freelance writers may consult include reports and studies from public and private institutions, court records, materials accessed through freedom of information requests, and, on occasion, materials

provided from anonymous sources. There is, lastly, the responsibility of providing photo(s), video, and audio to enhance a story particularly in converged newsrooms. It is to the activities of newsgathering that I devote my attention to in the remainder of this chapter, followed by an examination of the news writing process in the chapter to follow.

6.2 The Prefixes of Skilling: Contemporary Debates Surrounding Newsgathering

The cleaving of the technical functions of printing from the newsgathering responsibilities of reporting give the appearance journalistic work had taken on a post-industrial orientation in the previous century. Ornebring (2010) claims for the duration of the twentieth century the most complex technical system journalists had to acquire mastery over was the alphabet. This claim can be countered by the actual widespread diffusion of computer technologies in newsrooms by the end of the century—a process decades in the making (Bromley, 1997). Cotter's (2010) own presentation of a unified labour process consisting of the seemingly non-technical requirements of newsgathering and news writing also does not survive historical scrutiny.

The reduction in control reporters experience over their labour process—*vis-à-vis* the master-printer—is not attributable to a decrease in the technical requirements of their occupation. Contrarily, it is actually threatened by the introduction of new technological systems. The installation of telephones into newsrooms illustrates one instance in which Cotter's (2010) equilibrium between newsgathering and news writing is disturbed. Telephones in newsrooms inaugurate the era of "the leg man [*sic*]" and "the re-write man [*sic*]" (Hardt, 1990; Salcetti, 1995). The leg man is the reporter tasked with the newsgathering activities of covering an event, obtaining quotes, etc. These raw materials are then transmitted to the re-write man in the newsroom via telephone. This latter figure then transcribes the collected information before turning it into a story (Salcetti, 1995).

At management's insistence, conception and execution within the immediate labour process is separated. Hanno Hardt (1990) describes how the work of journalists comes to resemble, more closely, that of workers on the assembly line in automobile plants. Interestingly, under this new arrangement, the re-write man is the better compensated of

the duo with the leg man position becoming an entry point into news work (Salcetti, 1995). This conversion can therefore be interpreted as de-skilling both the conceptual and intellectual component of the craft as well as its creative and execution components.

Cotter's (2010) reconceptualised model is under threat once more in the twenty-first century. Recent decades have seen capital investment in, and the subsequent deployment of, digital communications technologies into newsrooms. This has served to reconfigure the labour processes of journalists, and freelance writers. The re-embedding of technical tasks within these labour processes has contributed, ostensibly, to an expansion of the craft qualities of these work operations (Bromley, 1997; Dickinson and Bigi, 2009; Ornebring, 2010; Lee-Wright and Phillips, 2012). Certain discursive claims state converged, multi-media technologies make possible the up-skilling, re-skilling, and multi-skilling of journalists. Fast forward to the past, and journalists come to resemble their master-printer forebears albeit in a reconstituted digital environment. This context imagines new technological skills as enhancing and expanding newsgathering activities.

The *New York Times* columnist, Thomas Friedman (2012), provides a portrait of what working in a converged newsroom entails while attending the Republican National Convention in Tampa, Florida in 2012. He outlines how a reporter would begin the work day by doing some newsgathering and then filing a first story for the web edition of the *Times.* The reporter would provide updates as to occurrences taking place at the convention using various social media applications. Another round of newsgathering results in the reporter preparing a web video for the *New York Times* electronic edition. Following that, the reporter would update the initial story filed. All the while, they would continue to monitor and post on social media before finally embarking on the reporting and writing necessary to produce the story for the print edition of the paper (ibid).

Michael Bromley (1997) deduces the inclusion of technical skills into the labour process transforms newsgathering into news processing. This phenomenon reaches its zenith in online news sites where video, text, sound, and still photos are integrated in order to produce a "multi-media, interactive product" (Bromley, 1997, p. 341). Friedman's (2012) account concerning the responsibilities of a reporter in the digitally converged *New York*

Times newsroom appears to differ little from what Bromley (1997) attributes exclusively to online news sites. The overall effect in both scenarios is that the craft skills of journalists from the twentieth century are diluted by the time and attention now devoted to technical considerations in the twenty-first century (Ornebring, 2008; Cotter, 2010).

In their investigation of broadcast newsrooms in Switzerland, the researchers, Roger Dickinson and Hugo Bigi (2009), discover journalists doing work previously undertaken by technicians such as camera operators. These video journalists now operate cameras as well as having knowledge of editing suite technologies, i.e. both hardware and software. Yet they remain responsible for developing story ideas, researching them, conducting interviews along with other aspects of newsgathering. One finding from the researchers is the pronounced change these requirements have had on interviewing. Generally, these video journalists have less time to devote to interview preparation—identifying sources, writing an interview schedule, etc. Additionally, in the course of conducting an interview, they are frequently interrupted by having to attend to certain technical needs such as ensuring adequate volume levels, maintaining the white balance, etc. (ibid).

By comparison, the cohort of freelance writers from this study appears to operate under increasingly archaic conditions. Their duties and responsibilities seemingly had not traversed beyond Cotter's (2010) categorizations of newsgathering and news writing activities. Unlike Friedman's (2012) *New York Times* correspondent, these freelancers did not need to produce the same story in different iterations across multiple platforms. Yet these informants did not work strictly in one medium. Eleanor Cameron, a self-described "radio freelancer" based in Vancouver, also did online communications work, maintaining a website for a civil society group in Toronto. Those working exclusively with the written word, still moved between media—electronic and print—and between job categories—communications versus journalism. Christine Smythe avers that if freelance writers' earnings are inadequate, it is due to a reluctance to learn the digital skills necessary to work across platforms or job categorizations.

If one applies Thompson's (1989) definition of de-skilling as the transformation of general skills to job-defined skills, then digitally converged media systems likely confirm

a de-skilling hypothesis counter to the claims of a re-skilling/up-skilling/multi-skilling trend taking place (Bromley, 1997; Ornebring, 2008; Lee-Wright and Phillips, 2012). The general human aptitudes of cognition, communication, and even cooperation that typify newsgathering experience a downward revision in giving greater attention to the requirements of operating technologies. As one British reporter explains, "the journalist craves autonomy, not the status of the automaton" (Lee Wright and Philipps, 2012, p. 69). Knowledgeable and effective use of technologies will continue to be integral to the labour process(es) of news media workers just as they were to those of the master-printer. But it is less the relationship to any single technology, or sets of technologies, and more the struggle over social relations of control that define instances of de-skilling the craft aspects of the journalistic labour process (Braverman, 1998; Woodcock, 2017).

6.3 The Revision of Labour: Healing the Divide after the Fordist-Taylorist Complex

A decade prior to digital technologies becoming ubiquitous in converged newsrooms, the management researchers, Michael J. Piore and Charles F. Sabel (1984), had proposed, already, that a renewal of, and return to, craft methods of production was underway. The authors claim advanced manufacturing nations are on the cusp of a "second industrial divide"; the first one having taken place at the turn of the twentieth century with the founding of the Fordist-Taylorist production paradigm, which sidelined the centuries old craft-production methods.

As cited previously, Boris (1986) observes how cyclical waves of interest in craft production have correlated to periods of significant social and economic upheaval in the history of the U.S. For Piore and Sabel (1984), a renewal in regimes of craft production presents an opportunity to revive capitalist economic growth, which had grown stagnant after the post-war boom. They also divine the second industrial divide as a potential means to overcome the alienation of the Fordist-Taylorist complex. The authors write the requirements of mass production upon the division of labour results in the routinization and trivialization of work to such an extent that it "degrades the people who perform it" (Piore and Sabel, 1984, p. 278).

Piore and Sabel (1984) investigate artisanal workshops in northern Italy where they observe workers using multi-purpose technologies in a variety of operations. They deem this system of production, predicated on workers' interchangeable use of skills and technologies, a model of "flexible specialization." The aim of flexible specialization is to encourage "permanent innovation" through the promotion of "ceaseless change" (Piore and Sabel, 1984, p. 17). This requires the development of polyvalent skills in workshops that prioritize collaboration and communication (Amin, 1994). Flexible specialization signifies the revitalization of craft forms of production and a transition from Fordist to Post-Fordist production regimes (Harvey, 1990). This, in part, recognizes the limits of separating conception from execution (Burawoy, 1987; Elam, 1994).

Critics of the Post-Fordist paradigm have tended to view managerial initiatives centred on job enrichment (skill development), job enlargement (enhanced responsibility), and job rotation (movement between tasks) as indicative of an overall intensification of work processes (Tomaney, 1994; Pietrykowski, 1999; Blyton and Jenkins, 2007). This is evinced in the reorganization of the labour process of video journalists in Switzerland (Dickinson and Bigi, 2009), as well as in the case of freelance writers in Canada who are working more intensively across more media on a regular basis. Understood in this manner, the Post-Fordist model of flexible specialization is a "lean production" model that ultimately undermines the development of deep skill (Pietrykowski, 1999).

Even in instances where workers such as journalists and freelance writers are becoming multi-skilled in a technical sense, management's lean production ethic entails more task responsibility in less time across more areas of engagement. According to Harvey (1990), lean production is but one element in an overall paradigm of "flexible accumulation," characterized by precarity, wage stagnation and a diminution in union density and accompanying union power (ibid).

The dynamic extent of change present in Post-Fordist production processes has its corollary in accompanying patterns of consumption. Flexible specialization is a contributing cause, and an effect, of the fragmentation of mass markets into niche markets, characterized by short production runs (Pietrykowski, 1999). Digital

communications have aided in bringing this to fruition in the journalistic field. The overcoming of spatial constraints with the relative ease of publication means the possibility of providing more content, more quickly, more often. The desire of producers and consumers for quicker turnover of commodities, or news content, with more variation and personalization, is a defining feature of flexible accumulation (Harvey, 1990).

Such a development could be potentially beneficial to freelance writers in Canada. The stated desire of those interviewed to write more stylized stories, addressing lifestyle concerns, is wholly congruent with the overall thrust of consumption in the Post-Fordist moment. In an updating of Piore and Sabel's (1984) thesis, the former editor-in-chief of *Wired* magazine, Chris Anderson (2012), has suggested the most recent advances in manufacturing and communication technologies finally enable small producers engaged in artisanal type manufacture to compete directly with corporations. This refashioning of craft and cottage industries would presumably include a challenge to large media companies. More specifically, Anderson (2012) describes this back-to-the-future moment as an opportunity to bypass corporations, and to sell directly to audiences.

The informant Bernard Thorn made mention of a similarly-themed proposal. He said it would be possible for freelance writers to organize in a co-operative type arrangement to sell articles directly to audiences. This would include the creation of a website with a pay wall to facilitate direct sales to audience members. Other writers also mentioned the possibility of operating as a co-operative, including Kate Pernaud who declared "all publications should be workers' co-ops." But the challenges of competing against large corporate media companies appeared insurmountable even to the respondents who made mention of such a possibility. The seeming improbability of finding success in such enterprises made it easier to simply reproduce *status quo* relations for the interviewees.

In addition to these entrepreneurial challenges, the proliferation of digital platforms has occurred within a political economic context of more concentrated ownership (Winseck, 2010). For freelance writers, this has resulted in a diminishment of potential markets at a historical moment when more opportunity presents itself (Cohen, 2016b). Concentrated levels of ownership are likely to endure as long as national governments (re)orient

regulations in favour of transnational capital. On a global scale, the further reduction in foreign ownership restrictions will lead to more merges and acquisitions involving news media conglomerations (Compton, 2010). Journalists' unions in the U.K. have feared, rightfully, this will further entrench lean production methods (Bromley, 1997). The umbrella of re-skilling/upskilling/multi-skilling has obfuscated underlying corporate accumulation strategies. The meeting of technical requirements in converged newsrooms has little to do with a craft renaissance and the amelioration of alienating work conditions.

To conclude, craft as a referent signalling alternate forms of work organization has proven itself to be quite flexible. Recent writings by Sennett (1998; 2006; 2008; 2012) and Matthew Crawford (2009; 2015) have invoked the signifier of craft labour as a counterweight to the interrelated Post-Fordist paradigms of flexible specialization and flexible accumulation. The works of both authors emanate from the philosophical tradition of American pragmatism. This body of thought places epistemological emphasis upon learning through engagement with the material world of objects external to the self. Crawford (2015) describes this relationship by writing craft is a "mode of apprehending the world by grappling with real things" (p. 135). This is rooted in "the intimate connection between hand and head" (Sennett, 2008, p. 9). However, Crawford (2009) identifies, this relationship as always under threat due to the "central imperative of capitalism … assiduously partitioning thinking from doing" (p. 52).

This capitalist exigent is expressed through the temporal characteristics of work that have emerged under the regime of flexible accumulation. This has had a negative effect upon skill development, according to Sennett (2006; 2008) and Crawford (2015). Both authors present craft as a deep and durable commitment to attaining mastery within a particular area of human endeavour. This is to occur incrementally, via sustained effort, over a prolonged chronological period: "routine becomes self-destructive (only when) human beings lose control over their efforts" (Sennett, 1998, p. 37). Conversely, the expectation of labour under flexible work relations is to be continuously in motion, changing careers, learning new skill sets, etc. The flexible specialization of Piore and Sabel (1984) is inimical to the articulation of craft as expressed by Sennett (1998; 2006; 2008; 2012) and

Crawford (2009; 2015). The former, as enacted via job enrichment, job enlargement, and job rotation schemes, provides attenuated skills development.

For the informant Carmen Jamestown, the extent to which she identified as being a craft worker was linked to her 30-plus years of experience as a freelance writer. She described this time span as a period in which she continuously and incrementally accreted knowledge and understanding of all facets of the labour process under both categories of newsgathering and news writing. She portended, however, new entrants to the field may not experience the same opportunities to develop their skills that she had enjoyed. This is because, on the whole, freelance writers in Canada occupy a contradictory craft position caught as they are in the current hegemony of flexible arrangements. Recall as well from chapter three, and possibly due to their journalism school training, most informants conceived of craft as acquiring a narrow set of skills applied to the completion of specific tasks. This is far removed from the craft cosmos of social and material relations Sennett (1998; 2008; 2012) and Crawford (2009; 2015) envision.

6.4   Search for the Next Big Idea: Conception Prior to Newsgathering

Institutional journalists have tended to benefit from having assignment editors to provide them with stories ideas or actual stories to cover—even if the expectation is that generalists and beat reporters alike will generate their own story ideas regularly. Freelance writers are far less likely to have someone commission them to research and write a story from a pre-determined idea. It is perhaps the historical legacy of the role of assignment editors in newsrooms that leads Cotter (2010) to define newsgathering as consisting of researching and interviewing. This framing, though, overlooks an ineluctable part of the newsgathering process prior to the collection of relevant materials using the appropriate (digital) tools of the trade.

Prior to that stage of story development, freelancers first need an idea of what story they are pursuing. On a daily basis, the freelance writers comprising this study's cohort appeared to attend to the process of generating story ideas. Rhonda Schmidt was one of multiple interviewees who described apportioning a part of her morning to reading

through e-mails, listservs, and social media feeds in search of potential ideas. Instances where Schmidt would identify a possible idea would lead her to conduct preliminary research for the purposes of developing a formal proposal to send to an editor.

For Jordan Jovich, this aspect of the labour process was not merely confined to the morning hours of the day. Rather, it was a continuous and ongoing search that had come to suffuse all aspects of his life. Routine daily activities, and their accompanying social interactions, were all treated with an eye towards being the source of a story idea that could then be proposed to an editor. He explained the need to approach everyday life in this fashion was due to the lack of certainty he faced with respect to future sources of remuneration. In keeping with this theme, Earl Hopkins claimed freelance writers must "always be pitching." Elsewhere, in a study of new media workers, an informant relayed to the researcher that "life is a pitch" (Gill, 2014, p. 16).

The review of publications for the respondents was also a means to attain a high level of fluency with respect to the dominant cultural signifiers in circulation at any particular moment. This tactic was necessary to remain relevant, and to not turn into a "dinosaur," according to the informant Catherine Moores. The proliferation of digital media had led Helena Vitalis to increase the amount of time she devoted to conducting online searches looking for story ideas to the overall detriment of her work: "You spend so much time figuring out the trends … you never really get down to actually thinking … And that (thinking) requires time and not all these distractions."

The expenditure of effort on trying to objectively classify the subjective interests of editors, readers, viewers, and listeners alike is no mere distraction. It is also suggestive of another means by which control over the labour process, and in particular, the intellectually rigorous component of story generation is transferred over to the needs of capital valorization. The very criteria determining whether an event is newsworthy betrays part of the bias involving news values[13] and the objectivity creed. Foremost is the

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[13] Both in journalism school and the few newsrooms I accessed through internships, the discourse around having a "nose for the news" possessed an essentialized quality. Reporters and editors discussed this trait as

very focus on events over intractable social issues. The privileging of events means journalists and freelance writers can deploy the five Ws of who, what, when, where, why, and how, to create a fact-based account that practitioners and interested parties consider objective. The ability to answer these six questions means reporters can comfortably cover any kind of hard news story (Ornebring, 2010).

Other pre-eminent news values include a focus upon the timeliness of an event, i.e. present mindedness finding favour over historical understanding. The stature of the figures involved in any incident has served to shape the definition of newsworthiness as well, as has the spatial proximity of an event, i.e. local and national occurrences receive greater amount of attention than international events (Tuchman, 1978; Gilligan, 2006). These newsroom norms also uphold a broader set of cultural concerns, favouring individualism, moderateness, the nation, representative democracy, responsible capitalism, and a general maintenance of *status quo* norms (Gilligan, 2006).

These values derive their historical genesis from the circulation rivalry between Joseph Pulitzer's *New York World* and William Randolph Hearst's *New York Journal.* This leads to the "yellow journalism" crisis at the close of the nineteenth century (Macdonald, 2005). During this period, the complete fabrication of stories becomes a commonplace occurrence, resulting in a full-blown devaluation in the citizen-audience's trust of newspapers. The fear of reprisals from legislators, along with declining audiences, elicits an industry-wide response from owners, publishers, editors, and even journalists to institute a series of reforms (Bennett, 1988).

What emerges from this is a newfound emphasis upon facts and objectivity. By the end of the nineteenth century, social scientists had already adopted the methods and

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though there were a genetic marker for it. By not presenting news worthiness as a historically constructed phenomenon, arising from a set of material conditions, I felt as though I was lacking in this marker. This was because news worthiness was treated as a tacit form of knowledge that one either possessed, or did not. This left me continually guessing as to what kinds of events assignment editors and city editors considered newsworthy. The stories I wished to pursue fell outside the purview of commercial, daily news media.

epistemological outlooks of the natural sciences. The aim of which was to lend greater credence to truth claims involving social phenomena (Horkheimer, 1972). Eventually, this approach is incorporated into the institution of journalism and with it several presuppositions concerning the epistemological assumptions of journalists. The first of these is that there is a social world of events that exists independently of the journalists who are observing them. A second presumption is that these same journalists can record these phenomena without bias. Lastly, these same journalists are assumed to be able to reflect this reality in their accounts, in mirror-like fashion, through employ of language and visuals (Ketchum, 2004; Godler and Reich, 2013). Robert Hackett and Yuezhi Zhao (1998) classify the totality of these qualities as constituting the "regime of objectivity."

In actuality, this regime is premised on routines journalists engage in daily, and how these practices affirm extant relations of power and the understandings that emanate from them (ibid). Reality is less reflected, and is more constructed through inter-institutional bonds of interest and need (Compton and Benedetti, 2010). That is, newspaper publishers and editors come to align themselves closely to the government and private bureaucracies of a developing information society at the turn of the twentieth century (Gitlin, 1980). This establishes a degree of efficiency in journalists' newsgathering routines that Mark Fishman (1980) describes as the "principle of bureaucratic affinity" (p. 143). Under the rubric of objectivity, the institutionalization of these power-knowledge structures allows journalists to become the "primary definers" of "the central value system" (Hall et al, 1978, p. 55). This forms the basis and the bias of enduring news values.

The technique of objectivity and the news values that accompany it reduce the ability of journalists to exercise more independent judgements. Even if the category of newsworthiness is historically dynamic, while managing to encapsulate a broad hegemonic consensus, it was never broad enough to capture the full range of interests and ideas expressed by this study's informants. Multiple interviewees spoke of keeping story ideas in their "back pocket" in case a moment arose when the news media ecosystem might be more receptive. Paradoxically, those interviewed would almost universally claim they were able to write articles on subject matter entirely of their choosing. This remained so even as they had to alienate their interests continually to those of editors, and

the latter's conception of what constituted newsworthiness (Hackett and Zhao, 1998).

Marx (1977) observes how the "separation of the intellectual faculties of the production process from manual labour, and the transformation of those faculties into powers exercised by capital over labour … (are) erected on the foundation of machinery" (p. 548-549). But for Edward Comor (2010), creative labourers have turned themselves into the "tools of capital" by instrumentalizing their own subjectivity in their efforts to elude alienating work conditions (p. 452). This same paradox is operational as it relates to the act of story generation, which is the first instance in a much longer newsgathering process. The freelance writers I interviewed were obliged to transform their decided interests into a manipulable object that found agreement with larger systemic needs beyond their control. These reifying tendencies immanent to capitalist social relations are expressed clearly in the story conception portion of newsgathering:

> This phenomenon (reification) can be seen at its most grotesque in journalism. Here, it is precisely subjectivity itself, knowledge, temperament, and powers of expression that are reduced to an abstract mechanism, functioning autonomously and divorced both from the personality of their 'owner' and from the material and concrete nature of the subject matter in hand. The journalists' lack of convictions, the prostitution of his experiences and beliefs is comprehensible only as the apogee of capitalist reification (Lukacs, 1971, p. 100).

Previously, during the era of the partisan newspaper, journalists are essayists, critics, and "contemporary historian(s)," engaged in a primarily intellectual activity (Carey, 1969, p. 32). In the period that follows, and its continuation into the present, this conceptual and intellectual component is degraded. Journalists remain interpreters of events, but they have lost the ability to do so independently through frameworks of interest and understanding that may extend beyond, or even contravene hegemonic norms as "they transform the specialized and bureaucratic knowledge of sources into the common sense knowledge that seems natural, practical, simple, immethodical and accessible" (Ericson et al, 1987, p. 346). Im (1997) describes this set of circumstances as a loss of "the subjective nature of the craft when they (journalists and freelance writers) surrender control over the idea, conception, or goal of their work with the rise of impersonal, objective reporting" (p. 39).

He concludes that the "technical expertise" of the "regime of objectivity" and other "taken-for-granted conventions" make opaque the delimited quality conception enjoys under these conditions (Im, 1997, p. 40, p. 44). Cohen (2013, 2016b) uses the terminology "conceptual technologies" to refer to mental constructs such as the objectivity code. She defines them as "principles of rationality, efficiency, and accuracy, which … changed the form of reporters' writing and challenged their autonomy" (Cohen, 2016b, p. 73). The stress in her analysis is on how these techniques of the intellect have severed news writing from "its historical ties to art forms, to writing as literary practice. Freelancers have tried to restore these ties by regaining their status as independent workers and remaining outside of an employment relationship" (Cohen, 2016b, p. 76). Yet this occludes the transformative outcome the code of objectivity has had upon the conception portion of newsgathering activities for journalists and freelance writers.

Cohen (2016b) alludes to freelance writers evading the de-skilled labour process as represented by the employ of "conceptual technologies." Their positioning outside the standard employment relationship is to offer them inoculation from such harmful effects. But the embedding of these mental techniques within the everyday procedures journalists and freelance writers use means they subjectively influence the final form stories take while objectively accounting for how stories are pursued. This takes place on a recurring basis irrespective of one's employment status in the field. If it appears otherwise to practitioners in the field, this is possibly attributable to the naturalized status these techniques have attained. Marx (1977) explains this phenomenon writing that it is "a social process that goes on behind the back of producers … (and) therefore appear(s) to the producers to have been handed down by tradition" (p. 135).

Marx's (1977) observation may explain why only one informant explicitly recognized her inability to report and write the stories she desired. Chelsea Austin recounted how she once had an editor "spike" one of her stories. This refers to the practice where management decides to not print a story already written and submitted for publication. Reasons can be several, but in this instance, Austin understood this event as an episode of censorship. It involved a story she had written that was critical of the labour practices of an industry that advertised intensively in the alternative media publication she wrote for

frequently. An editor explained the story would not run because of the potential threat it posed to relations with the industry and, implicitly, their advertising revenues.

Upon learning about the fate of her article, Austin began to consider by what other means she could tell the story without causing upset to her employer. This was a strategy she had to deploy often because of her interest in environmental and social justice issues. The desire to tell these stories had prompted her to attend journalism school and to become a freelance writer. Such stories interested her because of the lack of attention they received in news media: "I see a lot of things around in the world that aren't being covered … no one has the time and energy to write about them. So, I said, okay, I'll do that."

Much more frequent were assessments along the lines of "beggars can't be choosers" as stated by Carmen Jamestown. Informants explained the need to accept paid assignments irrespective of whether the story was of interest. Numerous were the references by interviewees to the main determinant in choosing assignments, or pitching stories, being the rate of remuneration. In fact, a measure of professionalism among these freelance writers was their ability to write about any topic regardless of interest. These instances are indicative of a loss of control over the conception ingredient of the labour process (Im, 1997). As the section to follow will show, it is no longer only "factory work … (that) confiscates every atom of freedom … in intellectual activity" (Marx, 1977, p. 548).

6.5 Supply and Demand Media: The Automation of Conception

The following case study will enable an exploration of changes to the craft of newsgathering at the intersection of alienated conception and automation. In particular, I will look at the brief, meteoric rise of Demand Media Inc., i.e. a "content mill." The term content mill, or content farm, refers to website proprietors, and their workers, who produce high volumes of content on a daily basis. Periodically, Demand Media was able to add as many as 6000 articles a day to its online properties (Barrett, 2010). Some have described the likes of Demand Media as instantiations of citizen journalism because of the lack of accreditation or experience required of participating writers (Veverka, 2011). Yet article titles such as "How to boil an egg," and "How to open a refrigerator door" on

Demand Media's most popular web property, *eHow*, raises questions about the efficacy of the company's contribution to the public sphere (Moses, 2014).

Co-founded by a principle figure from the social media platform, MySpace, Demand Media attracted $350 million in venture capital from its inception in 2006 to 2008. Executives at Demand Media used these monies to make the company into the 17th largest online firm in the U.S. by November 2010 (Wallenstein and Spangler, 2013). During the final week of January 2011, Demand Media Inc. became a publicly traded corporation. By the end of that same week, the company had a market valuation estimated at between $1.5-to-$2 billion dollars. This briefly exceeded the market capitalization of the New York Times Company (Fletcher, 2010; Veverka, 2011; Wallenstein and Spangler, 2013). This made Demand Media the first U.S. based Internet company to have an initial valuation of more than $1 billion dollars since Google's initial public offering in the summer of 2004 (Veverka, 2011).

Right at the outset of its operations, Demand Media had a multi-faceted approach to monetizing online content. At least initially, Demand Media gave the appearance of being a more traditional news media enterprise. It employed the equivalent of assignment editors to whom freelance writers could propose story ideas—as the company had no staff writers (Roth, 2009). Refinements to the algorithm soon resulted in the elimination of this human component (ibid). The generation of story ideas was now predicated on search engine optimization, assessing the popularity and advertising dollar figure of key words, and determining their order of appearance in search engine results (Roth, 2009; Fletcher, 2010). The elimination of the remaining subjective elements as they relate to story generation yielded five times more revenue per piece of posted content while the company's overall revenues grew by as much as 20-to-25 percent (Roth, 2009).

Estimates suggest Demand Media had between 7,000 to 10,000 writers and videographers creating content for its various websites at any particular time in the first few years of existence (Fletcher, 2010; Spangler, 2010). Freelance writers and videographers would visit a portal where they could select from a list of posted stories to write and/or record. Pay rates ranged from between $3-to-$15 dollars per story for

freelance writers. This depended on story length, often around 300 words, with the potential to earn additional monies depending on the click through rates on individual articles (Roth, 2009; Fletcher, 2010; and Frank, 2010). The informant Jaime Archambault described content mills as representing "a race to the bottom in terms of rates for freelancers."

The labour process for the production of this content also included copyeditors, who earned between $2.50-to-$3.50 per article, fact checkers, who received one dollar per article, and even a group of workers who were paid eight cents for each article title they proofread (Roth, 2009; Fletcher, 2010). Over a few short hours, Demand Media was able to produce an article for less than $10 on average (Fletcher, 2010). This made it possible to generate income quickly on individual articles even with online advertising rates being a fraction of those in print and broadcast. For each dollar Demand Media allocated to worker compensation, the company anticipated earning $1.58 in advertising revenues (Spangler, 2010).

Thomas Frank (2010) has referred to content farms as the equivalent of a "literary *maquiladora"* (p. 12). He writes they "automate not some part of the creative act, but rather the context in which it takes place: it deprofessionalizes journalism" (Frank, 2010, p. 12). In this short, polemical editorial, Frank (2010) does not clarify what he means when he writes content mills "deprofessionalize journalism." Nor does he expound upon his reference to the "context" in which the production process occurs. This proves challenging in terms of a closer reading of his account.

However, it is possible to state unequivocally that a portion of the "creative act" is automated contrary to Frank's (2010) suggestion. Whereas previously having a "nose for the news" was externalized in the mental technique that is news objectivity, it now passes from the living labour of journalists, editors, freelance writers, to the dead labour of an algorithm. The creativity involved in the complex conceiving of an act, either individually or collectively, before it is performed, which separates the human labour process from that of other animal species, now resides in an objectified technology outside the purview of worker control.

This represents a sundering of what is creative in the labour process. News values undergo a transformation from a set of more implicit assumptions to an explicit manifestation of Taylor's "one best way" approach to the labour process. Capital, as expressed through Demand Media's proprietary algorithm, appropriates the last remnants of subjectivity with regards to story ideas. Conception is decisively determined by certain quantitative measures, and any pretence to serving a broader public good is abandoned (Cohen, 2015a).

By the spring of 2011, changes to Google's algorithm relegated the content originating from Demand Media's websites to the status of "junk" and "spam" (Wallenstein and Spangler, 2013). This resulted in a precipitous decline in the number of unique page views, which leads to a devaluation in the worth of the corporation's share price from just over $20 dollars per share to the mid-single digit figures in less than one year (ibid). Demand Media Inc. has since tried to reinvent itself from a firm that specializes in search engine optimization to one that manages the brand accounts of other corporations. The creation of this more specialized content has meant the company has become less reliant on a reserve army of freelance writers (Moses, 2014). In October 2016, Demand Media Inc. still had a market valuation of approximately $120 million dollars prior to a decision by management to change its name to the Leaf Group by year's end (Reim, 2016).

Earlier technological advances such as the telephone simply separated conception from execution, but retained these functions within the realm of living labour. Yet even under this earlier model, generation of story ideas is not the exclusive domain of the newsgatherer. The judgment of reporters and freelance writers is still an object of capital's control costumed under the ethical veil of news values. But whereas mental techniques such as news values and the objectivity code rendered journalists and freelance writers more like appendages of capital's ultimate imperatives, the artificial intelligence of Demand Media's algorithm outright automates the first instance of the conception process. The chapter to follow will illustrate how these same tendencies are also affecting news writing. Prior to that, I close by examining how news values and the "regime of objectivity" not only de-skill conception, but how they also act to transgress one of the central myths of the journalistic field.

6.6 And Now Back to Our Regularly Scheduled Labour Process: What's New in Newsgathering?

Bill Ryan (1992) posits cultural labourers produce commodities in an "irrational" manner, conflicting with the logic of calculation and instrumentality informing most capitalist accumulation strategies (p. 104). This he terms the "art-capital" contradiction. This conclusion supports a longstanding tenet comprising journalistic lore (Leab, 1970, Tunstall, 1971, Baines and Kennedy, 2010). Whereas Sennett (1998) prioritizes regularity in developing craft skills, this is counterposed by a belief in the stochastic nature of newsgathering practices among practitioners, including the freelance writers in this study. Those employed in the field have viewed this supposed irregularity as counteracting the worst effects of alienation.

This construct is made manifest in the "shoe leather" journalism of the nineteenth century (Longinow, 2002). This phrase cites the earlier held norm that the journalists of most merit were those simply more willing to walk the streets indefinitely in order to unearth all the details necessary to capture a great story (ibid). Bonnie Brennen (1995) outlines how journalists do in fact experience moments of excitement and adventure in their labour process. "Spot news" in the form of car accidents, terrorist attacks, other instances of crime, breaking scandals is irregular. Philip Elliott (1978) notes, in an observation equally applicable to freelance writers, journalists' "daily experiences (consist) of working on different stories, in different circumstances, to meet deadlines, which may be repetitive, but usually pose unpredictable problems" (p. 186). This can further the perception work in the journalistic field cannot be standardized.

Yet even when "breaking news" does occur, involving eyewitness accounts, it ultimately still requires sanctification from a spokesperson either from police departments, government ministries, etc. Public and private bureaucracies of this kind are just as likely to communicate with, and transmit information to journalists and freelance writers through what Daniel Boorstin (1971) identifies as "pseudo-events." He categorizes "pseudo-events" as orchestrated occurrences intended to elicit widespread public

exposure and positive coverage for the event's organizers.[14] A partial list of "pseudo-events" would include press conferences, daily scheduled media availabilities, also known as "scrums," and various forms of photo opportunities.

Studies of editorial content have shown a preponderance of what appears in news media reports is derived from "pseudo-events" (Wark, 2003). It is therefore no coincidence that the public relations industry comes into existence at approximately the same juncture as newspaper proprietors, managers, and reporters begin to espouse the objectivity doctrine. Occurrences that are not strictly "pseudo-events," but still receive regular news media coverage are governed also by predictability. This is exemplified in the tendency of reporters to congregate daily at courthouses (Tuchman, 1978). Regularly scheduled events known well in advance to assignment editors (and freelance writers) characterize the coverage of sporting events, concerts, movie reviews, planning department meetings, product unveilings and more, and comprise a significant proportion of the material that appears in news media outlets. In their totality, "pseudo-events," and their near brethren, contribute to the routinization of journalistic work.

Despite the capriciousness of certain events that occur with some regularity, Brennen (1995) concludes the work of journalists is "routine, repetitive, monotonous, dull and boring" (p. 91). Herbert Gans (2003) expands upon the general tenor of this analysis by describing the production engaged in daily by news outlets as a "manufacturing process" (p. 49) as well as an act of "mass production" (p. 51). Whereas Gans (2003) asserts, in the last instance, that his descriptions are largely metaphorical, Marianne Salcetti (1995) avers journalists have become just another instantiation of the Fordist-Taylorist production complex: "Reporters were but one widget in this mechanized process, and in spite of the stereotypes of spirited individualism and work freedom, the work life (of journalists) … was not so different from that of a railroad worker or iron puddler" (p.59). As Sennett (1998) makes clear, routine only demeans when its protagonists experience a loss of control.

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[14] A proverb within the journalistic field whose exact provenance is unknown states journalism is what power brokers do not wish to be published, the rest is publicity.

One can assess the daily work patterns of journalists and freelance writers provide just enough variation to mask an otherwise underlying sameness (Elliott, 1978). But the romantic promise of a non-standard life remains central to the identity work of the freelance writers surveyed for this study. The respondent Bernard Thorn revealed that he had considered a return to working for newspapers on a permanent, full-time basis. But before commencing such a search, he realized he did not want to cover city hall on a weekly basis. Marcie Duchamp did not explicitly equate the web of routine imposed upon news work as a source of dissatisfaction. She did, though, refer to her dislike for the daily "churn" of the newsroom, and the reliance on "canned quotes" which made it possible. For Duchamp, not even "spot news" assignments could provide her with a respite from the disillusionment she felt towards newspapers' deadening production schedules and the de-skilling effects built into them.

These accounts are not without their paradoxes. The freelance status of participants would suggest newsgathering activities could be pursued in a more haphazard manner so as to avoid the feelings of monotony and drudgery associated with the much reviled standard employment contract of the twentieth century. Yet those surveyed imposed upon themselves production routines that once again lend credence to the assertion that journalistic work is not entirely distinguishable from the labour processes one might encounter in an industrial setting (Salcetti, 1995; Gans, 2003). These tactics were a near necessity for these freelance writers for it was only through the self-imposition of an iron will of self-discipline that they could hope to succeed in an industry that operates in ways that are beyond their control in increasingly ruthless and competitive ways.

The informant Bernard Thorn made sense of these contradictory phenomena in the following way. In teaching a continuing studies class in journalism, Thorn was surprised to learn the extent to which his students had abandoned a possible career in the creative industries in favour of something deemed more practical. Many of the students were envious of Thorn's career choice. This left Thorn feeling that it was a "cool thing" that so many "people want the job I have." Therefore, the broader reality of capitalist work relations for the many helps to perpetuate the Romanticism that continues to inhere within the journalistic field. This transpires even though the tensions directing the

trajectory of skill development in the field act to undercut journalism's potential as an art form and as intellectual endeavour (Desbarats, 1996; Adam, 2006).

Chapter 7

7 The Write Stuff? Imagining Creativity in News Story Formats

I begin the chapter by examining the stated wishes of participants, and journalists more generally, for opportunities to write as a means of creative self-expression, and how this converges and conflicts with dominant understandings of creativity at present. The next portion of the chapter explores competing models of what constitutes creativity in the journalistic field. This, I follow, by investigating technologies and techniques that have shaped, decisively, the news writing process. These same means, and their underlying social relations, also account for linking the phenomena of alienation and exploitation to one another. Finally, a short case study will identify additional technological challenges to the creativity of the news writing process.

7.1 From Workers' Inquiries to Worker Self-Development: An Outline of Competing Conceptions of Creativity

The project of neoliberalism remains incomplete even as it gives rise to something redolent of neo-fascist tendencies more recently (Bray, 2017). A shorthand definition of ideology as representations that "do not map reality," but instead reflect dominant class interests shows neoliberalism's exponents have had success in circulating this regime of accumulation and mode of regulation (Fuchs, 2008, p. 74). The successful propagation of this program has not excluded the freelance writers surveyed. This study, however, is committed to the broad tenets of Marx's (1997) workers' inquiries. This translates into the views and experiences of the freelance writers I interviewed being at the fore of this investigation, not their interpellated subjecthood. In keeping with this aim, even a cursory review of the interview transcripts reveals a desire for creativity as the strongest determinant in their pursuit of freelance writing as an occupation. The locus of this creativity, according to the participants, is to be found in the news writing portion of the labour process.

Subsequently, a workers' inquiry that is attuned to the needs and desires of its

participants must give consideration to how this group of workers envisions the development of its creative capacities. The most obvious manifestation of freelance writers' labour is the material they submit to various types of publications. A second less tangible outcome is that these freelance writers are also producing themselves in the process: "If we begin from the recognition that every activity in which people engage forms them, then we understand that there is a relation between the nature of our acts and the capacity we develop" (Lebowitz, 2017, p. 48). Here, Marx's (1997) concept of workers' inquiry combine with Marx's theory of human self-development (ibid).

It was the development of their ability to write for the purposes of (self) expression that most interested those interviewed. Diana Mill explained that she had "always been a writer. I've always written in journals and written poetry even before I was in journalism school. It's just a significant part of me I guess. If I'm not writing I am quite unhappy." As a self-proclaimed "creative person," Mill was attracted to journalism because "it is an art form. Creating a story is like doing a picture … I guess I enjoy the challenge of it." For Carmen Jamestown, part of the challenge was in "the fussing over words and trying to find just the right-phrase … I put my imprimatur on it and that is me" This source of satisfaction recognizes, at least implicitly, the sculpting power of human endeavour.

What these findings reveal is that the flexibility and autonomy attendant to the status of freelance employment is a secondary consideration, trailing the opportunity to be creative. Furthermore, those interviewed for this project were also more likely to equate the writing component of their occupation with the craft traditions of journalism. David Trendle, a college instructor in Toronto, expounded on how that it was the iterative acts of editing the written product that he most likened to the craft aspects of the journalistic labour process. He described the act of editing as consisting of "refining" and "fine tuning" for the purposes of "lopping off words," which are extraneous, in order to improve the work. He concluded by remarking on how he especially enjoyed the "sanding and polishing" of the final product.

The analogies Trendle evokes directly correlate the handicrafts to the acts of writing and editing. This lends a certain materiality to work that one might otherwise associate with

the symbolic and ideational realm. For Marx, the evocation of materiality is no mere analogy (Sanchez Vasquez, 1973). In the *Theses on Feurbach,* Marx (1964) emphasizes the material and sensual qualities involved in the everyday work humans engage. Most simply, one can detect a link in Marx's thinking between aesthetics understood as the investigation of beauty, and its etymological roots in the Greek notion of *aisthesthai.* The latter translates into perceptible knowledge and apprehension arrived at through the senses (Ledger, 2006). In combination, these are determinants for a process of unending development of the self and species.

The Marxist scholar, Raymond Williams (1961), explains activity of an ordinary kind is creative when it arises from the human need to convey some facet of human experience with others. Creativity is once again nothing more than the exercise of skilled work: "The special nature of the artist's work is his [*sic*] use of a learned skill in a particular kind of transmission of experience … Thus, the artists' impulse, like every human impulse to communicate, is the felt importance of his experience; but the artist's activity is the actual work of transmission" (Williams, 1961, p. 26). This desire to communicate with audiences, as Williams (1961) outlines, through the pleasure inducing arrangement of words appearing on a page, or on a screen, is what attracted the informants in this survey to the occupation of freelance writing.

These findings cohere with data gathered in the U.S. (Weaver, 2005; Willis, 2010). Surveys probing reporters' attitudes find a "love to write" the factor most responsible for selecting journalism as a career (Willis, 2010, p. 1). Willis (2010) describes this "love affair with the written word … (as the) artistic desire to create something profound and beautiful" (Willis, 2010, p. 2)[15]. In an earlier examination of journalists' attitudes, perceptions, and behaviours conducted in the U.K., Jeremy Tunstall (1971) found that

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[15] Although journalists and freelance writers may identify most strongly with the writing aspect of the craft, David H. Weaver and G. Cleveland Willhoit (1991) find management views their writing abilities as a source of collective weakness. The editors these journalism researchers interview identify these sources of weakness as consisting of a poor grasp of grammar and syntax. There is also a stated inability of reporters to spell at a sufficiently proficient level. The last category of concern for editors is the perceived difficulty reporters have with organizing their stories in a clear and coherent manner.

approximately half of the journalists he interviewed were simultaneously engaged in the writing of a manuscript for an intended book project. Over multiple generations now, journalists and freelance writers have demonstrated a tendency to view themselves as writers with many aspiring to be great writers (McIntyre, 2012).

Such sentiments prevail elsewhere, from Mexico to South America (Weaver, 2005) to Finland, where periodical writers reveal the expression of creativity as the defining feature of their occupation: "Some media professionals feel that for them personally, creative self-expression is the most important part of their job" (Malmelin and Nivari-Lindstrom, 2017, p. 342). This data contributes to the establishment of a determinate relationship between the wish to develop one's creative capacities and the attendant career choice of journalist/freelance writer. Yet these findings reveal nothing regarding what constitutes creativity in the journalistic field. Nando Malmelin and Lotta Nivari-Lindstrom (2017) ascribe this to the lack of an "established research tradition devoted to the study of creativity in the media industry, journalism, or media management" (p.335).

Malmelin and Nivari-Lindstrom (2017) attempt to give some shape to the concept of creativity, defining it as activity that "produces original, novel, or unique ideas that are considered useful and appropriate" (p. 336). The latter phrase, "useful and appropriate," refers to the production of commodities for the purposes of capital accumulation. This conception of creativity does not differ markedly from that presented earlier in the U.K. Labour Party's *Creative Industries Mapping Document* (Schlesinger, 2007). It is also congruent with Florida's (2002) injunction for creativity to be "the *decisive* source of competitive advantage … in virtually every industry" (p. 5, emphasis in the original text).

This accords with his broader articulation of how the needs of capital and those of culture labourers, and generally, all workers, are no longer in contradiction: "The great promise of our time is that for the first time in human history, the logic of economic development and prosperity requires that we harness and develop our full human potential" (Martin and Florida, 2009, p. 31). Although the following claims are audience dependent, Florida insists he emerged from a Marxist or neo-Marxist tradition of scholarship (Whyte, 2009; MacGillis, 2013; Schell, 2014). Both Marx and Florida do situate human self-

development as occurring through creative activity, but the respective conditions they envision for bringing this to fruition are at odds. According to Max Haiven (2014), Florida's (2002) articulations on creativity as something the individual possesses simply replicate the old capitalist order and all its prejudices, hierarchies and inequalities.

The accounts magazine writers provide to Malmelin and Nivari-Lindstrom (2017) run counter to current hegemonic understandings of creativity as disseminated by the likes of Florida (2002). These informants express little concern with generating unique and novel ideas. The envision creativity more as a matter of "refining, elaborating and developing existing ideas" (Malmelin and Nivari-Lindstrom, 2017, p. 339). This orientation is more iterative and craft like, akin to David Trendle's presentation, as opposed to the pronouncements of the necessity of "creative destruction" for the purposes of fostering innovation to advance the accumulation of capital (Florida, 2002).

Finally, the writers Malmelin and Nivari-Lindstrom (2017) interview convey an additional wish to possess more control over more aspects of their labour process minus management's rationalizing techniques. This control, in their estimation, would result in stories attracting a larger readership by enabling the pursuit of ideas of interest. This would indirectly deliver the financial benefits media companies seek (ibid). Haiven (2014) observes that while there may be more opportunities to be creative at present, they come with fewer opportunities for collective control: "Be as creative as you like,' the system tells us, 'just colour inside the lines of the individualist'" (p. 211).

The scholar of Marxist aesthetics, Adolpho Sanchez Vasquez (1973), describes labouring under such conditions as "alien, externally imposed activity, which would fail to satisfy his [*sic*] inner need, to unfold his [*sic*] human wealth" (p. 84). The unity of the labour process is creative when the objectives themselves are under the control of the producers (ibid). Contrary to Florida's (2002) formulation, production logics overdetermined to privilege exchange value will continue to instrumentalize the needs and aims of freelance writers (Sanchez Vasquez, 1973). The communication of some aspect of human experience in a manner that is pleasurable, informative, etc., is in-built to the labour process only to the degree that it favours and facilitates the money-making function of

exchange under capitalist social relations (Compton, 2004).

Despite this lack of control, the participants I surveyed remained hopeful. Multiple respondents viewed accepting nearly all assignments as a compromise that would enable them, a few times a year, to engage in projects they truly desired. Even as, in many cases, the wish list projects pitched by these freelancers were met with either outright rejection, or were simply ignored by editors. Eleanor Cameron described this lived reality as "a real rollercoaster." Rejection rates she had encountered led her to experience "moments of deep despair." These were offset by instances of euphoria with the approval of the occasional project furthering her capacities by enabling the expression of her knowledge and skills in challenging and meaningful ways.

7.2 The Systems Model of Creativity and the Hard News Format

In spite of Malmelin and Nivari-Lindstrom's (2017) claim of a lack of investigation into the elements of creativity in the media industries, and in particular, news writing, researchers have made cursory efforts towards this research aim. Catherine McKercher and Carman Cumming (1998) have conducted a preliminary analysis of what accounts for creativity in news writing. According to these authors, the requirement for creativity stems from the most well-worn of dicta instructors in journalism schools transmit to their pupils. That is to "show, don't tell" their stories. This obliges journalists (and freelance writers) to combine words (and other symbols), images (pictures and video), and sound in ways that create images in the mind's eye of citizen-audiences (ibid).

At a higher order of complexity and organization, this entails the arrangement of words into dialogue, the use of literary and descriptive devices for the purposes of portraying characters central to the news account, and the putting together of these component parts into a comprehensible narrative. When these elemental factors intermingle in novel ways by, for instance, juxtaposing previously unrelated phenomena, or by presenting the familiar in an unexplored manner, then one can adjudge that a creative act has occurred in the journalistic field (ibid).

The range of devices available to journalists and freelance writers may reach another level of sophistication in periodicals or other formats enabling longer-form storytelling. These may include the use of metaphor, dramatic irony, allegory, and the use of suspense for the purposes of building a story to a dramatic conclusion (McKercher and Cumming, 1998; Adam, 2006). The use of myth is another device writers operating in journalistic formats may employ. Myth does not refer to the fabrication of events or stories. Rather, it makes reference to the deployment of pre-existing cultural understandings for conveying complex, social issues in more easily understandable and dramatic ways (McKercher and Cumming, 1998; Lorimer and Gasher, 2001; Adam, 2006).

The normative aversion to abstract, detailed, and causal explanations encapsulated in the maxim "show, don't tell" encourages a reliance upon myth and the mentioned literary devices. The most important consideration when communicating with an audience, irrespective of medium, is to accede to the already established news writing norms (Cotter, 2010). Familiarity with a delimited set of forms and norms enables both producers and citizen-audiences to comprehend and adjudge any claims made, including those as to whether news writing is creative, according to Philip McIntyre (2012).

In fact, McIntyre and Janet Fulton have engaged in a systematic study intended to assess whether print journalism constitutes a creative form of writing. A founding premise of this investigation, according to Fulton (2011), is that creativity in the journalistic field does not denote the conjuring of tales or the fabrication of any element of a story. Journalism as a construction is a non-fiction genre that has at its ethical core a commitment to truth and facts (ibid). The informant Jordan Kovich described this as a tension journalists and freelance writers must negotiate in finding the points of overlap between writing creatively but within the confines of real life events.

Fulton and McIntyre's (2013) investigatory goal is to challenge individualized understandings of creativity. Besides countering this perception, they also argue against the diffusely held view journalism suppresses creativity and intellectual curiosity because it channels journalists' activity into undesirable formulae (de Burgh, 2003). They attempt to achieve these twin aims through the adoption of Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's (1999)

"systems model of creativity" to demonstrate creativity does not consist of the unfettered play of the free imagination of the individual, nor is journalistic writing negatively inhibited by the institutional restraints placed upon it. Contrastingly, the authors suppose these institutional frameworks socialize creativity in ways that are both enabling and constraining (Fulton and McIntyre, 2013).

The heuristic Fulton and McIntyre (2013) deploy to test their hypotheses is the hard news story. Most often, this story type is written using the conventions of the inverted pyramid—of this I will have more to say in the section that follows. The prevailing perception is that the hard news story is the format most contaminated by journalistic conventions (Scanlan, 2000). By extension, if this most constrained of formats can be shown to be creative, then the whole of the journalistic field must also be understood as constituting creative labour according to Fulton and McIntyre (2013).

The systems model of creativity is premised on the precept that social structures, and their accompanying cultural conventions, do not merely inhibit creative activity, but also foster it. The architecture of Czikszentmihalyi's (1999) model depends on interactions involving three elements that are continuously constituting one another in a circle of causality, the components of which he defines as the domain, field, and individual.

The first element identified is the domain—though this does not lend it greater causal specificity (Fulton, 2008, 2011). What comprises the domain is the cultural system that defines any particular sphere of human activity. This corresponds to the practices, codes, conventions, knowledge, and technologies deployed regularly within a specific sphere of human engagement. Fulton (2008, 2011) provides a condensed list of the features of the journalistic domain in the global North. They include the objectivity code, press freedom, inverted pyramid, and ideas of the press as representing the fourth estate.

The field refers to the locationally differentiated position social actors and institutions occupy within any particular sphere of human activity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1999). Human and institutional agents in a field are engaged in continual competition to change their positional location in that field, depending on the relative amount of capital they possess. One's position within this hierarchy of social actors is at least partially determined by the

ability to internalize the codes, conventions and norms of the domain. This, in turn, is contingently conditioned by the varying amounts of pre-existing capital one enters the field with. Those actors who have accumulated, individually and institutionally, the highest amounts of various forms of capital, and are therefore able to shape forces within the field in their image, are referred to as the "gatekeepers" of the domain (Fulton, 2008). The gatekeepers in the journalistic field would include media owners, publishers, station managers, editors as well as other journalists and freelance writers of differing status, and lastly, audience members (Fulton, 2008, 2011).

The gatekeepers are additionally tasked with assessing all contributions submitted by members of the field. In the case of freelance writers and journalists, this would refer to the articles they produce, and whether editors accept them for publication or broadcast. And subsequently, whether audiences legitimate submissions as valid, or treat them, say, as "fake news." Those submissions gatekeepers do accept overwhelmingly uphold the already agreed upon codes and conventions discussed above. Occasionally, a new modality emerges such as the "New Journalism"[16] movement in the 1960s (Boynton, 2005). These occurrences mark the potential for new paradigms to alter the domain in some minor or even more major way. These innovations, however, are likely to do so in a manner that remains preferable to those most able to orient the field in their favour. The daily global output of publications and broadcasts suggests the threshold for entering the journalism domain is low in comparison, for example, to having an article accepted for publication in a scientific journal (Krasovec and Zagar, 2009).

The final determinant under consideration in the systems model of creativity are the contributions of journalists and freelance writers as acknowledged through the assigning

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[16] Robert S. Boynton (2005) describes the "New Journalism" as a "truly avant-garde movement that expanded journalism's rhetorical and literary scope by placing the author at the centre of the story" (p. xii). In addition to being subject centred, it also challenges journalism's dominant conventions through language use, novel narrative forms, and even the types of punctuation it employs (ibid). Marc Weingarten (2006) posits "New Journalism" as a response to the inadequacies of the methods used by the mainstream, commercial media—both print and broadcast—to report on the social, cultural and political crises of the 1960s. Antecedents to the "New Journalism" include the essayist in the partisan press era of the late eighteenth century/early nineteenth century and the muckrakers of the Progressive era in the early twentieth century (ibid).

of by-lines[17]. Though it is a widespread practice now, the assignation of by-lines is a relatively recent development. In the early 1920s, the *New York Times* only assigned by-lines to foreign correspondents. It is only in the 1930s that by-lines became a regular feature associated with newspaper articles (Schudson, 1978).

The contributions journalists and freelance writers make are conditioned by their ability to gain mastery over the domain while simultaneously negotiating the social relations that comprise the socially structured field. Both the former and the latter are shaped by a longer life trajectory of enculturation and socialization respectively (McIntyre, 2007; Fulton, 2011; Fulton and McIntyre, 2013). The factors contributing to the processes of enculturation and socialization the authors identify are genetic endowment, positioning in the social class hierarchy, educational opportunities arising from this positioning, and other objective factors contributing to the formation of subjectivity (ibid).

In sum, this model bears no resemblance to Romanticist notions of creativity (Fulton and McIntyre, 2013). Creativity is not the product of an individual acting in singular fashion as nothing in the model is conceived of as appearing *ex nihilo*. Creativity under this model is relative and incremental. Articles that are accepted and displayed are by definition creative, including those written using the hard news format (ibid). That is because they are novel in their contribution to the storehouse of human knowledge. In order to attain this status, practitioners must master all aspects of the domain (ibid). This does involve acts of the imagination in generating story ideas as well as making a limited set of choices regarding selection of words, use of varied sentence structures, deployment of different narrative techniques, etc. (Fulton 2008, 2011).

In multiple instances, McIntyre (2007; 2012) is explicit about the parallels between Csikszentmihalyi's (1999) model and the field theory of the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu. There exist multiple, overlapping features between the two models in his estimation. But it is the few significant points of divergence that assists in spotlighting

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[17] It is worth noting here that projects engaged in by freelance writers often lack named identification or recognition. This spans from the ghost-written books they author to the marketing materials they anonymously write.

the weaknesses of Fulton and McIntyre's (2013) approach. Before exploring those limitations, it is first necessary to establish, briefly, the shared characteristics of what Csikszentmihalyi and Bourdieu outline in their respective models.

Bourdieu's conception of field theory as it pertains to cultural fields looks at the "relationship between people's practices and the contexts in which those practices occur" (Webb et al, 2002, p. 21). In this, the theoretical proposals of Csikszentmihalyi and Bourdieu both attempt to address the question of structure and agency in a non-linear, dialectical fashion. Both models also make efforts to capture the increasing degrees of differentiation, autonomy, and specialization characterizing different spheres of cultural production (Moore, 2010).

The most closely aligned parallel between the schemas centres on the conceptualization of the individual in the systems model and the notion of *habitus* in field theory. For Bourdieu, *habitus* represents an embodied set of properties any social actor possesses. Attitudes, behaviour, and even body comportment are all inculcated via the objective, structural positions one occupies, albeit in a largely non-conscious manner, and the types of interactions these positionings facilitate. That which is internalized and the manner in which this takes place depends upon one's objective position in a field, and the amount and types of capital accumulated. This will condition how one performs within any field one enters into (Maton, 2010).

Additionally, the success or inability of individuals to negotiate the field of social organization will be largely dependent upon one's ability to learn "the rules of the game." This specific formulation is similar to Csikszentmihalyi's (1999) use of domain. Bourdieu uses the analogy of a game and the rules that govern them to capture how social agents must navigate position taking within a field (Benson, 1998; Hesmondhalgh, 2006). It is only by learning the codes and conventions of any field that one can successfully compete for different forms of capital with other agents in the social organization of the field. This is the meso level of analysis in Bourdieu's paradigm with the individual constituting the micro level.

The scholarship of Fulton and McIntyre (2013) only operates at the micro and meso

levels of analysis. But in Bourdieu's model there also exists a macro dimension of analysis. As the word macro signifies, for Bourdieu there is a higher order level of social organization to consider. Bourdieu situates the symbolic production that occurs within the cultural fields as being located within a larger field of power he terms the economic and political fields (Hesmondhalgh, 2006). The economic and political field are located in an even broader context he refers to as the natural social space, i.e. the nation state. Though, in the current moment of increasingly internationalized media companies, Bourdieu's construction of what constitutes social space may need to be reconfigured to capture the still emerging global realities of media ownership and the accompanying divisions of cultural labour they engender.

The sub-field of more limited, or niche, production, with higher levels of cultural capital, enjoys more autonomy from the economic pressures of commodity production than does the sub-field of mass cultural production. The latter category is in much closer proximity to the power of economic capital, and therefore more closely adheres to its underlying grammar (ibid). In the current historical epoch, the field of power, and in particular, the demands of economic capital are exercising greater control over the entire field of cultural production. Rodney Benson (1998) describes this transformation as "economic rationality exert(ing) greater influence over and above cultural production" than seen previously (p. 465).

Overall, Bourdieu's cultural field theory addresses the long-standing tension within the social sciences concerning the degree of agency exercised by human actors at the micro level and the determining power of social structures at the macro level. He does so through the meso level analysis of fields, illustrating how they are both enabling and constraining for human actors. Fulton and McIntyre reach a similar conclusion, in both their collaborative and sole-authored works, regarding the creative potential of the hard news format while remaining entirely within the micro and meso levels of analysis. However, under the changing circumstances of increasing economic power, human actors are reduced to acting with only "a margin of freedom" in the fields of cultural production (Bourdieu, 2005, p. 30). Here, Bourdieu's (2005) conclusion differs markedly from those of Fulton and McIntyre.

Despite acknowledging their intellectual debt to Bourdieu, Fulton and McIntyre pay scant attention to the macro forces Bourdieu (2005) singles out. Via the notion of "gatekeepers," Fulton and McIntyre at least give a nod to the existence of asymmetrical power relations in the field. In another instance, Fulton (2011) writes managements' twin responses of decreasing newsroom budgets while increasing expectations for greater profitability are deleteriously affecting the ability of journalists and freelance writers to compose the types of creatively satisfying stories they desire and enjoy most. Journalists and freelance writers are becoming more reliant on the employ of standard formats (ibid).

These changes, however, do not undermine Fulton's (2008) faith in the explanatory strength of the systems model of creativity. For instance, Fulton (2011) insists the introduction of time-saving, digital technologies into Australian newsrooms pose no threat to the creativity of journalists. These tools merely represent an opportunity for "journalists (to) thrive under the pressure of deadlines," even as she recognizes routines and standardized formats as constitutive to the process of meeting deadlines (Fulton, 2011, p. 12). When considered thusly, the time sensitive nature of journalistic production as a manifestation of socially necessary labour time appears more disabling than enabling *vis-à-vis* the creativity of news writing. Managements' need to exert control over the creation of surplus value means it must make form, formulaic, in the manufacture of what Ryan (1992) terms "predictable originals."

Without the inclusion of a political economic dimension to capture the changing dynamics of production in the journalistic field, the systems model of creativity infers an indefinite state of equilibrium. Bourdieu's (2005) field theory improves upon the functionalism of Fulton (2008, 2011), McIntyre (2012) and Fulton and McIntyre (2013) by introducing a macro level of analysis that concerns itself with dynamic economic and political power relations. However, neither field theory, nor the systems model of creativity, is particularly well suited to examining historically specific changes to the labour process(es) of journalists and freelance writers. By way of example, Fulton's (2008, 2011) curiosity concerning the effects of (digital) technologies upon the creative aspects of news writing occurs in a chronological vacuum. But it is precisely to just such an inflection point that I turn to next.

7.3   The Wish to Subvert the Paradigm of the Inverted Pyramid

Digital communication devices continue to reorder the newsgathering processes of journalists and freelance writers. But an earlier technology of instantaneous communication still exerts an outsized influence on the news writing process into the new millennium. The telegraph is long obsolete from the journalistic toolbox. Yet the hard news story format it conferred upon the journalistic field, in the form of the inverted pyramid, remains the foundational news writing technique (Canavilhas, 2006).

The first transmission of a news story across telegraphic lines occurs on May 1, 1844 between Annapolis Junction, Maryland and Washington, D.C. (Stephens, 1988; Allan, 1997).[18] In an instant, Samuel Morse's invention is able to annihilate space through time over a distance that would have taken one hour to cover by train travel (Stephens, 1988). Just four years after the communication of this first story, six newspapers in the New York City area would partner to create the New York Associated Press—forerunner to the Associated Press newswire agency (ibid). The initial impetus for these competitors to partner is in order to share stories about the Mexican-American war (Allen, 2013). Soon thereafter, the New York Associated Press expands its territorial reach to include Baltimore, Washington, Philadelphia and Boston. By 1870, this network had come to include Europe and eventually Canada (ibid).

The invention of the telegraph and the formation of the newswire agencies it assists is one key factor contributing to the desiccation of the creative and intellectual terrain of journalists. By the mid-nineteenth century, partisanship had largely disappeared from newspapers in the form of patronage from political parties. However, newspapers continue to reflect particular ideological interests. This concerns newspaper publishers because they fear readers might become alienated consumers if they encounter stories shared across the newswire which contain ideological viewpoints different than their

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[18] The equivalent transmission in what was then British North America, now Canada, would not take place until 1847 (Allen, 2013).

own. The sharing of stories between member papers with differing ideologies requires a method and a format for the erasure, or at least minimization, of this difference. Newspapers belonging to the newswire agencies resolve this through the introduction of an early variation of the objectivity doctrine, and the concomitant inverted pyramid, thus increasing the alienation of their reporters instead (Allan, 1997; Hackett and Zhao, 1998).

The telegraph, the objectivity creed, and the inverted pyramid need to be understood, also, as reflections of a larger set of social transformations that are occurring at this time. The social forces that help usher in the aforementioned innovations are industrialization, the urbanization accompanying it, scientific advancements, technological developments, the further entrenchment of commodity production, the increasing normalization of market relations this facilitates, and the creation of mass markets for these commodities (Schudson, 1978; Im, 1997; Hackett and Zhao, 1998).

Newspaper proprietors' incorporation of the aforementioned innovations into their operations signals their dailies would be treated no differently than the manner in which farmers, and their market intermediaries, would approach "agricultural commodities" (Carey cited in Allen, 2013, p. 268). The spatial reach of the telegraph enables newswire agencies to gain control over burgeoning markets. These agencies achieve greater market control by linking networks of vast territorial expanse. This furthers the distribution of the news commodity (Allen, 2013). The overall effect is the propagation of the commodity form in advertising dominated newspapers whose advent arises with Benjamin Day's penny paper, the *New York Sun,* in 1833. Day's reliance on advertising revenues enable him to the sell the *Sun* paper at an 83 percent discount compared to rival partisan newspapers that have a newsstand sales price of six cents (Stephens, 1988).

In order to achieve a sufficient level of territorial diffusion to encompass the kind of mass audiences advertisers demand, the content of newspapers has to be homogenized (Carey, 1969). This manoeuvre takes into consideration, especially for the newswire agencies, variations in income and educational levels across their geographical span (Allen, 2013). All told, these changes indicate a shift away from the literary essay style of partisan newspapers, which had included the personal viewpoints of the writers, the ability of the

author to write using the first person, as well as the recounting of personal experiences (Hackett and Zhao, 1998). Additionally, regional variations in usage of words, phrases, idioms, metaphors, and the like have to be sterilized in order for newspapers participating in the newswire agencies to share, and to repurpose articles:

> If a story were to be understood in the same way from Maine to California, language had to be flattened out and standardized. The telegraph, therefore, led to the disappearance of the tall tale, the hoax, much humour, irony and satire that depended on a more traditional use of language. The origins of objectivity, therefore, lie in the necessity of stretching language in space over the long lines of Western Union (Carey cited in Allen, 2013, p. 267-268).

The middle portion of the nineteenth century as representative of the competitive epoch of capitalist enterprise means cities and towns have multiple newspapers, which publish several editions daily. The economic concerns accompanying this production schedule intersect with the technological limitations of the telegraph to shape the formation of the inverted pyramid (Allen, 2013). Early telegraph companies charge newspapers one cent per character transmitted across their lines (Scanlan, 2000). The contracts newspapers negotiate with telegraph operators also include a daily maximum word allowance. Due to this, management directs journalists to use simple, unadorned sentences devoid of unnecessary detail and consisting of short words if possible (Hackett and Zhao, 1998). Since telegraph companies have a limited transmission capacity, they insist on such clauses so newspapers do not monopolize their lines (Allen, 2013).

These already present tendencies are intensified during the U.S. Civil War in which newspapers spend hundreds of thousands of dollars to cover the conflict (Scanlan, 2000). The unreliability of telegraph transmissions only becomes more pronounced as soldiers on both sides of the dispute cut transmission lines in order to disrupt communications (Kershner, 2012). This further solidifies the use of the inverted pyramid to try and ensure the most important elements of any news story would reach the newsroom from the war's battle sites (ibid). The transmission of articles in this format also expedites production by denoting to editorial staff the material further down in the story is of secondary or tertiary importance. This means editing could begin from the bottom of stories upward in accordance with the spatial constraints and temporal exigencies of newspapers'

production cycles (Hackett and Zhao, 1998).

Consequently, the first observable characteristic of a story written using the inverted pyramid format is that it attempts to answer the 5Ws of the objectivity doctrine in a lead sentence, or lede, that is between 25-to-35 words in length (McKercher and Cumming, 1998; Scanlan, 2000; Kershner, 2012). The pyramid metaphor points to the strongest, broadest and most important architectural feature being built first. Except in the case of the hard news story, this feature is found at the top and not at the base. What narrows in pyramid fashion until arriving at the conclusion of the story is the importance of the information and the narrative detail contained (Hackett and Zhao, 1998).

Feature stories appearing in newspapers and magazines often rely on a format similar to the inverted pyramid. It is known as the "nut graph" format, or the *Wall Street Journal* structure after where it originated in the 1940s (McKercher and Cumming, 1998; Scanlan, 2000). Customarily, feature pieces following this template begin with a soft lead. This is usually an anecdote, relayed over multiple short paragraphs, in which audiences are inductively shown a general social trend through a scene involving an individual or just a couple of people (ibid). Following the brief anecdote, the nutshell paragraph—hence its sobriquet as a "nut graph"—will explain the tendency the writer will examine throughout the rest of the feature (ibid). The structure of the nut graph mirrors the inverted pyramid in that the material the author deems less important is contained in the paragraphs closer to the story's conclusion. Subsequent to the presentation of the issue via experts and supporting documentation, this type of feature story typically concludes by referring back to the characters in the opening anecdote in what is called "the (circle) kicker" (ibid).[19]

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[19] In my own journalism school experience, not following the nut graph format was not simply punishable through the assigning of a poor grade, it was simply not permissible. The instructor would not allow me to examine the intersection of race and poverty in Halifax's north end through the lens of what W. Lance Bennett (1988) describes as an institutional, analytical, historical and critical perspective. I had to substitute this approach for the nut graph formula instead. More specifically, this refers to a narrative style that is personalized, dramatized, and fragmented. Bennett (1988) describes this latter approach in the following way, "(W)hen the journalistic imperative is to report something about the person, or to find the human-interest angle no matter what the larger political significance, the news has left the realm of information that people 'need to know' and entered the business of psychological massage" (p. 32).

Another formula journalists and freelance writers commonly use in newspapers and magazines is the "hourglass" or "champagne-glass" method (ibid). This is a hybrid format, commencing with a hard lead—explaining the glass width at its top—with feature style writing contained throughout the remainder of the story (McKercher and Cummings, 1998). But unlike the inverted pyramid and the nut graph, the champagne-glass story does relay events in chronological fashion. This portion of the story is signified by the long flute part of the glass before finishing with a broader, more general summary (Scanlan, 2000). According to Chip Scanlan (2000), this technique, which comes to prominence in the early 1980s, is a "virtuoso form that provides the news-conscious discipline of the inverted pyramid and the story-telling qualities of the classic narrative" (Scanlan, 2000, p. 157).

Despite some growth in the prevalence of the champagne-glass story, over several decades now there has been a shift away from the exclusive use of hard leads towards the increasing utilization of soft leads. The use of the latter type of lead is characteristic of features and other types of periodical writing that has come to infiltrate the hard-news story as well (Tuchman, 1978). In either its hard or soft guise, the lead represents the primary opportunity to capture the attention of the audience—an absolute necessity when trying to entertain and inform in a commercial context (Daugherty, 1999). Greg Daugherty's (1999) determines the lead is the most important part of any story because it combines the most creative element of the story with its most important content. This enables audiences to decide quickly whether they want to continue reading the story, or to move along to the next one (McKercher and Cumming, 1998).

Irrespective of these changing trends with respect to the use of leads, they remain in service to formats such as the inverted pyramid, which James Carey (1969) calls a "distinctive and tyrannical aspect of daily journalism" (p. 306). For Schudson (1978), it is at odds with journalists' (and freelancers') "desire to write a good story, not a safe story, or an objective story, but one finely crafted and forceful in its emotional impact" (p. 187). Tuchman (1978) observes among journalists a measure of evaluation that defines success by the extent to which one has been able to move away from writing in the inverted pyramid format.

The sentiments articulated above were shared definitively by the participants in this study also. The informant Norma Lynn Smith expressed interest in possibly doing a master's degree in a creative non-fiction program. Although intimidated by the prospect of having to produce a book length manuscript of 200 pages, Smith was simultaneously intrigued by the possibility of indulging in the vocabulary and play of words she enjoyed. Most of Smith's experience had been in writing features for newspapers, but even in this slightly less structured format, she felt the opportunity to incorporate the aforementioned elements around word choice had been institutionally restricted.

As already alluded to, prior to the arrival of the telegraph, support for newspapers originates with political parties. With this newfound partisanship, newspapers become more issues oriented projects. Contributions to the public sphere on matters of social import require an appropriate vehicle for such efforts. From this there emerges an emphasis on presentation and writing in the form of the political essay. This translates into an "elegance and classical scholarship rarely displayed today" (Desbarats, 1996, p. 18). This style of writing means journalism is considered a "literary genre" and those working for newspapers are perceived as pursuing an activity that is intellectual in its orientation (Carey, 1969, p. 32). Over time, this is an outlook that has been wholly inverted as the style guide of the *Montreal Gazette* makes clear: "If you want to display your creative power or your sophistication or the scope of your intellect … you're not in the right place" (Cited in Hackett and Zhao, 1998, p. 58).

Carey's (1969) references to journalists being "professional communicators" and "technical writers" evokes Ellul's (1967) conception of technique as the application of the utmost efficient means to every realm of human organization and activity. Technique, then, consists of the procedures, knowledge, and skills that along with technologies are necessary for the attainment of organizational goals, i.e. the production of commodities, in this case news stories, in the least amount of social time necessary (Fuchs, 2008). The downward conversion news writing undergoes is an expression of journalistic work becoming "a labour that anyone can perform" as it is turned into "a simple, monotonous productive force that does not have to use intense bodily or intellectual faculties" (Marx cited in McLellan, 1984, p. 169).

Chang-de Liu (2006) identifies the changes accompanying the invention of the telegraph as transforming journalists into "typing machines" as story structure and narrative form is replaced by the transmission of information over long distances. The primary articulation of the "typing machine" syndrome is the inverted pyramid in its reduction of craft to the logic of technique and its expression of the latter in a series of routine procedures (Im, 1997). In order to uphold the sanctity of the objectivity code as performed through the medium of the inverted pyramid, and its equally formulaic counterparts, journalists and freelance writers mostly conform to these institutional demands that are beyond their control. This remains the case even if these means do not represent the most persuasive or effective way to communicate experience. Digital media represents an overcoming of the technological and spatial restrictions that first necessitated the use of the inverted pyramid, but there is nothing to suggest a lessening of its influence upon news writing in the new century (Scanlan, 2000).

Under certain circumstances, the inverted pyramid or the nut graph might be effective vehicles for the purposes of large scale, mediated communication. However, control over the labour process involving unity of conception and execution would mean freelance writers not only negotiate over content but over form itself. Opposite the claims of Fulton and McIntyre (2013), this does not equate to a Romanticist understanding of creativity as an unfettered quality that exists beyond any norms. However, it does express, for the freelance writers I spoke with, the wishes to communicate human experience that are immanent to the news writing process but not yet fully realized.

In wanting to expunge discourses surrounding creativity of any traces of Romantic individualism, Fulton and McIntyre (2013) have jettisoned, as well, Romantic critiques of industrialized labour processes. If individualism is surely not the basis of creativity, as Fulton and McIntyre (2013) assert, then it is equally possible to observe labour processes that are socialized but yet remain denuded of creativity. The inverted pyramid story format would appear to be an instantiation of this very phenomenon for it is constructed, primarily, according to the demands of (socially) abstract labour in which the concrete, definitive contributions of freelance writers are converted to a measurable quantum of column inches and deadline defining conceptions of storytelling (Roberts, 2007).

Laikwan Pang (2009) argues creativity theory of the kind engaged in by Fulton (2011) and Fulton and McIntyre (2013) is an articulation of capital's desires to manage and control the possibility of workers developing their capacities in unwanted and unfamiliar ways. A more unbridled creativity is the "natural enemy of capitalism, whose principles are efficiency, productivity, and management" (Pang, 2009, p. 65). In keeping with her "Marxist reading" of the creative industries, it is possible to conceive of creativity free of the instrumental constraints imposed by management and lauded by Fulton (2011). This is creativity as "purposiveness" that exists "without purpose" (Horkheimer and Adorno, 2002, p. 127). Conversely, creative works produced as commodities represent "purposelessness for purposes dictated by the market" (ibid).

The historical tendency has been for management to induce de-skilling of labour processes through the application of increasing amounts of scientific knowledge and technological developments. This is paired with the reorganization of work processes, rendering them simpler and more controllable from the perspective of management (Braverman, 1998). But in the preceding analysis, I have endeavoured to show that although the utility of the telegraph as a technology has receded, long ago, its handmaiden of technique, the inverted pyramid, persists in thwarting the articulated desires of the freelance writers who partook in this investigation. By fostering the lowering of freelance writers' value, *vis-à-vis* their labour power, these hegemonic formats also serve to lower the expectations these workers have for their chosen occupation. In the section to follow, I take one final look at how technologies and technique combine to visit the objective conditions of alienation and exploitation upon the subjective experience of freelance writers.

7.4   Past as Prologue: The Deepening of Value's Dictates in the Digital Era

Societal transformation, technological innovation, and changes to the political economy of capitalist news media all served to degrade news writing as a literary genre in the middle of the nineteenth century. Current transformations along these dimensions are likely to diminish further the act of news writing. The decreases in profitability among news media outlets, coupled with increasing competition for advertising revenues from

online entities such as Twitter, Google, and Facebook, and the demands of producing digitally, are likely to necessitate an acceleration in the valorization and turnover of capital as it moves through its circuit. One likely consequence of this is writing outcomes that are more predictable and less original as they become more rationalized. At the point of production, this translates into a further abstraction of labour.

Along with Quebecor's TVA Group Incorporated, Rogers Media Incorporated is one of the two largest proprietors of periodicals in Canada (Dobby, 2013; Marotte, 2014). On September, 29, 2016, Rogers Media Incorporated announced a series of changes to the publication schedule of some of the country's most popular magazine titles. The weekly newsmagazine, *Maclean's,* would become a monthly (Lewis, 2016). Other titles such as *Chatelaine* and *Today's Parent* would operate on a bi-monthly print schedule. Others still, such as *Flare, Sportsnet, MoneySense,* and *Canadian Business* would appear strictly as online publications with the promise of new content appearing daily for the latter three (ibid). Therefore, the announcement from Rogers Media Incorporated of a digital[20] first focus reverberated within the community of Canada's freelance writers.

On a web-based message board for freelance writers claiming nearly 1000 members in the fall of 2016, the general reaction to this announcement was that it would result in further decreases to their incomes. Concern over already low word rates for online submissions spiked as participants noted the amount of work required, and the type of work required, for online stories was little different than for articles appearing in the print version of the same magazines. However, the discrepancies in pay between the two were already said to be substantial with the print version of Rogers's magazines paying one-dollar-per-word while online rates were known to be roughly one half of that amount.

As management at these publications likely decrease rates of remuneration, story lengths also experience an associated decline. Empirical studies show audiences engage with online articles for a shorter amount of time than with their print counterparts (Wu, 2016).

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[20] This increasing emphasis upon digital news media production is now also an official plank of federal government media policy (Campion-Smith, 2017).

This means the medium does alter the way reading audiences engage with the messages they encounter: "The shift from paper to screen doesn't just change the way we navigate a piece of writing. It also influences the degree of attention we devote to it and the depth of our immersion in it" (Carr, 2010, p. 90). Subsequently, freelance writers and journalists have to produce more stories to try and satiate the endless supply of content digital platforms require.

The informant Catherine Moores has experienced this phenomenon directly as both an editor and writer. She described digital platforms as "copy intensive," and added that they "need words and they need them every day and sometimes several times a day." A survey of journalists in Sweden demonstrates the ceaseless need of copy digital platforms require means those working strictly in that sphere have to be three times more productive than reporters working for traditional print publications (Witschge and Nygren, 2009). The introduction of digital technologies to the journalistic field is thereby something new and old; an extension of a series of processes that have been unfolding since the middle of the nineteenth century but with twenty-first century characteristics in a process of dissolution and reformulation. This is evident in the litany of changes to the craft skill of journalistic writing that have occurred in the interim.

Overall, this recent expression of a more common feature is part of a much longer tendency within relations of capitalist production: "The workers becomes all the poorer the more wealth he [*sic*] produces … The worker becomes an even cheaper commodity the more commodities he [*sic*] creates. The devaluation of the human world increases in direct relation with the increase in value of the world of things" (Marx, 1988, p. 71). This passage appears in Marx's (1988) chapter on alienated labour. Yet it indicates he simultaneously recognizes the exploitation that is occurring as "an actual economic fact" (Marx, 1988, p. 71). Labour under capitalist relations of production exists for the express purpose of creating surplus value. The managers of capital achieve this through the further abstracting of the labour process. Therefore, the commodity workers discharge, their labour power, undergoes a devaluation.

At the same time, this related set of processes is also responsible for the alienation

workers endure. As the following passage demonstrates, attendant to the diminishment of the value of the labour power commodity is the degradation of the labour process and those situated within it:

> The laws of political economy express the estrangement of the worker in his object thus: the more the worker produces, the less he [*sic*] has to consume; the more value he [*sic*] creates, the more valueless, the more unworthy he [*sic*] becomes … the more civilized his [*sic*] object, the more barbarous becomes the worker; the mightier labour becomes, the more powerless becomes the worker; the more ingenious labour becomes, the duller becomes the worker (Marx, 1988, p. 73).

Since the material phenomenon of alienation and exploitation is internal to the dynamics of "the hidden abode of production," it is through an analysis of the labour process that "the secret of profit making" is revealed (Marx, 1977, p. 279). But Marx's value theory is expansive beyond the point of production in illustrating how the dynamics of capital interconnect the inside of production with the outside of circulation and reproduction. One example of the essence of these interrelations has been the treatment of Marx's value theory of commodity production as finding its equivalent in an external theory of the individual prices of commodities (Bellofiore, 2018). The apparent failure of Marx to demonstrate, accurately, how the value contained in commodities, as an objectified mass of homogenous human labour subject to the measure of labour time, proportionally converts to the exchange value of prices in the consumer market has led numerous commentators, including sympathetic Marxist scholars, to call for a wholesale repudiation of his value theory (Fine, 1989 and Elson, 2015).

Although no less controversial than "the transformation problem" of locating market prices in the production of value, Marx's analysis of value has met with greater approval—even from the likes of bourgeois economists according to Alex Callinicos (1993)—as a paradigm predictive of how internal to the social relations of capitalist production and reproduction is a tendency towards crisis. These periodic occurrences, or trends, stem from what Marx terms the "law of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall" (ibid).

This is a "progressive tendency … peculiar to the capitalist mode of production," reflecting the increasing socialization of labour as a reflection in developments to the general intellect (Marx cited in Callinicos, 1993, p. 131). As the technical means of production transform, there occur changes to the organic composition of capital, i.e. higher ratios of constant capital (machinery) to variable capital (living labour) (Bellofiore, 2018). As this takes place historically, human productivity increases through the extraction of greater amounts of relative surplus value.

This enhancement in the complexity of production processes, and the investment they require, result in a decrease in the number of workers required at the point of production (Callinicos, 1993). This ejection of living labour from the labour process forces wages downwards just as productivity is moving in the opposite direction. Competition requires intra-sectoral adoption of these technological means which leads to crises of accumulation within conditions of over production (ibid). This is but one manifestation of the law of tendency of the rate of profit to fall of which there are counter tendencies by which a decrease in the value of labour power may lead, once more, to changes in the organic composition of capital with a subsequent rise in the ratio of variable capital to constant capital (ibid).

Closer still to the relations of interest in this study is consideration of the making of the human potential to work into an exchangeable commodity, i.e. labour power. Riccardo Bellofiore (2018) writes that "Marx does not abstract at all from circulation. Account must be taken, before the capitalist labour process, of the buying and selling of labour power on the market, and of the way subsistence is determined" (p. 35).

For Alex Callinicos (1993), following Marx, in order for the capitalist mode of production to become spatially diffuse and temporally sustainable, it requires separation to happen along two dimensions. The first degree of separation involves one social class losing access to the means of reproducing itself as property is privatized and transforms into the exclusive purview of another social class (Mandel, 2015). The other sphere of separation entails the deepening of a division of labour as commodity production becomes generalizable. Under these conditions, people engage in private labour in which

they are not aware of, or in contact with, other producers. They are interdependent in this circumstance, yet these producers only come into contact with one another through socially-mediated exchange (Callinicos, 1993).

What the first dimension of separation requires of this social class of workers is that they treat their intellectual, bodily, and emotional capacity to work, i.e. their labour power, as a commodity like any other that needs to be (re)produced for the purposes of exchange on the market (Mandel, 2015). The body's capacity to conduct work in a variety of manners gives it an exchange value in circulation as it also possesses a (socially) necessary amount of labour to (re)produce these functions through the purchase of necessary commodities produced by other workers in a similar fashion (Fine, 1989).

The work day partly consists, then, of the hours needed to (re)produce the value of a worker's labour power. This is the necessary labour workers' perform to be able to purchase the objectified labour of other workers that comprises the substance of value in commodities (Bellofiore, 2018). The value of all the aforementioned commodities are expressed as money prices—both the commodities the worker purchases for reproductive purposes and the commodity the worker sells in the form of a wage, i.e. labour power. Money, therefore, is "nothing but value made autonomous in exchange … it is the necessary exhibition of abstract, indirectly social labour" (Bellofiore, 2018, p. 32). Money as a "universal equivalent" functions as an expression of value, i.e. the amount of labour time necessary to (re)produce a commodity which is a feature exclusive to the capitalist mode of production (Elson, 2015).

The use value of labour power to workers, and in the case of this study, to freelance writers, is its very exchangeability as a value on the labour market. As the informants detailed, the value of their commodity has been decreasing in recent years without an accompanying wholesale decrease in the exchange value of the commodities they require for the purposes of reproducing their labour power. That is, the value of their labour power has slipped below its reproductive rate in many instances. The longstanding and stagnant $1 per word rate has diminished to as little as 20 cents on digital platforms. This is taking place even as some of these platforms, in the case of, for instance, the *Toronto*

Star and the *Globe and Mail,* attempt to reinstitute subscription fees via paywalls—demonstrating that those writing for such publications are directly productive workers who fabricate commodities that expand the value of capital for these outlets through the realization of money revenues in exchange with consumers.

This surplus value freelance writers are responsible for creating that is realized as money in consumer markets is generated in the portion of the socially divided workday that is not directed towards reproduction, i.e. surplus labour (Bellofiore, 2018). The use value of freelance writers' labour power to the editors that employ them is their capacity to produce value above the reproduction of their own subsistence. The latter requiring, increasingly, for those surveyed, a partner whose value as commodity labour was expressed in a larger pay packet or a greater dependence on financialized debt or both.

The commonplace understanding of exploitation in Marxism is the differential between the value newly added to commodities during the surplus labour portion of the day and that which is compensated as necessary labour. But what is more importantly distinguishing for Bellofiore (2018) and Callinicos (1993) is the underlying phenomenon Marx's treatment of the exploitation of labour identifies. This is the continual return of his analysis to the social relations of capitalism that make such an arrangement possible. By comparison, bourgeois economists simply treat labour as another input of the production process, like land and capital, thereby naturalizing what is particular to capitalist society (ibid).

In summary, Marx's value theory as a theory of exploitation in production and as a theory of monetary value first identifies the separation of one class from another vis-à-vis society's means of production. This subordinates those that are dispossessed, turning their capacity to work into commodified labour power. This is only fully implemented when commodity production is generalized. It is at this stage that labour power is exchanged for a wage in the labour market, enabling the purchase of commodities for reproduction while contributing to the further growth of capital (Mandel, 2015).

It is this separation reflected in the social relations characterizing capitalist society, and the manner in which they are enacted in exchange, that gives rise to the second order of

separation (Callinicos, 1993). The interdependence of labourers in such a specialized division of labour is experienced not as a series of interwoven social relation, but as relations between things—money as the universal equivalent represents the commensurability of all commodities—that is realized in the circulation of market exchange. This process endows commodities with a fantastical appearance in which they take on an existence in which they are independent from those responsible for their production, reflecting "an inversion of (the) subject and object" (Bellofiore, 2018, p. 37).

But in the realm of circulation even the first degree of separation that subordinates the working class is obscured mainly. This is attributable to activity in this "noisy sphere (as taking place) on the surface and in full view of everyone" in which it appears the purveyors of capital purchase the requisite commodities for production and "pay the full price for" them (Marx, 1977, p. 279). Consequently, it is only in the production that the "secret of profit-making … (is) laid bare" (Marx, 1977, p. 280). In order to chronicle this, the labour process must remain a privileged site of analysis (Thompson, 1989), and it remains the narrow focus of evaluation of value theory in this study of Canada's freelance writers. As such, Cohen's (2012b; 2013; 2016b) examination of changes to the intellectual property regimes governing freelance writers provides a thorough, but somewhat partial analysis.

Because freelance writers enjoy "relative autonomy," according to Cohen (2012b; 2013; 2016b), in the journalistic labour process, exploitation is the primary threat this group of workers endure as their material living standards decline. The latter phenomenon she attributes to changes in the previously referred to private property standards: "(O)wning the rights to writers' works, publishers can continue to extract surplus value from workers' labour power long after they pay for an article" (Cohen, 2016b, p. 51). Once more, as Rigi and Prey (2015) explain, media firms are tightening their grip over intellectual property rights. But in this process no additional value is created by either producers (freelance writers in this instance) or consumers (news media audiences).

Profitability here stems from the selling of space or time to advertisers in or on news media properties. This is a market exchange in the sphere of circulation predicated on

supply and demand that is determined by the size and the demographic composition of the audience. Although it is not possible without the content commodity of journalists and freelance writers' stories, it simultaneously exists beyond the labour process (ibid). This differs markedly from Cohen's (2012b; 2013; 2016b) contention news media companies continue to extract surplus value from freelance writers through the tentacles of their property rights.

This analysis mostly overlooks, as well, the mechanisms built into the journalistic labour process freelance writers deploy in the most routine of ways on a daily basis. Cohen (2013; 2016b) gives some attention to what she refers to as "conceptual technologies," but she fails to link them explicitly to the role they play in creating (surplus) value. Comparatively, I have investigated these forms of intellectual Taylorism in detail—the inverted pyramid, the objectivity code, news values—in order to retain focus upon the point of production as the site that is generative of both exploitation and alienation. The state socialist/communist experiments of the previous century illustrate how changes in the regime of property rights can lead to outcomes of greater material equality, but that these strategies can be insufficient in dealing with the crisis of alienation (Holloway, 2010).

A focus upon the labour process additionally reveals the fault line in the second part of my interview schedule from chapter three. There, I was interested in examining how the Autonomist recoding of Marx's concept of "general intellect" might be undercutting the continued reliance on the measure of time as the source of value. The suggestion being the variable capital of developed human capacities, i.e. the ability to speak, to think, to learn, to possess a range of affects necessary to form and maintain human relationships, as located in the social factory, may engender increasing instances where the activity of workers is self-valorizing outside the circuit of capital (Virno, 2001). But as Postone (1993) notes, "the form of social domination that characterizes capitalism … is grounded in the value form of wealth itself," which is generated in and through the labour process (p. 30), a category of analysis Hardt and Negri (2004; 2004; 2009) insufficiently interrogate (Bohm and Land, 2012).

Both Marx (1988) and Braverman (1998) ably demonstrate that beneath the appearance of market exchange—here involving advertisers and news corporations—there remains the underlying "hidden abode of production." At the point of production, freelance writers in Canada continue to be subjected to producing under the law of value. Marx (1977) explains this phenomenon in the following way: "(A)bstract labour begins to quantify and shape concrete labour in its image; the abstract domination of value begins to be materialized in the labour process itself … the goal of production in capitalism exerts a form of necessity on the producers … the goal has escaped human control" (p. 182). The "relative autonomy" Cohen (2013, 2016b) ascribes to freelance writers is both less and more than it first seems. Less because it is always under threat from the logic of value production. The more I shall explore in this work's final chapter.

Ironically, one of the many critiques levelled in opposition to Braverman's (1998) analysis of the labour process is his disregard for Marx's labour theory of value (Jaros, 2005). This is allegedly reflected in the title of Braverman's (1998) *magnum opus* as it apparently links de-skilling solely with the monopoly conditions of capital. Others have accused him of the opposite tack. That is, he did not examine with sufficient rigour the mechanisms of profit making under monopoly conditions, i.e. monopoly pricing, mergers and acquisitions, the asset-stripping that follows from consolidation, and the collection of rent that becomes more pronounced in non-competitive markets[21] (Littler and Salaman, 1982).

In the passage below, Braverman (1998) presents managerial control of the labour process as existing expressly for the purpose of attempting to extract more surplus value from workers. Attendant to this is the alienation encapsulated in Braverman's (1998)

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[21] Dyer-Witheford (2011) observes that the financialization of economic activity involving complex quantitative instruments are forms of arbitrage that attempt to bypass laboures in the circuit of industrial capital. The circuit of capital can be thought to consist of capital using money to purchase commodities, including labour, that are involved in a production process for the purposes of producing a commodity. The commodity that is manufactured is finally sold for more money than it cost to produce it. This excess money is then invested into the circuit of capital and the cycle repeats itself. However, with derivative markets and other financial instruments, capital attempts to make money from money while avoiding the more difficult steps of, say, extracting resources from nature while simultaneously attempting to coerce potentially recalcitrant workers.

notion of de-skilling:

> (I)n order to ensure management control and to cheapen the worker, conception and execution must be rendered separate spheres of work, and for this purpose the study of work processes must be reserved to management and kept from the workers, to whom its results are communicated only in the form of simplified job tasks governed by simplified instructions, while it is thenceforth their duty to follow unthinkingly and without comprehension of the underlying technical reasoning or data (Braverman, 1998, p. 81).

The type of labour process analysis initiated by Braverman (1998) illustrates the inextricable linkage between alienation and exploitation by concretizing Marx's (1988) more abstract writings in his chapter dedicated to examining estranged labour. In sum, Braverman (1998) contributes empirical specificity to Marx's (1977) conceptions of the real subsumption of labour in service to socially necessary labour time as the objective criterion involved in the production of commodities. The Fordist-Taylorist complex Braverman (1998) chronicles in such detail continues to represent the single most important advance with respect to the aforementioned objectives of capitalist production.

It also means news writing is unlikely to reclaim anything resembling its brief historic moment as a literary genre. If freelance writers as creative, cultural labourers do not produce forms "in accordance with the laws of beauty," it is because they must produce them in accordance with the law of value (Marx, 1988, p. 77). But it need not be this way. Digital technologies make available to news media corporations a limitless amount of space for articles—though not without new costs being incurred. This could have a salutary effect on the types of issues receiving coverage as well as the narrative structures employed to communicate these stories. One such development would involve transitioning away from the hard news format that the freelance writers interviewed here wished to avoid. However, if what follows is any indication, the writer part in the occupational title of the participants in this study is under real threat.

7.5 J-Schools: From Labour Force Suppliers to Enforcers of Obsolescence

Just a few decades after their inception, the objectivity doctrine and the inverted pyramid became deeply embedded features of curricula at journalism schools (Mirando, 2002). Up

to the present, the vocational orientation of these schools means instructors transmit these techniques to each successive cohort of students that enrols. These schools provide a continuous supply of publicly subsidized workers to newsrooms in exchange for sponsorships, endowed academic chairs, and an informal supply of instructors from news media corporations to these programs (Edge, 2004). This level of mutual dependency between commercial news media and journalism schools ensures the ongoing communication of industry standards. Skinner et al (2001) have described this emphasis on the acquisition of skills as a phenomenon that is concerned, expressly, with creating "employable graduates who are ready to pull their weight in the time-constrained 'miracle' of industrial news production" (p. 345).

This refers to a lack of institutional recognition that the entirety of the labour process involved in the manufacture of news stories is conditioned to produce commodities (ibid). What this means with respect to the skill of news writing is that students learn the inverted pyramid, or the nut graph method for feature writing, but do not experiment with other story forms or narrative structures (ibid). This degree of conservatism is enforced by the need of students to try and master these techniques in order to secure a sufficient amount of "clippings" for a portfolio. The ability to construct a portfolio, editors look favourably upon, is essential to securing even precarious work in the industry (Reese, 1999). This has remained a necessary imperative even if it delimits the skill development of prospective future journalists and freelance writers.

Yet in recent years at least one journalism school appears to have acted in a fashion that contravenes the narrow aims of the mandate I have outlined. In 2010, a collaboration between the highly regarded Medill School of Journalism at Northwestern University in Chicago, and the Intelligent Information Laboratory, housed within Northwestern University's Department of Computer Science, led to the formation of an incorporated company named Narrative Science (Morgan, 2013). This enterprise gave rise to a software program, dubbed StatsMonkey, which automates the news writing process. As the name of the algorithm implies, researchers at the university initially created the program to write synopses of sporting events, and in particular, baseball games.

One of the firm's first clients, the Chicago-based *Big Ten Network* (BTN), is better known for broadcasting college football and college basketball games involving schools from the Big Ten Conference in the U.S. Midwest such as the University of Michigan, Ohio State University, the University of Wisconsin, etc. After partnering with Narrative Science, BTN was able to post stories summarizing game outcomes on their website one minute after their conclusion (Steiner, 2012).

Since its initial partnership with BTN, Narrative Science has expanded its client base to include financial firms and consultancies such as Mastercard Worldwide, Credit Suisse, Deloitte, and T. Rowe Price. A more recent algorithm developed by the firm, known as Quill, is able to combine more data points with "reasoning" in order to create performance reports for investors and regulators on mutual funds and other types of investment instruments (Morgan, 2013). Earlier, this type of report writing would have taken a team of humans several days, possibly even weeks to complete. The more sophisticated Quill algorithm can now perform it in minutes (Simonite, 2015).

Other companies besides Narrative Science have since developed software capable of generating news stories. In the mid-nineteenth century, New York City newspapers using the most advanced communication tool(s) of the age collaborated to create the Associated Press. Nearly two centuries later, the Associated Press has invested in the company Automated Insights. The latter has so far created automated copy, mainly in the form of quarterly financial earnings reports, that the former can then distribute through its various networks (Carlson, 2015; Cohen, 2015b; Kramer, 2017).

Late in 2016, Mark Cuban, Internet entrepreneur and billionaire owner of the Dallas Mavericks basketball team of the National Basketball Association (NBA), revoked the credentials of two reporters from the Entertainment and Sports Programming Network (ESPN) (Leung, 2016). As soon as the incident took place, the Professional Basketball Writers Association (PBWA), issued a statement asking Cuban to reverse his decision in the name of press freedom. However, Cuban's explanation for the manoeuver runs counter to the claims of the PBWA of censorship. Cuban has stated that the reason for his decision was to try and decelerate the rate of automation threatening journalism. By

barring the two reporters from ESPN, which uses material from the Associated Press, Cuban claims he was acting pre-emptively against the original newswire agency in order to prevent their usage of automated stories. This leaves the PBWA, an advocacy organization for basketball reporters, in the awkward position of having a billionaire capitalist defend its members' access to potential future employment (Lou, 2016).

Other news media outlets have used algorithms to generate articles as well. The *Los Angeles Times* has employed a program called Quakebot. This software program is able to convert data provided by the U.S. Geological Survey, concerning local tremors and earthquakes, into news stories in just a few minutes time (Shadbolt, 2015). The *Washington Post* has developed a program named Heliograf to cover high school football games in the metropolitan area (Madan Fillion, 2017). Overall, this current generation of software programs appears to be best suited for producing game summaries from sporting events, financial reports, or other kinds of data heavy stories (van Dalen, 2012). The emphasis on quantitative analysis means narratives can be kept simple. For example, game summaries rely upon standard tropes such as the match being a "nail-biter" (ibid).

However, Ehrenreich (2015) estimates that within another decade, 90 percent of stories appearing in news media outlets could be generated automatically. This figure aligns with other projections regarding the potentially devastating effects automation could have on employment numbers in the coming decades. An oft-cited Oxford University study has calculated as many as 50 percent of all jobs could be automated within the next twenty years (Sorensen, 2013). During this century, and the two preceding it, the demise of work due to automation has been prophesized often enough. But this time might truly be different with "the ongoing triumph of capital over labour" (Thompson, 2015, p. 53). The exigencies of capital require it to reduce socially necessary labour time to as small a magnitude of time as possible. This eventuates in the introduction of technology for the purposes of automating labour processes to the extent possible during any historical moment, depending on the overall development of the technical forces in any particular social formation (Marx, 1973).

The current conjunctural moment of capitalist crises, subsequent changes in social

relations governing work, coupled with technological innovation, has created the conditions for the incorporation of automated news writing in the journalistic field. Yet, according to pronouncements from senior members at Narrative Science, this does not portend the complete elimination of journalists. This is because their proprietary software will still require "meta-writers" and "meta-journalists" to impute certain broad themes necessary for story generation, i.e. the nail-biting game (van Dalen, 2012).

More recently, the Google corporation has provided $800,000 in grant money to a collaboration between the Press Association, a British news agency, and Urbs Media, a software company, as part of its "Digital News Initiative" (Glasser, 2017). This will enable the written automation of 30,000 local news stories a month (ibid). The funding figure includes moneys to recruit five journalists responsible for the editing and the curating of the automated stories the software writes (ibid). These examples illustrate Marx's (1973) prognostication of workers, in this case journalists and freelance writers, becoming the "watchmen [*sic*] … (of) the production process" (p. 705).

For Marx (1973), the prospect of reducing living labour to the status of watch person foreshadows an even more revolutionary future than what executives at Narrative Science, Automated Insights, Google, etc. can envision. This shift, marks for him, the stage of capitalist development in which, paradoxically, the ability to produce with such great efficiency actually comes to undermine the manufacture of commodities according to the logic of socially necessary labour time. In a universally automated production system, socially necessary labour time loses its force as an organizing logic for all human activity as there is no longer any surplus value to extract from living labour. Thus, a new measure of time emerges. This is surplus time in which humans are free to pursue the range of activities and endeavours they wish to engage (ibid).

For the informants who comprise this study, this might translate into the additional time many desire to pursue stories that are of longstanding interest to them. The stories they indefinitely keep on pitch lists, but are never able to propose to editors. As long as commodity production continues to prevail, in tandem with the technological advances noted, any surplus time may be experienced as redundancy in the labour force. Despite

claims to the contrary, applications artificial intelligence companies are developing for the journalistic field will likely serve as labour displacing technologies (Carlson, 2015).

What should also be worrisome to journalists and freelance writers is research indicating audiences are largely unable to distinguish between stories authored by humans and those originating from a software program (van Dalen, 2012). This is occurring even as executives from Narrative Science have acknowledged the stiltedness of the prose in their stories, the reliance on hackneyed and clichéd phrases, the lack of variety in sentence structures, and the narrow range of vocabulary displayed (Shadbolt, 2015). Yet a company spokesperson predicts that by the end of the decade the proprietary algorithm will be able to generate stories capable of contending for a Pulitzer Prize (ibid).

The economics of the telegraph along with the accompanying creation of mass audiences engendered the inverted pyramid in the nineteenth century. From this commenced the further abstracting of journalistic labour. The extent to which the totality of these developments has contributed to the degradation of the literary tradition within the journalistic field makes possible the automation of news writing in the current century. This is an instance whereby supply has conditioned demand to the point where citizen-audiences are unable to discern living labour from dead labour.

Until now, many have noted journalists write the "first rough draft of history" (Shafer, 2010). That is, they are the subjects who first witness and chronicle humanity's most notable moments. The developments that I have detailed here point to an alternate future. If events continue to unfold apace, then both newsgathering and news writing may become the purview of robots and other forms of artificial intelligence as journalism schools and news media organizations deepen their historic ties (Madan Fillion, 2017). This could reduce journalists and freelance writers to being the objects of history, acted upon by the forces of capitalist production and technological advance. Historically, workers as a reified labour force have been most effective in countervailing such tendencies through a show of force as labourers in combination. Therefore, it is to the matter of union representation that I direct my focus in the next chapter.

Chapter 8

8   After Control: Labour Process as a Site of Resistance and Beyond

Workers have benefitted from combining into trade unions for more than a century. Under conditions of neoliberalism, unions have been unable to replicate earlier victories. The prevailing system of industrial relations excludes freelance writers. This has not prevented such workers from experimenting with ways to act together to improve their bargaining power. Recent interest in older models of labour organizing gaze back to craft modalities, which I review in this chapter. I also explore ways in which understanding the labour process as a medium and the dual nature of labour within it may contribute to such a project. I conclude by tracing the contradictory thought of Marx on craft and how, as a manifest representation of concrete labour, craft continues to provide a legitimate concept for understanding the relations and processes of freelance writers now and into the future.

8.1   Class Dismissed: The State and the Unions in the Post-War Period

In advanced industrial countries, including Canada, unions have been the institution most responsible for achieving real wage gains for more than a century (Heron, 2012). At the conclusion of the twentieth century those employed in unionized workplaces enjoyed a wage premium of 14 percent, meaning they earned 14 percent more than non-union counterparts in comparable jobs (Camfield, 2011). Some 15 years later, the differential in wage rates has shrunk to nine percent in the private sector and to three percent in the public sector (Thorpe, 2014). Despite the decrease, the wage premium continues.

Unions have been responsible, as well, for institutionalizing benefits packages and for helping to establish a variety of legal frameworks to ensure greater workplace fairness through a system of grievances and arbitration (Heron, 2012). These combined factors can help to account for the recent spate of successful unionization drives at more than a dozen digital news sites (Sedecca, 2017). A partial list of newsrooms that have unionized includes Salon, the Huffington Post, Vox Media, and the Intercept (Kim, 2016; Sedacca, 2017). Even news staff at legacy media outlets such as the *Los Angeles Times,* union free

since its inception in the 1880s, have decided to unionize (Jamieson et al, 2018). North of the border this tendency has encompassed news workers at Vice Canada, certifying the CMG as their bargaining agent after a six-month organizing drive that began in June 2015 (Cohen, 2016a). Freelancers are not part of the bargaining unit at Vice Canada. Yet union representatives from the CMG anticipate salutary outcomes to accrue to freelance contributors to Vice's various news enterprises from the drive (Salamon, 2016b).

Cohen (2011, 2012b, 2013, 2016a, 2016b) makes clear her preference for freelancers to join together in unions to ameliorate their declining material standards of living. The aim is to secure collective bargaining rights, which, in Cohen's (2016b) calculus, is "the most powerful tool workers have historically obtained through union membership" (p. 171). Benefits freelance writers would derive from union membership are "representation, negotiation, and protection of collective agreements" (Cohen, 2013, p. 296).

But organized labour has been less adroit at bargaining in a manner advantageous to its membership via collective bargaining (Ness, 2014). The erosion of the wage premium is one sign of this decline. During the neoliberal era, the labour unions' past prowess has been reduced, largely, to concessionary bargaining (ibid). Adopting this defensive posture, union leadership insists that there are benefits to cooperating with capital (Fraser, 2015). Consequently, labour leaders behave as though they are "junior partners to corporations" (Gupta, 2015).

Informant Earl Hopkins, a union member as both a staff reporter and a freelance writer, advocated for the above with enthusiasm. He noted that in a moment of crisis, where the news media's capitalist economic model is faltering, it is imperative that an increasingly contingent workforce of freelancers collaborates with media enterprises to ensure the future viability of both parties. It is this type of arrangement Stanley Aronowitz (2015) regards as the loss of all class perspective in confrontation with hegemonic capital: "(C)ompany-union collaborations are symptoms of nearly all unions' loss of class perspective. Corporate capital … knows it is a class and acts accordingly. Unions have renounced class warfare, while their adversaries pursue it with a vengeance" (p. 20).

Even prior to the neoliberal period, labour scholars supportive of the union movement,

such as Aronowitz (2015), note how unions have inflicted damage upon themselves. Between the start of the Great Depression and the communist hysteria of the post-war period, federal governments institutionalize and normalize collective bargaining as the cauldron within which labour-capital relations take place in Canada and the U.S. (ibid). The National Labour Relations Act of 1935 legalizes the ability of U.S. labour unions to enter into collective bargaining. In Canada, unions do not achieve this same status until 1944 when the federal Liberal party passes an emergency order-in-council, P.C. 1003 (Savage and Smith, 2017). This gives labour relations a particular form alongside its content of "responsible" unionism—more commonly referred to as business unionism or contract unionism in contrast to the class-struggle unionism that precedes it (Mosco and McKercher, 2008; Camfield, 2011; Aronowitz, 2015; Fraser, 2015; Ness, 2015).

Part of what characterizes business unionism is a teleology of collective bargaining, subsequent adherence to management rights clauses and no-strike clauses during the duration of the contract, dues funding to support the function of union bureaucracies, and an acceptance of "the capitalist system as the desired context of all of the above" (Lynd and Lynd, 2000, p. 3). Gorz (1968) characterizes the centrality of unions' focus on wage increases as "an impasse into which the labour movement is headed. For the movement is going in precisely the direction management wants" (p. 37). He adds that at this stage of union development "only the price of labour power may be disputed with management, but not control over the conditions and nature of work" (ibid). This is because at the conclusion of the Second World War, labour unions disavow developing worker solidarity to challenge the primacy of the capitalist organization of the workplace. This is followed by conservative labour leadership purging most of the remaining radical elements from within unions at the height of the Cold War. As collective bargaining is normalized, unions come to serve as a *de facto* police force, enforcing the contract on behalf of capital (Feldman, 2000; Glaberman, 2000; Swartz and Warskett, 2012).

What this set of arrangements engenders is a model of labour unionism as service provider (Camfield, 2011). Members are treated as consumers, purchasing services administered by the union (Mosco and McKercher, 2008). The bureaucratization of labour unions may prove efficient, but it reinforces the transactional nature of the

relationship between workers and their representative bodies (Aronowitz, 2015). This servicing model has come to encompass grievance procedures as well with unions replacing stewards with toll-free hotlines. Workers can then call the number provided to begin the grievance process, and have it addressed without their involvement (ibid). An opportunity to develop collective workplace understandings is sidelined for expedient purposes. Jane McAlevey (2016) writes unions are not particularly strong democratic institutions. Paid professional staff make little effort to train rank-and-file members to run their own organization. Despite these enumerated limitations, labour unions remain relevant (Neumann, 2015). According to Aronowitz (2015), even collective bargaining "will remain an important part of the arsenal of labour action" (pages 167-68).

For freelancers, collective bargaining could translate into improved levels of compensation—waged and otherwise. The now routine claim cultural workers, such as freelance writers, are the subjective embodiments of neoliberalism intimates their individualistic dispositions preclude them from acting collectively. However accurate such an assessment, at present, the most significant determinant preventing freelancers from organizing, even for the purpose of collective bargaining, is Canadian labour law (Cohen, 2011, 2013, 2016b). This makes them exemplars of the state's ability to direct labour relations towards certain outcomes with regards to the forms of organizing adopted. The recent use of boycotts to advance their interests looks back to the tactics of the Industrial Workers of the World, who would not sign contracts for they would abrogate their ability to resolve disputes via direct action (Lynd, 1996; Salamon, 2016a).

In an institutional ecosystem involving the state, labour, and capital that favours the latter, the class-based actions of workers are notable for the regularity by which they take place, according to Rick Fantasia (1989). He describes the intent of this system as designed "to channel and derail worker solidarity; independent activity and initiative … (Therefore) arguments about the inherently acquiescent, individualistic character of American workers seem facile in the light of the massive structures and resources devoted to controlling collective impulses" (Fantasia, 1989, p. 71-72). When considering class consciousness, in deeds and attitudes, in (North) American workers, or their absence, one must consider the regulatory environment. Below I provide an overview of

the different ways class consciousness has materialized in and among freelance writers in Canada historically, and how they have responded to an inability to bargain collectively.

8.2 Composing the Script: Freelance Writers' Experiments

Freelance writers in Canada and the U.S. work within conditions that strictly delimit the possibility of a collective response—to the extent that collectivity is theorized as the formation of bargaining units for the purposes of contract negotiations. Due to this prohibition, freelance writers have had to experiment with multiple organizational forms to sometimes challenge, but more often than not accommodate capital. Theorists within the Autonomist Marxist tradition have referred to investigations examining the variable strength and weakness of labour and capital at any particular historical moment as workers' inquiries interested in analysing class composition.

Composition as a concept represents another instance in which Autonomist Marxists have inverted the meaning of a term in relation to its initial deployment by Marx. The latter uses composition to refer to the ratio of "dead" labour that is objectified in technological systems deployed in labour processes at a particular historical juncture, relative to the amount of human labour, or "living" labour, that is extant in those same labour processes. However, for Autonomist Marxist theorists, composition undergoes a "Copernican turn," reversing the domination of workers implied in Marx's definition. Instead, it comes to refer to the tactics, processes, means, etc., by which workers struggle to secure some modicum of autonomy from the dictates of capital in an ongoing dialectical interplay of attempted exodus and subsequent recuperation (Soderberg and Netzen, 2010).

Reporters' first successful unionization drive at a Canadian news media outlet takes place at the *Toronto Star* in 1949 (Kesterton, 1984). It would take another generation before freelance writers in Canada would embark upon multiple strategies of sustained recomposition. These have evolved to where they consist of three types of active approaches. The first is the professional association (Cohen, 2011; Cohen, 2013; Cohen,

2016b).[22] Amidst a myriad of groups and organizations offering a variety of programs in support of the working lives of freelance writers in Canada, the largest and the longest standing of these bodies is PWAC. PWAC inaugurates itself on May 1, 1976, at an initial meeting consisting of 75 members. Today, the group consists of approximately 700 members, distributed across 23 chapters that exist across Canada (ibid).

A primary aim the group sets out for itself at its founding is to secure collective bargaining rights for freelancers in Canada. The recession of the early 1990s signals an end to any serious discussions PWAC members engage in concerning collective bargaining. It is decided that taking an adversarial stance towards publishers and editors would prove unnecessarily harmful in what is perceived as a difficult period for the industry (Cohen, 2016b). Since then, PWAC's leadership has abandoned the adoption of conflictual approaches towards the publishing industry. To reiterate from chapter two, a former PWAC executive director comes to see the group's focus as being on "evolution as opposed to revolution" (Cohen, 2016b, p. 205). Subsequently, the organization has pursued a different trajectory with a focus upon partnership and cooperation with publishers, and intra-organizational relations have been reoriented towards providing professional development services to its membership (ibid).

The next model Cohen (2011, 2013, 2016b) investigates is the freelance union. There are two such bodies operating in Canada. The older is the CFU. It began selling memberships in 2006, but the CFU does not hold its inaugurating meeting until 2009 (Crummer, 2009; Adaszynski, 2013; Cohen, 2016b). From its founding, the first president of the CFU identifies two temporally distinct priorities. The first for this voluntarist union is to garner legal recognition to collectively bargain for its members (Cohen, 2016b). The interim aim is to make available insurance plans for freelance writers as well as to be a service provider. An example of the latter is securing media accreditation for writers so they are able to cover the same events as staff of news media outlets (Adaszynski, 2013).

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[22] See Cohen, (2011, 2013, 2016b) for an account of these developments, including her own primary research, over and above the brief summary that appears here.

Earl Hopkins endorsed this approach, explaining that these are the types of "value propositions" freelance unions have to make to potential members. If membership fees are going to be a few hundred dollars on an annual basis, then unions wishing to represent freelance writers would have to provide at least an equal amount, or more, in services before Hopkins and his colleagues would consider purchasing a membership: "If writers could see what the value (proposition) was, they'd join unions whether they would affect what they really want, which is, you know, rate change."

After a decade of existence, the CFU is no closer to its mandate of being in a legal position to bargain collectively for freelancers. Recent changes portend of a potentially different arc for the CFU. In 2013, the CEP and the CAW combine in a merger that creates Canada's largest private sector union, Unifor (Van Alphen, 2013). As part of this converged union, the CFU is one of two community union chapters that emerge (Simcoe, 2014; Cohen, 2016b). Roxanne Dubois, the Unifor employee responsible for coordinating the chapters' activities, states that the aim of the freelance chapter is to organize these precarious workers around "broader community issues." This entails the identification of "common cause" issues for a classification of workers that is denied the ability to collectively bargain (Renders, 2013). The adoption of such a focus intimates a possible shift away from the economism and bureaucracy of twentieth century business unionism.

The emerging types of unionism Dubois hints at are most often referred to as social (movement) unionism or community unionism (Black, 2012). These kinds of initiatives have directed their efforts upon the precariously employed, who lack the legal ability to form bargaining units. As a general description, those supportive of this methodology point to the need to account for identities that extend outside the point of production (Savage and Smith, 2017). The idea of community is consequently rooted in the naming of shared interests along multiple dimensions of identity (Black, 2012). This idea of "whole worker organizing" aims to bring community perspectives into the workplace and union tactics into the community (McAlevey, 2016). Unifor's freelance community chapter appears to model itself, at least partially, on this theoretical foundation for worker activity. In the estimation of Dubois, the aim of such an approach is to "change the world" (Renders, 2013). This stands in contrast to the objectives of business unionism,

which have proven most effective at changing the lives of a limited membership group.

The other media union currently operating a freelance branch is the CMG in coordination with its parent union, the Communications Workers of America (CWA) (Cohen, 2016b). The CMG represents workers at the Canadian Broadcast Corporation (CBC). This encapsulates those in standard employment as well as the corporation's freelance workers. Freelance media workers who are not employed by the CBC can purchase a membership under the CMG's Freelance Branch (ibid). Students who aspire to work in the journalistic field as well as recent entrants employed on a freelance basis are eligible to become associate members of the CMG without charge (ibid).

The CMG's program for non-CBC freelance workers operates similarly to that of the CFU. The Freelance Branch acts as a service provider, and advocate, for those willing to pay an annual membership fee. There are a range of insurance plans, professional development programming, and services the CMG offers its members. Examples include tax preparation services, workshops on how to conduct contract negotiations, and for those with associate membership, "media mixers" that provide aspirants with an opportunity to socialize and network (Watson, 2014).

Estimates place the number of freelance media workers in Canada between 2,000 and 10,000 (Adaszynski, 2013; Cohen, 2016b). Irrespective of the exact figure, the number of freelance media workers who have been willing to buy memberships with either of the aforementioned unions remains small. The Freelance Branch of the CMG has approximately 65 members while the CFU community chapter has membership numbers in the range of 250 workers over several years now, which is roughly half of what it was at its inception (Crummer, 2009; Adaszynski, 2013; Cohen, 2016b).

The final recompositional paradigm Cohen (2011, 2013, 2016b) considers is the literary agency model. Under this model, a literary agent represents a self-selected roster of writers in contract negotiations between author and publisher (ibid). In 2009, Derek Finkle, a former freelance writer and magazine editor, begins operating the Canadian Writers Group (CWG) with the intention of representing freelance writers. Unlike union locals, which have a legal responsibility to represent all members within a bargaining

unit, the CWG is a private, for-profit enterprise. It is in Finkle's interests to select a roster of writers with well-endowed reputations and/or bargaining power within the sector (ibid). Although unconfirmed, an informant suggested Finkle had a roster approaching 100 writers. If accurate, and considered in relation to the 2000 freelance journalists Statistics Canada says exist in Canada, it means the CWG is offering representation to five percent of the freelance writers/journalists in this country. A final evaluation would have to suggest this is not a model that can be beneficial to freelance writers as a whole.

Freelance writers in Canada have had some success in acting collectively though the extent has been limited (Salamon, 2016a). This activity, thus far, does not equate with the ability of labour unions to secure bargaining rights on behalf of workers. This capability is the *sine qua non* of labour unions' existence in Cohen's (2011, 2013, 2016b) estimation despite Canada's labour relations apparatus prohibiting this possibility. In a final look at unionization models, I outline the future potentialities and historical shortcomings associated with craft forms of workers' combinations.

8.3   Craft Unionism: From Printers to Present

By the first decades of the nineteenth century, printers had begun to form union locals in most large cities in Canada and the U.S. This rapid expansion in locals continues into the mid-century period until the formation of the International Typographical Union (ITU) in 1869 (Mosco and McKercher, 2008). Three years later, printers at the *Globe* newspaper, members of the Toronto Typographical Union, strike in favour of a nine-hour workday contra the then standard 12-hour shift (Kealey, 1986; Salamon, 2013). The labour historian, Gregory Kealey (1986), characterizes this as a conflict revolving "around control and authority, not wages" (p. 83). This demonstrating, once more, the tension Gorz (1968) identifies in workers' demands.

Eventually, printers receive an offer of a 10-percent increase in wages in lieu of shortening the workday (Kealey, 1986). The head of Master (Printers) Employers' Association, and publisher of the *Globe* newspaper, George Brown, produces a legal brief that opposes this measure. He writes, "(the) law to the fullest extent provides for the protection and preservation of individual or personal liberty, it is equally against

combination for the purposes of raising or affecting wages … A combination … is, I think … an indictable conspiracy" (Savage and Smith, 2017, p. 23-24). Despite Brown's assertion, the federal Tory government passes the Trade Unions Act in 1872, which is the first recognition of the legal existence of unions in Canada. This signals, for Salamon (2013), that media workers have been central to the history of the labour movement.

Recent renewals of interest in craft modes of production also seem to have precipitated a revival in investigations concerning craft models of union organization. Mosco and McKercher (2008) have researched the structure and organization of the ITU in great detail in search of applicable insights relating to the present state of labour relations. What they determine is that craft unions have been particularly adept at fostering strong commitments from members (ibid). In the case of the ITU, its successes were attributable to the control it exercised over elements of the craft such as the system of apprenticeship. This control over the means of education extended and equated to control over the supply of labour by regulating who would be admitted. This was a conclusive means by which to generate loyalty among members to ensure the regulations governing the craft tradition were not undermined. One of the effects was that members understood the ITU as the source of their livelihood, not their employer (McKercher, 2002). Hence, the loyalty of ITU members was to the union, to the craft, and to each other in an indivisible manner.

Yet the shortcomings of craft union approaches are numerous, and they have a long genesis. Samuel Gompers originates the American Federation of Labour (AFL) in 1886 as a house of labour for craft workers (Ross, 2012). Under Gompers's direction, over multiple decades, the AFL emphasizes the pride of craft above broader class concerns. Additionally, the AFL does not challenge the sanctity of private property or any of capital's other central tenets. In fact, Gompers operates the AFL as though it were a capitalist entity premised on authoritarian control and rationalization. The AFL also slavishly upholds contracts after collective bargaining is legalized in 1935. Labour scholars also ascribe to Gompers responsibility for introducing what I have referred to as business unionism. The primary aim of the AFL is the reduction of inequality through a fairer distribution of the surplus value that its members generate (ibid).

Even as proponents of this organizing model, Mosco and McKercher (2008) acknowledge craft unions "have tended to be exclusionary, hierarchical and committed to an economic agenda of preserving and promoting the work their members do" (p. 82). Finally, craft unions have been sites of racist, sexist, xenophobic and homophobic attitudes and activities (Heron, 2012). For example, Canada's dominant craft unions in the late nineteenth century, and into the early part of the twentieth century, oppose immigration into the country by Chinese migrants (Storey, 1991).

A related form of organization to craft unionism is occupational unionism. The basis of the latter is a shared skill set among a narrowly defined class of workers (Cobble, 1991). To organize successfully along occupational lines, two conditions must be met. First, employers and the union representing a particular occupation agree to operate the industry as a closed shop. There can be few exceptions to this condition. Otherwise, if employers exercise complete discretion in the hiring decisions they make, then the union loses the ability to control the labour supply. Second, such a model depends upon the implementation and use of hiring halls. A full-time union official, known as a business agent, assigns workers to job sites on rotation (Piore and Sabel, 1984).

The Hotel Employees Restaurant Employees (HERE) waitressing locals in post-war America, between the mid-1940s to the mid-1960s, serves an example of a union organizing successfully using this model (Cobble, 1991). For employers, this arrangement is advantageous because the union, in this case the HERE, absorbs the cost and the responsibility of training workers at their vocational schools. Unions operate the hiring halls at no expense to the employer (ibid). Employers also enjoy an assurance of quality control as those assigned to their workplace would come to them from the vetted hiring hall (Osnowitz, 2010). What is advantageous to workers of occupational unionism is it offers employment security, though not necessarily job security. It makes possible continual employment during times of industry/economic decline. If an employer engages in layoffs, it is possible to return to the roster of workers rotated via the hiring hall. This enables the union to engage in job sharing programs (Cobble, 1991).

Despite the ultimate failure of these efforts in the waitressing industry, occupational

unionism offers a model to organize freelancers who lack a single employer (ibid). This requires changes to labour laws at the national and sub-national level. Without such changes, publishers have no reason to operate their newsrooms as a closed shop. This is particularly the case with an oversupply of journalists who wish for a career in the creative industries.

To summarize the above findings, freelance writers in Canada show little willingness to join voluntarist unions in significant numbers. This, despite more than 80 percent of those interviewed here possessing a favourable disposition towards labour unions. To date, the associational model has proven most popular for reasons not entirely clear. PWAC abandoned any notions of labour collectivity and/or militancy a quarter-of-a-century ago (Cohen, 2016b). However, without collective struggle for legislative change there exists little possibility of securing the collective bargaining rights Cohen (2011, 2013, 2016b) identifies as the centrepiece manoeuver needed for improving outcomes for freelance writers. This is why she ascribes to unions a second, more fundamental function, that at present would necessarily have to precede any opportunity to bargain collectively.

8.4   The Clash over Ideology: Class Consciousness in its Idealist and Materialist Enunciations

The final years of the nineteenth century see a consensus crystallize in Marxist circles on the need for a vanguard to inculcate into workers the values and understandings they needed to act as a class. Those in positions of leadership in communist and socialist organizations conclude intellectual uplift invested in raising class consciousness is necessary "to make the revolution possible" (Glaberman, 2002, p. 159). Holloway (2002) describes this as a set of practices within Marxist thought whereby an outside element is inscribed with the duty of bringing consciousness to those members comprising the working class. It is, as Holloway (2002) explains "the task of those in-the-know to lead and educate the masses" (p. 131). With sufficient class consciousness, workers will act in their own interests: "The revolutionary character of the theory is understood in terms of content, not in terms of method, in terms of the what, not the how" (ibid).

This related set of precepts continues to find favour into the present in circles ranging

from radical activists to radical schools of academic thought (Fantasia, 1989). Such scholarship has grown more insistent regarding the need for this type of workers' education following the capitalist crisis of the previous decade (Albo et al, 2010; Loewen, 2013). The Canadian labour scholars, Stephanie Ross and Larry Savage (2012), contend the crisis should have provoked a radical and militant response from working people, but is unlikely without the adoption of critical educational programs to mould "class consciousness" (p. 16). The ongoing conviction represented is that "it is necessary for people to have an intellectual grasp or 'correct line' on society before they can change it" (Fantasia, 1989, p. 236). The notion of the necessity of a "correct line" is associated with the thought of Vladimir I. Lenin (1978) and his observations of the uprisings and the revolts prior to the Russian revolutionary movements of 1905 and 1917.

One effect of this thought is that it reifies workers' praxis at the point of production in favour of more mediated forms of knowledge. The latter is knowledge formation that is abstracted from the practical, material activity workers engage in daily in the labour process as well as their resistance to it (Holloway, 2002; Day, 2005; Roberts 2006). It also suggests workers can be "filled with ideology as a container is filled with water," if ideology is conceived as a class particular set of beliefs (Aronowitz, 1981, p. xiii).

As an overall tendency, Cohen's (2013, 2016b) research supports this model of worker representation and education. She writes, with respect to the organizations vying to represent the interests of freelance workers, that it will be incumbent upon them to develop "class consciousness" by "challenging their (freelance writers) notions that they work only for themselves and illuminating the hard-to-see power relations that structure freelance writing as a form of labour" (Cohen, 2016b, p. 230-231). Elsewhere, along with her co-author Greig de Peuter, she notes how they have encountered few cultural workers who display a worker-centred identity. This refers to a lack of counter-interpellative subjectivities resistant to the hegemony of neoliberalism (de Peuter and Cohen, 2015). Via discursive means, the aim of counter-interpellation is to create critical consciousness for the eventual purposes of collective worker actions.

From an earlier unpublished dissertation, such statements are more prevalent in a sub-

section entitled "Challenges to Developing a Worker Consciousness." Here, Cohen (2013) identifies the predominant frames of self-understanding circulating among freelance writers as narrating identity around conceptions of entrepreneurialism, professionalism, and creativity. These identifications must be destabilized to incorporate working-class categorizations. It is the responsibility of the current archipelago of organizations attempting to represent the collective interests of freelancers to "challenge the broader cultural and social milieu in which freelancers work, which encourage self-sufficiency and entrepreneurship as keys to success" (Cohen, 2013, p. 326). The inability of freelancers to construct a working-class identity "pose(s) a serious limitation to organizing efforts, demonstrating that (the) biggest challenge in organizing freelancers, it seems, is freelancers themselves" (Cohen, 2013, p. 313). A more critical and worker-based consciousness must be brought to these freelancers from without their daily experience as labour power in a determinate labour process and set of social relations.

A body of less developed Marxist thought argues the theorizations examined thus far are instantiations of idealist common-sense thinking (Lynd, 2015). To Martin Glaberman (2002), although this line of thinking is linked to the Marxist canon, it does not accord with what Marx and Engels (1998) say about the possible formation of a revolutionary working class: "Revolution is necessary, therefore, not only because the ruling class cannot be overthrown in any other way, but also because the class overthrowing it can only in a revolution succeed in ridding itself of all the muck of ages and become fitted to found society anew" (Marx and Engels cited in Glaberman, 1993, p. 7).

This passage from *The German Ideology* locates worker insurrection in the material activity of struggle in contrast to idealist theses concerning a "correct line" of thought. This is in keeping with Marx and Engels's (1998) broader conceptualizations involving the unfolding of history, including consciousness and politics, from the material activity humans are engaged in. It is revolutionary activity that engenders an accompanying revolutionary consciousness, not the inverse of this (Glaberman, 1993, 2002).

Fantasia (1989) finds such "cultures of solidarity," referring to new forms of understanding and associated ways of acting collectively, in the strike actions of workers

in private-and-public-sector unions he examines. Workers come to see themselves as having an oppositional set of interests from capital and its managers (ibid). For David Camfield (2011) these active worker contestations are "schools of struggle." The focus upon a common antagonist means workers can overcome internal stratifications and disputes—to a limited extent—and develop an understanding of themselves as a class with opposed interests (ibid). Both at and through these sites of struggle, workers gain political knowledge and awareness of the (political) power they possess. McAlevey (2016) cites the importance of union certification drives and (first) contract negotiations as spaces of struggle also contributing to class education of a material kind. These engagements can be confidence building exercises, emboldening workers to imagine a future in which the tools of production are democratically regulated (Glaberman, 2002).

If freelance writers have yet to display, consistently, the types of consciousness the workers in Fantasia's (1989) case studies do, it is important to recall that they do not have the benefit of union protection and the rights this grants to them. The latter would include the ability to withdraw their labour power at the contract's conclusion. Affordances of this kind in which material struggle may precipitate class consciousness not only elude entire classes of workers exempt from union participation, but are increasingly unavailable even in those sectors eligible for collective bargaining. Decades long has been the trend of decreasing union density and an accompanying decline in the number of work days lost to strikes (Camfield, 2011; Bartkiw, 2015). Current political and economic circumstances limit the applicability of the analysis Fantasia (1989), Glaberman (2002), Lynd (2015), and McAlevey (2016) put forward, leaving one area unexplored as a possible crucial site in the development of a critical workers' education.

8.5   The Labour Process's Message as a Medium

A point of emphasis journalism school instructors convey to their students regards the purported importance of news media in creating an informed citizenry. But a workers' education for journalists and freelance writers would have to surpass this well-worn ethic. Broadly, it would need to encompass recognition of the social role labour plays in the production of value in capitalist society. This is the kind of critique schools do not typically supply and labour unions have long ago abandoned *vis-à-vis* the more limited

educational programming they offer (Camfield, 2011; Katz, 2012; Jappe, 2014). As the generation of value occurs in and through the labour process, it is possible freelance writers can begin to unravel its mystifications through the processes that generate it.

A starting point for unwinding the inscrutability of the above is the technical division of labour and its development for facilitating the spread of commodity production (Marx and Engels, 1998). This fragmentation of the labour process makes apprehension of workers' social contribution to the totality of commodity production difficult as the production of commodities individualizes and instrumentalizes people's relationship to their work.

Paradoxically, this same series of developments means workers actually become more socially interdependent on a much larger scale. But this is an attenuated form of social connectivity as the system of exchange universalizes (Holloway, 2016). Postone (1993) describes this system as a "quasi-objective form of social mediation constituted by labour," meaning the production and exchange of commodities brings humans into contact with one another, yet in ways that are largely outside their control (p. 6). The more commodified the necessities of life become, the greater the power of money as the medium to enable their purchase (Marx, 1973). As a consequence of all this, the more dependent upon each other workers actually become, the more their social relations seem to be characterized by independence and ultimately, by indifference (Marx, 1977). This is the social phenomenon Marx (1977) terms commodity fetishism.

In the society of the commodity, humans mainly relate to each other through the medium of exchange. The value of commodities appears as a natural property independent of the human labour with which they are imbued. This set of relations has taken on a naturalistic cover, attributed to the fetishized market mechanism and its "invisible hand" that exists outside and beyond the human hands of production and consumption. Instead of direct social relations between people in their roles as producers and consumers, what transpires under capitalism are highly mediated relations between things. This occurs at the point of exchange as money, the manifestation of social abstract labour, is transacted for a service or good. Abstract labour in its value producing function is the fulcrum of domination in

both the labour process and the exchange process that remains hidden in plain sight:

> Unlike the fetishism of 'the misty realm of religion' it (abstract labour) is not an ideological form, a product of our way of looking at things, but a product of the particular form of the determination of labour, of particular relations of production …This produces the illusory appearance that value in its money form is an independent entity (Elson, 2015, p. 165).

The phenomenon of commodity fetishism is not simply confined to the manufacture and exchange of commodities. Through the term reification, Lukacs (1971) applies this same set of principles from Marx's (1977) analysis to all domains of social life. The reification of consciousness that occurs across all domains gives the impression that the socially constituted world, in its totality, has, instead, natural origins (Stamps, 1995). This is the upside-down effect of the *camera obscura* in Marx and Engels (1998) discussion of ideology. The sociologists Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1967) contend that when humans begin to socially construct and transform the world outside of them in their image, through objectification, the possibility of reification is always in close proximity. The establishment of institutions that pattern behaviours and attitudes in particular ways means successive generations will encounter these entities in an ahistorical manner.

It is from this quality that the objectified social world derives its givenness. Despite emanating from the activity of humans, the objectified social world possesses the characteristic of immutability. Therefore, the remaking of this social world, including commodity production, requires an understanding that humans can potentially alter that which they have constituted (ibid). The paradox commodity fetishism and reification encompass is the ability of these described phenomena to obviate, largely, subjective realization of the social forces ultimately responsible for the construction of the social world. An unmasking of the underlying social relations would reveal that beneath the world of thing relations are human agents engaging in creative activity, albeit in alienated forms, and this includes the articles freelance writers compose.

Despite the opaqueness the technical division of labour, in service to commodity production, engenders, freelancers are favourably situated to comprehend that they constitute both the subject and object of history (Stedman Jones, 1971). Along with

reification, this is another concept that is derived from the work of Lukacs (1971). In his estimation, workers are positioned to gain objective knowledge of the subjective role they play in commodity production. This self-knowledge commences with the realization they are another input in the labour process, as labour power, like any commodity.

Lukacs (1971) terms this preliminary form of self-knowledge, i.e. the capacity to become objectively aware of one's object status, minimal consciousness, which precedes class consciousness. It is in this stage when workers gain class consciousness that they become the identical subject-object of history (ibid). This can be interpreted as the attainment of a comprehensive understanding of the totality of capitalist society's social relations. What accompanies this knowledge is the potential impetus for workers to alter this structured and structuring set of relations. Lukacs (1971) identifies the site of this knowledge production as emerging from the already familiar source of the vanguard institution(s), i.e. revolutionary workers' party. By contrast, Marx's "revolutionary praxis" centres on the facility subjects have for gaining objective understanding of their circumstances (Roberts, 2006, p. 29). In this guise knowledge of the subject-object union is found in the concrete portion of the (transhistorical) labour process. He describes humans as active beings who transform nature, and are transformed. They "doubly affirm" one another:

> I would have objectified in my production my individuality and its peculiarity and thus both in my activity enjoyed an individual expression of my life and also in looking at the object have had the individual pleasure of realizing that my personality was objective, visible to the senses and thus a power raised beyond all doubt. In your enjoyment or use of my product, I would have had the pure enjoyment of realizing that I had both satisfied a human need by my work and also objectified … for another human being the object that had met his [*sic*] need (Marx cited in McLellan, 1969, p. 464).

The objective knowledge first necessary is that human subjects objectify themselves upon nature by the activity of transforming nature (Sanchez Vasquez 1973; Sayers, 2005, 2011). The highest expression of this range of subjective capabilities, for Marx, is to be found in creative endeavour (Sanchez Vasquez 1973). In being able to contemplate such works, humans attain self-knowledge of their creative capacities and gain awareness of their constituting powers (Sayers, 2005, 2011). In effect, Marx identifies what is a type of aesthetic education for workers (Lunn, 1985). It is through the objectification of the

senses via labour processes that transform nature that humans develop their collective subjectivity in a manifold manner (Marx, 1988).

The sense perceiving organs that detect smell, sound, touch, taste, and sight are integral to Marx's (1964 and 1988) formulation as they were to informant Catherine Moores's experience. She described the art and craft of news writing thusly: "You are working with raw materials and hopefully turning them into something beautiful … You can create something when you read the words on the page, suddenly, they're beautiful and they become something admirable that you look at and you say, 'geez, did I write that? Wow, it sings.'" Diana Mill compared the process of story writing, when it was proceeding smoothly, to the pleasure she derived from singing. Evident in these metaphors and juxtapositions is the deep sensual enjoyment these respondents obtained, at least occasionally, from their creative expression. An understanding of subjective objectification was detectable in Yasmine Wood's response when she described all the "meaningful activities you do … (as) an externalization of (her) internal self."

Thus, the unity of the historical subject-object is most transparently realized via the unity of conception and execution in the labour process. Historically, the latter phenomenon has been associated with craft labour processes the likes of which journalists and freelance writers engage in—even as this class of workers is constantly subjected to de-skilling tendencies. But if freelance writers, journalists, and other similarly situated workers can apprehend how their objectified creative powers constitute their respective fields, then perhaps they can struggle to change the state of relations that dominate these fields at present. This process may well involve more idealist forms of knowledge, delivered by political parties, trade unions, professional associations and other organizations that comprise civil society, but the labour process as a site of material, social self-knowledge should not be underestimated in its importance in this regard.

Marx's (1964, 1988) aesthetic theory challenges certain epistemological assumptions of many adherents who have invoked his name. The nature of knowledge descends not from the content, i.e. what is presented, but from the manner of how it is brought to fruition. In this sense, the labour process can be thought of as a medium; medium theory being a sub-

field of investigation within communication studies (Lorimer and Gasher, 2001). Scholars working in this tradition have demonstrated an interest in how changes to the dominant orientation of communication technologies affect the processes of cognition and consciousness in populations (Comor, 2003).

Medium theorists have an overriding concern with how media as a system of technologies, of organization, and of institutional patterns generate and transmit conceptual systems people use to comprehend their lives (Comor, 1994). Media systems and their social relations possess the ability to influence what is permissible and impermissible: "(The) impact of forms of communication, then, resides, in the form of social order and organization they call forth and facilitate, the forms of consciousness they support and the point at which they locate forms of authority. If this is what the phrase means, then, in fact, the medium is the message" (Carey, 1975, p. 127).

The labour process as materially generative of ideas among workers about the nature of social relations that govern production can be thought of as a medium since it facilitates particular ways of knowing and ways of being with others. Although it would take several decades, the master-printer's loss of control over the labour process results in the institutionalization of the journalistic equivalent of a planning department, consisting of a hierarchy of editors and a publisher. In the terminology of medium theorists, management come to form a "monopoly of knowledge." (Comor, 2001). The effect of this on the journalistic field has been to normalize the regime of objectivity, the inverted pyramid, and the prevailing news values for more than a century now.

The near universalization of these standards within the journalistic field unambiguously influences the stories pursued. It also affects the means by which stories are composed. Consequently, the labour process of journalists and freelance writers prioritizes certain stories that are written with a particular kind of content. This is reflective of the power relations that structure the field. But the labour process of these workers still retains other features that are instructive at a structural level that is beyond the content of articles and stories. That is because what also conveys meaning is not solely the content contained in news articles, but the manner in how the content that is brought to fruition is organized.

In the face of the fragmentations and divisions the capitalist system of production institutes, what is communicated from a medium perspective is the coherence and holism that constitute the limited but unified labour process. These are key attributes with respect to establishing workers' control over the labour process as coherence and holism can contribute to a project of developing minimal consciousness (Lukacs, 1971).

What this type of process may more accurately signal is an intervention in the form of prefigurative politics. The Fordist-Taylorist fixation with the "organization of production" is inverted, even if momentarily, by providing a glimpse of what the "production of organization" may look like in a post-capitalist formation where people exercise control over all aspects of individual and collective endeavour (Bohm and Land, 2012, p. 220). The inadequacies of prefigurative politics in the new(est) social movements are well documented (Taylor, 2013; Srnicek and Williams, 2015). The repudiation of mediation, representation, universality and scale mean the rejection of political activity that might make possible large-scale transformative change. As harsh critics of prefigurative politics, which they term neo-anarchist "folk politics," Nick Srnicek and Alex Williams (2015) contend that sustained social struggle on a mass scale is likely to have prefigurative politics not as a destination, but a starting point.

David Graeber (2002) outlines the epistemological possibilities of the labour process, in its prefigurative guise and beyond; he writes, "there must be a link between the actual experience of first imagining things, and then bringing them into being, individually or collectively, and the ability to envision social alternatives—particularly, the possibility of a society itself premised on less alienated forms of creativity" (p. 73). The labour process as a site of workers' prefigurative self-activity is but one location where freelancers can undertake the personal transformation that must accompany larger societal change. For Sennett (2012), this embodied and experiential knowledge is seated in the concrete aspects of craft labour: "Craftsmen [*sic*] who become good at making things develop physical skills, which apply to social life. This process happens in the craftsmen's [*sic*] body" (p. 199). The labour process of craft workers shapes future probabilities for self-determination and self-constitution through the material objectification of the self: "craftsmanship [*sic*] emphasizes objectification" (Sennett, 2006, p. 104).

Hardt and Negri (2004) also find a degree of agreement with the American pragmatic tradition Sennett (2008, 2012) espouses, despite their occasional scathing criticism of his work. They view pragmatism as being consonant with an understanding of social practice as a means to form common understandings and ways of living. This refers to their notion of "constituent ontology," which alludes to a 'human nature' that is not static, nor essentialized (Hardt and Negri, 2009). Instead, humans write themselves cumulatively and incrementally in processes of collective becoming, which are conditioned by one's daily practices involving cooperation, communication, and cognition (ibid).

Once again, from an epistemological perspective, the how is as significant as the what (Holloway, 2002). Unity between the mental and the manual and between conception and execution contributes to how workers attain social self-knowledge, and this posits significant meaning for any political project engaged in the de-fetishization and the de-reification of the social relations freelance writers inhabit. In sum, freelance writers may be writing a first draft of a new(s) history not through what they chronicle, but via the manner in which they do so. However, the lack of a globally strengthened and sustained labour movement over several decades now has led labour process scholars to reconfigure the prevailing parameters of the field's analysis.

8.6   At the Point of Production: Reconsidering Resistance Beyond Indeterminacy

The publication of *Labour and Monopoly Capital* in 1974 occurs in a climate of heightened labour militancy. Relevant to this context is Braverman's (1998) description of his work, and its Marxist orientation, as "not an exercise in satisfying intellectual curiosity, nor an academic pursuit, but a theory of revolution, and thus a tool of combat" (p. 313). The second half of the decade sees a decline in workers' struggle. Concomitant to this decline in academic circles is a "second wave" of labour process studies, emerging to address perceived deficiencies in Braverman's (1998) book. Among these are his over emphasis on Taylorism as a system of control along with his alleged inattention to the subjectivity of workers in the labour process (Thompson and Smith, 2009). This leads to studies, such as Michael Burawoy's (1979) *Manufacturing Consent,* which examine management's engagement with worker subjectivity through the implementation of

(hegemonic) regimes of consent along with those of coercion.

In an attempt to bring an element of cohesion to the disparate components comprising the first and the second wave of labour process investigations during a decade of waning working-class activity, Thompson (1989 and 1990) develops what he terms a core set of principles comprising labour process theory. The first element in this theory is recognition of the labour process as a privileged site of analysis. Again, the generation of "surplus" via the labour process is indicative of an exploitative set of social relations. Consequently, analysis of the labour process is needed if the capitalist system of production is to be challenged (Thompson, 1989 and Jaros, 2005).

Another key element in his schema is the indeterminacy of labour power (Thompson, 1989). The first volume of *Capital* finds Marx (1977) noting how prospective workers and employers enter into agreements of employment, based on market exchange, in which each party appears as an equal in the labour contract. It is only as labour enters into "the hidden abode of production" that the iniquitous nature of the relationship becomes apparent. It is here where a market exchange of ostensible equality is transformed. It is in the labour process that workers are dominated for the purposes of producing value.

However, labour power is unlike other commodities inputted into the labour process (Smith and Thompson, 1998). Fluctuations between the potential labour power possesses and actual labour output can be understood as an expression of the ongoing recalcitrance workers' display. Management wishes to employ the intelligence and the purposiveness workers bring to the labour process. But it is these very same qualities that enable humans in their capacity as labour power to resist the demands of capital (Wright, 2011). Core labour process theory refers to this gap as the wage-effort bargain. Although the wage is guaranteed, the amount of effort is not. Due to labour's structural position of subordination, the "effort levels (of workers) are not stable … because of the distinct interests of each party in the exchange" (Smith and McKinlay, 2009, p.11-12). One can expect workers to engage in all types of soldiering and time-stealing activities in order to minimize the amount of effort they will expend over the course of the workday.

The precarious working conditions freelance writers encounter suggests resistance in the

form of the wage-effort bargain would be unavailable to them (Smith and McKinlay, 2009). The ability to secure future work opportunities is dependent on building a reputation for delivering quality work in a timely fashion. Once freelance writers enter into "the hidden abode of production," they would appear to have little opportunity to resist through a withholding of effort, leading to substandard articles, projects, etc. With great regularity, the freelance writers participating in this account would invoke the maxim, "you're only as good as your last" project, article, etc.

On a few occasions, respondents did speak of minimizing their time and effort commitment as much as possible without exacting any permanent harm to their reputation. Diana Mill was one informant who revealed her recalcitrance with respect to the wage-effort bargain. Mill attempted to attenuate her own effort and performance when she deemed it necessary: "If I am getting paid low wages for a story, which happens sometimes, then my way of going at it is, I don't put a lot of time into it. Because this is the only way you can get fairly (compensated) for your time. If you are making $150 a story, then you better damn well only spend three hours on it."

A post-structuralist turn in labour process analysis that commences in the 1990s correlates with a shift in investigatory focus from the indeterminacy of labour power to that of identity. Previously, management would attempt to align individual identity with an *a priori* corporate culture through team-building exercises and the like (Schoneboom, 2007; Sturdy, Fleming, and Delbridge, 2010). Management strategies since then have undergone a transition from the types of coercive consensus just described to measures that encourage individual expressions of the self in and through work. Almost any and all expressions of this "authentic self" are of value so long as they do not interfere with the pursuit of capital valorization (Sturdy, Fleming, and Delbridge, 2010).

Efforts at constructing consensual identifications with work for freelancers in the creative industries have revolved around appeals to meaningful work, infused with uniqueness, creativity, emotion, and individuality (Smith and McKinlay, 2009). Just as the wage-effort bargain offers an incomplete form of resistance, identity indeterminacy is also limited. The 'authentic self' of freelancers is constitutive of both their labour process(es)

and stratagems in the labour market as competitive distinction is expressed through the accrual and display of various forms of capital that comprises their deepest individuality.

Manifestations of micro-resistance in and through these types of indeterminacy have become the contemporary focus of labour process theory. This has served to elicit fierce criticisms with respect to the ostensible myopia of these lenses of inquiry, beginning with how they privilege the individual over the collective (Smith, 2006). Along the same continuum of critique, others have noted how these tactics do not contribute to the formation of class consciousness. A final negative appraisal is that they divert attention away from structural frames of understanding (ibid). This enables management to claim that soldiering and quitting are the manifestations of disgruntled individuals (ibid). To the extent that acts of micro-resistance can be illustrative of mutuality and solidarity, they still fail to "confront the nature of work itself" (Aronowitz, 1992, p. 131).

Labour process researchers continue to acknowledge an ongoing debt to Braverman's (1998) lasting contribution, yet they have departed, mainly, from the Marxist roots of his inquiry. This is because micro-resistant approaches decouple worker opposition at the point of production from larger class struggles (Smith and Thompson, 2009). Additionally, Marxist critics of core labour process theory have accused its practitioners of abandoning an explicit politics of working-class revolt, and discarding key categories of Marxist analysis such as the labour theory of value (Jaros, 2005). But a redeployment of the dual character of labour may make it possible to build scaffolding between resistance at the point of production to struggles of transformation at the level of class.

The structured antagonism of the labour-capital relationship at the centre of Thompson's (1989, 1990) core theory does not distinguish capitalist social relations from those of earlier social formations such as feudalism or slavery. All are marked by the domination of one class over another, rooted as they are in a particular set of property relations that enable the seizure of the surplus labour product from the subordinate class. An outline of the nature of property relations in capitalist societies did not evade the respondents I interviewed. For some, such as Trudy Forsythe, the educational efforts of the CFU and PWAC had been invaluable in alerting her to the importance of intellectual property

rights. Carmen Jamestown, referred to changes in intellectual property regimes as that "property right cock-up" that was making for a "foul life" she did not expect to improve.

Postone (1993) concurs with the assessment that capitalist social relations operate according to property relations of domination and exploitation. They also operate at a deeper structural level that he locates in the dual character of labour (ibid). Just as commodities purchased for consumption possess a use and exchange value, so too does the commodity of labour power. Labour power engages in work that produces a use value "of a definite kind, carried on with a definite aim," and this type of activity Marx (1977) identifies as concrete or useful labour (p. 133). Concrete labour is the content of the commodity, the form it takes is that of abstract labour (Holloway, 2010).

Implicit to the production of commodities is the creation of value in accordance with the logics of abstract labour. For Postone (1993), these logics "confront living labour as a structurally alien and dominant power" (p. 30). The need to produce in agreement with the grammar of value requires the usurpation of control over labour processes by management in what Postone (1993) refers to as "quasi-objective" forms of social domination. In this formulation, labour appears as a unitary category in which its abstract properties prevail: "Labour creates capital and it creates capitalism, a world structured on labour. Labour is cruel and dehumanizing, the very opposite of that conscious life-activity, which is potentially the basis of humanity" (Holloway, 2010, p. 104).

However, labour within the capitalist mode of production is not a unitary category. It possesses a two-fold quality. These abstract imperatives wish to shape concrete labour in their image, but according to Holloway (2010), this process is never complete. There is, always, "an overflowing" of concrete labour relative to abstract labour (Holloway, 2010, p. 173). And the basis of worker-management tensions at the point of production are immanent to the dual character of labour and the "permanent antagonisms" it engenders (Holloway, 2010, p. 195). Workers' desires for concrete labour to subsume the demands of abstract labour result in continual instances of "revolt," struggle," "rebellion," and an overall "refusal of alien authority" (Holloway, 2010, p. 174-175). As Aronowitz (1981) notes, the presence of relations of domination will precipitate resistance from workers

even though these actions are likely contradictory and even ineffectual.

For the freelancers in this survey, this impulse to resist is realized in concrete labour's "drive …towards doing the(ir) activity well" as an end-in-itself (Holloway, 2010, p. 173). This accords with terminology Sennett (1998, 2006, 2008, 2012) uses to describe craftsmanship. He writes craft work contains "an enduring basic human impulse, the desire to do a job well for its own sake… (as it) focuses on the intimate connection between hand and head" (Sennett, 2008, p. 9).

Labour process researchers contend forms of resistance regularly available to other classes of workers are inaccessible to creative workers (Smith and McKinlay, 2009). This fails to consider the immanent antinomy present in the tension between concrete and abstract labour. Empirical evidence of instances of conflict and contradiction were manifold among the freelancers with whom I spoke. Carmen Jamestown detailed how she would "fuss over words and try to find just the right phrase" for countless unbillable hours. This wish to do a project well irrespective of time considerations is resistance borne of domination that is contradictory as Aronowitz (1981) observes. It serves to ensure editors likely receive the best copy possible even as this acts to reduce the value of the labour power of freelance writers. Yet the freelance writers comprising this sample were consistently searching for opportunities in which the concrete labour they engaged in might be less thoroughly subsumed by the demands of abstract labour as articulated in the grammar of the dominant processes constituting newsgathering and news writing.

An analysis of the labour process of freelance writers incorporating the dual character of labour is able to capture this group of workers attempts to resist the logics of abstract labour on an everyday basis while still being firmly located within them. Interpretations of the two-sided nature of commodities has application beyond the point of production as well as it relates to labour power. Neoliberal restructuring over several decades has resulted in the loss of social provision, giving rise to the "branded self" of cultural workers who must engage others instrumentally in order to convert social and cultural capital into economic capital (Hearn, 2010, p. 427). These instances of "network sociality" are characterized by interactions that may be intense, but are almost always

short in duration, meaning they are unlikely to comprise a communicative practice of duration and durability through which a shared narrative develops (Wittel, 2001).

From the accounts provided by my informants, it is possible to discern a unilinear instrumentalization and commodification of relations involving those in the field. The need to maintain or even enhance the exchange value of their labour power situates them as "commodities for sale … (who) are always in competition with one another, and that helps to reduce whatever feelings of comradeship and communality might otherwise emerge" (Erikson, 1986, p. 2). Andrew Wernick refers to the means of promotion freelance writers engage as the enactment of the "commodity-sign" (p. 16). The commodity-sign consists of promotional acts external to the primary product involved in exchange, i.e. freelancer pieces sold to media outlets (ibid). If the external elements of the commodity-sign are viewed through the dual character of the commodity, it is possible to detect tension and antagonism where there appears to be only one-sided domination.

Freelance writers do find themselves imbricated in highly commodified sets of social relations. In a precarious labour without internal job ladders, it would seem to violate economic self-interest to share contact information, story ideas, and even prospective work opportunities with those one is in direct competition with for work. Despite this reality, respondents recounted the acts of mutuality that permeated their interactions. This would seem to point to an existing tension between the fulfilment of use values and exchange values. It is therefore possible to detect a very real antagonism between the competitive pressures these workers face, and the very real need they have for social support, friendship, community, etc. (Baines, 1999).

Although exchange value possesses the power to shape use value in its image, this is a non-totalizing relation as evinced in the culture of mutuality and reciprocity that is present in the relations between freelance writers. In a world of social relations entirely commodified freelance writers would be unable to display such qualities, even if the taint of instrumentality is not entirely extinguishable in use value. In spite of this, the seeds of the eventual negation of the commodity form are contained, potentially, within the cooperation, mutuality, and communication of use value manifested in struggle.

Consequently, neither accounts presaging unidirectional commodification of freelance workers subjectivity, nor participant accounts of an all-sided reciprocity are adequate.

The reintroduction of explicitly Marxist heuristics into labour process theory can help illuminate a frame of comprehension that goes beyond such binary depictions. Dialectical reasoning can illustrate how concrete labour and abstract labour, and use value and exchange value, are unities locked in a dynamic struggle consisting of internal contradictions (Callinicos, 1993). The interpretation of acts of resistance through this lens suggests the implementation of future changes to the labour process are unlikely to go forward as planned by managers and editors. A focus upon resistance found in the dual character of labour would seem to fall short of Braverman's (1998) injunction for Marxist labour process studies to help facilitate large scale revolutionary actions by workers. But in the last section of this work, I will try to configure various points of analysis that I have pursued in a manner that might be satisfactory to the thought of Braverman (1998).

8.7   Marx against Marx: Craft and His Contradictions

Until now, I have explored points of convergence between the concrete portion in Marx's (1977) dual characterization of labour and its most recognizable expression in craft labour. My intention has itself been two-fold: 1) to examine the epistemological implications I have associated with the craft labour process; 2) to reformulate conceptualizations about what constitutes resistance at the point of production. In partial service to these aims, I used a portion of the literature review to outline Mills's (1956) utilization of Marx's ideas concerning material praxis as illustrative of how worker understanding is situated in the labour process, and how this relationship, for Mills (1956), is best exemplified and embodied in the figure of the craft worker.

Possibly because of this type of reading, it remains possible to encounter scholars who claim Marx himself is favourably disposed to craft labour (Ezzy, 1997). Sennett (2006) provides an example of this type of interpretation when he writes Marx "regretted the demise of pre-modern craft guilds" (p. 15). Marx occasionally provides a sympathetic response with respect to the deprivations industrial capitalism had exacted upon craft labour processes and skills. He writes that in the "handicrafts" workers had discretion

over the use of their "tool(s)," but in the industrial setting of the factory, the machinery makes use of the worker as a mere "appendage." This, he concludes, "deprives the work itself of all content" (Marx, 1977, p. 548).

However, Marx "completely reject(s) the craft ideal" (Sayers, 2007, p. 449). More precisely, he describes this "ideal" in the following manner: "What characterizes the division of labour in the automatic workshop is that labour has there completely lost its specialized character. But the moment every special development stops, the need for universality, the tendency towards an integral development of the individual begins to be felt. The automatic workshop wipes out specialists and craft idiocy" (Marx, 1952, p. 144). Marx's evaluation of those located in the craft workshop is that they are skilled but in a limited way. Though these workers are familiar with all facets of their craft, they only produce a particular product that serves a geographically delimited market. Craft guilds and the workshops they administer uphold the "one-sidedness" and "narrow-mindedness" that consequently engenders craft idiocy (Marx and Engels, 1967, p. 84).

In contradistinction to the fetter of craftwork, Marx's vision of modernity involves global flows of people, goods, technologies, and symbolic forms. Those working in craft modalities may derive satisfaction from the proficiency they have developed in their field, but it is too self-limiting *vis-à-vis* the human potentialities that can be harnessed via rates of development in the productive forces of society, and the expansion of human needs that accompany progress (Sayers, 2007, 2011). There are additional shortcomings Marx affiliates with craft. One is that it is too individually oriented despite occurring in a workshop dependent upon collaboration (Merrifield, 2011).

These criticisms lead to Marx (1952), and Marx and Engels (1967, 1998), mischaracterizing the educational opportunities afforded by the craft workshop, including its aesthetic dimension, which was so central to Marx's (1964) filleting of Feurbach's materialism. Craft workers in the major European cities of the Renaissance receive an all-around education, consisting of practical skills training in combination with intellectual attainment of the widest variety (Wittkowers, 1963; Coleman, 1988). The aim of this program is the development of *"uomo [sic] universale"* (Wittkowers, 1963, p. 42). This

portrait runs counter to Marx's (1952) portrayal of the provincialism of the craft workshop. Unworldly outlooks may have prevailed in many workshops, but there is sufficient scholarly evidence to demonstrate many exceptions to this. The master-printers from this study display a range of material skills, aptitudes, interests and intellectual abilities that would seem to place them in a category closer to the universally developed human being—even in the instances where they were located not in town but in country.

Marx posits a divergent view of the kind of universality that may develop as an outgrowth of productive developments and people's relation to them and to one another. With the degradation of concrete labour, the deep attachment craft workers had to their vocation is replaced with feelings of indifference (Marx, 1973, 1977; Marx and Engels, 1998). This is a positive development in Marx's schema of progressive modernization (Adler 1990, 2007).

The diminishment in worker skill, relative to craft conditions of production, means that with a minimum of training vast numbers of people can work at an array of jobs with relative ease (Gorz, 1985). The subsequent lack of attachment to any particular occupation is said to prepare workers for all occupations: "Since proletarians have no trades, they are capable of any kind of work; since they are not bound to any particular work or specific production, they are in a position to appropriate them all, to take over the system of industrial production of the whole world" (Gorz, 1982, p. 24). The parochial traits of the craft worker are incrementally overcome as workers begin to apprehend the totality of production processes and their role(s) within them (Sayers, 2007, 2011). The emergent awareness of this all-encompassing power portends a social formation beyond capitalism; one where a majority of humanity democratically regulates their lives (ibid).

Knowledge of this totality also prepares the humanity for another future possibility. As humans gain the capacity to operate all aspects of every workplace, they also begin to imagine self-development that is many-sided (Cohen, 1988). Such a future is made possible by furtherances in what Marx (1973) terms the general intellect. General intellect is a continuously burgeoning form of social intelligence whose most evident manifestations are as objectified labour in advanced systems of science and technology

(Dyer-Witheford, 1999). The most obvious personifications of general intellect are scientists, engineers, and technicians, developing complex systems of production in advanced research settings. Marx (1973) also equates this form of "general social knowledge" with a diffusion and enhancement of mental and material capacities. Spatially and temporally, the forms of knowledge that appear in these technological complexes emanate from elite institutions and filter through the general population in an uneven process, mirroring extant societal hierarchies and divisions.

Among at least some Autonomist Marxists, this distribution of technologies means they no longer operate solely at the behest of capital. Technological development and systems of information and communication transmission become so ubiquitous that workers and the general populace no longer view them with trepidation (Witheford, 1994). Information and communication technology transfers become diffuse enough to constitute an ecosystem of machinery. Familiarity with these highest-level expressions of capital's technical proficiency enable the potential use of these tools subversively (Quinby, 2011). Human immersion in these new environments potentially prophesizes the emergence of a new society from the shell of the old as knowledge and cooperation are recuperated from their centuries old organization by capital (Witheford, 1994).

Yet in this postulation there is no suggestion of how a diffuse general intellect is to transform itself into a critical intellect that might help bring to fruition the promise it possesses. Converse these theses, Comor (2008, 2010) has described the effects of current media environments upon people's conceptual apparatus as orienting them towards the acritical, the sensational as well as predisposing them to favouring the spatially immediate over the temporally durable. By this, he implies activities mediated by these technologies, in their current configuration, are often antithetical to the time and concentration that is required in formulating oppositional forms of knowledge (ibid).

Furthermore, advances in the development of dead labour over living labour, as an element of general intellect, and the de-skilling this has encompassed, has not resulted in a universal attitude of indifference towards work (Marx 1973, 1977; Marx and Engels 1998). The extremes to which management abstracted labour during the high point of the

Fordist-Taylorist period in the twentieth century has elicited several kinds of responses from workers with indifference being only one of them. A majority of the informants in this study reacted in a manner that opposed indifference. The antidote to empty work experiences has been a desperate search for fulfilment via freelancing, a realm culturally recognized as enabling, unevenly, the at least partial expression of creative abilities.

Attitudes and behaviours reflecting indifference to work do come to engulf large segments of the industrial working class during Fordism's apogee as chronicled by labour scholars and industrial sociologists (Kornhauser, 1965; Goldthorpe et al, 1968). But the apathy and indifference these workers demonstrate does not culminate in a broadening of interests and intellectual horizons as Marx seems to have anticipated:

> Spare time activities of most workers tend to be narrow and routine, with little indication of self-development and self-expression or devotion to larger social purposes. Many appear to be groping for meaningful ways to fill their spare time but with little conception of the possibilities and with inadequate preparation or stimulation (Kornhauser, 1965, p. 266-67).

The craft idiocy Marx (1952) had identified in the feudalist workshop has given way to the Fordist idiocy of the shop floor of industrial capitalism. What capitalist relations of production have endowed their societies with is great "intelligence—but for the workers, idiocy, cretinism" (Marx, 1988, p. 73). Idiocy here does not refer to abject stupidity. Marx's invocation of the term hews closer to its Greek etymological roots (Adler, 1990). In its original usage idiocy makes reference to a broader withdrawal from political engagement and social intercourse in favour of more parochial concerns: "With rare exceptions, the men are wrapped up in their own very narrow private worlds. There is little evidence of devotion to the welfare and happiness of others, little activity that transcends strictly personal and family interests" (Kornhauser, 1965, 290).

In an ethnography of blue-collar workers in Thunder Bay, Ontario, Thomas Dunk (1991) avers the labour processes workers find themselves located within contribute in determinate ways to how they know the world. Dunk (1991) labels the division of labour as fostering a bias against intellectualism and oppositional forms of knowledge: "(The) overwhelming priority given to common sense and the importance of anti-intellectualism

is a result of working-class experience in the labour process, and other divisions between mental and manual labour" (Dunk, 1991, p. 153).

What Dunk (1991) attributes to developments in the division of labour that result in the separation of mental labour from manual labour might more accurately be described as an inhibition in the exercise of the continuity between conception and execution. It is this separation that contributes to making "work sordid" by reproducing the hierarchy whereby "one man [*sic*] executes the thought of another" (Murphy, 1993, p. 8). This serves to fetter workers' development in the detailed division of labour along all dimensions of human experience, including that of the intellect. More important determinants than the commercial entertainment complex and the edu-factory in an overall process of "creeping cretinization" are the work processes people attend to for most of their lives, according to the work abolitionist Bob Black (1986, p.22).

Consequently, the limited degree of unity between conception and execution freelance writers exercise can be viewed as an instantiation of "powerless autonomy" as Cohen (2013, 2016b) contends because of the techniques that constitute their newsgathering and news writing activities. Yet it may not just represent, but actually be more than this as it is rooted in material intercourse with the object world in a series of processes in which people come to know the self, come to know the other, and come to know how to know. Occupations such as freelance writer located in craft traditions not only require the pursuit of education, but are also a form of education themselves.

These propositions may seem improbablistic and naïve. But stagnation in growth rates of capital have meant the system's managers have had to call into being, increasingly, human qualities that can at least temporarily expand the circuit of capital investment. This has resulted in a pivot in the direction of innovation and creativity. Outcomes of this kind typically depend on labour processes where there is a greater degree of unity between conception and execution. In uniting conception and execution in the labour processes of the "creative class," as a means of advancing the aim of value creation, capital may be calling into being something that is untoward itself. This updating of Marx and Engels (1967) gravedigger hypothesis, for a limited number of workers in certain

spheres of productive activity, has been offset, at the same time, by capital's overseers heightened efforts to eliminate the presence of living labour in these same sectors.

The irresolvable contradiction for capitalist production and its purveyors, that remains, is between the promise of being able to develop one's capacities fully within a creative economy and the "law of the determination of value by labour-time" (Marx, 1977, p. 436). The continual thwarting of a promise that neoliberal production makes, but can never fulfil, could serve as the impetus for resistance and struggle (Rehmann, 2013). This leaves Richard Sobel (1989) to conclude "political action is more likely to occur when the patterns of class-imposed limitations clash with educationally induced expectations for challenge, responsibility, and mobility" (p. 55). This is consonant with a longer-term analysis of incidents of social unrest from the eighteenth, nineteenth, and twentieth centuries, challenging the dominance of an immiseration hypothesis (Hedges, 2015). One could extrapolate that the increasing reliance within capitalist production systems for workers with higher levels of academic accreditation, complex thinking, etc., might translate into these workers rejecting alienating and exploitative work (Braverman, 1998).

What is immanent to the analytical lens of the dual character of labour is "a material basis for political action," arising from the historically evolving desires of the freelance writers in this study and the current needs of the capitalist epoch (Elson, 2015, p. 173). The antagonism between concrete and abstract labour at the point of production illuminates the types of resistive activities freelance writers partake in while also positing one means by which they may become conscious of their collective power. Such a supposition appears no more fanciful in its possible efficacy than current cycles of worker mobilization and demobilization orthodox unions are employing in an ongoing war of position, wishing to sway public officials and public opinion through public relations strategies (Gupta, 2015; McAlevey, 2016).

The concrete (labour) basis for worker activity and an aesthetic education may contribute to a post-capitalist social formation which restores craft-like work to prominence in the potentially bright constellation of human endeavour (Cohen, 1988). In this iteration, it would be transformed, overcoming the parochialism and narrowness Marx (1952)

disdained into something more particularly universalistic (ibid). Finally, then, it is my hope that the inclusion of the approach I have pursued throughout this work contributes to an expansion in the Marxist analytical frameworks of workers' inquiries that may be missing. As Braverman (1998) cautions against, this is not intended as a solely academic exercise. A last hope is that it is a useful contribution to the resistance and struggles, and the links between them, still to come for freelance writers in Canada and globally.

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Appendix 1: Use of Human Participants – Ethics Approval Notice

Western Research

Research Ethics

Use of Human Participants - Ethics Approval Notice

Principal Investigator: Dr. Nicholas Dyer-Witheford
File Number:104151
Review Level:Delegated
Approved Local Adult Participants: 0
Approved Local Minor Participants: 0
Protocol Title: Material Identity: An Examination of Craft Relations in an Era of Freelance Writers.
Department & Institution: Information and Media Studies\Faculty of Information & Media Studies,Western University
Sponsor:
Ethics Approval Date:September 11, 2013 Expiry Date: February 28, 2014

Documents Reviewed & Approved & Documents Received for Information:

Document Name	Comments	Version Date
Western University Protocol		2013/08/04
Instruments	Interview Schedule 2.0 #104151	2013/08/25
Recruitment Items	Letter of Recruitment 2.0 #104151	2013/08/25
Letter of Information & Consent	Letter of consent 2.0 #104151	2013/08/25
Letter of Information	Letter of information 2.0 #104151	2013/08/25

This is to notify you that The University of Western Ontario Research Ethics Board for Non-Medical Research Involving Human Subjects (NMREB) which is organized and operates according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Humans and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario has granted approval to the above referenced revision(s) or amendment(s) on the approval date noted above.

This approval shall remain valid until the expiry date noted above assuming timely and acceptable responses to the NMREB's periodic requests for surveillance and monitoring information.

Members of the NMREB who are named as investigators in research studies, or declare a conflict of interest, do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on, such studies when they are presented to the NMREB.

The Chair of the NMREB is Dr. Riley Hinson. The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 00000941.

Signature

Ethics Officer to Contact for Further Information

Grace Kelly	Vikki Tran	Erika Basile

This is an official document. Please retain the original in your files.

Appendix 2: Material Identity Recruitment Letter

Material Identity: An Examination of Craft Relations in an Era of Freelance Writers

Faculty of Information and Media Studies, Western University.

Principal Investigator: Nick Dyer-Witheford (M.A., Ph.D.)
Co-investigator: Robert Bertuzzi (M.A.)

Invitation to Participate:

You are being invited to participate in this research study regarding the working conditions of freelance writers in the face of declining material conditions. Additionally, this research project wishes to investigate emerging social forms amongst freelance writers. Consequently, these emerging socialities may prefigure new organizational models or institutional forms whose aim is to improve work processes and material conditions of freelance writers. Your status as a freelance writer has made you eligible to participate in this study.

Purpose of the Letter:

The purpose of this letter is to provide you with the information you require to make an informed decision on participating in this research.

Purpose of this Study:

The purposes of this study are threefold. The first is to try and determine whether people are voluntarily choosing to be freelance writers or find themselves in such a position due to changing economic conditions within Canadian media industries. Secondly, the study aims to try and chronicle and characterize the social totality of working and non-working experiences of freelance writers. Lastly, it wishes to explore the ways freelance writers may or may not be organizing themselves as they encounter stagnant or declining wage conditions.

Inclusion Criteria:

You are eligible to participate in this study if you are a working-age adult whose primary means of employment, and of income is as a freelance writer. Additionally, it would be preferable if you had educational training and/or work experience as a journalist as freelance writers have historically emerged from this vocational stream.

Study Procedures:

If you agree to participate, you will be interviewed in person at a location of your choosing concerning your experiences as a freelance writer. You can participate in this interview at a time of your convenience. The interview should be approximately 90 minutes in length. I anticipate conducting one interview session with each participant. There will be approximately 15-to-25 participants taking part in this study. With the permission of the participants, the conversation would be recorded for transcription and consultation.

Possible Risks and Harms:

There are no known or anticipated risks or discomforts associated with participating in this study.

Possible Benefits:

There are no known direct and specific benefits to you from participating in this study. However, your participation will help in the generation of knowledge concerning the working lives of freelance writers in Canada, and more specifically, the Greater Toronto Area. You may also request a copy of the final dissertation or any other presentations or publications resulting from this research, if you wish, by contacting Robert Bertuzzi.

Compensation:

You will not be compensated for your participation in this study.

Voluntary Participation:

Participation in this study is voluntary. You may refuse to participate, refuse to answer any questions or withdraw from the study at any time.

Confidentiality:

Information that is collected during the study will be stored securely in the con-investigator's home office and all identifying information will be removed from the files following the completion of the study. A pseudonym of your choice will be used in the dissertation and any other presentations or publications stemming from this research. This pseudonym will be selected according to your preference, with either limited demographic information, very limited demographic information, or no demographic information at all.

Contacts for Further Information:

If you have questions about this study, please contact Robert Bertuzzi or Dr. Nick Dyer-Witheford. If you have questions about the conduct of this study or your rights as a research subject you may contact:

Office of Research Ethics
Western University

Publication:

If the results of the study are published, your name will not be used. If you would like to
a copy of any potential study results, please contact Robert Bertuzzi or Dr. Nick Dyer-
Witheford.

Appendix 3: Consent Form

Project Title: Material Identity: An Examination of Craft Relations in an Era of Freelance Writers

Study Investigator's Name: Robert Bertuzzi

I have read the Letter of Information, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree to participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

Participant's Name (please print):

Participant's Signature:

Date:

Person Obtaining Informed Consent (please print):

Signature:

Date:

Appendix 4: Interview Schedule

Section One – Work Meaning/Experience Questions:

1) In your estimation, what does the term work mean to you?

2) What was the first paid labour you did?

3) What was your first full-time job?

4) How do those experiences compare to your present status as a freelance writer/journalist?

5) When did you realize that you wanted to be a writer/journalist?

6) What was it that attracted you to this endeavour?

7) How did you come to find yourself in your current work situation?

8) How selective are you in the assignments that you choose?

9) What kinds of projects would you like to do more of? Why?

10) What kinds of projects would you like to do less of? Why?

11) How would you compare freelance work with that of a permanent staff position?

12) Having now worked as a freelance writer/journalist, would you accept a permanent staff position with an employer if such a position were available?

13) In which of the following categories would you classify the work you do?

____white-collar work
____professional work
____wage labour
____craft work
____other

14) What makes you describe it as such?

15) With which of the following classes would you identify?

____creative class
____working class
____middle class
____other

16) What is the basis of your identification with the class you selected?

17) What is important to you about your standing/status as a freelance journalist/writer?

18) What attributes do you most associate with your line of work?

19) Can you envision a point in your life when you would not be writing regularly?

20) Overall, how would you describe your feelings towards your work?

Section Two – Temporal Distribution of Work-Life Arrangements
1) In the questionnaire, I asked how many hours a week you work, how would you describe the distribution of that time on a per day basis?

2) How does a typical day for you unfold?

3) How compartmentalized are the different aspects of your day, for instance, work, child-care, socializing, or do they tend to blur together?

4) What are the effects of work intensity upon the quality/creativity of your output?

5) So, besides work, what other activities place the greatest demand upon your time?

6) In what ways does your status as a freelance worker help you manage the competing demands upon your time?

7) In what ways does being a freelance worker hinder your time management?

8) How would you complete the following, "I wish I had more time for …".

9) How do you typically feel at the end of the work day?

10) How many projects are you typically working on at one time?

11) How do you find yourself feeling during busy work periods?

12) How do you find yourself feeling during work periods that are not particularly busy?

13) What is your attitude toward the standard 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. workday?

14) How does your present work-life arrangement compare to this aforementioned standard?

15) Would you say your present work-life arrangement enables or constrains your ability to participate in community activities?

Section Three – Sociality Questions:

1) Where do you do most of your work?

2) Why do you choose to work from this location?

3) Would you ever consider conducting your job in an alternative work space such as a co-work or some other similar arrangement?

4) What would an ideal work space for you look like?

5) Would you describe your work as isolating? Why or why not?

6) Would you describe your work as social? Why or why not?

7) What role, if any, does technology play in making your occupation social and/or isolating?

8) What would you describe as the tools of the trade whether they be social, cultural or technological?

9) What forms of contact do you have with fellow freelance journalist/writers?

10) How would you characterize the nature of these interactions?

11) How would you generally describe your feelings towards other freelancers?

12) How often, if ever, do you collaborate with others on work projects?

13) How would you compare these collaborations with those you encountered in more traditional work settings?

14) What journalist/writing or other related work associations do you belong to, if any?

15) What needs does membership in such associations fulfill?

16) As a percentage, how much of the contact with this group takes place online?

17) People often cite the distastefulness of 'office politics' as one reason for preferring freelance work routines, what kinds of conflicts do you find yourself experiencing now as a freelancer?

18) Do you see any benefits to these conflicts?

19) What might help to mitigate these conflicts?

20) What role, if any, do you see for labour unions with regards to freelance journalist/writers?

21) How would you characterize your past encounters with labour unions?

22) Would another type of organization besides a union, such as a co-op or literary agency, be better able to represent your collective interests?

23) What qualities or attributes would you like to see an organization or a union demonstrate before you would join?

24) What role, if any, would the strength of ties to the community of freelance writers/journalists play in joining such an organization?

25) What role or what level of participation would you envision for a member such as yourself if you were to join?

Post-Interview Assessment:

Respondent description:

Dwelling description:

Neighbourhood description:

Overall tenor of interview:

Other salient features:

Curriculum Vitae

Name: Robert Bertuzzi

Post-secondary   McMaster University
Education and   Hamilton, Ontario, Canada
Degrees   1991-1996 BSc. Geography and Environmental Science

                      University of King's College
                      Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada
                      2003-2004 Bachelor of Journalism

                      University of Windsor
                      Windsor, Ontario, Canada
                      2004-2006 M.A. Communication and Social Justice

                      Western University
                      London, Ontario, Canada
                      2009-2018 Ph.D. Media Studies

Related Work   Teaching Assistant
Experience   The University of Windsor Ontario
                      2004-2006

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Bertuzzi, R. (2006). The East Asian Financial Crisis. In J. Klaehn (ed.), *Bound by Power: Intended Consequences,* (pp.188-216). Montreal, New York and London: Black Rose Books