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# Leisure/Crime, Immaterial Labor, and the Performance of the Teenage Girl in Harmony Korine's *Spring Breakers* (2012) and Sofia Coppola's *The Bling Ring* (2013)

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**Abstract:** Harmony Korine's *Spring Breakers* (2012) and Sofia Coppola's *The Bling Ring* (2013) introduced audiences to girls exploring criminal behavior both for and as leisure. The films introduce an idea of leisure/crime: criminal acts that appear to develop as natural, fruitful extensions of leisure activities, circumnavigating conventional laws of capitalism, yet still allow its actors to access, attain, and consume goods, money, value, and status. Through close analysis of the films' style and character performances, this article proposes that the films and their enactments of leisure/crime in fact offer complex critical commentary on contemporary relations between the representation of teenage girls, notions of performativity, and immaterial labor in the late-capitalist US. Throughout, the girl remains the pivotal figure; by desiring what is and what, in turn, becomes desirable, she shapes the consumer market as much as she is subject or victim to it. Whether or not this allows her to become subversive, or radical enough to undermine the system, remains to be seen, but the films certainly offer plenty of challenging new directions for us to consider along the way.

**Keywords:** leisure/crime, popular culture, American cinema, immaterial labor, feminist film theory, performance, *Spring Breakers*, *The Bling Ring*, Korine (Harmony), Coppola (Sofia)

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Two recent and visually striking films, Harmony Korine's *Spring Breakers* (2012) and Sofia Coppola's *The Bling Ring* (2013), introduce audiences to unexpected stories about girls and guns in the contemporary United States; they present girls exploring criminal behavior both for and as leisure. *Spring Breakers* tells the story of a group of college girls who rob a Chicken Shack to acquire capital for a spring break trip to Florida and, while there, become involved with a drug gang. In *The Bling Ring*, a film inspired by true events, a group of Hollywood teenagers rob celebrities' houses in their spare time. Many critics quickly dismissed both films for their superficiality and "depthlessness" (in line, perhaps, with the typically swift rejection of most popular culture addressing teenage girls). Richard Corliss called *Spring Breakers* "all surface and sham," while John Hanlon wrote it was "a ridiculous, repetitive, empty drama." For Jeffrey Lyles, *The Bling Ring* was "a film as vapid and empty as its subjects and inspiration," and Melissa Anderson argued it was "remote, repetitive ... [and] as insubstantial as the reality TV stars name-checked (and burgled) throughout," while Jeff Beck initiated a recurring connection between the two films when he wrote, "*The Bling Ring* is the most superficial film I've seen since *Spring Breakers* earlier this year. There's so little here in the way of substance...."<sup>1</sup> It is my contention, however, that these films—both in spite of and through their apparent shallowness—deliver complex critical commentary on contemporary relations between the

representation of teenage girls, notions of performativity, and immaterial labor in the late-capitalist US. By blurring the boundaries between leisure activities and criminal behavior, they present a new idea that I call leisure/crime: criminal acts that appear to develop as natural, fruitful extensions of leisure activities, circumnavigating conventional laws of capitalism, yet still allow its actors to access, attain, and consume goods, money, value, and status.

In both films, the perpetrators of leisure/crimes, importantly, are teenage girls. In this article, I wish to investigate this premise further. I will compare and contrast the two films in order to understand how each iterates its idea of leisure/crime, and why it seems essential that the perpetrators are teenage girls. The aim of this article, therefore, is twofold. By taking a closer look at *Spring Breakers* and *The Bling Ring* as documents of leisure/crime, I will argue that 1) these films, which indeed appear to be about nothing (they are all “surface and sham”), in fact offer complex and nuanced representations of the often invisible forms of immaterial labor valorized by contemporary capitalism; and 2) not only are teenage girls called upon to perform these types of labor, but the representations of teenage girls are made to embody them.

Leisure/crime is deeply rooted in the structure of late capitalism; it relies particularly on its constructions of immaterial labor and general knowledge. The theory of immaterial labor, as argued by Michael Hardt and other theorists of the post-Fordist mode of production, suggests we are now in a time where immaterial labor—labor that does not literally produce “material goods” but social connections, subjectivities, and nonmaterial commodities—creates more value than traditional forms of productive labor.<sup>2</sup> After agriculture and the production of raw materials, and the rise of industry and the manufacture of durable goods, what currently produces most value is service work and the manipulation of information (Hardt 1999, 90). Within this category, Hardt and others include computerized technologies, networked communication, and work that was previously conceived as, or attributed to, affective labor. Affective labor, a distinct category in its original use, was taken up by feminist interventions in the Marxist analysis of work to highlight the often un(der)paid labor of women.<sup>3</sup> It refers to the care and service work, both in the private sphere and the public sector, that revolves around the manipulation of affects, or the steering of tastes and emotions. As a category of labor, it comprises the (re)production of a sense of well-being, ease, and satisfaction, or excitement and passion, through entertainment, labor in the bodily mode, and social communication, as well as the creation of the affects that drive and circulate in cultural sectors such as fashion, the arts, and, importantly, branding and advertising.

This highly performative and affective labor, *Spring Breakers* and *The Bling Ring* suggest, marks the realm of the teenage girl, a figure introduced as both a key shaper and subject of consumer and popular culture. But it is important to understand affective labor here as part of the wider and more general notion of immaterial labor, the labor that, as Maurizio Lazzarato argues, “produces the informational and cultural content of the commodity” (1996, 133). This includes all the “activities involved in defining and fixing cultural and artistic standards, fashions, tastes, norms and public opinion” (133). Immaterial labor demands a process of mass intellectuality and constant self-valorization; a general knowledge that is produced collectively, through communication, productive cooperation and collective learning, which is then taken on by the “subjectivities” it produces, to reproduce that very knowledge (Lazzarato 1996, 134). The films suggest that it is precisely this general knowledge that allows its actors to transgress so easily; to just resituate, extend, and apply that knowledge elsewhere, because it is already theirs for the making, and taking. Immaterial labor is a mode of production that promotes continual innovation and depends upon highly flexible, precarious, and mobile laborers. It sets apart a central role for the culture industries, and specifically online activity, in an increasingly digital environment where value is produced

24/7 (Crary 2013). As Steven Shaviro suggests, “Capital now demands from workers everything, all the time; our dreams and intuitions, our passions and pastimes, our leisure as well as our work” (2004). And so it seems that these films are asking: If capital reappropriates everything anyway, why can’t teenage girls reappropriate certain actions to their advantage?

Both *Spring Breakers* and *The Bling Ring* present a North American landscape fuelled by immaterial labor; its teenage girls are presented as both the ideal objects and subjects of contemporary hyperconsumerism. Driven by their desire for both material and immaterial commodities, they “want things,” especially to be able to present themselves to others in a certain light. The films reveal they are willing and, crucially, able to do anything to attain what they desire: luxury items, popularity, fame/celebrity status, money to spend, wild and exuberant holidays, and all sorts of indulgences. The girls strongly conform to American materialist culture and its ideals, but the films suggest this is an environment that corrupts and annihilates traditional values and morals in the process. Although the girls in these films are still at school or college, and therefore do not work in the traditional sense, their worlds and activities are so much infused by the networks of information, communication, and consumption that characterize immaterial labor that they are “naturally” positioned as active agents within it. Their language is one of image, brands, marketing, uncompromised self-gratification (hedonism), of shifting, fleeting gestures and performances, and of highly affective and affected relationships. The exchange and consumption of commodities is essential; these girls are targeted en masse and then “subjectified” as precarious individuals within a predetermined consumer group. Importantly, however, while they may be positioned as individuals, as teenage girls they are entirely monolithic at the same time. Their (free) labor is consistently implored by corporate America (and by social media) to sustain specific enunciations of their identity, which then, in turn, uphold the images of brands and commodities, which then again turn to sustain the enunciations of their broadcast identity, and so on.

This complexity of the representation of the teenage girl in late capitalism owes much of its reading to the Franco-Italian collective Tiqqun’s radical text *Preliminary Materials for a Theory of the Young-Girl* (1999). Tiqqun’s conception of the symbolic and representational category “Young Girl” is larger than the socially defined actual girl; rather, the Young Girl is a distinct performative cultural role that can incorporate a range of identities. My analysis of the films will show how they enunciate this, and why it may be fruitful to define the teenage girl in terms of plasticity, as Heather Warren-Crow so skilfully and productively does in her book *Girlhood and the Plastic Image* (2014). Moreover, my analysis builds on theoretical paradigms such as feminist film theory and romantic film-philosophy—as proposed by Robert Sinnerbrink (2011a, 2011b)—to enter into a dialogue with these films; to see what they can offer us and how, as important cultural objects, they engage and explore the image of the teenage girl. Through detailed close analysis of the films’ workings, of their narrative and stylistic elements, and by way of thinking along with the films, this article investigates the radical potential of what they offer as strategies for girls to both navigate and chart the landscape of late-capitalist America.

This article is comprised of four main sections. The first introduces the narratives of the films. The second section examines the central idea of leisure/crime in each film, in order to reveal how and where the films call upon and reimagine immaterial labor practices. This part has two subsections; it looks at leisure for crime in *Spring Breakers* and leisure as crime in *The Bling Ring*. The third section will look at the role and representation of “the goods” in the films, to examine how and where they position the value and performance of the commodities found at the heart of the leisure/crime. The fourth section will turn to the representations of teenage girls in the films, to see where and how these representations are marked by performativity, and whether or not that performativity carries subversive potential; why is the teenage girl

a cipher for, or the ideal subject of, leisure/crime? The main point is that these films are not to be dismissed but rather acknowledged for the complexity of the ideas they present, and the ways in which they attempt to critique important tenets of late capitalism and explore the role (representations of) teenage girls play within this landscape.

## The Films

The premise of both films evolves around a group of American girls and their leisure/crime behavior. In Harmony Korine's *Spring Breakers*, we meet four young lower-middle-class girls, Faith (Selena Gomez), Candy (Vanessa Hudgens), Brit (Ashley Benson), and Cotty (Rachel Korine) as they study at college.<sup>4</sup> The group of friends bemoan their "trapped" state: "We really need to get out of here"; "We've been stuck here too long"; "[We] need to see something different," they say, voicing their desire to go to Florida for spring break (the raucous American college tradition that is introduced during the opening credits with all the carnivalesque, "Girls Gone Wild" debauchery it has become associated with in popular media). When their collective funds fall short, three of the girls come up with a quick fix for their plight: they rob a Chicken Shack fast-food restaurant using as their weapons a hammer and squirt guns. Once in Florida, the girls enjoy beach time, drink, take drugs, and party, vowing to keep the fun going with the mantra "Spring Break Forever." After a local rapper and gangster, Alien (James Franco), bails them out of a situational drug arrest, the girls join his gang, and two of them proceed to have sexual relations with him. As their situation becomes increasingly uneasy and begins to escalate, Faith returns home. After being injured in a drive-by shooting by a rival drug dealer, Cotty too leaves. In revenge for Cotty's shooting, Alien, Candy, and Brit decide to murder the rival gang. As they arrive by boat at the gang's compound, Alien is shot dead. The two remaining girls retaliate by massacring everyone in the compound before driving away in the rival drug lord's car.

Sofia Coppola's *The Bling Ring* was inspired by the real events of a band of teenage robbers in Beverly Hills. Their crimes were covered extensively by the media at the time; a *Vanity Fair* article famously inspired Coppola to make a film about the gang (Sales 2010). The film introduces us to a group of bored, privileged Los Angeles high-school girls, Rebecca (Katie Chang), Chloe (Claire Julien), Nicki (Emma Watson), and Sam (Taissa Farmiga) as they adopt the gay "new kid," Marc (Israel Broussard), into their popular clique. A shared love of fashion and celebrities soon evolves into an exclusive friendship when Rebecca suggests she and Marc should "check" unlocked cars and houses in their neighborhood for money, drugs, and other goods. Upon discovering they can use their celebrity-gossip knowledge to find out where celebrities live and when they are out of town, the group begins to hang out at "It Girl" Paris Hilton's house when she is away, taking clothes and valuables with them to show off at parties, in clubs, and on their social media accounts. The group continues to burglarize their favorite celebrities' houses in LA, taking valuables and personal effects, until the media and the police finally catch up with them and they are arrested. After a trial that is extensively covered by the media, some of the group are sent to jail. Their friendships evaporate, as evidenced by their "unfriended" status on social media. Nicki, meanwhile, is shown to turn the media attention to her benefit as she becomes a celebrity herself.

Although the storylines are different, and *Spring Breakers* is significantly more violent and even pornographic than *The Bling Ring*, both films situate their female leads firmly within a mass-mediated, hyperconsumerist North American culture; the girls quote and talk about pop culture, use (social) media throughout, and are presented as being constantly aware of, and actively taking control of (to a relative

degree, within the diegesis), the mediation of their own image through their performances. Importantly, the films themselves mimic such acts; they emulate mass media and pop culture by taking on the style of advertisements, music videos, and social media platforms, and they engage with social media directly (*The Bling Ring* offers the address of a website to follow Nicki at its conclusion). The films appear to mediate and negotiate their own nature (as films) by playing with their own performances. It is precisely this double emphasis on performance, on boundary transgressions and transformation, that crucially highlights the performative nature of leisure/crime in both films, and it is herein, I argue, that the films' critique becomes most evident. By ultimately feeding its audiences the very opium this critique presents as the core of the problem, it blurs the boundaries between perpetrator and victim, between subject and object, and thereby emulates the disappearing lines that have come to characterize immaterial labor and contemporary consumer culture.

### **Leisure/Crime**

Leisure/crime is defined here as criminal activities that develop “naturally” as extensions of leisure activities, and that allow its actors to access, attain, and consume the goods, power, and imagery they desire. The teen girl protagonists in both films participate in the patterns and behaviors demanded of them by late-capitalist America, and then simply perform these activities elsewhere. Where immaterial labor previously collapsed the boundaries between labor and leisure time, leisure/crime collapses the boundaries between labor, leisure, and crime. In Marx's view on capitalism, class differences are maintained through structural conceptualizations of crime; institutions are invited to reproduce conforming behavior as a form of social control, defining the ruling class as distinct from the working class, and separating the often-ignored white collar crimes from more “serious” crimes, such as burglary, street crime, violence, and so on. This evidence, needless to say, a strong racial dynamic as well, where white perpetrators are treated differently than subjects from other ethnicities (I will come back to this issue in my last section). The “serious” crime is the first in a range of radical acts that the girls in these films appear to reappropriate. The transformative potential of their actions is emphasized right from the start, even if each film enunciates this differently.

### **Crime-for-Leisure in *Spring Breakers***

*Spring Breakers* presents its leisure/crime by moving the behavior along a sliding scale, from naughty leisure behavior to committing crime in order to obtain the luxury of leisure, and finally to taking on crime as leisure. The jump from being “naughty girls” for fun and leisure to being “bad girls” as criminals is not big, and is here made to seem natural. We encounter Brit and Candy in a darkened lecture hall where students' faces are lit only by their computer screens. A lecturer talks about slavery and the history of civil rights (the irony presented by this should not escape the viewer). Brit, notably bored, draws a note on her notepad that reads “I Like Penis.” After she holds it up to her friend, a giggling Candy draws a giant penis on her own notepad with the words “SPRING BREAK” inside the shaft, which she then pretends to fellate for the viewing pleasure of Brit. This scene introduces the girls as able to transform a public space into a private realm. (Public space has historically been associated with work and private space with leisure; this division was then traditionally further demarcated along gendered lines.) A place for serious lessons becomes one for private, naughty-girl jokes and playfulness, as the girls successfully break away from the computerized setting of their learning environment by resorting to pen and paper. But there is more to this.

The sexual play implied by Candy's performance directly conflates the image of the phallus (and, arguably, the serving of the phallus through pretend fellatio) with their desired commodity of choice, the spring break vacation, marked by the writing inside the shaft of the penis. Here, the film brings the scene into direct connection with its opening montage. The succession of gaudy, highly saturated, and stylized slow-motion shots of college students at a beach, who are drinking, dancing, doing drugs, and going Girls-Gone-Wild-style naked on spring break—bringing to mind the imagery that Nina Power asserts reduces girls to their breasts (2009, 24)—is brought into play in contrast with the current quiet setting of the two girls in the darkened lecture hall. Their apparent willingness to pursue their own objectification, and their active desire to reenact the media constructions of spring break reiterated here in the performance of the sex act, thus take precedence over their current, passive state as student listeners. The suggestion of moral degradation in each scene informs the other, while simultaneously placing the bodily pleasure we associate with leisure in juxtaposition with the bodily exhaustion (or, in this case, boredom) associated with work.

All of this is made even more complex by that fact that the scene is reminiscent of a famous teen film that addressed the experience and sexual awakening of teenage girls, *Fast Times at Ridgmont High* (1982). (Both *Spring Breakers* and *The Bling Ring* reference teen films and teen-film tropes throughout. These are highly media-literate texts.) In an infamous scene in *Fast Times*, Phoebe Cates and Jennifer Jason Leigh engage in a fellatio lesson in the cafeteria, but their performance is quickly and safely reappropriated to serve the male gaze of teenage boys in the vicinity. The fellatio act in *Spring Breakers* is not only literally “created” (as in conjured up, drawn, and performed) by the girls themselves, but remains within the confines of their own exchange and bemusement (the gaze of the viewer notwithstanding). In other words, while firmly determined by their own sense of play and playfulness (i.e., their leisure), they are both conforming to the subjugation that is expected of their image—or the labor they are expected to perform—while actively recreating, or molding, it for themselves. This immediately highlights the rejection of clear, conventional boundaries in more ways than one; by taking on a position between “good” (appropriate) and “bad” (inappropriate) behavior, they are able to break their own boredom and passivity, and clearly pronounce their own desires. It is a scene that conflates and subverts a range of power structures that position the girls as passive objects (from the institutional setting to the popular media imagery of spring break and their sexualized behavior, which is exploited by the film itself as well), but the film insists this is all made ambiguous because it is part of the girls' own exchange, manipulation, and performance.

Such tensions, confluations, and transgressions are used by Korine to illustrate the fluidity between “naughty” leisure and criminal behavior throughout the film; transformation and reappropriation characterize most acts and performances depicted. Brit puts a gun in her mouth at a party (which repeats the earlier pretend act of fellatio), only to reveal it is a squirt gun that contains liquor. The girls exhale marihuana smoke into one another's mouths—a sensual activity that emulates the popular soft-core trope of hetero girl-on-girl kissing (and both is and isn't quite that)—thereby simultaneously reaffirming and repealing (or should I say reclaiming?) established voyeuristic fantasies. In empty, narrow dorm corridors, we see the four girls tumble over one another, dance, and do handstands within the frame of the hallway, laughingly singing words from Nelly's “Hot in Here”: “It's getting' hot in here (so hot) / So take off all your clothes / I am gettin' so hot, I wanna take my clothes off.” This again blurs the boundaries between leisure and sex, or labor in the bodily mode, and between subject and object. The gender and racial transgressions involved in taking on a male, black voice (I will come back to this in the last section) and parroting misogynist lyrics emphasize the girls' plasticity, and how they transform their environment through play and leisure, making it (temporarily) conducive to their desires. Such scenes underscore the girls' potential to reproduce,

transform, and reclaim popular, circulating consumer imagery at their will, while staking through their performance their claim as active consumers and producers of immaterial labor.

The leisure/crime dynamic in *Spring Breakers* becomes violent when Brit and Candy devise a plan to rob the Chicken Shack to get the money the girls need to go on a spring break trip to Florida. They commit a crime to enable their leisure. They present the idea to Cotty while she watches a video-game simulation of a mixed martial arts fight on her iPad—a seamless but notable cutaway amidst several cuts across the axis of action that continually destabilize the classical Hollywood continuity of space and direction in the film, suggesting that, in this world, filmic actions, mediated screens, and simulations flow organically into one another. The layering of screens—a recurring element throughout the film—visually signifies a doubling of illusion, flatness, and mediated performance, and signals what is about to come. Britt and Candy suggest they “borrow” Professor Stephens’s El Camino; Stephens is a professor with whom it is implied Cotty is sleeping. The allusion to sex situates the commodity they attain—the car—and validates its exchange in terms of the immaterial labor in the bodily mode. Simply put, Cotty exchanges sex for the right to the car.

The girls are next heard through a nondiegetic voice-over, psyching each other up for the robbery: “We can do this. I know we can. Just fucking pretend like it’s a video game. Act like you’re in a movie or something!” Candy says repeatedly, her words circulating in the air and on the soundtrack, before the girls rob the Chicken Shack. The act itself is shown in real time from the passenger seat in the getaway car. The three girls are masked in balaclavas and carry squirt guns and a hammer. The camera looks left past Cotty in the driver’s seat, as she brings the car around the Chicken Shack, so we observe the action through the frame of her car window, which functions as another screen. The windows of the restaurant are covered in layers of signs that present a painted menu with opening times and a neon sign that reads “Open.” The windows frame the action as yet another screen, obstructing a direct view. The crime is thus triply marked as a performance, or simulation, of sorts; we see fragments of what is happening—a gun held to the back of a man’s head, for instance, and a hammer hitting a table—through multiple screens on the screen (the camera, the car window, the window of the restaurant). The pop music playing on the car radio and the sounds of the car itself all the while mask the commodification of the action, as well as the violence of the criminal behavior that is orchestrated inside.

The crime is visually presented as an extension of computer game play (just “pretend it’s a computer game,” says Cotty), or as an extension of leisure, with the motion of the car mimicking a mobile screen, such as that of an iPad. But even more importantly, the action appears underneath several layers of context; it is observed through a car window/screen, through a restaurant window/screen, through the signs on that window/screen, and, let’s not forget, on the cinema screen itself. This suggests the act is easily absorbed by and deeply embedded in its environment, and in the world of popular media imagery. The criminal act committed is a “natural” extension of this reality, and of our leisure; our movies, our games, our naughty, playful fantasies and behavior. The gravity of the violence that is being committed is ignored under the pop soundtrack—we remain outside, mere observers of the scenes on multiple screens. (The viewers are made aware of the actual violence more fully later in the film, during a reenactment performed for Faith’s benefit, when we see the scene again from her imagined point of view and hear the sounds of the girls’ actions.) In this first instance, the viewer shares in the celebratory feeling of the successful heist (the “game level” was successfully completed) when we see the girls drive away with a bag full of money, as they let out exuberant cheers and ecstatic, adrenaline-charged laughter.



## Crime-as-Leisure in *The Bling Ring*

*The Bling Ring* also blurs the boundaries between leisure and crime but in a slightly different way. The film frames leisure/crime as a “natural” component of the North American middle-class teen girl condition, by conflating shopping with criminal behavior right from the start. The film opens with night surveillance footage of a group of teenagers (whose clothes and posture clue us in to their age) as they jump a fence and walk onto private property. The teens are perceptible only as dark silhouettes, avatars, maneuvering within the shadows of an affluent neighborhood. On the soundtrack, a girlish voice exclaims “Let’s go shopping!” before loud pop music leads the film into the opening title sequence, a montage of brash close-ups of luxury products (shoes, jewellery, clothes, and so on). This opening connects the high-end consumer goods—the evidence of a “leisurely” activity, a shopping extravaganza—with the surveillance footage that alludes to criminal behavior. The viewer is invited to contemplate the character, appeal, and consequences of shopping without a specific target, shopping for the sake of shopping, shopping for the fun of it, for the colorful, sensuous, naughty (over)indulgence of it, as we are bombarded with image after image of commodities.

After the title sequence, the film flashes back to the start of the story, and we see newcomer and gay high schooler Marc as he meets Rebecca, soon after he is taken on by her group of friends. Bored at a party at Rebecca’s house, the two retreat to her room to flip through magazines, exchanging jaded opinions over celebrities’ hair and outfits and playing a game of identifying the brands the celebrities are wearing. Rebecca then suggests (as though it were just the next fun thing for them to do): “Let’s go check some cars.” Outside, in the dark, Rebecca shows Marc what she actually means. They walk down the street and check if car doors are unlocked to take the goods inside: purses, wallets, drugs. The film suggests, then, that looking at images of to-be-desired commodities in magazines easily extends into just taking those actual commodities from unlocked cars; looking at (or desiring) goods leads to stealing. The ease with which fantasies and representations move into “reality” is reminiscent of the way in which layers of screened media lead to actual criminal behavior in *Spring Breakers*. And, as in *Spring Breakers*, this scene sets up *The Bling Ring*’s ethical code: it is not really stealing if we do not see the consequences and if other people “make the mistake” to let themselves be robbed. The threshold where crime begins is fluid and easily transgressed. “It’s crazy,” Marc remarks, baffled when they find four hundred dollars. “I know. People leave ‘em open with credit cards and cash,” replies Rebecca as they quickly walk off into the night. The theft strengthens the bond between Marc and Rebecca; the camera literally brings Marc into focus the next day at school, as though he has passed his initiation and is now truly part of the world he has entered. The duo’s shared experience and relationship to commodities ferment their actual friendship as well.

As in *Spring Breakers*, one transgression soon leads to another. We next see Marc and Rebecca driving in her car. When Marc asks, “Where are we going?” Rebecca replies, “Wherever we want!” before asking Marc if he knows anyone who is out of town. When Marc reveals that a hot boy he has met up with a couple of times is on holiday, the two drive to the boy’s house, find an open door, and wander through the rooms. Again, as Cotty’s relationship with her professor leads to the girls’ taking his car in *Spring Breakers*, this premise situates the foundation of the leisure/crime in terms of an exchange for performed labor in the bodily mode. Sex, as it is presented here, resides ambiguously somewhere between work and leisure, and in both films opens doors to transgression and appropriation. On top of this, it should be noted that Marc at this stage is permanently grouped in with the girls; he is marked as “one of the girls” by the film. This can perhaps in part be attributed to the feminization of the gay teenage boy by popular media, but also underscores the fact that the category of the “Young Girl” is wider than the socially defined identity of an actual teenage girl may imply.

Once in the boy's house, Rebecca picks up a bag from a closet (remarking, "It's a Birkin! Lindsay has this one...") and then finds a stash of cash under the bed as well. The next day, the two spend the money they found during an extravagant shopping spree; they try on countless outfits, compliment each other's looks, and purchase a range of designer ensembles, expressing great joy as they do so. Again, the progression of actions here reveals how one activity informs the other. The spotting of brands in celebrity magazines becomes useful knowledge to select the most valuable item to take from an unlocked house, cruising around town (and labor in the bodily mode) turns into breaking and entering, and the stolen money allows the duo to purchase the desired commodities they need to recreate the looks they admired in those same magazines.

The film continues to blur the boundaries between the leisure of shopping and criminal behavior. We soon see Marc at Rebecca's, browsing the internet and noting that Paris Hilton will be hosting a party in Miami. Rebecca suggests they Google where she lives and go see whether she leaves her key under the doormat. She does. During their first few visits to Hilton's house, Marc and Rebecca hang out, lounging on Paris's bed, in her dressing room, and in the nightclub room, and taking only select "fan" items. After boasting about their outings at parties, they invite the rest of their gang of friends, including Chloe, Nicki, and Sam, to join. "Let's go shopping!" says Rebecca upon entering Hilton's house—an exclamation we recognize as a repetition of the opening sequence; both films loop excerpts of dialogue throughout, as though to underscore the cyclical, organic development and influence of one action on another. The sequence that follows, which doubles back to the opening-credit sequence, is highly reminiscent of the shopping-at-the-mall scenes from teen films such as *Valley Girl* (1983), *Clueless* (1995), or *Mean Girls* (2004). By referencing these familiar tropes, the film brings up the playful joy and entertainment we experience from such indulgent sequences, but, importantly here, they are repositioned within a criminal framework. This diffuses the boundaries between the actions. In Paris's house, endless arrays of brightly colored high-end products are shown in close-ups and then tried on, only to be met with the girls' gasping exclamations of joy as they list off the brands: "Look at all the Louboutins! Chanel! It's Hervé Leger! They're Rolexes! It's a Birkin! That's sooo cute! That would look so good on you!" And, "Oh, that's totally my color!"

Through their constructions of leisure/crime, both films place emphasis on the general knowledge that circulates within immaterial labor. It is because these teenage girls know how to shop, how to play video games, how to act in films, how to model, how to Google, and how to identify which commodities are desirable, it is implied that they also instinctively know how to rob and commit crimes. The settings, Los Angeles (a city of super wealth and celebrity) in *The Bling Ring* and Florida in *Spring Breakers*, inform the girls' actions; their level of privilege suggests they have enough but desire even more partly because of their context. There is an extent to which the teenagers in both films are just slightly outside or marginalized, because of their class, in relation to the socioeconomic position they want. This slight marginalization is significant in understanding their motives and the leisure aspect of the crime, and it simultaneously "naturalizes" the crime's emergence. The didactic powers brought forth by immaterial labor can, and will, be easily reproduced by its targets, in particular collectively, and then repositioned elsewhere. Not only that, but because these actions appear to extend so naturally from leisure activities, their criminal implications become somewhat undone. Morality becomes a moot point in these films; desiring the commodity and getting one's hands on it is the superlative exchange.

Both films offer a solid critique of capitalism; they raise provocative questions about the nature of celebrity and self-gratification, and about the narcissistic, indulgent debaucheries of the affluent, by extension commenting on the incessant violent appropriations of capitalism itself. The capitalist class appropriates value from the working class in an established process of legalized stealing. So if this structural function

of capitalism is already a criminal activity, which hides the corrupting exploitation of labor within it, then the girls' theft is mere reappropriation. The boundaries between labor, crime, and leisure have long been blurred. The leisure/crime actions of the girls in these films merely reappropriate the exploitation as such.

Korine and Coppola both present the leisure/crime acts as transgressive and as emerging slowly; they are not rooted directly in malice or delinquency and cannot easily be condemned as such. Rather, they are rooted in the play and leisure activities that currently produce surplus value for capital under the conditions of immaterial labor, ultimately sustaining these conditions. The teens are not paid for their knowledge, for their free immaterial labor (let alone their labor in the bodily mode), or compensated for the value they (re)produce by desiring the commodities they desire. Therefore, it could be suggested that it is in accordance with the terms set by the capitalist system that they attain the commodities and luxuries they pursue. In other words, leisure/crime cannot entirely be read in terms of subversive commentary, or as "radical acts" that emphasize the shifting boundaries of white-collar crime. What is needed for these teen girl agents to reproduce what is imposed upon them (to desire what they are asked to desire) is presented here as though it should belong to them; as though it already, rightfully, does. Their ease of attaining these commodities further underscores their entitlement—as "heirs" of the white ruling class—and ultimately upholds the system more than rejects it. The leisure/crimes in *Spring Breakers* and *The Bling Ring* are never met with any real obstruction or moral consequence; the teenage culprits, still removed from an adult world fraught with responsibility, are never shown to be genuinely remorseful, or "truly" criminal, even when they kill. They are either not punished at all or only mildly, and the films present their actions (and the consequences of these actions) from such detached points of view that they somehow seem to reside beyond stern judgement. These actions appear to us, on the surface, as expectable transformative acts in the contemporary North American capitalist system; no longer a threat from the outside, but naturally vested within it.

## The Goods

*Spring Breakers* and *The Bling Ring* place leisure/crime at the heart of American capitalism. Both films offer something of a critique yet ultimately uphold the very notions of hedonism, materialism, and consumption they appear to condemn by reproducing the value of the material objects that leisure/crime pursues. But what happens to the material, to the tangible commodities, inside these performances that so strongly reside within the bounds of immaterial labor? I would suggest that the films position the material commodities themselves in terms of the performative and emphasize the immaterial character they take on, or the roles they play, in these fictive landscapes; the films suggest that symbolic value supersedes all other value. Commodity fetishism in *The Bling Ring* can only be fulfilled by direct mimesis; these teens don't want a blouse like Paris's, i.e., the same one she wears; they want the actual one she wears, with the aura of celebrity or symbolic value it carries. The girls in *Spring Breakers* don't want to just take a break, or any spring break, they want the "Spring Break" that mass-media entertainment has promoted and promised them would be theirs.

Both films critique and play with this fetishization by name-checking commodities throughout, in what Amy Taubin describes as the "most delirious product placement ever" (Taubin 2013). In his infamous "Look at all my shit!" monologue—a scene that is equal parts *MTV Cribs* and Jay Gatsby—Alien, the "wigga" drug dealer with his "borrowed black-gangster signifiers" (Taubin 2013), proudly shows off his possessions to Candy and Brit. He shows them his weapons, his video of *Scarface* ("that's on repeat"), his Calvin Klein

colognes (Escape and Be), his blue Kool-Aid, his bed that looks like an art piece, and his nunchukus. The girls squeal with delight at every item. The stuff is seductive: after introducing himself through his possessions—his commodities—Alien and the girls make out. The commodities are positioned as an integral part of his appealing, seductive image and mediate the sex act. Their function is not necessarily of material or use value, but rather resides in their images and the connotations they carry—power and success in hip hop, gangster, martial arts, and *MTV Cribs* cultures.

The girls in *The Bling Ring* also call commodities by their proper names (listing brands such as Louis Vuitton, Chanel, and Dolce and Gabbana in the “shopping scene” at Paris Hilton’s house, for instance) and are delighted by these brands and their place in popular culture; the bag they saw was, after all, the same Birkin that Lindsay (Lohan) had. These commodities are desired for what they are (exclusive, high-end commodities), but, much more importantly, they are desired for their symbolic value, for how they relate to the images of fame and celebrity that the girls consume through popular media. The films present commodities as desired above all for their image and reputation, for the roles they play in the mass media and may play again within networks of images and popular imaginaries.

This is a more complex idea than it at first appears to be. The original value of the commodity is upheld—its aura remains intact—but at the same time the content of the commodity (its function, its actual purpose) is shifted, and its value is positioned elsewhere. The material is overtaken by its image, by its immaterial value. In *Spring Breakers*, Brit professes that she loves money because “it looks so beautiful, it makes her pussy wet and her tits look bigger.” This description ignores the dollar bill’s monetary value and consumer power, and underscores instead the key role it plays in Brit’s performance, her sexuality, and her labor in the bodily mode. In a later scene, the girls roll around on Alien’s bed, caressing dollar bills and holding them tightly to their bodies in the way they might caress or hold a lover, and they experiment with the different looks that holding guns might take in specific scenarios. This scene upholds stereotypical fantasies and voyeurism—the image of half-naked girls rolling on a bed littered with money and guns positions them solidly as objects of the male gaze (Mulvey 1975)—but the ironic distance that is created by the exaggerated *mise-en-scène*, with the girls giggling as they smell and admire the money and guns in all the looks these objects might offer them, suggests that the performative qualities of both the girls and the goods dominate here.

The aesthetic slippages between “the real” and “representation” in *Spring Breakers* ultimately undermine both the girls’ agency and the consequences of their crimes. The girls’ (relative) power, achieved through their manipulation of the image, is, in the end, to be taken only at face value. Throughout the film, they gain no real power or money themselves. The guns they handle are either fake props, like the squirt guns that dispense liquor, or guns that are transformed into props for sexual play (a revisioning that Alien corroborates when he sucks off the girls’ guns as their pretend penises), or actual guns whose shots and deadly consequences are erased, however, by the stylistic elements of the film. There may be extreme violence and murder at the end of *Spring Breakers*, but we do not see the actual blood of the bloodshed. The final scene (which, it must be noted, displays troubling racial dynamics, since it is basically a black vs. white shootout, with the white girls and Alien trespassing on the black gang’s turf) renders the film itself transformed. The camera walks with the girls into the house at eye level, the neon colors of the girls’ bikinis glowing in black light, as music and a monologue of one of the girls describing the utopia of spring break overtake any diegetic sounds on the soundtrack. The film itself, in its conclusion, becomes a music video, or a video game. Victims quickly drop to the ground like faceless renderings, without any signs of bloodshed, and, as we walk with the girls through the house, their hands with guns are held high and pointed forward,

like in a first-person-shooter video game. The highly stylized visual aesthetic and slow motion of this final sequence of *Spring Breakers* undermine the impact of any “real” violent consequences of the killings, and maintain the action instead as one of simulation and image. Any actual accumulation of wealth, power, or success remains virtual within the scope of what the girls themselves are playing with; a mere part of the performance, of the leisure/crime, a mere part of the immaterial labor that is being performed.

In *The Bling Ring*, the commodities are also marked by their performative qualities; the gun the girls find at a celebrity’s house is incorporated in a lovers’ playacting, only to go off randomly in the air and be promptly laughed away. Like the guns in *Spring Breakers*, it is ultimately “for show” and rendered relatively inconsequential. The excess of celebrities’ designer goods that the group collects are stowed away under beds and in a grandmother’s attic, or resold for a fraction of their monetary value; a box of Rolexes is sold to a club owner under price (“Aren’t they worth a lot more?” Marc asks) and designer bags are resold in Venice Beach for fifty dollars, right next to the fakes. In this context, it does not even matter whether or not the goods are “real”; in terms of their image, they are the same as the fakes. The commodities star in the girls’ self-promotion and self-branding. The products are merely “selfied” once, as it were—briefly shown off at school, at a party, or on Facebook—to secure and promote a specific subjectified image before they are discarded. The goods in these exchanges become hollow, superficial props that serve to bolster the immaterial labor that the girls perform. The (material) function of the commodities carries no weight; these symbolic goods are fluid and transitory, like the girls themselves, or at least as they are figured within the language of late capitalism.

The repositioning of commodities in both films reflects some contemporary tensions between ownership, access, and exchange, and situates these tensions alongside the girls’ reappropriation of behaviors, actions, and performances. This can be taken one step further, since the crimes in these films target prebought, second-hand goods; luxury items that were already purchased by someone else, money that had already exchanged hands in prior transactions, turf (and/or vehicles) that another drug lord previously claimed as his own. *Spring Breakers* and *The Bling Ring* both depict a sort of renegade “sharing culture,” where commodities, now defined by their symbolic value, are kept in fluid circulation through second-hand ownerships networks. As Shaviro suggests in his reading of Paolo Virno’s *A Grammar of the Multitude* (2004), sharing cultures undermine corporate interests and capital accumulation. In Virno’s terms, the girls’ leisure/crimes can be read as “civil disobedience” or a possible “exit” from late capitalism, since they “shift the grounds of social activity elsewhere” (Shaviro 2004). For Shaviro, “downloading or exchanging mp3s is a low-key example of what Virno recommends.” One may ask whether goods exchanged under the conditions of immaterial labor, especially when resold between teens at a fraction of their value (as when the girls in *The Bling Ring* resell designer bags right next to fakes), do indeed undermine the system by circumnavigating the surplus value corporate companies normally take for profit. I would argue that it is possible to read such acts as subversive. Similarly, for that matter, the taking and repurposing of vapid excess goods from Paris Hilton’s house, where they are present in such an abundance that they are, as implied, not even missed initially, undermines patterns of ownership. There is a sense of ingenuity to the girls’ actions here, in how they get what they want through and as an extension of play, leisure, and consumption. Their acts of reappropriation reflect the shifting boundaries between ownership and theft within contemporary popular culture at large. As Shaviro suggests, this is so “[j]ust as hip hop producers are most original and creative when they work with—rework—samples drawn from prior songs. *Property [itself] is [now] theft*” (emphasis added).

Ultimately, however, the actions presented in these films do maintain the value of the goods. The films promote and reproduce the brands and specific commodities as to be desired, both within and outside the filmic text. Yet, in the process, their value is shown as having shifted into a different network; the symbolic value of the goods within the image factory of immaterial labor is what matters here.

## The Girls

In both films, the girl protagonists are avatars for shifting, contradictory, and transgressive commodities and forms of labor. Defined by their perennial becoming—they are en route to “becoming woman” through experimentation, learning, failure, and various phases of self-creation and affirmation—these adolescent girls defy and destabilize categorization in generative ways. In American popular culture, representations of teenage girls have been permitted to embody contradictory characteristics and to perform a wide range of transgressions: from tomboy behavior and cross-dressing to sexualized childlike innocence and play; from loudly voicing judgments and manipulating their peers to trying on different styles and levels of femininity or promiscuity at every whim (from abstinence to kissing other girls, without, necessarily, “setting” a matronly or queer identity) and to internalizing prospective male desire, pleasing their own mirror image, and so on. These qualities of the teenage girl on film are both explored and exploited in *Spring Breakers* and *The Bling Ring*; both films repeatedly play with, and expand on, the teen-film genre by recalling and stretching certain narrative tropes and style elements (like the visualizations of the shopping sequences or the teen speak in *The Bling Ring* and the naughty lecture hall behavior or the song and dance sequences in *Spring Breakers*). Both films appropriate well-worn tropes from the teen-movie genre and take them in new directions. This mirrors what the girls do with the stolen goods in *The Bling Ring* and what the girls do with mass-media (especially music-video and video-game) imagery in *Spring Breakers*.

The transgressive character of the teenage girl crucially informs the development of leisure/crime in these films, and the self-promotion that ensues, because the character both demands and allows for that kind of transformation. Both *Spring Breakers* and *The Bling Ring* push the volatility of their girls to the extreme. The girls in these films are unstable, unpredictable, elusive—even bulletproof, or immortal. In both films, as previously mentioned, the girls escape truly dire fate, partly perhaps because the narratives suggest that as teenagers they cannot be fully held accountable for their actions, but partly as well because their characters are presented as fluid, plastic, ungraspable. As the earlier description of the opening scenes of the films has shown, the actions of the girls evolve and shift along the surface: moving and adapting from one context to the next, transforming spaces, adjusting and reclaiming their positions within power structures, disrupting expected codes of conduct, and, at times, undermining the traditional modes of production that produce surplus value for capital (by exchanging and repurposing commodities). These actions can be marked as the girls’ agency, and this agency pivots on their status as borderline, transgressive figures in popular representation.

But the films underscore the fluidity of the girls by coding them as performing throughout. Both films constantly emphasize how the girls change their personalities and looks, how they adapt to different situations and perform a wide range of characters within pocket storylines, when the viewer is made privy to the fact that the girls are performing different roles. In *Spring Breakers*, for instance, we see the girls engage in explicit acts of sexual display, drink, and take drugs at parties in Florida, but the corresponding voice-overs reveal that they are telling their mothers and grandmothers over the phone that “this is a such a spiritual place ... we are totally safe ... we have found ourselves here ... and are just meeting the nicest

of people.” This juxtaposition of performances (the one marking the other as a performance and vice versa) is remarkable because it reappropriates the girls’ sexual objectification as one set, which is framed by their own terms and within their own framework. As Ayesha A. Siddiqi argues, “their bodies aren’t a vulnerability.... They wear their sexuality like their candy necklaces and stuffed-animal backpacks, with a casual wryness” (Siddiqi 2013). The girls move from university lectures and Bible readings to tourist buses and scooters to briefly being prisoners in jail, and easily adjust their personas to whatever the context requires. They appropriate hip hop and rap culture at will, singing and dancing to the sexually charged lyrics of a Nelly or Britney Spears song in unison. In scenes with Alien, they repeatedly turn the gun on him, moving from passive to active, from instigator to fantasy, from subject to object, and back again, within seconds. These shifting performances mark the volatility and precariousness of the teen-girl condition in late capitalism and, at the same time, highlight the girl’s ability to adapt and control her performance to achieve a specific outcome, as though this is precisely her agency within the system. The films appear to suggest that the same characteristic that capitalism emphasizes to instrumentalize the girls for its own purpose (their performance of immaterial labor) can provide them with a way to subvert the restrictions that capitalism places on their roles and lives.

The girls in *The Bling Ring* also shift their performances constantly. They rap along to hip hop in their cars, call each other “bitch,” “slut,” and “whore” as cute little nicknames, and voice their sincere aspirations to emulate their idols, Audrina Patridge and Lindsay Lohan, one minute, and the next express their sincere (less or equally, and does it even matter?) desires “to run a country someday” in an interview with *Vanity Fair*. In the same interview, the girls insist they want to become like the characters on MTV’s *The Hills*, to intern at *Vogue*, maybe get a modelling contract or a reality show—earn money by just being on TV (a rich, composite example of hypercommodified immaterial labor in and of itself). And they ultimately achieve this, by shifting and adjusting their performance of femininity along the surface and simply slotting “next” into place, as though they were answering what Alison Hearn calls the capitalist “insert yourself here” invitation posed by reality programs, or reacting to the “How to Be More like Lindsay” articles in women’s magazines or to the Pottery Barn and Ikea catalogues (Hearn 2010, 67–68). This reveals, perhaps, that the girls identify with images/representations of themselves (with their own symbolic value) above all else, but it also marks their successful ingenuity (the teens in *The Bling Ring* do become famous, both within and outside the text) as subjects capable enough to claim their own desired image.

The aesthetics of both films set the stage for such insertions, figuring the girls’ surroundings as all surface, marked by mass media and stripped of content. Both films employ limited palettes. Beige and pastels mark the bland, repetitive interiors, in the style of Ikea and Pottery Barn, of the suburban houses in *The Bling Ring*, while the intensely saturated Skittles- and Starburst-colored neons in *Spring Breakers* bear a striking resemblance to the party scenes in hip hop videos and/or the bright monochromatic colors of computer games. Both films employ a wide variety of stocks and filters, and editing that knows no clear, linear progression: the succession of scenes instead creates cyclical rhythms and repetitions through endless dialogue and visual loops, subjecting viewers to the same glimmering images of the girls trying on clothes, the same hovering distant security camera or removed points of view, over and over again. The scenes are upheld by electronic pop or dance music that hypnotizes bombastically on the soundtrack, with its synthetic auto-tuned sound textures and sampled hip hop beats. These films look and feel like music videos, like YouTube playlists, like Facebook or Instagram feeds, like remixes and mash-ups, like the flipping of pages in catalogues and magazines. *The Bling Ring* literally inserts images from TMZ, Facebook pages, news, and surveillance and reality-television-style footage in between its scenes. Our eyes move swiftly from shot to

shot, barely skimming the advertisements, the neon signs, the mobile screens, the flicking of channels, and the countless social-network pages that come our way. The style of the films, with their layering of screens upon screens, textures upon textures, media type upon media type, visually conveys a mediated form of the same ideas of excess, superficiality, flatness, transgression, malleability, plasticity, and flux that are associated with the girls, the commodities, and the leisure/crime in the narratives.

The teen girl protagonists are represented here as individuals; they are introduced as subjects, actively present in the enunciation of their specific desires and individual identities, and taking up individual performances on the films' stages. But they are also simply not there; they are removed, held at a distance by the layers of image. They are all one and the same in their mimesis: anonymous, collective, replaceable, mere bodies to be dressed up in guns, bikinis, and balaclavas, mere "teenage girls" to be inserted into a celebrity lifestyle. They are like the commodities they pursue in the sense that as soon as they venture off alone, or no longer take up their place in a network defined by immaterial labor (where symbolic value takes precedence above all else), they promptly disappear from view. When Faith and Cotty leave Florida independently, they are not seen or heard from again. The bus that takes them away, out of the spring break world, drives them into obscurity. Likewise, without the collective, or a network fuelled by media attention, the members of *The Bling Ring* lose their visibility; Marc is promptly unfriended by Rebecca on Facebook and only Nicki, now the subject of media attention, remains "seen" in the end.

The volatility of the representations of these girls, however, runs both ways. Nothing "sticks" to their performance: no gender, no sexuality, no ethnic or class coding, no criminal behavior (even burglary, street crime, drug crime, or violence and murder) can touch, mark, or set them. The representation of the privileged white, middle class, American teenage girl here becomes, in essence, a performative plastic vessel that can both carry and absolve anything, or, to put it differently, a vessel that can briefly carry a performance but into which everything else just simply disappears. The girls appropriate and discard black hip hop and R&B culture without consequence, and any sexual deviancy or the criminality of actions can simply be shaken off, to dissipate in thin air. It is crucial to note the deeply troubling racial dynamic at play in the films. It is because of their whiteness, and the films' consistent coding of the girls as white (the limited palette in *The Bling Ring* reduces all color to middle-class pale pastels, while the black light and sun-kissed saturation in *Spring Breakers* either equalizes all tanned skin or brightens whiteness through ultraviolet light), that the girls seem to get away with this behavior. Importantly, this plays out at the level of the casting in both films as well. Lest we forget, Selena Gomez is half Mexican, Vanessa Hudgens is half Filipina, and the actress who plays Rebecca in *The Bling Ring*, Katie Chang, is half Korean; yet within these films they are characterized as white middle-class girls because they are represented as such. From another direction, it is interesting to note that it is the clean teen princesses—Vanessa Hudgens, Selena Gomez, and Ashley Benson, of previous Disney and ABC Family fame, and Emma Watson, known for her role as Hermione in the *Harry Potter* series—that we encounter here, so easily transposed onto seductive, unpredictable, and manipulative teen girl bodies. The films play with this layered coding, using it to their advantage and reappropriating it in terms of the girls' agency, but at the same time upholding those very same racial and ethnic divisions the actors' identities evoke. It is highly doubtful that either tale, were it to feature black or Latina girls explicitly, would play out in the same way.

The precarious, perpetual mobility and fragmentation implied by all this slip-sliding, transgression, and shape-shifting (the girls are always both and neither, they are all and not a single one, they are always moving towards, never entirely set or graspable) may be read as nihilistic. The determined image of the teenage girl "in circulation" is overwhelming and difficult to pin down; she is everything and nothing at



once (again, both directors may well have been inspired by Tiqqun's conceptualization of the "Young-Girl" on this front). This too may at least partially explain why many reviewers and spectators were so put off by what they deemed to be cynical, empty, and shallow films. I, however, would be keen to reassert that *Spring Breakers* and *The Bling Ring*, though different, offer similar complex thoughts and self-reflexive negotiations on the relationship between performativity, immaterial labor, and the roles laid out for the commodity and (the representation of) the contemporary teenage girl. The films reveal the girl is the pivotal figure; by desiring what is and what, in turn, becomes desirable, she shapes the consumer market as much as she is subject or victim to it. Whether or not this allows her to become subversive, or radical enough to undermine the system, remains to be seen. Defining her in terms of plasticity may well be the first, fruitful step, as well as the attempt to revisit the potential of the performance. The very nature of the performance insists no one act can ever be the same, and it is here that transgression, ingenuity, fluidity, resistance, and agency reside. On top of that, these films promote collective female action and the emerging, evolving networks of exchange they navigate as the rightful alternative and the new ground to explore. Exciting and challenging films such as *Spring Breakers* and *The Bling Ring* may well be showing us the way.

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## Notes

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1. The quotes included here offer but a small selection of the reviews of *Spring Breakers* and *The Bling Ring* reviews accessed online through Rotten Tomatoes; many other reviews make similar points. For references see the bibliography. Jeff Beck's full review of *The Bling Ring*, originally published in *The Examiner* on September 16, 2013, can no longer be found online, but the quoted excerpt survives on Rotten Tomatoes at [http://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/the\\_bling\\_ring\\_2013/reviews/](http://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/the_bling_ring_2013/reviews/) (accessed August 21, 2017).

2. Hardt has argued this both alone (Hardt 1999) and in his work with Antonio Negri (Hardt and Negri 2001). See also Lazzarato (1996, 2006) and Virno (2001a, 2001b, 2003).

3. Kathi Weeks (2007, 2011) traces two clear lineages to the term "affective labor" as it developed in critical theory between the late 1960s and the 1980s. The first is the socialist feminist effort to add a critical account of reproductive labor to the Marxist analysis of productive labor (which had defined labor as the manual and later office work of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, mostly done by men) and the second Arlie Hochschild's discussion of the emotional labor of pink-collar service workers (1979, 1983). Both of these theories were feminist interventions in the Marxist analysis of work because their focus was to highlight the exploitation of all the unpaid female labor that sustained capital. This included domestic labor but also specifically reproductive labor, a notion that refers both to the literal reproduction of workers in the sense of producing children and the reproduction, through care and service, of emotions that maintain and provide the consistency of productive labor. This is where the term "affective labor" comes in, in the sense that—by extension—it is the type of work that focuses on the production of affects. Although Hardt and Negri conflate affective labor with immaterial labor a little too easily (and wrongly, I would argue, because in doing so they undermine the specific feminist origins of the concept of affective labor), in this article I draw on their broader category of immaterial labor (the more fitting label to describe our current, hypermediated times) while also trying to maintain the specifically feminist (and often unacknowledged) distinction of affective labor within immaterial labor.

4. Sarah Nicole Prickett (2013) recognizes a “quirkily individuated quartet” here, a familiar trope for narratives about girls and women, as seen in *Sex and the City*, *Little Women*, *The Craft*, *Girls*, and *Pretty Little Liars*, to name but a few. It is important to understand that both films appear to acknowledge and play with such familiar tropes throughout.

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