Parasitism and Contemporary Art

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Since the 1990s, there has emerged a strain of art practices that could be characterized—somewhat polemically—as parasitic. Related to histories of performance art, relational aesthetics, and institutional critique, parasitic practices draw upon the social, financial, and political capital of large institutions to produce socially engaged artistic situations, processes, and events that are intended to effect a change in the material circumstances of some of the participants or viewers.[1] Like a certain strain of politicized performance art, these practices exist in the form of social relations (as, for example, performance works by Adrian Piper or, arguably, Tino Sehgal), and they emphasize process over product. Parasitic procedures overlap with relational aesthetics in their concern that art produce utopic or microtopic situations, in which the form of an artwork might materially address a social problem, or at least imagine a social challenge otherwise (Bourriaud 2002; Bishop 2004). Finally, like institutional critique, parasitic practices depend upon institutions for resources and validation, though the institutions being addressed are typically not restricted to an art world (Becker 1982).

These parasitic practices bear some resemblance to "relational" or social practice artistic modes that emerged around the same time in the context of Western European nations with strong social welfare states. However, parasitism is best understood in the context of public–private partnerships that have emerged in response to the particular conditions of contemporary US cities: economically and socially diverse urban agglomerations with limited art markets, a profusion of institutions of higher education, and tangible conditions of social inequality brushing up against intense concentrations of wealth. These are the conditions of possibility for a parasitic mode of art making, something like institutional critique operating beyond the bounds of the art world.

Of course, following Hal Foster, one might counter that, even before the 1990s, artists had already broadened the legacy of institutional critique beyond the bounds

of art institutions. Writing in the mid-1980s, Foster cited artists such as Martha
Rosler, Sherrie Levine, Louise Lawler, and Krzysztof Wodiczko as "open[ing] up the
conceptual critique of the art institution in order to intervene in ideological
representations and languages of everyday life" (Foster 1985: 100). Yet Foster's 1980s
examples are primarily concerned with *mediated* social interactions, particularly
the ostensibly de-authored visual and linguistic tropes of advertising and corporate
lingo. The newer generation of post-institutional critique, i.e., those artists engaged
in parasitic procedures, is highly invested in face-to-face interactions, in the frictions
of an urban setting, or in the unscripted potentialities of global circulation of goods
and people; or, in recreating or instantiating those frictions in the setting of a
museum or gallery. It is oftentimes such antagonism that distinguishes parasitism
from relational aesthetics, the latter of which might be seen to evince a particularly
1990s optimism about the possible new modes of human cooperation effected by
the "end of history" (Fukuyama 1992) and the intercultural mixing of globalized
trade and labor markets (Friedman 1999), or fruitful local resistances to such shifts
(Critical Art Ensemble 1994).[2] But these parasitic art practices are not always
antagonistic. Instead, what is more characteristic of parasitism—what distinguishes
it from institutional critique—is its complicity in the *economic* mechanisms that
enable its very existence (Drucker 2006).[3]

One might also counter that parasitism is nothing new since "critical art" or
institutional critique had already always been parasitic upon the institutions
being criticized. With regards to works of institutional critique by artists such as
Marcel Broodthaers, Hans Haacke, Michael Asher, and Daniel Buren, Hal Foster
has argued that the:

> very attention to the institutional frame … determines its production no less for
> being exposed in doing so…. [T]his practice runs the risk of reduction in the
> gallery/museum from an act of subversion to a form of exposition, with the work
> less an attack on the separation of cultural and social practice than another example
> of it and the artist less a deconstructive delineator of the institution than its 'expert.'
>
> Foster 1985: 103

And Rosalind Krauss has posited that this has been a facet of modern art since
its very beginning: the "constitution of the work of art as a representation of its
own space of exhibition is in fact what we know as the history of modernism"
(Krauss 1982: 313). Indeed, much art historical scholarship of the past four
decades has foregrounded the physical spaces, institutional structures, and social
networks providing the conditions of possibility for artistic production.

More recently, art historians Miwon Kwon and James Meyer have taken site specificity as a guiding principle for analyzing works of "relational aesthetics" and "social practice art" that have emerged since the 1990s (Meyer 1995 Kwon 2002; Keeler 2008; Thompson 2012; Quinn 2012). Writing in the mid-1990s, Meyer argued that recent works by artists such as Mark Dion, Andrea Fraser, and Renée Green "transformed the notion of site specificity as it emerged in the early years of institutional critique and earthworks, revising the assumptions implicit in this model to reflect upon the globalized, multicultural ambivalence of the present day" (Meyer 1996: 20). For her part, Kwon cited an almost identical roster of artists, explaining that their works "complicat[e] the site of art as not only a physical arena but one constituted through social, economic, and political processes" (Kwon 2002: 3). In this lineage, parasitic practices are simply the most recent iteration of a mode of artistic production that interrogates the grounds of artistic production and/or exhibition, practices that foreground the physical, social, or discursive spaces that provide the conditions of possibility for the artworks produced by a given art world.

However, parasitic practices fit uneasily within this narrative of site specificity, even given the notion of site reimagined as mobile or portable, as "a process, an operation occurring between sites, a mapping of institutional and textual affiliations and the bodies that move between them (the artist's above all)" (Meyer 1996: 21). Instead, parasitic practices are closer to the mobile and deterritorialized processes of global capital, and the corresponding "artificial, residual, archaic" reterritorializations (Deleuze and Guattari 1983). In this sense, parasitic practices take advantage of what Michel Serres has characterized as the power of the parasite, which is "founded on the theft of information" and "could be called bureaucratic" (Serres 1982: 37).[4] However, the parasitic practices of contemporary art do not simply interrupt and extract from a system, but purport to fulfill the system's workings, all the while diverting resources to *another* system. From one set of institutions, money and social capital flow to a new array of institutions, at first fictitious, summoned into being by the artist as parasite.[5] If the artist is bureaucrat, it is as the anti-Bartleby, as a successful factotum whose parasitism does not enrich self, but diverts nourishment to a new organism with structures paralleling the parasited organism; a new institution forms to serve a different, underserved clientele. In contrast to Serres' one-way loop of parasite upon parasite, these parasitic art practices double the circulation with a shadow institution.

Recently, artists such as Theaster Gates and Tania Bruguera have used parasitic procedures to redirect the resources of large, financially-solvent

institutions bound up in networks of global capital in order to materially enrich socially marginal figures. In Gates' urban development projects, the artist draws upon the financial and political might of institutions such as the University of Chicago, the Knight Foundation, or the City of Chicago to perform the role of real estate developer in low-income African American communities of the urban United States. Bruguera's *Cátedra Arte de Conducta* (roughly translatable as 'School of the Art of Behavior') (2002–2009) has employed the structures of international art biennials to propel her Cuban students from the peripheral locale of Havana to art world centers, or her New York City-based *Migrant People Party*, now *Immigrant Movement International* (2010–2015), in which the resources of art institutions are channeled to political activism on behalf of undocumented immigrants. In both cases, these artists do not—or do not only— create art objects to be sold at gallery shows, but create situations funded by a combination of private and public sources, potentially including the largesse of art collectors, personal income derived from teaching, and public funding for arts and cultural programs. And in both cases, parasitic practices combine a savvy deployment of institutional resources and power with a nostalgic affirmation of older—even archaic—notions of identity.

In drawing upon these alternatives to the art market, Gates and Bruguera deploy a certain legacy of relational aesthetics, that is, a romanticized notion of localized identity reinvigorated under the pressures of global migration. The persistence of localized identity is a trope of the contemporary art world that has proven particularly strategic for practitioners of relational aesthetics. For example, artist Rirkrit Tiravanija—ethnically Thai, born in Argentina, educated in Canada and the US, and currently dwelling in "New York, Berlin, and Chiang Mai"—came to international attention with relational works that foregrounded his ethnic identity. In his 1992 work *Untitled (Free)*, Tiravanija set up a kitchen in the gallery and gave away Thai curry with rice. A similarly self-mythologizing aspect of identity is represented in British artist Liam Gillick's 1997 *Discussion Island*, whose concept draws upon Gillick's Irish ethnicity: "Discussion Island" is rooted in a fabled Celtic mode of conflict resolution carried out on the neutral ground of an island collaboratively maintained by various clans (Gillick 2009; Avgikos 1997).[6]

Both Gates and Bruguera similarly root their practices in ethnic community. However, in lieu of the mobile ethnicities of Tiravanija or Gillick, able to be recreated in virtually any art space, Gates and Bruguera undertake a reterritorialization of identity by rooting it in the specific contexts of African American Chicago, or the parallel New York City occupied by immigrants *sans*

papiers. Parasitic works of Gates and Bruguera are dependent not only upon the artist's identity, but upon a mode of territorialized belonging that focuses on unequal distribution of resources according to the geographic inequalities, for example, among urban neighborhoods or nations. Finally, what is most notable about the parasitism of certain contemporary art practices is their investment in post-globalization reconfigurations of financial flows. As art historian Johanna Drucker points out: "The difficulty of mapping older art historical models onto contemporary activity comes because the conditions on which agency, opposition, and revolutionary activity were conceived within those earlier political models no longer exist. . . . [W]here is that *locus* of power in advanced, transnational capitalist economies?" (Drucker 2006: 24). It is precisely those dispersed and delocalized nodes of power that parasitic art practices regard as their material.

Rather than institutional or social critique, these contemporary practices ostensibly sidestep the art market, instead marshaling the resources of large, financially solvent institutions and foundations bound up in networks of global capital in order to materially enrich socially marginal figures.[7] Gates works to divert resources to African Americans living in low-income, urban communities in Chicago and other industrial cities of the Midwest. Bruguera works to propel young, politically-engaged artists working under repressive conditions in Havana, or undocumented immigrants in New York City, to the center of the art world. The dual nature of these procedures cannot be overemphasized: these practices do not simply make marginal populations visible, or call attention to social problems, but initiate processes that will—hopefully, eventually— *materially improve* the lives of individuals in marginalized communities. That is, these art practices are not simply discursive, but lay the foundations for future financial and social gains. Moreover, in drawing upon the unpredictable potentialities of market forces, these US-based practices distinguish themselves from many European practices that engage with the possibilities of a social welfare state (even weakened as in the past two decades). Ultimately, this combination of public good and private investment is driven precisely by these artists' positions as cultural creators rather than politicians or activists.

I. Theaster Gates, the face of Chicago's urban development

A key aspect of parasitic practices is that they welcome institutional support, as opposed to the ambivalent stance of prior generations of institutional critique;

still, commentators tend to attribute a critical stance to these artists (Drucker 2006). For Theaster Gates, support from the University of Chicago, where he also holds a position as the director of Arts and Public Life, affords him institutional backing at the same time that his work both celebrates and challenges the University's relationship to its urban surroundings. In his large-scale urban projects, Gates salvages derelict buildings in lower-income African American communities of Chicago in order to transform them into community cultural spaces. In addition, Gates originally incorporated "a work force training program … [with the goal of using] the opportunity of building the interior finish work … to train and teach skilled carpentry to … young men from the community" (ArtPlace 2012a; Viveros-Faune 2012). Part community space, part urban development project, Gates' practice might seem to side-step institutional settings, by generating new arts institutions in areas typically underserved by museums and galleries. However, Gates' "institutions" are embedded in local economies of public–private investment that take the arts and cultural programming as driving forces for urban development. In 2012, for example, Gates' practice benefited from a $400,000 "Creative Placemaking" grant to the University of Chicago from the philanthropic and banking conglomerate ArtPlace. ArtPlace awarded the University these funds to support Gates' Washington Park Arts Incubator, a new institution intended to "serve as a powerful catalyst for neighborhood revitalization by creating a new hub for artistic production and community engagement on Chicago's South Side" (ArtPlace 2012b). The funding for this project demonstrates the parasitic nature of Gates' practice, in which his affiliation with the University legitimizes his work and allows him to fund it through donations to an institution, at the same time that his practice validates the University as an incubator of arts and community development.

Himself African-American, and a resident of the predominantly African-American, lower-income neighborhood to the south of the University of Chicago, Gates can be seen as both a link between the university and the surrounding African-American neighborhoods, as well as a critical commentator on the possibilities for such involvement (Gates 2009a).[8] One should question, however, whether Gates' identity simply allows the university to displace some of the "local anxiety" facing its expansion by situating him as its public face. The University poured over $1.3 million into the Arts Incubator, and the investment has paid for itself beyond merely good publicity (City of Chicago 2012). For one, the University has used the Arts Incubator to generate public and private investment to materially beautify a particularly blighted avenue that had greeted many

visitors to the University: "Reviving the stretch of Garfield between King Drive and Prairie Avenue is important to the university because the boulevard is the first thing that many out-of-state and international students see when visiting campus," explained the Vice President of the University of Chicago's Commercial Real Estate Operations (CREO) (Matthews 2014). Moreover, the University's support for Gates' Arts Incubator has generated further financial gains. In addition to the ArtPlace funding for this project, its "success" spurred another large donation to Gates' work, again funneled through the University of Chicago. In spring 2014 the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation awarded the University of Chicago a $3.5 million grant for "The Place Project." Building on "pioneering work by Theaster Gates," this project is intended to "test a community development model that supports arts and culture to help transform communities and promote local growth and vibrancy," by expanding Gates' practice to cities such as Gary, Indiana; Akron, Ohio; and Detroit (Knight Foundation 2014). Finally, the University of Chicago publicized these collaborations with Gates at precisely the time when the institution was engaged in the fiercest bout of lobbying to house the future Barack Obama Presidential Library. Playing good neighbor to surrounding low income African-American communities may not have ensured that the University of Chicago succeeded in winning the Library, but it certainly bolstered the institution's bid. Even as the University of Chicago has faced criticism for its real estate ventures in nearby areas, it could point to its support of Gates' work as demonstrating efforts to engage its neighbors (Lacey 2015).

II. Tania Bruguera, art, migration and risk

Similarly, Tania Bruguera has capitalized on the resources available to her while treading a fine line between collaboration with and criticism of the sources of her power and influence. In the mid-2000s, Bruguera established an alternative art school, *Cátedra Arte de Conducta*, in Havana. The school emphasized conceptualism and performance art precisely in response to the regressive artistic training and lack of new media and performance curricula within Cuba's main art school, the state-run *Instituto Superior de Arte* (ISA). However, Bruguera often relied on ISA to obtain visas and sponsorship for international artists who lectured as part of her experimental curriculum, and she drew a number of her pupils from ISA's student body. In addition to Cuban institutions, Bruguera's *Arte de Conducta* project was also aimed at institutions of the

international art world. In fact, the parasitic nature of Tania Bruguera's work can be seen to crystallize the creative funding structures and ersatz institutional settings deployed by artists unable to support themselves through sales of artworks, and who are increasingly denied the stability of pedagogical positions as well. As Bruguera developed the parasitism of her *Arte de Conducta* project, it relied not only upon the Cuban national art school, but upon an extensive and financially flush web of international art biennials and fairs. Using her position within this social milieu, Bruguera advanced the careers of her students by exhibiting their artworks as her own participation in the Havana *Bienal*.

On the one hand, Bruguera's use of her own fame and connections to propel her students to the next level of artistic professionalization offers a trenchant criticism of those professionalizing processes and their inaccessibility to young artists without links to art world centers. At the same time, Bruguera's own ability to travel in and out of Cuba relatively freely is dependent upon her status within the international art world, while her status in the international art world is dependent upon her precarious position as a Cuban artist. During the 2009 Havana *Bienal*, Bruguera also presented *Whispers of Tatlin*, a work that challenged the Cuban government's censorship and repression of free speech even as her own position as an internationally renowned artist protected her from real reprisals.[9] Mounting a microphone in the Wifredo Lam Art Center, a venue for the *Bienal*, Bruguera invited audience members to speak freely, while two performers dressed in military uniforms placed a white dove on the shoulders of each speaker, in mimicry of a famed incident involving Fidel Castro. After taking Havana at the head of the victorious rebel forces on January 8, 1959, Castro gave a public speech during which a pair of white doves landed on his shoulders; this bit of political theater was repeated with a single dove during Castro's speech for the thirtieth anniversary of the Revolution in 1989. In response to Bruguera's 2009, the Cuban government threatened to prevent her from leaving the country, but there were no real repercussions for this artistic provocation. Some five years later, US President Barack Obama's late-2014 announcement of a thaw in relations between the US and Cuba spurred Bruguera to attempt a repeat of her *Bienal* microphone piece, this time on the Plaza of the Revolution in Havana. As authorities placed key dissidents under house arrest and briefly detained others, including Bruguera (Cuba Debate 2014; Archibodjan 2015), the effort proved Bruguera's ambivalent relationship with the institutions that both restrict her activities and provide the limitations that serve as the very material for her artworks (Mosquera 2009). It is in her simultaneously ambiguous status within

the institution of Cuban civil society and the institutions of the international art world that Bruguera's works can operate: she draws her legitimation from both.

Similarly, Bruguera's *Immigrant Movement International* (2010–2015) has drawn upon the resources of the arts institutions such as the Queens Museum, the New York public arts non-profit Creative Time, and the Van Abbe Museum, as well as political entities: in 2015, Bruguera was named the first artist-in-residence of New York City's Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs. In contrast to Gates' deployment of institutions' financial resources to propel economic gains, Bruguera's parasitism is oriented more towards the potential for artistic institutions to shield artists from legal repercussions. It is not only Bruguera's position as a Cuban immigrant, privileged among migrants in the US, that allows her the freedom to dabble in politics, but also her position as an artist whose international career affords a certain freedom of behavior (it is no accident that Bruguera titled her pedagogical project "*Arte de Conducta*," art of *behavior*). The license to be outrageous, to challenge social and political norms, has become largely defanged and meaningless in contemporary Western societies. But these strictures remain relevant for Bruguera, both because of her position as a citizen of authoritarian Cuba, and because she refuses the ease and privilege of US or European citizenship, which would invalidate the potential danger of her artistic risks. With her Immigrant Movement International, she has exacerbated this indeterminacy. Taking on the role of a successful entrepreneur—complete with a confident LinkedIn profile that states her role as "Initiator/Director at Arte Útil Association"—Bruguera directs cultural production as a political shield for individuals with little access to social capital or political reach.

III. Parasites and their hosts

Though both Gates and Bruguera initially developed their parasitic practices in the context of academic institutions, in both cases these artists have turned to a wider array of organizations. Parasitic strategies initially arose as a majority of mid-career working artists found themselves affiliated with large research universities in close proximity to lower income urban areas, *in the absence of a strong art market*. Artist Michelle Grabner in fact theorizes that the early instantiations of "social practice" in Chicago offered "refuge" for painters faced with an utter lack of a local market for painting (Grabner 2013). In such a context, not only have artists been driven to academic institutions for their bread

and butter, making a living (albeit increasingly in contingent positions as adjunct instructors), but artists have seized upon universities and other local institutions as sources of funding and institutional might that can be harnessed for their own purposes, artistic or otherwise.

The historical precedent that provides a roadmap for future parasitism is a project undertaken in New York City in the 1970s by Gordon Matta-Clark, entitled *A Resource Center and Environmental Youth Program for Loisaida* (1977). Situated in the largely Puerto Rican and predominantly lower-income Lower East Side, the *Resource Center* was to serve as a design program for youths and government-funded job trainees.[10] Drawing upon his explorations in "undoing a building" as a means of addressing urban social conditions, Matta-Clark intended the project to move beyond "metaphoric treatment" of abandoned buildings toward transformation of social spaces in a manner responsive to occupants (Matta-Clark 1976). The first stage of the project was to be "a combination of basic design workshops and small scale building designs that would introduce key skills," while the second stage moved to heating and electric utilities, followed by "attention not only to the internal needs of a building, but also to the surrounding areas and neighborhood interests" (Matta-Clark 1976). Participating along with extant "Sweat Equity" programs, *The Resource Center*'s "ultimate emphasis would be to educate able young members of the community to make their own decisions while expressing unique and practical alternatives to sub-standard housing" (Matta-Clark 1976). Like Theaster Gates, Matta-Clark's work would have deployed a combination of arts and non-arts funding to materially benefit a marginalized urban community. Matta-Clark's work emerged during a period when not only was the city's population reaching a nadir, from the industrial lofts of Soho to the depopulating lower-income residential housing of the Lower East Side where Matta-Clark wanted to situate his Resource Center. Moreover, New York's art market was stuck in a relatively fallow period. In bringing together a Guggenheim grant with government programs, Matta-Clark marshaled funds to carry out a social intervention couched as art. It was in the absence of a strong art market that Matta-Clark proposed to address a neighborhood facing the dual problems of reduced population and substandard housing, an area arguably at the margins of Manhattan both in locale and political agency.

What is interesting about parasitic practices is not—or not only—their foregrounding of alternative economies, but the way they seek to harness the financial excess of global capital as a way to critique that very system. For, despite

any claims to the contrary, large research universities are embedded in this system, from private donations (think of Michael R. Bloomberg's reported $1.1 billion in donations to Johns Hopkins University, or the $350 million donation by the family of a Hong Kong real estate developer to Harvard University), to endowments sunk in a variety of financial instruments and real estate (Barbaro 2013; Rooney 2014). And US artists seeking alternatives to the art market, whether by necessity or design, have seized upon the large research university as one way by which that system's largess can be funneled toward art and social practice. Gates and Bruguera merely take such efforts to their logical limits. These two artists have been extremely successful at seizing upon the financial and political resources of non-governmental, non-commercial institutions (universities, biennials, foundations), not simply for individual gain but to redistribute those resources. This strategy requires a peculiar—and savvy—balancing act between critique and immersion within a system.

This new artistic entrepreneurialism is not, then, the spectacular showmanship of Jeff Koons or Damien Hirst, but the shadow phenomenon of artists and educators whose mode of production is necessarily dependent on the new economic realities and their positions as factotums. Perhaps this puts this approach in closer resonance with models from Europe, where (historically, at least) financial support for the art has been more evenly balanced between private and public than the largely commercial driven US context (Sholette 2000; Enwezor 2002). For US artists outside New York and Los Angeles, the large urban research university and the growing commitment to "creative placemaking" (Florida 2002; Florida, Stolarik, and Knudson 2010) and the role of the arts as a part of responsible relations with "the community," now seems to offer the primary alternative (amidst a vastly shrunken field of financial support) for artists to propel their own projects. This is not to say that Bruguera and Gates have evaded traditional art world structures entirely: when I speak of them as the most visible practitioners of parasitism, this is due precisely to their financial successes and notoriety.

For example, not only has Gates been the beneficiary of a wealth of funding from private non-profits, but his work on behalf of the University has resulted in public investment as well: "So what did Mayor Rahm Emanuel do during his first weekend in office? He went to City Hall on Saturday morning in jeans and a dress shirt and met with top officials from the University of Chicago to hammer out an agreement on, of all things, zoning and construction permits" (Harris 2011).

To repeat, Rahm Emanuel's first official action upon taking office as Chicago mayor was to discuss urban development with the president of the University of Chicago. The implications are clear: future economic growth depends on productive relationships between cities and large, wealthy private institutions. And part of such relationships may be the ability for universities to vacillate between business enterprise and educational institution, offering the promise of the university as economic engine while benefitting from tax breaks afforded to educational institutions. In the years since this initial meeting between Mayor Emanuel and University of Chicago President Robert Zimmer, the city has eased the University's development efforts in the area, most notably through the intermediary of Theaster Gates, who has served on the City of Chicago's Cultural Advisory Council since 2011. In the end, it is not only the University of Chicago for which Theaster Gates serves as the public face of socially responsible urban development, but—more and more frequently—for the City of Chicago itself (Chicago Transit Authority 2012; City of Chicago 2014).[11]

These parasitic practices thus take the form of "relational" or "social" or "service" aesthetics purporting to serve the needs of a community without access to the channels of power and concomitant financial resources. Yet, just as corporations have sought to capitalize on consumers' desires for the local, the authentic, and the personally-crafted, parasitic procedures draw upon viewers' nostalgic desires for "community engagement" in the context of a passive digital age activism of purchasing power. As app-fueled urban lifestyles become ever more mediated, immanent "community" is often located in an older way of life, or in the seeming "authenticity" of ethnic minorities who are perceived to retain a more cohesive social life rooted in face-to-face encounters. Frederic Jameson has described the resulting "envy and *ressentiment* of the *Gesellschaft* for the older *Gemeinschaft* which it is simultaneously exploiting and liquidating" (Jameson 1979: 145; Foster 2015: 123).[12] This is "social practice" as delegated to—as embodied in—the artist and his or her manipulation of institutional finances and influence. The parasitic practices of contemporary art can thus best be understood as a romantic version of capitalist entrepreneurship in the global age.

Where institutional critique sought to challenge the structures of the art world's existing spaces, and relational aesthetics sought to carve out heterotopias within and around the art world's institutional systems, parasitism criticizes by diverting the resources of extant institutions elsewhere. The parasitic practices of Gates and Bruguera create shadow institutions, a city within a city. In the case of Gates, this is the black metropolis, as a parallel set of institutions and public spaces

interpolating the predominantly white and upper-class art world and urban bohemias (Gates 2009b).[13] In the case of Bruguera, the shadow lives of the undocumented in the United States are given voice in an impossible political visibility. For both artists, success might be measured in the extent to which their presence—performative though it is—becomes no longer necessary for the functioning of these parasitic practices, as parasitism endures without the parasite.

Notes

1   These parasitic practices are related to, but importantly diverge from, the notion of the parasite proposed by philosopher Michel Serres, see below.

2   Even as the more pessimistic opinions of anti-globalization activists became apparent during the 1999 "Battle in Seattle" protesting the World Trade Organization Ministerial Conference, and the protests at the joint meetings of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank in Washington, DC, in 2000, there was also an optimistic strand of this movement that saw possibilities in pockets of "resistance" to corporate globalization. Many of these more optimistic activists highlighted the efforts of producers' cooperatives, such as the *Mondragón Corporación Cooperativa* in Spain, or the performative and media-savvy militancy of the Zapatista rebellion in Chiapas, which was initiated as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and implemented in 1994. Writing in the early 1990s, Critical Art Ensemble proclaimed that: "Treading water in the pool of liquid power need not be an image of acquiescence and complicity. In spite of their awkward situation, the political activist and the cultural activist (anachronistically known as the artist) can still produce disturbances. . . . By appropriating the legitimized authority of 'artistic creation,' and using it as a means to establish a public forum for speculation on a model of resistance within emerging techno-culture, the cultural producer can contribute to the perpetual fight against authoritarianism" (Critical Art Ensemble 1994: 12, 27).

3   Here, I mean something slightly different from Johanna Drucker's characterization of the complicity of contemporary art. As different as her approach is from the scholarship of art historians such as Benjamin Buchloh and Hal Foster, Drucker similarly defines her position in relation to an Adornian notion of the relationship between art and the culture industry or "mass culture values," even as she questions a knee-jerk opposition between the two.

4   Serres complicates an older Marxist paradigm of production and consumption (Lenin's "bloodsucking" kulaks enriching themselves at the expense of true producers, the peasants) with a media theory-inflected emphasis on communication, whereby the parasite takes the disruptive form of *static*. See Vladimir Lenin (1918).

5   One might understand this process in light of the fictitious doubling of an imaginary
    Eastern European city in China Mieville's novel *The City & the City* (Mieville 2008).

6   Gillick himself has noted that his recourse to Celtic legend was spurred by the
    particular context of the art department of Goldsmiths College and the emergence
    of the so-called Young British Artists (YBA), whose work in late-1980s and early
    1990s London at times adopted an aggressively identitarian mode of art production.
    Tracy Emin and Sarah Lucas, for example, took up a hyper-sexualized approach to
    form, style, and self-representation in congruence with third wave feminist stances,
    while Yinka Shonibare and Chris Ofili drew upon their Afro-British identities to
    combine forms and styles of Western art history (18th-century British and French
    genre scenes, the Madonna and child) with materials (Dutch-wax dyed fabrics,
    elephant dung, etc.) related to Africa's imbrication in colonial and imperial networks
    reaching to Western Europe and beyond. Gillick explicitly referenced debates on
    "difference and collectivity" among professors at his art college, and the legacy of
    feminist artists such as Mary Kelly, who was living in London until around 1987.

7   Of course these artists are not really evading the art market. Some of Gates' funding
    for his parasitic practices comes from sales of art objects, and he is represented by
    the unabashedly commercial gallery White Cube, in London. Bruguera has a more
    tangential relationship to the dealer-gallery-auction side of the art world.

8   In certain works, Gates has overtly addressed his own performance of blackness
    (Gates 2009c).

9   Bruguera's work references Tatlin's *Monument to the Third International*, which was
    intended to be topped with radio antennas. See Boym (2008).

10 Specifically, the job trainees were to be those funded by the Comprehensive
    Employment and Training Act (CETA), in which federal block grants were given to
    states and municipalities to deliver job training based on local needs. CETA was
    implemented in 1973 and replaced by the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) in
    1982.

11 Gates' recent commission for the redesign of a public transit station, for example,
    and his collaboration with the Chicago Housing Authority on a mixed income
    residential development put him in league with the big boys of commercial urban
    development. The arts component of the redesign of the 95th Street Red Line Station
    was budgeted at $1.3 million, while Gates drew upon $12 million of mixed private
    investment and government funding for the Dorchester Art + Housing Collaborative
    residential project.

12 Jameson asserts that, "In the United States, indeed, ethnic groups are not only the
    object of prejudice, they are also the object of envy; and these two impulses are
    deeply intermingled and reinforce each other mutually. The dominant white
    middle-class groups—already given over to *anomie* and social fragmentation and
    atomisation—find in the ethnic and racial groups which are the object of their social

repression and status contempt at one and the same time the image of some older collective ghetto or ethnic neighbourhood solidarity; they feel the envy and *ressentiment* of the *Gesellschaft* for the older *Gemeinschaft* which it is simultaneously exploiting and liquidating." Hal Foster discusses the compensatory nature of participatory art in the face of "the dissolution of the [Habermasian] public sphere."

13 As Gates describes, "Because I spend so much time moving between super formal institutions [museums, galleries, the City of Chicago's Department of Cultural, Affairs] and super informal ones, I wanted to . . . call attention to . . . the life that is lived between them. And often, the really formal ones are outside of my neighborhood, and the informal ones are often in my neighborhood. So I also wanted to . . . have those two things collide in the way they collide in my life. . . . One of the byproducts of [my] projects is that there would be this kind of spatial collision, or this social collision, that really conflates how my life looks every day."

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