

COMPUTERS ARE VERY STUPID COOKS

Reinventing Leisure as a Politics of Pleasure

Lowering the gas flame and blowing over the surface of the tea just before it boiled over, Meenakshi turned to me, “Cooking is like programming,” she said. “You give the computer a recipe and it follows it.” We were standing in her kitchen, where I had seen her whip up lemon rice, egg pakora, puris, and all different kinds of vegetable dishes without ever cracking a book, all the while keeping up an easy banter with me and whoever else was in the kitchen. “But you don’t use a recipe,” I exclaimed, wondering why she might think of cooking as following recipes, since she never used them herself. She tipped the pot and poured the tea expertly into two small plastic cups smiling indulgently. “That’s different,” she teased. “I don’t need a recipe. But the computer is a very stupid cook.”

The kitchen had become a place for us to have easy conversation that meanders from work to home to the habits of Berliners. Meena knew I was trying to understand “this whole programming thing,” as I sometimes put it, and she would test out different ways of explaining to me how her job works. On this day, Meena began by describing how computers follow source code like cooks follow recipes. She explained that writing code is analogous to writing a cookbook for machines. Meena did not consider herself a recipe follower. She was instead an author, an expert in thinking through the steps of making something, someone who wrote these steps down in a program for the “stupid” cooks, who simply follow along. A computer, she said, “will always do what you tell it even if it will not work.”

The slow pace of cooking, the daily ritual of making tea, allowed her some distance from the computer as executor of commands. I was struck by how she unraveled the threads that bound her to an expectation of straightforward, unthinking performance in the office.

The practice of making tea the way she does, watching the pot for the tiny indications that it is about to bubble up and quickly turning the dial to shut down the gas flame before it boiled over, is an expert technique that would be difficult to write down in a cookbook. It is not timed, it is sensed when she hears the milk making a slight hissing sound. It is not observed but glimpsed in the tiny bubbles that ring the pot. Wait too long and the milk boils over; too soon and the tea is weak and underbrewed.

Contrasting these two kinds of cooking, the improvised and the directed, separates home from work and lifts programmers away from their reduction to “stupid” machines. Habits and practices cultivated in the kitchen relieve the constant pressure of succeeding in programming economies by following narrow conceptions of programming labor. In this instance, Meenakshi framed her expertise in opposition to the stubborn materiality of the computer—hers were expanded competencies. In such reflective moments of human-object intra-action, programmers like Meena distance themselves from machines.¹ Such assertions of expertise tilt knowledge toward its “changing, unfolding character” and away from its self-contained, complete, and inert nature.²

In the living room and the hallways of the apartment that she shares with Rajeshwari, Meena has hung handmade signs and phrases urging confidence and good spirit. A bubble of paper with an inked phrase, “Just believe and all things are possible” floats above “Behind every ambition is effort and behind the effort is someone trying hard”; the back of the bathroom door tells us, “Every day gives a new hope,” and on the way out the door, the last thing she sees is a photo of a dolphin leaping from cobalt blue waters. Meena said the phrases and images keep her moving—they are reminders of what hard work can bring. These phrases transform the home into a space of preparation for work, where responsibility for molding the soul and the body for the rigors of long workdays, of training desire to find fulfillment in the office and in the horizons of a future just out of reach, rest on the shoulders of the workers themselves.

I asked her where she finds and how she chooses these sayings, and she pulled from her bedside table a copy of the autobiography of Neil Arm-

strong. Meena was a fan of autobiography. She told me she often copied out phrases from these books, carefully choosing ones that express faith in the future and tenacity for the present time. How did Meena reconcile her commitment to preparing herself to work through self-motivation and her distancing of herself to the way she is positioned at work through her expert cooking practices? This chapter explores the spaces of parks and kitchens, sitting rooms, and homes as places where new relationships between leisure and work are emerging. To do so, I take critical distance from prevailing ideas of neoliberal self-fashioning and self-improvement to argue for a doubled relationship that takes place in these spaces that makes leisure both a site for the production of laboring subjects and a site for the production of alternative practices of selfhood I describe as *eros*.³

Meenakshi was not a person who often simply followed directions. As we moved through the deepening afternoon light in her apartment, the damp winter curling around us and pulling us toward the warmth of the kitchen, Meena unfolded her tale of how she ended up in Berlin. Meenakshi, whom her friends call Meena, came from a landholding family just outside Hyderabad. While her grandfather once presided over green fields lush with barley, rice, and cotton, her father took the family to the sea, trading in fields for fish tanks. The family now owned an aquaculture farm producing fish and prawns for domestic and overseas consumption. Meena is one of two daughters; her older sister studied medicine, whereas she decided to go the information technology route, studying computer science and management.

A mixture of desire and anxiety led her to study programming. She would look out over the cool deep wells of wriggling aquatic life, the farmworkers balancing adroitly on wooden planks that ran along the tops of the tanks, and think that she wanted to be as successful as her sister. But, she believed, becoming a physician would not suit her. It seemed that everyone she knew was “doing the IT thing,” so she studied computer engineering and management. Nearing the end of her degree, she had another decision to make: to work locally or to go abroad. Again, it seemed that everyone she knew was going or trying to go “for foreign.” Although she loved her family, Meena wanted to get away from the family business for a while. It was expected that she would marry soon and that her future husband would eventually take over the fish farm. Working abroad for a few years might take some of the pressure off, since Meena was not ready

for the married life just yet. Like Madhu and Bipin, Meenakshi used the German green card to create a private area of individual control within global coding economies that she could leverage when she returned home. After completing her education at the Indian Institute of Management, Meenakshi decided to apply for a job with Software Solutions Global, headquartered in Germany. She had rarely been outside of Hyderabad and its environs, but after seeing the company's profile in one of her courses, she thought a job with SSG would better her résumé. So, after a brief phone interview with her future employers, she bought the plane ticket that took her to Berlin.

Her decisions fashioned Meenakshi as someone who does not follow instructions but improvises on them. She and other programmers resisted the instrumentalization of their cognitive labor by emphasizing their "capacity to unfold indefinitely."⁴ In her leisure time, Meenakshi undid some of underpinnings that fashion programmers into "the tools and commercial goods which are ready-to-be-used or traded further" by trying on the possible alternate worlds she might inhabit.

Variably decried as the end of free time, overwork, or the indefinite extension of the working day, most accounts of the relationship between leisure and work under late capitalism posit leisure as a fading value and experience in the world. Against this position, this chapter argues for a multifaceted relationship between leisure and work, where leisure gains in significance in three ways, only the first of which explicitly links productivity and leisure directly as a way of valorizing the subject "in leisure and reproduction."⁵ First, leisure time is used to recuperate and prepare for work, in part by developing skills and qualities of self that can translate to the workplace. Second, spaces of leisure are also spaces in which an alternative ethic of pleasure, or *eros*, can be developed as an explicit antidote to the claim on leisure by work. It is because leisure has been conceptualized as wanting to be made productive that it becomes available for appropriation and reappropriation for a politics of *eros*.⁶ Third, spaces and times of leisure are sites of experimentation in building an Indian middle-class lifestyle. These experiments with forms of life emerge from spaces of leisure that support cognitive labor and redirect its energies.⁷

Shezad Nadeem's account of outsourcing to India traces what he calls "consumer patriotism" that works to bridge the space between the hope for future prosperity and the reality of the daily grind of work. Such con-

sumption, argues Nadeem, shapes aspirational Indian middle-class identity through objects imagined as Western, like coffee, cigarettes, pop culture, the idea of upward mobility, and open displays of wealth.⁸ Nadeem calls such consumption a “consumer-oriented mimicry that has emerged as an integral component of class and personal identity.”⁹ This analysis dovetails with several recent accounts of the new Indian middle class stressing how class is defined through consumption, which has replaced government service as a mainstay of Indian middle-class identity.¹⁰ While it would be easy to subsume what I analyze here as the pleasure of leisure within consumer patriotism, leisure in the stories recounted below is neither a straightforward appropriation of a Western lifestyle nor a continuation of the politics of consumption through the consumption of time. Rather, the very meaning of consuming time as leisure is revisited in a situation in which the boundaries between work and leisure themselves are blurred. In the end, I argue that trying on forms of life (often through consumption) is more important than consumption in and of itself as foundational to Indian middle-class identity. It is this sense of experimentation, and the right to experiment, that no doubt will be picked up, transformed, and appropriated by others within the national and transnational imaginary of India.¹¹

In the office, Indian IT workers have to simultaneously exploit and transcend racialized assumptions that reside in Indian programming. They do this by elaborating a practice of ownership that is appropriative—it exploits the time frame of client-driven projects to temporarily own the code they write in order to extend their time on the job. Strategies of pursuing freedom as ownership occur within the ambiguity and undecidability of race discourse as it comes to ground in evaluations of new kinds of workers, where Indian IT workers are both devalued as grunt coders and revalued as sources of local knowledge. As I argued in chapter 3, these practices leave behind a trace of an alternative theory of ownership that creates spaces of privacy for the sake of freedom in an office overdetermined by the logic of innovation through knowledge sharing. After work, Indian programmers begin to unravel the demands on their time and demeanor in the workplace in similarly finessed ways. They use times and spaces outside of work to make themselves ready for the working day even while they try on lifestyles and play with forms of life that are then embroidered into an idea of the Indian middle class.

Meenakshi later explained to me that Neil Armstrong's story has particularly touched her because of the way it marries science and belief. He embodied for Meena the fusing of religion and science through the trope of future transformation. When Armstrong was walking on the moon, according to Meena, his disbelief in God and the spiritual realm of life turned into its opposite. Her religious practices, including daily *aarti* (prayers), special prayers at particular times of year, and festival celebrations, maintained her focus on the all that she needs to do to achieve success in this brutal industry. It kept her mind concentrated in order to learn new programming languages and to always be on the lookout for new opportunities. Her phrases and books are types of work on the self that tune it to the hum of an economy that values initiative and acceptance, focusing on the long horizon of the future and accepting the uneven present.¹²

The two ways that Meena uses her apartment incline toward a reconceptualization of the times and spaces outside of work as both the location of producing knowledge economy workers and the place for trying out new ways of inhabiting that world. An Indian middle-class imaginary emerges in the evolving, dialectical relationship between the two.

Leisure Reconsidered

In *A Grammar of the Multitude*, his treatise on the shifting categories needed to think about and imagine alternatives of contemporary capitalism, Paolo Virno describes the qualities demanded of workers today, contending they must be “accustomed to mobility, to be able to keep up with the most sudden conversions, to be able to adapt to various enterprises, to be flexible in switching from one set of rules to another, to have an aptitude for a kind of linguistic interaction as banalized as it is unilateral, *to be familiar with managing among a limited amount of possible alternatives* [italics mine].”¹³

Virno points out that the development of these characteristics takes place outside the office. Spaces and times outside work become, he notes, the sites where discipline in the arts of flexibility is cultivated. Rather than the workplace being the site where workers are formed, they form themselves before and after work to fit the model of an industrious, entrepreneurial self-starter.¹⁴ Thinking about how IT workers use and conceive of spaces and times before and after work, I realized their practices require

revisiting both Virno's formulation and more traditional approaches to the study of leisure.

Leisure and work have been linked since the advent of industrial management practices. Leisure, according to studies by Chris Rojek and others, has since the late nineteenth century presented itself as a release from work, a utopian space of individual freedom that, as the Latin root of leisure, *licit*, connotes, promised to allow what was barred from expression at work.¹⁵

The sociological studies of leisure that began in the 1920s to investigate the spaces and activities of life after work, such as Siegfried Kracauer's *The Salaried Masses* (which I discuss more fully later on), demonstrated that leisure activities were often both overtly and subconsciously organized by work.¹⁶ Leisure reinforced workplace rituals and hierarchies, all the while retaining a feeling of release from the demands of the workplace. Leisure was also conceptualized as a kind of commodity itself—to have and consume leisure was to become a member of the upper or leisure class. For Thorstein Veblen, for instance, leisure is a conspicuous wasting of time in order to confer on the subject rank and distinction, a consumption of time that has its correlate in the consumption of luxury goods.¹⁷ In Veblen's account of leisure, the pursuit of the markers of high status was an all-consuming passion that transcended class interest, such that lower classes emulated the consumption practices of the rich while the rich consumed luxury goods and quite literally wasted time to set themselves apart from the working classes.

By and large, the critical response to leisure has been twofold: first, to draw out explicitly the way that leisure-time activities are structured by the subject-making demands of capitalism and, second, to draw out leisure as an arena of distinction. Autonomist Marxists suggest that, against both the sociology of leisure and the critique of leisure and status making, work and leisure are no longer categories of binary opposition. They are instead linked horizontally through habits that have full right to expression in each world. Just as work is brought home and work time expands into leisure time, leisure abides in the workplace through parties, contests, telecommuting, casual Fridays, and flexible work hours. At the same time, when the very lines between work and leisure are blurred for the sake of generating new productive influences, the forms of life after work I discuss here are ways of experimenting with multiple kinds of emergent habitations of a *neoliberal* modernity.¹⁸

Accounts of late capitalism and subjective experience often seem to suggest that the whole of human experience has been colonized by work. Working longer hours than ever before, with the ability to work anywhere, the contemporary office worker “ought” to work everywhere and always. Bifo Berardi makes this connection explicitly, writing “the reasons behind the new love of working are to be found not only in the material impoverishment derived from the collapse of social warranties, but also in the impoverishment of existence and communication. We renew our affection for work because economic survival becomes more difficult and daily life becomes lonely and tedious: metropolitan life becomes so sad that we might as well sell it for money.”¹⁹

Although the description of the cognitariat that Berardi develops seems to describe so well the link between Indian programmers and the world of work, we have already seen in previous chapters how it fails to adequately engage difference and race. Here, the critique of knowledge work again does not accord with the experience of most Indian programmers I met. Rather than their metropolitan lives being sad, they were exuberant; spaces of leisure were also profound spaces of pleasure.

A more adequate accounting of this discrepancy argues that leisure time is not colonized by work but rather exists in a multiple and dispersed relationship to work. If the new reality of work and leisure inclines toward blurred boundaries and “perpetual metastability,” then it is a misrecognition of that blurring to suggest that work can colonize leisure.²⁰ Instead, there is a relationship between work and leisure that moves through many possible iterations, from opposition to collusion, from reprieve to continuation.

Self-Improvement: On Jogging

Not long after my conversation with Meena about computers and cooking, Mihir and Meenakshi decided that we should go jogging. They were taken by the idea of waking up early every morning before work and going for jogs in a nearby park. Given the long work hours that everyone was engaged in, I was skeptical that this plan would ever materialize. But sure enough, the following morning at 5:30 AM, I heard my buzzer ring. I hurried downstairs, the lines on my face still visible from the pillow on which I had slumbered, an unhappy fact Rajeshwari and Meenakshi, waiting for me at the door, were only too glad to teasingly point out. There followed a valiant

three and a half weeks where just over a half dozen of us would struggle out of our beds and make our way to the park early mornings. Meena and Mihir would jog, the rest of us were content with walking. Eventually we all succumbed to the need to sleep over the need for fresh air and exercise. The walks moved from being an everyday affair to a weekend activity.

Over the course of this month I began to wonder what would make programmers go jogging so early in the morning, despite the evident fact of their long work hours and at times extreme tiredness. I asked Mihir and Meena what had possessed them to jog in the morning in the first place, and their answers were telling. It was partly a competitive, flirtatious thing, Meena said, “since both Mihir and I are good at sports, we wanted to see who was better.” But also, added Mihir, “there is the enjoyment of the park itself.”

Humboldthain Park is a unique Berlin institution, urban and wild, the shards of historical memory partly visible around every corner, pushing up out of the earth, musing up evidence of well-laid-out and beautiful city planning. The park was built on top of an old World War II bunker that was filled in with debris to form two sylvan hills. A formal rose garden was carved out of the rubble of the gunnery platforms. Beneath the entire complex, a labyrinth of tunnels led from the vast armories of the bunker out onto the surrounding streets—the entrances to these passageways still visible and accessible from the sidewalks on regularly scheduled bunker tours. In the mornings before the sun evaporated, fog hung over its hills, and Humboldthain was cool and fresh. Meenakshi pointed out that these early morning walks were one of the few times that they could enjoy the calm space of the park, and this was another reason for getting up so early—to enjoy the clean spaces that the city had to offer. Then, there was also the element of training.

“Taking rounds in the morning” said Mihir, “will increase the ability to concentrate, the mental capacity. If you are fit in the body, you’ll also be fit in the mind.” He echoed Meenakshi’s sentiment about the sayings on her wall. Their answers point to the way that jogging “went with” the IT lifestyle. Working hard during the day, using the abstract faculties of the mind, needed to be complemented and countered by a morning jog that would be a locus of enjoyment, a respite from work, and at the same time would hone work skills. Jogging prepared the body and the mind for the office; it was a form of self-improvement that was explicitly conceptualized as training for being a self-managing subject who works on herself to develop

monetizable personal competencies. Linking jogging explicitly to competition, Mihir allegorizes the IT job market itself and the ultimate prize of a permanent position.

Meenakshi and Mihir explicitly thought of themselves as being in competition with each other; others were in competition with their own tiredness. As in the office, those with the best skills and most flexibility would prevail. Jogging was both the testing ground and training field of success. As may be well known, jogging is not a particularly well-developed pastime outside the United States. In Berlin, Americans and others who jogged were regularly met with curious stares. One student I met while in the field told me that one day while jogging past an older woman, she clutched her purse tightly to her chest, looked aghast, and called after him, “Warum rennst Du?” (Why are you running?). She was afraid, perhaps, that he was being chased. In India, too, jogging is a recent phenomenon, limited to the young, elite classes. In Mumbai, around Five Gardens Park, young men jog wearing shorts and sneakers, with headphones on, while the middle-aged walk “rounds.” In training themselves in the arts of bodily fitness and mental concentration, Indian programmers create for one another examples of how to inhabit a new lifestyle emblematic of the ethic of working hard and at speed that was a demand of the industry.

“Sport,” write Niko Besnier and Susan Brownell, “presumes an audience.”²¹ Programmers performed for a projected future audience of office colleagues, who could be told of their activities as a badge of similarity, vaulting them above other workers into the body-conscious class of IT managers. Yet, as the gradual slowdown of jogging to walking suggests, the drive toward hard work could not stand up and was at least partially subsumed into the slower pleasures of the leisurely stroll.

What is the relationship between work and leisure, the home and the office, that was being elaborated here? Can the way that houses and parks are used be unpacked to reveal something about the conditions of life and work in programming economies? Bifo Berardi suggests that cognitive workers should be seen “from the standpoint of social corporality,” stressing not only the cognitive but also the embodied realities of these workers, a two-sided relationship between virtual labor processes and a host of other needs that he describes with the term *cognitariat*.²² Can the activities of leisure reveal something about those other embodied needs that are not met at work but are still very much related to the world of work?

To answer these questions, it may be worthwhile to take a short detour through an earlier examination of work and leisure. In the 1920s, Siegfried Kracauer undertook a study of white-collar workers in Berlin, which he called *The Salaried Masses*. Kracauer describes the organization of the office in strict hierarchical terms, lingering on the divisions between upper and lower managers, the rooms full of young women typists, the strict order and evident classifications marked by title, size of office, quality of furnishings, clothing, and demeanor. In these offices, personnel were organized in divisions and units, their desks precisely following one after the other in neat rows, the discipline of the workplace like the discipline of an army.

Leisure time was a somewhat more complicated affair. As Kracauer outlines, time outside of work was both a respite from the working day and organized along the same lines as the workplace, so that it became the training grounds for increased workplace efficiency. He describes the sporting life organized by companies, where company teams met each other as if on a battlefield. Among managers and for some workers, such activities built solidarity and trained them to be healthy and fit for the office. These teams and outings sponsored by companies to include families were, in Kracauer's estimation, designed to harness the collective energy of workers that might otherwise be directed toward unionization and collective bargaining. The "company community" provided an outlet for collective energies that aligned with the interests of a firm. Kracauer quips, "Sports associations are like outposts intended to conquer the still vacant territory of the employees' souls."²³

Clearly, the conceptualization of the worker's "soul" as subject to manipulation by capital long preceded current formulations of the soul as having finally entered into the work process. Resonances can be noted, for instance, between Kracauer's account and Mihir's and Meenakshi's ideas about jogging, especially as they relate to preparing the body and mind for another day's labor. Like Kracauer's white-collar workers, these cognitive laborers jog to make themselves ready for another day's work, positing that the exercise, discipline, and fresh air will sharpen what is their primary work tool—the mind.

Unlike under industrial capitalism, however, Mihir's and Meenakshi's training is self-organized. For early twentieth-century office workers, the company encouraged and organized sports; in the early twenty-first century,

the high-tech company may make space for free-time pursuits through flexible work schedules. Yet often, when work schedules demand eighty or more hours a week of cognitive labor, these activities must be put on hold—a situation that in Germany at least sometimes fell to Indian coders, who were expected (and assumed to enjoy) putting in long hours at the office.

The deep investment in these activities suggests that sports and enjoyment are related to work as promises on the future. In Kracauer's world, leisure-time activities were organized as if in a factory at the same time as they were meant to replenish workers for another day of labor. In the twenty-first century, the idea that leisure time can replenish the worker is retained, but making leisure time productive is largely the responsibility of the worker herself.

Yet this, too, is not the end of the story of leisure. When jogging fell victim to the pace of work, the conviction that these and other similar activities were important remained for most Indian programmers. Walks replaced jogging after work and on weekends; some began daily meditation. These were all practiced to sharpen the mind to better hold up at work but also as part of a politics of pleasure and a spacing of leisure away from the demands of work. The walks, at a slower pace, without the competition, incline toward a slow appreciation of the space of the park. Enjoying the park is an example of how leisure—once explicitly conceptualized as a sphere of self-improvement to make oneself a competent and successful knowledge worker—can be redeployed toward more open-ended and oppositional ends. Such practices may be akin to what Judith Farquhar and Qicheng Zang describe in their discussion of the Chinese quality of *yangsheng*, or life-cultivation arts, where “the resources that can be mobilized in the service of the good life yield both pleasure and strength.”²⁴

When the autonomist Marxist Bifo Berardi takes up the idea of eros from Marcuse's *Eros and Civilization*, he aspires to divorce it from its repressive connotations, that is, from the association of domination with the repression of pleasure and freedom with pleasure's liberation. Because, according to Berardi (who here follows Jean Baudrillard's analysis of capital), “the ideology of liberation corresponds to the full domination of the commodity,” liberation cannot signify freedom from oppression. Instead, expression of impulses rather than repression feeds capitalist production. Like any commodity, signs produced under cognitive capitalism respond

“to the abstract logic of value production.” For Berardi, a “generalized compulsion to expression, rather than repression” results in the overproduction of signs.²⁵ If eros—as the pursuit of pleasure and the good life—is folded into capitalist expression in this way, then one may legitimately ask, what is left of eros as a political concept? Indeed, because Berardi posits expressivity as wholly given over to capitalism and correspondingly posits the cognitive laborer as she who most clearly gives voice to the folding of expression into work, he ends up recapitulating an empty and meaningless sphere of pleasure, in which one may as well work, because the pleasures of expression that once characterized metropolitan life are impoverished. The saving grace of eros, for Berardi, may not come from liberation but nevertheless comes from without—from channeling desire into other, more utopian pathways. Yet, from thinking about the leisure practices of actually existing cognitive workers, I have come to think of eros as a much more open and ambivalent concept, capable of being deployed simultaneously as oppositional to “the general compulsion to expression” and as conducive to forming an embodied middle-class imaginary through pleasure. This makes eros part of a critical utopian project (which I discuss more in the conclusion) that is neither free of capitalist constraint nor completely within the control of workplace demands.

Perhaps, then, the conviction that work will finally conquer the soul, unearthed by Kracauer and again, decades later, by Berardi, is overstated. Such a recurring fear might indicate just as equally the continued reworking and reimagining of the relationship of work, leisure, and the human soul, rather than colonization of the soul by work.

Bodily comportment has long since been part of the techniques of political authority in South Asia. Precolonial Yogic and Sufic techniques of asceticism, meditation, and breath control were said to develop fighting ability and supernatural power in their practitioners. During the colonial period, these legacies were reinterpreted by reformers such as Swami Vivekananda, Aurobindo Gose, and Hazrat Inayat Khan to offer up an indigenized version of Victorian bodily discipline that could frame Indians as morally, scientifically, and physically superior to British colonizers. In doing so, such reformers blended British codes of conduct and textual sources in such a way as to “purify” these traditions by ignoring, for instance, folk practices that included opiates and multiple crossings between religious communities.²⁶ Such neo-Yogic practitioners also made bodily discipline

a safe mode of expression for middle-class subjects to the degree that they divorced asceticism from violent rebellion on the one hand, and class, religion, and caste mixing on the other. A different trajectory of these same developments made its way into the nationalist *swaraj* (self-rule) philosophies of Gandhi and the martial exercises of the Hindutva cadres of the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh (RSS).²⁷ The jogging practiced by these programmers can thus be fit into a genealogy of bodily discipline that at once critiques dominant modes of power from the West, allows for experimentation with forms of selfhood, and solidifies the lifestyles of those who are economically successful.

In Joseph Alter's discussion of wrestling in North India, he makes the important point that physicality is linked to critique. By mobilizing practices of the body, wrestlers at once recall a utopian good rule where kingship, health of the nation, and responsible citizenry were aligned and a critique of the "babu" state run by corrupt and effeminate bureaucrats. In the reformed nation imagined by wrestlers, "developing a moral physique taps into the vital energy reserves of the human body and directs this energy to productive and virtuous ends."²⁸ Though they would be placed by wrestlers on the "babu" side of this equation, programmers are involved in a similar project.²⁹ They link programming and physical effort at "the level of the whole self" to develop themselves into hardened and heroic global cognitive laborers.³⁰ Their resolution of mental and physical modes of being is ambivalent precisely because they cannot fully endorse the way physical exercise is folded into the politics of the firm. The ambivalence around leisure time recalls Priti Ramamurthy's discussion of perplexity, "the puzzlement of people as they experience both the joys and aches of the global everyday."³¹ Even while conceiving of pleasure (in jogging, for instance) as shaping the body as an orientation toward future work, sites of leisure can be appropriated to support the joy of life after work, which also is integral to being middle class.

Excursions

In weekend outings, the organization of potential as a productive force in contemporary capitalism is reappropriated as the pleasure of experiencing a thriving European metropolis. "The weekends and after work are for enjoyment and relaxing," Mihir told me as he suggested, over my objections, that we all celebrate his birthday on top of the old German bunker

in Humboldthain Park at midnight. “We work so hard during the week, we should have some fun.” While I love the park, I was not sure it was entirely safe late at night. The only people I had seen there after hours had been drinking heavily from liter-size cans of cheap Köstritzer beer and generally had one or more large dogs with them. Ignoring my warnings, he went ahead with the plan. His friends bought a birthday cake and candles, and we all began the walk to the park shortly before midnight. At least someone had managed to bring a flashlight. I seemed to be the only one at all concerned that this might not be such a good idea, but the plan went well, except for Rajeshwari, who in the trek up the hill in the dark lost her passport. She would spend most of the following weeks in embassies and migration offices trying to reestablish her paperwork. We reached the top of the bunker, pulled out the cake, and lit the candles. Mihir blew them out, the teetotalers drank sparkling fruit juice, and the partakers champagne. We took one last, lingering look out of the darkness onto the lights of the city twinkling below and then headed back down to our homes.

Continuing the conversation the next day after work, Mihir revealed that the pleasures of Berlin were an important counterpoint to the grind of work. It was so much better to be here, he said, than in Regensburg, where his last job was. There was so much to enjoy in the city, so much to do and see, so much to eat, so many places to visit. “The people in Berlin are more open and they leave you alone more,” he told me; “we are much freer here.” The anonymity of the big city appealed to his sense of the adventure of working overseas. At the same time, the freedom Mihir evokes is also in comparison with life in India, where parks and public spaces have been plebeianized through “the subtle pleasures of defilement.”³² As Mihir and Bipin discussed one day while watching a Tamil-language movie, these films always evoke the village as an idyllic setting for a “lost” India. “There is always the nostalgia for the village presented in the movies,” suggested Bipin, “because we don’t live like that anymore in the cities, with the lush greenery and all.” While Bipin and Mihir agreed that this world displayed on film was illusory and villages were really not that wonderful, they also agreed that the world depicted in the movies of “rain showers and greenery,” as Mihir noted, “would make them feel refreshed.”

Parks, greens, and *maidans* (open spaces) in India’s urban metropolises were markers of imperial power, located in the British areas and representative of a public European space transplanted to the subcontinent. A

perennial site of middle-class Indian self-fashioning, from the anticolonial period through the 1960s, these parks were redrawn as extensions of middle-class neighborhoods, home to staging grounds of national protest, and, after independence, to the rituals of middle-class life such as “morning constitucionals,” the play of children and their minders, and after-work socialization, where “middle-class office-goers would take a stroll, sit for a while on the benches, and exchange greetings and gossip.”³³ As Sudipta Kaviraj writes, the park, as extension of middle-class sociality, “violated the principle of universal access, [since] underneath the formal publicity was a subtle, unstated hierarchy.”³⁴ Lower-class city dwellers did not think of the public green as their own. Beginning in the 1960s, as political and economic refugees began to move to cities like Calcutta in large numbers, they began to use the pavement and the parks as temporary sleeping quarters and homes that were then sometimes regularized and sometimes demolished. The poor claimed public space in part as a way of asserting membership in a democracy. The state, lacking resources to be responsible to these populations, responded by sometimes treating these settlements as part of the compact between a state and its people.³⁵ While occupation of public space by the poor was tentative at first, it became one of a congeries of practices that marked public space in India’s cities as the rightful domain of the poor. Through noise and filth, the poor “expressed their social insubordination by causing everyday irritation to their social superiors.”³⁶

Sites of pleasure outside the home are where lines of class antagonism are being drawn in India today.³⁷ Yet the direction of this conflict is far from predetermined. In urban India, city beautification programs attempt to use the symbolic power of the middle class to monopolize public pleasures. Yet, the insistent use of public space outside India by the middle class points to how middle-class control over public space in India has been successfully contested. There is also good historical reason to believe that the modes of self-discipline and modes of pleasure inaugurated by the middle class and described here will also be appropriated and improvised on by the poor in ways that do not accord with bourgeois sensibility.³⁸

It is against this background of occupied space in India’s cities that the pursuit of pleasure by Indian programmers in the cities of America and Europe should be understood. The pursuit of leisure time is in a very real

sense a fantasy of what bourgeois life should look like. The practices and pleasures of open space no longer available to the middle class in India are available in Europe and the United States, and Indian programmers walk (or jog) the same routes through parks and pursue similar genteel activities that their parents and grandparents once aspired to on the maidans of Kolkata, Hyderabad, Mumbai, and Delhi. The rise of the gated community in India responds to the experience of Indians in diasporic spaces in Europe and the United States—it brings what is experienced outside back into India.

On a Sunday afternoon in the springtime, we decided to go on a picnic in Treptower Park, a green space in East Berlin famous for its Soviet memorial to the fallen soldiers of World War II. The preparations for the picnic were elaborate and began the previous day. Each of us was given a dish to cook and bring, and we arranged to meet at Meenakshi and Rajeshwari's house at noon the next day.

The Soviet War Memorial at Treptower Park is a marvel of Soviet Cold War aesthetics. A giant statue of a Soviet soldier crushing a swastika underfoot with sword drawn and child in arm is flanked by a semicircle of friezes depicting war scenes and phrases by Stalin in both Russian and German. All the hallmarks of the socialist realist style have been used to full effect: the statues tower above neatly manicured lawns, a plaque declares that the homeland will never forget its fallen soldiers (some of whom are buried here), the common man is glorified, the scale is emotional, the limbs embodying the strength of Mother Russia and her heroic fighters appropriately bulky. We toured the site, looking up toward the blue sky as the shadows of the monument raked across the ground. The art of the past dutifully marveled at, we moved on to the main entertainment of the day. Finding a partly sunny, partly shady patch of grass, we spread our picnic blankets on the ground and covered them with dishes and cups, silverware, bottles of water, and multiple containers of food. Someone unpacked a Frisbee, another person a soccer ball.

In the long afternoon of eating, drinking, and playing, everyone was relaxed and joking. Meenakshi and Rajeshwari threw the Frisbee back and forth, warming themselves in the sun, and took a turn at soccer. People traded stories about friends they knew, about work, stories of moving from one job to another. They exchanged strategies for getting visas to the United States and asked each other whether parents could get visas to visit

them in Germany. They joked about eating too much and about Indian politicians, they started song games based on a well-known canon of Hindi film music, they played cards.

Over the year and a half I spent in the field, my notebook recorded a similar excursion every weekend in good weather. We visited the Reichstag and the Tiergarten, Sanssouci (a baroque palace in Potsdam), and the rose garden in Humboldthain Park near my house dozens of times. We trekked to Kreuzberg to eat the city's best falafel, and we traveled to Alexanderplatz to marvel at the TV tower and buy spices and vegetables at the Thai grocery store; we walked around lakes and ate ice cream. We shopped at H&M, the high-fashion, low-price clothing retailer, and we went to the Sri Lankan Hindu temple at the other end of Kreuzberg. We watched cricket at the Indian Embassy and sang *Jana Gana Mana* on Indian Independence Day.³⁹ These excursions recalled the uses of space Kaviraj described, the strolling and constitutionals, eating and joking, occupying parks, taking the air, and playing across the green grass—enjoying urban life in terms of its pleasures of space, order, and cleanliness. While these pleasures seem barred from enjoyment in India, they are readily available in Europe.

Elaborating leisure activities allows Indian middle-class subjects to “escape without leaving” the demands of a flexible subject.⁴⁰ Enjoying the park and the excursion taps into practices of enjoyment that open up a space beyond the uses of pleasure for the sake of work. Taking time in the park, playing games, and trekking to the top of a hill at midnight all expand experience beyond the dictates of producing qualities of a subject that can be marshaled as commodities in the future. These pleasures play out explicitly within the frame of the politics of the middle class in India, where Humboldthain Park, for instance, stands in for the right to pleasure as a means of attaining a middle-class quality of life. These ambivalences in the pursuit of leisure are reflected in the homes of short-term workers, where a kind of freedom is made possible by the very temporariness of these homes, making them a socially useful space for experiments in leisure.⁴¹

A Hostel in the Home

In the twelve months since I had first met this group of programmers at the embassy on Indian Independence Day, I had come to spend almost every evening at Meenakshi and Rajeshwari's apartment, which was just a few doors down from my own. We would usually meet after work and stay

up late in the night chatting. They both had to be up early, by six, to get to their jobs on time. I had been interning for the last few months at a research center focusing on German and European migration politics in order to understand better how the Indian IT phenomenon fit into existing migration legislation. Our working lives were mirroring one another's. We all went off to work in the morning and reconvened afterward to cook, socialize, and talk.

I came to think of Meenakshi and Rajeshwari's apartment and the other nearby apartments programmers shared as a home-hostel space, a hybrid social world that was part home, part dormitory, at once a site for the reconstitution of family and household relations, a place to reflect on the conditions of working as a transnational coder, and a space for experimentation and play.⁴² In her study of young people at college in Kerala, Ritty Lukose argued that the hostel or dormitory was a key site for the production of youth politics. In the hostel, women engaged in talk about morals, made fun of each other, mocked both male students and social classes, and revisited burning questions of social change and respectability.⁴³ As a "liminal space," the hostel is used by Lukose's informants to work through the contradiction of consumption and career that currently take center stage in the lives of young college-going Indians.⁴⁴

Like the hostel, the home of the short-term IT worker is a temporary accommodation. It is a space for reinvention and reconsideration of received ideas and new impressions, places where new "habitations of modernity" can be tried out. Although generally the argument has been that globalization (or in an earlier key, modernization) is changing Indian households and families or that the behavior of transnational migrants can be explained through recourse to the maintenance of family and household structure, this section takes a different tack.⁴⁵ I argue instead that in a situation in which the lines between work and leisure are blurred for the sake of generating new productive impulses, homes become a staging ground for both justifying transnational work as maintaining a middle-class quality of life and for inventing new forms of life for the middle class.⁴⁶ As Jean Comaroff notes, "Spatial contexts—and one might add, the processes that are played out within them—are themselves major media of socialization, invisibly tuning the minds and bodies of those who people them to their inner logic."⁴⁷ I would additionally add that for programmers, spatial processes rather visibly turn minds toward their logics, as programmers

comment on and make available for debate the very relationship between the world of work and the home that they are further developing.

The house has long been a hidden source of productivity at the same time that the home and the family have served as symbolic reservoirs of opposition to the market and the public sphere.⁴⁸ Both colonial and nationalist actors in South Asia targeted the home to provide evidence for the magnanimity or corruption of British rule. Nationalists used this version of the home to argue for interior cultural identities that were resistant to colonial influence, while colonialists used the example of the backwardness of Indian women in the home to justify continuing colonial domination. In these maneuvers, the home was consolidated as a sphere of Hindu and Muslim purity, a private space that was represented by religious devotion, female modesty, and modern home economics.⁴⁹ But, as attention to late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century female reformers like Pandita Ramabai and Parvati Athavale attests, the tight association between home, the nation, religion, and female purity did not go uncontested. Such women joined nationalist reform movements for widow remarriage and women's education. By creating communal homes for widows, for instance, such reformers collapsed "home and community" outside the confines of the family, calling into question the ability of the upper-caste Hindu domestic sphere to accommodate gender reform. By arguing for "nationalism as a gender-neutral unity of the various and different regions of India," they thwarted nationalist and colonialist discourses of female protection and male activity.⁵⁰ In doing so, they reconstructed the home as a site of contestation and negotiation among nationalist, colonialist, and feminist movements. Contemporary efforts to revisit the meaning of the home bear witness to these earlier moments, relying on the "very materiality" the home "appears to embody" to press claims for a new relationship between domesticity and the public, the self and the economy.⁵¹

In the current constitution of relations between market and home, the boundaries between the two have been reconfigured, even at the level of ideology, as permeable. In other words, historically the home has been the site of much of the hidden work done to maintain the sphere of the market and capital. Here, the home emerges from its hiding place as a space in which programmers both reflect on the conditions of labor and make themselves into subjects capable of being inserted into these labor regimes.

Meenakshi and Rajeshwari devoted a majority of the space in their home to creating a large sitting room for guests. They have divided their one-room apartment across the middle with a curtain that they could close when guests arrived. Behind the curtain that they drew when guests were there, they had two single beds and two closets on wheels for their clothing. They shared a bedside table with two small lamps on it, and a collection of crime novels and autobiographies is arranged on a shelf above the beds. Before the curtain, white plastic chairs accommodated visitors. Everyone who arrived between five and eight in the evening was given piping hot tea served in flimsy plastic cups. Tea-talking sessions sometimes went on until midnight.

The apartment belonging to Madhu and Bipin, one of two married couples in this group, had a kitchen, separate bedroom, and large sitting room. One side of the sitting room had a dining table, the other a large couch and coffee table with chairs arranged around it. On a low table near the dining table sat a personal computer. Everyone without a desktop computer at home would come over to their apartment to surf the web, send e-mail, and scan online job advertisements.

Mihir lived alone. His one-room apartment had a small kitchen and a room with his bed, a large flat-screen television and DVD player, a low, rectangular coffee table, and a collection of white plastic chairs. On the bedside table, he had a few books and a reading lamp, as well as a portrait of Shirdi Sai Baba. Mihir's house was where everyone assembled when they wanted to watch movies together. Mihir could have gotten a roommate to save money but did not as he hoped his aging parents would be able to visit him for several months at a time. In preparation for their eventual visit, he took care to keep the rooms clean and orderly. He applied contact paper to the floor in the kitchen to cover over what he thought of as an unacceptable amount of ground-in grime from previous occupants. Shyam, from Delhi, lived in the same apartment complex as Mihir, and I am told that he has a similar setup, though I have never seen it. Lacking the television and DVD player, Shyam's apartment afforded little opportunity for socializing. Srinu, Mayur, and another man named Arun, who is a biologist, lived in a two-room apartment. Mayur and Srinu shared a small room with bunk beds. They were both excellent cooks and invited us over from time to time for great feasts where we sat in Arun's room on the floor as there was little space elsewhere, played cards and song games, and gossiped.

In all these homes, space is given over to socializing, and personal space is economized. The apartments formed a network, with Usha and Bipin's home an important site for its space and for its access to the computer. Rajeshwari and Meenakshi's house, with its large "hall" or sitting room, could accommodate a dozen comfortably and was often the go-to destination after work. Mihir's house was important for film-watching parties, and Mayur, Arun, and Srinu's for foodie parties. These homes helped produce "corporate authorship," through which the commensuration of the world of work with the expanding horizons of middle-class Indian life emerged in their collective figuration of a good life. As Matthew Hull has recently pointed out in his study of Pakistani bureaucracy, for spatial artifacts, "it is often less important what they stand for than . . . how they arrange people around themselves."⁵²

Homes serve as meeting points for excursions at the same time that their arrangement invites, almost insists on, discussion of the day's events, politics, and explicit comparison of life in Germany with life elsewhere. The home is thus doubly located, first as a temporary space that matches a temporary lifestyle, and second as a "ring" of homes that arrange individual programmers in a network of friends and a cohort of young overseas Indians who can collectively work through the contradictions of being abroad. The chairs in Meenakshi and Rajeshwari's apartment, for instance, are plastic and not very expensive yet bought in a quantity to allow for socializing. They index concomitantly the temporary nature of life in Berlin for short-term programmers, a market economy of cheaply and readily available goods, and the value of socialization as a means of creating forms of enjoyment in excess of that same market efficiency.

One day, Meenakshi and Rajeshwari's home was used in the morning for cooking, as the three of us gathered to make food for an upcoming party at Mayur, Srinu, and Arun's house. As we cooked, we talked. The topic was love and marriage. Rajeshwari had a boyfriend who had moved from Hyderabad to Canada, but he had not told his parents of their relationship as they would not approve of a "love marriage." Rajeshwari was debating trying to find a job in Canada so as to join him. Asking our advice separately, she wanted to know from me if conditions for working in Canada were better than in Germany, and from Meenakshi, whether she should encourage her boyfriend to tell his parents about their relationship. Meenakshi told her to wait, saying that "if the boy's family is truly opposed to

the match, then it is better not to interfere.” Rajeshwari, however, was not so sure and was getting tired of waiting and questioned her boyfriend’s continued need for subterfuge. Such moments of conversation turned the home into an intimate space for figuring out acceptable ways to navigate relationships on one’s own but within the bounds of respect for the family and were an example of what Smitha Radhakrishnan called being “appropriately Indian,” of negotiating and, in the process, cementing both Indian particularity and global universalism.⁵³

Later that day, the home became a forum for discussing differences between the United States, Germany, and India, where some were of the opinion that Germany was better than the United States because at least Germans, in Mihir’s words, “left you alone to do your own culture,” whereas in the United States, Indians who moved there very quickly forgot their culture. For instance, he continued, friends of his who now lived in the United States “forgot they are supposed to take off their shoes when going into a temple.” Still again, the home was a space of play, where charades and card games allowed them to play with being “black ticket” salespeople (a popular role in charades: ticket scalping) and clever card sharks. And still later, the forum turned to a serious discussion of religion and science, reminiscent of Dipesh Chakrabarty’s discussion of *adda*, a social form of meandering talk where the vicissitudes of “modernity” are opened up for appropriation.⁵⁴

In the middle of the twentieth century, sociologists and anthropologists examined how industrialization was affecting “the” Indian family, positing that the joint family would disappear into nuclear family units, while arranged marriages would yield to free choice in marriage partner and fraternal unity would lessen as the conjugal couple was emphasized.⁵⁵ Although several authors pointed out that the joint family was probably not as widespread in precolonial India as has often been assumed, the trope of “modernization” as reflected in the transition from joint to nuclear family held sway. Opposing this modernist logic, Patricia Uberoi points out that the relationship between family structure and globalization is hardly predictable.⁵⁶ The home is a space where divisions are made available for contestation, not simply reproduced.

In the current iteration of market-family relations, the relationship of the home to the market is ever more explicitly charted out as one of interdigitation rather than opposition. The home and the idea of the family are both reenacted and made fluid by IT workers abroad. These fluidities

show how the IT workers experiment with ways of living as a key means of commensurating the complicated subjecthood of the fast and cheap coder and the cultural supplement to European reason they are often asked to inhabit at work with the vision they have of themselves as “heroic citizens” of the new India.

Given the interpenetration of home and world, it may be that the homes of IT professionals will continue to have a hostel-like quality, where the conditions of life can be commented on and renegotiated. In an earlier moment, Jane Collier, Michelle Rosaldo, and Sylvia Yanagisako wrote, “What gives shape to much of our concept of the Family is its symbolic opposition to work and business—in other words, to the market relations of capitalism.”⁵⁷ If the home and family are not quite structurally opposed to capitalism anymore but instead overlap with it as the site of both the production of work culture and the elaboration of a critique of labor, then the hostel stands in for a space of transition that is no longer fixedly opposed to the world of business but must take up that world and try to domesticate it.⁵⁸

In her kitchen, Meenakshi practiced the art of improvisation as a way of developing techniques of the self that distanced her from the computer as stupid, direction-following cook. In her sitting room, at the front door, before she left the house, she practiced the art of motivation through thinking positively, checking her inked phrases and her dolphin jumping out of the water for inspiration before stepping over the threshold of her home. Making these signs herself, she imbued them with her creative energies in a way that repeats, but does not simply conform to, how office culture asks her to invest her creative self in the company. In these instances, the home served as a training ground for work, producing feelings of hope, encouraging hard work and concentration, but at the same time, it produced a heightened sense of play with new ways of doing things.

The Pleasure of Leisure

Pleasure’s link to work and leisure, as theorized in the literature on control societies, is often premised on the loss of a space of leisure to the demands of work. Yet, I found that adjacent to these more familiar and well-rehearsed professional intrusions into leisure was the pursuit of pleasure as passing time in the bourgeois pursuits of strolling, picnicking, and eating alfresco. Leisure time no longer stands in direct contrast or opposition

to work but has instead become a mottled and dappled field, at once the space in which to develop work-related habits and dispositions and a space dedicated to the pleasure of pursuing everything that is not work. As Karin Knorr Cetina writes in her exploration of the politics of knowledge societies, one of the main consequences of the growing importance of information comes in the form of recognizing that “knowledge” implies different epistemes, what she calls “epistemic framing.” Different kinds of knowledge imply different lifeworlds, where the “merging and reconfiguring different orders” are a central activity in social life.⁵⁹ Leisure and work have, since the early twentieth century, been opposing lifeworlds, but in the current moment, their relationship is being reconfigured. If leisure is now conceived of as a space and time where workers mobilize and develop the expertise of self-management, this also makes leisure a site for an explicit refusal of this narrative. A specifically Indian middle-class imaginary emerges through an ethic of improvisation that treats leisure not as fully given over to work but puts it in a complementary and contrastive relationship to work. This ethic emerges at once from the limits of work as a site of rewarding labor and from the history of making an urban middle class in India as a public with a right to public enjoyments and public space.

The life of leisure has been infused with pleasures of the nonconstructive variety. Enjoying parks, as programmers do here, is one of these pleasures. Looking around I can see many more. Indeed, just as much as any activity (or, to the point, no activity at all) can be seen as preparation for work, it is also stubbornly constructed as not work. Eating and cooking, for example, can be a mode of work on the self. It can also be made into an elaborate ritual of taking time and expending energies in the opposite direction of work—the popularity of the black ticket seller in charades seems to comment on the many clandestine routes one might take to gain admission to the bourgeoisie pleasures of the city.⁶⁰ The skills practiced in leisure time are a dialectic between what is necessary for office culture and what opposes those very structures.

The dual nature of leisure is rather like the dual nature of other aspects of capital I have been discussing in this book. Both flexible, producing future possibilities and diverted toward immediate ends, the world of leisure is a site for the reinvention of subjecthood. While this reinvention is one of the main requirements for cognitive laborers, it neither necessarily emerges out of the culture of the office nor leads back to the workplace. In

this chapter, I have argued that Indian programmers both work on themselves in a conscious way to be better at their jobs and be successful at work and explore the pleasures that Berlin offers as a reward for their efforts that cannot be invaded by work. Self-improvement is a response to the global conditions of work that make it necessary to constantly reinvent oneself, especially for those who labor in knowledge economies in which race and difference are used to solidify the Indian programmer's reputation for cheap and fast coding. Likewise, the kinds of urban pleasures that Indian programmers pursue in Berlin are a response to embattled urban space in India. Perhaps the middle classes are reestablishing control over such spaces through multiplexes and shopping malls in the latest instantiation of class politics in space in India. But the story of the plebeianization of the Indian park should warn us against being complacent in the story of middle-class hegemony.

The middle class has made available for reappropriation the practice of self-improvement and pleasure as closely aligned. In this sense, those in the middle class may be innovating on the boundary between self-improvement and pleasure in a much more radical way than has previously been described. That is, they may be blurring the boundary between the unrestrained space of outside and the usual places of self-improvement: the home, the family, and the educational institution. While this blurring may make family life a site of consumption, it also makes the park a place where consumption can be criticized; while it purges the street of hawkers and pavement dwellers, it also sends a powerful message that the pleasures of the city are meant to be a reward for work. This message can be turned toward an argument for a democratization of pleasure, understood as passing time slowly among one's friends.

In his study of formerly "criminal tribe" cultivators in South India, Anand Pandian notes that the discourses of self-improvement simultaneously index the history of state-led reform of such groups through agriculture and an alternate ethic of cultivation that can, at times, valorize ways of life (such as *ganja* growing and petty thieving) that upend the prevailing ideology of agriculture as morally uplifting.⁶¹ In a similar way and for these middle-class subjects, discourses of self-improvement both participate in a neoliberal reform of subjectivity that makes of the individual an always adapting entrepreneur of her qualities and participate in creating a counterweight to this subject by providing a platform from which to argue that

channeling pleasure into work is one-sided. In part I of this book I argued that short-term Indian programmers are able to marshal such a critique because of how they are placed within companies as racialized, replaceable, yet exotic and interesting migrant workers—like computers themselves who cook but cannot write a recipe. This initial critique is elaborated outside of work through practices of pleasure that take their distance from work even while they articulate a desire to succeed in the workplace.